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Workplace experiences and career advancement prospects for women in the hotel industry in India

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to provide an insight into the factors that affect workplace experiences and opportunities for career progression of female employees in the Indian hotel industry. It provides a much-needed perspective on the work-life of women in the Indian hotel industry. The study had two phases: a systematic literature review was conducted for the first phase and the second phase included conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews. The findings of this study reveal that working in the hotel industry remains an ultimate choice for women where they have the opportunities to connect and socialize, enjoy and learn amidst the various challenges and barriers faced. The issue of gender is irrelevant for the women who set their standards and want to achieve their goals. Women show resilience and work against all odds with self-motivation to reach these goals.

KEYWORDS

experience at work, career advancement, women employees, women leaders, hotels

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1. Introduction

According to Blayney and Blotnicky (2017), female representation on the boards of leading hotel organizations was around 20%, whilst representation was even lower on the boards of international hotel associations. Evidence suggests an under-representation of women in senior management positions in the majority of industries (Blayney & Blotnicky, 2017; Cook & Glass, 2014; Fan, 2011; Fischer, 2013; Repetti, 2020; Russen et al., 2021) is because of various issues like matrimony, parenthood, inequity and stereotyping (Kara et al., 2018). The job roles of women employees are known to be of lesser value as compared to male employees (Chen et al., 2018), with male and female employees having different experiences in roles with the same job descriptions (Soni, 2017). Female hospitality employees show a higher emotional quotient with a more proactive approach towards fulfilling hotel guests' expectations which improves guest satisfaction and retention (Kim & Agrusa, 2011).

There is a consistent entry of women into the hospitality industry in India and a moderate rise (Patwardhan et al., 2016). Nevertheless, hotels face challenges in retaining their female employees due to longer and odd working hours and work-life balance issues (Karatepe & Uludag, 2008; Mooney & Ryan, 2009). The retention strategies and advancement programs executed by hotels have been yielding unsatisfactory outcomes, leading to an outflow of talented women employees (Gröschl & Arcot, 2014), and consequently making it imperative to examine the work-experiences and career advancement prospects for female employees.

The extant literature highlights the career development of female hotel employees in Asian countries (Li & Wang Leung, 2001; Ng & Pine, 2003) and in the countries of the west (Brownell, 1994; Calinaud et al., 2021). In view of the progress made by the Indian hotel industry and its contribution towards the social and fiscal development of the nation (Hole, 2019), it is important to examine the career advancement prospects for women in Indian hotels. This research highlights some notable career life realities faced by women working in Indian five-star hotels. The objective of this research is to provide an insight into the factors that affect workplace experiences and opportunities for career progression of female employees in the Indian hotel industry.

2. Literature review

2.1. India's uniqueness in terms women's status

In 200 BC, Manu, an Indian writer wrote, "be a young girl, be a young woman, or even be an aged one, nothing must be done independently, even in her house" (Buhler, 1964, p. 195). Islam has also influenced Indian culture, causing the practice of purdah, or female seclusion, which leads to a low female employment rate (Jayachandran, 2020). Indian women managers have made substantial progress in a brief span of time (Budhwar et al., 2005), but India's deeply rooted traditional gender roles and cultural norms can influence work culture affecting women's career choices and work-life balance. Interestingly, India has progressive legislation to address gender discrimination and workplace harassment. *The sexual harassment of women at workplace (prevention, prohibition and redressal): Act, 2013*, provides a legal framework for addressing sexual harassment (Government of India. Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2015). However, implementation and cognizance can vary, and some gaps remain. The Indian government's work reservation policies for women, such as in local governance (Panchayati Raj), to promote their participation in decision-making roles are unique to India and can influence the landscape of women in leadership positions. India has various women-only initiatives, women's self-help groups, microfinance programs and entrepreneurship support programs, designed to empower women economically. These initiatives are not as prevalent in many other countries. India relatively has a more extended maternity leave (26 weeks) (Government of India. Ministry of Law and Justice [Legislative Department], 2017) as compared to some countries supporting women in maintaining equilibrium between employment and domestic responsibilities. India also has extensive cultural and regional diversity (Muni, 1996) which means that work culture for women can differ significantly between different parts of the country (Gulati, 1975).

2.2. Experiences at work

Women hotel employees have a myriad of work-related experiences. Casado-Díaz et al. (2022) found remuneration inequality among men and women in the hospitality sector where women worked for low-wage firms (Vargas-Jiménez et al., 2020) and were pushed to lesser-skilled jobs with fewer decision-making tasks. Wage inequality is clearly visible for women at the managerial level in hotels, despite their level of education and commitment towards the job (Sparrowe & Iverson, 1999). According to Tindell and Padavic (2022), low-wage women employees from service industries also face 'incivilities' from supervisors, customers, and co-workers respectively. The root cause of the wage inequality predominant in the hospitality sector is gender discrimination (Campos-Soria et al., 2015) and the disproportionate presence of women in inferior job roles (Campos-Soria et al., 2009).

Supportive supervisors towards women hospitality employees assist in improving their work experiences and loyalty towards the organisation (Jolly et al., 2022). The attitudes of hotel managers and busy working schedules deepen the stresses faced at the workplace (Mohamed, 2015) with women receiving less support from their supervisors than men may weaken their sense of belonging, eventually wearing away their work engagement (Ling Suan & Mohd Nasurdin, 2016). Handling stress at work by female employees requires managerial support (Tsaur & Tang, 2012) and close communication (Kim et al., 2009).

A common phenomenon experienced across all countries is the glass ceiling leading to burnout; burnout being exhaustion, cynicism and reduced professional efficacy (Min & Yoon, 2021). Female employees found it complicated to pinpoint the presence of the glass ceiling or the presence of pay differences, behind the facade of a good work culture and career progression (Mwashita et al., 2020). The barriers of the glass ceiling perceived by women differed based on their career phase (Mooney & Ryan, 2009).

Networking among hotel employees as a social norm favours men's promotions, barring numerous females (Ryan & Mooney, 2020). These networking groups, also known as the 'old boys' network' provide guidance and recommendation for career advancement (Bac & Inci, 2010; Ibarra et al., 2013; Patwardhan & Venkatachalam, 2012). Sexual harassment in the workplace poses another major challenge faced by women employees working in the hospitality sector (Hoel, 2002; Poulston, 2008; Weber et al., 2002), leading to high staff turnover and reduced job satisfaction (Chan et al., 2008) and ultimately causing extensive psychological distress and low self-worth (Cho, 2002). Sexually-harassed females bear direct financial losses and diminished professional opportunities (Theocharous & Philaretou, 2009). Incivility towards female employees also spreads negativity amongst other female workers resulting in feelings of resentment and dejection (Miner & Eischeid, 2012).

2.3. Effect of work conditions on women

The work environment of a hotel is a key motivational factor (Kaliappen & Hilman, 2014; Kara et al., 2012) with a lack of workplace flexibility negatively affecting the work-life balance, leading to a higher turnover ratio (Blomme et al., 2010). On the contrary, self-accomplishment is a key driver of motivation (Kara et al., 2012) and jobs that are as enriched as those of their male counterparts make the women feel empowered and motivated (Ng & Sorensen, 2008). Empowerment (Ruiz-Palomo et al., 2020) and autonomy (Allan, 2019) facilitate job enrichment and satisfaction and enable women to deal with workplace discrimination (Baum, 2013).

Women tend to gain work experience at a decelerated pace which is conventionally episodic because of life changing events like matrimony, pregnancy and child rearing (Blau & Kahn, 2006; Polachek, 2006). The early stages of maternity leave, company policies about leave length, remuneration and eligibility criteria impact the experiences of working women (Ma et al., 2021). Women hospitality employees were more susceptible to "work interfering with family" than to "family interfering with work", and their chances of resigning from work were greater when work interfered with family (Yang & Peng, 2018). Psychological violence and emotional abuse perpetrated by hotel managers (manager mobbing behaviour) is found to be inversely proportional to quality of life at work and general quality of life (Kara et al., 2012; Kara et al., 2018). Gen-Y employees are more satisfied at work when being appreciated (Muskat & Reitsamer, 2020) with women easily being satisfied at work due to their lower expectations (Clark, 1997; Huang & Gamble, 2015).

2.4. Career advancement prospects

Career advancement is associated with the clarity of growth prospects, empowerment, the ability to take greater responsibilities, and the number of promotions acquired (Calinaud et al., 2021; Gong & Chang, 2008). Millennial women desire fairness in career advancement with equal growth opportunities (Maxwell et al., 2010) and more avenues are being created by leading organizations for women in management roles (Madera, 2015). To reach a leadership role, female managers have to conquer gender-bias (Ma et al., 2021; Woodhams et al., 2015) and work harder than men (Dinakaran, 2016). Hotel organizations' learning and development opportunities have the most effect on the career advancement of women, giving them the confidence to seek promotions (Brites da Silva et al., 2021). Career rewards and career development are two expectations of which career rewards was found to affect advancement more (Liu et al., 2021). The presence of women leaders is reassuring for female employees in entry level positions who see that they have a fair chance of career advancement (Ali et al., 2022).

2.5. Women's representation

The presence of women in leadership roles is correlated to a larger number of women at entry level (Ali et al., 2022). Concerning the role congruity theory of prejudice regarding female leaders recommended by Eagly and Karau (2002), leadership roles are difficult for women because of the prejudice that women are less successful leaders, and the fact that their achievements and output are therefore assessed less advantageously (Koburtay & Syed, 2019, 2020). Hospitality businesses must aim at employing and retaining women leaders until gender parity is achieved, while managing criticism from male employees (Ali et al., 2022). On studying data from 2006 to 2018, Repetti (2020) found an increase in women's representation at senior levels within hospitality, even though it was still on the lower side, being only 13.22% from the sample considered.

The main obstacle to women's advancement to senior management was the struggle in managing employment with domestic responsibilities. Thus, legislation to provide childcare can help to diminish vertical segregation (Doherty & Manfredi, 2001; Doherty, 2004). In the Indian context, the reasons for less women in leadership roles were domestic duties, choosing not to take leadership responsibility, and the extended work hours (Dinakaran, 2016). Gupta (2015) also highlighted the under-representation of women at higher positions in the Indian hotel sector. The efficient management of human resources practices together with timely recognition and rewards for generating supportive work practices are vital for work engagement (Burke et al., 2009). Koburtay and Syed (2019) suggested that following gender equality programs and conducting leadership development would increase the numbers and efficiency of women leaders.

2.6. Role of leadership

Xiong et al. (2022) suggested that there is a need for leadership and management to have an androgynous approach in the hospitality industry. Leadership support and motivation towards employees to innovate and to bring about positive changes in the organization enhances their performance (Kusumah et al., 2021).

Women in management roles can develop a robust bond with their subordinates leading to lower turnover rates. This is extremely important for the hospitality sector due to the 'perishable' nature of the industry (Chen et al., 2014). Women hotel employees believe that female managers will create a favourable work environment with better training opportunities (Pinar et al., 2013).

2.7. Synthesis of the literature review

India's traditional gender roles still impact women's career choices, with legislation targeting discrimination and job reservation policies affecting women's experiences. The hotel industry is particularly challenging for women due to inequality in remuneration, gender discrimination and overrepresentation in lower-tier positions. Supportive supervisors improve work experiences, but stresses like the glass ceiling and male-dominated networking hinder career progression. The work environment affects motivation and job satisfaction, with Gen-Y employees more satisfied with appreciation. Career advancement for women in the hotel industry is influenced by growth prospects, empowerment, increased responsibilities, and promotions. To address this, effective human resource practices, recognition and leadership development programs are recommended. Inclusive leadership styles can reduce turnover rates, create a favourable work environment, and improve training opportunities. After analysing the literature, the need for conducting a qualitative study in the Indian context on the following research gaps was identified:

1. The experiences of women hotel employees at different stages (entry, mid-management, and senior management).
2. The effect of work conditions on women hotel employees.
3. The career advancement prospects for women hotel employees.
4. Leadership with female representation in hotels.
5. The ambition of women hotel employees to reach top leadership roles.
6. The role of leadership in career advancement and motivation (or demotivation) of women employees.
7. Challenges faced by women hotel employees and their coping mechanisms.

3. Methodology

The current study used a systematic review of literature as a first stage, to present the initial framework and to collect and collate the findings of all related research on workplace experiences and career advancement prospects for women in the hotel industry. For the second stage the objective was fully accomplished through interviewing women employees working in five-star hotels in India. Fink (2010, p. 3) defined the systematic review of literature as a "systematic, explicit and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating and synthesizing the existing body of completed and recorded work produced by researchers, scholars and practitioners". Following Fink's (2010) sequence, the validity of the review's output was assessed, and the articles were re-examined with a timeframe between reviews to assure their reliability (Okoli & Schabram, 2010). A careful documentation of the search procedure was maintained for consistency and reliability throughout the systematic literature review process.

This review has been illustrated in Figure 1. Initially, the goals were accurately devised followed by detailing the protocols and the context literature was examined in the next step. In this study, the authors searched articles and reviewed theoretical frameworks from key academic journals with a peer review process to engender a proficient knowledge base (Ramos-Rodríguez & Ruís-Navarro, 2004). Only works which were conducted on women in hotels and hospitality and included women employees' experiences and career advancement were examined. This ensured that the works which met the criteria were accessed by defining and incorporating review parameters. All the research articles related to women employees in hotels were extricated from Scopus and Web of Science databases. The broad terms used during the initial search of the chosen database, with no limitation to the year of publication in English, were 'hotel' OR 'hospitality' OR 'catering' OR 'restaurants' AND 'women' OR 'female' AND 'employees' AND limited to subject area 'business' OR 'social science' OR 'multidisciplinary'. This search identified 286 sources. A scrutiny of the articles was conducted in a series of stages to identify the most apt suited to answering the research questions of the study. The final step incorporated the screening of the literature for inclusion. Thus, the omission of irrelevant research works, and the selection of the relevant articles was done to elicit the study objectives resulted in 127 sources.

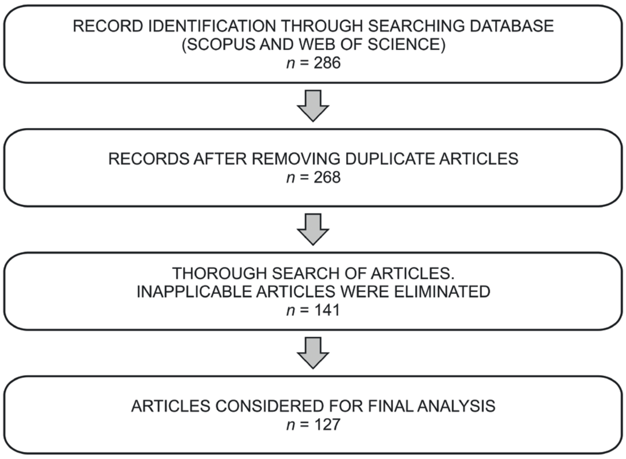

Figure 1. Selection process of research studies
Source: authors' own

3.1. Data collection

The next phase included conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews as these allow investigation of divergent experiences, views and perceptions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Five-star Indian hotels have worked towards identifying the different needs of female managers (Patwardhan et al., 2016), and there is a larger number of women working in five-star hotels in India at various levels as compared to lower hotels (Chaudhary & Gupta, 2011; Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India, 2017). Also, Kara et al. (2012) explains that employees of five-star hotels are better. Therefore, the researchers considered respondents from five-star hotels of India for investigation. Extant literature also shows that a qualitative approach is mainly considered in the western context, therefore it was important to learn about the experiences and expectations of women from an Indian perspective. India is a young nation with 66% of the population under thirty-five years old (Y20 India, 2023). With such a high proportion, it is important to study and analyse the career advancement prospects for women separately. Since this study is concerned with the thoughts, experiences and emotions of participants yielding subjective data, a qualitative approach was found to be more suitable. Research has found that "semi-structured interview is a widely accepted method due to its flexibility, fairly balanced structure as well as the quality of the data obtained" (Abaeian et al., 2014, p. 426). The interview questions were based on the literature available on experiences at work, career advancement prospects for women employees, impact of work conditions, women leadership representation, overcoming workplace challenges, and role of leadership in career advancement.

3.2. Participants

Sixty seven women hotel employees of five-star hotels of India were approached using a non-probability judgmental sampling method based on definite qualities (Zikmund, 2003). Malhotra and Birks (2007) stated that judgmental sampling requires the researchers to select elements from the population of interest. Due to their busy work schedules and other personal reasons (not disclosed) thirteen women employees working in five-star hotels of India participated, at which point the information gathered had touched saturation point. Conducting twelve interviews for analysing emergent themes in a qualitative study is sufficient (Guest et al., 2006). The interviews were conducted in English and lasted from 25 minutes to an hour conducted by the authors from January 2023 to March 2023. Initially, ten interviews were conducted with female hotel employees working in India and a preliminary analysis of the notes from the semi-structured interviews revealed that data saturation had been reached. However, the authors conducted three additional interviews. Francis et al. (2010) confirmed that a 10 + 3 criterion for conducting interviews is an effective method to identify new themes and achieve data saturation. The interviews were transcribed verbatim within a period of three days. The transcript of each interview was also validated by the participants. Ethical considerations were given paramount significance at all times with the participants being given a code to protect confidentiality and were informed that the responses obtained would be used for academic research only. Participants were given a consent form and were informed that they were free to withdraw from the assignment at any time. The interviews were recorded after obtaining permission from the participants. Table 1 represents a summary of the participant profiles.

Table 1. Participants' profile

Participant code	Designation	Experience (in years)
P 1	Cluster communication agent	1
P 2	Management trainee	2
P 3	Management executive	3
P 4	Duty manager	3
P 5	Assistant manager	9
P 6	Sous chef	10
P 7	Executive assistant	11
P 8	Housekeeping manager	13
P 9	Senior manager	15

Table 1 (cont.)

Participant code	Designation	Experience (in years)
P 10	Director – guest services	15
P 11	General manager	18
P 12	Sales executive	23
P 13	VP – learning and development	30

Source: authors.

4. Findings

4.1. Thematic analysis

The thematic analysis along with the generation of codes was based on the transcripts of interviews and analysed using Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) NVivo (Release 1.0). The researchers checked for equivalence and differences while forming codes (Creswell, 2007) and checked the coded data to verify the logical pattern (Egberg Thyme et al., 2013). Four main themes and twenty-three sub-themes emerged from the transcript analysis that broadly summarise the workplace experiences and career advancement prospects for women in the Indian hotel industry. Table 2 presents the details of the thematic analysis. Within the findings of the study, quotes from the participants are included as evidence (inductive analysis) and the findings are further supported by the extant literature (deductive analysis) (Gummesson, 2000). Further, 'word clouds' were generated by means of synonym-selection of the word frequency selection furnished in NVivo (Figures 2 and 3).

