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Global Hospitality and Tourism Research Summit-Fukuoka

May 15-18 2025

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The Sustainable Turn of Hotels as a Service Hub within Local Communities

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT (995 WORDS)

The hospitality sector is experiencing a sustainable evolution, shaped by a growing perception of hotels as multifaceted service providers. Modern hotels are increasingly positioned to serve as local service hubs, delivering an array of offerings that transcend conventional lodging functions. (Borkmann et al., 2022; Dontas-Chrysis et al., 2020) By fostering deeper connections with their surrounding communities, hotels can cater to the varied needs of stakeholders such as residents and local businesses (Bigby & Higgins-Desbiolles, 2022). This approach enhances the hotel's appeal while simultaneously driving social and economic growth in the regions they serve (Mackenzie, 2023; Dhir et al., 2022).

The **objective** of this paper is to explore the role, contributions and sustainable scale-up potential of hotel offerings and services while fostering socio-economic development within local communities. Through empirical data analysis, the study examines the demand of "residents and working neighbors" – people living near to a hotel or working in local business next to it – and explores potential hotel service innovation.

The **online survey** conducted in August-September 2023 targeted German-speaking individuals aged 16 to 69 years, with a weighted sample ensuring demographic representativeness. For this paper the sample representing "local communities" (n= 1.684) was used which was subdivided in "people who live near a hotel" (n = 791) and "people who work near a hotel" (n = 893).

This study provides valuable **insights** to guide stakeholders in integrating hospitality into municipal and district development. Hoteliers can sustainably enhance their offerings by expanding existing user groups, unlocking new revenue streams, and aligning services with clearly identified demand. Differentiating and tailoring services for specific user groups can further optimize engagement. Additionally, the findings highlight opportunities for innovative service offerings that could attract local communities, thereby strengthening the hotel business and its broader ecosystem.

As part of the **key findings and results** this study examines individuals' awareness of services offered by various accommodations. Among residents, business hotels (44.4%) and AirBnBs (44.2%) rank highest in awareness, followed by concept (42.0%) and luxury hotels (39.7%). Guesthouses show the lowest awareness (23.5%), with 39.1% reporting no specific knowledge. For working neighbors, awareness is highest for concept hotels (56.3%), serviced apartments (52.2%), and hostels (49.1%), while middle-class hotels rank lowest (33.6%), with 25.5% unaware of their offerings.

Almost one third (27.7%) of **residents are unaware** what services hotels in the neighborhood offer beyond guest rooms. This applies to 22.3% of the working neighbors. 19.0% of residents **have never used** the offers yet, while this applies only for 10.3% of the working neighbors.

46% of the residents and 50.0% of the working neighbors responded that the most prevalent barrier **why individuals have not utilized hotel service offers** beyond room accommodations, is that they "had never considered these services" prior to the survey. 19.0% (and 18.0% of the working neighbors) stated that they were "unaware of the available offerings", while 13.0% (and 8.0% of the working neighbors) cited "high costs" as a prohibitive factor. 10.0% (10.0% of the working neighbors) of respondents indicated that the services were "perceived as exclusively available to hotel guests", and 5.0% (6.0% of the working neighbors) noted a "lack of suitable services". Some respondents (7.0%; 8.0%) highlighted the existence of "other, more attractive options" as a reason for their lack of engagement.

The responses illustrate the respondent´s perceptions of the **importance of various hotel services** and offerings across different categories: Grocery and farming services are considered the most „important" service category for both groups of respondents (residents 62.9%; working neighbors 60.2%), followed by recreational services (57.1%; 54.4%). For residents, spatial offerings which include facilities like event spaces or co-working areas and services are rated „important" from 53.1% of residents (and 48.0% of working neighbors). Working neighbors and residents (49.9%) consider mobility and energy services equally as important, followed by sports, activities, and education services which is important for working neighbors (49.7%) followed by 44.9% of residents. Care services, business services, technology services and concierge services are rated lower in importance.

Further results show the **potential frequency of hotel service usage** by residents and working neighbors on a scale from 1 (never) to 5 (daily), using mean values. Pools (2.89) lead for residents, while working neighbors prefer spa and sauna (3.02). Both groups rank kiosks with daily-use products second (2.80; 2.98). Residents favor 24/7 grocery shops (2.79), while working neighbors prefer pastry shops (2.98). Gas stations and local markets rank high for both, reflecting demand for convenience. Working neighbors also value brunch (2.94), rooftop terraces (2.98), and breakfast-to-go (2.85). Residents prefer sustainable food offers (2.75), pastry (2.72), butcher shops (2.68), postal services (2.64), and rooftop terraces (2.63).

The findings highlight the importance of practical, everyday services in attracting users. Compared to the potential usage of the hotel offerings and services among the different categories, they were also interviewed if these services are **currently available in their neighborhood hotels**.

The results have significant **implications** for the hospitality sector, highlighting the need to raise awareness and address misconceptions about the range of services hotels offer, particularly to local communities. Targeted communication can enhance the visibility and competitiveness of traditional accommodations like guesthouses. Marketing efforts should focus on grocery and recreational services, key priorities for neighboring groups, and target mobility and energy offerings for working neighbors while promoting the value of underutilized specialized services, such as technical or creative facilities.

The **discussion** also reveals a divide between frequently used services, such as grocery access and recreational offerings, and underutilized specialized services like podcast studios and 3D printers. This gap suggests that limited awareness, perceived lack of relevance, or restricted access could be barriers to engagement. Addressing these challenges requires a dual approach: enhancing service availability and tailoring promotional strategies to demonstrate the practical benefits of these services for everyday use. Furthermore, the findings emphasize the importance of aligning hotel services with community needs, reinforcing their role as active contributors to local development. By bridging the gap between service provision and community expectations, hotels can strengthen their position as essential hubs for their neighborhood areas.

Keywords (5 Required)

1 Hospitality Services, 2 Service Hubs, 3 Local Communities, 4 Sustainable Hotels, 5 Service Innovation

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Towards Sustainable Tourism: What makes employees continue to engage?

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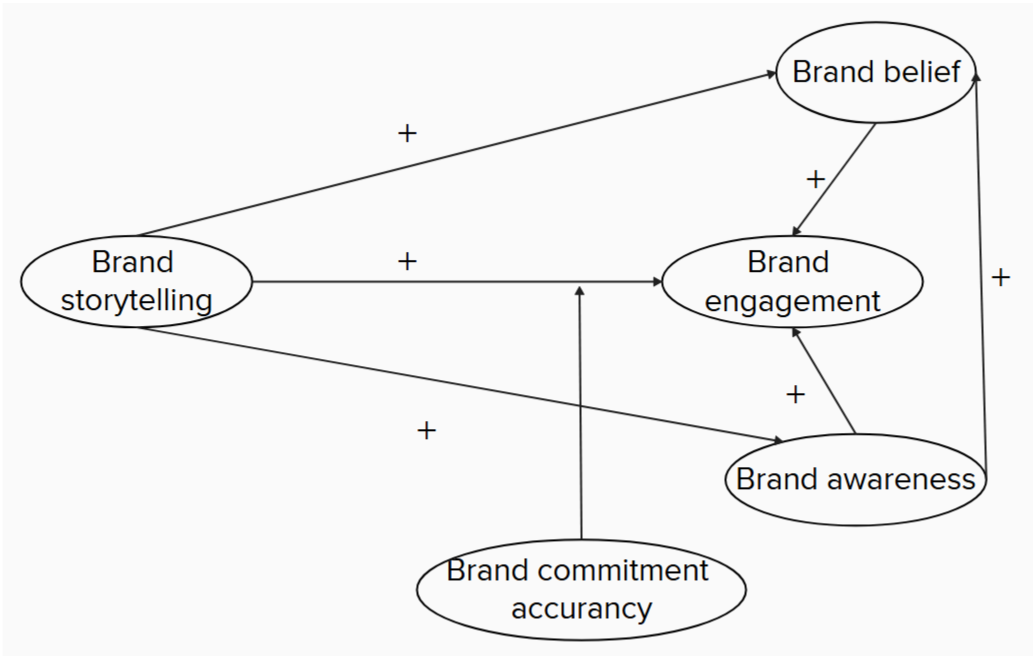
EXTENDED ABSTRACT (REQUIRED. NO MORE THAN 1000 WORDS)

In a busy business society and fierce commercial competition, it is crucial to retain exhausted employees. Employees in the service industry often face numerous problems, such as difficult customers and unclear job roles. After becoming part of a brand, employees gradually get to know the brand culture, thereby enhancing their brand awareness. When employees are immersed in brand stories, the accuracy of the brand's commitment to employees moderates the relationship between brand stories and brand engagement. For example, when the brand stories perceived by employees match their expectations, employees will get involved, which is a vague brand commitment. However, the consistency between this imagined and actual brand commitment, that is, an accurate and clear brand commitment, further affects employees' continuous engagement. Meanwhile, employees' beliefs and brand awareness during continuous engagement also influence their degree of brand engagement. According to the social identity theory, employees' engagement is often required by their identity. However, when beliefs conflict with behaviors, cognitive dissonance occurs. Therefore, employees' beliefs affect their continuous engagement. Employees' brand awareness consists of two parts. One part is employees' understanding of the brand (brand knowledge, role relevance, and perceived importance), and the other part is the perceived degree of help. When employees have a high level of brand awareness, it will also promote the formation of brand beliefs, and thus promote employees' continuous engagement.

Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothetical model.



Keywords (5 Required)

Brand engagement, Brand storytelling, Brand commitment accuracy, Brand belief, Brand awareness

Beyond Profit: Examining the Impact of Product Margin and Firm Size on Green Burger Offerings in Sweden

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Introduction

Sustainability in the restaurant industry has received increasing attention, particularly in response to growing concerns about climate change, food security, and ethical sourcing. Among sustainability efforts, menu changes—specifically, the introduction and expansion of innovative plant-based alternatives—represent a crucial yet underexplored area. Existing research has largely focused on demand-side factors, such as consumer preferences for plant-based items (e.g., Carlsson et al., 2022; Kerslake et al., 2022; Onwezen et al., 2021), and on broader sustainability initiatives, including energy efficiency and waste reduction by restaurants (McGregor et al., 2024; de Visser-Amundson, 2022) and consumers (Chakraborty & Mattila, 2024; Zhang & Zhang, 2024). However, less is known about the firm-level financial and strategic considerations that shape the decision to expand or contract sustainable menu offerings over time.

This study addresses this gap by investigating the dynamics of sustainable menu changes in Swedish hamburger chains. Sweden provides an ideal setting due to the wide availability and consumer acceptance of plant-based meat alternatives, alongside the significant ecological impact of fast-food chains. We examine the conditions under which firms increase or decrease their commitment to plant-based menu items, focusing on the role of financial considerations —particularly product margin as a determinant of sustainability commitments.

Theoretical Background

Prior research in sustainable management and hospitality has emphasized corporate social responsibility (CSR) as a driver of environmentally friendly practices (Carrigan et al., 2017; Hu et al. 2013; Kasim and Ismail 2012). Firms may adopt sustainability measures in response to external pressures, including regulatory requirements, social norms, and shifting consumer preferences. How restaurants engage customers in sustainable consumption is another topic that has gathered attention (Huang et al 2021; Moskwa et al 2015). However, voluntary sustainability commitments, such as offering plant-based menu items, require internal justification—often tied to financial performance and competitive positioning.

A key lens for this study is the balance and possible combination of profitability and legitimacy (Chiu & Sharfman, 2011; Li et al., 2017; Schaltegger & Hörisch, 2017) when pursuing sustainable yet unproven innovations such as plant-based hamburgers. Beyond merely studying the introduction of such innovative product types that serve to redefine core tenets in the industry, our study addresses how fast-food hamburger chains expand and contract such menu offerings over time, as legitimacy valuations and financial considerations play out.

Methodology

We analyze year-to-year menu changes across major Swedish hamburger chains, focusing on variations in plant-based offerings. Our dataset includes detailed menu records spanning multiple years, allowing us to track the introduction, expansion, and removal of plant-based items. This longitudinal approach enables us to identify patterns of sustainability commitment and retreat in response to financial performance.

To assess firm-level financial performance, we collect publicly available financial reports, examining profitability indicators such as net income and operating margins. We employ regression models to test the relationship between financial ratios and menu offerings (product mix).

Preliminary Findings

Early findings suggest that firms with lower profit margins are more inclined to introduce green burgers, supporting the idea that offering plant-based options reflects a commitment to sustainability. Additionally, major fast-food chains tend to have a lower proportion of green burgers on their menus, *indicating that large corporations are more likely to prioritize profitability over sustainability.*

No clear-cut correlation is found between the proportion of green menu offerings and standard financial performance metrics such as ROE and ROA. This suggests that factors like corporate mission and strategy play a more significant role than traditional financial performance indicators.

Expected Contributions and Implications

As we continue to analyze our data and interpret findings, we aim to contribute to the literature on sustainable hospitality management by highlighting the financial contingencies that influence corporate sustainability decisions. While prior research has examined consumer-driven and regulatory influences on sustainable practices, our study provides empirical evidence that firm profitability plays a significant role in shaping menu-level sustainability commitments.

Our findings offer practical insights into the financial sustainability of sustainability itself in the hospitality industry. Restaurants beyond the fast food segment seeking to promote plant-based alternatives must consider how economic fluctuations influence their ability to maintain such offerings. Moreover, the relatively stable presence of plant-based items even during downturns suggests that sustainability transitions, once initiated, may become embedded in long-term strategic planning rather than being treated as short-term marketing efforts.

From a policy perspective, we suggest that External incentives—such as tax benefits for plant-based offerings or sustainability certification programs—can help offset the additional costs of providing sustainable products. By lowering the perceived financial burden of sustainability commitments, policymakers can encourage the adoption and expansion of plant-based menu options, thereby advancing environmental sustainability on a larger scale.

Our research highlights the complex relationship between financial performance and sustainability commitments in the restaurant industry. Even when facing margin pressures, smaller restaurant operators tend to maintain their plant-based burger offerings, suggesting a strategic view that extends beyond immediate financial returns. This finding suggests that sustainability, once incorporated into a firm's strategic vision, retains a level of resilience even in the face of economic pressures. By shedding light on these dynamics, we provide a more nuanced understanding of corporate sustainability decision-making, offering valuable implications for both theory and practice in sustainable hospitality management.

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Conceptualising Employees' Healthy Institutional Dining Experiences in China

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT (1000 WORDS)

Introduction

Healthy dining is widely recognised as a fundamental determinant of individual well-being and organisational sustainability. Workplace canteens serve as key institutional spaces that facilitate food provision and nutrition education, support employee health, and contribute to the broader objectives of workforce management (Greger, 2018). However, existing research has predominantly focused on nutritional interventions and consumer-driven dining behaviors, with limited attention given to employees' lived experiences in workplace canteens (Liu et al., 2017; Sonnentag et al., 2017).

This study addresses these gaps by investigating employees' healthy dining experiences in workplace canteens, emphasising the multi-dimensional nature of these experiences. It seeks to identify the core experiential components that shape employees' perceptions of healthy dining. Grounded in the Strategic Experiential Modules (SEM) framework (Brakus et al., 2009), the research adopts a qualitative approach to explore how employees' engagement with workplace dining extends beyond the act of dining to encompass more diverse dining experiences.

By conceptualising healthy dining as an experiential process rather than merely a dietary intervention, this study extends the theoretical understandings of workplace dining. The study demonstrates that workplace canteens are not only venues for food provision but integral spaces that shape manpower stability (Niebuhr et al., 2022). The study also offers practical insights for corporate leaders by positioning workplace dining as a strategic tool for enhancing employee engagement and aligning with Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) initiatives.

Findings and Results

This study was conducted within a large textile factory in China, where a sustainable dining initiative was recently introduced to encourage healthy dining among employees. Data were collected through face-to-face in-depth interviews conducted in Chinese Putonghua with 32 full-time employees, organised into four focus groups in December 2024. Each audio-recorded interview lasted between 45 to 60 minutes. Sampling concluded when theoretical saturation was reached, indicating that no new data could be obtained (Glaser & Strauss, 1968). Thematic analysis, guided by the SEM framework, identified five experiential dimensions that shape employees' engagement with workplace dining: experiencing the freshness of healthy food, immersing in the canteen's dining atmosphere, navigating the diversity of healthy food choices, encountering the availability of healthy food, and the relational connections with colleagues.

Experiencing the freshness of healthy food emerged as a critical determinant of how employees perceived food quality and dining engagement and experiences. Participants frequently associated vibrant food colors, fresh ingredients, and aesthetically appealing presentations with positive evaluations of healthy meals. Taste preferences were equally influential, with employees demonstrating distinct inclinations toward either mild, natural flavors or highly seasoned dishes. The availability of condiments further enhanced the sensory appeal, as one participant noted, "*The colorful vegi in the canteen makes my meals much more satisfying.*" These findings suggest that food presentation plays a crucial role in encouraging healthy dining habits, reinforcing the importance of visual appeal and taste customisation in workplace dining settings.

Immersing in the canteen's dining atmosphere was strongly tied to environmental factors of workplace canteen. Employees expressed a preference for quieter, less crowded spaces, which they associated with a more relaxed and enjoyable dining experience. Additionally, temperature control and cleanliness emerged as key determinants of emotional comfort, reinforcing positive associations with the dining environment. One employee remarked, "*Coming in from the cold and sitting in a warm canteen makes the* *meal far more enjoyable.*" These insights indicate that dining spaces influence not only food choices but also employees' overall emotional well-being and workplace satisfaction.

Navigating the diversity of healthy food choices was another dining experience in the workplace canteen. It played a central role in shaping health awareness and decision-making regarding food selection. Some employees actively sought low-oil, low-sodium meal options, while others prioritised taste or convenience over health considerations. Notably, workplace communication channels played a significant role in enhancing health consciousness, as employees frequently discussed the nutritional value of meals and ingredient quality (Wong et al., 2021). One participant stated, "*We have a group chat where we discuss which meals are healthier and what type of oil the canteen uses*." These findings highlight the role of organisational communication and knowledge-sharing in fostering a health-conscious dining culture.

Encountering the availability of healthy food was influenced by meal selection processes and accessibility challenges. Employees expressed frustration over food availability inconsistencies and inefficiencies in service delivery. Pre-ordered meals were occasionally unavailable, leading to dissatisfaction and disruptions in dining routines. One employee described their experience, stating, "*Even though I pre-ordered, sometimes my meal is out of stock, which is extremely frustrating*". These findings emphasise that food accessibility and service reliability are crucial for ensuring positive workplace dining experiences.

Finally, the relational connections with colleagues highlighted the role of social interactions and collective dining habits in shaping employees' engagement with healthy food. Workplace canteens functioned as social hubs, where employees exchanged meal recommendations and influenced each other's dietary choices. One participant observed, "*If someone tries a new healthy dish and says it's good, more people will try it the next day*." Additionally, discussions regarding meal portion sizes and dining preferences were common, particularly among male employees who expressed a preference for larger portions. These findings underscore that workplace dining is embedded within broader social and organisational structures, reinforcing the canteen's role as a key element of workplace culture.

Discussion and Implications

This study repositions workplace dining as an experiential process that extends beyond mere food consumption, illustrating how multi-dimensional factors influence employees' healthiness and workplace sustainability. The findings have several theoretical and practical implications (Kim et a., 2018). Theoretically, the study extends the application of the SEM framework to workplace dining, shifting the focus from traditional nutrition-centered approaches to experience-driven analyses. It highlights that workplace canteens serve as organisational spaces that influence employee well-being.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest several strategies for optimising workplace canteen experiences. Organisations should prioritise food presentation, service reliability, and environmental enhancements to improve both sensory and emotional engagement with dining spaces. The study also underscores the strategic value of integrating sustainable and ESG-aligned initiatives into canteen management. By promoting healthy dining experiences, organisations can not only enhance employee well-being but also reinforce long-term sustainability commitments (Levitsky & Pacanowski, 2012).

Taken together, this study highlights that healthy dining in the workplace is not simply about food, it is about experience, engagement, and organisational identity. Future research should further explore the longitudinal effects of workplace dining experiences on employee well-being, to provide insights into how organisations can strategically use canteens to enhance workplace sustainability (Hill et al., 2003).

Keywords (5 Required)

Healthy Institutional Dining; Healthy Dining Experience; Strategic Experiential Modules; Employee Well-being; Organisational Sustainability

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Health Tourism Knowledge and Awareness Level of Emergency Healthcare Staff

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Utilizing the Stakeholder Theory as a foundation, this study qualitatively investigates the emergency medicine specialists' knowledge and perception on health tourism.

Health tourism is one of the tools for sustainable development (Figueiredo et al., 2024) and refers travels of individuals and groups outside of their hometown or home country for health purposes and these purposes includes maintaining and improving well-being and/or, recover and healing from illnesses (Kaygısız, 2021). Although health tourism research considerable expands in recent years, some gaps remain underdeveloped such as the integration of wellness and medical services (Lukose et al., 2024). Accordingly, the service and contribution of healthcare employees to health tourism requires some in-depth investigation. Thus, the research question of this study is: What is the knowledge and perception level of emergency healthcare staff about health tourism as stakeholders? By answering the questions, the following objectives are planned to achieve:

To understand the perception and knowledge level of emergency healthcare service staffs about health tourism as essential stakeholders of health tourism.

To evaluate how they perceive their role in the health tourism system and in which extend they consider themselves as stakeholders.

To provide some recommendations for full potential of health tourism industry by utilizing the powerful collaboration of diverse stakeholders of the system.

To answer the research question, achieve the research objectives, and obtain in-depth knowledge about the topic, this study utilized qualitative method. 45 semi-structured interviews were conducted, and the data analyzed by content analysis manually. The interview questions were formed based on previous health tourism related studies (Acar & Turan, 2016; Arkın & Salha, 2023; Bulut, 2021; Dağlı, 2021; Gökmen, et al., 2020). The questions then reviewed by two faculty members: one from health services and one from tourism management, and one health service undergraduate level student. After the revisions, one emergency healthcare service staff was interviewed to ensure the flow and clarity of the questions.

The results show that there are three themes emerged: Education, tourism, and health. The sub-categories of the themes are as followings:

Education: Language and communication skills, English language skills, health tourism education and training, language barriers of tourists

Tourism: Old town, UNESCO World Heritage List

Health: Economy, emergency services, services to tourist which have health issues

The detailed review of the themes reveals several results that could be beneficial to guide health tourism services:

First and the most important results is that although emergency service providers are vital stakeholders of health tourism, they unfortunately do not have detailed and comprehensive knowledge about health tourism. Arkin (2023) proposes that awareness level depends on demographic variables, which is also supported in this study as the awareness level deviates depending on experience, gender, and education level.

The limited number of participants that they can define health tourism properly, stated that they are unable to establish and maintain proper communication due to language barriers. In previous studies, Aba et al. (2019) emphasizes language barriers as one of the problems in health tourism as well.

Second, this study's results reveal that majority of the participants do not consider themselves as stakeholders of health tourism system. Several studies already pointed healthcare staff as inevitable aspect of health tourism (Liu et al., 2024; Malhotra & Dave, 2024). However, the emergency healthcare employees still unable to consider themselves as a part of health tourism system.

Last but not least, this study reveals, even awareness level is satisfactory, the contribution of emergency healthcare service employees will be limited as majority of the participants addressed language and communication skill barriers as essential problems.

Referring the objectives and the results, this study contributes to the literature in two aspects: from the theoretical perspective, this study reveals that stakeholder theory is not effectively applied in health tourism industry and requires higher awareness level from the stakeholders to achieve its powerful and constructive potential. By definition, a stakeholder is "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of an organization's purpose" (Freeman, 1984: 46). Although emergency health service employees strongly effects and effected by health tourism activities, this study reveals that due to lack of information and awareness, they are not able to contribute the system effectively.

From the practical perspective, this study reveals the barriers that hinders stakeholders' contribution. These barriers include but not limited to language barriers, communication skill barriers, lack of satisfactory knowledge on health tourism. Effective policies on health tourism should consider these barriers and plan the roadmap accordingly.

Overall, this study aims to investigate the perception and knowledge level of emergency healthcare employees about health tourism as one of the essential stakeholder groups. The results of this study are expected to guide policy makers to frame the health care activities by putting equal emphasis on all stakeholder groups to reach the full potential of health tourism activities. In addition, any stakeholder of the health tourism system would benefit the results of this study for more effective contribution.

Although satisfactory number of participants were interviewed at saturation point, all the participants were based in a specific destination. Future studies would employ variety of participants in terms of location and job experience. Future studies might also test the topic with empirical studies for generalizable results.

Keywords

health tourism, medical tourism, emergency medicine, stakeholder theory, stakeholder

Research on The Impact of Tourism Destination Co-creation Experience on Tourists' Satisfaction and Loyalty in User-Generated Content Engagement Platform

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT (REQUIRED. NO MORE THAN 1000 WORDS)

Although value co-creation concept has captured much interest, especially in the tourism and hospitality fields, the rapid growth of information generated by consumers of tourism and hospitality services calls for a systematic review of how User-Generated Content (UGC) has been applied. Whereas limited empirical studies have been conducted to explore the complexity of experience value co-creation process in the online tourism review platform context.

In this trend, tourists are gradually no longer satisfied with passively accepting the established tourism products or services, but are eager to occupy an active position in the production and consumption of tourism products. The rise of travel website (platform) can help tourists from mutual independence to close contact, from lack of information to well-informed, from passive acceptance to active participation. It is of great significance to understand the changes in the role and behavior of tourists from the perspective of value co-creation for the online tourism industry and even the whole tourism industry.

Therefore, this study attempts to answer the following questions: What is the relationship between User-Generated Content (UGC) engagement platform co-creation experience dimension and tourists satisfaction? How dose User-Generated Content (UGC) engagement platform co-creation experience dimension influence tourists loyalty? What is the relationship between User-Generated Content (UGC) engagement platform co-creation experience dimension and revisit intention? Dose eWord-of-Mouth (eWOM), destination image and destination personality dimension moderating the relationships among User-Generated Content (UGC) engagement platform co-creation experience, tourists' satisfaction, tourists' loyalty, and revisit intention?

The current study will fill the research gap by proposing User-Generated Content (UGC) as an engagement contributor to the online co-creation process and how this co-creation experience perceived a tourists' satisfaction, tourists' loyalty and even revisit intention. This study aims to examine how eWord-of-Mouth (eWOM),destination image and destination personality contribute to co-creation experience with the moderating effect of tourist satisfaction, tourist loyalty and revisit intention.

Based on the theory of value co-creation, social capital theory and the theory of planned behaviour, the study employs structural equation modeling with SPSS 22.0 and analyses the date with AMOS 22.0 software from Chinese tourists reporting on their most recently visited tourism destinations of Gansu province of China for recently five years. A total of 416 surveys were collected from travellers in Gansu province of China. Structural equation modelling analysis showed that perceived usefulness and trust were important determinants for User-Generated Content (UGC) engagement platform tourism destination co-creation experience.

User-Generated Content (UGC) engagement platform tourism destination co-creation experience have a partially positive significant impact on tourists' satisfaction; User-Generated Content (UGC) engagement platform tourism destination co-creation experience have a partially positive significant impact on tourists' loyalty; User-Generated Content (UGC) engagement platform tourism destination co-creation experience do not have a positive significant impact on revisit intention; Tourists' satisfaction have a positive significant impact on tourists' loyalty; Tourists' satisfaction have a positive significant impact on revisit intention; Tourists' loyalty have a positive significant impact on revisit intention; eWord-of-Mouth (eWOM) do not moderate User-Generated Content (UGC) engagement platform tourism destination co-creation experience and tourists' satisfaction; eWord-of-Mouth (eWOM) do not moderate tourists' satisfaction and tourists' loyalty; eWord-of-Mouth (eWOM) do not moderate tourists' loyalty and revisit intention; Destination image do not moderate User-Generated Content (UGC) engagement platform tourism destination co-creation experience and tourists' satisfaction; Destination image do not moderate tourists' satisfaction and tourists' loyalty; Destination image moderate tourists' loyalty and revisit intention; Destination personality do not moderate User-Generated Content (UGC) engagement platform tourism destination co-creation experience and tourists' satisfaction; Destination personality do not moderate tourists' satisfaction and tourists' loyalty; Destination personality moderate tourists' loyalty and revisit intention; eWord-of-Mouth (eWOM) have a positive significant impact on destination image; Destination image have a positive significant impact on destination personality; eWord-of-Mouth (eWOM) have a positive significant impact on destination personality.

Keywords (5 Required)

Co-creation experience, User-Generated Content (UGC) engagement platform, eWord-of-Mouth (eWOM), destination personality, tourists' satisfaction

Unlocking Hotel Success: The Synergistic Impact of Information Technology and Human Capital in the U.S. Hospitality Industry

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The U.S. hospitality industry has come to view Information Technology (IT) investments and Human Capital (HC) development as synergists of performance. This study explores this phenomenon and addresses a gap in the literature that investigated them separately. Integration of IT and HC can boost the performance of hotel on account of ameliorating the HR management, training and service quality resulting in increased customer satisfaction (Čupić, 2023; Dahash & Al-Dirawi, 2018). Skills and experience of employees form HC, which is essential for service excellence (Basnyat & Lao, 2019; Filimonau et al., 2020). When a firm invests in both IT and HC, fostering the two, the firm innovates and adapts to the market relatively easier (Turner & Guilding, 2012; Buallay et al., 2020).

Their interplay also fortifies organizational resilience. In crisis situations like the COVID-19, hotels with stronger HC were better adapted, exploiting IT for remaining operational (Filimonau et al., 2020; Fabio & Peiró, 2018). The integration of IT and HC investments improves financial performance through resource optimization and refinement of service processes (Buallay et al., 2020; Laing et al., 2010). Working on strategic alignment of IT and HC could also boost productivity and employee satisfaction. Knowledge management combined with IT improvements in hotels enables better service and employee retention (Abdullah et al., 2013; Taegoo et al., 2012). Aligning everyone brings strength to organizational culture, one of the most important drivers of motivation and efficiency (Taegoo et al 2012).

The effects of IT and HC Investments on hotel performance, resilience and competitiveness have combined influence. Understanding this synergy allows hotels to develop a strong business model for the modern hospitality era.

Objectives

The main goal of this study is thus to examine the interaction effects between investments in IT and HC in the hotel industry, and the subsequent impact on KPIs (e.g., RevPAR, GOPPAR, and customer satisfaction ratings). More specifically, this study aims to:

1. Assess the separate impact of IT investment and HC development on the performance of the hotel sector.
2. Study the interaction effects between IT and HC in revenue generation and operational efficiency.
3. Explore the moderating effects of market conditions and hotel segment characteristics on IT-HC-performance relationship.

Contribution

This study helps expand the hospitality literature in terms of how IT and HC may complement each other as complementary assets. Whereas prior studies either ignore the relationship or treat IT and HC as separate explanatory variables, this study provides an integrated analysis in the IT — HC joint capabilities framework to identify their complementary impact on hotel performance. This provides insights into strategic resource allocation and managerial guidance in leveraging IT-HC investments for a sustainable competitive advantage.

Findings and Results

Preliminary data analysis suggests that IT investments alone have a direct and beneficial influence on performance by enhancing operational efficiencies and customer service capabilities. Similarly, HC development improves the efficiency, creativity, and standard of service. Nonetheless, the relationship between IT and HC investments, when considered together, is non-linear, indicating that the availability of highly trained human capital optimizes the returns of IT investments. In contrast, hotels with lower HC development, are not able to harness the benefits of IT for better performance outcomes.

Results also underscore that market segment differences (i.e., luxury vs. economy hotels) moderate these effects, with higher-end hotels more benefiting from IT–HC synergies, as they largely depend on sophisticated technologies and specialized human capital. Competitive intensity, economic conditions and other environmental factors further moderate the impact of IT and HC on performance.

Discussion and Implications

The results of this research hold crucial implications not just for hotel executives but also for policymakers. First, the results highlight the importance of balanced investments in IT and HC, as either without the other could lead to diminishing returns. Secondly, it needs to be followed up by continuous employee training programs which aim to support staff to take advantage of IT advancements. Ultimately, the results highlight the importance of strategic alignment between technology upgrades and workforce capabilities in attaining sustainable performance improvements.

This research presents empirical data for policymakers and industry stakeholders to foster workforce development initiatives that correlate with technological advancements in the hospitality industry. Further research could extend this analysis to other international markets or to assess the impact of managerial perceptions on IT-HC integration qualitatively.

Keywords (5 Required)

Information Technology, Human Capital, Hotel Performance, Interaction Effects, Hospitality Industry

Overtourism in Kyoto: examining high density tourist zones through big data analytics

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction

Kyoto, a city renowned for its historical and cultural heritage, has increasingly faced challenges associated with overcrowding at specific tourist sites. As one of Japan's most iconic travel destinations, Kyoto attracts millions of domestic and international visitors annually, alongside a local population of approximately 1.4 million residents. The city is home to 17 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, which serve as major attractions for tourists seeking to experience Japan's rich cultural and historical legacy, while tourism significantly contributes to Kyoto's economy. Overtourism remains highly localized, with concentrated visitor densities leading to environmental degradation, infrastructure strain, congestion, and socio-economic disruptions for residents. These impacts threaten the authenticity and sustainability of Kyoto's heritage, necessitating strategies to balance tourism growth and cultural preservation.

Overtourism affects Kyoto in multiple ways, including increased foot traffic that accelerates wear and tear on historic structures, waste management challenges, and the overburdening of public transport. Additionally, rising rental prices and commercialization disrupt the daily lives of residents. Addressing overcrowding is essential for the long-term sustainability of Kyoto's tourism industry. Effective tourism management requires an understanding of visitor behavior, identifying high-density areas, and implementing measures to redistribute visitor flows. Strategies such as promoting lesser-known attractions and enhancing regulations are crucial to mitigating overtourism's negative effects.

This study aims to identify Kyoto's most crowded heritage sites using big data analysis from KDDI. By examining spatial and temporal visitor mobility patterns, this research provides empirical insights into crowd distribution and tourism hotspots. The findings are essential for developing policies to manage overtourism, ensuring Kyoto remains a sustainable destination that balances visitor experiences and local well-being. Moreover, this study contributes to academic discourse by offering a localized case study on overtourism in a globally recognized heritage city.

Contribution

Kyoto's reputation as a cultural hub attracted 53.25 million domestic and international visitors in 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, with total visitor spending amounting to approximately 1.2 trillion yen. Post-pandemic, there is a clear trend toward increasing these figures, as evidenced by an all-time high of nearly 36.8 million international visitors to Japan in 2024. However, the concentration of tourists in specific locations threatens the sustainability of these attractions and the quality of life for local residents. By pinpointing the most crowded sites and analyzing visitor patterns, this study provides valuable insights for policymakers and tourism planners to mitigate overtourism effects and enhance sustainable tourism practices in Kyoto. The research also contributes to the broader academic discourse on tourism management by offering a case study of localized overtourism in a globally recognized heritage city.

Objectives

The primary objective is to:

- Identify the overcrowded tourist destinations in Kyoto's heritage sites.

Methodology

The study utilised data from the Japan Travel Bureau Foundation (JTB) to categorize Kyoto's attractions based on their significance in the "S Category", which pertains to the resources representing national pride and Japanese identity, attracting visitors worldwide. For this analysis, only physical locations in the S category were considered. Big data from KDDI were employed to measure visitor density at these sites, with key parameters including the time period of data collection from 5:00 AM to 12:00 midnight daily to capture peak tourism activities, a radius of 0.5 km around the centre of each location, and the number of visits limited to one per person during the defined period. The study focused on the year 2019, as it recorded the highest number of visitors in history before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings and Results

According to the analysis, the study identified four key destinations as the most crowded destinations in the Kyoto heritage site: Gion area, Kyoto Imperial Palace, Kiyomizu Temple, Kinkakuji Temple. These results also highlighted the spatial distribution of these attractions across Kyoto. Gion and Kiyomizu Temple are located in Higashiyama Ward, Kyoto Imperial Palace in Kamigyo Ward, and Kinkakuji Temple in Kita Ward. Population densities in these wards varied, with Kamigyo Ward exhibiting the highest local population density.

Discussion and Implications

Overtourism significantly undermines the sustainability of destinations. Therefore, it necessitates the precise identification of areas with the highest tourist densities to implement interventions to mitigate adverse impacts and enable development. Considering Kyoto City, this study identifies Gion, Kyoto Imperial Palace, Kiyomizu Temple, and Kinkakuji Temple as the most crowded destinations, based on big data analysis of visitor densities. Additionally, Kamigyo Ward exhibits the highest local population density in Kyoto, while it is also crucial to manage Higashiyama Ward properly due to containing two famous tourist destinations, Kyomizu Temple and Gion district, which is Japan's most well-known geisha district. By giving priority to addressing overtourism challenges in those areas, Kyoto can preserve its heritage and enhance the quality of life for both residents and visitors. Thus, this research provides a foundation for further studies on overcrowding management, carrying capacity management, and overtourism management based on visitor density with the aim to mitigate socio-economic and environmental impacts in tourist destinations in Kyoto and worldwide.

Keywords

Kyoto, Overtourism, Overcrowded destinations, Big Data Analysis, KDDI

Demographic Differences in Service Robot Adoption: A Study of Hotel Guests' Intentions

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Introduction

The rapid advancement of technology has led to the increasing integration of robotic systems across various industries as a strategic approach to enhancing productivity and maintaining a competitive edge in the global market. While automation has traditionally been concentrated in sectors such as automotive, agriculture, and manufacturing (Sumner & Schlogl, 2018), the hospitality industry has recently witnessed a notable surge in the adoption of service robots. These AI-driven systems are now playing an increasingly significant role in enhancing customer experiences and optimizing operational efficiency. The incorporation of service robots into hotels, restaurants, and airports is fundamentally transforming the service landscape, positioning them as a permanent fixture in consumer-facing industries (Pelau et al., 2021).

The widespread adoption of AI-powered service robots in hospitality is largely driven by advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) and human-centered robotics (Tung & Law, 2017). Hospitality businesses are leveraging these technologies to minimize operational costs and enhance service delivery, as demonstrated by the deployment of Starwood's Botlr robotic butler (Cain et al., 2019), Incheon Airport's AIRSTAR robot (Shim, 2018), Royal Caribbean's Bionic Bar (Golden, 2014), and Japan's Hen-na Hotel (Hertzfeld, 2019). The increasing reliance on robotic automation reflects a shifting paradigm among hospitality operators, wherein robots are now regarded as integral contributors to a more efficient, seamless, and personalized service experience (Tung & Law, 2017).

Scholarly research has established that individual differences significantly influence consumer behavior (Agarwal & Prasad, 1999). Among these, demographic variables such as gender, age, income, and education level have been identified as key determinants of technology adoption decisions (Dahlberg & Oorni, 2007; Leong et al., 2011). Prior studies suggest that men are generally more inclined to adopt new technologies compared to women (Venkatesh et al., 2000; Faqih, 2016), while younger consumers tend to exhibit higher levels of technology acceptance than their older counterparts (Aluri & Palakurthi, 2011). Furthermore, research indicates that income and education levels positively influence technology adoption, as individuals with higher incomes tend to prioritize convenience, whereas higher educational attainment enhances technological literacy and adoption readiness (Rogers, 2010).

Given these insights, the present study aims to investigate the impact of demographic characteristics (i.e., gender, age, education, and income) on hotel customers' willingness to adopt service robots. By integrating perspectives from the technology adoption literature, this research seeks to offer a comprehensive understanding of how individual differences shape consumer acceptance of robotic technologies within the hospitality sector.

Methodology

Data were collected through a self-administered online survey conducted by the marketing research firm Qualtrics. The target population for this study comprised hotel guests in the United States. A total of 127 responses were obtained, of which 105 valid responses were retained for subsequent analysis. To examine whether hotel customers' intention to use service robots significantly differed based on demographic factors (i.e., gender, age, education, and income), ANOVA was conducted. For variables with more than two groups (i.e., age, education, and income), a Tukey post hoc analysis was performed to identify specific differences between group means.

Results

The findings indicated that hotel customers' intention to use service robots varied significantly based on their education level and age. More specifically, customers aged 36 to 45 years ($M = 5.30$) exhibited higher intentions to use service robots in hotels compared to those aged 46 to 55 years (M = 3.82). Furthermore, the results revealed that hotel customers with a bachelor's degree (M = 4.86) and a master's degree (M = 5.13) were significantly more likely to use service robots compared to those with only a high school diploma (M = 3.51).

Discussions and Implications

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the role of demographic factors in shaping hotel customers' intention to adopt service robots. The results indicate that age and education level significantly influence consumers' willingness to interact with robotic technology in hospitality settings. Specifically, younger customers (aged 36 to 45 years) demonstrated greater acceptance of service robots than their older counterparts, which aligns with previous research suggesting that younger individuals are more adaptable to technological innovations (Aluri & Palakurthi, 2011). Similarly, customers with higher educational attainment exhibited a greater likelihood of adopting service robots, supporting the notion that higher education enhances technological literacy and confidence in automation (Rogers, 2010). These findings have several practical implications for the hospitality industry. Hotel managers and technology developers should tailor marketing strategies and robotic service designs to align with consumer preferences across different demographic groups. For instance, targeted educational campaigns and hands-on demonstrations could help reduce hesitation among older or less technologically inclined customers. Additionally, hotels could develop customizable robotic services that cater to varying levels of tech-savviness, ensuring broader acceptance and enhanced guest experiences.

Keywords: Service robots; hospitality; hotel customers; behavioral intention; adoption

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The Impact of Senior Managers' Leadership Style on Frontline Employees' Perceived Empowerment in Luxury Hotels

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between senior managers' leadership styles and frontline employees' perceived empowerment in luxury hotels. Leadership in the luxury hospitality sector is uniquely positioned to impact employee performance and satisfaction due to its highly service-oriented nature, where guest expectations for excellence, personalization, and attention to detail are particularly pronounced (Kim et al., 2019). This research explores how various leadership styles including transformational, transactional, and servant leadership shape employee empowerment, enabling or hindering their ability to meet these elevated service demands. Drawing on foundational theories such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959), and Behavioral Theories of Leadership (Cherry, 2023), this study aims to provide theoretical insights and actionable strategies for empowering employees while addressing organizational challenges in maintaining service consistency. Empowerment is a critical factor in the luxury hospitality sector, as it fosters creativity, autonomy, and responsiveness among employees. Frontline workers, who directly interact with guests, rely on empowerment to address unique needs and deliver experiences that exceed expectations. For instance, empowerment has been shown to improve employees' ability to resolve issues swiftly, enhance guest satisfaction, and contribute to higher rates of customer loyalty (Bowen & Lawler, 1995; Spreitzer, 1995). However, the rigid hierarchical structures often found in luxury hotels can act as barriers to empowerment by constraining employees' decision-making authority and stifling innovation (Baum et al., 2020). Addressing these challenges requires a nuanced understanding of how leadership styles can foster empowerment while navigating the demands of a high-pressure work environment. Transformational leadership, characterized by its focus on inspiring and motivating employees through a shared vision, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation, has been identified as a significant enabler of empowerment (Bass & Riggio, 2006). By creating an environment that encourages proactivity and creativity, transformational leaders empower employees to go beyond standard procedures and address guest needs in unique and impactful ways. For example, luxury hotel companies like the Four Seasons have successfully implemented transformational leadership strategies to foster a culture of innovation and trust, enabling employees to deliver highly personalized service without fear of punitive consequences for mistakes (Wang et al., 2018). Similarly, servant leadership emphasizes the well-being and development of employees, creating a supportive organizational culture that prioritizes employee growth and collaboration. In this style, leaders actively work to remove barriers, provide resources, and facilitate decision-making autonomy among their teams. Luxury hotel brands such as The Ritz-Carlton exemplify this approach through practices that empower employees to resolve guest issues independently, contributing to enhanced job satisfaction and service quality (Eva et al., 2019; Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, 2023). However, servant leadership must be carefully balanced in structured environments, such as luxury hotels, where adherence to brand standards is essential for maintaining a consistent guest experience (Lashley, 2018; Kandampully et al., 2018). Transactional leadership, which is often associated with performance-based rewards and penalties, plays a more structured but still important role in fostering empowerment. By setting clear expectations and providing consistent feedback, transactional leaders create a framework where employees feel secure and valued (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). This approach can be particularly effective in environments where operational standards and performance metrics are critical to organizational success. For example, transactional leadership has been linked to reduced turnover and improved employee performance in luxury hotels, where clarity in roles and rewards is crucial (Chiang & Hsieh, 2012). This study also examines the mediating role of organizational culture in shaping the effectiveness of these leadership styles. Organizational culture significantly influences how leadership behaviors impact empowerment, with customer-centric cultures amplifying the positive effects of servant leadership and innovation-driven cultures enhancing the impact of transformational leadership. For instance, at The Ritz-Carlton, a culture centered on service excellence allows servant leadership to thrive, empowering employees to deliver exceptional guest experiences (Liu & Wang, 2017). Conversely, the Four Seasons' culture of creativity and adaptability aligns well with transformational leadership, encouraging employees to innovate while maintaining high service standards (Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, 2023). By employing a quantitative research design, this study gathers data through surveys administered to frontline employees across various luxury hotel brands in the United States. Participants are selected based on their direct interactions with senior management and their roles in guest service delivery. The survey instrument utilizes validated scales to measure leadership styles, transformational, transactional, and servant as well as employees' perceived empowerment (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Spreitzer, 1995). Analytical methods, including correlation, regression, and mediation analysis, are used to test hypotheses and identify patterns in the data. The findings of this study are anticipated to have both theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical perspective, the research advances understanding of how leadership styles function in the high-pressure context of luxury hospitality, refining existing empowerment frameworks to account for the unique demands of this sector (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Specifically, the study contributes to leadership theories by examining the interplay between leadership behaviors, organizational culture, and employee empowerment, providing insights applicable to other service-intensive industries such as healthcare and finance (Avolio et al., 2004). Practically, the findings are expected to guide hotel managers and human resource practitioners in developing leadership training programs and hiring strategies that prioritize empowerment-oriented leadership. For instance, implementing transformational leadership practices can inspire employees to take initiative and think creatively, while servant leadership approaches can foster a culture of trust and collaboration (Hunter et al., 2013). Additionally, transactional leadership techniques can provide the structure and clarity needed to align employee actions with organizational goals (Kim & Kim, 2017). By leveraging these insights, luxury hotels can enhance employee satisfaction, improve service quality, and build stronger customer loyalty, ultimately achieving greater operational success.

Keywords

Leadership Styles, Employees' Perceived Empowerment, Luxury Hotels, Frontline Employees, Senior Managers

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Enhancing Leadership Competencies with AI Integration in Ethical Decision-Making

Note: Conference logo will be placed at the center-top of this cover page

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Background and Objectives

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in hospitality operations creates ethical challenges for managers and leaders. As AI systems shape critical decisions from guest services to resource allocation, leaders should balance technological insights with ethical considerations to ensure transparency, accountability, and fairness. This study aims to examine how to enhance leadership competencies with AI integration in ethical decision making in hospitality and tourism businesses. Studies reveal that effective decision-making with AI depends on developing accurate mental models and understanding AI capabilities, particularly regarding confidence calibration and reliance strategies (Steyvers & Kumar, 2023). Recent research studies have shown that AI assistance can impact human decision-making processes and outcomes (Tejeda et al., 2022). However, the relationship between human confidence levels and AI-assisted decision-making in professional contexts remains complex (Chong et al., 2022). This study aims to examine how to enhance leadership competencies with AI integration in ethical decision-making in hospitality and tourism businesses.

Methods

A qualitative research approach will be employed through in-depth interviews with hospitality managers who use AI for decision-making. Following insights from recent studies on human-AI complementarity (Steyvers et al., 2022), we will analyze how leaders navigate the complexities of AI-assisted decision-making. Through thematic analysis, we will identify essential competencies, including understanding AI biases, ethical algorithm design, and accountability frameworks in hospitality contexts. Drawing from these findings, we will develop and evaluate an AI ethics training program using pre- and post-training assessments.

Expected Results

This study anticipates that traditional hospitality leadership competencies, such as critical thinking and emotional intelligence, will require expansion to include AI-related ethical competencies. We expect to identify key proficiencies needed for recognizing algorithmic biases in guest service applications, ensuring data transparency, and building stakeholder trust. The proposed training program will be designed to enhance leader confidence in ethical decision-making when implementing AI tools in hospitality operations.

Anticipated Implications

The increasing integration of AI in hospitality decision-making necessitates a redefinition of leadership competencies to include ethical governance as a fundamental competency. This research aims to develop a framework for leaders to evaluate and integrate AI into hospitality strategies, advancing responsible innovation while ensuring both technological advancement and human values are maintained in guest service delivery.

Keywords: Ethical Decision-Making, Artificial Intelligence, Leadership Competencies, Algorithmic Bias, Responsible Innovation, Hospitality Management

References available Upon Request

From Culture to Conduct: Exploring the Role of Cultural Factors in Shaping Japanese Employees' Work Behaviors

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

1. Introduction

Not every employee has the same understanding or standard for what their job entails. For example, while one employee may believe that staying after hours to assist a customer is a part of their job, another employee may view such behavior as exceeding their role. Why does this happen? Given that extra-role behavior enhances customer satisfaction and organizational success (Kim & Jang, 2023), understanding the underlying mechanisms driving extra-role behavior has been a longstanding focus in organizational behavior research (Boehnlein & Baum, 2022; Demerouti et al., 2015; MacKenzie et al., 1998; Diefendorff et al., 2002). However, theoretical gaps persist due to a limited understanding of the variability in employees' perceptions of their work behaviors. To be specific, existing research often focuses primarily on Western contexts, leaving a gap in understanding diverse cultural settings (Gelfand et al., 2017; Ma et al., 2022). Additionally, the role of individual-level values and their interaction with cultural factors in shaping behavior remains underexplored. This gap not only hinders cross-cultural understanding but also poses risks to global organizations striving for consistent operational success and customer satisfaction in diverse cultural environments.

Thus, this study sheds light on 'cultural factors' across multiple levels: national, organizational, and individual. This study adopts a qualitative approach, focusing on in-depth interviews with Japanese employees. Japan offers a unique cultural context, with its emphasis on collectivism, high power distance, and long-term orientation (Hofstede, 1984). Additionally, Japan's globally acclaimed hospitality industry and the underrepresentation of Japanese employees in organizational behavior research offer a valuable opportunity to enhance cross-cultural understanding. This study will identify how cultural dimensions—such as power distance, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, collectivism, masculinity, and high context-oriented—and individual values, including professionalism, perfectionism, and impression management, influence individuals' perceptions and interpretations of their roles within an organization.

