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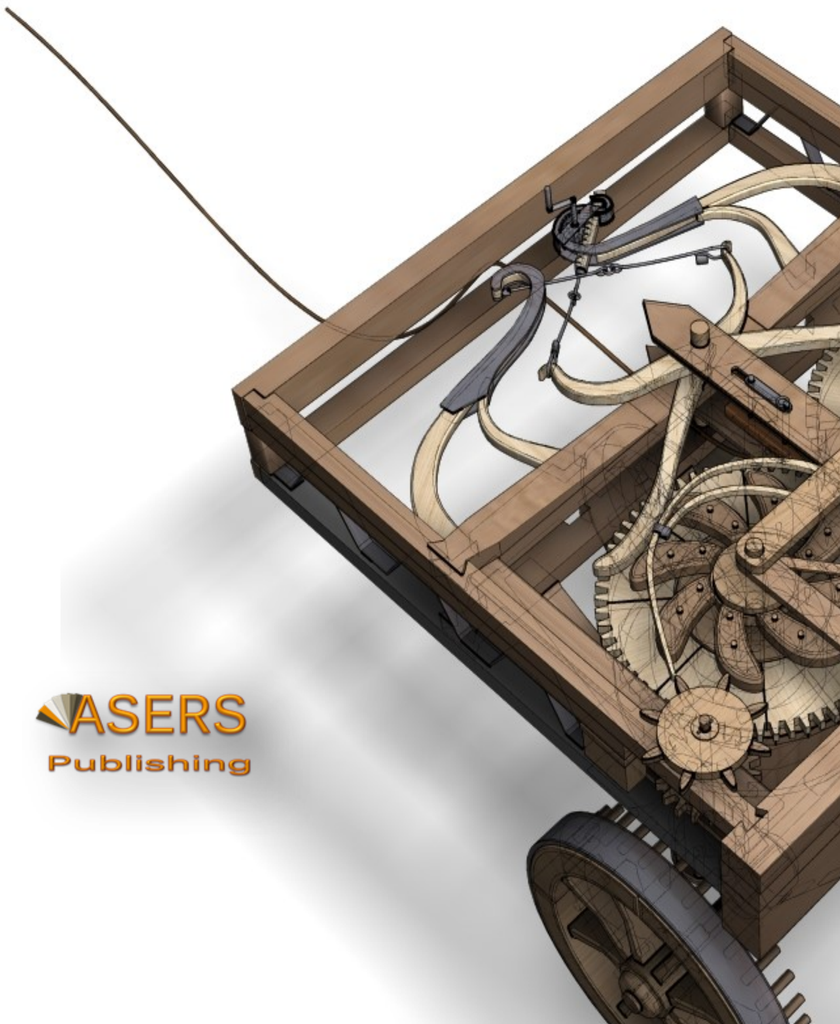

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Strategic Vectors of Coastal Tourism Development as a Blue Economy Component in the International Dimension

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Abstract: The blue economy covers various scientific areas and types of socio-economic activity that are related to each other: fisheries, shipping, tourism (beach and cruise), transportation, logistics, alternative energy, ecology, water management, climate change and biosphere conservation. It was found that coastal tourism occupies an important place in the system of the Blue Economy. According to the set of indicators: The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index, International tourist arrivals, thousands, Travel and Tourism industry GDP, and Employment in the tourism and travel sphere, a cluster analysis has been created for leading countries. As a result of the analysis, 9 clusters have been formed, for each of which strategic vectors of development were determined. The coastline of all countries in the world is 1162.3 million km. The longest coastline belongs to Canada – 202080 km. Relative indicators per 1 km of coastline as international tourist arrivals, international tourism inbound receipts, Tourism and Travel industry GDP have been considered. It has been substantiated that the Spanish coastal tourism industry deserves special attention. There are 17 coastal areas and more than 2,000 beaches in Spain.

Keywords: blue economy; costal tourism; indicators of costal tourism development; cluster analysis; Spain.

JEL Classification: F01; F 29; L 51; Z32; R11.

Introduction

The main goal of economic activity at all managerial levels is to ensure the highest efficiency in conditions of limited resources. The higher the level of development of the country, the greater the consumption. At the same time, innovative technologies, which are owned by countries with a high level of technical development, ensure energy and resource saving in the production of goods, performance of work, and provision of services. The methods, ways and intensity of the use of resources, first of all, depend on the type of these resources and their importance in the sectoral structure of the state economy. A special role for the socio-economic development of most countries is played by the resources of the world's oceans. Even countries that do not have access to the sea or ocean actively use water resources, such as rivers.

The world ocean is an important component of the biosphere and makes up approximately 95% of its structure. The biosphere is the natural shell of the earth, it is a self-organized, self-regulating, self-healing system that is able to maintain an ecological balance through natural processes. The world's ocean regenerates itself better than other types of natural resources. The main functions of the ocean in supporting the life of mankind are the production of oxygen, the absorption of carbon dioxide, the regulation of the global climate and temperature, it produces useful substances, is a source of a significant amount of minerals, absorbs negative emissions into the atmosphere, breaks down waste, is a source of food production, allows to transport people and goods with a sufficiently high level of efficiency, is a key resource for the development of the tourism industry, as well as a powerful source for the generation of alternative energy. These areas of activity are combined in the conceptual research direction 'Blue Economy'. This concept is quite new but is gaining more and more popularity and importance in the global environment. The Blue Economy is in the focus of attention of scientists whose research is involved in sustainable development, climate change, logistics, tourism, food security, energy, etc. The importance of this area of research is constantly growing, given the aggravation of global problems of mankind, the growth in the level of socio-economic activity throughout the world, the discovery of new opportunities based on the use of the resources of the oceans, which determines the relevance of research in this direction.

The objective of the study is the conceptual consideration of the blue economy from the standpoint of various vectors, the construction of the blue economy conceptual structure; identification of trends in the blue economy in the world and in particular in the European Union; identify the place in the blue economy structure and analyze indicators of the coastal tourism development; to make a cluster analysis and propose strategies for leading countries in terms of coastal tourism development; to diagnostic the main indicators of tourism development per 1 km of coastline and their correlation; to identify the Spain coastal tourism potential.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Conceptual Bases of the Blue Economy

The issue of the blue economy is relatively new in the theory and practice of economic relations. The urgency of its development is primarily due to increasing attention to the relationship in the system of economy, society and ecology. Scientists are currently paying special focus to the problems of the world's oceans, given its important role in ensuring livelihoods.

The importance of the seas and oceans resources for socio-economic development has been considered in their work by Bennett 2018; Botero, Fanning, Milanes, Planas 2016; Ferreira, Johnson, da Silva, Ramos 2018; Fraschetti, *et al.* 2018; Hemer, Manasseh, McInnes, Penesis, Pitman 2018; Malone, DiGiacomo, Gonçalves, Knap, Talaue-McManus, de Mora 2014; Salpin, Onwuasoanya, Bourrel, Swaddling 2018. These works consider the problems of marine resources, their types, importance for the economy.

By Michael V. B. the ocean without caring what we do towards its wellbeing, it continues to support all lives by generating oxygen, absorbing carbon dioxide, recycling nutrients and regulating global climate and temperature; it provides a substantial portion of the global population with food and livelihood and is the means of transportation for 80% of global trade; the marine and coastal fronts bestow a key resource to the tourism industry; provide all elements for tourism development of the familiar concept of 'sun, sand and sea' and help the diverse and expanding domain of nature-based tourism (Michael 2012). The relevance of the blue economy development is emphasized in the works by Pauli, G., he notes that it's time to move to a competitive business model that allows manufacturers to offer better products at lower prices while innovating in ways that not only increase profits, but also benefit the environment; this economic philosophy is called the 'blue economy' (Pauli 2010). Undoubtedly, ocean resources generate numerous benefits to the world economy and offer essential opportunities for transportation, food production, energy, mineral extraction, biotechnology, human settlement in coastal areas, tourism and recreation, and scientific research (Kaczynski 2011).

Issues of the blue economy development as a whole as a science have been considered by Eikeset, Mazzarella, Davidsdottir, Klinger, Levin, Rovenskaya, Stenseth 2018; Scientists look at the main factors in the growth of the blue economy, as well as its relationship with sustainable development. Similar issues of blue economy development, but from different points of view, are also considered by Visbeck, *et al.* 2014; Voyer, Quirk, McIlgorm, Azmi 2018; Winder, Le Heron 2017.

A new approach to understanding of the ocean importance in the economy and life has been proposed by Winder, G.M., and R. Le Heron: the BE paradigm presents the ocean through competing discourses – as a space for wealth creation in response to continued world poverty and inequality, and as a threatened and vulnerable ecosystem in need of protection in response to profound changes resulting from climate change, pollution, over-fishing, and habitat destruction. BE conceptions have reframed the oceans in the manner of a land-based resource assemblage, rather than an inhospitable realm to be explored and feared. As such it can be managed and developed, allocated as property, opened to markets, and governed (Winder and Le Heron 2017). Today, the blue economy is a theory supported by more than 180 concrete projects already implemented, which show that with less investment you can make more money, create new jobs and compete in the global market (Brears, 2021).

1.2. Blue Economy in the Sustainable Development Context

The active development of the blue economy began after the adoption of the Concept of Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The importance of oceans for sustainable development has been recognized from the beginning of the UNCED process, Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan, implementation and reaffirmation of which has been documented in the Rio+20 Conference; ongoing trends of exploitation and therefore the degradation of marine and coastal ecosystems show that endeavors to date to ensure sustainable developments have been insufficient (Blue Economy, 2014; What is the Blue Economy, 2017).

The importance of the blue economy for the concept of sustainable development implementation has been considered by García-Quijano 2009; Griggs *et al.* 2013; Hays *et al.* 2016; Kern and Söderström 2018; Lundberg 2013; Ntona and Morgera 2018; Potts *et al.* 2016; Stead 2018; Virto 2018; Waiti and Lorrenij 2018; Yang, Wang, Cao, Liu, Chen 2016.

The Sustainable Development Concept has been implemented for 30 years and acquires new features in view of the new problems emergence related to the harmonization of relations between social, economic and environmental spheres. The role of the blue economy in the Sustainable Development Concept is becoming increasingly important as new vectors and opportunities to exploit the potential of the seas and oceans in specific countries and the world at large.

The blue economy is defined by the World Bank as the ‘sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and jobs, and ocean ecosystem health’ (World Bank). The World Bank administers PROBLUE, a trust fund that supports ‘healthy and productive oceans’ (PROBLUE), and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) ‘works with the EU to ensure that the blue economy’s growth is tied to sustainable economies on both land and at sea’ (WWF).

Table 1 shows the main concepts regarding the justification of the essence of the blue economy.

The seabed provides 32 % of the global supply of hydrocarbons and exploration is extending towards the deep sea. Technological advancements are opening new frontiers of marine resource developments ranging from bioprospecting to the mining of seabed minerals. The sea also offers vast potential for production of renewable ‘blue energy’ from wind, wave, tide as well as from thermal and biomass sources (Blue Economy).

The issue of the blue economy is increasingly viewed from the standpoint of governance and government regulation. These issues have been considered in papers by Christie *et al.* 2017; De Santo 2013; Ehlers 2016; Granit, Liss Lymer, Olsen, Tengberg, Nõmmann, Clausen 2017; Hassler, *et al.* 2018; Islam and Shamsuddoha 2018; Kamat 2018; Niner, Milligan, Jones, Styan 2017; Portman 2014; Russel, den Uyl, De Vito 2018; Vaidianu and Ristea 2018.

The issue of governance in the blue economy covers the problems of strategies and programs for the development of this economy’s sector and its individual components; state support of priority industries and activities; risk assessment and management; motivating stakeholders in the blue economy to save resources and restore resources. An example of a comprehensive strategy for the development of the blue economy is the strategy of African countries, for which the blue economy is important.

The 2050 Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy adopted by the African Union recognizes the ‘urgent imperative to develop a sustainable ‘blue economy’ initiative’, and envisages the blue economy as the ‘New Frontier of African Renaissance’; the first ‘Sustainable Blue Economy’ conference was held in November 2018 in Nairobi, Kenya and gathered a wide range of actors, from political and business leaders to the UN and other intergovernmental organizations, scientific experts and members of civil society (Sustainable Blue Economy).

The problems of the development of the blue economy in Ukraine in the conditions of war are studied in many works. Ukraine has significant potential for the development of various branches of the blue economy, however, in the conditions of the temporary occupation of part of the coastal territories, there is a significant threat to the potential of the blue economy (Parsyak, V., Zhukova, O., and Vashchylenko, A. 2023).

Table 1. Conceptual approaches to essence of definition ‘Blue Economy’

Authors	Characteristics of concepts
Craven, 1982; Sherman, 1986	Research the problem of water use.
Pauli, 2010	The blue economy is a new economic philosophy that appears in the time of moving to a competitive business model that allows producers to offer better products at lower prices and innovate in ways that not only increase profits but also benefit the environment.
Silver *et al.* 2015	Determined how the definition ‘blue economy’ use and locate its articulation within four human–ocean relations vectors: oceans as natural capital, oceans as good business, oceans as integral to Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and oceans as small-scale fisheries livelihoods.
Winder and Le Heron, 2017	The BE paradigm characterizes the ocean as a space for wealth formation in response to world inequality and poverty, and as a vulnerable and threatened ecosystem in need of protection against profound changes resulting from pollution, climate change, over-fishing, and habitat destruction.
Nash, 2018	Considered the blue economy through the achievement of sustainable efficiency, which is achieved by replacing what does not require the development of new industries, offers a significant number of new jobs, valuable products and social justice.
Voyer *et al.* 2018	Considered the Blue Economy as a manifestation of sustainable development thinking in which the environment is exploited for societal needs but protected at the same time.
Rao, 2020	The main focus of the blue economy is on the world's oceans, seas, and everything connected with them
Brears, 2021	The blue economy is a theory supported by more than 180 concrete projects already implemented, which show that with less investment you can make more money, create new jobs and compete in the global market
Sverdan, 2021	Considered the blue economy as a new trend in social development and noted the paradox of the green economy is that production structures receive environmental rewards for reducing emissions, even if they continue to pollute. In this case, society needs a new way of developing like a Blue Economy.
Buono, 2021	The backbone of the blue economy should be technology and industries that cannot harm the oceans.
Celine Germond-Duret, 2022	Research the acceptance and endorsement of the blue economy that based on a perception of the sea as placeless, and the diffusion of development and sustainability norms from land to sea. Author uses a horizontal reciprocity framework to characterize the projection of norms within the land–sea relationship and explain three concepts—reciprocity, horizontality and normalization.

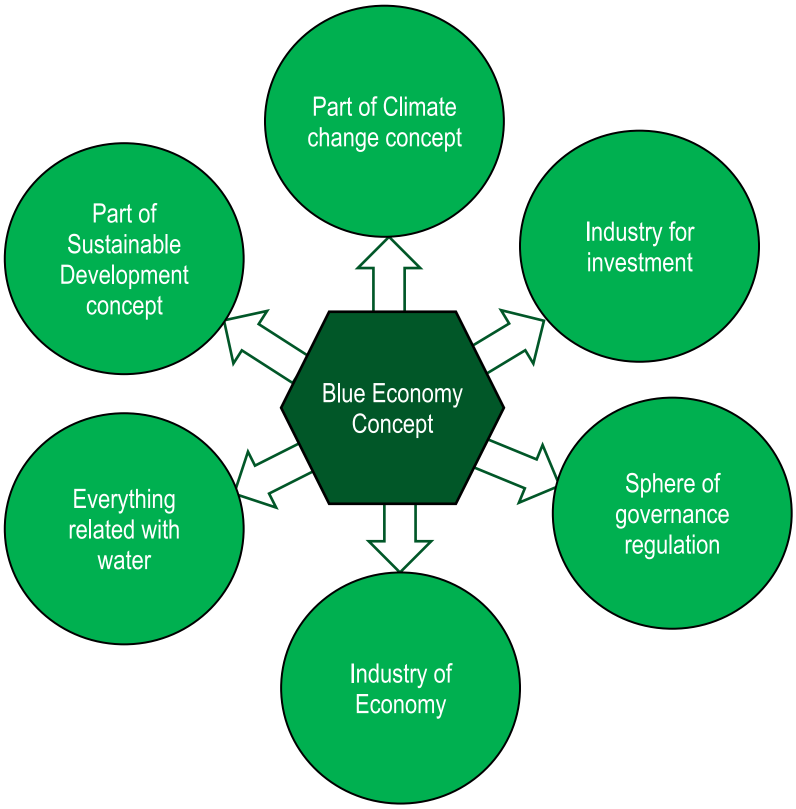
Source: summarized by authors.

The BE aims to promote economic growth, improve life and social inclusion without compromising the oceans’ environmental sustainability and coastal areas since the sea’s resources are limited and their physical conditions have been harmed by human actions (Office of the European Union). In recent years the term Blue Economy (BE) has become a concept closely related to maritime resources and developed economies in the oceans; its growing expansion and the emerging needs of a circular economy (an economic model oriented towards the elimination of waste generated, efficient use of resources, recycling and recovery (Mah 2021; Shojaei, Ketabi, Razkenari, Hakim, Wang 2021) herald challenges in both new and established treatments and materials (Cristiani 2017).

The blue economy encompasses many activities related to the sea and ocean resources using. At the same time, the sphere of coastal tourism deserves special attention. Tourism is an indicator of socio-economic country’s development, because on the one hand it performs a reproductive function – the human capacity for work restoration, on the other hand, reflects the level of country’s development. Ecotourism is gaining popularity (Walker and Weiler 2017), which emphasizes the need to green coastal areas and increase attention to compliance with environmental norms and standards (Domínguez-Tejo, Metternicht, Johnston, Hedge 2018). Thus, the importance of coastal tourism and significant prospects require the search for new ideas for the development of this industry.

Thus, the blue economy concept has been evolving over the past decades, every year it acquires new features and plays an increasingly important role in the implementation of the sustainable development concept. The concept of the blue economy is multi-vector (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Blue Economy conceptual vectors



Source: systematized by authors.

The multi-vector nature of the Blue Economy concept determines the choice of research methods, as well as priorities in conducting research in this scientific field.

2. Methodology

For research, it has been used a monographic method, which consists in a detailed study of conceptual approaches to identifying the essence, structure, indicators of the blue economy and its components development, including coastal tourism. The method of analogies has been also used to compare the studied indicators in terms of selected countries; economic and mathematical methods has been used, in particular, the method of cluster analysis for the formation of countries groups and characteristics of the blue economy role, including coastal tourism in terms of top countries clusters by tourism development indicators; correlation-regression analysis has been used for identify relationships between indicators of coastal tourism development.

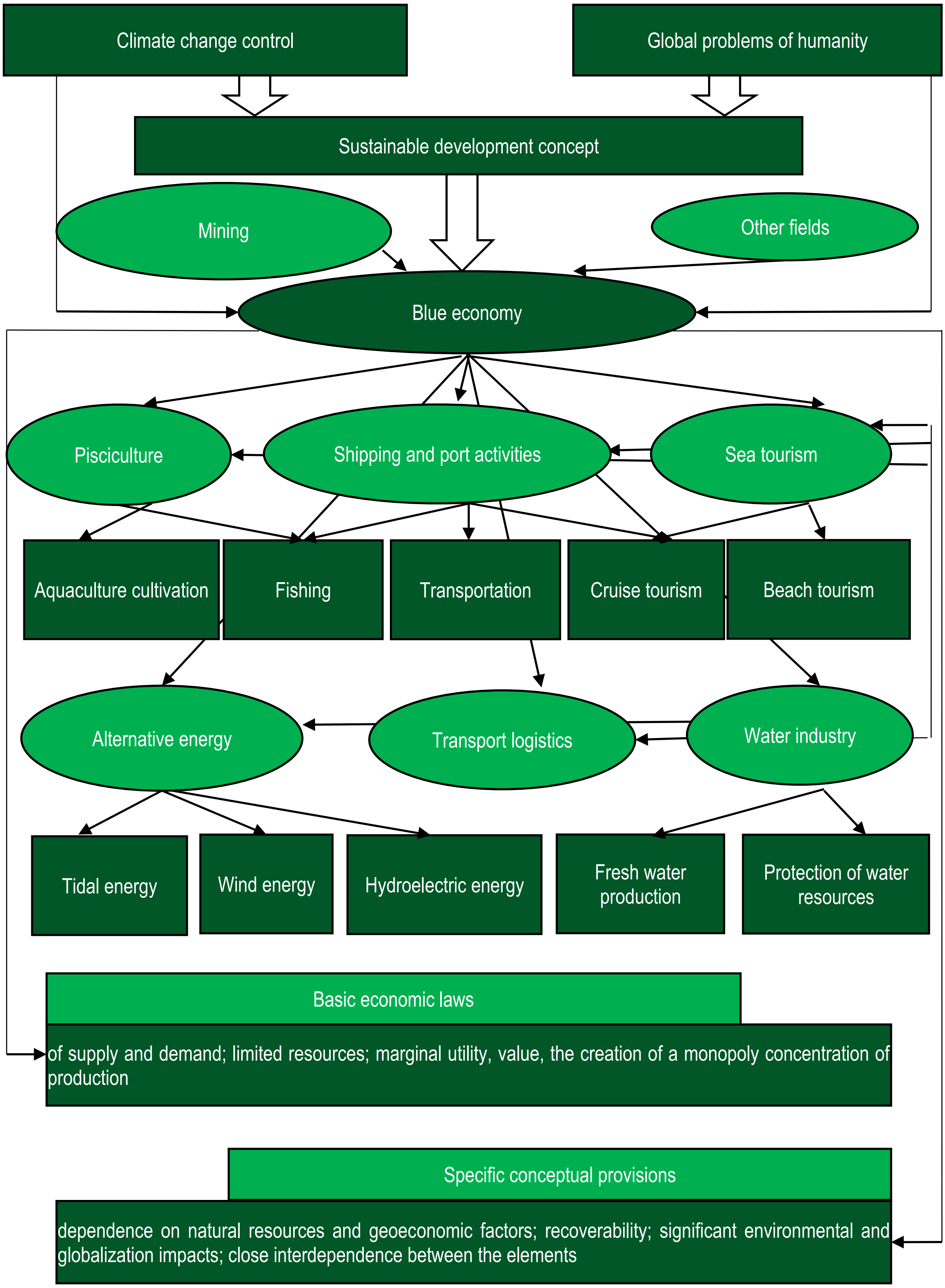
3. Application Functionality

3.1. Blue Economy Structure

3.1.1. The Concept of Understanding the Blue Economy Definition

It is expedient to consider the essence of the blue economy through the prism of several vectors. On the one hand, this is a classical economic science with a specific object of study - the world ocean and everything connected with it, on the other hand, it is a component of the concept of sustainable development, the basis of which is to ensure modern effective development without a threat to future generations based on the harmonization of relations within the economic, ecological, social subsystems. In addition, the blue economy can be considered as a generic name for several different sciences and areas of socio-economic activity that are only in contact with each other: fish farming, navigation, tourism (beach and cruise), transportation, logistics, alternative energy, ecology, and water economy that interacts with all other industries, since drinking water is used in all industries, while water resources need to be protected. It should also be noted that the blue economy is a separate vector for the study of climate change and the conservation of the biosphere (including the marine and oceanic environment) (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Conceptual model of the structure of the 'Blue Economy'



Source: systematized by authors.

Thus, Blue Economy includes traditional sectors: marine living resources; marine non-living resources; marine renewable energy; ports activities; shipbuilding and repair; maritime transport; coastal tourism; and non-traditional sectors: ocean energy; blue bioeconomy and biotechnology; desalination; marine minerals; maritime defense, security and surveillance; research and education; infrastructure and maritime works (submarine cables, robotics, etc.).

The blue economy is subject to the action of classical economic laws. So, for example, supply and demand is formed in tourism, fish farming, energy. The law of limited resources is manifested in the fact that despite the renewability of water resources, their consumption is limited, which encourages the development of resource-saving technologies in the field of the 'blue economy'.

The law of marginal utility can be traced in the fact that despite the significant potential of water resources, it is impossible to provide comprehensive consumer needs, in addition, the utility in the 'blue economy' is distributed unevenly in the global context (maximum utility is primarily obtained by countries located on the coast of large seas and oceans). The law of value can be traced in its classical appearance, namely, that the production of products based on the use of the resources of the oceans, as well as the provision of related services and exchange, should be carried out on the basis of their value. The law of generation of monopoly by the concentration of production is manifested in the dominance of large companies in the field of navigation, fish farming, tourism, and energy.

In addition to classical economic laws, the development of the 'blue economy' is influenced by specific conceptual provisions specific to this industry. First of all, a characteristic feature of this area of research is the special dependence on natural resources and geoeconomic factors. In terms of the importance of natural resources, the 'blue economy' can be compared to agriculture. In both cases, transportation of necessary natural resources (water and soil) is not possible or very difficult. Whereas, for example, the problem of shortage of coal or iron ore is solved by imports.

The blue economy should develop in harmony with the ecological environment, while this area is making a global impact. Thus, pollution of a reservoir in one place will, to a greater or lesser extent, pollute the entire oceans; a change in the riverbed will affect the landscape of the territory, flora and fauna, hydropower, and the filling of other water bodies.

The 'blue economy' develops with close interaction between its elements, so that fish farming is associated with navigation, which in turn implies links with the tourism industry (including cruise), logistics systems, and aquaculture. In addition, the 'blue economy' is associated with other sectors of the national economy (complements them or competes). There is competition in the fisheries and livestock sectors, there has been a growing debate recently about the benefits of fish and seafood or meat, and consumers are constantly making the right choices to increase competition in the industry. The Blue Economy complements the tourism industry and in particular the hospitality industry. Also, the blue economy is an important part of the food industry and restaurant business and food trade, as fish and seafood are an important element of the menu of restaurants and the range of grocery stores.

Thus, in our opinion, the blue economy is an interdisciplinary field of science, based on the classical laws of economics and specific postulates, and unites all areas of management related to the active use of water resources (shipping, fisheries, maritime tourism (beach and cruise), transport, maritime transport, logistics, alternative energy using water capacity, etc.) and provides for economic activities based on the principles of sustainable development, including harmonization of environmental and economic relations to minimize harmful effects on the environment and eliminate negative climate change.

3.1.2. The Blue Economy Development in Europe Union

According to the recent data, the EU Blue Economy sectors employed close to 4.5 million people and generated around €650 billion in turnover and €176 billion in gross value added (Table 2).

For the established sectors, two sectors are particularly noteworthy: the living resources, with gross profits valued at €7.3 billion in 2018, saw a 43% rise on 2009 (€5.1 billion). Turnover reached €117.4 billion, 26% more than in 2009. Marine renewable energy (offshore wind) has also seen growing trends, with employment increasing by 15% in 2018 (compared to 2017). The Blue Economy emerging, and innovative sectors include marine renewable energy (*i.e.* Ocean energy, floating solar energy and offshore hydrogen generation), Blue bioeconomy and biotechnology, Marine minerals, Desalination, Maritime defence, security and surveillance, Research and Education and Infrastructure and maritime works (submarine cables, robotics). These sectors offer significant potential for economic growth, sustainability transition, as well as employment creation. Emerging Marine Renewable Energy will be key if the EU is to meet its European Green Deal, offshore the EU Hydrogen Strategy3 and the newly published 'Offshore Renewable Energy Strategy'4 goals. The latter proposes an increase in offshore wind capacity from 12 GW to 300 GW by 2050, complemented with 40 GW of ocean energy and other emerging technologies by 2050. The most notable sub-sector in Blue bioeconomy is the algae sector.

Although recent socio-economic data are available for only a limited number of Member States (France, Spain and Portugal), turnover for these amounted to €10.7 million. Desalination, there are currently 2309 operational desalination plants in the EU producing about 9.2 million cubic meters per day. As climate change may lead to hotter and dryer summers, certain countries must ensure water supply and hence have invested in desalination (European Commission, 2021)

Table 2. Europe Union Blue economy established sectors, main indicators, 2018

Indicators	Indicator values
Turnover	650 billion Euro
Gross value added	176 billion Euro
Gross profit	68 billion Euro
Employment	4.5 million Euro
Net investment in tangible goods	6.4 billion Euro
Net investment ratio	3.6 %
Average annual salsary	24,020 Euro

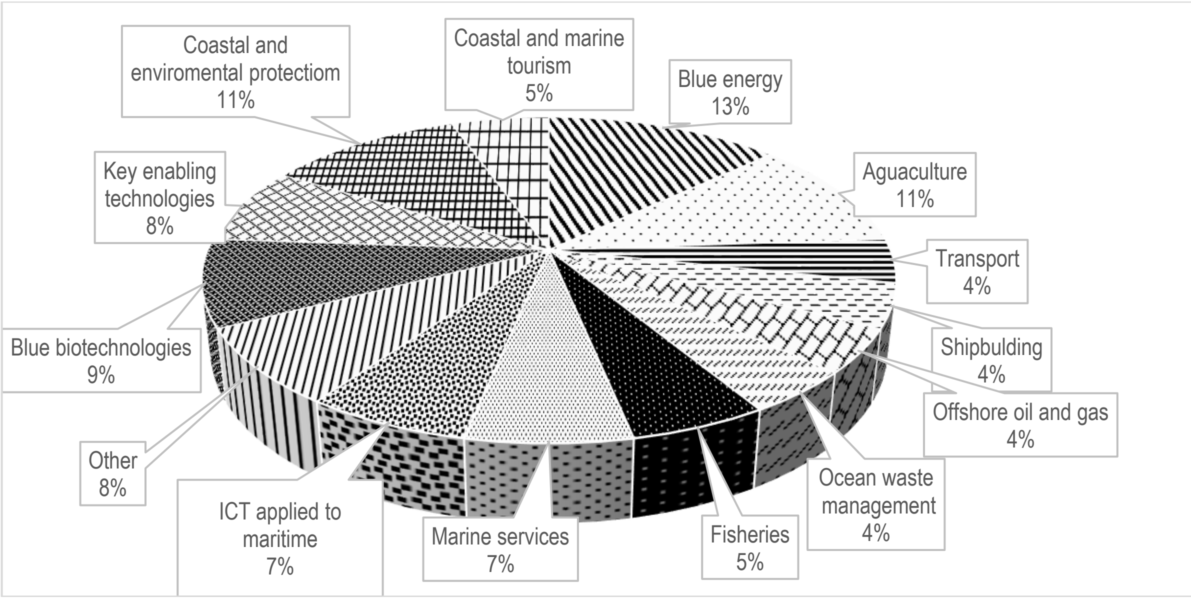
Source: Eurostat (SBS), DCF and Commission Services. European Commission (2021).
Notes: Turnover is calculated as the sum of the turnover in each sector; it may lead to double counting along the value chain. Nominal values. Direct impact only. Net investment excludes maritime transport and coastal tourism. Net investment ratio is defined as net investment to GVA.

The investment policy in the world and in particular in Europe Union plays the important role in Blu economy development. The European Investment Fund decides on the main issues related to investing in important industries in the European Union. The European Investment Fund is a specialist provider of risk finance to benefit small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) across Europe. EIF is a part of the EIB Group. Shareholders are the European Investment Bank (EIB), the European Union, represented by the European Commission, and a wide range of public and private banks and financial institutions (European Investment Fund). In 2020, the European Investment Fund (EIF) collaborated with the European Commission to launch the Blue Invest Fund initiative that will provide financing to underlying equity funds that strategically target and support the innovative Blue Economy. The Blue Invest Fund was structured under the European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI) Equity Product, the financial pillar of the Investment Plan for Europe, implemented by the EIF. This initiative recognizes the need for additional investment to address the challenges faced in relation to the sustainability and development of the Blue Economy and the necessary conservation of oceans, coastlines and marine life. The EIF believes that Venture Capital and Private Equity funds will play a critical role in the years to come in backing sustainable technologies and innovation that will contribute to the preservation of our oceans, seas and coastlines, precious shared resources that constitute the backbone and mainstay of the Blue Economy, a strategic high value economic sector (European Investment Fund).

EIF successfully deployed the targets reserved for the Blue Economy and ultimately surpassed the initial objective of €75 million. The investment program of Blue Economy development is directed at food security, health, and sustainability. These investments are set up to support start-ups developing innovative products, materials, and services that can contribute to enhancing marine conservation and the sustainability of the Blue Economy. The structure of investment in Blue economy is very diversified (Figure 3).

To date, Blue Invest had 545 companies verifying their eligibility for the programme, 132 companies confirmed as beneficiaries and 73 companies that have already completed the programme (55% of the participants). About 75% of the companies participating in the program are either SMEs or start-ups of under 3 years, of which a quarter are in pre-commercial phase. Most of the companies are in the Blue energy sector (12%), followed by aquaculture and coastal and environment (both at 10%), and Blue biotechnology (8%). In terms of MSs, France, the Netherlands, Ireland and Italy have the highest number of participating companies, accounting for close to 50% of the total (European Commission).

Figure 3. The structure of investment in Blue economy



Source: summarized by the author according to the data by Eurostat (SBS), DCF and Commission Services. European Commission (2021).

Gross Value-Added data show an acceleration in the growth of all sectors from 2013 onwards except for Non-living resources. The GVA generated by Coastal tourism in 2018, the largest Blue Economy sector in the EU, increased by 20.6% compared to 2009.

Table 3. Blue economy Gross Value Added

Indicators	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2018 to 2009, %
Living resources	14756	15242	15807	15876	15431	15872	16851	18128	18344	19100	129.4
Non-living resources	11190	11325	11935	11237	9684	8215	8422	4688	3911	4243	37.9
Ocean energy	41	115	179	205	325	437	798	1103	1432	1495	3646.3
Port activities	23126	23305	26799	23886	24175	25355	26348	27116	27349	26481	114.5
Shipbulding and repair	11263	11814	11747	10910	11060	11606	11250	12385	13515	14654	130.1
Maritime transport	26876	29966	27070	27382	29011	28695	32433	27040	31130	30047	111.8
Coastal tourism	66392	64719	58886	50924	54713	54175	56033	60353	68783	80049	120.6
Blue economy GVA	153643	156487	152424	140421	144398	144354	152135	150813	164463	176067	114.6
National GVA, billion Euro	9532.3	9848.6	10145	10205	10320.5	10555.6	10936.7	11231.2	11664.8	12046	126.4
Blue economy (% of national GVA)	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.5	93.8

Source: summarized by the author according to the data by Eurostat (SBS), DCF and Commission Services. European Commission (2021).

Maritime transport and Port activities increased by 12% and 14.5%, respectively. Other sectors that contributed to growth were Living resources (+29%) and Shipbuilding and repair (+30%). On the other hand, Non-living resources dropped by 62 % (Table 3).

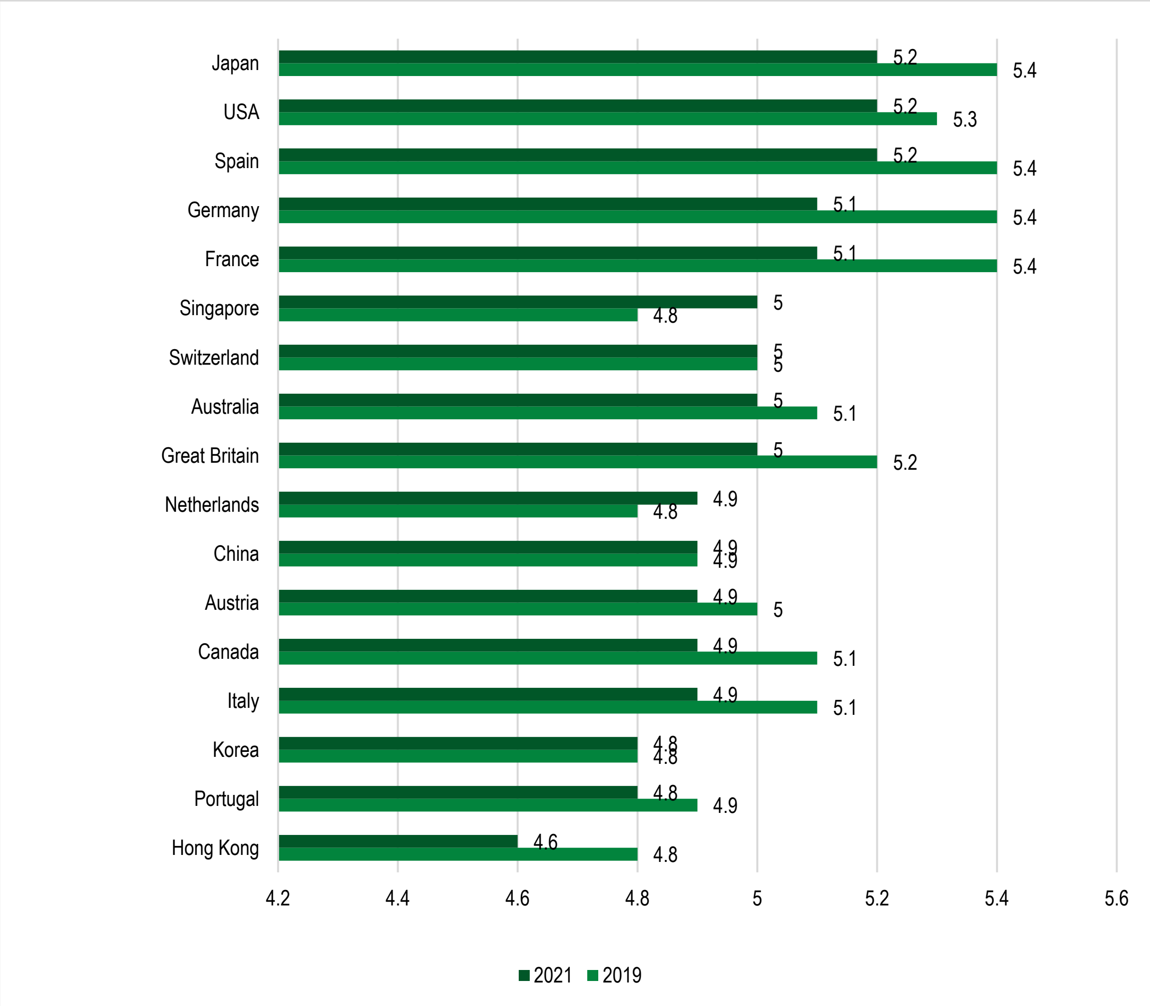
Employment is recovering since 2013. With respect to 2009, overall, 2018 figures are very similar. The highest relative expansion was observed in Maritime transport. In Shipbuilding and repair as well as in Living resources, employment has grown with respect to the minimum observed in 2013-2014, but it has not yet recovered to 2009 levels. In Non-living resources, a significant declining trend is seen. The sectors are also very different in their capital intensity. This is the case, for instance, for Coastal tourism compared to the Nonliving resources. Coastal tourism is labour-intensive, and often run by small or medium-sized local or family businesses; it is widespread along the entire EU coastline. This is reflected in the sector making the greatest contribution to the EU Blue Economy in terms of employment and gross value added and with its share increasing over time. However, the sector's contribution to GVA and profits are substantially lower than to employment. Within Non-living resources, the Oil and gas subsector is a highly capitalised industry that requires few employees per unit of output and is concentrated in a few geographical areas. The industry is generally comprised of large companies, which might have fewer direct links to local coastal communities. Consequently, this sector accounts for only a tiny fraction of employment (under 1% in 2018) but a substantial part of overall Blue Economy-related profits.

3.2. The Coastal Tourism Development like Important Part of the Blue Economy

3.2.1. The Worlds Trends of Tourism and Travels Development

An important place in the system of the Blue Economy is occupied by coastal tourism. If we consider coastal tourism from the point of view of globalization analysis, it is best characterized by the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index. This index is determined annually based on the analysis of indicators of 140 countries that characterize and ensure the development of tourism and increase the number of trips. The report on the competitiveness of travel and tourism is developed by the World Economic Forum for strategic analysis based on a comparison of indicators of countries in different regions. The maximum value of the Index is 7, such an indicator was not reached by any of the 140 countries studied (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Ranking of countries in the world according to the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index, 2019, 2021.



Source: compiled by the author for (The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report, 2019; 2021).

It is worth noting that in 2021 The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index in almost all countries was below potential. This is primarily due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Japan tops the travel and tourism competitiveness rankings with a score of 5.2, up from 5.4 in 2019. The United States is in second place with a score of 5.2 in 2021 (5.3 in 2019). France, Germany, Spain in 2019 had the highest values of the indicator - 5.4.

In 2021, Spain's score was 5.2, while France and Germany's score was 5.1. In 2019, the United Kingdom had a value of 5.2, in 2021 this indicator decreased to 5. The position of Singapore increased from 4.8 to 5. In 2021, such countries as Switzerland and Australia had a value of 5. High rates - 4.9, have such countries as the Netherlands, China, Austria, Italy, Canada; Korea, Portugal, Hong Kong have a value of 4.8. Ukraine occupied the 78th position in this rating in 2019 with a value of 3.7, that is, it is in the second part of the rating; in 2021, this indicator was not determined for this country and a number of other countries.

Chad and Yemen rank lowest with 2.5 and 2.6 respectively in 2021, as well as most countries in the sub-Saharan Africa region. In general, the highest value of the Tourism and Travel Competitiveness Index (more than 4.4) in 2019 was achieved by European countries - 20, or 57% of the entire set of TOP-35 countries, and in 2021 this indicator (more than 4.4) was only had 32 countries, of which 21 countries (or 65.6%) are European countries.

In second place in 2019 was the Asia-Pacific region - 10 countries, or 29%, the third - North and South America - 4 countries, 11%, only the United Arab Emirates from the Middle East and North Africa in the TOP-35. European countries were among the first to develop tourism, hotel and restaurant business and related infrastructure. However, at the same time, the historical heritage of European countries is of great importance, since it is the architecture and monuments of culture and art that most attract travelers. Thanks to this, the European region is the most competitive in terms of tourism and travel.

If we consider individual components (sub-indices) in 2019, then other countries are leaders. So, for example, in terms of the favorable environment for the development of the tourism sector, Switzerland is in first place, and Finland and Hong Kong are in second and third, respectively, with an indicator of 6.1. According to the favorable environment, European countries - Germany, Luxembourg, Iceland - have high marks (6). If we consider a sample of countries with an indicator of more than 5.3 (these are 50 countries), then among them 31 countries (62%), also high positions are occupied by the countries of Asia and the Pacific - Singapore (5.9, position 7), Japan (5 .9, position 10), New Zealand (5.8, position 14), Korea and Australia (5.7, corresponding positions 19, 20). The assessment of the environment in the USA is 5.8 (16th position), Canada - 5.6 (21st position).

Ukraine ranks 65th with an indicator of 5, which is higher than, for example, in such tourist countries as Indonesia (4.8), Turkey (4.6), Egypt, Mexico (4.5). The last places in the ranking for this indicator are occupied by African countries. On the sub-index characterizing the policy and the level of favorable conditions for travel and tourism, New Zealand occupies the first place with a value of 5.1. Unlike the previous sub-index, which characterizes the favorable environment, the leadership in terms of the favorable policy and conditions for tourism and travel is held by Asian countries - Singapore, Indonesia (indicator 5, 2 and 4 positions). In third place is Luxembourg.

Costa Rica and Panama are highly rated (4.9), both in the South American region. Ukraine ranks 70th with a score of 4.5. Relatively low scores are Italy and Great Britain (4.4), respectively 75 and 77 positions. Quite low are Ukraine's estimates for the sub-index characterizing the development of infrastructure - 3.4. That provided the 73rd line in the corresponding rating.

The best tourist infrastructure is developed in the USA and Switzerland according to the 2019 index (score of 5.8), as well as in Singapore (5.7), Great Britain and Spain (5.6). This indicator characterizes air traffic, the quality of roads, the development of the transport network, maritime transport. For most African countries, this figure is less than 2, which significantly reduces the overall competitiveness index of countries in terms of development of tourism and travel. The lowest score of Ukraine (2.1) was determined by the sub-index characterizing natural and cultural resources, which provided only 89th place in the ranking.

The most attractive in terms of resources and cultural values in terms of tourism are China with an indicator of 6.1, France (5.9), Italy, Spain (5.7), Brazil and Mexico (5.6). In the regional context, according to this indicator, the countries were placed in the ranking proportionally, which emphasizes the fact that in every region of the world there are interesting sights that attract tourists.

The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index is a comprehensive indicator that comprehensively characterizes the level of development of the tourism sector. Together with these indicators, it is advisable to analyze such indicators as international tourist arrivals, thousands, TandT industry GDP, Employment in tourism and travel sphere (Table 4).

Table 4. Indicators of tourism development in the leading countries of the world

Countries	Travel and Tourism Development Index	International tourist arrivals, thousands	International tourism inbound receipts (inbound US $, millions)	TandT industry GDP, US $ million	TandT industry share of GDP, % of total GDP	TandT industry share of Employment, 1000 jobs	TandT industry share of Employment, % of total employment	Domestic TandT spending, % of internal TandT spending
Japan	5.2	4116	10700.3	76067.8	1.5	1744	2.6	94.6
United States	5.2	19445	7617	356153	1.7	4037	2.7	93.9
Spain	5.2	18958	18477.4	28183.8	2.2	830	4.3	63.2
France	5.1	89400	32564.1	52230.9	2	1177	4.2	67.1
Germany	5.1	12449	22080.2	722999.4	1.9	2874	6.4	88.4
Switzerland	5	11818	9064.8	12554.2	1.7	161	3.2	72.3
Australia	5	1828	25820.9	20896	1.5	516	4.1	91
United Kingdom	5	39418	18933.3	35732.1	1.3	1600	4.6	85.4
Singapore	5	15119	5189.1	5171.5	1.5	181	5	50
Italy	4.9	25190	19796.6	56553.9	3	1519	6.6	80.6
Austria	4.9	15091	14018.2	15702.5	3.7	272	6.1	45
China	4.9	65700	14233.3	157865	1.1	22799	3	88
Canada	4.9	2960	11258.2	15336.8	0.9	600	3.3	81.2
Netherlands	4.9	7265	9101.1	21974.6	2.4	729	9.3	78.5
Korea	4.8	2519	10527.7	10768.8	0.7	310	1.2	67.9
Portugal	4.8	6480	8855.5	7438.9	3.2	379	8	41.4
Denmark	4.7	14573	3964.9	5829.9	1.7	64	2.3	69.6
Finland	4.7	896	1264.4	3491.5	1.3	56	2.1	84.8
Hong Kong SAR	4.6	1359	2842	2792.1	0.8	149	4.1	74.5
Sweden	4.6	7616	4373.8	8287.9	1.5	111	2.2	74.4
Luxemburg	4.6	525	4780.7	2390.2	3.4	16	5.6	15.6
Belgium	4.6	2584	6588.2	6136.5	1.2	118	2.4	62
Iceland	4.5	486	638.6	650.4	3.2	12	6.2	44.3
Ireland	4.5	10951	1900.6	1641.6	0.4	54	2.4	24.3
United Arab Emirates	4.5	7165	30730.6	8711.2	2.4	263	4.3	32.8
Czech Republic	4.5	14651	3627.9	4081.7	1.7	206	4	55.9
New Zealand	4.5	3702	6291.6	6148.6	2.9	169	6.2	70.2
Greece	4.5	7217	4932.9	5892.2	3	244	6.4	54.4
Estonia	4.4	1023	588.3	678.1	2.2	20	3	44
Poland	4.4	8418	7770	5034.8	0.8	306	1.9	26.9
Cyprus	4.4	632	658.3	270.9	1.1	15	3.8	19.4

Source: compiled by the author for (The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report, 2021; UNWTO; World Bank, 2021).

In terms of international tourist arrivals, the leaders are such countries as France - 89400 thousand, China - 65700 thousand, the third place is occupied by the United Kingdom - 39418 thousand, this figure is significantly lower than in the two previous countries. One of the main factors behind the high rate of international tourist arrivals is interesting tourist sites, historical monuments of culture and architecture, as well as natural resources.

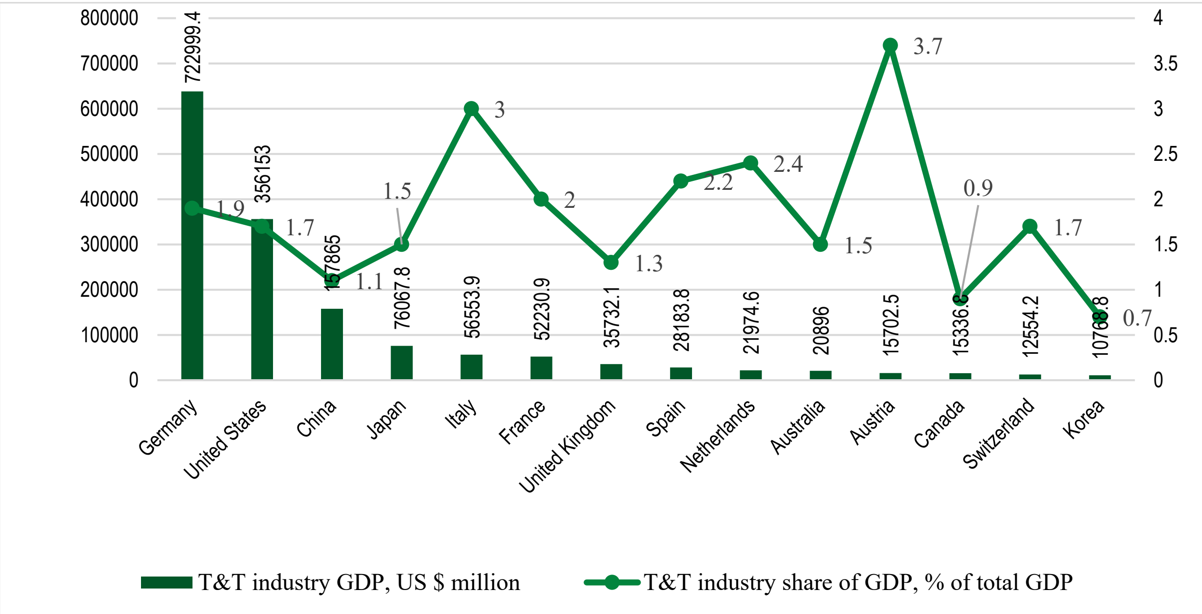
In addition, the visa regime for citizens of other countries is important, as well as the average prices for accommodation, meals, transportation costs, etc. Also, the leading countries in this indicator with a value of more than 10 million visitors include Italy, the USA, Spain, Singapore, Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, and Ireland. These countries are different in size and located on different continents, however, all these countries have a high level of socio-economic development and a balanced industrial structure.

It should be noted from the point of view of the Blue Economy that all countries in this top rating have access to the sea, which is an important factor in increasing tourist attractiveness, and also contributes to an increase in passenger transportation by sea. The number of tourists arriving in Japan (leading The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index) is 4116 thousand people, this is the 20th position in the ranking for this indicator.

If we consider the first 31 countries with the highest Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index, then among them the lowest value of international tourist arrivals is Iceland (486 thousand people), Luxembourg (525 thousand people), Cyprus (632 thousand people), Finland (896 thousand people).

Assessing the indicator of international tourism inbound receipts (inbound US$, millions), it should be noted that the leader in this indicator is the United States - 76127 million dollars. The United States, with a significant margin in second and third place, are respectively France (32564.1 million dollars) and the United Arab Emirates (30730.6 million dollars). Also, in the TOP-10 according to this indicator are such countries as Australia, Germany, Italy, Great Britain, Spain – International tourism inbound receipts of more than 18 billion US dollars. The lowest of the top countries, this figure is in Cyprus, Iceland, Estonia – less than 658.3 million dollars. USA. Other rating values can be traced to such an indicator as TandT industry GDP. Thus, the leader in this indicator is Germany – 722,999.4 US$ million. This is almost twice as much as the second-ranked US ($356,153 million). In third place is China with a value of 157,865 million dollars. United States, which is 2.3 times less than in the United States. In fourth place is Japan ($76,067.8 million), half that of China (Figure 5).

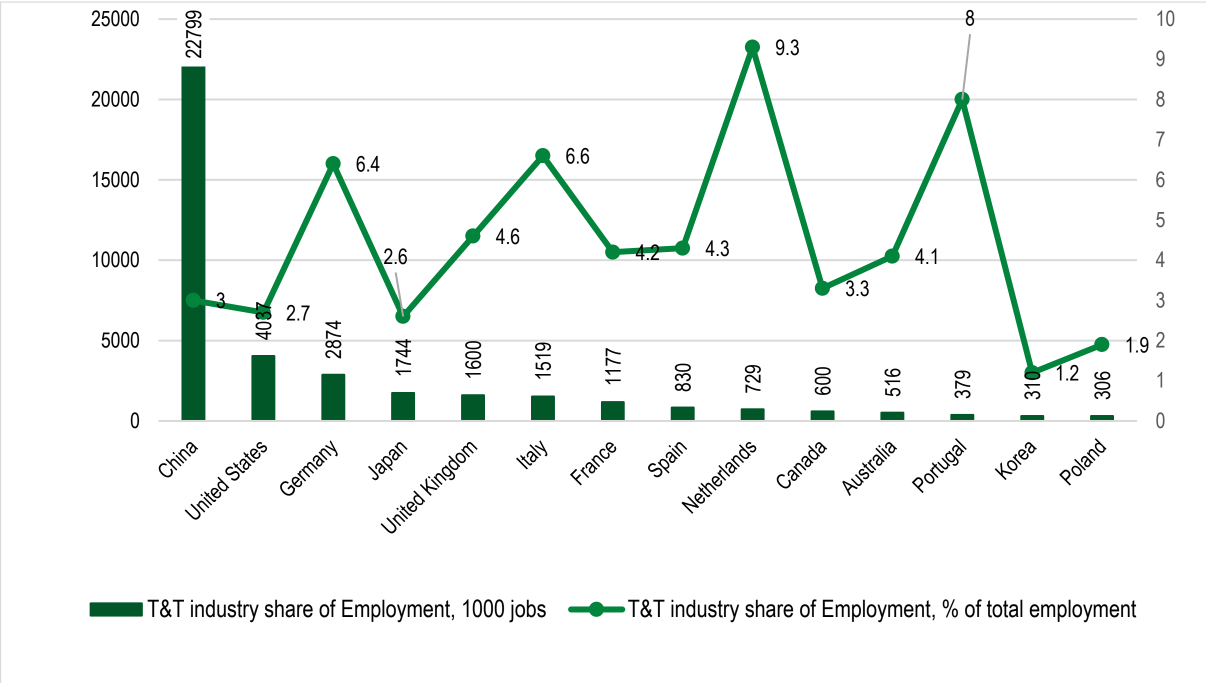
Figure 5. TandT industry GDP, US $ million and share of GDP, % of total GDP



Source: compiled by the author for (UNWTO; World Bank, 2021).

If we analyze the frequent tourism in the total gross domestic product, then it is insignificant. In particular, for Germany this indicator is 1.9%, for the USA - 1.7%, China - 1.1%, Japan - 1.5%. Among the top countries in tourism development, the highest share of tourism GDP is in Austria - 3.7% and Iceland - 3.2%. In Greece and Italy, this figure is 3%, Portugal - 2.9%. The lowest percentage among the studied countries in Ireland - 0.4% and South Korea - 0.7%.

Figure 6. TandT industry share of Employment, 1000 jobs and % of total employment



Source: compiled by the author for (UNWTO; World Bank, 2021).

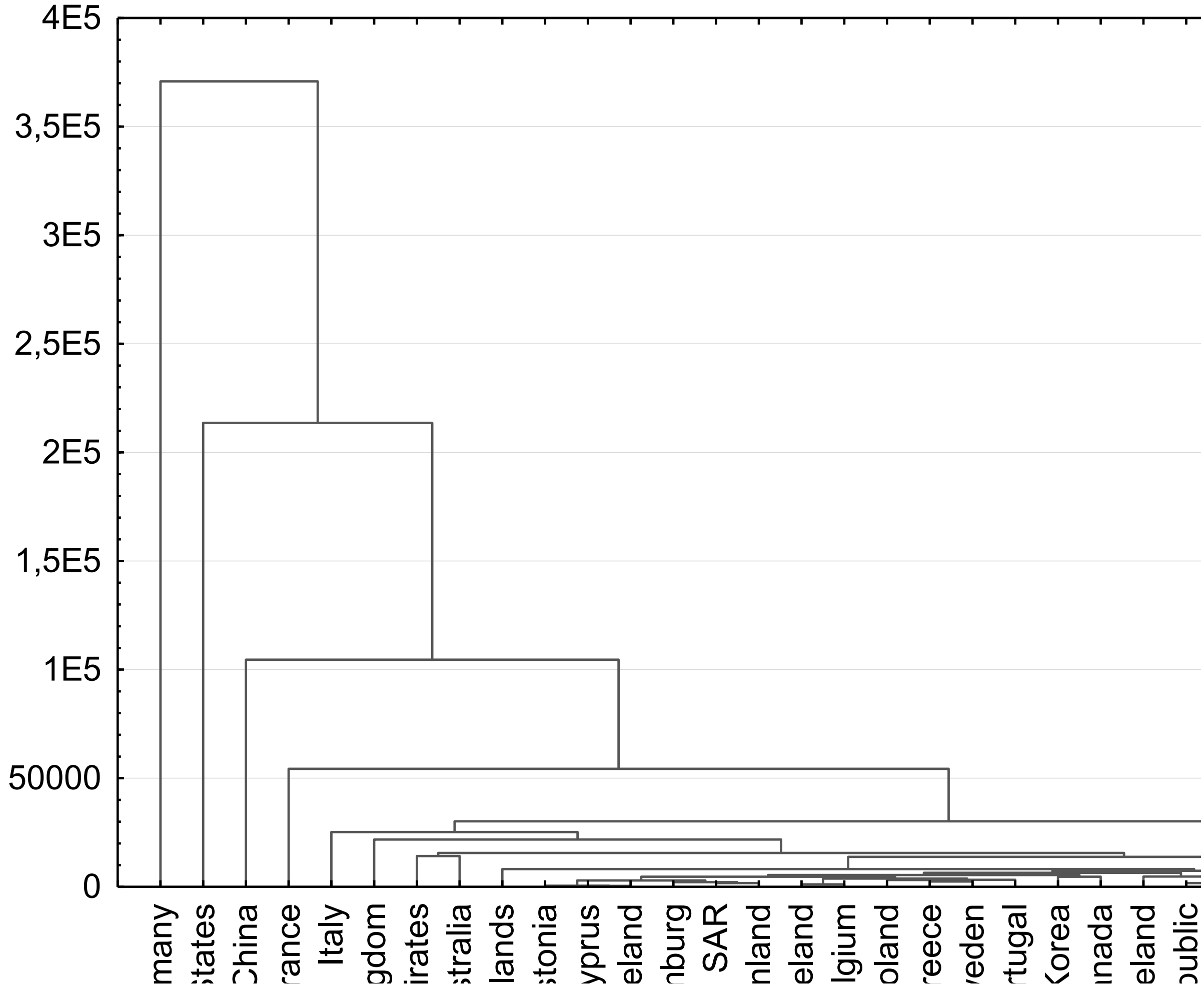
After analyzing employment in the field of tourism and travel (Figure 6), it should be noted that the highest figure for China is 22,799 thousand people, which is only 3% of the total number of employees, in the United States 4,037 thousand people are employed in this area (2.7%), in Germany – 2874 thousand people (6.4%), in Japan - 1744 thousand people (2.6%). Most of the workers employed in the tourism sector in the total number of employees in the Netherlands – 9.3% and Portugal – 8%.

Analyzing the indicator Domestic TandT spending (% of internal TandT spending), it should be noted that it is the highest for such countries as Japan, the USA, Australia – more than 90%, for Germany, China, Great Britain, Finland this indicator is more than 80%. The lowest Domestic TandT spending in such countries as Luxembourg (15.6%), Cyprus (19.4%), Ireland (24.3%), Poland (26.9%).

3.2.2. Cluster Analysis and Strategies of Leader Countries by Indicators of Coastal Tourism Development

Based on the combination of these indicators, it is advisable to conduct a cluster analysis in order to form groups of countries according to the similarity of characteristics (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Vertical hierarchical dendrogram of clustering by indicators of tourism development



Source: compiled by the authors.

To identify clusters using the cluster analysis technique, it is necessary to analyze the Euclidean distance. The calculation was made using the STATISTICA program. As a result of the analysis, it was revealed that most of the countries studied are quite similar in terms of tourism development, however, four countries are singled out separately, which it is not advisable to combine with others, therefore they form a separate cluster (Table 5).

Thus, given the results of cluster analysis, it can be concluded that the blue economy, in particular coastal tourism, plays a leading role in developing the country's potential. High rates of tourism development in those landlocked countries are due to another uniqueness that can attract tourists from around the world.

Table 5. Description of the role of the blue economy, in particular, coastal tourism in the context of clusters of top countries in terms of the level of tourism development

Clasters	Characteristic	The importance of the blue economy, in particular coastal tourism
Germany	The highest values of Travel and Tourism Development Index and TandT industry GDP, Domestic TandT spending, % of internal TandT spending. Significant number of historical and cultural monuments, developed infrastructure, including transport	Germany has access to the North and Baltic Seas. The most popular seaside resorts are Sult, Rügen, Hiddensee, Just, Borkum, St. Peter-Ording, Usedom, Amrum, Timmendorfer Strand and Prerow. Maritime tourism plays a secondary role in the development of tourism in Germany, mainly domestic tourism.
USA	The highest values of the Travel and Tourism Development Index, other indicators are above average. Attractive natural locations, cultural environment, modern architecture, shopping malls	The territory of the United States is bordered by the Pacific Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico. The beaches of California, and especially Miami, are considered some of the best in the world. Coastal tourism plays an important role.

Clasters	Characteristic	The importance of the blue economy, in particular coastal tourism
China	The highest rate of TandT industry share of Employment numbers jobs. The importance of tourism development among the top countries. Rich history and cultural heritage, natural locations. Domestic tourism predominates. Remote location for European countries reduces tourism potential.	The country is bordered by the Bohai Sea, the Yellow Sea, the East Sea and the South China Sea. The best beaches are located on the island of Hainan, Liaoning, Guangxi, Shandong. Mostly sea holidays are designed for domestic tourism, with the exception of Fr. Hainan, which has been actively developing in recent years.
France	The highest rate is International tourist arrivals. It has all kinds of tourist attractions - cultural, architectural, artistic, natural, etc.	Coastal tourism plays an important role. The main beach resorts in France: the Mediterranean coast: the Cote d'Azur (Nice, Cannes, Antibes, Juan-les-Pins, Saint-Tropez); Atlantic coast: Aquitaine region (Biarritz), Brittany region (Saint-Malo, Dinard, Cyberon, La Biel), Normandy region (Deauville, Trouville-sur-Mer, Honfleur); island of Corsica.
United Arab Emirates, Australia	Average indicators of tourism development among top countries. The most attractive are the natural locations and exotic countries	Coastal tourism is crucial in the development of tourism.
Japan, Spain, United Kingdom, Italy	The highest indicators of tourism development. All countries have a long history, developed economy, cultural, architectural heritage and natural locations	Coastal tourism plays an important role primarily for Italy and Spain, as well as for Japan (for which it is mainly domestic tourism). For the UK, coastal tourism is of secondary importance.
Singapore, Switzerland, Austria, Czech Republic	High level of socio-economic development and tourism, natural locations, cultural heritage, high level of service	Switzerland, Austria, Czech Republic have no access to the sea, Singapore has access to the sea, the main beaches are located on the island of Sentosa, but beach holidays in this country are not particularly attractive.
Portugal, New Zealand, Denmark, Sweden, Ireland, Greece, Poland	Average indicators of tourism development among top countries. Each country has its own uniqueness and how it differs from others	All countries have access to the sea, most of the coastal tourism depends on Portugal and Greece, New Zealand. Coastal tourism in Poland, Denmark and Ireland is widespread primarily among domestic tourists
Netherlands, Canada, Republic of Korea	Average indicators of tourism development among top countries, attractive due to multiculturalism, high level of globalization and level of socio-economic development	Coastal tourism plays a secondary role, in the Netherlands, Canada due to the climate, in the Republic of Korea is primarily aimed at domestic tourists

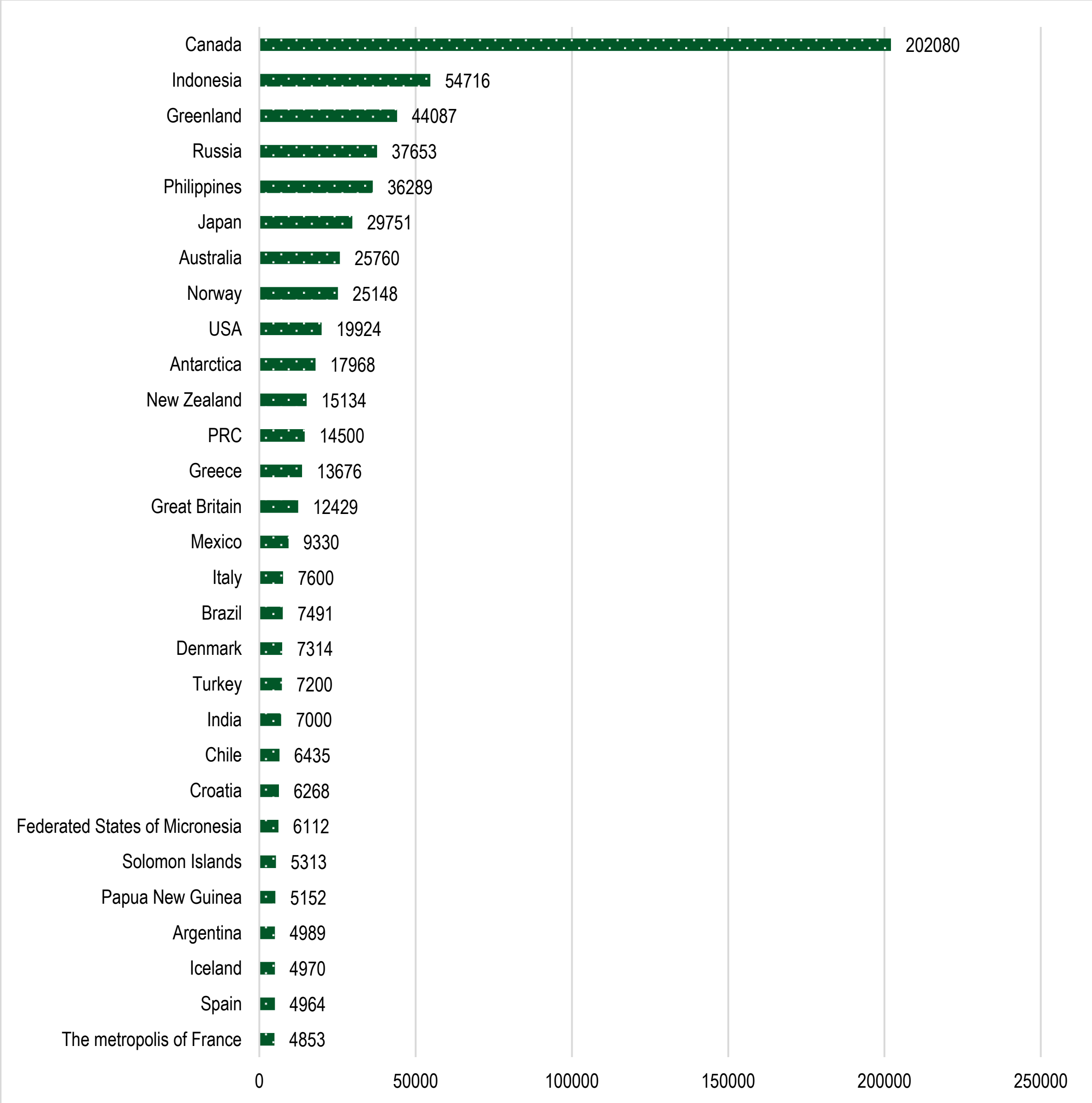
Source: generalized by the authors on the basis of cluster analysis.

2.2.3. The Main Indicators of Tourism Development per 1 Km of Coastline and Their Correlation

The coastline of all countries is 1162.3 million km according to The World Factbook. The longest coastline belongs to Canada – 202080 km, thanks to which the country has developed shipping, fisheries, mining, alternative energy, but due to geographical location and climate, coastal tourism in Canada is not very popular. In second place along the length of the coastline is Indonesia – 54,716 km. Indonesia is an island nation, with the largest islands being New Guinea, Kalimantan, Sumatra, Sulawesi and Java. The country also has a large number of rocks and coral islands. Indonesia is located between the Pacific Ocean in the northeast and the Indian Ocean in the west.

The country's borders are mostly maritime, the length of the land border is only 2830 km (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Ranking of countries in the world by the length of the coastline, km



Source: generalized by the authors according to The World Factbook.

In third place along the coastline is Greenland – 44087 km. It is the largest island on the planet, an autonomous constituent country within the Kingdom of Denmark. This country is located between the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans, east of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago. Beach tourism is not developing there due to the peculiarities of the climate, as about 80% of the country's area is covered by the second largest on the planet and the only permanent ice sheet outside Antarctica.

Among European countries, the longest coastline in Greece is 13,676 km. Greek resorts are popular all over the world, coastal tourism is developing both on the mainland and on numerous islands. One of the most popular beaches is Zakynthos, Ionian, located on the island of Zakynthos, which can only be reached by boat. Also among the top beaches in Greece are Voidokilia, which is located in Messinia, is one of the most impressive beaches in Greece, the bay is covered with silky sand and has an unusually symmetrical shape; Koukounaries is the most famous beach on the island of Skiathos, with pine plantations and a silky 1,200-meter white beach; Myrtos is located on the island of Kefalonia, the most photographed of all the beaches of Greece; Kokkini (Red) - one of the most famous and beautiful beaches of Santorini, surrounded by red rocks; Elafonisi is a small island connected to the rest of Crete by a shallow reef that can be crossed when the sea is calm; Seychelles - is one of the most beautiful beaches in Ikaria, the beach is covered with marble pebbles, emerald water and large rocks; also popular beaches in Greece include Plaka, Prasonisi, Balos, Porto Katsiki, Vai.

The presence of a developed coastline in combination with favorable weather conditions is the main prerequisite for the effective development of coastal tourism. It is advisable to consider such relative indicators per 1 kilometer of coastline as International tourist arrivals, International tourism inbound receipts, Tourism and Travel industry GDP (Table 6).

Table 6. The main indicators of tourism development per 1 km of coastline, 2021

Countries	Travel and Tourism Development Index (Y)	International tourist arrivals, thousands (X_1)	International tourism inbound receipts (inbound US $, millions) ($X_2$)	TandT industry GDP, US $ million (X_3)
Spain	5.2	3.8	3.72	5.68
United States	5.2	1.0	3.82	17.88
Japan	5.2	0.1	0.36	2.56
France	5.1	18.4	6.71	10.76
United Kingdom	5	3.2	1.52	2.87
Australia	5	0.1	1.00	0.81
Italy	4.9	3.3	2.60	7.44
Canada	4.9	0.0	0.06	0.08
China	4.9	4.5	0.98	10.89
Portugal	4.8	3.6	4.94	4.15
Korea	4.8	1.0	4.36	4.46
Ireland	4.5	7.6	1.31	1.13
United Arab Emirates	4.5	5.4	23.32	6.61
Iceland	4.5	0.1	0.13	0.13
Greece	4.5	0.5	0.36	0.43
New Zealand	4.5	0.2	0.42	0.41
Cyprus	4.4	1.0	1.02	0.42

Source: compiled by the authors for (The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report, 2021; UNWTO; World Bank, 2021).

For the analysis, those countries were taken that have a large coastline and a favorable climate for a beach holiday, while the Travel and Tourism Development Index values are quite high. France has the highest value of International tourist arrivals per 1 km of the coastline – 18.4 thousand people, in second place is Ireland - 7.6 thousand people, in third place - the United Arab Emirates – 5.4 thousand people. Among European countries, after France, Spain occupies the second place – 3.8 thousand people, the third – Portugal (3.6 thousand people).

As for Greece, which has the longest coastline in Europe, there are 0.5 thousand people per 1 kilometer. International tourism inbound receipts is the largest in the UAE – 23.32 million dollars. US and France – 6.71 million dollars. USA. Among European countries, this figure is also high in Portugal ($ 4.94 million) and Spain ($ 3.72 million). Tourism and Travel industry GDP per 1 km of coastline is the highest in the United States – 17.88 million dollars. USA, China – 10.89 million dollars. USA, France – 10.76 million dollars. USA. When calculating these indicators, it is necessary to take into account the fact that not all tourists are interested in the coastline and beach holidays, but in most cases, even those tourists who are indifferent to the beaches, visit them as a bonus to the main destination.

Multiple regression was used to determine the relationship between the Travel and Tourism Development Index and factor indicators per 1 kilometer of coastline, such as International tourist arrivals, International tourism inbound receipts, Tourism and Travel industry GDP. The analysis revealed that there is a moderate relationship between performance and factor traits, as evidenced by a correlation coefficient of R = 0.621. Regarding paired correlation coefficients, the influence of each of the factors is different:

$Rx_1 = 0,167$;

$Rx_2 = -0,12$;

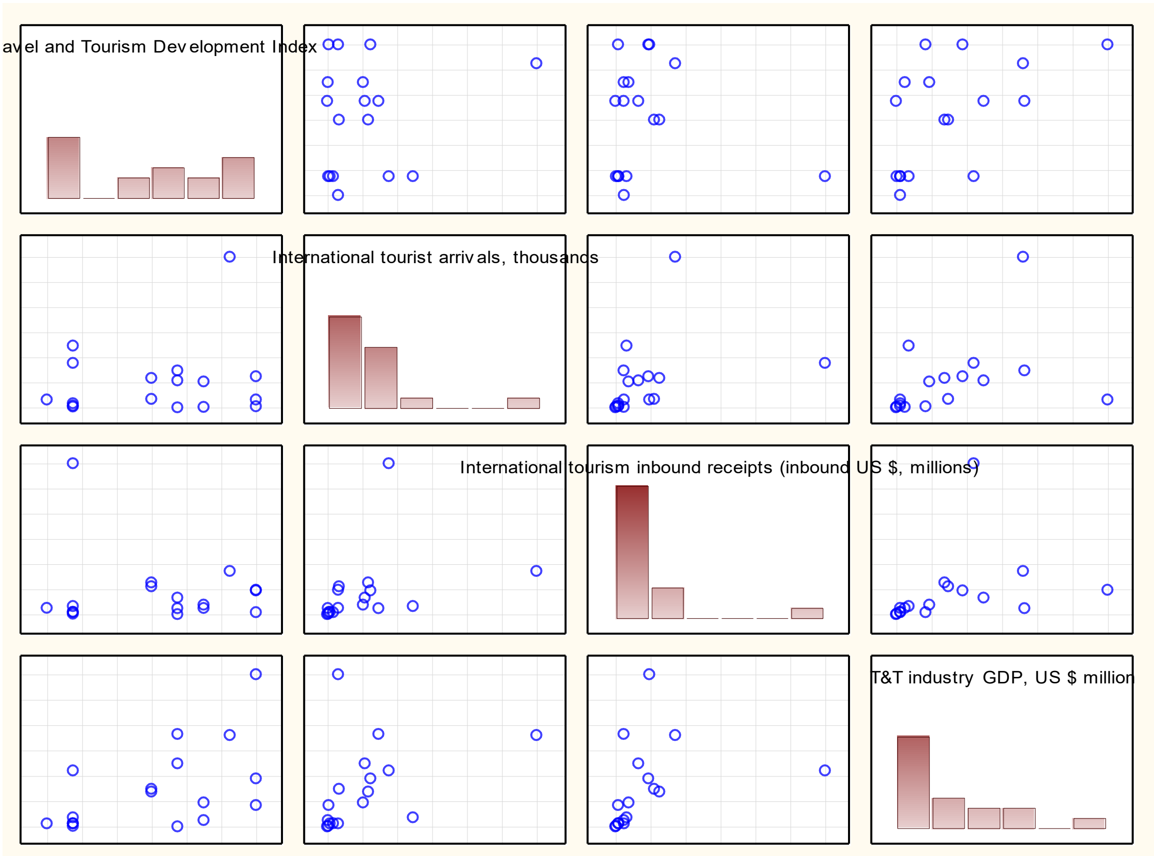
$Rx_3 = 0,539$.

Thus, the closest link is between the Travel and Tourism Development Index and the third factor, the TandT industry GDP per 1 kilometer coastline. With the first factor - International tourist arrivals per 1 kilometer coastline, the connection is weak. With the second factor of International tourism inbound receipts per 1 kilometer coastline, the connection is weak and inverse, as indicated by the minus sign. It is worth noting that high prices for holidays reduce the competitiveness of resorts, and therefore negatively reflected in the Travel and Tourism Development Index. Figure 9 shows the paired relationships between the studied traits.

As a result of the analysis, a regression equation was constructed, which can be used to predict the value of the Travel and Tourism Development Index on the basis of data on the factor features that determine the result. The regression equation has the form:

$$Y = 4{,}705 + 0{,}0341X_1 - 0{,}333X_2 + 0{,}631X_3 \qquad 2.1$$

Figure 9. Matrix interpretation of pairwise dependences between the studied features of the effectiveness of coastal tourism development in the leading countries of the world.



Source: builit by the authors.

2.2.4. The Spain Coastal Tourism Potential

Considering coastal tourism in European countries, it should be noted that Italy is the EU country with the most accommodation capacity in coastal areas with 916,000 rooms, followed by Spain (67,000), Greece (585,000), France (495,000) and Croatia (345,000). From the coastal countries, the ones with the least sum are Estonia (13200 thousand), Lithuania (9900 thousand), Finland (9400 thousand), Slovenia (9100 thousand) and finally Latvia with 8500 thousand rooms. Cyprus presents the highest average number of coastal rooms per NUTS3 (76000 coastal rooms per NUTS3). the entireisland being considered one unique region. Together with Bulgaria (almost 53000), Croatia (49000) and Romania (46000) are the countries with the highest averages. The lower averages are found in Estonia (4100), Netherlands (4000) and Finland (1500 coastal rooms per NUTS3).

Spain's coastal tourism industry deserves special attention. This country ranks first along with Japan and the United States in the Travel and Tourism Development Index, along the length of the coastline, Spain ranks fourth in Europe after Greece, Italy, France. In Spain, there are 17 coastal areas: Costa Brava; Costa del Maresme; Costa del Garraf; Costa Dorada; Costa del Assar; Costa de Valencia; Costa Blanca; Costa Calida; Costa de Almeria; Costa Tropical; Costa del Sol; Costa de la Luz; Costa Basque; Costa Cantabria; Costa Birdie; Rias Altas; Rias-Bahas (Figure 10).

Figure 10. The structure of the Spanish coastline

Source: Eurostat (SBS), DCF and Commission Services. European Commission (2021).

In total, there are more than 2,000 beaches in Spain. Each coastal area of Spain has its own uniqueness. In addition to beautiful beaches and nature, the regions of Spain combine history, centuries-old traditions, culture, architecture and art.

3. Discussion

Thus, in our study, we confirmed the hypothesis that the blue economy is a prospective research area. The blue economy has untapped potential that emphasizes the need for in-depth research in this area. We support the view that the blue economy is an important element of the sustainable development concept. However, we believe that its development goes far beyond this concept. It is expedient to consider the Blue Economy from the point of view of the classical economy, as well as a separate scientific field, covering shipping, fisheries, maritime tourism (beach and cruise), transport, sea transportation, logistics, alternative energy using water power. Considering the point of view of scholars on the important role of public administration in the blue economy, we agree with this thesis and consider that one of the main areas of government regulation is investment support for this area development. At the same time, it is important to grant funding for priority development areas in the sectoral context, as well as research projects.

Scholars' views on the important role of coastal tourism as a component of the blue economy have been developed. Methodological approaches to assessing the tourism sector, its potential and the sea or ocean coast role for this industry have been further developed. Methods of cluster and correlation-regression analysis were used to form strategies for the development of coastal tourism for each countries group. The important role of Spain in the development of coastal tourism and its potential have been identified.

Conclusions and Implications

The blue economy is an important area of modern research aimed at studying the resources and potential of the seas and oceans in the livelihood and development of socio-economic systems. The blue economy development is based on classical economic laws, as well as on specific laws that are characteristic only of the blue economy research field. The blue economy unites all areas of management related to the active use of water resources, including shipping, fisheries, maritime tourism (beach and cruise), transport, maritime transport, logistics, alternative energy using water capacity, etc.

The blue economy development is closely linked to the sustainable development concept, the relevance of which is growing every year due to increasing anthropogenic pressure. The main prerogative for the development of this area is the harmonization of relations between the economy, society and nature. That is, the use of resources from the world's oceans must be economical and efficient without endangering future generations.

An important place in the development of the Blue Economy is occupied by coastal tourism. To determine its role in the tourism industry, The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index was analyzed. The first place in the ranking of the level of The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index is occupied by Japan with the indicator, in second place is the United States, followed by France, Germany, Spain, and in 2019 these countries had the highest values.

Based on the analysis of indicators: Travel and Tourism Development Index, International tourist arrivals, International tourism inbound receipts, tourism and travel industry GDP, tourism and travel industry share of GDP, tourism and travel industry share of Employment, Domestic tourism and travel spending, built a cluster model, as well as the strategic vectors of development of leading countries in the field of coastal tourism.

The main indicators of tourism development per 1 km of coastline have been analyzed. Multiple regression was used to determine the relationship between the Travel and Tourism Development Index and factor indicators per 1 kilometer of coastline, such as International tourist arrivals, International tourism inbound receipts, Tourism and Travel industry GDP.

Analyzing the potential of the coastline globally, it was found that the longest coastline belongs to Canada - 202080 km, the country has developed shipping, fisheries, mining, alternative energy, but coastal tourism in Canada is not popular due to climate. In second place along the length of the coastline is Indonesia - 54,716 km. This country is one of the most attractive in the world for coastal holidays.

Spain has significant potential for the development of coastal tourism. It has 17 coastal areas and more than 2,000 beaches. For the effective development of coastal tourism in Spain, first of all it is necessary to pay attention to the development of tourist infrastructure, take into account environmental trends in tourism and consumption, expand the target audience, develop an effective marketing strategy at the level of individual tourism businesses and the coastal region. countries as a whole.

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Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

The authors contributed equally to this work.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Ecotourism and Outdoor Recreation Development in Harego and Bededo Urban Fringe Protected Areas, Ethiopia: Exploring Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

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Abstract: Ecotourism, outdoor recreation, and protected areas are interlinked and thus, most of the ecotourism and outdoor recreational activities are conducted in protected areas. The study's primary purpose is to describe the opportunities and challenges and pinpoint possible strategies for outdoor recreation and ecotourism development in the urban fringe protected areas of Harego and Bededo protected areas, Ethiopia. The primary data was collected through a qualitative approach, interviews with purposely selected experts and personal observation. From the findings, several opportunities were identified including the availability of other tourist attractions around Harego and Bededo, the geographical position of the sites, the coming newly constructed railway, and the presence of the Kombolcha integrated industrial park. Even though opportunities exist some challenges were also identified. These challenges include the presence of unwanted trash in the natural protected areas, the encroachments of the local community on the protected areas, the planting of non-indigenous trees, unplanned management of protected areas of Harego and Bededo, landslides, and erosion problems. Finally, possible strategies were identified and presented for developing ecotourism and outdoor recreation in the study area.

Keywords: ecotourism; outdoor recreation; urban fringe; protected area.

JEL Classification: Z32; Q23; L83; R11.

Introduction

The Ecotourism Society (ES) defines ecotourism as responsible travel to natural areas that promotes conservation and improves local people's well-being (Almeida-Gomes *et al.* 2022). Ecotourism, outdoor recreation, and protected areas are interlinked and thus, most of the ecotourism and outdoor recreational activities are conducted in protected areas (Nigatu and Tegegne 2021). As one form of nature-based tourism, ecotourism, and outdoor recreation are fast-growing industries (Simon *et al.* 2007). By its nature, ecotourism relies on natural resources as well as environmental education, and conservation of local culture and natural environment, ensuring economic benefit for the local and sustainable development of the areas (Mondino *et al.* 2019).

The broadest definition of outdoor recreation is all recreational activities undertaken for pleasure that generally involve intentional physical exertion and occur in nature-based environments outdoors (Highfill and Smith-Nelson 2018). Using natural landscapes as a recreational centre has increased in the recent decade, and it is expected to continue to increase. In the 21st century of cities and urbanization, the extension of city s and cities brings multifaceted impacts not only on biodiversity management but also on the social, political, and economic life of the people (Hornsten 2000); people are less connected to natural areas. Population growth and regional shifts in demographics and expansion, as well as socioeconomic trends, affect who engages in outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism (Winter *et al.* 2020). Winter *et al.* (2020) recognize the positive benefits of outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism/ecotourism. Visiting natural settings and being outdoors is widely recognized for improving human health and well-being, connecting people with their natural and cultural heritage, generating revenues for conservation, contributing to local economies, fostering local or indigenous identity, and developing a conservation consciousness. Outdoor recreation and ecotourism development are necessary around the protected area. Due to this reason, tremendous growth has been shown in urban fringe areas to regain a connection with nature and with wild landscapes and forested areas to participate in different outdoor recreation and ecotourism activities (Nigatu and Tegegne 2021). Eventually, the reasons include physical exercise, release from city life, fresh air, getting closer to nature, enjoyment of the scenery, strenuous hiking into wild mountainous areas, etc. While for most people it is probably a combination of reasons (Bell 2008).

Although some research has been conducted regarding protected areas' role in the conservation of biodiversity, ecotourism development potential, ecological preservation, biodiversity threats, and ecotourism as a sustainable livelihood option in Ethiopia (Asmamaw and Verma 2013; Chane and Yohannes 2014; Deribew *et al.* 2022; Eshetu 2014; Fetene *et al.* 2012; Mellaku *et al.* 2022), still the practice of using protected areas for ecotourism and outdoor recreation development is very limited and under-researched. Local communities' participation and willingness to engage in protected area management is also another key factor in the long-term conservation of natural resources and ecotourism development (Asmamaw and Verma 2013, Nigatu 2017). In this regard, previous studies in the area showed that local communities have a positive attitude towards ecotourism and outdoor recreation development (Nigatu and Tegegne 2021). More specifically, Dessie, the present study area is situated at the foot of a mountain, which makes it an ideal location for outdoor recreation and ecotourism. On the other hand, population and rural-to-city migration is too high in the surrounding city s (Dessie, Kobolecha, and other small city s like Haik and Sulela), and urban expansion is increasing due to overpopulation. Hence, the people living in the city s and visitors want fresh air from the surrounding protected areas to escape urban traffic. Therefore, the present study addressed ecotourism and outdoor recreation development opportunities, challenges, and possible development strategies in Bededo and Harego urban fringe protected areas.

The study has significance for the local community, governmental and non-governmental organizations in different ways. For instance, the findings would help to utilize as input for the administrators, culture, and tourism offices, NGOs, and volunteers concerned with tourism development, promote the site for visitors and conservationists, and help to develop a tourism and recreational management plan ecotourism and outdoor recreation development in the sites. Moreover, the study can contribute to the existing literature knowledge on ecotourism and outdoor recreation development agendas.

The study addressed the following objectives.

- To explore the existing opportunities in Harego and Bededo protected areas for ecotourism and outdoor recreational development.
- To assess the threats to Harego and Bededo urban fringe protected areas
- To pinpoint the possible ways and planning strategies for urban fringe protected areas of Harego and Bedebo to become ecotourism and outdoor recreational areas.

1. Literature Review

Many countries, institutions and organizations have adopted the definition of protected area given by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and its categorization (Kabil *et al.* 2022; Williamson 2006). According to IUCN, a protected area is a clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated, and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values (Lausche 2011). IUCN also classifies protected areas ranging from strict nature reserves, wilderness area, national park, natural monument or feature, habitat/species management area, protected landscape/seascape to protected areas with sustainable use of natural resources (Miller *et al.* 2023). Many protected areas such as national parks, wilderness area, nature reserves and protected landscapes received high level of recreational use predominantly areas near the large human population. Protected areas also play a dual role of conserving natural resources while providing access for outdoor recreation that are enjoyed by millions of people worldwide (Larson 2019; Monz *et al.* 2020). It has been promoted for its environmental conservation benefits, opportunities for outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism, and associated economic opportunities (Miller *et al.* 2023). For instance, the information posted by American outdoor industry association (2017) noted that outdoor recreation activities around protected areas are very prominent and the visits are recently estimated to account about 8 billion resulting $ 600 billion visitor spending annually at global level. As literature witnessed, the reason behind is that nature-based recreation is vital for human health and for building connections with nature that can help to foster pro-environmental behaviors. Protected areas can promote sustainable development of local communities and help alleviate poverty, primarily through economic opportunities provided by recreation and ecotourism. In the same manner, outdoor recreation fosters connections with nature and sense of place and has been linked to increased pro-environmental behaviors, improve ecological conditions where visitors are engaged in stewardship experiences and support for conservation organizations (Larson 2019; Winter *et al.* 2020).

Protected areas are biodiversity conservation centers and major tourism assets for a nation, particularly for developing countries like Ethiopia through providing sustainable benefit to the local community while supporting for maintenance and rehabilitation of the protected areas themselves (Fetene *et al.* 2012). As a result, Ethiopia has huge potentials for ecotourism development with more than 139 protected areas, cover about 17.01% of the country‘s land area (UNEP-WCMC, 2023). The researchers tried to summarize the categories and figures of protected area in Ethiopia with the following table.

Table 1. The categories of protected area of IUCN and Ethiopia

IUCN Protected area categories’		Ethiopian protected area categories’		Number
Ia	Strict Nature Reserve	NA		
Ib	Wilderness Area	Wildlife reserve		6
II	National Park	National Park		24
III	Natural Monument or Feature	NA		
IV	Habitat/Species Management Area	Wildlife sanctuary		6
		Open hunting area		3
		Controlled hunting area		39
V	Protected Landscape/ Seascape	National forest priority area		57
VI	Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	International designation	UNESCO-MAB biosphere reserve	3
			world heritage sites	1

Source: UNEP-WCMC (2023).

There are numerous opportunities for ecotourism in protected areas (Rana *et al.* 2010) and now a day, it becomes the most interesting topic to the nature lover and policy maker throughout the world due to various reasons; economic benefits (Azmaiparashvili 2017; Fetene *et al.* 2012; Kabil *et al.* 2022), livelihood option (Eshetu 2014), maintaining sustainability (Saidmamatov *et al.* 2020; Trisic *et al.* 2023), biodiversity conservation (Bekele *et al.* 2021; Asmamaw and Verma 2013; Bell *et al.* 2007) and helps to re-examine different strategies for the development of specific forms of tourism (Thao and Bakucz 2022). Even though many organizations and scholars tried to define ecotourism in different ways, Baromey (2019), summarized as the travel to fragile and pristine areas, usually protected, with the objective of causing low impact and at a low scale. Relatively, it is a new concept in tourism, which was originally sparked off by the idea of making harmonious co-existence with nature, as people are more and more looking to connect with nature while minimizing their impact on the environment. As a form of nature-based tourism, it is a conservation tool heavily connected to protected areas that support and raising awareness of the many important values of protected areas including ecological, cultural, sacred, spiritual, aesthetic, recreational and economic values (Asmamaw and Verma 2013; Miller *et al.* 2023).

As a conservation and economic development advocacy, ecotourism in developing countries particularly in Africa is a major industry. For instance, Kenya and Tanzania derived more than 80 % of their GDP from ecotourism (Fetene *et al.* 2012). The spectrum of ecotourism passes nature-based, natural resources conservation, educational, economic, sociocultural well-being, and sustainable development components (Deribew *et al.* 2022). The presence of natural resources found to be a key contribution to ecotourism development in both high and low-income countries. In this regard, Ethiopia is also a country endowed with the vast array of ecotourism resources (protected areas, parks, natural bridge, dense forests, cave, waterfalls, endemic birds, mammals, and hot springs associated historical resources) and has indispensable opportunities to get its share from the industry (Ashefo, 2018; Bekele *et al.* 2021; Deribew *et al.* 2022).

The other important activity associated with protected areas is outdoor recreation (Bell *et al.* 2007). Outdoor recreation refers to activities that people undertake out of doors in places where they can access nature (Bell *et al.* 2007) and describes what we do, why we do it, and what we gain from our nature tourism experiences (Miller *et al.* 2023). It provides opportunities to engage in recreational activities ranging from passive activates to active doings including learning about natural systems and develop attachments to places that contribute to positive spillover effects (Triši´c 2023). More importantly, it enables people to regain lost energy and to derive a sense of joy, refreshment, and satisfaction which can heal physical and mental fatigue and strain (Winter *et al.* 2020). Outdoor recreation is mostly performed in protected areas, while the significance of performing it around urban fringe areas is two folds. Urban Fringe, a landscape interface between city and country or an area that situates between urban and rural dynamic and swiftly changing area (Tali and Nusrath 2014), is an ideal place for outdoor recreation since the urban people want to escape from urban hassle and reconnect with nature. Because of its complex nature of explaining outdoor recreation practice, it has diverse activities to be involved. For instance, Henley Centre Head light Vision (2005) identified recreational activities including; being outdoor (like watching wildlife and picnicking), creative activities (like art and photographic work), health or relaxation (like jogging), utility journey (like safe routs to school), informal game or play (like sledging), high adrenaline non-competitive activity (like canoeing and mountain biking), commercially run activities (like pigeon racing and shooting), studying the environment (like geological surveys and field studies), educational activities (like school trips and expeditions), conservation volunteering (like picking up litter), and sustainable journey to the outdoor (like walking and cycling).

Despite the enormous importance of protected areas and ecotourism as an economic activity, the negative impact that tourism may have on these areas must not be overlooked (Kabil *et al.* 2022). Historically, ecotourism and recreation mostly have been concentrated in only some parts of protected areas, but expanding and changing due to increasing demand, and new technologies that increase access to and within protected areas (Monz *et al.* 2020). Consequently, many ecotourism destinations faced major challenges for ecotourism development including the clash between ecotourism development and conservation practices, the conventional and unsustainable practices of tourism (Hakim 2017), impact on local infrastructure and facilities, create competition for scarce resources, unwelcome marketing of indigenous products and traditions, influx of nonlocal workers, business owners, and amenity migrants (Winter *et al.* 2020), habitat alteration, and noise (Miller *et al.* 2017). Our lands, rivers, and seas are being impacted by dramatic changes which affect the management of resources and the development of tourism. In different parts of Ethiopia, unsustainable tourism business practices create pressure on the natural resources. For example, Deribew *et al.* (2022) notified that the northeastern Ethiopia particularly Raya areas subsistence agriculture put pressure on the natural resources. Inadequate sustainable financing and other environmental pressures associated with population growth (Aseres and Sira, 2021), undefined demarcation of sanctuaries, illegal killing of wildlife, pouching, human wildlife conflict, unsustainable use of natural resources and exploitation (Chane and Yohannes 2014; Fentaw and Jatni 2017) were among the threats of protected areas in Ethiopia.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Description of the Study Area

The study was conducted in South Wollo Zone, Amhara Regional State. South Wollo Zone is one of the Zones found in Amhara region and endowed with different historical, cultural, and natural attractions which make the tourists entertained, amazed and create breath taking feeling. To list some of the tourism resources of the zone; Dessie Museum, Niguse Mikael complex in Dessie, battle field and historic site of Mekedela Amba, Boru Meda historic site, historic site of Yisma Niguse, Jema Neguse Mosque, Tedibabe Mariyam and its environs, Tenta St.

Mikael church, Gishen Debre Kirebe Monastery, Lake Aredibo and Haik, Borena Sayint Worhimeno National park, Wolqa Abay Tasabi Park, Yegof mountain, Harego and bededo protected forests and Tossa Mountain and many other unexploded and untapped tourism resources are found (south Wollo culture and tourism department, 2019). Our study was focused on one of the near protected areas of Bededo and Harego. The two sites are found near Dessie city. Harego is found in between Dessie and Kombolecha city in the Southeast direction of Dessie within 20 kilometers. Bededo is also found in the north direction of Dessie and South direction of Haik and Sulula town. The protected forests covered the mountainous areas surrounding Dessie and nearby small towns of Sulula, Bededo, Qorke and Jeme.

2.2 Study Design

The objective of this study was assessment of opportunities, challenges, and prospects of Bededo and Harego protected forests for ecotourism and outdoor recreation. To address the main objective of this study the researchers followed a qualitative research approach. Qualitative data allows the researchers to gain detailed perspectives from the experts and communities involved in ecotourism and outdoor recreation. By using qualitative data collection tools, the researchers are able to identify the specific opportunities and challenges that arise within the local context of Harego and Bededo Urban Fringe Protected Areas. Qualitative data gives the researchers valuable insights into emerging trends and prospects of ecotourism and outdoor recreation development in the study area. The researchers engaged with stakeholders through qualitative methods to uncover innovative ideas, identify potential opportunities, and assess the feasibility of new initiatives. This information informs policy and decision-making processes related to sustainable development and conservation efforts in the areas (Saunders *et al.* 2007).

2.3 Data Type and Data Collection Techniques

For this study the researchers used both secondary and primary data. The secondary sources of data were collected from published and unpublished sources. Literatures that were found in the form of magazines and broachers from the Zonal and Woreda level were also incorporated. On the other hand, primary data was collected through key informants' interviews and observation.

Interview: To extract basic and important data from different experts, researchers conducted interviews. Semi structured interview questions were prepared, and interview conducted with key informants because semi structured interview is semi-structured explanatory and descriptive approach. It was conducted with 26 experts from South Wollo Zone culture and tourism department experts, Zone agriculture and environment conservation experts, Qalu Woreda culture and tourism office experts, Amhara Forest and Wildlife enterprise Kombolcha branch office experts, Tehuledere Woreda culture and tourism officers, Tehuledere woreda agriculture and environment conservation officers, rural Kebele leaders and selected local administrators, farmer who have an adjust land area with the protected areas, and Dessie city culture and tourism officer in order to understand the public use of the protected areas and to understand their view towards the management and conservation as well as the future development of the sites as an ecotourism and outdoor recreation site. Threats and opportunities and the type of ecotourism and outdoor activities more suitable in the study sites were also identified.

Observation: The researchers took observation of the sites to identify and triangulate the opportunities, threats and more importantly to suggest possible ecotourism and outdoor recreation developmental strategies with the help of checklists, photographically and note taking. By using observation as a major data collection tool, the researchers gained first-hand understanding of the natural environment, residents, wildlife and human interaction, and the challenges that existed.

2.4 Sampling Techniques

Sampling is a valid alternative when studying the population due to time constraint and impracticability (Saunders *et al.* 2007) in any study. For the effectiveness of this study the researchers select samples from the sample frame. Experts, kebele leaders and farmers who have adjacent land with the protected areas were purposefully selected considering their expertise, knowledge, and concern about the issue under investigated. Thus, a purposive sampling technique was applied to study this research. Using purposive sampling technique for this study allowed the researchers to deliberately select participants who possess the specific knowledge, expertise, or experience relevant to the study. In the case of ecotourism and outdoor recreation development, the researchers incorporated residents, government officials, experts in agriculture office to gather information from key informants who can provide in-depth and meaningful insights. For this study expert's knowledge and local experiences are greatly utilized. Therefore, purposive sampling approach allowed researchers to access participants who possess expert knowledge or information about the subject matter. This can also support the researchers to gain insights into specific aspects of ecotourism and outdoor recreation development and the experts provided in-depth explanations, share best practices, and offer recommendations based on their expertise, which enhanced the quality and relevance of the study findings. The researcher selected 26 samples from the kebele leaders, experts, and farmers for semi-structured interview purpose.

3. Research Results and Discussion

3.1 Opportunities for Ecotourism and Outdoor Recreation Development

The pursuit of ecotourism and outdoor recreation as catalysts for regional development has been invigorated by a confluence of factors in the Harego and Bededo protected areas. Situated in proximity to Dessie City, Kombolcha City, and Haik Town, these areas are poised to capitalize on their unique attributes, fostering sustainable growth and cultural enrichment. In this lens the researchers discuss the existing opportunities that shape the potential of ecotourism and outdoor recreation in this domain in Harego and Bededo protected areas.

- **The presence of Wollo University and other higher educational institutions nearby:** The presence of higher education in and around the tourism sites benefit a lot and is taken as opportunity for the development of the sites. In this regard, the presence of Wollo University was a great opportunity to develop ecotourism and outdoor recreation in Bededo and Harego protected areas. Different departments of the university primary tourism and hotel management, forestry, natural resources management, geography and environmental studies conduct research and engaged in community outreach programs. Besides Wollo University, Dessie W/ro Sehen Poly technical college, Kombolcha Poly technical college and Haik Poly technical colleges participate in the same issue and are taken as the opportunities to develop ecotourism and outdoor recreation in Harego and Bededo protected areas.
- **Availability of other tourist attractions around Harego and Bededo**: By its nature, tourism is the amalgamation of different tourism resources. Therefore, the presence of other tourism resources around Harego and Bededo protected landscape are significance for the development of ecotourism and outdoor recreation. These resources are found in Dessie, Kombolcha and Haik areas. In Dessie city a lot of tourism resources are found. These are Mereho historic palace, Dessie Museum, Ayteyf and its complex historical palaces, Wollo Bahil Amba and many other cultural and natural beauties. In addition, Haik town and its surrounding areas with a remarkable Logo Lake are also reflected as the best opportunity for the development of ecotourism and outdoor recreation in the study area. These resources are helpful to add value and enhance tourist experiences through eco-cultural tourism practices.
- **Government attentions for the development of tourism in the country:** In the last ten years; the government of Ethiopia has been giving due attention for the development of tourism and worked towards making tourism as one of the primary economic sectors. In the second Growth and Transformation Plan, the government of Ethiopia incorporates tourism as one form of wind of change and encourages tourism related investments. This special consideration of tourism as a driving force of Ethiopian economy directly or indirectly put positive impact on the present study area. In this regard, the government enabling policies and strategies focusing on developing community-based ecotourism development is being strengthened and expanded in South Wollo Zone specifically in Logo Lake. Logo Lake is the fourth site which is going to be developed as a community-based ecotourism site by the government of Ethiopia under 'Dining for Ethiopia' project next to Friendship Park, Koisha and Gorgora. This would create an enabling situation to develop Harego and Bededo protected areas as ecotourism and outdoor recreation hubs.
- **The geographic position of the sites:** Harego and Bededo protected areas are found in nearby Dessie City, Kombolcha city and Haik town. The sites are very suitable for recreational purposes for the urban community because of its proximity to the city and city communities.
- **The availability of land and air transport**: Relatively these sites are found near Dessie- Kombolcha airport and accessible for visitors. The land transportation to reach the sites is relatively very good because these two sites are crossed by asphalt road from Addis Ababa to Woldiya and Mekelle. This is also a blessing for these sites for the future development of ecotourism and outdoor recreation.
- **The coming of newly constructed railway:** The railway connects the capital with the northern extension of Woldia, Mekele, Kombolcha and Awash Hara Gebeya. This railway cross Kombolcha city near the Harego protected landscape. This railway has a clear strategic significance by connecting the North Ethiopia with Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway and with Ethiopian lifeline port of Djibouti. This in turn facilitates the travellers to visit the protected landscapes within the domain. This is not the only blessing; another blessing is after passing a minor railway station it reached the third major railway station in Kombolcha city with two major platforms.

- **The Presence of Amhara Regional State Forest Enterprise development office in Kombolcha:** In Ethiopia forestry plays in the setting of sustainable and green development path. To support the forest sector sustainability, regional governments establish and operate regional and local forest enterprise development office. Amhara Regional State also opened an office in Kombolcha to run such tasks in Eastern Amhara. This office supports the development and management of forest resources in the region in general and in East Amhara in particular. Therefore, the presence of the office in Kombolcha city is one of the best opportunities for the development and management of forests for ecotourism and outdoor recreational purposes in a sustainable manner.
- **The presence of Kombolcha integrated industrial park:** It is known that; Kombolcha industrial park is one of Ethiopian big project in the ways of its industrial transformation. The presence of this industrial park gives a good opportunity for the development of ecotourism and outdoor recreation in Harego protected area because many foreigners are residing in the city and demand to refresh their mind in the nearby recreational centre.
- **The country image as a developing country and the way of its transformation:** After the end of growth and transformation plan I; Ethiopia transformed and working with growth and transformation plan (GTPII) starting from 2015/16-2019/20. In this transformation plan, the Ethiopian government working towards realizing Ethiopia as 'low middle income country by 2025. This national vision gives power for the development of ecotourism and outdoor recreation in the protected areas.

3.2 Threats

The rise of difficulties inside the calm expanse of naturally protected areas threatens to destabilize the delicate balance between conservation and human activities. The Harego and Bededo protected area emerges as a focal point in the heart of these landscapes, exemplifying the complicated interplay between environmental preservation and human impact. In this study, the researchers identify and examine the primary obstacles to outdoor recreation and ecotourism growth in the Herego and Bededo urban fringe protected areas.

The presence of unwanted trash in the natural protected areas: Especially this challenge was seen in Harego protected area. Due to the presence of road that cross Harego protected area; many unwanted trashes were dumped in the left and right sides of the road from Dessie and Kombolcha city business operators (majorly Juice houses and vegetable and fruit stores) or even individual household trash.

The encroachments of the local community to the protected areas: - These two areas encountered the threat of urban expansion and encroachments from different direction. One of our informants described the problem.

> 'I think protected areas are designed for the conservation of nature by benefiting the local…however here in our locality, the population is growing in alarming rate… in order to accommodate the needs of the growing population; we observe that there is an expansion of illegal houses construction at the edge of the forests'.

Planting of non-indigenous trees: - In the current time; planting of non-indigenous trees is very common especially Eucalyptus tree because of its fast growth, easily establishment and maximum yields throughout Ethiopia. But this tree has a negative consequence and conquers the growth of indigenous trees of Ethiopia.

Unplanned management of protected landscapes of Harego and Bededo: Effective and efficient planning is the key issue to success in providing ecotourism and outdoor recreational opportunities. Planning is the process which involves setting wider goals and objectives as well as establishing standards and criteria to achieve them. However, in Harego and Bededo protected areas; there is no planning strategy to conserve, manage and to balance the demand and supply for ecotourism and outdoor recreation activities.

Land slide and erosion problem: Dessie City and its surrounding areas are susceptible to landslide problem, and this is severe around Harego protected area, surrounding Dessie. This problem would be a great threat for the development of ecotourism and outdoor recreation in the study area. Due to the presence of Borkena river which crosses Harego conserved landscape a very large erosion occurs from the high place of Harego to the lower valley of Borkena river.

There are some undesirable activities in the sites: In our observation, some undesirable activities are seen in the forest areas especially in Bededo. The first unethical and unwanted threats was few young men's and women take a trip and chew 'Khat' and take substances within the forest. These might be a great headache in the future for the management as well as exacerbate the problem in to organized substance abuse, sexual practice as well as other immoral activities.

3.3 Possible Ways and Strategies for Ecotourism and Outdoor Recreational Areas

The merging of nature and human interaction poses complicated difficulties and opportunities in the field of ecotourism and outdoor recreational areas. This research identifies potential techniques and mechanisms for developing outdoor leisure and ecotourism in special urban periphery protected zones. The practical answers and methods developed by the research participants were referred to as 'grassroot level solutions.' The strategies are discussed and summarized by researchers. These strategies encompass zoning approaches, conservation management plans, awareness creation, marketing and promotion, resource management, continuous monitoring, infrastructure development, safety measures, and community engagement. Each strategy encapsulates a distinct facet of the effort to create a harmonious coexistence between thriving ecosystems and the recreational pursuits of both local communities and wider audiences.

Zoning of the protected forest in different development zones: Zoning is one of the major strategies for the management of the forest as well as for the development of ecotourism and outdoor recreation in the natural forests. Conceptually zoning is allocating different areas of the forest for different activities and uses. In our case, the protected areas of Harego and Bededo were not divided for different uses. Therefore, if the concerned stakeholders are committed for the development of ecotourism and outdoor recreation in these areas, it has to be alienated for different sections/purpose with the consultation of the local communities, researchers, and forest expertise as well as tourism professionals.

Prepare conservation management plan for the sites: The observation and key informant interview illustrates that these protected landscapes have no management plan for their sustainability. Because of this, the sites are managed and conserved in traditional and unscientific ways. Conservation management plans have a significant value for the preparedness of the sites for ecotourism and outdoor recreation purposes. The respondents affirmed that without the conservation management plan the sites faced so many challenges such as ownership conflict, control as well as resources exploitation. Therefore, it is an urgent issue to culture, tourism and environment offices in collaboration with the concerned stakeholders to prepare a conservation management plan for the sites sustainability as well as for efficient operation of ecotourism and outdoor recreation.

Awareness creation program to the local: All the interviewees confirmed that; raising the awareness level of local communities about the pros and cons of ecotourism and outdoor recreational activities is the first and foremost steps of capacity building to fully enhance awareness of environmental conservation specially to protect trash damp. The awareness creation program must involve the local officials, local leaders, community residences, business owners and other stakeholders. One of our informants told that:

> 'For the development of ecotourism/outdoor recreation in these areas, it is a must to consult the local community and other stakeholders on tourism business operation, and nature conservationist. Skill based training must be also given for the officials, locals control of tourism business, management, and governance issues…'

Market and promote the destination for the local community and the wider audiences: Marketing and promotion is used as a significant tool for the conservation of nature and culture as well as for the development of tourism business in the market. Promotional works should be developed to market the resources for the locals as well as for larger audiences. The local communities and the urban dwellers (Dessie and Kombolcha) should be addressed with an effective and efficient marketing work in order to induce understanding of how much the areas are breath taking and attractive for outdoor recreation in their spare time. It is possible to address these portions of the community through leaflets, booklets, direct personal promotion, FAM trips, organized office group tour for familiarization, advertising through television, radio, and other electronic Medias. The larger audience should be also addressed through promotion, leaflets, booklets, public signs, website development, and inclusion of the sites in tourist map and tourist destination areas and many other promotional and marketing tools.

Management of resources, conservation: For the sustainable development of ecotourism and outdoor recreation in the study area, these efforts are crucial. To ensure sustainability, it is imperative to involve and empower local communities, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility towards natural resources. Most interview respondents expressed pride in their resources and wanted to showcase them.

The government, particularly the culture and tourism offices, recognizes the vital role of local communities as custodians and guardians of the site's natural resources. The interviewee, an office head, acknowledged the communities living in the adjacent areas as guardians of the resources. As a result, they are leveraging them to provide alternative livelihoods, such as tourism and sustainable agriculture. Communities understand the importance of resource conservation and have taken steps toward achieving it. This is done through community cooperation and indigenous knowledge development.

This foundation laid by the communities serves as a steppingstone for ecotourism and outdoor recreation. Product development plays a crucial role in this process, aligning with evolving resource interpretation. Effective interpretation of resources is necessary for optimizing ecotourism and outdoor recreation activities, ensuring visitors can fully appreciate and engage with the natural environment. The researchers recommend conducting environmental impact assessments, determining carrying capacity, and developing destination management plans before advancing ecotourism and outdoor recreation to higher levels. Furthermore, conserved forests should prioritize maintaining outdoor recreational activities for the wider community. This approach ensures that ecotourism and outdoor recreation benefits are accessible and enjoyed by a broad range of stakeholders. Overall, the integrated approach of resource management, conservation, and product development, supported by community involvement and appropriate planning, will contribute to the sustainable development of ecotourism and outdoor recreation in the study area.

Research and continuous monitoring and evaluation of the sites: During our discussions with interviewees, a significant amount of time was dedicated to research on resource inventory, and continuous monitoring and evaluation. This was done in Harego and Bededo protected areas. Thus, the researchers found that there are considerable challenges related to resource inventory, research on ecotourism business models, and monitoring and evaluation most participants believe the area was neglected and lacked proper attention.

Based on the participants' perspectives, the researcher has identified future strategies that can serve as recommendations for the relevant authorities. Firstly, it is imperative that researchers demonstrate their commitment to resource inventory and ecotourism development. Research efforts should concentrate on comprehensive resource inventories, effective management strategies, and business models with relevant policy implications.

The second strategy focuses on continuous monitoring and evaluation of sites. Given the fragility of these conserved forest landscapes and their slow recovery process, considerable labor and financial resources are required. Therefore, local and national governments must establish a robust monitoring and evaluation framework at the sites. This framework will ensure the sustainability of the sites and support the development of business operations. By addressing these recommendations, the concerned bodies can work towards overcoming the challenges identified. This will pave the way for effective resource management, successful ecotourism development, and long-term sustainability in the Harego and Bededo protected areas.

Preparing trial route, camping and other recreational facilities works: To promote Harego and Bededo protected areas for ecotourism and outdoor recreational activities it is crucial to establish trial routes, camping sites, and various development and management corridors. The planning, construction, and marking of forest landscape roads and trial routes should consider recreational needs and environmental values. During our interviews, one of our expert informants emphasized the importance of aligning the development of these routes, walking paths, and camping sites with ecological standards. This is because development strategies can negatively impact ecological processes through eco-tourists' footprints and outdoor activity participants.

Recreational facilities are a key requirement for eco-tourists and recreational participants in protected forests. These facilities should include walking routes, seating areas, picnic spots, way markers, information boards, signage, and viewing points, among others. This depends on the characteristics of the forests. However, during our research, researchers found that these facilities were lacking in the Harego and Bededo protected areas. This hindered the development of ecotourism and outdoor leisure activities. In the future, the fulfilment of these facilities will be crucial in determining the progress of ecotourism and outdoor recreation in these forests.

Based on our observations, walking in the forest appears to be the most suitable form of outdoor recreation and ecotourism activity. Therefore, walking paths/routes should be planned to maintain environmental values and optimize visitors' preferences through scientific planning and research. By incorporating these measures, the Harego and Bededo protected areas can enhance their appeal as destinations for ecotourism and outdoor recreational activities. This is while preserving their ecological integrity.

Ensuring safety and security in the forest: Natural and man-made hazards, as well as safety concerns, should be carefully considered and strategically managed. It is essential to identify and eliminate major hazards to create a safe environment for visitors. To enhance safety and security, various measures are necessary. Prohibition signs, warning signs, and other relevant safety and security measures should be installed throughout the site. These signs inform and guide visitors, helping them understand potential risks and adhere to safety guidelines. Furthermore, these measures also contribute to the overall conservation of the environment by promoting responsible behavior among visitors.

The safety and security system should address specific challenges and potential hazards in the forest. This may include provisions for protecting visitors from natural risks such as steep terrain, hazardous flora, and fauna, or adverse weather conditions. Additionally, the system should consider man-made hazards, such as potential conflicts with wildlife, crime prevention, and emergency response protocols. By prioritizing safety and security, visitors can have a positive and enjoyable experience while minimizing accidents or harm. An effective safety and security system safeguards visitors and contributes to the sustainable development of ecotourism and outdoor recreation. This is done by fostering confidence and trust among potential visitors. Collaborative efforts between relevant stakeholders, such as local communities, government agencies, and tourism operators, are crucial for the successful implementation of the safety and security system.

Fulfil human resource needs for the development: To transform the Harego and Bededo protected areas into ecotourism and outdoor recreational sites, one of the key strategies is to ensure the availability of necessary human resources for their development. Based on the input from our respondents, the following human resource requirements have been identified as crucial for the successful development of ecotourism and outdoor recreation in the future.

1 Firstly, ecotourism or tourism professionals will be essential. These professionals will be responsible for marketing, planning, development, and financial management of the sites to facilitate ecotourism and outdoor recreation businesses. In addition to tourism expertise, professionals in forestry and natural resources management will be required. Forestry professionals play a critical role in forest production, forest management, recreation management, re-planting, re-seeding, wildlife management, and the overall conservation of natural resources. Forest engineers are important for designing and overseeing the construction of lodges, roads, infrastructure systems, and communication networks.

2 Furthermore, expertise in fire management, hydrology, genetics, landscape architecture, ecology, and economics will also be necessary for the development of ecotourism and outdoor recreation in the Harego and Bededo protected areas. By ensuring the availability of these diverse professionals, ecotourism and outdoor recreation can be developed from various angles. These experts will contribute their knowledge and skills to enhance the sustainability, management, and overall quality of the sites. This will optimize the visitor experience while safeguarding the natural environment.

3 Collaborative efforts among these professionals, local communities, government agencies, and other stakeholders are crucial for effective and holistic development. By combining their expertise and working in synergy, the development of ecotourism and outdoor recreation in the Harego and Bededo protected areas can be realized. This will lead to both economic benefits and the conservation of natural resources and ecosystems.

Conclusions and Further Research

Ecotourism and outdoor recreation in and around protected areas have become increasingly important in recent years, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, many tourism patterns seem to pursue to maximize the use of protected areas in various tourism activities. Consequently, the need for ecotourism and outdoor recreation has encouraged researchers to conduct this research. The study concluded that the areas have favorable opportunities for outdoor recreation and ecotourism development. The presence of Wollo University and other higher educational institutions nearby, the availability of other tourist attractions around Harego and Bededo, government attention for the development of tourism in the country, the geographical position of the sites, the availability of land and air transport, the coming newly constructed railway, the presence of Amhara Regional State forest enterprise development office in Kombolcha, the presence of Kombolcha integrated industrial park are among others. Even though several opportunities have existed in the study area, some threats were also identified like the presence of unwanted trash in the natural protected areas, the encroachments of the local community to the protected areas, planting of non-indigenous trees, unplanned management of protected areas of Harego and Bededo, landslide and erosion problem and there are some undesirable activities in the sites. Finally, the following possible strategies were identified and suggested for developing ecotourism and outdoor recreation in the study area. These are zoning the protected forest in different development zones, Preparing conservation management plans for the sites, Awareness creation programs for the community, Market and Promoting the destination for the local community and the wider audiences resources management, conservation, and product development, training naturalist guide and strong security system, research and continuous monitoring and evaluation of the sites, Preparing trial route, camping and other recreational facilities works, safety, and security system in the forest and fulfill human resource need for the development of ecotourism and outdoor recreation in the areas.

This study provides valuable insights into the opportunities, threats, and prospects of outdoor recreation and ecotourism development in the urban fringe protected areas of Bedebo and Harego in Ethiopia. However, it is important to note that this study is not a fully-fledged empirical study. Thevisitors' we recommend further research in the following areas: exploring the root causes, societal attitudes, and potential policy measures that can address the challenges effectively, economic impact study of ecotourism and outdoor recreation development in protected areas, the ecological carrying capacity of the protected areas since they are urban fringe areas, they needs a great check and balance system of management for its sustainability, undertake surveys and studies to assess the quality of visitor experiences and their satisfaction levels.

From the conclusion the following practical recommendations are drawn.

- The South Wollo zone culture tourism and sports department, in partnership with Wollo University, will develop Harego and Bededo protected areas as community-based ecotourism sites.
- To reduce unwanted trash damping in the forest areas, the culture and tourism office and environmental bureaus should work in cooperation and control.
- The local authorities should refrain from planting non-indigenous trees in the forests.
- Organized planning should be developed for the conservation and management of the protected areas of Harego and Bededo.
- Dividing the protected forest into different developmental zones for the conservation of natural resources of the sites.
- Awareness creation programs should be given to the local community about ecotourism, outdoor recreation concepts, and conservation of resources.
- Marketing and promotion should also encourage outdoor recreation and ecotourism in the Harego and Bededo protected areas.
- Continuous research, monitoring, and evaluation mechanisms should be developed to manage the resources.

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Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Tesfaye Fentaw Nigatu: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Validation, Writing – review and editing.
Molla Nigus Aregaw: Conceptualization, Investigation, Formal analysis, Writing – review and editing.
Asnakew Atlug Tegegne: Conceptualization, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Writing – review and editing, Visualization.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Tourism and Educational Cluster in Tourism Industry

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Abstract: The development of a tourist and educational cluster can play a significant role in ensuring the sustainability of universities. By collaborating with tourism industry partners to undertake research projects that address sustainability, tourism trends, and emerging educational needs, both parts will gain in terms of competitiveness. There is a close relationship between education and tourism, due to the common goals. This article shows the reasons for the interaction between education and tourism and the results of their clustering. A methodological approach to the definition of the concept of 'tourist-educational cluster' is proposed. The contribution of the tourism industry to the development of theories and methods of active learning is noted. The potential of using pedagogical technologies in promoting tourism products is shown.

Keywords: tourism; education; cluster; sustainability.

JEL Classification: Z32; I23.

Introduction

The sustainable development of tourism determines the need to search for new mechanisms and approaches to the provision of educational tourism services, which will increase the demand for higher education services and stimulate the higher education market. The growing importance of educational tourism in achieving high rates of development of the national economy determines the need for improvement and state support in the form of providing academic freedom to educational institutions, as well as changing the content of educational programs in the context of increasing international competition in the field of higher education.

The importance and place of educational tourism as a system of continuous human education in the development of sustainable tourism attracts special attention. In many studies, the tourism and education cluster are considered in the context of the search for new technologies, methods and innovative forms of education that provide democracy, social openness, integrity, continuity, flexibility, variability and educational integrity. Educational tourism as an interdisciplinary phenomenon stands out as having an important pedagogical potential and acting as an effective tool to help people acquire knowledge, skills and abilities throughout their lives.

Many sources reveal the possibilities of using the tourist-educational cluster for the successful formation of competencies defined in the educational standards for advanced training in individual disciplines.

Along with the influence of tourism on education, there is also a reverse process, when education stimulates the development of tourism. This influence is manifested, on the one hand, in the fact that a person's desire to improve the level of education and, accordingly, the quality of life creates a demand for new tourism products with educational content (educational tours) and at the same time their offer, and on the other hand, it manifests itself in the promotion of tourism products in the use of pedagogical technologies.