Figure 2. Work experiences of women hotel employees
Source: authors

Figure 3. Career advancement prospects of women hotel employees
Source: authors

Table 2. Themes, sub-themes and codes

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes
Workplace experiences	Work culture	Discrimination, more effort, prove oneself, late acceptance, late recognition, difficulty in acceptance, prove one's worth, lack of encouragement, no bias, no gender discrimination, fair, fun, wonderful
	Work challenges	Frustration, mental pressure, physical pressure, exertion, maintaining cordial relations, high attrition, untrained staff, low salary, high work pressure, position matters, coping with different bosses
	Work characteristics	Tough, long hours, odd hours, hard work, difficult, attrition, staff shortage, empathetic, no problem, 12–16 hours, timings, long shifts, shift timings
	Work perception	Difficult, hard work, routine work, challenges, increased work pressure, favourable conditions, growth, support
	Work-life balance	No personal life, lack of holidays, no work life balance, work life balance, balance, reduced social circle, quitting work, family support
	Semantic barriers	Language barriers, language issue

Human resource development and policies	Policies	Lack of promotions, unable to upskill, skewed gender ratio, company policies, glass ceiling effect, evolving, best work environment, team management, HR policies, withholding promotions due to maternity leave, minimum experience criteria
	Promotions career	Hard to get hold of the opportunities, stagnation, less opportunity, constantly prove oneself, rejection
	Empowerment opportunities	Achievement, self-awareness, knowledge, growth, development, opportunities, respect, motivated, confident, determination, encouragement, experience, good opportunities, career growth, positive environment, motivating, promotional opportunity, achievements, support, trust, guidance, encouragement, recognition, training
	Learning and development (L&D)	Internal programs, learning opportunities, support for L&D, exposure to varied responsibilities, professional and personal growth, career advancement opportunity, trainings, development plan
	Growth opportunities	Higher studies, fast track growth environment, more growth in less time, support for career growth, promotion opportunity, mentorship, varied responsibilities, interesting opportunities, well advanced in career
	Creative freedom	Show self-creativity, employee rotation, honing skill
	Expectations	Clean accommodation, call families/children at workplace, feeling of safety, mental health training, flexibility, empathy, being human, gender equity, more compassion, less judgment and more trust, impart training, equality, positive and empowering corporate culture, encourage women to be in leadership roles, equal ratio, more support
	Suggestions	Support for career advancement, career advancement programs, better HR policies, period leave, reasonable working hours, reasonable time off, lesser work hours, flexibility of location, night drop provision, complaint corner for females, equal gender ratio, more upskilling opportunities, career enhancement workshops, company offsite, work hours, shift timing adherence, crèche facility, employee concierge services, redesign job roles
Leadership and representation	Representation	Hard work to achieve positions, no women general managers, less women leaders, very few women in leadership roles, significant senior leadership, leaders only to department level, one-fourth of the management strength, women boss, top management comprising of women, women representatives, head of department positions were held by women, female leaders, encouraging to watch women grow, good scope for more leaders
	Mentor support	Encouraging, boost confidence, train, lack of mentorship, management support and motivation, ethical conduct, way to shine
	Prejudice	Less tolerance towards a female boss, prove oneself in comparison to male counterparts, disregard, gender bias / gender equality, gender-defined roles and lack of support, gender neutrality, no effort for women's cause, perceive women to be less dedicated/ underperformers
	Leadership role	Role of managers in growth, special programs for training female general managers, leaders pave the way, positive leadership, positive and encouraging leaders, individual developmental need
	Leadership support	Trust for promotion, only employees with exceptional skills are encouraged, stagnation in career, stagnation, lack of career advancement opportunities, positive and motivating environment, missed promotion, support from organization, lack of support, exposure to varied roles, handle cluster properties, effective leadership, supportive environment, strive for more, initiative to excel, support and secure, environment, better performance, good opportunity, supportive seniors, unconditional support, trust
Career advice for women	Good career choice	Best industry for women, chance to enjoy luxury, meet different people, learn different languages, fun to work, happening place, has both ups and downs, enjoyment, being passionate, wonderful place, true passion, worth the experience, ease of expression, great experience, better suited, enjoyment, entertainment
	Success mantra	Set priorities, time, patience, bold, confident, learn, take initiative, self-confidence, perseverance, achieve goals, not give up, handle multiple roles, accept challenges, initiatives for self-growth, development, updating of skills, open to learning, face challenges, be ambitious, persistent, goal focused, tap opportunities, gender is irrelevant
	Future of women	Gender neutral, young women leaders, major change, women excel in the industry, great future leaders, high-aspirations, different phases
	Recognition	Appreciation, valued, respect, treated with respect

Source: authors.

During the process of coding, a total of 273 codes were created and were grouped under four main themes identified as human resource development and policies, leadership and representation, workplace experiences and career advice for women. These findings are reflected in Table 3.

Table 3. Core themes based on experiences of women in the Indian hotel industry

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes
Human resource development and policies	Policies, career promotions, empowerment opportunities, learning and development, growth opportunities, creative freedom, expectations, suggestions	101
Leadership and representation	Representation, mentor support, prejudice, leadership role, leadership support	61
Workplace experiences	Work culture, work challenges, work characteristics, work perception, work-life balance, semantic barriers	60
Career advice for women	Good career choice, success mantra, future of women, recognition	51

Source: authors.

4.2. Sentiment analysis

A sentiment analysis was conducted to comprehend the sentiments of the participants. This assists in automatically analysing a large amount of text with classifications automatically generated by NVivo and helped in extracting opinions that ranged from very negative to very positive sentiments representing the feelings of participants. The 108 coded references generated by NVivo resulted in 10 statements that were given the coding of very negative, 22 statements the coding of moderately negative, 45 statements moderately positive, and 31 very positive. Examples of statements that reflect the sentiments of women employees in the Indian hotel industry are presented in Table 4. The results based on workplace experiences and career advancement prospects are also graphically represented in Figure 4.

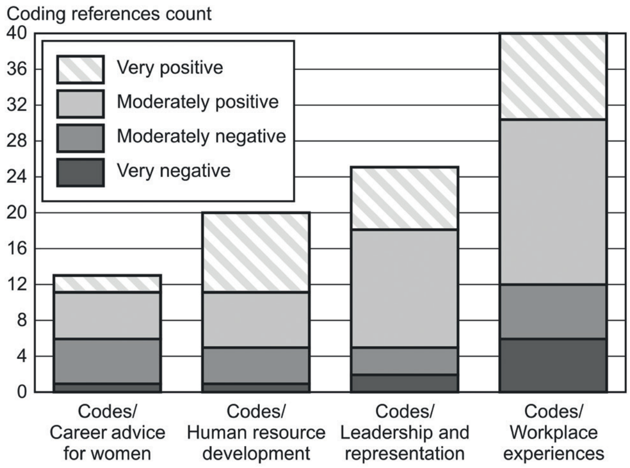

Figure 4. Sentiment analysis after automatic coding based on workplace experiences and career advancement prospects
Source: authors

Table 4. Statements exemplifying the sentiments of women in Indian hotels towards workplace experiences and career advancement prospects

Statements	Sentiments
In early career I felt discriminated as a woman as they do not assign you task which they do to the men; sometimes it used to get very frustrating	Very negative
As it is a very small percentage of women can give the kind of time that the industry demands, hence you can see the fallout in numbers at entry level	Very negative
It felt very difficult in getting ahead, as in, I was working for 12–16 hours every day, therefore, I couldn't have managed to upskill myself along with the job	Moderately negative
As a fresher, it was like I didn't know anything about operations so from taking check-in to briefing to handling complaints, they told me to handle it my way	Moderately negative
And if I mess up something they were always there to help me, but they told us to bring our own creative ideas to do everything	Moderately positive
Having an organization that focuses a great deal on ensuring gender equality is a blessing in disguise	Moderately positive
It is very encouraging to see women handling everything like a boss, and it's better than men	Very positive
Have been grateful enough to have worked with some wonderful female leaders who have taught me the basic ethics of working and the way to shine and had me confident enough to be trained in a way that reaching the top shall be the goal	Very positive
Initially it gets challenging with shifts and long hours but as you cope up with these challenges, you see respect for yourself	Very positive

Source: authors.

4.3. Word cloud of work experiences of women hotel employees

For an enhanced result visualization, a word cloud was generated (Figure 2) based on the 'frequency of words' option on NVivo. The standard words related to the workplace experiences of women hotel employees are indicated in the centre (working, level, hotel, employee) and these are surrounded by preferential words associated with positive work experiences (good, management, experience, encouraging, easy, learn, grow, assuring) as well as negative work experiences (prove, challenging, efforts, entry, hours, difficult, mid, entry, years).

4.4. Word cloud of career advancement prospects of women hotel employees

A separate word cloud was generated (Figure 3) to represent the career advancement prospects of women hotel employees based on the most frequently used words. The key words related to the concept are portrayed in the centre (development, career advancement) surrounded by the preferential key words (manager, helped, experience, support, work, prospects, opportunities, responsibilities, motivated, training, role, plan, department, fortunate, promote, excel, assigned).

5. Discussion

Amongst the work experiences that women employees had in different stages – entry level, middle management and senior management – women had to put in much harder work in comparison to men to prove their competence and women hotel employees found getting accepted tougher as compared to their male counterparts. The findings of the study agree with Ling Suan and Mohd Nasurdin (2016) who mentioned that female employees received less support from their supervisors as compared to male, which may weaken their enthusiasm and wear away their work engagement. Women show resilience and work against all odds with self-motivation to reach their goals. Kara et al. (2012) agreed that self-accomplishment is a key driver of motivation for female hotel employees. Regarding work experiences, P 5 and P 7 stated:

> It has been challenging, but wonderful always. In the beginning as an entry level staff, I was required to prove myself for being as good as a man in the kitchen. Afterwards, once I transitioned into management, the most important lesson I learnt was people management. Earning the respect of older male staff has been tough. That is where you learn how to command respect through hard work and consistency. [P 5]

> At the entry level, gender does not matter. It is the scope of work that matters. It is an individual's responsibility to learn and grow. [P 7]

Workplace experiences and conditions have a direct effect on employees. The participants expressed that long work hours, exertion, low salary, changing shift timings, lack of holidays, high work pressure, high attrition and difficulty in maintaining work-life balance were the major challenges faced. As women, they always have the added pressure of family responsibilities which makes working in the industry challenging for women. Ng and Sorensen (2008) informed that when women employees were given enriched roles like their male counterparts, they felt empowered. Regarding the effect of conditions at work on women, P 2 and P 8 stated:

> Working with this big property I gained more knowledge and experience with the policies provided. I felt I was in the right place to be guided. Further to the difficulties sometimes, it was hard to get hold of everything, and when I felt like I was getting lost I always had my team and my management to guide me back and push me towards my goal. [P 2]

> One faces challenges at different stages of life. It depends on us whether we step back or move forward and face them. Working in middle management with mostly male HODs always motivated me as I felt that I have earned the position, and I am no less. There were times when I was offered to move to departments which have general shifts as the higher management felt that as a woman it could be difficult to carry on further. This rather made me more determined. Initially it gets challenging with shifts and long hours but as you cope up with these challenges, you see respect for yourself. [P 8]

Career advancement prospects are a reason to come to work regularly in anticipation of growth. The findings highlighted that the female employees of 5-star hotels in India found it hard to get hold of the opportunities, felt stagnation, there were also lesser opportunities available to them, they had to constantly prove themselves, and faced rejection often. When organizations give training, show a clear growth path, and have examples to set, then the work environment becomes a place where the talented thrive. Kim and Agrusa (2011) explained that feedback, training and support from colleagues or supervisors helped in propelling the careers of female employees. But for women the path to success may not be as clear, straight, and smooth. Human resources development and policies must be robust and fair for women who must undergo maternity breaks, need childcare leave and require support from families as well. Similar conclusions were also given by Ma et al. (2021). The findings are also in accordance with Burke et al. (2009), emphasising that efficiently managed HR practices along with timely recognition and rewards generate the progressive work environment needed for better work engagement. The results also coincide with Blau and Kahn (2006) and Polachek (2006), who discussed the fluctuations in women's careers because of life-changing events like matrimony, pregnancy and child rearing. Regarding their career advancement prospects, P 6 and P 10 stated:

> My career advancement prospects are a bit cloudy as I recently had a child and I had to take many sick days during my difficult pregnancy. My batchmate got promoted but I was left out. Well, hoping for next year now. [P 6]

> My company sponsored me for some career advancement courses, which definitely helped me to perform better. [P 10]

Leadership having appropriate representation of women is a sign of inclusion and fair practices. The findings reveal that it is encouraging for women employees as they look up to female leadership as role models. The right representation of women leaders gives hope for women employees to continue in the organization. Mostly, women can lead their specific departments but not so many are at higher positions. Women too need to be more ambitious to reach top positions. Positive changes have occurred in the last decade in women's representation in leadership in hotels, which is in accordance with Repetti's (2020) finding of an increase in women's representation at senior levels (13.22%) within hospitality. Regarding women's representation in leadership, P 3 and P 11 stated:

> A lot of leadership positions like head of department positions were held by women. But very less could reach to general manager position or further. It is encouraging to watch women grow, in any industry. And, nothing is impossible. If I would have stayed, I might have had a chance to make it to the top. [P 3]

> Over the last decade, hotel companies have changed a lot. There is women representation in the senior leadership roles. But it's not enough. Women barely constitute about one-fourth of the management, and I believe there is scope to increase those numbers. In my view, it also works both ways. There are very few women who aspire to grow in the hotel business. Most are either content or opt for other industries. That is also the reason for the lesser representation of women in hotel operations. [P 11]

Motivation by the leadership gives women the confidence to excel, and to consider themselves worthy of growth in their careers. From this study it was observed that women hotel employees expect their leaders to be unbiased, assisting in showing the way for career advancement and conduct training for leadership roles. This is consistent with previous studies of Hillman et al. (2007) and Kusumah et al. (2021). The need for an unbiased and non-gendered leadership approach has also been discussed by Xiong et al. (2022). Regarding the role of leadership in career advancement, P 5 and P 1 stated:

> There is most certainly a big role of the leadership in my growth. Leaders pave the way, but the people do the walking. It has been positive most of the time. However, motivation comes from within. These days, post the pandemic, everyone has lost the motivation to work because the jobs require more time and pay lesser. In these tough times, self-motivation is very necessary. [P 5]

> There is good women representation. Seeing them, I worked hard to get this position, has been very encouraging. I always believe that we can achieve a lot more. [P 1]

Women hotel employees face numerous challenges and find ways to overcome them. The participants' challenges at work were feelings of frustration, mental pressure, physical pressure and exertion. They also found maintaining cordial relations was demanding, along with high attrition, untrained staff and low salaries, as also raised by Kara et al. (2012). There were also position-related issues which came with responsibilities, along with coping with different bosses over a period. A lack of workplace flexibility, also pointed out by Blomme et al. (2010), is also perceived as a challenge. Regarding the challenges faced in the workplace, P 8 and P 11 stated:

> Being in operations there are long working hours and shifts. It can be challenging especially when you must manage family too. The challenge I faced was stagnation and less opportunities in operations. I had to constantly prove that having a family won't affect my dedication towards my job. [P 8]

> The biggest challenge has been to balance work and home. A highly supportive family has ensured my continuation in the industry. [P 11]

Women hotel employees find that the hotel industry is a good career choice for women where they can be amidst a luxurious environment, meet new people, get to learn different languages and enjoy the overall environment. They find workplaces have both negative and positive aspects. Overall, they enjoy their work because of ease of expression. The career advice that women hotel employees have for other aspiring women workers is to set priorities; manage time; have patience; be bold and confident; be open to learning and taking the initiative; have perseverance; set and achieve goals and do not give up; be smart enough to handle multiple roles; accept and face challenges; take initiatives for self-growth, development and the updating of skills; be ambitious, persistent and goal focused; and tap opportunities. The career advice from women hotel employees is unique not found in the hospitality research discourse. Regarding the career advice from women hotel employees, P 12 and P 13 stated:

> Today is the right time to join the industry as young women leaders are much wanted. Organizations like Marriott and IHG have mandated growth of women leaders and thus a major change can be seen. [P 12]
>
> I can say now many women are now excelling, growing in their careers and proving to be a great future leader which I always appreciate and encourage. [P 13]

Women hotel employees expect changes and amendments to be incorporated in hotel policies and strategies. Some suggestions included support for career advancement, inclusion of career advancement programs, making better HR policies, having reasonable working hours, providing flexibility of location, night shift pickup and drop provision, having a complaint corner for females, maintaining an equal gender ratio, providing more upskilling opportunities and career enhancement workshops, conducting team building activities, having a crèche facility at work, providing employee concierge services, and redesigning job roles to make the environment favourable as a workplace for women employees. Some of these concerns were also raised by Kim and Agrusa (2011), Mohamed (2015), Liu et al. (2019), and Liu et al. (2021). P 9 suggested:

> More flexible timings and a little empathy towards those handling their work and families goes a long way. Be human and treat others the same way. Having a cooperative and understanding HR makes or breaks an organization.
>
> We need to create a positive and empowering corporate culture and create more upskilling opportunities for women. [P 9]

6. Implications

This study has contributed to the literature on workplace experiences and career advancement prospects for women in the hotel industry. The study was conducted on female employees of five-star hotels in India. Various studies have been conducted on such employees but a qualitative study with a detailed review of literature and a first-hand comprehensive account does not exist.

This work contributes theoretically by revealing that female hotel employees receive less support from supervisors than males, which can weaken their motivation and work engagement as also informed by Ling Suan and Mohd Nasurdin (2016). However, women show resilience and self-motivation, and when given enriched roles, they feel empowered. Empowerment, as also suggested by Ruiz-Palomo et al. (2020) and autonomy which is in line with Allan (2019), facilitate job enrichment and satisfaction, and Gen-Y employees are more satisfied when appreciated, which has been pointed out by Muskat and Reitsamer (2020). Career advancement was found to be linked to growth prospects, empowerment and promotions which is in accordance with Calinaud et al. (2021) and Gong and Chang (2008). Hotel organizations' learning and development opportunities positively impact female employees' career advancement which is also in line with Brites da Silva et al. (2021). The study also reveals that supportive family (Kara et al., 2012; Kara et al., 2018; Yang & Peng, 2018) and the presence of women leaders contribute to overall female representation (Ali et al., 2022; Hillman et al., 2007; Kusumah et al., 2021).

Past research has delved into hypothesis testing and quantitatively establishing the connections between career expectations and career advancement, work family support and motivation, but for the most part each aspect has been researched separately. This study is more holistic in nature as it has considered all areas that impact women's experiences at work and career advancement prospects.

The unbiased approach has led to more realistic feedback by women, which was mostly moderately positive. The findings of the study will help the hotel industry in being truly inclusive and supportive. Knowing what women expect from their careers and what effect workplace experiences have on them will direct the industry to change its policies to fit the requirements of the workforce. Equality, diversity, androgynous leadership and flexible work conditions are not just fads but a reality which needs to be implemented.

The findings of the current study reveal that working in this industry remains an ultimate choice for Indian women where they could connect and socialize, enjoy and learn amidst the various challenges and barriers faced. This study has brought forward career advice for women from women, which is a unique finding not found in the hospitality research discourse, hence providing a strong contribution. Women hotel employees offer career advice to aspiring women, emphasizing priority setting, time management, patience, boldness, confidence, perseverance, goal-setting and embracing challenges. They advise taking self-growth initiatives, being ambitious, persistent and tapping opportunities. Another unique finding of this study is that almost all big hotel companies in India have targets to ensure there are enough women in the workforce.

The issue of gender is irrelevant for the women who are self-driven and motivated. There is a need for robust and fair HR practices for women especially for those who have to undergo maternity leave. Hotels should prioritize women in leadership roles for career progression. In India, flexible schedules and understanding of organizational culture, including issues like gender bias and work-life balance, are needed. Implementing flexible scheduling and training solutions can help women employees contribute effectively. Hotel leaders must initiate more understanding of the organizational culture within hotels, including issues such as gender bias, sexual harassment and work-life balance.

Organizations should explore leadership and mentorship programs for women in the hotel industry, like the Women's Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (WICCI) Tourism and Hospitality Council in India, to promote career progression.

7. Future research and limitations

The current study had a qualitative research design considering women employees at all levels and years of experience. Future research may be carried out for different levels and experience brackets, giving detailed insights into changes in the perception of women employees at different stages of their careers. Research on women as a monolithic group is common, but it is crucial to look at how gender interacts with race, age and sexual orientation to affect career advancement and experiences at work. Additional long-term, longitudinal investigations could be carried out to provide insights into how career trajectories change over time for women in the hotel industry.

The participants were from five-star hotels in India. Other categories and other hospitality sectors could also be considered for future research. One major challenge faced during this research was an unwillingness of women hotel employees to participate in the interview process. Generalisability was not an issue for the authors as they were concerned in studying a specific situation. But this points towards resolving a generalisation issue by conducting a quantitative study to know whether the findings could be applied elsewhere.

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Hospitality and anti-tourist attitudes through the host-guest relationship in the *Westworld* science fiction series

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ABSTRACT

Westworld is a science fiction series that proposes a theme park of the future where 'guests' can live a Wild West experience without restrictions or reprisals, thanks to real-looking android 'hosts' who grant all their wishes. Due to the topic covered, this science fiction series allows its use as a common thread for an article that considers the concept of hospitality, the host-guest relationship and its consequence for the management of tourist destinations. This is achieved through an exegesis of *Westworld* and an analysis of academic bibliography. First, different concepts of hospitality and what they imply for the host-guest relationship are identified. Subsequently, how different theoretical developments on the resident-tourist relationship are proposed entailing different interpretations and reactions to the same objective reality. In conclusion, it should be noted that when tourism is perceived as subordinating the host to the wishes of the guest (as in *Westworld*), the appearance of anti-tourism attitudes among residents is only a matter of time, generating conflicts. Furthermore, the importance of dominant interpretive theories in determining the reaction of the local population to events that occur should be highlighted.