This expands existing organizational behavior theories by integrating cross-cultural perspectives, offering a nuanced understanding of how cultural orientation affects workplace behaviors. This theoretical integration highlights the interplay between macro-level cultural dimensions and micro-level individual factors, offering a more holistic framework for understanding employee behavior.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Employees' job behaviors

Employees' behavior is classified into in-role (task performance) and extra-role behavior (citizenship behavior). In-role behaviors encompass the essential service performances customers expect (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997) and are fundamental to fulfilling one's organizational role. Extra-role behaviors, or service-oriented organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), involve actions beyond formal duties that enhance customer experiences and business operations but are not explicitly required (Bettencourt & Brown, 1997; Kim & Jang, 2023). Given the value of extra-role behavior, especially in the hospitality industry, understanding the factors shaping employees' job behavior perceptions is crucial for effectively fostering such behaviors.

3. Method

This study adopts a qualitative research design using semi-structured interviews to explore how cultural orientations and individual values influence Japanese employees' perceptions of in-role and extra-role behaviors in the hospitality industry. Approximately 20 participants, aged 18 or older and working in hotels or restaurants in Japan, will be interviewed via Zoom to achieve data saturation. The interview guide focuses on topics such as general attitudes toward their job, work values, and cultural orientations, with example questions addressing constructs including uncertainty avoidance and power distance. Data will be analyzed using content analysis, combining deductive coding based on theoretical constructs and inductive coding to capture emerging themes (Cho & Lee, 2014). This methodology provides a robust framework for uncovering the cultural and individual factors shaping employee behavior in the Japanese hospitality sector.

4. Expected Discussion

4.1. The expected framework based on interviews

This framework, based on the heterogeneity of employees' behavioral standards, explores how cultural, organizational, and individual factors interact to shape perceptions of in-role and extra-role behaviors.

4.1.1. Cultural factors

Japanese employees' behavioral standards are shaped by distinct individual mindsets. In high relational mobility environments, individuals emphasize self-enhancement and uniqueness to manage group impressions (Krieg et al., 2018), naturally exceeding role expectations (Wang, 2015). This mindset aligns with Japan's "omotenashi" philosophy of exceptional service (Blanchy, 2010) and its strong service dedication (Haghirian, 2010). Consequently, high service standards create a self-reinforcing cycle of perfectionism and professionalism, making these expectations fundamental job requirements.

4.1.2. Individual factors

Building on cultural values, Japanese employees' behavioral standards are shaped by distinct individual mindsets. In high relational mobility settings, individuals emphasize uniqueness and self-enhancement to manage group impressions (Krieg et al., 2018), naturally exceeding role expectations as an organizational norm (Wang, 2015). This excellence-driven mindset is reflected in Japan's "omotenashi" philosophy of exceptional service (Blanchy, 2010) and reinforced by cultural dedication to service (Haghirian, 2010). As a result, high service standards foster a self-sustaining cycle of perfectionism and professionalism, with employees internalizing these expectations as core job requirements.

4.1.3. Organizational factors

Japanese organizations emphasize teamwork and collective action, integrating extra-role behavior into formal roles. Job assignment ambiguity fosters shared responsibility (Wang, 2015), with employees engaging in collaborative task-sharing without rigid roles (Shimozaki, 2000). While this may challenge those accustomed to clearly defined responsibilities, it aligns with Japanese management practices that encourage employees to extend beyond formal duties (Wang, 2015), effectively making extra-role behaviors expected contributions.

By integrating these factors, this framework offers a comprehensive understanding of how employees' behavior standards are shaped and enacted, emphasizing cultural and contextual sensitivity in managing diverse workforces.

5. Expected Implications

This study contributes to organizational behavior research by addressing gaps in the antecedents of in-role and extra-role behaviors, focusing on cultural, organizational, and individual factors. By examining cultural dimensions like power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and collectivism alongside individual values such as professionalism and perfectionism, it expands existing frameworks to account for cross-cultural variability in role perceptions. Using Japan's unique context enhances understanding of employee behavior in non-Western settings. Recognizing employees' distinct job behavior standards helps organizations foster consistent, high-quality service. Managers can design roles, set expectations, and tailor motivation techniques to align with cultural perspectives. Policies promoting extra-role behaviors can clarify their value and rewards, ensuring alignment with diverse cultural orientations.

(Total 985 words)

Keywords (5 Required)

1, In-role behavior 2, Extra-role behavior 3, Cultural orientation 4, Japanese employees

Figure

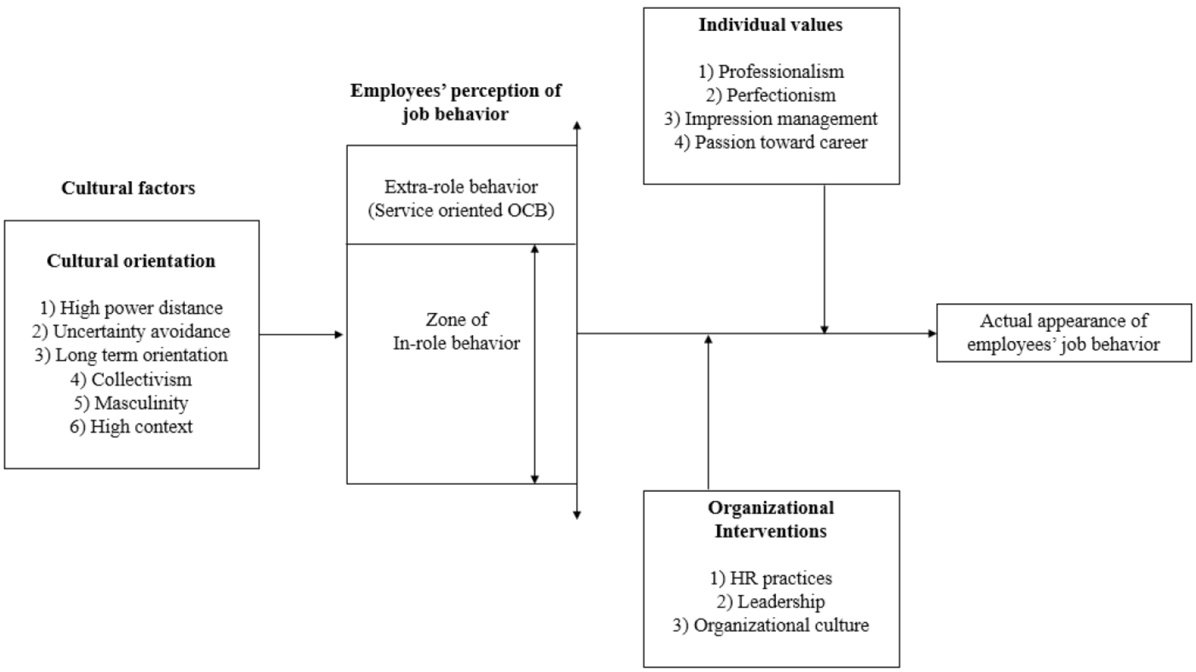

Figure 1. The expected framework based on interviews

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The Role of On-Site Participation in Academic Conferences:

A Comparative Study of Foreign and Japanese Attendees

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT (REQUIRED. NO MORE THAN 1000 WORDS)

The purpose of this study is to clarify the motivations of participants and the actual state of networking at academic conferences in Japan, and to consider the significance and challenges of on-site participation, especially in the post-COVID era. Due to the impact of COVID-19, academic conferences have changed to online/hybrid formats. In this study, authors focus on conference among MICE (Meeting, Incentive, Convention/Conference, Exhibition/Event), classify academic conference participants into foreign participants and Japanese participants, and consider the differences in motivations for participation and networking. Based on the results obtained, authors aim to provide suggestions for the future direction of academic conference management.

MICE has several advantages over general tourism. While MICE itself has an aspect of promoting tourism, holding academic conferences does not just increase the number of visitors to the host city, but also contributes to improving the brand power of the city and forming a base for academic and business exchange. The Japan Tourism Agency (2022) estimated the economic ripple effect of MICE held in Japan in 2016 to be approximately 1.59 trillion yen. The job creation effect of holding MICE was estimated to be approximately 96,000 people, and the tax revenue effect reached approximately 82 billion yen. In addition, according to the Japan Tourism Agency (2022), the average consumption per MICE participant was approximately 337,000 yen, which is higher than that of general tourists. In particular, in the post-COVID era, the hybridization of face-to-face and online events is progressing and the nature of academic conferences is changing.

Traditionally, international conferences were mainly held in person, with participants presenting their research in the same space and having the opportunity to network. However, since 2020, online conferences have increased sharply due to the impact of COVID-19, and hybrid international conferences that combine face-to-face and online conferences have since become widespread. Online conferences have the advantages of reducing participation costs and eliminating geographical constraints, but they also have the issue of restricting networking between participants compared to face-to-face conferences. In particular, studies on the satisfaction of academic conference participants have revealed that face-to-face participants tend to value the opportunities for interaction at academic conferences more than online participants (Hameed et al. 2021; Ram et al. 2024). However, research on changes in the behavior of conference participants in the post-COVID era and differences in networking trends is still limited. Therefore, this study clarifies participants' motivations at international conferences and their evaluation of each networking situation through a comparison between foreign and Japanese participants, and provides suggestions for conference management.

In this study, authors conducted a questionnaire survey of participants at international conferences held in Japan to clarify their motivations for participation and the actual state of networking. The survey was conducted at multiple international conferences from 2022 to 2024, and 75 people responded. In order to understand the motivations of participants in international conferences, 11 items (educational purpose, presentation, opportunities for networking, job opportunities, interesting program, career development, personal development, association-related activities, fieldwork in Japan, visiting friends and relatives, escaping from routine) were set based on previous research, and their importance was measured on a five-point scale. Moreover, survey respondents were asked whether they would prefer to participate in an international conference in person or online. In addition, to clarify the actual state of networking, nine situations that provide opportunities for networking within international conferences (banquet, welcome reception party, farewell reception party, coffee break, excursion, oral presentation session, poster session, business center, attraction) were set, and the survey was conducted on a five-point scale.

For motivation to participate, a Mann-Whitney U test was used to clarify the differences between overseas and domestic participants, an analysis was conducted using nationality (0 = Japanese, 1 = foreign) as the dependent variable. Furthermore, a binary logistic regression analysis was conducted to verify suitable locations for networking opportunities. In this analysis, the locations of networking opportunities within the conference (the nine items mentioned above) were set as independent variables, and nationality (0 = Japanese, 1 = foreign) was used as the dependent variable.

In terms of motivations for participating in international conferences in Japan, it was found that foreign participants considered several items more important than Japanese participants. On the other hand, it was confirmed that the basic objectives of conferences, such as opportunities to present and network, have a common value regardless of nationality. These findings suggest that future conference management will require program design that meets the needs of foreign participants and the provision of more substantial fieldwork. Coffee breaks during international conferences are important opportunities to promote free exchange of opinions and interaction. Since short breaks are between official sessions during international conferences, natural conversations that arise as an extension of presentations and discussions are thought to promote networking. On the other hand, in Japan, there is a tendency to place importance on networking in formal settings, and interactions at official receptions and banquets may be preferred. In Japanese business culture, emphasis is placed on exchanging business cards and greetings in official settings, so it may be thought that there is a tendency not to regard short breaks such as coffee breaks as opportunities for networking. Therefore, it is necessary to create an environment where both parties can easily interact with each other, such as by establishing a system that naturally brings together participants with the same research fields and interests.

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Keywords (5 Required)

On-site Participation, Academic Conferences, Networking, MICE (Meeting, Incentive, Convention/Conference, Exhibition/Event), Post-COVID Era

The Influence of Psychological Distance on Hotel Selection Decisions: A Construal Level Theory Approach

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The decision-making process of tourists is regarded as an important theme in hospitality and tourism research. Among the various decisions tourists must make, accommodation selection is considered one of the most significant (Kim et al., 2018). In the past, tourists relied on travel agencies for trip planning and accommodation selection. However, modern travelers can easily compare their options in real time and independently plan their trips using official websites, online travel agencies (OTAs), and social media platforms. Moreover, the growing usage of OTAs in recent years has not only expanded the range of accommodation choices available but also provided travelers with a vast amount of information (Sun et al., 2022). In this context, the accommodation selection process has become more complex for travelers (Nie et al., 2020). Therefore, reducing the complexity of the decision-making process by offering appropriate hotel recommendations that align with travelers' needs is necessary (Guillet et al., 2020; Rianthong et al., 2016). Existing research has confirmed the significant influence of individual characteristics (e.g., gender, age, income level, nationality) on accommodation selection. However, relatively few studies have focused on the influence of psychological factors. To address this research gap, this study attempts to clarify the influence of psychological distance on tourists' accommodation selection based on Construal Level Theory.

Psychological distance is a self-centered concept that represents the perceived proximity to or distance from a certain event. It primarily includes temporal distance, spatial distance, social distance, and hypothetical distance (Trope & Liberman, 2010). Construal Level Theory explains the changes in mental representations based on psychological distance from an event. According to this theory, when people perceive an event as psychologically distant, their construal level becomes high, leading them to interpret the event in an abstract, essential, and goal-oriented manner. Conversely, when an event is perceived as psychologically close, the construal level becomes low, causing people to interpret the event in a concrete, detailed, and goal-irrelevant manner (Liberman & Trope, 1998; Trope & Liberman, 2003; Liberman, Trope, & Stephan, 2007; Eyal, Liberman, & Trope, 2009). This study applies these theoretical perspectives to explain the influence of psychological distance on hotel selection.

In this study, conjoint analysis was conducted to examine the important factors that tourists consider when selecting accommodation. Based on the literature review, eight factors—price, brand, location, service quality, room quality, food and beverage quality, security, and facilities—were included in the conjoint design. To investigate the influence of psychological distance, participants were divided into two groups with different psychological distance levels. In previous studies, psychological distance was typically manipulated by asking participants to imagine hypothetical scenarios. However, this study addressed the limitations of scenario-based experiments by employing the construal priming method to manipulate construal levels during the questionnaire survey. Existing research has confirmed the bidirectional relationship between psychological distance and construal level, suggesting that manipulating construal levels can influence perceptions of psychological distance (Trope et al., 2007). In other words, directly manipulating participants' construal levels—toward either a high-level or low-level construal—leads to a corresponding increase or decrease in their perceived psychological distance from an event. In this study, the construal priming method was used to induce either a high-level or low-level construal state. The survey was administered by an internet survey company, and registered panel members were invited to participate. As a result, a total of 1,034 valid responses were obtained.

An ordered logit model was used for estimation. Based on the regression coefficients obtained from the analysis, indicators such as part-worth values and relative importance were calculated. The analysis results revealed that under both construal conditions, price was the most important factor, followed by food and beverage quality. This finding contradicts Construal Level Theory. However, when focusing on changes in relative importance, which represents the extent to which each hotel factor is valued, results

consistent with Construal Level Theory were obtained. Under the high-level construal condition (psychologically distant), abstract and essential factors such as brand and service quality had higher relative importance compared to the low-level construal condition. Conversely, under the low-level construal condition (psychologically close), concrete and secondary factors such as price and location had higher relative importance. Additionally, differences based on tourist attributes such as gender, age, and income were observed. Academically, this study provides new insights into the differences in the factors emphasized in hotel selection decisions by focusing on the influence of psychological distance, which had not been sufficiently addressed in prior research. Practically, the results of this study can contribute to improving information provision and enhancing accommodation recommendations tailored to the diverse needs of travelers.

Keywords (5 Required)

Accommodation selection, psychological distance, Construal Level Theory, construal priming method, accommodation recommendation

Connecting Emotions to Loyalty: The Impact of Flight Attendants' Aesthetic Leadership on Customer Satisfaction

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT (REQUIRED. NO MORE THAN 1000 WORDS)

The competitive landscape of the airline industry underscores the importance of emotional engagement in enhancing customer experiences. This study examines the role of flight attendants' aesthetic leadership in influencing passengers' emotional states, perceived service quality, and subsequent customer satisfaction and loyalty. Aesthetic leadership, defined by sensory engagement, empathy, and relational authenticity, bridges the gap between functional service delivery and emotional connection, providing a unique framework for customer-centric service improvement.

This research contributes significantly to service management and leadership studies. Theoretically, it extends the application of aesthetic leadership to customer experience management, highlighting its role in co-creating emotional value during service interactions. Methodologically, the study incorporates mediating factors such as perceived service quality and emotional engagement while exploring the moderating influence of customer expectations. Practically, the findings provide actionable insights for airlines to enhance their competitive advantage by integrating aesthetic leadership principles into service training and design.

The results reveal that aesthetic leadership significantly improves passengers' emotional states during flights, fostering higher perceptions of service quality. Emotional engagement acts as a critical mediator, strengthening the link between perceived leadership behaviors and customer satisfaction. Additionally, satisfied passengers demonstrate greater loyalty, reinforcing the importance of aesthetic leadership in achieving long-term customer retention.

These findings have broad implications. First, empowering flight attendants with aesthetic leadership skills can improve service delivery and foster emotional connections with passengers. Second, airlines can leverage emotional engagement to differentiate their services and build stronger customer loyalty. Finally, embedding aesthetic leadership principles into organizational culture can create a sustainable competitive advantage in the highly dynamic airline industry.

In conclusion, this study advances the understanding of aesthetic leadership as a multidimensional approach that integrates sensory, emotional, and relational dimensions to enhance customer experiences. By fostering emotional engagement and loyalty, aesthetic leadership offers a transformative framework for the airline industry to achieve service excellence and customer retention

Keywords:
Aesthetic Leadership, Customer Loyalty, Service Quality, Customer Satisfaction, Emotional Engagement

Understanding the Priming Factors Affecting Preference between Home Culture Connectedness and Authentic Destination Experience in International Travel

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Many tourists consider culture as a primary motivation to visit international destinations (Cohen, 1972; Funk & Bruun, 2007; Yan & Halpenny, 2019). This fascination is intensified in the era of globalization, where tourists increasingly come into contact with diverse cultures that are different from their own (Fan et al., 2023). For instance, in 2022, 969 million tourists travelled internationally, contributing $2.07 trillion to the global economy (UNWTO, 2024). As such, the cultural appeal of a destination has become a key indicator of its tourism competitiveness and a catalyst of its economic development and growth (Kumar, Kumar, & Nicolau, 2024). Indeed, tourism policy makers and destination marketing managers have frequently leveraged culture to uniquely present destinations (Carr, Ruhanen, & Whitford, 2016), aiming to attract international tourists and influence their destination selection (Filimonau & Perez, 2018), ultimately maximizing international tourism revenue (Mariani et al., 2023; Rakotondramaro & Botti, 2018).

However, international tourism experience encompasses two distinct aspects: authentic destination experience and home culture connectedness (Wang et al., 2019). Tourists exhibit different preferences between these two. For example, when traveling internationally to a culturally distinctive destination, some tourists value authentic destination experience (e.g., the Americans) (Guttentag et al., 2018), some value home culture connectedness (e.g., the Chinese) (Wang et al., 2019), and still others may well appreciate the opportunity of seeking an authentic destination experience, but simultaneously possess a desire to stay connected with their home culture (Torelli et al., 2017; Garrod & Nicholls, 2022). Given the importance of cultural exploration as a motivation for tourists and its impact on the economic growth of international tourism destinations, a key question arises: Why do some tourists prioritize home culture connectedness, while others prefer authentic destination experience in the context of international tourism?

We propose that tourists' global and local identities can help explain this phenomenon. Individuals with a global identity (globals) are anticipated to broaden their horizons, expand their social circles, and immerse themselves in novel and unfamiliar experiences (Nie et al., 2022). Whereas individuals with a local identity (locals) tend to exhibit greater attachment to their local community, prefer to stay within their local community, and immerse themselves in familiar experiences (Arnett, 2002). Based on these results, we argue that globals are more likely to change and reshape their personal qualities and view their personal qualities as malleable, hence endorsing growth mindset, while locals are more likely to keep their personal qualities and view their personal qualities as fixed, hence endorsing fixed mindset.

Growth mindset among globals (as opposed to fixed mindset among locals) may lead them to prefer authentic destination experience over home culture connectedness in the context of international tourism. Individuals with growth mindset tend to prioritize experience that fosters learning and self-improvement (Park & John, 2010; Song, Lee, & Kim, 2019), whereas those with fixed mindset are more likely to prefer experience that is less focused on learning and self-improvement but is easier to perform (Dweck & Yeager, 2019; Sum, Lau, & Chan, 2022). Considering that authentic destination experience offer novelty and cultural exploration, providing opportunities for tourists to learn and improve (Mody, Suess, Lehto, 2017), while home culture connectedness provides tourists with familiar social cues that guide interactions in their own culture and assure them perform tasks well (Garrod & Nicholls, 2022; Oberg, 1960), we propose that globals may prefer authentic destination experience due to their growth mindset, while locals may prefer home culture connectedness due to their fixed mindset in the context of international tourism.

This research examines the impact of global-local identity on the preference for authentic destination experience versus home culture connectedness among Chinese outbound tourists. The choice of Chinese outbound tourists is justified as they are the world's largest source market for international tourists since 2012 and have attracted global industry interest seeking to benefit from their significant spending (Pearce & Wu, 2017). Second, while home culture connectedness represents a significant internal need and common behavior among international tourists (Torelli et al., 2017), Chinese outbound tourists exhibit a higher level of need for home culture connectedness than their counterparts in other countries (Wang et al., 2019). For these tourists, maintaining home culture connectedness is considered more important than seeking authentic experience (Wang et al., 2019). Third, Chinese culture has become widely visible in many other countries, further reinforcing home culture connectedness among Chinese outbound tourists (Skinner, 2017). Given that a destination's culture plays a key role in its tourism competitiveness and economic development (Kumar, Kumar, & Nicolau, 2024), exploring the factors that influence Chinese outbound tourists' preference for home culture connectedness over authentic destination experience is crucial for the economic growth of international tourism destinations. Therefore, examining the impact of global-local identity on the preference for authentic destination experience versus home culture connectedness, using Chinese outbound tourists as the study sample, is highly valuable.

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The Role of “Kawaii” Service Robots in Shaping Memorable Experiences

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT (REQUIRED. NO MORE THAN 1000 WORDS) – <u>POSTER PRESENTATION</u>

For many hospitality practitioners and entrepreneurs, creating memorable experiences is at the core of their strategy to differentiate themselves from the competition and cultivate loyal customers (Hwang & Lee, 2018). In addition, rising labor costs have forced many hospitality business operators to search for new approaches to improving efficiency (Alexis, 2017). In light of new technological developments in robotics and artificial intelligence (AI), service robots have emerged as an avenue to support employees (Reis et al., 2020). While service robots' ability to adequately perform functional duties is understood, the role of underlying socio-emotional attributes merits further investigation.

For consumer interactions to succeed, it is imperative that service robots mimic human social and emotional characteristics (Wirtz et al., 2018). However, as noted by uncanny valley theory, copying humans too precisely can have negative impacts (Tinwell et al., 2011). Thus, small deviations from humanness can improve interactions. Cuteness, or "Kawaii," is a characteristic found in service robots that can enhance perceptions of service experiences (Qiu et al., 2020). Cuteness is manifested through the language, bodily features, and interfaces of service robots. Kawaii service robots can elicit emotional responses from consumers, which may affect consumption experiences (Venkatesh, 2000).

Therefore, the aim of this study is to explore how service robots contribute to customers' memorable experiences and behavioral intentions, the role of underlying social-emotional elements, and the impact of kawaii aesthetics in enhancing these experiences. Specifically, this study will explore:

1. How service robots influence the dimensions of memorable experiences.
2. The impact of memorable experiences on behavioral outcomes (visit intentions, revisit intentions, eWOM).
3. The influence of perceived humanness, social interactivity, and social presence on the formation of memorable experiences.
4. Whether kawaii features enhance the effects of social interaction, social presence, and physical presence on memorable experiences.

According to Wirtz et al. (2018), service robots are defined as "system-based autonomous and adaptable interfaces that interact, communicate, and deliver service to an organization's customers" (p. 909). In hospitality, service robots contribute to employee support, substitution, differentiation, upskilling, and improvement (Tuomi et al., 2021). The Service Robot Acceptance Model (sRAM) highlights several socio-emotional characteristics—humanness, social interaction, and social presence—that affect how service robots are perceived and accepted (Wirtz et al., 2018). These elements shape the perception of service robots as social counterparts, influencing the quality of customer interactions.

The Memorable Experiences Framework, first outlined by Pine and Gilmore (1998), includes elements such as novelty, hedonism, involvement, meaningfulness, and social interaction that influence consumer memories (Kim et al., 2012). Through the lens of these two frameworks, this study addresses gaps in the literature by exploring how the socio-emotional elements of the sRAM model affect memorable experiences and consumer behavioral outcomes with service robots. Moreover, the extant literature overlooks the moderating effect of "kawaii," or cute characteristics, present in service robot design.

General hypotheses include: the impact of socio-emotional elements on memorable experiences, the relationship between memorable experiences and behavioral intentions, and the moderating effect of kawaii service robots on the relationships between socio-emotional elements and memorable experiences.

This study will employ survey and quasi-experimental methods. The population of interest includes individuals who have dined in a restaurant employing service robots. The sample will specifically target Japanese consumers who have dined in such establishments within the last six months. An online questionnaire will be created using Qualtrics and distributed through Lancers. A scenario-based approach will be employed to measure perceptions of "kawaii" and standard service robots. In the first scenario, participants will view an advertisement for a restaurant featuring a "kawaii" service robot; in the second scenario, a standard service robot will be depicted. The restaurant industry was chosen as the context because several large chains in Japan, such as Bellabot, currently operate service robots, making the practice familiar to the average consumer.

Participants will answer several screening questions before proceeding to the main battery of items. Measures for memorable experiences will be drawn from Hwang and Lee (2018) and Stokburger-Sauer and Teichmann (2013). Scales for socio-emotional elements will be adapted from Bartneck et al. (2009) (perceived humanness), Biocca et al. (2001) (social presence), and Lee et al. (2006) (social interactivity). Behavioral intentions will be measured using an adapted scale from Kim and Moon (2009). All measures will use 7-point Likert scales. The study will employ the two-step approach to CFA and SEM (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

This research is still in its preliminary stages and has yet to collect data; as such, expected contributions will be discussed. This study hypothesizes that socio-emotional elements significantly impact customers' memorable experiences with service robots. These relationships are expected to be meaningful because they align with dimensions of the Memorable Experiences Framework, namely meaningfulness, social interaction, and hedonism. Additionally, cuteness or "kawaii" has been shown to elicit emotional responses from consumers, potentially enhancing these relationships with memorable experiences. Lastly, memorable experiences are expected to influence behavioral intentions such as revisit intentions, recommendations, and eWOM.

This study extends the Memorable Experiences Framework by integrating socio-emotional elements, offering new insights into how service robots shape hospitality experiences. It also advances the understanding of emotions and memorability by incorporating "kawaii" aesthetics as a moderator. For practitioners, the findings suggest that subtle "kawaii" aesthetics in service robot interfaces can enhance emotions, improve memorability, and positively impact visit/revisit intentions, recommendations, and eWOM. Strategies for incorporating emotion-driven engagements are further discussed. Future research should explore the role of "kawaii" in different cultural contexts and assess the impact of service robots on memorability over time as the technology becomes more common and its novelty diminishes.

Keywords (5 Required)

Memorable Experiences, Service Robots, Kawaii Aesthetics, Socio-Emotional Elements, Behavioral Intentions

Am I Seen as Overqualified? The Role of Overqualified Candidates' Stereotype-Specific Impression Management in Recruiters' Perceptions

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Imagine you are a recruiter and receive a resume from a candidate with an exceptionally high level of education, experience, or skillset for your open positions. How would you react?

Overqualification has emerged as a critical challenge in contemporary labor markets, with an estimated 16.5% of employees globally being overqualified for their positions (OECD, 2019). This phenomenon, dubbed the "overqualification epidemic" (Elmer, 2012), presents a complex dynamic where candidates face conflicting perceptions: while recognized for their high competence, they often encounter stereotypes of arrogance that may impede their hiring prospects (Kulkarni et al., 2015; Liu & Wang, 2012). This issue is particularly pronounced in the hospitality industry, where qualification mismatches frequently occur in frontline roles, often categorized as "dirty work" due to their limited educational requirements (Xu et al., 2023).

On the other hand, despite these dominant negative perceptions to overqualified candidates, studies indicate that recruiters do not uniformly stigmatize overqualified candidates and may even view them favorably during hiring processes (Erdogan & Bauer, 2021; Martinez et al., 2014). This disconnects between stereotype and practice suggests that candidate rejection may stem from factors beyond mere overqualification, particularly their performance during recruitment.

Signaling theory provides a valuable framework for understanding this dynamic, emphasizing how various cues, including professional conduct, qualifications, and interview performance, can reduce information asymmetry between candidates and recruiters (Connelly et al., 2011). The literature demonstrates that impression management (IM) tactics serve as crucial signals influencing recruiter perceptions (Bolino et al., 2016). For example, self-promotion might highlight competence, while ingratiation could increase likability and soften perceptions of arrogance (Bolino et al., 2008). Signaling theory also highlights individuals' strategic efforts to communicate their strengths and stand out in a competitive job market, it will be the foundation of the receiver's decision-making process (Connelly et al., 2011). Thus, the present study expects the different types of signals overqualified candidates provide via their IM tactics influence to the recruiter's hiring decisions differently.

Regarding IM tactics employed by overqualified candidates, this study focuses specifically on how perceptions of overqualification stigma influence these strategies. Research has shown that individuals with stigmatized characteristics often develop meta-stereotypes – an awareness or anticipation of how others perceive them based on these characteristics (Neel et al., 2013; Vorauer et al., 2000). This meta-stereotype awareness enables individuals to select appropriate impression management tactics that minimize the salience of negative stereotypes in recruiters' evaluations. Consequently, candidates who recognize themselves as overqualified are expected to deliberately signal favorable information through specific impression management strategies to counter potential negative perceptions, such as arrogant or less commitment characteristics. In contrast, candidates who are objectively overqualified but do not perceive themselves as such may either fail to signal countering information or inadvertently emphasize qualities that trigger recruiters' overqualification stereotypes, ultimately leading to different hiring outcomes.

An important paradox exists in hiring overqualified candidates. Recruiters make judgments about overqualification without knowing candidates' self-perceptions, even though negative stereotypes primarily stem from those who perceive themselves as overqualified (Demir et al., 2022; Erdogan & Bauer, 2009). This creates an ironic situation where recruiters might hire self-perceived overqualified candidates who successfully manage impressions but could later exhibit counterproductive behaviors, while rejecting not self-perceived overqualified candidates who fail to manage impressions effectively despite being potentially excellent fits for the role. This problematic dynamic presents significant organizational risks, such that it increases the likelihood of hiring candidates who may create workplace issues while simultaneously rejecting highly qualified and motivated candidates, resulting in substantial losses for organizations.

To examine this phenomenon, the present study will conduct two experimental studies targeting experienced hospitality professionals. The first study explores whether recruiters perceive overqualified candidates with specific stereotypes or not (e.g., more competent but also more arrogant), examining how these perceptions mediate hiring decisions with resume selection experimental scenario. The second study investigates the effects of IM tactics—self-promotion versus ingratiation—on recruiter perceptions and willingness to hire during the interview period. The anticipated findings suggest that overqualified candidates will be viewed as highly competent but also arrogant, yet still recruiters are willing to hire those overqualified candidates during the resume selections. However, when it comes to the interview, Self-promotion is expected to reinforce perceptions of competence but exacerbate arrogance, potentially reducing hiring willingness. Conversely, ingratiation is anticipated to mitigate arrogance while maintaining competence, increasing both likability and hiring likelihood.

• *Hypothesis 1*

Recruiters perceive overqualified candidates as more (a) competent and (b) arrogant than qualified candidates in the selection process.

• *Hypothesis 2*

Perceived competence and arrogance mediate the candidate's qualification and the recruiter's willingness to hire.

• *Hypothesis 3a*

For overqualified candidates. self-promotion tactics will increase both perceived competence and arrogance compared to control.

• *Hypothesis 3b*

For overqualified candidates, ingratiation tactics will decrease both perceived competence and arrogance compared to control.

• *Hypothesis 4*

Perceived competence and arrogance will mediate the effects of IM strategies and willingness to hire.

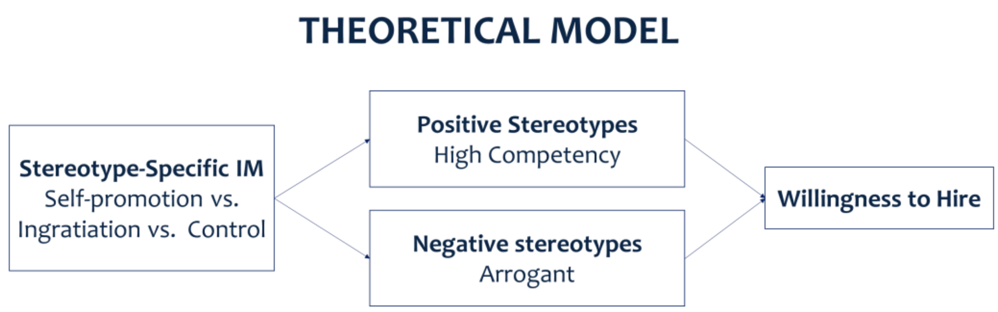
This research makes three key contributions. First, it addresses theoretical gaps by focusing on observed overqualification—when recruiters label candidates as overqualified—and its interaction with stereotype-specific IM strategies. Previous studies have concentrated on subjective overqualification (Erdogan & Bauer, 2021), overlooking how recruiters perceive and respond to surplus qualifications. By applying signaling theory to candidates' strategic behaviors, this study provides insights into how individuals communicate favorable traits during recruitment. Second, it provides empirical evidence by examining overqualification within the hospitality industry, a sector characterized by diverse roles ranging from routine tasks to professional responsibilities. Unlike prior studies that relied on student samples, this study uses experienced hospitality professionals to enhance the validity of findings. Third, it offers practical guidance for mitigating biases against overqualified candidates. By identifying the conditions under which negative stereotypes affect hiring decisions, recruiters can benefit from understanding biases in their evaluations of overqualified candidates, adopting strategies to ensure fairer hiring practices. For job seekers, the findings also offer actionable advice on navigating negative stereotypes through tailored IM strategies. Ultimately, this study aims to enhance both the fairness and effectiveness of recruitment practices, particularly within the hospitality industry, where overqualification is a prevalent challenge.

(Total 999 words)

Keywords (5 Required)

1, Overqualification 2, Recuruiting & Hiring 3, Impression management 4, Meta-stereotype 5, Signaling theory

Figure 1. Conceptual Model



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WHAT ARE THE MOTIVATING FACTORS FOR TRAVELLERS AND LOCALS TO DO HEALTH AND WELLNESS ACTIVITIES? *

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This study investigates why four different generations (baby boomers, Generation X, Y, and Z) from two countries (the United States and Turkiye) prefer healthy living destinations and activities in their hometowns and during their travels. Previous studies have shown that interest in healthy living activities has increased after the pandemic, with various groups of travelers incorporating these experiences into their travels (e.g., Okumus & Linton-Kelly, 2022; Xiong et al., 2023; Xiong et al., 2024). While interest in wellness activities is growing, there is a notable lack of comparative studies examining the reasons behind these choices across different regions and countries. Additionally, research on the varying preferences among generations is still insufficient. For this reason, we conducted this study by developing a set of semi-structured interview questions and questionnaires based on previously published health and wellness studies from academia and reports from the wellness sector. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted using open-ended questions to encourage participants to speak in their own words and narrative structures (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Interviewees were encouraged to provide examples of their experiences. Given the exploratory nature of this study, interviews were conducted in the form of open-ended conversations to obtain a clearer picture of health and wellness and to develop further and structure the interview guide (Jafari et al., 2013). We validated the validity and reliability of these questions with a sample of 6 travelers from these different groups. A total of 11 interview questions were selected, including demographic information.

During the interviews, participants' statements were transcribed verbatim using an automatic transcription system, while their confidentiality was maintained throughout the process. Interviews were conducted with Turkish participants in Turkish and with American participants in English. The research team was fluent in both languages, allowing all interviews to be back-translated into English. Two additional researchers, fluent in both languages, cross-checked both versions for meaning and consistency. Each interview lasted between 35 to 60 minutes. The interview questions were systematically organized into four categories: Physical Fitness, Health (Healing/Treatment Methods), Nutrition, and Spa and Beauty. Each category was clearly explained to the participants to ensure clarity. After making the necessary revisions, we have interviewed ten individuals so far. Data collection is currently ongoing in both countries. The university's Institutional Review Board in the U.S. and TUBITAK in Turkiye reviewed and approved the study.

Preliminary findings from this ongoing study suggest that all generations value physical wellness activities to address general health issues to alleviate the stress and strain of work, family, and social life while improving mental well-being, having a better quality of life, self-esteem, and short- and long-term happiness and health. Participants were generally found to turn to massage parlors and organic markets first, followed by spas, Turkish baths, and beauty centers for physical wellness. They also preferred Asian massage, fitness centers, culinary medicine, alternative medicine, or food concepts. Participants from the

[*] *This study is sponsored by The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye (TÜBİTAK)*

U.S. typically exhibit a preference for supplements and modern integrative medicine services. In contrast, Turkish participants favor traditional practices, including hammam, platelet-rich plasma (PRP), and ozone therapy. At the same time, American participants emphasized inspiring factors such as well-being, relaxation, self-acceptance, and longevity, while Turkish participants valued appearance, cleanliness, joy, relaxation, enthusiasm, and strength.

Keywords: *Health, wellness, travel, generations.*

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On the "Tourism Internship Program" of Kyushu Sangyo University's Department of Tourism, Aimed at Developing Human Resources in Tourism

Ichiro Maki

EXTENDED ABSTRACT (REQUIRED. NO MORE THAN 1000 WORDS)

In this document we describe the formatting requirements for the Global Hospitality and Tourism Research Summit－Fukuoka. Please review this document carefully. You can use this document as a template and copy/paste your paper actual paper content here (this might be the best or easiest way). Please be sure to adhere to the formatting requirements as introduced here. Please note several limitations on length and formatting: (1) your abstract should be no more than 1000 words, as the abstract will also be used for the conference program, (2) please use Times New Roman, single-space, and a 12-pt font, (3) please make sure to place your paper's objectives, contribution, findings and results (if any), and discussion and implications, (4) you can present all materials and sections such as figures, tables, and references during the actual presentation, and (5) please limit your abstract write-up in two page for the final submission using this template.

Keywords (5 Required)

「Internship」「Tourism」「partnership」「professional」「practical」

［Poster:］ On the "Tourism Internship Program" of Kyushu Sangyo University's Department of Tourism, Aimed at Developing Human Resources in Tourism

The "Tourism Internship Program" of Kyushu Sangyo University's Department of Tourism is a significant initiative that emphasizes the importance of practical educational programs in the tourism industry. The knowledge and skills that students acquire through practical experience become invaluable assets for their future career development. By strengthening collaboration with companies, the program supports students' job-hunting activities and contributes to the overall development of the tourism industry.

Moving forward, it is crucial to enhance the content of the program and establish a system that allows more students to participate. Deepening collaboration with companies and improving the quality of the internship content are essential to promote student growth. This approach enables students to acquire practical skills and build a favorable position for career development in the tourism industry.

This study examines the educational characteristics and effects of the Tourism Internship Program. A six-month pre-education period was implemented, during which students received guidance on the objectives of the internship and the basic behavioral norms as professionals. Subsequently, partnerships with tourism-related companies such as hotels and airlines were established, and an in-company training system was constructed, allowing students to gain practical experience. On the 12th day, a review session was held with representatives from companies, students, and faculty members, where feedback was provided. Additionally, companies evaluated students' performance on a five-point scale, and students recorded their daily tasks in an "L-Note," facilitating smooth communication through self-evaluation and on-site evaluation.

Surveys of students and interviews with company representatives confirmed that students acquired and developed specialized knowledge and skills as tourism professionals. Improvements were observed in the following eight areas: "thinking with a broad perspective," "specialized knowledge," "expressive ability to convey information to others," "ability to plan a career," "consideration for others," "adherence to professional norms," "continuous improvement of work quality through reflection," "fulfillment of leisure time," and "proactive engagement and achievement of tasks." This program enhances leadership, knowledge, and skills as tourism professionals and contributes to the development of practical skills and basic social skills. Through the internship, students improved their problem-solving abilities and communication skills, which are beneficial for future career development. The effectiveness of the program was supported by high evaluations from company representatives.

Overall, this study emphasizes the crucial role of practical educational programs in the development of tourism professionals and contributes to the improvement and development of future educational programs. The significance of this research lies in reaffirming the importance of practical educational programs in the tourism industry. The knowledge and skills that students acquire through practical experience become invaluable assets for their future career development. By strengthening collaboration with companies, the program supports students' job-hunting activities and contributes to the overall development of the tourism industry. Moving forward, it is crucial to enhance the content of the program and establish a system that allows more students to participate. Deepening collaboration with companies and improving the quality of the internship content are essential to promote student growth. This approach enables students to acquire practical skills and build a favorable position for career development in the tourism industry.

This program enhances leadership, knowledge, and skills as tourism professionals and contributes to the development of practical skills and basic social skills. Through the internship, students improved their problem-solving abilities and communication skills, which are beneficial for future career development. The effectiveness of the program was supported by high evaluations from company representatives. Overall, this study emphasizes the crucial role of practical educational programs in the development of tourism professionals and contributes to the improvement and development of future educational programs.

Furthermore, the program's success highlights the importance of continuous feedback and evaluation. By incorporating regular review sessions and performance assessments, the program ensures that students receive constructive feedback, which is vital for their professional growth. This iterative process of learning and improvement not only benefits the students but also enhances the overall quality of the internship program. As the tourism industry evolves, this program must adapt to new trends and demands, ensuring that students are well-prepared to meet the challenges of the future.

Poster

Tourism in the Anthropocene

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT (REQUIRED. NO MORE THAN 1000 WORDS)

What is the Anthropocene? How does tourism relate to this movement? The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between tourism and environmental changes such as global warming and biodiversity decline, from the perspective that our actions are interrelated with local cultures and nature to form the earth system, and to clarify what tourism, that is, sustainable tourism are suitable for the Anthropocene era.

1) Start of the Anthropocene: In 2000, the Nobel laureate in chemistry P. J. Crutzen argued that the Holocene is now over and the "Anthropocene" — the age of mankind.

2) Tourism from an Anthropocene perspective: Gren & Huijbens (2014) embarked on tourism research from the perspective of the Anthropocene. "Tourism is undoubtedly a geophysical force that characterizes the Anthropocene," he said. In other words, tourism is a burden on the "Earth system" and must be seen as a fundamental part of the environmental problem of the Anthropocene, which is global sustainability.

3) Anthropocene and Tourism – Three Stages: In the Anthropocene discussion, it is important to understand the three stages in order to examine the relationship between tourism and the effects of the Earth system, such as global warming and biodiversity loss.

Stage 1 - The Industrial Era (ca. 1800—1945) : Since the Industrial Revolution, fossil fuels have been used as power to promote industrialization. This eased constraints on energy supplies, led to population growth, and rapid expansion of the global economy. There was also widespread deforestation and conversion to agriculture, particularly in the Northern Hemisphere. Throughout the first stage, the atmosphere was the most pronounced manifestation of environmental changes on a global scale, and an increase in carbon dioxide concentration was confirmed. On the other hand, the technological innovations that drove the Industrial Revolution, especially the invention of the steam engine, were stimulated by the development of railways and steamships, which stimulated the movement of people and promoted tourism. In 1825, steam locomotive railroads opened in England, and in 1869 the transcontinental railroad of the United States opened. In addition, in the mid-19th century, steamships entered service on the Atlantic liner route, facilitating intercontinental travel. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, coastal areas such as the Riviera on the Mediterranean coast and Southern California on the west coast of the United States developed as popular tourist destinations. In addition, mountain railways (Rigi Railways) began to run in mountainous areas such as the Alps, and winter tourism was developed.

Stage 2 - The Great Acceleration Period (1945—ca. 2015) : After World War II, the new international regime promoted the creation of conditions for the resumption of economic growth. Increasing urbanization, increasing urban population, and the advent of automobiles and aircraft have led to a rapid expansion of human activity that has affected various aspects of the Earth system. The world's ecosystems have changed so rapidly and extensively that the rate of species loss has increased. Through the development of new materials, the formation of minerals, plastics, and persistent organic pollutants has accelerated, and the environment has been long-lasting. The concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere has increased, and global warming has progressed rapidly. By 1950, atmospheric CO_2 concentrations had exceeded 300 ppmv – 270-275 ppm before industrial levels – and suddenly began to accelerate. And since 1950, about three-quarters (about 310-380 ppm) of the anthropogenically caused increase in CO_2 concentrations has occurred (Steffen *et al.* 2007). On the other hand, after World War II, tourism also entered an era of great acceleration. The number of international tourist arrivals increased from about 25 million in 1950 to about 1.4 billion in 2018, and was expected to reach 1.8 billion by 2030, How has tourism affected the Earth system? I would like to examine the environmental changes on a global scale due to tourism by focusing on six aspects. First, 30-50% of the Earth's non-frozen surface has been altered by human land use and land cover. Second, energy use has a wide range of environmental impacts. This is largely due to the fact that 85% of the world's energy use is based on the burning of fossil fuels. Third, tourism may have an impact on bioexchange and the extinction of wild species. The most important is the direct transfer of species through tourism. Fourth, tourism is the main factor driving

the transmission and epidemic of diseases. Fifth, there is a waste of water. Many countries are facing a serious water crisis, including depletion of surface water and groundwater. As the population increases and changes in water quality and availability, conflicts over water are expected to intensify on a global scale. Finally, I would like to point out that while tourism deepens environmental knowledge, it does not necessarily lead to positive changes in tourist attitudes, attitudes, and ultimately environmentally sound behaviour.

Stage 3 - Stewards of the Earth System (ca. 2015—?) : Recognizing that the burden on the earth caused by human activities has come to threaten human survival, it is necessary to formulate policies to reduce greenhouse gases, take action, and aim for sustainability in the earth system. One of the challenges of tourism in the Anthropocene is environmentally friendly tourism (soft tourism). How can tourism protect local ecosystems, keep economies efficient, ensure future economic growth, and contribute to peaceful and constituent people, under the constraints of reducing greenhouse gas (carbon dioxide) emissions? Second, the Planetary Boundary (PB) framework is an attempt to construct a new paradigm that seeks to sustain the Earth system and create a state of resilience while promoting the continuous development of human society. There is a need for scientific analysis of the danger of planetary destabilization of the Earth system due to human-caused disruption. Thirdly, as an ethical question of the Anthropocene, the ethics of care related to the global scale is a kind of "geo-philia," and in tourism as well, there is a need for a love for the earth that takes care of the earth, breaking away from conventional tourism.

Keywords (5 Required)

Anthropocene, Tourism, Global Warming, Earth System, Soft Tourism

"Research into an educational model for training international students as hotel personnel"

Tsubasa Konishi(Nishitetsu international business college)

In our technical college, we have established a new department so called “Management for International Hotels” targeted for international students to improve their skills so that they can play an active role in tourism field.
They will study for 3years to gain advanced skills and highly qualified certificates to be able to contribute to the operations and management departments of the hotel industry. Due to the increase of inbounds, a lot of technical colleges are offering programs for them, but most of them do not get employed as a global human resource but as a work force at present. Our final mission of this new department is to help develop a human resource for the future in hotel industry.

They spend over 700 hours of thorough Japanese language education aimed at passing the N2 exam. They also spend over 300 hours of training at the hotel. In their third year they will learn in a field of study called “Accounting” to improve their skills in management. Through those basic curriculums, we check their operation skills, and find their problems so that we can give correct guidance individually.

As a result, in recent years, international students have managed to improve their skills in Japanese language and also achieved high techniques at the same time, so consequently, all international students hoping to find employment were able to pass the employment exams at domestic hotels and secure job offers.

As for future plans, our intention is to challenge and develop in instructive model, and contribute to globalized hotels in Japan. There for we should aim to enrich the curriculum in “Japanese Language Education” “Hotel Specialized Education” “Hotel Internship”
and “Intercultural Understanding Education” in base.

Poster Presentation

Sustainable Tourism and Changing Tourist Behaviors: A Case Study of Dazaifu Tenmangu in the Age of Social MediaPaper

Miyamae Noriko,Japan noritsuku66@yahoo.co.jp

Poster Presentation

Sustainable Tourism and Changing Tourist Behaviors: A Case Study of Dazaifu Tenmangu in the Age of Social Media

Noriko Miyamae

Abstract

This study explores the evolving dynamics of sustainable tourism through a case study of Dazaifu Tenmangu Shrine, a major cultural and historical tourist destination in Fukuoka Prefecture, Japan. Amid increasing global attention to sustainability in tourism, Japan has introduced national guidelines emphasizing the importance of community-based destination management. The integration of residents and visitors is now considered essential for long-term sustainability.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted tourist volumes; however, the number of visitors to Dazaifu has since rebounded, with notable growth in international tourism. This revival is closely linked to the strategic use of social media by both the shrine and local businesses, which now serve as primary channels for tourists to obtain and share information. Traditional guidebooks have largely been replaced by real-time, visual-based platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, reflecting broader shifts in tourist behavior.

Through on-site surveys, interviews with shop owners and staff, and participant observation conducted between December 2024 and April 2025, this research investigates the current state of tourism around Dazaifu Tenmangu. Particular attention is given to the diversification of tourist demographics and behavior, the responses of local businesses, and infrastructural challenges facing the area. The findings suggest a clear transformation from a traditional religious pilgrimage destination to a multifunctional, experience-based tourist hub.

The surveyed shops—ranging from long-established souvenir and sweets shops to newly opened cafés—demonstrate varying levels of engagement with social media. Younger shop owners often actively use platforms to post visually engaging content, attracting customers who are highly influenced by online images. Meanwhile, more traditional shops benefit from user-generated content, even if they do not engage with social media directly. This has led to increasingly complex patterns of tourist behavior, often centered on food, shopping, and photo opportunities rather than religious worship.

The majority of foreign tourists originate from Asian countries such as South Korea, Taiwan, and China, with relatively fewer from Western nations. Japanese tourists tend to be younger (20s–30s) and are strongly influenced by social media trends, while foreign visitors display a wider age range, often traveling in families. The traditional practice of shrine visitation is, for many, secondary to shopping and

eating along the approach.

In terms of purchasing behavior, the era of mass-buying by international tourists appears to be declining. Instead, demand has shifted toward “high-quality items” and “unique experiences.” Local products like umegae mochi, matcha-flavored sweets, and culturally themed goods remain popular, while exclusive, locally made items and even Japanese pop culture merchandise (such as anime character goods) are especially attractive to overseas visitors. Many foreign tourists include Dazaifu as the final destination in their travel itinerary, taking direct buses to the airport from Dazaifu Station after shopping for souvenirs.