Thus, the tourist-educational cluster (synergy of education and tourism) will ultimately allow the system of continuous education to more fully meet the needs of various age and social groups of the population, more effectively reveal and develop the cognitive and creative potential of people.

The importance of the tourism industry in the development of the economy cannot be overestimated, since it creates jobs at a much lower cost than other industries. Accordingly, the need for highly qualified personnel for the tourism industry is growing rapidly. One of the main problems of tourism development is the lack of personnel. To attract business representatives, it is necessary to create associations consisting of representatives of tourism industry professionals, organizers of training programs and experts from universities who train specialists. An important point is also the creation of educational clusters based on the development of tourist and recreational special economic zones.

The development and scientific substantiation of a conceptual approach and a set of recommendations aimed at improving the sustainability of educational tourism have become the goals of this article.

1. Literature Review

The study of cluster organization in relation to tourism as one of the tools to improve its efficiency is of paramount importance for Kazakhstan and requires deep theoretical research, comprehensive analysis and development of sound recommendations based on them. Various aspects of the cluster organization of the economy, including tourism, have been considered in the works of many scientists.

Integration in the field of higher education leads to the interaction of educational organizations with the labor market in order to prepare highly qualified human capital. The state policy is to address youth employment issues and problems, and the related needs of companies in the professional and labor competencies of graduates. It is the tourism industry as a type of entrepreneurship that is becoming an integral part of the solution for incorporating tourism entrepreneurial competencies into university curricula (Santos-Jaén *et al.* 2022) This decision should help graduates enter the labor market by improving their employability skills, as well as instilling in them an entrepreneurial inclination towards self-employment as a worthy career path (Khelifi 2023) and has the potential to strengthen business education, innovation and the economy (Carpenter and Wilson 2021, Albers and Rundshagen 2023).

Therefore, the cluster of tourism and education in the sustainable development of the tourism industry will make a significant contribution to economic development through economic benefits to people in the form of increased income. At the same time, tourism companies, relying on higher education institutions in terms of skilled labor, also benefit (Arena *et al.* 2023). Considerable attention has been paid to the opportunities for increasing labor productivity due to the influence of the tourism business sector on higher education.

The interdependence between universities and the tourism industry creates a mutually beneficial relationship that leads to increased financial gains for educational institutions offering services to the tourism sector. This collaboration not only boosts the revenue of universities but also opens up avenues for these institutions to enhance faculty salaries, thus incentivizing educators to engage with the tourism business (Drach 2021 and Altynbasov 2021.

The development of educational tourism as a separate segment of the tourism industry actually became possible due to a significant increase in the tourist flow within certain categories of the population, primarily children and youth. Studying the impact of education on the quality of tourism products by developing more effective quality improvement strategies as a key element of tourism development, assessing tourism products and resources, researching cultural and historical heritage is reflected in the work of Tahiri *et al.* (2021).

Saepudin *et al.* (2019) explores how to enhance educational tourism in the Cibodas Village of by examining its potential, challenges, and offers valuable recommendations for fostering educational tourism while ensuring its positive impact on both the community and the environment.

World economic processes entail the reform of education in the teaching of tourism and service. A highly skilled workforce capable of coping with a rapidly changing work environment is a priority for organizations' economic goals. Kazakhstan business is interested in reforming education and needs specialists in the field of tourism, as well as financial support in their preparation (Rakhimberdinova 2022, Omarova 2021)

The main directions of improving the quality of training of professional tourism personnel, the study of the main personnel problems affecting the quality of services in the field of tourism, the professional qualities necessary for successful employment in the field of tourism are studied in the works of Brel and Zaytseva (2019), Komandyshko and Semenova (2018).

Thus, the issues of improving the system of regulation of educational tourism are largely due to the specific features of project activities as the main form of implementation of educational tours. Here, the advantages of the participation of educational institutions in project activities in the educational tourism market are obvious, which requires the development of scientific and methodological tools for regulating the implementation of economic activities and the introduction of innovative technologies in the design and implementation of new tourism products. At the moment, the issues of developing scientific ideas about clustering are relevant, which manifests itself in the sectors of the sphere of educational services, in particular, in tourism. Purposeful clustering of the tourist and educational sector requires scientific developments, principles and methods for managing this process. Methodological issues of cluster formation are still insufficiently developed, especially those emerging in the tourism sector.

The concept of greening the education system against the backdrop of growing environmental consciousness and the need to improve the environmental awareness of modern society is a key approach to formulating the environmental sustainability of the education system and an indicator of the effectiveness of the entire process of providing educational services in modern conditions. Increasing the degree of greening the education system is the inclusion of environmental issues, the rational use of natural resources, environmental protection in curricula and the training of teachers capable of implementing the concept of continuous environmental and economic education (Kharchenko 2020).

Thus, understanding the theoretical foundations of the impact of sustainable development and social responsibility on the quality of university education, when education affects people and nations, universities must take on the task of responsible learning (Chumaceiro 2022).

The impact of new technologies and growing demand on the workforce requires the development of online education in various forms, providing students with support, responsibility, flexibility and choice professions, including those in the tourism industry (Yasnolob 2019).

2. Tourism and Educational Cluster

Researching and evaluating the factors of sustainable tourism development based on the formation of tourist and educational clusters requires a systematic and comprehensive research methodology. Here's a proposed outline for such a methodology:

- to study of the theoretical foundations of the conceptual apparatus in the field of organizing tourist clusters, expanding ideas about clustering as a system of interconnected groups of tourist enterprises and educational institutions;
- to systematization of indicators of the internal and external environment for the development of educational tourism based on analysis;
- to develop a conceptual approach to ensuring the sustainability of tourism based on the formation of tourist and educational clusters.

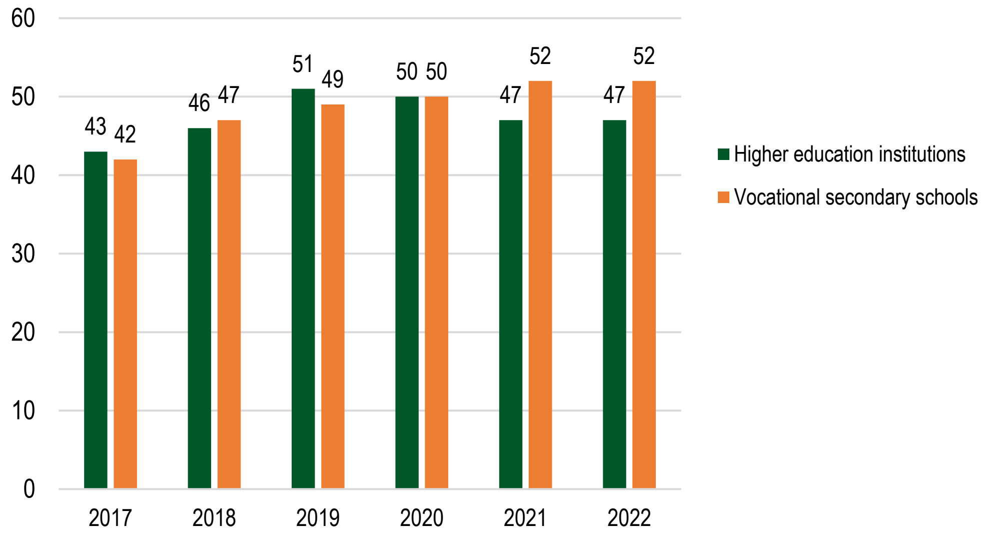
Changes in the global economic situation actualize for Kazakhstan the problem of sustainable economic growth of the regions in order to preserve national sovereignty. The emphasis on sustainable regional growth will create a basis for the development of economic entities in its territory and form a common national dynamic. The study of the problem of regions shows the use of economic integration mechanisms in the form of clusters, which leads to the need for the formation of such cluster management systems that contribute to the economic development of territories. The main industry capable of providing national as well as regional growth is tourism. Thus, the gross value added of tourism in 2022 amounted to 670.5 billion tenge and its share in Kazakhstan's GDP was 1.2%, returning approximately to the pre-pandemic state. In this regard, the development of recommendations for the development of an integrated education management system in the tourism sector, taking into account territorial features, is relevant.

The tourism and educational cluster can be defined as the integration of educational institutions located in geographic proximity with interacting tourism companies in order to produce qualified specialists for this area and focused on the production of an innovative product (service) of tourism, recreation and culture. The multiplier effect of the development of the regional economy, as well as the tourism industry, is possible if conditions are created for advanced training and continuous training of local specialists in popular specialties and professions, which can be provided through the creation of an industry educational cluster.

The need to create an educational cluster is also due to the presence of a personnel problem as a barrier to regional development, since problems with the qualifications of personnel exist in almost all areas of the economy, including those related to tourism.

The deficiency of adequately skilled professionals in the realm of tourism stands as a formidable obstacle hindering the sustainable and efficient progression of the tourism industry. Within this context, Kazakhstan finds itself positioned at the 71st spot among 136 nations with regard to the accessibility of proficient workforce within the tourism sector. Presently, Kazakhstan has 47 universities actively engaged in offering educational training focused on the domain of tourism.

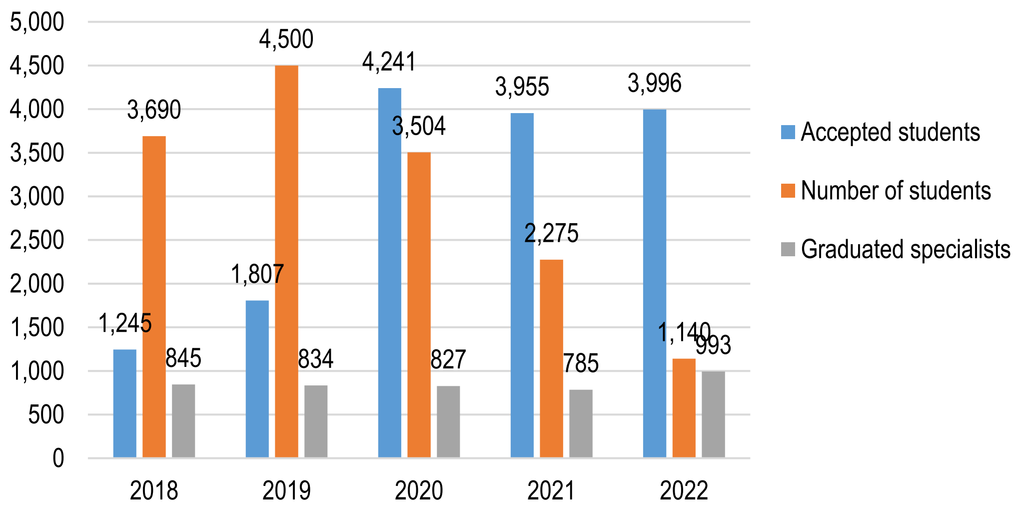
Figure 2. Number of educational institutions involved in the training of specialists for the tourism sector, units



Source: compiled by authors

The data in Figure 2 show that in 2022, out of 122 higher education institutions, the share of universities involved in the training of specialists for the tourism sector was 38.5%. At the same time, 11 universities or 23.4% of the total number of educational institutions are state-owned, 36 universities (76.6%) are privately owned.

Figure 3. Training of specialists with higher education for the tourism sector, people

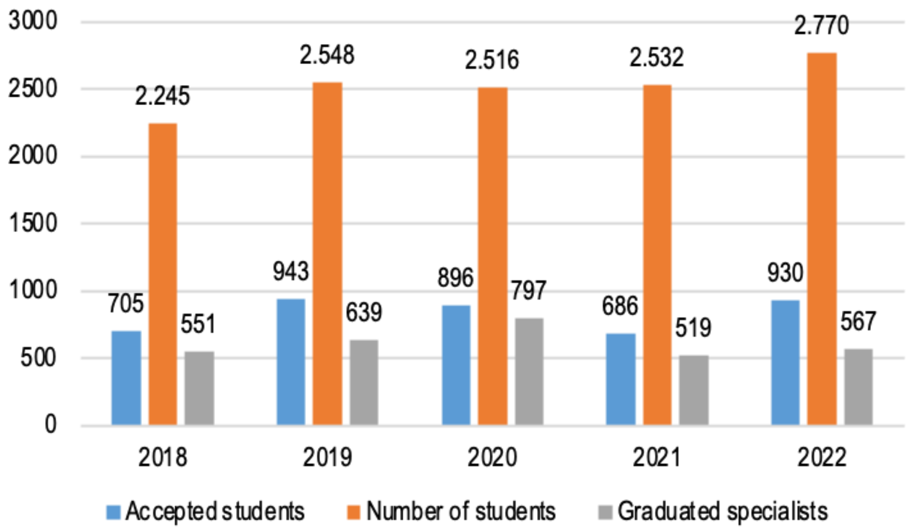


Source: compiled by authors

Despite the fact that there are a number of tourism training programs in Kazakhstan, the need for practical training and vocational training for certain categories of tourism professionals, such as tour guides, guides and entertainment program animators, remains high. The lack of guides and tour guides in the regions significantly increases the cost of the tour package due to the involvement of guides from the cities of Astana and Almaty. The main issues are the non-compliance of curricula with international standards, the wear and tear of the technical materials used, the lack of teaching staff, especially foreign professors with international experience and practitioners. To date, 3,996 students have entered the tourism sector in 2022, while 993 students (24.8%) have graduated. State universities accepted 365 students and graduated 126 specialists (Figure 3).

The training of human resources in the Kazakh education system, taking into account more industrial practices, is carried out at the level of technical and vocational education in the following specializations tourism (by industry): 'tourism instructor', 'tour guide', 'travel agent', 'manager'; translator (by industry): 'translator', 'guide-interpreter'. The remaining specialties are related, including specialties in the provision of services (restaurant business, waiters, etc.). The number of specialists with secondary vocational education in the field of tourism in 2022 was 567 students, in 2018 - 551 people, in 2019 - 639 people, in 2020 - 797 people and in 2021 - 519 people (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Training of specialists with secondary vocational education for the tourism sector, people



Source: compiled by authors

Thus, in the current situation for the educational sphere, it is characteristic that the existing educational institutions do not provide training in accordance with the industry needs, both quantitatively and qualitatively, training programs do not have a practical focus.

3. Empirical Approach for Increasing the Economic Sustainability of Universities Based on Tourist and Educational Cluster

The uneven growth rate of the network of educational institutions, the training of personnel does not correspond to the list of popular specialties, in this regard, it is necessary to form an educational cluster to ensure the advanced formation of human capital and requires the solution of the following tasks:

- integration of educational institutions in the field of tourism, as well as related industries;
- create conditions for increasing the economic independence of educational institutions and the effectiveness of their activities.

That is, the main goal of creating an educational cluster in the field of tourism is to unite vocational education institutions and social partners to meet the needs of regional labor markets in the field of tourism and services, which will help improve the quality of the workforce, create educational programs for vocational training and retraining of personnel, as well as and achieving a balance between future demand and supply for certain specialties in the labor market.

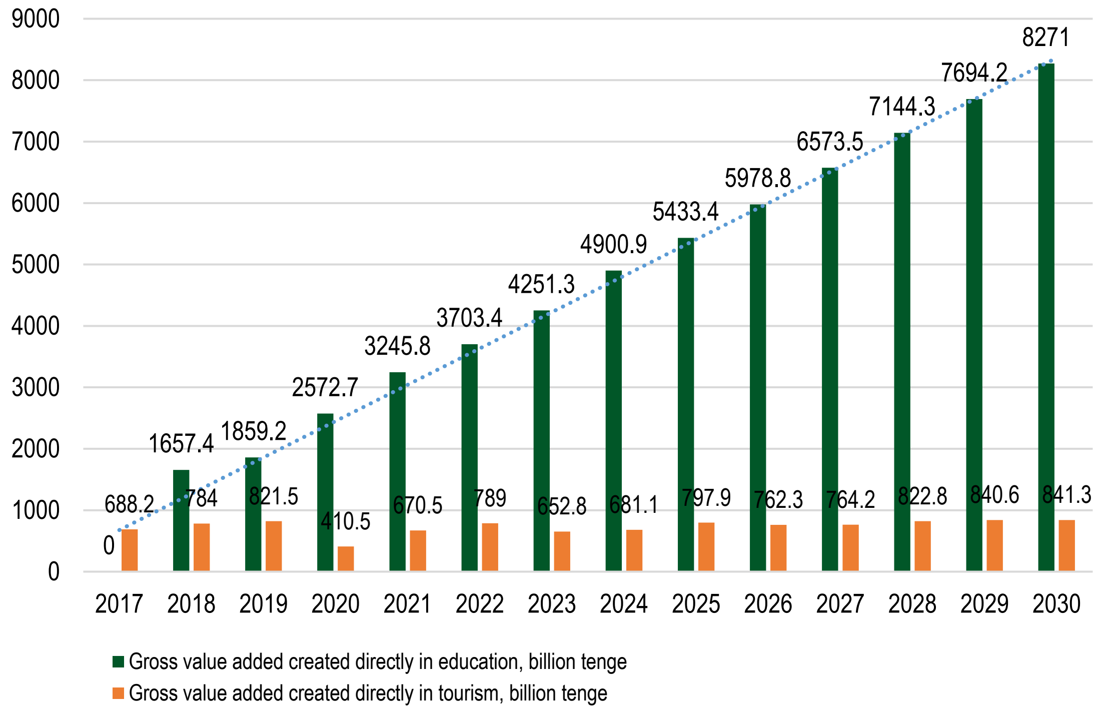
To determine the closeness of the relationship between the factor and the result, we calculate the coefficient of determination (R2). By assessing the significance of the presented equation, we examine the coefficient of determination: R2, since it is equal to 0.99, the regression equation is statistically reliable. As a result of the calculations, a multiple regression equation was obtained.

Table 1. Forecast indicators of the creation of an educational cluster in the field of tourism, billion tenge

Years	Gross value added created directly in education	Gross value added created directly in tourism
2017	1.528, 9	688,2
2018	1.657,4	784,0
2019	1.859,2	821,5
2020	2.572,7	410,5
2021	3.245,8	670,5
2022	3.703,4	789,0
Forecast 2023	4.251,3	652,8
2024	4.900,9	681,1
2025	5.433,4	797,9
2026	5.978,8	762,3
2027	6.573,5	764,2
2028	7.144,3	822,8
2029	7.694,2	840,6
2030	8.271,0	841,3

Source: compiled and calculated by authors

Figure 5. Indicators of the educational cluster in the field of tourism



Source: compiled and calculated by authors

The data in Figure 5 show that between these indicators there is a rather strong dependence with a correlation coefficient, a dependence with a correlation coefficient of r = 0.99, which indicates a significant influence of these factors in the development of the educational cluster in the field of tourism. That is, when creating this cluster, the gross value added created directly in education in 2030 will amount to 8271 billion tenge and tourism 841.3 billion tenge. Leading universities of the country, having educational and methodological bases, experience in training specialists in the field of tourism and service, should become the center of the educational cluster. In determining the prospects for the development of the market for higher education services, we use scenario forecasting, which allows us to take into account not only the impact of the main factors and conditions of the forecast environment, but also the impact of managerial decisions aimed at minimizing the impact of possible crisis situations and increasing the efficiency of implementing the chosen economic scenario.

To design scenario forecasts for the development of the higher education market, the tools of the prognostic model of Brown (2023), related to adaptive models, were chosen. In the resulting model, with a probability of 86%, it can be argued that the forecast is likely to be realized in the medium term, while the standard deviation of the model error from the forecast model was 0.14% (Table 2).

Table 2. Forecast data for determining the volume of the market for higher education services, including for the tourism sector, for the period up to 2035 using the Brown model

Years	Volume of services rendered, thousand tenge	Exponential Model 1			
		k=0,8	Accuracy	85,89%	Number of students, pers.
		Forecast Ŷ=	Model error	Standard deviation	
2023	640.755.338	501.865.755	138.889.583	0,08	586.057,6
2024	808.966.036,5	612.977.421	195.988.615	0,10	572.310,28
2025	1.049.027.428	769.768.313	279.259.114	0,13	577.806,124
2026	1.386.167.823	993.175.605	392.992.218	0,16	577.856,0592
2027	1.861.500.025	1.307.569.379	553.930.646	0,18	576.839,8054
2028	2.533.636.086	1.750.713.896	782.922.190	0,20	574.307,0307
2029	3.482.216.823	2.377.051.648	1.105.165.175	0,22	576.732,0147
2030	4.820.670.460	3.261.183.788	1.559.486.672	0,23	574.999,0326
2031	6.710.392.280	4.508.773.126	2.201.619.154	0,24	574.400,2354
2032	9.378.022.907	6.270.068.449	3.107.954.458	0,25	574.199,4823
2033	13.143.373.228	8.756.432.015	4.386.941.213	0,25	574.163,4963
2034	18.458.550.007	12.265.984.985	6.192.565.021	0,25	573.117,8762
2035	25.961.516.929	17.220.037.002	8.741.479.927	0,26	57.2976,309
			av. value av. standard deviation =	0,14	

Source: compiled by authors

An effective adaptive forecasting method based on exponential smoothing is Brown's method (Brown's linear growth model). Brown's Linear Growth Model typically refers to a type of forecasting model introduced by James Durbin and Geoffrey Watson Brown in the context of time series analysis. This model is sometimes also called the 'linear exponential smoothing model with growth.' The model is an extension of simple exponential smoothing those accounts for both a level component and a linear trend component, making it more suitable for time series data with a consistent linear growth or decline. The predictive model of the method looks like this:

$$\hat{y}_{t+d} = \alpha y_t + (1-\alpha)\hat{y}_t,\ \hat{y}_0 = y_0, \alpha \in (0,1)$$

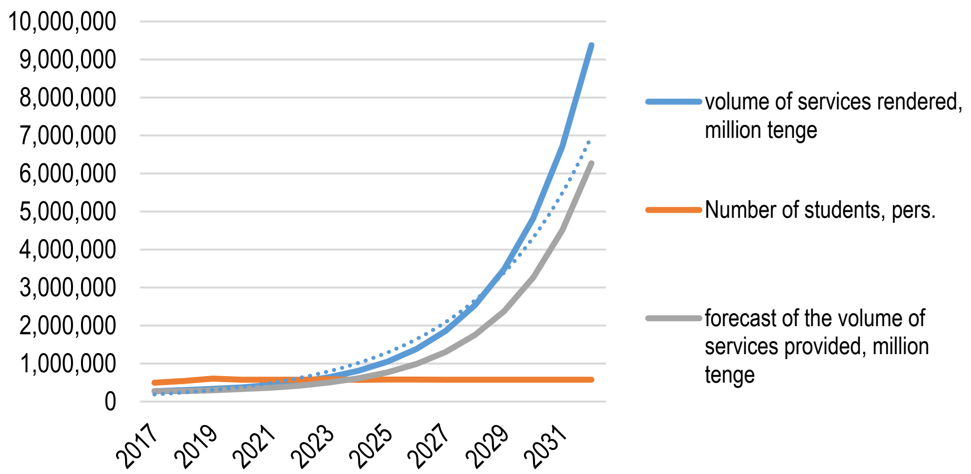
where: forecast $\hat{y}$ (the volume of higher education services provided for the tourism sector) is a forecast made for d - steps forward at the $t-m$ adaptation step; *t- time interval lag; α* - smoothing parameter, or weighting factor; y_t is the actual value of the training sets.

This model considers the forecast 1st step ahead, then $(y_t - \hat{y}_t)$ the error of this forecast, and the new forecast $\hat{y}_t$, as a result of adjusting the previous forecast, taking into account its error (the essence of adaptation). Forecasting reflects new changes faster and removes random fluctuations, which increases the proportion of recent observations:

$\alpha \to 1, \hat{y}_{t+d} \to y_t$.

The model of actual and predicted indicators of the development of the higher education market is shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Forecasting the development of the market for higher education services based on the Brown model



Source: compiled by authors

The predictive model shows that by 2035 the market for educational services will outrun the volume of the service market, and in this case, higher education organizations need to adjust the market supply in the medium term.

Table 3. Ensuring the competitiveness of the market for higher education services, including for the tourism sector, in Kazakhstan to ensure the sustainability of tourism

Directions	Suggestions
Educational	▪ Availability and continuity of quality education, control of the conditions for the implementation and results of educational programs, the growth of academic and economic independence of universities. ▪ Employment of graduates. Increase in public funding (revenue per student). Degree of PPP. Growth of wages of teaching staff. Attracting foreign teachers, domestic scientists and practitioners. Development of distance learning forms, unification of digital educational products. ▪ Increase in educational grants for specialties in the field of tourism, determine the leading university in training personnel in the field of tourism, update curricula in accordance with international standards. ▪ Personnel training: mid-level personnel in the hospitality industry, local historians, guides, instructors, guides, guides and guides with knowledge of various foreign languages.
Research	▪ Universities with a high share of income from RandD, growth in RandD, the effectiveness of scientific research. Availability of modern technological, measuring and testing equipment, a high proportion of highly qualified scientists. Dynamics of the Hirsch Index.

Source: compiled by authors

Conclusion

The cluster of tourism and education should be considered as the most optimal option for combining educational and tourism activities as an industry that provides not only regional and national growth, but also, considering current trends, allows achieving a balance in the national economy, reducing its dependence on raw material exports. This integration will provide employment opportunities for graduates, which is a vital aspect for both higher education institutions and for the graduates themselves and the sustainable development of the tourism industry. To do this, it is necessary to create a personnel service that has a single information system with tourism enterprises, monitors the needs of the labor market, attracts young professionals and coordinates the recruitment of promising specialists in the field of tourism.

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Credit Authorship Contribution Statement:

Chingiz Makenov: Development of the concept of scientific research: formulating ideas, formulating the main goals and objectives. Writing an introduction, posing problems that have not been solved in previous studies. The formulation of the goals and objectives of the study, the relevance of the topic and its significance in the modern and current context. Criticism of the literature, generalization of the main points of view, review and evaluation of existing research on the topic. Preparation and release of publications on data visualization/image.

Aina Narynbayeva: Determination of the goals and objectives of the study, the relevance of the topic and its significance in the current and modern context. Critical review of the literature, generalization of the main provisions, review and evaluation of existing research on the topic. Explanation of the sequence of the study and justification for the choice of methods used to obtain reliable and evidence-based results. Final revision of the published article. A brief analysis of the obtained results and presentation of a reasoned conclusion.

Nina Petrichsheva: Compilation and systematization of statistical data in the form of tables and figures. Analysis of patterns and trends in the development of the research process and evaluation of the data obtained during the study, based on the scientific position of the scientist and empirical work. Responsibility for all aspects of the study, integrity and finalization of all parts of the manuscript.

Meruyert Umirzakova: Checking, analyzing and summarizing data. Analysis of patterns and trends in the development of the process under study; evaluation of the data obtained in the course of the study. Application of statistical and mathematical methods for the analysis and generalization of research data.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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The Practice of Tourism Product Endorsement: Perspective of Islamic Business Ethics in Social-Media

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Abstract: The rapid development of technology and information has caused the use of the Internet to be higher. One of the widely used digital business marketing activities is social media endorsements which are currently being used to inform products to consumers through Tiktok and Instagram social media. However, some endorsers are dishonest in providing consumer product reviews in endorsement activities. Thus, in its application, endorsement practices still do not follow the principles of advertising promotion according to Islamic business ethics. For this reason, this paper aims to discuss the practice of endorsement on social media TikTok and Instagram from the perspective of Islamic business ethics by Muslim endorsers. The research method applied for qualitative with a depth-interviews. The results showed that first, endorsement business ethics in Islam is that the endorsed product must be responsible, honest, and authentic; the endorsers must be friendly and polite; the endorser must cover the aurat (body parts covered), not praise excessively, do not use swear, be transparent, and do not demonize other products. Second, regarding the practice of endorsement on social media, Tiktok and Instagram, from the perspective of Islamic business ethics, have found several ethics that are violated when endorsers promote products to consumers.

Keywords: touristic product; endorsement; Islamic business ethics; social media.

JEL Clasiffication: P13; M31; Z32; K22.

Introduction

Globalization is a global process that makes people know each other and exchange information indefinitely and distance. Rapid globalization has made it easier for people to access the Internet for information (Zhang *et al.* 2018). Ease of using technology (Gao *et al.* 2018) can create competition and contain fast-developing economic growth (Marcon *et al.* 2022; Yu *et al.* 2018). The Internet's presence in digital marketing is a very high-impact business space because this revolution creates technology and artificial intelligence. Today, social media is becoming an effective means of business promotion because it is accessible to everyone. Social media is an important part of marketing or business behavior and one of the best ways to reach customers.

People and companies have now widely used social media to implement marketing communication strategies. Digital literacy grows as a public service (Mcdougall *et al.* 2018), although it sometimes creates addiction (Xu 2023), conflict, and negative impacts (Gao *et al.* 2018, Hutchison *et al.* 2020, Kuss and Griffiths 2017, Polizzi 2021, Scheiber *et al.* 2023, Yu *et al.* 2018, Zhang *et al.* 2023). One option is implementing a strategy where effective endorsers are employed in customer-brand engagement (Borges-Tiago *et al.* 2023) as advertising promotions for endorsement practices. Judging from various social media, business actors promote products by asking celebrities to endorse them. Of these social media, the most popular are Tiktok and Instagram because they are in great demand by internet users. Instagram has developed many features to support virtual-based social media facilities in the form of photos and videos.

Technological developments have encouraged critical thinking (Checa-Romero 2015, Prins 2016). The growth of technology means that advertising is carried out through social networks, one of which is TikTok and Instagram, which continue to grow (van Oosten *et al.* 2023). The platform is a photo-sharing app that allows users to take photos, videos, apply digital filters and share them with various social networking services, including the functions of Tiktok and Instagram itself. As a networking site, this social media plays an important role in digital marketing (Nilashi *et al.* 2021) besides considering tourist motives (Schoner-Schatz *et al.* 2021). Today's high social media usage will certainly expand the presence of Tiktok and Instagram platforms. Tiktok had 99.1 million monthly active users in Indonesia in April 2022, and Instagram had 99.9 million monthly active users in Indonesia in April 2022 (Arfyan and Bayu Pratama 2022). Related to the growth in the number of Tiktok and Instagram users makes one of the strongest contemporary marketing trends, namely endorsement. Social media targeting currently on the rise is part of mutually beneficial cooperation. This usually happens between online stores or businesses and artists or celebrities because they have a lot of fans and followers, which is useful for increasing the sales of the store or online business and some products and so on.

Endorsements by influencers are quite effective promotional social media advertisements (Ingrassia *et al.* 2022). Besides being easy, fast, and cheap, endorsements are also aimed at potential buyers directly. In the modern business world, the endorsement is an activity where a business owner approves or asks a celebrity or artist to endorse a product directly on social media and mentions the business owner's social media accounts, such as Tiktok and Instagram, and the business owner gives the product for free to one of the artists or celebrities who promote the product. Social media connects users (Zhang *et al.* 2023) more effectively, and currently, social media is also used by the government in politics (Yuan *et al* 2023).

For consumers, endorsement is a way to discover the advantages and disadvantages of the products offered. But in reality, there are many misleading endorsement practices in marketing products for profit, meaning there is a difference in quality between the products offered and those advertised by endorsers. Leveraging this reputation, endorsers can easily persuade consumers to buy the advertised product without paying attention to important aspects of the product advertisement, ranging from clothing, electronic goods, food, and beverages to cosmetics and medicines. Various advertisements in product endorsements often confuse buyers in buying a product, especially body care and beauty products.

However, every Muslim must have a positive image towards oneself, others, and the environment. Islam rejects deception, obscurity, or any other methods considered wrong. Muslims must be honest. Honesty and truth are the most important values in business. In this case, forms of fraud, exploitation, and misrepresentation are prohibited since doing so would create accountability from a social and legal point of view. Therefore, social facts prohibit all kinds of activities that contain elements of manipulation and fraud. That is why business ethics is such an important topic today. Suppose Islamic business ethics is a moral custom or culture about a company or individual business. In this case, Islamic business ethics relates to standards based on the Qur'an and Hadith, which should be used as a reference by its followers in their actions when promoting products to consumers. In Islam, it forms a boundary or dividing line between what is permissible and impermissible, what is right and wrong, what is halal, and what is haram. It is this limitation or dividing line which is called ethics. Similarly, behavior in doing business and doing business is inseparable from the existence of moral values or business ethics. For entrepreneurs, it is important to integrate the moral dimension into the framework or scope of business activities.

A lot of past research has talked about endorsement and social media. In general, the majority of the existing literature talks about the impact of social media on behavior (Alzaidi and Agag 2022, Astleitner *et al.* 2023, Jabeen *et al.* 2023; Lerouge *et al.* 2023, Xu *et al.* 2023), the role of social media (Balaban *et al.* 2022, Serrano-Estrada and Martí 2023, Zafar *et al.* 2021) the benefits of social media on education (Devera *et al.* 2023, Zheng *et al.* 2023) and business economics (Jeljeli *et al. 2022,* Tourani 2022). Few studies examine how endorsement is described with an Islamic value approach. This research then elaborates more deeply on the practice of endorsement on social media Tiktok and Instagram from the perspective of Islamic business ethics.

1. Literature Review

Promotional tools in social media have a significant role in empowering transaction activities (Trihayuningtyas *et al.* 2019) regarding the marketing activities of tourism products. Digital media is more widely adopted because this media is considered adequate, fast, and low-cost (Tan *et al.* 2018) as a promotional tool because of the development of communication technology. It is massively able to spread information on tourist products to consumers in a short time. In addition to the dissemination of friendship, the development of this technology has changed the behavior of individuals in choosing ways to travel, especially in providing accommodation and ticket information. Promotion had been widely applied through media and non-media communication channels. The transfer of tourist information through digital and conventional media such as the Internet, newspapers, brochures, and television has assisted the tourism industry in building an image of the destination. The use of social media such as blogs and other online social networks is also used as this media allows the dissemination of information on promotion to reach out to many groups massively.

Dissemination of information in the form of tourism promotion can be seen from the emergence of social media from private institutes and the government online. The use of channels such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram is also used with the content of texts and photos. Short films and videos of the beauty of specific destinations are often distributed through the help of YouTube and then transmitted to groups of tourist players on a massive scale. Online media, like internet access, facilitates the exchange of information and is considered the best media for good promotions. In education, digital learning mechanisms impact unequal prospects; rural with all limitations – cities with higher incomes access the internet with high quality (Sanz-labrador *et al.* 2021). Furthermore, learning digitally tends to produce low accuracy, distraction (Kuznekoff *et al.* 2015), reduced empathy (Selwyn *et al.* 2016), and not getting a complete understanding, causing the response to be slower (Cladis 2018). Worst of all, educational institutions no longer prioritize humanists but lead to profit (Komljenovic 2021).

Social media endorsement is the practice of individuals or organizations using social media platforms. Visitors use online reviews using social media for effective methods of search (Xu and Li 2016). It promotes destinations, experiences, tourist products, or services to followers and audiences and is related to destination branding (Wu 2018). Social media endorsement involves leveraging the influence and reach of social media users, commonly known as content creators, to endorse and generate awareness about tourism-related offerings. Social media endorsement has gained significant importance in the tourism industry due to the widespread use of social media platforms and their influence on consumer behavior. Social media such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok create and enable creators to share content related to various aspects of the tourism industry. Many endorsement activities can be performed through sharing personal stories, videos, and reviews experiences. Influencers may also provide recommendations and detailed information about the best places to visit to enrich travel experiences. Social media endorsements can significantly impact tourism, as they can reach a wide audience and influence the audiences to make any decisions to purchase. However, it is critical to note that authenticity is important in social media endorsements. Influencers should disclose any sponsorships or partnerships to maintain trust and credibility with their audience. Additionally, it is essential for businesses and travelers to critically evaluate the endorsements and consider multiple sources of information before making decisions based solely on social media content.

Endorsements on social media such as TikTok and Instagram in the context of tourism can appear in many forms. Endorsements often involve content creators who review what tourism products are introduced to target users. Smart tourism today incorporates social media for promotion (Vecchio *et al.* 2018). Endorsements on social media have a significant effect on consumer opportunities in making decisions to make purchases. Information technology that is fast access allows people to make business transactions easily. The element of social media as a medium in transforming product news is considered effective in attracting market interest in buying tourism goods and services. Social media on smartphones is a marketing tool for customer interaction (Tan *et al.* 2018). Carry out endorsement activities in travel products when it is easy to do. Tourism influencers can create engaging videos around specific tourist destinations they want to promote. They can capture travel moments when they visit, show beautiful views of tourist sites, interesting places such as tourist spots, or unique activities that can be done in these destinations, such as mingling with local people. This activity is a tourist activity that tends to provide more value to the audience. The authenticity of the situation due to participating in community activities is an added value where direct experience with indigenous people is new.

Accommodation reviews in the form of comprehensive reviews of travel products have become a regular activity for content creators. They can use social media to endorse microfilm, as many endorsers did (Shao *et al,* 2016). Influencers can provide reviews about hotels, villas, or other lodgings on social media by targeting markets according to age and interest levels. They can show their facilities, comfort, and experience while staying at the accommodation will give more attention to the audience. Something new and not faked activity can take viewers longer to enjoy the spectacle of endorsements. A good endorsement is essentially an honest and reliable promotion. One of these indicators is the missed curiosity of the audience about the authenticity of the goods and services offered. In addition to destination, food and culinary content are also something that cannot be forgotten to be endorsed. Influencers can recommend restaurants or food specialties of certain regions through photo posts on TikTok or Instagram content creators have.

In Indonesia, almost all tourist destinations use social media. The Indonesian tourism ministry maximally used social media assistance in promotional activities. The YouTube channel, for example, was utilized and filled with destination content involving endorsements. The effectiveness of selection of YouTube media is quite economical and can reduce the cost of advertising or promotion compared to conventional media. Along with this, besides YouTube, the tourism ministry also used Instagram to target potential customers.

Not only in Indonesia, the use of digital media in social media has also been massively carried out in various parts of the world. In Northern Portugal, for example, YouTube reflects tourism activities, although sometimes the content aired contradicts reality in the field (Losada and Mota 2019). Media marketing tourism in the form of an official website has also been practiced in Zhejiang, China, where this media is Used to promote local attractions to the international world (Shao *et al.* 2016). The content on this website focuses on delivering information about a range of destinations, revealing the area's history, and building credibility. In addition, Gulbarah and Yuldirim (2015) supported the statement that most world companies have used web pages and mobile applications where the Internet and social media have been adapted for marketing needs.

The role of the media in promoting goods or products is widely used. As a part of business, tourism almost integrates both conventional and digital media. The rapid change in media look has largely impacted product promotion and what to implement through social media. Accessibility to social media is critical as it allows issuers to communicate the information they convey. Low costs create a dynamic and interactive environment to send feedback regarding the number of views and comments (Cristea *et al.* 2015). Putting strong words to influence readers is a way of persuading, touching, and acting to completely stick to how products give profound meaning.

Endorsements on social media such as TikTok and Instagram in the context of tourism can appear in many forms. Endorsements often involve content creators who review what tourism products are introduced to target users. Endorsements on social media have a significant effect on consumer opportunities in making decisions to make purchases. Celebrity endorsement is more effective in endorsing products (Chung and Cho 2017) as people believe in fame. Information technology that is fast access allows people to make business transactions easily. The element of social media as a medium in transforming product news is considered effective in attracting market interest in buying tourism goods and services. Carry out endorsement activities in travel products when it is easy to do. Tourism influencers can create engaging videos around specific tourist destinations they want to promote. They can capture travel moments when they visit, show beautiful views of tourist sites, interesting places such as tourist spots, or unique activities that can be done in these destinations, such as mingling with local people. This activity is a tourist activity that tends to provide more value to the audience. The authenticity of the situation due to participating in community activities is an added value where direct experience with indigenous people is new.

Accommodation reviews in the form of comprehensive reviews of travel products have become a regular activity for content creators. There is a tight relationship between endorsers and social media (Aw and Labrecque 2020). Influencers can provide reviews about hotels, villas, or other lodgings on social media by targeting markets according to age and interest levels. They can show their facilities, comfort, and experience while staying at the accommodation will give more attention to the audience. Something new and not faked activity can take viewers longer to enjoy the spectacle of endorsements. A good endorsement is essentially an honest and reliable promotion. One of these indicators is the missed curiosity of the audience about the authenticity of the goods and services offered. In addition to destination, food and culinary content are also something that cannot be forgotten to be endorsed. Influencers can recommend restaurants or food specialties of certain regions through photo posts on TikTok or Instagram content creators have.

Endorsements on social media must be done honestly and responsibly. Influencers must properly declare that they are paid to provide honest and thoughtful reviews of their content. It aims to maintain trust and authenticity in communication with its followers. Endorsements on TikTok and Instagram allow tourism destinations and businesses to leverage the influence of influencers and their content creation to promote themselves to a wider audience. While for social media users, this endorsement can be a source of information and a reference in planning and influencing audience cognition (Dhanesh and Duthler 2019).

2. Research Methods

This type of research is qualitative descriptive with case studies on endorsers on social media. Descriptive qualitative, in its principle, is an approach that describes data where the process of findings is carried out without statistical methods that require data to be translated into numbers accumulatively. Comprehensively, this research was refined by reviewing previous literature on the same topic discussing endorsement on social media (TikTok and Instagram).

This study involved seven endorsers selected based on three criteria; activeness on social media, number of followers, and popularity. Being active on social media means that an endorser is a person who has a social media account and periodically fills content according to his niche. The content focuses on tourism, which contains sociocultural, economic-business, and other tourism products. The discussion of tourism content was chosen because there is a tendency that tourism is a business trend that is always positive; its development is also favored by the public in general, for example, by young people. The name factor for well-known content creators becomes a criterion in the next data collection process. The number of followers above 10 thousand from each account is a consideration that the average producer and travel activist offers their products to content creators with a clear audience and sufficient number. This is believed to be able to influence people to decide to make purchases of tourism products that have been endorsed.

Furthermore, the data analysis process is carried out using deductive thinking, namely a model of data presentation from general proportions and ending in a specific conclusion. Data analysis in this study was conducted through in-depth interviews with endorsers and several samples of tourism activists who have tourism products and have involved endorsers in promoting their tourism products. In-depth interviews are conducted by recording conversations using the help of smartphones that we have prepared. We analyze the data through a data screening process because we believe that interview data must be sorted and able to answer the data sought according to the research questions raised. Coding, reducing less important data, grouping, and presenting results to be concluded is a series of processes in data analysis in this study. Relevant literature references are also our reference in describing the final data, which contains more about the focus of endorsement practices on Tiktok and Instagram social media from the perspective of Islamic business ethics.

3. Results

An endorsement is a form of product or brand promotion carried out by business people (tourism business) with endorsement service actors, namely endorsers; these endorsers can be called celebrity endorsers with many followers or followers on Tiktok and Instagram social media. Tiktok and Instagram social media are widely used in the world of tourism business. The endorsement method is usually the endorsed party using or consuming or using the endorser's product. The use of endorsers in advertising is intended to support or encourage the advertising message to be more easily accepted by consumers while facilitating the growth of consumer confidence in the advertised product. Most endorsement practices are from various endorsed products; many are done on social media by Tiktok and Instagram celebrities. Such as beauty products, food, beverages, and parasite products are now a productive business trend for millennials and generation Z.

The practice of Endorsement on Tiktok and Instagram is an attractive option for promoting travel products on social media. Social media makes tourism businesses use it in the public sphere, which can increase the added value of sales. In this study, the practice of endorsement is that most endorsers are Muslim in promoting tourism products. Islam in running a business must be based on Islamic values; Muslims have the holy book of the Qur'an, which should be a life guideline. Islam does not teach its followers to conduct business activities with deception or lies. In endorsing on social media, the process must be based on responsibility and honesty. This principle must align with Islamic cultural values as universal values that must be practiced where transparency and business balance that benefits both parties are absolute principles in Islamic business ethics. As an endorser, Muslims should be careful in receiving endorsements, honest and transparent in promoting the product so that the public is not disappointed and trusts endorsers who are considered to have a good image in the eyes of the public.

In promoting (endorsement) tourism products, for example, in tourist destinations, it often does not follow the principles of Islamic business ethics. The practice of honesty and responsibility of celebrities in promoting products and providing information about the advantages of products raises questions to the public. Not a few endorsement activities of a celebrity must give statements that are not following the circumstances of a tourist product he promotes. Endorsements are not fully known in detail or try it before recommending it to others. The interviews we conducted with the perpetrators concluded that the product to be promoted is sometimes not fully accepted because the endorser knows it clearly and in detail. They sometimes only accept concepts from the producer's side to convey. The information disseminated by the endorser follows the manufacturer's taste, who provides endorsement to the endorser.

Tourist destination reviews are travel products that content creators often endorse. The majority of endorsement content is to provide reviews of the excellence of the tourism product. Completeness of facilities, the appearance of lodging room space, price information, and services dominate the contents of the endorsement. From the recognition of endorsers, information about the shortcomings of tourist attractions is avoided from being published. They consider that the lack of products will impact the number of consumers who consume the products offered. The aspect of honesty in this context becomes less prominent. There is an assumption that the promotion must display the positive side of the product. They do not realize that the value of honesty in providing information on products is important because it will attract people's interest. Few people carry out activities to purchase goods and services because the endorser displays complete information, ranging from the advantages and disadvantages of the product.

Another example of non-tourism products is whitening lotion products. Endorsers claim only to promote it but do not try the product. This, of course, only gives dishonest reviews and tries to convince Instagram and TikTok users that the product is good and effective for whitening the skin when used. Islamic principles of business ethics tend to be ignored. In sales of beauty creams, usually, endorsers will give a review that the product is what makes it beautiful or handsome, white, and free from acne. However, the fact is that the endorser is white and acne-free not because of the cream but other products or treatments that have been used. In this case, producers and endorsers must ensure that the products sold do not contain prohibited elements, there is no usury, do not harm consumers, there are no elements of fraud, and ensures consumer security so that the transaction is feasible according to Islamic religious principles. If the endorser contains fraud, such as explaining a product or service that is fabricated, the advertised product is not following what is promoted; of course, it violates the procedures for buying and selling, according to Islam. Suppose the promotion contains praise that is manifestly true and not excessive. In that case, this promotion is legally permissible, but if otherwise, it contains lies about the promoted product, then it is prohibited in Islam.

Several endorsement practices violate Islamic business ethics based on our study with cross-data from sources. First, Islam does not allow women in photos or videos of endorsers to often open their aurats. As a Muslim woman, it should be mandatory to cover the aurat. Islam forbids any attempt by a woman to show attractive sides of herself to other men who are not her husbands excessively. This recognition is widely supported by the fact that influencers, endorsers, or content creators do a lot of endorsement activities in a way that is not right and tends to be excessive. Wearing open clothes, tight clothes, and not wearing hijab are often shown by content creators on social media. Today's social media content (TikTok, Instagram, YouTube) has many negative connotations. Because of the views factor, people are willing to create content according to market tastes without paying attention to Islamic rules. Of course, the goal is to protect themselves in a better direction. Islam, in practice, forbids its adherents only to show off their beauty in public because it will invite bad intentions from others. Islamic prudence, in this case, is the key to the harmony of humankind's way of life. Islamic ethics considers exploiting beauty alone but not employing these abilities and skills useless. Second, endorsers, when doing advertising promotions, sometimes never provide information about the shortcomings of the endorsed product. As an endorser, you should be transparent about promoting the endorsed product by explaining the shortcomings of the product being promoted, both invisible and visible.

Endorsement actors on social media (TikTok, Instagram, YouTube) advertising promote in a way or ethics that are not allowed to be accepted by the public audience. In the case of culinary tourism products, endorsers do not fully convey the correct information about the culinary products. They only convey preliminary information without explaining in detail about ingredients, safety, and advantages to product legality. And also, often contains pornography in the endorsed content. According to informants, culinary promotion is subjective. There were several complaints from the audience, which essentially questioned the information conveyed by endorsers. There is a contradiction between what is certified with the quality of culinary taste and the convenience of service when consumers try the product. From other literature about the endorsement, we found that endorsements were not as expected by the public, for example, on beauty cream products, food, and beverages. Informants do not use endorsed products and only promote them according to industry needs. The practice of endorsement from this example is contrary to Islamic business principles that emphasize honesty and orientation of product quality. This practice harms customers. Therefore, the transparency of the product delivered must be true to its original quality.

On the other hand, several cases of endorsers provide information following the product's identity. The results of an interview with one of the content creators found no irregularities when promoting products and services from tourism. Some Muslim women wear clothes that cover the aurat. In addition, endorsers have given honest testimony when promoting products and services without vilifying other people's businesses. This is following the rules of Islamic business ethics.

Furthermore, (Zakiyah, 2021) in his research entitled The Phenomenon of Endorsement of the Sales of a Product Reviewed from Islamic Business Ethics, revealed that: First, Endorsement provides information that follows the real facts of the product, the most dominant choice with a percentage rate of 80% stating Neutral.

Second, product endorsement has paid attention to religious values (covering the aurat), the most dominant choice with a percentage rate of 86, with 67% stating neutral. Third, the endorsement is also a real user of the product, the most dominant choice with a percentage rate of 60% expressing disapproval; Fourth, Endorsement It has been seen that there is an attitude of truth in the sense of honesty towards consumers, the most dominant choice with a percentage rate of 60% states neutral, Fifth, Endorsement has been seen to be responsible following their respective duties, the dominant choice with a percentage rate of 60% states neutral. Sixth, researchers believe that endorsement is now following Islamic business ethics, the most dominant choice with a percentage rate of 66.67% states neutral, meaning that the phenomenon of endorsement in the modern era cannot be said to be following funds or not following Islamic business ethics, because it is considered still in the middle.

There is a common thread from this study: endorsements are found on several social media Tiktok and Instagram, and several endorsement actors sometimes give wrong perceptions or are not following the quality of the advertised product. An example of this is that advertising only provides information about the product's advantages but does not provide information on the shortcomings of the endorsed product. Content sometimes pays attention to the skin rather than the content. Found content creators who highlight the attractive side of their body parts, dress tight, and cross the aurat limit when marketing the products, they endorse. However, some Muslim endorsers have complied with Islamic business ethics in carrying out endorsement practices on Tiktok and Instagram social media, such as when promoting have tried the product and closing the aurat. Before the promotion, you already know the product's advantages, and the product already has Halal certification. Although Islam does not explicitly regulate positions, Islamic teachings have basic Islamic principles related to endorsement ethics. Thus, the practice of government should be based on the rules in the ethics of endorsement established by the state and even the Qur'an and Sunnah related to this matter.

Ethics play a very important role. Ethical and moral rules are not only about behavior and actions; ethical issues are closely related to communication between two parties, individuals, and groups. Therefore, ethics is a guideline on how to organize human life harmoniously to achieve harmony collectively.

4. Discussion

Endorsement is one of the online marketing trends (Chung Cho 2017, Dhanesh and Duthler 2019) spread through Tiktok and Instagram social media, which are very popular in today's society. Endorsement is now widely used by marketers to market their products because endorsement can be an effective marketing strategy that marketers can rely on today (Aw and Labrecque 2020). The endorsement in Islam is a fairly effective promotion of social media. Besides being easy, fast, and cheap, endorsement promotions target potential buyers directly. Muslim marketers in Indonesia widely use marketing through endorsements.

It turns out that some of these endorsement practices are working well, and some are not going well; in many ways, we find and explain things that are appropriate and not following Islamic law, from marketing strategies implemented by entrepreneurs and celebrities Tiktok and Instagram. Regarding ethics violated, the advertised products seem too exaggerated to fight things contrary to Islamic law. Based on its function, celebrities who receive endorsements on Tiktok and Instagram social media should be more careful when receiving endorsement offers, knowing complete information related to the product they will endorse, not just endorsing, understanding the compatibility of product information obtained from the party which endorses with the product to be endorsed endorse. So that they can testify to what they endorse so that no consumer is disappointed or feels deceived because promotions or advertisements that contain fraud are unfair trade activities and harm consumers when the goods purchased are not following what is advertised. Celebrity sometimes endorses products as they get more public interest from the audiences (Chung and Cho 2017).

However, we found some ethical discrepancies in the celebrities of social media Tiktok and Instagram, such as the case above, in which we have explained that there is the fraud that occurs because, in modern it is very easy to transact via the Internet, especially through the Tiktok and Instagram flatforms. Recipients of endorsement services it is expected to be able to consider various products that will be endorsed so that they are not detrimental to consumers as their followers on Tiktok and Instagram social media and, when promoting products, can show information that will not be detrimental will later become consumers of products that will be endorsed on Tiktok social media and Instagram. In Islamic business ethics, celebrity endorsement is reasonable when business people ask Tiktok and Instagram celebrities to promote their products by saying the ability and quality of the product are actually without exaggerating, and consumers know it is just a promotion.

The endorsement of celebrity endorsers is common nowadays as influences use social media widely (Guruge 2018). Many small, medium, and large companies compete for celebrities to promote brand product advertisements. TikTok and Instagram grow rapidly to better drive audience intention (Duffy 2017). It is not uncommon for companies to be willing to spend very high costs to get advertising stars who create the image of their products and companies. Even now, many models from ordinary backgrounds become advertising models by showing the attractive and detailed side of the advertised product. Business actors ask for endorsement models for photos of advertised products and share them on social media. In addition, endorsers also use audio-visuals, such as recording product details and describing them in very interesting language.

A company must certainly pay attention to how the ethics or morals of an endorser whether it can be applied properly, correctly, and following sharia or business ethics in Islam because if the morals of an endorser are good and good, it will be able to cause satisfaction to consumers who will and have used the product. The first thing that a person values about themselves is, of course, how the morals are attached to him; if it does not reflect bad morals, it will certainly be a negative value for him and vice versa; if it reflects good morals, it will certainly be a positive value for him.

Conclusion

Endorsement in Islam is a marketing communication strategy that supports celebrities such as influencers, bloggers, and others as a tool to support and support the attractiveness of products endorsed on Tiktok and Instagram social media in ways and processes that follow Islamic principles. Endorsement business ethics in Islam are goods endorsed by genuine and halal products, being friendly, polite and polite, Muslim women endorsers must cover their aurat, do not praise products excessively, not using swearing, being transparent, loosening products, and do not demonize other products. The practice of endorsement carried out by some Muslim endorsers on Tiktok and Instagram social media only aims to make other people interested in buying. Still, the endorser does not use or buy the endorsed product aforementioned. Then, the five principles of business ethics in Islam, which, if implemented, ensure that there are no cases of fraud that occur and are felt by consumers. These concepts are unity, equilibrium, free will, responsibility, and benevolence.

The practice of endorsement on social media Tiktok and Instagram found that Muslim endorsers still make promotional advertisements with discrepancies in the products to be endorsed. Some products in the endorsement upload are not registered with BPOM and halal labels from MUI. It is also mentioned that endorsers do not highlight product deficiencies when promoting products but only show product excellence. As for endorsers who only focus on product endorsements but do not buy and use their endorsed products, and endorsers also still show aurat when promoting products on Tiktok and Instagram social media, should be endorsers Muslims are obliged in Islam to cover the aurat, not only to show beauty but also to show ability and skill as Muslim endorsers. The advice given is as follows: Muslim endorsers should be more selective in accepting endorser offers and pay attention to ethics in doing business so as not to violate Islamic law. Online business people must choose endorsers who can promote products on social media, Tiktok, and Instagram that do not violate business ethics in Islam.

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Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Darmawati compiled ideas and research drafts. He is responsible for collecting data in the field, compiling research instruments and providing research funding. Darmawati also contributed to finding the correct informant for the interview. Hasan Basri: responsible for compiling transcripts of research results, coding data and conducting the interpretation process. He contributed to selecting literature related to the topic under study and translating it from the source to the target language.

Declaration of Competing Interest

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An Examination of the Supply-Side Stakeholders' Views towards Health Tourism Investments in the Region of Thessaly, Greece

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Abstract: The study aims to examine the views of local executives and managers in Thessaly, Greece related to the potential profitability of investing in the health tourism industry. Furthermore, the study attempts to shed some light on the factors that affect their views about health tourism investments. The data are collected through self-administered questionnaires to stakeholders in facilities that have the potential, or they are already, engaged in the health tourism industry. The sample is collected from a wide range of facilities, namely hotels, hospitals, private clinics, rehabilitation centres and nursing homes. Kendall's tau-b correlation statistics and logistic regression models are employed to detect the driving forces on the formation of attitudes towards health tourism investments. Current research regarding health tourism in Greece is rather limited. In addition, the majority of relevant international studies examines factors shaping the demand side. The present study utilizes a sample from the supply side, thus of stakeholders in related sectors and can enhance our knowledge about their stances towards health tourism investments and the factors shaping these stances.

Keywords: health tourism investments; attract factors; economic development; expectations; Greece.

JEL Classification: R58; Z32; R11.

Introduction

The global tourism market constitutes one of the most vibrant service markets with upward expansion trends prior to the pandemic onset. The international tourism sector growth is responsible for a large share of job openings in the regional labour markets, it creates advantageous multiplier effects in several other economic markets and it is contributing substantially to local economic development (ILO 2022). The tourism sector was among the sectors mostly hit by the disruption of economic activity and free movement during the pandemic, but it started gradually to exhibit recovery signs and there are optimistic views that the tourism industry might fully recover even as close as in 2023 (Zhang *et al.* 2023).

The Greek tourist sector consists one of most profitable and priority sectors in Greece (Lolos *et al.* 2021). In specific, the tourist sector accounted for approximately 17% of the country's GDP in 2013 which rose between 27.5% to 33.1% in 2019. The sector also generates a demand for products and services of around 34 billion euros annually and it is responsible for the employment of around 18.3% of total employees (Agiomirgianakis and Sfakianakis, 2022; Kalantzi *et al.* 2017). While tourism can entail different forms (cultural tourism, religion tourism, food tourism and the like), the discussion around the growing effects of health tourism is starting to attract the interest of researchers. Health tourism is a broader notion than medical tourism and it involves all geographic movements of people in order to receive medical care, aesthetic treatment, prevention, relaxation and wellness services to maintain, improve or restore physical and mental wellbeing (Klimova and Kuca 2020). While health tourism is a rapidly expanding branch of tourism at the international level, limited research in Greece has focused on the potential dynamics and characteristics of health tourism in the country. Current research mainly focuses on the medical tourism industry and mainly examining the demand side and the associated factors that promote demand for medical tourism services (Karadayi-Usta and Serdar Asan 2020).

Following the above, the present study aims to examine the factors that affect stakeholders' opinions and attitudes towards investments in the health tourism sector in the region of Thessaly, located in Central Greece. While the region of Thessaly is a small region, still it began to quickly arise as a health tourist destination at the internal and international market, with a rapid expansion in private clinics, nursing homes, rehabilitation centres and the like that attract patients from various parts of Greece and other countries, *i.e.* mostly European. The sample is collected through online questionnaires to various stakeholders of establishments that may have or have the potential to engage in health tourism activities, namely hotels, hospitals, private clinics, rehabilitation centres and nursing homes. Although the sample is limited in the area of Thessaly, the analysis can provide some valuable insights on the attitudes of the stakeholders regarding the potential profitability of investments in the health tourism industry and to the opinions that formulate these attitudes. In general, the study indicates that stakeholders who adopt more positive stances regarding the effects of health tourism on the economy, those who are more optimistic towards health tourism prospects in the region and those who feel that there is adequacy of supportive services in the area, are the ones more likely to view health tourism as a profitable investment. The next section provides a detailed literature review on the drivers of stakeholders' attitudes regarding health tourism. Section 2 presents the dataset and the methodology adopted in the study. Section 3 discusses the empirical findings and finally, Section 4 concludes the paper.

1. Literature Review

The health tourism industry is considered to be a robust industry with closely inter-related supporting markets such as the wellness market, the travel market and the like, which is evolving quite rapidly in the past few decades (Wong and Sa'aid Hazley 2021). The tourism industry is considered the third largest economic market in the European Union and as such, it exerts positive spillovers to local labour markets, boost investment, generates income and contributes to the expansion of interrelated markets (Roman *et al.* 2022). Health tourism is a growing branch of the global tourism market with great opportunities for further expansion. The vast majority of relevant research focuses on medical tourism that constitutes a narrower branch of health tourism, mainly concentrated on seeking medical treatment services in areas other than the area of residence. However, health tourism includes all medical, spa and wellness, and curative services. It seems that current-state-of-the-art research in health tourism investigates issues around the demand side, namely health tourists' satisfaction, health effects following the consumption of health tourism services, the choice of destination and the like (Roman *et al.* 2022).

It seems that the main driving forces of the expansion in health tourism are the differences in health treatment costs between the areas of origin and destination, the long waiting lists, the differences in the quality of services and the personnel, or the lack of relevant treatments in the area of residence. A significant competitive advantage is obtained by less developed countries who face lower labor costs and have become major competitors in the global medical tourism market, namely India, Thailand, Turkey, Malaysia and so on (Sultana *et al.* 2014; Zhong *et al.* 2021).

Fewer studies examine the side of supply in the health tourism market, and in particular, the choices, attitudes and stances of providers of health tourism services. In addition, the majority of studies concentrate on medical tourism, a narrower construct of health tourism. To this end, Karadayi-Usta and Serdar Asan (2020) underline that medical tourism offers opportunities to combine health care services with vacation, and facilitates the cooperation of several implicated partners from the supply network. The researchers examine the medical tourism supply chain network of the businesses that are involved in the sector, ranging from health facilities to accommodation providers and transportation facilities. In detail, they proceed to in-depth interviews with managers of associated facilities in Turkey and the conclusions derived indicate that a vast network of services providers should be well coordinated and well collaborated in order to provide a package of medical tourism services of high standards in order to attract medical care tourists.

There is limited evidence on health or medical tourism research for Greece. While it is true that the tourism market is one of the sectors contributing significantly to the country's GDP, there are still scarce evidence on the different specializations of tourism such as health tourism. However, studies underline the positive impact the expansion of international tourism exerts upon economic activity and there are evidence suggesting that the tourism market growth can help mitigate the negative shocks of recessions and facilitate the economy's recovery after a period of negative economic shocks (Lolos *et al.* 2021). When it comes to health tourism, a study that is closer to the research questions of the present study is the one of Sarantopoulos *et al.* (2014). The researchers state that while Greece has some natural advantages such as the infrastructures, the scenery and the tourism expertise, still medical tourism is not of high priority at the policy making level. They examine a large sample of hotel executives' willingness to invest in medical tourism in relation to their opinions and attitudes. It seems that while the majority of the respondents are willing to invest in medical tourism services provision, they have serious reservations on the ability of the local networks to support medical tourism and the personnel training. A subsequent research work stresses that stakeholders in Greece are aware of the positive effects of the medical tourism growth on local development and they are willing to invest in medical tourism services provision.

However, there is not much evidence to the authors' knowledge, on the attitudes and stances of managers and executives from all sectors that have the potential to engage in the global health care tourism market. The present study attempts to remedy this issue by examining the stakeholders' views towards health tourism investments and by identifying factors that drive these views.

2. Data and Methodology

2.1 The Dataset

The data are collected from a primary research survey that was conducted in Greece in 2020-2021. The survey is limited in the region of Thessaly in Greece. Thessaly is located in Central Greece, and it is characterised by a remarkable expansion in the provision of health tourism services. The questionnaire is targeted towards specific stakeholders closely engaged to the health tourism industry. In specific, the data are obtained self-administered questionnaires through online platforms to managers and executives of public hospitals, private clinics, rehabilitation units, nursing homes and hotels of 4* and 5*. While an attempt to draw information from all relevant units in Thessaly was made, the final sample (after removing incomplete information) consists of representatives from 14 public hospitals, 27 private clinics, 11 rehabilitation centres, 17 nursing homes and 81 hotels.

The main question of interest involves the stakeholder's opinions regarding the potential profit of investing in health tourism services, namely:

'Do you believe that offering health tourism services is a profitable investment for your unit?'

The respondents' answers are coded between those that answer positively ('1') and the remainder who do not believe that investing in health tourism services can be profitable for the establishment they are employed in ('0').

The determinants investigated in the empirical analysis, involves the participants' stances regarding certain business and sector characteristics related to health tourism. First, an indicator is employed regarding the respondents' assessments regarding the level of adequacy of businesses related to athletic, recreational and touring activities in the region under examination. The answers range on a 5-Likert scale from 'not at all' up to 'too many' and a dummy indicator is constructed with the value of '1' for responses above the sample average and '0' otherwise. Attract factors for incoming health tourists in the area of Thessaly, are crucial to understand and these factors can affect respondents' stances against investments in health tourism. Therefore, a question is administered that asks for the potential factors that may attract health tourists in the region of Thessaly, based on the opinion of the respondents. The potential attracts factors examined in the study are respectively: 'Low cost', 'High quality of health services', 'Tourism and cultural factors', 'The climate' and, 'Easy to access'. Dummy variables for each pull factor are created. The fifth factor dummy, namely 'easy to access' is omitted from the regression models, thus serving as the reference dummy. In addition, an indicator regarding the effect of health tourism upon economic development is also drawn. Respondents are asked whether they believe that health tourism can contribute to the economic development of the region. Answers are again coded between '1: yes' and '0: no'. Finally, individual expectations about the evolution of health tourism can facilitate or discourage investments. Therefore, a question asking the respondents' expectations about the evolution of health tourism prospects in the region of Thessaly in the next five years is also administered. The information received is used to construct a dummy variable distinguishing between those feeling ‘quite’ or ‘too much’ optimistic and those who either assess their expectations as mediocre or even less.

2.2 Methodology

Firstly, Kendall’s tau-b rank correlation coefficients are estimated due to the qualitative nature of the variables included in the analysis. Kendall’s tau-b is considered more appropriate for small sized datasets as in this case and produces similar results to Spearman rank correlation coefficient (Conover 1999; Walker 2016). In addition, logistic regression models are estimated with heteroskedasticity-corrected standard errors, in order to better understand the driving forces of stakeholders’ attitudes towards investments in the health tourism sector.

3. Results

3.1 Descriptive Statistics

Figure 1 presents the mean percentage values of each response for the dependent indicator. In detail, it seems that the vast majority of the stakeholders reviewed, state that they consider the health tourism sector as a profitable investment (81.97%). Only the remaining 18.03% believe that investing in health tourism services provision cannot be profitable for their establishment.

Figure 2 presents the mean percentage values in the answers of the participants regarding the effect of health tourism expansion upon the economic development in the region of Thessaly. In particular, the majority of respondents seem to view health tourism as a contributing factor that can boost regional economic development. A little less than half of the sample believes that health tourism growth can boost ‘a lot’ the economic development of the region (40.98%). Another 36.07% of the sample participants believe that the expansion of the sector can help ‘quite a lot’ economic development. While 17.21% of the respondents state that the health tourism industry can boost ‘somewhat’ economic development, only 5.74% of the respondents believe the opposite.

Finally, Figure 3 presents the mean percentage values of the sample answers regarding their expectations on the growth of the health tourism industry in the region in the next five years. The analysis of the responses indicates that quite a few respondents are greatly optimistic about the future growth of the health tourism industry. In specific, 32.79% of the respondents believe that the health tourism industry will grow ‘a lot’ or ‘quite a lot’ in the next five years. A more restrained response is obtained by 28.69% of the respondents who believe that the health tourism industry will grow ‘somewhat’ in the following five-year period. Finally, a large part of the sample believes that the future growth of the health tourism services will be either ‘low’ or ‘none at all’ (38.52%).

Figure 1. The mean % of respondents’ answers on whether they consider that the health tourism sector is a good investment

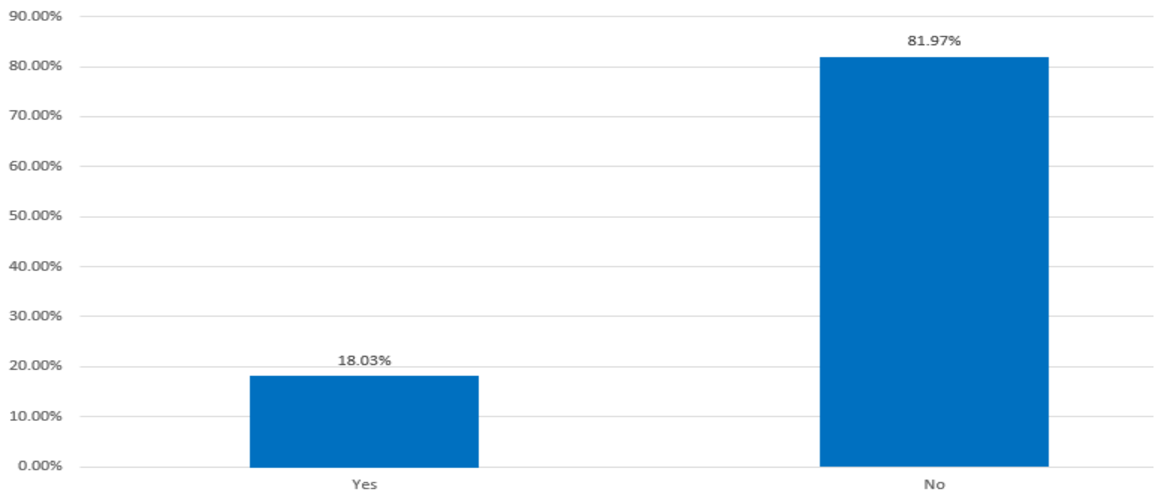


Figure 2. The mean % of respondents' answers on whether they believe that health tourism can contribute to the economic development of the region of Thessaly

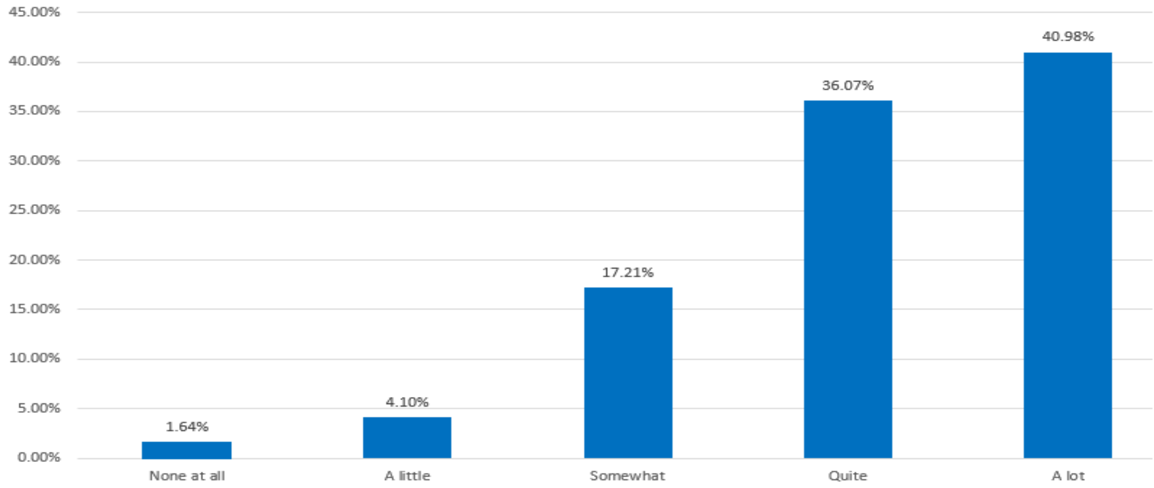
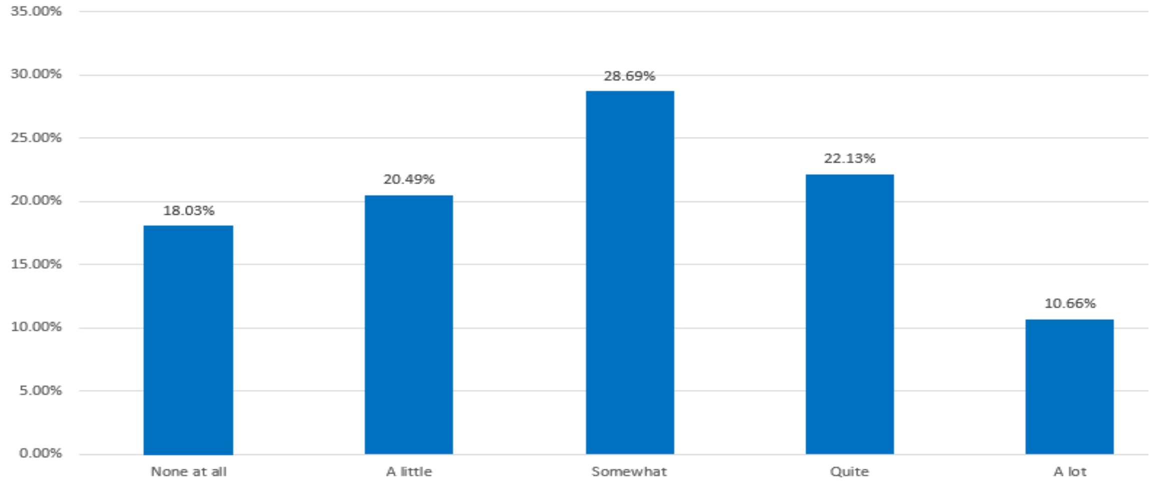


Figure 3. The mean % of respondents' answers on whether they believe that health tourism will be expanded in the region of Thessaly in the next five years



3.2 Statistical Findings

Table 1 presents the Kendall tau-b's correlation coefficients between the variables included in the analysis, along with the estimated levels of statistical significance. A positive correlation of low strength is obtained between individual beliefs about investments in health tourism and beliefs about the effect of health tourism expansion upon economic development. This means that respondents who view health tourism services as profitable investments also tend to assess highly the sector's contribution to regional economic development and vice versa. Similarly, a positive but of low degree correlation is found between individual stances in health tourism investments and expectations about health tourism's future in the area. Once again it seems that individuals who consider health tourism as a profitable investment also tend to be optimistic about the sector's future growth. A strong and negative correlation is observed between factors attracting health tourists, namely 'low cost' and 'tourism and cultural activities'. Similarly, a weaker and negative correlation is observed between the factor 'low cost' and 'climate'. The pull factor of health tourists 'quality of services' is negatively related to the factors 'tourism and cultural activities' and 'climate' but positively related to the beliefs about economic development and expectations of the health tourism industry growth. Finally, respondents who tend to believe that health tourism affects positively economic growth are those with more optimistic expectations about the future of the health tourism industry.

Table 1. Kendall tau-b's statistics

Variables	Investment to health tourism	Adequate development of recreational, etc. companies	Factor: low cost	Factor: quality of services	Factor: tourism and cultural activities	Factor: climate	Health tourism effect upon economic development
Adequate development of recreational, etc. companies	0.121						
Factor: low cost	0.030	-0.053					
Factor: quality of services	0.108	0.161 **	-0.049				
Factor: tourism and cultural activities	0.060	0.109	-0.553 ***	-0.289 ***			
Factor: climate	0.075	-0.058	-0.233 ***	-0.313 ***	0.095		
Health tourism effect upon economic development	0.282 ***	0.035	-0.000	0.284 ***	-0.107	0.086	
Expectations regarding health tourism prospects in the next five years	0.156 *	0.115	0.130	0.157 *	-0.049	-0.115	0.280 ***

Note: Robust standard errors are calculated. * p <0.1; ** p <0.05; *** p <0.01.

Table 2 presents the empirical estimates of two logistic regression models, with individual beliefs regarding the profitability of the health tourism industry as the dependent variable. Model 1 presents the empirical estimates of the model augmented with information on the indicator of the adequacy of recreational, touring and similar businesses. Unfortunatly, in model 1, rehabilitation centres and nursing homes are excluded since there is not available information on the indicator under discussion. Model 2 provides estimates for the full sample but without the inclusion of the former indicator. In both models, the factor of low cost is associated positively and significantly at the 5% level of statistical significance. This means that stating low cost as a factor that attracts health tourists in the area, is associated with higher chances to state that investment in health tourism services is profitable for the business. The same stands for the factor of tourism and cultural activities, namely individuals who consider the presence of tourism and cultural activities as important in attracting health tourists, also have higher chances to assess the provision of health tourism services as profitable for their establishments. Respondents who believe that the health tourism industry is significant for the economic development of the region, also have higher chances to find as profitable the health tourism activities. Having optimistic expectations about the future of the health tourism industry is also associated with higher chances to view health tourism services as profitable. Still, the relationship is insignificant in Model 2, suggesting the existence of unobserved heterogeneity between the indicator of individual expectations and the indicator on the adequacy of recreation and the like businesses.

Table 2. The determinants of individual stances towards investments in health tourism, Logistic Regression results

	Model 1	Model 2
Adequate development of recreational, etc. companies	0.309	-
Factor: low cost	1.598 **	1.125 *
Factor: quality of services	0.511	0.791
Factor: tourism and cultural activities	1.306 *	1.269 **
Factor: climate	1.006	0.872
Health tourism effect upon economic development	1.095 **	1.292 ***
Expectations regarding health tourism prospects in the next five years	1.416 *	0.676
Constant	-1.272	-0.902
Pseudo R^2	0.155	0.129
Wald chi-square	12.36 *	12.92 **
No. of observations	122	150

Note: Robust standard errors are calculated. * p <0.1; ** p <0.05; *** p <0.01.

Conclusion

This paper attempts to shed some light on the views of stakeholders related to the health tourism market. It also provides some first findings on the driving factors that affect these views. The study focuses on the region of Thessaly, located in Central Greece. The empirical findings indicate that the majority of executives surveyed understand that investment in health care tourism is a profitable choice for their facilities. The stakeholders who believe that the low cost of the services provided and the availability of tourism and cultural activities are important to attract health tourists, adopt a more positive stance towards health tourism investments. Similarly, those who recognise the positive effects of the expansion of health tourism upon economic development, also take a more favourable stance towards these investments. In addition, the executives that are more optimistic and hold higher expectations of the growth of health tourism in the near future, they also tend to think of such investments as profitable. These findings highlight that executives who are more aware of the operation of the health tourism industry and they acknowledge the multiplying soothing effects upon the economy, are more likely to be engaged in the health tourism sector. However, the majority of stakeholders seem to understand the socio-economic opportunities that arise by investing in health tourism services. These findings are in line with other relevant studies in Greece who also stress the positive stance of stakeholders towards health tourism but there is lack of an organised policy at the central level (Sarantopoulos and Laloumis, 2015).

The research is based on a limited sample and under this caveat, the findings should be viewed with caution. However, they still can serve current research, by detecting the driving forces of the stakeholder's decisions to invest in health tourism. The findings derived by the study can shed some light on the attitudes of the stakeholders that are employed in establishments closely related to health tourism services. They can also serve as a significant policy tool for the appropriate provision of motives to executives, in order for them to engage in the global health tourism market. Greece has several comparative advantages such as the location, the cultural heritage, the climate, the infrastructure and the personnel. Still, at the policy level there is need to prioritise measures and policy actions to attract stakeholders in the health tourism sector and provide them the necessary motives to enter this global highly competitive but very promising (in terms of the socioeconomic benefits gained) Market.

Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Georgia Giannake: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Software, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Funding acquisition.
Athina Economou: Investigation, Methodology, Supervision, Data curation, Validation, Writing – review and editing.
Mary Geitona: Investigation, Methodology, Supervision, Data curation, Validation, Writing – review and editing.

Theodore Metaxas: Investigation, Methodology, Supervision, Data curation, Validation, Writing – review and editing.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Functional Conflicts in Tourist Coastal Resort Cities with Special Spa Status in Poland. The Stakeholder Approach

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Abstract: This study aims to identify and analyse the potential conflicts of tourism, resort and residents' functions based on coastal resort cities of the highest importance in Poland (Sopot, Ustka, Kołobrzeg, Świnoujście). Coastal health resorts are specific urban units where tourist and resort functions provided under high environmental restrictions dominate the primary urban function typically focused on social and resident matters. Coastal resort cities attract tourists heavily. Hence, such cities must deal with varied stakeholder expectations. This may lead to conflicts in sustainable urban development.

The analysis considers the stakeholder perspective regarding the occurrence of various conflicts. Different research methods have been used, including case studies and stakeholder analysis based on the salience model and classifying stakeholders into homogenous groups with the attributes assigned.

The diverse and often divergent needs of stakeholders in coastal cities require a specific approach to developing such urban units, including stakeholder relationship management. A method used for the resort stakeholder analysis is based on classical stakeholder classification proposed by Mitchel, Agle and Wood (1997).

The nature of functions performed in resort cities naturally lead to internal and developmental conflicts. However, based on an assessment of attributes assigned their evaluation across key stakeholder groups, the study results show that these conflicts occurred dormant in studied cities.

The research methods used, an approach taken, and results achieved can be successfully used by decision-makers responsible for urban development to identify and manage potential conflicts deriving from diversified expectations of urban stakeholders or conflicting urban functions.

The article is of an international character and might be used to various aspects of city management, as it combines stakeholder management approach with urban development and potential function conflicts.

Keywords: sustainable urban development; stakeholder analysis; coastal resort city; special spa status; urban functions; conflict management.

JEL Classification: M21; Q01; Q56; I18; Z32; R11.

Introduction

Coastal resorts are an attractive mass tourism destination, especially in the summer season. The realisation of socially desirable resort functions may entail functional conflicts resulting from divergent expectations of different resort city stakeholders. The article focuses on the stakeholders' conflicts from the permeation of urban functions with tourist ones. It finds and discusses various aspects of the potential function conflicts in coastal resort cities and addresses those issues concerning Poland's four key coastal resort cities. Understanding potential conflicts in cities with unique functions, such as resorts, tourism, and port, will allow deepening knowledge of the functioning of complex urban organisms.

The article provides a detailed review of studies on urban functions and tourism urbanisation concepts regarding sea resorts, including wellness, and well-being concepts and stakeholders conflict management.

Poland is a member of the EU and one of many countries with well-developed health resorts. Therefore, with its specific spa cities, Poland can be a point of reference for other countries. Health resort cities, through their care for the environment, set development trends for other cities. At the same time, such a strong development of the spa function and the implementation of environmental protection priorities force potential conflicts that may escalate during the intense development of the city.

The structure of the paper is, therefore, as follows. Section 1 outlines the current literature review on resorts and health services. In section 2, the Research approach is described. Also, the group of cities is presented as they form the fundament for our research. Section 3 shows the results of the study. Section 4 includes discussion based on the study's results and literature review.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Specialization of Resort Cities

The desire for health-promoting services has dominated the noticeable increase in interest in health tourism. This is particularly the case in EU countries, while outside the EU, trends include beauty treatments, affirmation, and healthy lifestyles (Altinay and Kozak, 2021; Tomić and Košić, 2020; De la Hoz-Correa et al. 2018; Dryglas and Salamaga, 2018; Aydin and Karamehmet, 2017; Dimitrovski and Todorović, 2015; Manaf et al. 2015; Gustavo, 2010). The specialisation of resort cities is particularly related to health services broadly. Medical tourism is their healthcare and travel both coincide (Hira and Kaur 2023), but medical refers more to health drivers. However, Büyüközkan *et al.* (2021) also include rehabilitation as part of health tourism. Medical (a.k.a. health) tourism differs from wellness (a.k.a. wellbeing) tourism in terms of the use of natural healing resources (Dryglas and Salamanga 2018), while wellness (in combination with wellbeing and fitness) does not necessarily offer such resources (Voigt 2014).

Wellness tourism deals with the overall well-being of the body, and mind, and is about maintaining health through special treatment by healthcare institutions (Dimitrovski and Todorović 2015; Csirmaz and Pető 2015). Well-being tourism is a form of wellness but focuses more on emotional issues.

A particular type of resort presents coastal resort towns (cities). Coastal destinations as parts of the resort and spa industry, and the rediscovery of natural well-being attributes of sea, sand, and sun are being repackaged within the wellness paradigm (Page *et al.* 2017). Page *et al.* (2017) also notices that coastal resorts with natural attributes attract an ageing population. In specific cases, they also can attract younger tourists by offering a range of entertainment.

Although destination as an object of analysis has experienced a decline due to different internal and external factors influencing the place (Chapman and Light 2016), resorts might experience similar problems resulting from the blending of tourist and urban functions and the diffusion of conflicts on this background. In coastal resorts, 'tourism as urbanisation' might be the key development factor (Clavé and Wilson 2016). Unfortunately, there are only 18 papers related to the subject that is registered in the Scopus database for the period 2014-2022 in the area of social sciences, economics and management (keywords search: ('coastal' AND 'city') AND ('resort' OR 'spa').

1.2 Resort Cities' Conflicts

Conflicts in tourist cities are not a new subject (Sagan 2000). There are evident examples of tourism impact studies and conflicts between tourism development and coastal towns. Examples of such impacts include real estate prices, social conflicts, overburdening local infrastructure, or even overloading with tourists on cruise ships. Tourism creates employment, influences urban development, and generates higher revenues for economic actors. According to sustainable development, tourism revenues can be perceived from economic, social, and environmental perspectives (Postma and Schmuecker 2017).

Postma and Schuecker (2017) indicates the expectations of different stakeholders towards tourism, where residents seek a quality of life, consumers seek a quality of experience, and service providers (tourist suppliers, providers, tourism brokers) seek quality and opportunities. The mechanism of conflict between key stakeholders is related to social exchange theory, *i.e.*, the belief of tourism's positive or negative impacts. However, there is a lack of comprehensive research on seaside resorts, which presents Table 1.

Table 1. Scopus documents on resort stakeholders' conflicts published 2014-2022 in the English language (15.04.2023)

Key words search	No of documents
'resort' AND (*'stakeholder'* OR *'stakeholders'* OR *'conflicts'*)	338
'resort' AND *'conflicts'*	285
'resort' AND *'stakeholder'*	245
'coastal' AND *'resort'*	134
'seaside' AND *'resort'*	102
(*'coastal resorts'* OR *'health resorts'* OR *'seaside resorts'* OR *'seaside health resorts'* OR *'coastal health resorts'* OR *'resort city'* OR *'resort city'* AND (*'stakeholder'* OR *'stakeholders'* OR *'conflicts'*)	23
('coastal' AND 'city') AND ('resort' OR 'spa').	18
(*'coastal'* AND *'resort'*) AND (*'stakeholder'* OR *'stakeholders'*)	9
(*'coastal'* AND *'resort'*) AND *'conflicts'*	7
(*'coastal'* AND *'spa'*) AND *'stakeholder'*	6

Source: Own elaborations based on Scopus.

Only 6 Scopus papers dated 2014-2022 (in social sciences, economics, and management) address conflicts in the context of tourists and residents (keywords search: ('spa cities' OR 'resorts' OR 'health resorts') AND ('conflicts' AND 'residents' AND 'tourists') – Table 1.

1.3 Over - Tourism as a Specific Emanation of Conflict in Tourist Cities

Direct and indirect annoyance to residents due to an increase of tourists in cities, referred to as 'over-tourism' (Nunes *et al.* 2021), can lead to conflicts between tourists, tourism suppliers and residents (Postma and Schmuecker 2017), and can lead to 'tourism fatigue' by urban residents (Nunes *et al.* 2021). The main source of the conflict is the overuse of the infrastructure developed mainly or partly for local residents (Freya and Briviba 2021).

Over-tourism is a significant problem for coastal tourist cities. This issue appears in the literature, for example, in terms of sustainable tourism development (Insch 2020) and the involvement of technology and smart city to address over-tourism (Pasquinelli and Trunfio 2020). Over-tourism can be continuous but can also result from hosting a specific event, such as the Olympic Games (Schnitzer *et al.* 2021). The problem is so widespread that despite the competition between cities, cooperation is clear to deal with the discharge of over-tourism (Sibrijns and Vanneste 2021). The most frequently cited examples of over-tourism in Europe are Barcelona and Venice, but the issue was an important topic of municipal elections in Amsterdam and Barcelona in 2018 (Koens *et al.* 2018).

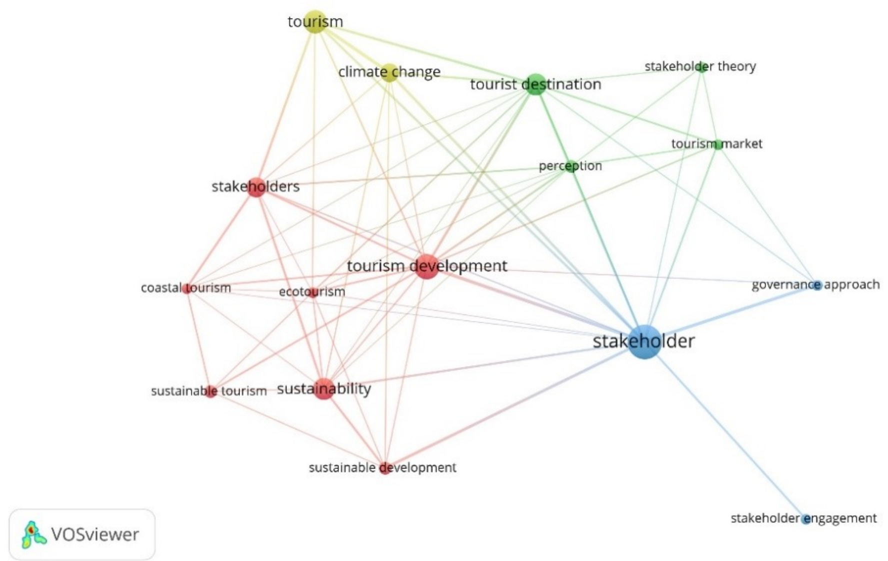
1.4 Summary of the Literature Research

The literature review reveals a gap in research on urban function conflicts in the context of the city's key stakeholders. There is even less research about resort cities, although the conflict of functions is particularly evident from the perspective of residents' and tourists' expectations.

In conclusion, literature has a research gap covering conflict issues in coastal resort towns. The phenomenon of over-tourism, which is gaining in scale, is the cause of increasing inconveniences resulting from tourism development, including health tourism. In the latter context, the specialisation of resort towns is a source of more exposure of natural assets to the impact of tourism flows. Although tourism, as a rule, is synonymous with local development, the knowledge of adverse effects should allow for finding mitigating actions.

The validity of the study assumptions was based on bibliometric data analysis of the co-occurrence of words connotated with 'tourism' context leads using the Scopus database and VOSviewer (full-counting Scopus documents dated 2014-2022 in social sciences, economics, and management).

Figure 1. The Network Visualization of Literacy Topic Area based on 'resort' AND 'stakeholder' in Scopus



Source: Own elaborations.

The analysis of keywords repetition in 116 documents having the words: 'resort' and 'stakeholder' resulted in the three keyword clusters.

2. Materials and Method

2.1. Research Design

The thesis is that in coastal resort cities, the resort and tourism functions are in mutual conflict. Therefore, the research question is whether the resort and tourism functions' conflicts also affect coastal resort cities operating under specific provisions of the legal framework?

Table 2. Research scheme

Phase	Step	Tool	Outcome
Framing and designing	1. Framing the problem	Literature review	Thesis Research question
	2. Building theory	Literature review VOSviewer software	Research gap identification
	3. Describing the methods		Description
Preparing, collecting	4. Conducting a case study	Case study analysis	Selection of case studies Data collection
Analyzing and concluding	5. Stakeholders identification and categorization	Stakeholders map and salience model based on simulated responses	Stakeholder salience model
	6. Defining conflict areas	Research report based on different methods	Finished manuscript
	7. Answering research question	Research report, paper template	

Source: Own elaborations.

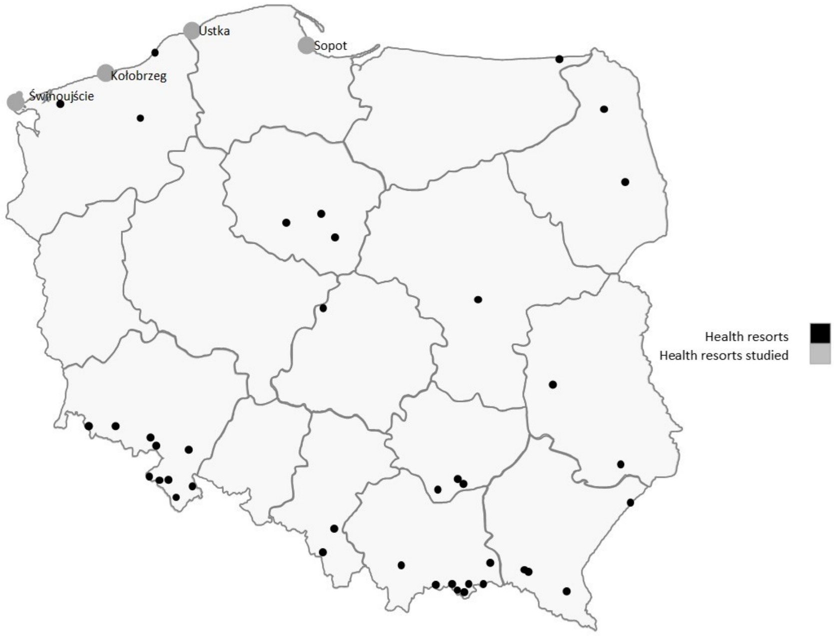
To achieve the research aim, the paper explores the stakeholders and areas of conflict and analyses the resort and tourism functions of coastal resort cities in Poland. The analysis was conducted from stakeholders' perspectives on mutual conflicts. Different research methods have been used to answer that question, including case study analysis and a form of the resort stakeholder analysis elaborated for this research. Different research methods deal to answer the research question, including literature review, case study analysis, and a form of the resort stakeholder analysis elaborated for this research. The case study method allows for the formulation of the background as it forms a type of intensive research (Swanborn 2010) and enables designing specific research questions to provide a range of evidence (Gilham 2000). The analysis is embedded in a real context (Yin 2012) and a timeframe relevant to a city-specific environment. A case study analysis is recommended when the actors' behaviours cannot be controlled (Yin 1994). The research wants to take a holistic view and explore social processes in rich and complex detail (Lindgreen *et al.* 2021). A method of stakeholder analysis is based on the classical stakeholders' classification proposed by Mitchel, Agle and Wood (1997).

2.2. Health Resort Cities in Poland

The health resorts in Poland are regulated by relatively restrictive legislation (Act, 2005). The legal conditioning of health resorts in Poland is considered more stringent than in most EU countries. It is also specific that domestic tourists, and beneficiaries of spa and resort services dominate in Poland. Under the Act (2005), resorts in Poland are an integral part of the health care system. They are implemented using natural resources and unique facilities such as pump rooms, graduation towers, parks, arranged sections of the seacoast, spa pools or underground mining pits. In addition, there are specific requirements that must be met jointly to apply for the status of a health resort (Act, 2005), such as possession of natural healing resources, residence in a climate with medicinal properties, a medicinal plant, fulfilment of restrictive environmental protection requirements, control of appropriate technical infrastructure (in the field of water and sewage management, energy and public transport).

Health resorts are an essential and integral part of the Polish healthcare system (Szromek and Romaniuk 2014). The specific status and relationships between the various stakeholders in Poland's health resorts result from historical conditions and systemic transformations (Węclawowicz-Bilska and Wdowiarz-Bilska 2019).

Figure 2. Spatial location of health resorts in Poland



Source: Own elaborations based on Wiktorowicz (2020).

In 2020, there were 45 statutory health resorts in Poland, 32 of which operated spa sanatoria for adult patients (Wieczorek and Wiktorowicz, 2020), where the conditions and standard of treatment were guaranteed by the state (Węclawowicz-Bilska and Wdowiarz-Bilska, 2019). Most spas have parks, and half have graduation towers or kinesitherapy. Among resort services, treatment of rheumatoid diseases (42 health resorts), orthopaedical and traumatic diseases (36 units) dominate. Less than half of the resorts offer services for treating nervous system disorders, cardiology, and the upper respiratory tract. In contrast, oncological diseases can be treated in two units and eye diseases in one (Wieczorek and Wiktorowicz, 2020). In 2022, based on the Resorts register, there are already 47 health resorts in Poland, including lowland health resorts (17), foothill health resorts

(15), mountain health resorts (9) and seaside health resorts (6). Within the group of seaside health resorts, 4 towns have significant spa and tourist potential and have strongly developed urban functions (Sopot, Kołobrzeg, Świnoujście and Ustka).

2.3. Study Sites Description

Four major coastal resort towns in Poland were included in the study: Świnoujście, Kołobrzeg, Ustka, and Sopot. The remaining two seaside resorts were excluded from the study due to failure to meet the assumptions, *i.e.*, the Dębki health resort is a village, and Kamień Pomorski is located on the Kamień Lagoon and not on the high seas. Primary data on each of the towns is provided in Table 3. All the towns obtained formal spa status 20 or more years ago.

Table 3. Key data of the researched resorts

Resort	The year of obtaining statutory rights	Historic resort heritage	Population 2020	Resort area in zone A*	Health resort treatment facilities in 2020
Świnoujście	1967	19th century	40,948	161.99 ha	3
Kołobrzeg	1967	19th century	46,198	627.05 ha (A1+A2)	4
Ustka	1988	20th century, pre-war period	15,199	171.45 ha	2
Sopot	1999	20th century, post-war period	35,286	143 ha (A1+A2)	3

* Zone A - a separated area of the health resort commune, in which there are healing devices and regulations in the field of spatial development.
Source: Own elaborations based on Statistics Poland and resort cities' statutes of: Kołobrzeg, Sopot, Świnoujście, Ustka.

Spa cities are not only tradition, unique architecture and special spa zones. These cities have a tourist base, attracting not only tourists, but also wealthy inhabitants. The analysed spa cities show significant differences in city budget revenues which are of a higher level than the average city in Poland.

Table 4. Changes in population density and budgetary income of resorts' towns per capita

	Population density in 2002 and 2020 [inhabitants / km2]			Budget income per capita in 2005 - 2020 [PLN, EUR*, current prices]		
	2002	2020	Change	2005	2020	Change
Świnoujście	213	203	-5%	3 426 (770)	14 753 (3315)	331%
Kołobrzeg	1 818	1 800	-1%	2 279 (512)	6 131 (1378)	169%
Ustka	1 615	1 492	-8%	2 317 (521)	6 931 (1558)	199%
Sopot	2 392	2 042	-15%	4 143 (931)	10 642 (2392)	157%

Source: Own elaborations based on Statistics Poland. Exchange as of 2.11.2021: nbp.pl, the average euro exchange rate in 2020

The data presented in the table show that all coastal resort cities experience the unfavourable phenomenon of negative migration, with a substantial simultaneous increase in incomes. Each examined city has a slightly different environmental potential, determining its resort functions. Table 5 presents the analysed resorts according to the natural resources, treatment directions and infrastructure as of 2020.

Table 5. Resort infrastructure and natural resources in the researched resorts in 2020

Resort	Natural resources	Treatment	Health resort treatment functions and infrastructure
Świnoujście	saline-mud-climatic	orthopedic-trauma, rheumatology, cardiology, and hypertension, upper and lower respiratory tract, obesity, endocrine disorders, nervous system diseases, osteoporosis, skin diseases, female diseases	Graduation towers, spa parks, a section of the seacoast, healing, and rehabilitation spa pools
Kołobrzeg	mud-climatic	orthopedic-trauma, rheumatology, cardiology and hypertension, upper, and lower respiratory tract, diabetes, obesity,	Graduation towers, spa parks, kinesiotherapy paths, a section of the seacoast arranged in a

Resort	Natural resources	Treatment	Health resort treatment functions and infrastructure
		endocrine, nervous system diseases, osteoporosis, skin diseases	section, healing, and rehabilitation spa pools
Ustka	hydrotherapy - saline, mud and climatic	orthopedic and traumatic, rheumatological, cardiological and hypertension, upper, and lower respiratory tract, endocrine diseases, diseases of the nervous system,	Graduation towers, spa parks, kinesiotherapy paths, seaside promenade
Sopot	Brine and climate	orthopedic and trauma, rheumatology, cardiology and hypertension, lower respiratory tract diseases, nervous system diseases, osteoporosis	Spa pump rooms, a decorated section of the seacoast, healing and rehabilitation spa pools

Source: own elaborations based on Wiktorowicz (2020).

The analysed cities have extensive healing resources. In addition, these cities have a well-developed resort infrastructure, which was already successively developed in the centrally controlled economy system until 1989. A more detailed analysis of the resources forming the basis for developing the resort functions of the cities presents Table 6.

Table 6. Classification of healing natural resources in coastal resorts in Poland (data for 2020)

Resort	Brines	Spa mud	Jodine	Minerals	Other resources
Świnoujście	deposits of therapeutic waters	peloid deposits	yes	no	climate
Kołobrzeg	underground therapeutic waters	yes	yes	therapeutic peat peloid	climate
Ustka	3.43% sodium chloride brine iodine hypothermic	yes	yes	healing peat deposits - peloid	climate
Sopot	4.2% sodium chloride water (brine), iodine water.	yes	yes	no	climate

Source: own elaborations based on resort cities' statutes of: Kołobrzeg, Sopot, Świnoujście, Ustka.

Maintaining the health resort status requires communes to protect natural resort resources. At the same time, having the status of a health resort is associated with certain restrictions on running a business and bans on building certain facilities. For example, it is forbidden to build industrial plants or facilities in a resort area whose activities may significantly negatively affect the area's natural values. In each studied resort city, strategic documents pay attention to the development of resort functions (City Strategy: Sopot, Świnoujście, Ustka, Kołobrzeg). Also, other planning documents, such as the Spatial Masterplan, note the concept of the resort city development. Moreover, the communes had to pass different resolutions to adopt the health resort statute (Health resort statute: Sopot, Ustka, Świnoujście, Kołobrzeg).

Historical resort traditions, dating back to the 19th century of the examined cities, are much older than their obtained spa status. The most significant infrastructure is presented in Kołobrzeg among the all analysed health resort cities. The most urbanised health resort is Sopot, being also a part of one of the largest metropolitan areas in Poland. Apart from being a health resort, each of the examined cities is also an attractive place for the development of summer mass tourism, which may cause stakeholders conflicts and may negatively influence residents. High tourist attractiveness results from the seaside location and other attributes, such as hotel base and spatial and architectural layout of cities. Therefore, the main challenge of sustainable urban development in the face of diverse stakeholder needs is to mitigate the conflict of functions.

On the one hand, these cities developed without a burdensome industrial sector. On the other hand, the development challenge is the short tourist season over the cool, off-summer Baltic Sea. In recent years, in Polish coastal cities, there is a moderate-intensity preseason of the influx of tourists, beginning in May. During the tourist season, the number of visitors significantly exceeds the number of residents. Therefore, a significant part of the economic base of cities relies on servicing external demand.

Focusing on tourist traffic during the two months of the short but intense tourist season is a reasonable strategy for entrepreneurs. The revenues cover the operational costs for the remaining months of the year. Therefore, the local authorities do not influence tourist traffic during the season. Then the tourist function dominates the primary function of cities, and inhabitants experience tourist nuisance particularly acutely.

The highest increase in accommodation places is noticeable in Kołobrzeg, where the spa function is the most developed. A constant upward trend in the arrival of tourists is clear in the examined cities. The covid-19 pandemic significantly limited the influx. The presented data indicate that the spa function does not significantly inhibit the development of the tourist function.

2.4. Framework for Conflict Analysis

In the Polish regulatory framework of health resorts, the critical issue is the protection of natural resources along with the climatic conditions of the areas granted under health resort status. Locally, the regulations apply to a health resort commune and result from the act on commune self-government, according to which the status of a resort commune may relate to the whole commune or its part. Resort cities must fulfil specific special development standards.

According to the act, the resort city divides into three zones. The spa infrastructure is in zone A, an area of special protection. Zones B and C are the buffer zone for zone A. Establishing industrial plants and activities harmful to the natural environment are excluded in all zones. At the same time, these cities should have proper proportions of green areas.

Table 7. Investment restrictions and requirements in resort zones in Poland

Zone A restrictions	Zone B restrictions	Zone C restrictions
1. industrial plants 2. single-family and multi-family residential buildings 3. detached garages 4. commercial facilities with a usable area ofmore than 400 m2 5. petrol stations and distribution points for petroleum products 6. landfills for solid and liquid waste 7. organizing mass events	1. industrial plants 2. petrol station, less than 500 m from the border of zone A of the health resort protection 3. landfills for solid and liquid waste	industrial plants
Zone A requirements	**Zone B requirements**	**Zone C requirements**
The percentage of green areas should be no less than 65%. There may be guesthouses, restaurants or cafes, betting, spa treatment and spa treatment equipment.	The percentage of green areas should be no less than 50%. There may be service and tourist facilities, including hotels, recreational, sports and communal, and housing.	The percentage of biologically active areas should be not less than 45%.

Source: Own elaborations based on Act (2005).

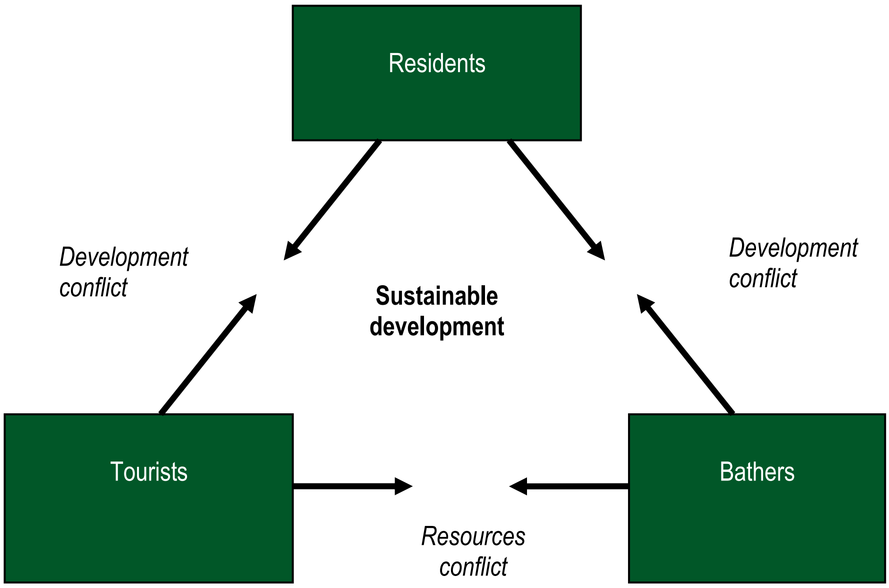
Apart from delineating specific protection zones, the city applying for the health resort status indicates and confirms its natural healing resources and determines the proposed directions of spa activities based on an inventory of the relevant tourist and resort infrastructure (Act, 2005). Conflicts of urban, tourist and spa functions may result in different expectations of residents, local entrepreneurs, local authorities, tourists, and bathers.

Cities are systems that function continuously in conflict situations. Principal conflict areas are property rights, access to resources, and development concepts (Fig. 3). Resort cities are especially prone to conflict.

Environmental protection in the resorts and the rigors in the development of zone A intensify conflicts over resources, especially land, which can be more intensively used for economic activities unrelated to resort activities. Resort infrastructure exists in resort cities, often found in the city centre, which excludes other types of development for divergent functions, *e.g.*, industrial development. The resort function also influences the priority scope of transport organisation in the city because the pollution of the environment by vehicles and noise must meet low standards in terms of decibel levels. The heat supply system must be modern for the air quality to be remarkably high.

Environmental protection standards are not as crucial for the tourist function as for the resort function, which focuses on a greater intensity of city exploitation. At the same time, the spa function, similarly to the tourist function, aims to serve the external demand, *i.e.*, patients or tourists who differ in the purpose of their stay, intensifying the development conflict. In selected coastal resort cities, the resort and tourist functions are parallel and overlap. Stakeholders often use the same hotel base and similar attractions. A characteristic feature of coastal resort towns is the fact that there are coastal belts with beaches in their areas, which are under the supervision of the maritime administration.

Figure 3. Conflicts triangle of the resort city



Source: Own study based on Fitzgerald and Leigh (2002).

At the same time, they play the role of spa facilities with iodotherapy and thalassotherapy. Still, their development is also subject to the control of the maritime state administration. Therefore, seaside resort cities are areas of strict regulation for the spa and state administration in health resorts and the coastal areas.

3. Results

3.1 Resorts Stakeholders' Analysis Method

Verifying the conflict triangle with regards to a coastal resort city, stakeholder analysis and categorisation were performed. Its goal was to figure out the interactions between the various categories of stakeholders and to understand attitudes and relationships across the full spectrum of stakeholders. A comprehensive stakeholder approach allowed us to understand the background of conflicts.

Based on general principles in the stakeholder management process, the first step of the research is to identify and categorise stakeholders (Zamojska and Susmarski 2017). Assigning attributes to each stakeholder (Mitchell, Agle and Wood 1997) and classification into homogenous groups allows to decide the attitude towards the project (inhere: the resort cities).

Understanding stakeholders' relations and their impact on health resort activity and medical tourism is crucial for making-decision processes (Peric *et al.* 2014). Stakeholder management is a communication tool and helps to manage conflicting stakeholders' interests in diverse types of projects (Pedrini and Ferri 2019). For example, Boerner and Jobst (2011) studied stakeholders' interests in German public theatres.

3.2 Resort Stakeholders' Selection and Identification Process

A better understanding of functional conflicts demands identifying, understanding, and analysing all the key resort stakeholders and their attributes. In general, stakeholders are any entities, individuals, groups, or institutions influencing or influenced by the activities of institutions (Eskerod *et al.* 2015; Mitchell *et al.* 1997) or projects (Aapaoja and Haapasalo 2014). In literature, stakeholders' approaches usually reflect in terms of companies or projects.

Regarding health resorts in Poland, a more proper approach would be the project approach. Setting up the resort zone has its start date and schedule and can be evaluated as an infrastructure project backed by cost-benefit analysis. Resorts can be recognised as infrastructure projects, characterised by complex interactions between stakeholders whose different interests are a source of conflicts (Zamojska and Susmarski 2017).

Local context and strong interdependencies between diverse stakeholders are essential in local growth. Kamassi *et al.* (2020) assume even that the development of medical tourism depends heavily on the stakeholders' relations. That is why stakeholders should be included as the main part of the decision-making process in resort projects. However, not much research on the stakeholders of resort projects has been published (Al Maamari 2020).

Table 8. Seaside health resorts stakeholders' identification and aggregation into groups

Stakeholders group	Example stakeholders
Local and State Authorities	health minister, governor (voivodeship leader), local government bodies, decision-making public institutions, public entities performing municipal tasks
Bathers	patients entitled to benefits free of charge, beneficiaries, fee-paying patients
Business	hotels and lodging providers, property developers, travel services operators, industrial enterprises
Environment	ecologists, natural environment, NGOs, local community
Financiers	health minister, marshal's office, municipality
Opinion Leaders and Media	NGOs, municipality, local media, professional and sectoral organisations
Residents	retiree residents, local labour market, working residents, schoolchildren and students, prospective residents
Resort Staff	the chief physician of the health resort, referral physicians, resort personnel
Tourists	domestic tourists, foreign tourists

Source: Own elaborations.

Table 9. Stakeholders groups exemplary attitudes to coastal resorts

Stakeholders group	Exemplary attitudes towards resorts
Local and State Authorities	health resorts, as an element of health care in Poland (Paszkowska, 2017) should develop
Bathers	interest in year-round access to resorts
Business	perception as a barrier to the development of certain types of entrepreneurial activity due to environmental limitations and the lack of areas intended directly for investment activities
Environment	less noise and environmental pollution
Financiers	financial support from central and local authorities through grants
Opinion Leaders and Media	positive attitude towards resorts
Residents	diversified attitude: positive resulting from the feeling of an increase in wealth in connection with, for example, an increase in real estate prices and easier access to treatment and rehabilitation services, a good situation on the labour market in specific specializations, good quality environment (Wiktorowicz, 2020) negative ones resulting from: higher costs of living related to the tourist character of the city, restrictions on running a business, nuisance resulting from tourism
Resort Staff	interest in maintaining and creating jobs
Tourists	high attractiveness of the coastal health resort as a tourist destination

Source: Own elaborations.

Kamassi *et al.* (2020), based on the study, indicate eight key stakeholders in medical tourism, namely, medical tourists, healthcare providers, government agencies, facilitators, accreditation and credentialing bodies, healthcare marketers, insurance providers, and infrastructure and facilities. In the specific circumstances of a given country, the list of key stakeholders may differ and include, for example, resort staff, labour unions, investors, financial institutions, insurance, or social security (Kulkajonplun *et al.* 2016). Among stakeholders, also think tanks, sectors of NGOs, and Academics may be mentioned (Álvarez *et al.* 2011). Referring to medical tourists using foreign resorts can be divided into poor and wealthy. Manaf *et al.* (2015) and Kamassi *et al.* (2020) underline the quality as a critical driver of the medical tourism supply side, which depends on three dimensions represented by stakeholders, namely, medical staff, administration, and support services staff and providers.

Stakeholders play a crucial role in medical tourism because they may contribute to the industry's growth. It is worth noting that a literature review leads to the conclusion that the object of the stakeholders' study is the tourism industry connected with health resorts.

The identification of stakeholders included theoretical considerations and was based on the Act (2005) and the analysis of strategic and planning documents of the studied coastal resorts. The stakeholders were then aggregated into homogeneous groups, as shown in Table 8.

Using the desk research method, examples of stakeholder attitudes towards seaside resorts have been assigned to stakeholder groups (Table 9).

3.3 Resort Stakeholders' Attitudes Based on the Salience Model

The basis for impact studies on a resort project is stakeholder attributes, understood as characteristics that significantly affect the project (Doloi, 2012). The stakeholder salience model was constructed using three attributes (power, urgency, and legitimacy) proposed by Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997).

Power to influence the project can be exercised by voting rights (by owners, decision-makers), economic influence (as an investor, client, contractor, or business partner) or political impact (as public administration, non-government organisation) or legal impact (potentially all stakeholders). Urgency can be understood as time-dependent stakeholder expectations of the resort project, where stakeholder expectations require immediate response or action. Legitimacy can be perceived as a claim based upon the legal title, contract, legal right, moral right or interest in the costs and benefits generated by the resort.

In further proceedings, primary attributes have been expanded to include another, referred to as attitude, to propose a strategy for acting on stakeholders. Stakeholder's multidimensional attitudes toward the resort project may consist of various aspects, *e.g.*, emotional (state of mind, negative attitude toward life), behavioural (personal or culture-related preferences), and receptivity (willingness to engage, response to the needs of the activity, openness to change, project progress, emerging issues during project implementation).

The process was conducted using an original software instrument for measuring stakeholder influence on the infrastructure projects carried through by a municipality. It was described in Section 3.1. Then stakeholder group attributes were calculated based on stakeholders' predicted responses. The table shows the average simulated values of all four attributes stakeholders perceive within the identified groups. The simulated distribution of stakeholder attribute values was indicated on a five-point Likert scale (1-5), where 3 means the neutral response.

Table 10. Mean values of simulated responses across stakeholder groups and categories

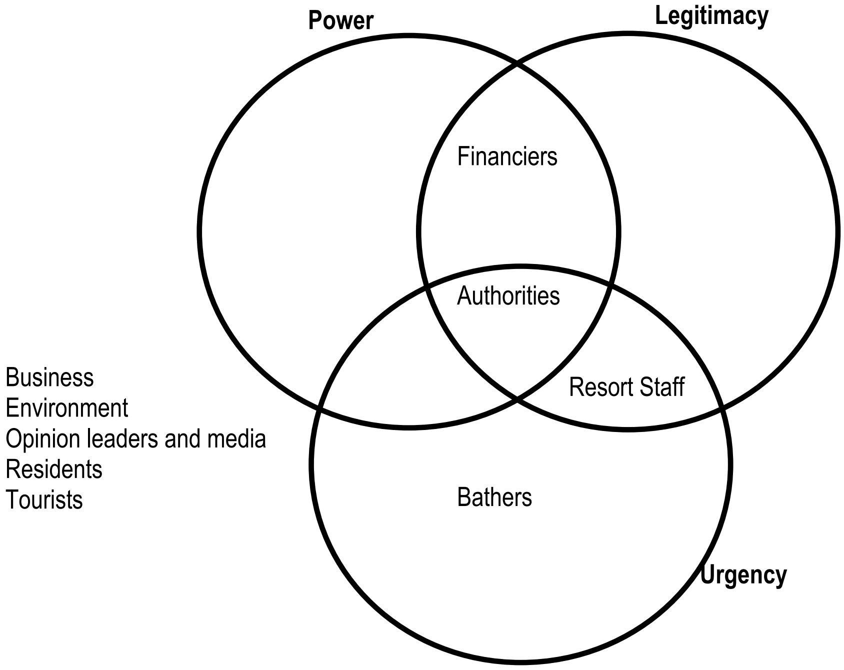
Stakeholders' group	Attitude	Power	Urgency	Legitimacy
Local and State Authorities	3,6	4,4	3,8	5,0
Bathers	5,0	1,0	5,0	2,0
Business	1,8	1,2	2,0	2,0
Environment	4,5	2,0	3,3	2,5
Financiers	4,3	4,3	3,3	5,0
Opinion Leaders and Media	4,0	2,5	3,3	3,0
Residents	2,8	1,6	2,6	1,8
Resort Staff	5,0	2,7	5,0	4,0
Tourists	2,0	1,0	2,0	1,0

Source: Own elaborations.

The salience model shows the picture of stakeholder attributes in three overlapping circles based on previously performed tests of means. The function used in the model (Measuring Stakeholder Influence, 2017) determined whether a particular attribute was statistically significant or not (. <05). Based on the attributes assigned, it was possible to decide on the category of stakeholders and expected reactions. Based on Mitchell, every stakeholder group has one or two attributes assigned and can be classified into one of the categories (Mitchell *et al.* 1997; Wagner Mainardes *et al.* 2012): dormant, dominant, dangerous, definitive, discretionary, dependent, demanding, or non-stakeholder.

The categories classification of stakeholder groups based on the simulation results for each attribute is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Coastal resorts stakeholder groups salience model



Source: Own elaborations.

As a result of the attributional classification of stakeholder groups based on the results of simulations conducted for each attribute, the group of stakeholders described as 'definitive' (owning all three attributes) were only 'Authorities'. These groups are of the highest priority and demand immediate attention. 'Financiers' have been assigned to a 'dominant' stakeholder group (owning power and legitimacy attributes), and they expect and receive much attention. The group of 'dependent' stakeholders included 'Resort staff'. 'Bathers' were among the 'demanding' stakeholders, which means that although urgency is the most crucial attribute, they must be monitored regarding their potential. They depend on other groups for their claims to be considered. Non-stakeholder describes groups that neither hold the influence nor are influenced: 'Business', 'Residents', 'Environment', 'Opinion Leaders and Media' and 'Tourists'.

Table 11. Stakeholders group characteristics and stakeholders' potential management strategy in the coastal resorts

Stakeholders' group	Category	Attitude	Potential for cooperation	Strategy
Local and State Authorities	Definitive	Supportive	high	Engage
Bathers	Demanding	Insignificant	low	Monitor
Business	Non-Stakeholder	Non-supportive	low	No action
Environment	Non-Stakeholder	Insignificant	low	No action
Financiers	Dominant	Supportive	high	Engage
Opinion Leaders and Media	Non-Stakeholder	Insignificant	low	No action
Residents	Non-Stakeholder	Neutral	low	No action
Resort Staff	Dependent	Supportive	high	Engage
Tourists	Non-Stakeholder	Non-supportive	low	No action

Source: Own elaborations.

Stakeholders' group's classification by categories, types, attributes, and potential for cooperation enables the proposed communication strategies to be specified. The function first classifies stakeholder groups, which determine their attitude (attitude) and considering the potential for collaboration, it suggests a communication strategy for every stakeholder group (Measuring Stakeholder Influence 2017).

The classification determined stakeholders' groups using the following attributes: supportive, non-supportive, mixed, neutral, and insignificant. Based on responses counted as the average of simulated values perceived by stakeholders, the 'high' or 'low' determines the potential of a particular stakeholder to collaborate.

The phrases ‘engage’ and ‘monitor’ provide general guidelines for dealing with stakeholders actively or passively.

One of the limitations of the salience model is not including the level of the attribute assigned. Also, it is impossible to prioritise the groups of stakeholders assigned to one category (here: non-stakeholder).

4. Discussion and Conclusions

4.1 The Stakeholder Analysis in the Context of Function Conflicts

City attractiveness derives from residents’ and visitors’ demand, while urban attractiveness for residents is the primary attribute. Clavé and Wilson (2016) cite studies introducing the intertwining and close interdependence of two functions toward the urban orientation of the place resulting from the touristic model. However, in health resorts, such cities may experience excessive development of tourist functions resulting in tourist traffic and boundaries in city planning (Hącia 2016). Hącia (2016) also underlines the negative impact of such tourism on urban attractiveness for residents (*e.g.*, soaring prices, and seasonality).

Resort cities are prone to a potential conflict of functions arising from stakeholders’ needs, where the resort and tourist functions dominate over the urban function. It can also lead to a development conflict. The health and tourist functions aim to serve external demand. The resort function relates to the creation of health services for patients. The development of health services is related to the city's spatial development, which also affects the residents.

Table 12. Conflict areas - stakeholders groups and scope identification

Stakeholders groups	Conflict scope
Tourists – Residents	Nuisance resulting from tourism and air pollution
Bathers – Tourists	Nuisance resulting from tourism and air pollution
Residents – Bathers	Access to spa facilities
Residents – Local and state authorities	the quality of life of the residents
Business – Local and state authorities	Business restrictions due to regulatory resort framework
Business – Resort staff	Business restrictions due to regulatory resort framework
Local and state authorities – Bathers	No data
Business – Bathers	No data
Environment – Business	Environmental restrictions for business

Source: Own elaborations.

A good understanding of stakeholders’ values in the cost-benefit and impact evaluation is a prerequisite to justify efforts to gain and keep resort status in Poland. In Poland, due to the strong connection to natural resources and municipal affiliation, the analysis of stakeholders in the health and resort industry needs to address broader knowledge and stakeholder divisions and concepts. Due to the specific municipal cooperation, health resort patients (bathers, guests, or tourists) are not the primary critical drivers of resort development and success, as is confirmed in many other countries (Kamassi, 2020).