KEYWORDS

hospitality, hostility, neocolonialism, *Westworld*, host, guest

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1. Introduction

During the 1970s, dystopias were frequent in the cinema, posing in an extreme way the various fears that had appeared with the rapid technological and social development of the previous decades, and that have not disappeared today. In more recent times, given the need to find new ideas for film and television, the plots of series and films from that time have been recovered. One of these is the series *Westworld* (2016–2022), a dystopian science fiction series based on the film *Westworld* (1973) and its sequel *Futureworld* (1976) (Internet Movie Database [IMDb], n.d.a, n.d.b, n.d.c).

The film *Westworld*, directed by Michael Crichton and released in 1973, proposed a near future where there is a theme park for adults, called Delos, with three thematic environments that refer to periods mythologized by cinema (Friedman, 2007): the American Wild West (Westworld); Europe in the Middle Ages (Medievalworld) and imperial Rome (Romanworld) (IMDb, n.d.b). The three environments are populated by human-looking androids who act as stereotypical characters from the era represented. In these environments, guests are encouraged to do whatever they want, including attacking or killing the host androids. During one of the visits the hosts begin to respond violently to the guests, until murders of guests at the hands of the androids begin. 'The Gunslinger', an android played by Yul Brynner, stands out in his pursuit of the protagonists (Friedman, 2007).

A sequel titled *Futureworld* was released shortly after, directed by Richard T. Heffron, in 1976. Delos Park reopens, but without Westworld, and now there are four environments, Spaworld, Medievalworld, Romanworld and Futureworld, while also mentioning an Eastworld in development (IMDb, n.d.a). In this case, the story has changed and focuses on a plot to replace world leaders with cybernetic clones (Hardy, 1995).

Finally, *Westworld* is a dystopian science fiction series created by Jonathan Nolan and Lisa Joy and broadcast on HBO (today HBO Max) between 2016 and 2022. The first season was based on the film *Westworld* and, to a lesser extent, *Futureworld*, but only one of the three worlds of the original film appears. In the other three seasons it took a different direction from the central idea of the 1973 film and expands into a real world of the future where a showdown for the domination of humanity takes place (IMDb, n.d.c).

The context of the first season of *Westworld* is a futuristic theme park, belonging to the Delos Inc. corporation, where visitors, called 'guests' can live a mythologized experience of the Wild West in the late 19th century (Lovell & Hitchmough, 2020). Visitors can do anything they want (fight, killing, rape, etc.) without fear of reprisals, especially from the 'hosts'. These are androids with an appearance so real that it is difficult to distinguish them from humans and who are programmed to interact with the 'guests' and access all their desires, whatever they may be (Gurevitch, 2022; Netolicky, 2017). The narration of the series goes into more detail than the film and exposes various stories in parallel occurring in the park at different moments in time, increasing in confusion and intrigue during the evolution of the first season. But in both cases, the original film and the current series, there is a growing awareness of the 'host' androids that results in a violent revolt against the 'guest' visitors and park employees (Lacko, 2017).

As indicated before, the series *Westworld* recovers a dystopia created in the seventies. This dystopia captures the limits to which a host-guest relationship can reach in the world of leisure and tourism. This concern is not new, nor has it lost relevance over the years, as shown by the appearance of conflicts between residents and tourists in some destinations, under the media label of 'tourismphobia' (Screti, 2022; Seraphin et al., 2019; Velasco González & Carrillo Barroso, 2021), a concept related to overtourism (Veríssimo et al., 2020; Vetitnev et al., 2021). Therefore, the host-guest relationship deserves deeper reflection on its theoretical fundamentals and the implications of various interpretations of hospitality. The aim of this article is to consider the concept of hospitality, its different approaches and types, and its consequences for the management of tourist destinations through reflection on the fictional *Westworld*. Equality or not between the parties involved in the tourism sector is the subject of discussion and the central point of this article. The methodology consists of an exegesis (Krauth, 2011) of the dystopian science fiction series *Westworld*, taken as the guiding thread, along with a literature review on the concept of hospitality. The concept of hospitality and how it is perceived is of great importance as it is the foundation on which all tourist activity is based. The main conclusion is that the theoretical interpretation drawn of the concept of hospitality is key to facing the challenges of tourism.

2. The concept of hospitality

In prehistory, with the appearance of the first sedentary settlements, the issue of travel outside of a community arose. It was a problem for travelers who arrived in unknown settlements and for the communities into which these travelers arrived. There was always doubt about the intentions of the other which could be friendly or unfriendly. In this context, two complementary and opposite concepts emerged: hospitality (friendly contacts) and hostility (non-friendly contacts).

Hospitality is an agreement between the residents of a community, the hosts, and the travelers who come to that community, the guests. In the context of hospitality, hosts are in their dwelling (home, region, country, etc.) while guests have moved outside theirs. The concept of 'dwelling' implies morals and customs (Tomillo Noguero, 2013) and, therefore, hospitality implies that two sides, hosts and guests, meet in the formers' dwelling, an environment dominated by their customs and morals. For their part, the guests seek security (not suffering violence), food and shelter (conditioned on local customs, availability and the historical era).

In essence, and from its most remote origins, hospitality implies a customary contract between host and guest that is formalized through rituals performed when the guest arrives at the host's dwelling and that binds both parties until the agreed end of the guest's stay. Examples of these rituals are the offering of bread and salt in Eastern European and Middle Eastern countries (Gall & Hobby, 2009; Hayward, 2020), or the welcome Lei 'necklace' (composed of flowers) in various parts of Polynesia (McDonald, 1995).

The concept of hospitality as a contract between host and guest, to manage the relationship between them, shows nuances in different cultures around the world. According to some authors (Derrida, 2001; Kant, 2003; Tomillo Noguero, 2013) there are various types of hospitality: contractual (Kant, 2003) or conditional (Derrida, 2001); universal (Kant, 2003); pure or unconditional (Derrida, 2001); and hyperbolic (Derrida, 2001).

'Contractual hospitality' (Kant, 2003) or 'conditional hospitality' (Derrida, 2001) implies an invitation from the host addressed to the guest, since it entails a desire to limit the welcome, maintaining the host's control and power over the dwelling. It is a very formal hospitality, represented by rituals, rules and conventions that represent the contractual relationship and the acceptance of implicit conditions.

Contractual or conditional hospitality is the most common in many different cultures, and leisure and tourism activities would be included within this concept. Tourism is a type of hospitality in which there is a formal contract between the parties and economic compensation from the guest to the host. In addition, there are precisely defined host services and rules to be met by the guest.

'Universal hospitality' (Kant, 2003) or 'pure/unconditional hospitality' (Derrida, 2001) implies a right to visit by the traveler or guest and an assumption of risks by the host. It is a hospitality, incompatible with the sovereignty, control or power over a host's dwelling, based on religious ideas of love and borders on utopia. It is an absolute and unrestricted hospitality that seeks 'compensation' not immediate and not coming from the current guest, but in the form of equal hospitality when the host is also a guest in other's dwelling. In this case it is a behavior that is offered to everyone and expected of everyone as future compensation.

Universal, pure, unconditional or absolute hospitality is less common than contractual or conditional hospitality, with few contexts in which this type can clearly be found. These tend to be in poor societies with a very dispersed population where there are no commercial accommodation alternatives and the hospitality of any dwelling found along the way is essential or even a life-or-death necessity. The vital importance of hospitality in these societies is what connects this type with religious concepts and a lack of compensation. One region famous for it is Polynesia (Leach, 2003) where it was vital for inter-island travel. Other places with a similar type are Bali, an island located in Indonesia (Mustafa et al., 2020), and Ibiza, a Spanish island located in the Western Mediterranean (Ramón Cardona & Serra Cantallops, 2013, 2014). Regions with universal hospitality have achieved great popularity as tourist destinations for conveying an image of a friendly and helpful population that serves visitors in exchange for, apparently, nothing.

In the tourism sector, tourists' vacations are clearly framed within the concept of contractual hospitality, since there are formal contracts subject to commercial law and monetary compensation for host services. A problem is that this type does not generate the highly positive emotional experience of unconditional hospitality which would be a recreation of the myth of the noble savage in the lost paradise (Serra Cantallops & Ramón Cardona, 2015). It must be contractual hospitality to guarantee the financial success of the sector and its economic sustainability, and thus it is not possible to create tourism based on universal hospitality. But it is possible to simulate it through pricing policies for packages and gifts. The guest pays for some services, the main ones, but the rest are offered to the tourist for free or in exchange for nothing. The costs of free, or apparently free, products are incorporated into the price of the main products, without breaking contractual hospitality. But some of the services are perceived as unconditional hospitality (without compensation) by the guest, who partially recovers the emotional effect of pure or unconditional hospitality.

Finally, 'hyperbolic hospitality' (Derrida, 2001) implies a xenophilia that translates into an excess or pathological obsession with the other and everything it represents. Normally, this hyperbolic hospitality implies the exaltation of the other, considering their culture as superior, but above all it implies a low opinion of one's own society and culture. In many cases, xenophilia is a form of criticism of local reality itself, considering any other society as better or superior, and inhabited by individuals with higher cultural, ethical and moral standards. But sometimes there is a level underlying this type of xenophilia, where it is interpreted as benevolence or supportive action towards others while praising one's own culture. This double level in the discourse about 'others' was possible to detect in the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and his references to the myth of the noble savage (Rousseau, 2018). In any case, hyperbolic hospitality is the result of a biased view of one's own and the hosts'/guests' societies.

The concept of hospitality, perhaps only with the exception of hyperbolic hospitality, posits a relationship between host and guest on equal terms. Each party has obligations and requirements that must be met to avoid moving from a situation of hospitality to a situation of hostility. This implies that:

1. The guest receives protection, a set of services and kind treatment from the host and, in return, respects the host's customs and rules, without breaking, contradicting or criticizing them. In addition, the guest may have to provide compensation in contractual hospitality, usually as gifts for the host or monetary payment in commercialized hospitality, such as tourism, leisure and other similar services.
2. The host is respected in his dwelling by the guest, and not as a threat to the host. In return, the host protects the guest, while the guest remains in the dwelling, and provides a set of services during the stay, such as shelter, food, advice, leisure and entertainment (if stipulated), among others. This set of services is expected to be of a quality in line with the host's capabilities. In relation to protection, every accepted guest is protected equally or greater than the hosts.

Therefore, hospitality is a customary contract between individuals or between groups of people in an equal situation. In tourism, hospitality is a commercial contract between a company and a tourist, both parties with freedom to contract in a more formalized and regulated way. In the tourism sector, the existence of a situation of equality between the parties (companies, individuals, society and administrations) and is the subject of discussion and the central point of this article. Equality between the parties within the tourism sector has similarities with that in international politics between sovereign states. Formally all independent and sovereign states are equal, but the reality of geopolitics indicates that the largest, richest and most militarily powerful states exercise power over smaller ones. The same would happen with large companies and administrations involved in the tourism sector, since they are formally equal, but size does matter in day-to-day reality.

3. From *Westworld* to anti-tourism attitudes

The basic concept of hospitality posits equality between the parties. In this case, the host and the guest would be on the same level in all aspects, avoiding controversies about unequal relationships. But when there is an economic consideration, this equality can deteriorate when there is economic dependence through contractual hospitality relationships. Therefore, equality between parties as an anthropological concept loses force when analyzing the economic perspective. In this case, theories emerge that explain the relationships within contractual hospitality, and between hosts and regions 'sending' guests.

For example, the economic dependence of service providers is considered to generate a servant-lord relationship, instead of a host-guest relationship. Recalling the mansions of Victorian England, workers in the sector would be the servants of an elite of rich and powerful people (the lords), the current equivalent being large companies and, especially, clients or tourists. By being economically dependent, worker-servants must tolerate the whims and abuses of the client-lords, generating a clearly unequal and dependent relationship. This servant-lord mentality is present in many arguments for and against tourism:

1. In situations where tourism is defended, despite the many drawbacks, it is argued that 'without tourism, what would we live on?' demonstrating the high degree of economic dependence and the impossibility of choosing between this sector and alternative ones. Indicating a dominance of companies and tourist 'senders' over the workers and residents of the tourist destination.
2. In anti-tourism positions, this vision of tourism as a servant-lord relationship underlies the contempt for jobs (illustrated with expressions such as 'a country of waiters'), activities, training and research in the tourism and hospitality sector. In other cases, they are explicit in their expressions and speak of the subordination of tourist areas to the desires and whims of the 'sending' markets and their tourists.

This interpretation of tourist activity takes its very real problems (including high dependence on a very volatile economic sector, overcrowding of tourist areas or regions, the low added value of many jobs, high consumption of some resources) and links them to the essence of tourism, formed under a vision that is nothing more than a variant of the theory of domination (Bourdieu, 1994, 1998), which in turn is a translation of the theory of exploitation in the sociocultural field (Marx, 1887/1974a, 1910/1974b, 1909/1974c). The theory of domination has been adopted by various social groups since the mid-20th century as an ideological basis that allows the domination of one part of society by another (normally a minority) based on unjust reasons, demands for compensation or a reversal of this situation; usually partly real and partly imaginary. Worthy of a more general reflection would be an analysis of why these theories have had such social success. It may possibly bring relief to many people who believe that they have not had the success in life they deserved, but it is also possible that it will serve as an excuse for the political purposes of some opinion leaders.

If we move from an individual or sectoral level to a regional or national level, a new very prolific theoretical field appears, with clear references to the theory of domination and also to the theory of exploitation. In this case it is postcolonialism (Fanon, 1961; Memmi, 1957). Postcolonialism proposes that the colonial relations of domination still remain in the discursive sphere and the social analysis of the former colonies. Therefore, although the empires have disappeared, the former metropolises continue to influence the former colonies through economic, social and cultural relations. It should be noted that various former colonies of the United Kingdom and France remain linked to the former metropolises, not only by cultural or commercial ties, but also by treaties made during the independence processes and which maintain subordination to the former metropolis in various aspects such as defence, the economy and international relations. Clear examples are the Commonwealth of Nations, with respect to the United Kingdom, and the user nations of the West African CFA franc and the Central African CFA franc, with respect to France.

In this theoretical context, terms such as 'orientalism' have appeared to refer to a vision of the rest of the world as self-proclaimed by Western countries (Saïd, 1978), or 'subaltern' (Spivak, 1988), to refer to colonized peoples excluded from the exercise of power. Postcolonialism has carried a lot of weight in ethnographic studies of the developing world, where there are still very asymmetrical relationships, but they are studies that suffer from an essentialist approach and a static vision of native cultures (Boissevain, 1996). It is difficult to analyze these issues without falling into the bias already denounced, since criticism of ethnocentrism could be seen as a new ethnocentrism of moral superiority expressed through a criticism of classic ethnocentrism, aggravating the error with the attempt to correct it.

In this theoretical framework, tourist activity would be a part of neocolonialism (Ardant, 1965; Prashad, 2007; Sartre, 2001; Stanard, 2018), where the 'sending' regions are the dominant centrality and the 'receiving' regions are the peripheries of pleasure (Boissevain, 1996; Navarro-Jurado et al., 2015) dominated by the centrality and, therefore, subjects of postcolonialism. In this context, the image of tourist destinations would be an unreal mythologization and strongly impregnated with orientalism (Saïd, 1978), since tourism promotion would show what tourists expect based on their prejudices and pre-established beliefs, and not the reality of the tourist destinations. On the other hand, the resident population and tourism workers would be in a situation of subalternity (Spivak, 1988), excluded from the benefits and decision-making power monopolized by large tourism companies and some local powers. Although the existence of these elements in the reality of tourist destinations cannot be totally denied, their presence varies enormously between regions and countries. While in some cases the former colonialism continues, although formally there is no longer administrative dependence, in other cases it is difficult to talk about neocolonialism and apply analyses of postcolonialism, especially in the tourist regions of the Western world closest to the centrality (Boissevain, 1996; Cooper, 1976), that is, in the first and second periphery of pleasure (Navarro-Jurado et al., 2015). In social sciences, totalizations are wrong and generalizations are risky. In this case, postcolonialism and neocolonialism provide a reasonably good analysis of some regions, but it is difficult to generalize it as a theoretical model for all tourist destinations.

Both theoretical visions of tourism, both the servant-lord relationship (tourism as servility) and the postcolonial vision (tourism as neocolonialism of the peripheries), generate an interpretation of tourism as domination. In this interpretation, local societies are 'subaltern' to a domain monopolized by tourism multinationals and tourist 'sending' societies, with *Westworld* being the most extreme embodiment. In *Westworld*, the use of androids allows this vision of host society domination to be taken to its ultimate and most violent consequences, with the androids' awareness being an 'awakening' to a postcolonial vision of their subalternity, and the violent revolt being the materialization of anti-tourist attitudes in the most extreme way: killing tourists and park employees.

This interpretation of tourism as host society domination has a lot of weight in the academic (mainly in the analysis of tourism from the social sciences), media (providing a vision of the world and forming public opinion) and 'associationist' (especially lobbies critical of tourism development) fields. This vision or interpretation significantly permeates public discourse in many tourist destinations and considers the negative impacts of tourism as something intrinsic with domination as its essence. Consequently, opposition to tourism impacts inevitably implies anti-tourism attitudes among residents (Cooper, 1976; Jacobsen, 2000; Kim & Kang, 2020; Screti, 2022; Seraphin et al., 2019), as these negative impacts are inseparable from the existence of tourism. But many are the result of poor tourism management or an excess of tourists (Cheung & Li, 2019; Dodds & Butler, 2019; Kim & Kang, 2020; Mihalic, 2020; Milano et al., 2019; Phi, 2020; Veríssimo et al., 2020; Vetitnev et al., 2021). Faced with the problem of overtourism, regional administrations usually choose, as a solution, to limit the growth of supply or even demand, but this usually leads to price increases and harm to tourists and residents. Although in recent times references to strengthening a region's resilience (Cheung & Li, 2019) or the adoption of policies aimed at 'degrowth' (Milano et al., 2019) are common.

Public opinion normally adopts the language that reaches it, lobbies adapt their language to their goals and the media transmit these messages, but there are doubts about the academic world and its lack of greater criticism. This lack in some academic fields is difficult to attribute to a single cause: it may be due to the difficulty of departing from existing models and theories, something that affects all of them; it may be for argumentative convenience, by supporting its analyses on pre-existing, simple and clear theories; it may be acting as lobbyists for ideological or political intentions; it could be a combination of all these; or it could be for other reasons that need to be investigated. In any case, we are facing a 'discursive recurrence' that feeds its particular theoretical 'autism' (Boissevain, 1996), increasingly distant from the objective reality of tourist activity which is gradually permeating public opinion, generating anti-tourism positions characterized by actions and opinions hostile or contrary to tourism (Cooper, 1976; Jacobsen, 2000; Kim & Kang, 2020). It could also be based on real problems decontextualized and reinterpreted to fit the theoretical framework adopted, normally looking for a confirmation (Nickerson, 1998) of one's own prejudices about the sector. The real and tangible elements behind the emergence of anti-tourism attitudes are (Cooper, 1976):

1. An excess of tourists (Milano et al., 2019), being especially severe when very large and very rapid growth occurs, not giving time for the tourist offer or local society to adapt to the new reality. Poor planning or chaotic development of the tourist destination amplifies the negative effects on the local population.
2. That the exogenous development of tourism implies that decision-making occurs outside the region and the main benefits generated have repercussions outside as well. In this case, tourism will be seen as something imposed from outside and with few benefits for residents. On the contrary, endogenous development implies an initiative that arises from local society and maximizes local involvement in management, passing on the benefits locally and improving the socioeconomic situation of the local population.
3. That the culture and social structure of the region also influence the local reaction towards tourism. In more egalitarian societies that are open to outside influences, the perception of tourism is more positive. In closed societies or those with inequalities it is more negative since the benefits are not distributed among the whole society and higher classes despise the sector as they consider it servility towards tourists.

These elements are challenges that the management of the tourist destination must face to reduce the negative effects on residents. But it is also important to check the 'story' that marks the visions and actions taken by managers, workers and residents, and for this it is necessary to recover the academic debate, beyond the unconditional acceptance of current theories, as a starting point for a change of vision. It is not the enough to see tourism as a host-guest relationship between equals and as a servant-lord relationship between the unequal. In the first case, the problems come from a bad agreement between the parties or non-compliance with it, not from tourist activity per se, and it is possible to correct these problems without abandoning tourism. In the second, the subalternity of the neocolonial situation in the peripheries of pleasure, prevents local society from being able to face the problems without abandoning tourism. Obviously, the result is not the same: whether to face these problems or whether to consider it essential to end tourism.