Despite the positive momentum, several challenges have surfaced. Waste disposal issues, insufficient signage for restrooms, and a lack of resting spaces have been exacerbated by the rise of street food consumption. Local shopkeepers also report an increase in littering, particularly since the shrine reduced the number of trash bins. These observations highlight the urgent need for improved tourism-related infrastructure to support the growing number of visitors.

Efforts to provide a more sustainable tourism experience include multilingual signage, foreign-language omikuji (fortune slips), volunteer tour guides, and foreign-language menus created by shop owners. However, persistent infrastructural limitations, such as poor accessibility in older areas, congested roads, and lack of barrier-free facilities, continue to affect visitor comfort and limit exploration beyond the main thoroughfare.

On a social level, many locals express concerns about cultural differences, yet some report improvements in the manners of foreign tourists, especially among younger generations. Shopkeepers have found that respectful communication helps foster mutual understanding. This positive trend may serve as a foundation for deeper engagement between hosts and guests.

In conclusion, this study illustrates the dual transformation occurring in Dazaifu: quantitatively, with increasing visitor numbers post-COVID, and qualitatively, with changing motivations and behaviors. The shift toward hybrid tourism—combining cultural heritage with modern consumer demands—requires local stakeholders to adopt flexible strategies and collaborative approaches. Sustainable tourism in Dazaifu cannot rely solely on individual shop initiatives but must be supported by coordinated efforts among businesses, residents, government agencies, and tourism organizations.

The research emphasizes the importance of community cooperation, timely communication, and infrastructure development in addressing the complexities of modern tourism. Moreover, fostering inter-shop dialogue and knowledge-sharing mechanisms is crucial for collectively responding to rapid behavioral shifts in tourism. As a historically and culturally rich destination, Dazaifu holds significant potential to become a model for sustainable, inclusive, and community-driven tourism.

Keywords：

Sustainable Tourism , Dazaifu Tenmangu,Tourist Behavior,Social Media and Tourism,Community-Based Tourism Management

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Poster: Marketing Gendered Destinations: The Effect of Voice Pitch

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Wai Ching Wilson AU, Fiona CHI, and Pengchen ZHAO

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT (REQUIRED. NO MORE THAN 1000 WORDS)

Tourism branding has traditionally relied on visual and textual elements to create compelling destination identities and influence consumer decision-making. However, as digital tourism marketing evolves, auditory branding is emerging as a crucial yet underexplored component of destination marketing communications. Sound symbolism theory suggests that auditory stimuli, including voice pitch, tone, and intonation, can implicitly convey meaning, shaping consumer perceptions and emotional responses (Melzner & Raghubir, 2023). In advertising and branding research, voice pitch has been found to influence credibility, trustworthiness, and product evaluation (Tsantani et al., 2016). However, limited research has explored how voice pitch in destination promotional content influences tourists' mental imagery and decision-making, presenting a significant gap in tourism branding studies.

The growing use of video-based tourism marketing further underscores the need for a deeper understanding of auditory branding strategies. Tourism destinations frequently employ voiceovers in promotional videos to enhance brand messaging, yet existing research has largely focused on the impact of visual imagery, colors, and destination narratives (He, Li, & Zhong, 2024). Since tourism is an experiential product that relies on multi-sensory engagement, understanding how auditory cues, particularly voice pitch, contribute to destination brand perception is essential. This study addresses this gap by examining how voice pitch affects perceptions of destination masculinity and femininity, influencing voice-destination congruency judgments and travel intentions.

Gender-based branding is a well-established concept in consumer research, where brands are often perceived as having masculine or feminine traits (Aaker, 1997). Similarly, tourism destinations can be characterized by gendered attributes—for example, adventure-based destinations with rugged landscapes are often perceived as masculine, whereas luxury resorts or wellness retreats may evoke feminine associations (Pan, Lu, & Zhang, 2021). However, less attention has been given to how auditory cues—such as voice pitch—reinforce these gendered destination perceptions.

Given the aforementioned research gaps, this study adopted a between-group methodology with a single factor (low pitched voice vs. middle pitched voice vs. high pitched voice) experimental design to investigate individual's voice-destination congruency perceptions (Figure 1).

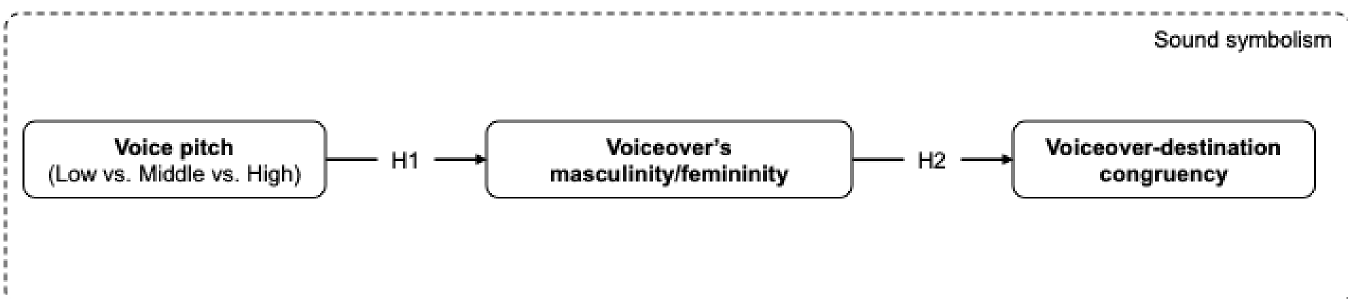

Figure 1. Proposed research model

The experimental stimuli were created in three stages. First, four destination promotion sentences were randomly generated using a publicly available random-text generator (https://deepai.org/chat/text-generator). Second, this study used a "male" voice from Play.ht (i.e., an AI-powered voice generator that creates ultra-realistic humanlike voices; https://www.play.ht) as the baseline voice and created an audio file for each sentence. A computer software package for speech analysis (i.e., Praat) suggested that the pitch (i.e., 113.29Hz – 135.14Hz) of the baseline voices falls with the ranges (i.e., 85Hz – 155Hz) of an average adult man. Next, voice pitch was systematically increased and decreased by three levels using AudioDirector 365 to create two different conditions.

Inspired by prior work on gender-based destination stereotypes (Pan, Lu, & Gursoy, 2020), a binary destination choice task was used to examine individual's voice-destination congruency perceptions. After listening to the four sentences, participants were then presented with four randomized binary destination options: one stereotypically feminine option and one stereotypically masculine option (Pan et al., 2020; Pan et al., 2021) (Table 1) and instructed to select the destination that best fit the voice they interacted with previously. The four binary destination options were selected based on the characteristics of destination femininity (e.g., relaxing, lovely, romantic, and graceful) and masculinity (e.g., adventurous, heroic, conquering, and vast) identified by Pan et al. (2021).

Table 1. Four binary destination options

Pairs	**Masculine destinations**	**Feminine destinations**
D1		
D2		
D3		
D4		

With the help of a professional survey company, 300 valid responses were collected over a one-week period from panel members. Four logistic-based mediation models (PROCESS Macro Model 4; Hayes, 2012) were conducted to examine whether voice pitch differences foster individual's voice-destination congruency perceptions through perceived masculinity/femininity. The results consistently suggested that perceived masculinity/femininity partially and positively mediated the effect of low voice pitch D1: b=1.544, 95%CI=0.721–2.763; D2: b=1.256, 95%CI=-0.333–2.551; D3: b=1.123, 95%CI=0.367–2.117; D4: b=1.701, 95%CI=0.258–3.845), and completely and negatively mediated the effect of high voice pitch (D1: b=-1.916, 95%CI=-3.460– -0.844; D2: -b=1.558, 95%CI=-3.214– -0.412; D3: -b=1.394, 95%CI=-2.612– -0.462; D4: -b=2.112, 95%CI=-4.807– -0.380) on individual's selections of a masculine (vs.

feminine) destination. These results triangulate the relationship between voice pitch and perceived masculinity/femininity of voiceovers across gender. The significant direct positive effect of low voice pitch on individual's destination choice (b=1.206–2.782, $p<0.001$) supported Tsantani et al.'s (2016) argument that lower-pitched voices are perceived as more reliable and trustworthiness.

This study makes significant theoretical and practical contributions to the fields of tourism branding, sensory marketing, and sound symbolism theory. Theoretically, it extends sound symbolism theory by demonstrating that voice pitch serves as a gendered auditory cue, influencing tourists' perceptions of destination masculinity and femininity, an area largely unexplored in destination marketing research. This finding advances the understanding of gender-based branding by highlighting the interplay between auditory branding elements and destination image formation. Practically, this study provides valuable insights for tourism marketers and destination managers by emphasizing the importance of strategic voice selection in promotional materials. By integrating auditory branding into tourism marketing strategies, this study provides a novel and actionable framework for enhancing destination competitiveness and consumer appeal.

Keywords (5 Required)

Destination gender, Masculinity/femininity, Voice pitch, Video marketing, Sound symbolism

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Poster

The impact of Personalization and Diversity on Trust, Usefulness and Satisfaction in Photo-Based Social Media Travel Recommendations

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With the rise of social media as a primary platform for travel information acquisition and decision-making, algorithm-driven personalization has become a crucial factor in shaping travel choice (Leung et al., 2013). While personalized recommendations enhance efficiency by tailoring content to users' preferences, they also raise concerns about the filter bubble phenomenon, which restricts exposure to diverse perspectives and reinforces pre-existing preferences (Chen, 2023; Shin & Lee, 2021). In the tourism context, this phenomena is particularly relevant given its potential to overemphasize popular destinations while limiting awareness of lesser-known options (Gretzel, 2019). Therefore, this study examines the interaction between personalization and information diversity in social media-based travel recommendations and its impact on trust, perceived information usefulness and user satisfaction. Prior research has largely focused on the efficiency of recommendation systems (Dahlgren, 2021; Gong et al., 2024), with limited attention to their implications for decision diversity and trust formation in the tourism context. By investigating the balance between personalization and diversity, this study provides valuable insights into mitigating algorithmic biases and promoting fair and transparent recommendation systems in the tourism industry.

To empirically examine the interaction between personalization and diversity in social media-based travel recommendations, this study employed a 2 (personalization: low vs. high) × 2 (diversity: low vs. high) between-subjects factorial design. A total of 174 participants were randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions, where they engaged with Instagram-based travel recommendations and assessed their perceived trust, information usefulness, user satisfaction, and travel choice intention. Personalization was manipulated by varying the composition of the recommended posts as follows: (1) in the high-personalization condition, all 10 recommended posts exclusively featured restaurant-related content; and (2) in the low-personalization condition, the recommendations included five restaurant-related posts and five posts featuring other types of content, such as tourist attractions and accommodations. Diversity was manipulated by altering the variety of the posts: (1) in the high-diversity condition, all 10 posts featured distinct and varied information; and (2) in the low-diversity condition, the posts contained repetitive and similar information.

The findings indicate that high personalization enhances trust when paired with diverse information, whereas low diversity weakens trust and increases the risk of filter bubble. Additionally, trust significantly influences travel choice intention, mediated by perceived information usefulness and user satisfaction. While perceived information usefulness alone did not mediate the relationship between trust and choice intention, it contributed to a significant sequential mediation effect when combined with user satisfaction. Notably, user satisfaction emerged as a critical mediator, underscoring its central role in driving travel decision-making.

This study offers several theoretical contributions by empirically examining how personalization and diversity interact to influence trust in tourism decision-making. Unlike prior studies (Shin & Lee, 2021) that primarily explored the filter bubble in news and political contexts, this study extends the discussion to tourism, revealing that personalization's impact is contingent on diversity. These insights emphasize the necessity of incorporating diversity into recommendation systems to avoid algorithmic biases. Furthermore, this study identifies the dual mediation effects of perceived information usefulness and user satisfaction on the relationship between trust and choice intention, providing a foundational understanding of the multidimensional impacts of psychological variables (e.g., perceived usefulness, satisfaction) on behavioral intentions (Bagozzi, 1992). Notably, the finding that perceived information usefulness did not independently mediate the relationship between trust and choice intention but exerted an indirect effect through user satisfaction underscores the importance of considering user satisfaction as a key factor in designing recommendation systems. This highlights the need to integrate psychological factors into the design and evaluation of recommendation systems, proposing practical directions for enhancing their effectiveness.

From a practical perspective, these findings offer meaningful insights for tourism practitioners aiming to enhance user experiences and ensure sustainable growth through recommendation systems. A key insight is the importance of balancing personalization with diversity to mitigate the adverse effects of filter bubbles. Integrating diverse and balanced content into recommendation algorithms can foster user trust and encourage engagement with lesser-known tourism options, enriching the overall platform experience. To achieve this balance, tourism platforms should prioritize implementing algorithmic diversity metrics and continuously refining recommendation processes. Actively gathering and analyzing user feedback on the relevance and quality of recommendations enables iterative improvements, ensuring that both personalization and diversity align with user expectations. This adaptive approach enhances user satisfaction and drives long-term engagement. Additionally, transparency in algorithmic operations is also essential for building trust. Providing clear explanations of why specific recommendations are made and offering users the ability to customize their preferences can improve perceived credibility and deepen interaction with the platform. By implementing these strategies, tourism platforms can foster trust-driven, diverse, and user-centered recommendation systems. This not only improves user satisfaction and engagement but also promotes ethical and sustainable tourism growth, ensuring long-term industry development.

Ultimately, this study underscores the importance of balancing personalization and diversity in social media-based travel recommendations. By addressing the negative consequences of the filter bubble phenomenon, the findings highlight the necessity of trust-building mechanisms in recommendation systems to promote fair, transparent, and sustainable travel decision-making.

Keywords (5 Required)

Social media, Potential tourists, Perceived information personalization, Perceived information diversity, Filter bubble

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Poster: Expanding smart tourism technology attributes from the tourist’s perspective

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT (REQUIRED. NO MORE THAN 1000 WORDS)

The rapid proliferation of smart tourism technology (STT) has fundamentally reshaped the tourism sector, altering how tourists interact with destinations and how tourism enterprises conduct their operations. Smart tourism technology encompasses a diverse array of digital tools, artificial intelligence (AI), big data, and the Internet of Things (IoT) that enhance tourists' decision-making capabilities, personalization of experiences, and real-time engagement with destinations (Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2015). In response, many tourism destinations are actively integrating smart technologies to offer seamless, data-driven, and immersive experiences, thereby bolstering their competitiveness in the digital era (Gretzel et al., 2015).

Existing literature on smart tourism technology has predominantly relied on No and Kim's (2015) conceptual framework to identify four key characteristics that define the effectiveness of these systems: accessibility, informativeness, interactivity, and personalization. This framework ensures that tourists can conveniently access technological services, enabling smart tourism platforms to provide valuable, real-time data to assist travelers in planning and experiencing their journeys (Xiang et al., 2021). Interactivity facilitates engagement through smart technologies, enabling two-way communication between tourists and tourism service providers (Gretzel & Sigala, 2021). Finally, personalization enhances user satisfaction by tailoring recommendations and services based on tourists' preferences and behavioral patterns (Buhalis et al., 2019).

As tourism destinations become increasingly digitized, tourists' expectations are evolving, prompting a demand for more sophisticated and innovative applications of smart tourism technologies. While the attributes of accessibility, informativeness, interactivity, and personalization have been well-established in the smart tourism literature, No and Kim's (2015) conceptual framework was developed based on tourism websites in the era of eTourism, where technology primarily served as a facilitator of information dissemination and service optimization (Buhalis & Law, 2008). This framework may not fully capture the expanding role and functions of technology in the contemporary smart tourism landscape.

The shift from eTourism to smart tourism signifies a profound change in the role and function of digital technology within tourism experiences. While eTourism was characterized as static and transaction-focused, smart tourism is dynamic, data-driven, context-aware, and experiential-oriented (Gretzel et al., 2015). There is an emerging focus on understanding how smart tourism can foster deeper experiential engagement, emotional attachment, and real-time adaptability. This transformation necessitates an expansion of the traditional STT framework developed by No and Kim (2015) to better capture the evolving role of technology in the smart tourism domain (Au & Tsang, 2022).

This exploratory study adopted a qualitative approach, utilizing in-depth interviews to thoroughly explore tourist perspectives on STT attributes. A convenience sampling technique was used to obtain a sample of respondents who were 18 years old or older, had at least one travel experience within the past 24 months, and had experience using at least six of the 20 smart tourism technologies summarized by Jeong and Shin (2020). A total of 20 participants were recruited for the in-depth interviews.

The interview protocol included four main sections to obtain an in-depth understanding of STT attributes: 1) defining smart tourism; 2) defining smart tourism technologies; 3) experiences using smart tourism technologies; and 4) attitudes towards smart tourism technologies. Each interview lasted an average of 43 minutes, ranging from 32 to 58 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded with the interviewees' consent, transcribed verbatim, and translated into English by the first author for further analysis. The six-step thematic analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to analyze the interview data, with No and Kim's (2015) traditional STT framework serving as the foundation to explore STT attributes.

The findings identified two additional smart tourism technology attributes - uniqueness and timeliness - that play pivotal roles in enhancing tourists' experiences and shaping their perceptions of smart destinations. Uniqueness, as an emerging STT attribute, refers to the ability of smart technologies to provide tourists with distinctive, one-of-a-kind experiences that differentiate destinations and augment their personal identity. The second emerging attribute, timeliness, underscores the significance of delivering real-time information to enrich smart tourism experiences. The study reveals that tourists highly value immediate access to relevant, up-to-date data regarding crowd levels, queue wait times, weather conditions, and alternative route suggestions. Delays in accessing real-time information diminish the perceived efficiency of smart tourism applications, particularly in high-traffic urban areas where time-sensitive decision-making is crucial.

This study expands the conceptual framework of smart tourism technology by identifying uniqueness and timeliness as essential additions to the established STT attributes. These findings help bridge the gap between traditional STT functions and tourists' changing expectations, providing new insights into how smart tourism can enhance depth of experience, destination uniqueness, and real-time effectiveness. The study offers practical implications for tourism stakeholders, underscoring the importance of tailored digital innovations that align with tourists' desires for exclusivity, immediacy, and enriched experiences. Future research should further investigate how these attributes influence tourist behavior, destination competitiveness, and long-term engagement across diverse tourism contexts.

Keywords (5 Required)

Smart tourism, smart tourism technology, technology attribute, uniqueness, timeliness

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Poster: Nudging with colors in electric vehicle rentals: The effect of brightness contrast in button design

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT (REQUIRED. NO MORE THAN 1000 WORDS)

There would essentially be no tourism without the supports of transport. Unfortunately, in the process of carrying tourists to, from and within destinations, transport contributes the most emissions in tourism (Le-Klähn & Hall, 2015). Scholars have generally suggested that public transport is the most effective way to reduce transport emissions in tourism (e.g., Gronau & Kagermeier, 2007; Albalate & Bel, 2010; Gronau, 2017), as it accommodates many tourists simultaneously to significantly lower carbon emissions per person.

However, the shift from private vehicles to public transport in tourism has nonetheless impacted the fun, flexibility, and freedom associated with self-driving tourism (Derrett, 2002). By definition, self-driving tourism involves using automobiles (private or rented) for leisure and pleasure rather than for commuting or errands (Prideaux et al., 2001). Prideaux and Yin (2019) urged tourism scholars to focus more on how new mobilities technologies such as electric vehicles help reduce transport emissions. In Scotland, Milev, Hastings, and Al-Habaibeh (2021) discovered that electric vehicles produced 33.7% less greenhouse gases than conventional vehicles, representing the future of the transport industry (Van Mierlo & Maggetto, 2007).

The use of electric vehicles has been highly relevant to the self-driving tourism market, that accounts for more than 40% of tourism activities (Prideaux & Carson, 2003). This market has even become more popular after the pandemic when there is a high demand for proximity tourism, with Li and Guo (2023) reporting that more 80% of tourists in Xinjiang are self-driving tourists. However, scholarly attentions on vehicle rental market in tourism remain scarce. While the contribution of vehicle rental companies to encourage electric vehicle use is obvious (e.g., eco-labelling and free-charging), investigations on how tourists are motivated to rent electric vehicles are limited (Au, Lin, & Chi, 2024).

As an "aspect of the choic architecture that alters people's behavior in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives" (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008), nudging provides an insightful mechanism to encourage tourist opting for a more sustainable option (i.e., renting an electric vehicle) in their self-driving tour. Despite the extensive scholarly attentions on nudging in the tourism literature, most literature heavily relied on the message framing concept to study nudging as an informative tool to engage individual's reflexive thinking (Souza-Neto et al., 2023). They overlooked nudging as a heuristic blocker to simpily the decision-making process (Barton & Grüne-Yanoff, 2015). In other words, nudging with information may not always be effective, because decision-makers may be confused by the additional efforts they devote to evaluate the relevance and quality of information (Miller & Cassady, 2015).

As a form of visual nudging, nudging with color has widely been recognized effective to promote desired behaviors such as donation behaviors (Nie et al., 2020), walking behaviors (Chen et al., 2023), and purchasing behaviors (Peng et al., 2022). Since Singh (2006) reported that 62% to 90% of individual's decision relied on color alone, distinguishing items by colors is a common nudging practice in the society. In many destinations (e.g., China and the United Kingdom), a green number plate indicates electric vehicles to signify their eco-friendly and sustainable.

Drawing on visual salience theory, which posits that individuals tend to unconsciously direct attention towards the most salient visual stimuli (e.g., distinct color) (Michels et al., 2024), this study aims to examine the effect of color brightness contrast between a desired option (i.e., the 'select' box for a fully electric vehicle) and less-desired options (i.e., the 'select' boxes for a fossil fuel vehicle and a hybrid electric vehicle) on individual's vehicle rental decision through mental imagery (Figure 1). Adopting a between-group methodology, this study conducted a single factor (low vs. middle vs. high brightness contrast) scenario-based experiment with 300 (100 per group) participants (Figure 2).

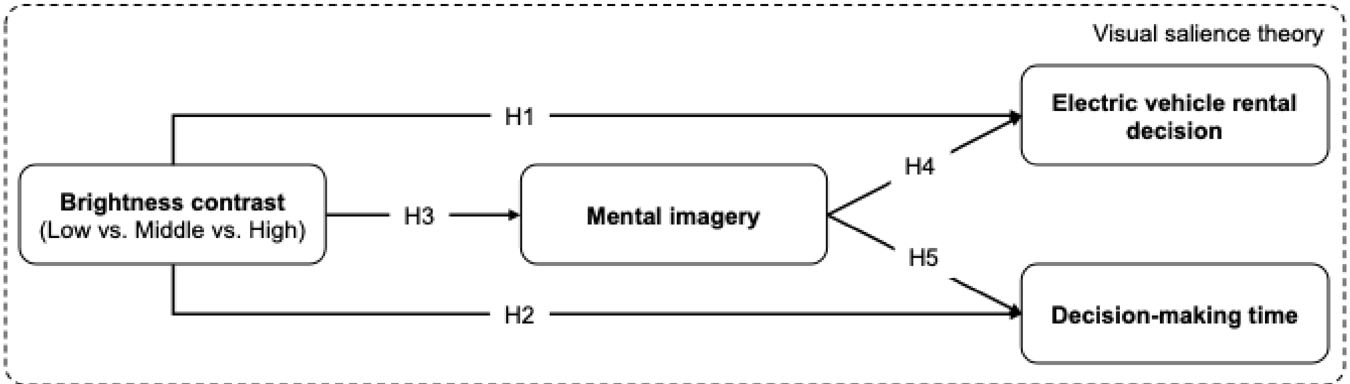

Figure 1. Proposed research model

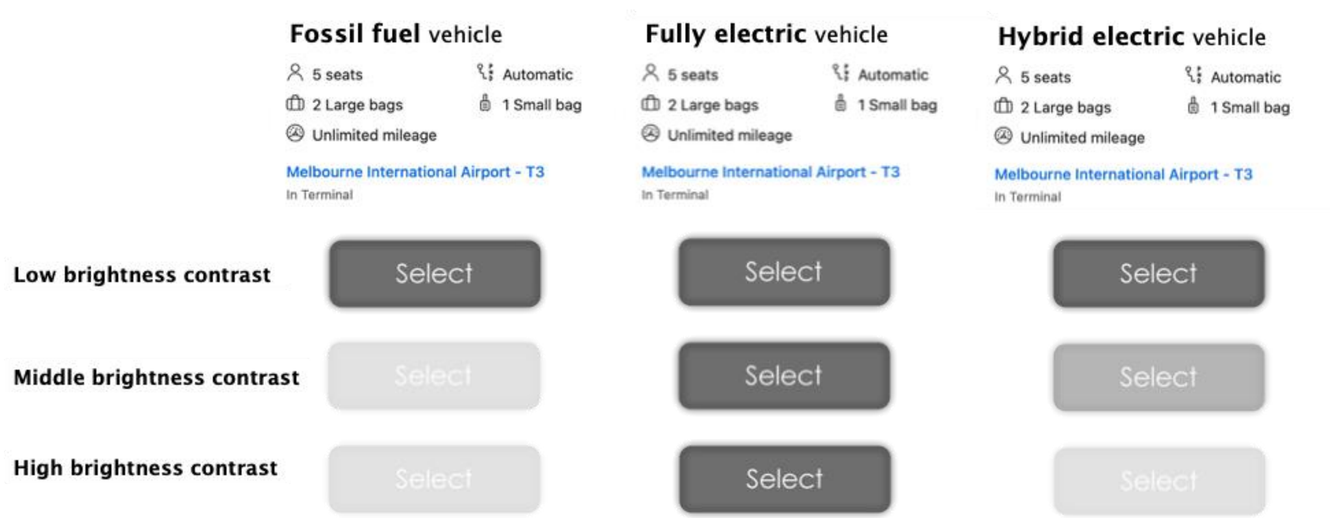

Figure 2. Experimental stimuli

Two mediation models using the SPSS macro (Hayes, 2018; model 4) was conducted to analyze the mediating effect of mental imagery in relation to color brightness contrast and two decision outcomes: rental decision and decision-making time. The results revealed that brightness contrast significantly shortened one's rental decision-making times ($b=1.124$, $p<0.001$), but only fostered an electric vehicle rental decision through mental imagery ($b=0.317$, 95% CI=0.144–0.535). Consistent with visual salience theory, participant's attention was directed towards a more salient visual stimuli to make a rental decision in a short time. The full mediating role of mental imagery in the relationship between brightness contrast and rental decision highlighted the importance of understanding the psychological mechanism behind the color effects.

Theoretically, this study extends the investigations on sustainability to the transport context by focusing on visual nudging to examine the effects of brightness contrast and color hue on tourists' willingness to rent an electric vehicle for their self-driving tours. Practically, this study supports vehicle rental companies, website/mobile app developers, and destination managers to better promote sustainability in self-driving tourism.

Keywords (5 Required)

Nudging, electric vehicle, self-driving tourism, brightness contrast, visual salience theory

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Poster: Message framing in themepark's crowd management: An Application of the Social Value Orientation theory

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT (REQUIRED. NO MORE THAN 1000 WORDS)

Effective crowd management is a critical component of operational success in theme parks, where large volumes of visitors converge daily. Theme parks often face challenges such as overcrowding, long wait times, and safety concerns, which can negatively impact visitor satisfaction and park reputation (Yin et al., 2024; Sharma et al., 2023). It is unsurprising to see that theme park managers have been engaged in exploring ways of solving the serious crowding issues, such as increasing ticket price (Jin, Hu, & Kavan, 2016), collecting visitor's location-based data (Tsang & Au, 2024), and providing route suggestions (Jin & Pearce, 2011). However, message framing is a powerful yet underutilized tool in theme park crowd management.

The tourism literature has been no stranger to designing framed messages, with many scholars focusing on how a message should be framed to foster individual's desired behaviors. However, they suffer from two main research gaps. First, most message framing studies focused on tourists' sustainable behaviors (e.g., Chan, Tsang, & Au, 2021), because the lack of knowledge has widely been proven as the major barrier for individual's sustainable behaviors. While communications have been suggested effective in guiding tourist flows (Joshi & Wakslak, 2014), investigations on how message framing strategies should be adopted to foster more effective communication remains limited but important to support crowd management in theme parks (Tsang & Au, 2024).

Second, while Brown, Kappes, and Marks (2013) proposed an incentive approach to mitigate crowding in theme parks, such an approach stems from an egoistic perspective to assume that visitors only alter their original travel plan for maximizing their self-benefits. However, the altruistic nature of tour planning behaviors has been largely overlooked (Cocking, Drury, & Reicher, 2009). Altruistic behaviors are crucial for effective crowd management, as they promote cooperation and reduce the likelihood of conflicts or safety hazards. For example, Au and Petrick (2025) drew on the social-value-orientation theory to argue that visitors engage in crowd management practices because they are willing to contribute to a more harmonious and efficient environment. Hence, these altruistic values of tour planning behaviors require more investigations to provide a new perspective of crowd management in theme parks.

Given the two aforementioned research gaps, this study drew on the prospect theory and the social value orientation (SVO) theory to investigate the interaction effects of (1) gain vs. loss framing and (2) cooperative vs. individualistic vs. competitive information on the change of tourists' willingness to support crowd management practices in theme parks before and after the intervention from one of the six framed nudging messages. Drawing on social psychology, the SVO theory has widely been recognized as an advanced form of the game theory to understand how individual makes decisions under different dilemmas (Balliet, Parks, & Joireman, 2009), in which their immediate self-interest (e.g., unwillingness to share location-based data) is at odds with what is best for others (Komorita & Parks, 1994). Since the SVO theory provides a strong theoretical foundation to understand combinations of outcomes derived by the self and others, more recent scholars have found it insightful in designing interventions (e.g., Au & Petrick, 2025; Drouvelis, Metcalfe, & Powdthavee, 2010) by recognizing individual's heterogeneous preferences over the benefits induced by a specific behavior.

We adopted a mixed between-within group methodology with a 2 (gain vs. loss framing) × 3 (cooperative vs. individualistic vs. competitive information) scenario-based experimental design to compare the effectiveness of the six framed messages in fostering the visitors' willingness to adjust travel plan (Figure 1). An online self-administrated survey was developed for data collection purpose. At the start of the online self-administrated survey, potential respondents rated their interest level for five amusement rides at Shanghai Disneyland. Then, they were told to imagine that they were waiting at a long line for their

most interested amusement ride and received one of the six framed messages that encourages them to visit their least interested amusement rides in a shorter time. Afterwards, they were asked to rate their willingness to adjust their travel plan (i.e., following the suggestion of the framed message) using a seven-point Likert bipolar scale anchored by “strongly disagree” and “strongly agree”.

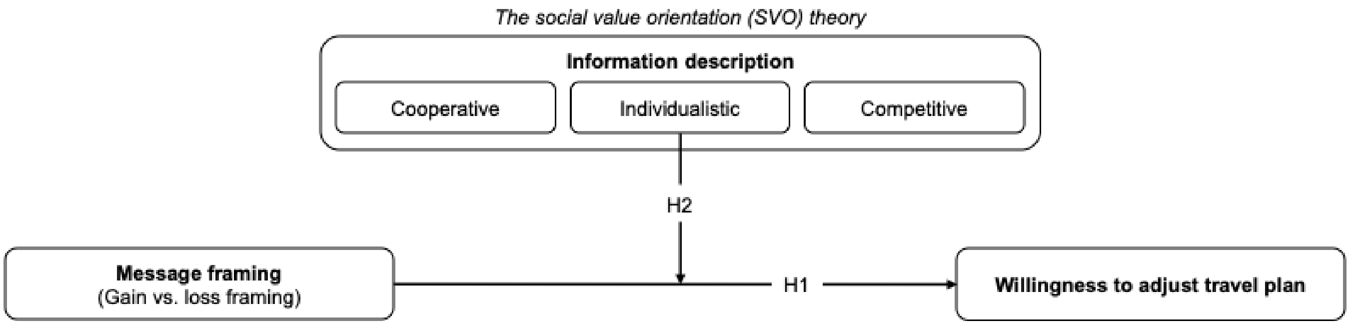

Figure 1. Proposed research model

A two-way ANOVA was performed to examine the impacts of message framing and information description on participants’ willingness to adjust their travel plan. The results suggested that message framing ($F=13.042$, $p<0.001$), information description ($F=3.363$, $p<0.05$), and their interactions ($F=3.770$, $p<0.001$) significantly changed visitors’ willingness to adjust their travel plan, lending supports to H1 and H2. The results of Turkey post-hoc tests further suggested that a gain-framed cooperative message fostered visitors’ willingness to adjust their travel plan the most, affirming the altruistic nature of tour planning behaviors in theme parks.

From a theoretical perspective, this study serves as a pioneering attempt to incorporate the concept of altruism with crowd management in theme parks by focusing on the role of altruism in tourists’ tour planning behaviors. Drawing on the social value orientation theory, this study illustrates how visitors respond to different framed messages. From a practical perspective, this study benefits four tourism stakeholders (i.e., theme park operators, tourism businesses, destination marketers, and tourism technology developers) by identifying the most effective communication way of solving crowd management in tourism.

Keywords (5 Required)

Message framing, crowd management, prospect theory, social orientation theory, altruism

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poster

Japanese regional cuisine in food tourism: What are the issues?

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT (REQUIRED. NO MORE THAN 1000 WORDS)

This report attempts to examine the issues that may arise in positioning regional food in Japan as food tourism, with a focus on traditional local cuisine in farming and mountain villages. Overseas interest in Japanese food culture has grown significantly, as evidenced by the inclusion of "Japanese food" on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2013. There is also a high demand from foreigners who want to visit Japan and experience "authentic Japanese food," and food plays an important role in Japanese tourism. According to a survey conducted by Norinchukin Bank, the most popular Japanese dish eaten during a stay in Japan was "sushi" (68.3%), which was by far the most popular, accounting for more than half of all responses. This was followed by tempura (47.2%), steak and grilled meat (46.9%), ramen (46.3%), and udon and soba (45.8%) (The Norinchukin Bank 2023). These are iconic Japanese dishes that are known around the world.

Food tourism, which aims to promote food as a destination, is expected not only to attract large numbers of tourists, but also to play an important role in strengthening a region's identity, sustaining cultural heritage, contesting fears of global food homogenization, and facilitating the regeneration of an area's sociocultural fabric (Everett, S., & Aitchison, C. 2008). Based on this idea, Japanese government agencies are implementing policies to promote food tourism initiatives that shift the focus to the appeal of more local food. For example, in 2006, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries established a system to attract inbound tourists to rural areas through local food and food culture. SAVOR JAPAN (SAVOR Japan: Areas for Overseas Transmission of Food Culture) is a program that certifies regional initiatives such as agricultural and forestry areas that attract foreign visitors to Japan with the appeal of local cuisine, the agriculture, forestry and fisheries industries that support it, and traditional culture. By 2024, 43 regions had been certified as SAVOR regions along with their local cuisine. It is hoped that these initiatives will draw attention to regional cuisine in rural areas, which has received less attention than that of cities such as Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto.

On the other hand, it has been pointed out that the common perception of food as a mere attraction in tourism is challenged by stressing the complications and impediments experienced by tourists in the local culinary sphere in unfamiliar destinations, even when attracted to the local cuisine (Cohen, E., & Avieli, N. 2004). I will consider the issues involved in positioning local cuisine and other food traditions that have been passed down in farming and mountain villages in Japan, as well as the industries and cultures that surround them, as food tourism.

First, when local cuisine is positioned as a resource for food tourism, how is its tradition and authenticity reconstructed? In tourist cuisine, flavors and textures are adapted to the tastes of the majority. In addition, since food tourism often involves experiences related to food, such as harvesting and cooking, simpler dishes are offered. In this context, I wonder whether the standardization of local cuisine, which was originally diverse, will progress.

Secondly, what points should we pay attention to from a gender perspective? Local cuisine and traditional food in Japan's rural villages and mountain villages is supported mainly by the labor of women, and despite the importance of their role, they are sometimes not adequately compensated. In the food tourism industry, the role of women is becoming increasingly important, and there is a possibility that they will be required to play the role of food representations, such as "OFUKURO-NO-AJI (mother's home cooking)".

Third, how should we ensure consistency with global food regulations? For example, one of Japan's traditional foods, pickles, has been supported by small businesses, including individuals. However, with the full implementation of the revised Food Sanitation Law, the production of pickles will require a

"business permit" from June 2024, and the installation of processing facilities that comply with the international food hygiene management method "HACCP" will be mandatory. Since it would cost a huge amount of money to set up processing facilities, many farmers who have been producing pickles will not be able to comply, and there are concerns that the "flavors of the region" will be lost.

Fourth, how will the increased focus on the appearance of dishes affect local cuisine, as travelers take photos of dishes and spread these images through social networking services?

Food tourism initiatives focusing on local traditional cuisine are just beginning in Japan, and there is a need for sufficient discussion on these points.

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Keywords (5 Required)

food, food tourism, Japanese regional cuisine, traditional food, local

Poster: Expanding SERVQUAL: Cultural authenticity in Beijing Courtyard House B&Bs

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT (REQUIRED. NO MORE THAN 1000 WORDS)

The growth of cultural tourism and the increasing demand for authentic accommodation experiences have led to a resurgence of traditional lodging options (Jones & Millar, 2013), such as Beijing Courtyard House B&Bs. These heritage-rich accommodations offer a unique blend of historical authenticity, traditional Chinese aesthetics, and immersive cultural experiences. However, despite their cultural appeal, these establishments face persistent service quality issues, which threaten their competitiveness and long-term sustainability (Liu et al., 2013). Unlike standardized hotels, which operate under well-defined service protocols, Courtyard House B&Bs exhibit inconsistent service quality, unclear performance benchmarks, and variations in customer expectations. These challenges arise due to the lack of a unified service quality framework that accounts for both modern hospitality standards and cultural authenticity, which is crucial in shaping guests' perceptions and satisfaction.

Existing research on service quality in hospitality primarily focuses on international chain hotels and boutique lodgings (Rauch et al., 2015), with limited studies addressing cultural accommodations. The SERVQUAL model, one of the most widely applied service quality assessment tools, has been extensively used in hospitality and tourism research. In the hospitality industry, service quality can play the most influential role (Alauddin et al., 2019; Sampaio et al, 2018). However, it is not fully suited for culturally significant accommodations, as it does not capture heritage value, cultural immersion, or traditional service attributes, which are key factors influencing guests' experiences in Courtyard House B&Bs. From the perspective of homestay operators' cultural backgrounds, the impact on their work and personal life differs between the individualistic culture in the United States and the collectivist culture in Taiwan (Hsieh, 2010). From the cultural perspective of tourists, those from different cultural backgrounds have varying concerns when choosing Airbnb, leading to different marketing strategies for each cultural group (Xi et al., 2022). From the perspective of the spatial environment, the creativity of local vernacular culture can manifest in both material and immaterial forms. Embedding local cultural and creative designs into the homestay environment, along with interactions with user-generated business behaviors, information, and media, can inspire deeper value (Zeng, 2023). Consequently, there is a significant research gap in developing a service quality evaluation model that integrates cultural authenticity with traditional SERVQUAL dimensions, ensuring a more accurate assessment of guest experiences in culturally themed accommodations. Addressing this gap is critical for preserving Beijing's cultural tourism assets while enhancing visitor satisfaction and market competitiveness.

This study aims to develop an enhanced service quality framework by extending the SERVQUAL model to include cultural authenticity, recognizing its critical role in guest satisfaction within heritage accommodations. The specific objectives of the study are bifold: (1) to develop a comprehensive service quality evaluation system for Beijing Courtyard House B&Bs by integrating cultural authenticity into the SERVQUAL model, and (2) to examine the relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. To achieve these objectives, this research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure a comprehensive assessment of service quality determinants in Beijing Courtyard House B&Bs. The study begins with an extensive literature review to refine theoretical constructs and develop a culturally adapted SERVQUAL framework. This extended model incorporates six service dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and cultural authenticity.

Following this, a quantitative survey is conducted with guests who have stayed at Beijing Courtyard House B&Bs. The online self-administrated survey contains 37 questions. All questions were asked using five-point bipolar Likert scales anchored with "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" to measure the six service quality dimensions, arousal, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. Screening questions were asked

before the start of the survey to ensure that all respondents are eligible to take part in the survey. The final sample consisted of 216 valid responses after adopting three criteria to eliminate invalid responses: (1) those completed within less than two min, (2) those with a relatively low standard deviation (i.e., <0.25), and (3) those fell into the trap question (i.e., If you are reading this statement, please select "Strongly Disagree").

A two-stage data analysis approach was adopted to refine and replicate the newly developed scale after splitting up the whole dataset into two independent datasets. First, upon the significant results for Kolmogorow-Smirnow and Shapiro-Wilki test to confirm the normal distribution of all measurement items, a series of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with promax rotation was performed with the first independent random sample of 108. Second, a series of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed with the second independent random sample of 108 to assess unidimensionality, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. As presented in Figure 1, the result of PLS-SEM modelling with the full dataset does not only validate the six-dimensional conceptualization of service quality in Beijing Courtyard House B&Bs, but also emphasizes the importance of the cultural authenticity in determining guests' satisfaction and loyalty.

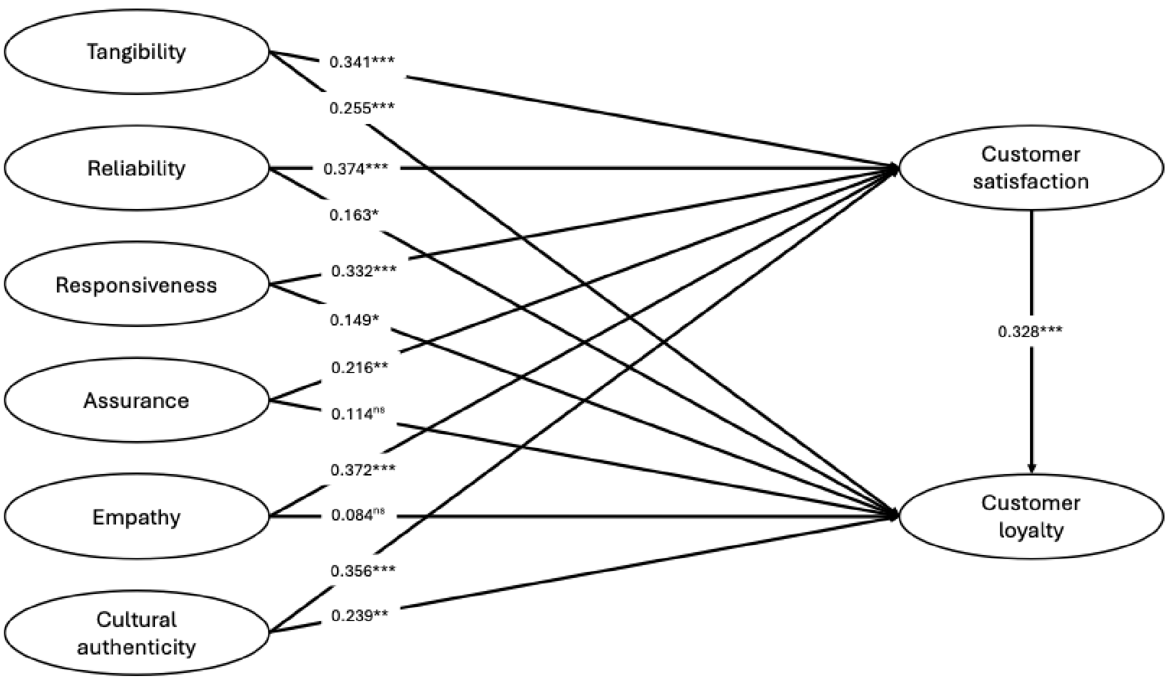

Figure 1. Results of the structural equation modelling

The expected findings of this study will contribute significantly to both theory and practice. Theoretically, the study extends the SERVQUAL model by introducing cultural authenticity as a core dimension, making it more relevant for culturally significant accommodations. It also provides empirical evidence on the relationship between service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty, specifically within the heritage tourism accommodation sector, which has been underexplored in hospitality research. Practically, the study will offer actionable recommendations for B&B operators on how to enhance service quality, improve guest satisfaction, and build long-term customer loyalty. Additionally, destination management organizations (DMOs) and tourism policymakers can use these insights to develop regulatory guidelines and training programs to support the sustainable development of traditional accommodations.

Keywords (5 Required)

Airbnb, peer-to-peer accommodation, cultural authenticity, service quality, heritage accommodation

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Poster session

Possibility of online travel consultation – The case of the travel agency HIS –

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT (REQUIRED. NO MORE THAN 1000 WORDS)

Research Objectives

Travel agencies are in the process of exploring sustainable business models that utilize their stores network and human services. Due to the spread of OTAs (online travel agencies) and the huge damage to management due to the Covid-19 disaster, the number of travel agency stores is decreasing. On the other hand, in travel planning and consultation, the use of travel agents' store networks and human services can be considered to be becoming more valuable. One of these models is online travel consultation via video chat. These are considered to be useful for the use of the store network and human resources built by traditional travel agencies to enhance customer convenience and contribute to the sustainable management of travel agencies. However, in tourism research, there are few research cases on the current status of initiatives and business feasibility. Therefore, in this paper, we aim to conduct a hearing survey with HIS Co., Ltd., which is the first in the travel industry in Japan to engage in online travel consultation, and to consider the possibility of online travel consultation by conducting interviews with the company about the background, current situation, and issues.

Previous research

We review three studies that focused on travel agency stores and human services. Grissemann & Stokburger-Sauer (2012) points out that "co-creation," in which customers actively participate in travel planning while creating plans, has a further positive impact on customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and service spending. According to a survey by JTB Co., Ltd. (2019), the usage rate of travel agency stores among the younger generation (18~29 years old) exceeds that of online reservations for overseas travel. Murooka (2021) shows that there are two reasons for using the human services of travel agencies: "maximizing travel benefits" and "anxiety about uncertain arrangements". These studies suggest that there is a need to use travel agency stores and human services in certain travel destinations and age groups, which may have a positive effect on customer satisfaction and travel agency revenue.

Research Methods

We conducted a survey for HIS by e-mail and interviews on the aim of introducing online travel consultation and its business feasibility.

Conclusion

HIS's online travel consultation was introduced in response to the Covid-19 disaster, and is now being introduced at all stores. As a result, the aim is to reduce the difference in business between stores. For example, when the one store is crowded, it is possible to connect to another store that is not crowded by video chat. In addition, a talent matching mechanism has been prepared. Using this system, the customers can make an appoints to a consultant who is familiar with a specific destination. As a result, it is possible to propose higher quality trips. In fact, we compared the average sales price for overseas travel in the Kanto region in 2023. Compared to online sales (no human services), call center sales were 167.3%, store sales were 181.2%, and video chat sales were 185.5%. As a result, online travel consultations were the highest sales unit price. These suggest that the more human services are added, the higher the unit price the sales price is. Furthermore, in online travel consultation , it was confirmed that the unit sales price tended to be higher for talent matching.

Implication

The implications of this study are that online travel consultation is highly feasible, as it can be expected to have a synergistic effect of providing high-quality services to customers and improving the company's unit sales price. It is conceivable that the use of ICT to integrate online and human services will lead to the sustainable management of travel agencies.

Postscript

From March 2025, Kyushu Sangyo University and HIS have started joint research on online travel consultation, and we would like to announce the results of these research again.

Keywords (5 Required)

online travel consultation, travel agent, sustainable business models, human services, OTAs (online travel agencies)

[Poster] Exploring the Soundwalk experience for people with visual impairment

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Dong-Min Park, and Chung Hun Lee (corresponding author)

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Purpose & Significance

Accessible tourism aims to ensure equal travel opportunities for individuals with disabilities (Darcy et al., 2020). However, tourism practices have predominantly focused on physical accessibility, overlooking sensory accessibility (Asadi-Shekari et al., 2013; Kim & Sohn, 2020). Especially for visually impaired tourists, tourism experiences require integrated sensory approaches beyond just auditory input.

The primary purpose of this study is to examine how multisensory soundwalk programs—combining interpretative guidance, assistive technology, and sensory engagement—enhance the tourism experiences of visually impaired individuals. A soundwalk is a guided journey along a path where participants actively interact with surrounding environmental sounds. Previous studies have primarily used soundwalks to analyze soundscapes environmentally (Venot & Sémidor, 2006; Jeon et al., 2011), largely neglecting their potential as multisensory experiences specifically designed for visually impaired tourists. Visually impaired individuals rely significantly on auditory, tactile, olfactory, and gustatory senses to interpret their surroundings (Qiao et al., 2021). Thus, exploring the effects of combined sensory experiences on their tourism engagement is timely and essential.

This research integrates Sensory Compensation Theory, suggesting enhanced sensitivity in remaining senses when one is impaired, and Embodiment Theory, emphasizing bodily interaction's role in shaping perception and memory. By applying these frameworks, the study explores how multisensory soundwalks influence sensory immersion, emotional well-being, and memory formation. Ultimately, this research significantly contributes to accessible tourism by expanding sensory-inclusive experiences.

Methodology

This qualitative study employed in-depth interviews with 10 visually impaired participants who experienced a soundwalk at Juknokwon (Bamboo Forest) and Hanjaegol Arboretum in Damyang, South Korea. Participants engaged with auditory and tactile stimuli, using a sound kit (headsets, recorders, windshields) to explore nature sounds and interact with their surroundings.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, and three major themes were identified: 1) Multisensory Experience and Sensory Immersion 2) Emotional Healing and Creative Stimulation through Sound 3) Sensory Expansion through Interpretation and Assistive Technology

Findings and Contribution

1. Multisensory Experience and Sensory Immersion

Participants discovered new aspects of natural sounds, allowing for deeper sensory immersion. Auditory experiences became more vivid and detailed, and participants reported that tactile interactions with trees, bamboo, and water enriched their perception of the environment.

2. Emotional Healing and Creative Stimulation through Sound

Many participants found psychological comfort and emotional healing through nature sounds. The absence of urban noise allowed them to experience inner peace and relaxation. Some participants also reported creative stimulation, using the experience to compose music, write reflections, or express emotions in new ways.

3. Sensory Expansion through Interpretation and Assistive Technology

Guided interpretation helped individuals with acquired visual impairments develop a spatial understanding of their environment. Assistive technologies, such as headsets and recording devices, enabled participants to detect subtle sounds that would otherwise go unnoticed, expanding their sensory experiences.

Additionally, interpretation and assistive technology contributed to recalling past memories and forming new ones, deepening participants' emotional connection to their surroundings. The provision of spatial and contextual information through interpretation enriched the overall tourism experience.

Conclusion and Implications

This study provides empirical evidence that soundwalks are an effective tool for fostering sensory immersion and emotional healing in visually impaired tourism. The findings suggest several key implications:

1. Soundwalks as a Tool for Inclusive Tourism

- While traditional accessible tourism focuses on physical accessibility, this study highlights the need for multisensory engagement to enhance tourism experiences for visually impaired individuals.