However, one of the limitations of the stakeholders’ relations analysis is that it does not explain the origins and the processes of relations (Al Maamari, 2020). Also, there is not enough knowledge about how different stakeholders perceive the impact of the project (Al Maamari, 2020). The literature analysis and own research on conflict screening in relative projects show a potential conflict of functions in resort cities due to the diversified characteristics of the key stakeholders: residents and tourists. The functions of cities are related to the key stakeholders.

No intense conflicts arose from the stakeholder impact study based on the salience model, in which individual-named stakeholders were assigned a point-based assessment of the significance of the attributes, such as power, urgency and legitimacy. In assessing the importance of the attributes, low values were rewritten for the key stakeholders of the conflict, residents and tourists; therefore, these stakeholders were not identified as key in the stakeholder management strategy.

Assigning low values results from the specific regulatory conditions for the operation of health resorts in Poland. Thus, the strength of the attributes of individual stakeholders results in more from the regulations than from the actual situation. Therefore, if the city is a health resort, the impact on the inhabitants is low. Hence, the role of these stakeholders in the conflict is small, which does not mean that this situation will remain unchanged. The voice of residents performed by their representatives in city councils was important before applying for the status of a health resort. Therefore, it can be expected that residents may change from dormant to active stakeholders in the case of increasing conflicts of functions.

4.2 Drivers to Reconcile for Conflicting Functions

The organisational model of a resort city resulting from the Act considers restrictions in the field of environmental protection, *i.e.*, air pollution and noise levels. Obtaining the status of a health resort is complicated but also requires natural healing resources. Despite the restrictions, in practice, the stringent environmental standards for spas are exceeded, for example, in terms of noise and air pollution. However, this does not result in the loss of the health resort status, which means that the public sector does not sufficiently enforce the regulations. Thanks to this, both the urban, resort and tourist functions can coexist in coastal cities with success.

Strict adherence to resort standards in terms of low noise and high air quality would lead to a worsening of conflicts in the city, as it would result in the necessity to reconstruct the city's transport system (mobility), *i.e.*, limit the city's accessibility to individual transport, costly reconstruction of the city's heat supply system and a decrease in income from tourism. The inhabitants overlook the lost profits resulting from developing zone A as a spa. Political factors also decide about keeping the spa function. Increasing the intensity of development for zone A and resigning from the spa function is currently not attractive for local authorities because seaside resort towns develop quickly compared to other cities in Poland. Moreover, the propaganda elimination of the spa zone would be politically unpopular for local authorities, contrary to the ecological vision of coastal resort cities. On the other hand, strict enforcement of health resort standards for environmental protection would escalate the frozen conflict. Hence, the importance the authorities who promote the resort city model do not want revolutionary changes.

Research shows that coastal cities try to combine the functioning of a health resort with a tourist function, minimising the occurrence of conflicts.

According to all strategic documents, the cities show the will to develop the spa function. Despite the expectations of entrepreneurs about the relaxation of the spa regime and the development of entrepreneurship, the spa function in the analysed cities is kept due to the expectations of residents and local and central authorities.

Conclusions

Urbanisation processes and the combination of diverse urban functions are accompanied by functional conflicts involving stakeholders. Conflicts are revealed in many areas and contexts such as urban fleet coordination (Martí *et al.* 2023), urban mobility (Mastora *et al.* 2023), land use, urban and rural development imbalances (Chen *et al.* 2023; Wang *et al.* 2023), natural resources protection.

However, natural resources can dominantly determine the development and competitiveness of nature-based tourism, so a good understanding of stakeholders and their potentially divergent interests is key in decision-making processes (Spoladore and Pessot, 2023). It is important for local authorities to implement a scheme for efficient conflict management in coastal resort cities as tourism has become part of a new global lifestyle (Romao, *et al.* 2018). Growing demand for extended health services accelerated by technological development (*i.e.*, Booking.com, Airbnb) results in conflicts between different city users.

The first stage is mapping the existing conflicts related to local specificity. If well implemented, the growing demand for health services related to, *e.g.*, the ageing population and lifestyle - so-called medical or health tourism have an enormous potential for development, deciding the economic development of the resort city. The growth of the silver economy, including health services, makes cities with natural healing resources (resorts) an essential infrastructure in the overall healing services system.

Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

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Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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International Practices for Managing Integration Processes in University Educational Programs of the Tourism Industry

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Abstract: Tourism is a global industry, and managing integration processes in university tourism industry education programs allows students to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to work in an international environment and manage international relationships. Managing integration processes in university educational programs of the tourism industry involves incorporating international practices to enhance the quality and relevance of these programs. Collaboration with industry stakeholders in establishing partnerships, such as tourism organizations, hotels, travel agencies, and tour operators, provides valuable insights into industry needs and trends. These collaborations help universities align their educational programs with the requirements of the tourism industry and ensure graduates have the necessary skills and knowledge.

Keywords: tourism; tourism industry; integration; educational process; educational programs.

JEL Classification: I25; Z32; R11.

Introduction

Integration processes in university educational programs of the tourism industry play an important role in preparing students for the modern requirements of this industry, aimed at forming a comprehensive and deep understanding of students in this industry, developing professional skills and preparing for a successful career in tourism. The integration of various disciplines such as hospitality, management, marketing, geography and cultural studies allows students to gain comprehensive knowledge about the tourism industry. This helps them to better understand the interconnection of various aspects and processes in tourism. The study of management of integration processes in university educational programs of tourism industry has high relevance for the following reasons:

- The tourism industry is one of the most dynamic and fastest growing industries. Integration processes in this industry are becoming more and more important to achieve competitive advantage and meet the needs of modern tourists.
- Tourism is a global industry, and the management of integration processes in university tourism industry education programs allows students to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to work in an international environment and manage international relations.
- Management of integration processes incorporates elements from different fields of knowledge such as management, economics, marketing, law and international relations. Research in this field allows students to develop interdisciplinary competencies and apply them in practice.
- In many countries, tourism is recognized as an important strategic industry contributing to economic development and job creation. Managing integration processes in university tourism industry education programs helps students realize the importance of effective management and collaboration within the industry to achieve sustainable development.
- Research and practical mastering of integration process management in university educational programs of tourism industry gives graduates an advantage in the labor market and helps them to become more competitive specialists.

The integration of practical components into the curriculum allows students to gain experience in the tourism industry while still studying. This may include internships, projects with real customers, simulation training, and other forms of hands-on learning. The integration of modern technologies such as virtual reality, artificial intelligence, data analytics and interactive platforms allows students to become familiar with the latest trends and tools in the travel industry. This helps them develop the skills they need to work with new technologies and apply them to tourism processes.

Seeking international accreditation for educational programs in tourism can provide assurance of quality and credibility. Accreditation bodies, such as the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) TedQual program or the World Tourism Association for Quality and Standards (WTAQS), set global standards for tourism education and ensure that programs meet industry expectations. The study of the mechanism for managing integration processes in university educational programs in the tourism industry allows improving the quality of education in this area, contributes to the development of the tourism industry and provides training for highly qualified professionals who are ready for a successful career in this rapidly growing industry.

The integration of the educational process involves the linking of various disciplines and areas of study to create a comprehensive and comprehensive program. In the case of the educational program 'Tourism', integration can be carried out in the following ways:

- Interdisciplinary approach: The program can combine knowledge and skills from different areas such as geography, cultural studies, economics, marketing, hospitality, management, etc. This will allow students to gain a comprehensive understanding of the tourism industry and develop a wide range of skills required to work in this field.
- Practical training and internships: Integration of the educational process may include cooperation with travel companies, hotels, agencies and other players in the industry. Students can gain hands-on experience through internships, workshops and projects that allow them to apply their knowledge in a real work environment.
- Project work and teamwork: The program may include project assignments and team projects that allow students to apply their knowledge and skills in creating and managing tourism products, developing marketing strategies, organizing events, etc. This develops their analytical, creative and communication skills.
- Use of modern technologies: The integration of the educational process may also include the use of modern technologies in teaching tourism. This may include the use of computer programs, geographic information systems, virtual reality, online platforms and other tools that will help students gain practical experience and expand their knowledge in the field of tourism.
- The integration of the educational process in the educational program: 'Tourism' allows you to create a more flexible, modern and practically oriented program that meets the requirements of the industry and provides students with the necessary knowledge, skills and experience for a successful career in the field of tourism.

1. Literature Review

Pitman *et al.* (2010) highlight the potential of educational tourism organized by higher education institutions to serve as a means of extending education beyond campus walls, fostering ethical education, and creating meaningful connections between universities and the wider community. Blended learning strategies are suggested as a way to enhance the impact of these educational experiences. The authors emphasize that educational tourism is not only about imparting knowledge but also about contributing positively to society through ethical education and practical learning experiences.

While engaging in educational tourism, universities also fulfill their civic mission for the benefit of the local community. A civic university integrates teaching, research and interaction with the outside world.

To be sustainable, the development of educational tourism practices in a destination, where the university always plays a coordinating role, should be the result of a combination of the 3E principles (Sharma 2015):

- Environmental Factors: provide tourists with knowledge-based information and train them to respect the local environment. Sustainable actions promote biodiversity conservation and focus on cultural heritage;
- Engagement: the active participation of tourists is crucial to make them feel fully immersed in the context and cultivate their special interests;
- Education: help tourists to truly experience the place by contributing to on-site learning practices.

Universities have a unique position to lead and facilitate the development of sustainable educational tourism practices that align with the 3E principles. They can design and implement educational programs that incorporate environmental awareness, active engagement, and research-based learning. By taking a proactive role, universities contribute to the overall sustainability of educational tourism, benefitting both the destination and the tourists.

Most studies on educational tourism have focused on the reasons why international students choose to attend study abroad programs. The destination is of great importance and its image and reputation] are major factors in student's choice (Huang 2008, Niaupane and Lee 2014).

In addition, international student mobility can facilitate future networks of international academic collaboration and inter-faculty fertilization, thereby creating benefits for the host university, the destination, and the students themselves (Enar, Diamond and Roseveare 2012).

The tourism industry is recognized for its role in promoting cultural exchange, generating employment opportunities, and contributing to regional economic development. It is considered one of the fastest growing sectors and a vital pillar of the global economy, garnering attention, and recognition from various countries around the world (Liu *et al.* 2022 and Shen *et al.* 2019).

According to Kimeto (2021), improving the level of training and knowledge of the labor force can increase the competitiveness of a particular tourism destination and contribute to the sustainable development of the industry. Her approach emphasizes that high quality of service and the level of human capital play a key role in the structure of the tourism industry.

The study by Pirog, Kilar and Rettinger (2021) conducted a principal components analysis that identified a specific set of skills and knowledge that have a significant impact on young people and their perceptions of employment in the tourism industry.

In order to study the factors influencing employment, Huang *et al.* (2022) focused on human development in the educational environment and conducted a quantitative study in nine higher professional colleges.

2. OECD Practices for Managing Educational Process

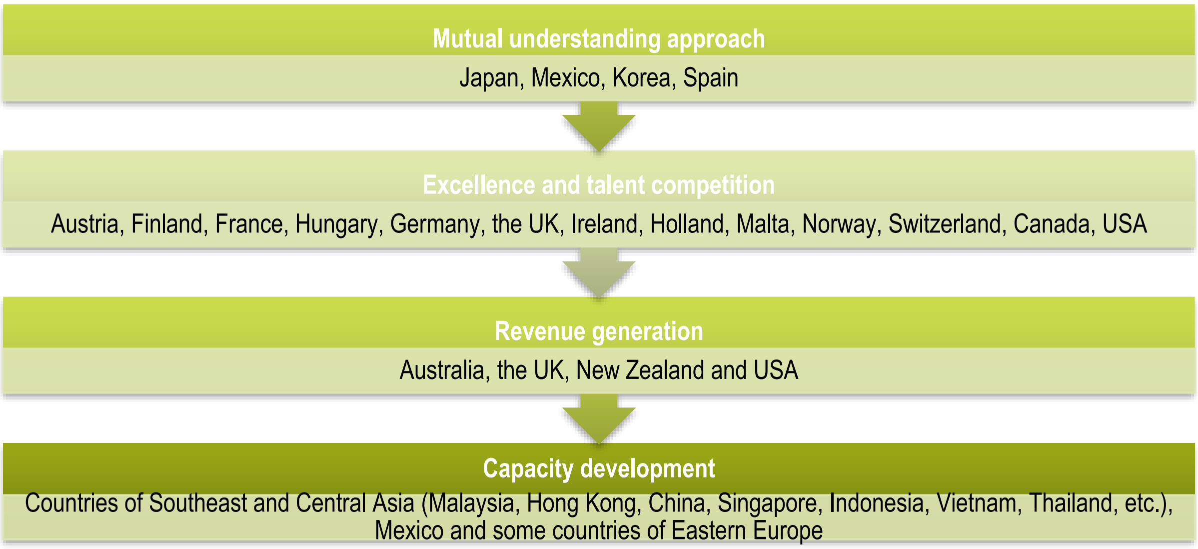
Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has a wealth of experience and practice in the field of educational management. The OECD develops policies and methodologies for measuring educational performance that allow countries to identify their strengths and weaknesses and compare their achievements with other countries. They are based on systematic data collection and analysis, enabling countries to make informed decisions and develop effective strategies to improve the quality of education.

OECD promotes international cooperation and exchange of experience in education. They organize international forums, conferences and research projects that enable countries to share best practices, ideas and innovations in education. Policy analysis and recommendations are provided by OECD to countries on how to improve their education systems, identifying good practices, identify challenges and offer concrete recommendations for the development of education systems. Also, research and innovation activities are conducted in order to stimulate innovation in education, study trends and changes in education systems, investigate new teaching methods and the use of technology, and share knowledge and cutting-edge ideas.

OECD emphasizes quality management in education to help countries develop quality assessment and monitoring systems, set standards and norms, and apply methods to improve the quality of education. OECD's educational management practices are based on collaboration with member and partner countries, sharing experiences and cutting-edge research. This contributes to improving the quality of education, fostering innovation and achieving sustainable educational development.

In OECD countries, there are four main mechanisms for managing integration processes that characterize the policies of these countries in relation to integration processes in the education sector (Figure 1). None of the above mechanisms exist in their pure form, and in practice, a country usually uses a combination of them.

Figure 1. Mechanisms for managing the integration processes of OECD countries



Source: compiled by authors according to source (*AAAS Custom Publishing Office,* 2017)

The first approach will be implemented through the development of international mobility of domestic and foreign students and research teachers through scholarships and academic exchange programs, as well as through partnerships between higher education institutions. In this case, it is not the competitive advantage of the university that comes to the fore, but long-term partnership with others, international cooperation. This approach does not imply an active campaign to attract foreign students, but rather targets a small elite of domestic and international students. The focus of coordination efforts is on development assistance and national geostrategic solutions. Due to this mobility, students must return to their country of origin for a relatively long period after graduation.

The countries using this integration mechanism are Japan, Mexico, Korea and Spain. It should also be noted that in recent years, Japan and Korea have been increasingly adhering to the strategy of increasing competitiveness in the global education market and the policy of attracting international students. In September 2014, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (MEXT) announced the selection of 37 Japanese universities for the 10-year Top Global University (TGU) Project with the goal of ‘enhancing international cooperation and competitiveness of higher education in Japan’. Annual funding of selected universities is divided into Type A ($ 3.5 million) for those ranked in the top 100 universities in the world and Type B ($ 1.4 million) for ‘innovative universities’. Integration efforts are made. As a result, several universities are planning to introduce a new quarterly semester to bring Japan’s academic calendar in line with the rest of the world, allowing for new dual-study programs in English. Other universities have begun building new ‘international dormitories’ to increase the number of international students and empower university rectors to hire new lecturers and set competitive salaries. Japan’s national policy has led to the following key projects, guiding principles for further integration in the coming decades: Superior Global University Project (TGUP), Japan Project Reconstruction and TOBITATE! ‘Study abroad tomorrow’.

The Supreme Global University Project (Su-pa guro-baru daigaku sousei shien), launched in 2014, aims to revitalize the internationalization process through fundamental university reforms over 10 years. Its goals include strengthening the role of higher education in national development, strengthening global human resources, and increasing the transparency of Japanese universities in the global higher education market.

The Japan Renewal Project (Daigaku no sekai tenkairyoku kyoka jigyo) is another competitive grant program that encourages bilateral and multilateral mobility through implementing creative programs along with partner institutions in specific target countries and regions, the choice of which reflects different policy priorities. In 2010, the project presented proposals for the creation of bilateral programs with American and/or multilateral programs with the China-Korea-Japan triangle and 2011 programs in ASEAN countries, which were transformed into international student mobility programs (AIMS) in 2012 and then concentrated across Russia and India in 2013. Fifty-five (55) selected programs are currently being implemented as pilot ones. TOBITATE (Tobitate ryugaku japan) is a nationwide campaign to increase the number of Japanese students studying abroad from about 60,000 in 2014 to 120,000 in 2020 (Mergner 2017). This program is distinguished by its close collaboration with industry. Employees from various business areas participate in the selection process and offer internship opportunities, support job search procedures and other tasks prior to the program implementation.

Scientists of South Korean universities have noticed structural and cultural changes over the past decade in light of government higher education policies on integration against the ideas of globalization. This policy aims to bring major South Korean universities to the level of world quality standards and strengthen South Korea's reputation as a region with a 'knowledge-based economy'. The latter goal should be achieved through the so-called 'global standard', which is based on the number of international publications and international rankings of research universities, as well as internationally published scientific articles with a citation index (TCM). According to the Ministry of Education, this policy has helped more Korean scholars be published at the SCI level. The Korean government has also used a deregulation mechanism to strengthen the position of universities. As a result, many small private universities were created, which were subsequently integrated into major universities. Today Korea has also focused its efforts on strengthening the integration processes in the field of student mobility and attracting foreign scientists, mainly from Japan, the USA and Europe.

The second management mechanism – excellence and talent competition – aims to attract highly qualified foreign specialists and talented students. In this case, countries use the mechanism of scholarships and grants, as well as programs to promote higher education, supported by visa and immigration laws. Countries implementing this integration mechanism include Austria, Finland, France, Hungary, Germany, the UK (in relation to students from EU countries), Ireland, Holland, Canada, the USA (in relation to graduate students), etc. These countries create special funds or centers for the organization of international cooperation and exchange. In Austria, in particular, there is the Austrian Exchange Service (OeAD), which was created in 1961 by a joint decision of Austrian universities. Today OeAD is actively working not only in the area of international cooperation, but also in scientific research and international education, and includes universities and other educational organizations: colleges, schools. In France, in 1998, a special agency for international cooperation in higher education, EduFrance, was created to assist international students and scientists. EduFrance currently has 174 educational institutions in France, 69 of which are universities.

In 1991, the state agency CIMO was founded in Finland, funded by the Ministry of Education, with the aim of developing international cooperation in education, culture, and social life of the youth. Today CIMO acts as the national agency for the Socrates and youth programs of the European Union, advises on the TEMPUS and Culture 2000 programs and manages the mobility of the EU Leonardo da Vinci program. CIMO provides information on educational and training programs in the EU member states, as well as various international opportunities for the youth. In addition, CIMO works with some partner organizations in Kazakhstan and Russia.

For the first time, in 2008, the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture introduced a novel concept: to formulate a comprehensive integration strategy for higher education in Finland. Collaboratively with universities, a strategy for the internationalization of higher education institutions for the years 2009 to 2015 was formulated. This strategy outlines 33 distinct initiatives categorized under five overarching themes: fostering a genuinely international university community, enhancing quality and appeal, sharing experiential knowledge abroad, promoting a multicultural society, and embracing global responsibility.

Through its diplomatic approach, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs is dedicated to reinforcing France's worldwide impact and advancing strategies for mutual collaboration in higher education and research. This ministry orchestrates the convergence of cultural and scientific diplomacy, bolstered by an expansive presence in 135 countries - making it the world's second-largest cultural network. Moreover, it presides over the most extensive assemblage of foreign schools and universities, along with institutions like Alliance Française and the French Institute. In this pursuit, the ministry employs specialized programs and resources to facilitate cooperation in higher education and research. A notable example is the allocation of an 80-million-euro fund, overseen by the Global Affairs Directorate, to drive these objectives. French companies are setting up joint laboratories with foreign universities, such as the Air Oxy-Combustion Air Liquide Joint Laboratory established in China in 2010 with Zhejiang University, the Essilor International Research Center (WIEOR) of Wenzhou Medical University and the Veolia Joint Research Center for Advanced Environmental Technologies of Tsinghua University.

At the beginning of 2015, DAAD united 239 German-speaking universities and 122 student organizations. DAAD mediates in the organization of university and scientific policy in Germany, organizing and funding academic exchange of students and scientists, as well as supporting research in Germany.

The latest and most enduring national approaches to internationalization are embodied in two key strategies. The first is the 2008 Internationalization Strategy crafted by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. The second significant milestone was marked by a collaborative declaration in 2013, uniting federal and regional ministers responsible for education and science. This declaration delineated the trajectory for internationalization in higher education, followed by a subsequent declaration in 2014 that outlined the cooperative efforts on the international front.

3. Priorities of Integration Processes of Educational Programs in Tourism

The trends that shape the content of vocational education in the field of tourism in the new socio-economic conditions are determined by the general framework of educational reforms, in particular, the generation of national educational standards. The advent of new generations of educational standards has ushered in a transformative era for educational institutions. This shift presents a broader scope for shaping the content of the dynamic components of educational programs. In effect, vocational training and education have gained newfound flexibility, attuned to the ever-evolving demands of the labor market and tailored to the unique individual interests of each learner.

Despite the fact that there are already a number of mechanisms and models that have proven their productivity in other countries, the peculiarities of the socio-economic structure of our country necessitate the development of management for the formation of innovative activities of higher educational institutions in the field of tourism. The effective harnessing of innovation potential is contingent not solely upon the extent of research and development efforts, but also hinges on a comprehensive amalgamation of pertinent technological, production, organizational, marketing, and financial facets that constitute the innovation process (Kulmaganbetova *et al.* 2019). In essence, the successful implementation of innovation is a multifaceted endeavor that involves more than just the creation of novel ideas. It demands a holistic approach that encompasses a spectrum of considerations.

According to Civera, Meoli and Vismara (2018), universities play a key role in the creation and utilization of knowledge and are explicitly funded to implement a combination of innovation and entrepreneurial strategies. Currently, many European countries are emphasizing policies aimed at improving academic performance. These endeavors are assessed by researchers such as Sørensen, Bloch, and Young (2018), Menter, Lehmann, and Klarl (2018), an initiative outlined by Daraio *et al.* (2019), and results-based funding mechanisms proposed by Meoli, Pierucci, and Vismara (2018). The overarching objective of these policy initiatives is to directly or indirectly nurture innovation and entrepreneurship, alongside enhancing university outcomes and performance (Froehlich 2018). Simultaneously, these efforts also target the advancement of the higher education system and its socio-economic influence on society (Lehmann and Stockinger 2019). In essence, these studies and initiatives collectively address the multifaceted landscape of higher education and innovation policies.

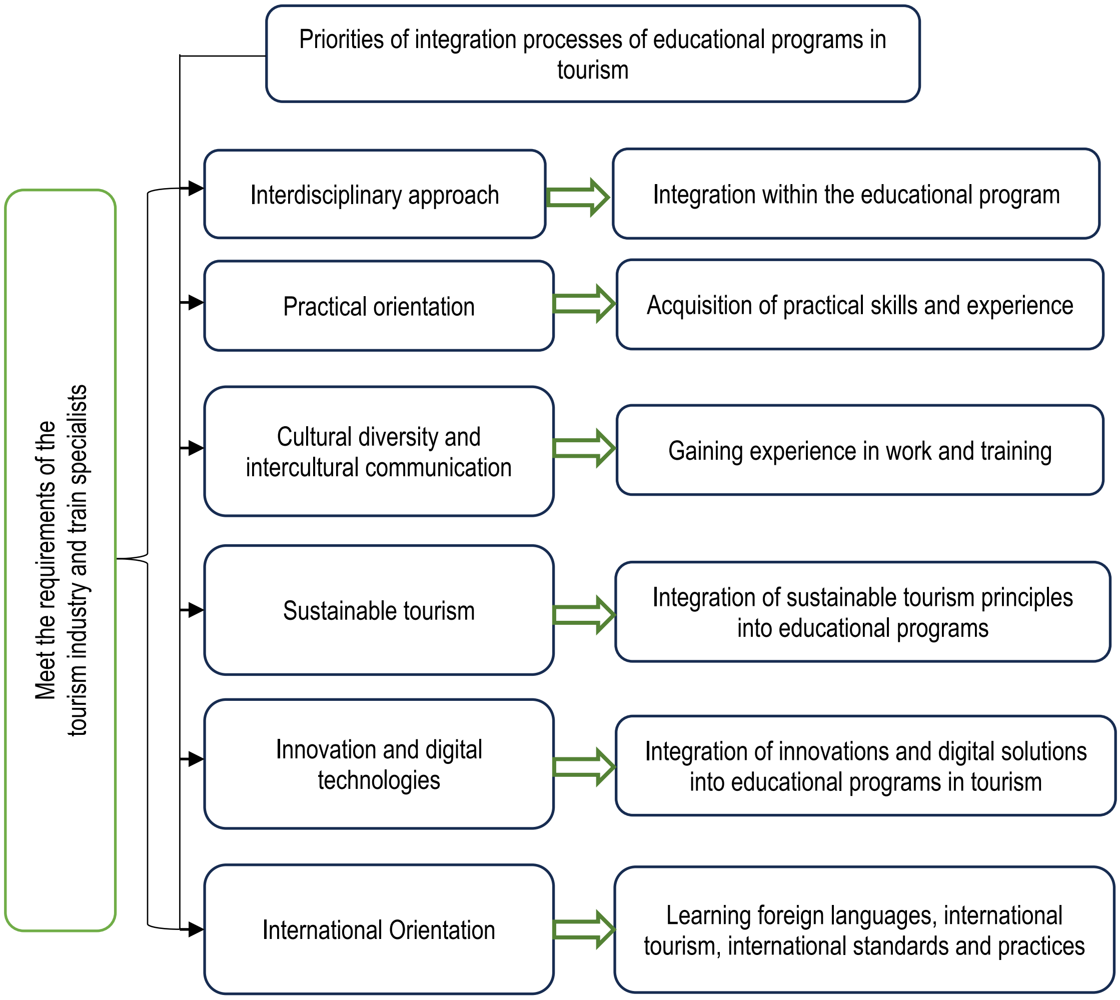
Considering the tourism industry and related university study programs, one can note the directions and priorities of the integration processes of educational programs in tourism, which can be varied and depend on the specific goals and context of each program. However, some general directions and priorities may include the following (Figure 2).

Modern higher education institutions are faced with the challenge of not only providing students with high quality knowledge, but also forming the foundations that will underpin their future professional careers. This is required for graduates to be able to successfully adapt to rapidly changing and increasingly competitive labor market conditions, in the context of interrelated educational processes.

According to studies, the tourism industry is important for cultural exchange, employment and regional economic development (Liu *et al.* 2022). Currently, tourism has become the fastest growing and most important sector of the world economy, recognized in all countries (Shen *et al.* 2019).

In today's environment, states and tourism destinations face an inherent challenge of competitiveness in tourism. This is due to their desire to gain a competitive advantage in the dynamic global tourism industry. It should be emphasized that the level of competitiveness of tourism destinations has a significant impact on their performance on the world stage (Sedlacek *et al.* 2022).

Figure 2. Priorities of integration processes of educational programs in tourism



Source: compiled by authors

Tourism destinations seed both competition and cooperation from the higher education system. To significantly improve the competitiveness of tourism destinations, it is necessary to strengthen cooperation between them. These factors can contribute to the sustainable and healthy development of the tourism industry. To ensure efficiency and success in the advancement of the hotel industry, hotel enterprises consistently strive to identify and attract a skilled and proficient workforce capable of delivering top-notch service quality. However, according to Nguyen (2020), there is a shortage of teachers in the hospitality industry with the necessary academic background and practical business experience. In addition, the lack of adequate classrooms, especially practical classrooms, also creates problems, resulting in the low quality of student training required by the hospitality industry.

Today, tourism as an activity is gaining high relevance due to its ability to have a significant potential impact on stimulating the development of new businesses in the country. Tourism products and services are not just limited to domestic sales, as they are also actively consumed locally, thus contributing to increased income in the local cultural and business spheres. Experts estimate that every coin invested in tourism can lead to an increase in income by five units. In Kazakhstan, this potential has not yet been fully realized, but the multiplier effect exceeds the turnover by three times. Consequently, the development strategy of the tourism industry is a current task and one of the promising directions of strengthening the national economy.

The imperative to expand the intellectual and professional capacity of society, coupled with the imperative to align the education system with market dynamics and the demands of real-world practice, underscores the significance of this study. Additionally, the exploration of theoretical research within the sphere of educational innovation further accentuates the relevance of this endeavor.

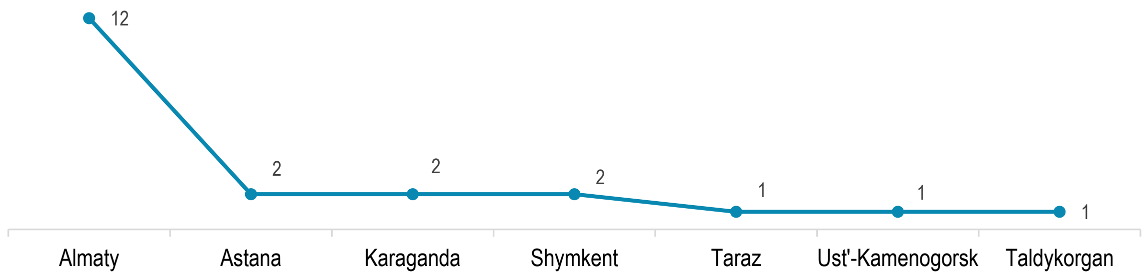
4. Education and Tourism. Facts and Insights

As a component of the global social system, education is exposed to innovative and integrative changes in its structure, content and ways of realization of key functions. The education system mirrors the socio-economic interactions within society and, on one side, is subjected to the dynamics of social reforms, while on the other hand, serves as a catalyst for its own innovative processes.

Globally, tourism stands out as a swiftly advancing and economically viable avenue for development. Its growth fosters employment opportunities, addresses social challenges, boosts tax revenues, and enhances a nation's standing on the international stage. Furthermore, tourism's expansion triggers progress in interconnected sectors like transportation, communication, construction, as well as light and food industries.

Considering the principal goals of Kazakhstan's national policy regarding the advancement of the tourism sector, professional education should be tailored to encompass disciplines that are in demand within the market.
Significant emphasis should be placed on the preparation of exceptionally skilled professionals in interrelated domains, particularly within the middle-tier managerial roles of the hospitality industry. Additionally, attention should also be extended to nurturing expertise within the domains of domestic and inbound tourism, encompassing roles such as local historians, guides, and instructors/escorts (Figure 3).

Figure 3. The list of regions of Kazakhstan, in which there is a specialty 'Tourism' and 'Hospitality' in the areas of bachelor's and master's programs



Source: compiled by authors

The quality of tourism services is influenced not only by the availability of cultural and historical sites and accommodation options, but also, to a greater extent, by the availability of qualified personnel in the tourism industry. The quality of the educational process directly affects the quality of education in the end, so one of the factors of youth competitiveness in the labor market is undoubtedly the quality of the educational process, which largely depends on the development of a comprehensive professional educational program. In the contemporary landscape, higher education institutions are confronted with a multifaceted challenge. Their role extends beyond imparting factual knowledge, encompassing the pivotal responsibility of shaping the trajectory of graduates' future professional journeys. This entails equipping students with the skills and adaptability required to thrive in a rapidly evolving and intensively competitive job market.

Tourism development has a significant impact on the formation of gross domestic product (GDP) and the effective functioning of various sectors of the economy, including not only trade, transportation, communication, construction, but also the production and distribution of consumer goods and much more. It should be noted that one of the significant advantages of tourism development is the creation of new jobs and, as a result, employment of the population. Employment in the tourism industry has a number of significant features, in contrast to employment in other industries and areas of production, namely:

- seasonal unevenness of employment: high workload in the high tourist season and, in fact, its absence in the low tourist season;
- the complexity of automating many activities in tourism;
- performance of duties in the mode of temporary employment or part-time work in many types of activities;
- attraction to the tourism industry of workers who do not have a high degree of qualification and require training;
- a significant number of workers without official registration at the enterprises of the tourism industry;

▪ the practical absence of a direct relationship between the introduction of new technologies and an increase in the productivity of personnel;

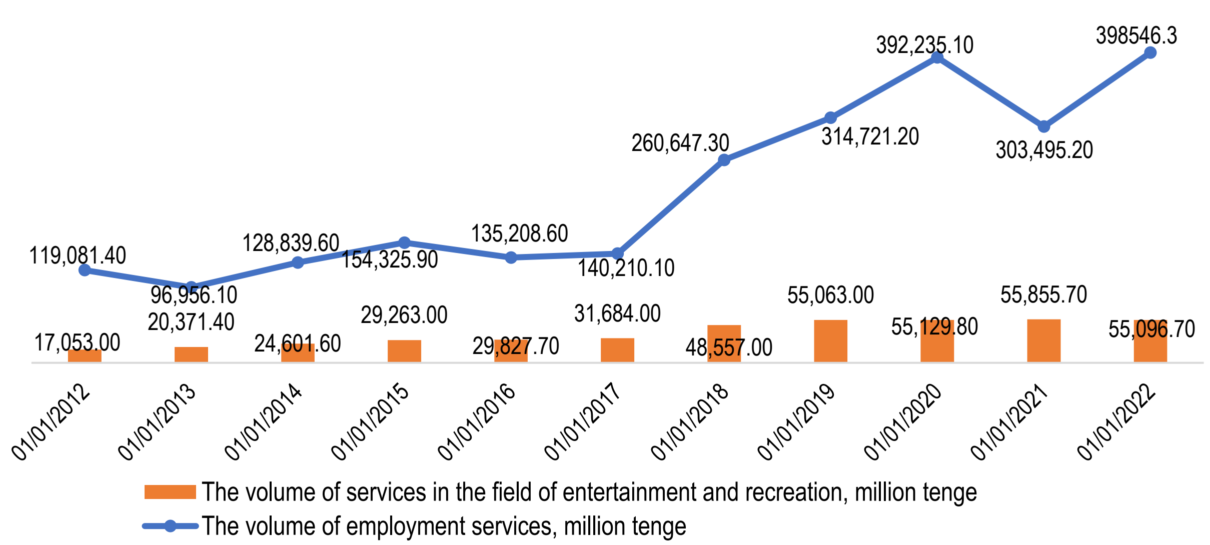
▪ the process of creating and consuming services in most cases involves personal contact between the service provider and its consumer, a comprehensive consideration of the individual characteristics and needs of consumers;

▪ maintaining and expanding the need for labor resources even with the possibility of increasing labor productivity, since the quality of service largely depends on the number of personnel per tourist;

▪ a large number of female staff.

Youth employment in tertiary education is set by individual states in response to world developments and strategic directions. The volume of youth employment services tends to increase every year (Figure 4).

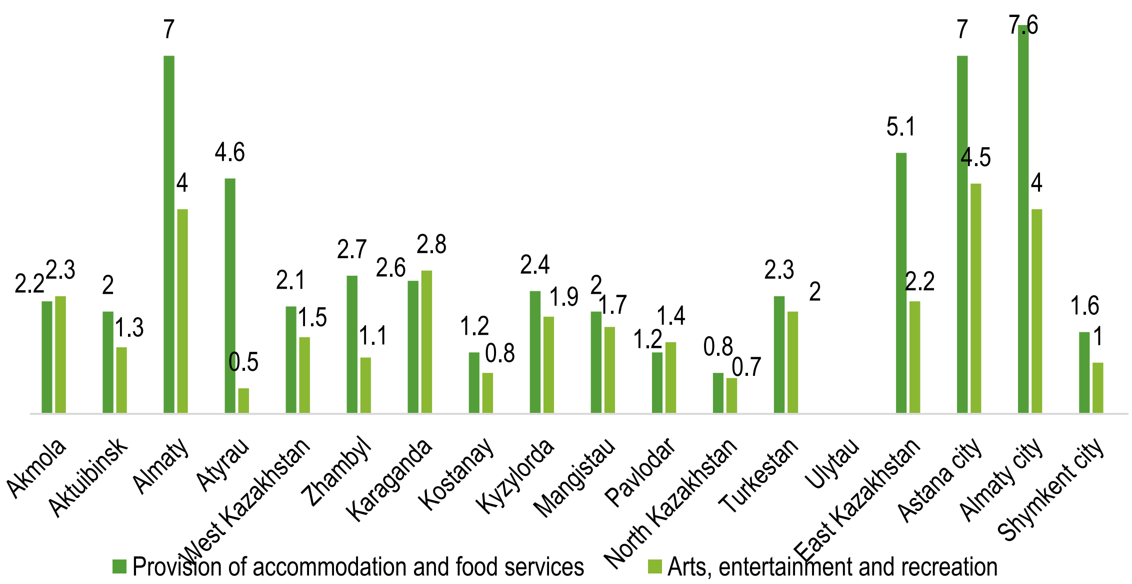
Figure 4. Volume of services for the employment of youth in the tourism industry, Republic of Kazakhstan, million tenge



Source: compiled by authors according to http://www.stat.gov.kz

There is a direct link between trends in tourism development and general economic, technical, social and innovative (technological) progress. In this regard, hospitality enterprises, including educational ones, are obliged to improve the quality of their services through innovative management practices that promote interaction with other actors and stakeholders in tourism development, in order to maximize efficiency and reduce investment costs (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Employed population (aged 15-28) in the tourism industry by region for 2022



Source: compiled by authors according to http://www.stat.gov.kz

The ‘Productive Employment’ project, initiated by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, encompasses a comprehensive array of measures aimed at strategically aligning personnel training with the evolving employment landscape. This initiative is geared towards enhancing the quality of education within universities by modernizing programs, faculty, and the educational environment (Table 1).

Table 1. Forecast indicators of the number of university and college graduates by 2021-2025

Indicator	Graduation of universities by state order	University graduation	Release of colleges by state order	College Graduation	Total
Healthcare	25.250	38.235	24.574	104.300	142.535
Agriculture	11.575	17.575	35.847	52.365	69.940
Tourism	2.995	7.760	10.505	19.213	26.973
Trade	1.470	14.960	3.693	5.041	20.001
Transport and logistic	5.570	22.295	41.420	54.069	76.364
ICT	28.670	71.670	37.213	68.859	140.529
Construction	7.460	17.595	35.207	51.937	69.532
Education	52.160	186.160	33.565	109.001	295.161

Source: compiled by authors

4.1. Risks Arising from Integration Processes in Universities

The EU analysis made it possible to identify the main risks of integration processes in universities in different regions of the world. The most common risk across all regions is that opportunities to study abroad are only available to students with financial means. North America also pursues a policy of integration as a means of generating higher income, which is actually observed in many countries of the world. A similar situation is observed in Kazakhstan, where the availability of higher education has declined over the past three years (according to a study by the Committee on Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan). The use of the integration mechanism purely for credibility is becoming the main reason in the countries of Asia and Latin America, which also raises concerns about the universities of these countries.

Integration processes in university educational programs ‘Tourism’ have their own risks that require careful analysis and planning to minimize negative consequences and ensure successful implementation of integration. One of them is the integration of programs, which can create competition between universities, especially if they offer similar educational programs in the field of tourism. This may lead to the need for more active marketing efforts and student recruitment.

As for the practice of integration process implementation in Kazakhstani universities, today many universities actually create the illusion of integration development of universities, while credibility and possibility of attracting high income come to the fore. In addition, with the influx of income, the quality of education in universities becomes worse (many European universities), which will eventually lead to the overthrow of the university and undermine the importance of higher education and the competitiveness of higher education across the country. Thus, the analysis of the world experience in applying the integration management mechanism in universities of different countries generally allows drawing relevant conclusions. The importance of integration processes at all levels of higher education is increasing from year to year. This is manifested in a wider range of activities, more strategic approaches, new national strategies and ambitions of universities in different countries.

The main consequences of such processes can be seen in improving the quality of teaching and learning and in preparing students for life and work in a globalized world (Bigagli 2020, Vu 2019, Yumashev *et al.* 2021; Achayeva and Subbotina 2015, Kim *et al.* 2021). At the same time, a policy at the national level is the central external trigger for the institutional integration mechanism. Even if national strategies have not yet been developed, universities are developing their own mechanisms for managing integration processes. However, if national policies tend to use the same performance-related goals, this can lead to a homogenization of institutional strategies, as universities tend to adhere to national guidelines rather than develop their own ones. When indicators are used, they focus on quantitative rather than qualitative outcomes, which forces institutions to increase the number rather than integration outcomes in terms of more learning, research and collaboration. The analysis showed that governments and universities in many countries are still struggling to find a balance between autonomy and accountability, which ultimately affects integration as it becomes more and more important in higher education (Williams *et al.* 2021). This policy is typical for Kazakhstan (Tultabayeva *et al.* 2017). This is especially problematic in Central and Eastern Europe as well as in developing countries.

There is a clear shift from collaboration to the competition: from the race for talent, recruiting international students, strategic partnerships to the pursuit of high income, rank and prestige. In Europe, this factor is becoming more evident: the demographic decline and reduction in the number of national funds mean that more and more universities are switching to short-term economic advantages. Apart from Europe, this trend is even more evident in developing countries. Attracting students to mobility is becoming a central aspect of integration (Gapsalamov *et al.* 2020, Puryaev and Puryaev 2020, Kuzmin *et al.* 2018). As a result, there is an imbalance between outgoing and incoming students and teachers in developing countries, leading to brain drain and a decline in quality and credibility. Meanwhile, it should be noted that successes and failures are associated with the strengths and weaknesses of the national higher education system, which, in turn, is associated with the economic, political and social development of each country.

Summarizing all of the above for the first chapter, the following conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, in the authors' opinion, the organizational-economic mechanism for managing integration processes in higher education is a set of logically grounded methods, structured in a special sequence of administrative-economic methods that allow purposefully and dynamically coordinating measures on the basis of their constant interaction to achieve a high-level education. Secondly, the organizational-economic mechanism for managing integration processes at a university depends on stakeholder groups, government, employers, teachers, board members, academic disciplines and students, which leads to the need to cover all aspects of higher education: teaching, research and service. Thirdly, the organizational-economic management mechanism is actually a reproductive process that is constantly updated due to new integration processes in global higher education. The nature of the mechanism makes it possible to distinguish between the indications of binarity, ambivalence and synergy. Fourthly, by analyzing various approaches to the nature of integration in higher education, the authors could identify the forms, types, methods and models of the organizational-economic management mechanism. Fifthly, the analysis of the world experience in applying mechanisms for managing integration processes in universities allows speaking about the growing importance of integration in higher education. Besides, the focus is on mobility as the main aspect of university income generation. Competition between universities is intensifying, leading to a race for quantitative rather than qualitative indicators.

4.2. Interrelation of Provided Services and Development of Educational Programs in Tourism Industry

According to the list of regions of Kazakhstan, in which there is a specialty 'Tourism' and 'Hospitality', in the areas of bachelor's and master's programs, such regions as Almaty, Karaganda regions will stand out. Astana, Almaty, Shymkent. In this regard, consider the scope of services provided by accommodations in the tourism industry.

In order to consider the further dynamics of the development of indicators of the volume of services provided in the tourism industry, using the data presented in Table 2, we will make forecast calculations that will be carried out using regression analysis using functions of spreadsheets. To do this, we will consider the relationship between the volume of services provided by the system of state local self-government and the quality indicators of educational programs. Tourism of the Karaganda region, which belong to one of the administrative budget programs, occupying 90.1% of the implementation. In accordance with the forecast calculations made, we obtain the following data (Table 2).

Table 2. The volume of services provided by accommodation places in the tourism industry of the regions where there is a specialty 'Tourism', thousand tenge

Region	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Almaty	4.779.411,8	8.280.288,8	9.783.415,5	9.722.946,4	5.321.254,4	8.441.135,9	5.371.264,6
Karaganda	3.872.377,1	4.226.003,2	310.831,4	492.393,4	2.975.895,8	4.626.332,6	3.951.061,2
Astana city	22.116.316,7	36.687.488,0	22.829.527,6	2.611.4387,0	11.564.321,7	20.289.103,1	3.649.859,3
Almaty city	19.662.212,0	22.479.547,1	25.710.759,7	32.293.595,3	16.806.510,6	27.908.836,2	37.040.234,8
Shymkent city	-	-	3.260.534,6	4.128.738,6	3.746.073,5	532.079,1	5.331.592,9

Source: compiled by authors

In order to conduct forecasting, the author chose as a basis the regions where there is a specialty 'Tourism' and, accordingly, such an indicator as 'The volume of services provided by accommodation in the tourism industry'. In the process of forecasting was used spreadsheets functionality, which automatically generated values on the basis of existing data. The following tools were used to evaluate the expected results:

- trend function - this function builds a linear regression based on the available data and allows you to predict values based on the trend;
- growth function - this function is used to create an exponential growth model based on the available data;
- prediction function - this function can be used to predict values based on a linear trend model;
- linear function - this is an array of functions that allow you to perform linear regression and obtain the parameters of the trend line equation.

This method allows to obtain approximate results for the inertial scenario: (1) function trend: select the cell in which we will make a forecast, select the known value of *y* - 'The volume of services provided by accommodation in the tourism industry in regions where there is a specialty 'Tourism'; the known value of *X* is the year from 2016 to 2022; and the new value of *X* is from 2023, we get the forecast values; (2) in the same way we make the forecast of the growth and prediction function; (3) the function is linearized using the formula: $y = mx + b$.

Table 3. Forecast values of development indicators of the most active regions of educational programs related to the tourism industry, 2023-2025

Indicator	2023	2024	2025
Almaty			
Trend	7.047.829,843	6.963.368,825	6.878.907,807
Growth	6.878.690,568	6.824.791,174	6.771.314,121
Prediction	7.047.829,843	6.963.368,825	6.878.907,807
Linear	7.047.829,843	6.963.368,825	6.878.907,807
Karaganda			
Trend	3.450.952,886	3.583.159,154	3.715.365,421
Growth	2.884.247,942	3.153.662,968	3.448.243,812
Prediction	3.450.952,886	3.583.159,154	3.715.365,421
Linear	3.450.952,886	3.583.159,154	3.715.365,421
Astana city			
Trend	17.684.236,5	16.274.902,65	14.865.568,79
Growth	17.528.881,18	16.517.686,03	15.564.824,07
Prediction	17.684.236,5	16.274.902,65	14.865.568,79
Linear	17.684.236,5	16.274.902,65	14.865.568,79
Almaty city			
Trend	33.712.870,46	35.644.598,94	37.576.327,42
Growth	33.036.294,52	35.365.260,94	37.858.412,98
Prediction	33.712.870,46	35.644.598,94	37.576.327,42
Linear	33.712.870,46	35.644.598,94	37.576.327,42
Shymkent city			
Trend	3.563.440,87	3.617.986,58	3.672.532,29
Growth	1.960.160,709	1.762.062,037	1.583.983,704
Prediction	3.563.440,87	3.617.986,58	3.672.532,29
Linear	3.563.440,87	3.617.986,58	3.672.532,29

Source: compiled by authors

The conclusions of the results of the calculations made are shown in Figure 6.

When compared in terms of the volume of services provided by accommodations in the tourism industry, it should be noted that Almaty and Karaganda regions are two different regions in Kazakhstan with different characteristics and potential for tourism development. Almaty region prevails in terms of the volume of services provided in tourism for a number of the following reasons:

- Geographic location. Almaty region is located in the southern part of Kazakhstan and borders on Kyrgyzstan. It has attractive natural attractions such as the Tien Shan Mountains, Alakol Lake, national parks and picturesque landscapes. This makes the region attractive for natural and ecological tourism.
- Cultural heritage. Almaty region is also rich in cultural heritage and historical sites. In the city of Almaty, the capital of the region, there are numerous museums, art galleries, architectural monuments and other cultural sites that attract tourists.

▪ Developed infrastructure. The Almaty region has a more developed tourist infrastructure in comparison with the Karaganda region. The region has a wide range of hotels, restaurants, travel agencies and other services that provide a comfortable stay for tourists.

▪ Large population and economic potential. Almaty region has a higher population and economic potential compared to Karaganda region. This can contribute to more tourism service delivery, as more people can travel and consume tourism services.

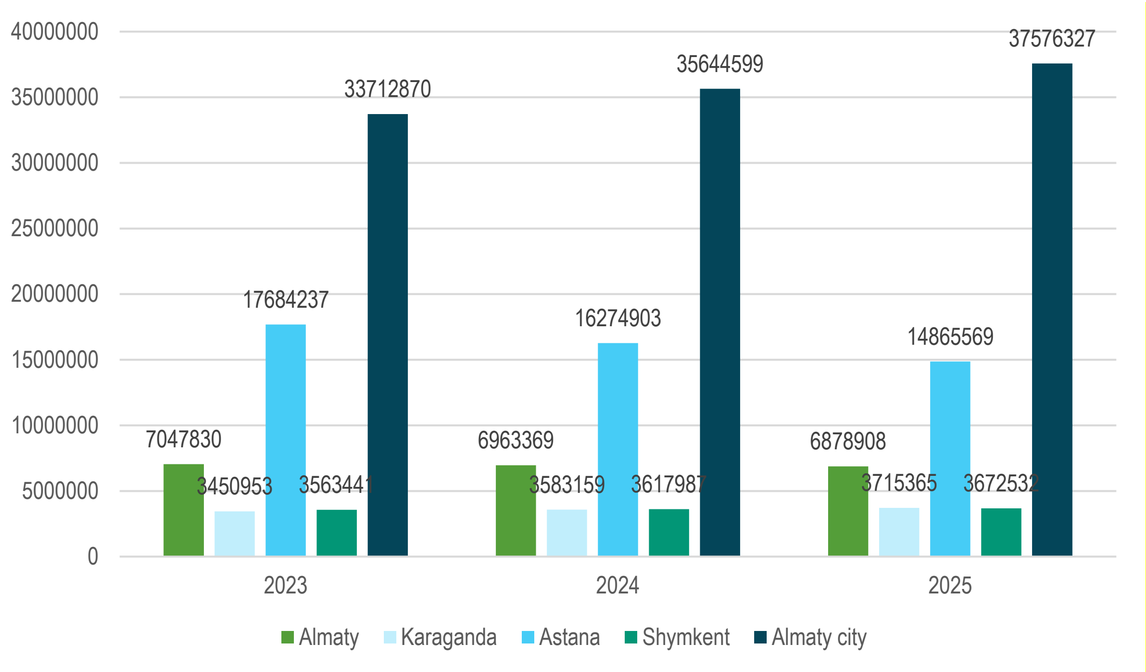
However, it is worth noting that the Karaganda region also has its own tourist attractions and potential for the development of the tourism industry. Astana is the political, administrative and economic center of the country. With this in mind, it is possible that Astana (Nur-Sultan) prevails in terms of the volume of services provided in tourism for the following reasons:

▪ The status of the capital. As the capital of Kazakhstan, Astana attracts more attention from business, politics, international events and business trips. This can lead to more visitors, guests and tourists, which contributes to the development of tourism infrastructure and services.

▪ Economic potential. Astana is one of the most developed economic centers of Kazakhstan. The city has a wide range of business infrastructure, financial institutions, international organizations and high-tech enterprises. This can attract business travelers and professionals to the city, increasing the demand for tourism services.

▪ Cultural and tourist attractions. Nur-Sultan offers a variety of cultural and tourist attractions such as Baiterek, Astana-Baiterek, the Astana Arnasy memorial complex, the National Library of Kazakhstan, various parks and museums. These objects attract tourists who want to explore the history, culture and architecture of the city.

Figure 6. Forecast values of the calculations of the most active regions of educational programs related to the tourism industry, 2023-2025



Source: compiled by authors

On the other hand, the Almaty region, including the city of Almaty, remains a major tourist destination in Kazakhstan. Almaty is the cultural, economic and tourist center of South Kazakhstan, and its mountainous landscape and proximity to natural attractions make it attractive for nature tourism. Both regions have their own unique features and advantages in terms of tourism, and the development of tourism depends on various factors, including investment, marketing efforts, quality of service and the availability of tourism infrastructure. Shymkent, the third largest city in Kazakhstan, has several factors that may explain its greater volume of tourism services:

▪ Geographic location. Shymkent is located near the border with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, which makes it an important tourist hub for visiting these countries. Proximity to international borders can facilitate intensive transit tourism and attract tourists from neighboring countries.

- Historical and cultural heritage. Shymkent is one of the oldest cities in Kazakhstan with a rich history. The city has a significant cultural heritage, including architectural monuments, museums, mosques and other historical and cultural attractions. It attracts tourists interested in the history and culture of the region.
- Developed infrastructure. Shymkent has a well-developed tourist infrastructure, including hotels, restaurants, shops and entertainment centers. Quality tourism services and facilities attract both domestic and foreign tourists.
- Business tourism. Shymkent is the economic center of South Kazakhstan and has a developed industry and commercial base. This attracts business travelers, participants of exhibitions and conferences, which contributes to the development of business tourism in the region.
- Transport accessibility. Shymkent has good transport links, including an international airport and railway station. This facilitates the arrival of tourists from different regions and ensures the convenience of travel.
- These factors may contribute to a larger volume of tourism services provided in Shymkent compared to other regions of Kazakhstan.

Thus, the volume of services provided in tourism can have a significant impact on educational programs related to tourism. Here are some ways in which the volume of services provided in tourism can influence educational programs: The growth and development of the tourism industry creates a demand for qualified professionals in this field. The increased volume of services in tourism requires educational programs that reflect current trends, requirements, and skills necessary for a successful career in the industry. Universities and educational institutions can tailor their programs to meet the needs of the industry, providing an up-to-date and relevant education for students. Increasing the volume of services in tourism can help to establish close links and partnerships between educational institutions and industry.

Universities can develop partnerships with travel companies, hospitality businesses, travel agencies and other industry players. This allows students to gain practical experience, internships and participate in real projects, which enriches their educational experience and increases their competitiveness in the labor market. The development of the tourism industry and the increase in the volume of services create more jobs and professional opportunities for graduates of educational programs related to tourism. Students educated in this field are more likely to find jobs in the tourism industry and build successful careers. Universities can tailor their programs to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and qualifications they need to meet the needs of the labor market. The growth of tourism services can stimulate tourism research and innovation. Universities can conduct research, study new trends, to develop new approaches and methods in the field of tourism. This can contribute to the development of new educational programs, specializations and courses that reflect the latest achievements and industry requirements.

In general, the volume of services provided in tourism has a significant impact on tourism-related educational programs, stimulating their development, adaptation, and relevance, as well as creating more opportunities for students and graduates in this field.

Based on the predictive calculations made using regression analysis, the author proposes measures to implement the mechanism for managing integration processes in university educational programs in the tourism industry, which is relevant for several reasons:

- Development of the tourism industry. Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the global economy and its role is becoming increasingly important. In this regard, there is a need to train highly qualified personnel capable of effectively managing integration processes in this industry. The study of integration management mechanisms in university educational programs helps to identify effective teaching methods and develop appropriate curricula.
- The complexity of the tourism industry. The tourism industry is multifaceted and complex, bringing together various sectors and actors such as hospitality, air travel, restaurants, attractions, local governments and travel agencies. Management of integration processes in this industry requires a deep understanding of its specifics and the ability to work with a variety of stakeholders. The study of this topic can contribute to the development of innovative approaches to management and contribute to the development of a more sustainable and efficient tourism industry.
- Innovation and change in the tourism industry. The tourism industry is constantly changing under the influence of new technologies, trends, and changes in consumer behavior. University educational programs must be able to adapt to these changes and provide students with up-to-date knowledge and skills. The study of integration management mechanisms in curricula helps to identify best practices and innovative approaches to student learning so that they can successfully cope with the challenges and requirements of the modern tourism industry.

For the successful implementation of the mechanism of management of integration processes in university educational programs in the field of tourism, the following measures can be adopted:

- Development of integration strategy. For this purpose, it is necessary to define the goals and objectives of integration of educational programs in the field of tourism, as well as the development of an action plan to achieve them. Consider the needs of students, labor market requirements and current trends in the tourism industry.
- Team formation. It is necessary to form a team responsible for managing the integration processes, including representatives of various faculties, departments and students to ensure a broad overview and participation of all stakeholders.
- Analysis of educational programs. It is necessary to analyze existing educational programs in tourism, identify overlapping and complementary elements, and identify common goals and competencies that can be combined into integrated courses.
- Develop integrated courses. It is necessary to develop integrated courses that combine elements from different educational programs, considering synergies and creating courses that will provide a deeper and more comprehensive learning experience for students.
- Creating a network of partners. It is necessary to establish partnerships with other universities, educational institutions, tourism companies and organizations for exchange of experience, joint training, and practical training.
- Monitoring and evaluation. It is necessary to establish a system for monitoring and evaluating the results of integration, assessing the effectiveness of integrated courses, student satisfaction and student performance, while using feedback to adjust and improve the integration process.
- Professional Development of Teachers. It is necessary to provide professional development for faculty members so that they can effectively deliver the integrated courses through training, workshops, and exchanges to enhance their competencies and knowledge.
- Student Involvement. It is necessary to encourage students' active participation in integrated courses by giving them the opportunity to choose and independently research topics related to integration, as well as organizing practical exercises and projects so that students can apply what they have learned in practice.
- Continuous Improvement. Implement a system of continuous improvement of tourism education program integration, using feedback from students, faculty, and employers to continuously improve and adapt programs.
- Dissemination of best practices. It is necessary to actively disseminate best practices in the management of integration processes in university tourism education programs by holding conferences, seminars, and publications to share knowledge and best practices with other universities and specialists in the field.

These activities will help to effectively manage integration processes in tourism education programs and ensure their successful implementation.

Conclusion

Global trends in managing integration processes in tourism education programs show that universities are seeking to integrate international elements into their programs to prepare students for the global challenges and needs of the industry. Effective tourism training requires a multidisciplinary approach that integrates knowledge from different fields such as economics, management, sociology, ecology and cultural studies. It is important to establish close cooperation with representatives of the tourism industry in order to adapt curricula to the requirements of the labor market and provide students with real opportunities to apply knowledge. Educational programs should introduce modern technologies and train students to use them in the management of tourism processes. Thus, the international practice of integration management in university educational programs of tourism industry emphasizes the importance of global approach, practical skills, cooperation with the industry and innovation to effectively prepare specialists for the dynamic and competitive environment of tourism.

Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Adiya Iskakova – an analysis of the international practice of managing integration processes in university educational programs of the tourism industry was carried out. An analysis of cooperation with industry stakeholders, such as tourism organizations, hotels, travel agencies and tour operators, is presented, which provide valuable information about the needs and development trends of the industry. Based on predictive calculations performed using regression analysis, the author proposes measures to implement the mechanism for managing integration processes in university educational programs in the field of tourism, which is relevant.

Madina Rakhimberdinova – a literary review was carried out on the topic of the study, as a result of which conclusions and the role of higher educational institutions in educational tourism were drawn.
Dzhapar Alybaev – the priorities of the integration processes of educational programs in the field of tourism in the new socio-economic conditions are determined. Education and vocational training are becoming more adaptive, considering the requirements of the labor market and individual interests of a person. The development of tourism leads to the creation of jobs, the solution of social issues, provides an influx of tax payments, and increases the prestige of the state in the international arena. In addition, the development of tourism leads to the development of related industries, such as transport, communications, construction, light and food industries.
Nyailya Smagulova – the risks arising from integration processes at universities are considered. It was revealed that the availability of higher education has decreased over the past three years. In Asia and Latin America, the use of the integration mechanism solely for persuasiveness becomes the main reason, which also raises concerns about universities in these countries.
Makpal Nurkenova – the introductory part of the study and conclusions are presented. The study of the mechanisms for managing integration processes in university educational programs makes it possible to identify effective teaching methods and develop appropriate curricula.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Halal Tourism Campaign: Does It Demolish Conventional? A New Touristic Segment on the Island of Lombok

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Abstract: A new segment, halal tourism, has been widely acknowledged and economically constitutes a spirit for societies' well-being improvement. The continuously growing Muslim population worldwide generates optimism that halal tourism is projected to be intensely consumed as it targets Muslims and non-Muslim travelers. This research then highlights how the halal tourism campaign impacts the existence of the conventional tourism industry on the island of Lombok. Phenomenology is a type of research formulated to answer research questions as it describes a phenomenon occurring at the research location. Processed data were systematically sourced from the first party in the form of structured interviews and participant observations involving hotel managers, government officials, tourism actors, academics, and related figures who fully understand the practice of halal tourism. Secondary sources (library research, document review) are analyzed in favor of the information sought. The study's results revealed that halal tourism practices are an added value to existing segments and can be adopted by non-Muslim tourism entrepreneurs. Halal tourism does not threaten conventional tourism, but its existence adds value to old products. Some challenges in response to halal tourism practice are discussed in this paper.

Keywords: conventional tourism; halal tourism; touristic segment.

JEL Classification: A12; Z32; L53; R11.

Introduction

The acceleration of the tourism industry means the same opportunities that are increasingly open to the enhancement of societies' well-being. This phenomenon is consciously believed to bring economic benefits (Basri *et al.* 2020; Pan *et al.* 2018) to local communities in line with the increasing convenience of accessibility and recreational resources (Wang *et al.* 2020). The strength of tourism as *a lucrative venture*, with the most rapid development in the world (Cavallaro *et al.* 2017), has made a significant contribution to creating jobs (Groizard and Santana-Gallego 2018, Jia and Chaozhi 2021) and also reduces poverty rates (Qin *et al.* 2019).

The increasing growth of tourism in various provinces in Indonesia is currently receiving serious attention. Lombok, as one of *Indonesia's* tourist icons besides Bali, has succeeded in attracting three million tourists per year (BPS 2017) with a varied typology despite having experienced a decline due to natural disasters, earthquakes in 2018 (Ramdani *et al.* 2019). The government's concentration on building a tourist-friendly tourism image is a measurable way of reaching the market. Increasing the frequency of visits through optimization of the marketing mix has a better impact on the socio-economic community. Therefore, providing a variety of tourist segments is one of the critical variables for regional revenues (Yen *et al.* 2021), for example, hotel tax revenues, restaurant taxes, entertainment taxes, recreational and sports venue levies.

The trend of halal tourism as an alternative segmentation is not new, as it has been practiced in several Muslim and non-Muslim countries. The development of halal tourism continues to increase (Ainin *et al.* 2020; Slamet *et al.* 2022), and it is considered very important to read as a new force because it can create added value economically. The flow of Muslim tourist visits, especially middle eastern tourists, continues to increase because, historically*,* the offer of services and products that are friendly to Islamic values has caused an increase in interest in halal tourism (Yousaf and Xiucheng 2018). A significant shift in Muslim visits from major destinations such as the UK and Europe to Asia is an excellent opportunity for halal tourism. Essential factors such as the growth of the Muslim population, which continues to increase yearly (Carboni and Idrissi Janati 2016, Nurdiansyah 2018), are projected to grow globally. Over the next two decades, approximately twice the number of the non-Muslim population can also boost the halal segment.

Interestingly, countries that are members of the non-OIC (Non-Organization of Islamic Conference) have publicly declared themselves to accommodate this potential. South Korea, with its certification institutions, has formed halal organizations such as the Korean Muslim Federation (KMF) and the Korean Halal Association (KHA) as recognized legality (Satriana and Faridah 2018)**.** In addition**,** Japan, under the Japan Halal Association (JHA) organization, won the title of 'World Best Non-OIC (Organization of Islamic Conference) Emerging Halal Destination' in 2016.

In the context of halal tourism, Indonesia can become a pioneer country (Widagdyo 2015) in campaigning for halal tourism. Countries with a majority Muslim population in the world can representatively implement it, not just emerge as consumers filling the market. On the other hand, Muslim countries such as Malaysia, under The Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), have succeeded in creating a halal certification authority body that provides certification to more than 20 categories of products and services (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia; Daganghalal) (Moshin *et al.* 2020) while Indonesia is still just starting out.

In response to the enormous halal tourism market opportunity, various countries seized this opportunity by building halal-friendly infrastructure (Samori *et al.* 2016), including the island of Lombok. Under the provincial government, the island of Lombok has publicly declared itself to welcome halal tourism. Scholars agree that halal tourism is a significant opportunity to escalate economic growth (El-Gohary 2016). The chances of successful development of this type of tourism are based on logical considerations. First, the halal concept follows the socio-cultural situation of the Lombok people with the Muslim majority. Second, the fertile religious value in social interaction makes the island of Lombok a friendly tourist destination for visitors. Third, public amenities such as restaurants that provide 100% halal food menu options can increase Muslim tourists' confidence in the legality of the food consumed. Places of worship in shopping centers, tourist destinations, or airports are also easily accessible (Subarkah 2018). The support of the icon 'a thousand mosques' potentially develops the island of Lombok. Since the development of halal tourism, Lombok Island has been named the world's best halal tourism destination by the world halal travel summit and the best honeymoon destination at the international tourism award event (Waryono 2022).

Although some researchers have conducted studies on halal issues, the majority of the scope of their research still does not discuss much of what we are assessing; whether halal tourism will eliminate conventional tourism practices or not. The existing literature talks a lot about halal food and its certification as an offer to Muslim travelers (Henderson 2016) but does not discuss the possibility of halal tourism demolishing the conventional tourism industry. Other studies, such as the analysis of accommodation providers' websites (Razzaq *et al.* 2016), also the analysis of conflicts of halal attributes, elaborated on the impact on the psychology of visitors to make a return visit (Akhtar *et al.* 2020). Moreover, risk assessments of halal products and services (Olya and Al-ansi 2018) do not widely share findings on the specific idea of what is proposed in the research question. Almost the same research has been studied by (Battour and Ismail 2016), which discusses in detail the opportunities and challenges of halal tourism. Still, the focus of the research and the study's concentration is different. In essence, A little study outlines how the halal segment can grow side by side with the conventional types of tourism that have been on the market, on the island of Lombok. Therefore, this study reveals how this halal tourism campaign emerged as a new segment and whether existing conventional tourism will be marginalized due to the threat of new segments that are believed to have a robust opportunity to develop.

1. Research Background

1.1. Halal Tourism

The attraction of halal tourism reaps positive points. Several studies reveal tourism will continue to increase specifically on entrepreneurship (Fahrurrozi *et al.* 2023). Nationally, the quality of tourism in various countries tends to experience fluctuating conditions. However, Muslim travel reached its highest point in 2019, reaching 160 million (Global Muslim Travel Index 2021), and decreased due to the spread of COVID-19. Halal tourism projections will find a breaking point just as 2019 is estimated in 2024 and will increase until 2028. From the same source, in 2021, Indonesia's position is fourth in halal tourism and must be displaced by the development of halal tourism in Malaysia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia. In addition to improving the quality and capacity of halal tourism in some of these countries, Indonesia has experienced a decline in the quality of halal tourism. However, the quality of halal tourism in Indonesia has improved and gradually increased, occupying the second position after Malaysia (Mastercard-Crescentrating, 2022). The improvement in the quality of Malaysian halal tourism coincides with the increase in studies in the area – the two countries with the best halal tourism (Malaysia and Indonesia) are the largest contributors to the study (Suban *et al.* 2021).

In the context of halal tourism, Indonesia has great potential to develop the industry (Abror *et al.* 2020); From the aspect of climate that offers the beauty of the environment, nature, and culture with the largest number of Muslims in the world with adequate religious facilities to support the needs of halal tourism. Halal commodities are rapidly growing (Adel *et al.* 2021, Al-Kwifi *et al.* 2020, Wingett and Turnbull 2013). The expenditure of Muslim Visitors is expected to increase significantly from US$140 million in 2018 to US$230 - US$300 by the end of 2026; along with a significant increase in the Muslim population (Chianeh *et al.* 2019; Wisker *et al.* 2020).

Supported by the Indonesian population as the majority of Muslims (88% of the total population) is an opportunity welcomed by the Indonesian government. In 2019 Indonesia became Indonesia named the best halal tourist destination in the world and followed by the neighboring country; Malaysia. As a follow-up, the development of halal tourism is planned to continue until 2024 starting from 2019. Furthermore, the Indonesian government targets several areas as halal tourist attractions; West Nusa Tenggara, Aceh, Riau, DKI Jakarta, West Sumatra, Jawab Barat, Yogyakarta, Central Java, Malang Raya, and South Sulawesi.

The development of halal tourism in Indonesia may not reap difficulties as experienced by non-majority Muslim countries in general. Halal means Islamic norms and teachings (Muneeza and Mustapha 2020, Naserirad *et al.* 2022, Usman *et al.* 2019), in Indonesia, this is relevant. The basic values of Islam in presentation, tourist services, and tourist activities have referred to Islamic norms. Environment and culture refer to Islamic norms, So, it is not an exaggeration to say worship facilities as a carrying capacity are available almost along tourist destinations. The community well receives activities related to Islam. The support of these aspects is a strong reason to place Indonesia as the best halal tourism nomination. On the contrary, if referred to entirely Islamic norms, it can lead to instability between Muslim and Non-Muslim visitors or discrimination (Battour *et al.* 2018).

With biological wealth and natural beauty, the majority Muslim population, and with cultural diversity colored by Islamic values, it is not impossible that Indonesia can become the axis of halal tourism. This opportunity must be maximized without compromising aspects of Islamic teachings themselves. However, Indonesia still needs to improve itself in terms of halal tourism. Four criteria are set by the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) with their respective weights that can be a reference in improving the quality and capacity of halal tourism, access, communication, environment, and services (Mastercard-Crescentrating 2022). These four points are the main parts that influence the perception of tourist visits (Vargas-Sánchez and Moral-Moral 2019).

Access these criteria cover several important points; visa requirements, connectivity, and transport infrastructures. Accessibility is a strategic area in planning a tourist trip (Yen *et al.* 2021). Security, ease of access in terms of administration, and the availability of air and land transportation that facilitates movement from one place to the intended destination are one of the main considerations (Deng *et al.* 2020).

Communication includes destination marketing, communication proficiency, and stakeholder awareness. Language Mastery supports Muslim Visitor Guide needs and promotional needs, both conventional and digital. Foreign mastery can maximize the use of digital technology, considering that digital promotion is high (Shah *et al.* 2020). This aspect leads to qualified human resources. The readiness of Indonesian people in terms of communication is still dominated by mastery of English, but foreign mastery for local people is still relatively minimal. This is an important criticism for Indonesia, the development of halal tourism is not accompanied by the readiness of market needs. Most halal tourism actors are people from Middle Eastern countries (Harahsheh *et al.*

2019), with those who use Arabic as a social language. On the other hand, the Indonesian people's mastery of Arabic and other foreign languages is far from enough. The GMTI report for 2022 shows that language is the lowest point owned by Indonesia in supporting the needs of halal tourism.

Environment – covers several important points; safety, faith restriction, visitor arrival, enabling climate, and sustainability. Tourism is claimed to be one of the sectors that take part in exacerbating climate change (Ma and Kirilenko 2019) so consideration of environmental aspects is part of the responsibility of halal tourism to restore natural damage and provide safety and comfort in carrying out tourist activities. Tourism leads the environment degradation and increased gas emissions (Wang and Wang 2018); Sustainable halal tourism development is expected to contribute to minimizing the challenges of climate change (Marsiglio 2015), which is a threat to all humankind. Caring for nature, and maintaining peace are part of Islamic norms while maintaining aspects of achieving sustainable development targets. Nevertheless, Indonesia is part of a country that is still struggling with environmental issues.

The last is services that cover important points; core needs (halal food and prayer facilities), core services (hotel and airport), and unique experience. Halal tourism emphasizes products and services based on value and Muslim regulation (Azali *et al.* 2021). Compared to other criteria, GMTI places this last point with the most weight; 40%. The point of service is the most vital criterion of Halal Tourism. If you review the readiness of neighboring countries (Malaysia), in addition to guarantees of adequate accommodation and transportation, the price offered for food needs offered is cheaper than in Indonesia. To increase the number of foreign tourist visits to Indonesia, improving the quality of Muslim-Friendly Facilities, accommodations, safety, and human resources must be a top priority.

1.2. Conventional Tourism

Tourism development goes hand in hand with criticism; environment (Stephen, Boyd, and Boluk 2016), economy (Adedoyin *et al.* 2021), and social and cultural (Veeken *et al.* 2016). The criticism was responded to by efforts to improve, reform, and give birth to new forms of tourism development to protect communities and indigenous and local treasures (Bushell and Bricker 2016). Nature tourism is formed by criticism of environmental damage and a campaign to improve the quality of nature. Community-based tourism was introduced to promote local culture and increase the role of the community in the tourism industry while preventing the fading of local culture, which is increasingly eroded by the times (Lalicic and Garaus 2020, Wang *et al.* 2021). But on the other hand, tourism is used as a qualified source of foreign exchange (Gao and Su 2020). Indonesia, for example, before the spread of COVID-19, the amount of foreign exchange generated from the tourism sector in 2019 exceeded revenues from the oil and gas, coal, and palm oil sectors. Tourism adaptation continues following consumer needs and alignment with other aspects. Tourism sustainable development, culture tourism, and halal tourism are a series of forms of tourism adjustments that are environmentally friendly and meet the needs of people's lives.

Several studies suggest tourism will be increasingly in demand. This encourages various countries to improve the quality of their tourism. Indonesia, for example, the Indonesian government is increasingly aggressively developing tourism with superior program variants and will continue until 2045 development. To attract visitors, the Indonesian government has set 5 destinations as a super-priority; Lake Toba – North Sumatra, Borobudur – Central Java, Mandalika – West Nusa Tenggara, Labuan Bajo – East Nusa Tenggara, Manado, and Likupang – North Sulawesi. Malaysia is taking various strategic steps to develop tourism and positively impact the country's economic development (Islam *et al.* 2020; Shahbaz *et al.* 2018). On the contrary, tourism in Malaysia must deal with terrorism, natural disasters, and COVID-19 (Buigut *et al.* 2021).

However, tourism growth goes hand in hand with challenges. In the pace of the tourism development process in Indonesia, the criticism raised is a serious consideration. Environmental pollution resulted from tourism waste that did not manage well in Indonesia and almost in all parts. The tourism dilemma continues; Infrastructure development to support the needs of tourists is faced with the issue of environmental damage. Furthermore, environmentally friendly infrastructure development technology has not touched this aspect. Meanwhile, tourism demands high-quality facilities (Kamassi *et al.* 2020). Tourism adaptation is a big task for all stakeholders; Adjusting development with ecology, and culture must be prioritized to improve the community's economy.

2. Methodology

This research explains the social phenomena concerning halal tourism on the island of Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. We chose a qualitative-phenomenological method with the rationale that the representation of halal tourism phenomena campaigned by the province of West Nusa Tenggara answers many things, including the variety of empirical materials, case studies, and interpretations of social problems with naturalistic characterization settings. The phenomenological research can answer how the halal tourism campaign is carried out, what tourism industries are involved (hotels, restaurants, cafes, destinations), the implementation process, and how to campaign for the halal segment.

Phenomenological studies are applied on the island of Lombok by targeting government officials as important informants providing narratives about halal tourism. The selection of informants with purposive sampling from government officials (tourism office) is appropriate because they are essential authorities who maintain, feel, and run the halal tourism campaign program in the province of West Nusa Tenggara. Video on the halal tourism seminar from the governor of West Nusa Tenggara was then carefully analyzed to support data. Second, they are the most responsible body to explain to the public the essence of halal tourism as a new segment of accommodating Muslim travel but not shifting non-Muslim tourists. Other choices, such as summarizing the opinions of tourism entrepreneurs such as hotel and restaurant managers, are trusted sources. Their capacity to comprehensively explain how hotels or restaurants accommodate the unique needs of Muslim travelers and how non-Muslim visitors respond to the services provided by the accommodation is beneficial. Additional sources were gathered from several travelers, both Muslims and non-Muslims, randomly selected to reinforce the support data collected from key sources such as government officials (tourism agencies) and accommodation managers (hotels and restaurants).

Because the data processing is presented descriptively, the analysis process using the model popularized by Miles and Huberman includes collecting data, reducing data, displaying data, and drawing a conclusion. The data collection process is the first step by collecting data that is the point of study as formulated in the research questions. The source of data collection can be interviewed and reviewed documents. Data reduction is then carried out on the amount of data collected to be filtered because not all the data successfully collected is under the data sought. Critical coding data from interview studies, document reviews, and library research is carried out to be written and presented. The last step of the analysis process is to draw a conclusion containing the research findings.

3. Findings

3.1. Halal Tourism on the Island of Lombok

Halal tourism on the island of Lombok has become a new segment amid the growing tourism; Conventional. Halal tourism began to be proclaimed in the era of the two-term leadership of West Nusa Tenggara Governor Dr. TGB. M. Zainul Madji, Lc,. MA. With the educational background of agama, Muslim scholars, supported by Arabic communication skills, halal tourism opportunities are believed to be a superior product also because the island of Lombok is known as a thousand mosques. Access to networking with an open Middle Eastern community is a supporting factor for the Governor to conduct political lobbying to direct Middle Eastern tourists to look at the island of Lombok as a Muslim-friendly tourist destination where the majority of Middle Eastern tourists spend time visiting the European continent.

West Nusa Tenggara is one of more than 30 provinces in Indonesia proclaiming itself to be a province by offering halal segmentation to tourists. At first, this halal tourism campaign received an unfavorable response from tourism managers on the island of Lombok. They assume that the emergence of halal tourism in the market will have an impact on the weakening of conventional tourism. Halal tourism will kill conventional tourism businesses. This concern received a positive response from the West Nusa Tenggara provincial government. Various dialogue rooms were opened to provide an understanding that halal segmentation is intended to add new tourism features to take advantage of Muslim tourist visits with a lot of spending to other countries. These efforts have yielded results where many hotels register to take advantage of the opportunity of the halal segment as one of the tourism products offered. The following is a summary of TGB's explanation of halal tourism in a seminar entitled halal tourism: 'Halal tourism is present as an additional segment that provides more space for tourism business people. Halal tourism does not threaten conventional tourism, on the contrary, it will increase income opportunities because conventional tourism can offer halal tourism features without having to eliminate conventional tourism.'

Halal tourism as one of the service industries is a complement to the existing tourism business; conventional tourism. Halal tourism in principle is developed while still prioritizing culture and Muslim values but without compromising the originality of cultural values in the area that is a tourist destination. Halal tourism has the concept of developing Muslim-friendly tourism. This means that there is a guarantee to Muslim tourists that they are getting services that are following religious law without neglecting other conventional tourists who have become markets before. Muslim friendliness is the main principle of halal tourism development. All forms of accommodation and amenities that offer the concept of halal tourism will fully provide the needs of Muslim tourists for example the practice of providing prayer rooms, holy books, qibla wine, ablution places, and providing 100 percent halal food. Muslim friendly means that tour managers not only facilitate tourists with hospitality but all forms of needs attached to religious creed affairs become the concentration of every halal tourism manager. Thus, halal tourism does not eliminate all elements contained in conventional tourism but is a complement to existing tourism. The target of halal tourism is not only Muslim tourists but attracts non-Muslim tourists. Because in essence, halal tourism is only a complement to conventional types of tourism. As a Muslim-majority country, halal tourism packages should be a strong segment in Indonesia, especially on the island of Lombok. Some considerations such as a thick Islamic culture, the icon of a thousand mosques, and the hospitality of the population are supporting the success of halal tourism on the island of Lombok.

Halal tourism brands on the island of Lombok are increasingly popular based on awards and achievements achieved in several national and international events. In 2015, West Nusa Tenggara has won an award as the best halal destination at the International Halal Travel Summit. This world tourism activity was held in Dubai, the middle east. Not only that, but West Nusa Tenggara has also won awards as Word Best Cultural Destination, World's Best Culinary Destination, and World's Best Halal Honeymoon Destination in the same year. This is certainly a calculation in the global arena and makes the island of Lombok the main destination for world-class tourists. Referring to this, this may be the reason for the increasing number of tourists visits that come to visit, especially from the Middle East market. The halal tourism industry is a great business investment opportunity in every country, not only in Muslim-majority countries but among non-Muslim tourists, into a large market.

Here's a quote from one of the AR speakers: 'There is a moment when halal tourism should be a business opportunity for the big tourism industry on the island of Lombok. Several times winning awards in the field of halal tourism should be an opportunity that the halal tourism market will grow and succeed. But at this time, I see that the provincial tourism office does not echo this too much. Many factors can influence, including networking and changes in social and political situations'.

West Nusa Tenggara Province develops halal tourism based on the spirit of togetherness and religion of the people in West Nusa Tenggara. Community involvement is important to run a program and ensure that the values of the community are adopted in every aspect of development, especially tourism. Building halal tourism requires commitment from regional leaders and stakeholders to ensure the sustainability of the halal tourism business. The NTB government together with all existing tourism stakeholders built an agreement on halal tourism in terms of policy and budgeting. As a result of the mutual agreement in terms of policy, halal tourism regional regulations (Perda) were born. In terms of budgeting, the Government is committed to using the APBD budget to develop halal tourism by certifying hotels, restaurants, and all forms of service facilities related to halal tourism.

Cross-examination of resource persons during the data collection process concluded that halal tourism features are not an aspect that makes conventional tourism lost and undeveloped. Halal tourism is an additional segment that provides added value or there is a business expansion that tourists can choose without having to bury one of the existing features or packages. Tourism business can expand services which certainly make tourist visits increase both tourists from the Middle East and other parts of Europe. Halal tourism is not only focused on Muslim tourists who visit but services to non-Muslim tourists are considered such as the provision of facilities such as cross-religious holy books such as the Bible and other non-Muslim books at the hotel. This is a calculation that halal tourism does not distinguish Muslim and non-Muslim tourism in any aspect both arrival, service, and how to accommodate every need of tourists. Therefore, the presence of halal tourism does not adversely affect existing conventional tourism but opens up more opportunities for tourism entrepreneurs to increase income because halal tourism is an additional offer that can be consumed at any time.

3.2. Barriers to Halal Tourism Practice on the Island of Lombok

Halal tourism on the island of Lombok had become popular during the era of Dr. K.H. Muhammad Zainul Majdi. However, halal tourism cannot be separated from the challenges that must be passed. First, halal tourism has problems with the regulation of halal certification aspects of accommodation and tourism products such as hotels, restaurants, and cafes that have a Hilal level that needs to be listed and recognized. The following is an excerpt from an interview with one of the AST interviewees.

> 'The issue of certification of hotels is often a double perception. Some of us still want clarity on what products should be certified. The certifying body is still not 100 percent clear. I think halal certification bodies for our accommodation and restaurants should label them as guidelines for the standards set.'

The next obstacle is the perception of the public and managers about halal tourism. There is the most substantive perception claiming that the presence of halal tourism replaces tourism that is already operating. Conventional tourism will be buried because it is no longer accommodated by tourists. Halal tourism will change aspects that already exist in conventional tourism. The acceptance of conventional tourism entrepreneurs assumes that halal tourism brings new rules that all tourism products must be Islamic, have Islamic religious beliefs, and are closely related to Arabization. But on the contrary, halal tourism is expanding services both in accommodation facilities and the needs of Muslim and non-Muslim tourists have been arranged. The lack of public understanding of the conception of halal tourism has an impact on the assumption that there are restrictions on the implementation and prohibitions on old tourism products. In certain cases, such as mosques, there is a requirement for non-Muslim and even Muslim tourists to dress according to religious recommendations. Therefore, the concept of halal tourism is a way to manage tourism objects to meet the primary needs of humans in a worldly and *ukhrawi* manner without limiting other tourism business activities, for example in the context of conventional tourism.

Adequate transportation facilities are still an obstacle in addition to promotional activities. Mode of transportation to destinations that have accommodated halal tourism deficit. The provincial government and related agencies still do not fully provide clear public transport so that it can meet the needs of tourists when they want to visit certain destinations because currently, the majority of tourists use rental cars more expensive than the general mode of transportation.

4. Discussions

The trend of the halal lifestyle has globally touched the needs of the majority Muslim population. Halal lifestyle has encouraged individuals to travel by choosing travel products that can provide answers to their needs (Al-Ansi and Han 2019, Olya and Al-ansi 2018). Psychological needs in the form of material must be guaranteed halal, food that is religiously a dish that does not contradict religious teachings. This principle then becomes an opportunity for tourist destinations to offer halal tourism products.

In some non-Muslim countries such as Korea, Japan, Thailand, and Vietnam, halal segmentation is a successful alternative tourism product. This product service has brought in many Muslim tourists who used to spend the majority of their spending on the European continent. The success of non-Muslim countries in accommodating the needs of Muslim tourists is a significant tourism business achievement (Aratuo *et al.* 2018, Saint Akadiri *et al.* 2019) considering the size of the Muslim tourist market is projected to experience a surge and growth every year. The presence of the halal tourism sector will continue to grow and can be a solution to meet the needs of local communities, for example in employment and reducing unemployment.

In the context of the island of Lombok, the development of halal tourism first, there was resistance from some tourism managers. This challenge is based on the concern of some tourism entrepreneurs that halal tourism will permanently replace the role of conventional tourism. Conventional tourism opportunities are predicted to be destroyed because the echo of halal tourism had become a conversation and choice of many tourists when deciding on a visit. The dilemma did not last long because the provincial government has been actively communicating and providing an understanding that halal tourism is only one additional segment of selected tourism products. Fortunately, halal tourism is not only intended for non-Muslim tourists but can also be accommodated by conventional tourism as long as halal tourism products are provided (Ahmed and Akbaba 2018, Aziz and Athoillah 2019).

In the development of halal tourism on the island of Lombok, there are several obstacles. First, the government must deal with the mindset that halal tourism will eliminate conventional tourism. Halal tourism will not allow conventional tourism that is not under religious guidance. Second, the government has not maximized in campaigning for halal tourism on the island of Lombok. The process of standardization and product certification is often incomplete. The concept of halal does not only apply to tourist destinations (Samori *et al.* 2016) but lodging accommodations are also considered such as Hotels, Restaurants, Cafes, and others. Hotels that implement halal tourism on the island of Lombok have a certification level (hilal) of one to three. These levels have different facilities and types of visitors (tourists). Certification level one (hilal 1) can be visited by anyone, both Muslims and non-Muslims. Certification level two (hilal 2) can still be visited by non-Muslim tourists, but certification level two (hilal 2) has a type of facility that is slightly different from certification level one (hilal 1). While the certification level of the three (hilal 3) types of tourists who enter the hotel is only intended for Muslim tourists because in terms of facilities or in terms of hotel food that has hilal level 3 is not allowed haram food which is prohibited religiously.

In the future, the development of halal tourism on the island of Lombok needs a more rigid campaign. This action provides enlightenment and strengthens the concept to entrepreneurs and the community that halal tourism must be understood holistically. The circulation of issues about halal tourism that will eliminate conventional tourism can be reduced. The process of halal standardization and certification, for example on products that are physical consumption, is further clarified and facilitated by the provincial government so that it will be able to help improve halal tourism to develop on Lombok Island.

Conclusions

The halal tourism campaign in the context of West Nusa Tenggara has caused mixed speculation from tourism business people. Since halal tourism was proclaimed as one of the new segments entering the tourism industry in West Nusa Tenggara, there is an assumption that the introduction of halal tourism will have an impact on killing conventional tourism businesses. Business competition is considered unhealthy considering that halal tourism will fully control the market, limiting conventional business space because the rules used are directly related to Islamic religious principles. The concept of halal tourism is then interpreted as a new segment that displaces existing tourism businesses. The application of Muslim principles as the basis of business practices threatens other tourism businesses because halal tourism practices will use pure Islam which does not allow non-Muslims to consume tourist products. Arabization is allegedly strongly adopted so that it will shift the culture of the existing community. The government through relevant agencies then opens space for tourism business people to dialogue to provide explanations about what and how halal tourism should be developed. With a teamwork pattern, the West Nusa Tenggara Provincial Government has succeeded in convincing conventional tourism business people that halal tourism is beneficial in terms of adding business features that are not only used by non-Muslims but also by the majority of Muslims. Currently, there are dozens of hotels and restaurants in West Nusa Tenggara adopting halal tourism features as a tourist product offered to tourists.

Although halal tourism has opened up potential business opportunities for the community's economic business, some obstacles hinder the acceleration of its practice. Standardization of hotels and restaurants to the halal level needs to be clarified by the certifying body and the clarity of the products certified. The campaign for halal tourism must be done considering that not all tourism business people understand the essence of halal tourism. The assumption that halal tourism displaces conventional tourism harms the image and progress of tourism even though the halal tourism segment was introduced to open additional businesses to encourage better and healthier economic growth of the community. Other obstacles such as the limited mode of transportation as well as the promotion of halal tourism are important obstacles in advancing halal tourism in West Nusa Tenggara (Lombok Island).

Given that halal tourism contributes to the creation of a productive economy in the community, the provincial government through related agencies needs to focus constructive efforts to build this industry. Halal tourism campaigns must be carried out continuously, facilitating a space for dialogue with tourism players, communities, and society. In the future, the government can form an independent institution that specifically takes care of halal tourism certification in addition to MUI. This effort is believed to increase the level of public and consumer confidence in the legality and credibility of halal tourism as an industry.

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Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Heru Cahyono contributed to compiling research ideas, finding gaps studied and interpreting interview data with resource persons. **Muh Fahrurrozi** examines the economic phenomenon of the impact of halal tourism in West Nusa Tenggara. He assisted in analyzing and interpreting interview data and drafting papers. **Toto Sukarnoto** is in charge of compiling research instruments. He is responsible for collecting questions relevant to the data he seeks from sources. He also recorded the number of accommodations and collected information on the capacities of halal principles to be reported in papers. **Nursaid** is contributing to connecting researchers with resource persons. He is also responsible for selecting relevant literature for the tourism studied.

Declaration of Competing Interest

We declare that we have no conflict of interest in this research with other parties related to funding or that can harm or threaten the results of this academic work.

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The Linkage between Modern HR Management and Activities to Improve Performance in Tourism Development Trends in the Republic of Kosovo

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Abstract: The intention of this research is to expand process leaders' contributions leveraging modern human resources procedures and practices for the advancement of the performance of tourist enterprises in the field of Kosovar tourism. Determining and measuring the variables with the greatest impact and those with the least impact is one of the determinants of the level of staff performance in the tourism sector. The results show that relationships in the coordination of management actions have a favorable impact on raising the bar for work outcomes and accomplishments as well as the growth of these human resources in Kosovar businesses. Human resources from Kosovar tourism enterprises should be considered a strategic development partner. As a result of the implementation of the methods and processes of the development of the successful global employee, the satisfaction of visitors and tourists with the products and services offered is also confirmed. This scientific research will serve as a good scientific reference base for tourism enterprises, the managers of these enterprises as well as the levels of policy-making at both the central and regional, that the recognition of influencing factors and the implementation of contemporary management methods, yet, forcefully encourages the productivity and advancement of staff.

Keywords: tourism development; management; human resources; performance; touristic organization.

JEL Classification: M12; O15; Z32; R11.

Introduction

Based on information from the Kosovo Agency for Statistics (ASK, 2022), The Republic of Kosovo covers 10,905.25 km2. It is situated in South-Eastern Europe, surrounded by Macedonia to the south, Montenegro to the north, Serbia to the east, and Albania to the west. The area is bounded by the longitudes 19° 59' and 21° 47' and latitudes 41° 51' and 43° 16'. Different elevations may be found in the Republic of Kosovo's land. The Drini i Bardh river valley, on Kosovo's border with Albania, has the lowest point in the country at 270 meters above sea level, and Gjeravic, in the west of Kosovo, has the highest point at 2,656 meters. The river basins that are used to characterize Kosovo's the field of hydrography include the Ibri, Morava e Binçs Lepeneci and Drini i Bardh. The country's rivers supply water to three sea catchments: the Black Sea, the Mediterranean, and the waters of the Aegean Sea. The climate of the youngest state on the old continent is mainly continental, with Mediterranean and continental influences, resulting in warm summers and frigid winters (Inside the country, the average temperature ranges from +30 °C in summertime to -10 °C in the winter months (ASK, 2022).

In the area of developing human resources, the Republic of Kosovo is doing quite well two decades after the conflict., and all this is supported by other researchers who define the human factor, as presented by (Krasniqi B. A. 2012) Kosovo is the country in Europe with the youngest population, with 70% of the inhabitants under the age of 35., making it one of the most competitive in the region. Entrepreneurs are believed to be more concerned with environmental restrictions on the outside than internal characteristics like management abilities

(BSC-Kosovo, 2021). The travel and hospitality industry in Kosovo has to improve on a number of fronts, including professional preparedness. The national educational system has to be designed and coordinated, with the help of public and private educational institutions, local tourism-related agencies, associations, and incentives from the hotel and tourist industry. A good understanding of the contemporary tourism and hospitality sector, developments, and trends within the specific industry must be provided via educational programs, which must be continuously modified and developed in this manner (Gjonbalaj, 2023). It is necessary to establish regional training centers for hotel and tourism staff in order to support labor market demands. These centers' goals would be to: develop and improve qualifications and align them with labor market demands; monitor, assess, and examine regional labor market demands for knowledge and skills in the field of tourism and hospitality management; modify existing programs and develop new training initiatives. From this perspective, educational institutions should teach their staff not only how to master modern knowledge but also how to cultivate critical thinking abilities and the ability to deliver excellent services, which are only a few requirements to meet the demands of the international tourist business (Gjonbalaj, 2023).

The genuine management of human resources applying contemporary methods means all activities and actions that have to do with people in that organization or institution. Of course, here the strategies, principles, decisions, and actions are implemented in a chain manner with the sole purpose of managing these resources towards the highest results. Relationships and the ability to relate that these activities will result in favorable or unfavorable outcomes, both for the organization and for their employees. Kosovar tourism enterprises should review the roles and influences of employees as John Stredwick has presented in the book An Introduction to Human Resource Management, that the economic and business contest should also be tested where the duties and descriptions that will clarify the role will be discussed. of employees in their enterprises In reality, the bulk of annual reports for businesses plainly state that their people are their most significant asset. Nevertheless, many organizational decisions appear to place a low priority on the company's human resources as well as the (HR) department, despite these widely held beliefs and all-too-often expressed statements (Barney and Wright 1998). By concentrating on resources, from opportunity recognition to the ability to organize these resources into a business and finally to the generation of varied outputs through the firm that are superior to the market, we help in identifying problems that start to address the specific area of entrepreneurship (Busenitz, A., and Lowell. 2001).

1. Literature Review

The tourism and hospitality sector is regarded by many authors, as emphasized by Bowen, as one of the industries with the highest reliance on human labor for the delivery of services. The premise that the best process innovation ideas originate from individuals who are actively executing the work is the foundation for the crucial importance of employees' engagement in an organization's quality process (Bowen D. 2023). The HRM practices that encourage a service-oriented environment and provide customers access to the role clarity, capability, and motivation they need to engage in the creation and delivery of services are, of course, among the most crucial considerations (Bowen D. E. 1986). As a supporting fact, the utilization of a cross-functional team can enhance sub-unit coordination, enabling project work to be completed in parallel rather than sequentially, and eliminate delays brought on by the failure to integrate the essential information from across the company as they have potentiated it (David Caldwell and Deborah Ancona 2007).

The characteristics of human resource management are very important in relation to performance appraisal and evaluation decisions from different aspects. There is no doubt that education and managerial preparation are extremely supportive in these processes.

Decisions require both subjective and objective managerial traits. The results offer evidence for the habituation and reasonable expectations effects, as well as the manager's training and exposure to other cultures, in relation to the strategic choice paradigm and behavioral economics (Besnik Krasniqi 2018).

Based on the concept of a successful start-up in Kosovo, an entrepreneurial approach is needed, as the authors mentioned below: For companies, it is essential to have a knowledge of the entrepreneurial intention variables that draw managers to entrepreneurship (Krasniqi, Berisha and Pula 2019).

According to the authors mentioned below, empirical research demonstrates a positive correlation between managers' attitudes about innovation as a basis and prerequisite for reaching goals and achieving performance. (Damanpour 1991; Murphy, Trailer, and Hill 1996; Harris 2001; Cho and Pucik 2005.; Landry 2005)

Organizational involvement of managers facilitates the entire process, as the authors have noted. The owners and operators of Kosovar tourist businesses must effectively execute all of this (Memaj, Sejfijaj, and Shehu, 2019)

Other significant areas of management research include leadership theory (see Bass and Bass 2008) and motivation theory (Latham, 2012). These theories suggest that managerial interventions affect employees' attitudes, which in turn affects both the organizational and individual performance. Herzberg and Bass also note the importance of these theories (Memaj, Sejfijaj and Shehu, 2019). Empowerment was defined as a higher level of internal motivation of office or commitment and internal engagement in a task using Thomas and Velthouse's four assessments of a task: impact, competence, comprehension, and choice. As they offer positive evaluations for these four aspects of the job, an employee will feel more internally motivated and empowered (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990).

Workers are empowered by their leaders when they have faith in their abilities and are given the resources they need to succeed in their jobs. Employee empowerment aims to replace micromanaging by granting employees the liberty they need to thrive and the support they need to feel confident taking chances as they advance during their careers. When leaders use influence in their strategies or behaviors, followers are said to feel more empowered, according to Mathieu, Rapp, Ahearne (2005), and Arnold *et al.* (2000) and who developed intricate definitions of the term (Pinghao Ye and Liqiong Liu, 2022).

The last three decades have seen the rise of empowerment treatments and practices as significant strategies for encouraging positive attitudes and behaviors among staff members. These techniques produce organizational designs that promote self-leadership, autonomy, and the delegation of responsibility and power (Amundsen and Martinsen, 2015).

According to Cynthia *et al.* (2015) a structural turnover intention model with work satisfaction, organizational commitment, and supervisory conduct (including person- and task-oriented characteristics). The study also seeks to assess how much this kind of approach proves successful for businesses that are big as well as small and medium-sized firms (Mathieu *et al.*, 2016).

To ascertain if corporate culture and justice ideals have an impact on the link between supervisor empowerment management methods and employee empowerment behavior, the authors Cacciatore, G., Boudrias, J.-S., Plunier, P., Morin, A., Brunet, L., J. S., and Savoie, A (2010) discovered that when views of organizational supportive surroundings and justice were stronger, those actions were more positively linked to behavioral empowerment. (Boudrias *et al.*, 2010).

The researchers Pilati *et al.* (2021) examined the circumstances in which temporary work partnerships have a favourable impact on work results and how particular personality qualities may influence how different forms of employment may affect employee productivity. The sort of link between an employee's work experience and their demand for status, as a result, has a combined effect on establishing work results (performance and opinion. Conclusions imply that when workers have a high need for rank, temporary (as opposed to regular) job possibilities are more inclined to exercise influence over employee outcomes (Duan *et al.*, 2021).

The study that is supported is also the case of the authors (Lei *et al.*, 2021); it builds and evaluates a multilevel conceptual model that explains how creativity is impacted by genuine leadership through the encouragement of self-efficacy and an inventive team environment. It outlines two routes that true leadership might use to inspire creativity. Another approach focuses on the authentic leadership's ability to balance the relationship between self-worth and individual inventiveness. The first road is an indirect effect through a creative environment on a team basis and self-efficacy on an individual basis.

According to Yishuang Meng (2016), the necessity to establish a values-driven culture increased in the twenty-first century, motivating the workforce to fight and ardently pursue a common vision. This is feasible with strong and inspiring leadership (Wu *et al.*, 2016). This is a factor that Kosovar tourism businesses should take into consideration while determining their requirements for visitor and tourist satisfaction, respectively.

2. Materials and Methods

In order to properly assess the situation in the sector and to accomplish its goals, the design of the research's technique was produced. Secondary and primary data were both used in the study. We contend that the researchers' questionnaire, which was used to collect primary data, yielded conclusions that will help these tourist businesses function better. As well as secondary data from different papers, books, journals, and magazines, hypothesized associations were examined using data gathered through structured questionnaires that were distributed to a sample of 300 tourist businesses in Kosovo.

Entrepreneurs, managers, and their executives were requested to fill out a questionnaire on their opinions.

The statistical techniques of multiple regression analysis, the Durbin-Watson model, tests of effects between individuals, the KMO and Bartlett test, and the research data were examined using factor analysis. In accordance with the author's calculations, tabular data is used to explain how the results should be interpreted.

The sample included in this study is made up of organizations that have HRM procedures in place and a track record of dealing with a range of employee and HRM-related concerns. The following variables are considered when analyzing the performance: specific training, work, team involvement, rankings, productivity level, methods for staff growth, and levels of visitor and tourist satisfaction. A five-point scale is used to rate attitudes and performance based on the aforementioned variables. The conceptual model was put into practice utilizing the aforementioned variables in order to establish the link between the variables and test the hypotheses.

3. Research Methodology

Performance aspects related to training, employee success and satisfaction with the engagement of visitors or tourists will reflect the need for modern management techniques. To comprehend what is happening in the reality of the growth of Kosovo's tourism, public companies and small to medium-sized private businesses are addressed. The theories developed/applied in the aspects of this problem will serve to shed light on the reality of how much Kosovar enterprises are dedicated to the application of 21st century methods.

The subsequent research inquiries are created:

1. Is human resource management a key partner in the growth of tourist organizations?
2. How does HRM now contribute to the success of tourist organizations?

In the spirit of research questions, the following hypotheses are presented:

H0: HRM and employee performance in the tourism industry are positively correlated.

H1: HRM practices and tourism organization performance are positively correlated.

These queries seek to ascertain the HRM practices used in the Republic of Kosovo's tourist industry through reasoning. The constraints and when assessing the result and recommendation, it is important to consider the research's whole context.

The answers to these queries and the findings of the hypothesis tests unequivocally show the significant positive correlations between the variables. The link between the dependent variable's success, development, and employee empowerment and the independent factors is evident: Ranking and assessing performance in light of performance assessment The model developed from these stable values has, in the authors' estimations, produced a sufficient number of conflicts for improved, professional, and modern administration of human resources in Kosovar tourism firms. The pertinent numbers shown in the tables below serve as clear indicators of how these developmental factors interact.

Table 1. Model Summary

Model Summary[b]					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.440[a]	.194	.185	.663	1.512
a. Predictors: (Constant), rankin regrading in the performance appraisal relates performance, specific training, employee more responsive is an activity involvement of employee in teamwork.					
b. Dependent Variable: achievement of employee development empowerment					

Source: author calculation

The tabular data in the summary model support the weight of the relevant analysis.

Table 2. ANOVA

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	29.361	3	9.787	22.247	.000[b]
	Residual	122.299	278	.440		
	Total	151.660	281			
a. Dependent Variable: achievement of employee development empowerment						
b. Predictors: rankin regrading in the performance appraisal relates performance, specific training, employee more responsive is an activity involvement of employee in teamwork.						

Source: author calculation

According to the analysis, it is evident that the significance is at the.000 level, where employee growth and accomplishments play a significant role in how well workers perform in the modern human resources management practices used in the Kosovar tourism industry. These values, which vary based on the relevant variable, are shown in the table and each play a different function in accordance with its respective relevance. We may infer from this that, in Kosovar tourist organizations, employee performance and HRM have a strong positive link.

Table 3. Coefficients

Coefficients[a]								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics Tolerance	Collinearity Statistics VIF
1	(Constant)	1.327	.416		3.193	.002		
	Specific training employee more responsive is an activity	.200	.085	.134	2.345	.020	.884	1.131
	Involvement of employee in teamwork is an activity	.163	.078	.128	2.082	.038	.771	1.297
	Ranking grading in the performance appraisal relates performance	.354	.066	.315	5.345	.000	.836	1.197
a. Dependent Variable: achievement of employee development empowerment								

Source: author calculation

The results are presented below in relation to the level of productivity and efficiency attained. Based on these results, it is very clearly documented that Kosovar tourism enterprises should organize relevant training and team-building activities if they want satisfactory results for their businesses. All of these management activities will achieve a high level of productivity and efficiency.

Table 4. Model Summary

Model Summary[b]					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.528[a]	.278	.271	.494	1.674
a. Predictors: ranking grading in the performance appraisal relates performance, specific training employee more responsive is an activity, involvement of employee in teamwork is an activity					
b. Dependent Variable: level of productivity operating efficiency					

Table 5. ANOVA

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	26.161	3	8.720	35.743	.000[b]
	Residual	67.825	278	.244		
	Total	93.986	281			
a. Dependent Variable: level of productivity operating efficiency						
b. Predictors: ranking grading in the performance appraisal relates performance, specific training employee more responsive is an activity, involvement of employee in teamwork is an activity						

Source: author calculation

The fundamental tasks of managing the distinctive resources of this profile of Kosovar firms, it can be concluded from the study provided above, argue the significance of the degree of productivity and operational efficiency. The subsequent findings support hypothesis 2, it asserts that effective human resource management practices and Kosovo's tourism industry success are strongly correlated.

Table 6. Coefficients

Coefficients[a]								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics Tolerance	Collinearity Statistics VIF
1	(Constant)	1.807	.310		5.839	.000		
	Specific training employee more responsive is an activity	.018	.064	.015	.278	.781	.884	1.131
	Involvement of employee in teamwork is an activity	.196	.058	.194	3.352	.001	.771	1.297

Coefficients[a]								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
	Ranking grading in the performance appraisal relates performance	.366	.049	.414	7.428	.000	.836	1.197
a. Dependent Variable: level of productivity operating efficiency								

Source: author calculation

The outcomes from this method strongly support the answer to the second study question, according to the tabular data. Kosovar tourism firms should include these procedures into their everyday operations in order to boost output of those who work for them, the effectiveness of their business operations, and consequently the most important aim of visitor or tourist satisfaction.

Table 7. Model Explanation

Model Summary[b]					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.485[a]	.236	.227	.437	1.876
a.Predictors: ranking grading in the performance appraisal relates performance, specific training employee more responsive is an activity, involvement of employee in teamwork					
b. Dependent Variable: achievement of costumer satisfaction					

The analysis's findings indicate a high degree of significance for ensuring the happiness of travelers who frequent certain tourist hotspots.

Table 8. ANOVA

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	16.370	3	5.457	28.565	.000[b]
	Residual	53.105	278	.191		
	Total	69.475	281			
a. Dependent Variable: achievement of costumer satisfaction						
b.Predictors: ranking grading in the performance appraisal relates performance, specific training employee more responsive is an activity, involvement of employee in teamwork is an activity						

Source: author calculation

Table 9. Coefficients

Coefficients[a]								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	2.217	.274		8.092	.000		
	Specific training employee more responsive is an activity	.145	.056	.144	2.583	.010	.884	1.131
	Involvement of employee in teamwork is an activity	.214	.052	.247	4.134	.000	.771	1.297
	Ranking grading in the performance appraisal relates performance	.194	.044	.256	4.458	.000	.836	1.197
a. Dependent Variable: Achievement of costumer satisfaction								

Source: Author calculation

The findings between the subjects is well supported by the provided indicators, and the acquired results are supported by the Univariate Analysis of Variance. These findings undoubtedly hold a unique significance for tourist businesses that enhance their management processes with modern human resource practices and ideas.

The outcomes of the factorial analysis, KMO, and Bartlett's examination are reflected in and guide the further use of cutting-edge human resource management concepts in Kosovar tourism firms. and a guidebook for developing cutting-edge management approaches, as well as a manual for deepening the study of these enterprises.

Table10. KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.627
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	115.411
	df	3
	Sig.	.000

Source: author calculation

The correlation matrix shows very clearly that the level of education, the satisfaction achievements of visitors/tourists and the general level of productivity have the significance of the results presented for Kosovar tourism enterprises.

Table 11. Total Variance

Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1.755	58.506	58.506	1.755	58.506	58.506
2	.731	24.353	82.858			
3	.514	17.142	100.000			
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.						

Source: author calculation

Table 12. Component Matrix

Component Matrix[a]	
	Component
	1
Level Education	.680
Achievement of costumer satisfaction	.808
Level of productivity operating efficiency	.800
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. a. 1 components extracted.	

Source: author calculation

3. Case Studies

Cultural legacies possess unique features and value. Businesses created for the enjoyment of culture must also safeguard it for future generations. The residents in this area should spread knowledge of these ideas. This wealth should surely be made known and displayed in the most creative way imaginable. influencing the development of this Kosovo region by attracting domestic and international visitors to experience these intangible facets of the people' cultural heritage.

This refers to individuals who engage in enticing creative pursuits, produce worthwhile products and services, and oversee the necessary backbone infrastructure for the development, production, and dissemination of cultural activities, goods, and services.

4. Research Results

In accordance with the investigation, it is clear that the relevance is at the .000 level, where employee growth and accomplishments play a significant effect in how well workers function in the contemporary human resources management strategies utilized in the Kosovar tourism business. These values, which change depending on the relevant variable, are listed in the table and each one serves a distinct purpose depending on how relevant it is. This suggests that employee performance and HRM have a strong beneficial relationship in Kosovar tourism firms.

The values appear and each one has a different function based on how pertinent it is and how they alter depending on the relevant variable. This demonstrates a strong positive association between HRM and employee performance in Kosovar tourism businesses.

It is well established that Kosovar tourism businesses should arrange pertinent training and team-building exercises if they want their operations to succeed. Each of these management initiatives will be highly productive and effective.

It can be inferred that the fundamental tasks of managing the specific resources of this profile of Kosovar enterprises indicate the importance of the level of productivity and operational efficiency.

The results that follow provide evidence for hypothesis 2, which states that successful human resource management techniques and Kosovo's tourism business success are closely associated.

The statistics show that the results from this methodology substantially support the response to the second research question. In order to increase employee productivity, operational efficiency, and ultimately the most crucial goal of visitor or tourist happiness, Kosovar tourism businesses should implement these practices into their daily operations.

The offered indicators provide strong support for the findings between the individuals, and the collected results are validated by the Univariate Analysis of Variance. For tourism organizations that improve their management procedures using contemporary human resource methods and ideas, these findings unquestionably have a special value.

The results of the factorial analysis, KMO, and Bartlett's analysis are reflected in and serve as a guide for the continued use of cutting-edge human resource management principles in Kosovar tourism businesses. and a manual for expanding the study of these firms, as well as a guide for creating cutting-edge management strategies.

The correlation matrix makes it abundantly evident that the relevance of the results presented for Kosovar tourism firms is influenced by the degree of education, visitor/tourist satisfaction levels, and overall productivity.

5. Discussions

Kosovo's tourism and hospitality sectors need to develop on a variety of fronts, including employee readiness. Public and private educational institutions, regional tourism-related organizations, associations, and financial incentives from the hotel and tourism sectors must all work together to plan and organize the nation's educational system. Educational programs, which must be regularly adjusted and developed in this way, must provide a solid understanding of the modern tourist and hospitality sector, innovations, and trends within the particular industry.

To meet the demands of the labour market, regional training facilities for hotel and tourist personnel must be established. The objectives of these centres would be to: create and enhance qualifications and match them to labour market demands; monitor, assess, and look into regional labour market demands for knowledge and skills in the field of tourism and hospitality management; modify current programs; and develop new training initiatives. According to this viewpoint, educational institutions should instruct their staff on how to master modern knowledge as well as how to develop critical thinking skills and the capability of providing excellent services, which are just a few necessities to satisfy the demands of the global tourism industry.

All activities and actions within that organization or institution that have to do with people are considered to be part of the true management of human resources using contemporary approaches. Of course, in this case, the management of these resources is the only goal, and all strategies, principles, decisions, and activities are carried out in a chain. Relationships and the capacity to understand how these actions will affect the firm and its people both positively and negatively.

Conclusions and Further Research

The analysis's findings have shown gaps where, in the case of Kosovo, a great deal more empirical research is required. In addition, the research being conducted by the academic staff and students at the 'Haxhi Zeka' University in Peja's Faculty of Tourism will continue.

An essential component of efficient administration of Kosovar tourist enterprises is employee performance management.

Effective performance management actions, activities, and behaviors have been demonstrated in research to significantly impact employee engagement and results, as well as the performance of the overall business.

The study presents a strong argument for the importance of contemporary techniques and efficient human resource management in this area for the growth, performance, and prosperity of the tourism industry. The parameters investigated to gauge organizational effectiveness proved to be extremely significant determinants.

The ability and chances to improve and progress workers' professional abilities through training or participation in various work groups have tremendous influence on the performance of the entire firm.

The dedication of managers to creating a supportive work environment and a culture of confidence and cooperation between employees and executives is proof that the organization's vision and objectives have been achieved. Performance and production won't be lacking as a result. Learning provides employees with the motivation and tools they need to change their work behaviors in the desired directions.

The participation of the organization's members determines how well the organizational structure works. Employee involvement may be encouraged by explaining the goal, processes, and benefits of participation. This involvement can then improve ownership and dedication to achieving predetermined goals and sparking original thought.

The next research in order to fill the gaps in the needs of tourism in Kosovo will be directed towards the cooperation of the structures of the municipalities of the western region of Kosovo and the preparation of field staff as well as the awareness of the local population about the possibilities of the advancement of urban tourism in this region area.

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Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Osman Sejfijaj: The contributions of the first author and the second author in all aspects of the action and achievements of the realization of this paper are shared. After long discussions and analysis issued by respected authors in the field of tourism in full cooperation, the concept, methodology... and other actions have been defined, complementing, and remaining fully the academic and scientific cooperation.

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Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Earthquake, COVID, and the Economic Survival: How Tourism Entrepreneurs in Lombok Survived During the Double Disaster

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Abstract: This study aims to map the economic survival strategies of tourism entrepreneurs during the disaster period (earthquake and COVID-19) on Lombok Island. The research methods were documentation, interview, and observation. Documentation used to collect the government's policies in the economic, banking, and financial sectors. Interviews were conducted with tourism entrepreneurs in relation to their economic survival steps and strategies. Observation was used to see the economic survival activities carried out by tourism businesses. In this study found that the Indonesian and West Nusa Tenggara regional governments issued an economic policy in the relation with earthquake and covid disasters. Based on these government policies, tourism sector economic entrepreneurs survive in disaster conditions, and create other sources outside the tourism sector as a source of family economics. The survival economy of tourism entrepreneurs during the disaster period was by changing professions as traders with family savings capital, involving all resources in the family to meet household needs, and utilizing several strategic government economic policies during the disaster time.

Keywords: tourism; disaster; economic survival.

JEL Classification: J15; J18; J17; Z32; R11.

Introduction

Tourism is the heart of the economic sector that contributes a significant amount to the economic growth of the people in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. Therefore, development on the island of Lombok is focused on supporting tourism; both at the macro and micro levels (Salahuddin and Abdillah 2022). West Nusa Tenggara Province is the first local government in Indonesia which declared itself as a Halal Destination/Halal Tourism in Indonesia. The distinction of Halal Tourism was intentionally taken as a distinction of Lombok tourism activities and services with other tourism in Indonesia. Tourism service activities are also directed to meet halal tourism service standards, both national and international standards. With this policy, Lombok received an award as the best destination of halal tourism in 2016, and the best halal honeymoon in Qatar. By receiving the above awards, Lombok tourism received great attention from the world community. The peak of tourist visits in Lombok occurred in 2017 with a total number of visitors of 3,508,903. In 2018 (second quarter) the number of tourist visits in Lombok reached 1,314,788 tourists, and then stagnated due to the earthquake disaster that occurred in Lombok (Badan Pusat Statistik 2019).

Lombok's first major earthquake occurred on July 29, 2018, with a magnitude of 7.0, which was followed by small earthquakes with a magnitude of 3-5. The second earthquake on August 5, 2018, a week after the first earthquake, Lombok was rocked by an earthquake with a magnitude of 7.2, which was also accompanied by aftershocks with a magnitude of 3-6. For more than 3 months the island of Lombok was struck by earthquakes with a magnitude of 3-5. Economic activities were paralyzed, schools were closed, tourism was suspended, and government services were severely delayed. The people of Lombok lived for 6 months under the fear of disaster and lost their lives. Only medical officers, disaster agencies and volunteers were actively serving the needs of the community. As a result of the earthquake, 436 people died, 1,941 units of shops were destroyed, 92 hotels were closed, 13 traditional markets were damaged, 1,836 shops/retails were broken, 71,962 residential houses can no longer be resided in, 671 units of educational institutions were broken, and 128 places of worship were also destroyed. Material losses due to the earthquake were estimated at IDR 8.8 trillion (BNPB, NTB 2018). The problems that followed the earthquake were social, economic, health, security, and other issues that required special care and attention. In the context of tourism, Lombok lost potential visitors during the July-December 2018 period.

The President of Indonesia issued Presidential Instruction No. 5/2018 on the acceleration of rehabilitation and reconstruction after the Lombok earthquake. With the above instruction, the national food supply and clothing assistance were focused on the recovery of Lombok; mainly the recovery of trauma caused by the earthquake. By the end of 2018, the people of Lombok were living on the assistance of other regions, the Financial Services Authority provided relaxation of financing for businesses, financial institutions adjusted to economic conditions, and the community slowly began to rise from the disaster; rebuilding economic joints and reviving tourism activities.

In early 2019, Lombok gradually recovered. Tourist visits began to be busy again. Many tourists deliberately come to Lombok not only to enjoy tourist destinations but are more interested in visiting Lombok after the big earthquake. The 2018 earthquake was both a disaster and a blessing for the people of Lombok; tourist visits soared after the earthquake with a total of 3,789,754 visitors in 2019. When the tourism sector and the economy of Lombok rise, the corona virus disease (COVID) comes to destroy the economic foundation that has just been built.

COVID is a virus that changed the world; political, social, educational, economic, religious, and other aspects of life (Choironi 2021, Mas'udah *et al. 2021,* Sarnoto 2021, Wibisono *et al.* 2020). The global order is fundamentally changing because of COVID-19 that originated in Wuhan, China. The World Health Organization (WHO) announced COVID-19 as a deadly virus on March 11, 2020. The world community lives under the shadow of death, people's activities are only at home, social restrictions are imposed, only officers are freely outside the house to ensure that no one leaves the house, state-religion relations are tense, civil society and government relations were frozen; people's lives were quite tense.

In the conditions described above, the Indonesian government issued regulation Number 21 of 2020 concerning large-scale social restrictions in order to accelerate the handling of COVID-19. As a result, the space for people to move is very limited, the economy stagnated, face-to-face social communication was cut off, houses of worship were closed, shopping centers and markets were heavily guarded; the situation during the COVID-19 period was like a war situation. Every member of the community is required to survive in this condition; physically, socially, mentally, and economically.

This article specifically discusses the economic survival of tourism entrepreneurs in Lombok; what their creativity-innovative ideas are, the strategies taken, how the government is involved, and the output of their ideas and activities in the face of economic uncertainty caused by the double disaster; the earthquake-18 and COVID-19 disasters.

1. Literature Review

Studies on the economic impact of the pandemic have been published, both on a regional scale, Siswanto *et al.* 2021, Soesilo 2021), national, (Abe 2021, UNICEF 2021, Vet *et al.* 2021), and international (Delardas *et al.* 2022, Levy and Filippini 2021, Padhan and Prabheesh 2021, Roy 2010). Many academics have also conducted research on the economic impact of the Lombok earthquake, both regionally and nationally. In general, the research mentioned above covers about policies, finance, losses, and recovery strategies during disasters. In Indonesia, earthquake and covid disasters occurred in tandem (Palu City and Lombok Island). When the community moved towards economic recovery after the earthquake in 2019, COVID descended on it in early 2020. This 'double kill' of the community's economy has an impact on the community's ability to survive in a crisis. Especially if the economy is associated with tourism, it is very heavy and has a long impact on tourism entrepreneurs.

The relation of tourism and economy is a symbiotic relationship of mutualism and can simultaneously encourage the quality and welfare of society. Travelers, money, and services/goods in the tourism industry are variables that increase economic activity in tourism (Wahab and Cooper 2005, 75). The direct impact of tourism is the employment of new labor, the development of innovative products of goods and services of local communities, and the formation of economic networks (Febriani 2016, Haryana 2020, Ma'ruf and Masmulyadi 2013, Wilson and Ypeij 2012). Therefore, almost all countries in the world today are enhancing the 'face of the city' to attract visitors. In addition to infrastructure, improvements in the quality and quantity of accommodation and restaurant services are also made to please visitors. Exploration of new destinations is developed to add to the menu of visits for tourists. Investment in tourism is a long-term and promising investment (Cholik 2017, Haryana 2020, Manzoor *et al.* 2019, Pérez-Rodríguez *et al.* 2022, Rasool *et al.* 2021).

Investment and business activities in the tourism sector have been disrupted by the COVID-19. COVID-19 is a virus similar to Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) (Özdemir 2020). This virus was discovered in Wuhan in 2019, and was named Corona Virus by The International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses (Ahn *et al.* 2020, Miller 2020, Özdemir 2020, Tang *et al.* 2020). Similar to MERS and SARS, the symptoms of people who have contracted COVID are coughing, runny nose, fever, respiratory problems, and digestive disorders (Ahn *et al.* 2020; Özdemir 2020; Tang *et al.* 2020). The spread of the virus occurs through slithering animals such as bats, snakes, pangolins, and other wild animals (Özdemir 2020). COVID-19 has spread rapidly to almost the entire world in a very short period of time (Silveira and de Oliveira 2020). The media has helped to speed up the process of spreading (Cinelli *et al.* 2020; Lull 2011), and at the same time create a fearful situation (Pillay and Barnes 2020). COVID-19, also presumed to be a fabrication and economic conspiracy of the capital owners (Eberl *et al.* 2021, Hughes and Machan 2021, Miller 2020, Petrovi 2020). Capital owners, rulers, and the media are the 'master' of the COVID-19 'stage'. This is a kind of asymmetrical interdependence, namely power relations between and among countries, nations, and social classes. (Antoniades 2008, Kasiyarno 2014). COVID-19 is a practice of domination or subordination that arises from relationships created by the powers (Straubhaar 1991).