4. Conclusions

Both in *Westworld* and in real cases of anti-tourist attitudes, there is a hostile reaction from the host society against the tourist-guests. While in *Westworld* this violent reaction occurs when the park's androids become aware of their situation of the extreme domination of guests' wishes. In real cases an anti-tourist reaction exists (sometimes violent, but never to the level of *Westworld*) by a vision or interpretation of tourism as a form of domination. The 'story' of a society dominated by tourism (businesses and tourists), focused on an interpretation of tourism as a servant-lord or subaltern relationship generated by tourist neocolonialism, takes real elements that generate social concern, but is based on theories that propose tourism as a tool of subjugation for local society, with the resident-tourist relationship being essentially unequal in favor of the tourist. This interpretation of reality, and the implications it has for society and tourism management, is very different from the vision provided by the original concept of hospitality as a host-guest relationship between equals. Although the day-to-day reality of the tourism sector is quite far from the original application of hospitality in tribal or interpersonal contexts, the great distance between the anthropological concept and the theories that dominate the 'story' about tourist activity is striking. The causes of this distancing should be reason for reflection, especially in the academic world.

Theories propose explanations of reality and provide different interpretations of the same reality. Therefore, the prevailing theories determine the interpretations of events, the conclusions reached and, therefore, the opinions and actions of people. A theoretical vision of tourism as domination can generate anti-tourism attitudes and total opposition. A theory that sees tourism as a relationship between equals will cause tourism problems to be seen as errors in tourism management or failures in the host-guest agreements that gave rise to tourism. In the first case, the solution is to eliminate tourist activity, since it is an irreformable relationship and, in the second case the solution is to change tourism management. Therefore, the development and dissemination of theories is not an innocuous action and, when clearly improvable theories are strongly defended, the reasons for this must be raised.

The main conclusion is that theories determine the interpretation of reality and actions in response to that reality. Therefore, theories are not only a consequence of reality, but also a cause of reality. In tourism, it is essential to recover the essence of hospitality in its interpretation as a social reality, and the first step to achieve this is to promote the original concept and its implications in the academic world and, subsequently, in all public opinion. In this way, the problems that could generate anti-tourism attitudes will be considered as imbalances in management and not as something intrinsic and inevitable. It must be remembered that hospitality is a duty for both the host and the guest. The success, over the millennia, of the concept of hospitality is because it implies a relationship of reciprocity that entails the recognition of the guest as a subject of rights and, in return, the acceptance of the host's norms and customs (Tomillo Noguero, 2013). When tourism is perceived as subordination of the host to the wishes of the guest, as in *Westworld*, it is only a matter of time before rejection appears in the form of anti-tourist attitudes and violent reactions. For the future good of tourism, it is necessary to recover concepts and debates, in addition to proposing new ideas, theories and concepts (always subject to criticism) in the academic world and transferring them to reality. Future articles should reflect on the reasons that lead to the discursive dominance of some theories to the detriment of others.

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Implementation of the ecohumanist concept in the Grand Maerakaca tourism space, Semarang, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to explain the implementation of ecotourism and the humanist (eco-humanist) perspective in the tourism space of Grand Maerakaca. This research has used qualitative methods to explore issues related to these concepts as implemented in Grand Maerakaca. Observations and interviews with tourists from various demographic segments were conducted to get information related to their ability to access ecotourism spaces. The results show that not all tourist providers in Grand Maerakaca implement the eco-humanist concept such as shown by the absence of local community participation and the empowerment of vulnerable groups. Besides, some tourist paths are inaccessible and dangerous for older tourists and children. Some of these are reasons why Grand Maerakaca is not attractive to tourists. The findings were analyzed using descriptive analysis techniques to obtain a perspective related to eco-humanist implementation in Grand Maerakaca. The output of this research is to suggest forms of this implementation in tourist spaces in Grand Maerakaca that can accommodate all tourists and can increase tourist visits.

KEYWORDS

eco-humanist tourism, design implementation, tourist space, tourist destination

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1. Introduction

The development of tourism in recent decades has been heavily influenced by the development of society as a whole. The rise of industrial society turned tourism into a mass leisure activity, while globalization and post-modernisation have created an increasingly fragmented, individualized and diverse field of tourism supply and demand (Richards, 2011). They have an impact on the motives and trends that are favoured by the demand side and these are implemented in the product offers of tourism companies (Pellešová, 2020). It is important to understand current trends in the tourism industry (Delener, 2010) because the new forms of tourism are as relevant as unpredictable. Where they exist, they do so for specific sites or tours, and their overall significance in the tourism industry is still difficult to measure. Our work contributes to some tourism forecasts and new trends where tourism governance is a vital component of the global tourism system (Patiño et al., 2016). The new trends in tourism have not only had a positive impact (such as the development of society and technology), but also negatively (including the economic crisis, global warming, climate change, natural disasters and environmental change) (Pavlović, 2021). It is a challenge for tourism stakeholders to respond to these changes in a proactive way, with the aim of achieving and maintaining a competitive advantage for their organizations (Patiño et al., 2016).

Many factors must be considered for the tourism industry to be competitive such as management of tourist areas, tourist attractions and tourist satisfaction and convenience. Many tourist destinations are successful, but not a few fail and eventually close due to tourist inconvenience and dissatisfaction (Sari et al., 2022a). Some reasons are related to entertainment, accommodation, service and quality, price and value, cleanliness, destination image, information accessibility or lack of disabled friendly infrastructure (Aliman et al., 2016; Armario, 2008; Corte et al., 2015; Durie & Kebede, 2017; Irawan, 2017; Nastabiq & Soesanto, 2021). The result is that tourists feel that the benefits or perceived value related to the enjoyment of the experience have not been achieved (Durie & Kebede, 2017; Marinao, 2018). There is also a lot of effort by tourist managers to brand their destinations using certain themes: cultural, heritage, dark, religious, medical and many more; to provide travel products that are unique and different from others (Đurašević, 2014; Richard et al., 2017; Robinson et al., 2011; Shalbafian et al., 2020). However, because they are not balanced with the careful planning of tourist space, a tourist destination cannot look after those who travel to it.

One tourist destination that is of concern to researchers and an example of such issues is Grand Maerakaca in Semarang, Indonesia. Located on an area of 23.84 hectares, it is an educational tourism park in which there are 35 miniature traditional buildings from Central Java. This destination was established in 1988 and became a favourite with the public in general. However, the popularity of educational tourism did not last long and in the years leading up to the 2010s it began to lose its visitors. It was recorded that in 2014 Grand Maerakaca had only 38,571 visitors per year, although in 2016 this had increased to 131,172, but was still unable to compete with other similar tourist destinations near Semarang (Bisnis.com, 2017; Vaksin, 2019). In 2017, Grand Maerakaca re-branded by adding several tourist attractions as an effort to increase tourist interest and visits, including mangrove tourism, water tricycles, mini trains, 4D theatres and selfie parks (Mistriani & Pratamaningtyas, 2022), and was able to increase visitor numbers to 444,415 in 2018, although following years saw a decline back to 63,000 (Prasaja et al., 2023).

The efforts that have been made by Grand Maerakaca are not fully optimal, and this is due to the lack of tourism concept planning or the implementation of a mature tourist space design concept. The amount of research that has been done at Grand Maerakaca is mostly about tourism management, the economic value of tourism sites and the quality of tourism services (Alviani et al., 2018; Mistriani & Pratamaningtyas, 2022; Prasaja et al., 2023; Ratnasari & Alriani, 2019). There has been no research that explains the quality of tourist areas seen from the implementation of the design of tourism architectural concepts. From the many concepts, researchers introduce the perspective of eco-humanism to be able to assess the implementation of tourist space design from aspects of ecology and humanist architecture. The eco-humanist tourism perspective provides an understanding that a tourist destination is successful when the fulfilment of human needs is met without harming the environment, society, culture or the economy of the tourist destination (Sari et al., 2022b). As the location of Grand Maerakaca is in the northern coastal area of Java, with the availability of natural tourist attractions such as mangroves, it will be assessed using an eco-humanist approach in order to find out which tourist space design aspects inconvenience tourists and ultimately make them reluctant to visit again. Therefore, this study was conducted to explain the implementation of tourist space design in Grand Maerakaca seen from an eco-humanist perspective.

2. Literature review

2.1. Tourist needs

To understand how to create a good tourist space according to the needs and preferences of tourists, it is important for managers to know the characteristics of those who come to tourist destinations that have experienced a decrease in visits. By determining the satisfaction of specific desires, preferences and needs, managers can reveal the social, economic and psychological motives characteristic of tourists (Kaleychev, 2022). Each person indeed has different personal characteristics (Amanda et al., 2018). It is important to analyse these individual differences to identify the appropriate and most profitable market segments for these destinations (Sari et al., 2022a). Every generation has its own characteristics. Millennial tourists tend to be very selective in considering whether a tourist destination is worth visiting (Jiuhardi et al., 2023). They are self-referencing rather than referring to guidance given by more mature travellers (Damanik et al., 2023). They also influence other tourists with the photos they upload on social media (Park & Santos, 2017; Sari et al., 2021; Sari et al., 2022a), and they can find information about other tourists' experiences through online media free of charge (Robinson & Schänzel, 2019). This shows that tourist preferences can be used to highlight the advantages possessed by these destinations so that tourists have the desire to make another visit and recommend it to others (Amanda et al., 2018).

It is different for senior tourists who are not familiar with digital access and are not easily influenced by solicitations and testimonials from promoted tourist attractions. Moreover, health is often a barrier (Amaral et al., 2020). Senior tourists do not have as much travel ability as younger. Thus, tourist attractions selected are safe and do not 'test adrenaline', unlike attractions selected by millennial tourists which are exploratory and challenging. However, this does not reduce senior tourists' motivation to plan their trips personally (Amaral et al., 2020), because not all tourists are physically healthy and there are those with disabilities who desire recreation too (Sari et al., 2022a). Thus, in addition to senior and millennial tourist segments, there is also that of the disabled that need attention because at present tourist supply is still incomplete and varies widely (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2015). Therefore, the characteristics of tourists with disabilities also need to be studied in order to understand their preferences and needs when traveling to a destination. It is recorded in article 85 of the law on disabilities (*Undang-undang [UU]*, 2016) that central and local governments must ensure that those with disabilities have access to cultural and tourism services. Thus, all individuals, both with special needs or without, are entitled to the same tourism services.

The needs of tourists with special needs cannot be equated with general tourists. But it should be underlined that this is not about creating separate services for the disabled in the tourism destination but having a design that is integrated and more inclusive (Sari et al., 2022a). Tourism managers must be able to create a universal tourist space for all visitors. In Indonesia itself, there are already regulations regarding technical guidelines for facilities and accessibility in buildings and surrounding environment (*Peraturan Menteri Pekerjaan Umum dan Perumahan Rakyat*, 2006), which outline the minimum standard in a building, including the amount of space, pedestrian paths, parking areas, doors, ramps, stairs, toilets etc. With the existence of these tourism supporting facilities, at the right standard, a tourist destination will be enjoyed by all tourists, both those with special needs and those without. Thus, tourist satisfaction will be achieved because it meets the quality of service and the expectations of the customer. Vice versa, if customer expectations are not met and the quality of service is below the standard, the customer will be disappointed and may leave the service provider and maybe pass on these problems to others (Aliman et al., 2016; Corte et al., 2015; Durie & Kebede, 2017; Irawan, 2017; Marinao, 2018; Utama et al., 2020).

2.2. Eco-humanist perspectives

The eco-humanist concept is a combination of two different ones, namely ecology and humanism. These two are defined as a conceptual framework in which equal attention is paid to human and ecological well-being (Cohen, 2019; Peters & Verderber, 2017). Eco-humanism is a new paradigm that connects people, the environment and sustainability (Sari et al., 2022b). It is a human perspective for appreciating nature in every way to maintain tourist destination sustainability for generations to come. This paradigm is not only a general ideological doctrine but also a field of constructive innovation. It is used to discuss a tourist destination in terms of architecture, and to see tourist spaces as formed by humans in a nature-based tourist destination (Cohen, 2019). This needs to be considered to see if humans are wise in making decisions about the development of destinations. More clearly, this concept explains the relationship between tourist products that prioritize nature as their attraction and do not cause negative impacts, with design products that place human elements as part of universal design. Meanwhile, ecotourism and humanist architecture are two things that cannot be separated because they have an essential role in designing tourism architecture. The principle of both concepts then results in environmentally friendly tourism development designed to humanize people, hence all market segments can enjoy the design of the destination.

'Eco' in eco-humanist is not only widely translated as natural environment (ecology), but devoted to the environment in tourist areas (ecotourism). Ecology as the main element of ecotourism is a branch of biology that studies the interactions between living things and also with the surrounding environment (Anggara, 2018). Ecotourism is defined as nature-oriented and environmentally friendly tourism (Grenier et al., 1993). Ecotourism is similar to the sustainable tourism development concept that provides for the present needs both of tourists and the regions visited, and at the same time protects and ensures equal opportunity for the future (Feio & Guedes, 2013). The relationship between support for ecotourism development and perceptions of its positive impact by the local community is essential to improve the economic benefits of local livelihoods by empowering them so that they can gain tourism income and contribute to sustainability (Angessa et al., 2022). Therefore, ecotourism plays a crucial role in many rural areas dominated by nature rather than human activity and it has a huge potential as a concept to develop tourist activities due to its nature-oriented characteristics.

In accommodating ecotourism activities, it needs to be balanced with humanist concepts that are in accordance with applicable standards and principles, so that the spaces created can facilitate all kinds of tourists, including the disabled. Humanism is the principle of unconditional equality regarding the worth and dignity of all people regardless of background, society, culture and religion (Ellis, 2011; Sari & Karmilah, 2017). Architecture with a humanist approach brings a positive impact by improving the experiences of its users (Lyon, 2017). In addition, by giving aesthetic and cultural value it will provide intangible social and community benefits that extend the value beyond the environment itself (Scerri et al., 2018) and give meaningful experiences to tourists. Architecture plays a significant role in tourism sectors, in providing infrastructure to enable tourists to reach the desired destination and, once there, accommodation to host them, while also offering venues for leisure activities (Specht, 2014). Architecture also plays a role in being able to realize the theme or tourism concept into a spatial tourism design that is in accordance with standards and does not undermine its principles. It has an impact on the economy and is significant for the local population. Therefore, humanist concepts can also play a crucial role in tourist activities (Zlopaša & Solarević, 2019).

There are five principles supporting the concept of ecotourism (Cobbinah, 2015), environment conservation, cultural preservation, community participation, economic benefit and the empowerment of vulnerable groups. And there are seven principles in the humanist concept adapted from the concept of universal design (Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, n.d.): equality use, flexible use, simple and intuitive use, perceptible information, tolerance for error, low physical effort, and size and space for approach and use. Figure 1 above explains the principle of universal design applied to ecotourism, thereby ensuring a tourist destination that is intended for all (both human beings and natural creatures) by paying attention to environmental aspects as well as the properly facilitating the needs of tourists. This will have an impact on the satisfaction and loyalty of tourists to come and visit the tourist destination again (Sari et al., 2021). Under the concept of eco-humanist tourism architecture, a positive impact on tourist destinations needs to be obtained without harming nature, society or culture. The long term goal is the sustainability of the destination making a good impression with a mature and consistent concept.

To achieve sustainable tourism, a tourist destination needs to pay attention to the basic principles of sustainable development, namely meeting current needs and providing for the those of future generations (Brundtland, 1987). Sustainable tourism development is tourism that takes full account of current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, responding to the needs of visitors, the (tourism) industry, the environment and the host community (UNWTO, 2005). Sustainable tourism development consists of three pillars, namely environmental, economic and social, which are then synergized with the principles of eco-humanist architecture and expressed into four tourism components. By balancing all aspects, there will be a very healthy reciprocity between humans and the environment because their needs, both tourists and tourism organizers, are met and the environment is not damaged due to the development of tourism destinations. Other impacts will certainly follow, such as increased community welfare and a well-maintained destination environment. Designing tourist destinations based on eco-humanist architecture will also help the community to expand tourist market segments, not only millennial tourists but all social groups can enjoy destinations. In this way, the sustainability of these tourism activities can continue and the goals of sustainability can be met, as long as the destinations keep the four components of tourism in good condition and maintained.

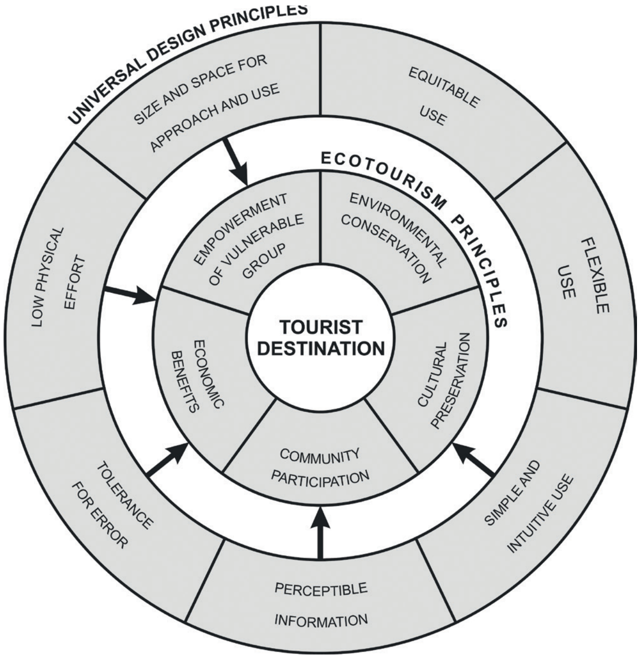

Figure 1. Universal design principles applied to ecotourism
Source: Sari et al. (2022b)

3. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative method to explore and explain phenomena related to the concept design implemented in tourist destinations in dialogue with the results of observations of an eco-humanist architectural perspective. Grand Maerakaca was selected as a case

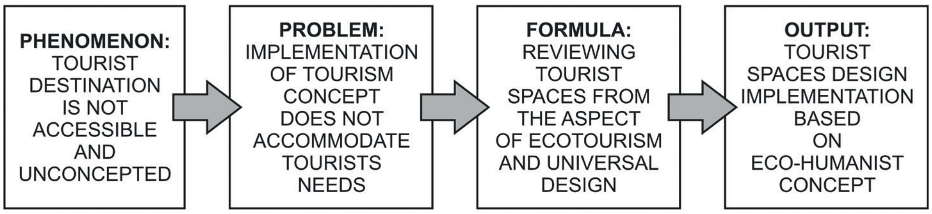

Figure 2. Research process
Source: authors

study because it is the one and only educational-park themed tourist destination in Semarang. As mentioned in the introduction, this destination has made various efforts to increase tourist arrivals to what they were during its heyday in the 1980s. However, these efforts have not been fully optimal because researchers can see that there are aspects missed by developers, such as humanist aspects or a universal design that should have become an obligation in a tourist destination. Likewise, the ecotourism aspect has not had a fully significant impact because there are several details that also need to be considered. These aspects, if considered optimally, would be able to influence the interest and motivation of tourists to come because their recreational needs have been accommodated. Thus, tourist visits in Grand Maerakaca would increase.

The researchers bring the variables of ecotourism (Cobbinah, 2015) and universal design principles (Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, n.d.) to field observations and interviews in the destination. Firstly, we observe the physical condition of the area based on the ecotourism principle to find out the tourist spaces used. Secondly, we identify the design concept implemented in each of these spaces. Thirdly, we interview some informants using purposive sampling, including tourists from various demographic segments ranging from parents and adults to teenagers. The number of informants is around 40–50 depending on whether the required information has been obtained or not. Some of the open-ended questions that will be asked are about convenience and the complaints of tourists in accessing tourist spaces to know whether they can accommodate tourist needs or not. The result of observation and interview will be classified in the findings section and analyzed regarding the implementation of eco-humanist tourism. Documentation of daily activities and environmental conditions is also used as supporting data to examine the findings. In addition to getting primary data directly in the field, we also look for secondary data that can be obtained from books, journals and relevant agencies. Data was also obtained from a literature review related to geographical conditions.

The findings are then analysed using descriptive analysis techniques, namely explaining the true conditions of tourism space design implementation that currently occur with some dialogue between relevant references. We discuss the findings with other related tourist destinations and from other perspectives to see what can be improved. The output is a form of effective implementation of tourist space design based on aspects of eco-humanist architecture. Discussions related to sustainability will also be an output of this research because the purpose of creating destinations is to synergize economic, social and environmental aspects. If any of these three aspects are not met, there will be no sustainability. In the end, the destination will never be in demand by tourists and end up by closing permanently. Thus, the results will be a solution that can be realized by Grand Maerakaca so that sustainability can be established for future generations. Figure 2 is the research flow.