2. Incorporating Sensory Immersion into Tourism Program Design

- Tourism providers should integrate auditory elements, tactile interactions, and guided interpretation to create inclusive tourism programs.

3. The Role of Technology and Interpretation in Enhancing Tourism Experiences

- Assistive technologies (e.g., headsets, recording devices) and expert interpretation enhance spatial perception and sensory immersion, making tourism more accessible for visually impaired individuals.

Keywords (5 Required)

Soundwalk, the people with visual impairment, sensory compensation theory, embodiment theory, accessible tourism

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Reusing buildings: circular economy or gentrification in tourism?

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This study examines how tourism accommodation facilities utilizing pre-existing buildings contribute to advancing circular economy principles through adaptive reuse, while assessing their social impacts, particularly the potential displacement of local residents and the acceleration of gentrification processes (Tomassini et al., 2024). It explores the effects of this type of accommodation on sustainable tourism development, urban revitalization, and neighborhood dynamics at various stages of a destination's tourism life cycle. Additionally, the research aims to propose policy measures to address the challenges at the intersection of tourism development, circular economy objectives, and social equity in urban planning.

This article employs a theoretical synthesis approach to examine how circular economy principles, closely tied to sustainable development, intersect with gentrification processes, known for their negative social impacts (Gravari-Barbas & Guinand, 2021), in reframing the question of hospitality development in urban tourism destinations. The synthesis is grounded in a critical review of the circular economy approach and extends through a conceptual bridge to the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model (Romão, 2024). This innovative reframing aims to identify new opportunities for urban policy and tourism management.

The paper contributes to the literature on sustainable tourism by integrating the circular economy framework (Pomponi & Moncaster, 2017) into the analysis of the utilization of repurposed buildings as a tourism accommodation model (Lim & Endean, 2009). It highlights how adaptive reuse, localized sourcing, and sustainable operational practices align with circular economy principles (Arfaoui et al., 2024), reducing environmental impacts and promoting local economic resilience. Additionally, the study examines the unintended social consequences of these practices, such as their role in reinforcing gentrification processes. By incorporating the tourism destination life cycle model, the research provides a nuanced understanding of how the impacts of these accommodations may evolve over time, offering a comprehensive approach to policy design. The main results of this analysis can be summarized as:

Alignment with circular economy principles: The utilization of repurposed buildings for accommodation effectively extends their life cycle through adaptive reuse, reducing the environmental impacts of construction and preserving cultural and architectural heritage. These practices often include localized sourcing for the provision of different services (like meals) or experiences (like walking tours or cultural events), which reduces transportation emissions, supports small businesses, and strengthens local supply chains and creative activities.

Sustainability and cultural preservation: Many repurposed buildings implement sustainable operational practices, such as zero-waste programs and reduced use of single-use plastics, while retaining original architectural features that maintain the character of urban neighborhoods. However, they may reveal lower performance in aspects like energy consumption.

Social implications – Gentrification: Normally located in the most vibrant areas of the cities, these accommodation facilities may contribute to rising property values, attracting higher-income clientele and altering neighborhood identity. These dynamics (which include economic aspects, like new types of shops or gourmet cafes and restaurants) often lead to the displacement of long-term residents and the proliferation of upscale businesses, which exacerbates socio-economic inequalities.

Variable impacts based on context: In densely populated urban areas, repurposing buildings for tourism accommodation may amplify gentrification pressures and housing scarcity. Conversely, in less dynamic regions with declining populations, boutique hotels can revitalize local economies and stimulate regional regeneration without significant displacement effects. On the other hand, gentrification processes are normally more visible when destinations reach more advanced states of their life cycle.

The dual nature of utilizing repurposed buildings for tourism underscores the tension between environmental and social objectives in circular economy practices. While their adaptive reuse aligns with sustainable tourism goals, their role in tourism gentrification raises critical questions about inclusivity and equity in urban development (Romão, forthcoming). These findings highlight the need for comprehensive circular economy frameworks that address social equity alongside environmental sustainability.

Policy recommendations include:

Regulatory measures: implementation of zoning regulations to limit the conversion of residential units or other buildings into short-term rentals or boutique hotels and preserve affordable housing for local residents.

Community-inclusive development: policies must prioritize community-led tourism initiatives and support local businesses, ensuring that tourism development benefits existing residents without displacing them.

Incentives for sustainability: when using pre-existing buildings, hotels should adopt eco-friendly and socially responsible practices, such as energy consumption, fair labor standards and partnerships with local suppliers, aligning their operations with broader sustainability goals.

Life cycle-sensitive planning: policies should adapt to the stage of the tourism destination life cycle, addressing specific challenges such as housing inflation, infrastructure congestion, and overtourism-related externalities. Conversely, in the earliest stages of the life cycle, new forms of accommodation services may prompt the emergence and development of business opportunities.

Reusing pre-existing buildings as tourism accommodations exemplifies the promise and challenges of circular economy practices in urban tourism. To balance their environmental benefits with social inclusivity, a holistic approach to planning and policy design is essential. By addressing these tensions, cities can harness boutique hotels as catalysts for sustainable development while minimizing unintended consequences, ensuring equitable outcomes for local communities.

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Keywords

circular economy, gentrification, adaptive reuse, sustainable tourism, tourism life cycle.

Visual Futures of Food Marketing: Shaping Consumer Perceptions of Sustainable food with AI-Generated Imagery

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT (REQUIRED. NO MORE THAN 1000 WORDS)

Sustainable food, which is produced in an environmentally-friendly manner, often locally sourced and offers health benefits to dieters (Güneş, 2013). Despite these advantages, consumers remain hesitate to adopt it, largely due to concerns about unfamiliar taste and perceived quality (Raptou & Manolas, 2022). To address these barriers, this study aims to investigate marketing approaches that can encourage consumers to try Sustainable food. Specifically, based on the Visual Information Processing Theory, the study examines how visual stimuli influence consumer perceptions of food quality, credibility and purchase intention (Theeuwes, 2010). Additionally, it explores the interplay between consumer knowledge of Sustainable food, environmental concerns and the type of content presented, to better understand their combined impact on consumer attitudes. By integrating the theme of sustainability, gastronomy tourism, and AI technology, the research explores the role of AI-generated imagery in influencing consumer behavior. It focuses on two content types: "Food Presentation" (final dish aesthetics) and "Preparation Process" (cooking in progress), offering practical insights into how digital tools can promote Sustainable food and sustainable tourism.

Advancements in AI have revolutionized the creation of realistic and visually appealing images, offering details and textures that significantly enhance audience engagement (Yin et al., 2023). While previous research has explored visual aesthetics in food marketing, most studies have focused on user-generated images, leaving the AI-generated imagery largely underexplored (Law et al., 2024; Li et al., 2023). Moreover, although concepts such as "Food Presentation" and "Preparation Process" have been examined within gastronomy tourism, there is a notable gap in understanding how aesthetics and priming function in the context of AI-generated content. To address these gaps, this study investigates the interplay between AI-generated content types, consumer perceptions, consumer knowledge and their environmental concerns by leveraging several cognitive psychological theories. Priming Theory provides a foundational framework, explaining how different image types ("Food Presentation" vs. "Preparation Process") activate cognitive frameworks, shaping judgments about sustainability and credibility (Doyen et al., 2012). The research is further grounded in Visual Information Processing Theory, which emphasizes two key mechanisms: Bottom-Up Processing and Top-Down Processing. Study 1 focuses on Bottom-up Processing, highlighting how sensory input from images drives intuitive perceptions, particularly among consumers with limited sustainability knowledge (Theeuwes, 2010). Building on Study 1, Study 2 focuses on Top-Down Processing, which involves pattern recognition based on prior knowledge and expectations (Theeuwes, 2010). Together, these studies provide a comprehensive understanding on consumer behavior toward AI-generated content in sustainable food marketing.

Both studies adopted an image-based experimental approach, using AI-generated images created with the Stable Diffusion SDXL 1.0 model to depict four climate-conscious dishes (stability.ai., 2024). In Study 1, two sets of images were developed and validated by researchers, representing the content types of "Food Presentation" and "Preparation Process." Participants, recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), were randomly assigned to view one of the two image types. Following their exposure to the images, participants completed a survey including manipulation checks and measures of dependent constructs, such as perceived food quality (taste and healthiness), credibility, and purchase intention. Consumer knowledge of Sustainable food was assessed using multiple-choice questions, which served as a moderating variable in the analysis. In Study 2, environmental concern is added as an additional moderator, to examine the interplay of content type, consumer knowledge and environmental concern levels, while others remain the same as before. The data were analyzed using ANOVA, moderated mediation models, and MANOVA. A pre-test was conducted to confirm the reliability and effectiveness of the experimental design.

The findings revealed that "Food Presentation" images have a positive impact on perceived credibility, taste, and purchase intention, thereby supporting the hypotheses. Second, both knowledge of Sustainable food and the level of environmental concern can moderate how content type affects perceptions of food quality and purchase intention, mediated by perceived credibility. Specifically, participants with accurate knowledge and a higher environmental concern attributed greater credibility and higher food quality to "Preparation Process" images, while those with less accurate knowledge and a lower level of environmental concern showed a preference for "Food Presentation" images. Moreover, the results support critiques that the bottom-up process is overly simplistic and affirm the relevance of the top-down processing framework. This framework suggests that our understanding and perception are influenced by prior knowledge and beliefs, particularly in the context of how familiarity with Sustainable food and attitudes toward sustainability guide the transaction of visual stimuli into perceptions of food quality.

This study makes valuable contributions to the literature and industry practice. First, it shifts the focus of AI research in tourism and hospitality from the commonly explored comparison of robots and human staff in service operations to examining AI as a marketing tool, particularly its psychological impact on customers during the pre-purchase stage. Second, it provides empirical evidence on the influence of AI-generated imagery in food marketing, specifically comparing the effects of "Food Presentation" and "Preparation Process" images on consumer perceptions and behaviors. The study also extends the application of Visual Information Processing Theory to AI-generated content, offering new insights into how consumers process visual stimuli in this context. Additionally, it advances the theoretical understanding of Priming Theory by demonstrating how different types of imagery triggers different cognitive and emotional responses.

From a practical perspective, the findings emphasize the strategic use of AI-generated images to promote Sustainable food, highlighting the importance of tailoring marketing strategies to align with consumers' different levels of knowledge and environmental awareness. This approach provides practical insights for sustainable gastronomy tourism. Furthermore, the study encourages marketers to explore a broader range of AI-generated content types beyond food imagery, such as abstract art, stylized visuals, or animations, to create more engaging and personalized marketing materials. It also suggests leveraging AI-generated visuals in recruitment campaigns to attract younger workers, particularly those in Gen Z, to the tourism and hospitality sectors.

Keywords (5 Required)

AI-generated imagery, Sustainable food, Gastronomy tourism, Bottom-up processing, Top-down processing

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An update on the theme park industry in Japan: Analyzing successes and challenges

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Japan experienced a leisure boom during the “bubble economy” of the late 1980s/early 1990s (Funck & Cooper, 2013; Hendry, 2010) that led to the creation of many leisure sites including theme parks. Strategies for site development included creating thematic foreign country villages or *gaikoku mura* (Hashimoto et al., 2023; Hendry, 2000; Schlehe & Uike-Bormann, 2010), historical reenactment (Lam, 2020), high-technology based parks (Clavé, 2007), media property incorporation (Nakayama, 2023; Oh & Kim, 2020), *kawaii* (cute) character inclusion (Isomura et al., 2015), storytelling and performance from employees (Raz, 2000), multiple cultural layers (Beeton & Seaton, 2018), and appealing fantasy spaces that differ from everyday life (Toyoda, 2014). Nonetheless, the crowded landscape of attractions thinned due to factors ranging from competition, the eventual bubble burst, the global financial crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The global attractions industry has seen a resurgence post-pandemic. In 2023, the top ten theme park operators alone had more than a half billion visitors (Palicki, 2024), and attendance worldwide has reached 1 billion (W&G, 2021). Asia is a major market within the industry, and Japan is home to three of the world’s top ten theme parks by attendance (Universal Studios Japan, Tokyo Disneyland, and Tokyo DisneySea). While Japanese parks have long relied on domestic visitation, inbound tourism to Japan has been steadily increasing (Sharpley & Kato, 2021), with numbers in the last two years record-setting (JNTO, 2025). This translated to the highest number of international visitors to Tokyo Disney Resort (17.4% for the first half of 2024) due to factors such as excitement over their new theme land Fantasy Springs (opened June 2024) and the impact of a favorable exchange rate (OLC Group, 2025).

Because of the dynamic nature of the attractions industry and the importance of Japan in the global market, this study seeks to provide an update on its contemporary form. The last substantive contribution to this objective is found in Kawamura and Hara (2010), which is now 15 years old. Beyond the aforementioned global crises, several market factors have altered the business environment and guest demand trends. This study analyzes the current landscape with a sample of parks (n = 154) comprised of varying categories (theme parks, amusement parks, stand-alone attractions, zoos with amusement zones, etc.) in 42 prefectures. It also traces the locations that have been well-attended enough to appear on global industry visitation reports within the last 25 years (n = 13) and includes a sample of parks that have closed within the last 20 years (n = 30). The work continues the historical perspective and empirical analysis of the reference article, allowing the authors to draw conclusions on the current state of the industry in Japan.

Reviewing the data indicates characteristics including a large percentage of local and regional attractions and less destination properties with integrated resorts. There is diversity in location and age of property and while there are more amusement parks than theme parks, there are many mixed concepts as well (i.e., a ski resort with amusement park features, a stand-alone attraction with theme park characteristics). Data illustrating the inclusion of Japanese parks in global attendance reports reveals locations that have closed, places whose attendance was eclipsed by sites in the Chinese market, the continuing dominance of Tokyo Disney, and the rise of Universal Studios Japan. The study addresses reasons for closures such as competition or economic and infectious diseases crises. It explains the major impact of the Chinese market both as a challenge with competition and an opportunity with cross-pollination of visitors to leisure sites. Successes are described such as the rise of foreign visitors to destination parks, the growth and glocalization of the Disney and Universal brands, and new models such as Ghibli Park.

This study contributes to a more holistic view of Japan's role in the worldwide, contemporary theme park industry. Literature in English within the last ten years on the Japanese context has been limited. Only a handful of papers in different disciplines involve the Japanese industry as a subject (e.g., Freitag et al., 2023; Jimura, 2021; Mittermeier, 2021; Smith, 2022). Most literature has focused on single parks (often Disney) and none thoroughly examine the industry's past and current state other than a few works (Clavé, 2007; Kawamura & Hara, 2010; Raz, 1999) that are now out of date.

An area of further research this study suggests is popular culture/media-induced tourism or "contents tourism"/*kontentsu tsūrizumu*. Scholarship has been increasing on its impact (Kato & Horita, 2018; Schrerer & Thelen, 2020; Yamamura & Seaton, 2020), its connection to fan pilgrimage (Matsuyama, 2022; Seaton, 2017; Thelen & Kim, 2023), and the revitalization of spaces and histories because of tourist practices (Seaton, 2015; Yamamura, 2015; Yamamura, 2018). These concepts have not been connected to the Japanese theme park context. However, theme parks utilize intellectual properties to attract guests (e.g., Fuji-Q Highland's theme areas based on *Gaspard and Lisa*, *Naruto*, and *Thomas & Friends*), host contents tourism (e.g., anime festivals and ride overlays at Universal Studios Japan), become their own content (e.g., the popular Duffy and Friends brand at Disney), or are primarily created as an attractor of contents tourism (e.g., Ghibli Park).

Understanding the current market will assist scholars in gauging the impact of these sites in tourism ecosystems as well as discerning Japan's evolving role in the global attractions industry. Practitioners can benefit from evaluating development opportunities and considering strategies that lead to business sustainment or elimination in the theme park industry. Theme parks and other leisure attractions continue to be "catalysts for regional economic developments" (Kawamura & Hara, 2010, p. 249). Thus, theoretical and managerial insights can be gained from comprehending the state of the theme park industry in Japan, its lessons on successes and failures, and potential future directions.

Keywords

theme parks; amusement parks; Japan; tourism development; competitiveness

The value of thrills: Understanding consumers' willingness for amusement and theme parks

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of hedonic pricing in amusement parks, a sector known for its rising demand and cost-intensive operations. Amusement parks embody hedonic experiences prioritizing multisensory stimulation and theatrical elements, aligning with the experience economy theory (Pine & Gilmore, 2011). With increasing consumer expectations and premium pricing models, understanding the factors influencing visitor willingness to pay is crucial. This research investigates how objective and subjective park attributes impact pricing, seeking to identify specific elements that shape consumers' willingness to pay for these leisure experiences.

As evidenced in the literature, theme park experience can be influenced by a myriad of variables. Service, hours, capacity, cleanness, noise, crowd, queuing, rides, thrill, entertainment options, information, food, and facilities are some of the many characteristics investigated in the amusement park context (Cheng et al., 2014; Geissler and Rucks, 2011; Johns & Gyimóthy, 2002; Kao et al.; 2008; Milman et al., 2020; Ryan et al., 2010). These hedonic experiences are not uniform across the industry. This research approaches the data, exploring variables previously identified as affecting visitor experience but not evaluated using the pricing approach.

Lancaster's (1966) and Rosen's (1974) approaches to price indicated that observed prices are related to the attributes perceived in the products. This relationship has been long investigated. Some examples can be found in real estate (Witte et al., 1979), environmental aspects related products (Garrod & Willis, 1992), and hotels (Soler et al., 2019). With this theoretical lens it is possible to infer that objective features and hedonic perception can influence price amusement park prices. The question that this research aims to answer is which of the many tangibles and intangibles variables observed in an amusement park visit would influence visitor willingness to pay for their leisure experience.

The research employs a mixed-method design, combining qualitative ethnographic assessments of amusement parks' thematic land and narrative aspects and quantitative econometric analysis. The sample was defined following the Global Attractions Attendance Report on the top attendance in each world region. Data was obtained from field observation and online marketing communication and scraped from four online databases on park attributes. The study utilized hedonic pricing models to disaggregate the price of a one-day ticket into distinct attributes, exploring how these influence visitors' willingness to pay. Ordinary least squares regression was applied to quantify the impact of each park attribute on ticket prices.

The analysis reveals several significant factors influencing theme park ticket prices. Notably, location plays a crucial role. By adopting North America as the baseline variable for regional impact, all regions were associated with substantial decreases in ticket prices, indicating pricing constraints. Nine other variables were investigated, and the results will be presented at the conference.

This study enriches the literature on tourist attraction, demonstrating the relevance of subjective aspects on experiential consumption and offering empirical insights for optimizing park attributes to enhance visitor satisfaction and revenue that can be used by managers and designers. Future research should explore dynamic pricing impacts and variations in visitor profiles.

Keywords (5 Required)

ticket prices, willingness to pay, theme and amusement parks, hedonic pricing, park attributes,

consumer behavior.

Dairy Tourism: A Niche Segment in Food Tourism and its Emerging Role in Japan

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Abstract

Dairy tourism, a specialized form of food tourism, has gained increasing attention in recent years, though it remains understudied compared to more established tourism sectors such as wine, sake, and whiskey tourism. Existing studies, primarily focused on Spain and India, emphasize dairy tourism's potential to contribute to rural development and diversify farm incomes (Fusté-Forné 2021, Tengli et al. 2019). However, systematic research on dairy tourism in Japan is notably limited, despite its growing significance in the country.

In Japan, dairy tourism is a niche sector that reflects both the country's unique agricultural practices and consumer preferences. Unlike Europe, where dairy traditions span centuries and encompass a variety of livestock such as buffalo, sheep, and goats, Japanese dairy farming predominantly involves cows, particularly Holstein and Jersey breeds. These farms are highly specialized and often focus on creating consumer-friendly experiences that combine entertainment and education. Furthermore, consumer preferences in Japan highlight another important distinction: while cheese is a cornerstone of European dairy tourism, Japanese visitors overwhelmingly prefer ice cream as the primary dairy product. Natural cheeses, widely enjoyed in Europe, are not as popular in Japan due to the country's historical preference for processed cheese and its relatively limited exposure to artisanal cheese varieties. These cultural and historical differences in dairy consumption are directly reflected in the nature of dairy tourism offerings.

This research categorizes Japanese dairy farms engaged in tourism into three distinct types: (1) entertainment-focused farms, which highlight activities such as ice cream and butter-making workshops, animal interactions, and on-site consumption of dairy products in farm cafes; (2) education-focused farms, which collaborate with schools to offer lectures and hands-on experiences educating visitors about animal care and sustainable farming practices; and (3) hybrid farms that combine these approaches, creating a unique form of "edutainment" (education + entertainment). These models not only cater to diverse audiences but also align with the government's 6th industrialization initiative, aimed at integrating agriculture, industry, and service sectors to drive regional economic development.

Fieldwork conducted at 12 dairy farms across Japan reveals the growing importance of dairy tourism as a tool for rural revitalization and cultural promotion. In recent years, regional tourism councils and government bodies have recognized the potential of dairy farms as tourism destinations. Initiatives such as the Yogurt Summit—held in various dairy-farming regions across Japan—and the online educational tours organized by organizations like Yognet underscore the emerging role of dairy tourism in promoting regional identities. These efforts are supported by local governments, which encourages farms to diversify their activities to enhance economic resilience and attract a wider audience, including international tourists. Notably, some regional councils have begun promoting dairy tourism resources in English, highlighting the sector's growing international appeal.

Despite its recent growth, dairy tourism in Japan faces unique challenges. Educational dairy tours, while increasingly popular, are still limited compared to those in countries with long-standing dairy tourism traditions. Additionally, there is significant untapped potential to integrate dairy farming more closely with Japan's broader tourism strategies. For instance, while European dairy tourism often includes visits to traditional cheese-making facilities, the Japanese focus on ice cream and other processed dairy products limits the scope of cultural and gastronomic education provided to visitors. Addressing these gaps could help Japan develop a more comprehensive approach to dairy tourism that balances entertainment with education and sustainability.

From a global perspective, Japan's approach to dairy tourism offers a compelling case study in innovation and adaptation. While it lacks the deep historical roots of European dairy farming, Japan's dairy farms have successfully leveraged their cultural and natural assets to create unique tourism experiences. By combining elements of fun, learning, and

sustainability, these farms are setting a new standard for niche tourism development. Furthermore, their efforts to align with global trends in sustainable tourism, such as reducing the environmental impact of farming activities, position Japan as a potential leader in this emerging sector.
The significance of dairy tourism extends beyond its economic impact. By offering immersive experiences that connect visitors with the origins of their food, dairy farms play a critical role in fostering consumer awareness and promoting sustainable consumption. For example, many farms educate visitors on their efforts to use cow waste as manure, reducing environmental impact and contributing to circular farming practices. Additionally, some farms highlight their use of eco feed—recycled food byproducts—as an alternative to imported feed, which not only reduces reliance on foreign resources but also helps mitigate food waste. These practices, showcased during farm visits, enhance the visitor experience while contributing to broader societal goals, such as promoting sustainability and addressing climate change.
The findings of this research highlight the multifaceted value of dairy tourism in Japan, encompassing its contributions to branding, community engagement, and regional development. By categorizing farms into entertainment-focused, education-focused, and hybrid “edutainment” models, this study provides a framework for understanding the diverse roles that dairy farms play in Japan’s evolving tourism landscape. Additionally, the study emphasizes the strategic potential of educational dairy tourism in promoting sustainable farming, enhancing consumer awareness, and generating additional revenue for farmers. By situating these insights within the broader contexts of food tourism and global tourism trends, this research sheds light on the innovative ways Japanese dairy farms are creating high-value, impactful visitor experiences that appeal to local and international audiences alike.

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Keywords
dairy tourism, food tourism, edutainment, sustainable rural development

Psychological Drivers of Voluntary Carbon Offset Participation

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT (REQUIRED. NO MORE THAN 1000 WORDS)

The urgency of addressing climate change highlights the need to understand the psychological and behavioral factors influencing participation in voluntary carbon offset (VCO) programs. This study investigates how intrinsic and situational drivers, including psychological distance, regulatory focus, and prior pro-environmental behaviors, shape consumer intentions to engage in VCO initiatives. By shifting the focus from traditional message framing approaches, this research provides a novel perspective on sustainable decision-making processes.

This study makes significant contributions to the fields of tourism, sustainability, and consumer psychology. Theoretically, it extends the application of Psychological Distance Theory and Regulatory Focus Theory to the domain of VCO programs, offering a more nuanced understanding of the mechanisms underlying consumer behavior. Methodologically, the study incorporates mediating factors such as environmental awareness, perceived responsibility, and perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE) while examining moderating effects of psychological distance, regulatory focus, and prior behaviors. Practically, the findings provide actionable insights for designing interventions that overcome psychological barriers and promote sustainable behaviors in the tourism and hospitality sectors.

The results reveal that psychological distance plays a critical role in shaping consumer intentions. Consumers who perceive climate change as an immediate and personal issue exhibit stronger connections between environmental awareness and their willingness to participate in VCO programs. Additionally, prior pro-environmental behaviors enhance the mediating effect of PCE, indicating that individuals with a history of eco-friendly actions are more confident in their ability to contribute meaningfully to climate change mitigation. Regulatory focus also significantly moderates these relationships. Prevention-focused individuals emphasize responsibility and risk aversion, leading to cautious but deliberate actions, while promotion-focused individuals prioritize achievement and growth, amplifying the impact of environmental awareness on contribution intentions.

The implications of these findings are multifaceted. First, reducing psychological distance is essential for motivating VCO participation. Communication strategies should aim to make

climate change feel more immediate and relevant by emphasizing local impacts or employing emotionally engaging storytelling techniques. Second, leveraging prior pro-environmental behaviors can enhance the effectiveness of marketing campaigns by reinforcing consumers' sense of efficacy and responsibility. Finally, tailoring interventions to align with individuals' regulatory focus can further optimize engagement. Prevention-focused individuals respond better to messages emphasizing risk reduction and long-term stability, such as protecting future generations, while promotion-focused individuals are more motivated by messages highlighting progress and shared achievements, such as building a sustainable future.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing body of research on sustainable tourism by offering a deeper understanding of the psychological mechanisms influencing VCO participation. It bridges theoretical gaps in Psychological Distance Theory and Regulatory Focus Theory and provides practical strategies for addressing the pressing challenges of climate change. By leveraging insights into intrinsic motivations and situational factors, policymakers, environmental organizations, and tourism businesses can design more effective interventions to foster sustainable consumer behavior. These findings underscore the importance of strategic, tailored approaches to promoting VCO programs and advancing sustainability initiatives in the tourism and hospitality industries.

Keywords (5 Required)

Voluntary Carbon Offset (VCO), Psychological Distance, Regulatory Focus, Pro-environmental Behaviors, Perceived Consumer Effectiveness (PCE)

Understanding tourists' adoption of AI-powered medical chatbots: extending TAM in health-focused travel contexts

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Understanding tourists' adoption of AI-powered medical chatbots: extending TAM in health-focused travel contexts

An AI-powered chatbot designed to provide medical assistance during travel represents an innovative application of artificial intelligence in tourism. This chatbot offers personalized medical advice based on users' symptoms, health history, and current location. By enabling travelers to make informed health decisions through self-care guidance, over-the-counter medication suggestions, and recommendations for professional medical attention, these systems enhance tourists' experiences by ensuring quick and reliable access to medical support. However, while AI adoption is on the rise, particularly in the tourism industry, little research has explored the behavioral and psychological determinants that drive tourists to adopt such technologies. This study addresses the gap by investigating factors influencing tourists' intentions to use AI-powered chatbots for medical assistance, leveraging the extended Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to evaluate the acceptance of these systems in a travel context.

The research aims to analyze the determinants of tourists' behavioral intentions to adopt AI medical chatbots during travel. This analysis is underpinned by the TAM framework, which emphasizes the roles of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use in technology adoption. The study extends this model by integrating three additional constructs: AI familiarity, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Figure 1). AI familiarity shapes perceptions of both usefulness and ease of use by enhancing confidence in engaging with AI systems. Subjective norms, reflecting the influence of social expectations, shape attitudes toward the chatbot's usability and utility. Perceived behavioral control reflects users' confidence in their ability to use the technology effectively, thus influencing their adoption decisions. This theoretical approach provides a robust framework for understanding tourist behavior in health-focused AI applications.

To test the proposed model, the study employed a quantitative survey methodology, collecting data from 596 U.S.-based tourists via Qualtrics. Respondents were asked to evaluate their perceptions and behavioral intentions regarding the use of AI-powered medical chatbots during travel. The study proposed eight hypotheses, focusing on relationships between AI familiarity, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and behavioral intention. Data were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM) to validate these hypotheses and assess the relationships among the constructs.

The findings reveal that AI familiarity significantly influences both perceived usefulness ($\beta = 0.69$, $t = 6.67$, $p < 0.001$) and perceived ease of use ($\beta = 0.64$, $t = 6.05$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that tourists who are familiar with AI are more likely to perceive the chatbot as beneficial and easy to use. Subjective norms positively affect perceived ease of use ($\beta = 0.33$, $t = 3.92$, $p < 0.001$) but do not significantly influence perceived usefulness at the 0.05 level. Perceived behavioral control emerges as a critical factor, significantly impacting both perceived usefulness ($\beta = 1.45$, $t = 13.46$, $p < 0.001$) and perceived ease of use ($\beta = 1.56$, $t = 14.02$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, perceived usefulness strongly predicts behavioral intention ($\beta = 0.68$, $t = 8.85$, $p < 0.001$). Contrary to expectations, perceived ease of use does not significantly influence behavioral intention ($\beta = 0.02$, $t = 0.38$, $p > 0.05$), indicating that usability alone may not drive adoption.

The study has significant theoretical implications. First, they extend TAM's applicability to health-focused AI technologies in tourism by incorporating AI familiarity, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control into the model. The results highlight the importance of perceived behavioral control as a determinant of tourists' attitudes toward AI, suggesting that future research on technology acceptance should account for users' confidence in their ability to interact with AI systems. Second, the study demonstrates the nuanced role of subjective norms, which influence ease of use but not necessarily perceived usefulness, offering insights into the social dimensions of technology adoption.

Practically, these findings provide valuable insights for developers and stakeholders in the tourism and AI sectors. To enhance adoption, AI medical chatbot developers should focus on creating intuitive user interfaces to improve ease of use and invest in educational initiatives to boost AI familiarity among tourists. Policymakers are encouraged to establish robust guidelines ensuring the accuracy and reliability of AI-driven medical advice systems, fostering user trust and confidence. Such measures are essential for maximizing the utility of AI medical chatbots, ultimately enhancing travel experiences and driving broader acceptance of AI technologies in tourism.

Overall, this study provides a valuable examination of the factors driving tourists' adoption of AI-powered medical chatbots. By extending TAM and applying it to a health-focused travel context, the research advances theoretical understanding and offers practical recommendations for stakeholders. These findings open up discussions for future studies exploring the adoption of AI technologies in diverse domains, ensuring that innovative solutions effectively address user needs.

Keywords: AI-powered chatbot, technology acceptance model, medical assistance, tourist behavior, perceived usefulness

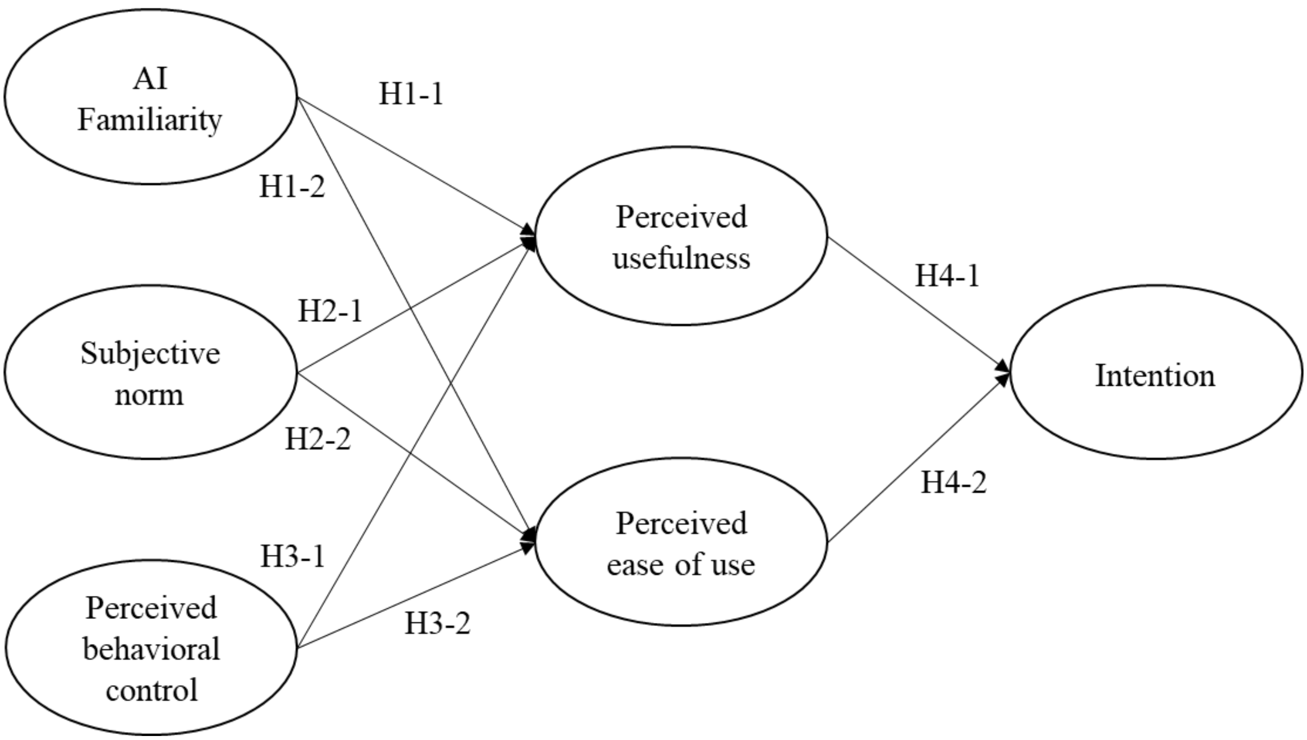

Figure 1: A proposed conceptual model

Tourists' Continuance Intention to Use ChatGPT: The Role of Information Quality and Literacy

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Recent advances in generative artificial intelligence (AI), particularly ChatGPT, are revolutionizing how tourists search for information and plan their trips. Generative AI expedites tourism information and recommends personalized itineraries tailored to travelers' preferences, budget and length of stay (Ali et al., 2023; Carvalho & Ivanov, 2024). Due to its user-friendly interface, ChatGPT also facilitates tourism-related decision-making and is increasingly being integrated into the hospitality and tourism industry (Stokel-Walker & Noorden, 2023; Van Dis et al., 2023).

Previous studies on ChatGPT adoption (Li et al., 2024; Niu & Mvondo, 2024) have predominantly employed the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM: Davis, 1989), focusing on perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. However, as the limitations of generative AI—AI hallucination and the production of inaccurate or biased information—become more apparent, scholars argue that TAM alone may be insufficient to explain tourists' behavioral intention regarding ChatGPT usage (Ajibade, 2018; Christensen et al., 2024; Zaineldeen et al., 2020). While the tourism industry is increasingly applying generative AI for customer service, repeated exposure to unreliable or irrelevant content can reduce consumer satisfaction and deter continued use when searching for information.

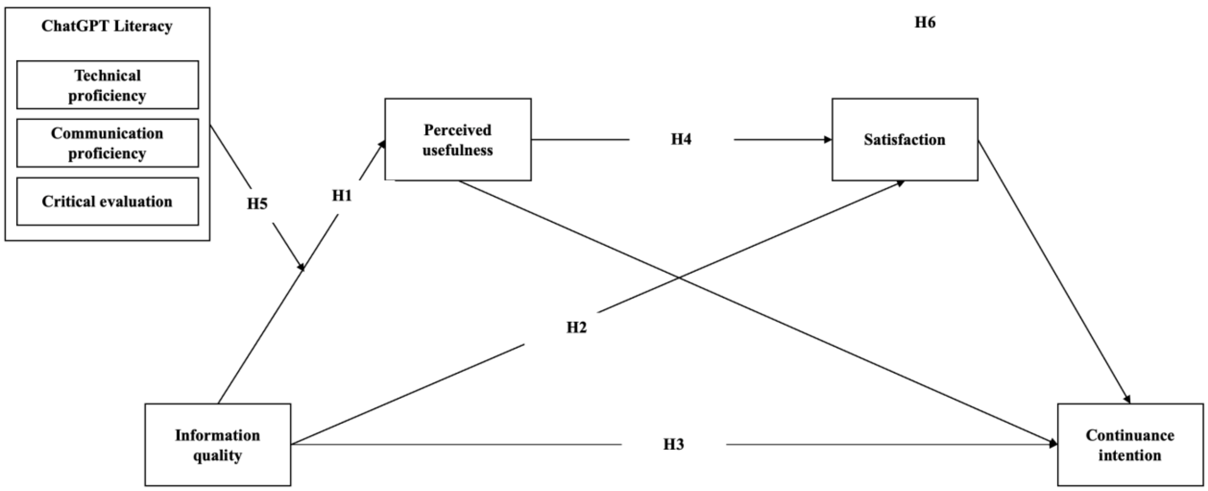
Addressing these challenges requires not only technological advances to improve information quality but also efforts to enhance users' technical and critical thinking abilities referred to here as 'ChatGPT literacy'. User literacy influences the quality of AI-generated responses even when interacting with the same system and algorithm. Previous research has examined ChatGPT literacy in relation to user satisfaction via motivational factors (Lee & Park, 2023) and its applications in educational contexts (Ma et al., 2024). However, despite those findings, research on ChatGPT literacy in the tourism industry remains very limited. Therefore, this study explores tourists' intention to continue using ChatGPT for travel planning with a focus on the effects of information quality and ChatGPT literacy. We propose a moderated serial mediation model that examines how information quality influences continuance intention through perceived usefulness and satisfaction and how ChatGPT literacy moderates these relationships.

Information quality of ChatGPT in a tourism context encompasses accuracy, sufficiency, reliability, timeliness and personalized relevance (Kim et al., 2017; Niu & Mvondo, 2024). High-quality information is likely to increase perceived usefulness (H1) and overall satisfaction (H2). Previous research has shown that high-quality information can minimize the time and cost required to obtain necessary information, thereby making the travel planning process more efficient and useful (Li et al., 2024), which makes tourists feel more satisfied (Masri et al., 2020; Shi & Lee, 2021).

Furthermore, information quality can positively influence continuance intention to use (H3) with perceived usefulness and satisfaction serving as key mediators (H4). These relationships are based on Expectation-Confirmation Theory (ECT: Bhattacherjee, 2001), which posits that users evaluate whether their pre-adoption expectations (e.g., regarding information quality) are met. If the outcome meets or exceeds these expectations, users develop stronger perceptions of usefulness, heightened satisfaction and a greater likelihood of continuance intention. This framework has been extensively studied in various contexts such as ChatGPT (Niu & Mvondo, 2024), Chatbots (Ashfaq et al., 2020) and e-tourism systems (Masri et al., 2020; Filleri et al., 2021).

ChatGPT literacy refers to the ability to effectively generate, evaluate and apply information obtained through ChatGPT interactions. It consists of three dimensions: (1) technical proficiency, indicating familiarity with the system's features; (2) communication proficiency, denoting the skill of crafting precise prompts; and (3) critical evaluation, referring to the capacity to assess the accuracy and potential shortcomings of AI responses (Lee & Park, 2024; Ma et al., 2024). Research on digital and AI literacy suggests that greater literacy enhances perceived usefulness by enabling users to acquire and apply reliable information efficiently (Al-Abdullatif, 2024; Nazzal et al., 2021). In addition, Wang et al. (2023) observed that tourists often report high satisfaction with high-quality information even if certain aspects of e-tourism literacy (information knowledge) are lacking, highlighting the interactive effect between information quality and user literacy. Consequently, ChatGPT literacy may moderate the relationship between information quality and perceived usefulness (H5, H6).

Figure 1. Conceptual model

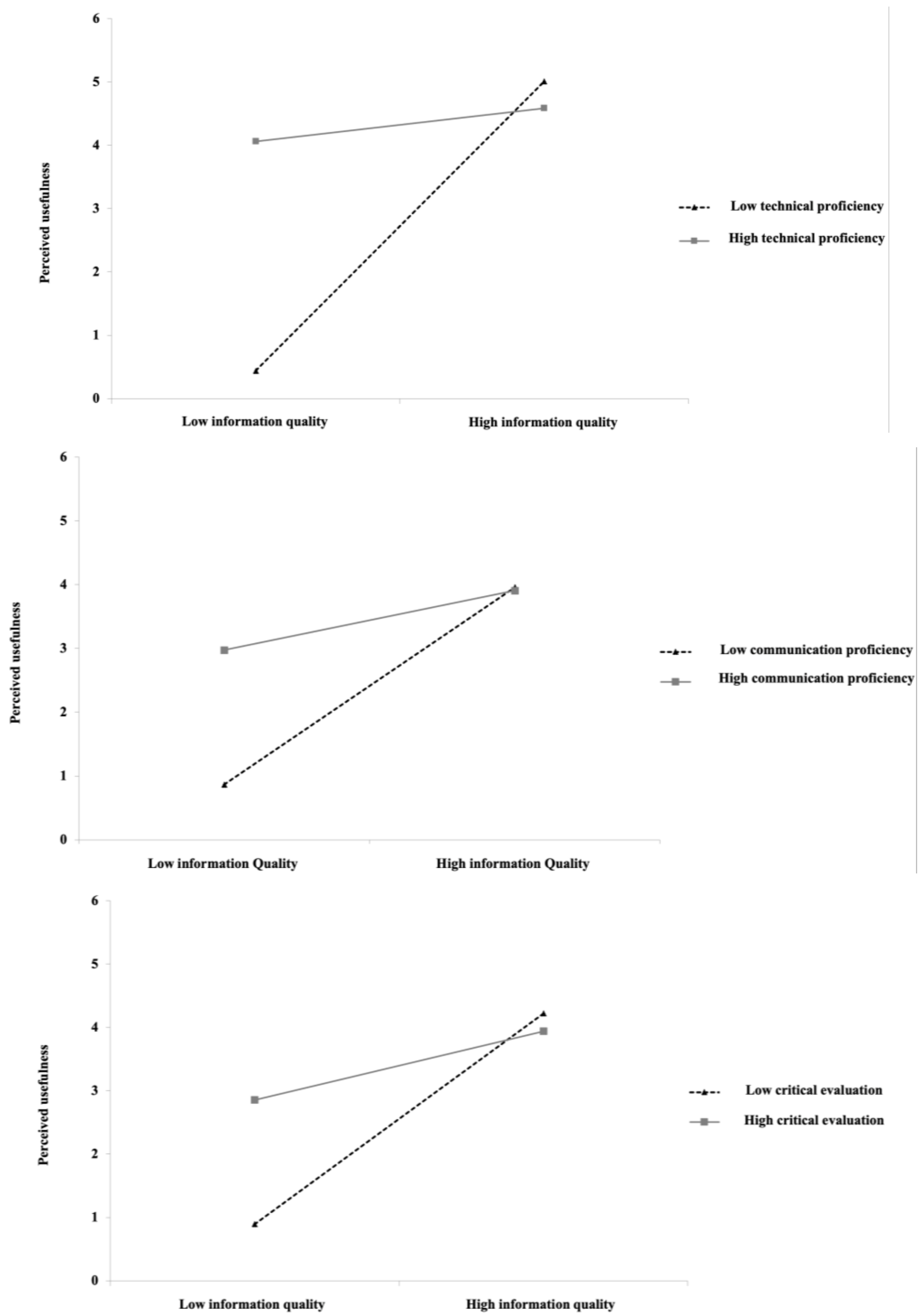


This study employed an online panel survey targeting individuals who had used ChatGPT for travel information search within six months. After data screening, 391 valid responses were obtained (53.7% male; 69.1% aged 20–39). The moderating effect of ChatGPT literacy was evaluated using the SPSS Process Macro Models 1, 6 and 83 (Hayes, 2017) with significance tests carried out in the context of interaction effects. The findings indicated support for all proposed hypotheses.

The finding suggests that information quality is paramount in shaping tourists' decision-making processes when using generative AI. High-quality information not only elevates perceived usefulness but also fosters user satisfaction, thereby increasing the likelihood of continued usage.

Interestingly, ChatGPT literacy can mitigate the adverse effects of low information quality on perceived usefulness. Users with strong literacy skills can critically assess responses, refine their prompts and preserve the overall usefulness of ChatGPT interactions even though information quality is suboptimal. In contrast, low-literacy users tend to rely more heavily on provided content and may experience reduced perceived usefulness when information quality is insufficient. However, when information quality meets key criteria—such as accuracy, sufficiency, reliability, personalization and timeliness—literacy differences become less pronounced indicating that under conditions of high-quality content even low-literacy users can effectively utilize generative AI.

Figure 3. Moderating effect



These findings underscore the importance for AI and tourism companies to prioritize the delivery of high-quality information and to promote literacy development as a complementary strategy. By investing in both information quality and user literacy initiatives, industry stakeholders can enhance decision-making efficiency and strengthen user engagement with generative AI in travel planning contexts.

Future research could focus on clarifying the concept of ChatGPT literacy in a tourism context and consider employing more objective and precise methodological approaches to measure it. For example, an experimental task mirroring real-life travel planning scenarios could be designed to evaluate ChatGPT proficiency with external evaluators appraising participants' search strategies, prompt formulation, and information synthesis based on both quantitative and qualitative metrics. Such approaches would provide deeper insights into the multifaceted nature of ChatGPT literacy and its influence on travel-related decision-making.

Keywords (5 Required)

ChatGPT, Generative AI in Tourism, Information quality, ChatGPT literacy, Travel planning

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The service triad between customers, service robot and frontline employees: a naturalistic observational approach

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Background & study objective

Service robots redefine guest experiences by transitioning the service encounter from a dyadic interaction between guests and frontline employees (FLEs) to a triadic model that includes service robots as key contributors to service quality (Phillips et al., 2023). Service robots are positioned as either a complete replacement for human labor or an augmentation supporting FLEs (De Keyser et al., 2019). The latter, where humans and robots work together to achieve service goals, has received limited scholarly attention. As a result, it may overlook the operational and social complexity introduced by the triadic interaction between customers, robots, and employees (De Keyser et al., 2019; Phillips et al., 2023). Furthermore, most existing hospitality studies investigating these triads were either conceptual or relied on online experiments (e.g., Nguyen et al., 2024; Yoganathan et al., 2021). They may not adequately capture the spontaneity and authenticity inherent in real-world human-robot interactions (Fernandes & Oliveira, 2021).

To address these gaps, our study employed a naturalistic observational approach and utilized restaurant environments to unravel the behavioral and interactional patterns salient in the customer-robot-FLE service triad. The observational methodology fits well in this study context since one key actor of the triad, the service robot, could not communicate its thoughts and feelings via traditional survey questionnaires or interviews (Bakeman & Quera, 2011). In addition, because our understanding of the customer–robot–FLE triad, particularly in the restaurant service context, is still in the nascent stage, it is essential to observe the triads as they naturally occur and without interventions that might elicit changes in the study subjects' natural proclivities (Sussman, 2016).

Methodology & analysis

Our study followed the methodological procedures from naturalistic observational studies involving technology use (Elias et al., 2021; Lawrence, 2018). The field sites included two restaurants located in Central Florida that have utilized service robots in their frontline operations. One researcher visited restaurants assuming the role of a regular diner. This anonymous approach minimized the risk of influencing observed behaviors, reducing reactivity, and ensuring an authentic representation of interactions (Sussman, 2016). This study employed an ethnographic approach, utilizing field notes to systematically document key events emerging from the descriptive, contextual, and reflexive observations. Descriptive notes included detailed accounts of the observed participants' verbal exchanges, actions, interactions, and any pertinent non-verbal and emotional responses (Emerson et al., 2011). The observer complemented descriptive notes with contextual notes, thereby situating the descriptive details within a meaningful framework. Finally, reflexive notes captured the researcher's personal reflections throughout the fieldwork process, transforming them into rich narratives to portray the observed events more fully (Walford, 2009).

The field notes were coded using MAXQDA v.24 qualitative data analysis software. A grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was employed to generate overarching themes and subthemes that emerged from the data. Consistency and accuracy of the code interpretation were strengthened by triangulation among two researchers in the study. From a matrix of code frequency and proximity to other codes, the MAXQDA v.24 generated cluster maps, representing the emergent themes of the customer–robot–FLE triad in restaurant settings (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2019).

Preliminary findings and discussion

From the observational data over the course of ten hours, six themes emerged in the analysis based on n = 525 codes. These themes include: (1) *FLE-Robot Efficiencies & Disruptions* (n = 64); (2*) Tech-Touch*

Blended Service (n = 53); (3) *Robot Delivery* (n = 46); (4) *Robot Social Dynamics* (n = 44); (5) *Robot Mechanical* (n = 31); (6) *Customer Awareness* (n = 19) (see Figure 1).

The most predominant theme that emerged from the data, *FLE-Robot Efficiencies & Disruptions*, revealed the dual nature of a service robot as a tool to support the work of the FLE. The robot served as a driver of operational efficiency for FLEs. However, service delays caused by robots disrupted operations, often requiring intervention. For example, on one occasion, the robot experienced a severe navigation issue, prompting a team of FLEs to troubleshoot, clearly disrupting service flows. Such results highlight the essentiality of managing operational challenges and service failures inherent in the triad, where factors like physical plant design, robotic navigation and sensor settings, troubleshooting support, and employee training are likely to play a critical role in operational quality (Phillips et al., 2023; Mejia et al., 2024).

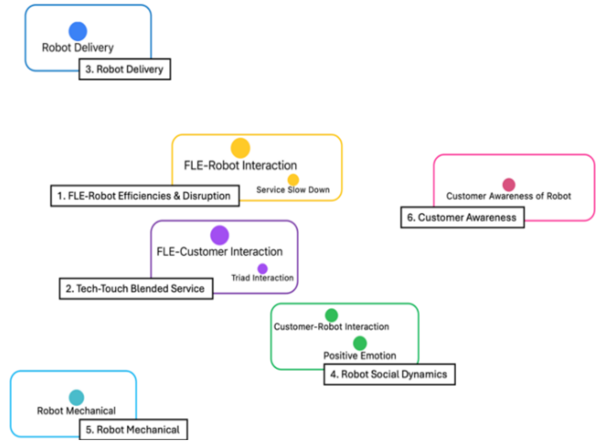

Figure 1. Thematic results of qualitative analysis of customer-robot-FLE service triad (n = 525)

The second emergent theme was *Tech-Touch Blended Service*, which delineated the balance (or lack thereof) of FLE-robot task allocation to achieve service goals. The data showed that the traditional dyadic interactions between FLEs and customers remained prominent, implying an under-utilization of robot usage in customer-facing interactions. The third theme, *Robot Delivery*, represented the robot's central role: delivering drinks from the server station to the customer tables. Here, instances of role ambiguity were observed, as FLEs frequently chose to deliver drinks themselves rather than relying on the robot, suggesting some resistance towards human-robot collaboration. Conclusively, this emphasizes that integrating a service robot might not automatically translate into forming a true service triad as previously conceptualized (De Keyser et al., 2019). Our findings emphasize the importance of employee adoption and training to foster a collaborative service triad.