The presence of COVID-19 is followed by social restriction policies that hamper the pace of world economic growth. The tourism sector as Indonesia's flagship is also completely paralyzed due to the operational ban on all modes of transportation (air, sea and land) globally. Churches, mosques, monasteries, and other religious activities are forcibly closed to prevent crowds. Government offices, educational institutions, and other service offices limit services to strict standards. Shopping centers, traditional markets, and malls are heavily guarded by police and soldiers. There is almost no interaction and communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. The sound of ambulance sirens picking up COVID-19 patients and delivering the bodies of those who died from COVID-19 can be heard almost every hour. A tense atmosphere under the shadow of death surrounds every second of human time. In pandemic conditions, everyone is forced to survive and persevere with all the resources they have; food, food, and shelter.

Economic survival is often associated with resources, production, and scarcity. Naturally, a person will produce goods/services that are considered scarce in the market to get a high price. For this reason, resources are needed to enable production activities to fulfill needs. Gilles offers the concept of humanitarian economic (Gilles 2018), where community members utilize the power of their local traditional and cultural values for economic defense. Economic survival in business is the ability to innovate, business experience and access to a strategic network, access to affordable finance, ownership structure and aggregate financial performance. (Steinerowska-Streb *et al.* 2022). The community's economic survival ability is becoming stronger with the obstacles, challenges, disruptions, and disasters faced by the community.

2. Methodology

This research was based on a qualitative study that explains the ideas, behaviors and survival strategies implemented by tourism entrepreneurs after experiencing two massive disasters, namely the earthquake-18 and Covid-19. Data were collected using observation, interview and documentation methods. The observation was used to map the ideas, behaviors and survival strategies carried out by tourism businesses after the earthquake-18 and Covid-19. Interviews were conducted to find out more deeply the facts that occurred in the field by digging up information directly from tourism businesses. While documentation was carried out to support the data collected through observations and an interview.

The data analysis model used in this research is the Habermasian data analysis model. The analysis starts from the process of data collection, interpretation by individuals, and drawing conclusions by interpreting the truth in general. Data collection is performed by collecting data from observations, interviews, and documentation. Interpretation by individuals in the hermeneutic approach is performed by looking for the essence of a particular phenomenon. In this study, individual interpretation was done by the researcher through interpretation of what was said and done by the research subject during the interview process. The conclusion is made based on the interpretation of the general truth, meaning that based on the individual's interpretation, the researcher connects the interpretation or interpretation based on the truth that has been recognized by the majority.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 Tourism and the Disasters in Lombok

Tourism, economics and development have a symbiotic-mutualistic relationship that supports each other (Cooper and Wahab 2001, Ivanov and Webster 2007, Mihalic 2013, Nizar 2015). The emergence of tourism opens up new economic opportunities, new labor force, increases the price of goods/services, increases the income of the community, and helps the community to achieve prosperity (Ivanov and Webster 2007, Ntibanyurwa 2006). This is why many countries have been developing the tourism industry (Kapiki 2012), and that is also the reason of West Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia developing its tourism resources which cover natural tourism (sea, mountain, forest), cultural tourism, sport tourism, and religious tourism (Taqwiem *et al.* 2020).

Based on its potential, since 2010 the West Nusa Tenggara Provincial Government has developed the following programs; development of small islands tourism, development of Mandalika Special Economic Zone, development of Mount Rinjani global geopark tourism area, development of Mount Tambora tourism area, NTB as the center of world halal tourism development, and poverty alleviation through community based tourism (CBT) program (Syafruddin *et al.* 2023). Within 5 years, the West Nusa Tenggara government managed to maximize all the potential resources at its disposal to realize the above program which was marked by the increase in the tourist visits in West Nusa Tenggara.

Tourism development in West Nusa Tenggara province has been disrupted since the 2018 earthquake. The earthquake caused many losses in the form of damage to residences, school buildings, markets, shopping centers, tourist facilities and others. The physical damage above also had an impact on tourist services, because all stakeholders and resources were directed to physical repairs and the restoration of social life, economy, education and other sectors. Although there are no services for tourists, the number of visits to Lombok remains stable, both for tourism and social purposes. Throughout 2019, West Nusa Tenggara Province continued to make physical improvements, and was delayed by the arrival of COVID-19 at the end of 2019.

COVID-19 is a global disaster that has a direct impact on the tourism sector, especially with the 'travel restriction' policy in each country. As a result of the 'travel restriction' as many as 440 million trips were canceled in 2020 which resulted in a 93% decrease in the number of visits and a loss of USD 440,000,000. In the history of global tourism, COVID-19 is the worst condition that has an impact on the global economic downturn (Ivanov and Webster 2007, UNWTO 2020).

Statistical data on visits to West Nusa Tenggara in the early years (2015) of tourism development can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. Number of tourist visits in Lombok 2014-2022

Year	Foreign visitor	National visitor	Total
2014	752.306	876.816	1.629.122
2015	1.149.235	1.061.292	2.210.527
2016	1.404.328	1.690.109	3.094.437
2017	1.430.249	2.078.654	3.508.903
2018	1.204.556	1.607.823	2.812.379
2019	1.550.791	2.155.561	3.706.352
2020	39.982	360.613	400.595
2021	11.890	827.325	839.215
2022	126.539	1.249.756	1.376.295

The table above shows an average increase in visitor numbers of 20%-40% each year. The 2018 earthquake had no significant impact on the number of visitors. The decline in visits decreased drastically in 2020, especially after the 'social distancing' and 'travel restriction' policies. This decline in the number of visits has an impact on the economic collapse of tourism businesses in West Nusa Tenggara.

3.2 Disaster, Government Policy, and Economic Recovery of Tourism Entrepreneurs

Physical losses in the tourism sector due to the earthquake were estimated at USD 4,990,958. Several hotels, home stays, and fundamental tourism facilities in several tourist areas were completely destroyed, especially in the epicenter area of Mount Rinjani (Krisnahadi 2020). For 8 months, the community's tourism economy was not running well, adjusting to the emergency conditions of the earthquake disaster.

Likewise, the economic situation during a pandemic will simultaneously cause a decrease in people's purchasing power (Ngadi *et al.* 2020), where the circulation of money in society becomes less, at the same time the level of production of goods also becomes very limited which results in a trade deficit in the economic cycle (Albuquerque *et al.* 2020, Yeh 2021).

In an effort to minimize the impact of the earthquake and covid-19 on the economy, the concept of strategic policy (survival) created by the government to safeguard people's purchasing power. The government's efforts to restore the economy after the earthquake and covid-19 were carried out by making recovery policies that were both physical and non-physical in nature. Physical recovery such as reconstruction of damaged buildings, direct and indirect financial assistance, and fiscal incentives. While non-physical such as trauma center activities and skills training.

Government policies for the economic recovery of post-earthquake communities consist of:

- The life insurance assistance issued by the Ministry of Social Affairs amounted to Rp. 89,364,300,000. Assistance was given to 297,881 people of West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) who had been impacted by the earthquake.
- Reconstructing community buildings damaged by the earthquake through Presidential Instruction No. 5 of 2018 which was followed up with Governor Regulation No. 35 of 2018 on the 2018-2019 earthquake reconstruction action plan.
- Providing relaxation of credit and finance for earthquake-affected communities with POJK No. 45/POJK.03/2017 concerning Special Treatment of Bank Credit or Financing for Regions Affected by Natural Disasters.
- Providing tax incentives for earthquake victims through Decree of the Director General of Taxes Number KEP-209/PJ/2018 concerning Taxation Policies in Connection with the Earthquake Natural Disaster on Lombok Island.
- Providing entrepreneurship skills training for earthquake victims by the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs and the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection.
- Conducting post-disaster industrial development and coaching activities by the Ministry of Industry through the Directorate General of Small, Medium and Miscellaneous Industries. The capital stimulus was provided through the NTB Cooperative and MSME Office (Maryanti *et al.* 2019).
- Government Assistance to MSEs by the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs.

While the government policies in restoring the people's economy during the COVID-19 pandemic are:

- Law No 2 of 2020 on the Stipulation of Government Regulation in lieu of Law Number 1 of 2020 on State Financial Policy and Financial System Stability for Handling the Covid-19 Pandemic and/or in the

Context of Facing Threats that Threaten the National Economy and/or Financial System Stability into Law.

- Providing tax relief through Minister of Finance Regulation No. 23/PMK.03/2020, concerning the Tax Incentives for Taxpayers Affected by the Corona Virus.
- Providing for the relaxation of health insurance payments through Presidential Regulation Number 64 of 2020 concerning relaxation of BPJS health payments.
- Providing education operational costs through Directorate General of Higher Education Circular Letter Number 302/E.E2/KR/2020 which regulates the authority for educational institutions to provide credit subsidies for students who need internet connections.
- Developing community work competencies by providing pre-employment funds through Presidential Regulation Number 36 of 2020 concerning Work Competency Development through the Pre-Employment Card Program.
- Social safety net programs for low-income communities and economic stimulus for SMEs through NTB Governor Regulation No. 22 of 2020 on General Guidelines for Handling COVID-19.
- Provision of assistance for wage subsidies to BPJS Labor participants by the NTB Manpower and Transmigration Office.

3.3 Survive Strategies of Tourism Entrepreneurs After Earthquake-18 and COVID-19

Tourism economic sector activities in Lombok due to the earthquake and COVID reduced regional income, tourism sector workforce reduction, dismissal of workers, decreased income in the tourism support business sector, the closure of culinary businesses, souvenirs, travel, and several other businesses that support tourism. As a result, many people have lost their jobs, sources of income, and because of this the impact on reducing the workforce in the tourism sector, decreasing the income of businesses in the tourism sector, and decreasing the quality of life of the community. In the above conditions, tourism service businesses are required to survive in meeting their needs. With the help of government policies related to financial relief as described above, service entrepreneurs carry out survival strategies in meeting their needs. Some of the strategies that tourism entrepreneurs in Lombok take are as follows:

- Diversification of income. Tourism entrepreneurs who have various sources of income will find it easier to survive. Other sources of income will replace sources of income from the tourism sector that were lost due to the earthquake and Covid-19.
- Switching professions as traders. For employees and tourism business owners who set aside some of the income in savings and investments, divert their savings and investments as initial capital to trade; clothing, basic necessities, fast food, and others according to their abilities, interests, knowledge and networks. Due to pandemic conditions, many have chosen to sell online with COD and transfer models.
- Shaping the entrepreneurial mentality and spirit of family members. In general, the family economy of tourism businesses in Lombok is supported by the income of the husband/wife from the work they do. Because of the dismissal of workers, the source of family income automatically becomes null. Because of this condition, the mentality and spirit of the members are shaped naturally to survive. The mentality and spirit of family members was shaped by giving them economic responsibility in fulfilling family needs with a unique job distribution model.
- Reducing the cost of shopping for clothing, food, and shelter, because Tourism workers and business people are identical with a glamorous look. With the paralysis of economic activity in the tourism sector, tourism economy entrepreneurs reduce the financial burden at all levels of needs and only focus on fulfilling primary needs. With this model, tourism entrepreneurs in Lombok are able to reduce costs, and survive in disaster situations.
- Utilizing government policies in disaster management. Some government policies as mentioned earlier are utilized by tourism entrepreneurs to get financial relief in relation to financing institutions and tax obligations. The government also issued a policy on post-earthquake and covid-19 education fee assistance.
- Utilizing relationships and friends. One of the advantages of having relationships and friends is that they can help in difficult times. Tourism entrepreneurs utilize relationships and friends to find new jobs when their old jobs are gone.

Conclusion

Disaster is undesirable for everyone, but everyone is required to adapt to all changes that may occur; social, climate, politics, earthquakes, floods, and others. Everyone in society was required to survive with all the resources they have; social, moral, and intellectual in disaster conditions. Tourism as a sector that is sensitive to change requires entrepreneurs involved in it to prepare themselves with change. To strengthen the resilience of economic survival must also be supported by regulations that favor the sustainability of tourism development.

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Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

The main idea of the research was conceived by **Muh. Baihaqi**, developed together with **Muh. Salahuddin** through the development of the theory required in the research. The methodology was developed together with **Muh. Baihaqi, Muh. Salahuddin**, and **Nurrahmah**. Data collection and research investigation were conducted with all the authors. Writing the research data report was conducted by **Dewi Sartika** and **Nurhilaliati**, reviewed by **Muh. Salahuddin** and edited by **Muh. Baihaqi**. Final validation of the research was conducted by **Nurhilaliati** and **Dewi Sartika Nasution**.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Bibliometric Analysis of Research Interest in Rural Tourism

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Abstract: Rural tourism is a form of tourism that takes place in non-urban areas and is characterized by traditional lifestyle, rural culture, and nature-based activities. Over time, its features drew attention not only to more and more visitors, but also to researchers, transforming it into one of the most active fields of scientific study. The main objective of this paper is to investigate the evolution of academic work in rural tourism and the main trends in this domain. Using VOS Viewer, we processed a number of 6,656 studies published between 1964 and 2022 and indexed by Scopus, the world's largest database for academic journals. Results showed a growing interest in rural tourism, with almost 800 articles published each year over the last couple of years. Different European organizations (e.g. British universities) and scientific journals (e.g. Tourism Management) proved to be highly influential, and through most cited authors and documents have shaped the perspective of academic communities on rural tourism. Finally, the cluster analysis of documents, countries, and word frequency in abstracts, titles, and keywords, based on relevance scores and term frequencies, allowed the mapping of bibliometric networks. Consequently, links and interrelations between all these elements were highlighted, as well as specific timelines showing the exact year when researchers, from different parts of the world, decided to focus on certain issues related to rural tourism and thus, managed to convert them into popular subject areas of study.

Keywords: rural tourism; bibliometric analysis; Scopus; VOS Viewer; publications; citations.

JEL Classification: R10; Y10; Z30.

Introduction

Rural areas, generally characterized by low population densities, display traditional elements regarding lifestyle and social structures dominated by agriculture, forestry, livestock and/or fisheries activities that have shaped, to a different extent, the world natural ecosystems. The new rural landscapes that emerged, nowadays cover more than 70% of the surface area of many countries, according to some sources, while others stipulate higher occupancy rate that reach 90% of the world's surface. Given this impressive percentage of dominance by rural landscapes, people may have practiced rural tourism in empirical ways from time immemorial within non-urban areas where the local communities used to be engaged in the above-mentioned sectors. However, while the first trips started in Antiquity and continued in the Middle Ages, for various reasons, including cultural, commercial and military ones, it was only during the 16th and 17th centuries that rural space truly became the point of interest for people who were fond of the correspondent natural and human built environment. Repeated tourist activities, revolving around rural culture, agriculture, craft and nature-based elements, culminated in the development of a new form of tourism that, by the end of the 20th century became a main subject of interest of both theoretical and practical significance. Thus, researchers and visitors of the rural area, along with investors and services providers have brought their contribution to the development of rural tourism transforming it in one of the most popular forms of tourism that, in addition to this, is also an effervescent scientific field of study, as results of this bibliometric analysis will continue to show.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Rural Tourism

Rural tourism, as a concept, is difficult to define (Lane, 1994; Rosalina *et al.*, 2021) because it could take different forms and develop '*within the vast range of physical, social and political environments and results in a wide diversity of outcomes*' (Sharpley and Roberts, 2004: 119). The definition of rural tourism varies from country to country (Lane and Kastenholz, 2015); some countries may include certain activities within this definition while others may not. Similarly, there are differences in the way researchers conceptualize rural tourism (Barbieri, 2019). For example, some researchers define rural tourism as synonymous to *agritourism* and *farm tourism* and use these terms interchangeably (Fleischer and Tchetchik, 2005; Yang *et al.*, 2010), whereas other researchers see agritourism and farm tourism as niche forms that are part of a broader rural tourism (Phillip *et al.*, 2010). If we are to try a more general definition, we could say, following Lane (1994), that rural tourism, in its '*pure*' form, should be located in rural areas and should be rural in scale, character and functions.

First, tourists may have started to visit the countryside in the 19th century (Kohl, 2006; cited in Karali *et al.*, 2021); however, this praxis has not become really visible until the 1950s (Lane, 1994) when two things happened: rural-to-urban migration intensified and rural areas became more accessible to urbanites due to major improvements in the transportation systems. Lane and Kastenholz (2015) have distinguished three phases in the development of modern rural tourism:

- *Phase 1* – Started in the 1970s in Western Europe and it was seen as a way through which farmers could supplement their declining incomes from agriculture. Because, at the time, rural tourism was so closely connected to farming activities, it was also referred to as *agritourism* or *farm tourism*. Rural tourism was seen as a diversification tool that allowed small farmers to survive the crisis affecting rural space (Egresi, 2002).
- *Phase 2* – In this phase, which started approximately in the mid-1980s, rural tourism spread from Western Europe to other world regions (Central and Eastern Europe, North America, parts of Latin America and of Asia and Australia and New Zealand). Rural tourism became popular and started to attract many urbanites who opened tourism businesses in the countryside. Rural tourism also became more diversified in this phase. Besides farm holidays/agritourism, rural tourism started to incorporate other niche forms, such as *activity tourism* or *cultural* and *heritage tourism*.
- Phase 3 – Starting with 2000, we see a decline of rural tourism activities in the more mature markets due to aging infrastructure, increased competition among businesses, and competition from other types of tourism. Interest in rural tourism will either die out, or will be rejuvenated through innovation.

This evolutionary model mirrors the basic phases of Butler's (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC). The timing of the phases varies from region to region and even from country to country (Lane and Kastenholz, 2015). While rural tourism in one country may already be in the third phase, in other countries it may still be in its incipient development.

1.2. Bibliometric Analyses in Rural Tourism

Rural tourism has been an important area for research over the last decades (Karali *et al.*, 2021). However, a quick search of the major databases will demonstrate that there are relatively few bibliometric studies on rural tourism (Ruiz-Real *et al.*, 2020). In fact, as Karali *et al.* (2021) have pointed out, rural tourism is one of the least researched areas of tourism from a bibliometric perspective (Karali *et al.*, 2021).

Bibliometric analysis has more recently become a common tool for the review of prior literature (Khanra *et al.*, 2021). Bibliometric analyses are useful to monitor and evaluate the progress made in a certain area of study (Boyack *et al.*, 2005; Hall, 2011; Köseoğlu *et al.*, 2016; McBurney and Novak, 2002; Xiao and Smith, 2006), to identify the most popular areas of research (Rauniyar *et al.*, 2021), and to better understand the newest trends and future directions in this research domain (Bozok *et al.*, 2017; Rauniyar *et al.*, 2021).

Bibliometric analyses are increasingly employed by researchers because they allow them to identify current and emerging research clusters within the discipline (Donthu *et al.*, 2021; Rauniyar *et al.*, 2021) and to learn about relationships between keywords and between authors representing various academic and research units and countries (Khanra *et al.*, 2021; Park *et al.*, 2011; Rauniyar *et al.*, 2021). This research method is also useful to identify the most productive and most influential researchers, and contribution of universities, research institutions and countries to the development of certain areas of research (Park *et al.*, 2011; Rauniyar *et al.*, 2021).

The majority of the reviewed studies based their bibliometric analysis on between a few hundred (Adenidji and Özçatalbaş, 2021; Bozok *et al.*, 2017; Guan and Huang, 2023; Karali *et al.*, 2021; Priatmoko *et al.*, 2023; Rauniyar *et al.*, 2021; Ruhanen *et al.*, 2015; Singhania *et al.*, 2022) and almost 900 studies (Ruiz-Real *et al.*, 2020). The most comprehensive bibliometric analysis on rural tourism was undertaken by Lane and Kastenholz (2015) and included no less than 1,848 publications. On the other hand, a few such analyses were carried out using less than one hundred publications. This can be explained by the fact that the authors introduced some restrictive criteria when searching for relevant publications. For example, the study by Leković *et al.* (2020) considered only those publications that had at least ten Scopus citations. Thus, they ended up with only 23 usable publications for their bibliometric analysis. Another study, by Yılmaz (2019), considered only peer-reviewed bibliometric articles published in Turkish journals. Based on this criterion, only 48 articles were found. Finally, Ranjan and Chowdhary (2020) were interested only in those tourism articles indexed by Scopus that focused on the image of rurality. Only 75 articles published between 1980 and 2020 met these criteria.

The studies considered in previous bibliometric analyses were published over a period of between ten (Leković *et al.*, 2020; Priatmoko *et al.*, 2023; Yılmaz, 2019; Zeng *et al.*, 2022) and 40 years (Karali *et al.*, 2021; Ranjan and Choudhary, 2020; Rauniyar *et al.*, 2021). Most analyses of this type relied on either the Web of Science (Dimitrovski *et al.*, 2019; Lane and Kastenholz, 2015; Lulu *et al.*, 2023; Zeng *et al.*, 2022) or Scopus databases (Adenidji and Özçatalbaş, 2021; Priatmoko *et al.*, 2023; Ranjan and Choudhary, 2020; Singhania *et al.*, 2023), although some bibliometric studies were based on publications indexed by two databases, such as Web of Science and Scopus (Leković *et al.*, 2020; Guan and Huang, 2023; Rauniyar *et al.*, 2021; Yılmaz, 2019) or Scopus and JCR (Karali *et al.*, 2021). Further, some bibliometric analysis on rural tourism considered only journal articles (for example, Karali *et al.*, 2021), whereas others took into consideration a wider range of publication types, including book chapters or articles published in conference proceedings (Bozok *et al.*, 2017; Ruiz-Real *et al.*, 2020). Also, while some previous studies analyzed papers published exclusively in tourism and hospitality journals (Karali *et al.*, 2021) or, even more restrictively, in the four highest ranked journals in the tourism field (Ruhanen *et al.*, 2015), other studies considered any paper on rural tourism regardless of the focus of the journal (Lane and Kastenholz, 2015; Rauniyar *et al.*, 2021; Ruiz-Real *et al.*, 2020).

In terms of the software used, most bibliometric analyses performed on rural tourism academic documents employed VOS (as was also noted by Rauniyar *et al.*, 2021). *VOS* (Visualization of Similarities) *Viewer* was developed by Van Eck and Waltman (2010) and works by analyzing co-citations and co-occurrences of authors and of keywords or words that appear in the abstract or in the full text as well as other bibliographic coupling and then mapping these relationships for a better visualization (Leong *et al.*, 2021; Rauniyar *et al.*, 2021). We found only two bibliometric analyses on rural tourism academic documents that employed different software. Leković *et al.* (2020) used Harzing's (2007) *Publish or Perish* software to conduct a bibliometric analysis in order to review the most recent trends in rural tourism literature, while Lulu *et al.* (2023) employed CiteSpace. At the same time, Guan and Huang (2023) used CiteSpace in addition to VOS Viewer. According to the website mentioned '*Publish or Perish is a software program that retrieves and analyzes academic citations. It uses a variety or data sources to obtain the raw citations, then analyzes these and presents a range of citation metrics, including the number of papers, total citations and the h-index*'.

Most bibliometric studies on rural tourism were performed at global level and only one of the review articles we surveyed analyzed peer-reviewed articles published in Turkish journals (Yılmaz, 2019). Further, the great majority of bibliometric analyses were performed on rural tourism publications; however, a few such studies focused on topics which are more or less synonymous, such as *agritourism* (Dimitrovski *et al.*, 2019; Rauniyar *et al.*, 2021). There are, also, studies that investigate the relationship between rural tourism and another area of research, such as rural development (Singhania *et al.*, 2022), *sustainable development* (Adenidji and Özçatalbaş, 2021), *rurality* (Ranjan and Chowdhary, 2020), residents' perception (Lulu *et al.*, 2023), wine production (Marco-Lajara *et al.*, 2023), or crafts (Fernández Bellver *et al.*, 2023).

Employing a bibliometric approach, Karali *et al.* (2021) found that most articles on rural tourism were published in the last decade. Also, while before 2000 most studies on rural tourism were from developed countries, after 2000 a greater number of scientific articles came from developing countries (Karali *et al.*, 2021). Ruiz-Real *et al.* (2020) indicated that most studies on rural tourism deal with Spain, Romania, and China. These findings were confirmed by Adenidji and Özçatalbaş (2021), who found that most studies related to rural tourism and sustainable development are from China. On the other hand, the most prolific authors on this subject are from Portugal, China, the United Kingdom, and the United States (Ruiz-Real *et al.*, 2020). A survey of rural tourism studies, published between 1980 and 2019, found that the most frequently covered topics in these studies are: community politics, power struggle, resource control and, more recently, climate change and epidemic (Karali *et al.*, 2021). Previous bibliometric analyses have shown that research on rural tourism is fragmented and that there are gaps in the literature that can be speculated by scholars who want to do research in rural tourism (Ruiz-Real *et al.*, 2020).

2. Research Questions and Methodology

The main objective of this study is to synthesize the literature on rural tourism and to identify past, present and future research trends. We also seek to understand how the literature on rural tourism has evolved over the last 60 years, what were the most common types of publications, and which academic fields were the most interested in this subject. Finally, we employ a range of descriptive statistics analyses to classify authors, organizations and journals, and even popular topics that set research direction. For these purposes, a series of questions were designed and were further correlated with the results' section, as follows:

1. Was there any growth in interest over the third phase of modern rural tourism development (i.e. starting with 2000) compared to the first decades of online publications?
2. Which are the most common types of publications?
3. What sort of academic fields were concerned about the rural tourism topic?
4. Which are the most productive and prominent research organizations and where are they from?
5. Which are the most prestigious scientific journals according to citations?
6. Who are the most productive and prominent authors in rural tourism field?
7. Which are the most cited papers in rural tourism of all times?
8. Which countries (according to authors' academic affiliation) produce the most research? Are they also the most cited ones?
9. Which topics have been the most debated during the 60 years of research in rural tourism studies?

For this bibliometric study we decided to use the Scopus database; firstly, because it provides access to older rural tourism studies (i.e. 1964) that are not available in other collections such as Web of Science (WoS). Secondly, Scopus includes a greater number of document results (over 7,600) compared to its counterparts (e.g. around 6,000 results on WoS for rural tourism publications), thus being the largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed papers (Rauniyar *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, all data archives can be also visualized in VOS Viewer, the main software tool that was employed first in generating and measuring relevance scores, then in constructing and analysing bibliometric networks and clusters.

The initial search resulted in a number of 7,600 publications. Of these 6,825 publications were written in English and were further considered for our analysis. Another 169 publications were found to be lacking important data and were excluded from the list. In the end, a number of 6,656 publications were considered for this study.

Based on publications' year, type, academic fields, journals, researchers and their organizations, countries, most cited authors, papers and states that stood out for their occurrences, several conclusions related to this body of tourism literature were drawn. They were highlighted either by tabular or graphical representations including the mapping process as well. Undoubtedly, the most complex maps that have been created illustrate the most frequently debated topics and issues that have aroused great interest among researchers during the six decades of studies in the rural tourism matter.

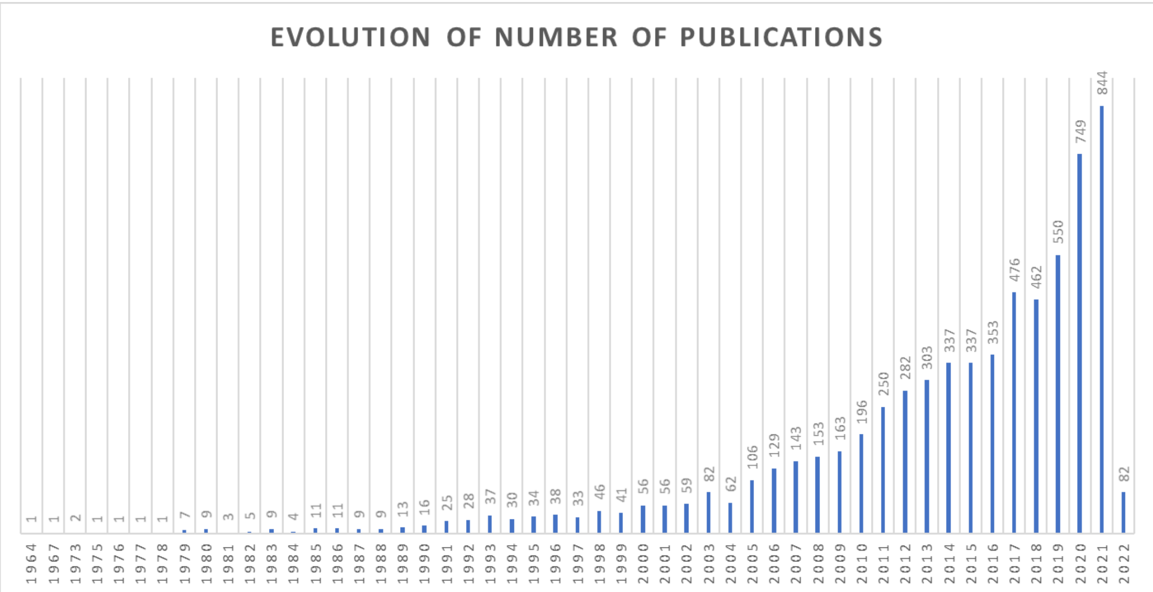
3. Analyses and Results

3.1. Evolution of Online Publications Regarding Rural Tourism

The first paper on rural tourism was published in 1964 (Figure 1). Although probably not the first study ever conducted, it has the merit of being the oldest one made available online to Internet users worldwide.

Statistics show that the first two decades of research (assimilated with Phase 1 of modern rural tourism development) were less productive in terms of number of publications. On average, less than four studies were published each year during this time period (Table 1; Figure 1). However, in the next 10 years (1985-1994), meaning the beginning of Phase 2 of modern rural tourism, the average number of publications increased more than five fold to almost 20 per year. The average number of publications then doubled during the last five years of the twentieth century and again during the first five years of the twenty-first century, when Phase 3 of modern rural tourism also started. The same growth rate was maintained during the next five-year periods. Between 2015 and 2019, on average 435 studies were published and indexed by Scopus each year.

Figure 1. Evolution of number of publications



Source: Authors' research
Primary data: Scopus

In 2020, no less than 749 research studies on rural tourism were published which increased to 844 studies in 2021 (table 1) that seemingly 'random' perfectly coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1. Number of publications published over different periods of time

Phases of modern rural tourism development	Year	No. of publications per year (min. – max.)	Average no. (art./year)
PHASE 1	1964 - 1984	1 – 9	3.46
PHASE 2	1985 - 1994	9 – 37	18.90
	1995 - 1999	33 – 46	38.40
PHASE 3	2000 - 2004	56 – 82	63
	2005 - 2009	106 – 163	138.80
	2010 - 2014	196 – 337	273.60
	2015 - 2019	337 – 550	435.60
	2020 - present time	749 – 844 (2021) – 82 (february 2022)	796.50

Source: Authors' calculations
Primary data: Scopus

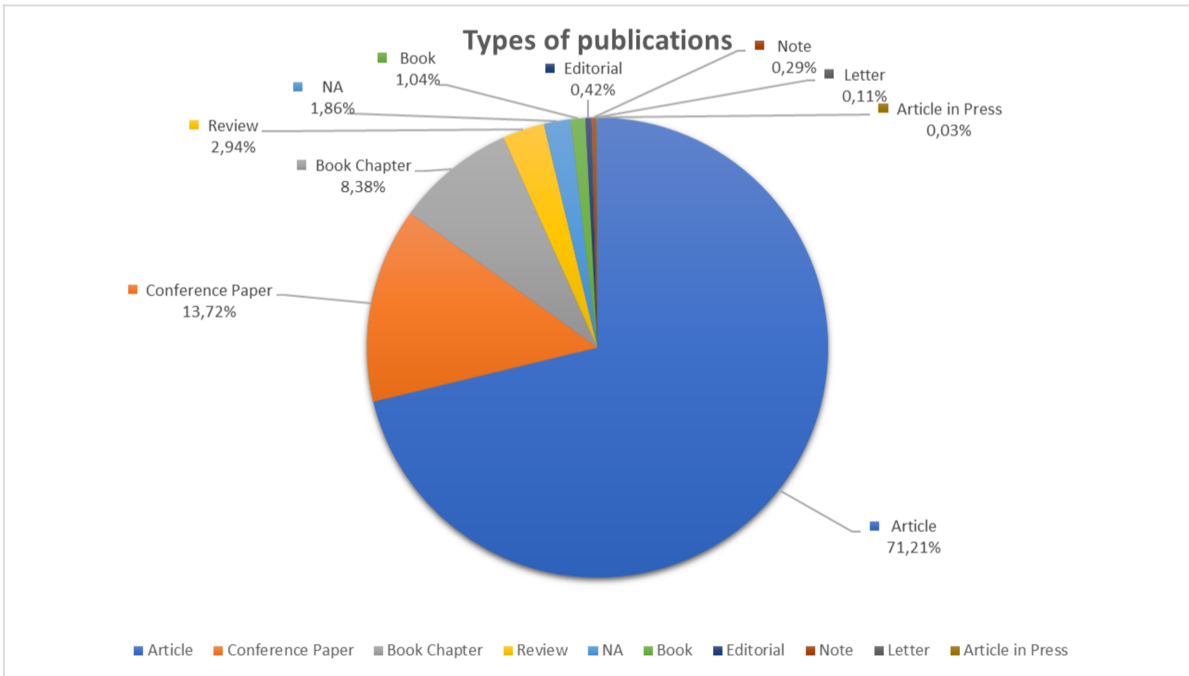
The reason could be twofold: firstly, authors had more time to invest in research during the lockdown that has required them to engage in online working and secondly, after the outbreak of the pandemic, tourists considered more and more rural areas as alternative to other destinations, contributing to the thriving of this form of tourism. Thus, the more attractive the activities for visitors in non-urban areas, the more interest paid by researchers in the study of motivation, satisfaction, impact, and effects etc. related to rural tourism.

By analyzing the growing trend, we observed that we are dealing with a number of publications organized in geometric progression. Given that the ratio between consecutive terms is the same (i.e. a period of five years) and that these series are the successive power of two (i.e. 50, 100, 200, 400, 800), we could estimate there could be 1,500-1,600 publications on rural tourism in 2025. These numbers could double in the following years (approximately 3,000 papers in 2030) if both authors and visitors continue to express interest in rural tourism. If the current rate of growth is maintained, the numbers could even pass the threshold of 10,000 studies in 2040.

3.2. Most Common Types of Publications

Of the 6,656 Scopus indexed publications considered for this study, 4,740 (or 71.4%) were articles published in different scholarly journals (Figure 2). Conference papers (913 publications) and book chapters (558) come next while rural tourism publications in the form of books (69), editorials (28), notes (19), letters (7) and articles in press (2) are much less widespread (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Types of publications



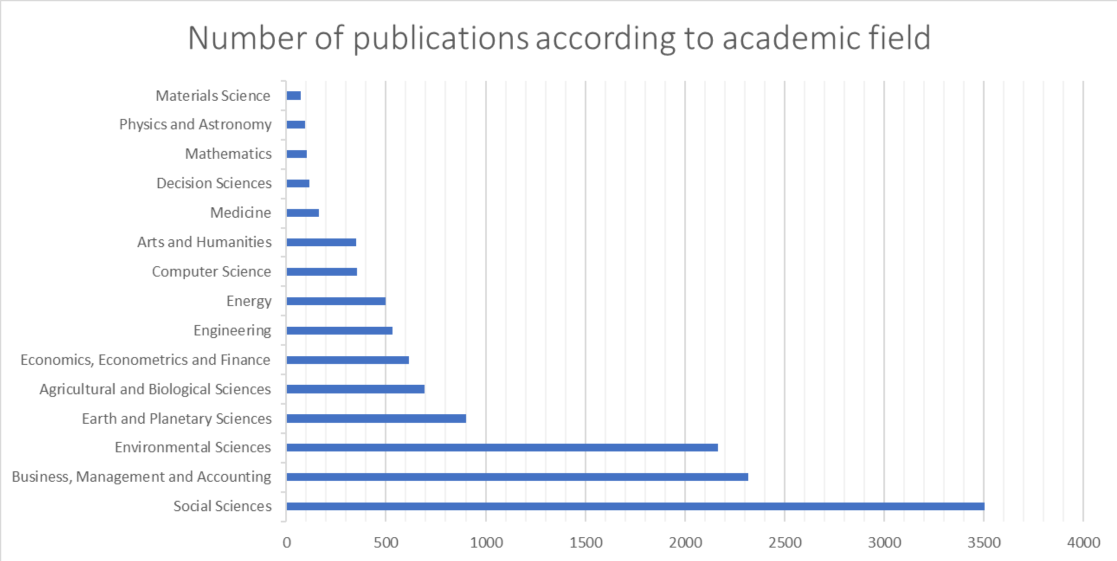
Source: Authors' calculations
Primary data: Scopus

3.3. Academic Fields

To start with, it should be mentioned here that an article may be assigned to more than one academic field. As for academic fields, Figure 3 shows that most studies on rural tourism published between 1964 and 2022 belong to three scientific domains: Social Sciences (3,500 studies), Business, Management and Accounting and Environmental Sciences (over 2,000 studies each).

Further research showed that even less conventional sciences (e.g. Decision Sciences, Mathematics, Physics and Astronomy, Materials Science etc.), that have limited connection to rural tourism domain, claim some related studies, but they represent less than 1 percent of all publications.

Figure 3. Number of publications according to academic field



Source: Authors' research
Primary data: Scopus

3.4. Most Productive and Prominent Research Organizations

In order to determine the scholarly productivity, only those research organizations with at least three publications on rural tourism were included in this analysis. This process left us with 161 research centres, institutes and universities (with different faculties and departments), as well as specialised schools and colleges.

The results show that the highest number of publications by one organization is nine. Furthermore, only nine organisations have managed to produce more than five academic works as follows:

- 9 publications: Geography Department, The University of Leicester, United Kingdom and the Department of Geography and Economic History, Umeå University, Sweden (two organizations);
- 8 publications: Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing, China (one organization);
- 7 publications: Department of Tourism, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand; University Putra Malaysia, Malaysia and University of Tehran, Iran (three organizations);
- 6 publications: School of Hospitality, Tourism and Culinary Arts, Taylor's University, Subang Jaya, Malaysia; School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong; National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland (three organizations).

The remaining 152 organisations published between three and five Scopus-indexed studies on rural tourism. The distribution is detailed below:

- 5 publications: 15 organisations, half of them from Europe and among them one from Romania - Bucharest University of Economic Studies;
- 4 publications: 32 organizations, 50% of these are from Europe - including two from Romania (University of Bucharest and University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest);
- 3 publications: 102 organizations, out of which one third are from Europe and three organizations are from Romania.

Another meaningful indicator for the prominence or prestige of an organization is the number of citations publications authored by researchers from this organization have received. When it comes to rural tourism research, each organization boast of between 0 and almost 800 citations; however, most organizations have received less than 50 citations for their publications (Table 2).

More than half of all organizations that have received 100 or more citations for their publications are from Europe (none from Romania). The highest ranked two organizations in Romania have received between 10 and 49 citations. Other two Romanian organizations received between one and nine citations (Table 2).

However, the organisations with the greatest number of publications related to rural tourism (more than five publications per organisation) are not necessarily the most cited ones.

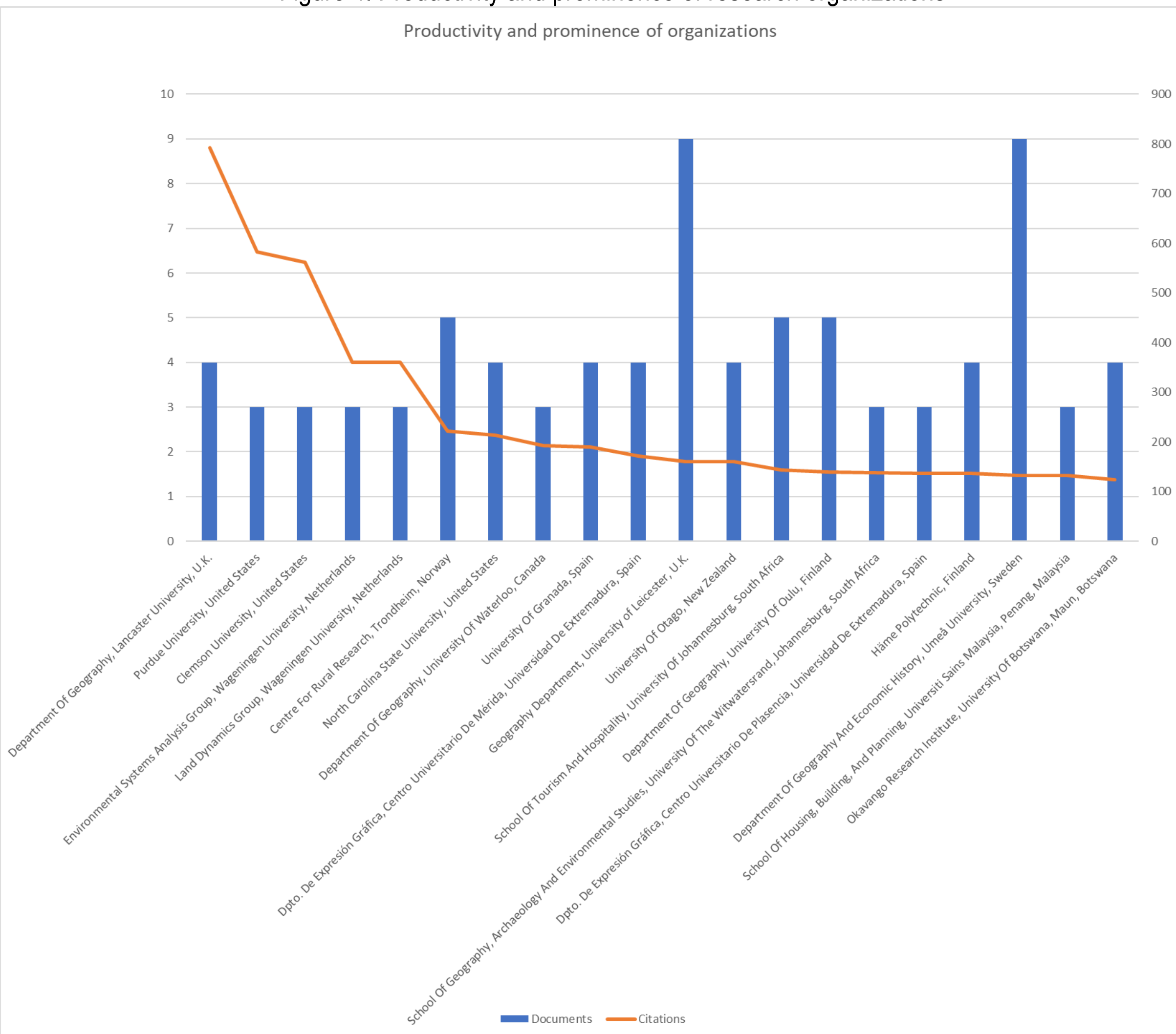
Table 2. Number of citations according to research organizations

No. of citations	Total no. of organizations	No. of organizations in Europe	No. of organizations in Romania
750-999	1	1	0
500-749	2	0	0
250-499	2	2	0
100-249	22	11	0
50-99	29	7	0
10-49	52	21	2
1-9	48	18	2
0	5	3	2
Total	161	63	6

Source: Authors' calculations
Primary data: Scopus

Thus, in top ten most prominent universities, one can observe the prevalence of those institutes with three important studies on rural tourism and more than 350 citations each (e.g. Purdue University - 582, Clemson University - 562, Wageningen University - 361) or four publications that have received between 171 (University of Extremadura) and 792 citations (the Department of Geography, Lancaster University, United Kingdom) (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Productivity and prominence of research organizations



Source: Authors' research
Primary data: Scopus

In addition to United Kingdom, Netherlands, Norway and Spain, other European countries that stand out are Finland and Sweden, both in Top 20 due to the three universities whose publications on rural tourism have received more than 130 citations each.

At the other end of the spectrum, publications by five organizations (two of them from Romania) received no citations so far and publications by ten organizations (of which two from Europe) received only one citation.

3.5. Prestigious Scientific Journals According to Citations

In general, it is considered that the more citations a journal receives, the more prestigious it is. For this reason, we have limited our analysis to those journals that have been cited at least 100 times. It turned out that 161 journals find themselves in this situation as follows:

- more than 10,000 citations/journal: one journal – Tourism Management (10,367);
- 5,001 – 10,000 citations/journal: one journal – Annals of Tourism Research (8,644);
- 1,001 – 5,000 citations/journal: eight journals – Journal of Sustainable Tourism (4,747); Journal of Travel Research (3,518); Journal of Rural Studies (2,044); Sustainability (1,837); Tourism Geographies (1,366); Current Issues in Tourism (1,310); International Journal of Tourism Research (1,153); Land Use Policy (1,019);
- 501 – 1,000 citations/journal: nine journals – Sociologia Ruralis, Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism, World Development, Ecological Economics, Landscape and Urban Planning, Tourism Management Perspectives, Tourism Economics, Geoforum, International Journal of Hospitality Management;
- 251 – 500 citations/journal: 33 journals – e.g. Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing, Journal of Vacation Marketing, Tourism Recreation Research etc.;
- 151 – 250 citations/journal: 48 journals – e.g. Journal of Cleaner Production, Nature, PLoS One etc.;
- 100 – 150 citations/journal: 61 journals – e.g. Journal of Small Business Management, Canadian Geographer, Area etc.

Most journals in this list (88.2%) have received less than 500 citations.

3.6. Most Productive and Prominent Authors in Rural Tourism

Productivity and prominence can be measured both for institutions and for individual authors. Here we considered only those authors that, by the end of February 2022, published more than three studies on rural tourism. A number of 290 authors met this criterion. The most productive authors are listed in figure 5. A summary of this analysis follows below:

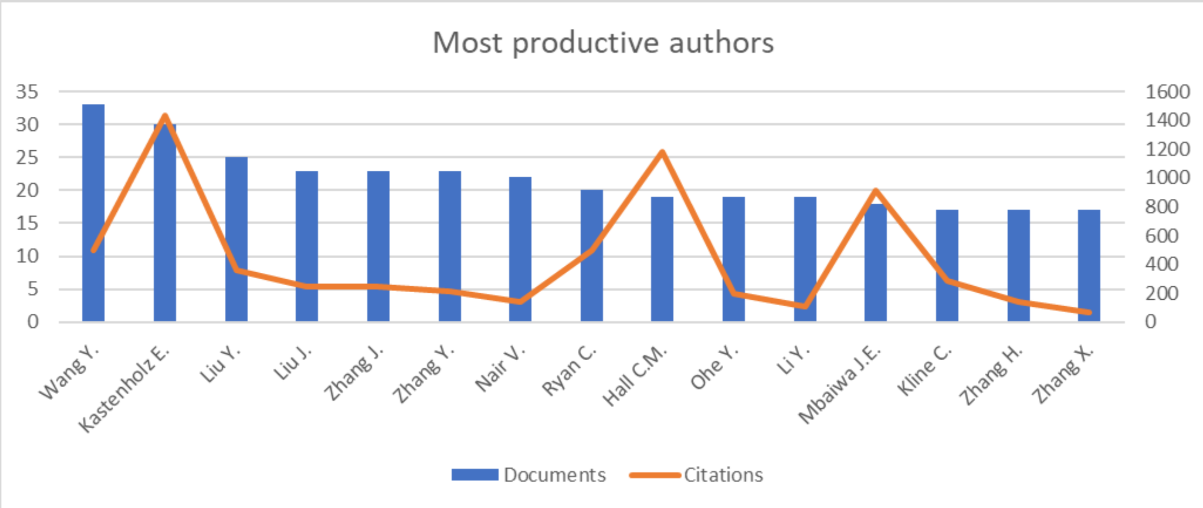
- 30 – 33 publications: two researchers (0.68%);
- 20 – 29 publications: six researchers (2.06%);
- 15 – 19 publications: nine researchers (3.10%);
- 10 – 14 publications: 31 researchers (10.68%);
- 6 – 9 publications: 139 researchers (47.93%);
- 5 publications: 103 researchers (35.51%).

One can see, from this summary, that the majority of authors (83.44%) have published less than 10 articles in the scientific field of rural tourism and only 3% have 20 or more publications. The most productive researchers appear to be Wang, Y. (with 33 publications on rural tourism) and Kastenholz, E. (with 30 publications), followed by Y. Liu, J. Liu, J. Zhang, Y. Zhang, V. Nair and C. Ryan (with between 20 and 25 publications (Figure 5).

In terms of citations received by researchers, we can summarize the results of our analysis as follows:

- 1,500 – 1,812 citations: two researchers (0.68%);
- 1,000 – 1,499 citations: four researchers (1.37%);
- 500 – 999 citations: 14 researchers (4.82%);
- 100 – 499 citations: 108 researchers (37.24%);
- 0 – 99 citations: 162 researchers (55.86%).

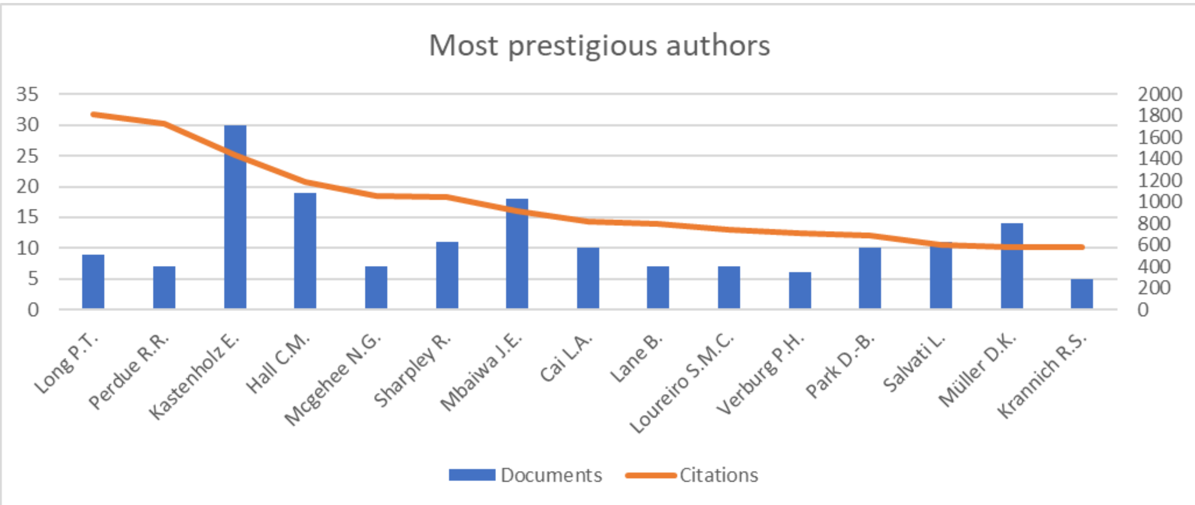
Figure 5. Most productive authors



Source: Authors' research
Primary data: Scopus

It can be noticed that only six researchers (2%) received 1,000 citations or more. The most cited authors of rural tourism studies are P.T. Long (1,812 citations), R.R. Perdue (1,730 citations) and E. Kastenholz (1,436 citations). While for Long, as first author, the most important study continues to be *Rural Resident Tourism Perceptions and Attitudes by Community Level of Tourism*, written in co-authorship with Perdue R.R. and Allen L., for the second most prestigious researcher in the world (i.e. Perdue R.R.), the paper that received most citations (also written in co-authorship with Long P.T. and Allen L.) remains *Resident support for tourism development*. Kastenholz's most cited works remain: *Segmenting tourism in rural areas: The case of north and central Portugal*; *Understanding and managing the rural tourism experience - The case of a historical village in Portugal*; and *'Cultural proximity' as a determinant of destination image*.

Figure 6. Most prestigious authors



Source: Authors' research
Primary data: Scopus

The other three researchers that received more than 1,000 citations are C.M. Hall (1,184 citations), N.G. McGehee (1,052 citations) and R. Sharpley (1,049 citations) (figure 6). Of these authors, McGehee has only seven studies on rural tourism indexed by Scopus, but, as it was stated before, prominence or prestige is not necessarily determined by the number of articles published.

As a conclusion that we can draw from the two graphical representations is that the top 15 most productive researchers is dominated by Asians, while the top 15 most prestigious authors is mainly composed of those who work at organizations of the Anglo-Saxon world.

3.7. Most Cited Papers in Rural Tourism

Considering that in the previous sections we have conducted an analysis of prominence from a macro perspective, by establishing which are the most prestigious organizations that have brought their contribution to the development of rural tourism, and then, we continued by listing those authors who enjoy the best reputation in this field, it is now time to focus on those specific papers that received the highest number of citations over the years.

The situation at the level of publication can be summarized as follows:

- 500 – 599 citations: five publications (0.07%);
- 400 – 499 citations: one publication (0.01%);
- 300 – 399 citations: twelve publications (0.18%);
- 200 – 299 citations: 32 publications (0.48%);
- 100 – 199 citations: 122 publications (1.83%);
- 50 – 99 citations: 281 publications (4.22%);
- 20 – 49 citations: 770 publications (11.56%);
- 10 – 19 citations: 830 publications (12.46%);
- 5 – 9 citations: 963 publications (14.46%);
- 1 – 4 citations: 1,925 publications (28.92%);
- 0 citations: 1,715 publications (25.76%).

Our analysis has shown that one-quarter of all publications on rural tourism have not been cited yet and another quarter received only between one and four citations. Only around 2.5% of the publications received 100 or more citations. Top five most cited papers, with more than 500 citations, illustrates studies conducted at almost 20 years apart (from 1990 to 2009) and authors who also stood out in top five most prestigious researchers, namely, Perdue R.R. and Mcgehee N.G., who also owe their reputation to the publications from this top (Table 3).

Table 3. Top 10 list of the most cited publications

Author	Year of publication	Title of research	No. of citations
Sims R.	2009	Food, place and authenticity: Local food and the sustainable tourism experience	597
Cai L.A.	2002	Cooperative branding for rural destinations	557
Bessiere J.	1998	Local development and heritage: traditional food and cuisine as tourist attractions in rural areas	534
Perdue R.R.	1990	Resident support for tourism development	526
Mcgehee N.G.	2004	Factors predicting rural residents' support of tourism	503
Andereck K.L.	2000	The relationship between residents' attitudes toward tourism and tourism development options	420
Briedenhann J.	2004	Tourism routes as a tool for the economic development of rural areas- vibrant hope or impossible dream?	396
Park D.-B.	2009	Segmentation by motivation in rural tourism: A Korean case study	393
Bennett N.J.	2014	Why local people do not support conservation: Community perceptions of marine protected area livelihood impacts, governance and management in Thailand	389
Pearce D.	1989	Tourist development. Second edition	378

Source: Authors' research
Primary data: Scopus

If we were to establish the main preoccupations of the researchers solely based on the above Top 10 list of most cited documents, we could clearly identify the most popular areas of study, starting from tourism development and sustainability, as general directions, to more specific ones, based on attitude, motivation, and perception of both tourists and residents.

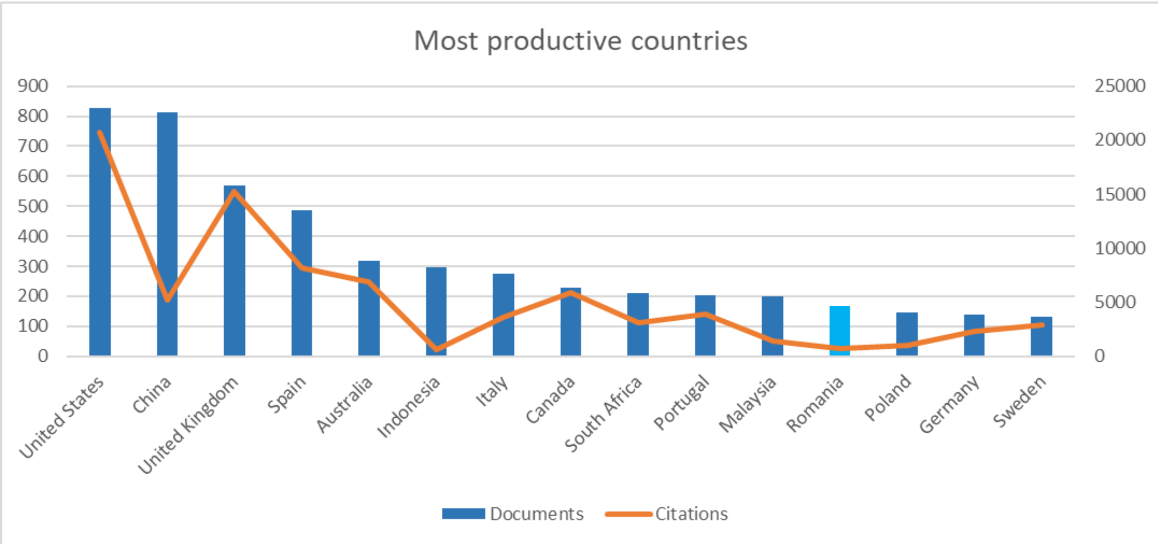
3.8. Most Productive and Prominent Countries According to Authors' Academic Affiliation

We have also analysed the number of studies on rural tourism and the number of citations they have received based on the authors' country of academic affiliation. Here, we need to keep in mind that a publication can have authors from multiple countries. The results of the analysis have shown that the authors of the 6,656 publications come from a total of 136 countries. Based on the number of studies published we could distinguish seven categories of countries:

- 500 – 999 publications: three countries (2.20%):
- 200 – 499 publications: seven countries (5.14%);
- 100 – 199 publications: twelve countries (8.82%);
- 50 – 99 publications: 15 countries (11.02%);
- 15 – 49 publications: 29 countries (21.32%);
- 5 – 14 publications: 26 countries (19.11%);
- 1 – 4 publications: 44 countries (32.35%).

It came out that one third of the states that were part of our sample produced less than five articles each and almost half of this category is represented by countries with a single publication. Most of these countries seem to be from Africa (e.g. Benin, Comoros, Cote D'Ivoire, Guinea). The countries with the greatest number of publications are the United States and China (around 800 each). These are followed by the United Kingdom and Spain (approximately 500 publications each). It is encouraging to see Romania among these countries, in top 15 most productive states in the world, and in top five European states, and also displaying more articles than the countries that have a tradition in rural tourism, such as Germany and Poland (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Most productive countries according to authors' academic affiliation



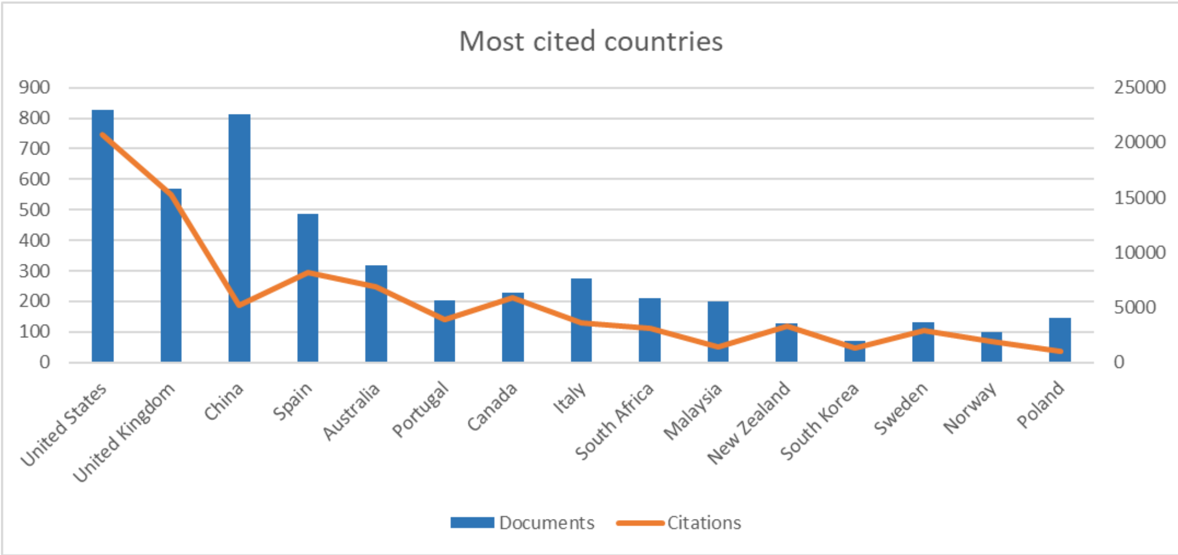
Source: Authors' calculations
Primary data: Scopus

Analysing the number of citations received, the 136 countries can be divided into the following categories:

- 20,000 – 24,999 citations: one country (0.73%);
- 10,000 – 19,999 citations: one country (0.73%);
- 5,000 – 9,999 citations: four countries (2.94%);
- 1,000 – 4,999 citations: 18 countries (13.23%);
- 500 – 999 citations: 16 countries (11.76%);
- 100 – 499 citations: 31 countries (22.96%);
- 50 – 99 citations: 16 countries (11.76%);
- 10 – 49 citations: 31 countries (22.79%);
- 0 – 9 citations: 18 countries (13.23%).

As indicated above, almost 50% of the analysed countries received less than 100 citations each, while 24 countries (or approximately 17.5% of the total number of studied countries) received 1,000 or more citations. The greatest number of citations was received by the United States (20,749), the United Kingdom (15,274), and Spain (8,172). Other countries that received more than 5,000 citations are Australia, Canada, and China (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Most cited countries according to authors' academic affiliation

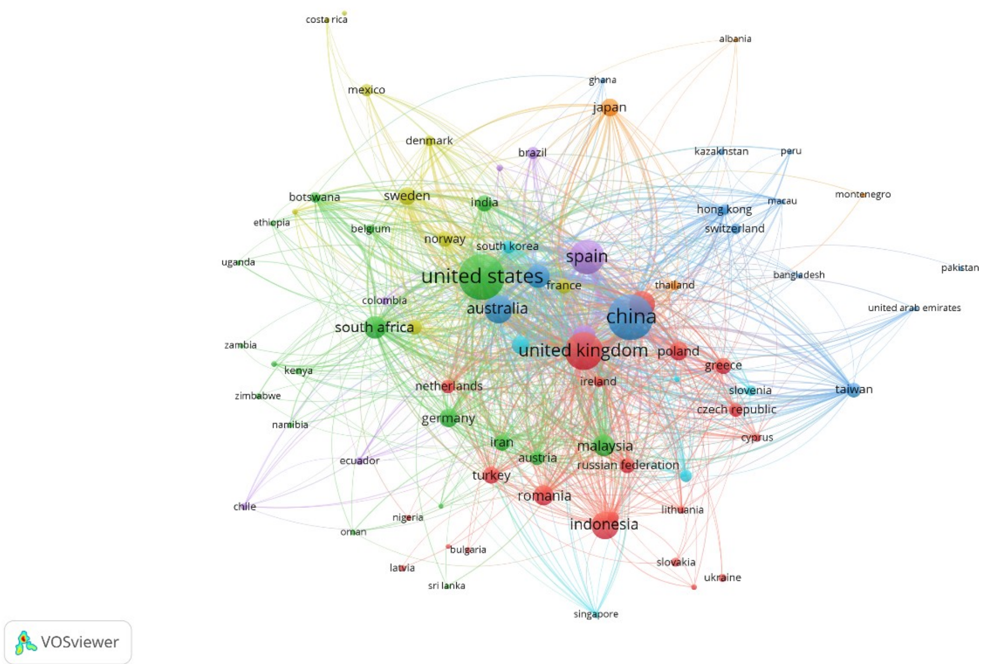


Source: Authors' calculations

Primary data: Scopus

By combining the two criteria, namely the number of documents of a country (productivity) for which we have established a minimum value of 5, and the number of citations of a country (prominence) whose minimum settlement amount was limited to 10, seven different clusters related to citations between countries emerged, including a total of 80 states, as shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Citation countries



Source: Authors' research via VOS Viewer

Primary data: Scopus

The bibliometric analysis allowed us to visualize and understand more meaningful connections between countries by means of citations between them (Figure 9). It can be observed how United States (green cluster), United Kingdom (red cluster), and China (dark blue cluster) stand out not only within their clusters, with total link strength values that exceed 2500 (Table 4), but also at global level. Next in line comes Spain, which shares the same purple cluster with Portugal, the sixth most important country according to its total link strength (1612). Australia (fifth place at global level – 1731 link strength) and Canada (seventh place at global level – 1577 link strength) demonstrate important collaborations with China and other countries within the dark blue cluster having the most privileged positions in comparison with the second and third best rated citation countries in all clusters. Other values and relationships, sometimes justified by common cultural background, other times by geographical proximity, are exhaustively listed in the table below (Table 4).

Table 4. Citation countries and correspondent clusters

Cluster number and colour	No. of countries in cluster	Citation countries in cluster	Total link strength
1 - red	21	Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Egypt, Greece, Hungary, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom	United Kingdom (3824), Italy (1401), Poland (592), Greece (471), Romania (419), Ireland (405), Indonesia (331), Netherlands (307), Russian Federation (292), Turkey (257), Hungary (223) etc.
2 - green	19	Austria, Belgium, Botswana, Ethiopia, Georgia, Germany, India, Iran, Kenya, Malaysia, Namibia, Oman, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda, United States, Zambia, Zimbabwe	United States (4111), South Africa (1105), Malaysia (865), Germany (439), Austria (409), Iran (400), Botswana (355), India (275) etc.
3 - dark blue	13	Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, Ghana, Hong Kong, Kazakhstan, Macau, Pakistan, Peru, Switzerland, Taiwan, United Arab Emirates	China (2879), Australia (1731), Canada (1577), Taiwan (551), Hong Kong (440) etc.
4 - yellow	9	Costa Rica, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, Mexico, Norway, Sweden, Venezuela	Sweden (768), Norway (732), Finland (586), France (507), Denmark (281) etc.
5 - purple	7	Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Portugal, Spain	Spain (1952), Portugal (1612), Colombia (112), Brazil (107) etc.
6 - light blue	7	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Israel, New Zealand, Serbia, Singapore, Slovenia, South Korea	New Zealand (820), South Korea (808), Israel (423), Serbia (267) etc.
7 - orange	4	Albania, Japan, Montenegro, Thailand	Japan (350), Thailand (208) etc.

Source: Authors' research
Primary data: Scopus

3.9. Most Debated Topics of Research in Rural Tourism

In order to determine which topics have been most debated during the 60 years of research in rural tourism studies, we analysed word frequencies in abstracts, titles, and keywords (Table 5).

Table 5. Top 10 list of the most frequently used terms in abstracts, titles, and keywords

ABSTRACTS		TITLES		KEYWORDS	
Terms	Occurrences	Terms	Occurrences	Terms	Occurrences
community	3276	tourism	1282	rural tourism	1045
village	2109	rural tourism	598	tourism	725
tourist	1809	development	558	rural development	309
landscape	1155	case study	451	sustainable development	242
experience	1135	village	395	sustainability	191
tourism development	1096	case	369	sustainable tourism	169
place	1087	community	321	rural areas	157
agriculture	915	analysis	319	China	145
quality	891	China	309	ecotourism	142
income	858	impact	282	agritourism	137

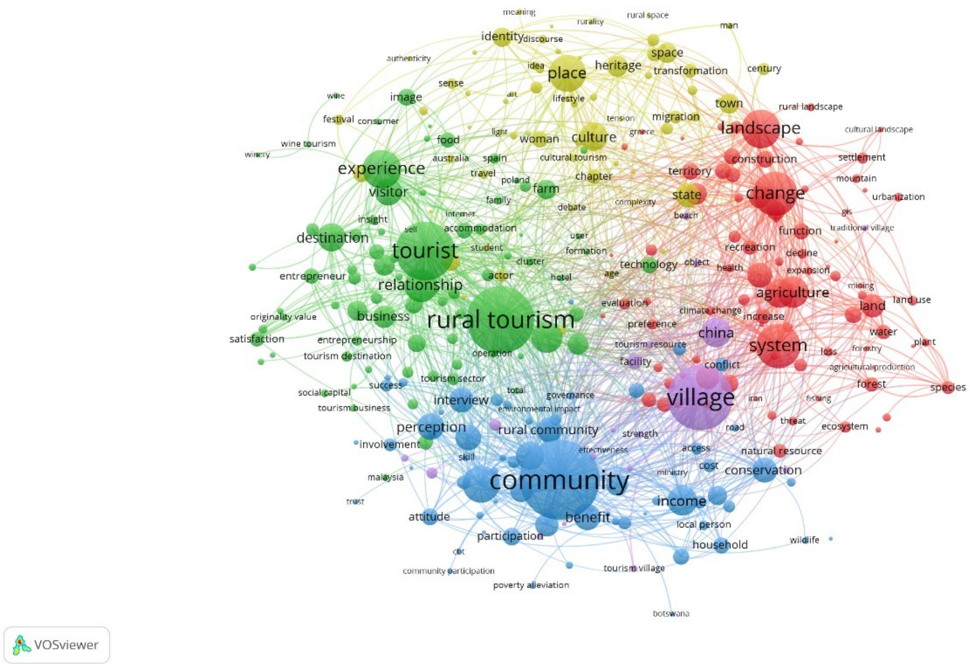
Source: Authors' research
Primary data: Scopus

A cross-sectional analysis shows that, except for the word *tourism*, which sets the context of the research, the only term that can be found in all three sections is the one indicating *development*, a direction that most of the studies refer to as a general objective. However, while the titles and abstracts have in common the *community* and the *village* that could both be assimilated to the socio-cultural side of the rural universe, the overlapping of keywords and abstracts reveals the economic side by means of income generator activities such as *agriculture* and *agritourism*.

3.9.1. Co-Occurrence of Words in Abstracts

By considering only terms with more than 50 frequencies, five clusters, composed of 320 items, emerged as shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10. Co-occurrence of words in abstracts



Source: Authors' research via VOS Viewer
Primary data: Scopus

As previously stated, and illustrated in table 5, *tourism development* could be considered the leitmotif of many studies regarding rural areas. However, only by considering the network generated by VOS Viewer and the blue cluster, one can better understand that this concept is closely linked to that of *community* and *income* (Figure 10). According to further connections, the solution could either come from different *stakeholders* and even from *government* or could rely on forms of *conservation* and *ecotourism* (Table 6).

Table 6. Terms' frequency in abstracts and correspondent clusters

Cluster number and colour	No. of words in cluster	Examples of abstracts' words occurrences (min. 550) in cluster	Relevance scores (of the previous examples)
1 - red	86	landscape (1155), agriculture (915), population (815), source (640) land (570) etc.	all 5 examples < 1
2 - green	83	tourist (1809), experience (1135), quality (891), destination (789), visitor (780), business (612), literature (576), farmer (556), farm (512) etc.	experience (10.632) destination (11.681) farm (10.322) all other six examples < 1
3 - dark blue	68	community (3276), tourism development (1096), income (858), resident (806), conservation (685), perception (666), stakeholder (654), local community (635), government (592), ecotourism (515) etc.	all 10 examples < 1
4 - yellow	65	place (1087), state (669), heritage (554), space (545), identity (520) etc.	identity (10.695) all other examples < 1
5 - purple	18	village (2109), China (850) etc.	both examples < 1

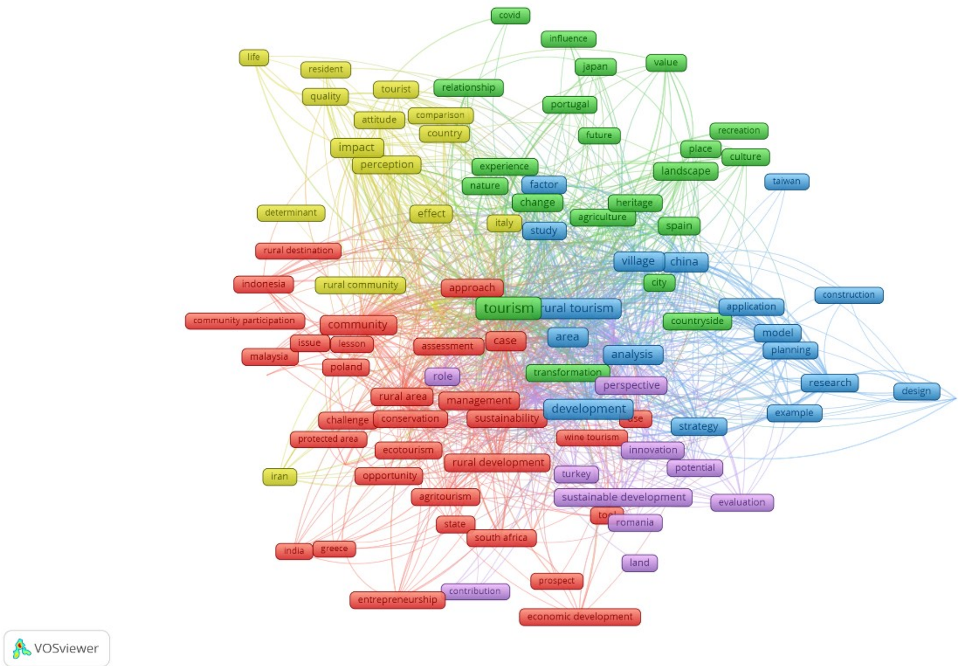
Source: Authors' research
Primary data: Scopus

As for the *tourist* term that dominates the green cluster, the *experience* seems to matter most, which is why both *quality* and interesting *destinations* are mainly sought. Based on terms' frequency in abstracts, these ideas are highly debated in the literature since both values of occurrence (789 and more) and relevance scores (over 10.500) indicate the focus of publications towards them. Finally, while *landscape* and *agriculture* go hand in hand and share the same red cluster, *place* and *identity*, most often correlated with *culture* (figure 10), also tend to become inseparable. The fact is that the two terms complete each other since *place* seems to be rather general, whereas *identity* could represent specific topics covered by dedicated researchers. This is also confirmed by low relevance score for *place* (0.544) in contrast to the high relevance score for *identity* (10.695).

3.9.2. Co-Occurrence of Words in Titles

Only those words that appear in titles at least 25 times were considered for this analysis. Thus, five clusters resulted, as shown in Figure 11, consisting of 110 items.

Figure 11. Co-occurrence of words in titles



Source: Authors' research via VOS Viewer
Primary data: Scopus

In order to better operate with the most frequently used words in the titles of publications, a supplemental limit was established: minimum 150-occurrences, which left us with 22 terms (Table 7).

Table 7. Terms' frequency in titles and correspondent clusters

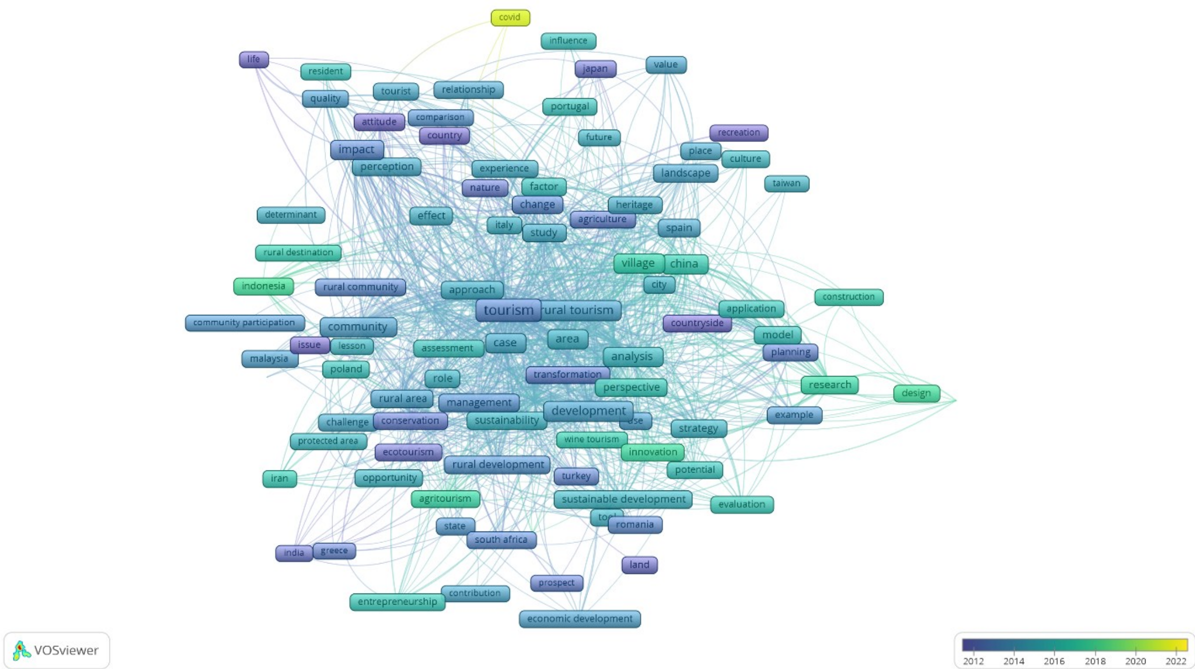
Cluster number and colour	No. of words in cluster	Examples of titles' words occurrences (min. 150) in cluster	Relevance scores (of the previous examples)
1 - red	38	case (369), community (321), approach (202), management (172)	all four examples < 1
2 - green	23	tourism (1282), landscape (181)	both examples < 1
3 - dark blue	19	rural tourism (598), development (558), village (395), analysis (319), China (309), area (264), study (215), research (181), model (173), strategy (165)	research (17.563) all other examples < 1
4 - yellow	16	impact (282), tourism development (208)	both examples < 1
5 - purple	14	case study (451), region (278), perspective (224), role (189)	all four examples < 1

Source: Authors' research
Primary data: Scopus

Even so, each cluster has maintained at least two examples that we can refer to. While the green one incorporates the best rated term, *tourism* (with 1282 occurrences), the blue cluster is the best represented one, catching the eye by two aspects. Firstly, by the highest number of words that met our criterion, more precisely, 10 examples with more than 150-occurrences, of which 50% are part of the Top 10 list of the most frequently used terms in titles (Table 5; Table 7). Secondly, it offers a wider perspective of the interconnections between words, no matter how low the relevance score is (< 1) and thus, how less specific the topics appear (e.g. rural tourism, development, village, analysis). In the end, the blue cluster is the only one within which we could find a high relevance score (i.e. 17.563) for a quite general term, namely *research*.

Due to the timeline function available in VOS Viewer, the mapping of the previous networks and links was also made according to the year when researchers started to cover the following topics (Figure 12). It turned out that older preoccupations regard nature, agriculture, countryside, conservation, and ecotourism subjects, whereas the newest ones refer to COVID-19, innovation, and design in the field of rural tourism studies.

Figure 12. Co-occurrence of words in titles according to correspondent timeline



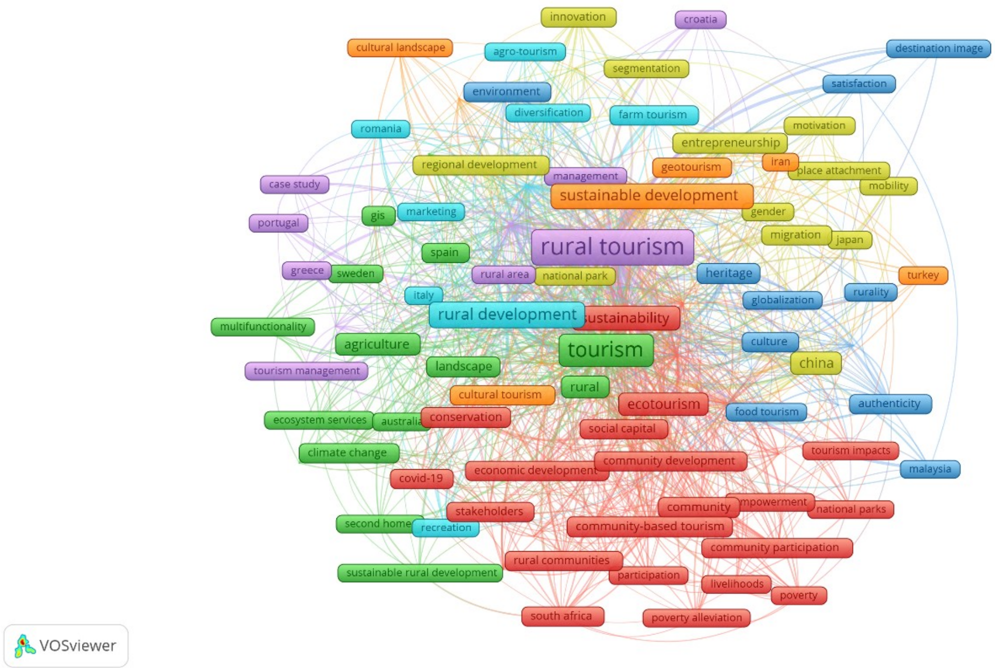
Source: Authors' research via VOS Viewer
Primary data: Scopus

3.9.3. Co-Occurrence of Words in Keyword Lists

Finally, by taking into consideration the terms with more than 20 frequencies in the keyword lists, seven clusters came to light (Figure 13), comprising 105 items as shown below.

As we are dealing with a type of analysis where occurrence of words coincides with the total link strength, in terms of order from largest to smallest values (Table 8), both hierarchies follow the same line, enabling a better observation of clusters' configuration. This time, the purple one stands out due to the specific nature of most studies held under the aegis of *rural tourism* (Figure 13). Given the characteristics of this form of tourism, which takes place in *rural areas*, that sometimes require special *management*, we can totally understand the existing connections within this cluster. Next, the light blue cluster reveals the directions that both phenomenon and its research focused on, namely *rural development*, sometimes via *agritourism*. In the end, the latest trends in research seem to be introduced by the red cluster. On one hand, it highlights terms with an average of 150 occurrences such as sustainability, sustainable tourism, and ecotourism that are still trendy; and, on the other hand, it shows some possible further research directions, the case of COVID-19 being the most relevant of all (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Co-occurrence of words in keyword lists



Source: Authors' research via VOS Viewer
Primary data: Scopus

Table 8. Terms' frequency in keyword lists and correspondent clusters

Cluster number and colour	No. of words in cluster	Examples of keyword lists' terms occurrences (min. 100) in cluster	Total link strength (of the previous examples)
1 - red	30	sustainability (191) sustainable tourism (169) ecotourism (142) tourism development (123)	sustainability (157.00) sustainable tourism (117.00) ecotourism (102.00) tourism development (78.00)
2 - green	17	tourism (725) rural (115)	tourism (503.00) rural (90.00)
3 - dark blue	16	-	-
4 - yellow	15	China (145)	China (103.00)
5 - purple	10	rural tourism (1045) rural areas (157)	rural tourism (633.00) rural areas (124.00)
6 - light blue	9	rural development (309) agritourism (137)	rural development (236.00) agritourism (102.00)
7 - orange	8	sustainable development (242)	sustainable development (188.00)

Source: Authors' research
Primary data: Scopus

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study has the advantage of being the most comprehensive one so far, in terms of number of publications (6,656) and in terms of years (58) that were taken into consideration. On one hand, approximately 5,000 documents were added to the previous bibliometric analysis made by Lane and Kastenholtz in 2015. On the other hand, in comparison with other studies undertaken in 2020 or 2021 (which referred to 40 years of research) almost two decades of new contributions were included in the present evaluation of the progress related to the area of rural tourism studies. Furthermore, except for the language barrier and some lacking data that eliminated around 950 documents from the very beginning, no other restrictive criteria were applied. Neither quantitative, nor qualitative limits such as number of Scopus citations, types of documents or main focus of the publication have influenced the results, leading to a broader perspective and understanding of the field at global.

It is worth mentioning that our study not only confirmed the impressive number of publications released in the last decade as Karali *et al.* (2021) did, but also correlated the average of 800 papers/year with the COVID-19 Pandemic. Furthermore, it clearly stated the propensity of authors for articles, with more than 70% of all documents ever written being classified as so, irrespective of the academic field of the researcher. Apart from the observation that more than a quarter of the papers are currently indexed by Social Sciences, our study highlighted the British universities as the most productive and the most prominent organizations in the field of rural tourism. With more than 10,000 citations, Tourism Management turned out to be the most prestigious scientific journal that authors have selected to publish their work. Speaking about authors, this study drew the conclusion that although nowadays Asians (China) are the most productive researchers, the Anglo-Saxons (United States and United Kingdom) remain the most prestigious figures of the academic field of rural tourism, placing the three countries in every top that concerns outstanding results. In the end, the final analyses revealed not only the most debated topics such as development and sustainability, local communities and villages, agriculture and landscapes, but also the latest trends which nowadays are still dealing with the COVID-19 Pandemic impact and effects, community-based tourism, destination image, place attachment, innovation and experience, management and strategy.

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Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Bianca Sorina Răcășan: contribution and relevant actions, but not limited to Investigation, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Data curation, Funding acquisition.

Cristian-Emanuel Adorean: contribution and relevant actions, but not limited to Methodology, Software, Formal analysis, Data curation, Validation, Visualization.

István Egresi: contribution and relevant actions, but not limited to Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Supervision, Writing – review and editing, Funding acquisition.

Ștefan Dezsi: contribution and relevant actions, but not limited to Project administration, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Funding acquisition.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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The Influence of University-Business Cooperation in the Development of Local Tourism in Kazakhstan: Documentary Analysis

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Abstract: Cooperation between universities and businesses has become a potent tool for driving innovation, economic growth, and societal development. Through this partnership, universities and business companies can pool their resources, knowledge, and practical experience. Universities have significant expertise in tourism research, education, and training that can be used by businesses to enhance their products, services, and operational procedures. Businesses, in turn, offer useful insights and real-world problems that influence academic research and curriculum development. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of university-business cooperation on the expansion and enhancement of the local tourism industry in Kazakhstan. This study uses documentary analysis as a research approach and examines current legislation, reports, policy papers, existing literature, and other pertinent sources to find out more about the role of university-business cooperation in the tourism industry. The findings emphasize the importance of university-business collaboration in fostering innovation and technological advancement, facilitating knowledge transfer and skills development, contributing to regional economic development, addressing societal challenges, and promoting sustainable development. It stresses that university-business cooperation is essential to the growth of local tourism. By fostering knowledge exchange, innovation, and collaboration, these partnerships create a supporting ecosystem that promotes the competitiveness and sustainable expansion of the local tourism sector.

Keywords: university-business cooperation; local tourism; legal acts; Kazakhstan.

JEL Classification: I23; I28; K15; L30; L33; Z32; R11.

Introduction

University-business cooperation has become essential in the tourism sector as a means of accelerating national and regional economy and development. Through collaboration, these stakeholders can leverage their respective strengths to encourage sustainable practices and foster innovation in the tourism sector. The quality of tourism products and services can be greatly improved by giving priority to the training of tourism staff and innovative strategies. This article examines the substantial advantages and potential that university-business collaboration offers in the growth of local tourism in Kazakhstan. To analyze the role of university-business cooperation in the tourism industry, this study uses a documentary analysis methodology. Documentary analysis involved the systematic examination and interpretation of various documentary sources, including the existing legislation and policy documents of Kazakhstan such as the State Program for the Development of the Tourism Industry for 2019-2025, the Concept for the Development of the Tourism Industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023-2029. Findings indicate that although it has great promise, university-business collaboration in the tourism sector of Kazakhstan encounters difficulties such as communication impediments, conflicting expectations, and institutional barriers. Addressing these difficulties is crucial as it enables the realization of the full potential of such partnerships. University-business cooperation is essential as a catalyst for innovation, societal advancement, and economic progress, as it combines the strengths of academia and industry to foster knowledge transfer, drive technological advancements, improve workforce development, promote regional economic development, and tackle urgent societal issues.

1. Literature Review

University-business cooperation has proven to be highly effective in fostering the development of a knowledge-based society while acting as a fundamental pillar in establishing and operating modern regional innovation systems. According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) expert's recommendations, it is imperative for all member nations to engage in collaborative efforts aimed at advancing this objective (OECD, 2019). This mutual interaction, broadly endorsed and actively promoted in all developed countries, represents a positive development in the pursuit of this goal. However, studies on this topic have provided a general overview of university-business cooperation and few studies have been undertaken on the influence of this collaboration with the tourism sector. In particular, there have been no studies exploring the impact of such cooperation on the development of domestic tourism in the context of Kazakhstan. Consequently, in this study, the authors attempt to study this phenomenon in the national context.

OECD recommendations on university-business cooperation have been accepted by many countries and taken into account by many experts and academics and have resulted in studies in different national contexts (OECD, 2019). For example, Chatterton and Goddard (2000) conducted case studies and used secondary data presented at multiple conferences that primarily examined the experiences in Australia, the Baltic States, Scandinavia and continental regions. They examined the function of universities as purveyors of knowledge and the importance of diffusing this knowledge among local communities. The authors found that HEIs should respond effectively to requests from various actors and agencies involved in regional development, thus helping to achieve national goals. The impact of universities on local economy has also been emphasized by Drucker and Goldstein (2007), who posit that universities have the potential to exert a substantial impact on the local economy by means of their entrepreneurial endeavors, innovative practices, and commercialization of research outcomes. They found that the development of economic policies, strategies and initiatives can be influenced by collaborative efforts with industry and government. Hall (2010) and the OECD (2020) have also suggested that universities can contribute to the development of effective economic strategies for local businesses and governments by providing their research and strategic planning expertise. Thus, we can see that OECD experts and scholars believe that cooperation between universities and businesses can have a positive impact on the development of the local economy.

A number of specific techniques have been proposed to overcome the problem of the impact of university-business cooperation on domestic tourism in national contexts. The strategic partnerships established between academic institutions and businesses can play a pivotal role in bolstering the advancement of local tourism growth. For example, Rinaldi *et al.* (2020) carried out a comprehensive case study of an EU project in Italy. They found that universities have the potential to contribute to the growth of tourism and hospitality industries in urban areas through the provision of recreational and sports facilities, as well as the establishment of accessible lecture halls and exhibition venues. This project highlighted the active involvement of a local university in the development of a town and its rural surroundings as a destination for gastronomy and exemplary sustainable food tourism. The university has been instrumental in working with a variety of stakeholders to achieve this ambitious goal. According to Huggins and Johnston's (2009) assertion, the collaboration between academic institutions and business enterprises has the potential to establish inventive networks that foster sustainable tourism growth. In addition, the collaboration can facilitate the promotion and establishment of the regional tourism sector, as posited by Kotler *et al.* (1993) and corroborated by the OECD (2020).

Other researchers also highlighted the benefits of such cooperation between universities and businesses. In particular, Mowery *et al.* (2001) posited that collaborations between universities and businesses have the potential to stimulate regional economic expansion by facilitating the creation of innovative tourism products. Another study conducted by Rampersad (2002) suggests that it is possible to introduce up-to-date curricula in tourism in order to cultivate a skilled workforce that can effectively respond to the changing needs of the industry. It, therefore, seems necessary to develop innovative tourism products and renew higher education programs. However, the OECD's recent report indicates that the global suspension of international tourism during the pandemic, coupled with significant limitations on domestic tourism in various countries, has resulted in a decline of 1.9 percentage points (to 2.8%) in tourism's direct contribution to GDP and a decrease of 10.6 percentage points (to 9.9%) in the share of service exports in OECD countries, on average. Domestic tourism played a crucial role in sustaining numerous jobs and businesses during the pandemic. It is anticipated that domestic tourism will return to pre-pandemic levels by 2023. Meanwhile, the complete recovery of international tourism is now projected to extend until 2025 or later (OECD, 2022).

The symbiosis between academia and business can immensely contribute to the economic sector, leveraging a knowledge-driven economy and fostering local development (Bayanbayeva *et al.*, 2023; Etzkowitz *et al.*, 2000). Universities have long ceased to be just centres of knowledge and are increasingly playing an important role in the development of urban infrastructure and local tourism (den Heijer and Curvelo Magdaniel, 2018; Hebbert, 2018). Etzkowitz *et al.* (2000) proposed the Triple Helix Model as a significant theoretical framework for comprehending the effects of that collaboration on the advancement of tourism at the local level. This model posits that collaboration between universities, industries, and governments can result in improved economic outcomes, such as the promotion of tourism. Academically speaking, universities are widely acknowledged as crucial sources of knowledge, while industries are viewed as entities responsible for implementing stated knowledge. Additionally, governments are seen as facilitators and regulators in this process. Since the development tourism industry in developing countries such as Kazakhstan is usually realised with the government's support and university-business cooperation is also facilitated by state efforts this study will be based on the Triple Helix Model of interaction. For example, Altynbassov *et al.* (2021) conducted a case study research based on a document analysis in Kazakhstan. They found that to support local tourism in the southern regions of Kazakhstan, it would be appropriate to set up international university campuses. In addition, researchers found that the legal status of Kazakhstan's HEIs has been transformed into business-like entities which enable them to collaborate with external stakeholders (Altynbassov *et al.*, 2020). They also suggested that the government should give tax breaks to local companies that perform philanthropic acts, as well as free plots for universities. In their view, the establishment of international university campuses can draw hundreds of thousands of students from neighbouring countries such as Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. They believe HEIs in the south of Kazakhstan have great opportunities to develop academic tourism as a sector of the economy.

On the other hand, it can be a real impetus for developing emerging tourism sectors like academic tourism and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions) tourism (Altynbassov *et al.*, 2022). Kazakhstan is currently prioritizing the advancement of MICE tourism as a significant area of focus. That data is evident through the State Program for the Development of the Tourism Industry for the period of 2019-2025, as well as the Concept for the development of the tourism sector in the Republic of Kazakhstan during the years 2023-2029.

With a considerable economic impact, it has developed into a highly specialized tourism niche (Rogers, 2008). MICE tourism has been identified by various scholars as a crucial contributor to infrastructure development, income generation, employment opportunities, and foreign exchange inflows (Rogers, 2008; Davidson and Cope, 2003). It is considered of significant importance within the realm of higher education institutions. They assert that universities frequently serve as significant locations for conferences and gatherings, thereby stimulating MICE tourism. Additionally, the dissemination of knowledge during these gatherings can enhance scholarly inquiry and augment the prestige of academic institutions. Furthermore, scholarly research has examined the correlation between universities and MICE tourism, particularly in the realm of education. This has resulted in universities providing courses and degree programs that concentrate on event management and MICE tourism, ultimately offering individuals professional training and generating a specialized workforce for this sector (Getz, 2012).

In summary, a collaboration between universities and the business community is supported by serious international organizations like the OECD and its recommendations are considered by many countries. Some studies have been conducted on the impact of such collaboration in the tourism sector in a domestic context. Unfortunately, research into issues related to university-business cooperation and its impact on domestic tourism has received little attention in Kazakhstan's context. The literature reviewed here demonstrates this immaturity. It is particularly necessary to categorize the problems caused by this collaboration in the field of tourism and to develop an effective government strategy to address them.

2. Research Methodology

This study employed a documentary analysis, a research technique in the social sciences which enables the methodical interpretation and assessment of documents to comprehend phenomena (Bowen, 2009). The process entails the examination of tangible or intangible objects, including but not limited to reports, administrative records, memos, and correspondence (Prior, 2012). The process of document analysis typically adhered to a systematic approach, encompassing a series of stages such as selection, evaluation, and interpretation. The process of selection pertained to the identification and acquisition of documents that encompass pertinent information pertaining to the research subject (Scott, 1990). The process of evaluation necessitated that researcher undertook an assessment of the genuineness, reliability, inclusiveness, and significance of the documents (Corbetta, 2003). The conclusive phase of the process entailed inferring the fundamental connotations, implications, or decisions that can be extracted from the records, as stated by Denzin and Lincoln (2011). For these reasons, this study was based on the analysis of the current Laws related to tourism, State Program for the Development of the Tourism Industry for 2019-2025, the Concept for the development of the tourism industry in the Republic of Kazakhstan for the years 2023-2029, the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan 'On Amendments and Additions to Certain Legislative Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Tourism', The Roadmap of Employment

3. Research Results and Discussion

3.1 Analysis of the Concept for Tourism Industry Development in Kazakhstan: Government Strategies, Economic Impact, and Legislative Improvements

The state documents such as the recent Concept for the development of the tourism industry in the Republic of Kazakhstan for the years between 2023 and 2029 pertaining to tourism development indicate significant alterations in the prioritisation of the industry, financial allocation, and business support. According to the Global Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index of the World Economic Forum-2021, Kazakhstan has achieved a rank of 66th out of 117 countries, indicating a significant improvement of 14 positions from its previous position of 80th in the 2019 index. The nation exhibits a considerable capacity in the comprehensive assessment based on distinct sub-indices. Kazakhstan ranks first in terms of price competitiveness (Concept, 2023). This enhances the appeal of the country to budget-conscious travellers and positions it as a prominent player in the region for prospective international visitors. However, the impact of price competitiveness on the tourism industry is significant as it affects the attractiveness of a destination and the decision-making process of travellers (Eugenio-Martin, 2003). Despite the potential of alluring pricing to attract tourists, it is necessary to maintain a balance with high-quality service maintenance (Dwyer *et al.*, 2010). In addition, excessive price competitiveness may result in over-tourism and resource degradation, as highlighted by Koens *et al.* (2018). Hence, the achievement of prosperous tourism development necessitates a comprehensive approach that considers pricing within the wider competitive landscape.

In addition, it has been noted that there has been a favourable trend in certain domains, such as the prioritisation of the tourism sector, which has experienced a positive shift of 15 positions and currently holds 68th place in the ranking of the country's brand strategy and other related indicators. However, other areas such as International Openness, Natural Resources, and Tourist Service Infrastructure have only seen a modest increase of no more than four positions (Concept, 2023). This demonstrates the degree to which the nation is emphasising the advancement of the tourism industry. However, it should be stated that focusing solely on particular segments within the tourism industry may result in uneven progress. According to Tosun (2002), although specific areas may experience growth, this can potentially result in the stagnation or decline of other sectors. The mentioned approach has the potential to further aggravate social disparities, as it may result in advantages being bestowed upon specific stakeholders while others bear the brunt of the consequences (Bramwell and Lane, 2011). Therefore, the government might need to follow the balance policy on the improvement of all tourism related sectors.

The Government of Kazakhstan is currently interested in developing the tourism sector and is providing a variety of incentives to do so. In December 2012, the President's Message to the people of Kazakhstan 'Strategy 'Kazakhstan-2050': a new political course of an established state' set a new strategic objective for the country to join the 30 most developed nations by 2050. 'Kazakhstan-2050' stressed economic modernization. Several policy documents followed to modernise key economic sectors, including tourism. The tourism industry has been identified as one of the 16 potential areas for receiving preferential loans and subsidies (Tileuberdinova *et al.*, 2019). The following outcomes were achieved during the 2019-2022 period as a result of the execution of the State Program for the years 2019-2025. The implementation of the 'Tax-Free' system enabled non-native individuals to obtain a reimbursement of value-added tax on their acquisitions. Additionally, the number of countries exempt from visa requirements increased to a total of 79. Furthermore, the obligation for non-citizens to possess migration cards and register their presence for a maximum of 30 days was eliminated (Concept, 2023). Although the implementation of tax-free and visa-free policies has the potential to enhance tourism by augmenting its accessibility and affordability, it can also impose a burden on resources and give rise to security concerns (Neumayer, 2006). Moreover, the implementation of such policies aimed at fostering cultural exchange may potentially result in environmental and cultural disturbances (Koens *et al.*, 2018). Further, visa-free policies may potentially heighten the likelihood of unauthorised immigration and security concerns, especially considering the current ongoing geopolitical turbulence within the region related to the migrants from Ukraine and Russia. Thus, despite that these accomplishments are expected to significantly increase the influx of tourists, both regionally and globally, cautious actions must be undertaken to estimate potential hazards.

The tourism sector's legislative framework has been enhanced through the adoption of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan 'On Amendments and Additions to Certain Legislative Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Tourism.' This law aims to implement systematic and comprehensive measures for government assistance of the tourism industry. The aforementioned measures encompass the provision of financial support to tour operators through a subsidy of 15,000 tenge per foreign tourist, reimbursement of 25% of expenses incurred in procuring equipment and machinery such as ropeways, snow groomers, and snow generators for ski resorts, partial reimbursement of expenses related to the construction and renovation of tourist facilities and roadside service facilities at a rate of 10%, and a 25% subsidy for the acquisition of tour buses (Concept, 2023). According to Tleuberdinova and Salauatova (2018), the industry has the potential to tackle societal concerns, promote national progress, and generate fiscal income, thereby leading to a rise in the gross domestic product. The Triple Helix Model suggests that the above mentioned initiatives serve as evidence of the government's pivotal role as a facilitator in fostering industrial growth (Etzkowitz *et al.*, 2000).

According to the 2019-2025 State program, the tourism industry has been assigned the objective of augmenting its contribution to the GDP composition to 8% by 2025. Whereas more recently, as per the report published by the World Tourism and Travel Council (2021), Kazakhstan ranks 129th in the list of countries with respect to tourism, with a contribution of 6.2% to its GDP and a cash volume of $7.9 billion in the year 2021. In contrast, according to Tleubergenova *et al.* (2019), although there has been an increase in the number of tourists between 2014 and 2019, the GDP contribution indicator has remained constant at 1%. This clearly shows a substantial expansion of the tourism sector within the nation, with statistical evidence indicating a promising surpassing of the predetermined objective.

Such a success of tourism development in a relatively short period can be explained by the government's prioritization and investment strategy. The local implementation of tourism industry projects has facilitated the generation of a considerable quantity of enduring employment opportunities. According to the OECD (2022), domestic tourism has emerged as a crucial source of support for numerous enterprises and employment opportunities. For example, the primary objective centred on the allocation of funds within the 'Employment Roadmap' initiative, which facilitated the development of 23 projects valued at 14.8 billion tenge, as well as 99 sanitary and hygienic facilities valued at 1.0 billion tenge, throughout the year 2020. A total of 58 projects were funded, amounting to over 26 billion tenge, with a loan duration of up to 10 years. Under the auspices of the 'DKB 2025,' a sum total of 60 billion tenge was allocated to fund 177 projects, with a loan duration of up to 5 years. In an effort to enhance the investment climate within the tourism sector, the threshold for identifying a tourism investment project as a priority has been lowered from 2 million MCI to 200,000 MCI (at present, the monthly calculated indicator stands at 3,450 tenge), thereby enabling the acquisition of investment preferences. Based on the projections, it is anticipated that the implementation of these novel measures will result in a minimum of 2,500 units being covered by entrepreneurs by 2029 (Concept, 2023). In contrast, according to Tleubergenova *et al.* (2019), the proportion of regions' gross value added generated by tourism can be evaluated by analyzing the number of active entrepreneurs, when compared to the pre-pandemic scenario. For instance, between 2013 and 2017, there was only 1.6-fold increase in the quantity of active individual entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized enterprises operating within the tourism industry. This shows how the government support is focused on the engagement of all types of entrepreneurs. The allocation of funds by the government towards tourism has the potential to stimulate economic progress, augment the appeal of destinations, and promote objectives related to sustainable development, as evidenced by various studies. The tourism sector has a noteworthy impact on employment generation and the mitigation of unemployment, chiefly by means of fostering tourism-based entrepreneurship.

3.2 Trends and Challenges in the Advancement of Domestic Tourism in Kazakhstan: An Analysis of Official Documentation

The Concept (2023) has identified significant challenges pertaining to the advancement of the tourism sector in Kazakhstan. The areas of tourist attraction suffer from inadequate infrastructure development, logistical challenges, a scarcity of accommodation options, limited variety and subpar quality of tourist offerings, unsatisfactory levels of customer satisfaction, inadequate digitalization of tourist services, a shortage of skilled personnel in the industry, insufficient promotion of regional and international tourism potential, a dearth of regular international events in Kazakhstan, and insufficient progress in the development of MICE tourism. Some of these major problems were reflected by Kenzhebekov *et al.* (2021) who conducted a survey in which experts identified that the lack of developed infrastructure is a significant hindrance to the progress of tourism in Kazakhstan. This was indicated by 81% of the respondents. Moreover, the proposition that a shortage of skilled personnel poses a significant obstacle to the advancement of the tourism industry in Kazakhstan. The quality of service in the tourism industry is a noteworthy concern, as indicated by 77% of the survey participants. Earlier, Bazhikova and Shayekina (2015) expressed optimism regarding the growth of regional tourism in Kazakhstan, while also noting that it is largely characterized by a lack of organisation and spontaneity. However, over the years, including the pandemic, Kazakhstan's government has shown much effort in adapting to the required changes.

For example, upon analysis of the new strategy for tourism development implemented this year, it was observed that a significant proportion of the public opted to visit proximate natural recreational areas, national parks, and resort zones. Domestic tourism has experienced a relatively smaller decline in comparison to inbound and outbound tourism. In contrast, as per the reports, there has been a surge in the count of international visitors availing lodging services, exhibiting a 2.9-fold rise as compared to the corresponding period of the preceding year (208.5 thousand), and reaching a total of 610 thousand individuals. The year 2022 witnessed a notable rise in the volume of visitors to national parks, setting a new record. The quantity of visitors rose by 400,000 individuals in comparison to the previous year, resulting in an estimated total of 2 million visitors (Concept, 2023). These figures indicate encouraging outcomes for the imminent advancement of the tourism industry and clearly shows how the pandemic period have significantly influenced the inner tourism.

On the other hand, according to the statistics, the shortage of accommodation facilities indicated during pre-covid period has seen record improvements (Concept, 2023). For instance, the services rendered by accommodation facilities amounted to 129.2 billion tenge, indicating a significant increase of 63.7% as compared to the corresponding period of the preceding year (78.9 billion tenge). The numbers exhibit a substantial increase in comparison to the yearly benchmark established in 2019, which was recorded at 120.5 billion tenge. Such increase in the aftermath of the pandemic is viewed as a collaborative achievement between government initiatives and nearby enterprises, which have significantly bolstered the surrounding communities. However, there is still a question of service and facilities quality that are more difficult to measure. This is also supported by the fact that one of the most noteworthy matters identified pertains to standardization. The country does not have a compulsory mandate for the categorization of tourist accommodation (Concept, 2023). As per the statistical data of 2021, among the total of 3,686 tourist accommodation establishments, a mere 147 were assigned a specific category denoted by a 'star rating'. In the year 2020, a mere 150 establishments out of a total of 3,514 were categorized as hotels. Similarly, in the year 2019, only 205 out of 3,592 establishments were classified as hotels (Concept, 2023). Enforcing a compulsory mandate for the categorization of tourist lodgings or devising strategies to encourage and stimulate categorization would guarantee that visitors are provided with amenities that align with the designated hotel classification. Standards function as a mechanism to guarantee the level of services provided. The provision of high-quality service plays a crucial role in the advancement of regional tourism. According to Kozak and Rimmington (2000), visitor satisfaction is significantly impacted by this factor, resulting in increased rates of loyal visitors and favorable referrals; thereby conferring a competitive advantage in comparison to alternative locations (Parasuraman and Zeithaml, 1988) and contributing to economic sustainability through its capacity to stimulate revenue growth (Cronin and Brady, 2000); and most importantly, the presence of high service quality has the potential to attract a larger number of tourists, resulting in positive impacts on local economies and the overall well-being of the community (Budeanu, 2005). However, in 2020, a study was conducted which found that tourism establishments, particularly those located in regional areas, exhibit significant non-compliance with established standards (Concept, 2023). Furthermore, a considerable number of these entities are not cognizant of the existence of any regulations that could potentially enhance the quality of their services, as well as customer satisfaction and loyalty. These findings indicate a large gap to focus on and ensure high-quality service for tourists. It seems that current system lacks sufficient organisation to guarantee the active execution of these regulations by enterprises operating within the tourism sector. Apparently, the attainment of service compliance confirmation is reliant upon voluntary certification. Consequently, there exists a necessity for the development of a system that provides incentives and encourages businesses to conform to the established standards and implement novel educational standards that cater to the industry's requirements.

Other problems identified such as inadequate infrastructure and logistical challenges might be related to the country's geographical location. Laruelle (2018) asserts that Kazakhstan's challenging topography, characterized by expansive mountainous regions, deserts, and steppes, coupled with a relatively low population density, renders infrastructure development technically demanding and financially burdensome. Seken *et al.* (2019) analysed articles that reflected state programmes for the development of regional tourism. They identified and described the potential of rural tourism in various aspects such as agriculture, climate, organisation and distribution, socio-geography, culture and history, material and technical factors, as well as institutional and economic factors. The participation of both public and private sectors holds significant importance in the process of designing a tourist destination as it facilitates the attainment of consensus and alignment of strategies among various companies and institutions towards a common objective (Presenza and Cipollina, 2010). The proficient handling of the varied connections between stakeholders is crucial in guaranteeing the enduring expansion of regional tourism. This is because each stakeholder possesses unique resources and viewpoints that aid in the comprehensive advancement of the sector. As a result, some regions may possess more potential for the development of tourism industry than others.

For example, in order to tackle issues pertaining to quality and regional competitiveness, the notion of a priority tourist territory has been introduced, as per previous state documents. This refers to a specific area that possesses a unique potential for the development of tourism and is listed as a republican-level object on the tourism map. The government has prioritised the allocation of funds towards infrastructure development and the identification of six distinct tourism clusters based on regional and tourist-specific characteristics. According to Niyazbayeva and Yessengeldina (2016), the creation of clusters within the tourism sector is a crucial priority for Kazakhstan in enhancing the competitiveness of its administrative and territorial divisions. While all clusters are important for the growth of individual economic sectors, Kenzhebekov *et al.* (2021) identifies only one specific cluster in the Almaty region that generates a synergistic effect for all stakeholders involved. This were also highlighted by Tleuberdinova and Salauatova (2018) who conducted a study on business activity in different regions of Kazakhstan. The study ranked the regions based on their entrepreneurial activity in the tourism industry. The results showed that the southern regions and the capital city were more developed in terms of the number of tourists, and local businesses, and attracted investments. Kenzhebekov *et al.* (2021) refer to other clusters as protoclusters, claiming that they will be able to form fully-fledged cluster models if the involvement of local community will be fulfilled to create different tourist products. This statement aligns with Freeman's (1984) stakeholder theory, which advocates for the inclusion of all stakeholders in the decision-making process to enhance the quality and adaptability of the product. The authors emphasise the notable potential of two regional destinations, namely the areas adjacent to the Caspian Sea and the historical and religious hub of Turkestan. The southern region of Kazakhstan, which is the most densely populated, possesses a more conducive climate for the establishment of an educational institution, especially in newly separated region of Turkestan, for the enhancement of local tourism (Altynbassov *et al.*, 2021; Altaibayeva *et al.*, 2020). Thus, it should be highlighted that every region needs to consider the local climate and distinct characteristics while formulating tourism strategies.

In fact, a notable development in this regard is the establishment of the International University of Tourism and Hospitality in the city of Turkestan in 2020, which is recognised as a hub of cultural significance. The state officials have emphasised the efforts fostering 'heritage tourism' that revolves around the preservation of historic sites, thereby making a significant contribution to the development of tourism in the region. This highlights the imperative for collaboration between universities, businesses, and government entities to effectively address regional tourism needs, thereby yielding favourable outcomes for development.

Other examples from Eastern region in Kazakhstan show the necessity of the involvement of all stakeholders, including the local community for the achievement of common goals. The study written by Ziyadin and Takhtaeva (2014) delves into the challenges associated with the growth of the tourism industry in the East Kazakhstan region. The authors examine the repercussions of these challenges on the tourism and recreational sector of Kazakhstan. They also propose the need for the creation of theoretical and methodological frameworks, as well as organisational and economic mechanisms, to facilitate comprehensive strategic management of the regional tourism sector. One frequently recommended approach is to conscientiously involve local stakeholders in the consideration of managerial decisions. Daye *et al.* (2020) conducted qualitative and quantitative research on Kazakhstan's involvement in the Great Silk Road starting from China. The study suggests that government planners should take into account the possibility of undermining favourable views of the country if there is an excessive focus on China's soft power activities. It is advisable for government planners to exercise caution when promoting Chinese cultural awareness as a strategy to foster trust and support within the local community. Thus, it is suggested that the management should utilise a bottom-up approach that involves consultation with citizens during the implementation of the project in various communities.

3.3 The Role of University-Business Collaboration in Developing Domestic Tourism

The analyzed texts consistently prioritize the enhancement of tourism personnel, training programmes, and innovative strategies aimed at improving the quality of touristic products. Recent studies suggest that human resources in the tourism industry constitute a significant factor in an organization's competitive advantage. It is argued that a crucial factor in the advancement of regional tourism is the incorporation of collaboration between the government, universities, and businesses. According to the proposal presented on January 17, 2014, regarding Kazakhstan's aspiration to join the ranks of the top 30 developed nations, underscored the importance of aligning higher education with the demands of a knowledge-intensive economy. The attainment of this alignment is anticipated to be accomplished by integrating universities and vocational schools with emerging intellectual and innovative clusters. The incorporation of pedagogical modules on innovation, entrepreneurship, and financial management into foundational curricula at national universities is emphasized by the conceptual framework. In fact, entrepreneurial universities have made a significant impact on the advancement of the tourism industry through their provision of specialized entrepreneurship education and training for professionals in this sector (Oktadiana and Chon, 2017; Tomasi *et al.*, 2020; Vaduva *et al.*, 2020). Hence, as outlined in the Concept (2023), the primary aim is to establish methodological principles for the development of educational programmes in the field of tourism, involving experts from around the world. Additionally, it seeks to enhance the involvement of industry representatives and stakeholders in the design of educational programmes and instructional materials. Furthermore, it aims to explore the viability of integrating concise instructional sessions into current training curricula.

Educational institutions that provide training for individuals in the tourism industry typically engage in cooperative efforts with employers, stakeholders within the tourism market, as well as those in the restaurant and hotel sectors. The objective of this collaboration is to emphasize education that is geared towards practical application within specific fields of study, and to facilitate the integration of practical training sessions at tourism and hospitality establishments. Rampersad (2002) suggests that the implementation of specialized curricula centred on the field of tourism presents a favourable prospect for the cultivation of a proficient workforce capable of competently adapting to the evolving demands of the tourism industry. In addition, academic institutions have the potential to aid local enterprises and governmental bodies in formulating efficient tourism tactics by utilising their proficiency in research and strategic planning, which involves the participation of scholars and researchers from the region (OECD, 2020). For instance, the Cornell University School of Hotel Administration in the US is known for its hotel and hospitality collaborations. The region's tourism industry benefits from the individuals' creative solutions to industrial issues. The university's Centre for Hospitality Research publishes publications that benefit local tourism businesses, boosting regional tourism (Cornell University). Similarly, the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management (the University of Surrey) is known globally for its groundbreaking industry research. The University of Surrey has conducted tourism-boosting research with several industries which promoted sustainable practices and improved customer experience. The main goal is to connect academic research to local tourism enterprises to revitalize the industry by involving the local stakeholders.

However, as per the data provided by the Bureau of National Statistics of Kazakhstan, in the year 2021, despite that over 2,000 students successfully completed their vocational and technical secondary education programmes in the fields of 'Tourism' and 'Restaurant and Hotel Management', the tourism sector's practical needs are not entirely met by current academic programmes, as they lack practical orientation (Concept, 2023). It might be a concern that individuals who have obtained degrees from specialized educational institutions might be experiencing a low level of demand in the job market. Thus, it is recommended that teaching staff in specialised disciplines should include industry practitioners to augment the quality of instruction.

In this regard, the education and training of individuals in the tourism sector is being conducted by 49 institutions of higher education within the nation. The combined enrollment of these academic institutions totals to 12,000 students. Tourism organisations in Kazakhstan, including Kazakh Tourism JSC, the Kazakhstan Tourist Association, and the Kazakhstan Association of Hotels and Restaurants, collaborate with partners to cultivate practical skills among students (Concept, 2023). These partnerships serve not only as a means of training, but also as a platform for the professional development of future specialists in the tourism and hospitality industry. For example, in the European context, industrial internships comprise 50%-70% of academic programmes, whereas in the US personnel agencies are created in educational institutions facilitate training. These agencies collaborate with the tourism industry by utilising an information system that monitors labor market demands and recruits specialized personnel (Concept, 2023). Similar trends have appeared in the context of Kazakhstan's HE since joining the Bologna Process (Amandykova *et al.*, 2016). The collaboration between universities and businesses in the context of local tourism development is a multi-stakeholder framework that encompasses various entities such as local communities and government bodies. This framework, as proposed by Freeman (1984), aims to foster cooperation among these diverse stakeholders. Consequently, the quality of service in tourist organisations is contingent upon the knowledge, skills, and conscientiousness of their personnel.

Although collaboration between universities and businesses holds significant potential for advancing the growth of regional tourism, there are frequently encountered obstacles that arise in these joint ventures. Collaborative efforts may encounter hindrances such as communication challenges, incongruity of anticipations, and institutional obstructions, which have the potential to curtail their efficacy. Communication challenges can arise due to conflicting interests and goals among various stakeholders. Divergent objectives and timelines or mismatch of expectations are frequently observed between the academic and business domains. Scholars may prioritise extensive and sustained research endeavours, whereas commercial enterprises may prioritise prompt and pragmatic resolutions to operational challenges. Drucker and Goldstein (2007) addressed the issue of misalignment and proposed that universities and businesses should establish mutual expectations and outcomes to bridge the gap. For example, Issabekov *et al.* (2022) have asserted that presently, within the tripartite framework of 'university-science-business,' prospective partners lack a shared objective that is mutually appealing to all parties involved. 'University plus enterprise equals new enterprise' was their most logical interaction scenario which allows the university build new popular products and services. They claim that modern corporations are increasingly consumer-oriented, anticipating academic benefits and reluctant to invest in the complete result, whereas national corporate managers are awaiting of the fast benefits of this collaboration and prioritising speedy gains. In this regard, the incongruity of anticipations can be resolved by establishing a common comprehension through collaboratively determined initiatives and communal goals (Drucker and Goldstein, 2007). Thus, the establishment of regular and structured communication channels, as well as the creation of common platforms for knowledge exchange, can effectively overcome communication barriers.

The expansion of the tourism sector can be facilitated by entrepreneurial universities through various means, including research and innovation, business training and education, involvement in local community and regional development, partnership with the industry and cooperation, incubation and acceleration, as well as technological transfer and commercialization (Guo *et al.*, 2022; Hall and Williams, 2019; Novelli, 2023; Pugh *et al.*, 2022; Rinaldi *et al.*, 2022; Xiajie, 2021). However, there might be institutional barriers arise due to the distinct institutional contexts and norms that govern the operations of universities and businesses. The presence of bureaucratic obstacles may impede efficient collaboration. It is also important to consider the type of educational institution to establish the most efficient cooperation among different stakeholders. For example, public university rectors possessed sole decision-making power, making corporate governance difficult (Sagintayeva *et al.*, 2018).

Thus, the government issued a special order to convert 28 public institutions into non-profit JSCs in 2019 to constitute a board of directors. The Ministry of Science and Higher Education and the Agency for the Protection and Development of Competition approve charter changes and new ventures for public universities. The shareholder and Ministry of Finance decide this under Article 177 of the Law 'On State Property'. As a result, public colleges can legally attain financial independence and react to market conditions, essential to building the entrepreneurial university model. Thus, education institutions might emulate corporate boards by emphasising strategic planning, accountability, financial management, and stakeholder engagement. The implementation of flexible institutional arrangements and supportive policies can serve as facilitators for successful collaboration, particularly in the context of institutional barriers.

One of the key objectives in the establishment of entrepreneurial universities is to improve the effectiveness of research and innovation institutions, in accordance with existing legislation. The achievement of this goal requires the enhancement of legal frameworks pertaining to venture capital funding, safeguarding intellectual property, providing assistance for research and innovation, and facilitating the transformation of research discoveries into commercial products. Furthermore, it is suggested that governmental authorities should grant permission for the transfer of licenses pertaining to the commercial utilization of research funded by academic institutions, research bodies, and small-scale enterprises. These initiatives highlight the dedication of the Kazakhstani government to cultivate a favorable environment for entrepreneurial universities. Nevertheless, a thorough analysis of strategic documents and websites of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Kazakhstan indicates that these measures may lack the necessary comprehensiveness for the establishment of entrepreneurial universities. The development of entrepreneurial universities in Kazakhstan faces significant challenges, primarily due to the lack of a robust innovative and entrepreneurial ecosystem within academic institutions. Additionally, there is a shortage of qualified management personnel for effectively facilitating technology transfer. These obstacles greatly hinder the progress of entrepreneurial universities in the country.

Regarding this, to create more appropriate environment for university-business cooperation, according to the Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2017), mining enterprises, whether foreign or domestic, are required to allocate 1% of their contract sum towards research and training. This provision aims to facilitate the accumulation of funds by universities through collaborations with industrial companies. The new Concept (2023-2029) aims to implement legislative modifications to enhance tax incentives, thereby augmenting the advantages for private enterprises engaged in partnerships with universities. Various Western countries, with the United States being particularly prominent, have implemented comparable measures, such as the Tax Reform Act of 1969. This legislation formally solidified tax deductions for charitable entities, thereby stimulating philanthropic and corporate contributions and promoting collaborations between universities and industries (Mozumi, 2022). The aforementioned strategies are implemented with the objective of enhancing the financial resilience and competitiveness of universities within the context of academic capitalism. These strategies involve acquiring external funding through various means such as government grants, industry agreements, donations, endowments, patent commercialization, and international partnerships (Tijssen *et al.*, 2019). The entrepreneurial university model, through the diversification of funding sources and decreased dependence on traditional funding, has the potential to bolster the university's institutional capacity and promote collaboration between the university and industry. This, in turn, can facilitate effective knowledge creation, commercialization of innovations, and contribute to positive regional development.