4. Findings

4.1. Tourist spaces in Grand Maerakaca

Grand Maerakaca is an educationally-themed tourist destination in Indonesia, in Semarang, Central Java. This destination was adapted from an earlier educationally-themed destination in Jakarta, named Taman Mini Indonesia Indah, which was built in around 1970 and successfully provided interest for tourists at that time. As with Taman Mini Indonesia Indah, Grand Maerakaca provides several tourist attractions in the form of education on types of Javanese traditional houses along with their characteristics and uniqueness. There are 35 buildings representing the 35 regencies or cities in Central Java Province. Visitors can also see the results of the industry and handicrafts produced by each region, so they can learn about the diversity of local culture and creativity from all regions in Central Java Province. Landmarks from each region are also displayed in miniature such as the iconic satay stall representing Blora Regency and a replica of the Great Mosque of Demak representing Demak Regency (see Figure 3). When associated with the concept of ecotourism, Grand Maerakaca has implemented cultural preservation in the form of regional traditional houses along with their art and uniqueness. But such

Figure 3. Cultural tourism space in the form of miniature traditional houses and art
Source: S.R. Sari, 2023

tourist attractions are not in demand by tourists because they are considered ancient and only to be seen as in a museum. There is no authentic experience or 'thick' culture in each building that can be felt by tourists so that tourist satisfaction and interest in Grand Maerakaca is not so great.

At the beginning of the construction of Grand Maerakaca, this tourist destination could indeed be categorized as culture-based educational tourism because the majority of attractions introduce Javanese culture in the form of traditional houses and art. But along with the development of the times, Grand Maerakaca began to offer other tourist attractions such as miniature foreign cities, a suspension bridge and culinary tours. In addition, there are several tourist attractions outside the tour package which require additional fees, including fishing, golfing, boat rental, costume rental for photos, and tourist trains (see Figure 4). These support the main activities in the Grand Maerakaca destination and began to be built from 2017 as an effort to increase visits which in the previous decade had begun to decline. These efforts are to bring an economic benefit from the idea of ecotourism where the purpose of forming tourist space is to have an impact on the economy of the destination itself. Although until now the efforts are still not effective in attracting tourists because the design of these spaces is not authentic and original, and thus uninteresting.

In addition to cultural and other attractions, there are natural attractions offered by Grand Maerakaca, namely mangrove trail tourism. The geographical condition of the Grand Maerakaca area on the coast leads to the natural growth of mangrove forests. The area that is conserved and developed into mangrove tourism makes it one of the attractions because in Semarang itself, there is no other mangrove tourism. The design of the trail brings to tourists an experience of the natural magnificence of mangroves (see Figure 5). This tourist route is used as access for managers to care for the mangroves. There is also quite a large lake that functions as a view and photo spot, while reducing the heat in the surrounding area. There are boats of various shapes that can be rented by visitors. This attraction is an educational facility to explore the natural preservation in the area and the environmental conservation principles of ecotourism have been well pursued in Grand Maerakaca. Mangrove tourism has

Figure 4. Tourist space in the form of miniature foreign countries (on the left side) and tourist trains (on the right)
Source: S.R. Sari, 2023

Figure 5. Natural tourism space in the form of mangrove tourism (on the left side) and boat tours (on the right)
Source: S.R. Sari, 2023

been quite attractive because there is no similar offer in Semarang, so tourists tend to choose Grand Maerakaca for their mangrove tourism experience.

The establishment of tourist spaces in Grand Maerakaca is entirely the authority of the provider company, PT Pusat Rekreasi dan Promosi Pembangunan (PRPP) Central Java. Based on information obtained from tourist managers, there is no role for local communities involved in the formation of tourist space. There are no local settlements around the tourist area, and a distance of about 1–2 km to some elite housing. There is not much that can be done by the local community because the development of the tourist area is fully managed by the private sector and stakeholders. This is not in line with ecotourism principles which apply the principle of community participation. Similarly with regards to the principle of empowering vulnerable groups, for instance the elderly. As for involving external parties, namely traders to sell their food in the food court area, this did not last long because Grand Maerakaca became increasingly quiet and there were no buyers, therefore the traders did not extend their contracts. These traders prefer to trade outside the Grand Maerakaca area because they feel there is more potential to invite customers than inside (see Figure 6). The traders are not local residents, but from another area that is quite far from Grand Maerakaca, so there are not many tourist spaces formed due to community participation or empowerment.

The tourist space formed in Grand Maerakaca cannot be separated from the planning concept or themes raised by developers and owners of tourist destinations. Theme in tourism may refer to any unique feature of a destination that would create a foundation for tourism product development (Shalbafian et al., 2020). Numerous destinations use thematic tourism to develop new products, focusing on various consumer segments in order to expand visitor experience (Đurašević, 2014). Thematic tourism is a kind of journey that initially satisfies a given interest such as entertainment, a physical activity, an interest in a particular subject, or a particular type of destination (Shalbafian et al., 2020) such as ski shows, stunts, animal shows, Broadway-type musicals, puppet shows, parades, street performances and so on (Richard et al., 2017). Many tourism themes could then be raised starting from ecotourism, agrotourism, barrier-free tourism, and many more, and elaborated

Figure 6. Food court inside the tourist area empty of customers (on the left side) who prefer the food court outside (on the right)
Source: S.R. Sari, 2023

with the desired form of architectural design. By creating a unique, attractive themed space where visitors will spend time, a business can create bonds between their offer (the added values of their products or brands) and visitors (Åstrøm, 2019). The purpose of raising themes in a tourist destination is to show its uniqueness, which hopefully can contribute to socio-economic development, local livelihood improvement and visitor experience (Angessa et al., 2022).

4.2. Tourist space design implementation in Grand Maerakaca

There have been many changes in Grand Maerakaca in terms of tourist attractions, tourist facilities, accessibility and management. It is necessary to study further each component of this space as it relates to an aspect of universal design (Sari et al., 2022a), considering that Grand Maerakaca was created for the family tourist segment which consists of parents and children. When viewed in terms of accessibility, tourist trails in Grand Maerakaca are designed with many branches and no single path from the entrance to the exit (see Figure 7). This is intended to let tourists choose their desired attraction. However, some segments of tourists are less able to understand this kind of accessibility. Most senior visitors are confused about which path to choose for them (see Figure 7) unlike teenage tourists who can freely explore and choose any tourist path. Thus, Grand Maerakaca does not fully embrace the principle of simple and intuitive use where tourists should easily understand the form of tourist space regardless of age, educational background or experience (Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, n.d.).

As the area tends to be flat, tourists should be able to enjoy destinations without getting tired. However, branching paths have the potential to make senior tourists feel exhausted. Thus, Grand Maerakaca has not fully applied the principle of low physical effort in its space design, because tourists should be able to move in destinations without having to spend

Figure 7. Branch on the tourist route at Grand Maerakaca
Source: photo of information board in Grand Maerakaca
S.R. Sari, 2023

excessive physical effort (Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, n.d.). In addition to tourist trails, the implementation of steps and ramps that are too steep also has the potential to tire tourists (see Figure 8). Although the ramp is a form of implementation of the equitable use principle where the design should accommodate tourists with special needs (Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, n.d.), implementation in Grand Maerakaca meets the universal requirement only of design, namely by adding wooden boards above the steps. In addition, the ramp slope is considered too steep for someone who uses his/ her own wheelchair without the assistance of others and not according to ramp standards from the regulations of the Indonesian Minister of Public Works on technical guidelines for facilities and accessibility in buildings and the environment (*Peraturan Menteri Pekerjaan Umum dan Perumahan Rakyat*, 2006).

In addition to being steep, the steps are not equipped with railings, so senior tourists often have difficulty in climbing or descending. Though railings are a form of universal implementation of design to facilitate tourists, one problem is left-handed people (Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, n.d.). This can be seen not only on the steps, but also on the mangrove tourist

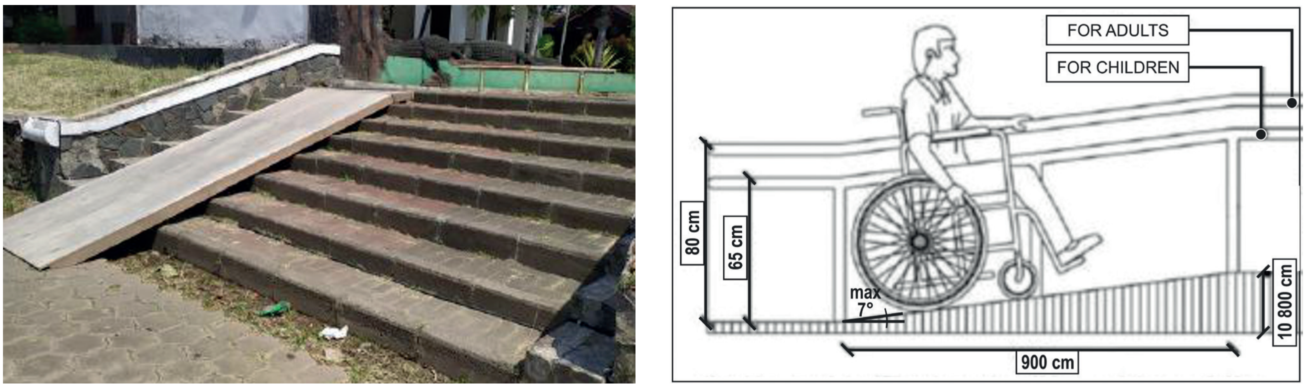

Figure 8. Implementation of a steep ramp (on the left side), not in accordance with the standards of the Minister of Public Works of the Republic of Indonesia (*Peraturan Menteri Pekerjaan Umum dan Perumahan Rakyat*, 2006) (in the right side)
Source: S.R. Sari, 2023

Figure 9. Mangrove tourism paths (in the left side) and food court areas (in the right) that do not have railings as a safety or barrier between the land and the lake
Source: S.R. Sari, 2023

Figure 10. Tactile tourist paths are not implemented in all tourist areas (in the left side) gathering points large enough to accommodate large numbers of tourists (in the right)
Source: S.R. Sari, 2023

path and food court area directly adjacent to the lake (see Figure 9). For teenage tourists this means no limits, because they are free to walk and even sit on the banks of the lake. However, for senior tourists and children, this is quite dangerous because there are no restrictions or safeguards for them. Thus, in addition to not fully following the principle of flexible use, Grand Maerakaca is not tolerant of any error because a tourist destination should be designed safely and be harmless to its users (Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, n.d.).

Grand Maerakaca does not fully apply the principle of perceptible information either, because although the area is equipped with information boards and signage, these markers only apply to physically fit tourists. Unlike visitors who have special needs, they need certain markers for wheelchairs, and tactile or other elements to provide directions through easy reception of information (Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, n.d.). Grand Maerakaca applies tactile information but only in front of the entrance and not applied in the entire tourist area (see Figure 10, in the left side). In addition to tourists with special needs, a destination must also be able to accommodate tourists regardless of their different shape, size or posture, so that these people still have free space even when in a room with others (Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, n.d.). Grand Maerakaca fulfils this principle because the dimensions of trails, gathering points and tourist spaces are quite large (about 8 to 10 meters) and can accommodate large numbers (see Figure 10, in the left). Tourists can also conveniently walk along paths using the same space, both for those with wheelchairs and those who walk normally (see Figure 10, in the right side).

5. Discussion

5.1. Designing eco-humanist tourist spaces

When viewed from the aspects of eco-humanist tourism, Grand Maerakaca has not been fully optimal for tourism activities based on environmental

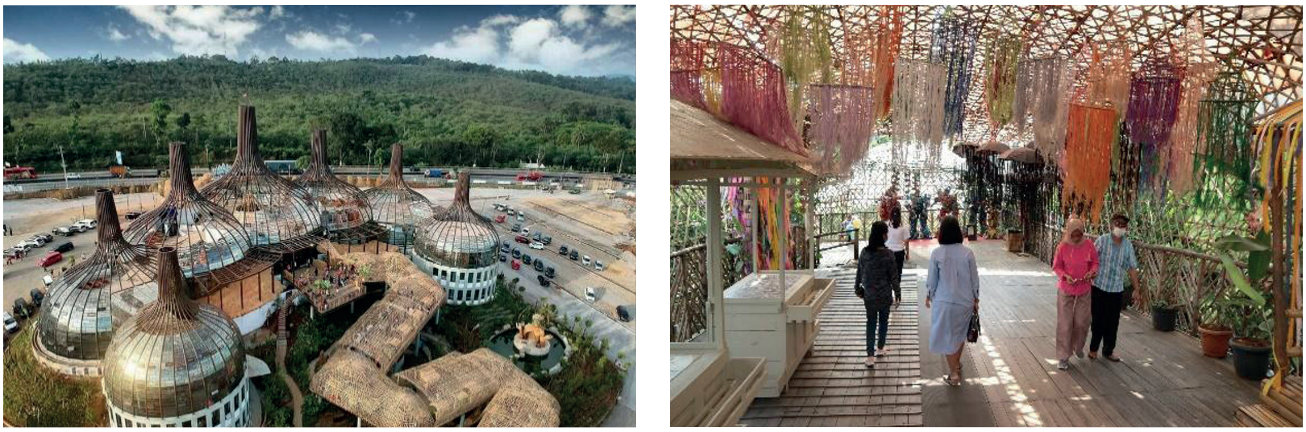

Figure 11. Dusun Semilir tourist destination seen from exterior design (in the left side) and interior (in the right)
Source: S.R. Sari, 2022

friendliness and human convenience, thus affecting the motivation of tourists to visit. Clearly, Grand Maerakaca has a decreasing the number of visitors because the experience and satisfaction of tourists are neglected. It is important for a destination to evaluate the disadvantages and advantages of various aspects in terms of service, availability of tourist attractions, effectiveness of such attractions, design of tourist spaces and other things that affect tourist satisfaction. It is also important for a tourist destination to have a mature concept which is the parent or foundation of the destination attraction (Shalbafian et al., 2020). What happened at Grand Maerakaca was that the concept raised was inconsistent with the form of design, cultural, natural and artificial tourism are all present at Grand Maerakaca but are not well integrated with each other. The innovations created are not based on careful planning or design, so the tourist space created remains unattractive to tourists.

Grand Maerakaca began to erode with the fierce competition in the world of tourism. New tourist destinations began to emerge with fresher and more contemporary concepts, and of course an integrated implementation of tourist space design. One example is seen in the tourist destination of Dusun Semilir, Semarang-Indonesia. This tourist destination, which was established in 2019 using an eco-park theme where the implementation of the tourist space design correctly utilizes natural materials. Sari et al. (2022b) have also conducted research related to the implementation of the eco-humanist concept in Dusun Semilir and almost all principles have been implemented although there are still some points that are not optimal such as the application of ramp and step designs that are too steep. Dusun Semilir continues to innovate to create interesting tourist attractions, and the implementation of the design is in line with the main concept so that tourist spaces are aligned and integrated with the theme (see Figure 11). Dusun Semilir is still one of the tourist destinations of choice for tourists because it understands the character of its tourists, their needs and the prospects or projections for future tourism so that sustainability is maintained.

Tourist destination design is an aspect that is also as important for management. Without the architecture, a destination will not be grasped by tourists, similarly without careful management planning, a tourist space with any form of interactive architecture will have no function and die. For this reason, it is important for managers to collaborate with experts in various fields such as architecture, psychology, management, economics and others to be able to create attractive destinations, accommodate the needs of tourists, and to unconsciously be recommended to others. Therefore, the supply (tourist space) provided must be in line with demand (tourist needs). Humans themselves have four basic needs: physiological, security, belonging and love, and self-esteem and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). These four needs do not have to be all met by tourist destinations, but at least the basic needs should be, such as the need for food, rest and security. Furthermore, other needs are gradually being met, such as togetherness and creative experiences. These needs are translated into tourist attractions, such as skating, rafting and so on. Of course, the spaces created are tailored to the segment of tourists who come, ranging from children to the elderly.

The demand or needs of tourists are aligned with the eco-humanist concept and realized in environmentally-friendly and humanist tourist spaces. Architecture plays a role in realizing these spaces (Specht, 2014) in accordance with applicable rules, but still prioritizes aesthetic principles. Architectural content that can be applied in a tourist destination (Meng, 2019) includes the design, sourcing and selection of building materials. The architectural patterns should include a comprehension of humanity, the transformation of natural elements, complementarity between architectures and the environment, and bionic architectural patterns. If the tourist area has a unique architectural style, it should be applied as much as possible so that tourists can better understand the local folk customs. Grand Maerakaca wants to create contrasting tourism patterns, namely cultural, natural and artificial, but the three do not have similar architectural patterns, so a good impression is not found by tourists at Grand Maerakaca. It is similar with the selection of building materials. These should be beneficial to the environment, the promotion of the tourist area, and construction and maintenance. This should not only be concerned for the construction period; instead, it should be integrated overall to achieve real ecological environmentally-friendly construction.

The implementation of eco-humanist-based destination design must be aligned with the principles of tourism architecture, not only applying the principles of ecotourism and universal design, but the synergy of one tourist space with another needs to be considered. The role of architects is important here so that the design of the tourist space created does not seem patchy but is carefully planned. Cooperation between stakeholders is also important considering that the biggest challenge in tourism development in Grand Maerakaca is the influence of outside culture. In addition to architecture, it is also important to understand trends and predict future tourist preferences without losing identity or character. Because what happened in Grand Maerakaca was that changes in community trends caused the disappearance of regional culture, and this has led to changes in architectural styles in Grand Maerakaca. The growth of modern architecture indicates that there is a lack of cultural pride in communities toward their own culture. Therefore, it is important for a destination to understand the concept of tourism architecture before it is finally implemented into the design of tourist space.

6. Conclusion

Grand Maerakaca does not fully implement the eco-humanist concept in each of its tourist spaces. There are several principles that are not fulfilled such as the absence of local community participation and community empowerment. The goal to increase economic benefits is also not fulfilled because the attractions provided do not attract tourist interest. In addition to the principle of ecotourism, the principle of universal design is also less respected, as a result there are still many tourist trails that are inaccessible and dangerous for senior tourists or children. Eco-humanist principles are also not in line with the principles of tourism architecture where the design of one attraction with another is not in line with the main concept. Lack of cooperation with relevant stakeholders can also be a reason for the lack of implementation of tourist destinations with mature concepts. Grand Maerakaca needs to evaluate the shortcomings and develop a mature destination so that the design implementation will be in line with the concept raised. The eco-humanist concept can be a benchmark that Grand Maerakaca could use to develop, because its tourism potential can be enhanced with the eco-humanist concept to become an environmentally-friendly, community-based, accessible destination for all segments, and beneficial for tourism operators.

Grand Maerakaca is one of the many educational-park themed destinations in Indonesia that currently do not succeed. However, from it we can understand that to become a successful destination requires various perspectives and academic fields such as social sciences, economics and the natural environment. By studying these three, it is hoped that the sustainability of a tourist destination will continue to be maintained for the next generation. Grand Maerakaca has experienced its tipping point, and it is hoped that with development it will be able to restore itself to its former glory, along with the achievement of sustainability goals. This contributes to research related to ecotourism, humanist architecture and universal design. Tourism as part of architecture should accommodate activities safely and conveniently regardless of the background of the tourists. By accommodating this, the quality of the area will be better and visits are expected to increase. This research is limited to observation and literature studies related to Grand Maerakaca, the ecotourism concept, and humanist architecture. Further research related to the eco-humanist concept with other research methods is needed to complete the results of this study.

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Agritourism in academic research: Literature review and cluster analysis

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to review the current literature in the field of agritourism. The data for the analysis was collected from the Web of Science database from 1990–2022: a total of 1,834 bibliometric publication records. The article presents both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The results indicated five main research areas: (a) the impact of the attitudes of the community on the perception and management of ecotourism and agritourism; (b) the impact of models of the perception of the quality of services in agritourism on customer satisfaction; (c) the quality of services and tourist culinary experiences that motivate the choice of agritourism destinations; (d) the typology of agritourism farms and their differentiation in the development of rural tourism; (e) the impact of state policy on the management of rural tourism and agritourism. The limitations of the conducted research, which mainly concern the methodological part, should also be borne in mind: including the selected publication database, and search criteria such as publication year or language.