The fourth salient theme, *Robot Social Dynamics*, positioned the robot as a "social agent" in the triad (van Doorn et al., 2017), which elicited different positive emotions from customers, ranging from smiles, laughter, and curiosity, and social engagement like taking photos and patting the robot. In contrast, the fifth key theme, 'Robot Mechanics,' highlighted the limitations of robots as machines devoid of human-like intelligence in decision-making, which affected the triad. Notably, the robot's slow and rigid movement contrasted sharply with the flexibility of human servers. These limitations were particularly evident during peak hours when more FLEs were observed disengaging from the robot to maintain the pace of service. The final theme – *Customer Awareness* – depicted the extent to which customers displayed clear awareness of the robot's co-presence. This theme contributes novelty to the extant literature as it conceptually distinguishes between passive awareness and active engagement with the robot, the latter being predominantly driven by joint robot interactions involving both customers and FLEs.

Conclusion and implication

Our study is among the first to investigate the customer-robot-FLE service triad from a vantage point (enabled by naturalistic observations), thereby enriching extant human-robot interactions literature from the higher-order service system and service process perspective. It also offers practical insights for restaurant managers, human resource professionals and service designers to tailor effective robot integration plans, standard operating procedures and training programs, fostering a true collaborative service triad between the service robot and human participants in restaurant environments.

Keywords: Service robot, human-robot interaction, service triad, restaurant, naturalistic observation

Global Hospitality and Tourism Research Summit-Fukuoka

Supporting Restaurants that Support their Community: Innovative Mindfulness Practices to Reduce Stress and Turnover

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Keywords: Turnover, Stress, Restaurants, Mindful Practices, Organizational Culture

Purpose and relevance of study in hospitality: Turnover is the biggest problem in hospitality. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the implementation of a manager-led, four-week mindfulness program to reduce job stress and turnover intention. This research blended Human Resources Management and Strategic Leadership Development by introducing innovative mindful micro-practices during existing pre/post-shift meetings. The regional fast casual restaurant company was founded as a barbeque ministry well known for a commitment to communities, based in Orlando, Florida in the United States of America.

Existing literature and theoretical frameworks: Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan) includes three key tenets of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, making it a good fit for the service industry. Self-determination theory was the framework for restaurant manager training, then delivered to their teams. Self-determination theory has long been aligned with mindfulness and personal well-being.

Methods: The evaluation used an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. Manager training addressed stress and introduced mindfulness, aligning manager roles with the company mission, vision, and values. Managers were provided with 26 different mindful micro-practices demonstration videos including written instructions for micro-practices: breathing, movement with breath, focus with intention, and energizers including laughter. After the Zoom-based training, managers were provided other resources housed on the company intranet and accessible at any time. The study population was 339 team members and 21 managers at the 8 participating restaurant locations; previously 7 locations participated in a pilot study.

Team member surveys reported stress at work, mindfulness, and turnover intention, while manager interviews focused on the implementation experiences of managers and their teams. Dispositional mindfulness awareness was measured using the five-item version of the Mindful Attention and Awareness Scale (MAAS, Brown & Ryan, 2003; van Dam et al., 2010; Osman et al., 2016). MAAS showed predictive validity for burnout and work engagement ($F = 68.766$, $p = 0.000$), and is a valid and reliable unidimensional measure of mindfulness in work settings.

Following the analysis of the survey data, all managers were invited to participate in recorded, confidential interviews in Zoom. After informed consent was verified, managers were asked open-ended questions about their industry experience, their intervention experiences, and the organizational culture, concluding with member-checking questions. The interview data was robust with over 900 codes identified (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Results: In this presentation, we focus on understanding the statistically non-significant changes in stress and turnover intention after the intervention, $F(2,12) = .214$, $p = .95$, $\eta^2 = .082$, despite the moderate effect size.

Qualitative data analysis revealed five overarching themes.

(1) Stressors at Work: Stress and lean staffing were a vicious cycle for managers and team members.
(2) Supportive Leadership: Corporate leadership was supportive, positive, and encouraging.
(3) Caring Organizational Culture: Careful hiring ensured organization fit and caring behaviors, reinforced by organizational language and customs. All participants described a values driven company with a team culture providing rewarding work, a competitive advantage for team member recruitment and retention, in addition to sales and service.
(4) Intervention Experience: Some locations adapted the intervention because a mix of positive and cautious reactions of managers and team members affected implementation.
(5) Behavioral Adaptations: Contrasted with pre-intervention stress, managers described a variety of stress reducing behaviors among managers and team members, including the benefits of mindful practices and post-intervention behavioral changes.

Discussion and Conclusion: This study provided insights and practical applications to reduce job stress and turnover in hospitality. These findings are consistent with prior research showing stress at work as a driver of turnover (Park & Min, 2020); employees often cite ongoing stress when leaving a job (Wang et al., 2021, Rothausen et al., 2017). Past studies of casual dining restaurant turnover were affected by turnover of staff during data collection, also true in this study (Bufquin et al., 2018; DiPietro et al., 2020; Ponting, 2022).

This restaurant chain was an ideal candidate for successful implementation of this mindfulness-based intervention to reduce stress and turnover, yet the results were mixed. Extensive research shows that leader relationships, support, and actions affects turnover (Park & Min, 2020; Basford & Offermann, 2012). Managers interviewed felt supported by their leaders, which may reduce stress at work and thus reduce turnover (Bufquin, 2020).

Despite being an ideal organization for this mindfulness intervention to reduce stress and turnover, organizational stressors and the organizational culture affected the implementation of the intervention. Mindfulness should be part of leader self-development, supporting positive outcomes for service workers (Urrila, 2021; Hülsheger et al., 2013). Only five of fifteen managers interviewed had experience with stress reducing behaviors before the study, leading to discomfort when leading mindful practices. Four managers interviewed did not attend manager training and some felt vulnerable leading their teams. Adding mindfulness practices to an already busy pre-shift meeting was, ironically, another source of stress for managers and team members.

Despite their initial concerns, managers understood that stress and turnover were top priorities; some managers adapted the intervention to meet their team needs within the company culture. Most importantly, the organizational culture supported the autonomy of managers to adapt the intervention. Several managers initiated open conversations during about stress with their teams, a first for the company. Post-intervention, three managers reported no behavioral changes while four managers reported positive behavioral changes with plans to continue the conversations about stress at work, as teams were more attentive to the needs of their coworkers and guests.

Reflecting the service profit chain (Heskett, et. al, 1994) this study reports how hospitality organizations that support their team members and their local communities, position the hospitality industry for a sustainable future in one of the top tourism destinations in the world.

Tourism as a Catalyst for Economic Growth in Africa: Assessing the Impact of Ghana's Year of Return Initiative.

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Tourism is gradually emerging as a driver of economic growth contributing to large foreign exchange inflows, creating employment and infrastructure development. The world's largest economies such as the United States of America, China, and Japan are all benefiting heavily from the proceeds of tourism exemplifying its relevance worth emulating in weaker economies in Africa. Interestingly, Sub-Saharan Africa recorded an impressive growth of 8.6 percent, surpassing the global average of 7 percent in 2020.

Literature suggests that Africa is gradually embracing tourism and recognizing its economic potential. For example, In 2019, the president of Ghana declared the "Year of Return" a large tourism initiative targeted at enticing African American, Caribbean, and African Diaspora to visit Ghana and reconnect to their ancestral heritage. This initiative featured two-month calendar activities like music festivals, business conferences, sentimental and commemoration tourism-packed activities, and conferring citizenship to interested African Americans attracting global attention from media giants such as CNN, DW, Aljazeera, and many others. As a result, tourism visits increased from 200,000 to 750,000, generating over 1.9 billion dollars for the economy. Despite these significant achievements, limited empirical studies exist to show the contribution of tourism to the development of Africa's economy. This paper examines the successes of tourism in Africa using Ghana as the case study.

The existing literature on tourism in Africa mostly concentrates on the historical, and socio-cultural significance leading to insufficient analysis of financially related effects, investment, and social and community developments despite global recognition of tourism as a driver of economic development. This study fills the gap by providing a comprehensive case-based analysis of Ghana's "Year of Return"- a large-scale tourism initiative highlighting the effect of tourism on broader economic sectors like investment in infrastructures and real estate, real economic growth, donations, and community support. Thie objectives of this study is to evaluates the benefits of the socio-economic benefits- economic growth, investments, and community support by tourists.

The study adopted the mixed methods approach incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods. In the qualitative approach, primary data is collected through in-depth interviews using structured and semi-structured surveys from stakeholders such as the Ministry of Tourism, Ghana Tourism Authority, and Ministry of Finance, Additional perspectives were sourced from hoteliers, event organizers, restaurant operators sector investors, returning diasporas and beneficiaries from the informal eco-system.

The study relied on government sector reports as the core secondary data- an economic impact analysis report from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and, a tourism performance evaluation report from the Ministry of Tourism and related agencies. In furtherance, the qualitative data extracted from the interviews were thematically evaluated to explore the relationship between investments, donations, and tourism-related activities on Ghana's local economic landscape. The combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods provided the study with a comprehensive evaluation of the economic, social, and investment-related impact of tourism in Ghana.

The findings lend credence to the fact that tourism promotes economic growth, with Ghana's model demonstrating the need for developing countries to leverage tourism initiatives for economic prosperity. The initiative generated over 1.9 billion dollars in direct benefit to the economy, with annual tourism figures increasing from 200,000 to 750,000, and over 200 foreigners granted citizenship. Additionally, significant benefits were prevalent with stakeholders such as event organizers, hoteliers, restaurants, pub owners, vendors, tourist guides, and service operators in the informal sector highlighting broader economic benefits.

Significant investments were also identified in real estate, hospitality, and the entertainment sector. The study found surge in philanthropic contributions to education, healthcare, and community development.

The findings lend credence to the notion that tourism promotes economic growth in Africa. The influx of tourists increased from 200,000 to 750,000, generating increased revenues to key sectors such as hospitality, transportation, and retail in the year under review. Over 1.9 billion dollars was generated into the economy as a result of the Year of Return initiative supporting the theory that tourism can help solve economic challenges in Africa.

Ghana highlights the importance of tourism initiatives for developing countries. Furthermore, more than 200 members of the African diaspora received citizenship, resulting in sustained investments in real estate and tourism infrastructure. Additionally, considerable advantages were observed for stakeholders-event organizers, hoteliers, restaurant owners, and pub managers. Other benefits affected vendors, and tourist guides, and provided financial gains to various service providers in the informal sector and rural tourist sites. Philanthropic donations also supported healthcare, education, and community activities.

This study confirms the socioeconomic benefits of tourism for the economic development of the state, highlighting the need for developing countries to develop tourism initiatives that will entice an inflow of tourists into their country.

Keywords

Tourism-led Development, Economic Growth, Diaspora Engagement,Foreign Investment, Sustainable Tourism

Balancing Technology and Humanity: The Moderating Effect of Dehumanization in AI Training Programs

<u>Note:</u> Conference logo will be placed at the center-top of this cover page

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Introduction

AI-based training platforms, such as Strivr and Attensi, are transforming employee development in chain hotels by providing innovative solutions to enhance operational efficiency, improve service quality, and maintain consistency across properties. Frontline employees play a crucial role in delivering high-quality guest experiences, often managing complex interactions requiring technical proficiency and emotional intelligence. Traditional training methods may lack the adaptability and engagement needed to prepare employees for these challenges, whereas AI training offers personalized learning, real-time feedback, and consistent content delivery, making it particularly effective in addressing these needs.

The purpose of this study is twofold: (1) to examine how employees perceive the quality of AI training across multiple dimensions and its impact on job satisfaction, and (2) to explore how perceived dehumanization moderates this relationship. This focus addresses a gap in existing literature, which often highlights the technical or operational benefits of AI training without considering its emotional or psychological implications for employees. By addressing these dual effects, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities and challenges of AI training for frontline employees in the hospitality industry.

Literature Review

AI training has emerged as a transformative tool in the hospitality sector, offering scalable and efficient solutions for employee development. By simulating real-world scenarios, AI platforms allow employees to practice complex tasks in a controlled, risk-free environment. These systems also provide real-time feedback, enabling learners to identify and correct errors immediately, which accelerates skill acquisition and enhances confidence (My Hotel Line, 2024). Additionally, AI training reduces costs associated with traditional methods by minimizing the need for physical materials, dedicated trainers, and in-person sessions. These benefits make AI effective for training frontline employees, whose roles demand a balance of technical expertise and emotional intelligence. Consistent training delivery is another significant advantage of AI platforms, ensuring uniform service quality across multiple hotel properties (Digital Guest, 2024).

Perceived training quality has long been recognized as a critical determinant of employee outcomes, including job performance and satisfaction. The evaluation of training quality typically encompasses multiple dimensions, such as content relevance, platform effectiveness, delivery and design, engagement and interaction, and practical application (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006; Noe, 2017). In the context of AI training, these dimensions are enriched by features such as adaptive learning, gamification, and real-time feedback, which improve employee engagement and retention. High-quality training programs meet employees' developmental needs, equipping them with the skills and confidence required to succeed in their roles, thereby enhancing job satisfaction (Prentice et al., 2020; Davis, 1989).

H1: Perceived training quality (H1a: content relevance, H1b: platform effectiveness, H1c: delivery and design, H1d: engagement and interaction, and H1e: practical application) positively influences job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction is closely linked to employees' perceptions of their training experiences. According to job satisfaction theory (Locke, 1976), fulfilling employees' developmental needs through high-quality training can significantly enhance their satisfaction. AI training contributes to this by offering interactive and engaging learning modules (Noe, 2017). These factors are especially important for frontline employees, who often face dynamic and high-pressure situations requiring a blend of technical and interpersonal skills (Panda Pod Hotels, 2024). High-quality training programs not only enhance job satisfaction but also increase employees' intentions to progress in their careers by equipping them with the skills and confidence to pursue advanced roles within their organizations. This aligns with research emphasizing the role of training in shaping long-term career aspirations (Prentice et al., 2020).

H2: Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived training quality and job progression intention.

Dehumanization Theory (Haslam, 2006) suggests that environments heavily reliant on technology may diminish individuals' sense of connection and authenticity. In hospitality, where emotional intelligence and personal engagement are critical, perceived dehumanization could moderate the effects of training quality on job satisfaction. Studies indicate that employees who feel dehumanized are less likely to fully engage in their roles, which may negatively affect their job satisfaction (Haslam, 2006; Prentice et al., 2020). This study extends existing research by examining dehumanization as a moderating factor, providing a more comprehensive understanding of how employees experience AI training in service-oriented industries.

H3: Perceived dehumanization moderates the relationship between perceived training quality and job satisfaction.

Methodology

Data will be collected from employees in operational departments, such as Front Office and Food & Beverage, who have undergone AI-based training programs. A cross-sectional survey will be distributed via online platforms and in-house systems, targeting a diverse sample to ensure generalizability. The structured survey instrument will measure perceived training quality across eight dimensions: content relevance, platform effectiveness, delivery and design, engagement and interaction, practical application, impact on skills and knowledge, overall satisfaction, and technology usability. These dimensions are derived from established frameworks, including the Kirkpatrick Model (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006) and the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989). Job satisfaction will be assessed using the Job Descriptive Index (JDI), a widely validated measure of job satisfaction. Perceived dehumanization will be measured using adapted items from Haslam's (2006) dehumanization scale, focusing on feelings of reduced personal connection and authenticity in the training process. To analyze the data, the study will adopt a two-step approach as outlined by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), utilizing confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling.

Expected Implications

This study is expected to provide critical insights into the dual impact of AI training on frontline employees in chain hotels. By highlighting the benefits of high-quality AI training and addressing the potential risks of perceived dehumanization, it offers a balanced perspective on the effectiveness of AI-driven learning systems. The findings will help hospitality managers design training programs that optimize employee outcomes while mitigating unintended consequences. Furthermore, this research contributes to the broader discourse on technology-driven employee development, supporting the sustainable growth of the hospitality industry by ensuring that AI training systems align with both organizational goals and employee needs.

Keywords: AI Training, Job Satisfaction, Perceived Dehumanization, Frontline Employees

Re-imagining cultural tourism through retro products

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT (REQUIRED. NO MORE THAN 1000 WORDS)

Cultural tourism plays a vital role in fostering appreciation among diverse communities by allowing individuals to experience and engage with different cultural activities, customs, rituals, and ways of life (Chen & Rahman, 2018). It involves tourists engaging with both the tangible cultural manifestations and the behaviors and customs of a destination, creating a dynamic interaction between visitors and the cultural environment (Chen & Rahman, 2018). By immersing themselves in the cultural landscapes of various regions, tourists gain insights into the values, beliefs, and customs that shape societies (Smith, 2015). This form of tourism not only contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage but also stimulates local economies and encourages the sustainable development of communities (Labadi et al., 2021). As such, cultural tourism is an essential component of the tourism industry, offering unique and enriching experiences that transcend traditional sightseeing.

Despite its significance, current research in cultural tourism predominantly focuses on heritage cultural sites and intangible cultural heritage, often emphasizing historical narratives and artifacts (Leong et al., 2024; Chen, 2024). This approach, while valuable, tends to overlook the dynamic and evolving nature of culture in contemporary contexts. The emphasis on preserving historical sites and traditions sometimes neglects the innovative and transformative aspects of culture that are emerging in modern societies. As a result, there is a research gap in understanding how cultural tourism can integrate both the preservation of historical heritage and the incorporation of contemporary cultural expressions. Addressing this gap is crucial for developing a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to cultural tourism that reflects the multifaceted nature of culture today.

In modern times, there is a growing movement towards embracing innovation and change within cultural tourism (Wang et al., 2024). This shift recognizes that culture is not static but rather a living, evolving entity that continuously adapts to new influences and ideas. The challenge lies in finding ways to honor the heritage of the past while simultaneously embedding the ideas of the present and future. This leads to the research question: "How can cultural tourism reflect the heritage of the past and embed ideas of the present and future?". To answer this question, this conceptual paper seeks to conceptualize retro products for cultural tourism that capture the essence of past traditions while incorporating contemporary and forward-thinking elements. By doing so, cultural tourism can offer experiences that are not only rooted in history but also resonate with modern sensibilities and anticipate future cultural trends.

To conceptualize retro products for cultural tourism, this conceptual paper defines retro by contrasting it with vintage, heritage, and nostalgia: unlike vintage, retro is new and re-designed; unlike heritage, retro is not actual historical objects from past cultural heritage; unlike nostalgia, retro can offer a fresh and contemporary appeal. By exploring these intersections and retro's unique attributes, six key components of retro are identified: Romanticism, Authenticity, Bygone, Innovation, Groundedness, and Timelessness.

Specifically, *Romanticism* refers to a sense of idealism evoked by the past styles and designs embedded in retro products (Hemetsberger et al., 2011). *Authenticity*, by definition, refers to the core values and cultural significance of an 'original.' In retro, however, authenticity involves maintaining the authentic significance of the original while *readapting* it to a new social and historical context (Brown et al., 2003). *Bygone* involves one's memories of a specific era triggered by the past cues associated with that time period. *Innovation* in retro refers to the integration of updated design and technology to improve people's quality of life and overall experience (Brown, 2003). *Groundedness* refers to a sense of stability provided by the familiar elements embedded in retro products, providing individuals with comfort and emotional support in this ever-changing world. *Timelessness* refers to qualities or characteristics in retro that

transcend time periods and remain relevant and valued across generations, highlighting the enduring relevance and significance of continuity.

Overall, this conceptual paper contributes to the tourism academic and offers insights to destination management organizations and tourism officials. Theoretically, this paper contributes to tourism and hospitality literature by introducing an integrated conceptualization of retro products. It combines perspectives from different disciplines, such as marketing and fashion, further enhancing the comprehensive understanding of 'retro' as a whole. It sets the foundation for future research on retro products in tourism and hospitality, which is an increasing phenomenon that has not yet been thoroughly explored. Practically, this paper provides destination management organizations (DMOs) with suggestions from two perspectives: tourism product development and destination marketing, by using tourism examples to highlight the characteristics of retro products in the tourism context.

Keywords (5 Required)

Retro, Product, Tourism, Hospitality, Conceptualization

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The Influence of Perceived Safety and Psychological Empowerment on Resident and Tourists' Emotional Solidarity at a Cultural Festival

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Local events and community festivals offer a plethora of opportunities for locals and visitors to interact, potentially fostering affection and harmonious relationships. For this encounter to occur, residents must be prepared to be exemplary hosts, and visitors must also be willing to integrate into the community. Festivals and other cultural events have emerged as significant forces behind cultural tourism, providing distinctive experiences that draw tourists while influencing the character and vibrancy of local communities (Lopes & Hiray, 2024) and have the capacity to foster a festive, celebratory ambiance (Richards & King, 2022). Residents as well as tourists will base their opinions and judgments on the effects—both positive and negative—that these events and other tourism-related activities have on the local community. But most of the time, the economic impacts are mostly used in their assessment. There have been consistent divergences in the economic benefits (Getz, 2010), emphasizing the needs to investigate the interactions between residents and tourists through the lens of non-economic measures such as emotions (Woosnam, et al., 2014).

As a theoretical framework for understanding the dynamics between residents and tourists, emotional solidarity has also received substantial attention in the field of tourism research (Woosnam et al., 2015). Emotional solidarity is what binds people together in establishing a "we" sentiment as opposed to "me versus you" view (Jacobs & Allen, 2005). Hammarström (2005) defined emotional solidarity as the emotive bonds individuals establish, distinguished by their emotional proximity and the degree of their interaction. In the tourism context, Woosnam & Noorman (2010) introduced and developed the emotional solidarity framework in measuring the emotional connection between tourists and the residents and was found to consist of three distinct factors – welcoming nature, emotional closeness, and sympathetic understanding. Woosnam (2011) asserted that as residents and tourists interact with one another, engage in similar behavior, and share similar beliefs, some degree of emotional solidarity will emerge, forming a bond between them.

For emotional bonds to be fully established between the residents and tourists, the question of safety must be adequately addressed satisfactorily. As Woosnam et al., (2015) contended that emotional solidarity contributes to a feeling of being safe. Perceived safety is crucial in any tourism context, especially at cultural events where people may become targets of crime as they celebrate (Larsen, 2012) and more recently, health safety when COVID-19 struck the entire world (Joo et al., 2021). Destinations with a solid reputation for safety make tourists feel more welcome and make it easier for them to connect with residents, thus giving the residents a form of psychological empowerment. In the context of tourism, psychological empowerment refers to the ability of tourism to boost residents' sense of pride and self-worth (Scheyvens,1999). The enhancement of self-esteem is strongly linked to the sense of uniqueness that inhabitants experience when individuals visit specifically to appreciate the distinctive natural and cultural attributes of their region (Boley & Gaither, 2015).

Emotional solidarity has been applied in many tourism studies both from the resident and tourist perspectives, notably among them are studies linking emotional solidarity with place attachment (Aleshinloye et al., 2020; Woosnam et al., 2018), resident attitude to tourism development (Erul et al., 2020; Joo et al., 2021), destination image (Woosnam et al., 2020), tourism impacts (Chua et al., 2022; Munanura et al., 2023), and social distance (Aleshinloye et al., 2020; Joo et al., 2018). In the festival literature study too, emotional solidarity has been studied in terms of resident support for festivals (Li & Wan, 2017), perceived impacts of cultural festivals (Woosnam & Aleshinloye, 2018; Yozukmaz et al., 2020), residency and frequency of attendance (Woosnam et al., 2014), and festival authenticity (Ayad et al., 2024)

Studies linking the interactions between residents and tourists through the lens of emotional solidarity and societal factors (Woosnam, et al., 2014) is very scant in the literature. Most especially, non-economic constructs as antecedents of the emotional solidarity that can evolve between residents and tourists at destinations. Consequently, the present research seeks to utilize perceived safety and psychological empowerment as antecedents to the emotional solidarity that develops between residents and tourists in festival contexts. This approach highlights the importance of non-economic factors in building positive relationships and community cohesion. The purpose of this study is twofold: (1) to examine the effect of perceived safety and psychological empowerment as emotional solidarity develops between residents and tourists in tourism destinations., and (2) to analyze the variance between the two constructs – perceived safety and psychological empowerment – in relation to emotional solidarity factors between residents and tourists.

Data for this study were collected from residents (n=328) and tourists (n=317) during the annual Osun Osogbo Cultural Festival in 2023. Perceived safety, psychological empowerment, and emotional solidarity were measured by the 6-item perceived safety scale utilized in the work of George (2010), 5-item Boley and McGehee's (2014) psychological empowerment scale and the 10-item Emotional Solidarity Scale (ESS) developed by Woosnam & Norman (2010) respectively. Each scale was presented as a 1–7 agreement Likert scale, where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. Furthermore, SPSS's AMOS software was used to first test the construct validity of the measures and second, to test the structural relationships between the constructs. The factor loadings for all the measurement items exceeded 0.50, confirming construct validity (Hair et al., 2010).

For the resident, this study examined seven direct relationships among the proposed paths using structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the fit between the theoretical model and the collected data. The model exhibited an acceptable fit, with key indices reported as follows: GFI = 0.80, CFI = 0.88, TLI = 0.86, RMSEA = 0.06, and $\chi^2/df = 3.26$. For the tourist data, the study also investigated seven direct relationships among the proposed pathways by employing structural equation modeling (SEM) to evaluate the alignment between the theoretical framework and the data collected. The model demonstrated an adequate fit, as evidenced by the following fit indices: GFI = 0.77, CFI = 0.88, TLI = 0.85, RMSEA = 0.06, and $\chi^2/df = 5.59$. Implication and limitations/future research opportunities will be discussed.

Keywords (5 Required)

Perceived safety, psychological empowerment, emotional solidarity, Osun Festival, Osogbo, Nigeria.

Counting Attendees for a Non-Gated Open-Field Festival

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Counting Attendees for a Non-Gated Open-Field Festival

Significance

Large-scale events and festivals are widely acknowledged as effective means to attract tourists and visitors, stimulate the local economy, and promote potential development, particularly in communities with limited resources. These events can play a pivotal role in reshaping local economies. The Annual Walleye Festival in Port Clinton, Ohio, is a notable example.

Like many small towns along the Lake Erie coast, Port Clinton faced structural and economic decline after the manufacturing industry's heyday waned in the last century. However, the city has found its niche as a premier destination for sport fishing on Lake Erie. Community leaders have strategically leveraged the Walleye Festival to generate revenue and bolster the city's reputation. Port Clinton is not only recognized as the "World's Walleye Capital" but is also a key player in what has been termed "walleye economics."

The Annual Walleye Festival, hosted for over 35 years, features carnival rides, food and merchandise vendors, a large entertainment tent with food and drinks, non-stop performances, a grand parade, a kids' fishing derby, a lighted boat parade, and a 5K run/walk. Over time, the festival has grown significantly in size and attendance while enriching its offerings with diverse entertainment and social activities. The Walleye Festival serves as a model for other communities seeking to boost their development through similar events.

Problem

To evaluate the festival's impact on the local economy, it is essential to determine the number of attendees. However, counting attendees at a non-gated, open-field event presents significant challenges. Traditional methods, such as examining increases in restaurant receipts or hotel occupancy rates during the event, cannot definitively attribute these changes to the festival.

Research Approach: Crowd Counting via Digital Imaging

This research introduces a crowd-counting technique proposed by Hussain, Yatim, Hussain, Yan, and Haron (2011), which uses digital imaging analysis to estimate crowds in well-defined areas. Specific sample areas—such as food, ride, and vendor zones—were identified as popular gathering spots. Photographs were taken at regular intervals throughout the festival to count attendees within these defined areas.

Methodology

1. **Defined Sample Areas**: The food, ride, and vendor areas were selected as sample zones due to their popularity.
2. **Photo Collection**: Photos were taken every other hour from the beginning to the end of each festival day. Individuals visible within the defined spaces in these photos were included in the count, even if only partially captured.

3. **Questionnaire**: A supplementary questionnaire was administered to collect demographic information, visitors' primary reasons for attending, spending patterns, and the duration of their stay.
4. **Data Analysis**:
   - Attendee counts from the sample areas were averaged across different times of the day.
   - To avoid double-counting, a festival turnover rate of 3.39 to 3.5 was applied to calculate the number of unique attendees per day.
   - The total estimated attendance was derived by multiplying the average attendee count by the turnover rate and the festival's duration.

Findings

The research estimated that approximately 20,606 people attended the three-day Walleye Festival in 2016. An input-output analysis revealed that the festival generated a total economic impact of $3.8 million. These findings provide valuable insights into crowd capacity versus site selection and assist in planning future events by evaluating revenue potential.

Limitations and Future Directions

The study acknowledges certain limitations, including the need to adopt emerging technologies to enhance crowd-counting accuracy. Future research should explore advanced methods such as real-time video analytics, machine learning, and geospatial data to refine crowd estimation techniques.

Conclusion

The Annual Walleye Festival in Port Clinton demonstrates how a community event can stimulate economic development. By employing innovative methods like digital imaging analysis, event organizers can better understand attendance metrics, enabling them to assess and optimize the economic impact of their festivals. This case study offers valuable lessons for other communities aiming to enhance their development through similar initiatives.

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Investigating the role of perceived benefits of host-guest interaction in the festival tourism context

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Investigating the role of perceived benefits of host-guest interaction in the festival tourism context

1. Introduction

Festivals, carrying the cultural identity of a place, allow local residents to interact with tourists (Getz, 1991). As the establishment of positive guest-host interaction in the festivals can periodically bring social and economic impact to this place, these festivals are essential for the development and branding a place (Ma & Lew, 2012). Past research has explored the perceived benefits of host-guest interaction from the perspective of tourists (Stylidis, 2022). However, there is a scarcity of research on how the benefits of host-guest interaction affect the brand relationship between local residents and the place, creating challenges for understanding the concrete impact of host-guest interaction in place branding (Getz, 1991). The continuation of local festivals is driven by the force of resident support as they recognize the benefits derived from their encounters with tourists (dos Santos et al., 2024). Therefore, it is critical to explore the benefits of host-guest interaction when branding a place (Shi et al., 2024). Drawing upon the social exchange theory (Homans, 1958) and Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryn 2012), this study aims to explore the role of perceived benefits of host-guest interaction in branding a place from the perspective of local residents.

2. Literature review

Host-guest interaction refers to social encounters between hosts and tourists at a specific location (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). Residents are considered an essential part of a destination's "hospitality vibe" (Simmons, 1994). The benefits of host-guest interaction for residents are one of the primary factors that encourage residents to create a hospitality vibe in their home places and support tourism development (Stylidis, 2022). Beyond economic incomes, residents can receive diverse benefits, such as making friends with tourists, experiencing cultural differences, promoting the local culture, and improving the image of the place where they live when interacting with tourists (Zhang et al., 2017).

Brand awareness suggests how residents recognize their living place as a well-established brand that captures tourist traffic (Burger, 2015). When local people derive benefits, such as financial reward, from their interaction with tourists, they are more likely aware that their hometown are branded as a popular destination (Qu et al., 2024). Brand commitment is defined as the psychological connection between individuals and a particular brand (Nyadzayo et al., 2015). If residents perceive the benefits of host-guest interactions when attending the festivals, their emotional connection with their hometowns tend to be enhanced (Tanford et al., 2011). Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1: Perceived benefits of host-guest interaction have a positive impact on brand awareness.
H2: Perceived benefits of host-guest interaction have a positive impact on brand commitment.

Brand ambassadors refer to individuals who regularly embrace and promote a particular brand (Zhao et al., 2022). When residents recognize the popularity of their places and have a strong attachment to their places through the festivals, they are likely to have good interaction with tourists to brand this place and recommend the festivals to others (Wassler et al., 2021). Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed, and the conceptual model is presented in Figure 1.

H3: Brand awareness has a positive impact on brand ambassador behaviors.
H4: Brand commitment has a positive impact on brand ambassador behaviors.

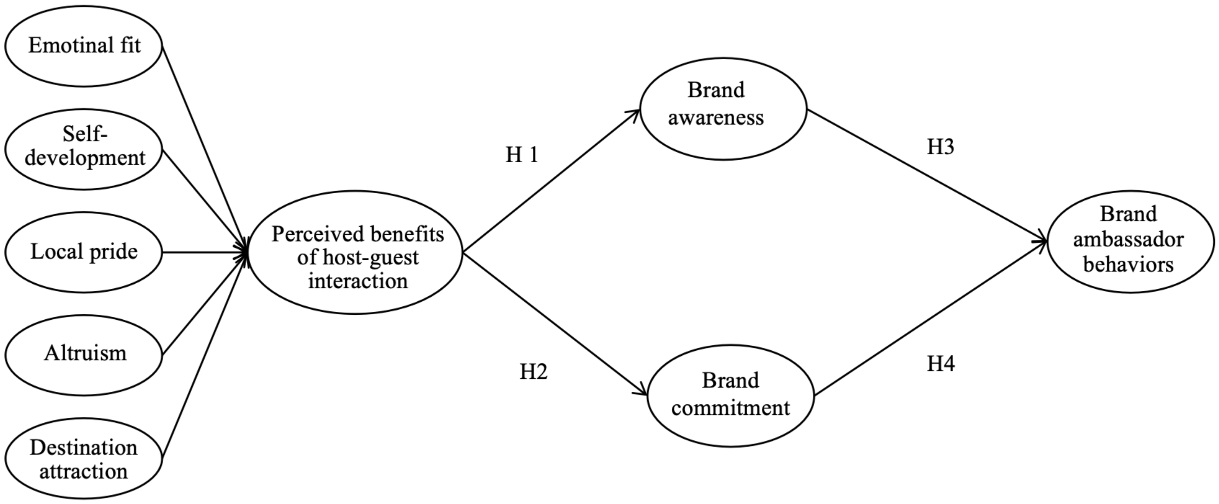

Figure 1. Conceptual model

3. Methodology

This research collected onsite data from the Snow Festival in Harbin, China in 2024. The quality of the responses was controlled through several rigorous steps (e.g., attention checks). All measures were adopted from existing literature and assessed on a 7-point Likert-type scale (Kim et al., 2018; Shi et al., 2024; Zhao et al., 2022). Removing unqualified cases, this study obtained 429 valid surveys for data analysis. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed, given its greater flexibility in theory development and sample size (Hair et al., 2011).

4. Results

This study examined the measurement model and structural model using PLS-SEM. Results of Harman's one-factor test and the variance inflation factors for all constructs and items showed that common method variance is not a concern in this research. The measurement and structural model of this study are well-established. As the results of bootstrapping testing showed, all hypotheses are supported.

5. Conclusions

Drawing upon the social exchange theory (Homans, 1958) and self-determination theory (Deci & Ryn 2012) this study reveals the importance of benefits derived from host-guest interaction in the festival context in evoking local residents' brand awareness and commitment toward the place, which encourages them to become the brand ambassadors. This study extends the theoretical understanding of the social exchange theory and self-determination theory and adds insightful knowledge to host-guest relationship research in the festival tourism context. Practical implications are also provided for place marketers and festival operators by leveraging festival tourism to brand a place.

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Keywords

Perceived benefits of host-guest interaction, brand awareness, brand commitment, brand ambassador behaviors, festival tourism

Visualizing spatial mismatch between supply and demand in regional tourism

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Tourism, the largest single service export for the United States, is a key driver of regional economic development and is expected to generate $223.60 billion in revenue by 2025 (Statista, 2024). Growth in tourism depends on the dynamic relationship between supply and demand, which varies based on the distribution and accessibility of resources. These factors differ across geographic regions and reflect natural and geographical uniqueness (Hall & Page, 2014; Lv, 2019; Zhang & Yang, 2023). Certain destinations accumulate abundant resources and attract consistent demand, whereas others face lower utilization and diminished economic gains (Yang & Cao, 2022). This disparity requires careful analysis of regional variations in tourism development. Recognizing these differences is vital for policymakers and stakeholders who aim to foster robust regional tourism. An assessment of mismatches between supply and demand helps guide policy decisions, infrastructure investment, and strategic planning.

Scholarly interest in regional tourism analysis has steadily grown. Researchers have traditionally used Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping to determine primary factors that shape tourism resources. The supply-side perspective in tourism economics has examined how various tourism resources influence regional development. For example, Smith (1987) found that different resource types in Ontario, Canada, affect local economies in distinct ways, with counties reliant on tourism activity often depending more on it for economic stability. Spotts (1997) also highlighted the need to reduce economic disparities by addressing gaps in areas with lower tourism spending and impact, showing that tourism's economic benefits remain uneven across Michigan. Strategic interventions are therefore essential for balanced economic progress. Later work by Formica and Uysal (2006) demonstrated how mismatches between tourism resource types and tourist perceptions create supply-and-demand gaps in Virginia.

Despite these insights, a more detailed spatial analysis of both supply and demand remains essential. Literature on regional tourism analysis has largely focused on supply-side perspectives within local travel economies, while demand-oriented studies often rely on subjective assessments rather than objective data. Demand plays a critical role in tourism development, as it reflects visitor preferences and influences infrastructure investment. It also determines the actual use of tourism resources. However, existing research has provided limited analysis of where spatial mismatches occur. As a result, studies on spatial variation from a regional perspective remain insufficient.

The purpose of this research is to examine spatial mismatches between supply and demand in regional tourism in Florida at the community level. Tourism resources in Florida vary due to environmental, cultural, and infrastructural differences, which highlights the influence of geographical and environmental heterogeneity. In order to address these variations, this research establishes a systematic approach for an evaluation of regional disparities in tourism. The following objectives guide this investigation:

1. Develop tourism resource indices to quantify and evaluate the distribution of tourism resources across Florida.
2. Classify tourism regions based on resource attributes to construct a coherent framework for regional analysis.
3. Provide a visualization of tourism supply and demand to pinpoint hotspots and underutilized areas.
4. Visualize the spatial correlation between tourism resources and short-term rental operating performance.

The study applies advanced spatial analysis tools and statistical methods. GIS-based analysis represents tourism resources. This include natural and built attractions, across Florida's counties. Data that illustrate demand patterns allow for a side-by-side comparison with supply indicators. Factor analysis helps distill complex resource attributes into comprehensive indices that facilitate classification and comparison. Cluster analysis then groups counties with similar resource portfolios, which reveals distinct tourism profiles that may attract different visitor segments. This combined approach allows a detailed examination of how spatial mismatches emerge in specific locations, offering crucial insights into where demand remains unfulfilled or where over-saturation may occur. In turn, policymakers can implement targeted interventions, such as the promotion of lesser-known destinations or adjustments to visitor flows in popular hotspots, to balance economic gains and minimize environmental impacts. Aligning local policies with precise analytical insights supports more adaptive, data-driven strategies that enhance long-term resilience in the tourism sector. Moreover, continuous monitoring of resource use and visitor preferences enables timely policy adjustments.

An analysis of mismatches assists policymakers and planners in the allocation of resources more effectively and the design of strategies that support sustainable and equitable growth. Spatial disparities in resource distribution highlight the significance of environmental, cultural, and infrastructural factors that shape local tourism opportunities. A clear understanding of these differences remains critical for long-term sustainability and requires a thorough review of how resource allocation, demand patterns, and policy initiatives intersect. This study aims to optimize resource use, strengthen local capacities, and promote balanced development models. The detection of spatial mismatches establishes the foundation for strategic regional tourism planning. The ultimate objective is to develop approaches that leverage existing assets, address shortcomings, and advance sustainable community-level growth across diverse regions.

Keywords (5 Required)

Community sustainability, Spatial mismatch, Supply and demand, Regional analysis, Tourism resource

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Finding the Sweet Spot: How Destination Marketing Spending Shapes Tourism Outcome Returns in Japan

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Finding the Sweet Spot:
How Destination Marketing Spending Shapes Tourism Outcome Returns in Japan

Objectives

This study investigates the conditions under which Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) spending impacts tourism outcomes, particularly in the context of regional DMOs in Japan. While studies have demonstrated significant returns from DMO marketing investments (Kulendran & Dwyer, 2009; Pratt et al., 2010), recent scrutiny has raised questions about the long-term effectiveness of marketing efforts by DMOs (Zavattaro & Fay, 2019). Drawing on the law of diminishing marginal returns (Ricardo, 1817), the research examines two key relationships: the relationship between DMO marketing spending and tourist arrivals, and the subsequent relationship between tourist arrivals and tourism receipts.

Contributions

This study contributes to the existing literature in three ways. First, it extends beyond the traditional focus on national-level DMOs in Western countries by examining smaller regional DMOs in the Asian context. Second, it moves beyond the conventional linear analysis of destination marketing effects by incorporating diminishing returns, examining a nonlinear relationship between DMO spending and tourist arrivals. Finally, while confirming the effect of tourist arrivals on tourism receipts, this study demonstrates the effectiveness of DMO spending on tourism receipts at the optimal point. These findings contribute to more informed budgeting strategies for DMOs of various stages.

Methods

The researchers collected data on DMO spending, tourist arrivals and tourism receipts from the annual reports of DMOs submitted to the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism of Japan. The data covered the period from 2019 to 2022. The study included a total of 181 Japanese DMOs, comprising 150 city-level DMOs (83%) and 31 prefecture-level DMOs (17%), resulting in 724 observations (181 DMOs over 4 years).

The study employed a cross-sectional design. In line with Assaf and Tsionas (2020), this study addressed potential endogeneity using Limited Information Maximum Likelihood (LIML) Instrumental Variables regressions with robust standard errors. The two key relationships investigated were: the nonlinear relationship between DMO spending and tourist arrivals, alongside the linear relationship between tourist arrivals and tourism receipts. Following Gujarati (2015), the models include instrumental variables, including DMO revenues, cultural and natural resources, crime rates, satisfaction and repeat rates, and temperature.

Findings and Results

The first model demonstrated good fit ($F = 23.54$, $p < 0.001$, centered $R^2 = 0.2248$) and passed instrumental variable tests where the Kleibergen-Paap rk LM statistic was significant (42.787, $p = 0.0009$), indicating that the excluded instruments were relevant and correlated with the endogenous variables; the Hansen J statistic was insignificant (24.625, $p = 0.1034$), meaning the models were not over-identified and the instruments were appropriate; the endogeneity test for the endogenous regressors was insignificant (4.363, $p = 0.1129$), indicating that the specified endogenous regressors are exogenous. DMO spending had a significant positive linear effect on tourist arrivals ($\beta = 3.700$, $t = 2.13$, $p = 0.033$), while its squared term showed a significant negative effect ($\beta = -0.0735$, $t = -1.69$, $p = 0.091$), confirming an inverted U-shaped relationship between DMO spending and tourist arrivals, following the guidelines for the analysis of the elasticity effects Altin et al. (2020). Subsequently, the optimal point where DMO spending maximizes tourist arrivals was estimated (\$ 778.2 million in DMO spending; 6.96 million tourist arrivals; \$111.83 per extra tourist).

The second model also exhibited good fit ($F = 23.11$, $p < 0.001$, centered $R^2 = 0.6567$) and satisfied instrumental variable tests (Kleibergen-Paap rk LM = 15.066, $p = 0.0046$; Hansen J = 0.530, $p = 0.9122$; Endogeneity test = 0.262, $p = 0.6087$). Tourist arrivals revealed a significant positive linear effect on tourism receipts ($\beta = 0.8076$, $t = 4.81$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that a 1% increase in tourist arrivals leads to a 0.8% increase in tourism receipts, meaning that every extra tourist will cause a continued linear growth in tourism revenues. The results mean that at the optimal DMO spending point, where \$778.2 million spending attracts 6.96 million tourists (\$111.83 in DMO spending per tourist), \$1.08 billion in tourism receipts are generated (\$155.17 in tourism receipts per tourist). This suggests that at this point, \$1 in DMO spending generates \$1.39 in tourism receipts.

Discussions and Implications

This study investigated DMO spending's impact on tourism outcomes through two key relationships: DMO spending to tourist arrivals, and tourist arrivals to tourism receipts. Results revealed tourist arrivals showed a consistent positive linear effect on tourism receipts while an inverted U-shaped relationship between DMO spending and tourist arrivals, with spending having a positive effect up to an optimal point, after which effectiveness diminishes. Drawing on the law of diminishing marginal returns (Ricardo, 1817), these findings align with and extend previous research questioning DMO effectiveness, especially in mature destinations (Zavattaro & Fay, 2019). The phenomenon can be further explained by Mela et al.'s (1997) learning theory, which suggests declining marketing effectiveness as brand recognition increases.

Theoretically, the study advances academic understanding of DMO effectiveness in two ways. First, by implementing the diminishing returns theory to destination management, it provides empirical evidence of nonlinear relationships in tourism marketing effectiveness. Second, by examining these relationships in an Asian context, specifically Japan, it extends the theoretical application beyond the traditional Western-centric framework of destination management research. Practically, it suggests smaller destinations to pursue more DMO activities to stimulate demand through external marketing and internal management, while larger (or well-recognized) destinations might revise their resource allocation strategies because the marketing effectiveness might have been diminished. The study's limitations encompass its cross-sectional nature and focus on Japan, potentially impacting long-term trend analysis and global applicability. Future research could broaden this study into diverse geographical settings to validate these findings globally.

Keywords

destination marketing effectiveness, diminishing marginal returns, DMO spending, tourist arrivals, tourism receipts, inverted U-shaped relationship, budgeting strategy

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Travel Photography's Contribution to Green Consumption in Tourist Destinations: Intrinsic Logic, Pathways, and Obstacles in Shangri-La

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of global tourism has led to significant environmental degradation, raising concerns about the sustainability of tourism consumption. In response, research on green consumption in tourism has primarily focused on policy interventions, eco-certifications, and infrastructure improvements, with less attention paid to consumer-driven sustainability efforts. While numerous studies examine tourists' pro-environmental behaviors, motivations, and ethical consumption choices, limited research has explored how specific tourism activities, such as travel photography, contribute to green tourism development.

Travel photography refers to a commercialized tourism experience where professional service providers offer staged photography sessions for tourists in culturally significant locations. This experience typically involves costume rental, makeup services, and professionally curated photography in destinations such as the Old Town of Lijiang, Shangri-La, or other scenic and heritage-riches sites. Unlike casual travel photography, which is self directed and spontaneous, this structured photography service integrates cultural representation with

tourism consumption, providing an immersive and low-impact way for visitors to engage with destinations.

Existing research on travel photography has largely focused on tourists' motivations, the aesthetics of photography, and the role of photography in shaping travel experiences. Studies have explored how travelers use photography for self-expression, destination marketing, and memory preservation. However, the potential of travel photography as a sustainable tourism practice remains underexplored. Travel photography, by its nature, has a low environmental footprint compared to resource-intensive tourism activities such as adventure tourism, mass sightseeing, or luxury travel. It allows tourists to engage with destinations in a non-extractive manner, minimizing direct ecological harm while promoting local culture and heritage through digital storytelling.

This study investigates the role of travel photography as a green consumption behavior and examines how it influences tourists' sustainability awareness and actions. Using Shangri-La, a renowned ecotourism destination in Yunnan Province, China, as a case study, this research aims to identify the intrinsic motivations, pathways, and barriers of travel photography in promoting sustainable tourism consumption. A mixed-method approach is employed, integrating quantitative surveys (n=203) and semi-structured interviews (n=12 travel photography studios). The study is guided by the AISAS consumer behavior model (Attention, Interest, Search, Action, Share), which allows for an in-depth analysis of how tourists engage with travel photography and whether it influences their environmental awareness and sustainable consumption behaviors.

The survey captures tourists' perceptions of travel photography as a sustainable alternative, their willingness to replace conventional tourism activities with photography experiences, and their likelihood to promote sustainable travel practices through social media sharing. Meanwhile, the qualitative interviews provide insights from industry practitioners regarding market trends, sustainability challenges, and the potential role of travel photography in eco-tourism branding.

Overall, this research reveals that travel photography is a viable, low-impact alternative to traditional tourism activities. It provides tourists with an immersive yet eco-friendly way to engage with destinations. Unlike mass tourism, which often involves high energy consumption, overcrowding, and extensive infrastructure development, travel photography encourages slower, more intentional travel, reducing unnecessary resource depletion. Additionally, tourists engaging in travel photography demonstrate higher levels of environmental awareness, with many participants reporting that capturing images of natural landscapes and cultural sites increased their appreciation for conservation efforts.

However, barriers hinder the widespread adoption of travel photography as a recognized green consumption practice. These barriers include market fragmentation, inconsistent service quality, lack of consumer education, and weak industry regulation. Many travel photography businesses operate in a highly competitive and price-sensitive market, making it difficult to integrate sustainability principles while maintaining profitability. The absence of formal sustainability guidelines or best practices for travel photography businesses further exacerbates the challenge, preventing the widespread adoption of eco-friendly photography services.

This study makes the following three key contributions. Firstly, theoretical contribution. Expands the discourse on green consumption in tourism by integrating alternative tourism models such as travel photography into sustainable consumption research. This study broadens the understanding of non-extractive, low-impact tourism behaviors that contribute to sustainability. Secondly, practical contribution. Provides policy and industry recommendations, including standardizing green practices in travel photography, implementing sustainable business models, and developing consumer education programs. Travel photography businesses can benefit from strategies to enhance their environmental responsibility while maintaining market competitiveness. Lastly, methodological contribution. Applies the AISAS model to tourism research, offering a structured framework to analyze consumer decision-making in low-impact tourism activities. This approach can be adapted to future studies examining consumer engagement with other sustainable tourism practices.

While this study provides valuable insights into the role of travel photography in green consumption, further research is needed to explore the long-term behavioral changes associated with this activity. Future studies could examine the effectiveness of destination marketing strategies that incorporate sustainable photography initiatives, the role of AI and digital tools in promoting responsible travel photography, and comparative studies between different cultural contexts to understand how travel photography influences sustainability perceptions globally.

In conclusion, this research integrates consumer behavior theories with sustainability frameworks, providing actionable insights for destination managers, tourism operators, and policymakers. It offers a scalable model for integrating travel photography into sustainable tourism strategies worldwide.