3.4 MICE Tourism as a Developing Potential

Another relatively new aspect of tourism industry which is highlighted in the last two state programs on the development of tourism is MICE tourism. It is identified as a prospective avenue for the advancement of local tourism with a huge potential. The MICE tourism industry pertains to a distinct segment within the broader tourism sector, which is dedicated to the organisation, coordination, and facilitation of meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE) (Kim *et al.*, 2022; Rojas Bueno *et al.*, 2020). In 2019, Kazakhstan demonstrated a notable advancement in its global standing for MICE tourism development, as per the rankings published by the International Congress and Convention Association (Concept, 2023). The country ascended by 20 positions and secured the 79th rank. As per the data provided by the association, Kazakhstan managed to secure 18 international association events in the year 2019, which resulted in a revenue generation of USD 6 million. One of the prominent examples, the staging of the World Expo in 2017 resulted in a significant increase in the number of international tourist arrivals to Kazakhstan, reaching a peak of 4,559,500 in that year. This influx of tourists contributed US$ 3077.5 million or 1.6 percent of the country's GDP (Daye *et al.*, 2020). This has shown a positive correlation between a country's investment in tourism promotion and the revenue generated by tourist activity within the country. Tourists make a direct contribution towards the growth of GDP, hotel occupancy rates, tourist arrivals, and expenditures in the respective destinations, thus, positively influencing the local businesses and communities.

It is argued that universities can play a crucial role in developing MICE tourism in Kazakhstan. Minister of Science and Higher Education in his recent interview has highlighted the bold ambition of Kazakhstan becoming a new regional academic hub (Imangali, 2023). The President's proposal in 2022 to establish five branches of renowned international universities in Kazakhstan by 2025 was primarily motivated by regional dynamics. The demographic shifts observed in Eurasia, specifically attributed to a significant population growth in Central and South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, have resulted in a rise in both international academic mobility and the demand for high-quality educational services (Lem, 2023). Moreover, the current geopolitical developments in Ukraine have brought about significant changes in the educational framework of Eurasia, thereby presenting strategic prospects for nations such as Kazakhstan. Given the increasing influx of students from India, Pakistan, Africa, and the Middle East in search of educational prospects, thus, showing that Kazakhstan has the potential to establish itself as a burgeoning academic center.

Nevertheless, the process of becoming a regional education centre necessitates significant financial investments in infrastructure to effectively accommodate a large number of international students. Furthermore, the minister stresses that it is crucial to emphasize the meticulous planning and implementation of information campaigns aimed at promoting the 'Study in Kazakhstan' brand on a global scale. In this regard, there have been tremendous improvements in the direction of international cooperation between universities.

For example, in 2022, Kazakhstan commenced the establishment of four university branches, commencing with the British De Montfort University. This initiative involved a substantial investment of more than $15 million to establish a comprehensive campus in Almaty. Subsequently, the Moscow Engineering and Physics Institute established a partnership with Al-Farabi University in Almaty. Additionally, Gubkin Oil and Gas University engaged in collaboration with Atyrau Oil and Gas University. Furthermore, the University of Arizona continues to cooperate with Kozybayev University in Petropavlovsk.

In 2023, the government has established more ambitious objectives, aiming to inaugurate an additional six internationally recognised campuses of high status. The examples encompass the presence of various international educational institutions in different regions of Kazakhstan. Notably, Heriot-Watt University has established a campus at Zhubanov Aktobe Regional University, thereby designating Aktobe as one of the four global locations hosting Heriot-Watt campuses. Similarly, Seoul National University of Science and Technology has formed a partnership with Kyzylorda Korkyt-Ata Regional University, while the German Engineering Institute has established a campus at Yessenov University in Aktau. Additionally, Tianjin University has established a branch at Serikbayev East Kazakhstan Technical University. Additionally, there are proposals in place to establish satellite campuses of Ghazi University and Hacettepe University, both of which are renowned institutions based in Turkey. In summary, according to the minister, Kazakhstan has set a target to accommodate around 12 branch campuses of diverse international universities by the year 2025. It should be noted that these collaborations have resulted not only in international/regional attraction of academic and students into the country, but also have resulted in unprecedented movement within the country, for instance, universities students from the Northern regions first time ever receiving students from far Southern regions who are willing to relocate for dual education. To sum up, MICE tourism has a great potential for the development of the country and the tourism industry, especially considering the fact of the involvement of universities, local businesses, and government support.

Conclusion

To sum up, the influence of university-business cooperation on the development of local tourism is undeniable. Collaboration between academic institutions and the business sector fosters knowledge exchange, skill development, and strategic planning, which promotes sustainable growth and increases competitiveness for destinations. Harnessing the power of this collaboration is becoming increasingly important in the development of the tourism industry and in creating a sustainable and prosperous business. The results highlight the significant role of the tourism industry in job creation, unemployment reduction, and entrepreneurship support. Despite some difficulties, recent statistics show the industry is growing favorably, with bright possibilities for exceeding predetermined goals. The government has taken proactive steps to advance the tourism sector as seen by incentives, preferential loans, and legal changes. However, there is still potential for improvement in some areas, and ongoing work is required to boost infrastructure growth and competitiveness. Overall, the analysis underlines the potential of the tourism industry for further expansion and the government's commitment to the sector's growth in Kazakhstan. Additionally, the rise of MICE tourism in Kazakhstan offers a chance to strengthen the regional tourism sector and support economic development. Kazakhstan may realize its potential as a popular destination for conferences, exhibitions, and meetings by addressing challenges such as limited promotion, a dearth of international events, and an underdeveloped MICE sector. Through partnerships with business stakeholders, active involvement in international forums, and strengthening the capabilities of tourism professionals, Kazakhstan can position itself as a competitive player in the international MICE tourism sector. Findings also show some positive changes have been made in employment and economic value in the tourism sector of Kazakhstan despite obstacles including infrastructure, skilled staff, and service quality. Further progress depends on addressing these issues and involving relevant parties. Opportunities for expansion can be found in the prioritization of tourist destinations and the creation of tourism clusters based on local characteristics.

Limitations

It is important to acknowledge that document analysis may have certain limitations. The combination of diverse research methods, such as interviews or surveys, in a methodological triangulation approach (Denzin and Licoln, 2011) can result in a notably efficacious outcome. In order to augment the credibility and comprehensiveness of the research outcomes, and to attain a more intricate and refined comprehension of the research issue, it is recommended that this research should utilize qualitative research methodology, incorporating empirical data. This is due to the absence of any prior empirical research studies pertaining to the subject matter, specifically concerning the involvement of university management in the advancement of local tourism. According to Silverman (2016), documents may exhibit diverse biases that are contingent upon their authors, objectives, and historical circumstances. Hence, it is imperative to exercise prudence in their utilization while also recognizing their constraints.

Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

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Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Formation of Tourist Clusters in Ecotourism Centers: Case of Zerenda Resort Center in Kazakhstan

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Abstract: In modern conditions, the development of tourism is undergoing dramatic changes under the influence of a number of exogenous and endogenous factors. For tourists, those tourist areas are becoming more and more attractive, where full-fledged conditions for recreation in a unique natural environment have been created, considering the provision of comfortable stay. Thus, one of the directions of spatial organization of tourism is formation of tourist clusters. In this scientific work, the authors consider the issues of creating tourist clusters in ecotourism centers of Kazakhstan on the example of the Zerenda resort center.

The method of cartographic taxonomy was used as the main research tool, within which taxa were identified that could form the basis of a tourist cluster in a certain geographical environment. Territorial units were included in each taxon, covering territories of the area where tourist resources are located.
As a result of the study, sections of the resort area were identified, which can be covered by a tourist cluster. It is assumed that each section of the cluster has its own specific characteristics and can act as a dominant and serve as a point of attraction for tourists.
In general, given that the clustering process is a rather lengthy and complex process, the authors assume that the creation of tourist ecotourism clusters can not only increase the attractiveness of ecocenters, but also lead to the emergence of new types of recreation, including in the field of green tourism.

Keywords: ecotourism; tourist cluster; tourist territory; taxon; ecocenter; tourist product; destination; tourist market.

JEL Classification: Z32; Q57; P49; R11.

Introduction

Today, the conditions for the development of tourism, as well as economic relations between the subjects of the tourism market, formed as part of serving tourists, are undergoing dramatic changes. The change in the consumer environment of tourists is forcing tourism enterprises to develop tourism products aimed at yet unknown tourist areas, look for new ways to promote products, develop strategies for transforming the territory into an attractive tourist space, etc. Today, tourism enterprises are not able to solve these problems on their own, as a result of which they are forced to integrate with other subjects of the tourism market and form their competitive advantages in interaction with each other.

One of the ways to increase the efficiency of interaction between market entities is the creation of clusters within the tourist area. A cluster today can be considered as a tool for increasing the efficiency of interaction between enterprises operating in a common cultural and social environment within a certain geographical space. The specifics of the geographical space within which a cluster is created often determines the features of building economic relations between subjects and becomes the basis for the formation of a unique area of tourist relations within a certain area. However, despite the fact that the cluster is considered one of the effective ways to increase the competitiveness of not only a separate group of enterprises, but also the tourist territory as a whole, today in foreign and domestic practice there are a number of contradictions regarding the description of approaches to the formation and development of clusters not only in tourism, but also in other sectors of the economy.

Distinctive features of tourist areas, the specifics of economic activity by the subjects of the tourist market, the socio-cultural environment of the area, the role of local government bodies, public associations, movements, and other factors affect the mechanisms and structure of a tourist cluster. In addition, each cluster created within any tourist space has its own unique characteristics and, quite often, is focused on making competitive advantages by creating special recreational conditions that are not available in other territories. The prerequisite to create clusters is determined the need to form a joint winning position in the market of tourist services, the inability of a tourist enterprise to independently influence the change in the trajectory of the tourist flow in its direction, the need to jointly address the problems due to the negative impact of tourism on the environment and the life of the local population with authorities and other institutions.

One of the characteristics of modern tourism clusters is a close integration of tourism business entities among themselves (Bouchra N.H. and Hassan R.S., 2023), as well as cooperation in promoting tourism services. The degree of integration and cooperation of activities of economic entities in the field of tourism is becoming one of the criteria for the effective development of the tourist area. It should be noted that until recently, the subjects of the tourism business were not interested in forming close integration ties with other tourism enterprises. The sustainable nature of the formed tourist flows, the popularity among tourists of destinations that already had a certain reputation and had the necessary infrastructure for serving tourists provided tourism enterprises with a stable income. However, the recent increase in the degree of unpredictability in the development of external environment, the complication of geopolitical situation in a number of states, the introduction of new rules for servicing tourists developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, the manifestation of natural disasters in countries specializing in tourism has led to a sharp increase in demand for domestic tourism products, and at the same time, tourists began to pay great attention not only to the comfort of services provided, but also to the availability of safe sanitary and epidemiological conditions. In addition, there is a formation of new trends related to the fact that more and more tourists today are showing interest in tourism products, providing both recreation in a unique ecological environment and the possibility of implementing cognitive activities. In this regard, travel companies, especially those operating in the countries of the post-Soviet space and specializing in the sale of foreign tours, began to pay attention to the development of territories located within the country.

The development of the territory for tourism purposes, the creation of unique recreational conditions for tourists on the basis of local resources requires the travel company to establish close cooperation with all stakeholders who are interested in developing tourism within a given geographical space. As a result, in a number of states, the issues of clustering tourist territories have become relevant again, especially in those geographic areas where there are unique natural objects that can act as the dominants of the cluster.

1. Literature Review

The concept of a cluster has been discussed in the scientific literature since the end of the 20th century, but to this day there is no generally accepted definition of a cluster, including those formed in the field of tourism. Before revealing the concept of 'tourist cluster', it is worth paying attention to the term 'cluster' itself and its modern characteristics.

The first prerequisites for studying cluster systems were made in the works of A. Marshall, who drew attention to the fact that the concentration of firms within the boundaries of an industrial region has a positive effect on their economic efficiency (Marshall A., 1920). In other words, firms concentrated in one geographical area, in order to increase their market opportunities, actively enter into integration and cooperation ties with each other, forming certain clusters of intersectoral ties. This, in turn, gives them the opportunity to ensure the stability of their activities.

Developing the theory of industrialization and studying the specifics of the interaction between economic entities within the industrial region, S. Czamanski and L. De Ablas noted that a cluster is a set of industries that are economically connected by flows of goods and services more strongly with each other than with other sectors of the national economy (Czamanski S., De Ablas L.A., 1973).

The term 'cluster' in the economic literature began to appear actively due to the fundamental works of M. Porter, who characterized them as a group of geographically adjacent interconnected companies (suppliers, manufacturers) and related organizations (educational institutions, government bodies, infrastructure companies) operating in a certain area and complementing each other (Porter M., 1990, 1998). According to this definition, clusters, regardless of which sector of the economy they operate in, have the following common characteristics: cluster members are localized within the boundaries of a certain geographical space, there are fairly close ties between cluster entities, enterprises operating as part of the cluster are of various types (Mukanov *et al.*, 2022).

Other Western experts point out that clusters should be considered not as systems that provide a fixed flow of goods and services, but as a dynamic mechanism for close partnerships between enterprises based on knowledge creation and aimed at increasing returns through the widespread use of innovation (Krugman P., 1991, Morozini P., 2004). In this case, they pay attention to the fact that a cluster is able to change under the influence of competition and acquire more and more new characteristics that allow it to adapt to a changing external environment, and at the same time, the development of a cluster depends on the degree of involvement of enterprises integrated with each other and operating in the same geographical environment in innovative activity.

Rosenfeld S. under the 'cluster' category understood 'a geographically limited concentration of similar, related or complementary enterprises with active channels of communication and business ties, operating in a common specialized infrastructure and facing common opportunities and threats' (P. Nie, Ch. Wang, L Lin, 2020: 731-740).

More modern authors represent a cluster as a set of enterprises of various sectors of the economy operating within the same geographical area, united in a single structure, the elements of which are interconnected and interdependent within the framework of the formation of both individual and general competitive advantages (Boja C., 2011, Karpova G.A., 2011, Delgado M. et al, 2014, Beilin I.L., 2019). It should be noted that based on the presented definition, modern clusters have the following main properties: geographical proximity of the location of the entities involved in the cluster structure (Bubnov A.V., 2018); firms that are subjects of the cluster simultaneously compete and cooperate in an effort to create competitive advantages (Boja C., 2011); depending on the specialization of firms, integration links between cluster members are formed both vertically and horizontally; integration processes between enterprises belonging to the same cluster activate the exchange of information; the concentration of cluster entities in one geographic space is one of the reasons why firms can involuntarily involve each other in innovation processes; cooperation and integration of economic relations of subjects within the framework of tourist services creates the preconditions for the transformation of a tourist area into an attractive tourist destination (Hartman S., 2023); joint efforts of cluster members in building up common competitive advantages make them more resilient to rapidly changing environmental conditions (Karanovich M.K., 2019, Kazmina L. et al, 2023); each cluster, based on the unique characteristics of the area, has a special socio-cultural environment, which can increase the attractiveness of the area for tourists, etc.

It should be noted that clusters operating in a particular industry or region have their own specific features, and quite often, these features determine the order of interaction of subjects within the cluster, the formation of competitive advantages, the definition of cluster dominants, etc. If we consider the specifics of clusters operating in the field of tourism, it can be noted that these systems are quite dependent on the geographical characteristics of the area. Traditional package tours classified as the sun, sand and beach are quite often concentrated in well-defined local areas (Benner M., 2017), which encourages travel companies to concentrate in close proximity to these natural resources. In addition, the tourism product is complex and includes a number of services, the provision of which involves heterogeneous enterprises. On this occasion, F. Capone characterized clusters operating in the field of tourism as a localized group of tourism market entities united by a value chain, the interaction between which includes both competition and cooperation (Capone F., 2016). In this case, it is worth noting that it is the need for the participation of diverse enterprises in the formation and promotion of a tourist product, as well as the desire of subjects to be located close to resources that attract tourists, is one of the reasons for the formation of tourist agglomerations.

Recently, a lot of works have appeared devoted to the study of the specifics in the formation and development of clusters. Some researchers consider the tourist cluster as an economic category, others describe it in terms of geography. From the economic point of view, a cluster is considered as a form of increasing the joint competitive advantages of economic entities operating in interconnection with each other within any tourist area. For example, Beni M.S., considering the problems of globalization of tourism, notes that modern clusters act as an effective territorial form of increasing the competitiveness of tourism enterprises (Beni M.S., 2003). In the geographical sciences, a cluster is used as the creation of a certain area for the functioning of tourism enterprises involved in the process of serving tourists within a geographical area (Kropinova Y.G. et al 2009, Konyshev E.V., 2020). It should be noted that a number of authors study clusters from the point of view of agglomeration theory (Delgado M. *et al.*, 2014, Gómez-Vega M. *et al.*, 2022, Lomsadze T., 2023) and network theory (García-Villaverde P.M. *et al.*, 2020, Dukhovnaya, L et al, 2023). It is known that the tourism industry is a highly agglomerated industry and entities interested in serving tourists are concentrated where tourism resources are located or there is a greater influx of tourists. Tourist enterprises within the framework of serving tourists begin to cooperate with each other, and the duration of this cooperation leads to the formation of stable network relationships between subjects.

Tourist clusters, as complex organizational structures, where each participant, while maintaining their independence, is involved in a flexible integration process (Kachniewska M., 2013) have a fairly strong impact on the sustainable development of the regional economy. In addition, the attachment of tourism enterprises to the use of resources of a certain geographical area leads to the development of specialization. In this regard, recently, researchers have begun to study tourism clusters through the prism of regional management. Thus, Petrov O.V. indicates that each cluster, including the tourist one, is a growth point for the development of the region's economy, involving other activities into the orbit of its activity and turning a depressed area into a developing and attractive center for investors (Zherukova A.B. *et al.*, 2020). The composition of the cluster may include not only the subjects of the business environment, but also government agencies, public organizations and research centers, whose activities in relation to each other are complementary (Yalçinkaya T. et al, 2019). In some countries (Georgia, Brazil, Portugal), recently representatives of the local community have been actively involved in the formation of clusters (De Santana Ribeiro L.C. *et al.*, 2015, Perkins R. *et al.*, 2022, Lomsadze T., 2023), united in unions or associations whose activities are aimed at promoting certain public initiatives (environmental, social, and other interests) or protecting the values of the population. This gives grounds to judge that the cluster can act as a separate institution with its own characteristics.

The process of managing tourist clusters is rather complicated, since each cluster combines a system of formalized and non-formalized relations of its participants between themselves and the external environment. The tourist cluster is influenced not only by global and regional processes caused by changes in the preferences and opportunities of tourists due to the prevailing economic, political, and environmental circumstances, but also actively adopts the results of the activities of enterprises in other sectors of the economy. Thus, innovative technologies developed by IT enterprises are actively used in the framework of tourist services. In other words, the tourism cluster is an open system, the development trends of which can be determined not only by internal processes, but also by its relationship with the external environment.

The main distinguishing feature of the tourist cluster from other clusters (agro-industrial, manufacturing, etc.) is its route based territorial organization. The tourist route and the corresponding tourist flow connect objects, turning them from competing into interacting elements of the system. The dominant of a tourist cluster can be both an infrastructure object (accommodation facility) and an object of tourist interest (ski resort), but in any case, the main condition for the development of a tourist cluster is the presence or appearance of routes and tourist flows (Karanovich M.K., 2019). Enterprises strive to maintain interaction with each other, turning it into sustainable integration ties, which creates the basis for the clustering of the tourist area. Thus, it becomes clear that the tourist cluster and the conditions for its development depend quite strongly on the properties and structure of the tourist product sold within the tourist area. In addition, the closeness of vertical and horizontal ties between enterprises, as well as the degree of their coverage of various processes (from the development of a tourism product to the implementation and service of the end consumer) determine the depth and breadth of the tourism cluster.

In general, in modern conditions, the main features of tourist systems that function as tourist clusters include:

- localization of enterprises and other entities involved in the process of serving tourists in a geographically limited space;
- the presence of an enterprise with sufficient material, information and technological resources that can become the core of the cluster and determine the main development priorities;
- involvement in the process of creating the value of a tourist product of enterprises in related sectors of the economy and the formation of direct and feedback links between cluster members;
- use of unique natural within the framework of economic activity, historical and cultural resources inherent in the territory within the framework of tourist services, and through them the formation of competitive advantages not only of the cluster members, but also of the region as a whole;
- the general socio-cultural environment for the functioning of tourism enterprises, which gives them the opportunity to effectively interact with each other, etc.

These features make it possible to consider the tourist cluster from various angles as: an open system that influences the development of the region's economy and increases its competitiveness; a tool for the formation of an attractive tourist destination, within which the cluster acts as a center of attraction; a mechanism for the formation of competitive advantages for a group of economic entities involved in the process of creating and promoting tourism products; the area of activity of heterogeneous interacting enterprises, whose activities are aimed at ensuring the efficiency of each enterprise through active cooperation and integration.

Within the framework of this work, the tourist cluster is understood by the authors as a group of elements of the tourist infrastructure, localized in a certain geographical space, and which are interconnected with each other through the creation of tourist values based on the specifics of the area.

2. Materials and Methods

It is known that the formation and development of tourist clusters today depends on a number of factors that quite often affect not only the integration links between participants within the cluster, but also determine the general characteristics of development. One of the factors of tourist territory clustering is the characteristics of the geographical environment where tourist services are provided. Within the framework of this study, the authors put forward the following hypotheses using the example of the Shchuchinsko-Borovoye recreation area:

- tightness of placement within the boundaries of a certain geographical environment of natural objects, elements of the infrastructure of tourist services form the basis of clustering. The degree of concentration of natural objects and other cultural and historical monuments can be one of the main reasons for the active interaction of tourism market entities with each other. In addition, the peculiarity of interaction between enterprises depends on the uniqueness of the tourist resources of the territory, because of which specialization is formed;
- in modern conditions, clustering processes can occur in any tourist areas, including ecotourism centers. Today, ecotourism centers are not only a place where tourists stay independently and spend their holidays in an ecologically clean environment, but also a territory where there is the necessary infrastructure aimed at improving the comfort of tourists' stay. In addition, more and more new services in the field of organizing recreation in ecotourism centers have recently appeared, which forms new integration links between the entities involved in the process of organizing and implementing tourist recreation;
- the ecological environment of the geographical area, as well as the existing tourism infrastructure, make it possible to determine which territorial units can be included in the tourism cluster. In this case, territorial units should be understood as a part of the territory where individual tourist resources are located or a tourist route runs. The set of territorial units included in the cluster can be considered as a geographical field of the cluster,

which has its own boundaries within which integration processes take place between the participants actively participating in the organization of tourist services;

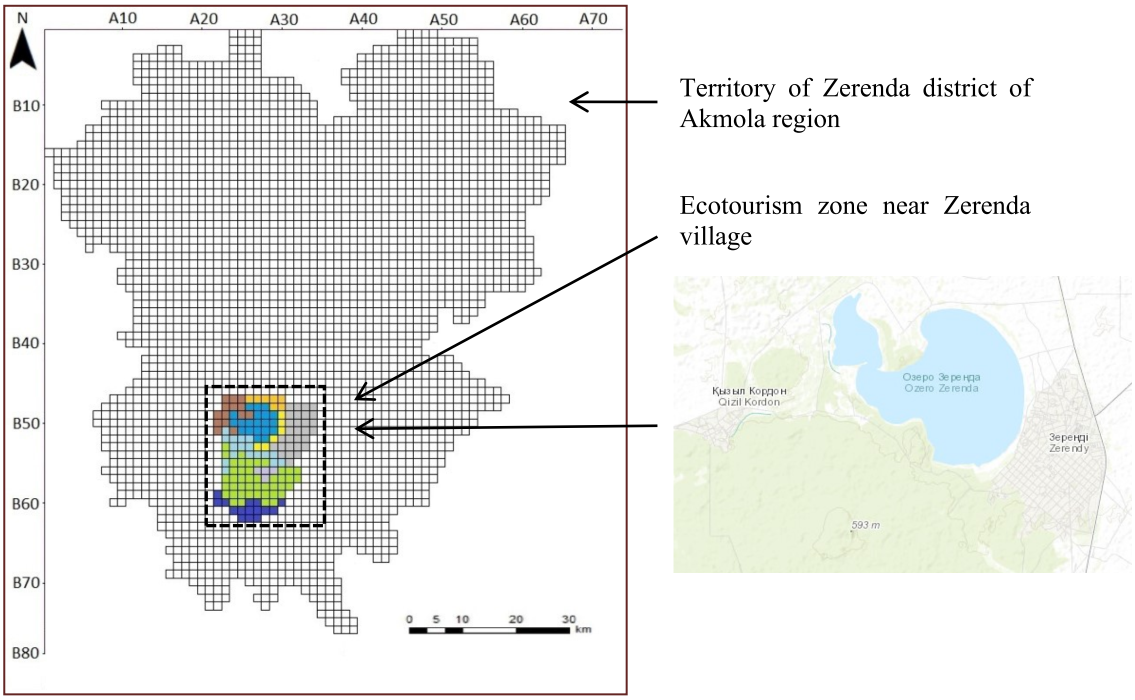
- the composition of the tourist cluster can be determined by the scale of the tourist services provision, i.e. a tourism product, in the implementation of which various enterprises are involved, may affect a different geographical and infrastructural environment, subsequently involving them in clustering processes.

The main research tool is represented by the method of cartographic taxonomy (Morozov M.A. *et al.*, 2012), within which taxa were identified that could form the basis of a tourist cluster in a certain geographical environment. In this case, taxa are understood as a set of objects located in a certain geographical space, and which are characterized by common characteristics. The selection of a taxon can be based on different properties and features of objects. A taxon always characterizes a specific set of objects (Rostom G.R., 2018).

Cartographic taxonomy allows dividing the tourist space into territorial units based on the specifics of the existing infrastructure elements and the characteristics of tourist resources. Each territorial unit has its own unique characteristics and is able, to a certain extent, to form the attractiveness of a tourist territory. A selection of territorial units, the characteristics of which satisfy the conditions for organizing tourist services, makes it possible to determine the contours of the territory where it is possible to develop clustering processes. In general, the method of cartographic information makes it possible to form an array of data on the territory, with a description of the characteristics of each element of the terrain. This makes it possible to: systematize information about the territory and group it based on the characteristics of the sites available on the ground; identify taxa that can be included in the tourism cluster; identify the most attractive areas for tourists; to model the processes of development of certain tourism types within the boundaries of geographical space; manage the process of development of the tourist area and predict its future state, taking into account the rational use of natural and other objects of the natural environment and infrastructure, etc.

The studies were carried out on the territory of the Akmola region of the Republic of Kazakhstan, namely in the Shchuchinsko-Borovoye resort area. Based on the existing elements of the tourist infrastructure and attractive natural resources, the geographical space of the recreation area was divided into territorial units with an area of 1 km2. The coordinates of each territorial unit correspond to their serial number on the map (Figure 1). A set of territorial units with common characteristics was considered as a separate taxon. The combination of taxa made it possible to determine the possible boundaries of the tourist cluster and its geographical area.

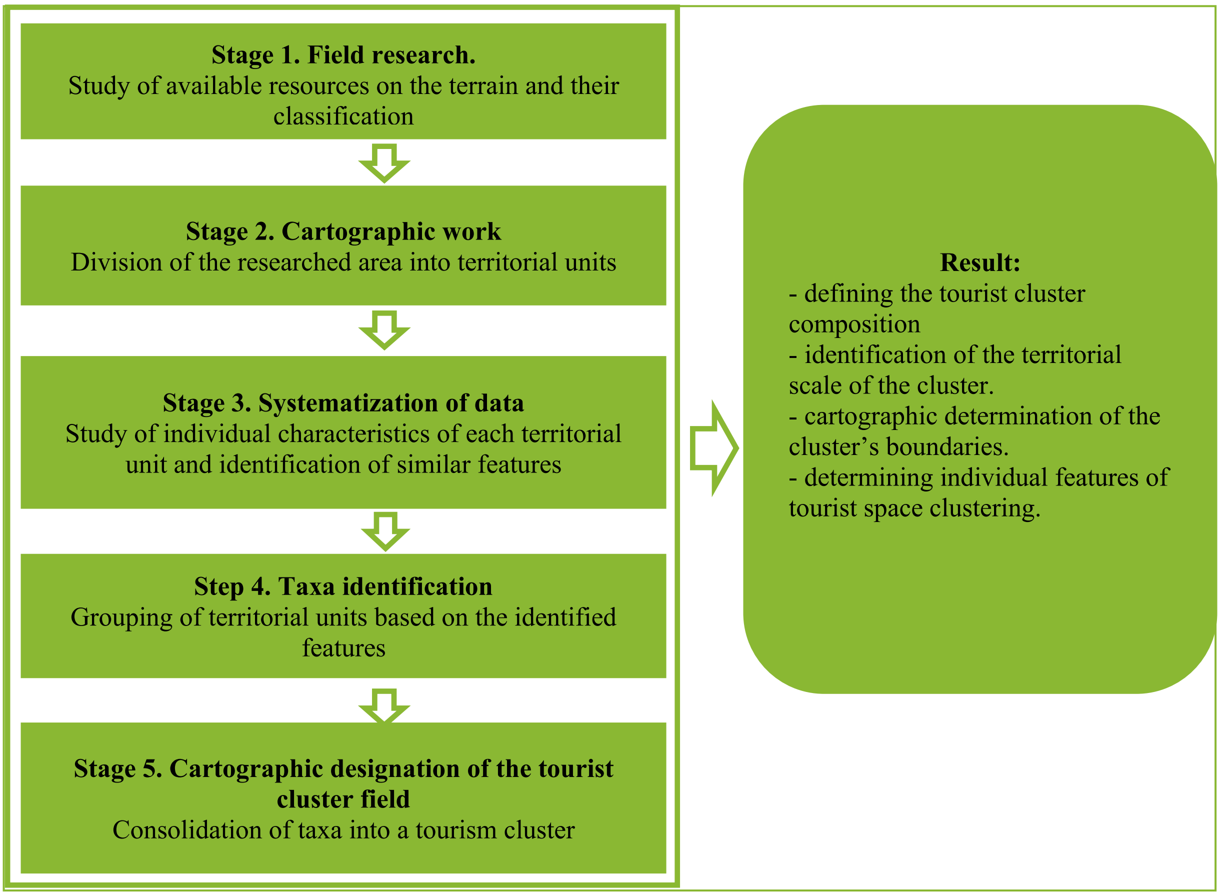
Figure 1. Map of the Zerenda district with the designation of territorial units of the ecological recreation zone



Source: compiled by the authors based on the methodology of Morozov M.A. and Lvova T.V.

The research algorithm consisted of several stages, which made it possible to form a sufficient array of data on the area, the characteristics of objects that attract tourists interested in having rest in an ecologically clean environment (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Research algorithm



Source: compiled by the authors

The main materials used are represented by the works of domestic and foreign authors published in various periodicals and covering the problems of the tourist clusters formation and development in various conditions. The analysis of tourism development in the study area is based on quantitative data presented on official sources of the Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Committee of Tourism Industry of the Ministry of Culture and Sport of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Akimat of Akmola region, etc. The determination of cartographic taxa, as well as the identification of the features of individual areas of the terrain and elements of the tourist infrastructure, was carried out by using the results of field research and exploring topographic material.

3. Research Results and Discussions

Tourism is one of the priority areas for the development of the national economy for Kazakhstan. Located between large countries like China and Russia, the country has significant potential for the development of many types of tourism. The presence of unique natural monuments on the territory of the country, the rich nomadic history of the people with its historical and cultural heritage, the variety of recreational areas that provide for holidaymaking in an ecologically clean environment create favorable conditions for increasing the level of tourist attractiveness of the country. In addition, a sufficiently large territory of Kazakhstan with its diverse landscape, flora and fauna allows tourists to organize their holidays in a different natural environment, and at the same time being on the territory of one state.

Today, the country has more than 12 national natural parks and about 10 nature reserves, the natural and recreational characteristics of which make it possible to implement both active and passive tourist recreation. A number of natural sites, due to their unique characteristics, are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. For example, on the territory of Northern Kazakhstan, lakes and natural objects located within the boundaries of the

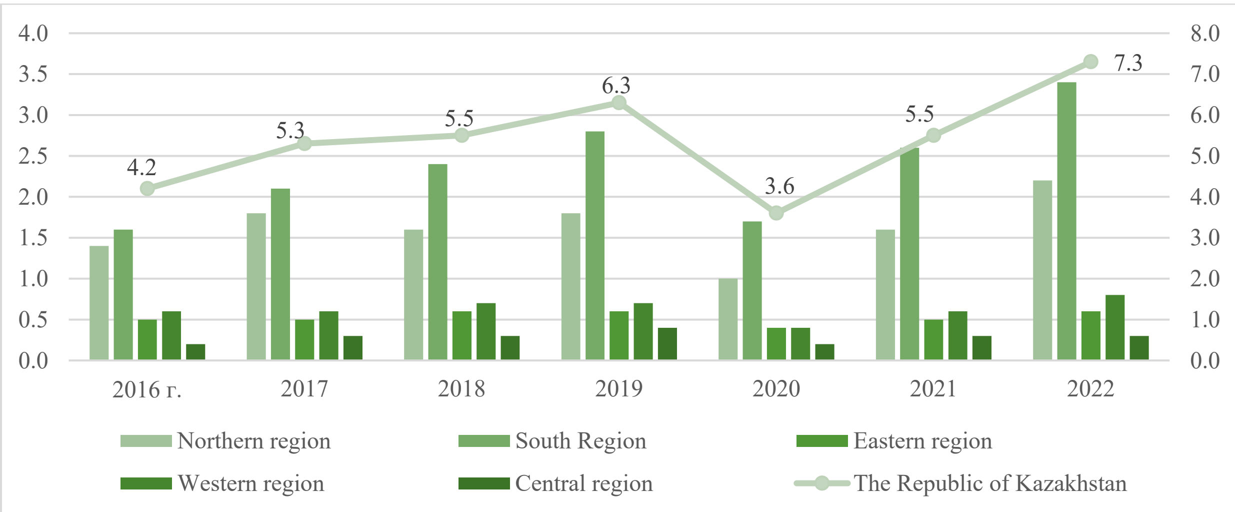
Naurzum and Kurgaldzhinsky reserves since 2008, and the Turan deserts of the temperate zone in the Altyn Emel National Park), the Ustyurt plateau in the Ustyurst Reserve since 2021 are on this list.

Formation of conditions for the development of the modern tourism industry is one of the priority areas of state policy, implemented in the framework of increasing the competitiveness of the national economy. During the years of independence, a number of state programs and a concept were adopted in the country, the purpose of which was to form the necessary tourist infrastructure in the regions. Thus, the State Program for the Development of the Tourism Industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2019-2025 presented the Touristification Map, where TOP-10 areas were identified, within the boundaries of which it was supposed to create the necessary conditions for the formation of a material and technical base for a comfortable stay for tourists. It should be noted that not only the subjects of the tourism business, but also government agencies, public organizations and national companies are involved in the process of developing the tourism sector in the country today. A special role is given to local authorities, which are directly interested in the formation of attractive tourist destinations based on available local tourist resources (Tleubayeva A. *et al.*, 2023). In addition, in a number of regions, local authorities have developed and are implementing strategies to promote existing tourist centers both at the republican and international levels.

The main tourist centers of the country, which are attractive for domestic tourists and vacationers from neighboring countries, include the Almaty mountain cluster (located in the southern region of Kazakhstan), the Shchuchinsk-Borovoye, Bayanaul, Imantau-Shalkar resort areas (the northern region of the country), Lake Alakol, State national natural park Katon-Karagay (Eastern region), tourist zone of Mangistau (Western Kazakhstan), Astana and Almaty, etc.

According to the Bureau of National Statistics 7.3 million people were served with accommodation in the country in 2022, which is an increase of 25.4% compared to the previous year of 2021. As can be seen in Figure 3, in general, from 2016 to 2022, there is a positive tendency in the number of visitors served by various accommodation facilities. Only in 2020 there was a sharp decline in this indicator, which is associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, according to various expert data, the profitability of domestic tour operators and travel agents decreased by 50-60%. In different regions, the picture differed for better or worse due to the influence of regional factors, the presence or absence of strict quarantine measures. It should be noted that the COVID-19 pandemic had a rather strong impact on the behavior of domestic tourists. The closure of state borders, the introduction of lockdowns and the restriction of movement in countries that are in demand among Kazakhstani tourists have led to a sharp increase in demand for domestic tourism products. In this regard, quite new trends in the field of organization of tourist services have been formed in the country. For example, in a number of tourist centers based on glampings were formed, allowing tourists to spend their holidays in an ecologically clean environment, taking into account the provision of sanitary and epidemiological safety. In addition, the introduction of the sanctions policy of European countries in relation to Russia became the reason that in 2022 Russian tourists began to consider the countries of Central Asia as a priority destination for tourism purposes.

Figure 3. Number of visitors served by accommodation facilities in 2016-2022 (million people)



Source: based on data of the Bureau of National Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan

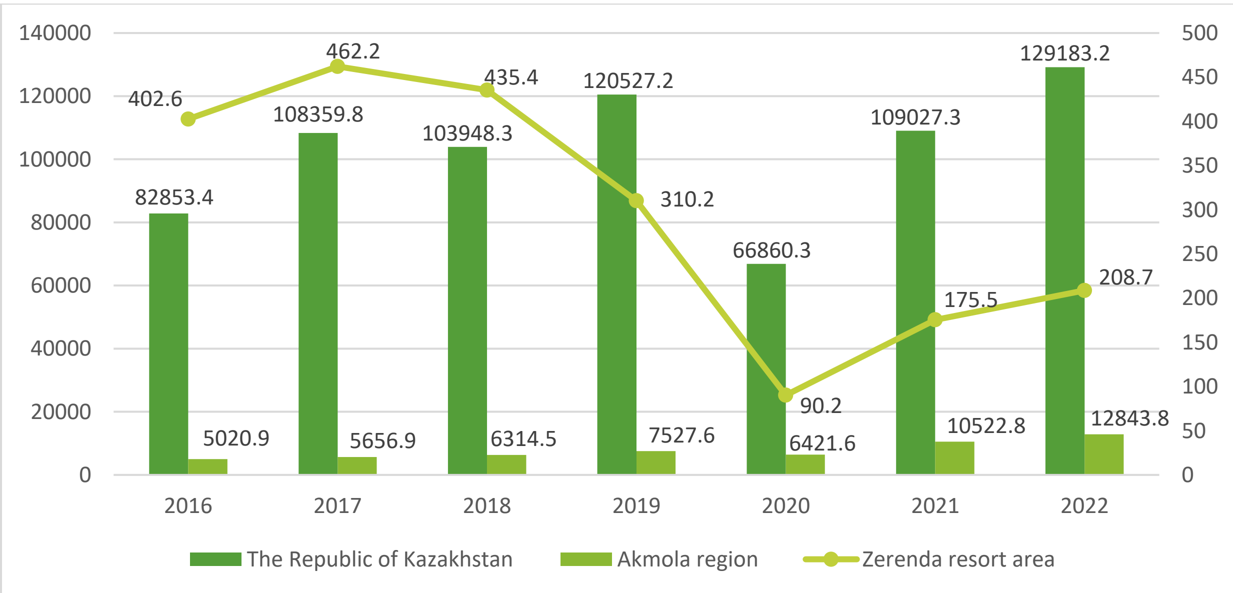
Unlike other countries of the world, which, due to limited opportunities, specialize only in certain tourist services, Kazakhstan has great opportunities to develop tourism in various directions. Today, based on the characteristics of tourist resources available in the regions, it is possible to create at least two dozen tourist facilities for 10-15 thousand places that meet international standards (Dmitriyev P.S. *et al.*, 2022). In an environment where routes that make it easy to maintain social distancing practices, without public modes of transport and crowded tourist areas oriented to more remote places where tourists are less likely to come into contact with other people are increasingly in demand, issues of developing eco-tourism are becoming more relevant. In the country, today there are several resort areas that can fully meet the needs of tourists in recreation in an ecologically clean environment with the provision of sanitary and epidemiological safety standards. One of these tourist areas is the territory of the Zerenda resort area, located in the Akmola region.

According to its characteristics, the Zerenda resort area has unique natural resources, allowing tourists to combine their holidays both in the forest and in the mountains. Today, more than 200 ecotourist routes are being implemented on the territory of the resort area. This area is located 60 km from the Shchuchinsko-Borovskaya resort area, popular among the inhabitants of the northern region of the country and is of interest not only for domestic tourists interested in relaxing in an ecologically clean environment, but also for guests arriving from neighboring countries (mainly Russia). In addition, it is worth noting that the natural objects available on the ground are being developed by tourists not so long ago. One of the reasons for this is that the Shchuchinsko-Borovskaya resort area cannot cope with the flow of tourists, especially in summer, as a result of which vacationers are forced to look for and explore new territories where it is possible to fully satisfy their tourist needs.

Today, on the territory of the Zerenda resort center there are more than 50 hotels with rooms of various levels of comfort, lodging establishments that can accommodate tourists both in the summer and winter seasons, the roadside service points are organized, the entities that provide services for organizing equestrian, walking and other active tours, as well as sanatoriums that work closely enough with educational institutions that train personnel in the field of tourism operate.

In general, in 2022, in the Zerenda resort area, the volume of services provided by accommodation facilities amounted to 208.7 million tenge, which is 15.9% higher than in the previous period. However, compared to 2016, there is a significant decrease in this indicator. This is primarily due to the fact that the majority of visitors were oriented to rest in the Shchuchinsko-Borovskaya resort area, which is located 85 km from this area. COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the change in consumer preferences of tourists, the demand for visiting areas that allow for recreation in a unique natural environment, taking into account compliance with sanitary and epidemiological safety standards, has increased. This has led to an increase in the number of tourist trips to the considered resort area.

Figure 4. Volume of services rendered by accommodation places in 2016-2022 (million tenge)



Source: based on data of the Bureau of National Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan

One of the advantages of the Zerenda resort area is its geographical location. The recreation area is located 60 km from the regional center of Kokshetau, 310 km from the capital city of Astana and 250 km from the state border of the Republic of Kazakhstan with the Russian Federation. This makes the resort area accessible to tourists not only from the cities of Kazakhstan, but also from large agglomerations of the Russian Federation, where the population exceeds 500 thousand people. So, within a 10-hours drive to the Zerenda resort area there are such Kazakhstani cities as Astana, Petropavlovsk, Pavlodar, Kostanay, Karaganda, the Russian cities of Omsk, Chelyabinsk, Kurgan, Tyumen (Figure 2). Statistical studies show that today the main visitors to the resort area are residents of the northern regions of Kazakhstan and the border cities of Russia.

Another advantage is the availability of the necessary infrastructure for the full-fledged organization of ecotourism recreation. On the territory of the resort area today there are both hotel enterprises and sanatorium organizations, as well as centers providing services in the field of hiking, horseback riding and other types of ecotours. In addition, in recent years, local governments have significantly invested in local road infrastructure, which has increased the level of accessibility of the resort area for tourists from other regions.

Figure 5. Cities located within a ten-hours drive to the Zerenda resort area

Source: compiled by the authors using Google Earth

Despite the fact that the Zerenda resort area has recently significantly increased its level of attractiveness among domestic tourists and visitors from neighboring countries, there are a number of problems that do not allow it to fully develop as a tourist destination. These problems include:

- fragmentation of entities that are involved in the process of serving tourists on the ground. Most subjects are not interconnected and search for their target consumers on their own (Mukanov A. et al, 2022). Most of the tourists staying in medium and small accommodation facilities, due to the lack of proper economic relations of the hotel enterprise with other tourism business entities, cannot receive complete information about local tourism products. As the study shows, each entity provides services only within the framework of its specific activity. In addition, the lack of development, and sometimes the lack of integration links between travel companies and hotel companies, leisure organizations, etc. does not allow comprehensive promotion of the resort area as a full-fledged destination.

- a small number of tourism products that would be promoted jointly by local representatives of the tourism business. Unfortunately, visiting tourists are often left on their own, they look for accommodation, pick up food points, independently determine excursion routes around the area. The development of integrated tourism programs, including accommodation services and other types of tourism activities, would contribute to the full-fledged organization of tourism in the area, and competition would motivate enterprises to actively establish economic ties with each other in order to form a winning position in the market;

- the lack of a clear policy of positioning the area in the market of tourist services. The territory of the resort area has unique natural resources, based on which it is possible to organize tours aimed at a specific target group of tourists who prefer active recreation. Most tourists stay for weekend tours, and quite often they are involved in passive recreation. A certain part of tourists independently turns to individuals who provide excursion services or who are able to act as guides, and thereby try to satisfy their cognitive needs;

- most of the subjects of the tourism business is focused on providing services only in the summer. Despite the existing potential in the territory of the resort area, tours focused on winter types of recreation are practically not implemented. In recent years, Kazakhstan has seen an increase in the level of demand for tours focused on winter holidays. However, residents of large agglomerations in the northern regions of the country are faced with the problem of the lack of a well-equipped center for winter recreation;

- there is no unified policy to increase the competitiveness of the resort area, which would involve representatives of the tourism business, accommodation facilities, active leisure organizations, local authorities, etc. As already noted, not far from the resort area, there is the Shchuchinsko-Borovskaya resort area, in comparison with which the Zerenda resort area is significantly inferior in terms of attendance and volume of tourist services. The definition of a clear competitive policy and the involvement of all stakeholders in its implementation would increase the level of demand for the resort area among potential tourists by an order of magnitude.

One of the directions for addressing these problems can be the formation of a tourist cluster on the territory of the resort area. The clustering of the territory will increase the attractiveness of the resort area not only due to the uniqueness of the available natural and other tourist resources, but also by improving the quality of service based on the active interaction of enterprises and other entities involved in the process of providing tourist and recreational services. As F. Capone notes '... all the subjects involved in the tourism cluster are interconnected and interdependent. The services of some tourism organizations are complementary elements of the product of other tourism companies. In this regard, the formation of competitive advantages in one cluster entity directly affects the success of other enterprises, which are also an integral element of this system' (Capone F., 2016). In addition, the process of clustering the tourist area will contribute to the establishment of effective channels of cooperation between business entities and government agencies, public organizations and other social institutions interested in the long-term development of tourism in the area.

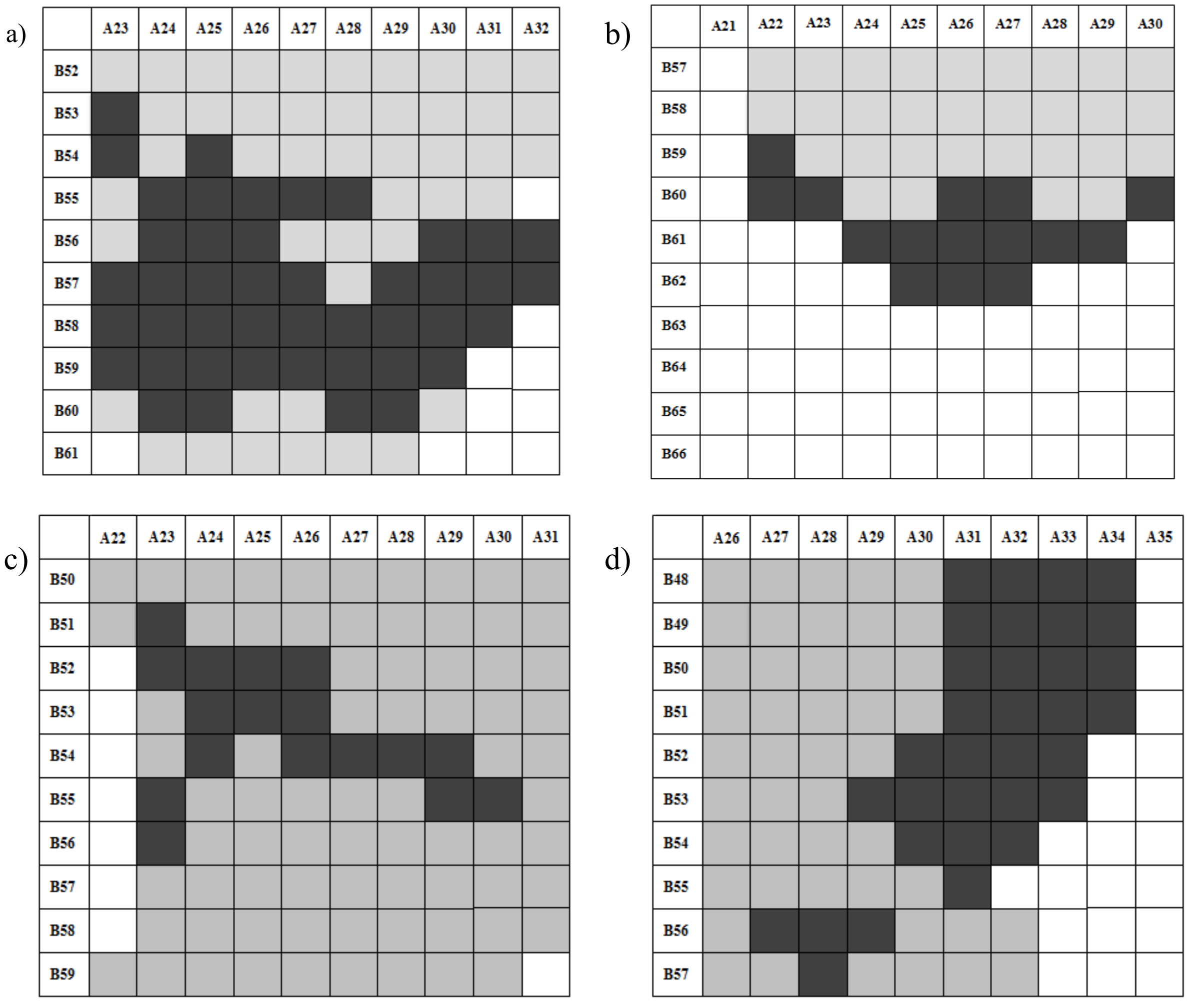
One of the directions for the development of the Zerenda resort center as an attractive tourist destination is the formation of a tourist cluster on its territory, mainly focused on ecotourism. The dominants of the cluster can be unique natural objects available on the ground and around which the activities of the majority of tourism business entities are concentrated. As part of the application of the cartographic taxonomy method, we have identified the main taxa that can form the basis of the cluster and form its initial image:

- taxon 1 - 'Infrastructure for ecological recreation in the forest zone'. The Zerenda resort area is located in a geographical area where there are unique natural objects that can act as the dominant tourist cluster. Pine forest, adjacent to the resort area, is one of the attractive tourist recreation areas, where tours of both active and passive leisure are implemented. Within the boundaries of the forest zone, the necessary infrastructure has been formed (paved tourist trails, places for short-term parking, zones for passive recreational activities, equipped sanitary and hygienic zones, fire safety facilities, etc.), which contributes to a comfortable and safe rest for tourists. Based on this, this taxon includes territorial units that cover the territory of the forest zone, as well as the locations of infrastructure elements that are designed to create the necessary conditions for tourists to rest in the forest (Figure 6);

- taxon 2 - 'Infrastructure of active tourism based on mountain objects'. This taxon covers the mountainous areas of the resort area, and also includes territorial units where there is the necessary infrastructure for organizing outdoor activities at mountain sites. The average height of the mountain facilities available in the resort area is 550-600 meters (Zhylandy, Medvezhya hills). The paved trails allow tourists to climb as part of a group or individually and satisfy their needs for outdoor activities. In addition, there are unique sites, such as the Ulgulinsky waterfall and the Dragon Cave, which, due to their characteristics, are attractive not only for tourists, but also for other specialists engaged in research in the field of the environment and the history of the area. It should be noted that on the basis of mountain facilities, students of a number of training centers work out their skills as instructors. For example, every year students of the L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University majoring in 'Tourism' undergo educational practice in active types of tourism (Figure 6);

- taxon 3 - 'Roadside service infrastructure', includes territorial units, within the boundaries of which facilities are located, whose activities are aimed at serving road users and tourists in the roadside. Currently, the resort area is crossed by one main route, along which tourists arrive for recreation either in their own car or by bus. Almost all roadside service facilities (gas stations and repair stations, food points, motels, short-term parking areas, sanitary and hygienic zones, etc.) are located along the highway within the boundaries of the resort area, which has a positive effect on the comfortable travel of tourists, especially during entry into the territory of the resort and the zone and exit from it (Figure 6);
- taxon 4 - 'Tourist service infrastructure', including areas where tourist firms, catering establishments, organizations providing excursion services are concentrated. To date, most of the enterprises involved in the process of serving tourists are located within the boundaries of the village of Zerenda, which allows us to consider the settlement as part of the tourist infrastructure (Figure 6);

Figure 6. Projection of cartographic taxa 1 - 4



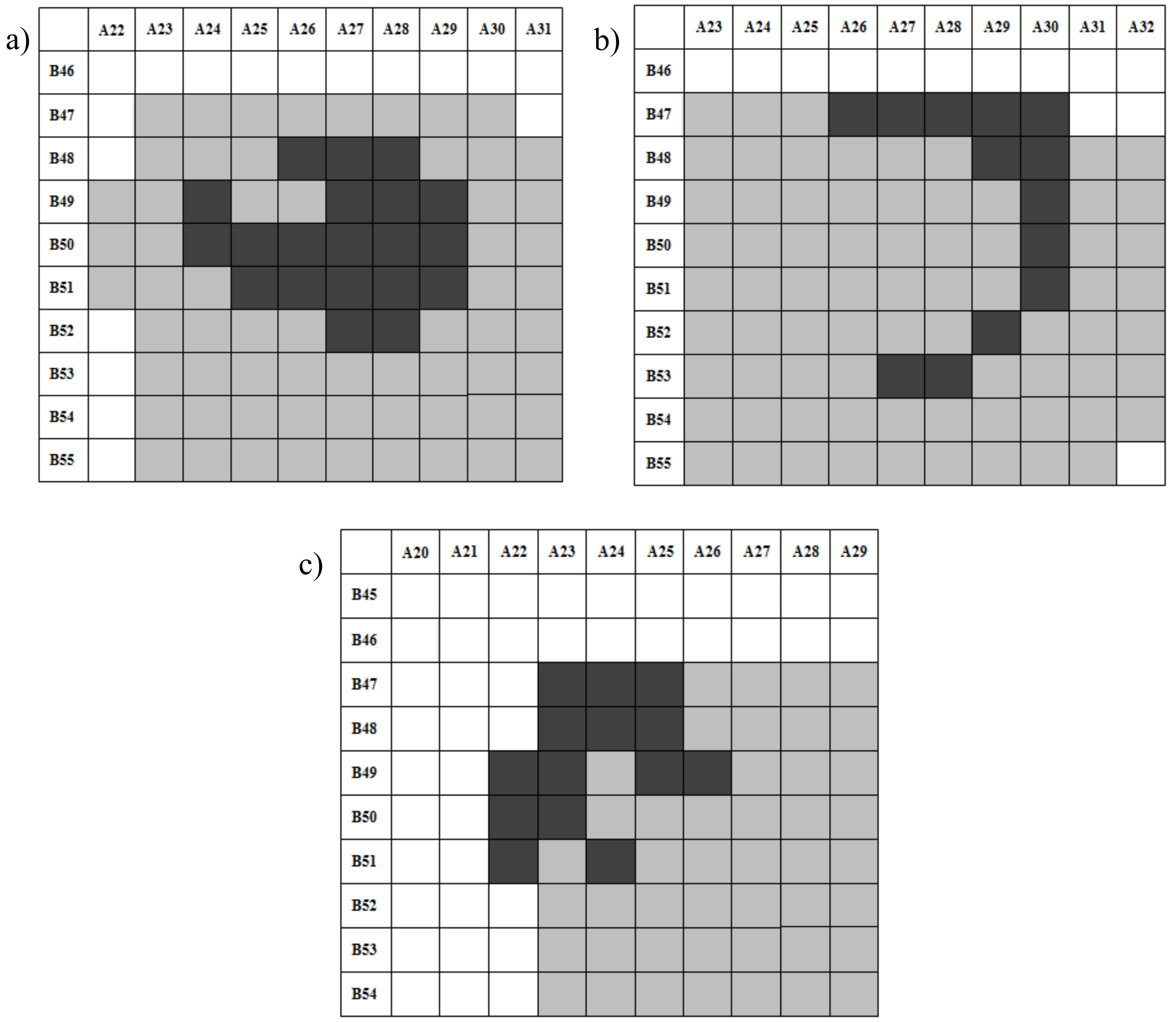
(a - taxon 'Infrastructure for ecological recreation in the forest zone', b - taxon 'Active tourism infrastructure based on mountain facilities', c - taxon 'Roadside service infrastructure', d - taxon 'Tourist service infrastructure')

Source: the figure was compiled by the authors

- taxon 5 - 'Water tourism infrastructure'. The taxon unites territorial units covering the territory of Lake Zerenda, where tourists have the opportunity to engage in active and passive recreation (boating, fishing, relaxing on the beach, etc.) within the water area of the reservoir. This taxon includes the infrastructure of both the coastal zone and those located directly within the water area (Figure 7);
- taxon 6 - 'Health tourism infrastructure'. This taxon consists of territorial units where objects providing health services are located. Thus, there are more than 10 health-improving facilities (Zeren-Nur, Karagaily, Sunkar, etc.) on the territory of the resort, which specialize in balneotherapy, mud treatment and other outdoor recreational activities in a pine forest (Figure 7);

- taxon 7 - 'Infrastructure of passive recreation and general purpose'. The taxon of this category includes the territory where there is infrastructure for passive recreational activities (walks, recreation in the forest zone, etc.). In addition, those areas where general-purpose infrastructure is located (points of short-term rest, leisure, playgrounds for children, etc.) are also covered. It should be noted that, although some of the objects included in this taxon are not of a tourist nature (for example, gazebos, mushroom pickers rest areas, areas with plantations of berry trees, etc.), however, their presence significantly increases the comfort of tourists in the resort. zone (Figure 7).

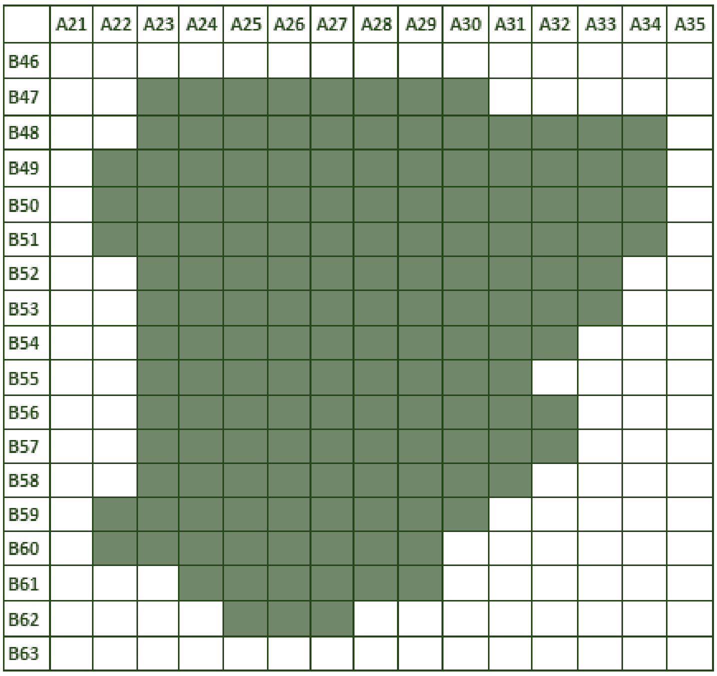
Figure 7. Projection of cartographic taxa 5 - 7



(a - taxon 'Infrastructure of water tourism', b - taxon 'Infrastructure of health tourism', c - taxon 'Infrastructure of passive recreation and general purpose')
Source: the figure was compiled by the authors

Each taxon has specific features and is quite significant in the organization of tourism in the researched area. The taxa are interconnected by processes that arise in the framework of creating conditions for a comfortable rest for tourists, and there is also a certain degree of dependence on each other. Thus, the state of one taxon can influence the demand for another taxon. The interconnection of taxa among themselves is one of the main reasons for the formation and development of integration links between economic entities involved in the process of serving tourists in a given territory. In order to increase the demand for their services, tourism enterprises, together with other tourism business entities, begin to develop and promote tours covering objects of various taxa, which leads to the natural formation of clustering processes within the boundaries of the territory under consideration. In other words, the interaction of taxa with each other leads to the formation of a space within which the processes of production and consumption of tourist services are concentrated. In this case, the tightness of interaction between economic entities and other participants in the local tourism market within the boundaries of taxa creates the basis for the formation of cluster systems, and the area of interaction determines the geographic field of the cluster. Thus, Figure 8 shows the general cartographic projection of the proposed cluster on the territory of the Zerenda resort center obtained by combining the above taxa.

Figure 8. General view of the cluster, formed by integration of taxa



Source: the figure was compiled by the authors

The cartographic projection allows to outline the boundaries of the geographical field of the tourist cluster in space. When integrating taxa into a cluster, it is necessary to pay attention to their characteristics. This makes it possible to select territorial units that really have unique properties and include them in the cluster. Each territorial unit has its own coordinates in the presented projection and displays certain areas that are significant for tourist recreation. It should be noted that depending on changes in the conditions for the development of the tourism market, consumer preferences of tourists, the specifics of the functioning of economic entities, certain territorial areas may be included or excluded from the taxa. In some cases, new taxa may form in nearby territories, which may be covered by the cluster in the future. In other words, the geographic field of the cluster is not constant, but may change after a certain time under the pressure of various factors. The cluster matrix is shown in Figure 9 and displays the main territorial units that can be included in the cluster on the territory of the Zerenda resort area.

Today, the Zerenda resort area has a good potential for the formation of tourist clusters. The unique natural objects of the resort area make it possible to form a tourist cluster specializing in ecotourism. The creation of tourist clusters in the territory will allow tourism enterprises to actively interact with each other, participate in the system of accumulating the value of the tourist product, and jointly increase the competitiveness of the territory. It is no secret that the Zerenda resort area is less attractive to domestic tourists compared to the Shchuchinsko-Borovskaya area due to the lack of a well-defined promotion strategy from local authorities and the business community. In this case, the creation of an ecotourism tourism cluster will just enable the participants of the local tourism market to jointly form new competitive advantages and promote the territory as an attractive destination. In addition, the clustering of the territory will allow the subjects of the tourism market to jointly develop and promote new products focused not only on ecotourism, but also on other types of green tourism. For example, in the Napa Valley (California, USA), the clustering of the wine industry led to the emergence of wine tourism (Solazzo G. et all, 2022), and the Kitakyushu cluster (Japan) became the first cluster where advanced information and robotic technologies are concentrated, involved in the process of serving tourists (Nowak J.-J., Petit S., 2021). In addition, the formation of clusters will lead to the fact that tourism enterprises, in order to increase their competitive advantages, will actively integrate with the entities involved in innovation.

Figure 9. The main territorial units that can be included in the cluster on the territory of the Zerenda resort area

Taxon 1		Taxon 2		Taxon 3		Taxon 4		Taxon 5		Taxon 6		Taxon 7		Cluster geographic field
A23B53 A23B54 A25B54 A24B55 A25B55 A26B55 A27B55 A28B55 A24B56 A25B56 A26B56 A30B56 A31B56 A32B56 A23B57 A24B57 A25B57 A26B57 A27B57 A29B57 A30B57 A31B57 A32B57 A23B58 A24B58 A25B58 A26B58 A27B58 A28B58 A29B58 A30B58 A31B58 A23B59 A24B59 A25B59 A26B59 A27B59 A28B59 A29B59 A30B59 A24B60 A25B60 A28B60 A29B60	+	A22B59 A22B60 A23B60 A26B60 A27B60 A30B60 A24B61 A25B61 A26B61 A27B61 A28B61 A29B61 A25B62 A26B62 A27B62	+	A23B52 A24B52 A25B52 A26B52 A24B53 A25B53 A26B53 A24B54 A26B54 A27B54 A28B54 A29B54 A23B55 A29B55 A30B55 A23B56	+	A31B48 A32B48 A33B48 A34B48 A31B49 A32B49 A33B49 A34B49 A31B50 A32B50 A33B50 A34B50 A23B51 A31B51 A32B51 A33B51 A34B51 A30B52 A31B52 A32B52 A33B52 A29B53 A30B53 A31B53 A32B53 A33B53 A30B54 A31B54 A32B54 A31B55 A27B56 A28B56 A29B56 A28B57	+	A26B48 A27B48 A28B48 A24B49 A27B49 A28B49 A29B49 A24B50 A25B50 A26B50 A27B50 A28B50 A29B50 A25B51 A26B51 A27B51 A28B51 A29B51 A27B52 A28B52	+	A26B47 A27B47 A28B47 A29B47 A30B47 A29B48 A30B48 A30B49 A30B50 A30B51 A29B52 A27B53 A28B53	+	A23B47 A24B47 A25B47 A23B48 A24B48 A25B48 A22B49 A23B49 A25B49 A26B49 A22B50 A23B50 A22B51 A24B51	=	A23B47 A24B47 A25B47 A26B47 A27B47 A28B47 A29B47 A30B47 A23B48 A24B48 A25B48 A26B48 A27B48 A28B48 A29B48 A30B48 A31B48 A32B48 A33B48 A34B48 A22B49 A23B49 A24B49 A25B49 A26B49 A27B49 A28B49 A29B49 A30B49 A31B49 A32B49 A33B49 A34B49 A22B50 A23B50 A24B50 A25B50 A26B50 A27B50 A28B50 A29B50 A30B50 A31B50 A32B50 A33B50 A34B50 A22B51 A23B51 A24B51 A25B51 A26B51 A27B51 A28B51 A29B51 A30B51 A31B51 A32B51 A33B51 A34B51 A23B52 A24B52 A25B52 A26B52 A27B52 A28B52 A29B52 A30B52 A31B52 A32B52 A33B52 A23B53 A24B53 A25B53 A26B53 A27B53 A28B53 A29B53 A30B53 A31B53 A32B53 A33B53 A23B54 A24B54 A25B54 A26B54 A27B54 A28B54 A29B54 A30B54 A31B54 A32B54 A23B55 A24B55 A25B55 A26B55 A27B55 A28B55 A29B55 A30B55 A31B55 A23B56 A24B56 A25B56 A26B56 A27B56 A28B56 A29B56 A30B56 A31B56 A32B56 A23B57 A24B57 A25B57 A26B57 A28B57 A29B57 A30B57 A31B57 A32B57 A23B58 A24B58 A25B58 A26B58 A27B58 A28B58 A29B58 A30B58 A31B58 A22B59 A23B59 A24B59 A25B59 A26B59 A27B59 A28B59 A29B59 A30B59 A22B60 A23B60 A24B60 A25B60 A26B60 A27B60 A28B60 A29B60 A30B60 A24B61 A25B61 A26B61 A27B61 A28B61 A29B61 A25B62 A26B62 A27B62

Source: the figure was compiled by the authors

Conclusions and Further Research

World practice shows that one of the effective directions of the spatial organization of tourism in a certain area is the formation and development of cluster systems. Clusters in the field of tourism allow developing and promoting a tourist area through the integration and cooperation of business entities involved in the process of rendering tourism services. In addition, not only representatives of the local business community are involved in the integration processes, but also other stakeholders interested in the development of tourism. As a result, the competitiveness of the tourist territory increases due to the joint efforts of the cluster members.

The Zerenda resort area is one of the ecotourism centers in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Within the boundaries of the resort area, unique natural objects are concentrated that are of interest to tourists. The results of the conducted research allow us to conclude that the Zerenda resort area has all the necessary characteristics for the formation and development of tourist clusters specializing in ecotourism. The creation of an ecotourism cluster will significantly increase the attractiveness of the area for tourists and reorient the flow of tourists from other regions of the country and neighboring countries in their direction. In addition, it is worth noting that the formation of ecotourism clusters will lead to a positive effect of scale, when active cooperation and integration of economic entities can lead to a decrease in the average cost of producing tourism services, which ultimately may affect the final price of the tourism product.

To date, there are a number of natural objects on the territory of the resort area with an established infrastructure for servicing tourists, as well as centers for health tourism and recreational purposes. The characteristics of each object allow them to act as the dominant tourist cluster, around which enterprises involved in the process of serving tourists can be concentrated in cooperation with each other. Natural, historical, educational and other objects used as tourist resources on the territory of the resort area make it possible to form and develop not only passive, but also active types of tourism. This will make it possible to involve enterprises and organizations of various profiles and levels in the structure of the tourist cluster, which will positively affect the demand for the area among tourists.

The results of the analysis show that the geographical field of the proposed tourist cluster can cover infrastructure elements throughout the resort area. Each element has characteristics that can give the cluster distinctive features. In addition, the methodology of cartographic taxonomy applied in the framework of the study made it possible not only to identify the components of the cluster, but to determine the approximate boundaries of the territory where the clustering processes will take place.

Thus, the formation and development of tourism clusters focused on ecotourism can be one of the ways to effectively organize tourism on the territory of the Zerenda resort area and turn it into an attractive destination. However, it must be taken into account that the clustering process is rather long and complex and requires active actions not only from individual economic entities, but also from other stakeholders engaged in the development of tourism in the territory. In addition, to ensure the sustainable development of the tourism cluster in the long term, it is necessary to conduct more detailed scientific research in the field of determining the tools to motivate economic entities to cooperate and develop integration ties between them, rational development of the territory for tourism purposes, identifying the features of the socio-cultural environment of the tourism cluster, etc.

Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Aidar H. Mukanov: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Data curation.
Kamshat P. Mussina: Project administration, Software, Validation, Writing – review and editing, Visualization.
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Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Exploring a New Destination Image: A Case Study of Suranadi Village

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to examine several aspects of tourism in Suranadi Village, namely the sociology of attributes, destination attributes, tourist loyalty, and tourist opinions on Suranadi, as a first step towards finding a new Suranadi Tourism destination image. Using a quantitative descriptive method and a questionnaire, data were collected and analyzed using the achievement level formula. This study discovered that the sociology attribute received a good predicate with an average of 82; destination attribution received a good predicate with an average of 81; and visitor loyalty attribution received a very good rating with a value of 86. Furthermore, tourists believe that Suranadi Village should improve a variety of aspects, including tourism product innovation and other supporting factors. Finally, the most popular tourist attractions in Suranadi Village are natural and religious tourism, as Suranadi Village has significant natural potential and is a Hindu pilgrimage site.

Keywords: tourist destination; marketing; rebranding; Suranadi Indonesia.

JEL Classification: M3; L83; Z33; R11.

Introduction

One of the main forces driving economic growth nowadays is tourism (Tang and Tan 2015, Tugcu 2014). The main element of tourism and the factor that most influence people's decision to pay for a trip to a certain location is the uniqueness of the tourist attractions there. The uniqueness might be viewed from the perspective of the level of service, the aesthetic appeal of the location, or the sociological component, which could be the brand image utilized to attract tourists from all over the world. Therefore, to increase the destination's worldwide competition and meet evolving tourist wants and motivations, developing a favorable destination image has taken the top spot in tourism management and destination marketing at the moment (Molina *et al.* 2010).

Numerous studies have been inspired by the significance of brand image, particularly in the field of tourist research. As tourism markets become more competitive, enhancing a destination's reputation adds value to the sector. However, travelers' subjective perceptions of reality are what give the location its positive connotations. A difficult task is evaluating the destination's reputation. The value of researching this topic has been underscored by the significance of developing a destination's image as well as the challenge of evaluating such an image. It's common to refer to destination images as simply ‘impressions of a location’ or ‘perceptions of an area’. Everyone agrees on the significance of a tourist destination's image since it influences a visitor's subjective perception, which in turn influences their behavior and choice of destination. In the nearly four decades of the intradisciplinary study of marketing, which has typically been oriented on either effective destination positioning or the destination selection process, the tourism destination image (TDI) has been a worthy subject of research.

In the case of Indonesia, the government has initiated national branding as a national identity to enhance how the world sees Indonesia and help Indonesia's tourism grow. In 2011, the government created a national brand called ‘Wonderful Indonesia’ to capitalize on the country's enormous tourism potential. Apart from Bali the Island of the Gods, Explore Makassar, Java Cultural Wonders, Majestic Banyuwangi, Coral Wonders (Bunaken, Wakatobi, and Raja Ampat), and Friendly Lombok, the Ministry of Tourism also launched 10 new destination brands or more generally known. as 10 new Bali tours (Barrung 2018).

The West Nusa Tenggara regional government increased regional tourism promotion in response to the national government's efforts to promote travel in Indonesia. This is reflected in the fifth objective of the vision and mission statement, ‘Prosperous and Independent NTB,’ which includes a flagship program called ‘99 Tourism Villages’ that is spread out over 10 districts or cities. In an endeavor to further turn the 99 tourism villages into communities that fully exploit the local environment, culture, and creative abilities, the West Nusa Tenggara Provincial Government has made the initiative of the 99 tourism villages one of its key areas of concern during the past three years (Darmo *et al.* 2021). Tourists’ villages need to place a high priority on preserving their sense of place, practicing conservation, considering carrying capacity and being flexible enough to adjust to tourism.

Ten districts or cities, including Bima Regency (10), Dompu Regency (9), Bima City (4), Mataram City (4), West Lombok Regency (13), Central Lombok Regency (16), East Lombok Regency (18), North Lombok Regency (8), Sumbawa Regency (9), and West Sumbawa Regency, are involved in the development of 99 tourism villages in West Nusa Tenggara Province (8). The Genpi Lombok Sumbawa team was successful in gathering several other additional tourism villages that had already been formed, developed, are currently operating, or are experiencing problems, some of which have not yet been included in the decree, some of which are a District Decree and is not included in the Governor's Decree. In addition to the 99 Tourism Villages that were decreed by the Governor of West Nusa Tenggara (Darmo *et al.* 2021).

One of many tourist communities established before the West Nusa Tenggara program's ‘99 Tourism Villages’, Suranadi Tourism Village has long been a popular destination in West Nusa Tenggara and is now considered a valuable asset for the region's tourism industry. The marriage of culture and nature is what makes Suranadi Tourism Village special. In addition to seeing the distinctiveness of the temples that make up Suranadi Tourism Village, visitors may also take in the pristine scenery and pleasant ambiance of things like rice fields, gardens, woodlands, and rivers with crystal-clear water. Domestic tourists particularly enjoy the gourmet processed goods produced by Suranadi Tourism Village, such as fruit dodol (jackfruit, soursop, durian, and banana). Some Suranadi people operate a home industry that produces the fruit dodol. among the different potentials that ought to be optimally developed. There hasn't been any follow-up in developing Suranadi Village since tourism management and the locals don't completely comprehend the idea of a tourist village. Additionally, the supporting infrastructure is insufficient, and domestic travelers still make up the majority of visitors.

In general, there have been many studies on the brand image of a destination or destination re-branding (Blain *et al.* 2005, Ghorbanzadeh *et al.* 2022, Jesca *et al.* 2014, Kaefer 2021, Marzano and Scott 2009, May-Chiun *et al.* 2013, Morgan *et al.* 2020, Pike 2005, Puad *et al.* 2016, Qu *et al.* 2011, Stylos *et al.* 2016, Subagyo

2019, Surya *et al.* 2018). Some of these studies, most of them only discuss the perspective of supply so there is often a discrepancy between what tourists want and what is offered. Meanwhile, in this study, the authors tried to evaluate the key aspects of tourist attraction, namely sociological attributes, destination attributes, and tourist loyalty. Not only that, from the literature study conducted by the author, there has been limited research that has attempted to involve tourist perceptions in the process of branding a destination, especially in Indonesia. Thus, there is often a discrepancy between the needs of tourists and existing attractions.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Branding of Tourist Destination

Tourism destination branding is the use of names, symbols, logos, slogans, or images to distinguish a location from others and make it easier for visitors to remember and have a distinct emotional experience there (Hanna *et al.* 2021, Marzano and Scott 2009; Qu *et al.* 2011).

Marzano and Scott (2009) define destination branding as generating good views by mixing distinct elements from a location. This demonstrates the use of destination branding as a tactic to attract travel and foster a positive reputation. Place branding is an endeavor to convey a positive image of a tourism destination to draw visitors and offer a memorable experience. Destination branding is required to make sure that visitors and location managers share the same understanding of tourism attractions. There are two parts to this destination branding strategy. The first is showcasing the country's tourism business in its entirety or part to the public, including its natural beauty, cultural diversity, vibrant society, and other characteristics that could help the nation develop its brand.

In Qu *et al.* (2011) article's destination branding, or brand image portrayed is how the recipient sees it. While public diplomacy is used to advance business image internationally due to the nature of the brand, this study focuses more on the brand identity of a nation. A brand's identity is made up of its culture, personality, personality, name, logo, and slogan. This may affect how the general public interprets a brand's identity, for instance: culture, as it is connected to the cultural traits present in both the environment and the country; Character is something that makes a country stand out, and it is typically found in the laws or constitutions that provide the legal foundation for a nation's branding; personality is about how people are inclined to welcome visitors; Name, frequently the original name of the tourist destination in the local tongue or English: this is significant because it is strongly tied to the communication strategy targeted at tourists; it must also have numerous distinctive and unforgettable powers and connotations; logos and slogans. This may affect how the general public views the identity of a brand, for instance: culture, both regional and broader in scope; It is possible to declare that the characteristics of a tourist destination can be incorporated into the character of a logo; however, the character must be simple, simple to remember, and able to represent a tourist destination; According to (Risitano 2006), a slogan is a succinct summation of a place's appeal that might draw tourists.

1.2. Rebranding of Tourism Destination

Re-branding is a tactic used by businesses to improve current brands while keeping in mind their original purpose, according to (de Boer *et al.* 2014). When a business feels the need to replace an existing brand and reintroduce a new brand that aims to uphold the level of quality and image provided, this is known as re-branding.

Typically, changing a logo or symbol is regarded as an element of rebranding. However, in practice, this procedure is followed by the revision of brand values, making it a drawn-out and meticulous process. Rebranding is being done on a wide range of products, including corporate and travel locations.

The first step in rebranding is to get the strategy right, which is an initial research process to uncover opportunities that exist on target and adjustments that are genuinely needed by the agency; The second step is creating the brand, the name is taken into consideration, the slogan and logo are made, branding is done in the agency's official media, and the basic brand identity is developed. The brand rollout stage is part of an efficient rebranding procedure. Several strategies can be used to do this, including introducing the brand to management teams and staff, training management and staff on the new brand's values, and creating a launch strategy (Lazutkin and Chausov 2021).

1.3. Destination Image

The destination's image is crucial for promoting tourist attractions to stakeholders and potential visitors. Destination image is a reflection of one's thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and perceptions regarding a location (El Badriati *et al.* 2022, Fakeye and Crompton 1991).

According to Fakeye and Crompton (1991) and Gartner (1989), the destination image is the perception of a complex combination of several items and connected attributes. Destination images are described as a collection of ideas and impressions based on information processing from several sources over time that generates a mental representation of the numerous qualities, rewards, and impacts one seeks from a destination (Zhang *et al.* 2014).

According to Assaker *et al.* , the perception of a particular place can affect travelers' behavioral intentions (Assaker and Hallak 2013). An individual's mental representation of their knowledge, emotions, and general perceptions regarding their destination is referred to as their destination image. The range of goods, features, and attractions that influence the perception of the destination Whang *et al.* adds to the perception of the choosing process based on diverse facts (Whang *et al.* 2016).

According to Stylos *et al.* (2016) a person's perception of things, objects, behaviors, and events is referred to as the picture of his aims, attitudes, beliefs, and several objectives that have expectations and ideals for a specific site all affect how they perceive that area. In behavior, the destination image serves two crucial purposes: (1) influencing the choice of the destination; and (2) influencing the final decision or triggering behavior, including involvement (location experience), judgment (satisfaction), and intention (future behavior goals), review, and readiness to suggest) (Chen and Tsai 2007). The three elements of destination image, according to (Girma 2016, Qu *et al.* 2011), are cognitive destination image, unique destination picture, and emotive destination image.

2. Research Methodology

The frequency approach and Likert scale calculations are used in this form of research, which is a quantitative descriptive study. For travelers, this study was carried out between October 19 and November 11, 2022.

Table 1. Research instruments

Indicators	Code	Questions
Sociological Attributes	S1	Suranadi Tourism Village is convenient to travel
	S2	I feel safe traveling to Suranadi Tourism Village
	S3	Traveling in Suranadi Tourism Village is easy without having the assistance of a tour guide
	S4	The prices of tourism products and services in Suranadi Tourism Village are affordable
	S5	Suranadi Tourism Village has the basic facilities or infrastructure to fulfill the needs of tourist
Destination Attributes	D1	Culinary tourism is one of the main attractions of Suranadi Tourism Village
	D2	Nature tourism is one of the main attractions of Suranadi Tourism Village
	D3	The place of worship is one of the main attractions of Suranadi Tourism Village
	D4	Water tourism is one of the main attractions of Suranadi Tourism Village
	D5	The recreational place is one of the main attractions of Suranadi Tourism Village
	D6	Forests are one of the main attractions of Suranadi Tourism Village
	D7	Agrotourism is one of the main attractions of Suranadi Tourism Village
	D8	Outbound and Camping are one of the main attractions of Suranadi Tourism Village
	D9	Accommodation is one of the main attractions of Suranadi Tourism Village
	D10	Suranadi Tourism Village has lots of interesting tourist destinations
	D11	Tourism destinations in Suranadi Tourism Village are well-preserved
	D12	Suranadi Tourism Village is the main destination on Lombok Island
	D13	Tourism destinations in Suranadi Tourism Village are well-promoted
Tourist Loyalty	F1	I will revisit Suranadi Tourism Village in the future
	F2	I will highly recommend Suranadi Tourism Village to my friends and family
	F3	In my opinion, Suranadi Tourism Village has the potential to be developed as an international tourism destination
Tourist Opinion	T1	Things that need to be improved in Suranadi
	T2	The attraction that tourists want

103 answers were obtained, which can be used for analysis. Suranadi Tourism Village, the subject of the case study, is one of the tourist towns in West Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara. To learn more about tourists' perceptions of the destination image and destination qualities in Suranadi Tourism Village, questionnaires were also distributed online via Google form to the research subjects.

This study is a development of Puad's research, which also covered marketing and rebranding in Malaysia's Ipoh City. Three aspects: sociological features, destination attributes, and future development, are the subject of Puad *et al.'s* (2016) study. The authors include a new indicator, namely tourist opinion, to set this study apart. This is crucial because the study needs to have a significant impact on Suranadi Village to influence future tourism regulations there.

In this study, a questionnaire was employed as a method of data collection. using a survey with both open-ended and closed-ended questions. The trait of closed questions is that the authors have predetermined all of the response options for this question; the respondent is not permitted to submit answers other than the answer options. Additionally, open questions have a wider range of qualities. Additionally, the researcher did not predetermine the questions or replies. To make it easier for respondents to answer and at the same time make it easier for the writer to analyze the data, the writer uses a Likert scale as the answer for each statement in the questionnaire.

Table 2. Likert scale

Indicators	Symbols	Value
Strongly Disagree	SD	1
Disagree	D	2
Neutral	N	3
Agree	A	4
Strongly Agree	SA	5

The data analysis of this study is also different from (Puad *et al.* 2016). This study uses the frequency method combined with Achievement Level (AL) to get a clear image of Suranadi. This analysis intends to describe the characteristics of each research variable. By presenting the data in a frequency distribution table, calculating the average value, total score, and level of achievement (AL), and interpreting it. This analysis does not relate one variable to another and does not compare one variable to another. To find the level of attainment of respondents' answers, the following formula is used:

$$Achievement\ Level\ (AL)\ =\frac{Average\ Score \times 100}{Minimum\ Score}.$$

Achievement levels can be classified as follows (Arikunto 2010):

Table 3. Level of achievement criteria

No.	Level of Achievement	Criteria
1	85% - 100%	Very Good
2	66% - 84%	Good
3	51% - 65%	Enough
4	36% - 50%	Bad
5	0% - 35%	Very poor

3. Result and Discussion

The demographic information of the respondents is shown in Table 4. A total of 103 responses were gathered, of whom 62 males and 41 women provided information. Only 2 respondents in this survey were under the age of 15, and the majority of respondents were between the ages of 34 and 45. In this study, respondents' vocations comprised students (35%), enterprises (41%), public servants (4%), academics (7%), and other employment (14%). Given that many respondents are college students and recent graduates, the majority of respondents have annual incomes of less than 500.000 rupiahs. 39 respondents had an annual income of more than 500.000 rupiahs. Due to Suranadi Village's status as a place of devotion for Hindus, up to 53 respondents identified as Hindus. There were 45 Muslims and 5 Christians among the responders to this survey, respectively. The majority of tourists came from West Lombok, where 44 people and 30 people from Mataram City originated.

Table 4. Respondent details

Demographic		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	41	40%
	Female	62	60%
	Total	103	100%
Age	< 15 years old	2	2%
	16-20 Years old	19	18%
	21-30 years old	75	72%
	34-45 years old	7	7%
	Total	103	100%
Job	Student	36	35%
	Enterprise	41	40%
	Government Workers	4	4%
	Fresh Graduate	7	7%
	Others	15	14%
	Total	103	100%
Income	< 500.000 IDR	40	39%
	500.000 – 1.000.000 IDR	24	23%
	1.000.000 – 1.500.000 IDR	7	7%
	1.500.000 – 2.000.000 IDR	10	10%
	> 2.000.000 IDR	22	21%
	Total	103	100%
Religion	Islam	45	44%
	Hindu	53	51%
	Christian	5	5%
	Total	103	100%
City of Origin	West Lombok	44	43%
	East Lombok	8	8%
	North Lombok	5	5%
	Central Lombok	5	5%
	Mataram	30	29%
	Sumbawa	4	4%
	Bima	3	3%
	Others provinces	4	4%
	Total	100	100%

Source: Data processed

Table 5 below explains the average value and achievement of each indicator such as the Sociology aspect (S), the destination aspect (D), and the future development aspect (F).

Table 5. Results

NO	Value					Total	Score	Average	AL	Category
	SD	D	N	A	SA					
	1	2	3	4	5					
S1	3	0	19	42	39	103	423	4.106	84.6	Very good
S2	2	3	22	43	33	103	411	4	82.2	Good
S3	4	1	11	33	54	103	441	4.281	88.2	Very good
S4	3	2	25	44	29	103	403	3.912	80.6	Good
S5	3	7	30	40	23	103	382	3.708	76.4	Good
								Total	82.4	Good
D1	2	2	15	38	46	103	433	4.203	86.6	Very good
D2	5	1	12	37	48	103	431	4.184	86.2	Very good
D3	4	9	26	64	0	103	455	4.417	91	Very good
D4	3	2	19	27	52	103	432	4.194	86.4	Very good
D5	2	1	18	46	36	103	422	4.097	84.4	Very good
D6	3	2	19	41	38	103	418	4.058	83.6	Good
D7	5	4	29	37	28	103	388	3.766	77.6	Good
D8	4	4	24	37	34	103	402	3.902	80.4	Good

NO	Value					Total	Score	Average	AL	Category
D9	9	15	26	36	17	103	346	3.359	69.2	Good
D10	3	5	18	41	36	103	411	3.990	82.2	Good
D11	3	6	23	46	25	103	393	3.815	78.6	Good
D12	6	5	24	39	29	103	389	3.776	77.8	Good
D13	5	13	29	35	21	103	363	3.524	72.6	Good
								Total	81.27	Good
F1	4	0	13	38	48	103	435	4.223	87	Very good
F2	3	4	18	34	44	103	421	4.087	84.2	Very good
F3	4	1	10	34	54	103	442	4.291	88.4	Very good
								Total	86.5	Very Good

Source: data processed

3.1. Sociological Aspect

From a total of 103 responders, the first code, S1, which represents the comfort level of Suranadi Village, yielded an achievement level of 84.6, or the 'Very Good' predicate. The second code, S2, denotes security and is equivalent to the 'Good' category with a score of 82.2. In terms of travel convenience, the third code, or S3, achieves a degree of achievement of 'Very Good,' or 88.2. Fourth (S4) and Fifth (S5), namely in terms of costs and resources. These elements each received scores of 80 (Good) and 76. (Good). Therefore, it can be said that the sociological aspect has an average achievement value of 82.4, earning it the designation of 'Good.'

The safety and comfort of visitors is a situation that is anticipated to remain steady, causing a sense of tranquility without being accompanied by worries when traveling to and staying in a location for a while, according to Chen *et al.* (2016), Chuang *et al.* (2020), Imbeah *et al.* (2020), Jin *et al.* (2013), Zhou *et al.* (2018), Zou and Meng (2020)). For the tourism industry to function properly and allow visitors to have a relaxing vacation, safety, and comfort are vital necessities. Every traveler takes seriously any threat to their safety and comfort because they are seeking out tourist attractions and not travel hassles. Because if a tourist attraction is not safe and comfortable, it might physically and financially injure the visitors, safety, and comfort are very crucial.

Prices in the hospitality sector and demand for tourism are typically not linear relationships that depend on a variety of variables that affect travel decisions (Dwyer *et al.* 2000, Morley 1994). The relationship is rather complex, particularly when it comes to customers in poor countries (Tkalec and Vizek 2016). According to Nahar *et al.* research, a strengthening of the growth in a commodity's price, particularly in the tourism sector, will significantly affect tourists' purchasing decisions or it may be stated to have a negative impact (Nahar *et al.* 2020).

Destination attractiveness is described by Mayo and Jarvis (1981) as 'the perceived potential of the destination to deliver these individual benefits and the relative relevance of individual benefits'. The distinct elements that make up a location, such as its attractions, infrastructure, services, and the people who provide these services, improve this capacity. A tourism destination is, therefore, a mix of destination qualities, namely tourist facilities, and services, according to Yangzhou Hu and Ritchie (1993). Tourists consider a destination's perceived suitability to fit their demands when determining how attractive the place is. It is commonly accepted that the more features a destination possesses, the more enticing it becomes. Destinations build amenities and services to increase their attractiveness to draw tourists. In the lack of these qualities, a destination loses some of its appeal. Additionally, without a desirable destination, tourism would not exist and there could not even be a need for tourist amenities and services (Kim and Lee 2002). However, other places, such as remote tropical islands or tiny coastal towns, have a constrained selection of amenities and services and are still quite popular.

3.2. Destination Aspect

Five indicators received very good predicates out of a total of 13 indicators evaluated on the destination aspect, including culinary tourism (D1), nature tourism (D2), places of worship (D3), and water tourism (D4). Each of these indicators is given a score ranging from 84 to 91. Meanwhile, indicators D6–D7 each have good predictability, with the lowest score of 72 on the promotion indicator. With an average of 81.27, it can be concluded that the destination aspect in Suranadi Tourism Village receives a favorable predicate.

A tourist destination is a location that is visited by tourists, and it can refer to a city, region, or even an entire country (Ahmed 1996, Aksoy and Kiyci 2011). According to Jani *et al.* (2009) tourist destination consists of multi-destination trip characteristics, including both environmental and service factors that entice visitors to stop by and stay longer. Similarly, Crouch (1994) also noted in his study that the infrastructure, accessibility, market ties, mixed activities (such as sports and recreation activities, music and fun activities, etc.), and core attractors (such as special events, climate, and culture and heritage attractions) are the primary factors that significantly influence the competitive positioning of a tourist destination (Crouch and Ritchie 1999).

Most recently, May-Chiun *et al.* (2013) divided the characteristics of a destination into four categories: cultural/heritage, social, economic, and environmental characteristics, and they proposed that all four characteristics are crucial predictors of the destination's image. The competitive success of a tourist site, according to Enright and Newton, is heavily influenced by the advantages and disadvantages of such characteristics (Enright and Newton 2005). The most significant destination qualities, such as attractions, accessibility, lodging, supplementary services, and knowledge that affect visitor perception, have been identified by Truong and King (2009). The survey also made a connection between a destination's attractions and two categories of attractions: man-made attractions, such as theme parks and entertainment, and natural attractions, such as mountains, valleys, landscapes, forests, lakes, and rivers (casinos, trade halls, and theaters).

Furthermore, Khong Chiu Ananzeh (2012) extrapolated that pull, push, and religious qualities influence tourists' decisions to travel to a particular location. Additionally, Upadhyaya indicated in his study that accessibility and lodging options are crucial characteristics of the tourism sector. The examined literature has taken into account both major and secondary elements of destinations as well as cultural/heritage, social, economic, and environmental attributes. The primary characteristics of a tourism destination are the weather, ecology, culture, and traditional architecture, while secondary characteristics include hotels, catering, transportation, and entertainment; destination attractions, lodging services, food services, and tourism trade, among others (Chahal and Devi 2015). Attractions can be both natural and man-made. And only a small number of researchers have used the 5As-attraction, accessibility, lodging ancillaries, and awareness attributes. In terms of infrastructure, the term ‘accessibility to the destination’ refers to things like highways, airports, and railroads, while ‘accommodation’ refers to places like hotels, bunkhouses, and tented camps where tourists may stay, eat, sleep, and feel easy and comfortable to move around.

Furthermore, it has been suggested by Enright and Newton (2005) that infrastructure and accessibility issues, common touristic actors, special events, shopping, food, a calm atmosphere and climate, attractions, sports and recreational activities, music and fun activities, and other factors significantly affect how competitively positioned a tourist destination is.

3.3. Tourist Loyalty

Suranadi Tourism Village appears to have a very good score in terms of future development, with the three indicators evaluated receiving maximum scores of 87, 84, and 88, respectively. The majority of respondents stated that they would return to Suranadi Village and recommend it to their relatives, friends, and others. Furthermore, the majority of respondents believe that Suranadi Village has the potential to be developed into an international standard destination.

In tourist literature, the intention to return has been identified as an important research topic (Lee *et al.* 2018). According to numerous researchers, returning visitors spend more time at a location, engage in more leisure activities, are happier, and recommend the place to others, all while requiring significantly less marketing spending than first-timers (Lehto *et al.* 2004, Zhang *et al.* 2014).

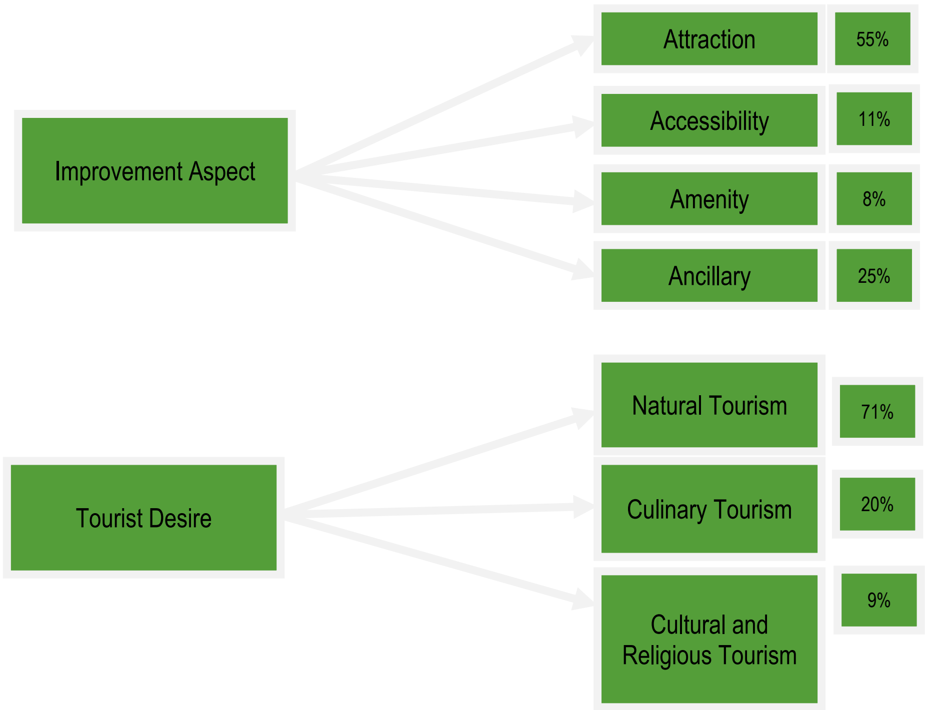
The intention to return to a tourist site has been described as a sort of post-consumption behavior and involves a visitor repeating an activity or visiting a location (Baker and Crompton 2000; Cole and Scott 2004). It also pertains to the visitor's assessment of their likelihood of returning to the same location, their plans to do so, or their desire to promote the location to others (Chen and Tsai 2007, Khasawneh and Alfandi 2019, Stylos *et al.*2016).

It is commonly acknowledged that achieving customer happiness is important for building loyalty, not just in the context of physical products but also in the tourism industry (Som and Badarneh 2011). Um *et al.* assert that the desire to return is seen as an extension of satisfaction (Um *et al.* 2006). Tourists will likely be satisfied with a tourist location if they have positive sentiments there, which will raise their desire to return. The literature contains numerous research demonstrating the beneficial influence of visitor satisfaction on the propensity to return (Assaker and Hallak 2013, Chen and Chen 2010, Khasawneh and Alfandi 2019).

3.4. Respondent Opinions

To sharpen the findings and provide a clear impact on Suranadi Village, the authors asked the respondents two questions: what aspects needed to be improved and what type of tourism object the respondents desired. Figure 1 depicts the responses provided by respondents, which were then assigned special codes by researchers.

Figure 1. Respondent's opinion of Suranadi



Source: data processed

The author can draw conclusions based on the information provided by each respondent regarding aspects that the Suranadi Tourism Village Management should improve, such as attractions, access, amenities, and ancillaries. Suranadi's attractions, according to 55% of the 103 respondents, needed repair and improvement. Respondents stated that the tourist attractions in Suranadi Village were monotonous and lacked variety and that some attractions had no appeal to tourists. For example, it is believed that the Suranadi Village tourism forest has not been effective in attracting tourists because it has been left untouched, with no activities or uniqueness to offer. Furthermore, the spring attractions in Suranadi Village are thought to be neglected, so they are worn out and no longer appealing to teenagers.

Ancillary is the second area that needs to be addressed the most. Up to 25% of respondents believed that supporting factors for Suranadi tourism, such as rules governing travel, advertising, hiring more imaginative management, and security measures for tourist attractions, ought to be taken into account. According to Cakici and Harman (2007), auxiliary services and awareness factors strongly influence tourists' willingness to return to a destination, but other factors like attractions, infrastructure, and cultural factors have the least impact. All services offered to tourists or providers of tourist services are considered ancillary services, and awareness refers to tourists' capacity to recall the image of a destination they have in their minds. On the other hand, due to the sufficiency of access and amenities in tourist destinations, respondents paid little attention to other factors like access and amenities.

In terms of attraction type, according to 71% of respondents, natural tourism is what they are most interested in. According to respondents, Suranadi Village should offer natural tourism that includes zoos, water attractions, flower gardens, adventure travel, and even ecological travel. The second most popular attraction in Suranadi after environmental tourism appears to be culinary tourism. Even though there are already some culinary tourist attractions in Suranadi Village, respondents hope that there will also be the newest culinary tourism developments there. Finally, 9% of respondents want the façade of Hinduism to be maintained because Suranadi Village is one of the main places of worship for Hindus in West Lombok. Additionally, respondents stated that the Suranadi tourism object must have a value that can be shared with the visitors, such as information about the customs or culture of the local neighborhood.

Ferrario contends that a place must possess a particularly special quality to be appealing (namely attraction). As a result, the first significant group or category of a destination's appeal is its attractions (Ferrario, 1979). This claim is confirmed by Crouch and Ritchie (1999) who point out that attractions are the primary drivers of traveler traffic, making them the primary determinants of a destination's appeal. Attractions within a destination are necessary for tourism to grow; other characteristics work well together. Supporting services and amenities for the location make up the second set of destination attributes that predicts its appeal. Crouch and Ritchie (1999) and Dwyer *et al.* (2003) both claim that facilities and support services at a destination play a complementary role in forecasting the success of a destination. Support services are useless in a location without attractions, though. People-related variables make up the third set of predictors of destination appeal. The importance of human-related elements in determining destination attractiveness is complementary to the role of destination attractions. Human-related elements are meaningless on their own; they require attractions, auxiliary infrastructure, and services that can benefit society as a whole.

Conclusion, Limitation, and Future Work

The decrease in the number of tourists visiting Suranadi Tourism Village, Indonesia, indicates that the destination is experiencing stagnation, with no innovations or advancement to attract visitors. Thus, the purpose of this research is to evaluate several aspects of tourism in Suranadi Village, such as the sociology of attributes, destination attributes, tourist loyalty, and tourist opinions on tourism. As a result, managers can use this research to rebrand their tourism villages.

This study discovered that, first, sociological attributes such as comfort, safety, convenience, affordable prices, and adequate facilities receive favorable treatment from respondents. Second, the destination attributes, such as the condition of tourist attractions in Suranadi Village, receive high marks. Third, there are aspects of respondent loyalty, such as the desire to return, word-of-mouth promotion, and opinions about Suranadi Village's potential. Finally, respondents believed that the attractions and ancillary aspects could be improved, with natural, culinary, and cultural/religious tourism being the main draws of Suranadi Village.

This article can serve as a resource for the manager of Suranadi Tourism Village as they build and develop the village. The Suranadi Village Manager must revitalize and innovate tourist attractions, particularly natural, culinary, cultural, and religious tourism. Additional aspects such as security, cleanliness, and destination management must be improved to improve the destination's quality. Furthermore, destination promotion must begin, as Suranadi Village has not yet received an adequate promotion, leaving it unable to compete with neighboring villages.

This research has implications for the novelty of research in the field of destination marketing wherein creating a new image for a destination it is necessary to evaluate various aspects such as sociology attributes, destination attributes, tourist loyalty, and tourist desires so that a match between the supply and demand sides emerges.

To develop a strategic plan for the new brand of Suranadi Tourism Village, further research is required to analyze from the perspective of Suranadi's tourism service providers or the supply side.

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Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Gunawan Bata Ilyas conceptualized and supervised the project, providing critical insights and guiding the overall direction. He was deeply involved in investigating the subject matter, designing the methodology, and curating the data. Their role extended to project administration, ensuring the smooth execution of tasks. He took the lead in writing the original draft of the manuscript, showcasing his comprehensive understanding of the topic. **Gunawan** also played a pivotal role in validating the findings and generating visual representations that enhanced the clarity of the work.

Kristiana Widiawati contributed significantly to the project by conceptualizing its framework and assisting in the design of the methodology. She actively participated in the investigation process and took on project administration tasks, which contributed to the project's overall success. **Kristiana** was responsible for both the original draft of the manuscript and subsequent rounds of reviewing and editing, ensuring the quality and coherence of the content.

Suhaimi was instrumental in shaping the project's conceptual foundation and methodology. His insights were valuable in creating a robust framework for the study. **Suhaimi** played a crucial role in crafting the original draft of the manuscript, ensuring that the core ideas were effectively communicated. He also actively engaged in reviewing and editing, refining the content to meet high standards of accuracy and clarity.

Rismawati contributed significantly to the conceptualization of the project's key aspects and methodology. Her insights played a vital role in shaping the direction of the research. **Rismawati** took charge of the initial draft, incorporating her understanding of the subject matter into the manuscript. She was also actively involved in the review and editing processes, refining the content to achieve precision and consistency.

Syamsu Budianti played a pivotal role in conceptualizing the project's central themes and designing the methodology. His contributions were essential in framing the research in a meaningful way. **Syamsu** took an active role in crafting the original draft of the manuscript, showcasing their ability to convey complex ideas effectively. His dedication extended to reviewing and editing the content, ensuring that the final work was coherent and polished.

Muhammad Azizurrohman was deeply involved in the project from start to finish. his contributions spanned conceptualization, investigation, and methodology design. He took on the responsibility of project administration, ensuring the efficient coordination of tasks. **Muhammad** played a significant role in the original draft of the manuscript, channeling their comprehensive knowledge into clear and insightful content. He continued to engage in the review and editing processes, refining the work to achieve excellence.

Declaration of Competing Interest

There is nothing to declare.

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Digital Innovation in Hospitality: Bridging the Gap between Concierge Services and Hotel Guests

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Abstract: This study has a primary objective of investigating the existing gap that exists between guest interactions and hotel concierge services, with an emphasis on exploring potential solutions through software technology. To attain this goal, twenty in-depth interviews were conducted; eight conversations involved hotel concierges while twelve exchanges entailed interactions with guests. In conducting these interviews, the research aimed to gain extensive knowledge regarding challenges faced by both parties throughout their communication processes. Each interview was critically analysed to systematically identify specific issues suitable for resolution via software applications.

The classification of concierge services facilitated the proposal of technology-based enhancements, which underwent testing by a focus group comprising both guests and concierges. The main objective of this study was to meticulously assess the proposed improvements in terms of their effectiveness in bridging gaps between these two groups. According to research results, there is a direct link between employing suggested software solutions and decreasing interaction discrepancies; implying that strategic usage can considerably boost hotel hospitality through better communication and comprehension among staff members and guests alike.

The research suggests a wider implementation of technological resources in the hospitality industry as they can enhance guest experience and increase concierge efficiency. Further investigation could examine how effective these software solutions are across varying hotel environments and evaluate their lasting effects on customer contentment and hotel profits.

Keywords: hospitality industry efficiency; guest interactions; hotel concierge services; software technology solutions; communication.

JEL Classification: L86; L83; L25; D30; Q01.

Introduction

The emergence of the digital era has engendered extensive alterations across multiple sectors, and this extends to the hospitality industry (Kim *et al.* 2020). With an ever-increasing requirement for superior customer service and exceptional guest encounters, hotels are continuously seeking novel methods in exceeding their guests' anticipations (Huangxiong Qi and Rucong Mo, 2021). Within a hotel's operational framework, among various positions that exist is the concierge role which assumes critical importance as a linkage between hotels and guests alike. As per convention, it encompasses delivering customised services while managing requests from clients; its central objective lies mainly in creating unforgettable experiences for patrons (Bardi, J.A. 2011). However, due to the rising complexities of diverse client demands with time- progressing challenges arise with attempts towards fulfilling this goal by hotel concierges.

One significant problem that has received a great deal of attention is the deficiency in communication between hotel guests and concierges (Kim *et al.* 2020). Despite the advancements in technology, which have revolutionised service delivery and utilisation, specific areas continue to create tension (Maglovska C.R. 2020).

This study seeks to thoroughly examine this friction point, with particular emphasis on the issues that arise during interactions between hotel guests and concierges, particularly in the context of communication gaps.

The integration of technology in the hospitality industry has been widespread (UKEssays, 2018). Digitised room keys and online booking systems are among the many technological advancements that have significantly influenced how hotels operate. Hotels employ various digital tools and software programs to simplify operations, improve customer experience, and optimise productivity levels (Popov, L.A. *et al.* 2017). Nonetheless, despite these advances, there is still a dearth of research into how software solutions can boost interactions between concierge staff and guests which needs attention from researchers (Cardoso, L *et al.* 2021).

Our proposition suggests that the utilisation of software can have a substantive impact on decreasing the communication and comprehension barrier between hotel concierge personnel and their guests. This inference stems from the accepted understanding of how digital tools can be beneficial in many industries, including hospitality (Paul, P. *et al.* 2018). Software solutions have illustrated capabilities to enhance communication, streamline services, and enhance user experience, thereby cultivating more gratifying customer experiences (Buhalis, D. and Law, R. 2008).

To verify this supposition, we implement a twofold research methodology. Firstly, we conduct comprehensive interviews with both guests and concierges aiming to gather insightful understandings of the obstacles they encounter during their interactions. This method is employed to systematically classify the ideas acquired from these discussions revealing hurdles that could potentially be addressed by implementing software solutions.

As a result of categorising these issues, we suggest particular software-based enhancements. A focus group consisting of both concierges and guests is then utilised to evaluate the effectiveness of these improvements. The inclusion of various stakeholders in the focus group allows for an extensive assessment that provides crucial feedback on how well the proposed enhancements reduce the identified interaction gap.

The research conducted holds tremendous potential for not just individual hotels, but the entire hospitality industry. The success of software in connecting concierges and guests can lead to groundbreaking improvements in guest experiences. This study's findings serve as a framework for similar technology implementations across various sectors of the hospitality field that fuse traditional human interactions with modern-day innovations resulting in top-of-the-line customer service.

Additionally, this study provides valuable observations for other industries that prioritise customer satisfaction by showcasing how technology can be utilised to augment communication and service provision. The findings of this research have the potential to encourage more comprehensive inquiries into the feasibility and relevance of similar software solutions across different fields, thereby making a substantial contribution to the expanding scope of literature on technology's role in enhancing customer experience.

1. Literature Review

This literature review aims to expand academically on the key themes of this research paper. Firstly, it delves into how the role of concierge services in the hotel industry has evolved, exploring studies by scholars such as Leung and Law (Leung, R. and Law, R. 2010). Secondly, it examines how technology has transformed guest experiences in hospitality using sources from Collins and Van Hoof et al (Van Hoof, H.B 1996). Lastly, this review explores the untapped potential for software solutions to bridge the gap between concierges and guests with insights provided by Dabholkar's classification scheme (Dabholkar, P.A. 1994). Through analysis of these three crucial aspects, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of their impact on customer loyalty within the hospitality industry. In conclusion, academic expansion beyond conventional arguments is essential to understand maturing trends within an evolving market that demands competent decision-making skills from business leaders seeking success amidst challenging conditions brought about by globalisation and technological advancements as well as emerging disruptors like Airbnb or Booking.com (Bock, K. 2015).

1.1 The Role of Concierge Services in the Hotel Industry

The hospitality industry highly values concierge services as they significantly contribute to ensuring a high-quality guest experience, increasing satisfaction and retention rates (Hollander, J. 2022). Historically, the role of concierges revolved around acting as the primary link between guests and various services such as booking dinner reservations or arranging transportation while also providing information about local attractions. In recent times though, there has been an extensive widening of responsibilities for these employees (Fusté-Forné, F. and Jamal, T. 2021).

In contemporary times, concierges play a multifaceted role as personal aides, excursion leaders, troubleshooters, and occasion organisers to enrich clients' stay at the hotel (Brotherton, B. 1999). A research study conducted by Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier has revealed that satisfaction with concierge services is a vital factor in establishing customer loyalty (Tussyadiah, I.P. and Fesenmaier, D.R. 2009). It highlights how important it is for hotels to recognize not only the significance of enhancing guest experiences but also ensuring their repeated patronage through efficacious operations of concierge services.

Even though the concierge service is vital, its delivery still faces difficulties. Research indicates that with the increasing variety of guest requirements, concierges sometimes encounter obstacles in fulfilling these changing expectations (Kandampully, J. 2010). Therefore, it is crucial to recognize and address these challenges to optimise customer satisfaction (Huangxiong Qi and Rucong Mo, 2021). With the rise of technological advancements, hotels have leveraged digital tools to expand concierge services by offering guests access to a range of amenities, including instant messaging services (Maglovska C.R. 2020).

1.2 The Impact of Technology on Guest Experiences

The hospitality sector has demonstrated exceptional flexibility toward technological innovations (Kansakar *et al.* 2019). These digital tools have been broadly integrated into the industry, changing service delivery and guest experiences. With online booking systems and mobile apps for check-ins/check-outs; guests can have virtual tours of hotel facilities while automated services are used to customise their experience more conveniently (Šerić, M., Saura, I.G. and Praničević, D.G. 2016). As such, these advancements signify an overall revolutionising influence on consumer engagement by enabling personalization and enhancing convenience compared to traditional models of operation (Sutyrina, O. 2021).

Research conducted by Neuhofer, Buhalis, and Ladkin revealed that the integration of digital technology has facilitated personalised guest experiences which have contributed immensely to guests' satisfaction (Neuhofer, B., Buhalis, D. and Ladkin, A. 2014). Ivanov and Webster explored advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and service automation in the hospitality sector (Ivanov, S.H. and Webster, C. 2017). They found out that using these technologies aids in automating routine tasks, improving staff's productivity to focus on more complex tasks consequently enhancing quality services for customers leading to better guest experience. Moreover, digital technology has also enabled hospitality businesses to collect and analyse large amounts of data on guest preferences and behaviour (Kim *et al.* 2020). This data is used to personalise guest experiences further and offer recommendations for activities, dining options, and facilities tailored to individual preferences.

1.3 The Potential for Software Solutions in Bridging the Gap between Concierge and Guest

Although the implementation of technology has demonstrated considerable usage in the hospitality sector, academic research on software solutions to augment concierge-guest interactions remains limited. Some studies have started investigating this field indicating the potential advantages provided by software applications that boost these types of interactions (Zhang, X. and Kim, H. 2021). In a study conducted by Jauhari and Sanjeev, the authors suggested that with advanced front-office automation applications and concierge technology, hotels can attain higher levels of guest satisfaction (Sanjeev, G.M. and Jauhari, V. 2012).

The significance of Information Communication Technology in managing customer relationships was emphasised by Sigala (Sigala, M. 2003). Through technological advancements, hotels could enhance their customer service. Likewise, Law *et al.* discussed the potential use of software for efficiently handling guest requests and inquiries which can lead to improved guest satisfaction (Law, R., Leung, R. and Buhalis, D. 2009).

Our study expands on the aforementioned findings and intends to conduct a thorough investigation into how software technologies can effectively bridge the gap between hotel concierge services and guests. Our objectives are centred around identifying distinct challenges that can be resolved using software solutions, developing such applications accordingly, and assessing their impact in a practical setting.

This study has the potential to offer valuable guidance for hotels and other providers of hospitality services seeking to elevate their service offerings through the deliberate utilisation of technology. In addition, it could enrich the body of knowledge on technology and customer service by shedding light on how software can be leveraged to enhance guest satisfaction in the context of hospitality.

2. Methodology

The methodology utilised in this study involves a thorough mixed methods research design, which incorporates both qualitative and quantitative approaches to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the issue being studied (Tegan, G. 2023). Dabholkar's categorization scheme served as an inspiration for the study's differentiation between the concierge service delivery process and outcome dimensions (Dabholkar, P.A. 1994). This approach enables a precise comprehension of the complexities involved while also guiding technology-based solutions' development and assessment aimed at enhancing both aspects of service delivery.

The techniques employed to gather data for this research comprised software testing and validation stage, semi-structured interviews, and group deliberations. The selection of these methods was based on their appropriateness in obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the information necessary to respond to the study's inquiries (Creswell, J. W. 2014).

2.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

To gather data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with two significant stakeholder groups: hotel guests and concierges. A total of 20 interviews took place, with eight among the former and twelve among the latter. The number of interviewees was determined based on data saturation principles, where conducting additional interviews no longer provides new insights (Saunders, M.N., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. 2018). During the interviews, constant analysis of data was performed to detect emerging themes and problems. After conducting 20 interviews we noticed that further questioning did not reveal any new insights or issues. This observation indicated that data saturation had been achieved in the research process.

The primary goal of the concierge interviews was to comprehend the obstacles encountered during their routine operations and delivery of services. The challenges encompassed management concerns concerning guest inquiries, communication with guests, as well as technology-related predicaments. To elicit comprehensive and detailed information regarding the concierges' encounters, obstacles, and viewpoints on how software applications could augment their service provision approaches, a series of interview questions were developed. The inquiries are structured into four primary domains guided by Dabholkar's taxonomy and previous studies centred on innovation in hospitality services, which are the following:

- *Concierge's Roles and Responsibilities:* Comprehending the duties and obligations of a concierge is crucial to comprehend how they accomplish their tasks on a day-to-day basis, as well as understanding their utilisation of technology (Bardi, J.A. 2011). This understanding facilitates placing their difficulties in context and initiating discussions regarding prospective software enhancements. For this section we have formulated the following open-ended questions:
  - Can you describe your daily tasks as a concierge?
  - What do you consider as the most important part of your job?
  - How do you currently use technology in your role?
- *Challenges and Difficulties:* Buhalis and Law suggest that recognizing the obstacles and complexities in providing services is essential to enhance service excellence (Buhalis, D. and Law, R. 2008). These inquiries intend to pinpoint aspects of service delivery that can be enhanced through software implementation. To facilitate a comprehensive discussion, we have devised the following open-ended inquiries for this section:
  - What are the common challenges you face while serving guests?
  - Can you describe a situation where you found it difficult to fulfil a guest's request?
  - How do these challenges impact your ability to deliver excellent service?
- *Technology Use and Perception:* Assessing the technology usage and outlook of concierges is crucial in determining their ability to leverage technology-based solutions (Sigala, M. 2003). Furthermore, it enables the identification of possible obstacles that may hinder software integration. In this portion, we have created the subsequent open-ended inquiries:
  - How comfortable are you with using technology in your role?
  - What technology tools or software are you currently using?
  - What are some of the pros and cons of using these technology tools?
  - Are there any tasks or processes that you wish could be automated or improved with software?
- *Suggestions for Improvement:* The contribution of concierges in enhancing the quality of their service with software is significant as they are the ones who utilise technology (Ivanov, S.H. and Webster, C. 2017). Thus, their feedback on characteristics that can enhance efficiency and customer contentment holds practical value. For this section we have formulated the following open-ended questions:
  - What features would you like to see in a software tool that would assist you in your role?
  - How do you think a well-designed software tool could improve guest experience?

The purpose of conducting interviews with hotel guests was to gain insights into their satisfaction levels, experiences and potential areas for improvement regarding the concierge services. Open-ended questions were utilised to gather diverse perspectives (Bryman, A. 2012). The interview questions were formulated to obtain comprehensive perspectives from hotel guests regarding their experiences with concierge services. Moreover, the questionnaire was categorised into four main groups based on Dabholkar's classification similar to the above case. The goal of these inquiries is to explore how software could enhance guest experiences by gaining insights from their expectations and opinions:

- *Experience with Concierge Services:* To gain insight into ways of enhancing concierge services, hospitality providers need to have a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and expectations that guests possess concerning such services (Buhalis, D. and Law, R. 2008). This forms the basis for their suggestions on how best to improve these amenities. To guide our inquiry, we have developed the subsequent open-ended queries:
    - Can you describe your typical interaction with the hotel concierge during your stay?
    - What do you expect from the concierge services when you stay in a hotel?
    - How do you currently use technology to interact with hotel services?
- *Satisfaction and Challenges:* Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry indicate that examining the challenges and opportunities of concierge services can uncover critical areas for advancement while providing insight into how these encounters affect a hotel guest's overall perception (Zeithaml, V.A., Parasuraman, A.P. and Berry, L.L. 1990). For this section we have formulated the following open-ended questions:
    - What were the most satisfying experiences you had with concierge services?
    - Have you ever experienced any difficulties or challenges with concierge services? Can you describe those situations?
    - How did these experiences influence your overall impression of the hotel?
- *Technology Use and Perception:* Gaining knowledge about how comfortable guests are with technology and their experience regarding it will help identify any potential obstacles or doubts they might have in hospitality settings (Law, R., Buhalis, D. and Cobanoglu, C. 2014). This information assists in determining the readiness of guests for solutions based on technology. The following open-ended query has been developed for this purpose:
    - How comfortable are you with using technology to interact with hotel services?
    - Can you describe any experiences where you used technology to access hotel services? What were the pros and cons of those experiences?
    - Do you feel that technology can replace personal interaction with hotel staff? Why or why not?
- *Suggestions for Improvement:* It is highly beneficial to collect feedback from guests about how software can enhance their interactions with concierge services, given that they are the primary users of such services (Ivanov, S.H. and Webster, C. 2017). Guests' input can lead to valuable recommendations for new features which would improve overall satisfaction and participation in these services. About this matter, we have devised open-ended queries as follows:
    - If there was a software tool to enhance your interaction with the concierge services, what features would you find helpful?
    - How do you think a well-designed software tool could improve your experience with hotel services?

The verbatim transcription of the interviews was analysed thematically using Braun and Clarke's approach to detect essential patterns and themes (Braun, V. and Clarke, V. 2006). Additionally, Dabholkar's theoretical framework facilitated an examination that distinguished process-related from outcome-related concerns in scrutinising the interview data.

2.3 Design and Categorization of Software Solutions

After analysing the difficulties and concerns highlighted in the interview process, possible software remedies were proposed. These remedies were developed to be smoothly integrated into current hotel procedures while offering guests a user-friendly experience.

The classification of every solution was conducted by applying Dabholkar's scheme, which involves categorising them based on whether they improve the efficiency and seamlessness of service delivery (process-related) or enhance guest satisfaction and engagement (outcome-related) (Dabholkar, P.A. 1994).

According to Hevner *et al.*, a collaboration between software developers, IT professionals, and the research team during design ensured that the resulting solutions were strong, viable, and suitable for their intended use (Hevner *et al.* 2014).

2.4 Focus Group Discussions and Software Testing

In the ultimate stage of data gathering, a focus group was established consisting of five participants that comprised both concierge staff and guests. The primary objective of this particular focus group was to evaluate the recommended software solutions in an environment that is regulated for testing purposes.

The software solutions were evaluated by the members of the focus group who actively used them. Feedback was collected through structured discussions, and this cyclical process facilitated ongoing improvements to enhance the effectiveness of the software in meeting both guest and concierge needs.

A quantitative analysis was employed to process the feedback obtained from the focus group. This involved using descriptive statistics to present data that showcased how effective the software solutions were in bridging the divide between hotel guests and concierge services. Overall, the rigorous methodology employed in this study ensured that every aspect of the research process was conducted meticulously and systematically. The study used both process-related and outcome-related categorization to classify the proposed software solutions.

3. Findings

The outcomes of the study can be presented in two main parts, namely discussions with hotel concierges and conversations with guests. These sections have been further classified utilising a thematic analysis methodology.

3.1 Findings from Concierge Interviews

Roles and Responsibilities: The concierges' everyday responsibilities revolve around customer satisfaction and involve a diverse set of duties. Among these tasks are arranging bookings for guests such as dining reservations, transportation arrangements and tours, providing details about points of interest in the vicinity while also resolving any concerns or issues raised by visitors.