KEYWORDS

agritourism, rural tourism, literature review, cluster analysis, co-word

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1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the fast-growing economic activities both in Europe and globally (Ramaano, 2023). The development of tourism is a process whose effects can be observed in the economic, social, political and ecological spheres (Karhu et al., 2022). For many rural areas, tourism is becoming an important factor in economic development by reducing unemployment, creating markets for food products and small-scale manufacturing, and creating new jobs (Renfors, 2021). For the inhabitants of a village, it is primarily a supplementary source of income. It forces the development of such local infrastructure as environmental protection facilities, recreational and sports facilities, retail outlets, catering services and others, all related to servicing tourists (medical and veterinary care points, car repair points, recreational equipment points, postal services, banking and more) (Roman & Grudzień, 2021).

Rural tourism in this form is not a new way of spending free time (Roman et al., 2020). In the initial period of development, it was a way of recreation for the richest social classes (Roman & Grudzień, 2021). Travelling among the European aristocracy, owning a summer residence and going to the countryside for recreation were once very fashionable (horseback riding, hunting, fishing and enjoying good country food) (Frederick, 1993).

More and more people began to participate in rural recreation. Rural areas have been rediscovered as places not only for passive relaxation, but also a place for active leisure (Mahmoodi et al., 2022). The values of the rural landscape, and the specificity and diversity of farms began to be appreciated (Gil Arroyo et al., 2013). Rural tourism has become competitive for large holiday complexes due to its distinctiveness and the opportunity for contacts with the local population (Rosalina et al., 2021). An important advantage of rural tourism has become its accessibility, even for people with lower incomes, as well as an opportunity to find a farm away from big cities and leisure centers (Fang, 2020).

The advantage of rural tourism is its constant modification. Currently, it is no longer just serving meals and offering accommodation. This type of tourism has been supplemented by rock climbing, art workshops, specialized activities and others (Gannon, 1994).

Agritourism is an intermediate form, belonging to "rural tourism" and similar to "farm tourism". Therefore, agritourism is one of the forms of non-agricultural economic activity for farming families who decide to organize visits of tourists to their own farms. The agritourism offer consists of accommodation which can be combined with full board or the chance to buy fresh products from the farm for self-catering (Dragulanescu & Drutu, 2012).

It includes both longer visits and weekend tourism. It is often associated with active recreation, performing small tasks on the farm and eating healthy food. It can have an individual or collective form, e.g. a stay for the disabled combined with hippotherapy. It is also a form of activation for rural areas, as well as a source of additional jobs (Ammirato et al., 2020).

Its development as one form of non-agricultural activity is carried out by farms producing or processing raw materials. It determines the sustainable economic development of the countryside in conditions of an appropriately adapted and effective economic structure.

Table 1. Rural tourism definitions by different authors (chronological)

Author/Authors	Definition	Journal/Publisher
Lane (1994)	"Rural tourism is a distinct activity with distinct characteristics that may vary in intensity and area"	*Journal of Sustainable Tourism*
Clarke (1996)	"Rural tourism is cultivated on farms, where the working environment is part of the product for the potential consumer"	*Tourism Management*
Oppermann (1996)	"Rural tourism includes part-time or full-time farm accommodation as a criterion for the choice of the tourist"	*Annals of Tourism Research*
Iakovidou (1997)	"Tourists should be actively involved in farming and on-farm productive activities"	*MEDIT*
Gladstone and Morris (2000)	"Tourism activity is closely related to farm activities and is often linked to household profitability"	Multilingual Matters
Roberts and Hall (2001)	"Currently, the term rural tourism is increasingly used to define a series of activities that have little to do with a farm, except that the farmer is the person managing the facility and the land"	CABI Publishing
Power (2005)	"Rural tourism is practiced by tourists looking for rural tranquility. It is far from the mainstream, from areas of intensive tourism"	Waterford Institute of Technology
Ollenburg and Buckley (2007)	"Commercial tourism enterprises are farms where production is carried out"	*Journal of Travel Research*
Irshad (2010)	"The key form is recreation in agricultural areas, but also in all non-urban areas"	Government of Alberta
United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (n.d.)	"A type of tourism activity in which the visitor's experience is related to a wide range of products generally linked to nature-based activities, agriculture, rural lifestyle / culture, angling and sightseeing"	UNWTO
Šajn and Finer (2023)	"Rural tourism, whose origins lie in agritourism and farm stays, is typically built on experiences that are specific to the countryside, often includes physical activities connected with nature, is usually small in scale and involves a large number of small private businesses"	European Parliamentary Research Service

Kovshun et al. (2023)	"Rural tourism is a socio-cultural activity that acts as a 'producer' of tourist services aimed at enhancing the country's economic development. Rural tourism is as a unique form of recreation in rural estates, utilizing their services, resources, and the opportunities provided by local cultural heritage. Rural tourism is a form of entrepreneurial activity that offers leisure services in rural areas using their own households and the natural, cultural or historical resources of the locality where they are located"	*E3S Web Conferences*
GeeksforGeeks (2024)	"Rural tourism refers to the exploration of the rural flora and fauna and basically keeping the beauty of the rural diaspora in front of the world. In other words, rural tourism is classified as a form of the tourist industry that provides an opportunity to showcase rural indigenous culture, life and heritage in rural locations, as well as providing employment and other investment opportunities for local residents and allowing interaction with the host and guests for a more enhancing travel experience"	GeeksforGeeks

Source: authors.

2. Literature review of rural tourism and agritourism

Rural tourism takes place in a rural environment, using the traditional cultural and natural values of an area (Phillip et al., 2010). Unfortunately, very often rural tourism is replaced by the term agritourism (Rosalina et al., 2021). It should be added that these are not synonymous and rural tourism should be treated as a broader concept. The authors of the article understand agritourism as a form of recreation, and at the same time a type of rural tourism. However, for rest (recreation), people use services other than accommodation.

In Table 1 example definitions on agritourism are presented.

With reference to the definitions presented, the authors of the article believe that rural tourism is an activity related to the stay of tourists in rural areas during their free time away from their place of residence and employment. This terminology is closest to the understanding of rural tourism by Oppermann (1997). Currently, more and more people are enjoying rural holidays.

Definitions of agritourism by different authors are presented in Table 2.

The concept of agritourism is not unambiguous. A review of the literature reveals a lack of unanimity in defining this term. For the purpose of the work, it is assumed that agritourism is a part of rural tourism concerning recreation (including active recreation) of people on an active farm that offers various types of recreational and tourist services in its area and beyond during the tourist season or throughout the calendar year.

Table 2. Agritourism definitions presented by different authors (chronological)

Author/Authors	Definition	Journal/Publisher
Sharpley and Sharpley (1997)	"Tourism products are directly related to the rural environment, agricultural production and the stay of a tourist on a farm"	Thomson Business Press
Iakovidou (1997)	"Tourism activity that is undertaken in non-urban areas by people who are mainly employed in the primary or secondary sectors of the economy"	*MEDIT*
Nowakowski (2001)	"Agritourism is a form of tourism with high recreational and psychological values for adults, as well as didactic for youth and children, consisting in actively spending holidays and holidays in the countryside directly on a farm, i.e. participating in farming work, eating meals on the farm, etc."	Wydawnictwo Akademii Górnośląskiej w Katowicach
Sonnino (2004)	"Hospitable activities carried out by agricultural entrepreneurs and their family members who need to stay in touch with their agricultural activity"	*Sociologia Ruralis*
El-Hage Scialabba and Williamson (2004)	"Agritourism is 'The symbiotic relationship between tourism and agriculture'. In a simple context, agritourism also known as agrotourism, is a form of tourism which activities are focused directly with agriculture, and utilises the unique offerings of rural and agriculture rich communities"	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
Marques (2006)	"A specific type of rural tourism, where the owner's main house should be integrated with other rural facilities, inhabited by the service provider, which allows the remaining buildings to be made available to visitors"	*Tourism Economics*

Table 2 (cont.)

Author/Authors	Definition	Journal/Publisher
McGehee (2007)	"Rural entrepreneurship that includes both the rural environment, the farm and the tourist trade activities"	*Journal of Sustainable Tourism*
Kizos and Iosifides (2007)	"Small-scale, family or cooperative tourism activities in rural areas by people employed in agriculture"	*South European Society and Politics*
Barbieri and Mshenga (2008)	"Any practical farm activity created to attract tourists"	*Sociologia Ruralis*
Gaworecki (2010)	"Agritourism is a form of rural tourism closely related to agriculture and a functioning farm"	Polish Economic Publishing House
Roman (2018)	"Agritourism is a part of rural tourism concerning recreation (including active recreation) of people in an active farm that offers various types of recreational and tourist services in its area and beyond during the tourist season or throughout the calendar year"	Warsaw University of Life Sciences Publishing House
Center for Agriculture and Food Systems at Vermont Law School (n.d.)	"Agritourism activities often include activities directly related to the sale of agricultural products, such as farmers markets, roadside farm stands and harvest-your-own produce operations"	The National Agricultural Law Center
Kapała (2022)	"These are activities […] in connection with one of the strictly agricultural activities makes them qualify as agricultural and be subject to the same regulation as agricultural activities"	*Review of European and Comparative Law*
National Agricultural Law Center (n.d.)	"Agritourism, agricultural tourism, or agritourist activity refers to tourism activities connected to an agricultural operation"	The National Agricultural Law Center
Joyce (2022)	"The term 'agritourism' is defined as «any activity carried out on a farm or ranch that allows members of the general public, for recreational, entertainment, or educational purposes, to view or enjoy rural activities, including farming, ranching, historic, cultural, harvest-your-own activities, hunting, fishing, equestrian activities, or natural activities and attractions»"	Coates' Canons NC Local Government Law

Source: authors.

3. Materials and methods

3.1. Research methodology

The aim of the article was to review the current literature in the field of agritourism. The state-of-the-art literature review methodology (SotA) procedure is described in detail by Barry et al. (2022) and uses bibliometric methods to facilitate the analysis of a large number of publications (Pritchard, 1969). Descriptive bibliometrics was used to analyze trends in research and to identify appropriate researchers or research centers (Badger et al., 2000; Klincewicz, 2012).

The following tools and techniques were used in the bibliometric analysis: analysis of changes in the number of publications, analysis of citations, and the co-word method. The analysis of changes in the number of publications and citations made it possible to identify trends and determine the level of knowledge transfer and dissemination by authors representing various research centers. Co-word analysis, in turn, allowed the identification of the main thematic areas covered in publications on agritourism. These areas were identified using the cluster analysis method developed by Zhu et al. (2009). Clustering was established in VOSviewer version 1.6.18, a tool for building and visualizing bibliometric networks. The software allows large text files containing descriptions of bibliographic records from well-known databases, including Web of Science (WoS) to be worked on.

3.2. Data collection and research tasks

Data for analysis was collected from the Web of Science database on 20.11.2022. Web of Science is one of the main mechanisms for finding academic sources by offering a large variety of documents. In the search for records, the fundamental issue is the identification of keywords that are considered relevant to the analyzed issue (Aveyard, 2014). The analysis included articles in in whose titles the following phrases occurred: "agritourism", "agrotourism" and "rural tourism".

As a result, a set of 2929 publications was created, which were then subjected to further selection. The following limiting criteria were used:
- date of publication – publications from 1990 to 2022 are included;
- type of publication – includes publications in peer-reviewed academic journals and books;
- publication topic – focusing on selected keywords.

After applying limiting criteria, the dataset consisted of 1834 publications (total *h*-index = 74, sum of the times cited = 26 347).

Next, answers were sought regarding the general trend in numbers of publications and citations, the identification of the main researchers, centers, countries and journals, as well as the main research areas in the field of agritourism.

4. Results

4.1. General trends in agritourism publications

Figure 1 shows the number of publications in the WoS database on agritourism in the years 1990–2022. Attention should be paid to the constantly growing trend related to interest in the topic. Three sub-periods of development of publications in the field of agritourism can be distinguished: (a) low interest in 1990–2004; (b) 2004–2018 – average interest (often in fact decreases); (c) 2019–2022, high interest, when an average of 200 articles were published per year. A significant increase in the number of publications in recent years can be attributed to increased attention to the issues of agritourism.

The growing interest in the subject of agritourism confirms the usefulness of systematizing a review of the latest literature and the search for future research directions. Most articles were written in English but the database also includes articles in Chinese, Spanish, German and French. Most publications concerned such research areas as social sciences, environmental sciences or business economics (Table 3).

Table 3. The ten most important research areas in the field of agritourism

Research area	Percent	Number
Social sciences	39.9	732
Environmental sciences/ Ecology	21.1	388
Business/ Economics	18.2	335
Science/ Technology	13.8	253
Agriculture	13.7	252
Geography	8.0	147
Public administration	4.0	74
Sociology	3.7	69
Development studies	3.0	56
Computer science	2.7	50

Source: authors based on the created database.

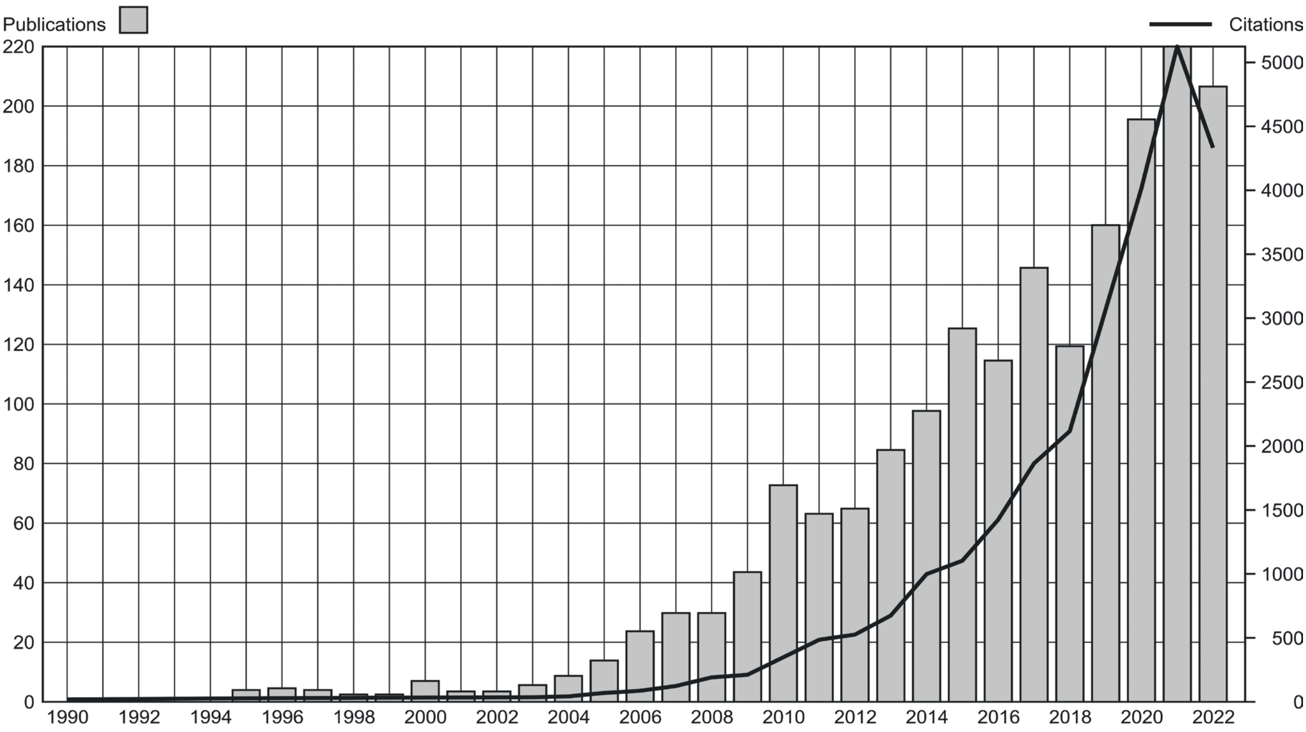

Figure 1. Number of publications related to agritourism in 1990–2022
Source: authors based on the created database

4.2. Web of Sciences

The next step concerned the division of academic publications into Web of Science categories (Table 4).

Table 4. Web of Science categories

Web of Science categories	Percent	Number
Hospitality leisure sport tourism	38.0	697
Environmental studies	15.6	287
Environmental sciences	13.9	256
Green sustainable science technology	13.0	240
Agricultural economies	9.6	177
Management	9.0	166
Geography	8.0	147
Economics	7.2	132
Business	4.3	80
Regional urban planning	3.8	71

Source: authors based on the created database.

As many as 697 items qualified in the "hospitality leisure sport tourism" category.

4.3. Analysis of publication sources

The most common journals in which articles on agritourism were published include: *Sustainability*, *Scientific Papers Series Management, Economic Engineering in Agriculture and Rural Development*, *Tourism Management*, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *Ekonomika Poljoprivreda Economics of Agriculture* (Table 5).

Table 5. Journals with largest number of publications in the field of agritourism

Publication titles	Percent	Number
Sustainability	8.6	159
Scientific Papers Series Management Economic Engineering in Agriculture and Rural Development	4.7	86
Tourism Management	3.2	59
Journal of Sustainable Tourism	2.5	46
Ekonomika Poljoprivreda Economics of Agriculture	2.2	42
Current Issues in Tourism	1.5	29
Tourism Planning Development	1.4	26
Annals of Tourism Research	1.3	25
Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research	1.3	25
International Journal of Tourism Research	1.2	22

Source: authors based on the created database.

The most common publishers include Taylor & Francis, MDPI, Elsevier and University Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine in Bucharest (Table 6).

Table 6. Publishers with the largest number of publications in the field of agritourism

Publishers	Percent	Number
Taylor & Francis	14.2	262
MDPI	11.5	211
Elsevier	10.9	201
University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest	4.8	89
Emerald Group Publishing	4.0	75
Sage	3.2	60
Wiley	2.7	50
Springer Nature	2.6	49
Routledge	2.5	47
Balkan Scientific Association of Agricultural Economists	2.3	42

Source: authors based on the created database.

The next stage concerned the authors of the publications, their country of origin and affiliation.

4.4. Analysis of publications by country and research center

The leader who published the largest number of publications on agritourism was Carla Barbieri (Table 7).

Table 7. Publication authors in the field of agritourism

Author	Number of publications in the field agritourism	Percent	Place in the ranking
Barbieri C.	18	0.9	1
Kastenholz E.	16	0.8	2
Saxena G.	11	0.6	3
Calina A.	10	0.5	4
Ohe Y.	10	0.5	4
Roman M.	9	0.4	5
Calina J.	9	0.4	5
Cretu R.C.	8	0.4	6
Li J.	8	0.4	6
Lo M.C.	8	0.4	6

Source: authors based on the created database.

Authors publishing articles on agritourism most often came from China, the USA and Romania. In addition, many publications were associated with authors from countries such as Spain, Italy or Poland (Table 8).

Table 8. Number of publications by country

Country	Percent	Number
China	17.8	328
USA	11.0	202
Romania	8.3	153
Spain	7.3	134
Italy	6.2	115
Poland	5.0	93
United Kingdom	4.9	91
Canada	3.4	64
Serbia	3.4	64
Portugal	3.3	62

Source: authors based on the created database.

In the next step, research centers were analyzed. It should be noted that the dispersion of research on the issues of agritourism was large. Most publications were published by employees of the University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest (Table 9).

Table 9. Number of publications by research center

Affiliation	Percent	Number
University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest	2.7	49
University of North Carolina	1.6	30
University of Novi Sad	1.4	26
Universidade de Aveiro	1.3	25
State University System of Florida	1.0	20
Universidad de Extremadura	1.0	20
North Carolina State University	1.0	19
Warsaw University of Life Sciences	0.9	18
Chinese Academy of Sciences	0.9	17
University of Johannesburg	0.9	17

Source: authors based on the created database.

The authors also represented the University of North Carolina, the University of Novi Sad, the Universidade de Aveiro and the State University System of Florida.

4.5. Analysis of the main research areas

The next step, by means of which research areas in the field of agritourism were identified, was co-word analysis and was used to carry out cluster analysis. It should be noted that co-word or co-occurrence analysis is a technique by which the actual content of a publication can be examined (Leung et al., 2017). This analysis uses words that are derived from the keywords defined by the authors. In addition, words found in keywords, article titles, abstracts, indexes, and even full texts could be analyzed (Emich et al., 2020). As a result of this analysis, words that often appear together are related thematically which makes it possible to identify thematic clusters and determine the directions of future research.