Keywords: Travel Photography, Green Consumption, Sustainable Tourism, Consumer Behavior, Shangri-La

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The Ethical Implications of Generative AI in the Hospitality and Tourism Workplace: Balancing Innovation with Employee Well-Being

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The rapid integration of artificial intelligence into the workplace has transformed the nature of work across various industries, including hospitality and tourism. Generative AI (GenAI) tools such as DeepSeek, Claude, Midjourney, and Synthesia are increasingly assuming roles in data analysis, design, and content creation. As a result, the impact of these technologies on employees' perceptions of meaningful work and well-being has become a critical area of inquiry (Bankins & Formosa, 2023). Meaningful work is defined as employment that individuals perceive as valuable, purposeful, and aligned with higher goals (Bowie, 1998). Despite the growing prevalence of AI, its psychological and ethical implications for employees remain underexplored. This paper addresses this gap by examining the intersection of employee well-being and ethical AI, and evaluating how AI can both enhance and undermine meaningful work. Drawing on philosophical and business ethics frameworks, including Kantian ethics, virtue ethics, and utilitarianism, this study explores the ethical significance of AI in the workplace.

In the hospitality and tourism industry, GenAI technologies have been widely adopted by employees to enhance service quality, operational efficiency, and decision-making. However, these advancements also raise fundamental questions about the nature of work and the issue of ethical usage. Meaningful work, characterized by intrinsic value, a sense of purpose, and alignment with broader societal goals, is crucial for employee well-being and job satisfaction (Michaelson et al., 2014). The integration of GenAI can both augment and diminish this sense of meaningfulness, depending on how it is implemented and managed. On the other hand, while artificial intelligence technology has the potential to improve employee skills and autonomy, it can also lead to increased surveillance and control, thereby redefining the concept of meaningful work (Abrams, 2004; Symon & Whiting, 2019). For instance, AI-driven performance monitoring may enhance productivity but could also lead to employee burnout and a sense of disconnection from their work. Additionally, AI's reliance on large datasets and algorithmic decision-making raises concerns about privacy, data bias, and systemic injustices (Bailey et al., 2019; Walsh et al., 2019). These issues are particularly relevant in the hospitality and tourism industry, where customer data is abundant and employee interactions are highly scrutinized. Existing frameworks, such as the AI4People ethical AI framework (Floridi et al., 2018), provide valuable insights into the ethical use of AI but do not directly address the concept of meaningful work. This study aims to fill this gap by proposing a comprehensive ethical framework that balances technological innovation with employee well-being. By integrating philosophical and business ethics perspectives, this research seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of the ethical implications of AI in the workplace.

To achieve this, the study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining web scraping techniques with semi-structured interviews. The interviews focus on employees' experiences with GenAI, their emotional responses, and their perceptions of work meaning and GenAI-related ethics, such as privacy and algorithm transparency. Participants were recruited from various sectors within the hospitality and tourism industry, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives. Thematic analysis was used to identify key factors influencing employee wellbeing. In addition to qualitative interviews, the study also employed web scraping and natural language processing (NLP) techniques to analyze online forum posts, reviews, and feedback on GenAI applications at workplace. This approach will provide a broader understanding of GenAI's impact on employees, capturing both positive and negative experiences (Campos Macias et al., 2022). By combining qualitative insights with quantitative data analysis, this research offers a comprehensive evaluation of GenAI's influence on work experiences.

This research aims to uncover the dual impacts of AI on work experiences and propose an ethical framework for organizations to consider when implementing AI technologies. By addressing the ethical dilemmas associated with AI, this study seeks to provide practical solutions for fostering meaningful work opportunities while maintaining a balance between technological advancement and employee welfare. The findings will highlight the importance of ethical considerations in AI deployment, emphasizing the need for organizations to prioritize employee well-being alongside technological innovation. The hospitality and tourism industry stands to benefit significantly from the insights provided by this research. By understanding the ethical implications of AI, organizations can develop strategies that enhance employee satisfaction, reduce turnover, and promote a positive work environment. This study will also contribute to the broader discourse on AI ethics, providing a valuable resource for policymakers, industry leaders, and researchers interested in the intersection of technology and human well-being.

This research endeavors to enhance the quality and productivity of the workplace within the hospitality and tourism sectors, firmly rooted in principles of ethical integrity. By fostering a harmonious relationship between employees and emerging technologies, organizations can leverage the benefits of GenAI while preserving the intrinsic value of meaningful work. This study aims to provide a roadmap for sustainable business development, ensuring that technological advancements serve both business interests and the well-being of employees.

Keywords (5 Required)

Generative Artificial Intelligence, Ethical Issues, Meaningful Work, Employee Well-being, Hospitality and Tourism

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Application of Digital Technology in Sauna Facilities:
A Case Study of Unmanned Sauna Operation

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Keywords
SaaS (Software as a Service), Service distinction, Labor shortage, Facial recognition systems, Payment systems

1. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

This study focuses on the sauna facilities that are managed through unmanned operations utilizing digital technology, which have become popular in recent years in Japan. By examining such unmanned facilities, this study aims to establish resulting benefits and implications for the hospitality industry.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Yoshioka (2025) provides an overview of the sauna industry in Japan, noting that more than 300 new sauna facilities opened in the year 2024 alone, and that the sauna portal "Sauna Ikitai" (https://sauna-ikitai.com/) lists approximately 14,000 sauna facilities in total. The report also analyzes a survey carried out by Japan Sauna Institute (2024) on the number of sauna enthusiasts and sauna usage trends in Japan, and found that after the Covid-19 pandemic both the total number of users will increase and the number of frequent users will decrease. The author contends that this current situation cannot be described as a general increase or a boom.

Grand View Research Inc. (2025) forecasts that the global sauna market size was valued at USD 859.5 million in 2023, but is expected to grow at a CAGR of 5.9% between 2024 and 2030. Furthermore, for the Asian market, including Japan, it further states that the Asian Pacific sauna market is projected to expand a CAGR of 7.2% from 2024 to 2030.

Other research by Mordor Intelligence (2025) forecasts market growth for saunas and spas. These previous studies and survey results indicate that the sauna market is indeed growing worldwide.

3. METHODOLOGY

This paper presents a case study of the ORS, sauna facility company. Based on the survey of literature and an interview with the president, the actual situation regarding the use of digital technology will be clarified.

There are only a small number of unmanned sauna facilities in Japan. The ORS's president of one of them, agreed to be interviewed. The company operates four unmanned sauna facilities in

Tokyo, Japan. As of 15/Feb/2025, a total of 24,000 "Sa-Katsu" (word-of-mouth comments on the use of sauna facilities) had been entered by sauna users in the aforementioned "Sauna Ikitai. These were selected for this study because they are popular and unique facilities.

4. RESULTS OF A STUDY

The company has only one member, the president himself, and all the sauna facilities are unmanned. Some stores are staffed by employees of the parent company of ORS, but these employees are not involved in the operation of the sauna facilities. This is due to legal reasons: depending on the area where the store is located, someone must be stationed there.

The use of digital technology in ORS sauna facilities includes user registration, receipt of usage fees, and the management of entry and exit for general use. When using the sauna for the first time, the user enters his/her cell phone number into the terminal, pays the fee by credit card, etc., registers his/her face photo via a link in a short-mail sent to his/her cell phone, and holds his/her face over the terminal for face recognition to unlock the door. When exiting, the door is unlocked by holding the terminal over the face.

In addition, there is a reporting tool for each facility. Conversation is prohibited in these facilities. If users are conversing with each other, another user may press the button installed in the facility to inform the president. The terminal carried by the president then rings and the president uses the terminal to alert the user by voice. If the user insists on continuing the conversation, the president will go to the site and forcibly remove the user from the facility and prohibit the user from using the facility thereafter. The banning of users can be achieved using a facial recognition system.

The unmanned operation of sauna facilities requires many of these functions, and ORS utilizes digital technology for these functions. The ORS uses cloud services to provide the necessary software, and the parent company's engineers develop only the parts that link the software together. Therefore, despite the extensive use of digital technology, the cost of information systems remains very low.

5. CONSIDERATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Generally, the operation of facilities in the hospitality industry is complex. However, the ORS sauna facilities are an example of how digital technology can be used to manage (part of) this structure. It should be noted that the physical handling of goods, such as cleaning of the facility and management of equipment, is outsourced. And in almost all but physical matters, digital is being used.

It was interesting to note that the president of the ORS pointed to a tendency for stores to create reasons for staff to be present, citing the lost-and-found response as an example. Although the user is at fault for forgotten items, most of facilities keep the forgotten items for users. At the company's sauna facilities, cleaners leave forgotten items in a designated area after the closing time, and users can retrieve them by themselves. In other words, the company is not required to deal with forgotten items.

Although this response to forgotten items is different from that of digital technology, it does demonstrate the potential of distinguishing between do's and don'ts in designing the products that the hospitality industry offers as expected services.

6. CONCLUSION AND CONTRIBUTION

This study contributes to the case that the way to be effective in the use of digital technology is not simply to identify what digital technology is being used and how, but adds to the discussion to distinguish between what workers must do and what can be done through non-human management.

Although many sauna facilities in Japan are manned, this study illustrates that there is great potential for the use of digital technology in all hospitality industries, and that the initial investment and running costs are not as high as imagined.

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Advanced Urban Air Mobility (UAM) Routing for Integrated Transportation and Tourism: A Case Study in Busan, South Korea

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT (REQUIRED. NO MORE THAN 1000 WORDS)

Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to develop an advanced routing policy for Urban Air Mobility (UAM) systems that simultaneously address urban transportation and tourism needs. The study aims to optimize UAM operations, leveraging a hexagonal grid-based routing model that enables six-directional movement, enhancing routing flexibility and efficiency. This research not only focuses on minimizing travel distance for transportation purposes but also seeks to enrich tourism experiences by selecting scenic and culturally significant routes. By incorporating real-world GIS data, the model considers critical geographical and regulatory elements, including no-fly and restricted airspaces, river networks, road infrastructure, residential zones, emergency landing sites, coastal boundaries, and popular tourist attractions. The ultimate goal is to maximize customer satisfaction by providing tailored routes based on the specific purpose of UAM use, whether for transportation or tourism, and to establish a balanced UAM operating system that aligns with each purpose.

Contribution

This study contributes significantly to the evolving field of UAM by introducing several novel elements to the routing process. The implementation of a hexagonal grid system marks a departure from traditional square grid models, providing enhanced maneuverability through six possible movement directions instead of four. This approach leads to more natural and efficient route planning, reducing travel times and avoiding unnecessary detours. The model also uniquely integrates GIS data to evaluate and incorporate real-world factors such as airspace restrictions, emergency landing requirements, and the specific attributes of urban landscapes. By addressing both transportation and tourism needs, the study introduces a dual-purpose UAM operation strategy, presenting a framework that can adapt to varying urban contexts and strategic priorities.

The study employs a mixed-integer programming model to determine the optimal scheduling and routing of UAMs. The model includes distinct objective functions for transportation and tourism scenarios: transportation routes are optimized for the shortest travel distance and highest traffic score, while tourism routes are designed to maximize the exposure to scenic views and cultural landmarks. The optimization process uses CPLEX to derive optimal solutions.

Findings and Results:

Extensive numerical experiments conducted using GIS data from Busan validate the proposed model's effectiveness in both transportation and tourism scenarios. For transportation-focused operations, the UAM routes optimized for minimal travel distance demonstrated strong performance while maintaining compliance with regulatory and safety constraints. For example, the shortest route from Gimhae Airport to Dadaepo Beach was identified as 19.0 km. However, when prioritizing higher traffic scores over the shortest path, the distance extended to 21.0 km. Similarly, the route from Gimhae Airport to Busan Station maintained a shortest distance of 17.5 km, while optimizing for traffic scores increased the route to 22.5 km. These results highlight the trade-offs involved in optimizing different operational goals.

For tourism-oriented routes, the model showed its ability to enhance passenger experiences by selecting visually appealing paths. The route from Dadaepo Beach to Taejongdae, for instance, presented a 15.0 km shortest path but extended to 19.5 km when prioritizing the maximum tourism score. This finding demonstrates the model's adaptability in balancing efficiency with experiential value, offering significant potential for tourism enhancement through UAM services. Additionally, the study considered various environmental and infrastructural constraints, ensuring that the proposed UAM routes remain viable within Busan's complex urban landscape.

Discussion and Implications

The dual-purpose UAM system proposed in this study offers a versatile solution for metropolitan areas looking to integrate advanced air mobility into their transportation and tourism strategies. By demonstrating how transportation efficiency and tourism appeal can be balanced through strategic routing, the study provides valuable insights for urban planners and policymakers. The use of a hexagonal grid not only improves routing efficiency but also enhances safety and compliance by aligning well with regulatory and emergency requirements.

The integration of real GIS data in the model offers a practical approach that can be replicated in other urban settings, providing a template for cities considering UAM deployment. The study's findings suggest that tourism-oriented UAM routes could support regional tourism by promoting scenic flights over culturally and naturally significant areas. Moreover, transportation-focused UAM routes could alleviate ground traffic congestion, offering a fast and efficient alternative for urban mobility.

For future research, several avenues could be explored to build on this work. Enhancing the traffic and tourism scoring system to include dynamic elements such as real-time traffic conditions, seasonal tourism demand, and changing regulatory environments could further improve model accuracy and relevance. The development of heuristic or machine learning-based approaches, such as reinforcement learning, could support the simultaneous optimization of multi-origin and multi-destination (Multi-OD) scenarios. Additional case studies in diverse urban environments would also help validate and generalize the model's applicability.

Conclusion

This study effectively integrates advanced mathematical modeling, real-world data analysis, and innovative routing strategies to present a robust framework for UAM operations. By offering a flexible model that supports both transportation and tourism, this research paves the way for smarter, more adaptive urban air mobility solutions. The outcomes not only contribute to academic knowledge but also present practical solutions for enhancing urban mobility and regional tourism, demonstrating the transformative potential of UAM technology in modern cities.

Keywords (5 Required)

Urban Air Mobility (UAM), Hexagonal Grid Routing, Tourism, Transportation, GIS-Based Optimization

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How hotels utilize their resources and capabilities to gain competitive advantage: Insights from interviews with Japanese hotel managers

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Paper's objectives:

This study shows that loyal customers are a strategic resource for hotels and five resources and capabilities (customers, employees, organizational knowledge, facilities and location) play a central role when acquiring, retaining and developing loyal customers. The importance of these strategic activities (acquiring, retaining and developing loyal customers) are a common understanding regardless of hotel category, management style or business history. In addition, this study emphasizes that there are differences between individual hotels in terms of how they value, combine and prioritize the five resources and capabilities; in other words, there are differences in the specific ways in which these strategic activities are carried out. Research on hotel resources and capabilities that bring competitive advantage has been undertaken, but further knowledge is needed (Kruesi & Bazelmans, 2023). Many previous studies have examined the relationship between the *achievement* of certain strategic activities, such as quality control, and hotel performance, however, there has been little discussion of *how* they are implemented. If the content of the strategic activity is uniform, it will not be a source of competitive advantage. In this study, I focused on causal ambiguity (King, 2007) and attempted to capture variations in the way these strategic activities of hotels were implemented. Causal ambiguity is a concept that claims that the competitive advantage of an organization is created by the ambiguity of the relationship between resources, capabilities and organizational outcomes. Strategic activities that are implemented differently by hotel can be considered a concrete phenomenon of causal ambiguity, that is, they can be a source of competitive advantage.

The research methodology employed semi-structured interviews with three managers of Japanese hotels in different categories. The interviews were conducted in October 2022, lasting 120 to 200 minutes for each person. The interviewees and hotel profiles are as follows:

Interviewee A: President of a company that operates a domestic chain of limited-service hotels (40 hotels)

Interviewee B: Former general manager and executive officer of a full-service hotel (two brands) in Tokyo.

Interviewee C: Founder of two regional resort hotels and former general manager and president of the operating company for those two resort hotels.

Contribution:

As a theoretical contribution, this study clarified specific strategic activities of hotels that utilize resources and capabilities that are thought to be the source of interfirm causal ambiguity (causal ambiguity experienced among competitors) and indicated the focus of future research on competitive resources and capabilities of hotels.

As a practical contribution, this study encouraged hotel managers to reevaluate their five resources and capabilities that are used for strategic activities in order to enhance their competitiveness and to consider appropriate combinations and necessary investments.

Findings:

Regardless of the hotel's category, management style or business history, it was recognized that the strategic resource that brings competitive advantage is loyal customers and five resources and capabilities were used to acquire, retain and develop loyal customers, however, how each value was perceived and utilized differed from hotel to hotel.

A tendency confirmed only in limited hotels was that the location environment directly influenced the content of the facilities. They differentiated themselves by planning or renovating their facilities to suit the market characteristics brought about by the hotel's location. In addition, to compensate for the restrictions on service content, they also placed importance on collaboration with companies in different industries in the surrounding area.

A tendency confirmed only in full-service hotels was that they recognized that the motivation and pride of employees was strongly influenced by the evaluation from the public and the employees' own families. Public relations activities were undertaken in the hope of raising the hotel's reputation and recognition. In addition, autonomy was encouraged regarding dress and behavior when coming to and leaving work. There was a strong awareness that the hotel's brand was supported by the evaluation of local people.

A trend that was only observed in resort hotels was the extensive marketing activities to turn the hotels into destinations. They were characterized by strategic alliances with other organizations, such as inviting famous foreign restaurants and joining international consortia of luxury hotels with the intention of keeping prices high. This kind of leverage was needed in Japan, where the luxury resort market is still weak.

Discussion and implications:

The reason why loyal customers are strategic resources for hotels is that price is the only operational variable that maximizes sales within the constraints of service supply. In order to maintain and increase prices, it is important to acquire loyal customers who actively choose your hotel. If you can acquire loyal customers, you can avoid low-price competition with rival companies and in the long term, you can expect both occupancy rates and prices to increase as loyal customers use your hotel repeatedly and spend more during their stay. This is the flow that leads strategic activities to organizational outcomes.

In order to carry out this series of strategic activities, the hotels in the study utilized five resources and capabilities, however, the context of these resources and capabilities differs from hotel to hotel and the value recognition differs depending on the manager's understanding of these resources and capabilities. Therefore, it is suggested that the five resources and capabilities generate diverse strategic activities, which may ultimately result in interfirm causal ambiguity.

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Keywords

1. Competitive strategy
2. Resource-based view
3. Strategic resources and capabilities
4. Causal ambiguity
5. Japanese hotel industry

Optimizing Hotel Locations: Trade-Offs Between Profitability and Tourist Attraction Effect

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT (REQUIRED. NO MORE THAN 1000 WORDS)

Objectives

With the rapid recovery of global tourism post-COVID-19, South Korea is experiencing increased demand for hotel accommodations. Selecting optimal hotel locations requires balancing profitability with regional tourism development. This study develops a quantitative decision-making framework for hotel location selection, focusing on 18 cities in Gangwon Province, South Korea. The study employs Microsoft Azure Machine Learning Studio to predict hotel guest demand, considering factors such as city residents, tourists, and surrounding hotel conditions. A Pareto analysis with an epsilon constraint is applied to explore the trade-off between maximizing hotel profit and enhancing the tourist attraction effect. Unlike traditional studies that use a single-objective approach, this research adopts a multi-period, multi-objective framework that incorporates real estate investment returns and long-term operational strategies. By analyzing optimal hotel opening, maintenance, and closure strategies over a ten-year period, the study provides a comprehensive decision-making model for both hotel investors and policymakers.

Contribution

This study contributes to the field of hotel location decision-making and tourism economics in several ways. First, it introduces a bi-objective optimization approach, integrating tourist attraction as a key factor alongside profit maximization. While most previous studies focus primarily on financial returns, this research provides a balanced perspective that aligns hotel investment decisions with broader tourism development goals. Second, it incorporates real estate investment profit, an often-overlooked factor in hotel location research. Many studies focus solely on hotel operating profits, but this research considers land value appreciation and real estate investment returns, ensuring a long-term financial perspective. The study employs a multi-period decision model, allowing for strategic planning over time rather than treating each location decision in isolation. Third, the use of machine learning-based demand forecasting improves the accuracy of hotel site selection. Traditional location analysis relies on static models that do not account for evolving market conditions, whereas predictive analytics provides a more flexible, data-driven approach. This methodology benefits both hotel investors and policymakers, allowing for more informed decision-making in response to changing tourism patterns. Finally, the study offers practical policy recommendations for local governments. Given the trade-off between profitability and tourist attraction, the findings emphasize the need for government incentives, such as tax breaks, subsidies, or regulatory support, to attract hotel investments to locations that align with public tourism objectives.

Findings and Results

Numerical experiments reveal key insights into optimal hotel location strategies. When prioritizing profit maximization, the model selects five cities in 2024, with a hotel closure and relocation strategy in 2031 to maintain profitability. However, when prioritizing the tourist attraction effect, an increase of 571,000 tourists results in a $4.76 million reduction in total profit. This demonstrates the need for government intervention to support tourism-focused hotel investments. The study also examines how major tourism infrastructure projects impact hotel location decisions. In a scenario where Yangyang opens a large artificial surfing facility in 2029, attracting 10 million additional tourists annually, the model shifts preference to Inje over Goseong as a hotel location. Similarly, if Gangwon Land expands its casino operations, drawing 23 million additional tourists, the model retains a hotel in Donghae instead of closing it. These findings underscore the importance of adaptive decision-making in response to shifting tourism trends and infrastructure investments.

Discussion and Implications

The findings have several important theoretical and practical implications. The trade-off between hotel profitability and tourism development highlights the necessity for multi-objective optimization in hotel location selection. While hotel investors focus on financial sustainability, local governments must ensure that tourism infrastructure development supports regional economic growth. The study suggests that government subsidies, tax incentives, and infrastructure investments are necessary to bridge the gap between corporate and public interests. Additionally, this study demonstrates the value of machine learning-based demand forecasting in hotel investment decisions. Traditional hotel location research relies on fixed models that fail to adapt to real-world market shifts, whereas predictive analytics enables more flexible, data-driven decision-making. Hotel investors can leverage real-time data analytics to optimize site selection in response to changing tourism dynamics. From a strategic planning perspective, the findings suggest that hotel chains should adopt a long-term, portfolio-based approach to location selection. Instead of treating hotel investments as standalone decisions, hotel groups should evaluate multi-period strategies that account for real estate appreciation, tourism growth, and evolving market conditions. By taking a comprehensive, long-term view, hotel investors can maximize profitability while also contributing to sustainable tourism development.

Conclusion

This study presents a quantitative decision-making framework that integrates profit maximization and the tourist attraction effect into hotel location selection. By combining machine learning-based demand forecasting, real estate investment analysis, and Pareto optimization, the research provides a data-driven approach to hotel investment and urban tourism planning. The findings emphasize that government intervention is crucial in aligning corporate profitability goals with public tourism objectives. Policies such as tax incentives, subsidies, and regulatory support can help attract hotel investments to high-potential tourism regions. The scenario analysis underscores the importance of adaptive decision-making. As tourism trends shift due to new infrastructure, market disruptions, and policy changes, hotel location strategies must be continuously reassessed. Leveraging machine learning and multi-objective optimization enables smarter, more profitable investment decisions. Future research should enhance this model by incorporating hotel differentiation factors (e.g., star ratings, service levels, and operational costs) and external economic variables (e.g., exchange rates, foreign investment policies). As the hospitality industry continues to evolve, advanced analytics and multi-objective modeling will be essential for sustainable and profitable hotel investment strategies.

Keywords (5 Required)

Hotel location, Demand prediction, Pareto analysis, Profit maximization, Tourist attraction effect

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Customers and Other Sources of Workplace Support for U.S. Restaurant Employees and Its Influence on Worker Well-Being, Retention, and Turnover Intentions During a Crisis.

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Customers and Other Sources of Workplace Support for U.S. Restaurant Employees and Its Influence on Worker Well-Being, Retention, and Turnover Intentions During a Crisis.

ABSTRACT

This study highlights the pivotal role of human resource support systems in the restaurant industry and the impact such systems have on the well-being and retention of employees. Intentions to remain with an employer are significantly affected by quality of life and job satisfaction metrics, which the hospitality literature identifies as significant determinants of overall employee contentedness. The pandemic affected many industries, but among the most severely impacted businesses were restaurants, where workers faced altered food production protocols, schedule adaptations, altered guest interaction formats, and increased take-out and delivery orders (Chen & Eyoun, 2021). While inherently stressful due to long hours, time pressures, customer demands, and pressure to meet or exceed sales goals and quality standards while creating satisfied guests (Hayes & Weathington, 2007), restaurant work has seen a resurgence of resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. Occupational stress researchers agree that psychosocial resources are essential in stressful environments (Frone et al., 2020). Hobföll's (2001) Conservation of Resources theory (COR) expounded on this notion, arguing that social support can protect and preserve an individual's resources as a survival mechanism during challenging times. This study aims to explore the impact of workplace support systems, including those offered by the organization, supervisors, co-workers, and customers, on employee well-being, life satisfaction, and job satisfaction in the post-pandemic recovery period.

Despite the abundance of research on turnover in the restaurant industry, there is a need for more comprehensive studies beyond the traditional unidimensional lens. Published research has primarily investigated the intention to leave through the perspective of job satisfaction or organizational commitment; however, a recent meta-analysis on voluntary turnover determined that satisfaction and commitment are excellent predictors of turnover and further suggests that there is a need for more complex predictor combinations in more thoughtful, theory-driven ways.

Leta and Chan (2021) purported that the hospitality industry is particularly vulnerable to the impact of crises from a variety of perspectives surfacing from "political instability, economic recession, and natural disasters" (p. 1), all of which affect daily operations and turnover. This particular event has spurred the heightened need for the industry to revisit the dichotomous role of support systems and customers' role in restaurant workers' well-being. This study, with its innovative approach, seeks to fill this gap by providing a model that includes the additional predictor of customer interaction (i.e., customer-initiated support) to contextualize multi-level influences in the workplace that affect worker well-being (i.e., job and life satisfaction) and turnover intentions (i.e., intention to stay and career turnover).

Prior organizational support research has included support from within the organization, conceptualized as organizational support, supervisor support, and coworker support; however, missing from this perspective is the value of interaction between the service provider and recipient. This customer-client interaction is a critical factor in a worker's well-being. Quick et al. (1997) proposed that clients provide an essential source of support in a service provider's social support network system, and further investigation is needed. Conversely, the role of customer interactions has also been viewed negatively due to the malevolent behavior of service providers. Further study of customers' impact on worker well-being may provide insight into understanding the importance of customer-provider social behavior and how customer interactions may affect turnover intentions.

Social relationships play an essential role during stressful work periods by creating additional strain or acting as a reward (Maslach & Leiter, 2017). Understanding the influence of social networks during crisis periods, such as COVID-19, becomes essential to know how various support systems can help

employees maintain a positive attitude while navigating unplanned and uncontrollable events (Park et al., 2021).

Research implications include contributions to the literature by unraveling the strength of the determinants and introducing the groundbreaking concept that the customer is another influencing factor affecting restaurant employee job satisfaction and career-change intentions. This study further offers insight into the importance of work environment support during a crisis and the residual effects during the post-pandemic timeframe. After surveying 337 restaurant employees, the findings suggest that customer-initiated support, in addition to the human resource systems provided by the organization, plays a vital role in bolstering the well-being of restaurant workers and satisfaction with their jobs. Further reasons suggest that feelings of life satisfaction may encourage a change in careers, even when restaurant workers are satisfied with their jobs. Social and practical implications posit that restaurant organizations focus on improving their policies and procedures to ensure employees are supported on both an individual and group basis to improve salient retention and career-change intentions.

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Keywords

worker retention, well-being, human resources, support systems, customer interaction, job satisfaction, crisis.

Volatility Parameter Clustering of REITs

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Introduction

Effective risk management and precise return forecasting are crucial for informed financial decision-making, especially in volatile market conditions. This is particularly complex for Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs), which are heavily invested in high-capital expenditure sectors, leading to significant fluctuations in financial metrics such as earnings, cash flows, and debt levels (Singal, 2019).

In this paper, we take these foundational characteristics of REITs and aim to assess and compare a large number of generalized autoregressive conditional heteroskedastic (GARCH) processes on lodging REITs to characterize both symmetric and asymmetric volatility clustering and tests by its ability to forecast and capture commonly held stylized facts about conditional volatility, such as persistence of volatility, mean-reverting behavior, and asymmetric impacts of negative vs. positive return distribution and series. We also investigate the forecasting performance of our GARCH models together with two different density functions: Gaussian and Skewed Student's-t Distribution, and with three prediction proxies: (i) RMSE, (ii) MAE, and (iii) MAPE to assess the optimal predictor model when testing the symmetric effect or asymmetric effects of the return forecasts of REITs.

Ultimately, this paper seeks to enhance the understanding of REITs by examining the intricate market microstructure, including the pivotal roles of information diffusion, liquidity, and trading activities in shaping price volatility. Our analysis aims to elucidate the complex dynamics that influence the risk-return tradeoff for REIT companies and their shareholders across different market conditions, highlighting strategies for navigating both buoyant and turbulent periods. This comprehensive economic overview will provide valuable insights for stakeholders in optimizing investment decisions during various phases of market activity.

Empirical Procedures

- Preliminary Work:
  - *Data and Sampling Formation:* Time-series formation with ADF, PP, and DFGLS tests for stationary testing for a 10-year time window with daily stock return to smooth out the data robustness and to capture seasonal and idiosyncratic components on the stock return data for 2 portfolios as: (a) Accommodation and (b) Airlines.
  - *Return of stock i at date t:* $r_t = 100(\log(P_t) - \log(P_{t-1}))$ where P_t is the closing value of the stock i at date t will be taken to obtain the stationary series in returns.
- Time-varying Volatility Models:
  - *Symmetric Volatility Clustering:* ARCH(1), GARCH (1,1), GARCH (2,1), MGARCH
  - *Asymmetric Volatility Testing the Leverage Effect:* TGARCH, GJR-GARCH, EGARCH, APARCH
  - *Distribution Method Selection:* Gaussian, Student t's, and Skewness
  - *Constant Conditional Correlation (CCC) vs. Dynamic Conditional Correlation (DCC):*
- Forecast Estimates:
  - *Predictor Models:* RMSE, MAE, and MAPE

The choice of generalized autoregressive conditional heteroskedastic (GARCH) models in this research is grounded in their proven effectiveness in capturing time-varying volatility and their extensive application in financial market studies (Creal et al., 2013). GARCH models are particularly adept at modeling the thick tails and volatility clustering common in financial time series data, which are prominent features in

REIT returns. These models also allow for testing both symmetric and asymmetric effects, providing a comprehensive view of the impact of positive and negative market movements on REIT volatility. Furthermore, by incorporating different density functions such as Gaussian and Skewed Student's-t, the methodology enhances the robustness of the volatility estimates, accommodating the skewness and kurtosis observed in REIT return distributions. This methodological approach ensures a thorough analysis of the volatility dynamics in REITs, facilitating more accurate predictions and better risk assessment strategies (Brooks & Persand, 2003).

Anticipated Outcomes

This study's findings are expected to uncover nuanced risk patterns through volatility models, enhancing risk management and return forecasting accuracy for REITs. We aim to detail the average magnitude and errors in volatility forecasts, highlighting the implications of overestimations and underestimations on investment strategies. Such insights will allow us to offer concrete, actionable advice to REIT companies, analysts, and investors on selecting robust models for managing risks effectively. Specifically, during volatile market phases, our recommendations will likely include employing diversified risk mitigation strategies such as stop-loss orders, adjusting investment exposures, and considering more conservative or risk-tolerant portfolio allocations to safeguard against anticipated volatility spikes. These strategies are intended to optimize financial outcomes by balancing risk and return in uncertain market conditions.

Keywords

REITs, GARCH Models, Volatility Clustering, Forecasting Performance, Asymmetric Volatility

HOTELL – solution for personalized hospitality

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Abstract

Tourism and the hospitality industry have always been considered to be crucial economic sectors for many countries. However, the contribution of tourism to global development was truly appreciated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Sanitary restrictions had a negative impact on tourist flow, and, as a result, many countries were deprived of a significant part of the GDP and experienced a hike in the unemployment rate. In 2021, the industry began to revive showing steady raises in profits every year. What is more, post-pandemic recovery contributed to the emergence of new trends connected with personalization, contactless services and digital solutions. Thus, the present research aims to develop a TravelTech startup which helps hotels to improve general guest experience by simplifying the procedure of providing personalized service. The main hypothesis is that it is possible to create an application for B2C users (hotel guests) connected with a CRM system for B2B users (hotels). It is planned to include a profile with guest's information and their preferences, an option to search for hotels automatically which is based on guest's needs and preferences automatically, a pre order of some additional services while booking the room. Potentially, this can solve the problem of slow, low-quality service and loss of loyal guests of large hotels and be in demand in the market.

The research has been conducted using the following methodology. The analysis of modern trends in hospitality has been based on literature study. Later, the target audience of the project has been identified and divided into segments. In order to reveal the target audience' pains, a Customer Development method interview has been applied. Moreover, it has been necessary to evaluate the competitiveness of the project if it enters the market one day using a comparative table of competitors. What is more, the prospects of the application have been reflected in Porter's Five Forces model.

Last but not least, the demand for the main functions has been proved during the MVP test.

As for the product being developed, it is a free mobile application for IOS and Android where guests can create a profile resembling the one on social networks and mention not only basic information like name or nationality, but also health characteristics, clothes and shoe sizes, special wishes regarding meals, favorite color,room fragrance, activities, etc.

After editing the profile, the guest adjusts their stay. In this page users choose the destination, purpose of the trip, the number of guests; mention if they travel with children; precise their preferences regarding cleaning and check-in/check-out hours, and special menu, if necessary. Then, users can choose between the manual search for hotels and AI search based on the details of the stay and guest's preferences mentioned in the profile. The last step is the choice of additional services. The B2B part is represented by a CRM system collecting users' data via the API integration. Thus, the hotel staff can view guest profiles.

The main results of the study are a successful marketing research that has proved the presence of customer pain points that had been assumed. What is more, the data obtained from interviews and MVP test have revealed some axes for future product development. Thus, the basic settings of the future application that are in demand have been defined.

Summarizing the key findings of the study, at the present stage of the project the main goal has been to conduct marketing research. Indeed, it has successfully proved the presence of customer pain points that had been announced in the hypotheses section. What is more, based on the data obtained from interviews, a Minimum Viable Product has been created and offered to B2C and B2B customers. The results of the test have revealed some axes for future product development.

Although the technical elaboration strategy has been outlined, the HOTELL startup needs to undergo several changes and experiments. Thus, the most important point, which will be the focus in the near future, is fundraising for the creation of the IT solution itself. Then, the next target will be the interaction between B2C and B2B modules, search for partners among hotels and data integration to PMS systems. Moreover, it is crucial to test the viability of the monetization model with the aim of

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developing a detailed financial strategy. Another challenge that will be faced is the promotion strategy. However, the main goal within 3 years after the launch is to recoup the investments and start making profits.

All in all, HOTELL aspires to change the operational procedures in the hospitality industry. The company's mission is to guarantee long-term and trusting connections between hotels and their guests via innovative tools. In this case IT solutions do not aim to replace human employees, they exist and work side by side in order to minimize mistakes and provide the most exceptional service.

Keywords: TravelTech, Hospitality, Business, IT solutions, Personalization, Guest experience

Introduction

Hospitality industry is nowadays one of the main development axes for many countries. On a daily basis hoteliers are faced with figuring out how to cater to the guests' needs first, while juggling operational, budget and labor challenges. Not so long ago, the world experienced the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, which began at the end of 2019 and was marked by significant changes in all spheres. Indeed, some of the most serious losses were observed in the tourism and hospitality industry. Thus, quarantine measures, border closures and travel restrictions imposed by some countries in 2020, despite their positive effect on combating the virus, had such consequences as:

- Massive declines in the Average Daily Rate (ADR) and Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR) in many hotels and resorts throughout 2020;
- Reduction of the international tourist flow by 30% compared to the pre-pandemic period;
- Disruption in production and supply chains in hospitality and tourism business around the world;
- Profit decline of 11-29% in European hotels;

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- Mass layoffs, job losses and general decrease of employees' incomes. (Azzahra, 2023)

Already in 2021, the industry began to recover from the crisis. Despite the remaining anti-covid measures in the first half of the year, in the second half there was an increase in demand for a tourist product (this is largely due to the invention of the COVID-19 vaccine, which was one of the factors that contributed to increasing tourists' confidence in travel safety). Thus, in 2021, there was a hike of the tourist flow compared to 2020, and the income of the tourism industry increased. However, these are not the only changes in the industry. After the pandemic, clear trends began to be observed in the tourism and hospitality business. Nowadays, guests are increasingly looking for sophisticated personalized experience that is inevitably connected with technology innovations and digital solutions. (EHL Insights, 2024) A high demand for innovations is also proven by the increasing number of startups in TravelTech (Tab.1).

Tab. 1: *Travel Technology Market Size*

Report Attribute	Key Statistics
Base Year	2023
Forecast Years	2024-2032
Historical Years	2018-2023
Market Size in 2023	US$ 10.0 Billion
Market Forecast in 2032	US$ 17.8 Billion
Market Growth Rate 2024-2032	6.4%

Source: (IMARC)

Goal and hypothesis
The present research aims to develop a TravelTech project which helps hotels to improve general guest experience by simplifying the procedure of providing personalized service.

Hypothesis: Creating an application for B2C users (hotel guests) connected with a CRM system for B2B users (hotels) which includes:

1) a profile with guest's information and their preferences;
2) the option to choose a hotel based on guest's needs and preferences automatically;
3) the possibility to pre order some additional services while booking the room;

This can solve the problem of slow, low-quality service and loss of loyal guests of large hotels and being in demand in the market.

Let's divide this hypothesis into smaller ones:

1) Premium hotels with more than 200 rooms are faced with the problem of inefficient, insufficiently personalized service and frequent mistakes on the part of staff due to poorly structured information about guests which results in the loss of loyal customers.
2) It is possible to create an application combining detailed guest information and booking service.
3) It is possible to integrate a third-party solution into hotels' PMS.
4) The elaborated solution solves the problems of hoteliers and their guests.
5) The product is competitive.

Methodology

The research has been conducted using the following methodology. The analysis of modern trends in hospitality has been based on literature study. Later, the target audience of the project has been identified and divided into segments. In order to reveal the target audience' pains, Customer Development method interview has been applied. Moreover, it has been necessary to evaluate the competitiveness of the project if it enters the market one day using a comparative table of competitors. What is more, the prospects of the application have been reflected in Porter's Five Forces model. Last but not least, the demand for the main functions has been proved during the MVP test.

1. Description of the idea

3.1. HOTELL application for B2C users

It is a free mobile application for IOS and Android where guests can create a profile resembling the one on social networks and mention not only basic information like name

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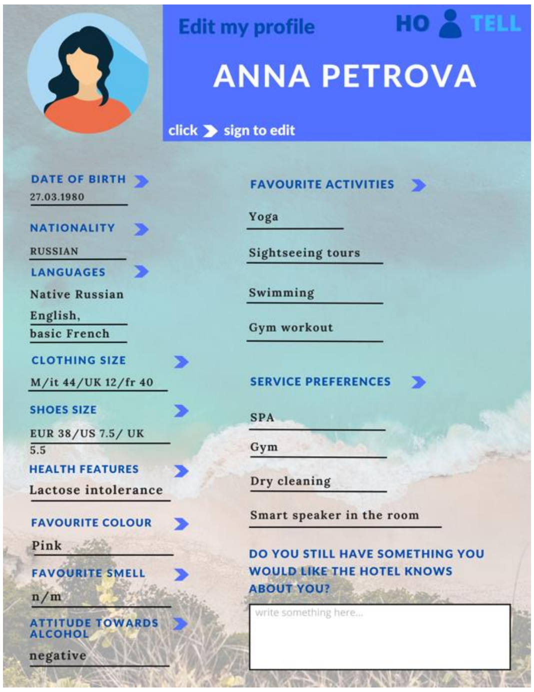
or nationality, but also health characteristics, clothes and shoe sizes, special wishes regarding meals, favorite color, room fragrance, activities, etc. (Fig. 1)

Fig. 1: *HOTELL guest profile example*



After editing the profile, the guest adjusts their stay. In this page users choose the destination, purpose of the trip, the number of guests; mention if they travel with children; precise their preferences regarding cleaning and check-in/check-out hours, and special menu, if necessary. Then, there are two options:

1) Guest looking for a hotel manually;
2) AI searches hotels which match best the details of the stay and guest's preferences mentioned in the profile.

The last step is the choice of additional services. For example, the guest can pre order a massage session or choose a particular pillow from the menu. The content of this page totally depends on a hotel and the services that it provides.

3.2. HOTELL B2B program

The B2B part is represented by a CRM system collecting users' data via the API integration. Thus, the hotel staff can view guest profiles. The same API integration is used for sharing data with the hotel's PMS. For instance, it helps hotels to receive the booking details along with the guest profile and synchronize them in order to add all necessary information into a particular reservation and assign a room number.
For integrating with the most popular hotel PMS OPERA 5 two APIs can be used: a general API and a kiosk API. A general API (OPERA Web Self-Service) provides data

on availability, rooms, guests, reservations and housekeeping. Whereas, a kiosk API (OPERA Kiosk) assures connectivity between OPERA PMS and kiosk applications. It provides data on check-ins/check-outs, credit card authorization, payment methods, paid reservations, etc. To get access to these APIs, it is needed to proceed three steps:

1) Application for the partner program;
2) Use of FIAS protocol (OPERA's property protocol that allows to exchange data between OPERA 5 and other systems);
3) Set up of OPERA Exchange Interface. (AltexSoft, 2023)

3.3. Monetization model

HOTELL aspires to implement a combined monetization model. The main one does not differ much from other booking aggregators: HOTELL will charge a commission from every booking and additional services reservations (the amount of commission will be defined later). Technically, hoteliers pay for the possibility to get advantage of detailed guest information and promotion of services they provide. However, in later updates, it is planned to integrate a freemium-model for B2C users. In other words, basic settings in the guest profile will remain free of charge but in order to access the most sophisticated and personalized points that will be added, guests will need to pay.

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4. Target audience analysis

Due to the fact that the HOTELL application unites hotels and their guests, it is necessary to divide the target audience into two parts. The B2B audience is premium 5-stars hotels with 100+ rooms aiming to optimize their operations, while the B2C audience is represented by two main segments: young people accustomed to applications and social networks, and MICE tourists privileging excellent service that allows them not to get distracted from work. All of them are customers of well-known premium segment hotels. In order to indicate the problems that the target segments face, as well as improvement points, Customer Development method has been chosen. For hotel guests 60 interviews have been conducted (Tab.2), both orally and in a written form. In hotels, for an interview have been invited 30 employees from line staff to department managers (Tab. 3). Some criteria have been identical for B2C and B2B audiences with the purpose of evaluating all aspects of guest experience and comparing guests' and hoteliers' viewpoint on it.

Tab. 2: *CustDev scenario. B2C*

Hotel guests	**Criterium**
Have you ever experienced that a front office assistant greeted you by your name?	Basic level of personalization
How do you generally evaluate the level of personalization in hotels you have been to?	Average rate of personalization in the field
What represents comfort for you?	Space for improvement
Do you use additional paid hotel services?	Demand for additional services
What can generally cause inconveniences during your stay at the hotel?	Guest profile points
Have you ever been faced to staff mistakes? If so, which ones?	Presence of mistakes in big hotels
What booking aggregators do you usually use? Are you satisfied with them?	Demand for the booking module

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Tab. 3: *CustDev scenario. B2B*

Hotel employees	**Criterium**
What are the most common staff mistakes in your hotel?	Presence of mistakes in big hotels
Is OPERA guest profile sufficient to get the necessary information about your guests?	Space for improvement
Are guests satisfied with the amenities you provide?	Efficiency of the Guest Relations department
How would you rate the sales of additional services?	Demand for promotion of additional services
How do you treat guests with allergies, special diets and other health particularities?	Experience of special cases and problem-solving
How flexible is your hotel when it comes to personalized cleaning, check-in and check-out time?	Technical part of the stay custom module
What digital solutions have you already integrated? Describe your impressions of using hotel digital systems.	Experience of integration of third-party solutions into hotel PMS

5. Competitiveness

The first step of the competitiveness evaluation of the HOTELL application has been a comparative table of the main competitors (Tab. 4).

Tab. 4: *Competitors' description*

Competitor	Advantages	Disadvantages
Booking.com	1. Variety of accommodations 2. Filters 3. Marketing tool for smaller accommodations 4. Global reach	1. High commission 2. Basic guest information only
GoodStay	1. Increase of the number of room service orders (services dashboard) 2. Saving employees' time 3. Reduction of printing costs 4. Reduction of inventory risks	1. Only in Russia 2. Functions only for in-house guests
SabeeApp	1. Automatic assignment of rooms to individuals or groups 2. Virtual key 3. Automated push-notifications that accompany guests during their stay 4. Online check-out	1. Pre-stay interaction with hotel guests via email 2. Interface cannot be translated into Chinese or Arabic

Thus, the advantages of HOTELL application compared to previous analogues are the combination of a hotel CRM system and aggregators for B2C users, which allows to reduce the time needed to search for information about each guest, promptly solve operational problems and provide the most personalized service. Among disadvantages are the absence of interaction with guests during their stay directly via the application and dependance on services of a particular hotel.

For estimating the competitiveness of the HOTELL application on the TravelTech market, Porter's Five Forces model has been chosen (Fig. 2).

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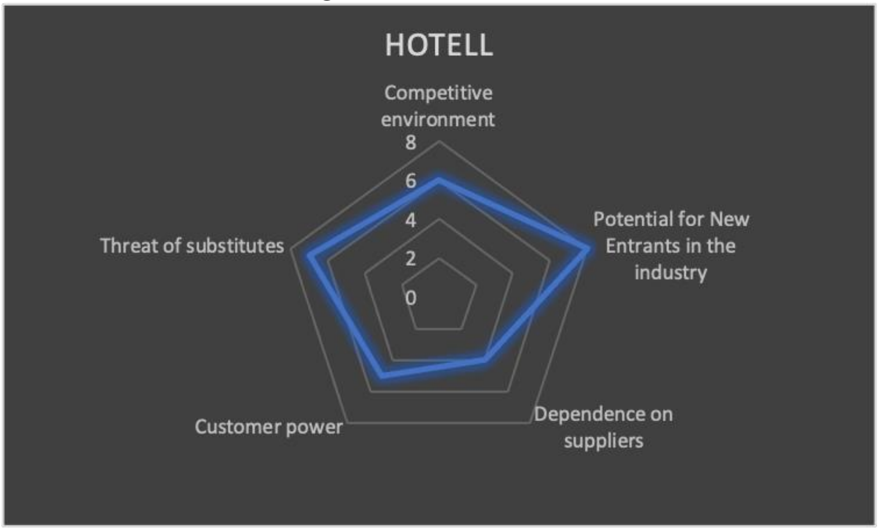
Fig. 2: *Porter Five Forces*



6. MVP test

Minimum Viable Products have been created for both B2C and B2B audiences. The B2C part has been performed on the Google forms platform, where the response fields have been used to simulate the guest's profile to verify how guest experience might change if they provide some information about their preferences before check-in. The B2B audience has initially been supposed to have identical Google forms, but the main difference has been that hotel staff could only view the data provided by guests without editing it. This MVP has been tested by 35 employees in two hotels in Moscow. At the moment, a higher-quality MVP is being developed on the Webflow website.

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Conclusion

Summarizing the key findings of the study, at the present stage of the project the main goal has been to conduct marketing research. Indeed, it has successfully proved the presence of customer pain points that had been announced in the hypotheses section. What is more, based on the data obtained from interviews, a Minimum Viable Product has been created and offered to B2C and B2B customers. The results of the test have revealed some axes for future product development.

Although the technical elaboration strategy has been outlined, the HOTELL startup needs to undergo several changes and experiments. Thus, the most important point, which will be the focus in the near future, is fundraising for the creation of the IT solution itself. Then, the next target will be the interaction between B2C and B2B modules, search for partners among hotels and data integration to PMS systems. Moreover, it is crucial to test the viability of the monetization model with the aim of developing a detailed financial strategy. Another challenge that will be faced is the promotion strategy. All in all, the main goal within 3 years after the launch is to recoup the investments and start making profits.

Acknowledgements

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Enhancing Japan’s Lodging Industry: Insights and Strategic Approaches from Leading Tourism Countries

Note: Conference logo will be placed at the center-top of this cover page

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT (REQUIRED. NO MORE THAN 1000 WORDS)

1. Objectives

The tourism industry is a key pillar of Japan's growth strategy and is vital for local revitalization, and many regions are actively promoting tourism. However, the lodging industry, which serves as the core of the tourism sector, faces labor shortages and low wages, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, making it increasingly difficult to attract workers back to the industry. Given the persistent labor shortage, improving labor productivity has become a pressing issue, however, it remains the lowest among all sectors. In addition, compared with Western countries, labor productivity in Japan's lodging industry is significantly lower, at less than half that of France and the United States.

This study analyses the current state of Japan's lodging industry and examines specific measures to improve its productivity and profitability. It also examines the challenges faced by the lodging industry in leading tourism countries, the initiatives taken to address them, and the efforts to improve productivity, to draw lessons applicable to Japan.

2. Methodology

This study consists of two parts: a survey conducted in Japan and an overseas survey. The domestic survey examines labor productivity in Japan's lodging industry through a literature review and interviews with key stakeholders. In addition to analyzing existing reports, interviews were conducted with lodging operators, DMOs, and hotel associations to gain a clearer understanding of the current situation. An expert panel was also established, inviting professionals from universities and government agencies in Japan to explore specific measures for improving the productivity of the lodging industry.

The overseas survey consists of three components: a literature review, interviews, and field research. The literature review analyzes challenges in the lodging industry and initiatives to enhance labor productivity and profitability focusing on leading tourism countries with significant tourism receipts. To complement this, interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including international organizations and those similar to the ones in the domestic survey to understand overseas efforts to enhance productivity and profitability. Additionally, field research was conducted in France, where in-depth interviews were held with representatives from tourism-related government departments, local authorities, tourism associations, lodging operators, industry trade unions to gain further insights.

3. Findings

Current challenges in Japan’s lodging industry

Interviews with Japanese lodging operators revealed that, while labor regulations are being complied with, efforts to improve employee engagement remain insufficient. Although the introduction of IT systems is progressing, it has not yet led to cross-functional operational reforms.In addition, while basic financial statements are being prepared, delays in financial reporting are common, making it difficult to accurately assess financial status. It has also been revealed that commission fees to online travel agents(OTAs) are putting pressure on the profits of small and medium-sized enterprises.Moreover, the strategy for targeting customer segments is unclear, leading to ineffective content development and promotional efforts. As a result, value-creation initiatives remain inadequate.