Challenges and Difficulties: According to concierges, they face various hurdles in their job that includes handling a large number of guest requests during busy hours and managing requests beyond their knowledge or authority (like booking tables at popular restaurants). Additionally, staying informed about the latest happenings and updates within the locality can be arduous.

Technology Use and Perception: A majority of concierges utilise technology, such as property management systems and online resources for local knowledge. Although these technologies serve primarily administrative purposes rather than enhancing the guest experience.

Suggestions for Improvement: According to the concierges, there are various methods by which technology can enhance their productivity and guest satisfaction. These include utilising a centralised platform for handling guest requests, creating an up-to-date database of local knowledge that is easily accessible, and incorporating it with other hotel systems.

Table 1. Findings from Concierge Interviews Source: own creation

Themes	Description	Interview Quotes
Roles and Responsibilities	Tasks centred around customer service, logistics, problem-solving, and knowledge provision	I assist guests in booking services, provide information about the city, and help solve any issues they might have
Challenges and Difficulties	Difficulties managing high volume of guest requests, especially during peak times, and obtaining timely and accurate local information	During peak hours, it gets really challenging to manage all requests promptly
Technology Use and Perception	Use of property management systems and online resources for local information, but mainly for administrative purposes	We have a system for bookings, but it doesn't really enhance guest interaction
Suggestions for Improvement	Centralised system to manage guest requests, dynamic local	A software that can centralise guest requests and update local

Themes	Description	Interview Quotes
	information database, and integration with other hotel systems	information in real-time would be helpful

3.2 Findings from Guest Interviews

Experience with Concierge Services: Guests usually seek the concierge's assistance for suggestions, bookings, and travel arrangements. While many guests have positive views of personalised service from concierges, some may feel reluctant to request support as they perceive high demand on the concierge's time.

Satisfaction and Challenges: Although guests generally expressed satisfaction with concierge services, there were several cases where their expectations were not met due to service delays, miscommunication and insufficient knowledge. These problems occurred more frequently during peak periods and consequently resulted in a negative effect on the overall hotel experience.

Technology Use and Perception: Technology was widely used by hotel guests during their stay, although they still acknowledged the importance of personalised service provided by a human concierge. While guests were comfortable using technology for some tasks, it was not viewed as a complete replacement for person-to-person interaction with staff.

Suggestions for Improvement: Guests recommended various functionalities for a software tool, such as the capacity to submit requests from their handheld devices, availability of up-to-date local information at all times and an instant messaging feature that enables them to communicate directly with the concierge.

Table 2. Findings from Guest Interviews Source: own creation

Themes	Description	Interview Quotes
Experience with Concierge Services	Interaction with concierge for recommendations, reservations, and logistical support	I usually ask the concierge for restaurant recommendations and bookings
Satisfaction and Challenges	Positive experiences with personalised service, but issues with service delays and lack of information during peak times	Once, I had to wait quite long for my tour booking because the concierge was too busy
Technology Use and Perception	Comfort with using technology for hotel services, but belief that technology cannot fully replace personalised service	I use the hotel app for room service, but I prefer talking to the concierge for recommendations
Suggestions for Improvement	Software features for direct request making, real-time local information, and direct communication with the concierge	An app where I can make requests and chat with the concierge would be great

3.3 Identified Gaps from Interviews

Table 3 presents the principal gaps affecting guest requests, local information provision and technology use in service delivery. Concierges face difficulties managing high volumes of requests as well as staying current on local knowledge which results in guests experiencing delays or receiving inadequate information. Both concierges and guests acknowledge the potential for greater advancements made possible by integrating technology to improve hotel services further.

Table 3. Identified Gaps from Interviews Source: own creation

Issues and Challenges	From Concierge's Perspective	From Guest's Perspective
Managing Requests	Difficulty handling high volume of requests during peak times	Long waiting times to get requests processed
Access to Local Information	Difficulty staying updated with all local events and offerings	Limited or outdated information provided
Use of Technology	Current systems are administrative and don't enhance guest interaction	Desire for more seamless integration of technology into service provision

3.4 Findings from Focus Group Testing

To evaluate the suggested enhancements to the software, a focus group comprising both concierges and guests was established. The prototype software that includes features such as request management capabilities, an active local information database and seamless integration with existing hotel systems for service provision was demonstrated to the group. Thematic analysis of feedback was performed during the testing period to enhance comprehensibility and accuracy.

Table 4. Feedback from Focus Group Testing Source: own creation

Proposed Improvements	Feedback from Concierges	Feedback from Guests
Request Management Capabilities	Improved efficiency in handling requests; Reduced stress during peak times	Shorter waiting times; Appreciation for the ability to track their own requests
Dynamic Local Information Database	Ease in keeping updated with local events; Ability to provide more accurate information to guests	Appreciation for real-time local information; Enabled better trip planning
Integration with Existing Hotel Systems	Seamless interaction with other hotel services; Improved guest service	More convenient and cohesive service experience; Improved perception of the hotel's service quality

The proposed enhancements were favourably received by the focus group, according to Table 4. Both hotel guests and concierges appreciated the request management capabilities since they helped improve the effectiveness of their requests and reduced waiting time for services provided. Additionally, a dynamic local information database was well-received which assisted both guests and concierges; it offered precise data so that informed decisions could be made regarding trip-planning activities. The integration with present hotel systems increased convenience level, and enhanced cohesion among members as staff worked seamlessly together enhancing a streamlined customer service experience; this ultimately upgraded customers' perception towards high-end quality service rendered at the hotel premises.

The feedback implies that utilising software could effectively facilitate decreasing the distance between a hotel concierge and their guests. Notwithstanding, it is crucial to acknowledge that technology functions solely as an improvement to the service provider and must not substitute or supersede the personalised and interpersonal dimension of concierge services.

Analysis

The examination of the results obtained from this investigation provides an understanding of the intricate interaction between concierge personnel and hotel patrons, underscoring how technology has a significant part in this dynamic. Additionally, it highlights that there is still potential for technological advancements to improve their connection even more profoundly.

Inadequacies in service delivery highlight a gap between the operational difficulties faced by concierges and guest expectations. According to both parties, common challenges include request management, the accuracy of local information, and the usage of technology for service provision. These observations are consistent with the literature on hospitality services that emphasise the demanding nature of hotel operations (Kandampully, J. 2012).

The implementation of a software system was proposed as a potential remedy to address these challenges. Surprisingly, both concierges and customers showed openness to the concept of incorporating technology more extensively into their interactions with each other. This willingness to embrace technological innovation reflects an emerging trend in hospitality research that emphasises the ongoing digitalization of this sector (Neuhofer, B., Buhalis, D. and Ladkin, A. 2014; Ivanov, S.H. and Webster, C. 2017).

According to the feedback given by the participants, utilisation of the software has a promising capability in promoting efficiency, generating real-time information and delivering an uninterrupted service experience. These functionalities resonate with current efforts focused on incorporating technology towards achieving higher levels of personalization and effectiveness within service-oriented industries (Ozturk, A.B. 2016).

The assessment highlights the importance of adopting a well-balanced approach toward technology integration in the hotel industry. Although technological advancements can enhance operational efficiency and customer engagement, it should not diminish the significance of personalised human service provided by concierges - an essential feature highlighted by Mody *et al.*'s research findings (Mody, M., Suess, C. and Lehto, X.Y. 2017). This emphasis on balance is consistent with the scholarly debate surrounding the 'high-tech, high touch' paradox prevalent within hospitality literature as discussed by Huang and Rust (2018).

Moreover, the feedback gathered from the focus group highlights the significance of integrating software with current systems. Implementations that are disruptive or not user-friendly can lead to unfavourable outcomes by causing annoyance instead of facilitating service. Hence, any improvement in hotel technology, especially those related to concierge services should prioritise a guest and staff-friendly approach while being consistent with established procedures and practices (Buhalis, D. and Law, R. 2008).

The study corroborates the assumption that properly crafted software can improve the connection between guests and concierge. Additionally, it emphasises the crucial importance of preserving human interaction in hospitality services. The results propose a possible direction for future concierge services, which entails an integration of technology and personal service with empathy-driven implementation and design to achieve optimal outcomes. Such developments show potential but require careful consideration to ensure they yield positive effects on guest experiences.

Conclusion

The primary objective of this research was to examine the discrepancies between hotel concierges and guests, as well as analyse the feasibility of incorporating software technology to address these gaps. The results deduced from interview sessions and evaluation through a trial version offer significant insights that broaden our comprehension regarding intricate dynamics involved in interactions among hotel guests and their respective concierges.

Based on this study, it is apparent that the concierge and guests encounter difficulties in handling requests, providing local knowledge, and utilising technology. Notably, a positive inclination towards adopting technological advancements presents encouraging possibilities for enhancing the future of concierge services.

Undoubtedly, technology can aid in the smooth running of operations and improve customers' experience. However, it should not dismantle the fundamental concept of concierge services which is personalised touch. This human element cannot be overlooked as it forms an indispensable part of a guest's stay and constitutes the foundation of the hospitality industry.

The study highlights the significance of ensuring that newly introduced software blends smoothly with pre-existing hotel systems. The implementation of new software causing aggravation or complications could result in an unpleasant encounter for both guests and concierges, contradicting the main objective of enhancing service experience.

Moving ahead, this research serves as a basis for future investigations to expand upon. Subsequent studies could investigate the optimal design and implementation of technology that complements and enriches human service furnished by concierges. Further exploration into the ‘high-tech, high-touch’ dichotomy in the hospitality sector could be conducted simultaneously.

To summarise, the findings of this study emphasise that appropriately created software has the potential to significantly improve communication between hotel guests and concierges by tackling hindrances that arise often and streamlining service operations. Nevertheless, when introducing technological advancements in hotels, it should be done cautiously with a focus on user needs while recognizing the importance of human-centred personalization services. This harmonised strategy may set a solid foundation for an enhanced guest experience through improved concierge services.

Recommendations

After analysing and interpreting the results of this study, we suggest the subsequent suggestions:

1. Develop User-Focused Software: The potential for technology to improve the guest experience and facilitate concierge tasks is evident in the hospitality industry, as staff and guests are increasingly open to incorporating it into their interactions. A software solution designed around user needs can help bridge this gap by offering streamlined request management, real-time local information, and an intuitive interface that enhances communication between guests and concierge employees.

2. Maintain a Balance between Technology and Personal Service: Although technology has the potential to enhance service delivery and improve efficiency, it is crucial not to overlook the human component that comes with concierge services. Rather than replacing personnel, technological solutions should aim at supporting them in their roles as an integral part of hotels' guest experience management strategy. Huang and Rust recommend adopting a 'high-tech, high-touch' philosophy which ensures that while technology augments quality service provision, human interaction remains paramount.

3. Ensure Seamless Integration: It is crucial to ensure that any software proposed for implementation in hotels integrates smoothly with their existing systems and procedures. This step is necessary to prevent disruptions of present operations, which might result in frustrating experiences for hotel guests and concierge staff members.

4. User Training and Support: When implementing new technology in the hospitality industry, it is crucial to provide comprehensive training and assistance for both guests and concierges. This facilitates efficient navigation and usage of the software, leading to optimised advantages for users.

5. Continued Research and Improvement: To stay abreast of evolving guest and concierge needs, it is advisable to undertake ongoing research aimed at enhancing the efficacy of hotel software. Conducting regular feedback sessions and user experience studies are effective methods for accomplishing this goal.

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Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Norbert Forman: Conceptualization, Literature review, Methodology, Investigation, Data curation, Writing - original draft preparation, Writing - review and editing, Visualization, Project administration, and Supervision.
József Udvaros: Conceptualization, Literature review and Data processing.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Loans of Second-tier Banks and Their Impact on the Development of Tourism Industry

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Abstract:

Second-tier banks, often referred to as regional or local banks, play an important role in providing financial support and resources to various economic sectors, including tourism, as well, having both direct and indirect impacts on the growth and sustainability of these. The increasing contribution of the tourism industry to economic development necessitates a growing need for cooperation between different sectors - public, private and community - at all levels of service production, as it is a necessity for agreement and mutual complementation, considering the available opportunities and resources. Effective non-performing loan (NPL) management and support for the development of the tourism industry are important factors in ensuring the stability and sustainable growth of the tourism sector in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The impact of tourism on consumer lending is expressed in expanding the availability of tourism services, stimulating the development of the tourism industry and innovative financial solutions. This provides tourists with the opportunity to implement their travel plans, and also contributes to the development of the economy and the financial sector as a whole.

Keywords: tourism industry; credit resources; tourism; economic sustainability.

JEL Classification: G21; Z32; R11.

Introduction

The growth of international travel and domestic tourism is driving demand for a variety of tourism services, including accommodation, transportation, food and entertainment. However, the implementation of many tourism plans can be hampered by a lack of own financial resources. In recent years, consumer lending has become increasingly popular among vacationers and travelers. Providing loans for the purchase of travel services and goods such as flights, tours, hotel rooms and additional services allows tourists to spread their spending over a longer period of time. This makes it possible to realize the dream of a trip, despite financial constraints.

The influence of tourism on consumer lending is manifested in several aspects. Firstly, the development of the tourism industry contributes to the growth of the supply of financial services related to consumer lending. Banks and financial institutions are actively developing specialized lending programs, offering tourists convenient conditions for paying for their travels. Tourists can choose between different types of loans such as credit cards, installments and other financial products that provide flexibility and convenience in paying for travel expenses. Secondly, consumer lending stimulates the development of the tourism industry, as it expands the availability and access to tourism services for a wide range of people. Many travel companies and businesses offer special financial packages and promotions with low interest rates or deferred payment to attract more customers and increase sales. Tourism enterprises can also cooperate with financial institutions to offer their customers special credit conditions. The third aspect of the impact of tourism on consumer lending is the stimulation of innovation in the financial sector. The development of tourism requires continuous improvement of financial instruments and services in order to meet the needs and preferences of tourists. Financial institutions and technology companies are developing new digital solutions and payment systems that make it easier to get loans and manage finances while traveling.

Thus, the impact of tourism on consumer lending is expressed in expanding the availability of tourism services, stimulating the development of the tourism industry and innovative financial solutions. This provides tourists with the opportunity to implement their travel plans, and also contributes to the development of the economy and the financial sector as a whole.

Second-tier banks can offer financial services to smaller businesses, start-ups, and local enterprises that may have difficulty accessing loans from larger, national banks. This inclusivity can benefit smaller players in the tourism industry, such as local tour operators, guesthouses, and small-scale attractions. These financial institutions offer loans to local entrepreneurs and SMEs looking to establish or grow their tourism-related businesses, contributing to economic diversification and local employment. Providing loans that cater to the unique needs of the tourism industry, they contribute to economic growth, job creation, infrastructure development, and regional prosperity. Their local focus and understanding of the tourism landscape enable them to be valuable partners in driving the success of tourism-related ventures.

4. Literature Review

Under the influence of globalization and integration of the world economy, as well as the deepening of economic, political, cultural and social interaction, tourism acts as a form of foreign economic activity. In this regard, there is a need to assess the sustainability of the development of regions and create a system of indicators that affect the development of tourism. Such a system of indicators serves as a tool for unifying and systematizing tourism management processes.

Researchers, such as Abozhina (2018), are actively paying attention to the issues of revolutionary development of the hospitality industry, which give us an understanding that the renewal of traditional service sectors, the introduction of trade and purchasing procedures with related financial and logistical operations, as well as changing consumption patterns under the influence of information technology and digital transformation of economic processes create the basis for the formation of new markets, conditions and approaches to analysis, forecasting and management decisions Digital platforms are becoming key channels of interaction with customers and transactions, as well as a means of developing innovative business models, including tourism.

Innovation analysis in the tourism industry addresses a variety of challenges related to both improving the satisfaction of the cultural needs of the population and enabling the innovation of business entities (Hao and Liu, 2018).

Musavengane (2019) are among the authors who gave birth to the concept of responsible tourism, which is extolled as a sure way for tourism to be not only profitable but also sustainable. In their research, scholars focus on aspects such as the specialization of national economies and the prevalence of transnational corporations, entrepreneurship and business development and growth. They discuss the impact of these factors on attracting managers, representatives of large corporations and small private businesses who are looking for new promising partnerships and niches to develop their businesses, including tourism (Myratdurdyev and Doroshenko 2018). Features of the emerging market of apartments as part of the hotel services market are analyzed in the works of Tanina *et al.* (2020), and others. The efficacy of implementing management decisions targeted at the advancement of the tourism industry is intricately tied to the state of hotel development, the quality of infrastructure, and the level of service excellence within specific regions of the country.

In accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated June 13, 2001 № 211-II 'On tourism activity in the Republic of Kazakhstan' (as amended and supplemented as of 04.07.2021) tourism includes two main types – inbound and outbound tourism (with amendments and additions as of 04.07.2021) tourism includes two main types – inbound and outbound tourism. Thanks to advances in transportation and technology, as well as improved living conditions, it is possible to change consumer patterns and priorities of people, including in developing countries. Tourism creates linkages between different sectors of the economy and its development contributes to the spread of economic impact.

Li *et al.* (2019) in their study remark that the provision of tourism resources is the basis and potential for tourism development. Optimal distribution of financial resources can guide the optimal distribution of social resources and increase the efficiency of resource use.

The role of the digital economy in economic transformation is becoming more and more noticeable (Chen *et al.* 2023 and Tian *et al.* 2021). Financial products that combine online standardization and regional customization can provide a more convenient payment method, more efficient workflow, and lower cost credit products for consumers and service providers in the industry chain (Huang and Hao 2021).

Modern financial institutions and Internet companies are actively introducing advanced technologies such as big data, IoT, cloud computing, blockchain and artificial intelligence into their activities. These innovative technologies are being used to create new financial business models in tourism industry that include finance, payments and investments.

Combining digital technologies with opportunities for tourism industry, has an important role in the development of consumption and tourism management. They allow the use of related technologies to create profiles of potential tourists and develop financial products and services based on traveler preferences. Talking about digital technologies we have to evidenced also the fact that data-driven enhance sustainable travel experience providing valuable insights that empower travelers, communities, and decision-makers to work together, make informed decisions, develop targeted strategies, and drive positive change (Nicola-Gavrilă 2023). Digital finance covers the entire process of tourism consumption, increasing the efficiency of payments and enriching the travel experience. They also provide value-added services to customers, including installments, insurance, and tourism-related financial products. Through the provision of information services in the tourism industry, digital financial platforms help tourism companies reduce operating costs and avoid risks.

Here, by right, the effective use of financial resources in general, including credit resources, requires great attention. Therefore, the effect of the financial tool is undoubtedly associated with the formation and orientation of the use of financial resources on the basis of numerous methods that affect the risks. Tourism, by and large, involves huge financial resources in its development from various sources that are prioritized like budget funds, bank loans, attracted investments, insurance, stock market funds, etc. (Kurmanalina *et al.* 2023)

Most travel companies are small and medium-sized businesses and often lack the collateral required for credit checks against traditional financial standards. Therefore, they experience difficulties in obtaining financing for their business activities. Currently, digital finance is able to accurately analyze risk and provide loans to customers using big data and financial models. This responds to the financial needs of tourism companies and encourages more tourism practitioners to join in innovation to improve the efficiency of the tourism industry.

Currently, the tourism business model is at the stage of integrating scientific and technological achievements, creativity and tourism. Cloud computing, big data and other new technologies are playing a key role in providing high quality information and reducing the cost of obtaining the necessary information for tourism innovation. The continuous reduction of marginal costs allows you to combine various aspects of tourism activities and make optimal decisions in the field of distribution (Jing and Sun 2019).

Digital finance facilitates the simplification of financial relationships between providers of various types of services, such as food, hotels, transportation, travel, shopping and entertainment. They also contribute to continuous innovation on the part of suppliers and the provision of diverse and personalized services to customers in real time.

In addition, tourism can stimulate the development of micro and small businesses in the tourism sector. Microfinance and small business programs can be aimed at supporting entrepreneurs who want to start or develop their own business in the tourism sector, such as opening a hotel, restaurant or travel agency. Thus, tourism has a positive impact on the development of lending programs, providing opportunities for financing various aspects of the tourism industry and stimulating entrepreneurial activity in this area.

The possibility to turn the young market of tourist destinations in Kazakhstan into a strong and profitable enterprise, capable of exporting its services, is quite realistic under the condition of strict compliance with market rules, providing acceptable management and control, thus creating a unique opportunity to pay attention to the possibility of ensuring the reputation of the RK in the world market of tourism industry.

However, the successful transformation of Kazakhstan into a tourist destination requires effective management and control. This includes creating a favorable business environment for investors in the tourism industry, developing marketing and promotion strategies, and establishing proper standards and certifications to ensure the quality of services. In addition, it is important to ensure a balanced development of tourism, taking into account the needs and interests of the population, developing the financial market and tools through which lending programs and operations related to this industry will be developed. Given these factors, Kazakhstan can effectively use its potential and strive to develop tourism as an economic growth factor. Market management and compliance with the rules will allow the country to create a solid foundation for the development of the tourism industry, attract more investment and improve its reputation in the international arena.

Thus, the impact of loans on the development of the tourism industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan (RK) has a significant impact on its dynamics and prospects. Loans from second-tier banks can be used to invest in the creation, modernization and development of tourism infrastructure, including hotels, resorts, entertainment venues and other facilities. This contributes to improving the quality and diversity of offerings for tourists. Loan financing supports small and medium-sized enterprises in the tourism sector, including tour operators, travel agencies, restaurants and other services. This contributes to job creation, diversity of the tourism product and increased economic activity. Loans can support innovative ideas in tourism, including the introduction of new technologies, the development of interesting tourist routes and the formation of unique tourist products.

5. Financing Tourism-Related Businesses

Borrowing from second-tier banks, commonly referred to as commercial banks, can wield a substantial influence on the advancement of the tourism sector. Tourism-related businesses, such as hotels, resorts, travel agencies, and entertainment venues, often require significant capital investments for expansion, renovation, or launching new ventures. These businesses identify their financial needs to enhance their offerings and competitiveness in the tourism market, obtain upgraded facilities, services, and improved marketing strategies. All these can lead to increased visitor satisfaction, longer stays, and higher occupancy rates. This, in turn, positively impacts the local economy and the overall tourism ecosystem. As tourism-related businesses grow due to loan-supported investments, they contribute to the overall economic health of the region. Increased spending on accommodations, dining, shopping, and entertainment creates a ripple effect that benefits various sectors of the local economy.

However, it should be noted that the use of loans requires a responsible approach to avoid overspending and non-payments, which can negatively affect the financial stability and sustainability of the tourism industry.

Consumer lending can affect tourism in the Republic of Kazakhstan in the following ways:

- Contributes to the development of domestic tourism;
- Promotes the development of external tourism;
- Development of infrastructure.

Consumer lending can stimulate an increase in the purchasing power of the population and an increase in living standards, which, in turn, can lead to an increase in demand for tourism services within the country. Thanks to the availability of loans, people can afford to pay for travel, accommodation, excursions and other travel services. According to the findings from the year 2022, the collective count of tourists who explored the resort regions of Kazakhstan reached a sum of 2,728,600 individuals. This figure represents a notable surge of 34.6% in comparison to the analogous period in 2021, during which there were 2,027,300 visitors. On average, each tourist who journeyed to the Republic of Kazakhstan expended approximately 27,086 Kazakhstani tenge on paid services. This computation was derived from information collected across 19 distinct resort zones.

Significant disparities were observed in the expenditures across various resort areas:

- Shchuchinsko-Borovsky Resort Zone: This locale demonstrated particularly substantial spending levels, with each person expending an average of 50,067 Kazakhstani tenge.
- Baikonur Tourist Zone: In contrast, the Baikonur tourist zone recorded the lowest spending level, with an average expenditure of merely 4,387 Kazakhstani tenge per individual.

These statistics underscore the varied financial outlays associated with visiting different resort areas within Kazakhstan. Factors such as the amenities, attractions, and overall tourism infrastructure of each zone contribute to the differing spending patterns observed. The information gleaned from these figures provides valuable insights for both policymakers and stakeholders, enabling them to tailor strategies and investments to optimize the economic impact of tourism in each respective region (Table 1).

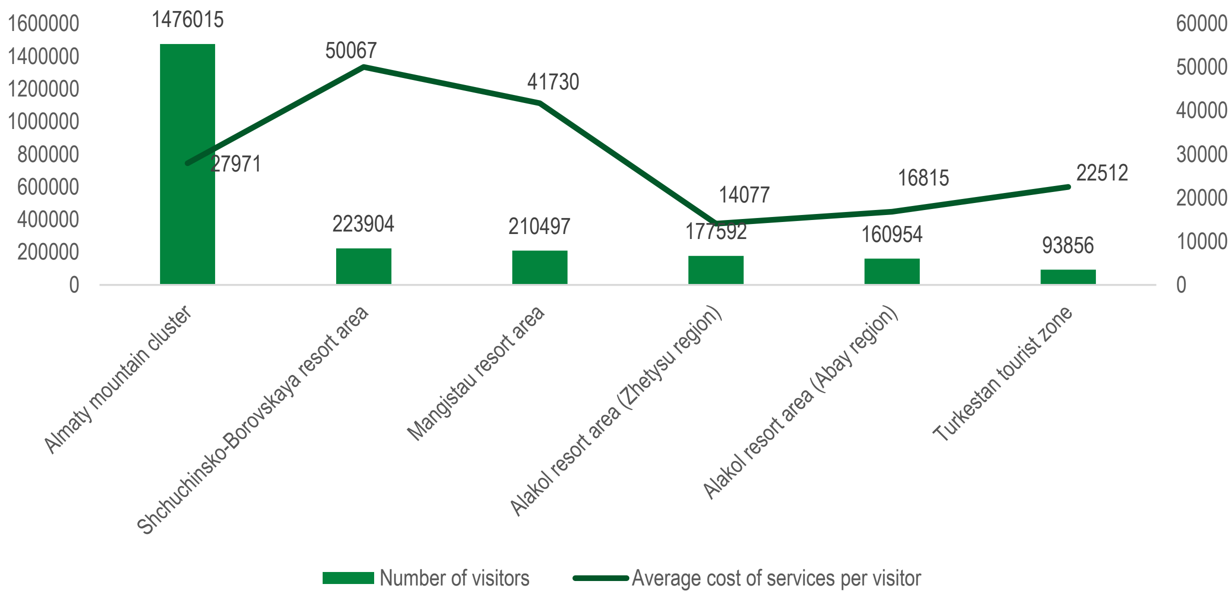
Table 1. Tourism development indicators, Republic of Kazakhstan, 2020-2022

Indicator	01.01.2021	9 months 2021	01.01.2022
Visitors served, thousand people	1,683.0	2,027.3	2,632.9
Volume of rendered services, million tenge	33,582.1	42,764.9	58,021.4
Number of placements, units	1,467	1,573	1,575
Number of rooms, units	38,417	40,002	39,690

Source: https://bizmedia.kz/

The average cost of services provided by resort areas amounted to 27,086 tenge per visitor. The graph showing the top resort areas by the number of visitors by the end of 2022 is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Top resort areas by visitors at the end of 2022



Source: https://bizmedia.kz/

During the span from 2019 to 2021, the allocation of state funds toward priority development projects through the Credit and Financial Leasing Mechanism garnered considerable significance, totaling a substantial sum of 16,732.8 million Kazakhstani tenge. This financing was executed by means of entering into credit and leasing agreements. The distribution of state financing across these three years is as follows: 2019: Seven projects were successfully executed, collectively amounting to a value of 10,109.1 million tenge; 2020: The following year witnessed the implementation of eleven projects, with a cumulative worth of 4,243.7 million tenge; 2021: In this year, state funding supported the realization of seven projects, aggregating to a total of 2,380.0 million tenge. These investments are indicative of the government's strategic commitment to fostering economic development through the facilitation of key projects. The Credit and Financial Leasing Mechanism serves as a conduit for channeling financial support into various sectors, thereby contributing to the nation's growth, innovation, and enhanced economic opportunities.

Consumer lending can encourage people to travel abroad, as they can use credit funds to pay for travel services abroad. This can contribute to the growth of inbound tourism and the development of the tourism industry in the country. Table 2 presents data characterizing the volume of services provided by accommodation places in the regional aspect of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Table 2)

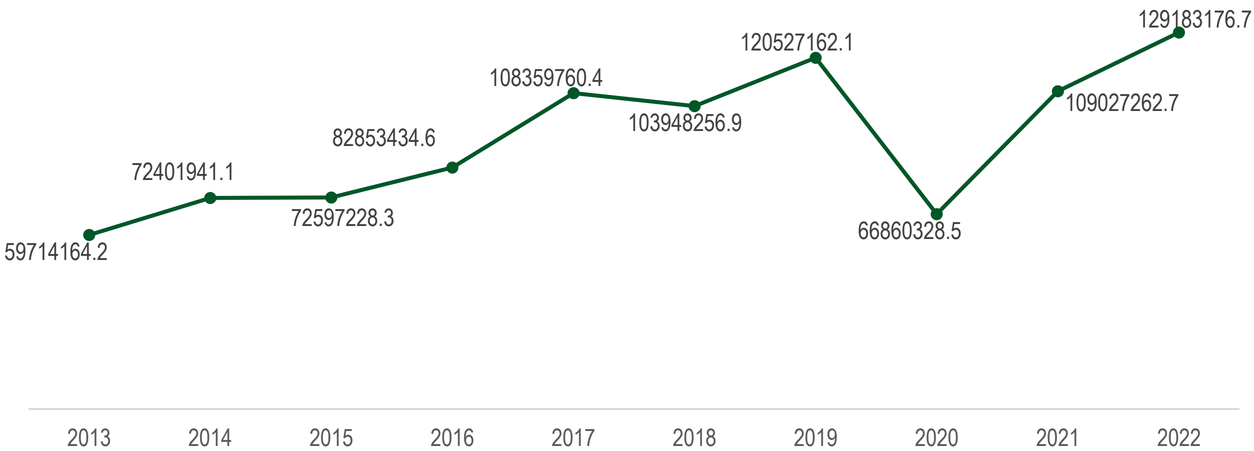
Table 2. Volume of services rendered by accommodation places by regions, Kazakhstan, thousand tenge

Region	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Akmola				-	3,552,517.9
Aktuibinsk	6,314,471.2	7,527,645.2	6,421,629.3	10,522,812.7	12,843,773.9
Almaty	2,038,369.1	2,178,368.8	1,100,896.2	2,243,015.4	2,254,754.2
Atyrau	9,783,415.5	9,722,946.4	5,321,254.4	8,441,135.9	5,371,264.6
West Kazakhstan	7,530,273.5	8,124,163.0	3,233,350.2	1,674,958.5	3,625,910.1
Zhambyl	2,701,254.7	3,154,681.9	1,987,619.9	3,165,256.7	2,681,374.0
Zhetysu					3,733,882.4
Karaganda	4,932,393.4	2,975,895.8	4,626,332.6	3,951,061.2	4,310,831.4
Kostanay	1,837,835.9	980,248.1	1,841,118.0	1,824,916.8	1,727,232.8
Kyzylorda	1,084,746.7	723,520.1	1,100,200.4	896,456.7	975,472.8
Mangistau	5,136,245.4	4,378,018.1	7,250,133.2	9,020,258.7	4,923,660.8
South Kazakhstan	3,367,502.4	1,344,993.3	2,369,328.3	2,740,650.7	2,130,571.5
Pavlodar	1,248,953.5	681,780.6	1,399,319.5	1,240,148.4	1,138,760.3
North Kazakhstan	4,932,393.4	2,975,895.8	4,626,332.6	3,951,061.2	4,310,831.4
Turkestan					3,965,004.7
Ulytau					271,575.9
East Kazakhstan	6,338,781.3	3,307,944.0	5,618,167.8	3,815,796.9	5,889,224.5
Astana city	26,114,387.0	11,564,321.7	10,289,103.1	23,649,859.3	22,829,527.6
Almaty city	32,293,595.3	16,806,510.6	7,908,836.2	37,040,234.8	25,710,759.7
Shymkent city	3,260,534.6	4,128,738.6	3,746,073.5	5,232,079.1	5,331,592.9

Source: https://www.stat.gov.kz

In general, the situation in Kazakhstan is as follows (Figure 2).

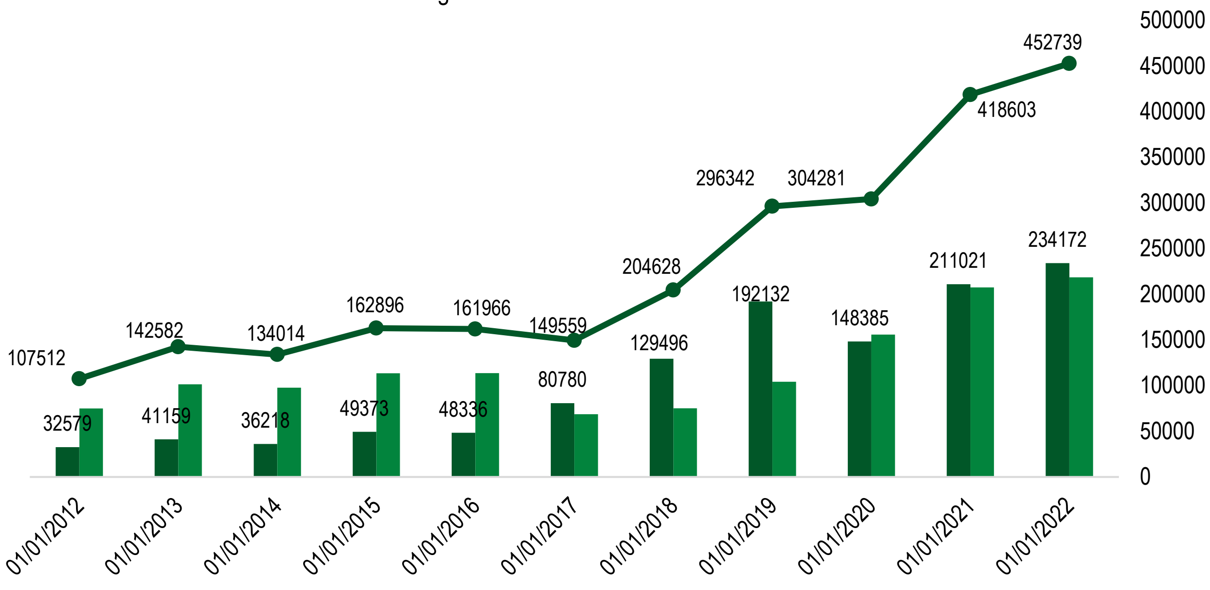
Figure 2. The volume of services provided by accommodation places, Republic of Kazakhstan, thousand tenge



Source: https://www.stat.gov.kz

An increase in consumer lending can stimulate investment in the development of tourism infrastructure such as hotels, restaurants, entertainment complexes and tourist facilities. Due to the availability of financial resources, entrepreneurs can implement projects to create and improve tourism infrastructure, which contributes to the development of the tourism sector as a whole (Figure 3).

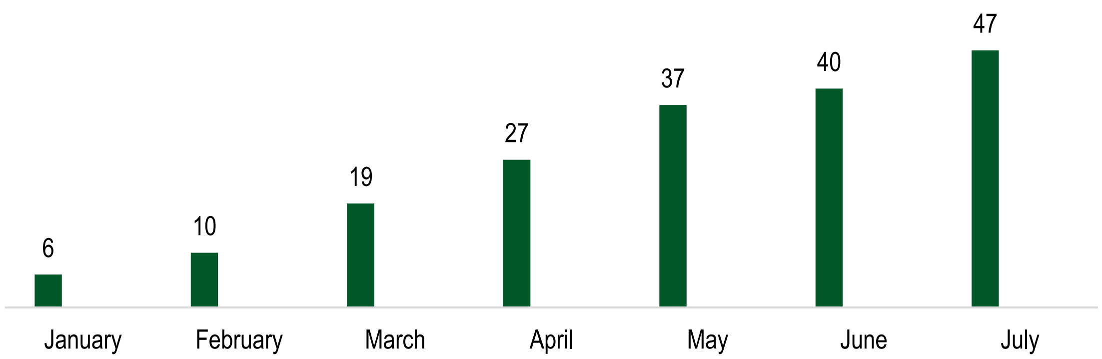
Figure 3. Innovative finance in tourism



Source: https://www.stat.gov.kz

According to the eQonaq information system, since the beginning of 2023, 195,149 foreign tourists have visited the country (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Number of foreign tourists arriving since the beginning of 2022, thousand people

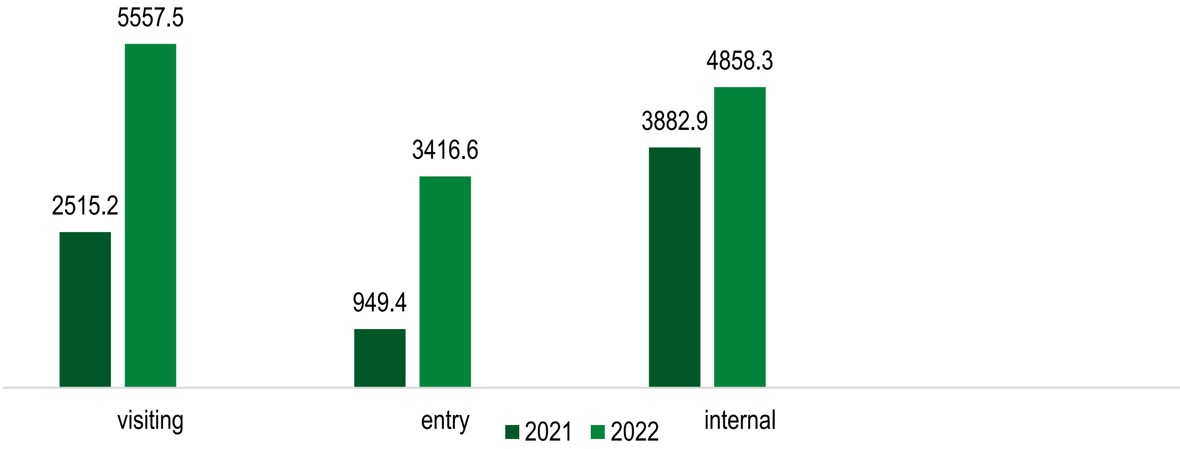


Source: https://forbes.kz/

The upswing in inbound tourism can be attributed to several key factors, with the most noteworthy being the amelioration of the circumstances surrounding the coronavirus pandemic. The removal of travel restrictions subsequently facilitated increased international travel, resulting in heightened inbound tourist numbers. In contrast, the phenomenon of outbound tourism within Kazakhstan exhibited remarkable growth during 2022. Over the initial nine months of the year, a notable 6 million citizens of the country embarked on international travels. This figure represents a substantial increase of 2.2 times in comparison to the same period in the preceding year.

Concurrently, the number of domestic tourists within the Republic of Kazakhstan witnessed a significant surge of 25.1%. This upswing underscores the heightened interest and engagement of local residents in exploring their own country. The cumulative figure of domestic tourists for the year reached an impressive 4.9 million individuals, as illustrated in Figure 5. These trends reflect the dynamic shifts in travel patterns and preferences, highlighting the multifaceted impact of global events on the tourism industry. The interplay between inbound and outbound tourism, as well as the burgeoning interest in domestic exploration, contributes to the overall tapestry of tourism dynamics within Kazakhstan.

Figure 5. Number of visitors served by types of tourism, thousand people



Source: http://www.stat.gov.kz

Kazakhstan has a huge potential for the development of new tourist products and can take a significant place on the world tourist map, as it has all the necessary basic prerequisites: favorable geopolitical location, richness of natural and recreational resources, cultural and historical heritage. In this regard, new businesses are starting to emerge in the sectors of restaurant, sports, cultural, souvenir and trade business. This promotes extensive infrastructure development beyond the narrow scope of tourism, contributing to the growth of related industries and improving the economic situation of the regions. The increase in the number of tourists caused by consumer lending can contribute to the growth of the regional economy. Visiting tourists spend money on accommodation, food, entertainment and shopping, which creates additional income for local businesses and residents. This can contribute to the development of local communities and increase the level of well-being.

6. Provided Tourism Services based on Loans of Second-tier Banks

The prevailing trajectory of tourism development underscores its escalating influence on the global economy and on the economies of individual nations. Within this paradigm, tourism is acknowledged as a substantial sector within national economies, dedicated to fulfilling the distinctive requirements of individuals during leisure and journeys. A pronounced correlation exists between the progression of the tourism industry and broader economic, technological, social, and innovative advancements. In this landscape, hospitality entities are urged to intensify their endeavors to enhance the caliber of their offered services. This enhancement is firmly rooted in innovative management strategies that facilitate collaboration with various stakeholders and participants in the tourism ecosystem.

However, it must be taken into account that consumer lending can also have negative consequences, such as an increase in debt, financial difficulties for borrowers, and risks of non-payment. Therefore, it is important to ensure responsible lending, debt control and financial literacy of the population in order to prevent possible negative consequences.

Let us put forward a hypothesis that the growth in the volume of services in the field of tourism services may lead to the need to develop credit resources, which are important for the development of the tourism industry. To do this, consider the forecast values of such an indicator as the volume of services provided in the tourism industry, the results of which are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Forecast values of the indicator the volume of services provided in the tourism industry, 2023-2025

Forecast	2023	2024	2025
Trend	124,598,056.3	130,425,471.8	136,252,887.2
Growth	127,031,863.7	135,363,494.4	144,241,571.3
Prediction	124,598,056.3	130,425,471.8	136,252,887.2
Linear	124,598,056.3	130,425,471.8	136,252,887.2

Source: compiled by authors

The conclusions of the results of the calculations made are shown below in the Table 3.

Table 3. Regression statistics. Results

Multiple R	0.719468082						
R-square	0.517634321						
Normal R-square	0.457338611						
Standard error	18,064,861.13						
Obs.	10						
Analysis of variance							
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F		
Regression	1	2.8016E+15	2.8E+15	8.584928	0.018998		
Remainder	8	2.61071E+15	3.26E+14				
Total	9	5.41231E+15					
Coefficient		standard error	t-Statistic	P-value	min 95%	max 95%	max 95,0%
Y-intersection	-11,664,263,331	4,012,560,897	-2.90694	0.019681	-2.1E+10	-2.4E+09	-2.4E+09
Variable X1	5,827,415.416	1,988,875.752	2.930005	0.018998	1,241,060	10,413,771	10,413,771

Based on the predictive results obtained using regression analysis, the hypothesis put forward by the authors was proved and several reasons were identified why this might be important, letting the industry to effectively respond to growing demand and improve its competitiveness.

- Allow investment in infrastructure, such as the construction and modernization of hotels, airports, transport networks and other facilities necessary to serve tourists. Credit resources can be used to finance such investments and provide the necessary funds for the development of tourism infrastructure;
- The growth in demand for tourism services can stimulate the development of tourism enterprises such as travel agencies, hotels, restaurants and entertainment companies. Loan resources can help these businesses expand their operations, improve service quality, purchase new equipment, or expand their customer base.
- Intense marketing and promotional activities to attract tourists. Credit resources can be used to finance marketing campaigns, advertising, participation in exhibitions and other activities aimed at attracting tourists.
- Develop new tourist destinations. Credit resources can be used to finance and develop new projects, such as the creation of tourist routes, the development of excursion programs or the organization of specialized events for tourists.

Conclusion

In conclusion, loans from second-tier banks play a critical role in the development of the tourism industry by providing financial accessibility, fostering local economic growth, supporting SMEs, facilitating infrastructure development, and contributing to the sustainability and resilience of the sector. The partnership between second-tier banks and the tourism industry is instrumental in achieving a well-rounded, dynamic, and sustainable tourism landscape. Finally, it should be emphasized that the role of loans from second-tier commercial banks is key in promoting the development of the tourism industry. They provide financial accessibility, help to stimulate local economic growth and support the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in this field.

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Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Ainur Myrzhykbayeva: the second-tier banks' lending and their impact on the development of tourism industry in the Republic of Kazakhstan is considered. The impact of tourism on consumer lending is expressed in expanding the availability of tourist services, stimulating the development of the tourism industry and innovative financial solutions. This provides tourists with an opportunity to realize their travel plans, as well as contributes to the development of the economy and the financial sector as a whole.

Kalamkas Rakhimzhanova: the relevance of the study aimed at the development of the tourism industry is substantiated. Tourism creates links between different sectors of the economy, and its development contributes to the spread of economic effects.
Ruslana Ichshanova: considered the research of foreign authors on the impact of tourism on the development of lending programs. Banks and financial institutions can develop specialized lending programs for tourism enterprises, helping them to expand their activities and improve the quality of services offered.
Arnagul Tishtykbaeva: it is revealed that due to its geopolitically favorable location, natural and recreational resources, cultural and historical heritage of the world level, Kazakhstan has the potential for the development of new tourism products and can become one of the major players on the world tourist map, as it meets all the necessary basic conditions.
Zagira Iskakova: description of the results of the study, which indicates the development of credit resources that can contribute to the growth and development of the tourism industry, providing the necessary funding for investment, enterprise development, marketing and improving the qualifications of personnel.
Anna Legostayeva: gives conclusions about the mechanism of management of problem loans of second-tier banks, which play an important role in the development of the tourism industry.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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A Systematic Guide for Conducting Thematic Analysis in Qualitative Tourism Research

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Abstract: Thematic analysis is a widely used method for analyzing qualitative data in social sciences research. This research article provides a step-by-step guide on conducting thematic analysis manually, emphasizing the importance of understanding the process for researchers seeking a deeper grasp of the nuances involved. The article highlights the key steps, including familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing and refining them, defining and naming the themes, and producing a final report. Through iterative reading, note-taking, and coding techniques, researchers can delve deep into the data, capture meaningful details, and uncover rich insights. Thematic analysis offers a valuable avenue for developing theoretical understanding, generating nuanced interpretations, and contributing to knowledge advancement in tourism research. The article also discusses the relevance and adaptability of thematic analysis in various qualitative research designs and methodologies. By prioritizing transparency, rigor, and a manual coding approach, researchers can ensure the validity and reliability of their thematic analysis, leading to robust and insightful findings.

Keywords: thematic analysis; social sciences; inductive research; manual coding; transparency.

JEL Classification: L83; L89; Z32; I29.

Introduction

Thematic analysis serves as a powerful and widely used method for analysing qualitative data in social sciences research, including tourism (Brady, 2015; Kiger and Varpio, 2020). As an inductive approach, it allows researchers to uncover and interpret the patterns, themes, and meanings embedded within the data, facilitating a deeper understanding of the research phenomenon (Braun and Clarke, 2022; Byrne, 2022). By identifying and organizing these recurring themes, thematic analysis enables researchers to extract rich and nuanced insights from their qualitative data, ultimately contributing to theory development, evidence-based decision-making, and advancements in knowledge within the social sciences (Braun and Clarke, 2019). Its adaptability to different research contexts and compatibility with diverse theoretical frameworks make thematic analysis a versatile tool that can be applied across a range of qualitative research designs and methodologies (Campbell *et al.*, 2021; Braun and Clarke, 2022).

The primary objective of this article is to provide researchers with a step-by-step guide on conducting thematic analysis manually. While the availability of software tools for qualitative analysis has increased (Kuckartz *et al.*, 2019), understanding the manual process is crucial for researchers seeking a deeper grasp of the nuances and complexities involved in thematic analysis (Williams and Moser, 2019). This guide aims to equip researchers, particularly those new to qualitative research or thematic analysis, with the necessary knowledge and practical skills to embark on their analysis journey confidently. By focusing on the manual coding approach, researchers will be able to gain insights into the underlying principles and techniques inherent in thematic analysis (and thus, fostering a deeper connection with their research and enriching the overall analytical process).

1. Qualitative Research: An Overview

Qualitative research is an exploratory research approach that focuses on understanding the subjective experiences, meanings, and interpretations of individuals within their natural settings (Aspers and Corte, 2019;

Casula *et al.,* 2021). Qualitative research aims to generate new theories or refine existing ones through an inductive process of theory development (Grodal *et al.*, 2021; Stahl and King, 2020). Unlike quantitative research, which emphasizes numerical data and hypothesis testing, qualitative research delves into the richness and complexity of human phenomena, embracing open-ended questions and capturing the context-specific nature of social interactions (Palys and Atchison, 2021). By adopting an inductive approach, qualitative research allows theories to emerge from the data itself, rather than imposing preconceived notions onto the research process (Mees-Buss *et al.,* 2022; Baghel and Pradhan, 2022). This inductive reasoning enables researchers to explore diverse perspectives, uncover unexpected insights, and generate nuanced understandings of social phenomena, thus contributing to the advancement of knowledge in the social sciences (Post *et al.,* 2020).

Qualitative research plays a vital role in the social sciences by providing a comprehensive understanding of complex social phenomena (Rashid *et al.*, 2019; Sebele-Mpofu, 2020). It allows researchers to explore the subjective realities, meanings, and experiences of individuals, groups, and communities, shedding light on the intricacies of human behavior, social interactions, and societal dynamics (Grodal *et al.*, 2021; Stahl and King, 2020). By embracing a holistic and contextualized perspective, qualitative research can capture the multifaceted nature of social phenomena that quantitative methods alone may not capture (Åkerblad *et al.*, 2021). It offers unique insights into the social and cultural factors that shape individuals' thoughts, beliefs, and actions, as well as the social structures and power dynamics that influence societal processes (Åkerblad *et al.,* 2021). Ultimately, qualitative research contributes to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of human behavior and societal issues, informing policy development, interventions, and social change in the social sciences (Wilson and Cariola, 2020).

2. Thematic Analysis: A Rich Analysis Method for Qualitative Data

Thematic analysis stands out as a highly suitable method for analyzing qualitative data due to its flexibility and adaptability across various research contexts (Braun and Clarke, 2019; Braun and Clarke, 2022). It offers a systematic and rigorous approach to uncovering patterns, themes, and meanings within qualitative data, making it particularly well-suited for exploratory research, theory development, and understanding complex phenomena (Braun and Clarke, 2019; Byrne, 2022). Thematic analysis allows researchers to delve deep into the data, enabling a comprehensive exploration of participants' perspectives and experiences (Braun and Clarke, 2022). Moreover, it provides a structured framework for organizing and interpreting qualitative data, ensuring that valuable insights are not overlooked (Neuendorf, 2018). The iterative nature of thematic analysis allows for a dynamic and evolving understanding of the data, facilitating the exploration of multiple layers of meaning and enabling researchers to capture the complexity inherent in human experiences (Javadi and Zarea, 2016). These characteristics make thematic analysis a versatile method that can be applied to a wide range of qualitative research designs and data types, contributing to its widespread use and relevance in the social sciences (Braun and Clarke, 2014; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017).

Thematic analysis possesses several key attributes that make it a valuable method for capturing rich and nuanced data, facilitating theory development in qualitative research (Braun and Clarke, 2022). Firstly, thematic analysis allows for flexibility in its application, accommodating different theoretical frameworks and research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2014). Researchers have the freedom to identify and explore themes that emerge directly from the data, without being constrained by preconceived categories or hypotheses. This flexibility allows for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Secondly, thematic analysis enables the identification and interpretation of patterns and themes that may not be readily apparent through other methods, allowing for the uncovering of hidden or novel insights (Braun and Clarke, 2014). This richness of data contributes to a deeper understanding of the research topic and supports theory generation (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Finally, thematic analysis provides researchers with a structured approach to analyze and interpret qualitative data, facilitating the development of theoretical explanations or models that account for the complexity of social phenomena (Braun and Clarke, 2014). The identification and exploration of themes can lead to the formulation of new theories or the refinement of existing ones, advancing knowledge within the social sciences (Braun and Clarke, 2019; Byrne, 2022).

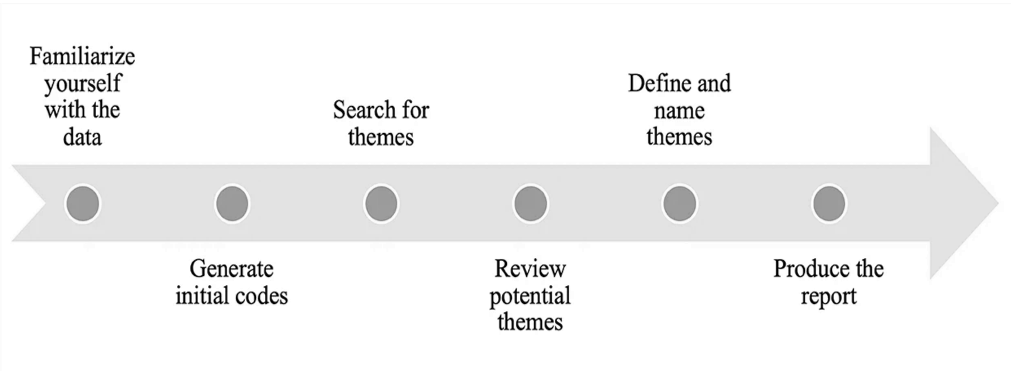
3. Key Steps in Conducting Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis involves a systematic process of analyzing qualitative data to identify patterns, themes, and meanings. According to Braun and Clarke (2014), there are six key steps in conducting thematic analysis. The first step is familiarization with the data, where researchers immerse themselves in the qualitative data, reading and re-reading it to gain a comprehensive understanding. Next, researchers generate initial codes, systematically labeling interesting features, patterns, or ideas that emerge from the data. The third step involves searching for themes, organizing and collating the codes into potential themes, identifying similarities, differences, and connections among them. In the fourth step, researchers review and refine the themes, ensuring they accurately represent the data and exploring any overlap or redundancy. Defining and naming the themes is the fifth step, where researchers clarify the content and scope of each theme and create clear and concise names that capture their essence. Finally, in the sixth step, researchers produce the final report by integrating the themes into a coherent narrative, supported by illustrative quotes from the data, and presenting the findings, interpretations, and implications of the thematic analysis. These six key steps provide a structured and systematic approach to conducting thematic analysis, ensuring the analysis remains grounded in the data and accurately reflects the richness and complexity of the qualitative data being analyzed.

Open-coding vs. closed-coding approach?

Before conducting the analysis, it is important to understand the key difference between the closed-coding and open-coding approaches. The main distinction lies in the level of flexibility and freedom given to the researcher during the analysis process. In closed coding, there is a predefined list of themes or categories (based on the underpinning theory), and the goal is to fit the data into these predetermined themes. This deductive analysis approach restricts the researcher to pre-established frameworks, limiting their exploration of new or unexpected themes that may emerge from the data. On the other hand, open coding allows the researcher to explore the data freely, without predefined categories, enabling them to identify and develop themes directly from the data. This inductive analysis approach encourages a more flexible and open-minded analysis, allowing for the discovery of novel insights and themes that may not have been anticipated initially.

Figure 1. Six key steps in conducting thematic analysis to analyze qualitative data



Source: Adopted from Braun and Clarke (2014)

Step 1: Familiarization with the data

The first step in thematic analysis is to familiarize oneself with the data by immersing in its content. This involves reading and re-reading the data, taking detailed notes, and making initial observations to develop a comprehensive understanding of its nuances and intricacies. By engaging deeply with the data, researchers can identify key themes and patterns that will guide subsequent stages of the analysis.

Table 1. Familiarization with the data

Action	Description
Data Familiarization	Immerse in content through reading and re-reading
Detailed Notes	Take comprehensive notes to capture nuances
Initial Observations	Make early insights to identify key themes

Source: Summarized in tabular format based on the aforementioned steps.

Step 2: Generating initial codes

During the second step of thematic analysis, researchers systematically code interesting features, patterns, or ideas that emerge from the qualitative data. This process involves identifying meaningful units of information and assigning descriptive labels or codes to capture the essence of each code. By generating these initial codes, researchers begin the process of organizing and categorizing the data, setting the foundation for further analysis and theme development.

Table 2. Generating initial codes

Action	Description
Systematic Coding	Code emerging features, patterns, or ideas
Meaningful Units	Identify information units for coding
Descriptive Labels	Assign codes to capture code essence

Source: Summarized in tabular format based on the aforementioned steps.

Step 3: Searching for themes

In the third step of thematic analysis, researchers organize and collate the generated codes into potential themes, aiming to identify patterns and connections. They examine similarities, differences, and relationships among codes to form meaningful clusters, searching for recurring ideas or concepts that cut across multiple codes. This process allows researchers to discern higher-order themes that reflect the central ideas or messages present in the data.

Table 3. Searching for themes

Action	Description
Theme Organization	Organize codes into potential themes
Pattern Identification	Identify similarities, differences, and relationships
Higher-Order Themes	Discern central ideas cutting across codes

Source: Summarized in tabular format based on the aforementioned steps.

Step 4: Reviewing themes

Next, researchers thoroughly review and refine the identified themes to ensure their accuracy in representing the data. This involves scrutinizing each theme to check for overlap, redundancy, or inconsistencies, and exploring their relationships with one another. By conducting this careful review, researchers enhance the validity and reliability of the thematic analysis, ensuring that the final themes are a faithful reflection of the qualitative data.

Table 4. Reviewing themes

Action	Description
Thorough Review	Scrutinize and refine identified themes
Overlap and Inconsistencies	Check for redundancy and inconsistencies
Enhanced Validity	Improve analysis accuracy and reliability

Source: Summarized in tabular format based on the aforementioned steps.

Step 5: Defining and naming themes

During this stage of thematic analysis, researchers focus on defining the content and scope of each theme. They thoroughly examine the associated codes and data to establish the key characteristics and boundaries of each theme. Additionally, researchers assign clear and concise names to the themes, aiming to capture their essence and convey their meaning effectively.

Table 5. Defining and naming themes

Action	Description
Theme Definition	Establish content and scope of themes
Key Characteristics	Examine codes for defining features
Clear Naming	Assign concise names capturing theme essence

Source: Summarized in tabular format based on the aforementioned steps.

Step 6: Producing the final report

In the final step of thematic analysis, researchers integrate the identified themes into a coherent narrative, weaving together the insights and patterns they have discovered. This involves using illustrative quotes and examples from the data to support and illustrate the themes effectively. Researchers then compile a comprehensive report that presents the findings, interpretations, and implications of the thematic analysis, providing a rich and nuanced understanding of the research phenomenon based on the identified themes.

Table 6. Producing the final report

Action	Description
Narrative Integration	Weave themes into a coherent story
Illustrative Support	Use quotes and examples to enhance themes
Comprehensive Reporting	Compile findings, interpretations, and implications.

Source: Summarized in tabular format based on the aforementioned steps.

4. Tips for Conducting Thematic Analysis

Quality assurance through iterative reading

Iterative reading is a vital component of qualitative research and thematic analysis, playing a central role in uncovering rich insights (Fuchs, 2022). By engaging in multiple passes through the data, researchers immerse themselves in the material, gaining a comprehensive understanding and identifying overlooked patterns, connections, and themes (Joffe, 2011). This iterative process allows for a deeper appreciation of the data's nuances, complexities, and context, facilitating a more robust analysis. Note-taking serves as a valuable tool for capturing initial observations and organizing thoughts, aiding in preserving the researchers' evolving understanding and enhancing transparency (Castleberry and Nolen, 2018). Coding techniques complement iterative reading by systematically categorizing and organizing data, enabling the extraction of key concepts, ideas, and themes. Together, these interconnected practices strengthen the rigor, trustworthiness, and validity of thematic analysis, leading to insightful interpretations and the development of rich theoretical insights. Emphasizing the importance of iterative reading ensures thorough engagement with the data, capturing crucial details that enhance the depth and quality of the analysis (Nowell *et al.,* 2017).

Ensuring Rigor and Trustworthiness

Transparency and rigor are paramount in thematic analysis, ensuring the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings. By emphasizing transparency, researchers provide a clear account of their analytical process, enabling others to evaluate and replicate the study. This involves documenting decisions made at each stage, such as the coding process, theme development, and data interpretation (Mackieson *et al.,* 2019). According to Mackieson *et al.* (2019), rigor, on the other hand, entails adhering to systematic and rigorous methods throughout the analysis. This includes employing clear criteria for theme selection, engaging in thorough data analysis, and seeking diverse perspectives through peer debriefing or member checking. By prioritizing transparency and rigor, researchers enhance the validity and reliability of thematic analysis, fostering confidence in the research outcomes and promoting the advancement of knowledge in the field (Neuendorf, 2018).

Manual Coding *vs.* Software Tools

Software tools have become increasingly available for conducting thematic analysis, offering convenience and efficiency in data management and analysis (Belotto, 2018). These tools provide researchers with features like code creation, data visualization, and data retrieval, streamlining the coding process and facilitating the identification of patterns and themes (Neuendorf, 2018). However, it is important to note that this guide focuses on manual coding to provide researchers with a comprehensive understanding of the thematic analysis process (Firmin *et al.*, 2017). Manual coding allows researchers to actively engage with the data, delve deeper into its nuances, and make subjective interpretations based on their expertise and insights (Firmin *et al.*, 2017; Belotto, 2018). By emphasizing manual coding, researchers can develop a more profound connection with the data and gain a deeper appreciation of the underlying themes and meanings. While software tools can be valuable aids, understanding the manual process is fundamental for researchers seeking a thorough grasp of the intricacies and complexities involved in thematic analysis.

Conclusions

The article provides a broad overview of conducting thematic analysis for qualitative research and has covered the key steps of thematic analysis, highlighting the significance of immersing oneself in the data, generating codes, searching for themes, reviewing and refining them, defining and naming themes, and ultimately producing a comprehensive report, all while utilizing iterative reading, note-taking, and coding techniques to capture meaningful details and uncover valuable insights. This approach enables the identification of recurring themes and patterns, contributing to a deeper understanding of the research phenomenon and facilitating evidence-based decision-making and theory development. Thematic analysis is a valuable avenue for developing theoretical insights and advancing knowledge in the social sciences. Researchers are encouraged to apply the steps and recommendations outlined in this guide to their own research projects, embracing transparency, rigor, and a manual coding approach. By doing so, researchers can embark on their thematic analysis journey with confidence, enabling them to produce robust and insightful findings. Embracing the power of thematic analysis allows researchers to unlock the profound depth of meaning hidden within their qualitative data.

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Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

The author confirms sole responsibility for the conception of the article and its design, the data collection through desk research, analysis of the articles and interpretation of results, and manuscript preparation.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The author declares that he has no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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The Relationship Between Tourism and the Efficiency of Budget Investments as Important Area of Strategic Audit

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Abstract: In the context of tourism, budget investments play a crucial role in developing and promoting tourism destinations, infrastructure, marketing campaigns, and other tourism-related initiatives. The relevance of the study lies in the fact that the relationship between tourism and the efficiency of budget investments is an important aspect of strategic audit. Tourism can be a significant source of income for many countries and regions, and the proper management of investments in tourism infrastructure and promotion of a tourism product can significantly increase the efficiency of the use of budget funds. In this article, we will consider the main aspects of this issue and analyze how effectively budget investments are used and what is the role of strategic audit in this direction.

Keywords: tourism; investments; budget; audit; strategy.

JEL Classification: Z32; G22.

Introduction

The relationship between tourism and the efficiency of budget investments is indeed an important area of strategic audit. Strategic audit refers to the evaluation of an organization's strategies, objectives, and performance to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. In the context of tourism, assessing the efficiency of budget investments is crucial for ensuring sustainable tourism development and maximizing the benefits derived from tourism activities. The way in which the tourism activities and budget investments are interconnected; is related to the economic impact, return on investment, infrastructure development, sustainability and environmental considerations, stakeholder engagement and also risk assessment.

Tourism can contribute significantly to a destination's economy, generating revenue, creating jobs, and stimulating local businesses. Efficient budget investments in tourism infrastructure, marketing campaigns, and destination development can enhance the economic impact of tourism. This includes investing in transportation, accommodation, attractions, and other tourism-related facilities that can attract visitors and generate revenue. Evaluating the efficiency of budget investments in tourism involves assessing the ROI of various tourism-related initiatives. This includes analyzing the financial outcomes and economic benefits derived from budget allocations. For example, investments in marketing campaigns can be evaluated based on the increase in tourist arrivals, revenue generated from tourism-related activities, and the overall economic growth stimulated by tourism.

Budget investments play a crucial role in developing and maintaining tourism infrastructure. This includes investing in transportation networks, airports, roads, ports, accommodation facilities, and public amenities. Efficient allocation of funds in infrastructure development can enhance the accessibility and attractiveness of a destination, leading to increased tourism demand and improved visitor experiences. Budget investments in tourism should also consider sustainability and environmental factors. This includes allocating funds for sustainable tourism practices, conservation initiatives, and the protection of natural and cultural resources. Efficient budget investments in sustainable tourism can ensure the long-term viability of tourism activities while minimizing negative environmental impacts. Efficient budget investments in tourism require collaboration and engagement with various stakeholders, including government agencies, local communities, tourism operators, and industry associations. Involving stakeholders in the budget allocation process and considering their perspectives can lead to more informed investment decisions and enhance the overall efficiency of budget utilization.

The strategic audit of budget investments in tourism also involves assessing potential risks and uncertainties. This includes considering factors such as political instability, economic fluctuations, natural disasters, and global events that can impact tourism. Efficient budget investments should take into account risk management strategies and contingency plans to mitigate potential risks and ensure the resilience of the tourism sector. Conducting a strategic audit that focuses on the relationship between tourism and the efficiency of budget investments, policymakers and stakeholders can gain insights into the effectiveness of their investment decisions. This evaluation helps identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement, enabling the formulation of more targeted strategies and the allocation of resources in a way that maximizes the positive impacts of tourism on the economy, environment, and local communities.

Tourism can be a significant source of income for many countries and regions, and the proper management of investments in tourism infrastructure and promotion of a tourism product can significantly increase the efficiency of the use of budget funds. Few ways in which tourism and public investment efficiency are linked are describe below:

- Public investment in the creation and improvement of tourism infrastructure (hotels, airports, roads, attractions, etc.) can attract more tourists and improve the tourist flow. This, in turn, can boost tourism revenues, boost tourism employment, and boost overall economic activity.
- Public investment in tourism product marketing and promotion can help increase the visibility and attractiveness of a country or region to potential tourists. This may include advertising campaigns, participation in international exhibitions and fairs, establishment of tourist information centers, etc. Effective promotion can lead to an increase in tourist demand and, consequently, an increase in income.
- Public investment in the development and preservation of local tourism resources (natural attractions, cultural heritage, traditions, etc.) can improve the attractiveness of a place for tourists. This may be due to the creation of national parks, the organization of cultural events and festivals, the restoration and preservation of historical heritage.

1. Literature Review

Public investment can play an important role in the development of tourism and increase its efficiency. Government investments in tourism infrastructure, marketing campaigns, training, and other aspects can stimulate the growth of tourism and attract more tourists. Budget investments can be directed to the creation and improvement of tourism infrastructure, such as airports, roads, hotels, attractions and other facilities. The improvement and development of infrastructure contribute to increasing comfort and accessibility for tourists, as well as expanding opportunities for various types of tourism, such as cultural, nature or business tourism.

Budget investments can be used to conduct marketing and advertising campaigns aimed at promoting a tourist destination or country. This may include participation in international exhibitions and fairs, creation of promotional materials, development of travel guides and information resources. Effective marketing promotion helps to attract the attention of potential tourists and increase their number. Budget investments can be directed to the training and development of personnel in the tourism industry. This may include special programs and trainings for service workers, guides, hotel staff and other tourism related professionals. The quality of service and hospitality play an important role in creating a positive experience for tourists and their return in the future.

In the context of globalization and integration of the world economy, tourism as a form of foreign economic activity stimulates interest in assessing the sustainability of regional development. This requires the development of a system of indicators that affect the development of tourism, and which can be used as a tool for combining and systematizing management processes and factors influencing the achievement of goals in this area. It is worth noting the works devoted to the study of issues of responsible financing as Oehmke and Opp (2020), Sukhacheva and Bichurin (2022) and others.

Tourism is a highly profitable intersectoral complex, one of the main exporters of the world economy, contributing to the strengthening of various economic, political, cultural and other ties between countries and regions, and also has the character of a social orientation of the development goals of modern society. In recent years, the attention of the world community to the impact of business on the environment and the development of the tourism cluster has been steadily growing.

According to Wang (2021), many companies are currently focused on achieving profitability and short-term return on investment, with little regard for their impact on the environment, society, and long-term growth. However, a deeper understanding of corporate sustainability and its relationship to sustainable competitive advantage can help companies achieve sustainable growth.

There is considerable scholarly interest in the relationship between corporate sustainability and competitiveness, but research findings so far have been patchy and lacking conclusive (Cai and Li 2018, Hussain *et al.* 2018, Rezende *et al.* 2019).

Indeed, the step outlined in the 57th point of the nation's plan '100 Concrete Steps to Implement the Five Institutional Reforms of the Head of State' highlights the critical importance of attracting anchor investors with proven success in establishing tourism clusters. This strategic approach aligns with the overarching goals set by the State Program for the Development of the Tourism Industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The State Program's objectives, including achieving a target share of tourism in the GDP at 8% by 2025 and significantly increasing employment within the tourism sector, indicate a concerted effort to accelerate the growth and development of the industry. These targets also signify an ambitious commitment to surpassing the growth of GDP, positioning the tourism sector as a major contributor to the nation's economy.

In present days, characterized by the digitalization of the economic system and the globalization of economic processes, tourism is becoming a highly profitable and intersectoral complex. It is one of the key exporters of the world economy and contributes to the strengthening of various economic, political, cultural and other ties between countries and regions. Moreover, tourism has a social orientation in order to develop modern society. In this regard, the governments of various countries, including Kazakhstan, are actively developing national strategies and assessing the risks and opportunities associated with the growing global influence of tourism.

Audit of the efficiency of the use of public funds in the modern context is a key form of financial management, allowing to assess the reasonableness and expediency of spending budgetary funds. In recent decades, the tourism industry has undergone significant growth accompanied by the growing demand for quality and reliable tourist services. In this regard, performance auditing acquires special significance. However, despite the importance of performance auditing in tourism, the management of the industry and its impact on the overall performance of the tourism sector often remains in the background. In this context, performance auditing becomes an integral part of the management process in tourism. The study emphasizes the importance of conducting performance audit in tourism and its management. This type of audit makes it possible to assess how effectively public funds are being utilized in the tourism sector and what results are being achieved through these investments. Performance audits also allow identifying potential problems and improving the management system, ensuring cost optimization and improving the overall efficiency of the tourism industry.

Thus, performance auditing in tourism should be given due attention, as it contributes to a more efficient use of public resources, improving the quality of tourism services and increasing the overall efficiency of this important sector of the economy. The study emphasizes the importance of conducting a performance audit in the field of tourism and its management (Stepashin *et al.*, 2019). The results of the study suggest that restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic and stay-at-home measures have affected the quality of the audit.

Deterioration in audit quality is associated with companies that have high inventories relative to their assets, as well as high research and development (RandD) expenditures relative to assets. This problem can also be associated with audit firms that are not in the 'big four', that is, the list of the four largest global audit firms as PwC, Deloitte, EY and KPMG (Shanaybaeva and Beisenova 2021). According to the study described by Shanaybayeva and Beisenova (2021), the following factors may cause a decrease in audit quality:

- Inventories and assets: Companies that have large inventories relative to their assets may present challenges for auditors, as assessing the value and condition of these inventories can be complex and require additional effort;
- RandD and assets: If a company invests heavily in research and development, this can also complicate the audit as the results of these investments and their impact on the financial statements must be adequately evaluated;
- Selection of audit firm: Non-Big Four audit firms may have limited resources and experience, which may adversely affect the quality of the audit;
- All of these factors can lead to lower audit quality and possible inaccuracies in the company's financial statements. It is important for auditors to be particularly vigilant when conducting audits where companies have these characteristics in their operations.

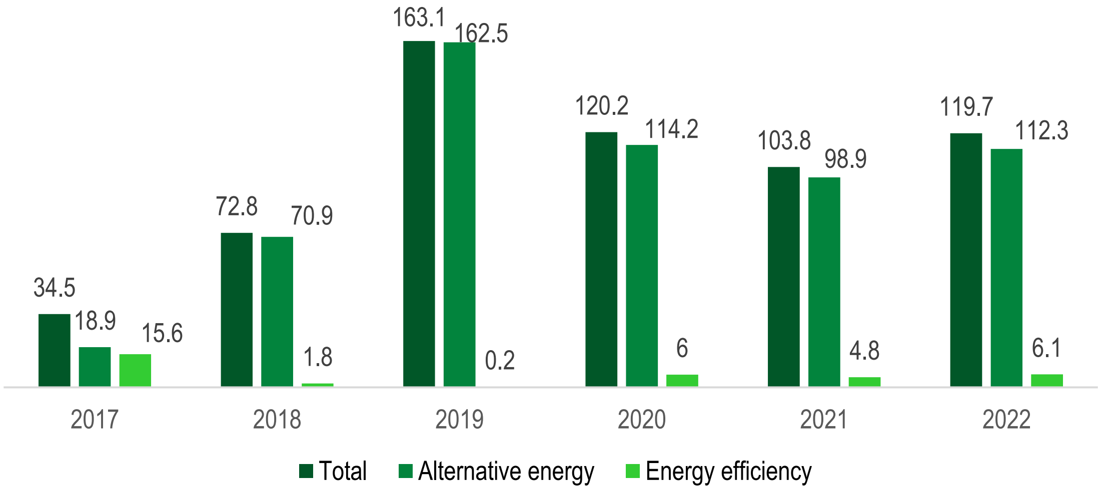
2. Tourism and Budget Investments Performance

The tourism industry, as one of the dynamic industries, accounts for about 10% of global GDP and about 30% of global exports of services, influencing global investment (7%), generating employment (10%) and contributing to total tax revenues (5%). As a result, the industry is recognized as a priority in economic terms. The relationship between tourism and fiscal investment performance can be as follows:

- Tourism contributes to the development of the region's economy by attracting investment in tourism infrastructure, hotels, restaurants and other related industries. Budget investments in tourism can stimulate economic activity, increase the volume of tourist services and create jobs, which in turn contributes to income growth and increase tax revenues.
- Budget investments in tourism allow to develop and improve infrastructure, attractions, natural resources and living conditions in tourist regions. This creates an attractive environment for tourists and increases the competitiveness of the region in the tourism industry.
- Effective budgetary investments in tourism can increase the inflow of tourists and tourism revenues. Investments in marketing, advertising, tourism events and the development of tourist routes can attract more tourists and contribute to the growth of tourism revenues.
- Tourism development through budget investments can contribute to the creation of new jobs in the tourism industry. This can be particularly important for regions with high unemployment or low economic development.
- Investments in tourism can contribute to the diversification of the region's economy. The development of tourism industry allows to reduce dependence on traditional industries and create new sources of income. This contributes to sustainable economic development and increases budget reserves.

In general, budget investments in tourism can have a positive impact on the development of the tourism industry, the region's economy and the efficiency of budgetary resources. However, it is important to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of these investments to ensure optimal use of budgetary funds and achievement of expected results. Kazakhstan is investing in renewable energy sources, energy-saving technologies and energy efficiency, as well as investments aimed at environmental protection. The main sources of investment were the own funds of enterprises, budgetary and other borrowed funds, as well as bank loans (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Investments in the 'green' economy of Kazakhstan, in billion tenge



Source: compiled by authors according to https://www.pwc.com.

The interaction between green energy and the tourism industry represents an important aspect in modern sustainable development. The main aspects of this interaction include the following:

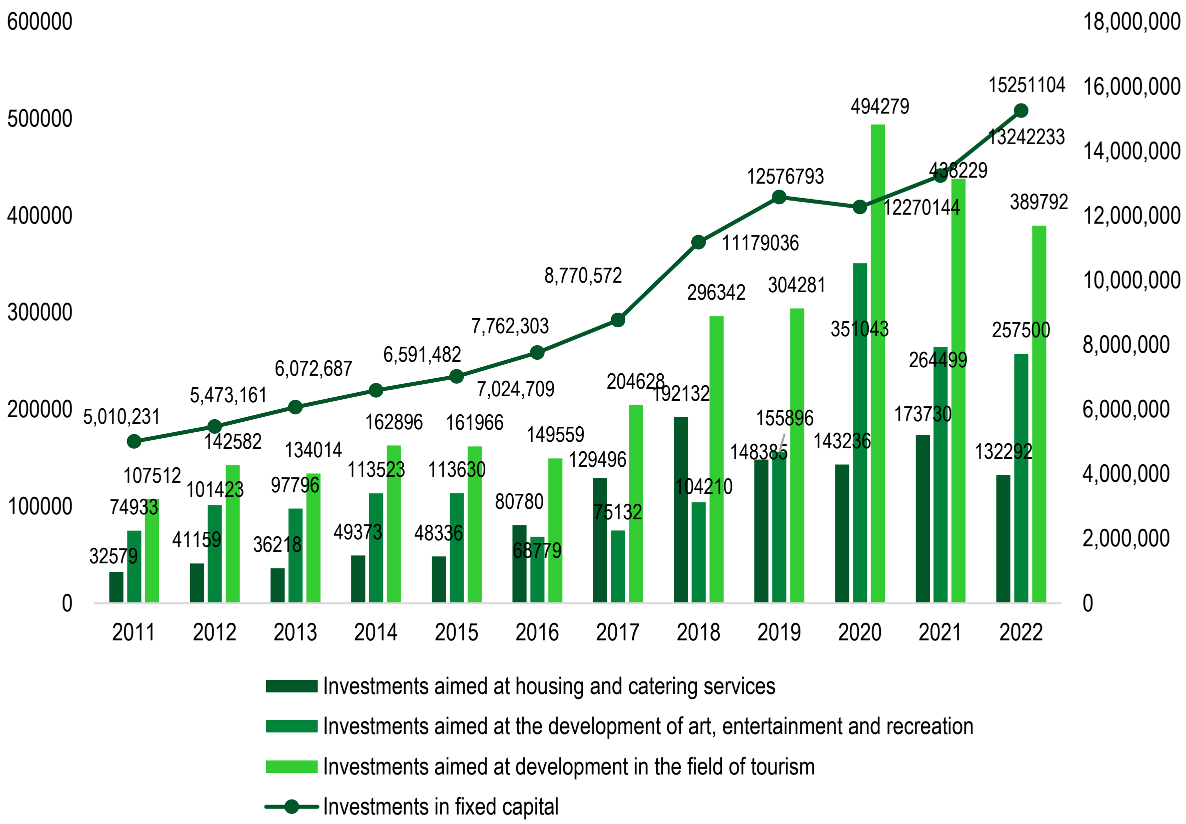
- Sustainability and environmental responsibility. Green energy such as solar, wind, hydropower, etc. is a clean source of energy that helps to reduce carbon emissions and negative impact on the environment. Incorporating green energy into the tourism industry enables the creation and promotion of sustainable tourism products and services, which meets the expectations of environmentally conscious tourists and contributes to more environmentally responsible tourism development.
- Energy efficiency and cost reduction. The use of green energy in the tourism industry can help improve energy efficiency and reduce energy costs in hotels, resorts, restaurants and other infrastructure. The use of energy efficient technologies and systems, as well as the integration of renewable energy sources, can reduce energy costs and improve the financial sustainability of tourism enterprises.
- The availability and promotion of green energy in such places contributes to the creation of attractive and eco-friendly tourist destinations and facilities, attracting tourists interested in environmentally aware and responsible travel.
- Education and awareness. The interaction between green energy and the tourism industry also provides opportunities for education and awareness among tourists about the benefits and importance of renewable energy. Tourists can gain knowledge about green energy and become active supporters of sustainability, which can influence their behavior and choice of tourism offerings in the future.
- Overall, the interaction between green energy and the tourism industry contributes to the creation of more sustainable and environmentally responsible tourism products and services. It provides benefits in energy efficiency, cost reduction, eco-tourism attractiveness and tourist education. Therefore, the development and integration of green energy into the tourism industry is an important aspect of sustainable development of this sector.
- The first element is directly hospitality enterprises providing accommodation and catering services. The second element is the enterprises involved in the formation of the tourist product. These are those facilities that can function without tourists, but their economic performance increases significantly when the tourist flow to the destination increases. Such objects can include places of entertainment, cultural and event objects, national parks, etc. These are the tourist resources of destinations.

Kazakhstan has priority tourist areas with diverse potential, such as Alakol, Shchuchinsk, Borovoye, the mountain cluster of Almaty region, Bayanaul resort zone, Imantau-Shalkar resort zone, Balkhash, Turkestan region and many other spectrums of destinations that represent a significant opportunity to develop the industry and attract more tourists. Each of these areas has its own unique characteristics and attractions that can attract both local and international travelers. Exploring and supporting the development of these destinations can help to diversify tourism flow, increase visitor numbers and the industry's contribution to the country's economy. It can also lead to the creation of new jobs, infrastructure and improve the overall educational and service base for tourism. However, there is a need for effective development of the tourism industry, which requires competent structuring and positioning of tourism products. Identifying unique tourism clusters based on common characteristics and experiences of different regions can help create strong tourism brands and attract the attention of both local and foreign tourists.

Tourism development can have a positive impact on economic development and improve the lives of local communities by creating new jobs and stimulating infrastructure development. However, it is important to consider the balance between tourism activities and the preservation of the region's natural and cultural resources. Conceptualizing tourism development as a unique cluster, it is necessary to pay attention to the social aspect, which can contribute to sustainable and harmonious development of tourism, as well as improving the quality of life of the local population.

The changing landscape of the tourism industry in Kazakhstan has presented a range of opportunities, particularly in light of the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Among these opportunities, the notable growth in the number of domestic tourists stands out. This shift in tourist behavior has been influenced by the restrictions on international travel, creating a scenario where more Kazakh citizens are opting for local tourism experiences. This trend brings several advantages and implications for the development of the tourism sector:

Figure 2. Innovative finance in tourism



Source: compiled by authors according to www.stat.gov.kz.

Tourism development can bring many positive impacts on various aspects of society and economy:

- promote cultural exchange and understanding between different peoples and cultures. The interaction of tourists from different countries contributes to the enrichment of cultural experiences and the expansion of inter-ethnic ties;
- can be a significant source of revenue for the region, contributing to increased tax revenues, job creation and service businesses;
- travelers spend money on a variety of goods and services in the country, which can boost exports and tourism-related industries;
- can stimulate investment in infrastructure such as airports, roads, hotels and other facilities, which can in turn improve the quality of life of local residents;
- contributes to increased economic activity in the region, which affects the overall economic growth of the country;
- can contribute to the development of small and remote villages, enriching them with culture, creating new jobs and investment opportunities;

- can contribute to the preservation and restoration of historical and cultural monuments, drawing attention to their preservation;
- can spur entrepreneurial activity in various spheres such as hospitality, restaurants, souvenir production and many others.

Thus, tourism development has a complex impact on the economic and social spheres, helping to strengthen cultural ties, create jobs, improve infrastructure and stimulate economic growth.

When developing a strategy for the development of the tourism industry, it is necessary to solve a number of tasks, including assessing the impact of investments in fixed assets on the development of the tourism sector. Tourism is a priority sector of the national economy, contributing to the sustainable growth of national income and employment, as well as having a stimulating effect on related industries. It also attracts significant foreign capital and investments in the state and national economy.

Modernization of traditional industries and services, introduction of trade and procurement procedures related to financial and logistics operations, as well as changes in the structure of consumption against the background of the penetration of information technology and digitalization of economic processes create the basis for the formation of new markets and conditions in the tourism industry. It also requires new approaches to analytics, forecasting and management decision-making in this industry.

The tourism industry was almost everywhere affected by the pandemic in 2020, and the number of enterprises and business volume in this industry declined in most countries, but in recent years in Kazakhstan, the number of enterprises in this industry has generally been increasing (Table 1).

Table 1. Innovative finance in tourism, million tenge

Year	Investments in fixed capital	Investments in fixed capital,	Investments aimed at housing and catering services	Investments aimed at the development of art, entertainment and recreation	Investments aimed at development in the field of tourism
2011	5,010,231	551,017	32,579	74,933	107,512
2012	5,473,161	622,317	41,159	101,423	142,582
2013	6,072,687	677,433	36,218	97,796	134,014
2014	6,591,482	747,257	49,373	113,523	162,896
2015	7,024,709	807,855	48,336	113,630	161,966
2016	7,762,303	918,904	80,780	68,779	149,559
2017	8,770,572	1,004,518	129,496	75,132	204,628
2018	11,179,036	1,117,617	192,132	104,210	296,342
2019	12,576,793	1,251,383	148,385	155,896	304,281
2020	12,270,144	1,393,507	143,236	351,043	494,279
2021	13,242,233	1,581,559	173,730	264,499	438,229
2022	15,251,104	1,769,611*	132,292	257,500	389,792

Source: compiled by authors according to www.stat.gov.kz.

So, for example, from 1st of January 2022, a program to reimburse travel companies for the purchase of vehicles with a capacity of more than eight seats began to operate in Kazakhstan. The program was initiated by the Ministry of Culture and Sports of the Republic of Kazakhstan, according to which the measure will improve the safety and comfort of tourists in the country. The amount of compensation is 25% of the actual costs incurred for the purchase of vehicles. The main goal of this program is to increase the availability of motor vehicles for guides, tour guides, tourism instructors operating in the Republic of Kazakhstan as individual entrepreneurs, as well as for tour operators, travel agents by reducing capital intensity and increasing the return on investment for the provision of tourist services (Renewal transport). As part of the implementation of the State Program for the Development of the Tourism Industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2019 - 2021, 126.1 billion tenge of state investments were allocated for the implementation of 80 projects, including 39 projects worth 59.8 billion tenge were financed in 2021 (Table 2).

Table 2. Projects with the amount of financing, in billion tenge

№	Destination	Number of projects	Funding amount
1	Alakol	6	18.0
2	Alakol (East Kazakhstan)	7	9.0
3	Shuchinsk	28	29.0
4	Turkestan	6	2.5
5	Mangistau	9	51.2

№	Destination	Number of projects	Funding amount
6	Imantau	2	0.43
7	Bayanaul	8	1.2
8	AGK	6	1.25
9	Balkhash	8	3.5
Total		80	126.1

Source: compiled by authors.

In the tourism sector, there is an additional need to finance 49 projects in the amount of 308 billion tenge. Among them are such projects as:

- construction of a road in the Imantau-Shalkar resort area (1.9 km, 0.3 billion tenge),
- bank protection works on the coast of Lake Alakol (Abay region, 17.5 billion tenge),
- improvement of the embankment in Balkhash (2.6 billion tenge).

The implementation of these projects is important for the development of tourism in the regions, as they will also increase the investment attractiveness of the regions. In Kazakhstan, the issue of increasing the volume of funding for the promotion of domestic tourism potential in the international tourism market is acute, as evidenced by the data presented in Table 3. During the study, it was revealed that the following projects are at the stage of development in the tourism industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Table 3. Projects aimed at developing the tourism industry that are under realization

Investment project	Start date	Entry date	Region	Workplaces	Project cost, million tenge
Resort area construction «Aqbura Resort»	2019	2035	Akmola	600	100,000
Construction of a tourist and recreational center (ski resort)	2023	2026	Turkestan	0	21,000
Multifunctional hotel complex	2023	2026	Astana city	50	19,000
Medeu Park Hotel	2020	2023	Almaty city	120	14,600
Construction of a hotel complex with a water park in Aktau	2023	2025	Mangistau	30	4,000
Construction of the ethno-tourist recreation area 'Koksai'	2021	2024	Zhambyl	40	2,000
Tourist base in the Small-Almaty forestry of the 'Ile-Alatau' (2019-2023)	2019	2023	Almaty	100	1,000
Construction of a tourist recreation center on Lake Saryoba	2020	2025	Akmola	40	710
Tourist Service Center	2022	2023	Almaty ctity	10	600

Source: compiled by authors.

Of course, a very important indicator of the development of tourism in the country is the financing of activities to promote the tourism potential in the domestic and, especially, in the international market. When comparing the data of some countries, such as Australia, the United Arab Emirates, Israel, Iceland, Greece, Norway and Georgia spend on promotion from 0.2% to 4.34% of their total inbound tourism income, while Kazakhstan is only 0, 03%.

Table 4. Indicators of promotion of tourism potential in foreign countries

Country	Share tourism in GDP (direct/total contribution, %)	Q-ty of arrivals, mln.	Income from incoming tourists, mln. USD	Average income from each entered visitor	Loading of rooms, %	Budget for the promotion of the country, million USD	Cost of attracting one tourist, USD/ tenge
Australia	2.9 / 10.9	8.2	32,423	$ 3,954	66.6	131.5	16 / 5,452
UAE	5.2 / 12.1	14,9	19,496	$ 1,308	77.4	40	2.6 / 912
Israel	1.9 / 6.8	2,9	5,722	$1,973	67	73	25 / 8,558
Iceland	7.0 / 33.9	1,79	2,415	$ 1,349	77.9	105	58.6 / 19,944
Georgia	8,1/ 27,01	6,3	2,166	$344	75.0	14	2.2 / 755
Norway	4.1 / 9.1	5,3	4,898	$924	52.6	70	13.2 / 4,490
Kazakhstan	1 / 4.1	6,4	1,825	$285	24.5	0.6 – (256 mln tenge)	0.09 / 32

Source: compiled by authors.

The more a country spends on promoting tourism, the more income tourists bring to the country. They directly affect the increase in the share in GDP, the loading of the number of rooms, the number of arrivals and their costs in the destination.

One of the sources of replenishment of the budget to finance the promotion of the country abroad can be the introduction of a tourist fee of a foreign tourist, implemented according to the principles of 'bed tax' (tourist tax). This mechanism, which is widespread in the world, involves the inclusion of a special fee in the hotel bill for non-residents, which partially forms the budget for promoting the region in foreign markets. In addition, the introduction of the tourist contribution of foreign citizens can become one of the systemic measures to improve the effectiveness of promotion and will allow you to directly evaluate the effectiveness of marketing. The more foreign tourists come to Kazakhstan, the more budget revenues will be, and, consequently, the more opportunities for the budget to provide funding for promotion. On the other hand, the more effective the promotion, the more tourists will come. That is, there will be a direct link between the tourist contribution and marketing efforts.

In 2018, in connection with the formation of a new administrative-territorial unit - the Turkestan region, a new FEZ was created, one of the goals of which is to increase the tourist potential of the city of Turkestan and further establish it as the spiritual capital of the Turkic World.

Financial support for business is carried out through the IDF JSC Damu as part of the implementation of various programs, such as:

- lending through conditional placement of funds in second-tier banks at rates from 8.5-14% for up to 7 years;
- subsidizing up to 50% of the loan interest rate;
- guarantee from 50 to 85% on loans;
- training and consulting.

Table 5. Projects on measures of state support for SMEs

Measures	Total	Tourism	Share of tourism
Conditional placement of funds in STB	30,394	1,167	4%
Subsidized interest rate	12,083	634	5%
Loan guarantee	3,729	196	5%

Source: compiled by authors according to UNWTO.

Table 6. Amount of funds allocated under measures of state support for SMEs, billion tenge

Measures	Total	Tourism	Share of tourism
Conditional placement of funds in STB	1,671	48	3%
Subsidized interest rate	1,911	101	5%
Loan guarantee	133	7	5%

Source: compiled by authors according to UNWTO.

Kazakhstan has significant natural and cultural resources that can serve as a basis for the development of the tourism industry. Its geographical location at the junction of Europe and Asia, the presence of diverse natural landscapes, historical and cultural monuments, and unique cultural traditions create the potential for a variety of tourist products and destinations. However, in order to realize this potential, it is necessary not only to effectively position and promote tourism products, but also to develop appropriate infrastructure, provide quality services and support from the state.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the relationship between tourism and the efficiency of budget investments is a critical aspect of strategic audit. Efficient budget allocations in tourism can lead to enhanced economic impact, improved ROI, infrastructure development, sustainability considerations, stakeholder engagement, and risk assessment. By conducting a strategic audit of budget investments in tourism, destinations can identify areas of improvement, optimize resource allocation, and achieve sustainable tourism development. Tourism takes place as a great of social and economic importance, thus: increases income, creates new jobs, develops all industries related to the production of tourist services, develops social and industrial infrastructure in tourist centers, activates the activities of the centers of folk crafts and the development of culture, provides an increase in the standard of living of the local population, increases foreign exchange earnings.

The current energy crisis was the result of many interrelated events that took place over several years, and humanity could not predict all the possible consequences, which allowed us to draw several important conclusions regarding the energy security of the country: It is necessary to take into account climatic risks (drought, cold, lack of wind) when designing and deploying renewable energy facilities, especially hydro and wind generation; Availability of reserve capacities is the basis of energy security (including gas reserves);There is a trend everywhere to reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels and diversify supply sources.

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Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Lyazzat Sembiyeva: analysis of the relationship between tourism and the effectiveness of budget investments is presented as an important area of strategic audit. It was also analyzed how effectively budget investments are used and what is the role of strategic audit in this direction.
Assel Ismailova: the relevance of the study is determined, which lies in the fact that the relationship between tourism and the efficiency of budget investments is an important aspect of strategic audit. Tourism can become a significant source of income for many countries and regions, and the proper management of investments in tourism infrastructure and the promotion of a tourism product can significantly increase the efficiency of the use of budget funds.
Zamira Bashu: a literary review is presented that characterizes public investments that can play an important role in the development of tourism and increase its efficiency.
Saule Spatayeva: conclusions are drawn about the relationship between tourism and the efficiency of budget investments, which are an important aspect of strategic audit. Efficient budget allocation in tourism can lead to increased economic impact, improved return on investment, infrastructure development, sustainability, stakeholder engagement and risk assessment.
Makpal Zholamanova: the need for a strategic audit of budgetary investments in tourism was identified, allowing destinations to identify areas for improvement, optimize resource allocation and achieve sustainable tourism development.
Gulmira Yessenova: an introductory part of the study is given, characterizing the conduct of a strategic audit on the relationship between tourism and the effectiveness of budget investments, which allows politicians and stakeholders to get an idea of the effectiveness of their investment decisions. Such an assessment helps to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement, developing more targeted strategies and allocating resources in a way that maximizes the positive impact of tourism on the economy, the environment, and local communities.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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The Impact of the Travel and Tourism Sector on the Growth of the National Economy

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Abstract: Purpose – This study aimed to examine the interrelationship between the economic development of the country and the development of tourism. This study strived to conceptually categories in TandT sectors recent reports in India and Indonesia. Methodology – This study employed secondary data involving United Nations (UN) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) reports and highly-rated peer-reviewed scientific journal articles. Systematic deductive reasoning was employed to perform UN and IMF report reviews. Findings– The service sector's contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is denoted as a progress predictor. Therefore, organizations are required to adapt tactics and operations in SCs to address current dynamic settings, possibilities, and threats. An essential procedural element involved adequate partner choice in SC to organize and provide competitive package tours. High service sector contribution to the national economy implied industrial advancement. As developing nations, Indonesia and India encompass rapidly advancing service industries on a global scale. Economically, the travel and tourism (TandT) sector proved essential in facilitating GDP and employment opportunities while a competent workforce vitally affected industrial growth and development. In this vein, human resource development is a crucial industrial component. Research limitation/implications – This paper provides several important points that need further research in the future. Some points have been presented regarding the Integration of technological engines and important factors of basic engines in tourism. Originality/value– This study shows the interrelationship between the economic development of the country and the development of tourism. Tourism helps in revitalizing the supply chain sector, which directly affects economic and industrial development and vice versa. This is beneficial for both governments and those in the tourism and economic sectors to make joint and effective cooperation. This research also mentions many important points that may help them to revitalize this relationship.

Keywords: travel and tourism; global ranking; India and Indonesia; business environment; national economy.

JEL Classification: F01; F02; F63; L83; R11.

Introduction

The travel and tourism (TandT) sector significantly impacted the world economy and community. Recently, the annual World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) study in collaboration with Oxford Economics indicated 3.5% of industrial growth in 2019 (consecutively outperforming the world financial growth of 2.5% for the ninth year) (WTTC, 2019). As TandT facilitated the creation of new employment (one in every four jobs) over the past five years, the sector reflected good partnership potential with government bodies for employment creation. Direct, indirect, and facilitated TandT effects in 2019 generated (WTTC Report, 2020) US$ 8.9 trillion (10.3%) for the global GDP, 330 million employments, one in 10 jobs internationally, US$ 1.7 trillion in visitor exports (6.8% of the total exports, 28.3% of global service exports), and US$ 948 billion through investments (4.3% of total investment) (WTTC, 2020). As the industrial GDP contribution will predictably increase (by almost 50%) in the coming decades, policymakers, industry leaders, and other stakeholders must emphasize TandT competitiveness to manipulate the expanding market. Although governments and businesses needed to regard the competitive levers to activate market share sustenance or acquisition, special consideration proved necessary to maintain tourism facilities, services, and assets. With the global rise of business and leisure travelers, competitive advantages need to correspond to prudent tourism management planning and destination-carrying capacities (Zekan *et al.* 2022; Stumpf *et al.* 2022; Garad *et al.*, 2021).

Following the World Tourism Organization in 2018, the number of international tourist arrivals reached 1.4 billion (worldwide) two years in advance. The aforementioned year also denoted the seventh consecutive year where tourism export growth (+ 4%) exceeded the merchandise export counterpart (+ 3%). Following the rapid growth pace, the assumption of 1.8 billion international tourists by 2030 might be conservative. The prediction globally denoted tremendous industrial and economic potential with further travel democratization. Following the global trend, developing economies are encouraging more tourists to visit and gradually become favorable travel destinations with higher TandT competitiveness (UNWTO, 2020).

The International Labor Organization (ILO) denoted the 'tourism' sector aspect to encompass particular transportation, travel agency, and tour operator segments. For example, hotels, caterers, and restaurants were regarded as an 'industry characterized by tourism' by most companies and subsequently integrated with tourism (ILO, 2013; Brainard *et al.* 2007, Çakmak and Çenesiz, 2020). On another note, international tourism involves business, professional, and religious travel, visiting friends and relatives, and healthcare (for travelers crossing borders and spending over one night) in the host country. The hotel and restaurant subsectors assessed in this study encompassed data on accommodation (hotels, boarding houses, motels, tourist camps, holiday centers, resorts, and youth or backpacker hostels), hospitality outlets (restaurants, bars, cafeterias, snack bars, pubs, and night clubs), and similar businesses (Rogaly, 2008; ILO, 2013; Yacoub and ElHajjar. 2021).

Based on the above, this study aimed to examine the interrelationship between the economic development of the country and the development of tourism through the answer two questions as the following:

RQ1: How to revitalize TandT sector which directly affects economic and industrial development and vice versa?

RQ2: What are the important points that may help them to revitalize this relationship between governments and those in the tourism and economic sector to make joint and effective cooperation?

1. Research Approach and Methodology

Study reviews of a particular paradigm denoted an established inquiry form in tourism disciplines for knowledge consolidation. For example, researchers could consider past research accomplishments, trends, and patterns in specific study areas (Buhalis and Law, 2008; Wareham *et al.* 2005). The contributions facilitated a platform and indications for future studies following past conceptual mappings. This study strived to conceptually categorize TandT sectors following recent reports. Notably, this study employed secondary data involving United Nations (UN) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) reports and highly-rated peer-reviewed scientific journal articles. Systematic deductive reasoning was employed to perform UN and IMF report reviews. The deduction begins with an expected pattern 'that is tested against observations' (Babbie, 2010). In other words, the deductive approach is concerned with deducting conclusions from premises or propositions. Deductive reasoning can be explained as 'reasoning from the general to the particular' (Pelissier, 2008; Garad *et al.* 2020).

2. Descriptive Results

The evaluation was categorized into quantitative and qualitative sections. The quantitative outcomes concerning the systematic literature review of reports were presented in the quantitative section. Meanwhile, the findings derived from the report reviews were presented (with the narrative descriptive technique) in the qualitative section.

The aforementioned assessment (accessible as part of the 2019 report or downloadable at http://reports.weforum.org/ttcr/) aimed to offer readers an advanced overview of TandT competitiveness among the five regional groupings encompassed in the 2019 index. Additionally, the evaluation highlighted the financial performance of the overall TandT Competitiveness Index (TTCI), four primary aspects (sub-indices), and all 14 pillars. On another note, financial performance elements (world rank and score) included all 90 TTCI predictors (as scores) from the World Economic Forum Executive Opinion Survey on a 1 to 7 scale (7 as the most favorable result) (Calderwood and Soshkin, 2019).

Table 1. The TandT competitiveness rank

Items	India		Indonesia	
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
Subindex A: Enabling Environment	98	4.4	72	4.8
Subindex B: Travel and Tourism Policy and Enabling Conditions	69	4.5	4	5
Subindex C: Infrastructure	55	3.8	71	3.5
Subindex D: Natural and Cultural Resources	9	5	18	3.8
Pillar 1: Business Environment	39	4.9	50	4.7
Pillar 2: Safety and Security	122	4.5	80	5.4
Pillar 3: Health and Hygiene	105	4.4	102	4.5
Pillar 4: Human Resources and Labour Market	76	4.5	44	4.9
Pillar 5: ICT Readiness	105	3.6	67	4.7
Pillar 6: Prioritisation of Travel and Tourism	94	4.3	10	5.9
Pillar 7: International Openness	51	3.8	16	4.3
Pillar 8: Price Competitiveness	13	6.1	6	6.2
Pillar 9: Environmental Sustainability	128	3.6	135	3.5
Pillar 10: Air Transport Infrastructure	33	4.2	38	3.9
Pillar 11: Ground and Port Infrastructure	28	4.5	66	3.3
Pillar 12: Tourist Service Infrastructure	109	2.8	98	3.1
Pillar 13: Natural Resources	14	4.5	17	4.5
Pillar 14: Cultural Resources and Business Travel	8	5.5	24	3.2
TTCI 2019 and Overall Rank	34	4.4	40	4.3

1 *Resource: http://reports.weforum.org/ttcr/*
2 *Note 1: Index of countries (one to 140 countries).*
3 *Note 2: Score range from 1 to 7 (1 = worst and 7 = best).*

In Table 1, The TandT Competitiveness Report denoted the World Economic Forum flagship product (a platform for future mobility development and world leader collaborations) for travel and transportation systems that complemented 21st-century requirements (Bank World, 2018). The report denoted a strategic benchmark for policymakers, organizations, and relevant industries to catalyse potential TandT sector development with novel insights into the national and economic development of specific advantages and areas for industrial competition (Garad and Qamari, 2021). The report also represented a multi-stakeholder dialogue platform to comprehend and expect developing TandT patterns and risks, policy, practice, and investment-related adaptations, and novel model acceleration for industrial sustenance. The index encompassed four sub-indices, 14 pillars, and 90 individual predictors across various pillars (Calderwood and Soshkin, 2019).

The TTCI (encompassing 140 world economies) assessed a set of factors and policies that promoted long-term TandT industrial development toward national competitiveness. The four sub-indices of the 2019 TTCI involved the following: 1) Enabling Environment, such as business environment, safety and security, health and hygiene, human resources, labor market, and information communication technology (ICT) readiness, 2) TandT Policy and Supporting Conditions, such as TandT priority, international transparency, price competitiveness, and environmental sustainability, 3) Infrastructure, such as air transportation, land and port, and tourism service infrastructure, and 4) Natural and Cultural Resources, such as natural and cultural resources and business travel (Calderwood and Soshkin, 2019; Rodríguez-Díaz *et al.* 2021).

The 2019 TTCI report implied the Asia Pacific region to be the second-most competitive region following Europe and Eurasia. Specifically, Japan (ranked 4th) topped the overall score while Bangladesh (ranked 120th) demonstrated the highest increase. In this vein, the region demonstrated optimal natural-cultural resource combinations (highest regional performance for Cultural Resources and Business Travel sub-indices) and sophisticated air transportation infrastructure globally (ground service infrastructure, ports, and tourism) with the highest regional increase (Fernández *et al.* 2020). Notably, East Asia Pacific was the most competitive sub-region while South Asia has been the most advanced counterpart since 2017 (Augustin *et al.* 2017).

Table 2. Overall national economy statistics in TandT sector

Indicator	Sub-indicator Type	2016	2017	2018	2020
India					
International tourism and expenditure (current US$)	Value	19,184,000,000	21,856,000,000	25,790,000,000	15,777,000
International tourism and expenditure for passenger transport items (current US$)	Value	2,808,000,000	3,413,000,000	4,471,000,000	3,203,000
International tourism and expenditure for travel items (current US$)	Value	16,376,000,000	18,443,000,000	21,319,000,000	12,574,000
International tourism and number of arrivals	Value	14,570,000	15,543,000	17,423,000	7,914,000
International tourism and number of departures	Value	21,872,000	23,943,000	26,296,000	6,915,000
International tourism and receipts (current US$)	Value	23,111,000,000	27,878,000,000	29,143,000,000	13,413,000
International tourism and receipts for passenger transport items (current US$)	Value	684,000,000	513,000,000	575,000,000	377,000
International tourism and receipts for travel items (current US$)	Value	22,427,000,000	27,365,000,000	28,568,000,000	13,036,000
International tourism and expenditure (% of total imports)	Value	4.06	3.89	4.01	3.2
International tourism and receipts (% of total exports)	Value	5.37	5.70	5.43	2.8
Employment in services (% of total employment)	Value	30.87	31.25	31.72	31
Employment to population ratio, 15+, total (%) (modeled ILO estimate)	Value	47.57	47.18	46.79	46
Employment in services and female gender (% of female employment)	Percent	24.98	26.13	27.19	25
Employment in services and male gender (% of male employment)	Percent	32.39	32.56	32.87	32
Indonesia					
International tourism and expenditure (current US$)	Value	9,932,000,000	10,945,000,000	11,629,000,000	1,980,000
International tourism and expenditure for passenger transport items (current US$)	Value	2,366,000,000	2,656,000,000	2,857,000,000	327,000
International tourism and expenditure for travel items (current US$)	Value	7,566,000,000	8,289,000,000	8,772,000,000	1,653,000
International tourism and number of arrivals	Value	11,519,000	14,040,000	15,810,000	4,053,000
International tourism and number of departures	Value	8,340,000	8,856,000	9,468,000	2,918,000
International tourism and receipts (current US$)	Value	12,566,000,000	14,691,000,000	15,600,000,000	3,533,000

Indicator	Sub-indicator Type	2016	2017	2018	2020
International tourism and receipts for passenger transport items (current US$)	Value	1,360,000,000	1,552,000,000	1,490,000,000	221,000
International tourism and receipts for travel items (current US$)	Value	11,206,000,000	13,139,000,000	14,110,000,000	3,312,000
International tourism and expenditure (% of total imports)	Value	6.22	5.99	5.32	1.2
International tourism and receipts (% of total exports)	Value	7.49	7.56	7.36	2.0
Employment in services (% of total employment)	Value	46.46	47.19	48.08	49
Employment to population ratio, 15+, total (%) (modeled ILO estimate)	Value	63.33	64.21	64.47	64
Employment in services and female gender (% of female employment)	Per cent	53.94	54.52	55.5	58
Employment in services and male gender (% of male employment)	Per cent	41.77	42.53	43.27	43

Resource: https://data.worldbank.org/.

Essentially, Table 2 illustrates the overall national economic statistics in TandT (annual number of international tourist arrivals and inbound receipts in US$ millions) and the ratio between both measures in 2017. The study data corresponded to the Tourism Satellite Account framework under UNWTO (developed by OECD and Eurostat), the UNWTO Yearbook of Tourism Statistics, and the Compendium of Tourism Statistics (Stats, 2018). Specifically, international tourism inbound receipts denoted visitor expenditure, such as payments to national carriers for international transportation and other goods or service pre-payments obtained in the destination country (receipts from same-day visitors) unless justified otherwise (Pratt *et al.*, 2018; Sethukumari *et al.,* 2021). For example, some economies excluded passenger transportation item receipts. This section also presents the TandT industry GDP value, value additions as the overall economy share, employment, and employment share of the overall economy.

Tourism denoted a promising growth sector that potentially unlocked private investments, expanded inclusive growth and employment, elevated export incomes, and navigated targeted infrastructure investment programs in tourism destinations. Globally, tourism was acknowledged for strong backward and forward connections with other economic sectors and the substantial employment of female staff (54% of qualified hotel and restaurant workers) and youths. With effective planning and management, the tourism sector could produce more employment and revenues towards poverty mitigation and mutual prosperity (Leung *et al.* 2018; Alisa *et al.* 2020).

Both private and public tourism-oriented companies encompassed the manufacturing, sales, and promotion of diverse tourism products or services (flights, accommodation at front desks, and tourism product sales in attraction spots). In this regard, tourist SC corresponded to a defined tourism product that potentially encompassed specific regions and cities. Tourism SC operators collaborated to 1) simultaneously offer particular materials, products, and services with sound relationships and 2) highlight a substantial source of organizational value in achieving a long-term competitive advantage. An essential procedural element involved adequate partner choice in SC to organize and provide competitive package tours (Goldberg, 2018; Garad *et al.* 2021).

Effective collaborations with various SC networks crucially determined SCA (Du *et al.* 2021; Centobelli *et al.* 2020). Various requirements were identified at the beginning of the offer to ensure unique and appealing TandT packages (McKercher, 2003; Kandampully, 2000). Tourism types in India and Indonesia are distinct based on ecology, mythology, history, geographical diversity (mountains, fields, and highlands), and homeopathic medication (Ayurveda) (Arunmozhi and Panneerselvam, 2013; Hampton *et al.* 2016; Salnikova, 2022; Garad *et al.* 2022). Both countries reflected different tourism alternatives, such as ecological, pilgrimage, historical, adventure, medical, and Ayurveda tourism (in India). The variety of tourist activities provided are as follows:

Table 5. Types of Tourism in India and Indonesia

No	Items	India	Indonesia
1	Leisure Tourism	√	√
2	Business Tourism	√	√
3	Ecological Tourism	√	√
4	Pilgrimage Tourism	√	√
5	Historical Tourism	√	√
6	Adventure Tourism	√	√
7	Sports Tourism	√	√
8	Wildlife Tourism	√	√
9	Rural tourism	√	√
10	Medical Tourism	√	
11	Ayurveda and Yoga Tourism	√	

1. Leisure Tourism: Denoted as a leisure period (in the absence of work) to engage in activities beyond daily routines. Recreational tourism implied holiday activities as follows:
   a. Relaxation (sleeping, relaxing, reading, walking on the beach, and scenic drives);
   b. Sports (hiking, swimming, surfing, and running);
   c. Visiting interesting areas and local attractions;
   d. Visiting friends and relatives;
   e. Shopping for items of interest.
2. Business Tourism: Indicated as 'travel for business purposes' and categorised into three aspects, such as a) trading goods for wholesale resale, b) performing business transactions (visiting clients and negotiating contracts), and c) participating in business conferences, exhibitions, or events.
3. Ecological Tourism: An exploration of diverse and rich flora and fauna, natural beauty, forest views, wildlife reserves, mountains and hills, and scenic beaches for all nature lovers.
4. Pilgrimage Tourism: India is known as the 'Land of Gods and Goddesses' following a strong mythological background, whereas Indonesia displayed the cultural wealth of kings from various islands who significantly influenced the spread of religion beyond local sites and cultures. As culturally developed nations and the birthplace of multiple saints, poets, and philosophers, both India and Indonesia have supported the growth of pilgrimage tourism from ancient times.
5. Historical Tourism: As a nation that produced multiple notable rulers and warriors with famed historical backgrounds, each Indian city or site encompassed historic significance. Popular tourist locations in India include the Taj Mahal in Agra, Ajanta Ellora and Khajuraho caves, forts in Delhi, Rajasthan and Maharashtra, and the historic Madurai city. Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms in Indonesia include the Borobudur, Prambanan, Gedhong Songo, Kalasan, and Mendut temples in Central and East Java and the Sumatra and Kalimantan islands.
6. Adventure Tourism: As nations with high geographic diversity, India and Indonesia were suitable for adventure tourism. For example, Indian terrains offer hiking, skiing, and trekking in the Himalayas, camel safaris in Rajasthan, rafting on the Ganges near Rishikesh, rock climbing, wind rafting, and other tourist adventures. Meanwhile, Indonesia encompassed many islands and attractive adventure locations, including Mount Krakatau and Bromo Tengger Semeru in East Java, Mount Rinjani in Lombok West Nusa Tenggara, trekking in Bali, the Ijen crater in Banyuwangi, East Java, and Komodo island, rafting in Citarik Sukabumi, the Alas Aceh River, and the Elo River in Magelang, Central Java, and cave tours in Gunungkidul (a special Yogyakarta region), Pacitan in East Java, and Maros in South Sulawesi.
7. Sports Tourism: denoted international travel to spectate or engage in sporting events, including the Olympics, World Cup (football, rugby, and cricket), tennis, golf, and the Formula 1 Grand Prix.
8. Wildlife Tourism: indicated wild animal observations in natural settings or captivity, including wildlife photography, observation, and feeding. The tourism type provided customized wildlife tours and safari packages closely associated with ecotourism and sustainable tourism.
9. Rural tourism: a tourist activity that occurs in areas with rural attributes. Specifically, agro-tourism was one of the latest concepts that revolutionized the Indian travel sector with authentic and interactive rural experiences in natural contexts. On another note, rural tourism in Indonesia reflected

a combination of excitement, adventure, natural beauty, and enriched culture with novel possibilities to integrate with surrounding environments (traveling to locations with conventional lifestyles).

10. Medical Tourism: a tourism type where visitors intend to receive medical treatment. Given that most foreign tourists visited India following affordable and effective treatment facilities, the country was globally regarded as a better medical treatment option.
11. Ayurveda and Yoga Tourism: a 'life science' established in 600 BC. India has documented high tourist arrivals following Ayurveda tourism. For example, the state of Kerala in South India is a renowned Ayurvedic tourism site. Meanwhile, Indian Yoga denoted yogic practices and basic meditation for mind, body, and soul revitalization in many Indian ashrams. The Himalayas, Rishikesh, Kedarnath, and Gangotri in North India are some of the renowned Yoga tour destinations that promote perpetual peace and spiritual quests.

Other minor tourism types involve luxury, Agro, Culinary, Meditation, and Geo-tourism. Summarily, tourism implied profitability for the following sectors: accommodation, tour guide, recreation, tourist attraction, events and conferences, food and beverage, transportation, and the travel trade.

3. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings show that the SCA which demonstrated within the tourism sector was able to potentially maintained tourism sector growth and development. Denoted tourism as a promising growth sector that potentially unlocked private investments, expanded inclusive growth and employment, elevated export incomes, and navigated targeted infrastructure investment programs in tourism destinations. The service sector contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is denoted a progress predictor. For emerging destinations, high-quality goods and service standards served as the appealing suppliers of world-class hotels and tourism operators. Therefore, organizations are required to adapt tactics and operations in SCs to address current dynamic settings, possibilities, and threats. An essential procedural element involved adequate partner choice in SC to organize and provide competitive package tours.

High service sector contribution to the national economy implied industrial advancement. As developing nations, Indonesia and India encompass rapidly advancing service industries on a global scale. Economically, the travel and tourism (TandT) sector proved essential in facilitating GDP and employment opportunities while a competent workforce vitally affected industrial growth and development. In this vein, human resource development is a crucial industrial component.

This study shows the interrelationship between the economic development of the country and the development of tourism. Tourism helps in revitalizing the supply chain sector which directly affects economic and industrial development and vice versa. This is beneficial for both governments and those in the tourism and economic sectors to make joint and effective cooperation. This research also mentions many important points that may help them to revitalize this relationship.

Integration of technological engines in tourism, the incorporation of engines in tourism is listed as follows: Introduce novel programs and plans for high tourism investments; Increase public and private sector collaborations; Offer government incentive packages for industrial support; Waive and reduce tourist establishment fees; Initiate planned investment following potential industrial requirements; Promote investments for domestic tourism projects; Allocate specific tourism investment areas; Present holistic tourism investment databases; Organize a promotional list of promising investment possibilities; Present a novel and integrated model for hotel licenses following the surrounding environment attributes.

Future research: Several titles were proposed for future studies upon reviewing a broad range of tourism-related studies and reports: The role of sporting events in marketing and promoting tourism; Individual economic level predictor on tourist site selection; Tourism sector development prospects as follows: High-end tourism: luxury tourism that emphasized service quality over quantity; Meditation tourism: one of the most reputable international tourism form (a novel tourism product worldwide). The tourism required experts on meditation and cognition to select suitable activity sites upon due examination and exploration.

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Ika Nurul Qamari: has contributed as first author by working on Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Visualization.
Mohsin Shaikh: has contributed ideas especially on Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal Analysis, Writing – original draft, Visualization.
Askar Garad: contributed as third author with relevant acts, such as: Conceptualization, Investigation, Data curation, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Visualization.
Leli Joko Suryono: contributed as the fourth writer by carrying out activities: Validation, Writing – review and editing, Visualization.
Nuryakin: contributed as the fifth author by working on activities: Data curation, Validation, Writing – review and editing, Visualization.

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The authors state that they have no known competing financial interests or personal ties that could influence the work disclosed in this article. The document was unanimously agreed upon as a form of international collaboration.

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Tourism and Gender: Safety for Women Travelers, Enhancing Gender Equality and Combating Violence Against Women

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Abstract: The purpose of this article is to analyze the safety of women tourists, which includes strategies for promoting gender equality and combating violence against women in the tourism industry with specific reference to the context of Kazakhstan. The article outlines the essential strategies for breaking barriers and fostering a gender-equal environment in the tourism industry. It stresses the importance of comprehensive training programs, supportive work environments, policies and programs that support women's leadership and representation in decision-making processes in tourism, addressing the wage gap, creating a safe environment, establishing policies and procedures for handling complaints and offering assistance to victims. Documentary analysis methodology involved the systematic examination and interpretation of relevant documents, reports, publications, international conventions, and declarations related to gender equality and violence against women in the tourism sector. The findings of this study underline the significance of collaboration with various stakeholders including governments, tourism organizations, businesses, and civil society, and advocacy for legal reforms in creating systemic change. The documentary analysis revealed key strategies for ensuring the safety of women travelers. This includes implementing technological and security innovations, such as mobile applications for security and video monitoring. Additionally, it is crucial to offer women-only transportation and accommodation options. Gender-sensitive training was also identified as an essential component for tourism professionals.

Keywords: gender equality; violence against women; sustainable development; Kazakhstan.

JEL Classification: I23; I28; K15; L30; L33; Z32.

Introduction

The safety of tourists, including women travelers, is essential for the successful development of tourism. The safety of women tourists involves addressing gender equality and violence against women. Despite some improvements, gender inequality still exists in the travel and tourism industry (Alarcón and Cole, 2019; Casado-Díaz *et al.*, 2022; Duffy *et al.*, 2015). Women frequently have limited opportunities for career growth and leadership roles in the tourism sector and commonly experience unequal pay and discriminatory practices (Carvalho *et al.*, 2018; Casado-Díaz *et al.*, 2022; Chen *et al.*, 2021; Muñoz-Bullón, 2009). Moreover, the problem of violence against women, such as harassment and assault, can put their safety and well-being in danger (Aragón Falomir, 2022; Eger, 2021; Mpu and Adu, 2021; Sanggyeong Je, 2023). Addressing these challenges requires proactive measures. This article aims to shed light on strategies that advance gender equality and combat violence against women in the tourism industry. It will explore strategies such as training programs, fostering a supportive work environment, collaboration with stakeholders, advocacy for legal reforms, addressing the wage gap, and creating accessible support systems that empower women and address violence against women. It stresses that collaboration with various stakeholders in the tourism industry including governments, tourism organizations, and civil society can facilitate the development of initiatives that promote gender equality and economic opportunities for women within the tourism industry. The tourism industry can contribute to sustainable development and social progress by breaking barriers and creating a safe and inclusive tourist environment.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Gender Inequality in the Tourism Industry

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in September 2015, established Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5), which aims to global commitment to achieving gender equality and empowering women (UN, 2015). It focuses on eliminating all forms of gender-based violence and discrimination, ensuring access to proper healthcare and education, and promoting equal opportunities for women in political, economic, and public life. Achieving gender equality by 2030 is impossible without taking a decisive effort to address the underlying causes of discrimination against women in the public and private spheres. Despite notable progress in some areas, gender inequality continues to persist in the tourism sector of many nations across the world (Alarcón and Cole, 2019; Casado-Díaz *et al.*, 2022; Duffy *et al.*, 2015; Navarro Cejas *et al.,* 2021; Segovia-Pérez *et al.*, 2019). According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2023, that reflects indicators of economic integration, such as salaries, access to high-skilled employment and access to education, the economic gap between men and women is significant even in developed countries (World Economic Forum, 2023).

Global Report on Women in Tourism (2019) stresses that 'tourism has a pivotal role to play in achieving the commitments at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – including commitments to gender equality, women's empowerment and leaving no one behind'. It highlights that women in tourism often face various challenges and disparities, including underrepresentation in leadership roles, wage gap, unpaid care work, access to education and training, safety concerns, and stereotyping and bias. Although women count for 54% of workforce worldwide in the tourism sector, they are underrepresented in managerial positions (less than 40%), management roles (less than 20%), and board positions (less than 8%) (Global Report on Women in Tourism, 2019). Unless gender equality is effectively and significantly addressed, tourism's ability to make a meaningful contribution to the SDGs will be limited (Alarcón and Cole, 2019; Zelinska *et al.*, 2021).

Meanwhile, according to the Global Report on Women in Tourism (2019), a gender pay gap continues to persist in the tourism sector, as women earn less than men for equivalent work. Research also indicates that there is a sizable wage gap for women across all locations within the tourism industry, with their mean hourly rate being significantly lower than that of men, revealing serious gender-related challenges (Casado-Díaz *et al.*, 2022; Muñoz-Bullón, 2009). For example, the study by Fleming (2015) that based on a sample of 112,990 people employed in the hospitality industry of the USA in 2010 found that there is solid evidence of a persistent income gap between females and males, even after taking into account factors such as educational attainment, and hours worked. Casaldo-Díaz *et al.* (2022) argue that women employed in the tourism industry tend to hold lower-ranking positions compared to men and, also they are more commonly found in low-skilled roles, contributing to their overall wage gap. Thus, wage gap is one of the factors that contribute to the gender inequality within tourism sector.