The co-word analysis was carried out as follows:

– searching for records in the database using the criteria described in detail in the methodology section,
– data export, including authors' names, titles, abstracts, keywords, sources,
– developing maps of relations to form thematic clusters,
– analysis of the results obtained.

Frequency analysis was carried out for a set of keywords whose phrases appeared at least ten times.

Figure 2 presents the visualization of keywords for the thematic area of agritourism. There were 1499 keywords in total of which the most common were "management", "perceptions", "model", "attitudes", "impacts", "satisfaction", "tourism", "diversification", "impact", "areas", "sustainability" and "agriculture".

Co-word analysis identified five research clusters related to the topic of agritourism (Figure 2):

1. Cluster 1 (green): The impact of community attitudes on the perception and management of ecotourism and agritourism.
2. Cluster 2 (yellow): The impact of models of perceiving the quality of services in agritourism on customer satisfaction.
3. Cluster 3 (purple): The quality of services and culinary experiences of tourists as a motivation to choose destinations.
4. Cluster 4 (blue): Typology of agritourism farms and their differentiation in the development of rural tourism.
5. Cluster 5 (red): The impact of state policy on the management of rural tourism and agritourism.

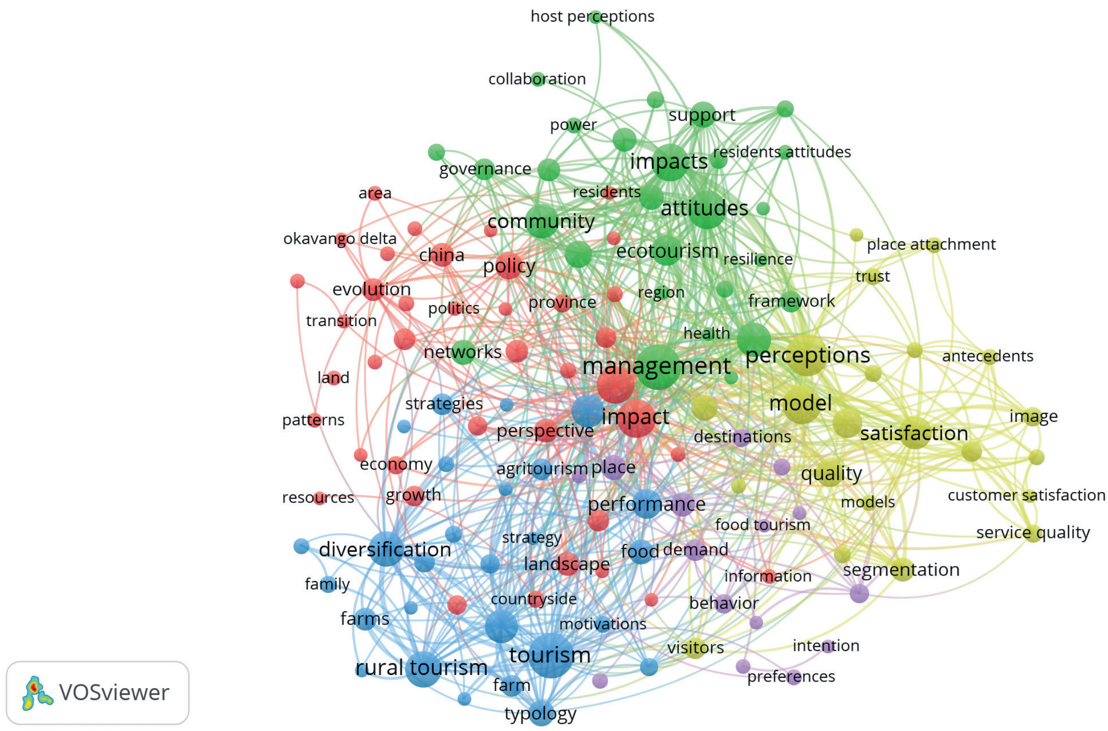

Figure 2. Co-word cluster map

Note: coloured lines showing the terms 'management', 'impact', 'perceptions', 'networks', 'models' etc. for a visual presentation of those most used in agritourism

Source: authors based on the created database

5. Discussion

5.1. Cluster 1 (green): The impact of community attitudes on the perception and management of ecotourism and agritourism

The first cluster presented concerned the impact of attitudes towards the benefits of ecotourism on loyalty to destinations presented by Bazazo et al. (2017). The authors used the variables of economic development, social development, cultural preservation, community capacity building and environmental protection on allegiance to the Wadi Rum destination in Jordan.

Upadhaya et al. (2022) presented an article on local perceptions on the impact and importance of ecotourism in central Nepal. Ecotourism contributes to the conservation of natural resources and promotes the management of natural and cultural resources.

5.2. Cluster 2 (yellow): The impact of models of perceiving the quality of services in agritourism on customer satisfaction

Chatzigeorgiou and Simeli (2017) presented the development of a conceptual model that demonstrates the dynamic nature of the relationship between service quality and guest satisfaction in the agritourism hotel sector, based on theories derived from social psychology and previous research in the marketing, management and service literature.

Osman and Sentosa (2013) described the impact of customer satisfaction on service quality and trust relationships in Malaysian rural tourism. The model was developed and then tested by adopting a partial least squares (PLS) procedure on data collected from a survey of 295 people. The results showed that service quality increases satisfaction in rural Malaysian tourism.

5.3. Cluster 3 (purple): The quality of services and culinary experiences of tourists as a motivation to choose destinations

Testa et al. (2019) presented a study aimed at examining what motivational factors influence the frequency of culinary tourists exploring local food and drinks in agritourism destinations in Italy.

Fanelli (2020) analyzes guest reviews regarding time spent in Tuscan agritourism facilities, with particular emphasis on cuisine, health benefits and social experiences. The analysis is based on a representative sample of 1886 published by visitors from around the world on the websites of 60 agritourism establishments operating in Tuscan municipalities.

Ullah et al. (2022) presented a study to measure the level of satisfaction of a tourist's destination, and also considers gastronomy as an element of visitor motivation. The survey was conducted on a sample of 307 tourists who visited northern areas of Pakistan.

5.4. Cluster 4 (blue): Typology of agritourism farms and their differentiation in the development of rural tourism

Galluzzo (2015) studied the evolution of Italian agritourism between 2003 and 2013 and showed the connection between the presence of agritourism farms and variables showing the growth of farms capable of producing food of certified quality and farms able to offer cultural, recreational and sports activities related to rural space.

Lak and Khairabadi (2022) presented in their article the problem of infrastructure provided in conjunction with agritourism which can be considered as a method of sustainable development and based on rural areas.

Arru et al. (2021) investigated the ability of farms in less favored areas of Montiferru to reward family work by adopting a diversification strategy through the establishment of agritourism. The authors found that such characteristics cannot be linked to specific business farm models but are best linked to the ability of individual farms to utilize their resources and diversify their activities.

5.5. Cluster 5 (red): The impact of state policy on the management of rural tourism and agritourism

Hwang and Lee (2015) conducted an ex-post evaluation of the results after the completion of the “Traditional Village” program in South Korea. The study assumed the non-agricultural income of farms as the measurable income of the ex-post indicator and the assessment of the impact of the program on this indicator.

Ilyukhina et al. (2021) described in their work global trends and regional policy in agritourism in Oryol Oblast in Russia. The authors draw attention to the active position of the state on agritourism issues in the form of nationwide projects, created mutually as a beneficial partnership with entrepreneurship in the form of regional programs.

6. Conclusions

Based on the literature review and cluster analyses presented in the article, several conclusions were formulated. The first cluster presented concerned the impact of community attitudes on the perception and management of ecotourism and agritourism. The attitude of the local community towards tourists has a great impact on tourism development in a given area. Rural residents often approve or watch with interest the activities undertaken by service providers of agritourism farms. It is worth pointing out that sometimes the attitudes of residents towards tourists and those running agritourism activities are hostile. This is often caused by tourists vandalizing various places (benches, shelters, etc.) or disturbing the area. There are also cases of environmental degradation (Roman, 2020).

The second cluster “The impact of models of perceiving the quality of services in agritourism on customer satisfaction” concerned quality in agritourism in a broad sense. It is necessary to create, support and promote the brand in agritourism (build a uniform image of the brand and quality), including the use of new technologies to promote and sell agritourism services, e.g. building an innovative online sales system for agritourism services. Institutional issues related to the development, promotion and sale of agritourism products should also be put in order.

The third cluster is “The quality of services and culinary experiences of tourists as a motivation to choose destinations”. Attracting new target groups (e.g. tourists choosing culinary ideas) to rural areas, and mainly young people by using the possibilities of modern technologies and new media (fanpage, YouTube channels, smartphone applications, etc.).

The fourth cluster is the “Typology of agritourism farms and their differentiation in the development of rural tourism”. In the development of agritourism, there should be a greater specialization of tourist offers, including those for the elderly and people with disabilities, as well as the development of offers and a system of sale to foreign customers (culinary farms, active farms, for schools, care facilities – including therapeutic).

The fifth cluster is “The impact of the state policy on the management of rural tourism and agritourism”. In this respect, cross-border cooperation and the implementation of joint solutions in the development of agritourism is important (e.g. tourist trails, observation of examples on other farms and implementing them on one’s own).

The influence of state policy is also found in training and consulting activities when building a tourist product, marketing and providing tourist services, as well as conducting marketing research in order to learn about new solutions in agritourism. The main limitations of reviewing research papers are:

- the use of a non-probability sampling strategy, which affects the generalization of the results;
- research focused only on motivations that are part of psychological factors known to influence behavior; other individual factors such as attitudes, consumer awareness and personal values, as well as cultural and social factors were excluded;

- collecting data only from designated areas and generalizing, then considering different tourist destinations on this basis;
- the use of cross-sectional design may have errors in the representation of variables;
- review of only national opinions without taking into account global trends in the researched area;
- lack of data collection for analyses over long periods.

The research gap in the presented work on agritourism in academic research concerning literature review and cluster analysis allow only a selected number of articles on a selected issue to be presented. The authors' approach is multi-dimensional and multi-layered which makes it impossible to precisely define the broad multi-aspect nature.

There are dynamic changes in agritourism, so it is worth in the future continuing issues and conducting similar research, e.g. by presenting academic research on rural tourism. In our opinion, the future of agritourism is developing rapidly, due to the fact it has existed and will exist, and its offer will become even more attractive and tailored to individual recipients (families with children, singles, organized groups).

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Assessing global perceptions of India: Policy implications drawn from foreign tourism narratives

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Abstract

This study scrutinizes India's growing appeal as a tourist destination, accentuated by government initiatives and innovative tourism policies like the e-visa program, Incredible India Campaign 2.0 and digital advancements in the travel sector. With the diminishing impact of COVID-19, there is a noticeable surge in various forms of tourism – inbound, outbound and domestic. The primary focus is to understand the driving factors behind the choice of India as a destination for inbound tourists. This research delves into these motivations, providing a global perspective on India's attractiveness. A mixed-method approach was employed, utilizing convenience sampling for data collection. The quantitative analysis was based on a survey, informed by a literature review, comprising 390 respondents from 10 diverse Indian destinations. Additionally, 25 qualitative interviews were conducted, aiming to enrich and triangulate the quantitative findings. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) revealed five predominant motivations among inbound tourists: culinary interests, spiritual pursuits, budget-consciousness, cultural curiosity and natural allure. These findings were substantiated through thematic analysis. The outcomes have significant practical ramifications for destination managers and tourism policy developers in India. By understanding these key motivators, they can devise targeted strategies for enhancing the appeal of India to these specific tourist segments. This study not only aids in refining tourism promotion efforts but also contributes to the academic discourse on tourist motivation offering a fresh international perspective on India's image as a tourist destination.

Keywords

tourist destination, outer perspective, exploratory factor analysis, mixed method, India

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1. Introduction

It is crucial to comprehend how different countries are viewed internationally in an era of fast globalisation and constant cultural interactions. The study of global perceptions in India is crucial as it has strong implications for the country's international relations, trade and tourism. The information regarding the opinions set by the outside world of the tourism is of significant importance as it plays a role in shaping a country's image and policies (Tosun et al., 2021). Like many countries that acknowledge the power of being seen, India is positively thriving for the attention of the world. India is recognised as a fascinating land of cultures, landscapes and experiences (Bhalla & Chowdhary, 2023). Its diversity makes India a unique and preferred tourist destination for travellers from all over the world.

India's Ministry of Tourism stands as a testament to the nation's dedication towards strengthening its global image as a premier travel destination through initiatives like the "Incredible India" and "Atithi Devo Bhava" campaigns, emphasizing culture and hospitality. Notably, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has resonated in changing marketing tactics and legislative improvements. Undoubtedly the impact of the pandemic has left a lasting impact on the people. Therefore, the importance of understanding foreign perceptions in the context of global events and their influence on tourism demand is timely (Aggarwal et al., 2023).

Focusing on the factors that attract foreign tourists to India is particularly significant, especially in the post-COVID-19 era where global tourism is striving for revival. Understanding these factors has become crucial for strategizing and rejuvenating India's tourism sector amidst changing dynamics and traveller preferences influenced by the pandemic's aftermath. Research question one (RQ_1) focuses on understanding the specific expectations of tourists considering India, helping in specially curated marketing strategies. Meanwhile, research question two (RQ_2) examines the overall perception of India among foreign tourists which can help to identify branding strengths and areas needing improvement (Kainthola et al., 2024). Addressing both questions offers a holistic view, suggestions for further developing the image and meeting traveller expectations:

RQ_1: What are the expectations of the tourist who is looking to India?

RQ_2: How India as a brand is perceived by foreign tourists?

For these requirements, the study surveyed 390 tourists across varied Indian regions to determine their reasons for visiting. Using descriptive research and convenience sampling, it identified five main reasons tourists are drawn to India: culinary experiences, spiritual journeys, affordability, cultural immersion and the country's natural beauty. Through this nuanced analysis, the article aims to offer invaluable insights for policymakers, destination managers and stakeholders in India's tourism landscape. By bridging the gap between global perceptions and actionable policy implications, this research aims to shape strategies that not only enhance India's appeal but also resonate with the diverse narratives that define its global image.

2. Literature review

Studying the motivations and expectations of tourists visiting India as a tourist destination holds significant importance for shaping the country's tourism policies, enhancing visitor experiences and fostering sustainable tourism development (Kainthola et al., 2024). The perceptions and preferences of foreign tourists play a crucial role in influencing travel decisions and experiences, making it essential to understand motivations and expectations (Pestana et al., 2020). On the same lines, Preko and Gyepi-Garbrah (2023) emphasized the importance of understanding the impact of national cultural orientation in tourism development, underscoring the significance of studying tourists' sense of safety and the trustworthiness of tourism information.

Also, Gnoth (1997) assessed bargaining motivations and attitudes, emphasizing the importance of understanding motivations and behaviours in shaping travel experiences and satisfaction. Several studies have used the tourist motivations to classify the tourists into categories to cater to them more efficiently (Cohen, 1979; Jeong & Shin, 2020). These studies provide valuable insights into the influence of tourists' motivations and expectations on travel experiences and satisfaction. Therefore, understanding the motivations and expectations of tourists visiting India is crucial for enhancing satisfaction and loyalty (Hsu et al., 2010).

Similarly, Rather et al. (2022) explored the antecedents and consequences of engagement among tourists in India, highlighting the significance of understanding motivations and behaviours in shaping engagement and experiences. No country can survive in a vacuum. While the connection with the world has both its pros and cons, India's domestic challenges are shaped by global forces. Also, the power of different forms of marketing tools in manoeuvring its image is researched and acknowledged by several authors (Sun et al., 2014). Further, the importance of management is discussed to find out ways for improvement. These studies provide valuable insights into the influence of foreign perceptions on destination marketing and national identity (Yen et al., 2020).

Indian tourism offers a diverse range of experiences, including wellness, cultural, rural, and dark (Chowdhary et al., 2022; Gursoy & Kaurav, 2022). Food tourism, in particular, has been extensively studied, with a focus on understanding the motivations of visitors and tourists (Fusté-Forné, 2019). Gupta and Mohta (2022) discussed Indian cuisine, with its diverse flavours and regional variations, playing a significant role in attracting tourists. Food choices in India are influenced by physical, geographical, and cultural factors, and food tourism is promoted as a way to explore the diverse cuisines. Additionally, India's rich cultural heritage, historical sites and natural beauty contribute to its appeal as a tourist destination (Verma et al., 2018).

The wellness sector, including yoga and spirituality, is also a major draw for tourists. India is known for its yoga and spiritual practices, and tourists visit places like Rishikesh to experience wellness and spiritual healing (Bowers & Cheer, 2017; Goyal & Taneja, 2022). Shopping is a motivation for tourism in India, with tourists interested in buying local and ethnic products (Kathuria et al., 2023; Kaurav & Gupta, 2022). Figure 1 indicates all motivations towards India, investigated in existing literature. However, there is limited research specifically addressing these motivations in the context of Indian tourism. Further studies are needed to explore and understand the specific factors that drive tourists to engage in cuisine-oriented, yoga and spirituality orientation shopping-minded tourism, rich culture and history, and the natural beauty in India.

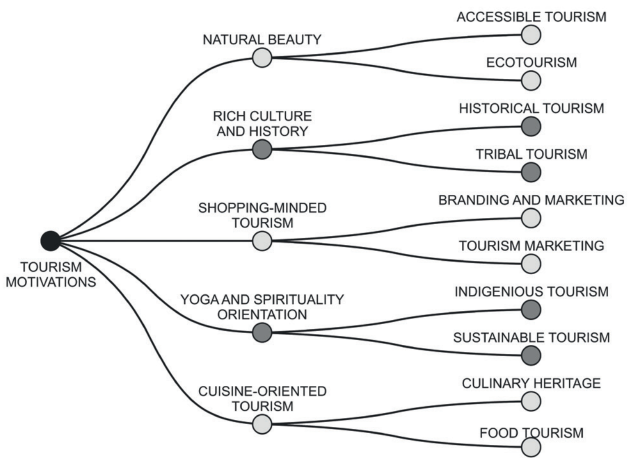

Figure 1. Literature classification on different aspects of perception towards the India
Source: authors using Scopus

There is a multifaceted impact of foreign perceptions on various domains, highlighting the importance of considering these perspectives in shaping India's global engagement and tourism policies. In conclusion, researching foreign tourists' perceptions of India as a tourist destination is essential to developing sustainable tourism regulations, improving tourist experiences and promoting sustainable tourism. The sources reviewed are very helpful in revealing how destination image affects many tourism sectors. These sources also stressed the importance of recognizing and resolving these issues to boost India's tourism.

3. Methodology

A survey was conducted with foreign tourists visiting India to explore the motivating factors attracting them. In the initial phase, semi-structured interviews were carried out with foreign tourists on trains from Agra to Delhi and Gwalior, considering that Agra hosts a significant number of foreign tourists. To ensure diverse perspectives, the research team interacted with tourists from various classes and seating arrangements on the train. These interviews were conducted in the mix of first-class air conditioned (AC), AC-II tier, AC-III tier, executive class chair, air-conditioned chair or coaches and sleeper coaches in variety of trains like the Rajdhani, Shatabdi and Gatimaan Expresses. These interviews were conducted in an informal setting to facilitate candid responses, and the interviewers were proficient English speakers.

It is crucial to note that the research team considered the class-specific nature of places in India. Interviews were conducted on trains to capture diverse perspectives, considering the various classes and seating arrangements. The team also ensured interaction with tourists from different budget categories. Regarding the selection of interviewees, the team employed a non-biased approach, avoiding judgments based on skin colour. Tourists were approached based on their presence on the selected trains and willingness to participate, ensuring inclusivity and recognizing the diverse experiences of international tourists in India.

The interview schedule aimed to uncover attributes influencing the decision to travel, and additional attributes were identified through these interviews. The information gathered was later integrated into the survey instrument.

The survey questionnaire comprised two major sections. The first collected demographic and socio-economic information, while the second included 28 attributes derived from the literature review and refined through panel discussions. Respondents were asked to select the attributes they perceived as most desirable, and these were carefully filtered in consultation with three professors and seven research scholars. The items were measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all important*) to 5 (*extremely important*).

The instrument underwent a pilot study with 15 international tourists, leading to language improvements and the merging of similar attributes. After the pilot, a final set of 24 attributes was established for the instrument.