The current state and challenges of the lodging industry in selected countries

Like Japan, labor shortages are a critical global issue, forcing companies to generate revenue with limited human resources. Digital transformation (DX) and operational efficiency improvements are essential, but as a labor-intensive industry that prioritizes hospitality, maintaining service quality while improving profitability remains a challenge.

Another key challenge, similar to those faced in Japan, is the increasing pricing control power of OTAs. Their dominance restricts pricing flexibility and reduces profitability. In response, some governments have implemented regulatory frameworks to foster a more balanced market environment.

Initiatives for enhancing profitability overseas

Compared to Japan, France, and Thailand have implemented official accommodation rating systems that help maintain service quality and provide accurate information to tourists. France's system includes assessment criteria such as monitoring customer satisfaction, handling complaints, promoting local production and consumption, environmental considerations, and improving working conditions. These rating systems not only guide service quality but also support overall business management. They also enable travelers to make informed accommodation choices without relying solely on OTAs.

In the United States, the Uniform System of Accounts for the Lodging Industry (USALI), developed by the NYC Tourism, Conventions, and Visitors Bureau, is widely used. Lodging companies use this standardized format, which also serves as an important reference for investors. By benchmarking against industry peers, businesses strive for continuous improvement, ultimately increasing productivity.

Field research in France revealed a strong emphasis on employee engagement. Rather than focusing solely on labor productivity, lodging operators prioritize building trust between management and employees to improve service quality. There is also a strong focus on enhancing customer value, which includes service quality, and informative and engaging explanations that satisfy intellectual curiosity of tourists, unique ambiance, and brand development.

The overseas survey revealed that enhancing local tourism value is key to improving the profitability of the lodging industry, with stakeholder collaboration playing a crucial role in this process.

For example, in France, lodging providers play a key role as the first point of contact for tourists. Training programs organized by tourism associations equip them with local tourism knowledge, enabling them to better serve visitors.

4. Implications and conclusion

Improving labor productivity in Japan's lodging industry requires a holistic approach that enhances profitability, service quality, and employee engagement in addition to efficiency, while also emphasizing the importance of service capabilities and value creation in soft aspects such as fulfilling customers' intellectual satisfaction.

Governments have a critical role to play in ensuring fair competition while guiding to improve industry profitability and service quality. A comprehensive strategy that integrates quality assurance, financial sustainability, and stakeholder cooperation is essential to strengthen Japan's accommodation sector.

Keywords (5 Required)

Comparison of Lodging Industry Initiatives, Labor productivity, Profitability, Local Tourism Value, Stakeholder Collaboration

Tourism and Community Awareness Building: Focusing on the Activities of the City of Minamata, Kumamoto Prefecture, Japan

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BACKGROUND

In post-war Japan, a planned economy was adopted through the National Land Development Plan (Honma1999). Certain regions have been intensively developed according to this policy. In return, subsidized public investment has been made in areas not covered by the labor supply in those specific regions (Nakazawa2012). However, such economic policies have reached their limits as Japan's economy has continued to stagnate for a long time. Thus, instead of large-scale public investment by the state government, regional societies were encouraged to become economically self-reliant by attracting domestic and foreign tourists. For example, the government has expanded the existing system of cultural heritage protection, creating new categories such as 'National Modernization Heritage' and 'Japan Heritage' and transforming various local cultural resources into tourism resources. This has created a mechanism to transform various local cultural resources into tourism resources. The policy involves a limited distribution of government subsidies to local communities. Various regions are campaigning to have their sites inscribed on the World Heritage List, with the aim of obtaining continuous subsidies (Arai2008).

Furthermore, a decline of regional economy and community is one of social issues because of progressing aging, population decrease, and population concentration in urban areas in Japan. With this recognition, a regional development through tourism has been focused as an effective breakthrough, and some measures to increase the number of visitors such as improvements of traffic infrastructure and hosting events held by major advertising agencies have been conducted. However, it is suggested that these measures lack resident's participation and the democratic process (Sudo2007).

In this study, we focus on activities to promote tourism with the participation of local residents (Suganuma2015). We conducted a sociological analysis of the activities of the civic agency in Minamata City, Kumamoto Prefecture, and elucidated the community (re)building functions of activities to develop an experience-based program for community-based tourism. Minamata City is known for Minamata disease, which was first discovered in 1956. It was caused by the release of methylmercury in the industrial wastewater from the Chisso Corporation chemical factory. Then, discrimination against the patients, who mainly lived in the poor fishing village area, occurred and a conflict among the residents seriously progressed. Some activities to rebuild the community started in 1994 and the civilian agency, Kanshiranui Planing, started to develop tourism program in 2001. This study is a case study of sustainable tourism in Japanese society, especially in local areas.

MATERIALS & METHODS

Data were collected via a fieldwork survey including interviews with key members of the agency and participant observation for their activities, and we analyzed them using MacIver's community theory of sociology.

RESULTS

Our analysis led to the results that there were three functions that built community sentiments in the above-mentioned activities. The first function is the formation of "role-feeling" among the local residents in the process of developing their "Hands-on-Learning Program". The second function is that the residents learned about their own region as they participated in the activities as the hosts of the groups and by so doing, developed civil consciousness. The third function is that the local residents acquired their confidence and nurtured their pride in their region.

DISCUSSION

As a conclusion to our analysis, this report will argue about the importance of activities that promote community-based tourism. Considering the sustainability of tourism means considering a better relationship between local communities and tourism. Tourism development that only benefits the companies involved in tourism, will not last long. Especially in a society that is becoming smaller both economically and in terms of population, it is desirable to develop tourism that allows residents to participate.

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KEYWORDS (5 REQUIRED)

Sustainable Tourism, Community based Tourism, Community Awareness, Resident's participation, Tourism development

Willingness-to-pay for sustainable transport: Understanding tourists' preferences for low-emission mobility at urban destinations

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Urban transport is fundamental to the functioning of contemporary cities, underpinning economic activities and accommodating the daily movements of both residents and visitors (Masiero et al., 2022). However, its substantial contribution to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions remains a significant challenge, with road-based travel accounting for approximately 40% of urban GHG emissions (Ardila-Gomez et al., 2021), with private cars and taxis being especially significant emitters. Consequently, addressing this challenge demands strategies that encourage a shift from private cars and taxis to more sustainable modes such as buses, trams, and rail.

Providing individuals with access to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions information has been shown to significantly influence transport choices, particularly when tied to emissions reduction goals (Pan et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2021). GHG labels, such as CO_2 emissions in pounds or grams, have been studied in the context of car purchases and route selection (Daziano et al., 2021; Gunter & Wöber, 2022). However, their effectiveness is highly context-dependent—some individuals respond strongly to emissions data, while others remain indifferent unless it is framed in a way that highlights personal or societal benefits (Waygood et al., 2022). Studies indicate that framing techniques, such as hedonic cues or colour-coded emissions scales, can enhance consumer engagement and increase willingness-to-pay (WTP) for low-emission alternatives (Wang et al., 2021).

Despite extensive research on GHG labels in vehicle purchase decisions, their influence on intra-destination tourist mobility remains underexplored (Greene et al., 2024). Tourists often prioritize convenience and cost over environmental concerns, making it unclear whether emissions labels alone are sufficient to alter their transport decisions. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining whether contextualized CO_2 emissions information influence tourists' transport mode choices, particularly their willingness to switch from high-emission to low-emission alternatives. Understanding how tourists respond to these labels is essential for designing effective policy interventions that promote sustainable urban transport.

This study reports on a stated choice experiment designed to examine how gain-framed messages might influence tourists' preferences for environmentally friendly travel. The experiment involves presenting participants with multiple hypothetical trips modes within the destination, each featuring distinct travel times, costs, and transport mode combinations, alongside CO_2 emission metrics. These tasks were administered via computer-assisted interviews with visitors to Hong Kong, conducted by trained researchers in prominent tourist districts.

Data analysis involved estimating a multinomial logit (MNL) model to examine tourists' transport mode preferences. The results indicate that tourists exhibit disutility toward key transport attributes, including waiting time, travel time, and travel cost. Additionally, they demonstrate disutility toward CO_2 emissions information, suggesting that higher emission levels negatively influence transport preferences. Willingness-to-pay for emissions reductions, along with the value of travel time savings were derived from the model outcomes. Specifically, the WTP value tourists place on reducing CO_2 emissions by choosing more sustainable transport options were retrieved as the ratio of the coefficients related to CO_2 emissions and the transport-specific travel cost parameters.

This study aimed at investigating the impact of contextualised CO_2 emission data on tourists' transport mode choices, incorporating GHG labels to influence mode switching. The findings indicate that tourists exhibit disutility toward CO_2 emissions and transport costs, suggesting that emissions labels can enhance the attractiveness of lower-emission alternatives. Moreover, WTP estimates highlight the trade-offs tourists are willing to make for environmental benefits, reinforcing the importance of emissions information in sustainable transport decisions.

Keywords

Urban Tourism, Willingness-to-pay, Transport and Tourism, Nudging, Pro-environmental behavior

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Unravelling the distributional impacts of Indonesia's inbound tourism

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction

Inbound travel has been an essential source of income. The power of tourism in an amplifying economy encourages countries and regions worldwide to promote tourism and to harvest its maximum financial benefit. Despite rising studies on tourism economic impact, insight into its income distribution remains understudied. This study aims to fill in the gap in the literature by taking the case of Indonesia. We ask, how does inbound tourism affect the income of various groups of labor and households in Indonesia? Correspondingly, an investigation based on Social Accounting Matrix (SAM) framework is carried out primarily in the year 2008, with expected expansion covering previous years to understand its growth. Groups of labor are distinguished by skills, remuneration status and area, while households segmented by income level and area.

Methodology

Two datasets are used in this study: (1) Social Accounting Matrix of Indonesia 1975-2008 (BPS-Statistics Indonesia, 2011) and (2) International Visitor-Arrivals Statistics 2008 (BPS-Statistics Indonesia, 2009). Analysis is carried out primarily for year 2008, but will be accomplished also for some previous base years, i.e., 1995, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2003, and 2005. These years were selected considering the availability of both dataset groups, and same structure throughout the studies years. Due to partly missing data in the SAM dataset and sectoral discrepancy between both datasets, several corrections and reconsolidations were performed in advance.

The modified Indonesian SAM used in this study contains 17 factors (i.e., 16 labor and one capital), eight households, corporate, government, 23 production sectors, capital account, indirect tax, and rest of the world. The SAMs of all studied years are balanced at integer, whose values are indicated in billions of Indonesian Rupiah. The international visitor expenditures data were reaggregated into six tourism-oriented sectors, i.e., (1) wholesale and retail trade, (2) auxiliary transport activities and storage; (3) restaurants; (4) hotels; (5) transportation; (6) personal and household services, and other services. The total expenditure by sector is calculated by multiplying inbound visitor expenditure per trip (in US$) with total number of trips, respectively; then is converted to Indonesian Rupiah (IDR) using relevant annual exchange rate according to International Monetary Fund (IMF) per associated year. First, we calculate the tourism-induced endogenous income (y_n) is measured by multiplying accounting multiplier (M_a) to inbound tourism demand (x) (Pyatt & Round, 1985).

$$y_n = (I - A_n)^{-1}x = M_a x$$

Next, to understand tourism's income distribution to various type of labour and household the accounting multiplier is decomposed based on Stone's additive multiplier decomposition framework into four components illustrating a circular economy, i.e., initial injection (I), transfer multiplier effects (T), open-loop or cross multiplier effects (O), and circular closed-loop effects (C). Details on abovementioned accounting multiplier and decomposition adopts and are elaborated in Pyatt & Round (1977) and Defourny & Thorbecke (1984).

$$M_a = \underbrace{I}_{I} + \underbrace{(M_{a1} - I)}_{T} + \underbrace{(M_{a2} - I)M_{a1}}_{O} + \underbrace{(M_{a3} - I)M_{a2}M_{a1}}_{C}$$

Results

The contribution of inbound tourism on Indonesian economy in 2008 is estimated about IDR 733,2 trillion (approximately US$75.6 billion), which is later decomposed into initial injection, transfer, open-loop, and closed-loop effects by 10, 26, 17, 47%, respectively.

The distribution of open-loop effect on labor and capital factor are 60 and 40%, respectively, where three-fifth of the former is distributed to 'clerical, sales, and services worker' while the remaining two-third of the former is apportioned to 'production, operator, and manual worker' (18.1%), 'agricultural workers' (15.5%), and 'professional, technician, managerial, and non-civilian workers' (6.0%). Outstanding contribution on clerical, sales, and services workers, which is exceptionally higher on paid status and urban area (IDR 3.41T). It is plausible since this category covers services workers who mostly engage in formal hospitality and tourism-related businesses in urban areas.

Moreover, the open-loop effect is distributed on aggregated households and enterprise by 72 and 28%, respectively. Nevertheless, households' segments receive less than enterprise, where the most and the least effect on households are found at high-income urban household (IDR 13.2T) and non-labor rural household group (IDR 1.4T), respectively. Furthermore, income distribution on non-agricultural households (81%) is four times larger than agricultural households (19%), where two-thirds of the former household is distributed to urban households while the remaining goes to rural household. Nevertheless, despite high-income households receiving higher income distribution in absolute terms for both in rural and urban, the income distribution gap between low-and high-income household in rural is relatively small in contrast with urban.

Overall, households' segments in urban benefitted more than its counterpart in rural, yet high-income level household gains more than low-income level and non-labor force household segments regardless area of residence. Furthermore, within the agricultural household category, labor household gains the least effect whereas entrepreneur household benefited higher, even compared to any rural household segments.

Agricultural labor (IDR 10.8T) benefited the most among labor, albeit only slightly higher than clerical, sales, and services workers (IDR 10.7T). The agricultural entrepreneur household group gained the largest effect (IDR 9T), while its labor segment (IDR 1.8T) benefitted the least. Moreover, in terms of non-agricultural households, urban households gain more effects than rural households, where benefits are distributed the most at high-income household, followed by low-income and non-labor force household.

Conclusions and implications

Inbound tourism brought up significant impacts on Indonesian economy. The clerical sales and service workers and high-income household benefit the most, whose extent of income is higher in urban areas. Benefit reallocation from high- to low-income group is needed to improve fairness in income distribution.

Keywords

Inbound tourism, social accounting matrix, multiplier decomposition, income distribution, Indonesia

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The Influence of City Brand and e-WOM on Visitor Satisfaction and Revisit Intentions in City Events

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Abstract
Recent advancements in media and the proliferation of social media platforms have revolutionized the way individuals gather information, particularly regarding travel. Unlike traditional media, which was once limited in scope and focused on unidirectional communication, modern media allows information to spread rapidly and diversely. Travelers increasingly prefer digital media sources such as online travel agencies, blogs, and social networking services over traditional outlets like newspapers, magazines, or television for obtaining travel information. This study explores the role of city brand reputation and environmental cues in shaping visitor satisfaction and revisit intentions at city events, emphasizing the moderating effect of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM).

1. Introduction

The media environment has undergone significant changes with the development of the internet and social media, which has led to an explosion of accessible information. As a result, individuals are now exposed to a broader range of news and events, which also extends to the tourism sector. In particular, travelers increasingly rely on digital platforms such as online travel agencies, blogs, and social media to gather information, plan trips, purchase travel products, and share experiences with others (Chung & Shin, 2010; Wang, 2018). This shift from traditional media to digital sources has been accompanied by a growing awareness among citizens regarding social issues, further magnifying the attention given to specific topics and events. Brand reputation plays a crucial role in consumers' evaluation of service quality. A strong brand reputation not only reduces the search cost for consumers but also builds trust in the service, encouraging both initial purchases and repeat business. In the context of city branding, if visitors are unable to assess service quality or environmental cues clearly, they may rely heavily on external factors such as brand awareness and reputation to form an opinion about the city (Kim, 2010). The focus of this study is to explore how city brand reputation influences visitor satisfaction and revisit intentions, as well as the importance of visible cues and brand reputation in shaping consumer behavior.

2. Research Purpose

The study aims to investigate the impact of city brand reputation and environmental cues on visitor satisfaction and revisit intentions at city events. Specifically, it seeks to understand the role of e-WOM as a moderating factor between these variables. The specific objectives of this research are as follows:

To define and identify the components of city brand reputation, environmental cues, e-WOM, visitor satisfaction, and revisit intention through a literature review.

To analyze the relationship between city brand reputation and visitor satisfaction.

To examine the effect of environmental cues on visitor satisfaction.

To investigate the relationship between visitor satisfaction and revisit intention.

To assess the moderating effect of e-WOM on the relationship between city brand reputation, environmental cues, and visitor satisfaction at the Busan International Film Festival.

To explore the moderating role of e-WOM in the relationship between visitor satisfaction and revisit intentions.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative approach, utilizing a literature review to develop operational definitions for the key variables and establish hypotheses for the research. A survey will be conducted among visitors who have attended the Busan International Film Festival, using both online and offline platforms. The collected data will be analyzed through statistical methods to test the proposed hypotheses and examine the moderating effect of e-WOM.

4. Literature Review

Brand Reputation

Brand reputation refers to the collective assessment of a company’s attributes over time and can significantly influence consumer perceptions. A strong brand reputation serves as a valuable asset, differentiating a company from its competitors and enhancing brand performance (Fombrun & Van Riel, 1997). Customers tend to trust brands with higher reputations, which ultimately impacts their attitudes and behaviors, such as purchase intentions and loyalty (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001). High brand reputation also reduces perceived risks associated with service quality, making consumers more confident in their purchase decisions (Kim, 2010).

Visitor Satisfaction

Satisfaction is defined as the extent to which consumer expectations are met or exceeded after experiencing a product or service (Kotler, 2013). It represents a consumer's emotional response to the service provided. In the context of city events, factors like event content, service quality, and the environment influence visitor satisfaction (Oliver, 1997).

Revisit Intention
Revisit intention refers to a consumer's likelihood of returning to a service or product after a positive experience (Kwon & Seo, 2019). It is a key indicator of customer loyalty and satisfaction, reflecting the potential for repeat engagement (Lee & Kim, 2016).

e-WOM
Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) refers to the online sharing of information, experiences, or opinions about a product, service, or event. It plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions, especially in the tourism and event sectors, where visitors may rely on online reviews to make decisions (Syahrivar & Ichlas, 2018).

5. Conclusion and Implications
The research will provide valuable insights into how city event organizers can leverage brand reputation, environmental cues, and e-WOM to enhance visitor satisfaction and encourage repeat visits. By examining the moderating effect of e-WOM, the study will contribute to a better understanding of how digital interactions influence consumer behavior in the context of city events. The findings are expected to offer practical implications for marketing strategies, emphasizing the importance of building a strong city brand and fostering positive online communication among visitors. This could help city event organizers refine their promotional efforts and develop a more loyal customer base.

Keywords (5 Required)

Keywords: City Brand Reputation, Environmental Cues, e-WOM, Visitor Satisfaction, Revisit Intention, City Events.

Karma is Contagious: How Blind-Box Offerings Enhance Tourist Purchases in Spiritual Destinations

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT (REQUIRED. NO MORE THAN 1000 WORDS)

In current years, blind-box selling strategies — where product or service contents are intentionally concealed from the consumer at the time of decision-making (Kovacheva et al., 2022; Mvondo et al., 2023) — have surged in sectors like retailers, restaurants, airlines, and travel agencies. Yet their application to spiritual destinations (e.g., temples, churches, sacred natural sites), remains underexplored. In an era where tourism competitiveness increasingly hinges on innovation and cultural resonance, this study investigates the psychological drivers behind the rising popularity of blind-box souvenirs in spiritual tourism. By integrating contagion theory (Rozin et al., 1986), charitable giving research (Savary et al., 2020) with spiritual tourism frameworks, this research examines how blind-box marketing amplifies tourists' perception of souvenirs as vessels of a destination's "spiritual essence," thereby fostering purchase intentions.

Prior research on blind-box marketing emphasizes its uncertain nature that evokes curiosity, gamified experiences, and positive emotions (Kovacheva et al., 2022; Zhang, 2022). However, these studies mainly focus on commercial contexts, overlooking the unique dynamics of spiritual tourism, where souvenirs symbolize cultural heritage and metaphysical values (Soukhathammavong & Park, 2019). Contagion theory, which explains how objects acquire symbolic "essence/aura/souls" through contact (Rozin et al., 1986), has recently expanded to include positive contagion (e.g., products imbued with luck or blessings; Newman & Dhar, 2014). Yet, few studies explore how spiritual destinations can amplify these effects or how religious beliefs moderate consumer responses. In spiritual destinations, another common practice to encourage purchases is to bundle products with donation requests. For instance, temples or shrines may offer small thank-you gifts, such as amulets, mala beads, and joss sticks, in exchange for donations. So, the very same bundle can be framed in one of the following two ways: "donate $10 and receive a mala beads bracelet" (donation-with-a-gift framing) versus "buy a mala beads bracelet and the proceeds will go to the temple" (charitable purchase). Charitable giving research demonstrates that charitable purchase framing triggers utility-based evaluations, whereas donation-with-a-gift framing enhances warm-glow feelings (Zlatev & Miller, 2016). However, no study has tested how these frameworks interact with blind-box design in spiritual settings. To fill this void, this research aims to investigate three important factors – tourism offering type (certain vs. blind-box), offer framing (charitable purchase vs. donation-with-a-gift framing), and tourists' Buddhist beliefs -- that jointly influence tourists' purchase decisions. This research fosters an understanding of why certain CSA messages will be praised versus admonished by consumers.

Two online experiments were conducted with Chinese tourists to test hypotheses. Study 1 (N = 200, Credamo workers) employed a single-factor, between-subjects design (offering type: certain vs. blind-box product) with Buddhist beliefs as a moderator. Participants imagined visiting a Buddhist temple café offering either a blind-box coffee or a clearly described coffee. Study 2 (N = 196, Credamo workers) adopted a 2 (offering type: certain vs. blind-box) × 2 (offer framing: charitable purchase vs. donation-with-a-gift) between-subjects design, using a fictitious temple souvenir store selling mala bead bracelets. Key measures included: perceived transferred essence, purchase intention, and Buddhist beliefs. Data were analyzed using ANCOVA, moderated mediation analysis (PROCESS; Hayes, 2017), and the Johnson-Neyman technique to account for cultural and contextual moderators.

For Study 1, results found that blind-box (vs. certain) offerings heightened perceived transferred essence ($M_{certain}$ = 5.57 vs. $M_{blind\text{-}box}$ = 5.81; $F(1,197)$ = 4.24; p = 0.041), which lead to greater purchase intention (b = 0.05, SE =0.04, 95%CI = 0.01 to 0.14). Moreover, the mediation pathway was significant only for individuals with higher levels of Buddhist beliefs (b = 0.13, SE =0.07, t (1.98), p = .049, 95%CI = 0.01 to 0.26). While for Study 2, results showed that the moderated mediation was significant ($b = 0.33$, $SE = 0.15$, 95% CI [0.05, 0.65]). When the framing of charitable purchase was adopted, participants were more likely to purchase certain (vs. blind-box) offerings ($M_{certain} = 6.09$ vs. $M_{blind\text{-}box} = 5.75$, $F(1,191) = 4.25$, $p=0.041$). Such effect was diminished when the framing of donation-with-a-gift was used ($M_{certain} = 5.75$ vs. $M_{blind\text{-}box} = 5.91$, $F(1,191) = 0.93$, $p = 0.337$). Thus, all hypotheses are supported.

Theoretically, this research introduces contagion theory to explain the appeal of blind-box selling in spiritual tourism. It identifies two novel moderators, Buddhist beliefs and offer framing that alters perceived tourists' essence perceptions and purchase intentions. Drawing on charitable giving and spiritual tourism research, our studies foster an understanding of when and why blind-box selling strategy will be praised versus admonished by tourists. Practically, future tourism practitioners can use the blind-box selling strategy to market culturally authentic souvenirs (e.g., randomized amulets, mystery artifacts), reducing overproduction and waste. Also, they can tailor framing to diverse tourist demographics: Transactional framing ("charitable purchase") for general audiences and altruistic framing ("donation-with-a-gift") for spiritually engaged tourists.

Keywords (5 Required)

Blind box selling strategy, spiritual tourism, contagion, Buddhism, framing.

The Impact of Nostalgia on Consumer Preferences for Majority-Endorsed Morning Tea Products: The Role of Social Connectedness and Moderating Effects of Place Attachment and Brand Engagement

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ABSTRACT

Morning tea, a cornerstone of Guangzhou's cultural identity, transcends its role as a mere culinary tradition, becoming an essential element of social interaction and cultural continuity(Guo et al., 2023). Morning tea is a provincial intangible cultural heritage of Guangdong Province(Chen, 2009). Morning tea is not only a part of daily life but also a significant cultural practice actively promoted by the Chinese government to preserve regional culinary traditions. While traditionally enjoyed by older generations, recent trends indicate a notable shift in consumer behavior, with younger locals increasingly engaging with morning tea(Jiang, 2019). These younger consumers are drawn not only to its sensory appeal and the diversity of choices but also to the nostalgic value it represents, forging an emotional connection to their cultural heritage(Guo et al., 2023). This growing interest presents an intriguing avenue for exploring the factors that shape consumers' choices of majority-endorsed morning tea products, which are perceived as authentic and culturally significant(Tam, 1997).

In this context, the decision-making process surrounding the choice of morning tea products is influenced by a complex interplay of nostalgia, social connectedness, place attachment, and brand engagement. Majority-endorsed products, which are highly regarded by both locals and tourists, often carry an added layer of social validation that reinforces their authenticity and cultural value(Fan et al., 2020). While previous studies have explored nostalgia in the context of food tourism(Das et al., 2024; Vignolles & Pichon, 2014; Wahyudi et al., 2024), there remains a gap in understanding how social networks and emotional bonds to a place influence consumers' preferences for these culturally endorsed products. Research has not yet delved into the study of morning tea. Specifically, there is a need to investigate how factors such as social connectedness, place attachment, and brand engagement shape the decision to choose majority-endorsed morning tea products, particularly when nostalgia acts as a central motivator in consumer behavior. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the role of nostalgia in influencing the choice of majority-endorsed morning tea products among local consumers in Guangzhou. We draw on optimal distinctiveness theory and consumer conformity theory to examine the impact of tourists' nostalgia on their choice of majority-endorsed products. Nostalgia influences the selection of majority-endorsed products through its effect on social connectedness(Fan et al., 2020). Place attachment serves as a moderating factor, linking nostalgia to both social connectedness and the choice of majority-endorsed products, though it does not act as a decisive influence. Similarly, brand engagement functions as a moderating factor between social connectedness and the choice of majority-endorsed products, but it does not play a determining role. Therefore, while social connectedness emerges as a key influencing factor, place attachment and brand engagement are likely to act as moderating factors in shaping tourists' product choices.

We conduct our field research in Guangzhou, the capital city of Guangdong province, where morning tea—a regional delicacy and an emblematic aspect of local culture—plays a significant role in reflecting the area's traditions, customs, and way of life(Guo et al., 2023). Guangzhou, with its large consumer base and status as a key tourism hub, offers an authentic context for exploring the dynamics of local food consumption(Song, 2018). For this study, we adopt a four-group single-factor (nostalgia vs. control) between-subjects experimental design, utilizing SPSS to analyze the relationships among the key variables.

We hypothesize that tourists' nostalgia will significantly influence their choice of majority-endorsed products. Specifically, nostalgia is expected to affect commitment through social connectedness. Additionally, both place attachment and brand engagement are anticipated to play a relevant, albeit non-decisive, role in shaping consumer behavior. Place attachment is proposed to serve as a moderating factor, influencing both the relationship between nostalgia and the choice of majority-endorsed products,

as well as the relationship between nostalgia and social connectedness. Furthermore, brand engagement is found to have a moderating effect on both the relationship between nostalgia and the choice of majority-endorsed products, as well as the relationship between social connectedness and the choice of majority-endorsed products.

This research contributes to the literature on food-based tourism by examining how emotional and social factors shape consumer behavior in the context of traditional food practices. By expanding the concept of optimal distinctiveness theory and consumer conformity theory, this study provides a novel approach to understanding how consumers engage with local food traditions. Moreover, the findings will offer valuable insights for businesses and marketers seeking to leverage the emotional and cultural appeal of majority-endorsed food products in destination marketing. The insights derived from this study can inform strategies for promoting local food products in culturally rich tourism settings, ensuring that marketers effectively tap into the emotional and nostalgic motivations of younger consumers who seek deeper connections with their heritage.

In conclusion, this study offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the factors that influence the choice of majority-endorsed products in food tourism, providing a deeper insight into how emotional and social connections to place and culture drive consumer decisions. The findings contribute to both the theoretical understanding of food-based tourism and practical applications for businesses aiming to engage local consumers in culturally meaningful experiences.

Keywords (5 Required)

Morning Tea, Majority-Endorsed Product, Nostalgia, Social Connectedness

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Analyzing Chinese Tourist Motivations for Hokkaido Destinations Using Transformer Models and Statistical Methods

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT (REQUIRED. NO MORE THAN 1000 WORDS)

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a rapid decline in Japan's inbound tourism industry, with strict travel restrictions significantly reducing the number of international visitors (UN Tourism, 2023). However, as restrictions have eased, inbound tourism is experiencing a strong recovery (JNTO, 2024), particularly among Chinese tourists. Understanding and analyzing the needs of these tourists is essential for revitalizing Japan's tourism industry and ensuring sustainable growth. This study contributes to this effort by identifying and predicting key motivational factors driving Chinese tourists to visit various locations in Hokkaido.

Understanding the motivations of Chinese tourists visiting Japan, particularly the Hokkaido region, is crucial for enhancing destination marketing strategies and optimizing tourism experiences (The Japan Times, 2024). This study aims to predict Chinese tourist motivations for visiting specific attractions in Hokkaido by leveraging Transformer-based natural language processing (NLP) models combined with principal component analysis (PCA). Given the rising importance of social media in shaping travel decisions, this research analyzes large-scale user-generated content (UGC) from platforms to extract key motivational factors influencing destination choices. The study's findings provide actionable insights for tourism stakeholders to develop tailored marketing strategies that resonate with the preferences of Chinese tourists.

Existing literature on tourism motivations predominantly relies on traditional survey-based approaches and structured interviews (Cohen, 1972; Crompton, 1979) and classic theoretical frameworks such as push-pull theory (Dann, 1981) and means-end theory (Gutman, 1982). While these methods provide valuable insights, they often suffer from limitations, including response biases, small sample sizes, and difficulties in capturing real-time or evolving travel preferences. Recent studies have introduced data-driven techniques, including sentiment analysis and topic modeling, to analyze tourism motivations (Alaei et al., 2019; Gregoriades et al., 2023). However, these methods may overlook the intricate relationships between motivational factors and textual context. Transformer models, particularly pre-trained models like BERT (Devlin et al., 2019) and RoBERTa (Liu et al., 2019), have demonstrated superior performance in understanding nuanced text semantics but are rarely applied in tourism motivation research. Additionally, principal component analysis (PCA) has been widely used in tourism analytics for dimensionality reduction, helping to extract the most significant motivational factors from the vast amount of data predicted by Transformers.

Our previous research (Liu et al., 2023) demonstrated that the Transformer model RoBERTa effectively scores motivational factors (self-expansion, excitement, unexpectedness, natural experience, local engagement, cultural observation, and health recovery) (Hayashi and Fujihara, 2008), closely matching manual assessments while significantly reducing the required time and human effort. Building on this, we selected the most famous spots in Hokkaido and collected 500 Chinese reviews as the dataset. We then employed Transformer models to score the reviews according to motivational factors. Next, we applied the PCA method to the scored data to identify the most important motivational factor for each spot. Finally, we used the K-means algorithm to categorize the reviews and visualize the relationship between motivational factors and the corresponding reviews. By comparing motivations across different locations, this approach enables a deeper understanding of tourist preferences for specific sites. The insights gained from this analysis provide actionable recommendations for tourism facilities, helping them tailor services to better meet visitor expectations and improve overall tourism experiences.

The results reveal several key findings. Chinese tourists are primarily attracted to the natural scenery of Hokkaido, Japanese culture, interactions with local people, and shopping and dining experiences. Compared to Japanese tourists, Chinese visitors exhibit a stronger interest in Japanese cultural elements. The results scored by models closely align with manual scoring, demonstrating the model's effectiveness in identifying general motivations. However, the model shows lower accuracy in detecting motivations linked to personal experiences. For example, reviews related to "natural experience" and "cultural observation" often contain distinct and rich feature patterns or keywords. These reviews may describe specific attributes such as scenic beauty, historical sites, or cultural events, which provide clear signals that the model can easily learn from and associate with the respective motivation factors. In contrast, "excitement," "health recovery," and "self-expansion" may involve more abstract and subjective experiences that are less explicitly mentioned in reviews. These factors can encompass a wide range of activities and feelings, making it harder for the model to identify consistent patterns and accurately predict them.

This study makes several original contributions to the field. First, it introduces an innovative methodological framework that combines cutting-edge NLP techniques with statistical analysis to study tourism motivations, setting a precedent for future data-driven tourism research. Second, it expands the understanding of Chinese tourist behaviors in Hokkaido by providing empirical insights based on large-scale social media analysis. Finally, it offers practical implications for tourism marketers, destination managers, and policymakers by identifying key motivational drivers and emerging trends. Future research can extend this approach to other regions and examine cross-cultural differences in tourist motivations using multilingual NLP models. The findings underscore the importance of integrating AI-driven analytics in tourism studies to capture dynamic and evolving traveler preferences effectively.

Keywords (5 Required)

Tourism motivation, Transformer model, PCA, Chinese tourist, Hokkaido

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Issues Challenging Small Winery Operations in the U.S. in the Digital Era

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The U.S. wine industry has become extremely competitive as the number of wineries continues to increase while wine consumption is on the decline. The number of wineries in the U.S. has increased from 1,800 in 1995 to 11, 691 in 2023 (Wine Business Monthly, 2025).

Although small family-owned wineries make up the bulk of the US. wine industry, their market share continues to shrink, as industry concentration and consolidation show signs of acceleration (82% of wineries make less than 5,000 cases, which account for less than 15% of all sales). As a result, many wine entrepreneurs and small family-owned enterprises are struggling to survive in this competitive and fragmented industry (Gonen et al., 2024). Fires and drought brought on by climate change, labor shortages after the pandemic, and persistent inflation have only increased the challenges (Gonen et al., 2024).

The paper aims to explore some of the key issues small winery operators face. Importantly, we will discuss the following key questions.

1. What are the structural issues small wineries face?
2. Are small wineries ready to serve younger generations whose lives are ingrained in new technologies?

The Landscape

While small wineries represent a large percentage of the U.S. wineries, the market share of these small winery operators is small and continues to shrink. In 2021, there were 11,053 wineries in the U.S. (Statista, 2022), of which 8,996 (82%) produced less than 5000 cases a year and 74 produced more than 500,000 cases. In contrast, the top 10 major wineries in the U.S. controlled 70% of market share in 2020 (McMillan, 2020). Thus, while the U.S. is the largest wine market in the world, accounting for $106.3 billion of wine consumption in 2023, the U.S. wine industry is driven primarily by larger wineries (McMillian, 2020). The large wineries are valuable as they support industry associations, are the subject of the bulk of wine research, and are leaders in supply chain innovation, technologies, and branding and marketing.

Digitalization on Small Winery Operation

Larger wineries can leverage their financial and human resources to invest and adopt new technologies which help the firms increase productivity and efficiency. Also, more and more consumers have embraced new technologies due to the perceived ease of use they offer (Gursoy et al., 2019). While we do not have exact data on digital sales in the wine industry, we can refer to the foodservice industry for the rapid adoption of technology among consumers. In 2023, digital orders in the U.S. foodservice industry accounted for 20 percent of total revenue of the restaurant industry (NRA, 2024), while 70 percent of customers indicated that they would use the app of a fast-food restaurant to place and pay for an order (NRA, 2024). Consumers have integrated digitalization into their daily lives as using smartphone and apps are indispensable to them. Small wineries play an important, but different, role in their communities and the industry as they hire locally, preserve artisan culture, and introduce new customers to wine. They sell primarily using direct-to-consumer (DTC) through their tasting rooms and wine clubs. Small wineries are also responsible for their entire production to sales process - from producing to selling their products directly to their customers. Prior research (Lee et., 2021) suggests that the cornerstone of the DTC model's success is providing winery visitors with seamless service that builds high customer satisfaction and loyalty, which in turn leads to a lower churn rate in wine club membership (Lee et al.,2021). However, the emerging generation of wine drinkers whose lives are integrated with technology and spend much more time in the digital world as compared to previous generations may require small winery operators to develop different strategies. For example, small winery operators could adopt a gamification component into their wine club membership.

Increasingly, firms are also adopting AI - including AI digital agents and recipe development to detecting fake customer reviews on social media using AI (Bousquette, 2024; Mitchell, 2024). Wine is a medium for socializing with other people. Meeting and interacting with other enthusiasts and winery staff is a major part of visiting a winery. However, evolving technology may be eroding this notion. There is a need to understand how AI could affect the wine industry, particularly small wineries whose operations are more vulnerable to new technology that requires extensive capital investments.

Method

There is no systematic data for small wineries on best practices, innovations such as leveraging technology, or collaboration for economies of scale. Unlike Europe, where small wineries form cooperatives to achieve economies of scale. in the U.S. there is no similar business model for small wineries. Although cooperative brands in Europe like those in Italy and France are not perceived as high-quality brands, cooperatives are a way to build up economies of scale. To examine the above-mentioned research questions the researcher will conduct in-depth personal interviews with small winery operators across the US as well as various stakeholders. The results of the study will provide small winery operators in the US with insightful suggestions on small wineries' strategies to survive in the competitive wine industry and how to integrate emerging technologies such as AI into their winery operations.

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Key Words: Small winery, Digitalization

Based on the HMSAM Framework: Research on the Application of VR Technology in Cultural Heritage Museums and User Persistence

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ABSTRACT

In the era of the digital wave, virtual reality (VR) technology is making inroads into various aspects of life. In cities, it offers immersive gaming, and in education, it enables virtual historical explorations. Museums, once traditional, now use VR to revitalize cultural heritage.This study centers on VR in museums, exploring its interactivity, vividness, and novelty. Interactivity lets visitors engage with exhibits, like virtually using ancient tools. Vividness, with high-definition graphics and sound, creates an immersive experience as if at a historical site. Novelty provides a fresh way to experience heritage, breaking from monotony. Using the Hedonic Motivation System Adoption Model (HMSAM), it analyzes how these factors influence user persistence and willingness to use VR, and the potential of the online-offline hybrid model where VR previews at home lead to in-person museum visits. Empirical data is collected through experiential experiments with 589 participants of diverse backgrounds. Young students bring tech enthusiasm, and the elderly offer a traditional-virtual comparison. During the experiment, researchers assess users' reactions. They examine VR's ease of use, ensuring even tech novices can navigate it, and monitor the vividness of the experience, including picture, sound, and scene restoration. They also analyze novelty to see if it sparks curiosity.The results show that most participants are positive about VR in cultural heritage tourism and willing to keep using it. While VR's ease of use and vividness are appealing, participants are satisfied with their experiences. They recognize VR is evolving and has great potential to meet diverse needs. These positive findings indicate broad prospects for VR in cultural heritage tourism, highlighting the trend of integrating VR into museum experiences and the need for continuous VR development. This study also suggests that cultural heritage tourism will likely adopt an online-offline hybrid model, using VR to enhance the tourist experience. Although VR has great potential, we must acknowledge its current limitations and the need for improvement in many aspects.

Keywords (5 Required)

Virtual reality, Interactivity, Vividness, Novelty, Hedonic-Motivation System Adoption Model (HMSAM) , Cultural heritage

1. Introduction

Amidst the rapid advancement of technology and the digital revolution, a silent transformation is taking place across diverse industries. The realm of cultural and historical museums, which has long been committed to the preservation and exhibition of tangible cultural and historical artifacts, now stands on the brink of significant changes. In this era of innovation, no field can remain immune, and cultural and historical institutions are necessitated to undergo a fundamental shift in their operational models. In recent years, the integration of Virtual Reality (VR) technology with traditional museum experiences has emerged as an exhilarating frontier, revolutionizing entirely the way visitors interact with cultural and historical heritages. This study delves profoundly into the "Influence of Virtual Reality Technology on Cultural and Historical Museums in the Future" and takes the National Museum of Korean History as a case study.

Cultural and historical museums worldwide, including the National Museum of Korean History, are gradually recognizing the immense potential of VR technology. It offers a novel approach to presenting cultural and historical content and holds the promise of unlocking brand-new experiential dimensions. The continuous evolution of VR technology will enhance the museum visiting experience, enabling visitors to step into a vivid virtual world of cultural and historical tales, thereby bridging the gap between the physical and digital realms.

This introduction lays the groundwork for a comprehensive examination of the role of VR technology as a catalyst for change in cultural and historical museums, with a particular focus on the National Museum of Korean History. The objective of this study is to unveil how virtual reality can enhance the appeal and immersive quality of museum visits, potentially redefining the essence of cultural and historical museums in this era dominated by digital interaction. By exploring visitors' experiences and evaluating the impact of VR technology on their satisfaction levels, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the future development of cultural and historical museums in a world increasingly shaped by technological progress.

2. Literature Review

Hedonic-Motivation System Adoption Model (HMSAM)

The Hedonic Motivation System Adoption Model (HMSAM), developed by Paul Benjamin Lowry and his colleagues, enriches and refines the HMS model. This model delves deeper into the satisfaction of people's intrinsic motivations. While some models simply depict intrinsic motivation via perceived enjoyment, HMSAM features a more intricate structure of cognitive absorption (CA). CA mainly consists of enjoyment, control, curiosity, focused engagement, and temporary dissociation.

The variables within the Hedonic Motivation System Adoption Model are as follows: perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, curiosity, pleasure, control, behavioral intention to use, and immersion (Lowry et al. 2013). Research findings have emphasized a strong positive correlation between the Hedonic Motivation System and the utilization of information systems and digital technologies (Van Der Heijden, 2004). In the realm of product virtualization for online apparel shopping, the hedonic motivation system demonstrates a more pronounced positive correlation compared to the utilitarian motivation system (Kim and Forsythe, 2007).

It has been determined that hedonic performance expectancy is significantly linked to cognitive absorption in the acceptance of hedonic voluntary settings like Facebook (Lallmahomed, Nor, Ibrahim, and Rahman, 2013). Hedonic motivations have been shown to impact users' technology adoption in various fields, such as virtual game enjoyment (Hamari, 2015), hedonic health information systems (Li and Mao, 2015), and virtual hotels (Mäntymäki and Riemer, 2014).

Researchers have adjusted the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to more effectively explain the adoption of mainly intrinsic or hedonic motivation systems, for example, in gaming and using for entertainment purposes. Lowry et al. (2012) put forward the Hedonic - Motivation System Adoption Model (HMSAM) as an alternative to TAM. This model reveals that the flow state, acting as a complete mediator, serves as a potent and suitable predictor of the behavioral intention to use VR. HMSAM is especially valuable in clarifying the gamification elements of system use, placing emphasis on pleasure (hedonic motivation) and the flow state within VR worlds (Lowry et al., 2012, 2015). Moreover, interactivity, vividness, and novelty are three evaluation factors of flow. McLean and Wilson (2019) introduced these three factors in their AR study and investigated their effects on technology acceptance attributes, including perceived ease of use, practicality, enjoyment, and subjective norms.

Cognitive abilities are a crucial part of Csikszentmihalyi's (1975) flow theory, which combines several intrinsic motivational factors such as control, curiosity, enjoyment, and immersion. Additionally, Jang and Park (2019) found that presence, enjoyment, and perceived cost directly predict acceptance (intention to use), with enjoyment and presence having a greater impact than perceived cost. Against this backdrop, this study aims to apply this theory and further explore the application of VR technology in art museums.

3. Research model and hypotheses

3.1 Interactivity Vividness Novelty

Hoffman and Novak (2009) described interactivity as the technology's function that enables individuals to interact, control, manipulate, and engage with content easily. There are two important perspectives to study interactivity: (1) its technological elements and (2) the user's perception of it (Yim et al., 2017). Steuer (1992) highlighted the importance of considering technological features when defining interactivity. But the exact characteristics of interactivity are still a matter of discussion, as technological factors can greatly affect how users perceive their experiences. For instance, if the speed and smoothness of operation during use don't meet the standards of experienced users, it can have a negative impact on the overall perception of the experience.

From the user's point of view, interactivity is a subjective evaluation of their experience. In practical situations, if the conditions for an engaging experience aren't met, the flow of the experience can be severely disrupted. When users interact with a feature that meets their experiential expectations, it usually creates an appealing mental state (Yim et al., 2017).

Steuer (1992) defined immersion as the technology's ability to create a mediated environment that submerges individuals in rich sensory experiences. This involves combining sensory experiences from real-world objects that can be physically observed with non-sensory mental constructs from imagination, leading to a vivid mental image of a product or experience (Lee, 2004). Immersion is often associated with the aesthetic charm of products presented on websites or mobile apps (Flavian et al., 2017). Different aspects of immersion, like attention to detail and uniqueness, can strongly influence an individual's experience, especially when moving smoothly between the real and virtual worlds.

In the realm of technology, novelty generally refers to the perception of newness. But in the context of VR technology, it has a different meaning. Here, it means showing users exclusive, personalized, and fresh content as they interact with VR technology.

What makes novelty special in information processing is its power to attract consumers' attention, arouse their curiosity, and generate a feeling of enchantment (Hoffman and Novak, 2009; Kover and James, 1993).

Interactivity is defined as the speed at which consumers are able to manipulate technology, the degree of control they possess during this manipulation process, and the extent to which they can engage with the technology (Steuer, 1992). From a technological perspective, the perceived ease of use represents individuals' conviction that using technology will be hassle - free, which in turn improves productivity, performance, efficiency, and the sense of control (Davis, 1989). Research carried out by Chau and Lai (2003), Martin et al. (2015), and Rose et al. (2012) emphasizes that the control over technology and the efficient accomplishment of tasks are crucial elements in shaping consumers' perception of ease of use.

A VR experience that is highly interactive has the potential to arouse users' inclination to explore. In an environment where user actions are promptly responded to and real - time feedback is provided, it piques users' curiosity, motivating them to keep exploring and creating opportunities for learning and discovery. Gkantia and Dinas (2023) indicate that presenting digital stories in an interactive format can heighten preschool children's curiosity. Similarly, Yim et al. (2017) put forward that the enjoyment obtained from technology is closely associated with interactivity. Nicholas et al. (2000) contend that a greater number of interactive features in computer games result in higher levels of enjoyment. Yim et al. (2012) discovered that individuals have a more enjoyable experience with 3D images in an online setting compared to traditional 2D images. In the e - commerce context, research has demonstrated that consumers who are exposed to vivid product visualizations, such as product inspection tools, have a more favorable customer experience (Pantano et al., 2017).

In light of these considerations, the study formulates the following hypotheses:

H1 - 1: Interactivity has a positive impact on the usefulness of VR.

H1 - 2: Interactivity has a positive impact on curiosity.

H1 - 3: Interactivity exerts a positive effect on enjoyment.

Vividness enriches the authenticity of the VR experience, enabling users to simulate and comprehend complex information or environments more precisely. By offering high - definition and detailed experiences, vividness significantly augments the practicality of VR technology, assisting users in effectively carrying out tasks in the fields of education, training, and entertainment (Makransky and Lilleholt, 2018). Furthermore, the vivid visual and sensory stimuli in VR can kindle users' desire to explore. This high level of detail and immersion provokes curiosity, prompting users to engage more profoundly with the VR environment (Huang et al., 2013). Additionally, the realistic experiences brought about by vividness enhance user enjoyment. Appealing visual effects enhance the entertainment value of VR content, increasing user satisfaction and the intention to use the technology (Tussyadiah et al., 2018).

Based on these considerations, the study formulates the following hypotheses:

H2 - 1: Vividness has a positive effect on the usefulness of VR.

H2 - 2: Vividness exerts a positive influence on curiosity.

H2 - 3: Vividness has a positive impact on enjoyment.

Novelty can enhance the practical worth of VR experiences. Users who are in pursuit of novel experiences may uncover new applications of VR technology or acquire previously unacquired knowledge. Novel VR experiences foster innovation and creative thinking, thereby enhancing the efficiency and quality of task completion (Rauschnabel and Ro, 2016). Moreover, novel VR experiences can stimulate users' curiosity, driving them to explore VR content and features. This curiosity deepens users' cognitive and emotional involvement with VR technology and encourages them to explore its latent potential (Tussyadiah et al., 2018).

Furthermore, novel VR experiences frequently bring users a sense of pleasure and thrill, especially when these experiences deviate from or surpass their daily routines. Novel experiences offer an escape from daily life, adding fun and excitement (Huang et al., 2016).

In view of these considerations, the study formulates the following hypotheses:

H3 - 1: Novelty has a positive influence on the usefulness of VR.

H3 - 2: Novelty exerts a positive effect on curiosity.

H3 - 3: Novelty has a positive impact on enjoyment.

3.2 Usefulness of VR, Curiosity, Enjoyment and intention to use

When users recognize that virtual reality technology holds practical value in task - completion or entertainment - provision, they are more likely to be disposed to use this technology. This perception of usefulness is one of the central concepts in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) put forward by Davis in 1989. In the context of TAM, perceived usefulness is defined as users' belief that a specific technology will improve their job performance. As users come to perceive that VR technology can boost work efficiency, enrich learning experiences, or offer high - quality entertainment, their inclination to adopt this technology is likely to be reinforced. On numerous occasions, perceived usefulness has been demonstrated to have a significant correlation with the intention to use (Alalwan et al., 2015; Hartelina et al., 2021). Moreover, researchers such as Oluwajana et al. (2019) have verified the significance of perceived usefulness in studying students' adoption of teaching - and - education - related systems within educational settings. Consequently, the following hypothesis is advanced:

H4: The usefulness of VR has a positive influence on the intention to use.

Kim and Hall (2019), along with other scholars, have explored the relationship between curiosity and hedonic motivation within virtual reality models in the tourism domain, as well as how these motivations impact tourists' intention to use gamification platforms. Their research results indicate that curiosity plays a crucial role in heightening user engagement and interest in these platforms. Lowry et al. (2013) also accentuated the link between curiosity and the intention to use within the Hedonic Motivation System Adoption Model.