Furthermore, social and cultural factors such as traditional gender roles and stereotypes further hinder women's involvement in the tourism industry (Carvalho *et al.*, 2018; Chen *et al.*, 2021; Duffy *et al.,* 2015). These deep-rooted beliefs often aggravate inequality and limit opportunities for women, both as employees and entrepreneurs within the tourism sector. For instance, social norms may dictate certain roles as more suitable for women, leading to the concentration of women in traditionally female-dominated, unskilled and marginalized jobs such as front desk staff and housekeeping (Ghaderi *et al.*, 2023). Women may therefore find it difficult to get higher-paying jobs and leadership roles in the tourism sector. Similarly, women entrepreneurs in the tourism industry may face difficulties accessing financial resources and support due to gender prejudices in the financial sector (Handaragama and Kusakabe, 2021). These prejudices result from societal conventions and beliefs that view women as less competent in the workplace. Therefore, it is important to address traditional gender roles and stereotypes in the tourism industry in order to create a more inclusive and equitable sector that benefits from the full participation and contributions of women.

Additionally, there is still an uneven representation of women in senior roles within the tourism industry (Carvalho *et al.*, 2018; Chen *et al.*, 2021; Rinaldi and Salerno, 2020; Segovia-Pérez *et al.*, 2019). The concept of the 'glass ceiling' is commonly employed in gender and management literature to analyze the underrepresentation of women in top-level roles (Carvalho *et al.*, 2018; Chen *et al.*, 2021; Remington and Kitterlin-Lynch, 2018). It symbolizes the invisible barriers that competent individuals, such as women and ethnic minorities, encounter, impeding their advancement to senior and executive management positions (Carvalho *et al.*, 2018; Remington and Kitterlin-Lynch, 2018). Despite their skills and qualifications, these obstacles prevent women from advancing in their careers. Chen *et al.* (2021) conducted in-depths interviews with 14 females in hospitality leadership positions in the USA and found that women might face obstacles in their careers due to the lack of self-confidence, lack of careful career planning and workplace stereotypes. Moreover, Carvalho *et al.* (2018) found that even women who have surpassed the metaphorical 'glass ceiling' in hotels and travel agencies in Portugal, acknowledge that gender power dynamics and ongoing gendered processes still have an impact on them and that attaining a high position does not eliminate the influence of gender norms and biases in their professional settings. Therefore, addressing gender inequality requires systematic approaches that can include promoting equal employment opportunities, combating stereotypes and biases, empowering women in local communities, and implementing gender-sensitive policies and regulations.

1.2. Safety for Women and Violence Against Women in Tourism

Safety for women travelers and violence against women in the tourism sector are critical issues that require urgent attention and action (Aragón Falomir, 2022; Eger, 2021; Mpu and Adu, 2021; Sanggyeong Je, 2023; World Health Organization, 2013). Women in the tourism sector, such as hotel staff, tour guides, hospitality professionals as well as female tourists may be particularly at risk of experiencing various types of violence, such as sexual harassment and assault. In 2022, the highest rate of violent crimes against women was observed in Senegal (78%), Guinea (80%), and Pakistan (85%) (OECD, 2023).

The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women adopted December 20, 1993 defines violence as 'any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life'. Meanwhile, according to Article 3 of the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) adopted on May 11, 2011, 'gender-based violence against women shall mean violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately'. These international conventions stress the importance of thoroughly addressing violence against women in both the public and private domains.

The various forms of violence against women in the tourism industry range from verbal harassment to physical and sexual assault, trafficking and exploitation, and forced labor (Alrawadıeh and Alrawadıeh, 2020; Brooks and Heaslip, 2019; Cheung *et al.*, 2018; Díaz-Meneses *et al.*, 2020). The study by Cheung *et al.* (2018) has documented the prevalence of incidents of sexual harassment and seductive harassment behavior in Taiwan's tourism sector. Some key factors contributing to violence against women in the tourism sector include gender inequality, cultural factors such as gender-based stereotypes, lack of awareness and education, alcohol and drug use, economic factors, lack of legal protection, permissive culture (Aragón Falomir, 2022; Díaz-Meneses *et al.*, 2020; Mpu and Adu, 2021). Eger (2021) emphasizes the significance of gendered constructions of vulnerability in understanding the nature of violence. According to the Council of Europe, four types of factors can be identified as causes of gender-based violence: cultural factors (patriarchal and sexist views, gender stereotypes and prejudice, general acceptance of violence, socialization of gender, etc.), legal factors (low levels of reporting and investigation, legal flaws or loopholes), economic factors (lack of economic resources, poverty) and political factors (Council of Europe, 2019). Comprehending the diversity of the forms of violence and factors contributing to violence is crucial in developing targeted interventions and enhancing efforts to prevent gender discrimination.

Research has indicated that violence against women is prevalent in the tourism sector. Díaz-Meneses *et al.* (2020) analyzed violence from gender stereotypes and sexist attitudes in the context of tourism and argue that within the tourism sector, there are underlying gender stereotypes that contribute to the marginalization of women as both travelers and professionals. Similarly, Aragón Falomir (2022) examined and identified the factors that contribute to the vulnerability and violence faced by women in Cancun, Mexico's international tourism city and found that women's vulnerability is influenced by factors such as poverty, lack of education, inequality, and social norms. Furthermore, Cheung *et al.* (2018) found that Asian tour leaders frequently are very passive in dealing with instances of sexual harassment. These findings indicate the urgent need for effective measures to address violence against women.

2. Research Methodology

The aim of this study is to examine the promotion of gender equality and combating violence against women in the tourism and hospitality sector. To achieve this aim, a documentary analysis approach was employed. This methodology involved the systematic examination and interpretation of relevant documents, reports, and publications related to gender equality and violence against women in tourism and hospitality. In particular, international conventions and declarations such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women adopted December 18, 1979, Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) adopted May 11, 2011, as well as policy documents of Kazakhstan were analyzed. Data were analyzed in order to identify prevalent themes, patterns, and trends arising from the documentary sources, related to gender equality and violence against women in the tourism sector.

3. Research Results and Discussion

3.1. Addressing Violence Against Women in the Tourism Sector

A comprehensive and coordinated worldwide framework is needed to address violence against women in the tourism industry to ensure the safety and well-being of female tourists, employees, and local communities. The international framework of violence against women includes a set of agreements, conventions, and guidelines developed by international organizations and ratified by member countries to address and combat violence against women at a global level. One of the important steps in combating violence against women is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) that was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 18 December 1979. It is frequently referred to as an international bill of rights for women and is regarded as one of the most significant international human rights instruments that focuses on gender equality (Mullins, 2018). According to article 3 of the CEDAW, 'States Parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men'. Key features and provisions of the CEDAW include a comprehensive definition of discrimination, obligations of state parties, a focus on substantive equality, and the development of effective reporting and monitoring mechanisms.

In the meantime, Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women that was adopted by United Nations on 20 December 1993 was the first international law that specifically addressed violence against women, offering a framework for regional and global action. It is an essential international instrument for the global effort to abolish discrimination and gender-based violence against women. The Declaration provided the definition of violence against women, recognized gender-based violence as human rights violation, highlighted the importance of eliminating all forms of violence against women, and stressed obligations of states and international cooperation in eliminating violence against women. It has played a crucial role in shaping policies, legal frameworks, and initiatives that aim to eliminate violence and promote gender equality worldwide (King, 2019).

Another major international convention in combating violence against women is The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) and it is considered as first legally binding convention for Europe and first to establish a gender-neutral definition of sexual violence (Grans, 2018; Jurasz, 2015; Lozinska, 2021). According to the Istanbul Convention, types of gender-based violence include psychological violence, stalking, physical violence, sexual violence, including rape, forced marriages, female genital mutilation, forced abortion and forced sterilization, sexual harassment, aiding or abetting and attempt, unacceptable justifications for crimes, including crimes committed in the name of so-called 'honor'. Based on this classification Council of Europe (2019) identified five common types of gender-based violence: physical, verbal (including hate speech), sexual, psychological, and socio-economic. Key features of the Istanbul Convention include comprehensive scope, emphasizing preventive and protective measures, the importance of prosecution and sanction as well as non-discrimination and equality.

As the literature review indicated, women travelers and tourism workers face serious safety risks from sexual harassment and assault (Alrawadıeh and Alrawadıeh, 2020; Brooks and Heaslip, 2019; Cheung *et al.,* 2018). Therefore, it is crucial to create a safe environment where women feel protected and where offenders are held responsible for their behavior. In order to address this problem, training programs can be put in place to inform tourism staff on proper conduct, bystander intervention, gender sensitivity, and reporting procedures. In addition, creating accessible support systems, helplines, and safe spaces for victims can encourage reporting cases of violence. Some key benefits of support systems include providing immediate assistance, ensuring confidentiality, tailored support, raising awareness, prevention, early intervention, and collaborative efforts with the government and other stakeholders. These measures have the potential to play a significant role in encouraging reporting and supporting victims during their recovery process.

Another important way of tackling this issue is establishing policies and procedures for handling complaints and offering assistance to victims. These policies and procedures can offer a structured framework for handling complaints and helping individuals who are impacted. Developing such policies can include clear reporting mechanisms, confidentiality and anonymity, thorough investigation process, legal protections, timely responses, supportive measures, and regular training and awareness programs.

Additionally, legal reforms are an important step in tackling violence against women effectively. For example, the findings of the Review of the effectiveness of legislation protecting women from violence across the Commonwealth outlined 9 main areas for action that are intended to assist parliamentarians in their initiatives to improve local laws that protect women from violence: review existing legislation addressing violence against women, advocate for the introduction or amendment of legislation, build women's cross-party parliamentary networks, build parliamentary cross-party networks with men, build external alliances, conduct pre-legislative scrutiny, advocate for a specific amendment of a bill, conduct post-legislative scrutiny, and conduct a gender analysis of the budget (The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, 2021). Strong and comprehensive laws are crucial for protecting women, holding perpetrators accountable, and promoting a society free from gender-based violence. Some key areas in legal reforms related to violence against women can include removing legal loopholes, support for victims, and international cooperation. It is crucial to ensure the protection of female tourists and tourism employees as well as the creation of a secure atmosphere in order to achieve gender equality and responsible tourism practices. The creation of a safer and more respectful tourism environment for women and all individuals is possible through comprehensive and collaborative actions.

3.2. Safety for Women Travelers in Tourism

Safety for women travelers is a crucial aspect of creating a welcoming and sustainable travel environment. Prioritizing women's safety not only contributes to the growth and reputation of tourist destinations but also promotes the principles of human rights and equality. To address the safety of female travelers, it is necessary to take a multifaceted approach that incorporates infrastructural upgrades, increased security protocols, and public awareness initiatives. The rapid development of international tourism, as well as the growth of global security threats, demands new approaches for governing international collaboration and partnerships in the tourism industry. The dangers posed by the security concerns rise as nations' connections through travel and tourism deepen. Several crucial strategies to improve tourism security cooperation and partnership might be proposed to address these issues. One of the important ways of such partnerships is information sharing and intelligence collaboration. Countries must establish efficient systems for exchanging information and intelligence about potential security threats. To enable nations to react proactively and cooperatively, this entails building systems for exchanging real-time data on security concerns, trends, and incidents. Moreover, a coordinated response to cross-border security challenges can be facilitated by the formation of regional and international agreements on tourism security. These agreements could address areas such as extradition procedures and joint operations.

The documentary analysis revealed important strategies in ensuring the safety of women travelers such as technology and safety innovations (mobile apps for safety and video surveillance, women-only transportation and accommodation, gender-sensitive training, emergency hotlines and support centers, the collaboration of various stakeholders (Ghai and Chowdhri, 2022; Khoo-Lattimore and Gibson, 2018). In fact, technology may significantly assist safe tourism practices. Women travelers can feel more secure and have better overall safety with the use of mobile apps that offer real-time safety alerts and location tracking. Hotels and transport companies can also install contemporary security measures like CCTV cameras and panic buttons to ensure quick response in case of emergencies and for the purpose of identifying potential security threats.

Offering women-only services such as women-only accommodation options and transportation services aims at creating a secure and comfortable environment for female travelers. Women-only services contribute to enhanced safety and comfort, and a positive reputation of tourist destinations (Ghai and Chowdhri, 2022). They might have extra security precautions, female staff members, and safety procedures that provide them with a sense of protection and lessen the possibility of harassment or potential risks. Moreover, there may be specific norms and sensitivities surrounding relationships between men and women in some cultures. Women-only services can assist in addressing these cultural considerations and ensure that female travelers feel respected and safe.

Meanwhile, gender-sensitive training implies providing education and guidance for tourism professionals, including hotel staff, tour guides, and transportation operators, on gender sensitivity, recognizing harassment, and reacting appropriately to security concerns. Gender-sensitive training can cover a range of topics, including recognizing gender bias, understanding safety concerns, empathy and communication, and creating safe spaces. For example, The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) proposed four steps for gender mainstreaming in tourism companies as a part of guidelines on gender-inclusive strategy for tourism business: securing high-level support for gender equality and committing to the Women's Empowerment Principles; assessing current progress on gender equality; reviewing current progress on thematic areas for women in tourism; and developing and implementing an action plan for gender equality in tourism (UNWTO, 2022). Gender-sensitive training helps tourism professionals become more attentive and responsive to the diverse needs of female travelers.

Emergency hotlines and support centers are essential in ensuring the safety of women travelers. Travelling can be risky, especially in unfamiliar surroundings, and women may have difficulties with regard to their safety and security. Having access to dedicated emergency hotlines and support centers can provide them with protection and assistance. Emergency hotlines and support centers can provide immediate assistance in emergencies, psychological support, necessary information and resources for women travelers.

The collaboration of the government, travel agencies, and local communities is one of the key ways to create a safe and welcoming travel environment for women. This may involve implementing policies and guidelines to prevent harassment, training staff in the tourism industry on gender sensitivity, disseminating information and resources on safety, and promoting an inclusive and respectful culture.

3.3. Collaborative Strategies and Initiatives to Advance Gender Equality in Kazakhstan's Tourism Industry

Over the years of independence, Kazakhstan has made some progress in protecting the legal rights and interests of women and eliminating gender inequality (Bayanbayeva and Altynbassov, 2020; Khairullayeva *et al.*, 2022; Kuzhabekova and Almukhambetova, 2021; OECD, 2017). In 1998, Kazakhstan joined the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Kazakhstan has also signed other important international pacts on civil and political, economic, social and cultural rights of women (OECD, 2017). Currently, compared to other countries in Central Asia, Kazakhstan is a pioneer in advancing gender equality (World Economic Forum, 2023). According to article 14 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 'no one shall be subject to any discrimination for reasons of origin, social, property status, occupation, sex, race, nationality, language, attitude towards religion, convictions, place of residence or any other circumstances'. The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated December 8, 2009, On state guarantees of equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women ensures equal access of men and women to the state service and stresses the importance of ensuring gender equality in the field of protection of health, education, culture.

In the Global Gender Gap Index 2023, a study report that compares gender equality across 146 nations, Kazakhstan improved its overall standing and climbed to position 62 (World Economic Forum, 2023). Specifically, according to the report, Kazakhstan ranked 28th in Economic participation and Opportunity, 27th in Educational

Attainment, 47th in Health and Survival, and 100th in Political Empowerment. Thus, although the nation showed some progress in eliminating gender gaps in education attainment levels, economic opportunities and health and survival, the number of women in parliament and ministerial positions is still low. It indicates the gendered nature of management roles, highlighting that despite their apparent gender neutrality, these roles frequently reflect characteristics and expectations that conform to traditional male norms. This demonstrates how gender power dynamics still have an impact on organizations, proving that gendered hierarchies and norms play a significant role in determining organizational structures and dynamics.

In the Travel and Tourism Development Index of the World Economic Forum 2021, Kazakhstan ranks 66th out of 117 countries, up 14 positions compared to the previous index in 2019 (80th) (World Economic Forum, 2022). Kazakhstan has significantly improved its position in such areas as Tourism Prioritization, International Openness, Natural Resources, Tourism Services Infrastructure. At the same time, there is a deterioration in such indicators as the Business environment, Health and hygiene, and Safety. It shows the necessity of proactive measures in some areas in order to develop sustainable tourism in Kazakhstan.

Unfortunately, national policy documents on tourism in Kazakhstan such as the Concept of development of the tourism industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023 – 2029 ignore the gender issues in tourism. In addition, there are no statistics on the gender equality in tourism and violence against women in the tourism sector of Kazakhstan. Although at the international level there are various ratings regarding the danger or safety of countries and cities for women to visit, in Kazakhstan there is no unified information regarding these data. Furthermore, available literature from Kazakhstan's context also overlooks gender issues in tourism. For example, Altynbassov *et al.* (2021) found that the establishment of international university campuses can facilitate the attraction of international academics and students which can lead to the development of the tourism sector. Another study has revealed that academic mobility can increase the rate of MICE tourism and academic tourism as a whole (Altynbassov *et al.,* 2022). However, these studies did not cover gender equality issues in the tourism sector.

In fact, gender inequality hinders the tourism industry's capability to fulfill the United Nations SDG 5, which aims to advance gender equality and empower women. To address gender inequality in tourism in a comprehensive way, governments, tourism organizations, businesses, and civil society must collaborate. University-business partnerships are a crucial component of this collaboration (Issabekov *et al.*, 2022; Pugh *et al.*, 2022). These partnerships can address gender disparities and develop a more inclusive and equitable tourism industry by collaborating on research, teaching, and practical initiatives. Other important ways for promoting gender equality can include policies and initiatives that promote women's leadership and representation in the decision-making process, implementing measures to address the wage gap, providing training programs to enhance women's skills and opportunities for career advancement, raising awareness about gender-based discrimination and harassment and creating safe and inclusive work environments. Tourism organizations and employers should implement policies that promote equal opportunity, offer training on gender equality and diversity, and ensure transparent and fair recruitment and promotion processes. Additionally, establishing support systems and mentorship programs can assist women in navigating career challenges and empowering them to overcome barriers.

Conclusion

This article aims to shed light on strategies for ensuring the safety of women tourists, which includes strategies for promoting gender equality and combating violence against women in the tourism sector. Addressing gender-specific safety issues is one of the most important components of safe travel for women. Women travelers face unique challenges, ranging from cultural norms to potential risks of harassment or violence. Destination countries and stakeholders in the tourism sector must actively collaborate to put gender-sensitive policies and initiatives into place in order to mitigate these concerns. Furthermore, in order to develop a more inclusive and equal tourism industry, the root causes of discrimination against women must be addressed. This involves dismantling conventional gender roles and prejudices, encouraging women to pursue leadership positions, reducing the wage gap, and supporting and supplying resources for female entrepreneurs. These initiatives align with SDG 5's broader objectives of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Throughout the years Kazakhstan has been actively addressing the issue of gender equality by taking steps to protect women's rights and interests and eliminate gender inequality. The country has made strides in this regard through its participation in international conventions and the implementation of policies aimed at fostering gender equality across various sectors, including state service, healthcare, education and cultural domains. However, despite these achievements, there are still challenges that need to be overcome to achieve gender equality.

This study emphasizes that gender inequality in the tourist industry can be addressed by the adoption of gender-sensitive policies, the provision of training programs, and the promotion of women's leadership and representation. University-business partnerships can also play a significant role in developing a more inclusive tourism sector. Moreover, a worldwide framework is necessary to effectively address violence against women in the tourism industry. International conventions and agreements, such as the CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention offer essential guidelines and provisions for global action against gender-based violence.

The creation of a safe and respectful tourism environment for women requires comprehensive and collaborative actions that involve training programs, support systems, and policies for handling complaints and assisting victims. This study revealed key strategies for ensuring the safety of women travelers including implementation of technological and security innovations, such as mobile applications for security and video monitoring, offering women-only transportation and accommodation options and gender-sensitive training.

Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Aigerim Bayanbayeva: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Validation, Writing – review and editing.
Akmaral Turarbekova: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review and editing.
Daniyar Nurmukhanbet: Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review and editing.
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Nagima Kala: Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review and editing.
Serik Sabitov: Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review and editing.
Aiman Mytalyapova: Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review and editing.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Evaluating Quality of Hospitals Websites for Medical Tourism in Indonesia

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Abstract: The trend of medical tourism in Indonesia is still relatively low compared to other Southeast Asian countries, considering that the hospitals' service promotion through websites is ineffective. Website quality testing is needed to evaluate each hospital so that they have more advanced marketing in a more competitive digital world. This study aimed to see the difference between the scores of four dimensions: accessibility, experience, marketing, and technology, on hospital websites based on province, class, accreditation, and hospital ownership. This study used a quantitative approach in testing score differences in website quality with the Nibbler tools application. The secondary data are taken from the hospital website under the Ministry of Health in the Capital City of Jakarta and Banten, Indonesia. Data bivariate analysis was performed using the Kruskal-Wallis test. The result shows that accessibility significantly differed in accreditation; in the marketing dimension, significant differences were found between province, class, accreditation, and hospital ownership. Significant differences in experience dimension were also discovered between class, accreditation, and hospital ownership. Further, the dimension of technology had a significant difference in terms of hospital ownership.

Keywords: medical tourism; Nibbler; hospital website; quality; marketing.

JEL Classification: I11; L10; L15; L86; M31; Z33.

Introduction

The development of information technology is increasing (Huriyah and Hidayat 2022; Supriatin *et al.* 2022). Data on the development of information technology in Indonesia show that around 175.4 million Indonesian (64% of the Indonesian population) are internet users (Ariansyah *et al.* 2021). Promotion and marketing are essential to business sustainability (Dhameria *et al.*, 2021; Nasir *et al.*, 2022). With increasing internet users, websites have become the fastest non-conventional promotional media (Kawashima 2006). As healthcare facilities, hospitals utilize information technology development to market their products. Nowadays, patients surf hospital websites to decide on a hospital they prefer (Behmane, Rutitis, and Savicka 2019). Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesia and almost all countries use hospital websites to seek healthcare services. Hence, hospitals must be able to adapt to the increasing need to display their services effectively on a website (Huerta, Walker, and Ford 2016). Hospital websites have a wider reach than other promotional media that are not limited to space and time (Aufa *et al.* 2023). For example, even patients who live outside the hospital's working area can access the services (Sethi *et al.* 2020).

One of the strategic promotional plans is that hospital websites must be continuously updated with information to reach a global audience (Kusumawati 2018; Mason *et al.* 2023). Hospitals need to make their website easily accessible among prospective patients interested in content and services (Anthony Jnr 2021; Maurer, Bansal, and Bansal 2022).

Medical tourism has been a positive trend in the global industry (Ratnasari *et al.* 2022; T.-H. Cham *et al.* 2021; T. H. Cham *et al.* 2021). However, it is still relatively low in Indonesia compared to other Southeast Asian countries, considering that the hospital's service promotion on websites is ineffective (Kusumawati 2018). It is estimated that about 1 million Indonesian citizens perform health care abroad and are dominated by the upper middle class, who have more resources in choosing quality healthcare facilities. For example, 80% of medical tourists in Malaysia are Indonesian citizens (Norsiah Kadir and Sabri Nayan 2021). In 2017 every hospital was equipped with world-class facilities with 176 beds which cost US$ 14.95 million. However, this change does not affect its popularity compared to hospitals in Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia, known to offer state-of-the-art technology, international accreditation, competent medical personnel, and competitive prices and to promote their services on their hospital websites (Mahendradhata 2019).

Meanwhile, hospital websites among hospitals in the Capital City of Jakarta show below grade level compared to the digital health service startup websites (Yudasubrata *et al.* 2019). People likely access websites and applications from health service startups more than hospital websites. The Capital City of Jakarta, as the center of technological development in Indonesia, will undoubtedly affect the other surrounding provinces, namely West Java and Banten. Therefore, it is interesting to test the quality of their hospital websites to evaluate the hospitals' readiness for technological development in a more competitive digital world.

Various website assessment applications include Google Analytics, an online website analysis service owned by Google Inc that tracks and checks usage patterns and traffic and perform visual and statistical analyses. Besides, Readable.io help assess the quality of website content based on readability, grade level, text content, and presentation. The GT matrix tool evaluates the loading speed and performance of a website. Further, Qualidator is a tool to review the utility, accessibility, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), and technical quality of a website by running several automated tests (Derezińska and Kwaśnik 2020). Nibbler testing tool, in addition, can be used to measure the functional quality of a website. Nibbler testing tool, an online website testing application accessible on nibbler.silktide.com site (Sik-Lanyi and Orbán-Mihálykó 2019; Ara and Sik-Lanyi 2022), will test parameters by looking at the scores obtained and improving the scores. Nibbler can assess a website with four main dimensions of testing: 1) accessibility (how all users can access the website), 2) experience (how satisfying the website is for users), 3) marketing (how well the marketing and popularity of the website), and 4) technology (how well the website design) (Randy Joy 2018).

With this background, the research gap is to see the score differences in the four dimensions (accessibility, marketing, experience, technology) regarding hospital websites based on province, class, accreditation, and hospital ownership.

1. Methodology

This study used a quantitative approach in testing score differences in website quality with the Nibbler tools application (https://nibbler.silktide.com). Secondary data were taken from hospitals in Jakarta, West Java, and Banten on http://sirs.yankes.kemkes.go.id, containing hospitals accredited by Hospital Accreditation Commission (*Komisi Akreditasi Rumah Sakit*) based on province, class, ownership, and accreditation. The search showed 162 hospitals in Jakarta Province, 309 in West Java Province, and 84 in Banten Province. After being grouped by province, the authors searched for the hospital's website address and entered the URL into the Nibbler application to test its accessibility, marketing, experience, and technology. The data were processed in statistical software and analyzed univariately and in a bivariate way. Each dimension was assessed by the independent variables, i.e., province, class and accreditation, and hospital ownership, using a one-way ANOVA test to see the mean score differences in the quality of the hospital websites between accessibility, marketing, experience, and technology dimension. The one-way ANOVA test is a parametric test where the unmet normal distribution of the data will need to be further tested using a non-parametric test, namely the Kruskal-Wallis test. The accessibility dimension is the ease of accessing and navigating the hospital's website among the public, especially people with disabilities and computer-illiterate people. The experience dimension relates to user satisfaction with the website. Additionally, the marketing dimension refers to information, popularity, ranking, and technical aspects related to Search Engine Optimization (SEO). The technology dimension is the website programming performance, such as download speed, programming code quality, and website infrastructure quality (Huerta, Walker, and Ford 2016).

The dimensions are categorized as having very good scores at a range of 9.0-10; good scores at 7.0-8.9; quite good at a range of 5.0-6.9; poor scores at a range of 3.0-4.9; and very poor scores at a range of 1.0-2.9.

2. Result and Discussion

The hospital websites were evaluated based on four aspects consisting of province, class, accreditation category and hospital ownership as suggested by the Indonesian Ministry of Health. From 162 hospitals in Jakarta Province, only 143 were tested because most of the websites were under maintenance, or the hospitals did not create any website. Meanwhile, West Java Province has only 211 eligible hospitals out of 309, and Banten Province has only 61 eligible hospitals out of 84. This indicates that hospitals in Jakarta Province have more awareness of digital marketing because they are located in the center of information technology development that enables the community to switch from conventional promotional media to digital media. Nowadays, the global community tend to prefer internet access to access various health information for handy use; therefore, health care facilities should be more aware of this change (Alhuwail, AlMeraj, and Boujarwah 2018).

Based on province, the highest proportion of hospital websites that could be tested came from West Java (50.8%), followed by Jakarta (34.5%) and Banten (14.7%). According to hospital class, the highest proportion was hospitals with C class (52.5%), followed by hospitals with B class (32.1%), hospitals with D class (10.6%) and hospitals with A class (4.8%). Hospital class is determined based on the services provided, human resources, available equipment, facilities and administration and management.

The majority of hospitals have high quality level (54.2%), and the rest have first pass level (15.4%), advanced level (15.0%), intermediate level (10.6%) and basic level (4.8%). In terms of hospital ownership, the hospital websites are owned by companies (27.0%), social organization (12.0%), and provincial government (7.5%). The others belong to private parties, other private, Ministry of Health, other ministries, regional government (district and city), state-owned enterprises, religious organization such as Islamic, Catholic, Protestant organizations, Indonesian forces and police departments.

Table 1. Univariate Analysis Results of Accessibility, Experience, Marketing, and Technology

Dimensions	Mean	Max	Min
Accessibility	8.56	10.00	4.50
Marketing	4.97	8.90	1.60
Experience	7.23	9.40	2.20
Technology	8.02	9.80	4.80

Table 1 presents the average score of 415 hospital websites based on accessibility, marketing, experience, and technology dimensions. Three dimensions have a categorized average score, where accessibility has the highest average score (8.56) and the highest score in the very good category. Meanwhile, only the marketing dimension is in the poor category (4.97) likely because it has the lowest score (1.6) which is included in the very poor category. This result is in accordance with previous research where hospital websites in DKI Jakarta have lower promotion performance than digital health service startups (Yudasubrata *et al.* 2019). A website will get a high accessibility dimension if it is easily accessible by all users, including people with disabilities. Websites that can satisfy user needs have a tendency to get high scores on the experience dimension while reaching target users have a tendency to get high scores on the marketing dimension and those that can build and develop better technology have a tendency to get high scores on the technology dimension (Jain and Purandare 2021).

The data normality testing was completed first, and then bivariate analysis with one-way ANOVA test followed. The results showed that the normality scores of all dimensions meet the estimation (p value <0.005) as obtained from the results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) and Shapiro-Wilk (S-W): (accessibility dimension: K-S = 0.000 and S-W = 0.000); (marketing dimension: K-S = 0.001 and S-W = 0.000); (experience dimension: K-S = 0.000 and S-W = 0.000) and (technology dimension: K-S = 0.000 dan S-W = 0.000). Thus, the analysis was continued using the Kruskal-Wallis test.

The results of the bivariate analysis using the Kruskal-Wallis test are shown in Table 2 and Table 3. Table 2 shows that the significant differences in the accessibility dimension were only found in terms of the hospital accreditation (p = 0.003). This means that users found it easy to access the websites of highly accredited hospitals indicated by the highest average rating. The accessibility dimension is measured according to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines which contain perceivable, operable, understandable, robust criteria. Perceivable means that the information and website interface elements must be understandable. Operable websites with easy-access content should also have understandable and robust materials that can be opened and utilized using a supporting technology (Alhadreti 2021). Hospital websites that have advanced accreditation are considered able to implement the guidelines perceivable, operable, understandable, robust principles. Websites that meet accessibility needs can open up wider market opportunities. Patients aged 50 years and over as well as patients with disabilities experienced better accessibility to health service websites. Inadequate accessibility of websites will put hospitals at risk of losing their patients (Sik-Lanyi and Orbán-Mihálykó 2019).

Table 2. Results of Kruskal – Wallis Analysis of Accessibility and Marketing Dimensions by Province, Class, Accreditation and Hospital Ownership

Variables		N	Accessibility Dimensions		Marketing Dimensions	
			Mean Ranks	p values	Mean Ranks	p values
Province	Capital City of Jakarta	143	202.84	0.572	255.89	0.003*
	West Java	211	207.41		188.64	
	Banten	61	222.12		233.02	
Class	A	20	232.35	0.484	297.25	0.000*
	B	133	211.56		266.48	
	C	218	208.07		182.80	
	D	44	158.81		115.51	
Accreditation	Highly Advanced Level	225	218.06	0.003*	253.06	0.000*
	Advanced Level	62	228.88		200.52	
	Intermediate Level	44	148.33		127.51	
	Basic Level	20	221.24		107.97	
	First Pass	64	191.02		144.01	
Hospital Ownership	Ministry of Health	14	203.93	0.286	296.39	0.000*
	Other's Ministry	3	175.00		143.33	
	State-Owned Enterprises	6	193.50		343.42	
	Islamic Organization	7	316.79		304.79	
	Catholic Organization	6	278.58		258.80	
	Protestant Organization	3	84.50		216.00	
	Social Organization	50	197.26		186.35	
	Provincial Government	31	175.37		148.56	
	District Government	21	217.00		197.29	
	City Government	9	200.44		225.89	
	Private Parties	5	196.20		287.00	
	Companies	112	210.69		200.21	
	Indonesian Armed Forces	6	161.42		107.00	
	Indonesian Navy	3	105.83		192.83	
	Indonesian Air Force	4	239.50		61.13	
	Police Department	3	173.50		141.50	
	Other Private Parties	132	216.92		223.42	

Table 2 displays that marketing dimension differs significantly for all aspects: province ($p = 0.003$), class ($p = 0.000$), accreditation ($p = 0.000$) and hospital ownership ($p = 0.000$). Hospital quality is influenced by the regional development index and the number of beds. Hospitals that have high quality level have more support and resources from the owners to improve the quality of their websites. Hospitals with good quality websites use them to promote their services online instead of direct communication with patients or evidence-based information (Alhuwail, AlMeraj, and Boujarwah 2018; Roche and Jones 2021).

Table 3. Results of Kruskal – Wallis Analysis of Experience and Technology Dimensions by Province, Class, Accreditation and Hospital Ownership

Variables		N	Experience Dimensions		Technology Dimensions	
			Mean Ranks	p values	Mean Ranks	p values
Province	Capital City of Jakarta	143	202.84	0.572	255.89	0.003*
	West Java	211	207.41		188.64	
	Banten	61	222.12		233.02	
Class	A	20	232.35	0.484	297.25	0.000*
	B	133	211.56		266.48	
	C	218	208.07		182.80	
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Accreditation	Highly Advanced Level	225	218.06	0.003*	253.06	0.000*
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	First Pass	64	191.02		144.01	
Hospital Ownership	Ministry of Health	14	203.93	0.286	296.39	0.000*
	Other's Ministry	3	175.00		143.33	
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	Islamic Organization	7	316.79		304.79	
	Catholic Organization	6	278.58		258.80	
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	Social Organization	50	197.26		186.35	
	Provincial Government	31	175.37		148.56	
	District Government	21	217.00		197.29	
	City Government	9	200.44		225.89	
	Private Parties	5	196.20		287.00	
	Companies	112	210.69		200.21	
	Indonesian Armed Forces	6	161.42		107.00	
	Indonesian Navy	3	105.83		192.83	
	Indonesian Air Force	4	239.50		61.13	
	Police Department	3	173.50		141.50	
	Other Private Parties	132	216.92		223.42	

Table 3 shows that a significant difference in the experience dimension was found between hospital classes (p = 0.005). For example, class A hospitals have the highest average rating value (p = 0.000). Further, based on ownership, hospitals owned by Catholic organizations have the highest mean rating. Easy access to the website makes users quickly decide the product or service preferred (Cai *et al.* 2018). Class A hospitals, hospitals with highly advanced accreditation level, and hospitals owned by Catholic organizations satisfied website users. In other words, their websites can bridge between hospitals and patients. In improving the quality of the websites, hospitals need a certified website designer (Tarcan, Yalcin Balcik, and Sapaz 2020). Hospital website in China have a focus on promoting their basic services and information rather than patient participation and communication (Zhong *et al.* 2021). Little difference was found between China and Indonesia in terms of a gap between hospitals, website developers and patients. Most of the time, website developers only focus on quality indicators at the system level while patients need response from the website in satisfying their needs. However, they little focus on considering user preferences and on thinking about ways to increase patient satisfaction (Hung *et al.* 2022).

Table 3 also shows that a significant difference in the technology dimension was found only for hospital ownership (p = 0.005) where hospitals owned by Catholic organizations have the highest mean rating. The technology dimension relates to the quality of website design which consists of internal links, URL formats, headings, printing capabilities, server behavior, and meta tags (Randy Joy 2018)

Hospitals with the highest average score owned by Catholic organizations have better website designs. Quality private hospital websites in the technological dimension are dominated by private hospitals. This is in line with a study comparing the website quality of public hospitals and private hospitals in Turkey. Privat hospital websites in Turkey are of very high quality due to the superiority of private hospital infrastructure compared to public hospitals (Boydak and Yalçın İleri 2021). Research in Iran also confirms that there is a gap in the quality of the websites between public and private hospitals assessed from the WebMedQual approach. Public hospitals have low quality, especially in terms of website design (Saghaeiannejad-Isfahani *et al.* 2019). Ideally the quality of the hospital website can be assessed from accessibility, experience, marketing and technology dimensions manually through quantitative and qualitative methods. However, with the Nibbler tool, website quality testing can be done automatically through the same dimensions (Reichenpfader *et al.* 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic has forced hospitals to focus more on promoting their services on websites (Sulaiman *et al.* 2020; Kumar *et al.* 2020). Hospitals in Jakarta, West Java and Banten have more opportunities to expand their market share to attract foreign patients through medical tourism; therefore, evaluation of website quality could make an improvement. Websites that use English as instructions have better quality scores in accessibility, experience, marketing and technology dimensions.

In order to guarantee equal rights in obtaining digital health information on a website, evaluation and monitoring are needed to ensure the standards of online health information (Sheikh *et al.* 2021; Aiello, Renson, and Zivich 2020). Not all website developers put attention on website quality testing applications to increase the traffic of that website. Some of the free and paid website quality testing applications are reliable. Evaluation of website accessibility, marketing, experience and output technology can be used to improve the website quality to the next stage (Azad-Khaneghah *et al.* 2021; Domínguez Vila, Alén González, and Darcy 2019). Hospitals that have not maximized their website quality can find the efficiency difference between the results of Nibbler testing where website users' responses are collected online, and results of questionnaires distributed manually to patients.

Involving users or patients directly in assessing the quality of the website can give more insights on accessibility, marketing, experience, and technology dimensions. Future studies should be able to involve users or patients in hospital website assessment on accessibility, marketing, experience, and technology dimensions. Patients' or users' responses are good input for website developers and hospital management in Indonesia to improve the website quality so that it can open new markets to foreign tourists. The development of medical tourism in Indonesia lags other Southeast Asia countries such as Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia.

Hospitals in Jakarta, West Java and Banten have the potential to serve medical tourism targeting foreign and domestic patients who have affordability to pay for medical tourism abroad.

The expansion of the hospital target market in Indonesia requires investment in information technology, especially for developing hospital websites. Public hospitals under the Indonesian Ministry of Health already will have excellent services that can be promoted to attract foreign patients once transforming their websites based on accessibility, marketing, experience, and technology dimensions. The gap between website target users and hospitals as health service providers can be eliminated through active engagement on a website. The synergy between the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Tourism is necessary for establishing medical tourism in Indonesia to increase patient visits as well as tourists despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hospitals in Indonesia have not developed their websites and some are under repair. If these conditions happen continuously, hospitals in Indonesia will not be able to catch up on medical tourism services. Intensive promotion on the hospital websites likely further introduces the prevailing services of each hospital to domestic and foreign patients. The market segment of medical tourism in Indonesia is the upper middle class who have good financial capabilities. It is done to provide alternative funding for hospitals that may have cash flow difficulties during the Covid-19 pandemic. By looking at the strengths and weaknesses of each hospital's website, short-, medium- and long-term strategies should be considered. Hospitals in Indonesia are expected to be able to use the information technology to increase their market considering tight needs for Social Health Agency.

Conclusion

In conclusion, some hospital websites of hospitals in West Java Province had highly advanced accreditation level and were owned by other private parties. Hospital websites have good accessibility, experience, and technology dimensions. A significant difference in the accessibility dimension was only found in terms of hospital accreditation. Significant differences in marketing dimension occurred between provincial groups, class, accreditation, and hospital ownership. Significant differences in the experience dimensions were found between class, accreditation, and hospital ownership. Finally, a significant difference in the technological dimension was only found in terms of hospital ownership.

Hospitals in Jakarta, West Java, and Banten should carry out periodic website quality testing with the Nibbler tool or other applications. Hospitals should also conduct annual self-administered surveys among internal and external customers to test the quality of the website and compare the results of test using the application.

Globally, the results of medical tourism evaluations must improve accessibility, experience, and better technology. The medical tourism industry needs to be improved to meet customer needs and get timely and affordable services. Especially in Indonesia, expanding the hospital target market necessitates investment in information technology, particularly in developing hospital websites. It is important to verify website quality on a regular basis to increase the quality of medical tourism.

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Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Ari Nurfikri: The contributions of first author are Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Software, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Data curation, Validation, Writing – review and editing, Visualization.

Elsa Roselina: The contributions of the second author are Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Software, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Data curation, Validation, Writing – review and editing, Visualization.

Abas Hidayat: The contributions of the third author are Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Software, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Data curation, Validation, Writing – review and editing, Visualization.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Exploring Factors Shaping Tourist Satisfaction: A Case Study of the Chefchaouen Destination in Morocco

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Abstract: This study aims to identify determinants of tourist satisfaction in Chefchaouen, an authentic destination in the north-eastern of Morocco. Our study identifies factors that contribute more to tourists' satisfaction and comes up with recommendations.

Methodologically, an extended bibliographical review is presented to establish the hypotheses and the research conceptual model. A deductive approach is suitable for this study. It is a quantitative study based on a survey filled out by tourists on a visit to produce results.

The results of our study show that two dimensions 'joy' and 'positive surprise' have a direct and positive influence on tourist satisfaction. the results also show that staying in Chefchaouen gives them joy, pleasure, a sense of wonder, inspiration, and amazement. Generally, this destination provides them with pleasant and surprising experiences.

Our study also has some limitations due to the small size of our sample and its composition. It neglects domestic tourists All these limitations constitute new research perspectives in marketing tourist destinations. This research is original because it reveals to Chefchaouen and other destination marketing managers, the importance of emotional dimensions in evaluating the destination tourist experience.

Keywords: tourist satisfaction; tourist destination; emotions; tourist experience.

JEL Classification: Z32.

Introduction

Tourism has become a strategic sector for many countries. They are engaged today in fierce competition and a race for attractiveness that regularly results in a world ranking of destinations based on criteria such as natural and cultural resources or transportation infrastructure. The success of some destinations is primarily related to the satisfaction that tourists receive from their tourism experience (El Archi *et al.*, 2023). Several research has been conducted to a better understanding of what makes the tourist experience satisfying.

No one can deny that it is crucial to guarantee tourist satisfaction, not only because it allows destinations to obtain a flow of tourists and therefore stable revenues, but also to reduce complaints and guarantee positive comments to other tourists. Chefchaouen now enjoys a reputation as a tourist destination that combines gastronomy, cultural heritage, and sustainable development. It has a geographical aspect with two facets: mountainous, surrounded by peaks of more than 2,000 m altitude, and maritime, with 120 km of coastline, and a rich history of over five centuries.

Chefchaouen with a population of around 45,000, is the only city and the provincial capital with 420,000 inhabitants, whose rurality affects the majority of the population. It's 'the only medina of the intermontane situation' thanks to its natural setting. Due to the abundance of rock stores, it's the only Moroccan city rich in mineral drinking water. It's provided by the natural springs of Ras el-Ma and Tissemlal.

The heritage wealth of the province of Chefchaouen the cultural and natural side has made this province one of the 'tourist host countries' of Morocco (PAT: Abbreviation of 'Pays Accueil Touristique') since 2003, (Berriane, 2020). This significant potential is because it's the only Moroccan city with a large number of attributes encouraging more and more tourist stays. However, it is important to examine the factors that most contribute to tourist satisfaction because it will help to design strategies for increasing the number of local and international visitors. This work aims to identify the main tourists' determinants of satisfaction among visitors of Chefchaouen destination and to examine the relationships between the attributes of the destination and positive emotions. This research begins with the presentation of the theoretical framework, followed by the development of the conceptual framework, the research model design with formulation-related hypotheses, and then the presentation of the results.

1. Theoretical Framework

Satisfaction is a major construct in the field of tourism research, with many articles devoted to this subject. This research explains the importance of satisfaction for tourism management destinations and specific tourism offers. Therefore, satisfaction management should be a priority for any tourism manager (Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009; Zehrer, Crotts and Magnini, 2011). The literature reveals that satisfaction is a subjective opinion based on the tourist's evaluation after having different experiences in a place or destination (Pizam *et al.*, 1999). In other words, it's the realization of an expectation (Oliver, 1999) that can be expressed as an affective state, (Bake and Crompton, 2000) a cognitive state (De Rojas and Camarero, 2008) or a combination of both (Del Bosque and San Martín, 2008), after experiences in this place. From this perspective, we can say that satisfaction is a positive appreciation by the tourist of the benefits obtained in a place (Yoon and Uysal, 2005).

Strategic marketing, consumer behaviour, behavioural theory, psychology, management and sociology, all these fields are interested in the concept of satisfaction.

From a tourist point of view, Chefchaouen's destination is a coherent geographical territory, endowed with a strong cultural identity and varied potentialities allowing a diversified offer.

The city began to receive its first tourists more than thirty years ago and also benefits from its strong proximity to Europe (Berriane and Moizo, 2016). To highlight all its assets, it's, therefore, important to put the satisfaction of tourists among the priorities of tourism professionals. Nevertheless, studies on visitor satisfaction remain scarce, not only in the north of Morocco context in general but also in Chefchaouen and its surroundings more specifically. Further research on factors related to destination attributes as well as those influencing tourists' emotions is requested.

2. Conceptual Framework, Model and Research Hypotheses

2.1. Conceptual Framework and Research Model

Satisfaction is an important construct in the field of tourism research. Tourist satisfaction represents feelings, beliefs and opinions an individual has about the destination's ability to satisfy the special needs of this same person (Sukiman et al, 2013; Johann et Anastassova, 2014). Lately, it has been asserted that satisfaction might be Influenced by different factors, such as customer relationship management, that is why, customer satisfaction is related to a past interaction with a provider too (Nyadzayo and Khajehzadeh, 2016). The main objective of the study of tourist satisfaction in the scientific literature is twofold. On the one hand, it makes it possible to understand and measure the needs of tourists in the most efficient way possible and on the other hand to meet these needs and expectations through innovative improvements and creative solutions (Aliman *et al.*, 2016; Meng *et al.*, 2011). Tourist experiences often include positive and pleasant responses (Hosany and Parayag, 2013). The tourist's satisfaction will only be total when the perception of the tourist product or service corresponds to the image that the tourist has already formed before even being in contact with the tourist product or service (Aliman *et al.*, 2016). Aliman *et al.* (2016) did not fail to point out that research on tourist satisfaction is important for the success of destination marketing, because it influences the choice of destination, the consumption of products and services and the decision to revisit the destination. Thus, to manage the destination, it needs to change the focus from destination to tourist per se (Almeida-Santana and Moreno-Gil, 2018). Therefore, it's useful to emphasize the importance of tourist satisfaction to increase loyalty (Chi and Qu, 2008; Chatzigeorgiou and Simeli, 2017). For these reasons, we can consider tourist satisfaction as a sine qua none condition to guarantee tourism success in a given destination.

The concept of satisfaction is a process related to the needs, motivations and characteristics of the service offer. Therefore, we need to analyse deeply the antecedents behind each evaluation and not just its appreciation. It means we should not limit ourselves to understanding the emotional experiences of the tourists during their interactions with the services offered by the destination (Gountas *et al.*, 2007). Destination image depends on the attractiveness of destination attributes (El Archi and Benbba, 2023), and positive emotions (joy, love, or positive surprise) affect satisfaction (Pragay, Hosnay, Muskat, and Del Chiappa, 2017; Ramkissoon, Smith and Weiler, 2013). The following sections briefly discuss the theoretical underpinnings of each hypothesis formulated in this study.

Following this literature reading, we can assume that the determinants of tourist satisfaction depend on the attributes of the destination and the predisposition of tourists to have positive emotions. We can arise the following hypothetical-deductive model:

Figure 1. Conceptual model of the study

2.2. Research Hypotheses

2.2.1. Destination Attributes

According to Sari *et al.* (2019), tourism is a travelling activity to get satisfaction, improve health, relieve fatigue realize a pilgrimage, or execute a task. Furthermore, according to Ridwan *et al.* (2019), tourism is a human movement done consciously to have services by people within the country of origin itself or other countries and to seek and get satisfaction through original experiences.

A destination is recognized by its unique character, according to Moon *et al.* (2018), who present a description of the destination attributes like a collection of different destination components, that include both the physical and natural environment as well as services and facilities, that attract tourists. Moreover, Moon and al. (2018) also highlighted that destination attributes that attract tourists are history or local culture, special activities and events, accessibility, hospitality, service quality, destination management, infrastructure, superstructure and shopping quality. According to Auliya and Prianti (2022), we can say that tourist satisfaction is obtained thanks to positive destination attributes.

The main purpose for which tourists travel is to discover a destination. Destination image refers to the attractiveness of destination attributes (El Archi and Benbbe, 2023). These attributes can be the physical landscape such as the beauty of the landscape, the natural environment, access to nature, and the availability of various facilities, such as an information centre, restaurants, and hotels... This is mainly why tourists visit the city of Chefchaouen.

H1: Tourist satisfaction is influenced by the type of destination attributes.

2.2.2. Positive Emotions

Emotions, especially positive ones (joy, love, or positive surprise) influence satisfaction (Pragay, Hosnay, Muskat, and Del Chiappa, 2017; Ramkissoon, Smith and Weiler, 2013). Considering the effects of emotions on tourist behaviours is also a notable development in tourism research, this is due to their pervasiveness in travel activities (Aho, 2001). Tourist's emotions would be present in his memory, and this causes the tourist to have a dis/satisfaction about a destination (Izard, 2013; Pestena *et al.*, 2020; Christou *et al.*, 2018). The tourist who frequently experiences positive emotions in a given period is extremely willing to get a better hedonic trail and unforgettable tourist experience (Pearce, 2009; Prayag *et al.*, 2013). However, to reach such a level of hedonism feeling, positive emotions should express engagement of pleasure feelings with a tourist destination, we can quote about joy and positive surprise (Su and Hsu, 2013; Breiby and Slatten, 2015). Such a form of engagement that comes from the accumulation of positive emotions may increase tourists' satisfaction (Prayag *et al.*, 2016; Huang *et al.*, 2014). The second type of emotion that the tourist can feel is negative emotion (Hosany and Prayag, 2013; Nawijn and Brian, 2018). The possibility of facing negative emotions in a happy destination was neglected and our objective in this research is how to reach tourist satisfaction and not dissatisfaction, that's why we don't consider it.

Emotions influence not only post-travel evaluation but also all travel and stay stages (Pragay, Hosnay, and Ode, 2013; Ene and Schofield, 2011). They also play a primary role in defining memorable experiences (Mitas *et* *al.*, 2012b). The positive influence of emotions on tourist satisfaction being well established in the marketing and tourism literature leads us to assume that positive emotions are likely to determine tourist satisfaction in a destination.

H2: Positive emotions positively influence tourist satisfaction.

3. Research Methodology

Chefchaouen's destination is strategically placed as a Moroccan tourist destination. This study was conducted in Chefchaouen. Despite its potential for tourism attraction and its various competitive advantages, until now, the development and promotion of tourism in this city is little supported by scientific research that examines the issues from the perspective of visitor satisfaction. This is the main contribution of the present research.

This study adopts a quantitative research approach. The relevant literature review serves as the basis for adapting scales to measure tourist satisfaction. Our survey has four sections: Section 1 deals with the socio-demographic elements of tourists; Section 2 presents the attribute questions as well as all the feelings and emotions that tourists have for a destination and their relationship to overall tourist satisfaction. Section 3 invites visitors to share the determinants of their overall satisfaction and provides other suggestions and opinions in case they still have other issues that our survey did not cover.

Main studies that examine satisfaction have not been able to establish any consensus on its measurement. This question relative to the diversity of instruments and scale formats used to measure the level of satisfaction remains a major problem in marketing research (Aurier and Evrard, 1998). An analysis of the marketing literature allows us to distinguish two main approaches that have marked the evolution of this concept. There are a transactional approach and a relational approach. The indicators used to measure satisfaction have also evolved according to these approaches. Thus, the transactional approach is the concept or paradigm of disconfirmation or non-confirmation of the expectations of Oliver (1980). This unidimensional measure will then evolve to become multi-attribute (or analytic). After, researchers express the necessity to include these two forms of measurement to argue that satisfaction from consumer experience is a two-dimensional construct (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh, 2013).

3.1. Scale for Measuring Emotions: Presentation and Justification

3.1.1. Presentation and justification of the DES

In our research context, we follow specialist researchers in this field. We adopt it to measure the emotions and affective reactions of tourists as a factor determining their satisfaction with the destination experience. Researchers chose the ***Destination Emotions Scale (DES)***, elaborated by Hosnay and Gilbert (2010). This choice is justified by the following reasons:

- This scale was designed especially for tourist destinations and their set of dimensions is theoretically compatible with conceptions of emotions in experiential consumption marketing;
- It was designed specifically to measure emotions as part of the overall tourism destination experience;
- It has strong psychometric properties in terms of one-dimensionality, reliability, and validity both convergent, discriminant, and predictive. It is used, tested, and validated in a study on the evaluation of the determinants of the emotional reactions of tourists (Hosany, 2012). Same as in the study by Prayag Hosany and Odeh (2013) examine the relationship between the emotional patterns of visitors and their post-consumption evaluations. Also, in a study by Achaba and Rabiai, (2020) the emotional experience of the destination, satisfaction, and intention to recommend: Case of the destination of Agadir - Morocco;
- The external validity of the scale was also proven by Prayag, Hosany, Muskat, and Del Chiappa (2016) in a study of two separate international destinations: Thailand and Petra.

Hosany and Gilbert's (2009) DES scale includes 15 items structured around three emotional dimensions: Joy, Love and Positive Surprise.

Joy dimension:

The results of the study conducted by Hosany and Gilbert (2009) demonstrate that joy is a key aspect of tourists' emotional experiences. Indeed, joy is considered an intrinsic component of peak experiences (Mathes *et al.*, 1981). In the same way, Currie (1997) has shown that the pursuit of pleasurable experiences is motivating tourists. They have a higher disposition to pleasure-seeking experiences while on vacation (Carr *et al.*, 2002). This pleasure-seeking is an essential aspect of tourism experiences (Nawijn, 2011).

Love dimension:
When we think of love it refers to feelings such as tenderness, caring, and affection (Hosany and Gilbert, 2009). Love is an attitude of one person toward another particular, involving the predispositions of thinking, feeling, and behaving in a certain way toward this same person (Rubin 1970, p. 265). This dimension retained in the DES model is, according to Albert, Merunka, and Valette-Florence (2008), consistent with marketing research that has established the relevance of love as a marketing concept. In other words, consumers feel love towards products and brands. According to Carroll and Ahuvia (2006), brand love is the degree of passionate and emotional attachment to a brand. This love for a brand is linked to increased brand loyalty and therefore positive word of mouth.
Positive surprise dimension:
In marketing and tourism literature, it has been proven that positive surprise is a determinant of customer satisfaction and loyalty. Since we are dealing with the topic of satisfaction, it is important to mention that positively surprised customers are generally more satisfied and show increased loyalty (Westbrook and Oliver 1991). This dimension refers to feelings such as wonder, inspiration, and amazement. Positive emotions and more specifically positive surprises are present in the tourism experience, as vacations are characterized by a set of positive experiential processes (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Mannell and Iso-Ahola, 1987). They are primarily consumed for hedonic purposes (Tung and Ritchie, 2011b). In addition, several countries and cities have implemented marketing strategies to promote their brands. For example, the Thailand case with its slogan: *'Amazing Thailand, Amazing Value',* the German case *'Simply Inspiring'*, Malaysia case: *'Fascinating Malaysia',* or also the case of the Netherlands with the general slogan for its cities: *'Amazing cities'*, and the case of the city of Edinburgh: *'Inspiring Capital'.*

3.2. Justification of the Measurement Tool Chosen

For our results, we chose the Chi-square test to decide whether the variables are probably related or not. To show this relationship, we will examine this link between the factors under study by crossing each factor with the others as shown in Table 1. In this table, we express the relationship between the destination attributes and positive emotions. It clearly illustrates the interdependence between these two factors.

4. Results and Discussion

Our sample is about 200 tourists.

Table 1. The relationship between the destination attributes and positive emotions, the case of Chefchaouen destination

	Destination attributes									
Positives Emotions	**Nature**	**Culture**	**Shopping**	**Accessibility**	**Infrastructure**	**Reception**	**Services**	**Cost and price**	**Total**	**Significance**
	Sample									Chi-square
Joy	19	2	1	2	4	1	1	2	32	0.0000*
Enthusiasm	2	3	2	0	1	0	0	4	12	
Wonderment	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	2	10	
Happiness	3	3	1	1	1	1	0	3	13	
Pleasure	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	6	
Tenderness	7	1	0	1	0	1	1	4	15	
Love	2	12	0	0	0	0	1	3	18	
Attention	1	2	0	2	0	0	1	2	8	
Affect	1	4	1	1	1	0	0	1	9	
Warmth	9	3	0	1	1	0	0	1	15	
Stupefaction	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	8	
Astonishment	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	2	8	
Fascination	3	6	1	0	0	0	0	1	11	
Inspiration	2	1	0	3	0	0	0	2	8	
Surprise	4	1	1	2	4	2	2	11	27	
Total	6	5	7	14	12	5	6	41	200	

Source: Author
*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

It seems to be slightly marked by middle-aged tourists (61.1%) and young tourists (20.3%). The majority of tourists in our sample are women (71%) and 29% are men, the majority of them are married (70.3%), followed by (18.1%) of singles, divorced (8.7%) and a minority are widowers.

We can observe that the importance of the destination attributes and the positive emotions move in the same direction. We find 19 tourists among 65 who are attracted by the nature of the destination. It gives them mainly a feeling of joy more than other emotions.

The satisfaction of visitors is mainly due to the attributes of Chefchaouen's destination. It is about natural attributes (landscapes, forests and mountains: natural beauty) and cultural attributes, 50 tourists amongst 200 are attracted by the culture and develop a feeling of love for a destination. This is due to what Chefchaouen and its province represent in the history of the kingdom of Morocco. It's one of the privileged places where Andalusians settled (Jews, and Muslims) when they returned from Spain. They have spread thus, an Arab-Andalusian culture in the African land. This contribution made an alchemy of cultures and spiritualities.

The study of the results of Chefchaouen destination research considers the relative influence of each emotional dimension. It shows that the two dimensions ***'joy'*** and ***'positive surprise'*** **directly** influence tourist satisfaction. In this sense, we prove that **'joy'** and **'positive surprise'** are essential aspects of tourists' emotional experiences. **'Joy'** is considered an intrinsic component of peak experiences and is often associated with fun and affirmation of the meaning of life. This is coupled with a **'positive surprise'** constituting an essential motivating factor of the tourist whose high degree of achievement manifests the attainment of the expected goals of the stay in a destination (Prayag, Hosany and Odeh, 2013).

Thus, the results of these two dimensions (***'joy'*** and ***'positive surprise')*** show that tourists find that staying in Chefchaouen's destination gives them joy and pleasure and also a sense of wonder, inspiration, and amazement. They show that the destination is judged to offer a pleasant and surprising experience.

The importance of all of these affective dimensions must therefore be taken into account by the management and marketing responsible for Chefchaouen's destination in their marketing and promotional strategies.

Staying in a unique tourist destination with traditional charm carries complex and memorable experiences in which sentimental and emotional dimensions (Ladwein, 2003) are pervasive (Aho, 2001). It plays a central role in defining memorable experiences (Tung and Ritchie, 2011a) which have a favourable influence on satisfaction (Yuksel and Bilim, 2010). Emotional dimensions should therefore be considered by tourism destination stakeholders and managers (Mitas *et al.*, 2012a) in designing destination products and services.

Conclusion

Our results, therefore, are a contribution to literature improvement in terms of the evaluation of the destination's tourist experience. This concept remains complex and multidimensional more particularly on the role of emotions in tourists' behaviour. Concerning a practical and managerial contribution, our research provides Chefchaouen and other destination management and marketing responsible an idea about the importance of emotional dimensions in the evaluation of the destination tourist experience. Thus, it's required to consider them in future studies and satisfaction surveys, loyalty, and the destination tourist experience. Moreover, it must be considered in the development of offer programs, the formulation of marketing, promotional strategies, and action plans for the destination.

As with any research, our study also has some limitations that mitigate the results. These limitations are due, in particular, to the small size of our sample and its composition. Our sample neglects domestic tourists and visitors who represent an increasingly large proportion of the tourist population visiting Chefchaouen. Their perception and evaluation of the tourist experience may differ from international ones, as has been shown in some research (e.g., Tasci, Gartner 2007 and Yuksel, 2004).

All these limitations constitute many sources of future research perspectives. It can bring an important improvement of knowledge and an advancement for research in marketing tourist destinations.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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The Impact of Socioeconomic and Travel-Related Aspects on the Allocation of Expenditures by Tourists Traveling to Taiwan

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Abstract: This paper analyzes the spending patterns of foreign tourists visiting Taiwan in 2019. Then, the study examines the impact of socioeconomic and travel-related factors on tourists' allocation of expenditures for five essential trip products. By comparing the behaviors of tourists from different nations, the study investigates their priorities for travel expenses such as food, accommodation, transportation, and shopping. The study's OLS regression results show that distance, visit times, travel modes, duration of stays, number of visitors, gender, income, age, and education significantly affect tourists' travel expenditures in Taiwan. The findings reveal that longer-haul tourists spend more on travel products due to their experience. In addition, tourists traveling with companions spend more than those traveling alone, and males spend more on accommodation while females prefer shopping. The study also highlights the positive impact of the number of nights spent on the purchase level of travel goods and services. These insights provide valuable information on the travel-related variables that influence international tourists' spending behavior in Taiwan.

Keywords: tourist; expenditure; traveling; socioeconomic; Taiwan.

JEL Classification: Z32; Z30; L83; Q50 ; R11.

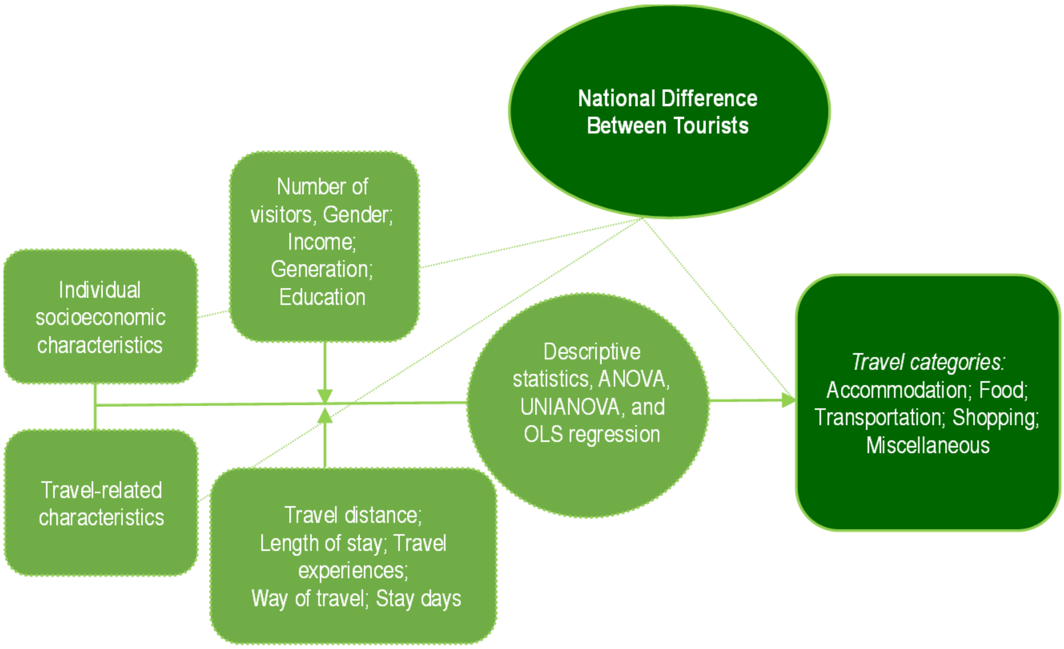
Introduction

Tourism, a critical industry that contributes significantly to the economic growth of many countries, relies on attracting both domestic and international visitors for its continued success. Li, Song, and Witt (2004) and Anderson (2010) found that studying travel expenditures is crucial to understand how tourist spending influences an economy; hence, the distribution of tourist expenditure is a critical problem in the economics of travel research. Another aspect of tourist expenditure research is the importance of the trip budget and how tourists allocate their expenditure for travel goods (Anderson 2010).

Many studies were conducted during the 1990s to analyze and comprehend passenger behavior based on nationality (Wu 2010; Sciortino and De Cantis 2022). The impacts of nationality vary depending on the purpose and kind of tourism. Some researchers anticipate that nationality disparities will considerably affect consumer purchasing behavior (Pizam and Sussmann 1995; Flognfeldt Jr 1999). According to some researchers, travelers from certain countries will remain longer at particular tourist sites under identical conditions. Japanese visitors, for example, spend more time in Italy than Chinese tourists (Sciortino and De Cantis 2022). Income and consumption levels also vary between nations. For example, American visitors are typically seen as a higher-income group with greater spending than other nationalities (Sciortino and De Cantis 2022).

Travel expenditure and budget share are essential concepts in tourism research, as they provide insight into how tourists allocate their financial resources during their trips. Recent studies have explored various aspects of these concepts, such as tourists' expenditure allocation at cultural heritage sites (Cai *et al.* 2021), the impact of travel motivation on expenditure allocation across different types of destinations (Lee, Jan, and Liu 2021), and the influence of tourist profiles on expenditure patterns of Chinese tourists in South Korea (Kim, Lee, and Kim 2021). These research findings indicate that by comprehending how tourists distribute their expenses and the factors that impact their spending habits, tourism professionals can customize their products and marketing approaches to cater effectively to various tourist segments' requirements and preferences.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework



Source: proposed by authors

Still, there is a need for more in-depth research on the national differences in travel-related and individual socioeconomic characteristics that influence the spending behavior of inbound tourists. The majority of researchers have concentrated on the elasticity of travel expenditures or the distribution of travel budget portions, while others have looked at the relationship between traveler spending and travel-related and individual characteristics but rarely consider the differences between nations. For this reason, our research focuses on the spending habits of inbound visitors to Taiwan from various nations based on their travel and socioeconomic features. Then, we examine the impact of socioeconomic and travel-related factors on tourists' allocation of expenditures for five essential trip products. We group the visitors' expenditures for five essential trip products: accommodation, food, transportation, shopping, and miscellaneous (e.g., entertainment). Aside from travel spending categories, travel-related features (i.e., distance traveled, duration of stay, traveling experience, and making plans) and individual socioeconomic features (i.e., gender, annual income, age, generation, and education) are thought to make a difference in the spending habits of inbound visitors from various nations. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework.

Our research delves into two fundamental questions: RQ1 seeks to determine whether travel-related and individual socioeconomic factors impact the spending habits of tourists from different countries. Meanwhile, RQ2 aims to explore how these same factors affect the distribution of expenditures. Through our investigation, we hope to understand better the complex relationship between travel, socioeconomics, and spending behavior. Our study has highlighted the significance of travel commodity prices, including accommodation, transportation, food, shopping, and miscellaneous expenses, for travelers from various countries (Lee *et al.* 2015; Chang, Chen, and Meyer 2013). We have analyzed the impact of travel-related and socioeconomic factors on the spending habits of tourists and how they vary across different nations. Our research aims to contribute valuable insights into the behavior of travelers concerning their expenditure in response to these factors.

The results of OLS regression show that distance, visit times, travel modes, duration of stays, number of visitors, gender, income, age, and education significantly affect tourists' travel expenditures in Taiwan. The findings reveal that longer-haul tourists spend more on travel products due to their experience. In addition, tourists traveling with companions spend more than those traveling alone, and males spend more on accommodation while females prefer shopping. The study also highlights the positive impact of the number of nights spent on the purchase level of travel goods and services. These insights provide valuable information on the travel-related variables that influence international tourists' spending behavior in Taiwan. The paper is structured in such a way that Section 2 presents the literature review, Section 3 outlines the data and methodology, Section 4 presents the empirical findings, and Section 5 discusses the implications and future research directions.

1. Literature Review

Tourist expenditure is a vital measurement concept used to evaluate tourism activities and the overall consumption of products and services. It refers to the total amount a tourist spends during their visit to a destination, also known as tourism expenditure or visitor spending (Zhang *et al.* 2020; Dixon *et al.* 2012). There is a substantial body of literature that examines the factors that influence tourist spending, including studies by Jiménez, Valido, and Pellicer (2023), Kalantari *et al.* (2022), Chen, Hwang, and Chang (2022), Pulido-Fernández, Cárdenas-García, and Carrillo-Hidalgo (2017). However, there is a lack of research on how socioeconomic and travel-related factors affect how tourists allocate their expenses while traveling in Taiwan. Jiménez, Valido, and Pellicer (2023) studied the research on the influence of altered air transport subsidies for Spanish residents on the spending behavior of non-resident tourists in certain areas. The findings indicated that raising the subsidy rate harmed the daily outlay of non-resident tourists traveling between mainland Spain and the islands, resulting in a noteworthy decline in their daily expenses while visiting the Canary Islands, ranging from 9.6% to 12.2%.

Kalantari *et al.* (2022) revealed that tourists who engaged with travel agencies or read magazines and newspapers before their trip tend to have higher expenditures in various categories. However, during their actual trip, these tourists typically turn to the internet to find the best prices on activities, leading to reduced expenses in most categories. Hosseini *et al.* (2022) examined a comprehensive analysis focusing on the determinants of total expenditure and per-person/night spending during domestic trips among Iranian households at the microeconomic level. Miscellaneous factors affect spending, including lodging, transportation, shopping, sightseeing, and entertainment. These encompass economic conditions, demographics, and trip details. Education level, income, age, occupation, family size, length of stay, mode of transportation, and staying with relatives are crucial variables impacting family vacation expenditures. Chen, Hwang, and Chang (2022) conducted a study exploring the impact of wealth on tourist spending and the correlation between age and tourist expenditure. A study found that older wealthy travelers tend to spend more on tourism. Areas with lower income and higher tourism spending are more impacted by wealth. In contrast, Pulido-Fernández, Cárdenas-García, and Carrillo-Hidalgo (2017) pointed out a trend in tourism research that often prioritizes conventional measures such as the purpose of travel, duration of stay, past visits, and accommodation preferences.

1.1. Travel-Related Aspects and Travel Expenditure

The destination is another factor influencing travel expenditure and budget share. For example, tourists visiting urban destinations spend more on accommodation and dining, while those visiting rural areas spend more on activities and attractions (Dwyer and Kim 2003). Moreover, tourists traveling to international destinations spend more than those traveling domestically (Wöber 2007). The type of trip is also an essential determinant of travel expenditure and budget share. Studies have found that leisure travel tourists spend more than those on business trips (Xiao, Cheng, and Zhang 2019). Additionally, longer trips are more expensive than shorter ones, and tourists who travel with others tend to spend more than solo travelers (Wöber 2007). By understanding these factors, stakeholders can develop targeted marketing campaigns, create products and services that meet tourists' needs, and allocate resources effectively to attract and retain tourists. According to (Divisekera 2010), New Zealand is one of Australia's most significant sources of tourists. Visitors from that country who travel to Australia for sightseeing spend more on food and entertainment and comparatively less on transportation and lodging than visitors from the United States. Contrarily, visitors from the UK prioritize dining, travel, and shopping, while visitors from Japan prioritize lodging, shopping, and entertainment, and Americans visiting Australia spend more on shopping, lodging, and transportation. These variations in spending behavior might result from diverse spending patterns, unique travel objectives, and individual spending budgets.

Wu (2010) research indicates that Chinese travelers are distinct from travelers from other nations as they consider it a luxury to spend a night in a hotel and are especially sensitive to changes in hotel rates, even when their income rises. In recent years, shopping was no longer a particular luxury for Chinese, Australian, and British tourists due to the drop in Hong Kong's consumer price index. Therefore, to draw incoming tourists from the United States, it may not be efficient to market Hong Kong as a shopping destination. Interestingly, Japanese visitors are less price-sensitive than Singaporean, Taiwanese, or Korean tourists due to Japan's high economic level. However, tourists from other source markets view lodging as more of a requirement than Japanese visitors, but the perceived importance of lodging to Japanese visitors has also significantly decreased, meaning they are more sensitive to changes in hotel room rates (Wu 2010). In addition, the study discovered that travelers from Korea have greater price elasticity than travelers from other source markets. As a result, hotels must develop effective promotion strategies for the Korean market to boost income. Wu (2010) also discovered that Singapore tourists' spending on dining outside of hotels is susceptible to outside shocks in the short term and that they increasingly perceive retail products as luxury goods. According to a survey of the Korean market, hotel accommodations are more critical to Taiwanese tourists than shopping, and demand for hotel accommodations from Taiwanese visitors is less sensitive to price changes (Wu 2010). Hotels that depend on Taiwanese visitors should pay greater attention to price changes in the retail industry to understand market changes.

Not surprisingly, the distance traveled is a critical factor affecting travel expenses (Athanasopoulos *et al.* 2014; García-Sánchez, Fernández-Rubio, and Collado 2013; Ho and McKercher 2014; Guillet *et al.* 2011; Lee *et al.* 2015). Distance traveled from home to a destination and travel expenses are strongly correlated, and transportation costs are positively associated with trip distance. Several authors have concentrated on the factors influencing travel spending for international travel markets. For example, Lee *et al.* (2015) and Ho and McKercher (2014) discovered differences in travel expenditures between short- and long-distance travel, as well as between trip distance and travel expenditure. Guillet *et al.* (2011) and García-Sánchez, Fernández-Rubio, and Collado (2013) showed that long-distance travelers spend their budgets differently from short-haul passengers. According to Brida and Scuderi (2013), travel distance can be measured using dummy variables that are nearly always used to represent the distance from the tourist's home to the travel destination. These dummy variables and travel expenditures have a significant positive association. In our current paper, we measure travel distance using categorical variables (i.e., short-haul, medium-haul, and long-haul), so we expect that there is a difference in expenditure between short-haul, medium-haul, and long-haul visitors who come from various countries.

The duration of stay is one of the most often used variables in travel expenditure valuation. Most earlier studies showed a positive correlation between travel expenses and the duration of stay (e.g., Ferrer-Rosell, Coenders, and Martínez-Garcia (2015); Gokovali, Bahar, and Kozak (2007); Jang, Ismail, and Ham (2001); Mok and Iverson (2000). According to Jang, Ismail, and Ham (2001) and Mok and Iverson (2000), the number of days a visitor spends on a trip is a continuous observable variable that determines the overall visitor's spending. Ferrer-Rosell, Coenders, and Martínez-Garcia (2015) recently demonstrated that daily spending was positively impacted by family income, kind of lodging, prior travel experience, and duration of stay. In contrast, some authors have found the opposite (Barros and Machado 2010; García-Sánchez, Fernández-Rubio, and Collado 2013; Smolčić Jurdana and Soldić Frleta 2017), which suggests that a shorter stay causes higher travel costs. In other words, the duration of stay was negatively correlated with expenditure, with shorter stays being associated with higher spending than longer stays. These studies were all concerned with how the duration of the stay affected the daily travel expenditure. Thus, we expect that there is a difference in expenditure between shorter-stay visitors and longer-stay visitors who come from various countries.

Past travel experiences are a categorical variable measured by the number of past visits or whether this is the first time traveling. Alegre and Cladera (2010) showed that repeat visitors spend less money than first-time visitors. Tourists are willing to pay extra for things since they have more experience (lodging, shopping, etc.). Some authors reported that repeat visitors tend to spend less on shopping and focus more on spending time inside the destination periphery visiting attractions, among other things (Oppermann 1996, 1997; Lehto, O'Leary, and Morrison 2004). Thus, we expect a difference in expenditure between first-time and repeat visitors traveling to a specific nation.

1.2 Individual Socioeconomic Aspects and Travel Expenditure

Previous studies have found that several factors influence travel expenditure and budget share, including the characteristics of tourists, the destination, and the trip. Firstly, the primary factor that affects travel expenditure and budget share is the tourist's demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, income, and education level. For instance, younger tourists spend more on travel than older tourists (Xiao *et al.*, 2019), and males spend more than females (Kim, Lee, and Klenosky 2003). Additionally, individuals with higher incomes and education levels tend to spend more on travel than those with lower incomes and education levels (Gursoy and McCleary 2004). Nevertheless, some studies discovered no statistically significant association between gender and tourism expenditures (Abbruzzo, Brida, and Scuderi 2014; Brida and Scuderi 2013; Bernini and Cracolici 2015). Secondly, Travel-related characteristics like distance, gender, age, experience, travel agency, and duration are significant indicators of tourist expenditures (Chen and Chang 2012; Chang, Chen, and Meyer 2013; Lee *et al.* 2015). Some authors claimed that male tourists spend more than female visitors (Thrane 2002; Saayman, Rossouw, and Krugell 2012), while Craggs and Schofield (2009) argued that female visitors spend more than males. Thus, we expect a difference in expenditure between male and female visitors traveling to a specific nation. Nicolau (2008) discovered that income level might affect tourists' spending. Aguiló, Rosselló, and Vila (2017) also found a positive association between income and tourist spending (i.e., accommodation, food, and transport expenditures). Both daily expenses and duration of stay are higher for high-income tourists, even as respondents are often hesitant to disclose their earnings. Because of this, several databases use ordinal categorical variables to survey this variable (i.e., income class). As a result, this income measurement has less information than a value variable and naturally produces an approximate estimate of the wealth status of residents. Thus, we expect a difference in expenditure between the income level of visitors traveling to a specific nation.

Next, age is likewise confounding due to the variety of outcomes. According to Brida and Scuderi (2013), age was significantly associated with tourism spending, and Abbruzzo, Brida, and Scuderi (2014) and Saayman, Rossouw, and Krugell (2012) found that age significantly positively impacts travel spending. In addition, some authors supported that older tourists tend to spend less than younger ones, such as Aguiló, Rosselló, and Vila (2017), Mehmetoglu (2007), Pouta, Neuvonen, and Sievänen (2006), and Kruger and Saayman (2010). We expect a difference in expenditure based on the age of visitors traveling to a specific nation. Finally, Aguiló, Rosselló, and Vila (2017) suggested that age and education level would be intriguing factors to consider when looking for high-income visitors. Similarly, Saayman, Rossouw, and Krugell (2012) discovered that tourists with a higher education level spend much more than those with a lower education level on travel products. Empirical research has produced conflicting findings on education level's influence on travel expenditure. According to Gokovali, Bahar, and Kozak (2007), visitors with a higher level of education do not remain noticeably longer or spend more than tourists with a lower level of education. We expect a difference in expenditure between the education level of visitors traveling to a specific nation.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Sampling and Data Collection

According to the Taiwan Tourism Bureau (https://admin.taiwan.net.tw), the Ministry of Transportation and Communication (MOTC) aims to comprehend the intentions, perspectives, consumption patterns, and tendencies of foreign tourists who come to Taiwan to provide helpful information for Taiwan's tourism industry. The survey data may be used to estimate visitors' expenditures. The target respondents are visitors departing Taiwan from the Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport, Taipei Songshan Airport, Kaohsiung International Airport, and Taichung International Airport. Those who arrived from overseas between January 1 and December 31 were the survey's target (except for the overseas transit visitors). In this survey, the quota sampling approach was used because it best complied with the control of working standards and the features of the samples to produce random and sample representatives.

Based on the Tourism Bureau survey, we consider all tourists who visited Taiwan in 2019. We chose 2019 to avoid the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic because most countries applied tourist restrictions which significantly reduced tourism revenue. The total valid samples were 8,562 respondents, including group/individual tours arranged through a travel agency (1,756) and group/individual tours arranged without a travel agency (6,806). Following that, we excluded respondents who had missing information on specific expenditures to avoid errors in our analysis. Furthermore, our study focuses only on tourists with sightseeing and business purposes because most of their budget is spent on travel products, whereas others frequently do not. As a result, our final sample size is 5,865 observations, which includes group/individual tours arranged through a travel agency (1,593) and group/individual tours arranged without a travel agency (4,272). Our data source is the Annual Survey Report on Visitor Expenditures and Trends published by the Taiwan Tourism Bureau. Appendix A contains the questionnaire used for data collection.

The data report shows the expenses of each tourist for each of the five products as defined by Stynes and White (2006): (1) Accommodations away from home, such as hotels and motels; (2) Food and beverages, such as fast food, meals, snacks, and groceries; (3) Shopping, such as clothes, jewelry, souvenirs, cosmetics, and unique local products; (4) Local transportation, such as high-speed rail, train, mass transit, airplane, coach, bus, taxi, ferry, public bicycles, rental cars, and others; (5) Miscellaneous, such as entertainment expenses, movies, nightlife, golf, and others. Travel expenditure is computed based on the activities of visitors and the consumer price indices for Taiwan's international visitors. The consumer price indices issued by the Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting, and Statistics, Taiwan, are represented by the travel spending categories in Table 1. Expenditure figures are standardized per day by dividing every product's expenditure by the total number of travel days in the trip. Table 1 catalogs the names of the travel-related products used in our analysis, their associated Consumer Price Index (CPI) categories, and the expense items.

We use travel distance variables, which are the approximate distances from a tourist's departure country to their destination, as mediators to explore the disparities in expenditure-allocation behavior of tourists from various countries. These variables are assessed through two methods: national distance and haul distance (i.e., short-, medium-, and long-haul tourists). In our sample, short-haul tourists include Japan, China, Korea, Thailand, Viet Nam, and the Philippines; medium-haul tourists include Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia; and long-haul tourists include the United States of America, Canada, and Europe. The information was obtained from the Tourist Bureau.

Table 1. Definition of expenditure categories in the survey, CPI, and current study

No.	Survey item	CPI classification	Current study
1	Lodging	Other accommodations, such as hotels and motels, away from home	Accommodation
2	Food and beverage	Food and drink	Food
3	Retail shopping	Retail purchasing	Shopping
4	Transportation	Transportation	Transportation
5	Recreation and Culture	Recreation and Culture	Miscellaneous
6	Miscellaneous	Other expense	Miscellaneous

Source: The CPI (consumer price index) is obtained from the Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting, and Statistics, Taiwan (https://eng.dgbas.gov.tw).

2.2 Variables and Model

In this study, the dependent variable is the total travel expenditure created by adding up the expenditures for accommodation, food, transportation, shopping, and miscellaneous. Total travel expenditure is standardized per day by dividing every product's expenditure by the total number of travel days in the trip. The expenditure variable is not normally distributed, so the natural log of the total expenditure is used instead. Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analyses are then used to estimate the models. This allowed us to examine the relationship between total travel expenditure (including sub-expenditure) and socioeconomic and travel-related variables.

$$\begin{aligned} Y_{ij} &= \lambda_0 + \lambda_1 \times TravelDistance + \lambda_2 \times VisitTimes + \lambda_3 \times WayofTravel + \lambda_4 \times Staydays \\ &+ \lambda_5 \times VisitorNumber + \lambda_6 \times Gender + \lambda_7 \times Millennials + \lambda_8 \times GenX + \lambda_9 \times GenZ \\ &+ \lambda_{10} \times EducationLevel + \lambda_{11} \times IncomeLevel \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

Where Y_{ij} is the total travel expenditure, travel-related aspects (including travel distance, visit times, way of travel, and days of stay), and socioeconomic aspects (including the number of visitors, gender, millennials, Gen X, Gen Z, education level, and income level).

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 Descriptive Statistics of the Sample

Table 2. Travel characteristics of different countries

Unit: %

Country	Travel purpose		Visit times		Travel types of arrangements		Stay days		Visitor number		Travel-attractive reasons		
	Sightseeing	Business	First time	Repeat visitors	Tour group	Non-tour group	Up to 3 days	More than 3 days	One person	2 or more people	Scenery	Gourmet food	Geographical convenience
Short-haul													
Japan	22.32	22.01	16.56	35.17	25.61	13.38	46.01	6.58	24.77	16.01	10.88	11.11	33.33
China	32.29	23.13	37.31	17.84	35.56	19.95	4.99	48.74	30.47	33.45	23.32	33.33	66.67
Korea	15.13	3.67	16.43	8.23	7.28	31.64	26.80	5.37	9.40	25.30	4.66	0.00	0.00
Philippines	5.29	4.94	5.67	4.31	5.53	4.50	6.36	4.52	5.55	4.50	9.33	11.11	0.00
Thailand	4.00	5.74	3.68	5.30	4.16	4.25	4.10	4.24	4.44	3.54	8.29	0.00	0.00
Vietnam	3.96	3.67	4.32	3.04	4.18	3.25	1.96	5.23	4.32	2.94	4.66	11.11	0.00
Medium-haul													
Malaysia	4.38	2.87	2.38	8.34	4.30	4.00	1.62	5.93	3.99	4.80	4.66	0.00	0.00
Singapore	5.46	2.55	4.37	6.90	5.30	4.75	1.45	7.60	5.13	5.22	3.11	22.22	0.00
Indonesia	1.45	1.91	1.52	1.44	1.70	0.94	0.47	2.18	1.54	1.38	1.55	0.00	0.00
Long-haul													
America and Canada	3.16	15.31	3.59	6.41	3.71	6.44	3.93	4.80	5.43	1.98	21.76	0.00	0.00
Europe	2.57	14.19	4.15	3.04	2.66	6.88	2.30	4.80	4.96	0.90	7.77	11.11	0.00
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

Source: Data processed, 2023

Regarding travel characteristics of different countries, visitors typically travel either for sightseeing or business purposes. The majority of tourists hail from China (32.29%), Japan (22.32%), and Korea (15.13%) for sightseeing. In contrast, American, Canadian, and European tourists tend to prioritize business travel over sightseeing. The dominant group of first-time visitors from Asia is from China, with an overwhelming percentage of 37.31%, followed by Japan with 16.56% and Korea with 16.43%. However, when it comes to repeat visitors, the majority are from Japan at 35.17% and China at 17.84%. Notably, Japanese and Chinese visitors prefer tour groups, whereas those from Korea, America, Canada, and Europe lean towards non-tour groups. Tourists who visit only for short periods (up to three days) tend to come from Japan and Korea (46.01% and 26.8%, respectively), followed by the Philippines at 6.36% and China at 4.99%.

For tourists who visit for more than three days, the highest proportion is from China (48.74%). Tourists from certain countries typically prefer to travel for more than three days, such as Singapore 7.6%, Japan 6.58%, and America and Canada 4.8%. In terms of the travel group size, a significant percentage of tourists from China and Japan travel alone (30.47% and 24.77%, respectively), followed by visitors from Korea and the Philippines (9.40% and 5.55%, respectively). For tourists traveling with two or more people, the highest proportion is from China at 33.45%, followed by Korea and Japan at 25.3% and 16.01%, respectively. Interestingly, tourists from Europe and Indonesia tend to prefer solo travel. Most visitors visiting scenic attractions are from China, making up 23.32% of the total, followed by visitors from America and Canada with 21.76%, and Japan at 10.88%. Interestingly, visitors from China and Singapore list food as their main reason to travel to Taiwan (33.33% and 22.22%, respectively), followed by Japanese and Vietnamese visitors (11.1%). On the other hand, visitors from Korea, Malaysia, and Thailand tend to travel for the lovely scenery.

Regarding the socioeconomic characteristics of different countries, there is a notable difference in the gender distribution of tourists between China and Japan. In China, a significant proportion of tourists are female, accounting for 34.07% of the total. Conversely, the proportion of male Japanese tourists is considerably higher, with females making up only 24.2% of the total. Several countries, including Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia, exhibit a similar trend to China regarding gender distribution among tourists. Females from these countries are more inclined towards travel than their male counterparts. The proportion of Chinese Generation Z travelers is higher (31.58%) than that of Generations X and Y, 32.14% and 41.76%, respectively. Conversely, for Japanese visitors, those from Generations Z and X tend to travel more than those from Generation Y. It is worth mentioning that Gen-X travelers from Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia exhibit a lower tendency to travel compared to their Gen-Z counterparts. Yet, Gen-Z travelers from Korea, the

Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, and the United States and Canada demonstrate a lower inclination to travel than those from the Gen-X group.

The majority of low- and middle-income travelers who show an interest in traveling are from China, accounting for 49.43% and 27.65% of the total, respectively. Additionally, tourists from Japan, Korea, and America and Canada with medium and high incomes tend to travel more than those with low incomes. However, in Vietnam, Singapore, and the Philippines, where incomes tend to be lower, tourists with lower incomes are more inclined to travel than those with higher incomes. This trend is similar to that observed among Chinese tourists regarding income and travel behavior.

Table 3. Socioeconomic characteristics of different countries

Unit: %

Country	Gender		Generation			Education		Income level		
	Male	Female	X Gen	Y Gen	Z Gen	High school	College and above	Low	Medium	High
Japan	24.20	20.46	23.77	14.87	23.08	29.48	20.40	2.19	27.68	24.50
China	28.44	34.07	31.58	32.14	41.76	32.35	31.04	49.43	27.65	27.95
Korea	13.73	14.07	10.07	17.59	3.30	11.06	14.65	4.28	18.35	12.82
Philippines	4.62	5.85	5.44	6.32	4.40	2.13	6.07	9.70	4.06	4.77
Thailand	3.41	4.92	4.36	4.88	6.59	3.11	4.46	5.01	3.49	4.64
Vietnam	3.58	4.26	2.45	5.33	6.59	3.69	3.99	11.37	2.05	2.97
Malaysia	3.76	4.66	6.17	3.57	2.20	4.91	4.03	2.19	5.12	4.02
Singapore	4.28	5.99	5.08	5.55	3.30	7.86	4.44	10.64	3.75	4.46
Indonesia	1.15	1.83	1.54	1.47	4.40	2.46	1.24	2.61	0.72	1.92
America and Canada	6.50	2.50	5.54	3.67	3.30	1.56	5.21	0.63	3.83	6.78
Europe	6.33	1.40	3.99	4.60	1.10	1.39	4.44	1.98	3.30	5.16
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

Source: Data processed, 2023

3.2 Travel Expenditure Analysis

Respondents were classified into three tourist categories based on their overall spending in Taiwan. Prepaid costs and local costs were included in the overall expenses, whether purchased independently or as part of a package trip. Prepaid expenses include flights, hotels, meals, airport transfers, and transportation. Meals, excursions, shopping, and entertainment are non-prepaid local expenses. Panel A of Table 4 shows that visitors who traveled from short distances spent an average of $185 per day on their vacation to Taiwan, while those who traveled from medium distances spent an average of $174 per day. Long-haul tourists visiting Taiwan spent, on average, $200 a day. The excessive buying behavior of short- and medium-distance visitors might be related to their cultural value of preserving interpersonal ties by providing presents (Mok and Iverson (2000) Mok and Lam (1997). Giving presents brought back from distant lands to parents, elders, friends, and colleagues at work is one way to demonstrate appreciation and strengthen connections. As a result, in addition to buying gifts for themselves, tourists frequently shop for gifts for others while overseas.

Second, long-distance tourists spent more money in each category (Panel A of Table 4) (excluding shopping). Furthermore, the data revealed two significant discoveries. Initially, all groups of incoming visitors in Taiwan spent much more on accommodation and shopping than any other travel spending category, consistent with earlier findings. Short-haul travelers spent more on shopping (39.98% of the budget share), whereas medium- and long-haul visitors spent more on accommodation (33.39% and 50.58%, respectively). Additionally, medium-haul tourists spent more on shopping (26.77% of the budget share, second rank), but long-haul visitors spent 22.06% of the budget share on shopping. Thus, Taiwan should invest in modern infrastructure and equipment for lodging facilities suited to Western cultures (targeting long-haul visitors) as well as create retail malls in conjunction with tourist attractions, collaborate with a variety of well-known brands, and diversify items, particularly those suited to Eastern cultures (targeting short- and medium-haul visitors). Furthermore, incorporating foreign cultures in the tourism industry will motivate tourists to visit again because experiencing their culture in a foreign land will be an unforgettable experience.

Panel B of Table 4 shows the average daily consumption of five categories per person from each country. According to descriptive data, in 2019, short-haul visitors constituted the greatest number (80.85% of all samples), followed by medium-haul tourists (10.86% of total samples), and finally, long-haul tourists (8.26% of total samples). The outcome of the travel budget share reveals that all travel items are essential for visitors. Compared to overall expenditure, spending on accommodation, shopping, and food is higher than spending on transportation and miscellaneous products. Medium-haul visitors spent the least on their daily consumption of these five categories.

Table 4. The average daily consumption of the five items per person for distance independent-travel tourists

Panel A: Short-, medium-, and long-distance independent-travel tourists

Items/Distance	Short-haul		Medium-haul		Long-haul		Total	
	Mean (USD)	Budget share (%)	Mean (USD)	Budget share (%)	Mean (USD)	Budget share (%)	Mean (USD)	Budget share (%)
Ex.Accommodation	58.32	31.49	58.37	33.39	101.09	50.58	61.86	33.39
Ex.Food	31.76	17.15	38.42	21.97	43.77	21.90	33.48	18.07
Ex.Transportation	14.45	7.80	22.98	13.14	24.58	12.30	16.22	8.75
Ex.Shopping	72.17	38.98	47.15	26.97	22.06	11.04	65.32	35.25
Ex.Miscellaneous	8.47	4.57	7.91	4.53	8.36	4.18	8.40	4.53
Total	**185.18**	**100.00**	**174.84**	**100.00**	**199.87**	**100.00**	**185.27**	**100.00**

Panel B: The average daily consumption of the five items per person by country

Items	Short-haul											
	Japan		China		Korea		Philippines		Thailand		Vietnam	
	Mean (USD)	Budget share (%)	Mean (USD)	Budget share (%)	Mean (USD)	Budget share (%)	Mean (USD)	Budget share (%)	Mean (USD)	Budget share (%)	Mean (USD)	Budget share (%)
Ex.Accommodation	88.17	44.40	32.00	17.57	73.98	41.07	59.38	34.72	60.56	32.64	39.53	23.23
Ex.Food	38.08	19.18	22.44	12.33	38.65	21.46	35.63	20.83	41.77	22.51	29.94	17.60
Ex.Transportation	15.16	7.63	11.84	6.50	15.14	8.40	21.36	12.49	18.64	10.05	15.16	8.91
Ex.Shopping	44.92	22.62	109.93	60.37	43.93	24.39	45.77	26.76	56.49	30.45	77.79	45.71
Ex.Miscellaneous	12.25	6.17	5.88	3.23	8.43	4.68	8.90	5.20	8.07	4.35	7.75	4.55
Total	**198.57**	**100.00**	**182.10**	**100.00**	**180.13**	**100.00**	**171.04**	**100.00**	**185.53**	**100.00**	**170.16**	**100.00**

	Medium-haul						Long-haul			
	Malaysia		Singapore		Indonesia		America and Canada		Europe	
Ex.Accommodation	66.08	34.57	53.76	31.64	52.52	36.01	111.17	49.30	89.30	52.56
Ex.Food	41.09	21.50	39.32	23.14	27.80	19.06	50.38	22.34	36.03	21.21
Ex.Transportation	24.01	12.56	24.14	14.20	16.11	11.04	27.13	12.03	21.61	12.72
Ex.Shopping	51.85	27.13	45.37	26.70	40.03	27.44	28.39	12.59	14.66	8.63
Ex.Miscellaneous	8.10	4.24	7.33	4.31	9.41	6.45	8.41	3.73	8.31	4.89
Total	**191.13**	**100.00**	**169.92**	**100.00**	**145.87**	**100.00**	**225.49**	**100.00**	**169.91**	**100.00**

Source: Data processed, 2023

On average, Malaysian visitors spent the most money at $191 per person, followed by Singaporeans at $170 and Indonesians at $146.60. For medium-haul travelers, the highest average spending was for Japanese tourists at $199, Thailand visitors at $186, Chinese visitors at $182, Korean visitors at $180, Philippines visitors at $171, and Vietnamese visitors at $170. Finally, long-distance tourists spent the most money. The average spending for American and Canadian tourists was $225, while European visitors spent $169.

3.3 Results of the ANOVA Test

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test examined whether there was a significant variation in key expenditure categories among the three tourist distances (Table 5). Categorical spending follows the same pattern as total expenditures. As seen in Table 5, there are significant differences in all expenditure factors except miscellaneous across the three travel distances. Given the amount of nighttime entertainment, a night market, a well-known brand, and multiple transit options, these findings may define Taiwan as a tourism destination.

Table 5. ANOVA for the average daily consumption amount of the five items per person for independent-travel tourists

Panel A: For short-, medium-, and long-distance independent-travel tourists

Items	Travel distance			ANOVA		Levene Statistic	
	Short-haul	Medium-haul	Long-haul				
	Mean	*Mean*	*Mean*	F	Sig.	Levene	Sig.
Ex.Accommodation	58.32	58.37	101.09	16.15	0.00	3.69	0.03
Ex.Food	31.76	38.42	43.77	31.04	0.00	11.65	0.00
Ex.Transportation	14.45	22.98	24.58	67.62	0.00	30.86	0.00
Ex.Shopping	72.17	47.15	22.06	40.12	0.00	32.47	0.00
Ex.Miscellaneous*	8.47	7.91	8.36	0.15	0.86	2.07	0.13

Panel B: By country, independent-travel tourists

Items/Country	Short-haul						Medium-haul		
	Japan	China	Korea	Philippines	Thailand	Vietnam	Malaysia	Singapore	Indonesia
	Mean	*Mean*	*Mean*	*Mean*	*Mean*	*Mean*	*Mean*	*Mean*	*Mean*
Ex.Accommodation	88.17	32.00	73.98	59.38	60.56	39.53	66.08	53.76	52.52
Ex.Food	38.08	22.44	38.65	35.63	41.77	29.94	41.09	39.32	27.80
Ex.Transportation	15.15	11.84	15.14	21.36	18.64	15.15	24.01	24.14	16.11
Ex.Shopping	44.92	109.93	43.93	45.77	56.49	77.79	51.85	45.37	40.03
Ex.Miscellaneous	25.78	22.02	36.30	15.73	15.03	14.57	20.42	12.75	14.94

	Long-haul		Differential mean test			
	America and Canada	Europe	ANOVA Test		Levene Statistic	
	Mean	Mean	F	Sig.	F	Sig.
Ex.Accommodation	111.17	89.30	14.66	0.00	3.82	0.00
Ex.Food	50.38	36.03	31.82	0.00	4.67	0.00
Ex.Transportation	27.13	21.61	20.90	0.00	9.09	0.00
Ex.Shopping	28.39	14.66	36.97	0.00	35.10	0.00
Ex.Miscellaneous	20.21	31.80	5.29	0.00	6.48	0.00

Source: Data processed, 2023

Note: The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level (Sig.<0.05). If the mean difference is insignificant at the 0.05 level, the post hoc test is used.* Miscellaneous expenses: The post hoc test results demonstrate that the mean difference of miscellaneous between short-, medium-, and long-haul tourists is insignificant.

Table 5. ANOVA of the average daily consumption of the five items per person for independent-travel tourists *(Cont.)*
Unit: USD

Panel C: Post hoc of the mean expenditure difference between pairs of countries

	China	Korea	Philippines	Thailand	Vietnam	Malaysia	Singapore	Indonesia	America and Canada	Europe
	Ex.Accommodation									
Japan	56.17*	14.19	28.79	27.61	48.64*	22.09	34.41*	35.65	-23.00	-1.13
China		-41.98*	-27.38	-28.56	-7.53	-34.08	-21.76	-20.52	-79.17*	-57.30*
Korea			14.60	13.42	34.45	7.90	20.21	21.46	-37.19*	-15.32
Philippines				-1.18	19.85	6.70	5.52	26.55	-51.79*	-29.92
Thailand					21.03	-5.62	-6.80	14.23	-50.61*	-28.74
Vietnam						-6.86	-8.04	12.99	-71.64*	-49.77*
Malaysia							12.32	13.56	-45.09*	-23.22
Singapore								1.24	-57.41*	-35.54
Indonesia									-58.65	-36.78
America and Canada										21.87
	Ex.Food									
Japan	15.64*	-0.57	2.45	-3.69	8.14*	-3.01	-1.24	10.28	-12.30*	2.05
China		-16.21*	-13.18*	-19.32*	-7.50	-18.64*	-16.88*	-5.35	-27.94*	-13.59*
Korea			3.03	-3.11	8.71*	-2.44	-0.67	10.86	-11.73*	2.62
Philippines				-6.14	5.68	5.46	-0.68	11.15*	-14.76*	-0.41
Thailand					11.82*	3.70	-2.44	9.38	-8.62	5.74
Vietnam						-7.83	-13.97	-2.15	-20.44*	-6.09
Malaysia							1.77	13.29	-9.30	5.06
Singapore								11.53	-11.06*	3.29
Indonesia									-22.59*	-8.23
America and Canada										14.35*
	Ex.Transportation									
Japan	3.31*	0.01	-6.21*	-3.48	0.00	-8.85*	-8.98*	-0.95	-11.97*	-6.45*
China		-3.30*	-9.52*	-6.79*	-3.31	-12.17*	-12.30*	-4.27	-15.29*	-9.76*
Korea			-6.22*	-3.50	-0.01	-8.87*	-8.99*	-0.97	-11.99*	-6.47*

Philippines				2.72	6.21	2.65	5.37	8.85*	-5.77	-0.24
Thailand					3.48	2.78	5.50	8.98*	-8.49*	-2.97
Vietnam						-5.25	-2.53	0.95	-11.98*	-6.45
Malaysia							-0.13	7.90	-3.12	2.40
Singapore								8.03	-2.99	2.53
Indonesia									-11.02*	-5.50
America and Canada										5.53
Ex.Shopping										
Japan	-65.01*	0.99	-0.85	-11.57	-32.87*	-6.93	-0.45	4.89	16.53	30.26*
China		66.00*	64.16*	53.44*	32.14*	58.08*	64.56*	69.90*	81.54*	95.27*
Korea			-1.84	-12.56	-33.86*	-7.92	-1.44	3.90	15.54	29.27
Philippines				-10.72	-32.02	6.08	-4.64	-25.94	17.38	31.11
Thailand					-21.30	-0.40	-11.12	-32.42	28.10	41.83*
Vietnam						-5.74	-16.46	-37.76	49.39*	63.13*
Malaysia							6.48	11.82	23.46	37.19
Singapore								5.34	16.97	30.71
Indonesia									11.64	25.37
America and Canada										13.74
Ex.Miscellaneous										
Japan	6.37*	3.89*	3.34	4.17	4.50	4.14	4.92	2.84	3.83	3.94
China		-2.55	-3.02	-2.19	-1.87	-2.22	-1.45	-3.53	-2.54	-2.43
Korea			-0.47	0.36	0.68	0.33	1.10	-0.98	0.01	0.12
Philippines				0.83	1.16	-0.80	0.03	0.36	0.49	0.59
Thailand					0.32	-1.58	-0.74	-0.42	-0.34	-0.24
Vietnam						0.51	1.34	1.66	-0.67	-0.56
Malaysia							0.78	-1.31	-0.31	-0.21
Singapore								-2.08	-1.09	-0.98
Indonesia									0.99	1.10
America and Canada										0.11

Source: Data processed, 2023

Note: The mean expenditure difference between pairs of countries is significant at the 0.05 level (Sig.<0.05).

Table 6. UNIANOVA for the interaction of travel and socioeconomic characteristics on expenditure patterns

Panel A: Traveling characteristics

Items	Country* Travel purpose		Country* Visit times		Country* Types of travel arrangements		Country* Duration of stay		Country* Visitor number		Country* Travel-attractive reasons	
	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.
Ex.Accommodation	0.51	0.89	0.75	0.67	3.56	0.00	1.06	0.39	1.45	0.15	0.35	1.00
Ex.Food	5.01	0.00	1.87	0.04	8.60	0.00	4.46	0.00	1.01	0.43	1.35	0.08
Ex.Transportation	1.99	0.03	4.43	0.00	7.41	0.00	6.63	0.00	1.33	0.21	8.42	0.00
Ex.Shopping	4.51	0.00	3.16	0.00	4.13	0.00	1.69	0.08	1.17	0.31	1.65	0.01
Ex.Miscellaneous	1.55	0.12	2.84	0.00	2.08	0.02	0.81	0.62	0.48	0.91	3.13	0.00

Panel B: Socioeconomic characteristics

Items	Country* Gender		Country* Gen X		Country* Gen Y		Country* Gen Z		Country* Education		Country* Income level	
	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.
Ex.Accommodation	1.25	0.25	0.77	0.65	2.26	0.01	0.12	1.00	0.52	0.88	0.51	0.97
Ex.Food	1.66	0.09	4.85	0.00	5.13	0.00	0.22	0.99	1.19	0.29	1.43	0.10
Ex.Transportation	2.08	0.02	3.50	0.00	8.57	0.00	0.20	1.00	2.16	0.02	2.02	0.01
Ex.Shopping	1.35	0.20	2.90	0.00	2.88	0.00	0.39	0.95	1.10	0.36	0.77	0.76
Ex.Miscellaneous	1.13	0.34	0.45	0.92	2.54	0.01	0.05	1.00	3.76	0.00	0.51	0.97

Source: Data processed, 2023

Note: The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level (Sig.<0.05). If the mean difference is insignificant at the 0.05 level, the post hoc test was used.

There are almost no significant differences in accommodation and miscellaneous expenditure between groups of nations (Panel A, Table 6). Specifically, we find an F value of 0.505, sig=0.888 for accommodation items, and an F value of 1.549, sig=0.116 for miscellaneous. In contrast, there are significant differences in food, transportation, and shopping expenses at the 1% level. There are significant differences in food, transportation, shopping, and miscellaneous expenses between groups of nations regarding lengths of stay (1% level). However, accommodation expenditure has almost insignificant differences with an F value of 0.774 and sig=0.116, >5%. Furthermore, the spending behaviors of tourists varies significantly based on their nationality and the type of travel arrangement they chose. This result indicates that non-tour-group visitors spend differently than tour-group visitors, particularly on accommodations. Tourists' expenses on food and transportation vary significantly at a significance level of 1% based on the length of their stay. However, there are almost no significant differences in their spending on accommodation, shopping, and miscellaneous items. Similarly, the number of tourists in the group showed almost no significant differences in the spending behavior of tourists between groups of nations. For those traveling for sightseeing reasons, there are almost no significant differences in accommodation and food expenditure of tourists between groups of nations. Conversely, there are statistically significant disparities (at the 1% level) in their outlays on transportation, shopping, and miscellaneous items.

Gender showed almost no significant differences in the spending behavior of tourists between groups of nations, except for transportation with the value of F=2.079, sig=0.023, <5% (Panel B, Table 6). For Generation X tourists, there are significant differences in food, transportation, and shopping expenses between groups of nations; however, there are insignificant differences in accommodation and miscellaneous expenditures. Gen Y tourists showed significant differences in spending behaviors between groups of nations, while Gen Z was insignificant. Travel expenditures of Gen Z are less than Gen X and Y because Gen Z are primarily students or low-income. Interestingly, Gen X had significant differences in transportation and miscellaneous expenses; however, there are no significant differences in accommodation, food, and shopping expenditure. Similarly, there are almost no significant differences in the spending behaviors of tourists based on income level, except for transportation expenditure.

3.4 Multiple Regression Analysis

The study conducted a formal test on the effects of travel-related and socioeconomic characteristics on tourist expenditures using ordinal least squares regression (OLS). The results of this process are presented in Table 7.

Table 7 −The results of regression

Variables	Total Expenditure	Ex.Accommodation	Ex.Food	Ex.Transportation	Ex.Shopping	Ex.Miscellaneous
	[Model 1]	[Model 2]	[Model 3]	[Model 4]	[Model 5]	[Model 6]
Constants	13.64***	1.362***	1.901***	0.330**	8.884***	1.159***
	[12.718]	[2.596]	[7.472]	[1.963]	[11.403]	[6.702]
Distance	0.680***	1.619***	0.615***	0.516***	-2.156***	0.0861**
	[2.631]	[12.803]	[10.036]	[12.738]	[-11.490]	[2.068]
Visit Times	2.177***	2.342***	0.786***	0.499***	-1.442***	-0.00806
	[6.543]	[14.381]	[9.959]	[9.558]	[-5.966]	[-0.150]
Way of travel	1.741***	-0.0807	-0.478***	-0.158***	2.141***	0.317***
	[4.954]	[-0.469]	[-5.731]	[-2.874]	[8.383]	[5.599]
Stay days	-4.544***	-3.898***	-1.541***	-0.514***	1.969***	-0.561***
	[-14.362]	[-25.166]	[-20.519]	[-10.350]	[8.565]	[-10.999]
Visitor number	0.225***	0.270***	0.0259*	0.0702***	-0.140***	-0.00095
	[3.498]	[8.524]	[1.710]	[7.036]	[-3.024]	[-0.093]
Gender	0.31	-0.553***	-0.0592	-0.0165	1.063***	-0.124**
	[1.020]	[-3.713]	[-0.820]	[-0.345]	[4.808]	[-2.527]
Millennials	-0.506	0.729***	0.535***	0.234***	-2.038***	0.0345
	[-1.205]	[3.546]	[5.372]	[3.555]	[-6.682]	[0.510]
Gen X	2.266***	0.977***	0.449***	0.225***	0.554	0.0594
	[4.739]	[4.175]	[3.960]	[3.007]	[1.596]	[0.770]
Gen Z	-4.613***	-0.368	-0.202	-0.15	-3.593***	-0.301
	[-3.726]	[-0.607]	[-0.687]	[-0.773]	[-3.993]	[-1.507]
Education	2.503***	2.082***	0.396***	0.331***	-0.247	-0.0602
	[5.966]	[10.139]	[3.980]	[5.037]	[-0.810]	[-0.889]
Income level	0.124	0.553***	0.122**	-0.0219	-0.479***	-0.05
	[0.550]	[5.004]	[2.282]	[-0.618]	[-2.922]	[-1.373]
Obs.	5,865	5,865	5,865	5,865	5,865	5,865
R-squared	0.087	0.235	0.132	0.082	0.086	0.027
Prob > F	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

3.4 The Impact of Travel-Related Aspects on the Allocation of Travel Expenditure

Compared to the baseline model (Model 1), submodels in which the effect of distance was modeled (Models 2–6) were significantly dominant at $p < 0.05$ level. This result highlights the importance of trip distance in determining tourist expenditures. The positive values indicate that longer-haul tourists affect travel expenditures more than shorter-haul tourists. However, it was found that shorter-haul tourists have a more significant impact on shopping expenditures. These findings are consistent with previous studies conducted by Brida and Scuderi (2013), Guillet *et al.* (2011), García-Sánchez, Fernández-Rubio, and Collado (2013), Ho and McKercher (2014), and Lee *et al.* (2015).

Based on the table provided, it is evident that Models 1-6 have statistical significance at the $p < 0.01$ level, except for Model 6, where the effect of visit times was included. This result highlights the importance of past travel experiences in modeling tourists' expenditure allocations. It is noteworthy that repeat tourists significantly impact travel expenditures more than first-time tourists, as evidenced by the positive values. However, the study found that first-time tourists have a more significant impact on shopping expenditures. Interestingly, tourists are willing to pay extra for travel products since they have more experience. These findings are consistent with previous studies conducted by Oppermann (1996), Oppermann (1997), and Lehto, O'Leary, and Morrison (2004), which reported that repeat visitors tend to spend less on shopping and focus more on spending time inside the destination periphery visiting attractions, among other things. However, our findings differ from those presented by Alegre and Cladera (2010).

Based on the table, it is clear that Model 1 demonstrated a negative coefficient regarding the impact of stay days on total expenditure per day at the $p < 0.01$ level. However, regarding consumption choices, stay days played a significant role in determining expenditure for various categories such as accommodation, food, shopping, transportation, and miscellaneous. Expressly, models 2, 3, 4, and 6 indicated that total expenditure decreased as the duration of stays increased for accommodation, food, transportation, and miscellaneous. On the other hand, model 5 showed that expenditure on shopping increased with stay days. These findings align with previous studies that have found that shorter stays lead to higher travel costs (Barros and Machado 2010; García-Sánchez, Fernández-Rubio, and Collado 2013; Smolčić Jurdana and Soldić Frleta 2017), although some studies have found the opposite to be true (Ferrer-Rosell, Coenders, and Martínez-Garcia 2015; Gokovali, Bahar, and Kozak 2007; Jang, Ismail, and Ham 2001; Mok and Iverson 2000).

The statistical significance of the travel mode coefficients, except for Model 2, was observed at a p-value of less than 0.01. Based on the analysis of various submodels, it was found that travel mode plays a crucial role in determining tourist expenditures. The results showed that non-tour group tourists significantly impact travel expenses more than tour group tourists. Furthermore, it was found that non-tour group tourists have a more significant impact on food and transportation expenses. These findings are consistent with previous studies (Chen and Chang 2012; Mok and Iverson 2000; Ahn *et al.* 2018; Chang, Chen, and Meyer 2013; Lee *et al.* 2015) and highlight the importance of considering travel modes while analyzing tourist expenditures.

3.5 The Impact of Individual Socioeconomic Aspects on the Allocation of Travel Expenditure

The statistical significance coefficients of the visitor number variable, except for Model 6, were observed at a p-value of less than 0.01 and Model 3 at less than 0.1. The number of visitors is crucial in determining tourist expenditures based on the analysis of various submodels. The positive values show that more visitors have a more significant effect on accommodation, food, and transportation expenditures, whereas fewer visitors have a more significant effect on shopping expenses.

Based on the analysis of the data, it has been found that the influence of gender on the expenditures of tourists is insignificant in the baseline model (Model 1). However, the submodels, namely Models 2, 5, and 6, have a significant effect at a $p < 0.05$ level. Consistent with prior research (Thrane 2002; Saayman, Rossouw, and Krugell 2012; Craggs and Schofield 2009), males are more willing to spend on accommodation and other expenses, while females prefer shopping. On the other hand, income was a significant factor in predicting travelers' expenditures. The baseline model (Model 1) shows that income level has no significant influence on expenditures, but the submodels, namely Models 2, 3, and 5, have a significant effect at a $p < 0.05$ level. This implies that inbound tourists in Taiwan with higher incomes tend to spend more on accommodation and food while spending less on shopping. This finding is consistent with previous studies by Nicolau (2008) and Aguiló, Rosselló, and Vila (2017).

3.6 Robustness Test

Table 8 –The results of robustness test

	Total Expenditure		
	Short-haul	Medium-haul	Long-haul
	[Model 7]	[Model 8]	[Model 9]
Constants	14.46***[12.182]	19.20***[6.903]	20.46***[5.106]
Visit Times	2.061***[5.320]	1.063[1.310]	3.294***[2.924]
Way of travel	1.122***[2.741]	2.738***[2.981]	5.077***[4.853]
Stay days	-4.151***[-11.856]	-7.823***[-6.585]	-6.412***[-5.712]
Visitor number	0.229***[3.045]	0.204[1.206]	0.277[1.567]
Gender	0.431[1.256]	0.292[0.367]	-2.379** [-1.975]
Millennials	-0.00143[-0.003]	-0.895[-0.772]	-5.425***[-4.063]
Gen X	2.514***[4.585]	1.873[1.529]	-0.507[-0.327]
Gen Z	-4.147***[-3.045]	-6.160*[-1.818]	-9.853* [-1.720]
Education	2.106***[4.387]	2.741***[2.736]	2.734[1.386]
Income level	0.14[0.545]	0.165[0.298]	-0.0499[-0.056]
Obs.	4,742	639	484
R- squared	0.074	0.147	0.228
Prob > F	0.000	0.000	0.000

Source: Data processed, 2023

Note: t statistics in brackets, * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

According to the findings presented in Table 8, our robustness test has revealed some interesting insights. The study examined the impact of various travel-related and socioeconomic characteristics on tourist expenditures for short-haul, medium-haul, and long-haul trips. The results indicate that visit times positively impact expenditures for both short-haul and long-haul trips, while the mode of travel positively impacts efficiency for all three distances. However, the duration of stays has a negative impact on efficiency for all three distances, while the effect of Gen Z is the opposite. The number of visitors and Gen X only impact short-haul travel. Additionally, education level significantly positively impacts expenditures for both short-haul and long-haul trips, while income level is insignificant.

Conclusion

This paper compares the traveling and socioeconomic characteristics of inbound tourists to Taiwan from different nations. We used a dataset of 5,865 respondents who visited Taiwan in 2019 from a survey by the Taiwan Tourism Bureau. Inbound tourists' expenditure and budget share were explored for five essential trip products: accommodation, food, transportation, shopping, and miscellaneous items. Simultaneously, we investigated the differences in foreign tourists' spending behaviors on travel categories based on the nation pair-comparison technique and demographics (i.e., travel distance, travel purpose, length of stay, traveling plan, traveling experience, gender, income, age, generation, and education). In 2019, short-haul tourists were the largest group, followed by medium-haul and long-haul tourists. The results of the travel budget share indicate that all travel products are necessities for tourists, and spending on accommodation, shopping, and food is higher than for transportation and miscellaneous items. For the average daily consumption of the five categories, short-haul tourists spent the least (with the highest average expenditure being from Japanese visitors, followed by Thai, Chinese, Korean, Philippines, and Vietnamese visitors), followed by medium-haul tourists (with the highest average expenditure from Malaysian visitors, followed by Singaporean and Indonesian tourists), and finally long-haul tourists (with the highest average spending from American and Canadian visitors, followed by visitors from Europe). Business tourists spent more money on accommodation, food, and transportation while spending less on shopping and sightseeing purposes. Males were willing to spend more money on trips than females, except for shopping. First-time tourists are more interested in shopping than repeat tourists.

The ANOVA test showed that different countries' tourists perceived different levels of importance for travel expenses. We used UNIANOVA and post hoc tests to examine the combined effects of travel and socioeconomic characteristics on expenditure patterns. Our findings indicate significant differences in travel-related characteristics (i.e., travel purpose, visit times, travel arrangements, stay days, visitor numbers, and travel-attractive reasons) in the allocation expenditure of international tourists in Taiwan. Similarly, socioeconomic characteristics (i.e., gender, generation, education, and income level) contributed to how tourists spent money. However, tourists tended to have the same accommodation expenditure allocation, while Gen Z spent similarly in different countries.

Based on our analysis of the six OLS models, including the baseline model and submodels, it is evident that most of the independent variables had a significant impact at an alpha level of 0.05. This outcome implies that one of the independent variables could explain the variations in the model for travel expenditure allocations. The study's OLS regression results show that distance, visit times, travel modes, duration of stays, number of visitors, gender, income, age, and education significantly explained tourists' travel expenditures in Taiwan. The findings reveal that longer-haul tourists spend more on travel products due to their experience. In addition, tourists traveling with companions spend more than those traveling alone, and males spend more on accommodation while females prefer shopping. The study also highlights the positive impact of the number of nights spent on the purchase level of travel goods and services. These insights provide valuable information on the travel-related variables that influence international tourists' spending behavior in Taiwan.

Implications

Tourist destinations may pursue one or a combination of key marketing objectives to increase: new tourist arrivals; duration of stay; tourist spending per guest; or first-time or repeat visitors. Understanding how to build and execute all four strategies is at the core of any marketing program.

The objective of this study is to utilize the pair-comparison geography technique to investigate tourists' spending patterns. The research aims to determine whether it is possible to identify distinct groups of tourists with significantly different travel expenditures based on their travel behaviors and individual socioeconomic characteristics. If they can, then tourism destinations can formulate strategies to attract more tourists or increase tourist spending. This study's results show that visitors from America, Canada, Japan, Malaysia, Thailand, China, and Korea are willing to spend more on travel products. More broadly, short-haul visitors spend more on shopping than accommodation, food, transportation, and miscellaneous; medium-haul tourists spend more on accommodation than shopping, food, transportation, and miscellaneous; and long-haul visitors spend more on accommodation than food, transportation, shopping, and miscellaneous. Short-haul visitors were the largest group (80.85% of total samples) and preferred shopping more than the medium-haul and long-haul visitors. They tended to travel individually rather than in tour groups and spent more than Japanese, Malaysian, Thailand, Chinese, and Korean visitors.

According to these data, Taiwan should take the following steps to draw more foreign tourists and boost tourist spending: (i) Enhance the variety and quality of shopping options, expand the number of available stores, and highlight these attractions in marketing materials; (ii) Concentrate on producing ads that show a variety of items and shopping options; (iii) Enhance sightseeing, shopping, dining, and entertainment to lengthen visitors' stays and encourage them to return; (iv) Present a romantic image, targeting families, younger couples, or honeymooners using different marketing strategies.

The findings from this study indicate that expenditure patterns based on the nation pair-comparison technique and matching of traveling and personal socioeconomic characteristics are viable ways of segmenting visitors (short-haul, medium-haul, and long-haul). The short-haul was the largest group and had significantly more stable expenditure levels in most travel categories than the other two distances, and they are distinguishable by several unique characteristics.

Limitations and Future Research

This paper is an early attempt to segment foreign tourist expenditure in Taiwan using the national pair-comparison approach and the linking of travel and personal socioeconomic variables, and it has limitations. The main problem is recollection bias in the traveler expenditure surveys. The challenge for tourism researchers is determining how well tourists recall the expenses associated with their vacation activities. However, because the average stay in Taiwan is shorter than seven days, the memory bias in this study was relatively minor. Another disadvantage is the modest cross-sectional sample size.

More study is needed to evaluate the expenditure elasticity of incoming visitors across countries and the relationship between travel and personal socioeconomic factors. As expected, there are no substantial variations in the travel spending of visitors between groupings of nations in this study. Future research should look at this link again. We also suggest segmenting inbound tourist expenditure using the national pair-comparison approach and the combination of travel and personal socioeconomic factors.