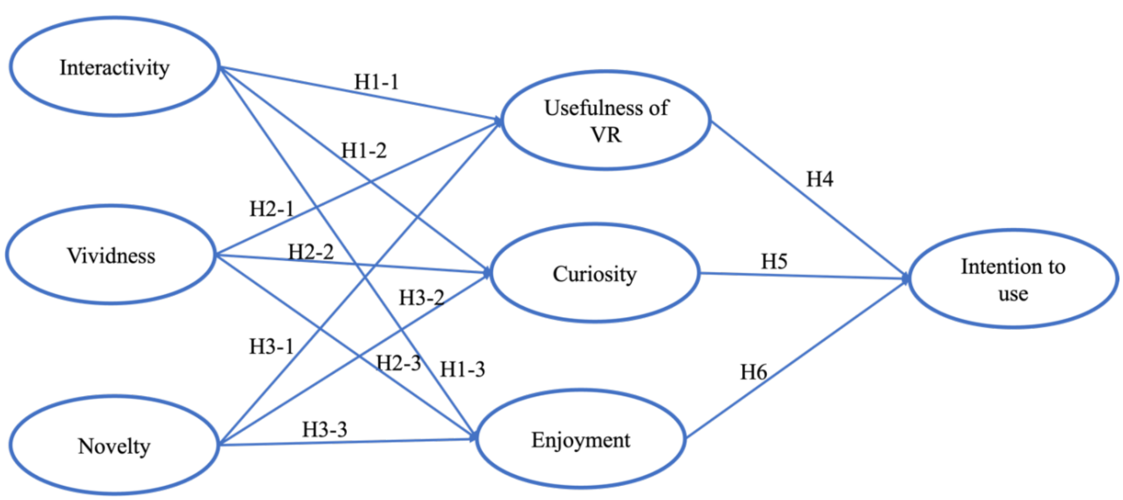
Based on these discussions, we put forward the following hypotheses:

H5: Curiosity has a positive effect on the intention to use.

Kourouthanassis et al. (2015) investigated the relationship between joy and the intention to use virtual reality games, with a focus on how hedonic motivation affects usage intentions. Their research emphasized that when users experience joy during technology use, this positive emotion can remarkably enhance their intention to keep using it. Joy, as an inherent pleasurable experience, is closely tied to the user's behavioral intention. According to Van der Heijden (2004), within the Hedonic - Motivation System Adoption Model (HMSAM), hedonic pleasure (joy) is a vital driver for the continuous use of technology. This emotional reaction strengthens the user - technology bond, thus promoting ongoing use.

Based on these considerations, the study formulates the following hypotheses:

H6: Enjoyment has a positive effect on the intention to use.



4. Methodology

This research mainly relies on experiential experiments. To explore the experience of VR technology, questionnaire surveys will be implemented, and the data collected from these questionnaires will be applied for result analysis. Initially, 589students are randomly enlisted. They are grouped into small teams and scheduled on specific days to engage with VR technology. In the first stage, 80 Chinese international students are randomly picked to carry out the preliminary experiment. The key objective of this stage is to verify the rationality of both the experiment and its process. In the subsequent second stage, the remaining 509 students are randomly selected. The experiment was carried out over a two - week period, spanning from December 8th to December 22nd, 2024, involving all 589 participants. Each participant put on VR glasses and took a virtual tour of the Seoul Museum of Modern Art. The VR experience for each participant lasted approximately 20 minutes, and this was followed by a questionnaire survey that took around 10 minutes. To encourage participation, students who completed the experience were given coffee coupons as rewards. It should be emphasized that all participants conducted the experiment in the same large lecture hall. This was done to account for the potential influence of the space size on the experimental results. Once all participants had finished the experience, the data was collected and pre - processed. Subsequently, data analysis was performed using SPSS and Smart - PLS software to derive the corresponding outcomes.

5. Results

5.1 Demographic result

Based on a questionnaire survey completed by 589 participants following their experience, the sociodemographic characteristics of the sample are detailed in Table 1. The distribution of respondents was fairly even between males (48.6%) and females (51.5%). The majority of respondents fell within the age range of 26 to 30 years, making up 34.1% of the sample, followed by the 31 to 40 years age group, which accounted for 29.7%. The remaining participants were aged between 18-25 years and 41-50 years, constituting 20.9% and 15.3% respectively. Participants holding a Bachelor's degree comprised 71.5% (421 individuals) of the sample, with those possessing Master's and Doctoral degrees or higher making up 16.5% (97 individuals), and high school graduates representing 12.1% (71 individuals). In terms of VR experience, participants with prior experience accounted for 57.9% (341 individuals), while those with no prior experience made up 42.1% (248 individuals). Among those with experience, most had engaged with VR games or had brief VR encounters at VR arcades. Interestingly, among the inexperienced participants, a majority developed a positive attitude towards VR technology after the experience, gaining a fair understanding of it. They found the VR museum experience intriguing and felt that it met their expectations.

<Table 1> Demographic characteristics of respondents

Item	Characteristics	Samples(589)	Ratio (%)
Sex	Male	286	48.6
	Female	303	51.4
Age	18-25	123	20.9
	26-30	201	34.1
	31-40	175	29.7

	41-50	90	15.3
Educational level	High School Diploma	71	12.1
	Bachelor's Degree	421	71.5
	Master's Degree & Doctorate or higher	97	16.5
Previous VR experience	Yes	341	57.9
	No	248	42.1

5.2 Measurement models

Smart-PLS (Ringle et al., 2015) is employed, and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) is regarded as an optimal technique for exploratory research endeavors. This is because it is well-suited for studies featuring a substantial amount of structural complexity and has the ability to pinpoint key predictors (Joseph F Hair Jr et al., 2017), even when dealing with relatively small sample sizes (for example, fewer than 500 responses), as demonstrated in previous research by scholars such as Leung et al. (2022) and Shi et al. (2022). PLS offers a comprehensive array of criteria and metrics for evaluating the quality of both reflective and structural models. These include the significance of path coefficients, the reliability and validity of constructs, and the overall explanatory power of the model.To begin with, we carried out an analysis of the data obtained from the experiential experiment. Adopting the methodology proposed by Joseph F. Hair Jr. and his associates (2017), we evaluated the reliability of the latent structure by using single-item loadings and Composite Reliability (CR). As illustrated in Table 2, the CR values for all factors are higher than 0.85. According to the established CR threshold, values exceeding 0.70 signify a high degree of internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). In this particular study, since the CR values consistently remain above 0.85, it strongly suggests that there is a high level of internal consistency within our research.

Secondly, Table 2 also presents the Cronbach's alpha values, which range from 0.714 to 0.845. These values are remarkably high, indicating outstanding scale reliability. In numerous situations, Cronbach's alpha has the tendency to underestimate the reliability of a measurement scale, especially when factor loadings are not equal (i.e., lacking tau equivalence) and the number of items is fewer than 10. In contrast, Composite Reliability is considered a more superior indicator of reliability (Goodboy & Martin, 2020; Hayes & Coutts, 2020; McNeish, 2018).

The last but equally important value to take into account is the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). All the item loadings in this regard are greater than 0.70. The AVE, which is computed to assess the convergent validity of the model, exceeds the threshold of 0.5 for all values (as shown in Table 2), thus fulfilling the AVE standard set by Joseph F. Hair Jr. et al. (2017).

<Table 2> Construct reliability and validity

Construct	Items	Source	FL	Alpha	CR	AVE
Curiosity				0.845	0.906	0.763
CUR-1	This experience excited my curiosity.	Agarwal& Karahanna(2000), Lowry et al. (2013), Kari, T., & Kosa, M. (2023)	0.828			
CUR-2	Interacting with VR technology made me curious.		0.897			
CUR-3	This experience aroused my imagination.		0.894			
Interactivity				0.787	0.876	0.702
INT-1	Male I was in control of my navigation through the VR technology.	Yim et al., (2017), McLean, G., & Wilson, A. (2019), Gong, T., & Park, J. (2023)	0.848			
INT-2	I had some control of the VR technology that I wanted to see.		0.832			
INT-3	The VR technology had the ability to respond to my specific needs quickly and efficiently.		0.847			
Intention to use				0.843	0.905	0.762
ITU-1	I would plan on using VR technology in the future.	Agarwal& Karahanna, (2000), Lowry et al. (2013), Kari, T., & Kosa, M. (2023)	0.885			
ITU-2	I would intend to continue using VR technology in the future.		0.885			
ITU-3	I expect my use of VR technology to continue in the future.		0.847			
Enjoyment				0.714	0.840	0.637
JOY-1	Experiencing with VR technology is enjoyable for me.	Kim, M. J., & Hall, C. M. (2019), Lowry et al. (2013), Kari, T., & Kosa, M. (2023)	0.705			
JOY-2	Experiencing with VR technology is interesting for me.		0.844			
JOY-3	Using VR technology for an experience makes me happy.		0.838			
Novelty				0.803	0.884	0.717
NOT-1	Using the VR technology offers something new each time.	Yim et al., (2017), McLean, G., & Wilson, A. (2019), Gong, T., & Park, J. (2023)	0.835			
NOT-2	Using the VR technology offers unique information.		0.849			
NOT-3	Using the VR technology offers a different experience.		0.857			
Usefulness of VR				0.776	0.870	0.690
UVR-1	Using VR technology makes my thinking clearer.	Venkatesh, (2000), Lowry et al. (2013), Kari, T., & Kosa, M. (2023)	0.817			
UVR-2	Using VR technology makes me feel rejuvenated.		0.844			
UVR-3	Using VR technology has improved my viewing efficiency.		0.831			
Vividness				0.821	0.893	0.736
VIV-1	The visual display through the VR technology was clear.	Yim et al., (2017), McLean, G., & Wilson, A. (2019), Gong, T., & Park, J. (2023)	0.858			
VIV-2	The visual display through the VR technology was vivid.		0.868			

VIV-3	The visual display through the VR technology was well-defined.		0.848			

Based on the experimental data, it is clear that for each latent structure, the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (as presented in Table 4) is greater than the correlations among the corresponding latent variables. This situation implies a high level of discriminant validity, as stated by Joseph F. Hair Jr. and his colleagues (2017).

Moreover, in accordance with the suggestions put forward by Ab Hamid et al. (2017) and Joseph F. Hair Jr. et al. (2017), we computed the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT) to further verify the discriminant validity. As can be seen from Table 5, all the HTMT values are below the critical value of 0.85. This result serves as additional evidence to confirm the presence of discriminant validity in our study.

<Table 4> Fornell-Larcker criterion（discriminant validity）

Constructs	CUR	INT	ITU	JOY	NOV	UVR	VIV
CUR	0.873						
INT	0.370	0.838					
ITU	0.359	0.460	0.873				
JOY	0.302	0.420	0.360	0.798			
NOV	0.439	0.390	0.382	0.420	0.874		
UVR	0.289	0.376	0.392	0.389	0.396	0.831	
VIV	0.280	0.371	0.361	0.303	0.329	0.336	0.858

<Table 5> Heterotrait-monotrait ratio

Constructs	CUR	INT	ITU	JOY	NOV	UVR	VIV
CUR							
INT	0.451						
ITU	0.418	0.564					
JOY	0.380	0.557	0.459				
NOV	0.524	0.491	0.465	0.546			
UVR	0.355	0.479	0.484	0.521	0.499		
VIV	0.335	0.462	0.434	0.397	0.405	0.420	

5.3 Structural models

Assuming a well-fitting overall model, the next step involves testing the hypotheses pertaining to the causal relationships within the Partial Least Squares (PLS) model. In this context, we employ the T-value as our metric. A T-value exceeding 1.96 between variables signifies significance at the 0.05 level, denoted as *; if the T-value surpasses 2.58, it indicates significance at the 0.01 level, denoted as **; when the T-value exceeds 3.29, it denotes significance at the 0.001 level, denoted as ***.

Building upon the various analyses discussed above and illustrated in Figure 2, we have constructed the Partial Least Squares (PLS) path analysis diagram, in conjunction with Table 9 and the path analysis diagram preceding the experiential phase, as well as accompanying data tables.

Firstly, we evaluate the robustness of the experiential structural model through R2 values. Specifically, the R2 values for the five endogenous latent variables within the model—namely, Usefulness of VR, Curiosity, Enjoyment, Intention to use—are computed as 0.236, 0.243, 0.260, and 0.246, respectively, indicating a favorable model fit.

Secondly, we proceed to validate the support for the assumed relationships between variables. We initiate this process by scrutinizing the results pertaining to Interactivity (T=3.911, p<0.001), Vividness (T=2.473, p<0.05), Novelty (T=6.629, p<0.001), and Curiosity. These findings reveal significant positive correlations between Interactivity, Vividness, Novelty, and Curiosity.

Continuing, we delve into the results for Interactivity (T=5.199, p<0.001), Vividness (T=3.015, p<0.01), Novelty (T=5.617, p<0.001), and Enjoyment. The data demonstrates significant positive correlations between Interactivity, Novelty, Vividness and Enjoyment.

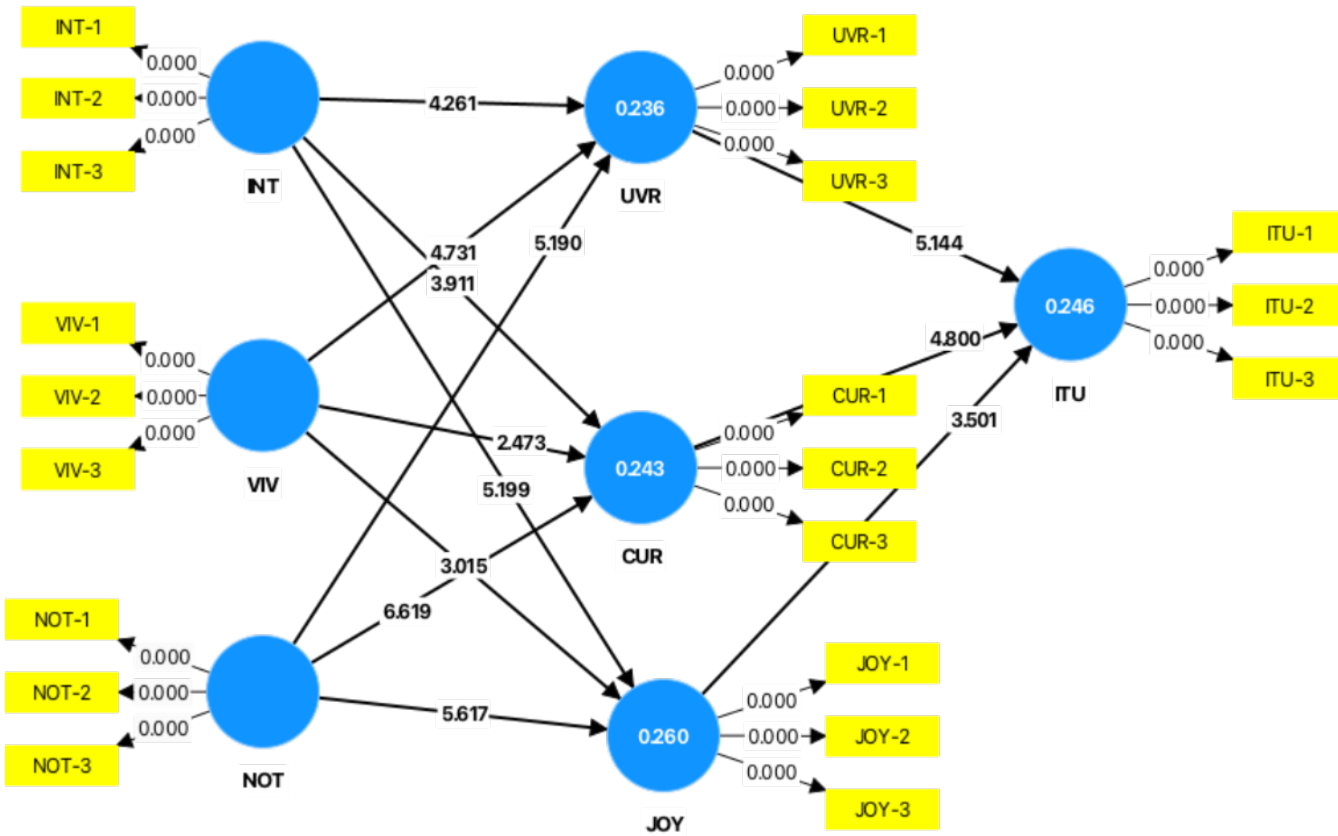
Subsequently, we examine the results for Interactivity (T=4.261, p<0.001), Vividness (T=4.731, p<0.001), Novelty (T=5.190, p<0.001), and Usefulness of VR. These findings showcase significant positive correlations between Interactivity, Novelty, Vividness, and Usefulness of VR.

Lastly, we investigate the relationship between Curiosity (T=4.800, p<0.001), Enjoyment (T=3.501, p<0.001), Usefulness of VR (T=5.144, p<0.001) and Intention to use. These findings suggest a positive correlation between Curiosity, Joy, and Intention to use. Therefore, all hypotheses find support in our analysis

<Table 9> Results of PLS path coefficient analysis

	Original sample(O)	Sample mean(M)	STDEV	T statistics	P values
CUR -> ITU	0.228	0.228	0.048	4.800***	0.000
INT -> CUR	0.207	0.207	0.053	3.911***	0.000
INT -> JOY	0.270	0.270	0.052	5.199***	0.000
INT -> UVR	0.211	0.213	0.050	4.261***	0.000
JOY -> ITU	0.193	0.194	0.055	3.501***	0.000
NOT -> CUR	0.327	0.329	0.049	6.619***	0.000
NOT -> JOY	0.278	0.281	0.050	5.617***	0.000
NOT -> UVR	0.257	0.257	0.049	5.190***	0.000
UVR -> ITU	0.251	0.252	0.049	5.144***	0.000
VIV -> CUR	0.095	0.095	0.038	2.473*	0.013
VIV -> JOY	0.111	0.112	0.037	3.015**	0.003
VIV -> UVR	0.173	0.173	0.037	4.731***	0.000

* INT: Interactivity VIV: Vividness NOV: Novelty UVR: Usefulness of VR CUR: Curiosity JOY: Enjoyment ITU: Intention to use



<Figure 2> Partial Least Square (PLS) path analysis results graph

6. Conclusion

The theoretical importance of this research is manifested in the integration of VR technology characteristics with the Hedonic-Motivation System Adoption Model (HMSAM) for in-depth exploration and discussion. By bringing the interactivity, vividness, and novelty of Virtual Reality (VR) technology into the context of art museums and integrating them with the HMSAM, we establish a crucial theoretical framework. This framework is instrumental in comprehending and forecasting how the audience will accept and utilize VR technology within art museums.

In the context of VR art museums, the three characteristics each carry distinct significance. Interactivity, for one, creates a multi-faceted experience platform. Here, the audience can directly interact with artworks, which not only elevates the quality of their visit but also has the potential to deepen their understanding and appreciation of the exhibited content. As per the HMSAM, greater interactivity during technology use can heighten users' pleasure, thereby boosting their intention to use the technology and overall satisfaction.

Vividness, on the other hand, refers to the rich, multi-sensory, and high-quality artistic experiences that VR art museums can offer. The highly realistic displays enable the audience to be fully immersed in an art environment that closely resembles reality, triggering deeper emotional reactions and a stronger sense of identification. The HMSAM posits that such vivid experiences can stimulate intrinsic pleasure, which in turn influences the acceptance of the technology.

Finally, novelty represents the unique experiences brought about by VR technology, which can spark people's exploratory desire and curiosity. In the cultural setting of art museums, novelty might be a pivotal factor in attracting and retaining the audience's interest, especially in a modern society where people constantly seek new experiences. The HMSAM emphasizes that novelty, as an intrinsic motivating factor, can encourage users to adopt new technology.

Theoretically, combining these three features with the HMSAM not only offers a framework for analyzing and evaluating the potential success of VR art museums but also pinpoints the key elements of the user experience that need to be considered during the design and implementation phases. This theoretical framework elucidates how fulfilling the audience's intrinsic need for pleasure can drive the acceptance and usage of technology. It provides valuable insights for organizations that aim to enhance cultural participation and educational experiences through technological innovations. Thus, the success of VR art museums, as a burgeoning medium for cultural dissemination, largely hinges on how these technological features are harmoniously combined with users' hedonic motivations and strategically leveraged to enhance the overall user experience.

In practical terms, this study applies VR technology to real-world scenarios and combines it with the Hedonic-Motivation System Adoption Model to investigate and discuss consumer satisfaction and usage intentions. As VR technology is gradually being embraced in various other fields, art museums are no exception. In the future, VR technology is expected to be introduced to transform traditional viewing modes. The research on VR can provide both theoretical and practical foundations for the future changes in the marketing models of art museums. Moreover, it can serve as a reference for other industries, such as education, entertainment, and tourism, in their application of VR technology. Additionally, the experimental findings demonstrate that people have a positive attitude towards integrating VR technology into daily life. The transition between virtual reality and the real world also piques their curiosity, spurring further exploration and utilization of VR technology to address other issues. Ultimately, this study aims to showcase the practicality of VR technology through its application in art museums.

The results of this research indicate that this thesis will expound on the application of Virtual Reality (VR) technology in the exhibitions and operations of art museums, with the goal of providing practical and viable guidance for museum operators and exhibition planners. Through a meticulous examination of VR technology and audience engagement, this study reveals how VR can enhance the participation level and educational value of art museums while creating unique and memorable experiences for visitors.

Firstly, the analysis of the technical aspects underscores the significance of choosing suitable VR equipment, optimizing spatial arrangements, and ensuring robust technical support. These elements collectively contribute to creating a safe and comfortable VR experience environment for the audience. Regarding audience engagement, it highlights the importance of ensuring that VR experiences are accessible and inclusive, providing adequate education and guidance, and establishing effective feedback mechanisms. This ensures that every visitor can reap the benefits and savor the allure of art. Finally, from the perspective of operational management, effective crowd control, regular equipment maintenance, and accurate budget planning are crucial factors for ensuring the successful implementation and long-term sustainability of VR experiences.

VR technology presents art museums with an innovative way to display artworks and enhance the visitor experience. However, realizing this potential requires meticulous planning and management to ensure the high quality of both the technology and the content, as well as to provide an inclusive, interactive, and educational experience for all visitors. With the continuous progress of technology and the emergence of innovative content, the application of VR technology in art museums is anticipated to have a more promising future, opening up new opportunities for art display and education.

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Transforming the Local Tourism Industry into a High-Productivity and High-Income Industry -Measures to Improve the Productivity of the Lodging Industry such as Ryokan-

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1. Introduction

Japan's tourism industry is a leading industry with long-term growth and can become a key industry in Japan. On the other hand, the tourism industry has a low wage level and a labor shortage compared to other industrial sectors. In light of this situation, in order for Japan's tourism industry to continue to develop sustainably into the future, it is necessary to make efforts to make the local tourism industry a high-productivity and high-income industry.

In this context, this study focuses on the issue of the productivity of local lodging businesses such as inns. In the mass production and mass consumption system that began during the period of rapid economic growth, external companies with strong and large-scale sales capabilities have held substantial power on pricing as well as service level determination and led sales. Therefore, lodging businesses such as inns were able to share profits by relying on this. As a result, the determination of service levels, such as prices and service contents, has become heteronomous. At the same time, many tourism areas have become average and uniform throughout the country, and demand has entered a phase of shrinkage, and the local tourism industry itself in each area is declining in competitiveness and profitability. Then, this study aims to propose necessary measures to transform the lodging industry such as inns into a high-productivity industry.

2. Method

The study first set up hypotheses on the current issues and challenges in low productivity in the lodging industry. Next, it collected information on examples of related initiatives in Japan and abroad. Then, it examined those hypotheses and identified the initiatives of individual businesses to deal with the challenges and policy responses to promote it. The author's team established an expert panel, in which over 20 tourism and local economy professionals were invited mainly from universities and the governments in Japan to explore measures to improve the productivity of the lodging industry in conjunction with other related tourism policy matters such as visualization of the tourism industry, management strategy for the entire local area, and digitalization. A total of three expert meetings were held from November 2022 to March 2023.Based on the discussions of the expert meetings, the recommendations were compiled in July 2023.

3. Results

The necessary measures for addressing the challenges were proposed from the six perspectives such as “Industrial policy for the lodging industry”, “Improvement of management capabilities”, “Smooth withdrawal from the lodging industry” “Strategic pricing”, “Human resources” and “Adding values”.

(1) Necessity of industrial policy for the lodging industry, such as inns

The Japan Tourism Agency, in cooperation with the relevant departments and agencies of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, should consider both incentive and regulatory mechanisms for land use measures such as urban development and urban planning, and should concretize them as industrial location policies for the lodging industry such as inns, and position them as part of industrial policies. In addition, it is necessary to introduce a public rating system and thoroughly implement management accounting.

(2) Improvement of management metabolism and management capabilities

It is necessary to improve the management capabilities of the lodging industry as a whole, including inns, by promoting the metabolism of management by human resources with skills to improve the productivity of the lodging industry and young human resources with leadership.

(3) Smooth withdrawal from the inns and other lodging business, etc

It is necessary to ensure that the appropriate exit of the lodging businesses, such as inns, which are unwillingly continuing to operate for the sake of appearances in the local area despite a lack of future prospect of achieving high productivity, or which have lost ability in managing business, is carried out smoothly and amicably.

(4) Appropriate evaluation of value as well as accurate and strategic pricing

"After accurately recognizing the value of the services provided, we should set prices commensurate with the value. In addition, we should set higher prices for better quality and value of services." It is necessary for the Japan Tourism Agency to widely disseminate this as a guideline for industrial policy.

(5) Requirements, development, etc of practical human resources

Sophisticated explanations of the history and culture of the local area by practitioners will lead to the improvement of Customer Satisfaction and are a source element for high added value. For this reason, it is necessary to present the minimum requirements for service professionals.

(6) Efforts to add value to the lodging industry, such as inns

DMOs need to work on both product and software aspects. In addition, in order to materialize and sustain it, it is necessary to set strategic pricing based on evaluation and market tests from the customer's perspective by high-value-added travel customers and experts in markets such as concierge services, rather than evaluation from the supplier's perspective. The Japan Tourism Agency should ensure that all employers are aware of the above in the guidelines.

4. Discussion and conclusions

The above findings are expected to provide to the stakeholders such as national/local governments, tourism businesses, associated industries, financial institutions, academics in Japan so that they could grasp the current situation and address the improvement of productivity in the lodging industry, which plays a central role in the local tourism industry. The findings could be also informative for other countries as a reference.

Those measures will contribute to sustainable growth of high-income industries, including local tourism-related industries, from the perspective of benefits to the local economy and employment. By linking these measures with other related tourism policies, such as management strategy for the entire local area, and digitalization, the foundation of local tourism industry will be strengthened and business innovation will be promoted to make the local tourism industry as a high-productivity and high-income industry. In the future, we have to study on the possible method to visualize the tourism industry to prevent the added value from flowing out of the lodging industry.

Keywords (5 Required)

productivity, added value, lodging industry, lodging operators, local tourism industry

Legitimacy Over Market-Orientation?
How Government Influence Shapes Destination Cooperation in Japan

Purpose of the study

This ongoing study examines cooperation in destination management among Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) and regional stakeholders in Japan. Since tourism destination development requires complex multi-stakeholder coordination to achieve collective regional benefits, understanding these dynamics is essential (Fyall et al., 2012). While extensive research has been conducted on destination cooperation, most studies have primarily adopted a Western perspective (see Cehan et al., 2021; Johnson et al., 2021; Pilving et al., 2022), where decision-making is more autonomous and market-driven (Line & Wang, 2017; Wang et al., 2013). However, destination management and governance in many parts of the world, particularly in Asian countries, are quite different as it is more government-led, with government policies orchestrating regional partnerships and legitimacy playing a crucial role (Zhuo et al., 2024). This leaves a research gap in understanding the role of government in the positioning of DMOs as publicly funded organizations, and the significance of legitimacy in affecting DMOs' operations. Taking Japanese DMOs as a case study, this research intends to examine the role of government in affecting and shaping various activities of DMOs, such as their motivation for collaboration with tourism businesses in the destination, determining factors contributing to their success of operation, and the challenges they are facing in serving the needs and interests of multiple stakeholders at the destination.

Theoretical framework

This exploratory study employs three guiding theories: stakeholder theory, institutional theory, and resource dependency theory. Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984) suggests that organizations perform better when they address stakeholder interests. While research has analyzed stakeholder relationships (i.e., cooperation vs. competition) (D'Angella & Go, 2009), impactful stakeholder typology (Perkins et al., 2022; Damian et al., 2022), and cooperation success factors (Tuohino & Konu, 2014; Zehrer & Hallmann, 2015), few studies (Wan et al., 2022) have examined how strong governmental influence plays a role in DMOs in Asian countries. Institutional Theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) defines legitimacy as a moral obligation to governmental requirements. Though applied to EU tourism policy (Estol et al., 2018), corporate social responsibility (De Grosbois, 2016), and hospitality (Lavandoski et al., 2016; Soares et al., 2021), DMO cooperation remains underexplored with this perspective. Resource Dependency Theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) posits that power lies with those controlling key resources, shaping cooperation (Fyall et al., 2012). However, a Slovenia study found governmentality outweighed resource dependency in determining stakeholder participation (Johnson et al., 2021), leaving room for Asian context exploration.

Methodology

This study employed semi-structured interviews. So far, a total of seven (7) interviews have been conducted with Japanese DMO managers across different operational levels: one regional DMO, three prefectural DMOs, and three city-level DMOs. All interviews were recorded and transcripts were used for data collection.

Findings and results

The study found that government influence and legitimacy are dominant forces shaping DMOs in Japan. While a DMO in a highly popular city reported that they seek private funding opportunities, particularly from the entertainment and event industries [C1], most Japanese DMOs operate under strict governmental strategic direction and funding. For example, all interviewed DMOs reported that their primary funding comes from public sources, including grants or commissioned funds provided by local prefectures, city governments, or the Japan Tourism Agency. Additionally, DMOs subcontract projects to business entities or other public organizations through public bidding processes, ensuring alignment with government priorities and regulatory requirements [R1, P1, P2, P3, C3]. Under the current government directive, data-driven destination marketing has become a key focus, with DMOs increasingly adopting Destination Management Platforms (DMPs) to centralize data and provide marketing insights to local tourism businesses [R1, P1, P3, C3]. These reflect a government-led model rather than a market-driven model typically witnessed in the West.

To strengthen their legitimacy as publicly funded organizations, Japanese DMOs want to ensure fair benefit distribution among local stakeholders, unlike Destination Management Companies (DMCs), which prioritize their own profit [C3]. Interestingly, Japanese DMOs extend their legitimacy beyond tourism, integrating their role with rural revitalization and sustainability efforts amongst aging and declining rural population, which can secure additional funding from ministries such as the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, and through Local Allocation Tax Grants [C2].

However, Japanese DMOs face significant challenges. Many DMOs reported government support primarily covers initial project implementation but not sustained operations [R1, P1, P3, C1, C3], or it does not cover marketing research before implementation [P2], suggesting "legitimacy" is not enough for securing long-term funding. Furthermore, the frequent rotation of counterpart government officers disrupts DMOs' long-term financial sustainability [R1, P2, C2] as DMOs must negotiate through the tourism department rather than directly with financial departments, and frequent counterpart changes make lobbying efforts more challenging [P1].

Contributions and limitations

Theoretically, this study shows that alignment with governmental agendas and the legitimacy of DMOs as agents of government bodies is the key driver of stakeholder cooperation, which advanced stakeholder theory in tourism contexts. Moreover, it demonstrates that legitimacy-seeking is not just an institutional necessity as reflected in institutional theory but a fundamental survival strategy for DMOs to secure their resources, which is more in line with resource dependency theory. Practically, this study provides key strategies for DMOs and policymakers for securing funding, managing stakeholder relationships, and navigating long-term sustainability. This study is limited by its focus on Japanese DMOs, restricting generalizability to other regions.

References are available upon request.

Keywords

destination management organization, cooperation, government influence, legitimacy, public funding

How do (potential) tourists perceive overtourism management initiatives? An exploratory study

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Purpose and relevance of the study

Overtourism is a term that has been increasingly featured in the literature, to address forms of excessive tourism with negative implications. According to the UNWTO (2018, p. 3) overtourism refers to "the impact of tourism on a destination, or parts thereof, that excessively influences perceived quality of life of citizens and/or quality of visitor experiences in a negative way". Among the many countries affected by overtourism (e.g. Italy, Spain, Greece, etc.) Japan experienced serious challenges due to the excessive influx of tourists, which posed strains on local communities and service providers. To address the issue, countries around the world have initiated activities aimed at managing and reducing the unsustainable consequences of excessive tourism. Among the many initiatives, the establishment of barricades to limit the view of Mt. Fuji as a way to control tourist flow in specific locations, attracted the attention of news worldwide. This sparked interest in this study, where we aimed at exploring tourists' perceptions towards overtourism-tending initiatives. Two samples where studied, each compromising of tourists who visited Japan in the past, and prospective tourists who are planning to visit Japan in the future. The results show different responses towards initiatives to manage overtourism, overall suggesting that the positives outcomes of those initiatives outweigh the negative perception of the key stakeholders (i.e., tourists and prospective tourists) towards the initiatives.

Literature

Further to affecting local communities, the broader context of tourist satisfaction and destination management suggest that overtourism can profoundly affect visitors' experiences. Papadopoulou et al. (2022) notes that when experiencing overcrowded settings resulting in waiting times, tourists may perceive lower service quality, even if the services themselves have not declined (Kwortnik & Thompson, 2009). Mashkov and Shoval (2024) agrees, explaining that the feeling of congestion diminishes tourists' enjoyment and can lead to a perception that they are not receiving the value they expected. Furthermore, Baker and Crompton (2000) argue that dissatisfaction often results in lower destination loyalty, which, as supported by Papadopoulou et al. (2022) can harm the long-term viability of tourist sites. Although the literature appears fairly interested in the effects of overtourism on tourists, less attention is dedicated to those initiatives aimed at managing overtourism, and directly affecting the tourist experience.

To that end, we posed the following question:

a) "How do (potential) tourists perceive overtourism management initiatives?"

Methodology employed in the study

To address the research question, an exploratory research design was employed, utilizing semi-structured, one-on-one, in-depth interviews as the primary data collection method. The study focused on two groups of participants: Italians who had previously visited Japan and Italians who had not yet visited but expressed a desire to do so. The aim was to explore their perceptions of Japan's government initiatives aimed at managing and reducing tourist influx.

A total of 17 interviews were conducted. Eight interviews involved Italians who had visited Japan within the past year, while nine were conducted with Italians who had not yet visited but expressed a strong interest in traveling there. During the interviews, participants in both groups were presented with evidence of specific measures implemented to address overtourism. For instance, they were shown examples such as the use of barricades to limit the view to Mt. Fuji as a way to control tourist flow in specific areas. The interviews examined their reflections on tourism, their perceptions of Japan's efforts to manage overtourism, and their evaluations of these measures. This approach provided insights into the views of both experienced visitors and prospective tourists regarding Japan's strategies for managing tourism.

Findings and original contribution to the field

The results of the study reveal differing reactions among the two groups of Italian participants regarding Japan's government initiatives to manage overtourism. Tourists who had already visited Japan were generally less affected by the restrictions. Their past experiences seemed to counterbalance the negative impact of the measures. In fact, many expressed support for limiting tourism, particularly in areas where overcrowding had negatively impacted their own travel experiences. They recognized the need for such interventions to preserve the quality of their visits and prevent the degradation of popular destinations. In contrast, Italians who had not yet visited Japan but hoped to travel there viewed the initiatives more negatively. While they indicated that the restrictions would not completely deter them from visiting Japan, they acknowledged that their perception of the country had been somewhat tarnished. The idea of facing limitations before even experiencing the destination led to a less favorable view of Japan's tourism policies. Interestingly, in both groups, participants who had experienced overtourism in their local communities were more understanding of the measures. They showed greater empathy towards the issues caused by overcrowding, which made them more open to accepting the restrictions. This suggests that firsthand exposure to overtourism may influence a more tolerant attitude towards similar measures abroad.

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Keywords

Overtourism, Tourist perceptions, Tourism management, Sustainable Tourism, Tourist experience

Investigating How Meeting Older Adults' Needs Influences Their Intentions to Join Senior Living Communities: A Mixed Methods Approach

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT (REQUIRED. NO MORE THAN 1000 WORDS)

In the past twenty years, the senior living industry in the United States has been steadily growing and evolving to meet older adults' varying needs. As older adults age, concern about their future living arrangements often becomes a priority (AARP, 2022). Based on an extensive literature review, there was a lack of comprehensive studies examining how older adults' perceptions of senior living communities' ability to meet their needs influence their intentions to join such communities. Earlier scholars delved into the push and pull factors that drive seniors' intentions to join senior living communities (e.g., Bekhet et al., 2009; Chaulagain et al., 2021); however, it is important to keep in mind that the senior living industry is needs-based, and how well they provide services, amenities, and features that meet the needs of their current target populations is the measure of their success. Hence, there is a need for scholars to investigate whether potential residents join senior living communities because these communities could meet their specific needs. Furthermore, when investigating factors that may influence older adults' intentions to join senior living communities, previous studies did not consider differences between the Silent Generation (born between 1925 and 1945) and the Baby Boomer Generation (born between 1946 and 1959). To fill these gaps, this study utilized Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to (1) investigate the influence of older adults' perceptions of senior living communities' ability to meet each of their needs (physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization) on their intentions to join senior living communities and (2) examine moderating effects of generational differences on the relationships between older adults' perceptions of senior living communities' ability to meet each of their needs and their intentions to join senior living communities.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory was introduced by Abraham Maslow in his article "A Theory of Human Motivation" (Maslow, 1943), which is one of the most acknowledged and widely applied theories of motivation based on human needs (Benson & Dundis, 2003; Dohlman et al., 2019; Tikkanen, 2007). In this theory, he suggests that people are driven by a series of needs that must be met in a hierarchical order, starting with the most basic physiological needs and culminating in the fulfillment of the more complex self-actualization needs. Generally, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs consists of five layers of needs building from the most fundamental to the most sophisticated: physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943; 1970; McLeod, 2007).

This study employed an exploratory sequential mixed-method approach to address the study gaps. In the qualitative phase, three focus group interviews (19 participants) were conducted to understand how residents' perceptions of senior living communities' ability to meet their needs influenced their intentions to join their communities. Based on the analysis of the focus group interviews, the five needs (physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization) from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory were appropriate independent variables for the study's conceptual framework. The themes that emerged from the focus group interviews and items from the literature review on services, amenities, and features senior living communities strived to provide were aligned with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and helped guide the development of the part of the survey instrument that focused on these five needs for the quantitative phase of the study. In the quantitative phase, using the Qualtrics panel, 366 online surveys were collected from older adults to test the study hypotheses using structural equation modeling analysis. Specifically, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to identify the underlying structures of the five needs outlined in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. After conducting the EFA, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used by following the two-step approach of Anderson and Gerbing (1998) to test all the hypotheses. Firstly, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was utilized to test the validity of the measurement scales. Secondly, the proposed hypotheses were tested by employing SEM. To investigate moderating effects, a multigroup analysis was conducted. Study results revealed that older adults'

perceptions of senior living communities' ability to meet their love and belonging and esteem needs positively influenced their intentions to join such communities; however, this was not the case for physiological [foodservice, housing], safety, and self-actualization needs. Generational differences only moderated the relationship between older adults' perceptions of senior living communities' ability to meet their love and belonging needs and their intentions to join such communities.

This study provides several significant theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, first, it contributes to the existing body of research by investigating older adults' decision-making processes when joining senior living communities from the perspective of their perceptions of these communities' ability to meet their needs. Second, this study has made a significant theoretical contribution to the literature by developing a needs-based measurement scale tailored for the senior living community. Third, this research is one of the first to contribute to the current knowledge within senior living and gerontology contexts by investigating how generational differences moderate the relationships between meeting older adults' needs and their intentions to join these communities. Practically, first, senior living community operators and marketing teams could benefit from striving to create and maintain vibrant social environments that encourage interaction and foster a sense of community among potential and current residents. Secondly, senior living communities could benefit from emphasizing their commitment to supporting the esteem needs of potential and current residents by respecting their privacy, autonomy, independence, dignity, and control over their lives. Third, in terms of generational differences in love and belonging needs, senior living communities could benefit from differentiating their marketing approach by including specific strategies targeting each of these two generations.

Keywords (5 Required)

1. Senior living communities

2. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

3. Generational differences

4. The Silent Generation

5. Baby Boomers

Unintended Prosocial Consequences of Robot Prevalence

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT (REQUIRED. NO MORE THAN 1000 WORDS)

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The main purpose of this research is to investigate how the rise of robot workforce influences consumers' prosocial behaviors. Past literature has documented that humans feel threatened by a rise of robot (e.g., Huang et al., 2021; Złotowski et al., 2017). It is nature of human to categorize social being into ingroup and outgroup, and often regard the outgroup as a threat (Tajfel, 1981). In the era of rise of robot, individuals categorize a whole humankind into the ingroup while robots into the outgroup (Jackson et al., 2020). Drawing on the intergroup threat theory (Stephan et al., 2015), we theorize that the rise of robot can pose a realistic threat. Past robotics literature argues that robots can elicit an innate fear of being replaced, loss of control, as well as death, resulting in individuals' feeling of uncanniness and human identity threat (MacDorman & Ishiguro, 2006; Ray et al., 2008). As increasingly intelligent and capable, robots impose a more realistic threat of taking humans' economic resources, such as jobs (Granulo et al., 2019). Although such a new generation of robots do not necessarily replace human employees but simply augment their abilities and efficiencies, people still fear that their employment and welfare are at risk (Yogeeswaran et al. 2017).

Past threat and defense literature argue that threats can trigger aversive psychological reactions (i.e., experiences of discrepancy) which in turn can activate various defensive coping mechanisms to alleviate feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, loss of control, meaning, or belonging (Jonas et al., 2014; Uenal et al., 2021). For example, facing a collective threat (e.g., terrorism, unemployment), people tend to re-affirm with their social group and share group identity with a relevant social category to restore sense of control (Fritsche et al., 2011). Likewise, Jackson et al. (2020) found that a rise of robot workforce can reduces prejudice toward outgroups by enhancing perception of a common human ingroup (i.e., panhumanism). That is, the threat posed by prevalence of robot prompt recategorization of ingroup and outgroup by highlighting the existence of a group (robots) that is not human: someone from a different race or nationality seem like part of one's ingroup (i.e., common ingroup identity model; Gaertner et al., 1993; Jackson et al., 2010). As a result, people may identify themselves with humanity as a whole and concern for global humanitarian issue, such as job loss (McFarland et al., 2012). Moreover, the terror management theory suggests that existential threats can produce prosocial behaviors (Hirschberger et al., 2008; Jonas et al., 2002). Taken together, we hypothesize that consumers are more prosocial given the rise of robot workforces due to the feeling of realistic threat.

STUDY 1. ARCHIVAL EVIDENCE ACROSS U.S. STATES

Method

Measures

Robot Intensity. Robot prevalence was measured using metro-level data from the International Federation of Robotics and Brookings. Metrics included robot workers per 1,000 human workers in 2015 and percent change in robot workers (2010–2015). These data were scaled to metro population and 2010 robot levels to avoid size confounding.

Prosociality. Measured as aggregate charitable contributions divided by total AGI, based on itemized tax returns. This metric reflects charitable giving as a percentage of AGI (Paarlberg et al., 2018). This represents only aggregated charitable contributions for those individuals/households who (a) file a tax return and (b) itemize deductions on their tax return.

Control Variable. Included metro-level median household income (Census Bureau), GDP per capita (BEA), total tax returns, and returns with charitable contributions (Deryugina & Marx, 2020).

Models. This study analyzed 1,522 metro-area-year observations (2010–2015) using fixed-effects models to control for year-specific factors, alongside random-effects and pooled OLS models for comparison. Fixed-effects models addressed heterogeneity across metro areas, which accounts for any year-specific factors that are invariant among metropolitan areas (Wooldridge, 2010).

Results

Regression analyses indicated that robot intensity positively affects donation (β = 0.0078, p < .01) while controlling for GDP per capita, median household income, the total number of tax returns, and the total number of returns with total charitable contributions. Models demonstrated strong goodness-of-fit at the 1% level.

STUDY 2. EXPERIMENTAL EVIDENCE

Method

Two hundred and three participants (M_{age} = 35.31, 48.3% female), recruited from Prolific, were randomly assigned to a robot condition or a human condition. Participants were asked to visualize themselves visiting a hotel where service robots or human agents provide frontline hotel services. Then, they were asked to describe how they would experience and feel during their stay in the hotel. After the writing task, participants rated realistic threat on three 7-point scale items (α = .84; Złotowski et al., 2017). Next, participants were asked to imagine that the hotel they visualized in the previous task asks for donation to a charity that helps people living poverty around the world. Participants indicated their donate amount on a slider scale ranging from $0 to $100.

Results

Supporting the prediction, participants in the robot condition was willing to donate more (M = 37.20, SD = 31.40) than those in the human condition (M = 26.40, *SD* = 26.82) (F(1, 201) = 6.94, p < .01). Moreover, participants in the robot condition perceived greater realistic threat (M = 4.89, SD = 1.50) than those in the human condition (M = 3.94, *SD* = 1.36) (F(1, 201) = 21.83, p < .01). A mediation analysis (bootstrap sample = 10,000; Model 4, Hayes, 2020) revealed that perceived realistic threat mediated the effect of hotel type on willingness to donate (a×b = 4.65, 95% CI = 1.61, 8.51).

DISCUSSION

Overall, this research enhances our understanding of the unintended societal impacts of the rise of service robots. Specifically, we demonstrate that consumers may become more prosocial as robots become more prevalent in the workforce. This study contributes to the underexplored area of the unintended consequences of robot adoption in the hospitality and tourism sectors. Moreover, our findings indicate that companies can expect increased consumer participation in various prosocial initiatives, such as charitable donations and pro-environmental actions.

Keywords (5 Required)

Service robot, Realistic Threat, Prosocial behavior, Donation, Consumer behavior

Acknowledgement

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Title: Boosters, Decliners, or Invariants: Preliminary results on the impact of travel on well-being

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT (REQUIRED. NO MORE THAN 1000 WORDS)

Tourism and well-being are a growing area of research interest. While existing tourism studies have long suggested that vacation is a venue for improving tourists' well-being, recent evidence offers an opposing view, indicating that vacations do not always have positive effects and may even increase stress and depression. Given that mental stress is common in Hong Kong, and Hong Kong residents perceive vacations as a temporary means to reduce stress and improve well-being, this study aims to answer two important research questions: Does vacation make tourists happier and improve their well-being? Do different travel characteristics and demographic variables result in varying levels of happiness and wellbeing improvement among tourists?

This study integrates concepts from positive psychology into tourism, specifically focusing on happiness and depression. According to the World Health Organization (2021), individuals who are satisfied with their current state typically feel happy, whereas those experiencing sadness, irritability, emptiness, or a loss of pleasure in activities are considered depressed. Most past tourism research has simply focused on one side of either happiness or depression at a single point in time rather than seeking to assess a change from state of depression through to state of happiness or vice versa. Therefore, a vast amount of tourists' well-being and emotions are still unexplored, and depression and happiness are not examined together in a single study, which constraints the understanding and robustness of positive psychology in relation to tourism. Inspired by this, the current study considers it worthwhile to integrate these two different but related concepts into a single study to assess whether vacations can improve tourists' well-being.

This study adapts a longitudinal study design which covers a time span of seven days before and after the vacation. Before the cycle of data collection starts, an invitation with an overview of the research and questions regarding the trip profile is sent to Hong Kong residents who have brought at least one outbound tourism product for the next six months via various online travel communities. With the prevalence of high stress levels, long working hours, and limited domestic resort options in Hong Kong, vacation has become a popular means of relaxation. Understanding whether vacations improve well-being is therefore highly valuable. Participants agreeing to join the study complete a pre-travel questionnaire assessing their emotions seven days before departure. The post-travel questionnaire is sent to participants seven days after the completion of vacation. Both questionnaires for measuring tourists' emotions adopts the Depression-Happiness Scale (DHS) (Joseph & Lewis, 1998). The DHS is made up of 25 items, 12 on positive emotions and 13 on negative emotions, measured on a 4-point scale (0 = "never" to 3 = "often"). The scale allows researchers to overcome the drawbacks of many of the previous well-being scales which were constrained by simultaneously evaluating both emotional states along a single continuum and mitigating ceiling and floor effects. Additional sections include trip profile details, tourist satisfaction (Sharma & Nayak, 2019), behavioral intentions (Vada et al., 2022), and demographic information.

The quantitative data were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Paired samples t-test is used to test whether there were any significant changes in tourists' well-being comparing before and after the vacation. To examine differences if different travel characteristics and demographic variables result in varying levels of happiness and wellbeing improvement among tourists, an independent sample t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) are conducted.

Among the 32 samples, the pre-travel happiness-depression scores ranged from 25 to 70, with a mean of 48.50 (SD = 9.54). Post-travel scores ranged from 33 to 68, with a higher mean of 51.47 (SD = 8.85). Both surveys revealed that Hong Kong tourists generally experience a higher frequency of positive thoughts, feelings, and bodily experiences. Paired sample t-tests showed a significant increase in happiness-depression mean values post-travel compared to pre-travel (Mean difference = -2.97, $t = -2.53$, $p < 0.01$). Based on the results of pair-tests, respondents were categorized into three groups: "Boosters" ($n = 19$), representing individuals whose well-being improved after vacation, "Decliners" ($n = 9$), representing those whose well-being decreased, and "Invariants" ($n = 4$) representing those with no change in well-being between pre- and post-vacation states. Due to the limited sample size, no significant differences were found among the three groups in relation to their demographic variables and travel characteristics (e.g., trip duration, destinations, companions, vacation types, and previous travel experience). Further research is recommended to explore these relationships.

This study provides several academic and managerial implications. Improving population mental health is a significant global priority. This research adds value to the tourism positive literature and understanding the current state of tourists' well-being before and after vacations. It also provides empirical support clarifying the relationship between tourism and tourists' psychological well-being and understand what travel and tourism offer. From a managerial perspective, the findings can guide mental health professionals and tourism practitioners in developing effective therapeutic interventions and travel recommendations. By collaborating, tourism practitioners and mental health experts can design travel packages that address specific psychological needs, such as stress relief, anxiety reduction, or emotional healing. Examples include nature retreats, wellness-focused itineraries, or cultural immersion programs that incorporate mindfulness practices, relaxation techniques, and therapeutic activities to enhance mental well-being. Additionally, the study underscores the potential of integrating tourism into mental health treatment plans, thereby promoting holistic approaches that incorporate leisure and travel as components of mental health care strategies. Pre-travel psychiatric support could involve assessments to identify risk factors and tailor travel plans to address tourists' concerns such as stress and anxiety. Post-travel psychiatric support could then evaluate the trip's impact on mental health and refine future treatment plans. These practical measures ensure that tourism is effectively utilized as a therapeutic tool to enhance mental well-being.

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Keywords (5 Required)

Well-being, Happiness, Depression, Positive psychology, Depression-happiness scale

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