Appendix A – Questionnaire Annual Survey of Visitors Expenditure and Trends in Taiwan

A. The number of visits to Taiwan (in the past three years, including this time)
B. The number of days to do planning for this trip before the visitor left for Taiwan
C. The number of days to spend on this trip in Taiwan
D. The ways of traveling (including group or individual tours arranged by a travel agency and personal tours without travel agencies)
E. Total expenditures for this trip to Taiwan? (type of currency, excluding prepayments)
F. Accommodation expenses (including hotel bills)
G. Food expenses (including all meals outside)
H. Local transportation expenses (High-speed Rail, train, MRT, airplane, coach, bus, taxi, ferry, public bicycles, rental car, and others)
I. Entertainment expenses (movies, nightlife, golf, and others)
J. Shopping expenses (including clothes, jewelry, souvenirs, cosmetics, local special products, etc.)
K. Miscellaneous expenses
L. Personal information (nationality, country, age, annual income, education, occupation, gender, and others)
L1. Nationality
L2. The country/area of the visitor's residence
L3. Age: (1) 12-19; (2) 20-29; (3) 30-39; (4) 40-49; (5) 50-59; (6) 60-65; (7) 66 and over
L4. Annual income: (converted to USD) (1) Under 9,999; (2) 10,000-14,999; (3) 15,000-29,999; (4) 30,000-39,999; (5) 40,000-69,999; (6) 70,000-99,999; (7) Over 100,000; (8) No fixed income
L5. Gender: (1) Male; (2) Female
L6. Education: (1) Primary, junior, senior high schools or vocational high school; (2) College or university; (3) Graduate school (master or doctorate); (4) Others

Note. Monetary value = US dollar. Only inbound visitors to Taiwan were asked about their expenditure questions.

Appendix B –Variable definitions

Variables	Measurement	Expected sign
Dependent variable		
Total expenditure	Amount of expenditure for accommodation, food, transportation, shopping, and miscellaneous.	
Ex.Accommodation	Includes all expenditures for paying hotel bills.	
Ex.Food	Includes all expenses for meals.	
Ex.Transportation	Includes any transport-related charges.	
Ex.Shopping	Includes all costs associated with purchasing (clothes, jewelry, souvenirs, cosmetics, and others).	
Ex.Miscellaneous	Includes all other expenditures, excluding the above categories (all outlays for entertainment activities such as cinema, nightlife, sports, and others).	
Independent variable		
Travel-related aspects		
Travel distance	A dummy variable is 1 if a visitor comes from a short-distance country; otherwise, it is 0.	(+)
Stay Days	A continuous observable variable is the number of days a visitor spends on the trip.	(+)
Visit Times	A dummy variable is 1 if a tourist travels to Taiwan for the first time; otherwise, more than one is 0.	(+)
Way of travel	A dummy variable is 1 if personal tours without travel agencies; otherwise, a tourist travels arranged by a travel agency is 0.	(+)
Socioeconomics aspects		
Income level	An ordinal categorical variable is measured by the annual income of respondents. In this scenario, income has a value between 1 and 3, with 1 representing the lowest income and 3 being the most.	(+)
Gender	A dummy variable is 1 if the gender is male, and 2 if female.	(+)
Millennials	A dummy variable is 1 if visitors were born between 1981-1996, otherwise, it is 0.	(+)
Gen X	A dummy variable is 1 if visitors were born between 1965-1980, otherwise, it is 0.	(+)
Gen Z	A dummy variable is 1 if visitors were born after 1997 (considered part of Generation Z), otherwise, it is 0.	(+)
Education level	The education level of respondents is an ordinal categorical variable. In this scenario, education has a value between 1 and 4, with 1 indicating elementary, junior, senior, or vocational high schools, 2 representing college or university graduate, 3 representing graduate school (master's or doctorate), and 4 representing others.	(+)

Note. Monetary value = US dollar

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Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Kieu-Thi Phan: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Software, Formal analysis, Writing –original draft, Data curation, Validation, Writing – review and editing, Visualization.

Sheng-Hung Chen: Conceptualization, Methodology, Project administration, Formal analysis, Writing –original draft, Supervision, Data curation, Validation, Writing – review and editing, Visualization.
Jie-Min Lee: Conceptualization, Methodology, Project administration, Formal analysis, Writing –original draft, Supervision, Writing – review and editing, Visualization.
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Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Sustainable Tourism: Effect of Destination Image on Loyalty Customers

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Abstract: This study investigates the relationship between factors affecting consumer loyalty, namely destination image, which includes environmental and socioeconomic pictures. Customer engagement is the intermediary in indirect testing. The goal of exploring Indonesian tourist locations as global tourist destinations should be worthwhile in the eyes of visitors or customers. This study determines that the perception of a place with local knowledge that applies to every Indonesian region has its allure. The data utilized in this study is primary data collected from respondents using questionnaires with stand-alone items. Foreign and domestic tourist industry participants and those with direct stake in tourism policy make up the research respondents. According to data analysis employing factor analysis, the environmental image positively impacted consumer loyalty. Customer loyalty is unaffected by socioeconomic status. However, after doing indirect research via consumer involvement, it was discovered that environmental and socioeconomic pictures positively impact customer loyalty.

Keywords: sustainable tourism; environmental image; socioeconomic image; customer engagement; loyalty.

JEL Classification: L83; M31; D12; Q56.

Introduction

COVID-19 has an impact on tourist sustainability awareness. The COVID-19 epidemic has altered the direction of the tourism industry (Higgins-Desbiolles 2020) According to (Fu 2020), COVID-19 also enabled the tourism sector to realign, focus attention, and relaunch itself as a significant participant in sustainability. The tourism industry can support sustainability by emphasizing changes in visitor behavior and sustainable travel destinations. Academics and professionals are now concerned about the sustainability of tourist locations (Gössling, Scott, and Hall 2020).

Sustainability is a long-term objective that requires support from all stakeholders. The UNWTO states that tourism development is sustainable in order to suit the needs of both tourists and local residents (Chi *et al.* 2022). Sustainable tourist locations simultaneously safeguard and improve prospects for a better future. Sustainability aims to manage all resources in a way that satisfies everyone's requirements in terms of economics, society, and aesthetics while maintaining the integrity of cultures, vital ecological processes, biodiversity, and life support (Rubio-Mozos, García-Muiña, and Fuentes-Moraleda 2020). The shift in focus toward managing tourist places to become more sustainable is indicative of this attention and support system. Indonesia is a popular tourist destination that provides a range of travel choices, such as ecotourism, cultural tourism, and culinary tourism (Pereira-Moliner *et al.* 2021; Reid, Johnston, and Patiar 2017)

In Indonesia, particularly in West Java, there is still room for improvement in implementing sustainable tourism (Werastuti *et al.* 2018). Only four sustainable tourist destinations in West Java have been certified by the 2019 Indonesia Sustainable Tourism Awards Festival (ISTAfest). Green Canyon (Cukang Taneuh) Cijulang Pangandaran Regency, Kampung Naga Neglasari Village, Salawu District, Tasikmalaya Regency, Cibuntu Village, Kuningan Regency, and Dusun Bambu, Lembang, West Bandung Regency are the four regions mentioned. Even so, the sustainability indicator is still regional.

Sustainable tourism sites are essential to visitors and a factor in their decision to return. (Chi *et al.* 2022) advocated the value of projecting an image of a sustainable tourist location to draw visitors and keep them happy and devoted. According to (Pereira *et al.* 2021), the public opinion climate moderates the relationship between perceptions of tourist risk, destination image, and visitor satisfaction. According to (Guix, Bonilla-Priego, and Font 2018), sustainable tourist sites are essential. In an ever-tighter global market, having a distinctive and well-known destination image is essential for competition. For tourists, a destination's image is crucial since it influences their behavior and their choice of location (Bukirwa, S., and Kising'U 2017).

More thorough and integrated development of sustainable tourism destinations is required. The sustainability values that serve as the foundation for creating sustainability traits and symbols still need to be finished (Stylos and Vassiliadis 2015) Th.e development of sustainable tourist destinations still needs to take into account aspects of religiosity that cause visitors to think critically about human and spiritual qualities. According to (Ribaudo *et al.* 2020), assessing the system's sustainability in all dimensions is critical as providing a detailed description of it (Sara, Saputra, and Larasdiputra 2021). Sustainable tourism is essential for more reasons than only social, economic, and environmental ones. Sustainable consumption is an issue in travel and hospitality (Tsai, Song, and Wong 2009). Shen (2020) shows that sustainable tourism depends on visitor behavior.

The actions of tourists like (Aldira, Wibowo, and Yuniawati 2016) are relevant to sustainable tourism. Previously, (Sudiarta and Suardana 2016) discussed the need for an explanation of tourists' conduct regarding religious values. As a result, perceptions of travel destinations are linked to traveler behavior and require explanation in various circumstances about the brand destination image. Customer Engagement (CE) is a crucial area that requires more focus (Barber 2014; Nezakati *et al.* 2015). Customer engagement (CE) is crucial for creating and enhancing customer connections, whereas customer engagement (CE) impacts consumption decision-making, according to (Hofmann *et al.* 2019), However, additional information is required regarding the degree to which customers engage in various online behaviors or the connection between customer engagement behaviors.

Contributions from the research can be used as a conceptual and practical framework for tourism players to create strategic measures to combine religious, educational, and recreational objectives with an ethical duty for sustainability by incorporating tourists. Additionally, to better understand religious tourism interactions by examining informal and official links. (Nyoman Nurjaya. 2022) among these relationships are those that concern sustainability.

1. Research Background

1.1. Sustainable Tourism

The foundation of sustainable tourism is a shared belief that guarantees the next generation will have more possibilities in the future (Pereira-Moliner *et al.* 2021). The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) asserts that tourism, one of the world's fastest-growing economic sectors, is increasingly acknowledged as a crucial factor in creating jobs and wealth, economic growth, environmental protection, and reducing poverty (Chi *et al.* 2022), In order to meet economic, social, and aesthetic requirements while preserving cultural integrity, vital ecological processes, biodiversity, and life support systems, all resources must be managed sustainably (Adi *et al.* 2022)

1.2 Loyalty Customers

The definition of tourist loyalty is a visitor's dedication to a location, which is viewed as the cornerstone of brand equity for a tourism destination to achieve competitiveness (Kaplan, R. S., and Norton 2001). Developed the idea of loyalty based on signs of a desire to recommend and return (Molodchik, Shakina, and Barajas 2014). The two leading indicators of tourist loyalty to a place are the likelihood of returning to a site and the inclination to promote it to others (Merli *et al.* 2019). According to (Wargenau, Astrid; Che 2004), it is the degree to which a tourist recommends a particular location or intends to return there.

Environmental Image. The intention of portraying a green image at a tourist site is connected to tourists' pro-green behavior. According to (Van der Poll 2015), reports of significant ecological harm have included soil erosion, plant root exposure, and littering by visitors. Rarely is the impact of environmental perception on visitor behavior acknowledged. Tourist value references that are focused on sustainability identify tourist sites that are regarded as being environmentally friendly. According to (Alam and Islam 2021), corporate stewardship of the environment creates a reputation that fosters the desire to be obedient. According to (Van der Poll 2015), restaurant patrons' interactions with varied environments shape their perceptions of tourists' expectations of these tourist locations and ultimately affect their allegiance. According to (Chen and Chang 2013) study of managers in

Dutch manufacturing firms, client loyalty is correlated with a company's reputation as being environmentally friendly. The following is the proposed theory:

H1: Environmental image has a positive influence on loyalty.

Socioeconomic Image. The socioeconomic image of tourists is another factor. Sustainable tourist destinations consider socioeconomic factors, as evidenced by society's social and economic growth. Today, the socioeconomic concept is essential for tourism (Andhika 2017). According to (Rivers, Shenstone-Harris, and Young 2017), socioeconomic issues are a crucial component of the sustainable development of local communities that attract tourists. Managers of tourist locations work to establish preferences for the values that tourists use to judge performance and determine their loyalty, including socioeconomic and sustainable development factors. The foundation for travelers' high levels of loyalty is their socioeconomic preferences. According to (Rivers, Shenstone-Harris, and Young 2017), the presence of qualities from sustainable tourist destinations, such as socioeconomic repercussions on the region, is a competition to make tourists loyal to tourist locations. Tourist attractions that are concerned about the socioeconomic situation of the neighborhood make contributions that go beyond their financial success. This profitability may affect the socioeconomic situation in the locality (Andhika 2017; Efferin and Hopper 2007). Community involvement as local investors is a component of attempts to promote socioeconomic development (Mahdavi 2022; K.A.K. Saputra 2021). It stressed how sustainable development promotes destination loyalty, particularly for tourist attractions in rural areas.

H2: Socioeconomic image has a positive effect on loyalty.

Customer Engagement. Tourist value references with an emphasis on sustainability are tourist locations regarded favorably by travelers (Sanusi, A., Sumiyati, L., Winata, A. 2017). According to (Hofmann *et al.* 2019). This coherence makes visitors feel more at ease and less compelled to be there. Consistency between visitors and producers fosters comfort and favorable affective reactions, such as participation (Zameer *et al.* 2018). By engaging in these tourist sites and with service providers who offer these tourism services, tourists feel at ease and obligated to demonstrate ethical responsibility to the conditions of society. According to (Zameer *et al.* 2018), the CE idea aids businesses in creating marketing plans that align with socioeconomic factors to boost customer engagement and business performance. When tourist places adhere to ethical standards, visitors will be more likely to return (Hofmann *et al.* 2019; Zameer *et al.* 2018). Tourism behavior is influenced by socioeconomic factors, including happiness, enthusiasm, and increased interaction with places (Ebrahimi, Karamouz, and Sarindizaj 2021; Efferin and Hopper 2007).The following is the suggested theory.

H3: Environmental image has a positive effect on loyalty through customer engagement.

H4: Socioeconomic image has a positive effect on loyalty through customer engagement.

2. Research Methodology

The data used are primary data that were obtained through two formal and informal processes: (1) submitting study ideas to FEB Trisakti University and research recommendations, and (2) submitting applications to each tourist destination. Secondary data, in the form of a report on the volume of tourist visits from BPS data, was used to support the research argument (2020).

Local tourists who visited several tourist attractions in tourist areas that matched the requirements for sustainable tourism made up the study population in this investigation. The research population's characteristics of visitors include the following: (1) local tourists who are not foreigners; (2) tourists who are there for enjoyment rather than to form romantic impressions (honeymoon tourists). Furthermore, (3) visitors are not coming for educational reasons like study attraction. The number of samples per tourist location was determined, and sampling was done at random. The number of items per tourist destination was calculated by multiplying the number of samples by the number of tourists divided by the number of tourists per location.

This investigation utilized a survey or questionnaire as the data collection method. The most popular tool for gathering research data is the questionnaire. More questionnaires were delivered by the researchers than there were samples (Widiyanti *et al.* 2022). 400 questionnaires were given as part of this study to ensure accurate and accurate results. A selection distribution based on tourist locations was used to choose 240 of the 288 surveys that were successfully collected, with full justifications and no outliers.

Variable measurement with an interval scale with a score of 1 to 5 starting from strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), disagree (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5) for positive statements and vice versa if the information is negative then the answers strongly disagree (5), disagree (4), disagree (3), agree (2), and strongly agree (1) for positive statements. Moreover, testing the hypothesis using the mediation model with the help of SEM-PLS.

3. Research Results

This section should Validity measurement is critical in evaluating the questionnaire. The validity test was carried out to determine whether the questionnaire used for research was valid. A reliable instrument is only sometimes correct. To see the correlation in validity, use factor analysis. Indicators in research with a loading factor ≥ 0.40 are declared valid to be used as observed variables that explain latent variables.

There is a wide range in the environmental perception of each tourist location. Ecological conditions are generally well-maintained at each tourist attraction. The findings of the study on ambient image factors are listed below.

Table 1. Descriptive environmental image

Variables/ Dimensions	Indicator	Average	Standard deviation
Environmental image	EI 1	3.87	0.80
	EI 2	3.89	0.88
	EI 3	3.92	0.82
	EI 4	3.92	0.91
	EI 5	3.92	0.80
	EI 6	3.85	0.88
	Average yield	**3.89**	**0.70**

Overall, the average picture of the environmental image can be seen from the average respondent's answer, which is 3.89 or is in the high category. With a standard deviation of 0.70, each data collected from tourists regarding environmental image tends to be centralized even though it is more spread out than a cultural image. The data collected fall into the excellent category. This shows that there are vast differences in each tourist destination's environment.

An example of the environment for Penglipuran and Nglanggeran tourist destinations, Yogyakarta, is cleaner than the Green Canyon (Cukang Taneuh) Cijulang, Kab. Pangandaran. The table above shows that Bali is the most powerful environmental image (Wardana *et al.* 2021; Werastuti *et al.* 2018). Tri Hita Karana, which refers to the harmony of the relationships between humans and God, humans and the environment, and humans and other humans, is a concept that is widely held among the Balinese population. The neighborhood maintains a clean and lovely atmosphere (Maudana, Ernawati, and Voda 2021; Komang Adi Kurniawan Saputra *et al.* 2021). Penglipuran and Pemuteran Village residents are concerned about the environment (Adi *et al.* 2022). Information on how visitors can help safeguard the environment is always provided.

Each tourism destination has its socioeconomic reputation. Each resort for tourists has a well-cultivated socioeconomic concept (Rivers *et al.*, 2017). The survey's findings indicate that the socioeconomic image is high, with a score of 4.06 and a standard deviation of 0.61. It is clear from this that tourist locations have a solid socioeconomic image. The community's role as a supplier of supplemental services at tourist attractions, such as guides and selling tourist items, indicates its economic and social activities. Each tourist-collected piece of information about the surrounding environment tends to converge, as indicated by the standard deviation (Efferin and Hopper, 2007).

Table 2. Descriptive socioeconomic image

Variables/ Dimensions	Indicator	Average	Standard deviation
Socioeconomic image	SEI 1	4.08	0.77
	SEI 2	3.97	0.73
	SEI 3	4.04	0.83

Variables/ Dimensions	Indicator	Average	Standard deviation
	SEI 4	4.07	0.82
	SEI 5	4.10	0.81
	SEI 6	4.08	0.82
	SEI 7	4.01	0.79
	SEI 8	4.15	0.87
	SEI 9	3.99	0.75
	SEI 10	4.14	0.81
	Average yield	4.06	0.61

Field research indicates developments and economic activity in Green Canyon (Cukang Taneuh) Cijulang, Kab. Pangandaran can detect socioeconomic changes (Halibas *et al.*, 2017). Many locals are employed in these tourism areas. Tourist destination providers ask locals to donate boats, set up stalls near attractions, or enlarge tourist zones so that services for visitors can be provided (Harun *et al.*, 2021).

Table 3. Deskriptive customer engagement

Variables	Indicator	Average	Standard deviation
Customer engagement	CE 1	4.04	0.84
	CE 2	4.20	0.85
	CE 3	4.02	0.88
	CE 4	4.01	0.86
	CE 5	4.07	0.82
	CE 6	4.02	0.85
	CE 7	4.01	0.82
	CE 8	4.03	0.79
	CE 9	4.02	0.78
	CE 10	3.97	0.81
	Average yield	4.04	0.83

The description of tourist customer engagement in each tourist destination is quite diverse. Customer engagement varies depending on the tourism destination. According to the findings of the descriptive analysis of the customer interaction data, the average score for this variable is 4.04, which is considered high. The standard deviation of 0.83 demonstrates that tourist consumer engagement data is frequently centralized (Sanusi, A., Sumiyati, L., Winata, A. 2017),

There are several levels of customer engagement at each location in response to tourists during these tourist interactions (Hofmann *et al.* 2019; Zameer *et al.* 2018). The most significant signal, with a score of 4.07, is a need for more readiness to offer suggestions for enhancing this location. In other words, travelers are open to sharing ideas for enhancing destinations in terms of environmental considerations and marketing to ensure sustainable tourist destinations. The lowest score indicates that visitors cannot provide input to tourism managers; however, a score of 3.89 indicates that visitors can provide information to tourism managers to help keep tourist sites sustainable (Hofmann *et al.* 2019).

According to observations made on the ground, many tourists participate in community activities, especially when there are cultural events, in places like Kampung Naga, Neglasari Village, and Kec. Salawu, Kab. Tasikmalaya (Hidayatullah *et al.* 2019). The participation of the neighborhood boosts the energy in the air.

The mood and intimacy of rural communities are introduced to tourists through direct interaction with the locals at Cibuntu Village, Kab. Kuningan. Community involvement is restricted to the tourism-related activities available in Dusun Bambu, Lembang, and Kab (Wardana *et al.* 2021).

Table 4. Description loyalty

Variables	Indicator	Average	Standard deviation
Loyalty	TL 1	3.90	0.79
	TL 2	3.89	0.81
	TL 3	3.90	0.83
	TL 4	3.88	0.82
	TL 5	3.93	0.79
	TL 6	3.87	0.90
	TL 7	3.93	0.82
	TL 8	3.97	0.92
	TL 9	3.98	0.76
	TL 10	3.93	0.76
	TL 11	3.93	0.82
	Average yield	3.92	0.66

The survey's findings indicate that, with a score of 3.92, visitor loyalty falls into the high category. Visitors may wish to remain longer in tourist areas or will complement the attractiveness of these areas to friends and on social media. The data gathered from tourists concerning loyalty is likely to be centralized because the standard deviation for the loyalty variable is 0.66. (Kandampully and Suhartanto 2000). The emotive response, I feel better when I stay in this destination, which demonstrates tourists' interest in tourism destinations, has the highest indicator, scoring 3.98. The tourist destination with the lowest score has the best potential for sustainable tourism. Tourist places still need to make sustainability a key priority, in visitors' opinion (Merli *et al.* 2019).

Field research revealed that travelers wished to return to Green Canyon (Cukang Taneuh), Kampung Naga, Cibuntu Village, Dusun Bambu, Pemuteran, and Penglipuran Villages. Positive remarks about their experiences are made by visitors on social media, with coworkers, and in their surroundings. Visitors post about their experiences on social media and participate in advocacy efforts to support and defend environmentally friendly tourist spots like Yogyakarta's Nglanggeran or Importantsari Tourism Village (Lasso and Dahles 2018)

The survey results regarding age showed that the majority were 36 to 45 years as many as 107 tourists or 44.6%. The lowest was the group aged above <16 years, as many as five or 2.1%. Age 36 s.d. 45 years is a productive age that requires holidays to stay productive. After a vacation, tourists can refocus on work and increase their productivity. The lowest group travel depends on decisions within the family. In addition, holidays in the age group <16 years depend on the time off from school. Age group 36 s.d. 45 years old is a group that is financially capable and is a group that can travel. This can be seen from tourists in Bali, Yogyakarta, and West Java, with the most dominant age group being tourists (Putri and Saputra 2022; Wardana *et al.* 2021; Werastuti *et al.* 2018).

Table 5. Hypothesis Test Results

Research Hypothesis		Estimates	*P-Value*	Conclusion
H1	*Environmental image has a positive influence on loyalty*	0.438	0.000	supported
H2	*Socioeconomic image has a positive influence on loyalty*	0.022	0.784	**Not supported**
H3	*Customer engagement mediates the positive influence of environmental image on loyalty*	0.11	0.008	supported
H4	*Customer engagement mediates the positive influence of socioeconomic image on loyalty*	0.335	0.00	supported

The results of the estimation parameter test (standardized regression weight) show a beta value of 0.434. The P-value of 0.000 <0.05 means that hypothesis 1 is supported. Environmental image has a positive influence on tourist loyalty. Consumer engagement increases when environmental quality and natural surroundings improve the approach to popular tourist destinations. The achievement of a tourism destination that demands the collective value of sustainability by visitors' expectations of a beautiful environment fosters the expansion of visitor loyalty (Kaplan and Norton, 2001).

4.Discussions

Students and university students were among the travelers who stated that they were pretty impressed with the environmental perception of tourism spots (Merli *et al.* 2019). The image of an ecologically conscious resort is associated with tourists who have an ethical commitment to the environment (Sutawa 2012). Tourists are aware that they play a role in fixing environmental issues and recognize themselves as stakeholders in environmentally friendly tourism sites (Stylos and Vassiliadis 2015). Interaction with tourist attractions promotes ongoing learning and assessment processes and expedites knowledge acquisition, which leads to assessments and actions, such as loyalty (Molodchik, Shakina, and Barajas 2014).

Designing vacation spots with an environmentally sustainable image demonstrates moral responsibility and promotes favorable visitor response through strong loyalty (Molodchik, Shakina, and Barajas 2014). For tourism to be competitive, especially in the long run, the communal idea of the environment is essential. Tourists demand that the tourism industry be developed with services and goods that are more 'environmentally friendly' and 'ethically' accountable. Increased environmental awareness suggests a change in attitude toward consumerism. Tourists increasingly seek high-quality vacation spots and demand cleanliness in tourist attractions that can support natural beauty (Rahmiati, Othman, and Tahir 2020).

The results of the estimation parameter test (standardized regression weight) show a beta value of 0.022. The P-value of 0.784 <0.05 means that hypothesis 2 is not supported, meaning that socioeconomic image does not positively affect tourist loyalty. Their dedication to tourism is distinct from the socioeconomic picture they perceive (Andhika 2017). Higher job and economic prospects for the community and the development of nearby facilities or infrastructure only sometimes result in more tourists visiting these tourist locations (Hellmeister and Richins 2019). A socioeconomic experience used as evaluation material for tourists is the interaction between tourists and socioeconomic activities such as infrastructure, local economic activity, and access to tourist locations (Wijaya, Bendesa, and Wiranatha 2021). Visitors' socioeconomic evaluation of tourist locations is the foundation for deciding whether to revisit and recommend them on ethical grounds. The compatibility of the moral value orientation between visitors and tourist places influences how visitors behave in a way that supports the viability of those destinations through strong loyalty (Rahmiati, Othman, and Tahir 2020).

The study's findings are consistent with those of (Merli *et al.* 2019), albeit in a different setting. The ability of the brand image to predict consumer loyalty requires factors like service quality and satisfaction to be fully mediated. Based on actual interactions with products or services, customers' opinions and ratings are highly influenced by the concept of a tourist destination. According to (Komang Adi Kurniawan Saputra *et al.* 2021). Performance - rather than appearance - is the key to increasing loyalty because it can lead to satisfaction, add value, and foster trust.

According to the conceptual framework developed in a behavioral, attitudinal approach and an approach that blends attitudes and behavior, visitors' loyalty is the result of an interactive and reciprocal process between providers and tourists (Merli *et al.* 2019). According to (O'Neill and Carlbäck 2011), a visitor's loyalty is an aim, dedication, and sense of self-identification with a particular tourist destination. According to this study's findings (Stanojević, Vranes, and Gökalp 2010), visitors do not fully comprehend the tourist sites' inherent responsibility regarding socioeconomic factors. Low-scoring visitors only make one trip even though it is a village with a positive socioeconomic reputation, like Pamuteran and Panglipuran. On the follow-up appointment, the socioeconomic standing was better. In order to develop loyalty, visitors need more mechanisms for acquisition, evaluation, and learning. Without this procedure, travelers can only satisfy their basic wants for travel and cannot explore the meaning of sustainability and moral responsibility in the destinations they are presented to (Komang Adi Kurniawan Saputra *et al.* 2022).

The social distance between tourist locations and visitors can be one of several explanations for the negligible impact of socioeconomic image on loyalty. Providers in tourism areas still need to develop their capacity to promote and project a socioeconomic image. Loyalty to socioeconomic factors is constrained by information and little contact (Molodchik, Shakina, and Barajas 2014; O'Neill and Carlbäck 2011). Because there is little connection and communication, tourists find it difficult to recognize popular tourist spots. This prevents contact and reciprocity between travelers and tourist attractions (Leninkumar 2017).

The results of the estimation parameter test (standardized regression weight) show a P-value of 0.000 <0.05, meaning that hypothesis 3 is supported. Some of the beneficial effects of the environmental image on loyalty are mediated by customer interaction. *Consumer involvement* is a psychological commitment demonstrated by the activities of tourists who volunteer their time and resources for the betterment of other tourists (Sanusi, A., Sumiyati, L., Winata, A. 2017). Tourists can use impressions recorded about tourist destinations as a resource to interact more closely with those destinations. The tourists become engaged and devoted when they understand that the values are appropriate. When participating in activities to demonstrate their psychological connection to tourist locations, tourists do not experience unnecessary pressure (Zameer *et al.*, 2018). Comfortable surroundings reinforce loyalty even more. On the other hand, tourism destinations use consumer involvement to 'defend' and keep their visitors while working together to develop sustainable tourist destinations. The environmental reputation created by tourist places, customer involvement, and traveler loyalty is all unified by a moral component (Sanusi, A., Sumiyati, L., Winata, A. 2017)

Based on the position of the environment image and the role of consumer engagement, the environment image of a tourist destination is not only designed based on brand positioning. It outlines the procedure for creating a distinct competitive advantage in consumers' thoughts (Chen and Chang 2013). However, it is a universally shared philosophy and approach to use a competitive advantage to generate robust and active customer loyalty ties for companies and build brands within a sustainability framework. On the other hand, tourism destination providers are aware that the role of customers (consumer engagement) and the position of loyal customers must be differentiated when establishing the sustainable value (Alam and Islam 2021).

Field research findings demonstrate that travelers who believe that tourist places have achieved the ideal of being ecologically friendly become more expressive while narrating tales about these destinations or describing how these destinations are (Chen *et al.* 2017). Visitors exhibit a willingness to assist tourist places and a psychological commitment to do so, especially in the case of environmentally damaging events like floods and tsunamis (Chen *et al.* 2017; Komang Adi Kurniawan Saputra *et al.* 2022). By encouraging the planting of mangrove trees or maintaining a garbage-free environment (Lima *et al.* 2021),

The results of the estimation parameter test (standardized regression weight) show a beta value of 0.335. A P-value of 0.000 <0.05 means that hypothesis 4 is supported, which means that customer engagement mediates the positive influence of socioeconomic image on tourist loyalty. Customer engagement mediates some of the positive socioeconomic impacts on loyalty. The focus of a tourist attraction on the socioeconomic aspect is a tactic that also demonstrates concern for the socioeconomic circumstances of the neighborhood (Rivers, Shenstone-Harris, and Young 2017). Impressive interaction experiences encourage self-expression, cognition, and emotional growth and highlight many tourism sites' moral similarities and orientations. This encounter leaves a lasting effect, and the tourist's perception is assessed and used as the foundation for a more profound and devoted commitment (Andhika 2017; Rivers, Shenstone-Harris, and Young 2017)

According to the study, attracting repeat business from tourists takes a significant psychological investment on their part. (Molodchik, Shakina, and Barajas 2014) Destinations that promote sustainability as a pertinent and distinctive value proposition for visitors to encourage psychological commitment (Rahmiati, Othman, and Tahir 2020). Sustainability is dependent on internal commitment, the utilization of resources from outside, and market factors. Tourism engagement and loyalty have resulted in internal commitment. At the same time, resources are available from tourists who engage with the market strongly and from outside pressures that push tourists to view sustainability as a long-term solution for all parties involved (O'Neill and Carlbäck 2011).

Conclusions

The study concluded that consumer involvement mediates the impact of socioeconomic status and environmental perception on loyalty. Loyalty benefits from a positive environmental image. The favorable environmental impact of tourism destinations encourages visitors to return and even promote them to others. Socioeconomic reputation does not enhance loyalty. Changes in the socioeconomic profile do not favorably impact visitors' loyalty. Tourist loyalty is only sometimes influenced by the socioeconomic impression travelers get of the place, such as the availability of retail establishments, the local economy, and interactions between residents and service providers. Visitors who are more devoted to tourism sites require more exposure and engagement. Although socioeconomic situations close to popular tourist locations are typical characteristics, it is still necessary to go deeper so that visitors may assess and identify more deeply to increase their loyalty.

The beneficial effect of a positive environmental image on loyalty is mediated by customer engagement. Tourists' perception of eco-friendliness inspires a psychological commitment to exchange information, resources, and time with other travelers and destination operators. By voluntary psychological commitment, tourists are encouraged to share resources and have more positive views and behaviors toward tourism sites. Customer loyalty is positively influenced by socioeconomic image through customer involvement. A favorable perception of a travel destination promotes greater participation, as a socioeconomic picture shows. Through high loyalty, involvement helps travelers to offer favorable reviews about tourism sites.

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Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Siti Zakiah: Conceptualization and writing – original draft; HM: Conceptualization and writing – original draft
Muhammad Yusuf Alhadihaq: Conceptualization and writing – original draft. The degree of contribution of each author is equal.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests related to this research. This statement affirms that there are no financial, personal, or professional interests that could potentially influence the research, ensuring transparency and integrity in your publication.

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Temporal Change of Foreign Tourism in Sri Lanka: A Study on Economic Perspective

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Abstract: Purpose: Many countries rely heavily on tourism as an economic driver. It has a large workforce. Sri Lanka's economic turmoil has been a big impediment to tourist trips. Tourists are keeping away from this picturesque country because of high inflation, frequent power outages, and fuel scarcity. This impacted the tourism industry, job losses etc. This research investigates the relationship between foreign tourist arrivals (FTA) and nation's GDP, and the barriers to tourism growth.

Methodology: The work is completed through gaining access to quantitative and qualitative data. SLTDA tourist reports from 2018 to 2022, World Data (2020), UNWTO (2017), Central Bank of Sri Lanka provided quantitative data. The information comes from an assessment of literature, articles published in significant newspapers, journals. Cartographic techniques were employed for analysis, and the correlation test was used to assess the relationship between tourist arrivals, foreign receipts, and GNP.

Findings: There is a positive relationship between FTA and tourism growth. Economic crisis has deteriorated Sri Lanka's tourism as people are unwilling to visit Sri Lanka owing to uncertainty, inflation, power outages, and fuel scarcity, even the domestic tourist are unwilling to spend money for travelling and leisure purpose.

Originality: In addition to demand and supply factors, the article indicates that other factors, like inflation and currency value, play a significant role in tourism development. The paper cites several reasons why developing-country governments must preserve stability in order to thrive all sectors of the country's economy, including tourism.

Keywords: foreign tourist arrivals; economy; inflation; crude oil; GDP; tourism.

JEL Classification: Z30; Z31; Z32; Z33; Z38; R11.

Introduction

Tourism entails the movement of people from one place to another to any place outside their usual environment for business, leisure or for any other purpose (UNWTO). Growing international tourism receipts has contributed significantly to GDP of many countries. The growth of tourism can earn foreign exchange earnings, revenues etc. and due to its nature of being labour intensive sector, it provides vast employment to many people directly and indirectly. The demand for tourism provides work to poor people, women, low skilled and low wage workers, skilled and unskilled migrant workers and thus helps in reducing poverty of the host region. It is due to this reason the sector of tourism has been identified as the major reason for alleviation of poverty and the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), (WTO and ILO, 2013).

Many nations around the world rely heavily on tourism as one of the major contributors to their GDP. There can be several reasons for the downfall of tourism in a country like economic downturn and recession, depreciating exchange rate, loss of market confidence and the loss of confidence of investors (Henderson, 2006). According to a common belief among tourism specialists, since foreign tourists are highly concerned about their personal safety, this business can only flourish in tranquil settings (Hitchcock, *et al.* 1993) Due to decline in tourist arrivals many sectors are affected in which hotels, restaurants and convention centres are the prominent ones, which not only happens due to lesser number of tourist but also less expenditure by them. (Pizam, 2009). In Sri Lanka, the tourism industry has a significant impact on both the GDP of the nation and the workers engaged in the industry. It also contributes significantly to the nation's balance of payments and foreign income. With inflation at an all-time high and the rupee depreciating against the dollar practically daily, Sri Lanka is currently experiencing one of the world's main economic crises.

Tourism was flourishing in the country very well, until in 2020 SARS COVID-19 started. Due to pandemic, many countries were forced to put lockdown of the nation; Sri Lanka imposed a lockdown on 20th March 2020 and put a travel ban as well. As a result of this many people in Sri Lanka lost their job and the tourism sector saw a drastic decline, there was a complete shutdown of tourism-related businesses likes the hotel industry, transport industry, etc. This ban on the tourism sector continued for the 8 months till December, 2020. The government decided to lift the ban but tourism failed to reach its pre- COVID peak. In the month of August,2021 the country witness more tourist arrivals from different countries, but this year in 2022, near about 40 percent of pre bookings has been cancelled by foreign tourists which is mainly due to fuel shortage in the country (Wijesinghe, PTI, July 2022). Economists suggested an export-driven growth strategy as a means of overcoming the nation's current debt crisis and expressed optimism that the economy will fully recover (World Bank Group, 2021). A multitude of issues and challenges, such as a lack of marketing, public awareness, and infrastructure development, are now affecting tourism. Government officials, practitioners, and policymakers are concentrating on re-building solutions to deal with these issues. (Navirathan et. al, 2023). This paper thus aims to highlight the relation between Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTA) and GNP contribution because the country's economy depends on the arrival of foreign tourists which is greatly affected during the present economic crisis.

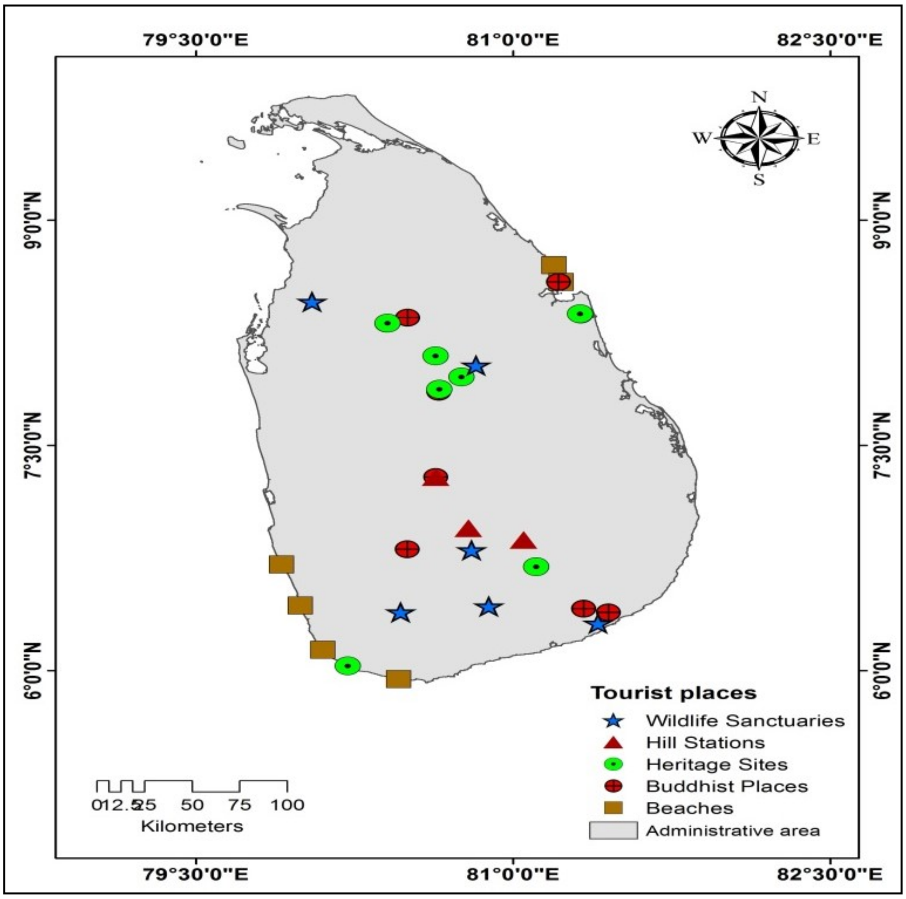
1. Development of Tourism in Sri Lanka

Development is a continuous process. Today, tourism is one of the most important elements in the development of a country and world economy, and it is also one of the leading sectors for generating revenue for advanced and emerging countries (Mason 2015). The Tourism Bureau in the country was established in 1937, and since then it has swiftly progressed in the tourism sector, however during the 2nd world war period the operations of the bureau was stopped, which again started working in 1948. The turnaround in the sector was first witnessed in 1966 when the Sri Lankan government came up with First Ten Year Master Plan for tourism which aimed at tourism promoting and marketing strategies. The plan was made after funding from USAID. The government legislative body passed Tourism Board Act No. of 1966 and Ceylon Hotel Corporation Act No. of 1966 for which the country witnessed first wave for the construction of new hotels with five resort development zone (Fernando, Bandara and Smith, 2013). The second wave of economic reforms began in the year 1989 with the introduction of second Ten Year Tourism Master Plan and the third wave of started with the ceasefire agreement signed between the rebels inside the country and the government led to stability in the political environment in 2002. After six years of the agreement the country was very peaceful and the government decided to come up with 3rd Tourism Master Plan which led to a boom in tourism industry (Fernando, Bandara and Smith, 2013).

Currently emerging from the pandemic and reviving tourist interest are travel destinations like Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand, where nature-based tourism has been a growing component (e.g., Steven, Rakotopare, and Newsome, 2021). Before the pandemic, nature-based vacation spots like Indonesia, the Philippines, Brunei, Cambodia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam were all increasing their tourism businesses to capitalise on burgeoning consumers. (Perera et. al, 2023). The strategic location and uniqueness of Sri Lanka helped her to become a tourist destination (Fernando. et. al, 2016). Its placement in the Indian Ocean on the main sea and aviation routes connecting the Far East and Europe benefits the nation's global logistic hub (Sri Lanka Info, 2011). The geographical location was one of the major reasons that Sri Lanka was colonised by three European powers, the Portuguese (1505-1656), the Dutch (1656-1796) and the British (1796-1948) (Fernando. et. al., 2016). Sri Lanka offers multiple option for tourists among them national park, wildlife, rich heritage and culture, and beautiful beaches are the prominent ones (Lai, 2002). Sri Lanka has a lengthy coastline. Several locations there, like Hikkaduwa and Unawatuna, provide adventurous activities like scuba diving. Tangalle is also a highly famous destination for divers. Mirissa, a city in the nation, is well-known among tourists for its excellent whale- and dolphin-watching opportunities. (Fernando. et. al., 2016).

Sri Lanka is a nation with abundant resources based on its cultural past. There are 8 UNESCO World Heritage Sites there (Figure 1), including Buddhist and Hindu temples. The nation benefits from having 6 of the 300 ancient monuments in the globe as well as 49 sites that the World Tourism Organization has classed as unique attractions, 91 as rare attractions, 7 world heritage sites, and world heritage sites (de Silva, 2000). Among these are the central highlands region, which is made up of Horton Plains National Park and Knuckles Conservation Forest, the Sinharaja Forest Reserve, the Dutch Fort in Galle, the Golden Temple of Dambulla, the Temple of Tooth in Kandy, and the Nallur Kandaswamy Temple in Jaffna (Jayasinghe, 2020).

Figure 1. Tourist Places in Sri Lanka



Buddhist tourism is a significant part of the country's tourism. Sri Lanka is a country that is renowned for its spirituality and is home to several places of worship, tourism hotspots, and religious landmarks, among other things. More essential components of Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka include Buddhist philosophy and Buddhist history. Meditation, yoga, explorations into the past and present, pilgrimage travel, and instruction in Buddhist philosophy are all included in Sri Lanka's Buddhist tourism. There are a lot of places that Sri Lanka tourism has discovered outside of Colombo that can provide for travellers who are on a mission to see life as it really is. The Sri Dalada Maligawa, also known as the Temple of the Tooth, which is located in the Kandy area and holds the revered tooth of Buddha, is surrounded by hundreds of monks. In Sri Lanka, there are 6,000 Buddhist monasteries with about 15,000 monks. Therefore, at sunrise, tourists will hear chanting emanating from all directions.

There is a positive relation between FDI and the GDP of the country (Mustafa, 2019). The contribution of tourism to the country's GDP was only 6% in the year 2000, which showed a progressive rise up to 12.6 % in the year 2020. The rate of increase was 4.28% per year. In the world, 10% of GDP is contributed by the travel and tourism industry and it is said that 1 out of every 10 jobs is related to tourism. (UNWTO, 2017). Tourism not only contributes to a country's GDP but is also said to be the main engine for regional development. it has an impact on revenue earnings and growth, employment opportunities, etc. (Khalil *et al.* 2007). But due to the introduction of SARS COVID19, the government decided to impose a lockdown across the nation. This resulted in the shutdown of tourism and businesses related to tourism across the country. Though the lockdown was lifted in October 2020, the travel ban continued till November 2020. Tourism was reviving slowly after the COVID phase, but it has weakened again, as the economic crisis is going severe day by day, and tourists are choosing alternate destinations for travel instead of Sri Lanka. It was expected that the phenomena of revenge tourism likely to be taken place, but Sri Lanka failed to tackle the situation and the arrival of tourists also failed to reach 50% of the volume of pre COVID levels in 2021 and 2022. The present situation in Sri Lanka is there are fuel shortages for vehicles, and cooking gas shortages which are affecting the hotel industry, inflation is at its peak which accounts for 17.5 % now. The whole supply chain for the tourism industry has been impacted as companies struggle to maintain their regular operations. The supply chain and the ability of tourism businesses to serve tourists with goods, services, and experiences have been further affected by import restrictions implemented to control foreign exchange pouring out of the nation. (Perera et. al ,2023). In order to increase independence and prevent future high reliance on foreign debt, proper taxes have been advocated. (George A.S et al, 2022).

2. Data and Methods

2.1 Study Area

Sri Lanka is an island country lying in the Indian Ocean towards the south of India. The latitudinal extent of Sri Lanka is 5°55’ north to 9° 51’ north and the longitudinal extent is 79° 41’ minute east to 81° 53’ minute east. It is the 17th smallest country in Asia and 123rs smallest country in the world. Though the areal extent of Sri Lanka is not big, the rich heritage it carries and the development of tourism in the country make it stand among the top island countries of the world.

2.2 Data and Methodology

The work is done by accessing quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data is obtained from Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) tourism reports from 2018 to 2022, World Data (2020), UNWTO (2017), Central Bank of Sri Lanka and Global Currency Forum. The qualitative data is gathered from an extensive literature review and articles published recently in leading newspapers, journals, and other publications; quantitative data is gathered from a large literature review. For analysis, mainly cartographic techniques are followed in MS Excel. The monthly data (from January 2020 to May 2022) of international tourists, the Sri Lankan currency (SLR) against the US dollar, the inflation rate, and crude oil prices have been taken and represented through the graph to understand the change with time as well. Later, the correlation test was used to determine the causal relationship between tourist arrivals, foreign receipts, and their share of GNP.

3. Results

3.1 Tourism in Economic Crisis, 2022

The threat of economic crisis to the tourism industry can be divided under two categories, A. external threats which include recession, currency fluctuation, and taxation. B. Internal threats that include rising costs, falling revenues and unprofitability. The whole nation is going into turmoil; nobody knows what the value of their currency on the next day will be, or when the fuel will be next available in the country. As a result of that, even though the tourism industry as a whole is under a downtrend, foreign tourist arrival has become less and even the domestic tourism is also on a downtrend as people prefer to keep money in hand instead of spending it on leisure purposes. Revenue to the industry is falling; hotel operators are ready to rent rooms at a cheaper price.

The number of visitors had been increasing since the hotels and other tourism-related businesses were restored, albeit more slowly (Figure 2a and 2b). However, as the economic crisis occurred, the number of visitors also began to decline, and the situation is now such that 40% of international tourists have cancelled their pre-bookings for the month of August 2022. (PTI, July 2022). 1, 06,500 international visitors arrived in March 2022, but the number fell to 32,856 in June (SLTDA). This demonstrates even more how little interest there is in travelling to nations experiencing political unrest and economic hardship. Due to the current gasoline scarcity, which has negatively impacted visitor arrivals, travel companies are substantially raising prices.

Figure 2a. Foreign Tourist Arrival in Sri Lanka 1962-2022

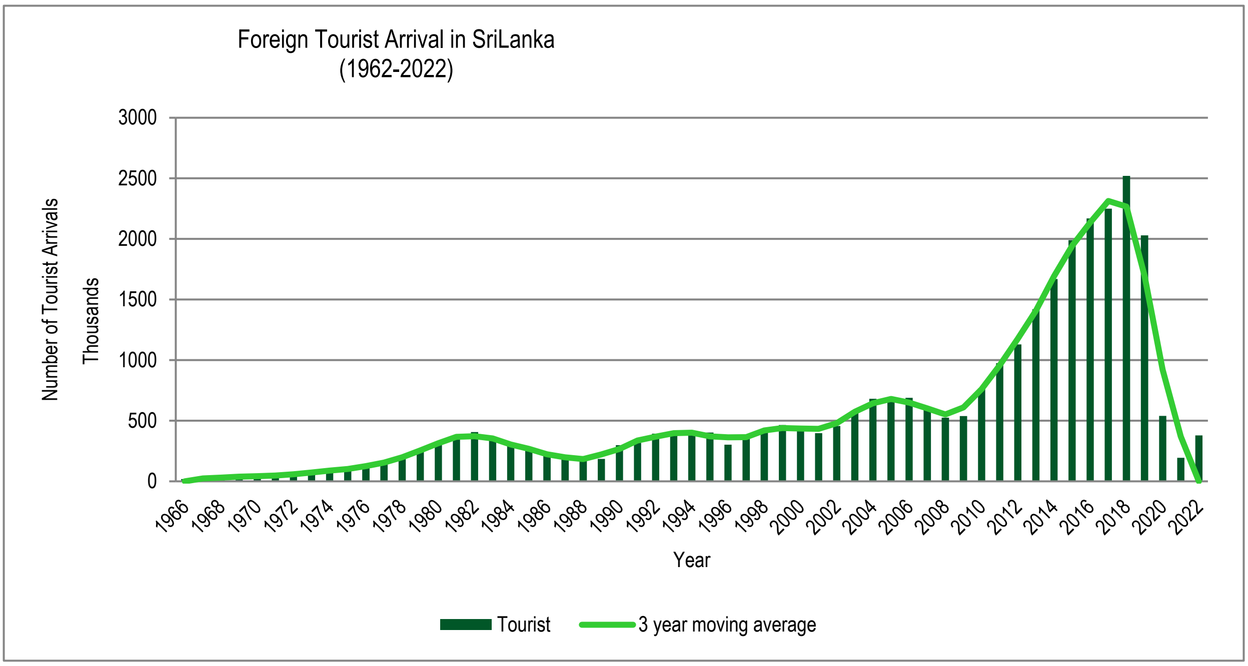
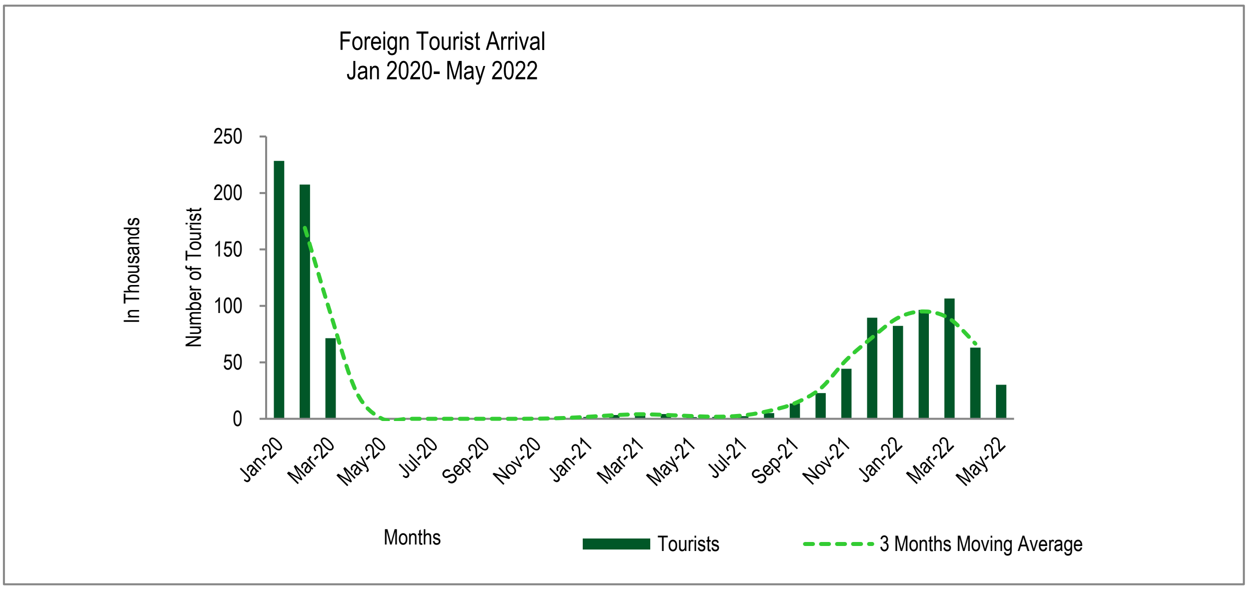


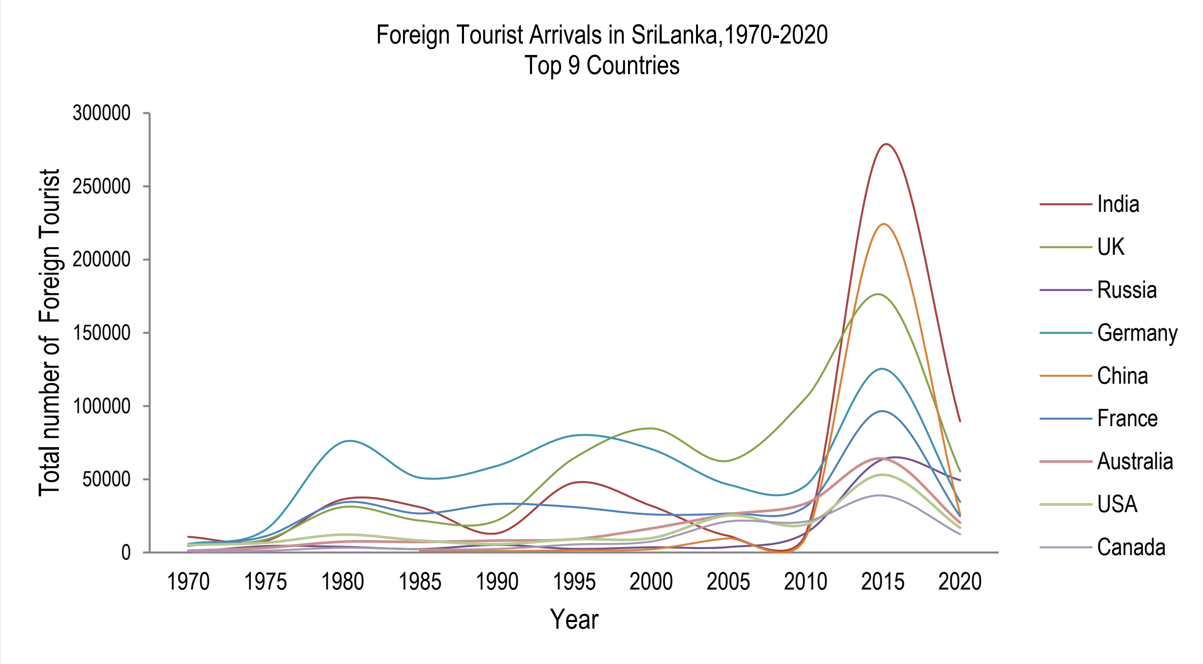
Figure 2b. Foreign Tourist Arrival in Sri Lanka (January2020- May 2022)



Since the Legislative Council of Sri Lanka adopted the First Ten Year Plan for Tourism in 1966, there has been a sharp growth in the number of international visitors, which has benefited the nation in several ways, including an increase in foreign reserves, the creation of job possibilities, and the development of hotels and resorts thanks to the passage of the Ceylon Hotel Corporation Act No. of 1966. Early on at TYTMP1, the majority of foreign visitors were from European nations, but subsequently, Indian and Chinese tourists started to flock there as well. There have been times when internal problems in Sri Lanka caused a temporary decline in visitor arrivals, however the country's tourism sector was greatly impacted by the post-TYTMP2 initiative, which intended to revive the industry. The number of international visitors entering the nation grew quickly in the years that followed.

Tourism is affected in Sri Lanka because of numerous external problems. The 2001 terrorist attack on the US Twin Towers caused a sharp fall in foreign tourist arrivals. The entry of tourists from the USA and Europe caused a quick fall, particularly with regard to the issue of security. In 2008, when there was a global economic crisis, a second significant effect was noted when very few tourists visited the country. However, following the economic crises' recovery and the Sri Lankan government's agreement to end hostilities with the LTTE, a rebel group in Sri Lanka created an environment that encouraged tourists to travel to the country. Post 2008 Tourism in Sri Lanka gained a rapid strength (Figure3).

Figure 3. Trend of foreign tourist arrival from top 9 destinations of world (1970-2020)



The favourable circumstances did not persist for long, however, as the number of tourists arriving in 2020 dramatically decreased initially due to the introduction of COVID-19, and although the tourism industry was reopened following COVID-19 and the execution of the vaccination schedule, it did not fully recover. Figure 2a demonstrates that even while tourism was growing slowly but steadily, it once again decreased as a result of the economic crisis that began in October and November 2021. Fuel shortages across the nation, which had an impact on the transportation sector - one of the key drivers of the tourist industry - are to blame for the current predicament. In addition to regular power outages, inflationary pressure has a detrimental effect on international visitors by forcing tour companies to raise tour prices.

3.2 Relation between Foreign Tourist Arrivals, Earnings, and GNP Contribution

The total number of tourist arrival in Sri Lanka was 384000 in the year 1995 contributing 351 million USD to the country's GNP, it was raised to 2.03 million tourists in the year 2019. But 2020 saw a rapid decline with only 540000 tourists, the majority of them came in January and February contributing 1.08 billion dollars to the country's GNP, with an average income of 1993 USD from every tourist (figure 4). In the year 2020, there was a complete shutdown of tourism activities from April till November, and when it resumed only 393 tourists came from across the world, it never recovered completely until November 2021, but the economic crisis has again resulted in a rapid decline of foreign tourist arrivals in the country and if this continues this industry will take several years to reach to pre COVID levels.

Figure 4. Relation between Number of Tourist Arrivals and Foreign Receipts

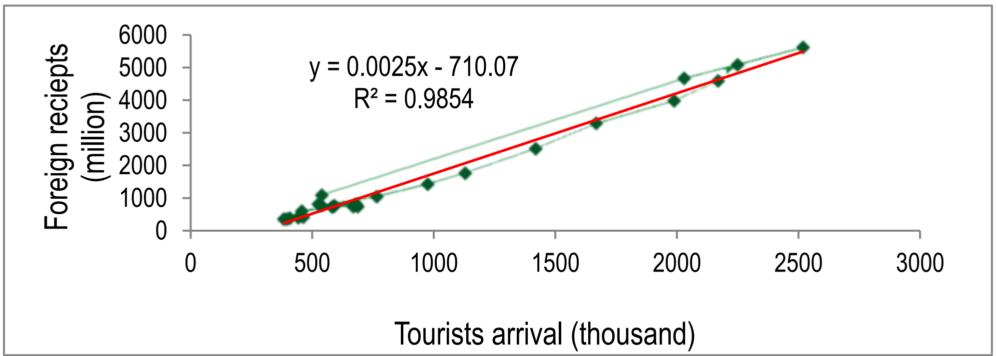
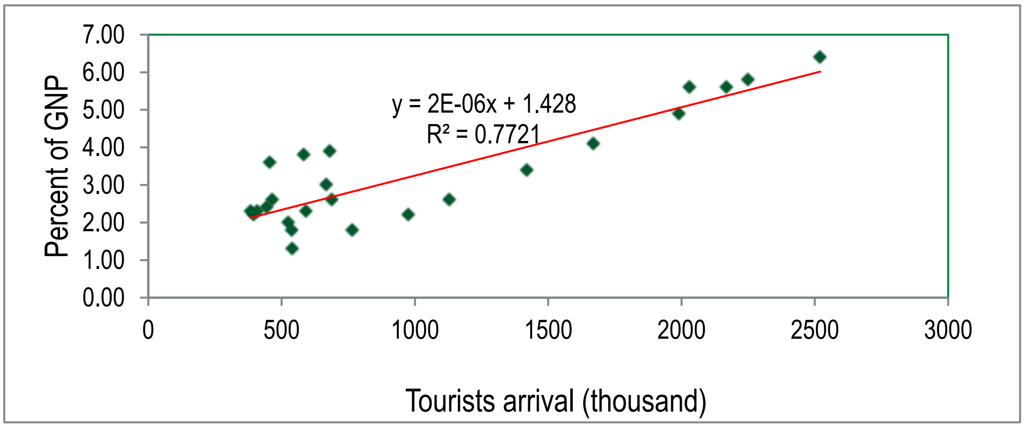


Figure 5. Relation between Number of Tourist Arrivals and GNP contribution

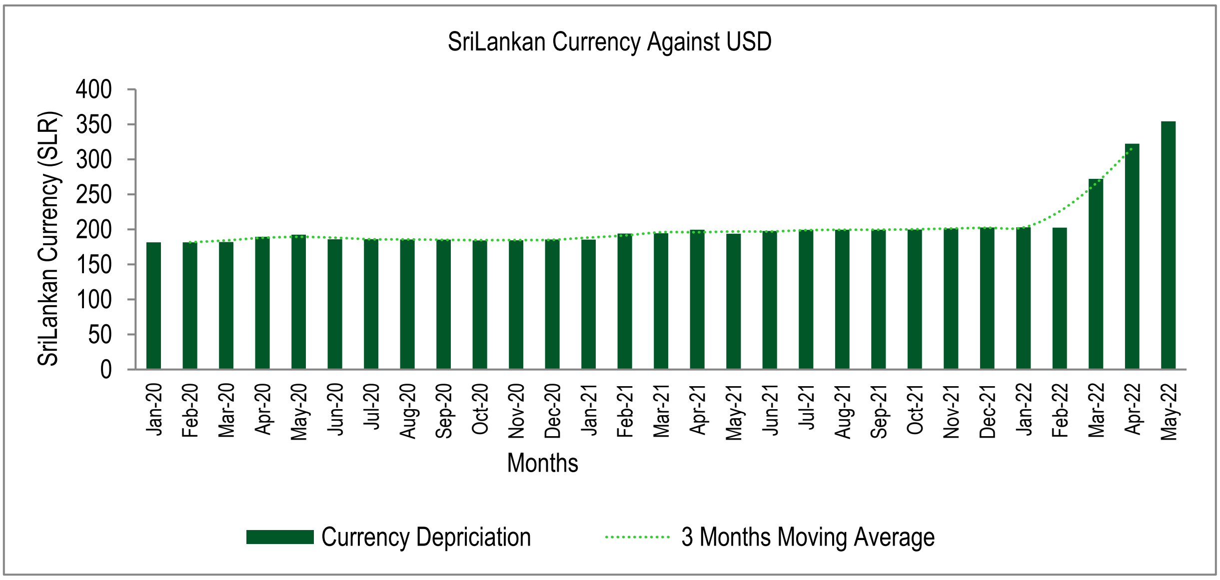


There is a direct relation between number of tourist and the contribution of tourist towards GNP (Figure. 5). The relationship between foreign revenues and tourist arrivals in Sri Lanka is highly positive (R2 = 0.984), and the relationship between those two variables and their contribution to the nation's gross national product is similarly favourable (R2 = 0.7721). This reflects the expanding GNP and foreign revenue contributions made by tourism to the nation. When compared to pre-pandemic levels in 2019, which were 2030000, the number of foreign tourist arrivals has increased significantly. 25 years ago, or in 1997, there were only 384000 foreign visitors arriving, a figure that has increased by a factor of more than two. Only 2.30 % of the total GNP was contributed by the tourist industry in 1997; this contribution peaked in 2018 at 6.40 %, and it slightly decreased in 2019 to 5.60 %.

3.3 Sri Lankan Currency against USD

Currency depreciation lowers demand for the travel and tourism sector (Hinderson, 2006) A significant issue is the decline in the value of the Sri Lankan rupee Prior to the Co-Vid, the value of the rupee was 180 before it was further devalued to 200 during and after the Co-Vid. In May 2022, it increased even further, reaching 358 Sri Lankan rupees to a USD (Central Bank of Sri Lanka) (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Value of Sri Lankan Currency (SLR) against USD



The whole economic climate of the nation has undergone a significant transformation as a result of the political unrest and the economic crisis. It has also had an impact on the tourism industry, which was struggling to rebound in the wake of CO-VID 19. The number of international visitor arrivals saw a 50% reduction in April 2022 compared to March 2022. The number of international tourists arriving in April 2022 is barely one-fourth as much as it was in April 2019. (2019–2021, SLTDA report).

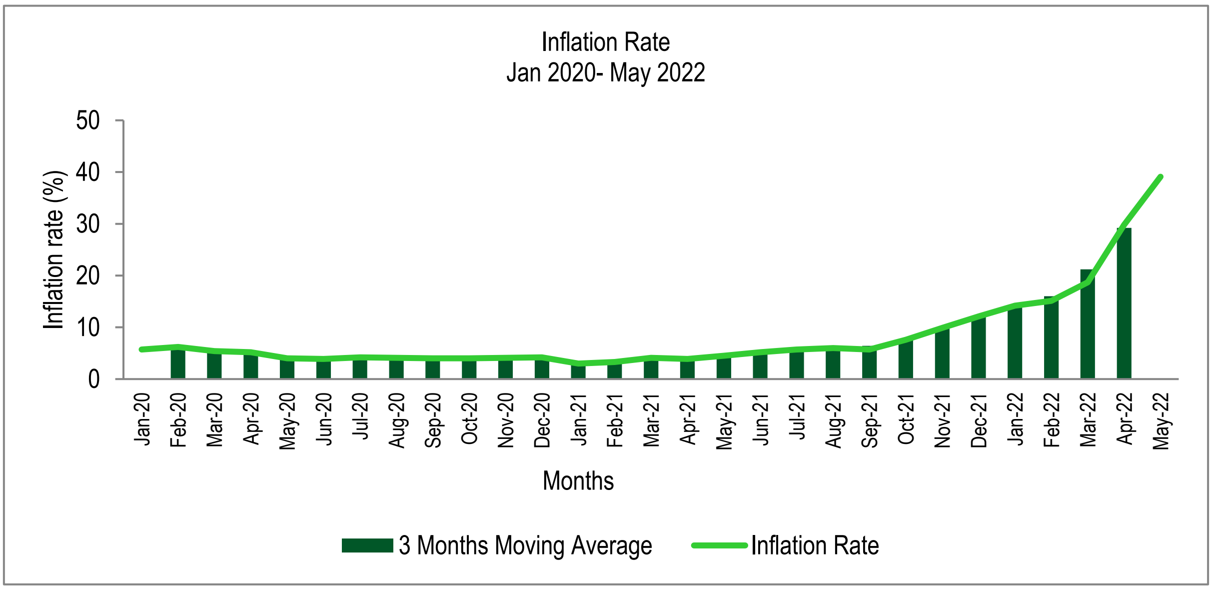
4. Discussions

4.1 Inflationary Pressure

Every economic downturn is accompanied by a huge issue with inflation, which makes domestic tourists reluctant to spend a lot of money on travel and other leisure activities because they are apprehensive about the future. Inflation in the Maldives rose to 17 percent in the years 2008 to 2009, a time when there was a severe financial crisis around the world. (WTO and ILO,2013).

The country's currency has been devalued to half of its value since February 2022, which would prevent citizens from spending money on leisure activities or accruing debt. As a result, inflationary pressure, a key cause for worry at the moment in Sri Lanka, will have a significant impact on the tourist sector (Barnet, 1975). This will have a profound effect on domestic tourism in the local area. If this trend continues, it will be very difficult for the tourist sector to recover. People have strong psychological motivations to avoid spending money on things they do not need, and they tend to save more money than they spend on leisure activities. (1975, Barnet). The nation is presently going through a severe economic crisis, which has led to a lack of essentials including food, fuel, cooking gas, medication, and other supplies (Jayawardena *et al.* 2023). The economic crisis has significantly changed peoples' everyday routines, including their eating, cooking, and travelling habits as well as other behaviours. (Sooriyaarachchi, P., and Jayawardena, R., 2023). Although there is ongoing discussion regarding Sri Lanka's economic issue, it is generally acknowledged that the nation's large levels of foreign debt are a significant contributing cause (Publicfinance, 2023, 2022). As of 2021, Sri Lanka's total debt totaled a whopping 119% of its GDP (IMF, 2022), with its foreign debt accounting for 64.2% of the country's GDP. Sri Lanka has decided to concentrate its economic strategy on industries that export goods in order to bring in foreign cash as a result of its high level of debt. (Saliya, C. A. 2023)

Figure 7. Inflation Rate in Sri Lanka (January 2020- May 2022)

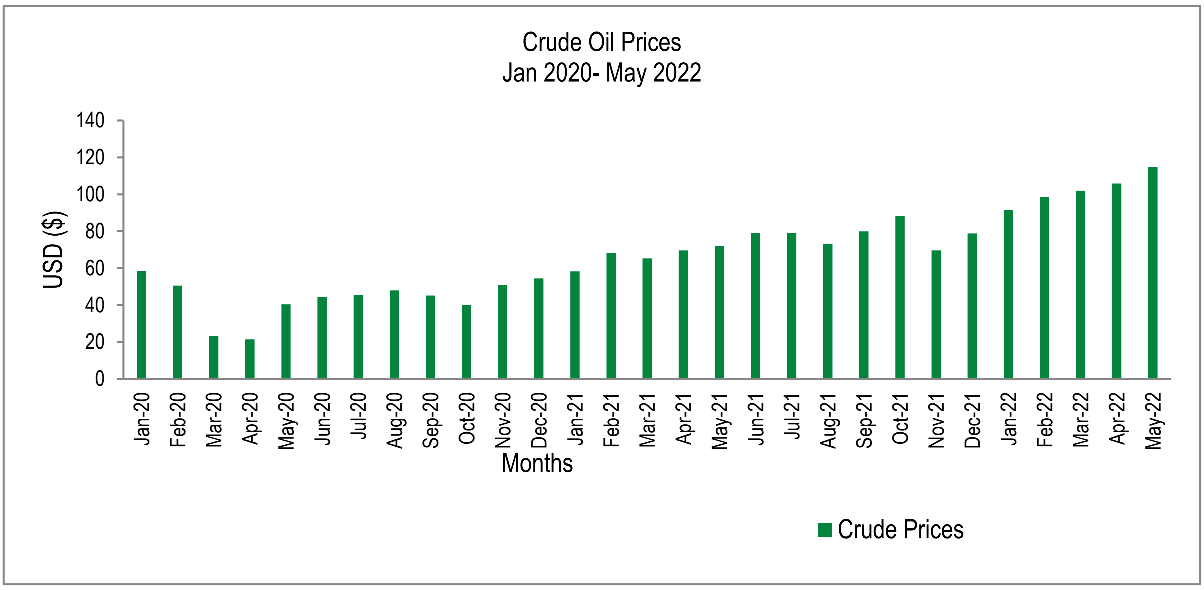


Even when the whole world, including Sri Lanka, was under the control of COVID-19 from March 2021 to March 2022, inflation in Sri Lanka was not even an issue. The first indication of inflation appeared in the second quarter of 2021, rising from 4.1 percent to 5.2 percent. The third quarter saw an increase to 5.85 percent, while the fourth quarter saw an increase to 9.9 percent. The situation deteriorated further in 2022; the inflation rate, which was 14.2 percent at the start of the year, rose to 39.1 percent in May 2022 (Figure7).

4.2 Effect Due to Rise in Crude Oil Prices

The worldwide increase in crude oil prices, which directly affects the aviation business and transportation industry, is a big worry as well as the country's inflation, which is one of the issues the tourist industry is dealing with. In January 2022, the price of crude oil on the world market was 60 USD per barrel. By May 2022, it had increased to over twice that amount, or 113 dollars per barrel (Figure 8). This had an impact on the tourist industries of many countries, including Sri Lanka. The price of crude oil has increased dramatically, which has led to a two-fold increase in airline costs as well as price increases for cars used in the travel industry, which affects both local and international tourists.

Figure 8. Crude Oil Prices in International Market (January 2020 – May 2022)



On January 1, 2022, the cost of gasoline in Sri Lanka was 204 SLR and the cost of diesel was 139 SLR; both prices have since climbed by more than 100%. On May 23, 2022, the price of gasoline in Sri Lanka increased to 450 SLR, while the price of diesel increased to 445 SLR. This has an impact on the transportation industry throughout the whole nation, especially the tourism sector, which depends heavily on transportation to transfer people from different regions of the nation. As a result of the depreciating local currency and the sharp rise in oil prices, which is having a negative impact on tourist arrivals, tour operators are being compelled to raise costs. As more and more individuals become aware of the situation, they are cancelling their previously made reservations.

4.3 Problem of Unemployment

More people are employed directly and indirectly by the tourism industry than in any other sector, which contributes to economic growth (Glossing et. al. 2020, Zaei 2013). More than 400 000 people work in Sri Lanka's tourism industry (SLTDA 2018), with 40% of them directly connected to the sector through hotel operations, tour operators, etc., and 60% indirectly through persons running souvenir shops and transportation services in popular tourist areas. It's not just about Sri Lanka, the Maldives' declining tourist industry also compelled tour operators to implement cost-cutting measures, which led to job cuts and unpaid leaves for a short period of time, severely impacting the labour market. The same issue also affected Costa Rican tour companies, who responded by lowering fixed expenses, shortening the workweek, and requiring unpaid absences of at least two to three months. 2013 (WTO and ILO). The issue of a quick recovery in Sri Lankan tourism is quite difficult; Sri Lanka is one of those countries where the tourist sector was completely shut down for approximately 8-9 months, and many individuals were laid off during the Co-vid breakout, many of whom were from different countries and were forced to return to their own country, creating a gap in the skilled labour demand that was needed in the tourism business.

The laydown of people has led many people to find alternative jobs in different sectors, hotels and gastronomy recorded the worst decline in the whole industry in Sri Lanka (hall et. al 2020), and as a result of that people are a majority of people are not willing to get back to the tourism sector, due to uncertainty of co-vid cases if it surges again or the economic crisis that has again declined the number of tourist arrivals in the country, if the people are discouraged to get jobs in the tourism sector of the country then many people who are the entrepreneurs in this sector has to depend on the foreign people. The result of this will be quite negative, firstly, the money or the salary that will be paid to the foreigners will not be resent in their own country and secondly, it will fail to reduce unemployment in the country (Glossing, 2020).

4.4 Change in Tourist Motives for Traveling

During the outbreak of co-vid most countries-imposed travel bans, and the tourism sector has hit badly, during the post-co-vid period when the travel ban was uplifted, there was a spurt in domestic tourism, and it dominated the whole tourism industry (Haywood, 2020), but in many places, it was only for visiting close people and relatives promoting leisure tourism. In Sri Lanka, though tourism was increasing even at a slower rate the instability in the political environment and local politics has taken the whole sector under its darkest side. In the current situation, and the way the country has been hit by inflation and other issues, people are preferring to keep money in hand rather than spending, this has led to significant decrease in domestic tourism. The political crisis, emergency situation in some places, and shut down of hotels in some areas has affected the mind of local people negatively, all these factors have led to decrease in domestic tourism.

4.5 Economic Crisis and Hotel Industry

There are many sectors in Sri Lanka that require capital infusion from different corporates and foreign investors, even though there are many people who are ready to infuse capital in hotel industries and others, but the lack of willingness towards uncertainty and economic crisis has to lead to a shortfall in investment. (Global Financial Crisis Bulletin). There are many businesses in Sri Lanka, particularly the hotel industry, and food services, that have shown a downtrend in the number of visitor arrivals, etc. The decline doesn't only consider the fewer arrivals of tourists, but less spending from a tourist is also a major reason for the decline (Pizam, 2009) which is also evident from the SLTDA official report. Power cuts and blackouts in different parts of the nation have hit the hotel industry significantly, though an alternative has been kept in the form of generators. It requires fuel, which also has a shortfall in the nation. A hotel manager in an interview with ANI as published in The Print, April 2022 said the major reason for the decline in the hotel industry is power cuts, hike in fuel prices, and unavailability of essential items, though they have set up their power banks without electricity, it will be difficult to survive, it is one of the major things that the tourist looks for. The problem of the hotel industry is not new, it is ever growing problem since the advent of co-vid in the country. The hotel occupancy rate prior to Co-vid used to be 70% which had fallen to 50% in January, 2020 and further fallen to 2.1% in March 2020, even though the domestic tourist were allowed to travel and foreign tourist was commenced from December 2020. The hotel occupancy rate barely reached 8.6% to December 2020. Since then, it failed to match its pre co-vid rate. (SLTDA, Annual Statistical Report, 2020).

Conclusion

The facts and results make it clear that there is a connection between the country's GNP and the rise of tourism as a result of visitor arrivals. A large portion of the island nation's population depends on tourism, but because of the country's economic difficulties, visitor numbers have dropped quickly. Although tourism was completely shut down from March 2020 to November 2020 as part of COVID-19, the reopening of tourism was drawing in a lot of visitors from around the world. The situation was getting better until a political upheaval-induced economic catastrophe hit the country. They were affected by the fear of inflation, the unpredictability of domestic tourism, and the depreciating value of currency because they preferred to keep their money in hand rather than use it for leisure activities. In contrast, overseas tourists were negatively impacted by the shortage of gasoline, the increase in crude oil prices, and the frequent cuts in power supply across the nation. As a result, many foreign tourists cancelled their pre-planned trips to this country. Many people are in danger as a result of the crisis' impact on unemployment, rising food and gasoline prices, and other factors. The analysis, nevertheless, was based on information from Sri Lanka's official tourism data and real-time reporting from various sources; as a result, the ground situation has to be explored and there is still room for more research based on local-level ground data.

Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Ayan Bhakat: Conceptualization; Methodology; Formal Analysis; Writing – original draft; Data curation; Validation; Writing – review and editing; Visualization.
Nirmalya Das: Conceptualization; Methodology; Formal Analysis; Writing – original draft; Supervision; Validation; Writing – review and editing.
Santu Guchhait: Conceptualization; Methodology; Formal Analysis; Writing – original draft; Writing – review and editing; Visualization.

Declaration of competing interest

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Analysis of Factors Influencing Re-Visit Intentions and Recommending Post-Pandemic Marine Tourism Destinations in Lampung Province

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the factors that influence tourists' decisions to revisit ecotourism destinations in Lampung province. The factors under investigation include the attractiveness of tourism, quality of service, information sources, and visitor satisfaction. The research employs a quantitative approach, utilizing a questionnaire that was distributed to 153 tourists who had previously visited a marine ecotourism destination. The Structural Equation Model (SEM) was then applied using Smart-PLS 4.0.8.6 to analyze the data. The results show that quality of service, hospitality, and social capital have a significant direct impact on visitor satisfaction, as well as on tourists' intentions to return and recommendations for the destination. There is also a significant indirect effect of these variables on the recommendation of tourism through visitor satisfaction and intention to return.

Keywords: marine tourism; attractiveness; hospitality; visitor satisfaction; quality of service; social capital.

JEL Classification: Z30; Z32; Z38.

Introduction

In the last decade, we have witnessed dramatic changes in traveller behaviour that have been significantly impacted by the global pandemic (Bashir, Ma, and Shahzad 2020; Fraga and Robledo 2022; Menhat *et al.* 2021). Indonesia, as an archipelagic country rich in its natural beauty, is no exception to this huge impact, which has created unprecedented challenges for the tourism industry in its various regions (Cahyanto, Liu-Lastres, and Gallagher 2023: Dewi *et al.* 2023). Lampung Province, known for its tremendous potential as a maritime tourism destination, has also felt the impact of this change. In this context, there is an urgent need to uncover new dynamics in tourist behavior, especially in the post-pandemic era (Bakri *et al.* 2023).

It's important to remember that post-pandemic conditions will continue to influence traveller behaviour in the future. Travelers are becoming more selective in choosing their destinations, seeking a more controlled travel experience, and expecting higher standards of hygiene (Agag *et al.* 2022). Therefore, it is important for the tourism industry to adapt to such changes and look for ways to meet the expectations and needs of tourists in the post-pandemic era.

The challenges and potential of tourism in Lampung Province have raised the need to better understand the behavior of future tourists (Sulistiowati *et al.* 2020). This article aims to explore changes in post-pandemic tourist behavior, particularly in Lampung Province, and recommend measures relevant to post-pandemic conditions. As such, this article not only has academic relevance, but also has important practical implications for tourism industry policymakers and practitioners, who will need to adapt to changes in the way travellers interact with tourist destinations in the future.

1. Research Background

The Department of Tourism and Creative Economy of Lampung Province has revealed fluctuations in the number of tourists in recent years, which is thought to affect the distribution and economy of the region (Primananda *et al.*, 2022). It is noted that before the pandemic in 2020, the movement of tourists in Lampung Province in a year could reach twelve million people. However, throughout 2020, the movement of tourists in Lampung Province only reached two million people. This can be seen in the performance assessment report of the local government (IKU) of Lampung Province. From the main performance indicators for 2022, it shows that the performance achievements of the Tourism and Creative Economy Office of Lampung Province in 2022 did not reach the target or achievement of less than 100%. One of them is the rating of increasing tourist visits, which is rated incredibly low. When compared to the last two years, there has been an increase, but it has not met the planned target. The value obtained in 2020 was 7.11% of the planned target of 27%. Meanwhile, the value obtained in 2021 was 8.90% of the planned 30% target.

The low number of direct tourist visits will have an impact on the low regional income (GRDP) in Lampung Province (Tuti, 2022). In addition, it will also affect the economic stability of local communities such as tourism developers and MSMEs (Prihantika *et al.* 2021).Other negative consequences will make the people around the destination lose other sources of livelihood (Rini and Apriyanti, 2022). So strategic efforts are needed in maintaining the competitiveness of tourism in Lampung province. This aims to avoid the adverse impacts received (Faturrahman *et al.*, 2021).

The evaluation by the government states that each region should prepare a strategy to encourage the return of tourists after the pandemic. The strategy is considered effective to increase the number of tourists post-pandemic. The strategies in question include infrastructure revitalization, service improvement, and sustainable tourism development. By paying attention to previous tourist visits, the strategy is considered to be able to influence the desire of tourists to return. In addition, the strategy that needs to be the focus of development is to increase the experience of satisfaction with tourist destinations (Nurmala and Sullaida, 2022). For example, efforts to minimize the risks faced by visitors, such as physical/health risks, financial risks, social risks, and natural disaster risks. This is considered to have a high correlation with the possibility of tourists revisiting after the pandemic (Chairunnisa and Siregar, 2019). By paying attention to these factors, it will open up opportunities for the tourism sector in Lampung Province to be excited again (Anom *et al.*, 2022).

According to the provincial government Lampung has many opportunities to quickly recover from the effects of the pandemic on the tourism sector. With the improvement of accessibility/infrastructure such as toll roads and the Bakauheni executive pier, the potential market for domestic/domestic and foreign tourists will be open. Another opportunity that can be utilized is the development of existing leading tourist destinations. The charm of tourism in Lampung Province is also quite attractive to local and foreign people. One of the most visited tourist destinations is marine tourism destinations. The charm of marine tourism is considered attractive to the people of Indonesia and the international world. In Lampung Province, the potential of marine tourism can contribute to the seventh largest number of tourist visits, especially in several leading marine tourism destinations. Based on the strategic plan report of the Tourism and Creative Economy Office of Lampung Province for 2019-2024, the current leading marine tourism destinations include Pahawang Island, Kiluan Bay Water Tourism Park, and Tanjung Setia Beach. It is considered from the level of tourist attraction and the number of tourists visiting. Most tourists choose to visit these three destinations because of their stunning natural beauty and available tourist activities.

Pahawang Island destination offers beautiful sea views with coral reefs and seagrass beds as well as a fresh beach atmosphere with sunrise and sunset as well as flora and fauna typical of mangrove forests (Husna and Novita, 2020). Kiluan Bay destination offers white sand beach tours along bays and islands as well as offshore tours with dolphin tracks that present dolphin watching, fishing, snorkeling, diving, photography, and ecotourism education as well as cultural tourism (Aida, 2019). Meanwhile, Tanjung Setia Beach Destination offers unspoiled natural beauty with white sand and large waves that make this beach famous as a surf tourism area. In addition, this beach also has a large underwater wealth with good coral reefs and an abundant variety of fish species. This destination can be developed into an attractive tourist area for diving and fishing activities.

All leading marine tourism objects of Lampung Province provide opportunities to increase the volume of tourist visits to the region (Yulianto *et al.*, 2018). Harnessing this potential can become an attractive tourism magnet that contributes greatly to the growth of Lampung Province, which is currently struggling with various challenges. Therefore, it becomes important to determine the factors that are considered influential in tickling the interest of tourists to visit these tourist attractions (Hariyanto and; Rukmandiana, 2022). Along with the growth of tourist flows, there is an optimistic outlook for the continued development and sustainability of this tourist destination (Dewanto, 2019).The increase in tourist visits is clear evidence of progress in the tourism sector which aims to preserve and increase the number of tourists who often visit this destination (Indriani *et al.*, 2019).

Previously, several studies have taken measurements showing that after the pandemic, safety has become a very influential variable in the selection of tourist destinations felt by tourists, tourism professionals, and marketing professionals (Pessoa, Oliveira, and Souza 2022). Then, there has been a study that measures the factors that influence visitors' intentions to return to visit and recommend historical tourist destinations in Indonesia. The results show that within areas beyond cultural heritage, especially for young adult visitors in the internet age, visual variables, ambience and breadth of place are considered significant major attractions. In addition, the real attractiveness factor also plays an important role in attracting visitors (Pratiwi *et al.* 2022).

Long before the COVID-19 pandemic, the exploration of tourist visitor satisfaction factors had been identified and known to be the main factor that influenced someone to revisit a tourist attraction (Lim, Kim, and Lee 2016; Bui and Le 2016). According to this theory, tourist visitor satisfaction consists of two main components, namely functional satisfaction, and affective satisfaction. Functional satisfaction is the level of satisfaction felt by a person with the facilities and services he receives when visiting a tourist attraction. Affective satisfaction is the level of satisfaction a person feels with the atmosphere and atmosphere encountered when visiting a tourist attraction (Han and Hyun 2017). Furthermore, visitor satisfaction of identified tourists can influence a person to revisit a tourist spot through loyalty mechanisms. Loyalty is the degree of commitment of a person to a tourist attraction, which can be indicated by an interest in revisiting. The higher the satisfaction of tourist visitors felt by a person, the higher the loyalty shown by that person, which means the higher the interest to visit again.

From the existing research information, it can be seen that there is a gap in available knowledge related to the exploration of factors that are considered to influence tourist interest in visiting tourist attractions after the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, the available data on exploration in the field of marine tourism is still limited, resulting in minimal understanding of this aspect of tourism. Therefore, through this research, new models were developed to cover this knowledge. In this study, several model factors have been considered to explore the satisfaction of marine tourism visitors, namely:

1. Attractions of tourist destinations

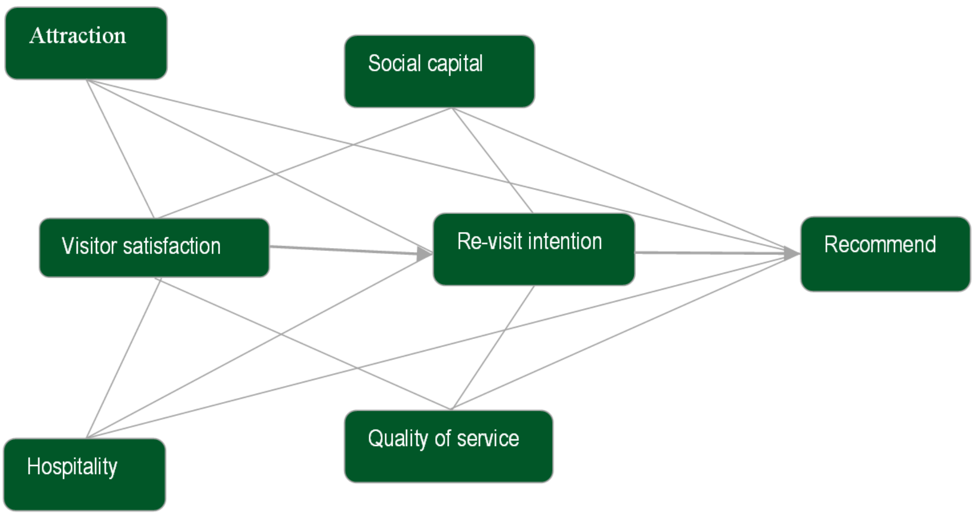
   Attractiveness has been identified as a factor that influences a person's propensity to visit a tourist destination and can also have an impact on visitors' satisfaction levels when they visit the place (Padrón-Ávila and Hernández-Martín 2019; McKercher and Koh 2017). The greater the attractiveness of a tourist destination, the higher the level of satisfaction felt by visitors. On the other hand, if the attractiveness of a tourist spot is low, visitor satisfaction tends to be lower as well (Putri, Susilowati, and Semedi 2021). This situation can occur because the attractiveness of an attraction has the potential to influence individual expectations of the experience at the place (Weng, Li, and Li 2023).

2. Quality of service at tourist attractions
   Service quality has a significant role in influencing the level of tourist visitor satisfaction. The aspect of service quality is divided into two main components, namely tangible quality and intangible quality (Mai, Nguyen, and Nguyen 2019). Tangible quality includes elements that can be seen directly by visitors, such as facilities, cleanliness, and safety factors. While intangible quality includes aspects that are not physically visible, such as the behavior and attitude of officers working at tourist sites. The level of satisfaction of tourist visitors tends to increase along with the improvement in the quality of service received by the individual. Conversely, if the quality of service received is low, then the level of satisfaction of tourist visitors also tends to decrease (Cheng *et al.* 2021).
3. Hospitality
   Hospitality is known to affect the satisfaction of tourist visitors and the intention to revisit someone to a tourist attraction because hospitality is a factor that can affect one's expectations of a tourist attraction (Frolova and Rogach 2023; Golian 2016). The better the hospitality one receives when visiting a tourist attraction, the higher the interest in revisiting someone to that place.
4. Social Capital
   According to several studies, there is a positive relationship between social capital and tourist visitor satisfaction (Revida, Yanti Siahaan, and Purba 2018;Diedrich *et al.* 2019). Someone who has high social capital tends to be more satisfied when visiting a tourist attraction, compared to someone who has low social capital. This can happen because someone who has high social capital tends to have more social networks that can provide support and advice regarding the choice of tourist attractions to visit. Conversely, someone who has low social capital tends to have fewer social networks so that they can provide support and advice regarding the choice of tourist attractions to visit.

All of these factors, namely attractiveness, service quality, hospitality, and social capital are considered to have a positive relationship with interest in visiting again, where the better the attraction, quality of service, hospitality, and social capital owned by a tourist attraction, the higher the interest in revisiting someone. In addition, indications of these various factors also have a positive influence on the likelihood of someone recommending tourist attractions (Park *et al.* 2019; Del Río *et al.* 2020). The higher the interest in revisiting someone, the more likely someone will recommend the attraction to others. This is because someone who has a high interest in visiting again usually feels satisfied with the experience gained when visiting a tourist attraction, so they will share the experience with others and suggest that others also visit the attraction. Conversely, if someone does not have a high interest in revisiting, then they most likely will not recommend that interest to others. This is because someone who does not have a high interest in visiting again may feel dissatisfied with the experience gained when visiting a tourist attraction, so they will not share the experience with others or may even give negative recommendations about the attraction (Obradović *et al.* 2023).

Based on the description of the problem, a research model was created that aims to explore the factors that influence the intention to revisit marine tourism destinations in Lampung Province. This model shows that attractiveness, hospitality, service quality, and social capital affect visitor satisfaction, while visitor satisfaction affects return visit intention and return visit intention affects the desire to recommend the tourist attraction.

Figure 1. Analysis Model



Based on Figure 1. indicates that attractiveness, hospitality, quality of service, and social capital affect visitor satisfaction (given an arrow in the direction of visitor satisfaction), while visitor satisfaction affects the intention to revisit (given an arrow in the direction of the intention to revisit) and the intention to revisit affects the desire to recommend the tourist attraction (given an arrow in the direction of the desire to recommend).

2. Research Methodology

This research was conducted in November – December 2022 using a quantitative approach. The data used is primary data sourced from 153 respondents obtained based on surveys / questionnaires. The sample of respondents was tourists who had visited the leading marine tourism of Lampung province, namely Pahawang Island, Kiluan Bay and Tanjung Setia Beach. The sampling method uses excidental sampling with the consideration of reaching out to the respondents who are the easiest to provide information. This study analyzed various predetermined variables, which were then derived in several indicators, namely:

Table 1. Research Variables

Variable	Indicator
Attraction	Natural beauty, uniqueness of tourist attractions, existing facilities
Hospitality	Friendly, fast, and courteous service from the clerk
Quality of service	Ease of access, cleanliness, safety, and comfort
Social capital	Recommendations from others, the reputation of tourist attractions
Visitor satisfaction	Pleasure, comfort, and perceived satisfaction
Re-visit intention	The desire to visit tourist attractions again
Recommend	The desire to recommend tourist attractions to others

The results of understanding these variables were made a research instrument in the form of aclosed question type questionnaire consisting of 5 question items for tourist attraction variables, 4 question items for hospitality variables, 4 question items for visitor satisfaction variables, 5 question items for service quality variables, 3 question items for social capital variables, 4 question items for the traveller revisit interest variable and 4 question items for the travel recommend variable. The collected data is then analyzed based on structural equation modeling analysis - Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS). The analysis was performed using the help of the Smart-PLS 4.0.8.6 application.

The PLS-SEM analysis method was chosen with careful consideration, considering that this research involved the development of new models and limited previous knowledge. In this context, PLS-SEM is an appropriate analytical tool because it allows us to combine highly variable data and identify complex relationships between factors that influence travellers' revisit intentions, taking into account the diverse characteristics of respondents. This method allows us to run a more comprehensive and in-depth analysis, which will provide richer insights in the context of post-pandemic changes in tourist behavior in Lampung Province.

3. Research Results

3.1 Data Summary

A summary of the data we have collected, it can be seen that respondents are dominated by women, who account for about 74% of the total respondents. Meanwhile, men accounted for about 26%. As many as 48% of respondents are private employees, while 36% of them are professionals, and 18% are government employees. The majority of respondents, which is about 64%, are undergraduate graduates. As many as 18% of respondents have a master's level of education, and the remaining 18% are high school students or equivalent education levels. Based on the age distribution of respondents around 61%, they are in the age group of 25-35 years, which is often an age group that is active in travel. As many as 25% of respondents were in the age group of 17-25 years, while 24% were in the age group of 36-45 years. Monthly expenses mostly range from 4 to 6 million rupiah (50%).

The majority of respondents came from outside the district/region, which reached around 62%. As many as 20% of respondents were residents within the same district/region, while 18% came from outside the province. There were no foreign respondents in this sample. These results reflect that most respondents are local or regional tourists who are interested in visiting tourism destinations within the same region or adjacent province.

This data will help in understanding travellers' revisit preferences and intentions based on their geographical origin.

3.2 Convergen Validity

The convergent validity value refers to the value of the loading factor on the latent variable along with the corresponding indicator. Assessing the convergent validity of individual checks on item reliability can be determined by examining standard loading factor values. When the value of the loading factor for the indicator related to the construct is higher than 0.70, it is considered optimal.

Table 2. Convergent Validation Values

Variable	Outer Loadings
A1 <- Attraction	0.851
A2 <- Attraction	0.874
A3 <- Attraction	0.909
A4 <- Attraction	0.901
A5 <- Attraction	0.731
B1 <- Hospitality	0.771
B2 <- Hospitality	0.889
B3 <- Hospitality	0.903
B4 <- Hospitality	0.879
D1 <- Quality of Service	0.827
D2 <- Quality of Service	0.803
D3 <- Quality of Service	0.889
D4 <- Quality of Service	0.872
D5 <- Quality of Service	0.814
E1 <- Visitor Satisfaction	0.823
E2 <- Visitor Satisfaction	0.865
E3 <- Visitor Satisfaction	0.832
E4 <- Visitor Satisfaction	0.836
F1 <- Social Capital	0.860
F2 <- Social Capital	0.888
F3 <- Social Capital	0.863
G1 <- Re-visit Intention	0.876
G2 <- Re-visit Intentions	0.894
G3 <- Re-visit Intention	0.917
G4 <- Re-visit Intention	0.849
H1 <- Recommend	0.827
H2 <- Recommend	0.861
H3 <- Recommend	0.869
H4 <- Recommend	0.784

In the convergent validation table (Table 2), it is seen that all indicators have a loading factor value greater than 0.7, which is considered an ideal value. These high loading factor values indicate that all indicators have a strong relationship with the constructs measured, such as Attraction, Hospitality, Quality of Service, Visitor Satisfaction, Social Capital, Re-visit Intention, and Recommend. The results of these measurements indicate that all indicators in the model have good convergent validity, which reinforces the quality of the analysis performed in this study. Therefore, all indicators can be validly used in the research model and can proceed to further stages of analysis.

3.3 Discriminant Validity

This value describes the cross-loading factor, which plays a role in determining the discriminant validity of a construct. This process involves comparing the loading value of the construction in question with the value of other constructions, with the aim of achieving a value of 0.70 or higher. If there is a loading factor that is less than 0.70, then the factor is omitted to simplify the model. f any loading factor falls below the value of 0.70, it may indicate that the indicator may not be strong enough in distinguishing between different constructs. Therefore, the loading factor is removed from the model to maintain simplicity and clarity of analysis. This ensures that only indicators that have a significant contribution to the construct in question remain used in the analysis

Table 3. Discriminant Validation Values

Code	Attraction	Hospitality	Quality of service	Visitor satisfaction	Social capital	Intention to visit	Recommend
A1	**0.851**	0.575	0.460	0.362	0.393	0.344	0.359
A2	**0.874**	0.641	0.505	0.435	0.432	0.408	0.381
A3	**0.909**	0.635	0.576	0.474	0.454	0.371	0.353
A4	**0.901**	0.651	0.590	0.487	0.480	0.348	0.385
A5	**0.731**	0.661	0.399	0.440	0.360	0.299	0.319
B1	0.643	**0.771**	0.529	0.490	0.446	0.408	0.409
B2	0.667	**0.889**	0.533	0.591	0.477	0.413	0.420
B3	0.639	**0.903**	0.576	0.605	0.533	0.447	0.464
B4	0.604	**0.879**	0.552	0.514	0.525	0.455	0.403
D1	0.586	0.620	**0.827**	0.511	0.474	0.479	0.426
D2	0.535	0.549	**0.803**	0.608	0.565	0.569	0.506
D3	0.531	0.581	**0.889**	0.613	0.543	0.535	0.504
D4	0.439	0.498	**0.872**	0.653	0.592	0.556	0.510
D5	0.429	0.439	**0.814**	0.632	0.555	0.513	0.496
E1	0.460	0.549	0.650	**0.823**	0.572	0.484	0.577
E2	0.430	0.575	0.545	**0.865**	0.567	0.499	0.403
E3	0.445	0.497	0.642	**0.832**	0.619	0.592	0.533
E4	0.394	0.530	0.577	**0.836**	0.571	0.512	0.435
F1	0.467	0.565	0.605	0.699	**0.860**	0.672	0.592
F2	0.410	0.472	0.536	0.592	**0.888**	0.657	0.501
F3	0.417	0.456	0.555	0.509	**0.863**	0.658	0.496
G1	0.370	0.455	0.578	0.571	0.679	**0.876**	0.498
G2	0.324	0.427	0.527	0.560	0.680	**0.894**	0.538
G3	0.425	0.494	0.584	0.566	0.706	**0.917**	0.654
G4	0.346	0.388	0.548	0.513	0.630	**0.849**	0.604
H1	0.433	0.473	0.509	0.486	0.523	0.529	**0.827**
H2	0.313	0.367	0.515	0.468	0.459	0.562	**0.861**
H3	0.323	0.419	0.465	0.493	0.551	0.513	**0.869**
H4	0.334	0.385	0.457	0.500	0.511	0.571	**0.784**

From the table above, we can see that the result of cross loading, which measures the validity of the discriminant, forms a diagonal line. This indicates that the variable indicators used in this study are valid. This is indicated by the value of each indicator against its own variable has a value above 0.70 and higher compared to other variables. In this context, diagonal lines in the table indicate that each indicator has a strong correlation with the variable it is supposed to measure, while the correlation with other variables is relatively lower. This is a sign that these indicators can be considered valid because they demonstrate the ability to measure the intended variable well. In other words, these results show that the indicators effectively measure the corresponding construct, and the results of the discriminant validity analysis confirm that the variables can be distinguished from each other well.

3.4 Composite Reability Test

The Composite Reliability test tests the reliability value of an indicator on a construct. Reliability tests aim to assess the extent to which the measurement tools used in this study are reliable and trustworthy. A construct is considered reliable if it has Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values above 0.70. Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values above 0.70 are common standards used in research to determine whether a construct can be considered reliable or not. If this value is above 0.70, it indicates that the construct has a fairly high degree of consistency in measurements, so it is reliable in representing the intended concept.

Table 4. Reability Test Values

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (Rho_A)	Composite Reliability (Rho_C)	(AVE)
Attraction	0.907	0.911	0.931	0.732
Hospitality	0.883	0.888	0.920	0.743
Visitor Satisfaction	0.860	0.860	0.905	0.704
Quality of Service	0.897	0.899	0.924	0.708
Recommend	0.856	0.855	0.903	0.699
Social Capital	0.840	0.844	0.904	0.758
Re-visit Intentions	0.907	0.910	0.935	0.782

Based on the table presented, we can see that the Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values for all variables have values above 0.7. Therefore, it can be concluded that the seven variables can be considered reliable and feasible for use in the next stage of testing.

3.5 Coefficient of Determination Test (R2)

The Coefficient of Determination (R2) test aims to determine the extent to which the independent variable affects the dependent variable in an analysis or statistical model. The results of this test provide information about how well the independent variable can explain variations or changes in the dependent variable. The R2 value ranges from 0 to 1, and the higher the value, the greater the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The results of this test can be seen below.

Table 5. R2 Test Values

Variable	R-square	Adjusted R-square
Visitor Satisfaction	0.636	0.626
Re-visit Intentions	0.617	0.604
Recommend	0.491	0.474

Based on the information presented in the table, it can be concluded that the combined effect of the variables Attractiveness (X1), Hospitality (X2), Social Capital (X3), and Service Quality (X4) on Visitor Satisfaction (Y) is 0.636, with an adjusted R-Square value of 0.626. This implies that these constructs (X1, X2, X3, and X4) collectively accounted for 62.6% of the influence on Y, while the remaining 37.4% was attributed to external factors not considered in the study. As a result, the impact of X1, X2, X3, and X4 on Y is categorized as moderate. Furthermore, the effect of Visitor Satisfaction (Y) on the intention to revisit (Z) was calculated at 0.617, with an adjusted R-Square value of 0.604. This means that Y, which is affected by X1, X2, and X3, contributes to 60.4% of the influence on Z, while the remaining part is influenced by unaccounted external factors. This influence is also categorized as moderate. Lastly, the effect of intent to revisit (Z) on recommended tourist destinations (W) was measured at 0.491, with an adjusted R-Square value of 0.474. This shows that the construct in variable Z accounts for 47.4% of the impact on W, and this influence is categorized as weak.

3.6 Model Fit

Model fit results are used to evaluate the extent to which the proposed model matches the observed data. SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual), d_ULS (Unweighted Least Squares discrepancy), d_G (Gorsuch Fit Index), Chi-square (Chi-kuadrat), dan NFI (Normed Fit Index).

Table 6. Model Fit

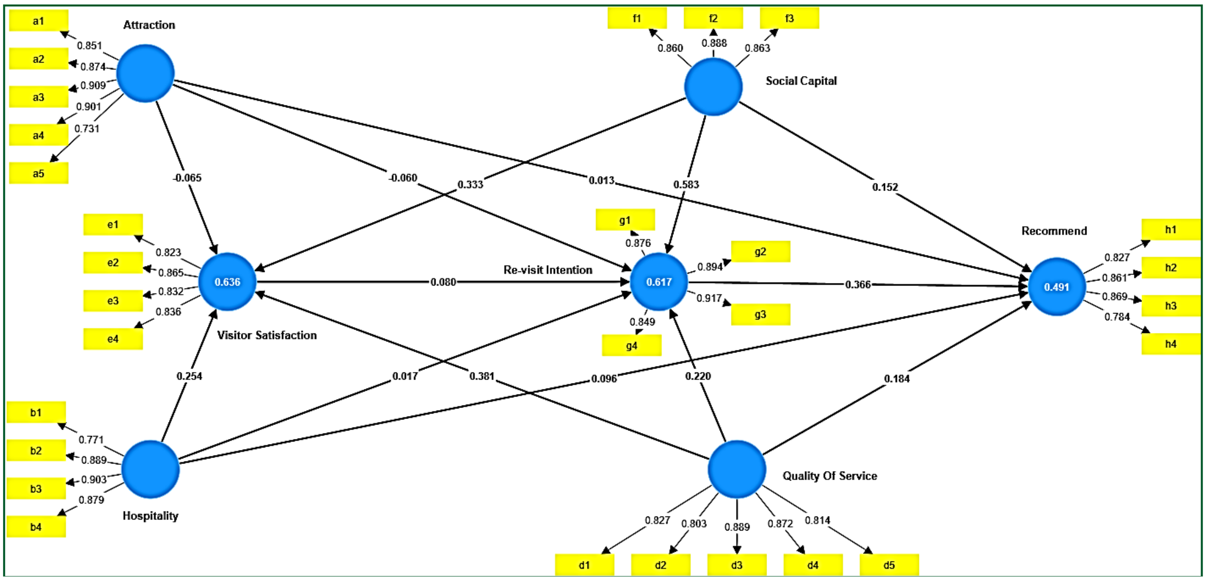
Fit Summary	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0,063	0,063
d_ULS	1,728	1,742
d_G	1,084	1,086
Chi-square	928,936	929,861
NFI	0,761	0,760

The fit model results show that both the Estimated model and the Saturated model have a good level of conformity with the observed data. This is seen from the SRMR value that is close to zero, the insignificant difference in d_ULS and d_G, and the insignificant difference in the Chi-square value. In addition, almost the same NFI values for both models also indicate a good fit. Thus, the Estimated model is considered adequate in explaining the data.

3.7 Path Coefficients

Path Coefficients are used to show the relationships between variables present in a study. The value of path coefficients ranges from -1 to 1. A path coefficients value that indicates a positive value means that the relationship between variables is positive. While the path coefficients value which shows a negative value means that the relationship between variables is negative. Here are the results of the path coefficients test.

Figure 2. Path Coefficients



From the path coefficients analysis figure, it is known that the statistical T values and P values appear as follows:

Table 7. Path Coefficients Values

	Original sample (O)	Sample average (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics	Nilai P (P values)
Attractions -> Visitor Satisfaction	-0.065	-0.060	0.070	0.932	0.352
Attractions -> recommend	0.013	0.013	0.076	0.170	0.865
Attractions -> Re-visit Intentions	-0.060	-0.059	0.085	0.706	0.480

	Original sample (O)	Sample average (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics	Nilai P (P values)
Hospitality -> Visitor Satisfaction	0.254	0.250	0.100	2.556	0.011
Hospitality -> Recommend	0.096	0.091	0.098	0.980	0.327
Hospitality -> Visiting Intentions	0.017	0.017	0.089	0.195	0.846
Visitor Satisfaction -> Re-Visit Intentions	0.080	0.087	0.101	0.797	0.426
Service Quality -> Visitor Satisfaction	0.381	0.380	0.092	4.160	0.000
Quality of Service -> recommend	0.184	0.191	0.098	1.877	0.061
Quality of Service -> Visiting Intentions	0.220	0.222	0.080	2.748	0.006
Social Capital -> Visitor Satisfaction	0.333	0.335	0.080	4.183	0.000
Social Capital -> Recommend	0.152	0.156	0.094	1.611	0.107
Social Capital -> Revisit Intentions	0.583	0.574	0.091	6.429	0.000
Re-Visit Intentions -> Recommend	0.366	0.363	0.116	3.139	0.002

The table of path coefficients (Path Coefficients Values) illustrates the relationship between variables in the research model. In the analysis of relationships between variables in the model, several patterns of direct relationship of each variable can be identified, as follows:

First, Service Quality has a strong positive influence on visitor satisfaction, showing that improved service quality can significantly increase visitor satisfaction. Furthermore, Quality of Service also has a significant positive influence on Visiting Intentions, indicating that good service can encourage travellers' intention to return. On the other hand, some relationships have weaker influence. Hospitality has a weak positive influence on visitor satisfaction, suggesting that hospitality may need to be improved to further influence traveller satisfaction.

Table 8. Indirect Effect

Variable	Specific indirect effects
Visitor Satisfaction -> Re-visit Intention -> Recommend	0,029
Quality Of Service -> Visitor Satisfaction -> Re-visit Intention -> Recommend	0,011
Attraction -> Re-visit Intention -> Recommend	-0,022
Social Capital -> Visitor Satisfaction -> Re-visit Intention -> Recommend	0,010
Hospitality -> Visitor Satisfaction -> Re-visit Intention	0,020
Quality Of Service -> Re-visit Intention -> Recommend	0,080
Social Capital -> Visitor Satisfaction -> Re-visit Intention	0,027
Quality Of Service -> Visitor Satisfaction -> Re-visit Intention	0,031
Attraction -> Visitor Satisfaction -> Re-visit Intention -> Recommend	-0,002
Attraction -> Visitor Satisfaction -> Re-visit Intention	-0,005
Hospitality -> Re-visit Intention -> Recommend	0,006
Social Capital -> Re-visit Intention -> Recommend	0,213
Hospitality -> Visitor Satisfaction -> Re-visit Intention -> Recommend	0,007

Quality of Service also has a weak positive influence on recommend, meaning service quality can influence traveller recommendations, although the effect is not statistically significant. Social Capital has a weak positive influence on Recommend. In addition, there is an insignificant relationship between Attractions and Visitor

Satisfaction, Attractions and Re-visit Intentions, as well as Hospitality and Visiting Intentions. This suggests that in the context of this study, such factors did not have a significant influence on related variables.

In addition, it is also known the results of the indirect effect analysis of various factors (Social Capital, Attractions, Service Quality, Hospitality, and Visitor Satisfaction) on the possibility of people recommending tourist destinations (Recommend) through Visiting Intentions or Visiting Intentions and Visitor Satisfaction.

In Table 8, the results of the analysis can be identified on the indirect influence of certain factors on the likelihood of someone recommending tourist destinations through Re-visit Intention and Visitor Satisfaction. There are several indirect influences that can be distinguished as positive and negative.

1. Positive indirect influences:
   a. Visitor Satisfaction -> Re-visit Intention -> Recommend (0.029): This is a positive influence that indicates that visitor satisfaction contributes positively to the intention to revisit and ultimately to the likelihood of recommending tourist destinations.
   b. Quality Of Service -> Visitor Satisfaction -> Re-visit Intention -> Recommend (0.011): Service quality has a positive impact on visitor satisfaction, which then has an impact on revisit intentions and recommendations.
   c. Social Capital -> Visitor Satisfaction -> Re-visit Intention -> Recommend (0.010): A person's social capital or social network also contributes positively to visitor satisfaction, which further impacts revisit intent and recommendations.
   d. Quality Of Service -> Re-visit Intention -> Recommend (0.080): Service quality has a strong positive influence on revisit intention and tourist destination recommendations.
   e. Social Capital -> Re-visit Intention -> Recommend (0.213): Social capital has a very strong positive influence on revisit intention and tourist destination recommendations.

2. Negative indirect influences:
   a. Attraction -> Re-visit Intention -> Recommend (-0.022): This effect is negative, meaning that the attractiveness of the destination does not contribute positively to the revisit intention and recommendation.
   b. Attraction -> Visitor Satisfaction -> Re-visit Intention -> Recommend (-0.002): This effect is also negative, indicating that destination attractiveness does not have a significant effect on revisit intent and recommendations through this path.
   c. Attraction -> Visitor Satisfaction -> Re-visit Intention (-0.005): Again, the attractiveness of the destination has no significant influence and contributes negatively to the intention to revisit.
   d. Hospitality -> Re-visit Intention -> Recommend (0.006): This effect is very small and insignificant, but positive. However, the positive impact is almost imperceptible.

4. Discussions

4.1 Influence of Attractions in Marine Tourism in Lampung Province

Based on the results of statistical testing with PLS-SEM, it shows that there is no langsung positive influence between the variables of tourist attraction on the variables of visitor satisfaction, the variables of tourist attraction on the intention of re-visiting. This is evidenced by the negative value of the path coefficient, namely -0.0 65, and -0.060 where there is no unidirectional influence. In addition, direct measurements between variables of attractiveness to recommend have a positive effect. However, if measured indirectly the influence of the attraction variable through the visitor satisfaction variable is continued to the re-visit intention variable on the tourist recommending variable there is no significant influence.

The results of this study are quite contrary to several related studies that test hypotheses, both partially and simultaneously on the variable of tourist attraction to tourist satisfaction. Such as research conducted by (Handayani *et al.*, 2019) in Bangka Botanical Garden (BBG) Pangkalpinang tour. Where indicates the tourist attraction available in the Bangka Botanical Garden (BBG) Pangkalpinang tourist area will increase the satisfaction of visiting tourists. As for other research, it is research from (Abdurrohman and Wibawanto 2021) where the results of the analysis show a very strong relationship between tourist attraction and visitor satisfaction of Villa Gardenia tourist attractions.

4.2 The Effect of Service Quality in Marine Tourism in Lampung Province

Based on the results of statistical testing with PLS-SEM, it shows that there is a significant direct influence between the variables of tourist service quality on the variables of visitor satisfaction in marine tourism in

Lampung province. A variable in the quality of tourist services to the variable of intention to revisit in marine tourism in Lampung province. As well as the variable of the quality of tourist services to the variable of recommending marine tourism in Lampung province. This is evidenced by the value of the path coefficient which is of positive value where there is a unidirectional influence. So the hypothesis related to the influence of service quality is proven and the hypothesis is accepted. These results are in line with previous studies that tested hypotheses related to the variability of the quality of tourist services to visitor satisfaction. Such as the research conducted by (Septiandari *et al.*, 2021) where the influence of the quality of tourist services carried out either partially or simultaneously has a positive and significant influence on Visitor Satisfaction (Septiandari, Hidayatullah, and ... 2021)and the intention to visit again at Tiga Warna Beach.

4.3 The Influence of Hospitality in Marine Tourism in Lampung Province

Based on the results of statistical testing with PLS-SEM, it shows that there is a significant influence between independent variables, namely the source of tourism information, on the intervening variable, namely visitor satisfaction in marine tourism in Lampung province. This is evidenced by the value of the path coefficient which is positive value, which is 0.262 where there is a unidirectional influence. So that the first hypothesis, namely that it is suspected that there is an influence of information sources on visitor satisfaction, is proven and the hypothesis is accepted. These results are in line with previous research that tested the effect of information sources on information systems on visitor satisfaction. Such as the results of research conducted by Julinta in 2015 where visitors are very satisfied with the service of PT. Julinta's tourism information sources. TSS. (Julinta 2015)

4.4 The Influence of Social Capital in Marine Tourism in Lampung Province

When viewed in figure 5 and table 5, it is known that the intervening variable, namely visitor satisfaction, which is influenced by simultaneous independent variables, namely, the quality of service and information sources are able to significantly affect the dependent variable, namely the intention to revisit tourists in Lake Ranau. These results are in line with research from (Purnami *et al.*, 2019) where visitor satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on the interest in visiting Bali Pulina agrotourism.(PURNAMI, SURYAWARDANI, and ... 2019)

4.5 The Effect of Visitor Satisfaction on Re-Visit Intentions in Marine Tourism in Lampung Province

Based on the results of statistical testing with PLS-SEM, it is known that there is a significant direct influence between the visitor satisfaction variable and the re-visit intention variable. This is evidenced by the value of the path coefficient, which is a positive value, namely 0.080 where there is a unidirectional influence. So the hypothesis related to the effect of visitor satisfaction on re-visit intentions is proven and the hypothesis is accepted.

4.6 The Effect of Re-Visiting Intentions on Recommending Marine Tourism in Lampung Province

Based on the results of statistical testing with PLS-SEM, it is known that there is a significant direct influence between the variables of re-visiting intention on the variables of recommending tourism in marine tourism in Lampung province. This is evidenced by the value of the path coefficient, which is positive value, namely 0.366 where there is a unidirectional influence. So the hypothesis regarding the influence of re-visit intentions on recommending tours is proven and the hypothesis is accepted.

Conclusions and Further Research

Based on the results of research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that there are differences in the effects of attractiveness, service quality, social capital, and hospitality on visitor satisfaction in marine tourism in Lampung Province. Attractiveness has not been found to have a direct positive effect on visitor satisfaction, but it does have a direct positive effect on the recommendation of travel. Service quality has been shown to have a direct positive effect on visitor satisfaction, re-visitation intentions, and the recommendation of travel. Social capital has been found to have a direct positive effect on visitor satisfaction, re-visitation intentions, and the recommendation of travel. Meanwhile, hospitality has been shown to have a direct positive effect on visitor satisfaction and re-visitation intentions, as well as the recommendation of travel.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the factors influencing visitor satisfaction in marine tourism in Lampung Province are not comprised of just one variable, but rather a combination of several interrelated variables. Service quality has the most significant effect on visitor satisfaction, followed by hospitality, social capital, and attractiveness. However, it is important to note that these results only apply to marine tourism in Lampung Province and cannot be directly applied to marine tourism in other areas. Therefore, it is recommended for marine tourism managers in Lampung Province to continue to improve the quality of services provided to visitors, maintain the hospitality of staff, and enhance the attractiveness and social capital available on the tour. This is expected to increase visitor satisfaction, leading to higher re-visitation intentions and recommendations to others.

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Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Rahayu Sulistiowati: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Draf editing.
Yulianto: Conceptualization, Investigation, Supervision, Validation.
Samsul Bakri: Methodology, Supervision, Data curation, Validation.
Maulana Mukhlis: Validation, Writing – review and editing, Project administration
Dimas Adi Saputra: Software Analysis, Data analysis, Data curation, Visualization

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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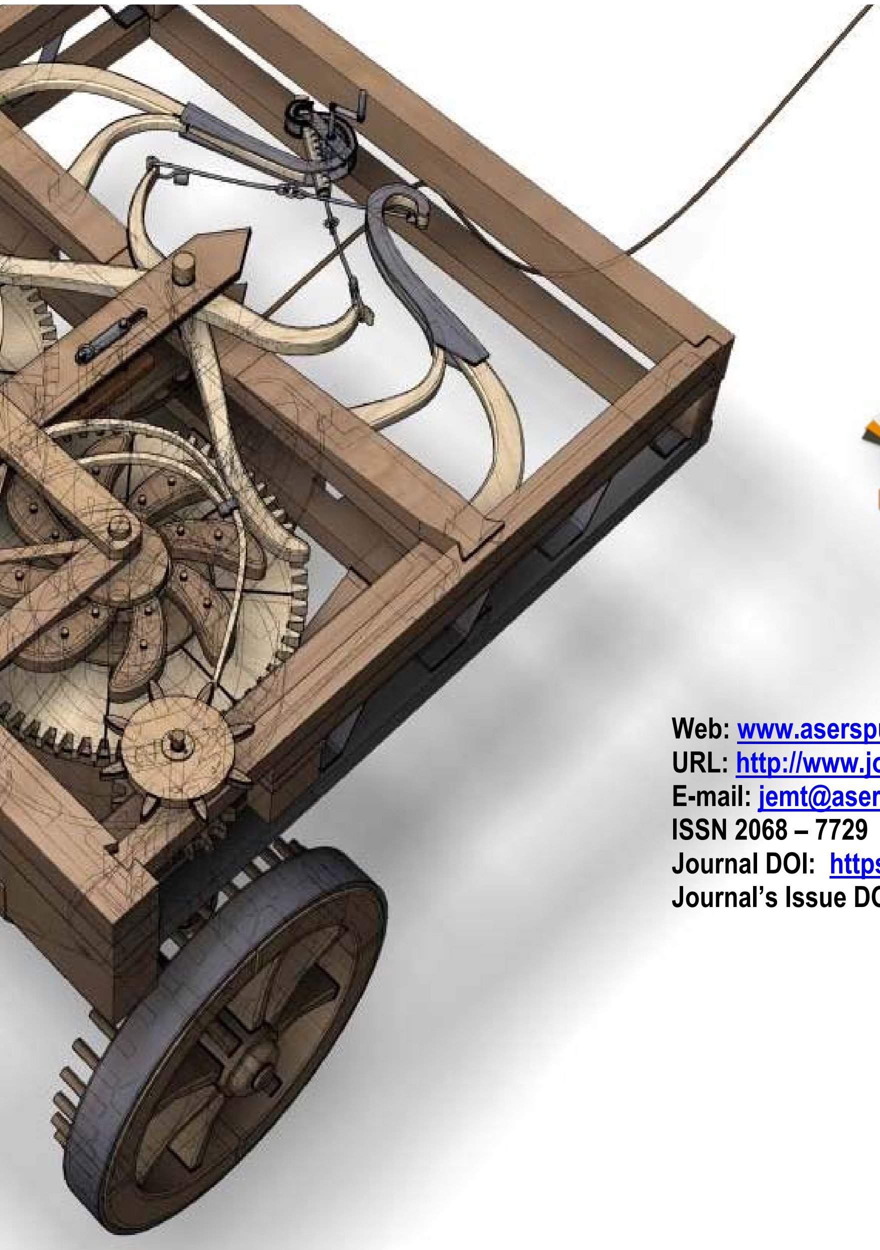

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