4. Data collection

Data collection took place in ten popular tourist destinations in India, including Agra, Jaipur, Delhi, Varanasi, Gwalior, Mumbai, Goa, Khajuraho, Mathura and Ujjain. These locations were chosen based on their significance, popularity and diverse destination personality. Within each city, different locations were selected for data collection to ensure a representative sample.

This occurred pre-pandemic using convenience sampling and interviewers approached respondents during their rest periods. A total of 485 questionnaires were distributed, with 390 usable forms returned. After eliminating incomplete and illegible forms, the final sample size remained with 340, representing a 70% response rate (pre-pandemic: 219, post-pandemic: 121).

5. Mixed method approach

It is noteworthy that a mixed-method approach was employed. Pre-pandemic, quantitative data were collected through surveys. Post-pandemic, qualitative data were gathered from international travellers using online, video and in-person methods in the same cities, providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing travel decisions and experiences.

After the pandemic, to deepen understanding of the changed travel motivations and experiences, we conducted in-depth interviews with international travellers. These interviews aimed to provide deeper insights beyond our initial survey data. Chosen travellers had recent visits to India post-pandemic, and we connected with them via video calls, ensuring everyone's safety. Each interview lasted 30–45 minutes, focusing on their post-pandemic experiences and perceptions of India. Furthermore, based on these interviews, we updated our survey questions to capture the changing travel dynamics effectively. This combined approach, blending qualitative interviews with quantitative data, offers a thorough understanding of post-pandemic tourism trends in India. These interviews aimed to complement the pre-pandemic quantitative survey data with rich, qualitative insights.

6. Data analysis

6.1. Quantitative approach

The data analysis process comprised two distinct stages, each leveraging a specific statistical tool with its own inherent importance and significance. The overarching strategy employed for data analysis unfolded in two sequential steps. Initially, frequencies and descriptive statistics were utilized to elucidate the fundamental demographic and socioeconomic backgrounds of the respondents, effectively profiling the study participants. Subsequently, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted, employing principal component analysis, to discern pivotal factors motivating individuals to visit India.

Within the sampled population, gender distribution was nearly balanced, with 51% identified as males and 49% as females. While respondents below the age of 18 constituted a minor proportion (2.32%) of the sample, their inclusion was deemed essential due to their discernible impact on destination decision-making processes. The age distribution revealed that 47.79% of respondents fell within the 19–30 age bracket, while 31.78% belonged to the 31–50 age group. The remaining 18% comprised respondents aged 50 and above. Noteworthy is the fact that a substantial majority (67%) of the respondents were first-time travellers to India.

Geographically, the majority hailed from Europe (21.11%) and North America (22.5%). Approximately 42% represented the Asian and Australian regions, while respondents from African countries constituted the smallest subset. These demographic patterns closely mirrored the official statistics reported in Indian tourism statistics (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2022). Furthermore, the sample exhibited a nuanced distribution across continents, encompassing 21% from Asian countries, 17% from European nations, 20% from North American territories, and 21% each from Australia and Africa and South America combined.

6.2. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

A meticulous examination of existing literature in the field of tourism motivation revealed a prevailing trend, with over 70% initiating their exploration with factor analysis as a methodological cornerstone (Gan et al., 2023). Consequently, in alignment with this established approach, the current article adopted a similar methodology, in the pursuit of uncovering the latent factors influencing motivations, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted, employing principal component analysis (PCA) as recommended by Oguz et al. (2020). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure for sample adequacy yielded a commendable value of 0.742, and Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 237.789$, $p < 0.001$).

Given the recommendation by Gorsuch (1983) to maintain a minimum ratio of 10 respondents to 1 item for a newly developed instrument, the study's sample size of 340 with a ratio of 14 : 1, was considered robust (Carpenter, 2018). These results substantiate the suitability of the data for factor analysis.

Utilizing principal component analysis with the varimax rotation method (Kaurav, Gursoy & Chowdhary, 2020), a five-factor solution was derived, collectively elucidating 66.9% of the total variance. Eigen values for all the factors were more than 1, which is above the threshold. Factors with loadings exceeding 0.5 were deemed significant contributors, leading to the exclusion of statements failing to meet this. Consequently, the analysis retained five factors comprising 20 items,

Table 1. Rotated component matrix of motivations and leading factors

Factors	Items/Questions	Factor loadings	Model validity
Cuisine oriented	India is profuse in multiple cuisines, varied from traditional, regional and international	0.862	Eigen values: 7.805 Percent of variance: 15.162 Cronbach's alpha (α): 0.863
	Ease of availability of foreign chains of foods	0.732	
	Multi-ethnic country	0.713	
	Variety of delicious cuisines	0.674	
	Indian food is prepared according to local traditions	0.644	
	Ease of availability of local food	0.567	
Yoga and spirituality orientation	India offers high Ayurvedic medicinal quality, rich, aromatic, green and herbal leaves	0.765	Eigen values: 7.654 Percent of variance: 13.54 Cronbach's alpha (α): 0.845
	India is rich in Ayurveda and medicines	0.716	
	Land of many rituals and festivals	0.665	
	Great place to do yoga and meditation	0.654	
	India is famous for spiritual learnings	0.543	
Shopping minded	Good and reasonable shopping destinations for artefacts, clothes, handicrafts and accessories	0.757	Eigen values: 6.579 Percent of variance: 12.113 Cronbach's alpha (α): 0.858
	Indian products offer a good value for money	0.674	
	Cost effective in services, like accommodation, transportation, body spa and body therapy	0.638	
Rich culture and history	Forts and monuments	0.712	Eigen values: 5.682 Percent of variance: 11.45 Cronbach's alpha (α): 0.716
	Rich cultural heritage	0.701	
	Fascinating history about kings and dynasties	0.698	
	Rich Indian ethnic culture and traditions	0.657	
Natural beauty	Diverse landscapes, like beaches, forests, deserts and mountains	0.642	Eigen values: 4.682 Percent of variance: 9.67 Cronbach's alpha (α): 0.706
	Ethnic products of India are a significant attraction, like clothes, food and artefacts	0.613	

Source: authors using SPSS.

with the removal of four items due to insufficient factor loading. To assess the internal consistency of each factor, Cronbach's alpha (α) was computed. This methodological approach aligns with evolving standards within the research community and ensures a rigorous evaluation of the factors identified through the analysis (refer Table 1).

Exploring motivations in the tourism domain involved a meticulous analysis of the data, revealing five distinct factors with eigenvalues exceeding one and collectively explaining 62% of the variance. Each factor underwent scrutiny for reliability using Cronbach's alpha, considering a threshold of $\alpha > 0.6$ for acceptance (Mehmetoglu, 2005).

Factor one: Cuisine orientation

Comprising seven items centered around cuisines, spices and food, this factor, labelled "cuisine-oriented", exhibited high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.863). Accounting for 15% of the variance, it underscored the global importance of Indian cuisine, reflecting the country's cultural diversity and culinary richness (Mangalassary, 2016).

Additionally, it is also a reflection of India's diversity in culture that is much in evidence in the diverse cuisines it offers (Rathore & Shekhawat, 2008). The local traditions, geography and history of a community play a crucial role in its gastronomy (Mangalassary, 2016). Local food is generally prepared according to the traditions of a community. Due to flexible trade policies, various international food chains are easily available across the country which have also promoted cooking to a certain extent in India. Thus, the multi-ethnic country offers a wide range of delightful and different cuisines.

Factor two: Spiritual orientation

Encompassing themes of spiritual experiences, yoga and meditation, the second factor, named "spiritual orientation" demonstrated a reliability of 0.845 (Cronbach's alpha) and 14% explained variance. With an eigenvalue of 7.654, this factor resonated with India's profound spiritual history and its reputation as the birthplace of various religions and spiritual practices.

India is considered the birthplace of many religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism and a place with profuse spiritual experiences (Aggarwal et al., 2008; Balutiya, 2019; Sharpley & Sundaram, 2005). Also, the country has an extended history in Ayurveda due to which the country is rich in Ayurvedic treatments and still upholds traditional medication and other wellness practices (Kumar, 2017). Peace and spiritual essence make India a great place to carry out wellness-related activities (Choudhary & Qadir, 2022).

Factor three: Shopping minded / budget centred

The third factor, "budget centred", highlighted aspects of value for money, inexpensive prices and affordable services. With a robust Cronbach's alpha of 0.858, it explained 12% of the variance. The factor emphasized India's affordability, diverse accommodation options and the allure of ethnic products, making it a competitive shopping destination (Choudhary & Qadir, 2022). Moreover, India offers a range of accommodation and experiences suitable for all kind of travellers, be it luxurious journeys or budget-friendly ventures. India was also seen as a place providing value for money with its rich history, diverse culture, its ethnicity, adventure and abundance of natural beauty. Also, the ethnic products of India are a significant attraction for many foreigners making it a competitive shopping destination for artefacts, antiques, handicrafts, traditional clothes and accessories.

Factor four: Cultural inclination

Factor four, named "cultural inclination", comprising items associated with ethnicity and culture, demonstrated a reliability value of 0.716 and explained 11% of the total variance. This factor celebrated India's rich cultural tapestry, featuring diverse structural designs, historical contributions and vibrant traditions (Choudhary & Qadir, 2022). The themes prevailing here can be represented as India offering a fascinating history of numerous kings, their dynasties and contribution to making the land prosperous and rich in culture. This richness can be appreciated in intangible aspects such as the diversity in structural designs at forts, monuments and museums. Indian ethnicity is seen in its traditions, rituals and festivals celebrated across the country by its people.

Factor five: Natural beauty

The fifth factor, labelled "natural beauty", incorporated statements related to India's diverse landscapes and tourism opportunities. With a Cronbach's alpha of 0.706, it explained 10% of the variance, emphasizing India's picturesque offerings, from mountains and beaches to forests and deserts. In adopting a concise approach, these factors succinctly encapsulate the diverse motivations and experiences driving international tourists to explore the country.

India stands out as a coveted tourist destination for a multitude of compelling reasons, as illustrated in Figure 2. Foremost among these is its rich and diverse cultural heritage, spanning from the ancient remnants of the Indus Valley Civilization to the awe-inspiring architectural marvels of the Mughal Empire. This historical tapestry provides visitors with a captivating journey through India's past. Secondly, the country boasts some of the world's most breathtaking natural landscapes, ranging from the snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas to the verdant tropical forests and backwater of Kerala, offering an array of experiences for every traveller. Thirdly, India holds profound spiritual significance, featuring revered sites like Varanasi, Rishikesh and Bodh Gaya, attracting seekers of enlightenment from around the globe. These locations hold particular importance in Hinduism (Aggarwal et al., 2008; Bandyopadhyay & Nair, 2019; Phukan, 2014; Rana, 2015).

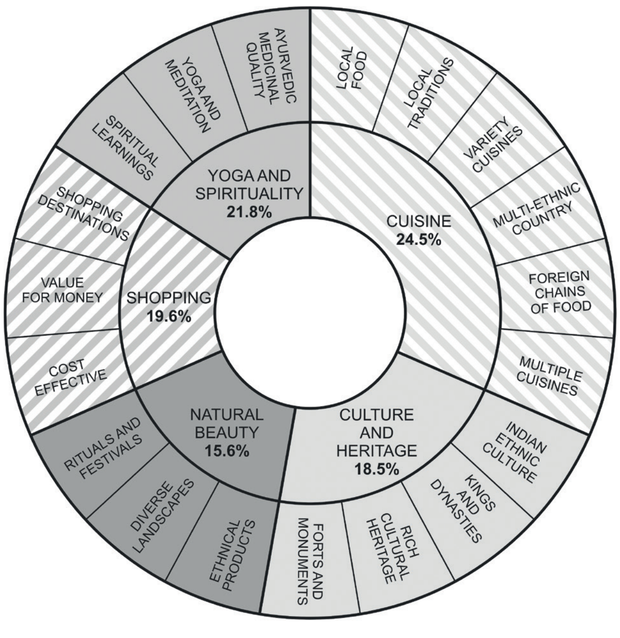

Figure 2. Experiences that drive towards India (foreign view)
Source: authors

Table 2. Thematic analysis of interview transcripts

Theme (number of participants)	Participant number	Analysis
Cuisine orientation (9)	P1, P2, P5, P6–P9, P15, P21	Participants expressed fascination with the diversity and uniqueness of Indian cuisine, highlighting it as a significant aspect of their travel experience
Spiritual orientation (9)	P4, P6–P9, P22–25	Responses indicated a strong inclination towards India's spiritual aspects, with experiences in yoga, meditation, and religious diversity being highly valued
Budget centred (8)	P3, P11–P17	The data underscored the importance of affordability in enhancing travel experiences, with participants appreciating value for money in various services
Cultural inclination (8)	P4, P16–P21, P24	Cultural heritage, historical sites and traditional practices were major attractions, as reflected in participants' interests in exploring India's rich culture and history
Natural beauty (10)	P8–P12, P16, P22–P25	Participants were captivated by India's diverse natural landscapes, from mountains to beaches, emphasizing the country's scenic beauty as a key motivator

Source: authors.

Moreover, India's vast geography and varied seasons have fostered a rich tapestry of cultures and cuisines, providing tourists with a diverse experience (Bhartwal & Sharma, 2022; Gupta et al., 2022; Rathore & Shekhawat, 2008). Lastly, the perception of India as an affordable destination, coupled with its allure as a shopping haven, further enhances its appeal to international tourists. The novelty, arts and crafts that form part of the shopping experience contribute to India's distinct brand identity (Ahmad, 2014; Khan et al., 2017). This multifaceted attractiveness positions India as a multifaceted destination, catering to a wide spectrum of interests and preferences for global travellers.

6.3. Qualitative approach

In this second part of the study, a sample of 25 participants was meticulously selected to provide insights into post-pandemic travel motivations, perceptions, behaviours, attitudes and experiences. The gender distribution was evenly balanced, with a slight male predominance. Age-wise, the majority of participants were young adults, primarily falling in the 19–30 age bracket, reflecting the active and adventurous segment of travellers. Geographically, the participants were diverse, representing various continents, with a significant number hailing from Europe and North America, in line with the global travel trends. Notably, a considerable proportion of these respondents were visiting India for the first time, offering fresh perspectives on their travel motivations and experiences in the country. Thematic analysis was done to decipher the inner experiences and also to triangulate what is been said in quantitative part of this study (Aggarwal et al., 2023; Kainthola et al., 2024; Kaurav, Suresh, Narula & Baber, 2020; Tiwari & Kaurav, 2022).

The thematic analysis in Table 2 reveals key aspects of India's appeal to international travellers. Cuisine orientation is a significant draw, with participants enamoured by the diverse and unique flavours of Indian food. Spiritual orientation underscores India's role as a center for spiritual activities and enlightenment, particularly through yoga and meditation. The budget centred theme highlights India's affordability, enhancing its attractiveness as a travel destination. Cultural inclination reflects a deep interest in India's rich historical heritage and diverse cultural practices. Lastly, natural beauty emphasizes the allure of India's varied landscapes, from serene beaches to majestic mountains.

7. Conclusions

A versatile destination with 28 states and eight union territories, each state offering a unique encounter with its history, culture and geography. The beauty of Indian monuments like the Taj Mahal, its nature, the grandness of its temples, diverse cuisines and the vastness of its culture is conspicuous in the numerous works dedicated by the scholars over the years, especially foreign authors. Tourism in India is significantly increasing and witnessing growth. While COVID-19 did bring a temporary halt (Assaf et al., 2022; Kainthola et al., 2021), it is again at a steady rise (Saxena et al., 2021). The study of tourist motivation is of great value in planning, marketing and administrating a destination and India is seen as a place providing value for money with its rich history, diverse culture, its ethnicity and abundance of natural beauty. The study enlightens the readers with the major motivations of the tourists visiting India, highlighting the expectations they have from their journey revealing their image.

This study's findings triangulate with both quantitative and qualitative approaches and underscore its multifaceted appeal as a travel destination in the post-pandemic era. The blend of rich cultural heritage, diverse culinary experiences, spiritual depth, natural beauty and affordability, positions India uniquely in the global tourism landscape. Future research could explore how these factors influence repeat visitation and the long-term perception of India in the international tourism market. Additionally, understanding the evolving expectations of post-pandemic travellers can aid in tailoring tourism strategies to meet the new dynamics of global travel.

India is a country with a lot to offer tourists, and it is no wonder that it is becoming an increasingly popular destination for travellers from all over the world. With its rich culture, amazing food and beautiful scenery, India has something for everyone.

8. Managerial and practical implications

The study offers practical implications for destination managers and tourism policy planners in India and the findings will lead to the policy implications. The above stakeholders can concentrate on planning in different ways and it will, therefore, provide insights to improvise the Incredible India campaign. It has theoretical implications, especially for the existing literature on tourist motivations in developing economies. The study suggests easy management, better catering for tourists, enhancing products and understanding the market. This article could be insightful for planner, managers and policymakers of tourism-related businesses, especially those that are working with inbound tourists. The results of this study suggest the direction for the segment of international tourists. How they should be catered for and targeted for futurist market campaigns? What are the expectations of the tourist who is looking towards India? These questions have been answered by this study.

9. Theoretical implications

The government of India has launched, in 2014, a first of its kind AYUSH (ayurveda, yoga and naturopathy, unani, siddha and homeopathy) Ministry. This initiative was envisioned to revive the profound knowledge of our ancient systems of medicine and ensuring the optimal development and propagation of Ayush systems of healthcare. Such initiatives are a strong step towards strengthening and expanding the spirituality essence of Indian tourism. India is gaining a significant focus on yoga and spirituality. Especially after the detrimental impact of COVID-19, travellers are seeking meaningful and relaxing journeys (Kainthola et al., 2022). India has the potential of being a world leader in the sector.

10. Limitations and future research directions

This study, while comprehensive, acknowledges certain limitations that pave the way for future research directions. Firstly, the sample representation of visitors from each continent was small, indicating the need for a larger, more cross-cultural study to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Secondly, data collection was concentrated in North India, which may not fully represent the diverse tourist experiences in South and Northeast India. Thirdly, the statistical methods allowed some chances of error in the grouping of factors, a larger sample is a possible solution of this problem. Lastly, data gathered pre-pandemic may not reflect the potential post-pandemic surge in interest towards spiritual and yoga-related tourism in India. Future studies could address these gaps by expanding the geographical scope of data collection, increasing the sample size for a more diverse cultural representation, collecting data from South and Northeast India, and examining post-pandemic tourism trends to capture the evolving dynamics of travel motivations and preferences.

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International retirement migration for Japanese retirees Motivational push-pull factors and behavioral phenomena towards cultural assimilation

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ABSTRACT

This article examines push and pull factors for Japanese retirees in Thailand as part of international retirement migration (IRM). Additionally, it studies levels of social integration, subjective wellbeing, life satisfaction, cultural assimilation and factors that hinder it. It examines the moderating and mediating effect of the relationship between independent and dependent variables. A quantitative method using a questionnaire was used and found that economic, health and social factors are significant in influencing retirees' push and pull motivations. As for social integration, subjective well-being, life satisfaction and cultural assimilation, there is positive feedback from retirees. Factors that hinder cultural assimilation are language barriers and cultural differences. The results show a positive and strong association between language acquisition and social integration, between social integration and cultural assimilation, and between attitudes and cultural assimilation. There is a moderating effect between language acquisition and cultural assimilation. The results also show that there is no mediating effect for local support on the relationship between attitudes and social integration.

KEYWORDS

international migration, Japanese retirees, push and pull factors, cultural assimilation

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1. Introduction

Between the 1960s and 1970s, mobility among retirees and high-income earners to seek a better environment and live abroad, increased. This is known as international retirement migration (IRM) and is defined as long-term or permanent migration rather than leisure as for short term holidays or business trips (Hall & Müller, 2004). IRM started as countryside recreation and part of a lifestyle and leisure culture, especially in Nordic countries (Lipkina, 2013), becoming popular with the purchase or rental of property in foreign destinations (Nouza et al., 2018). Later it contributed to regional economies in most tourism destinations (Hall & Müller, 2004). Retirees from the USA, Europe and Japan move to Southeast Asia, including Malaysia and Thailand, for a better quality of life after their retirement (Howard, 2008; Ono, 2008, 2010), an opportunity in fact for a second life, setting new goals, activities, the experience of living in foreign destinations and doing volunteer work (Williams et al., 2000). Before 2000, Japanese had a desire to stay in English-speaking countries like the USA, Canada and Australia, but since 2000, Southeast Asian countries, like Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines have become more popular because of the warm weather and cheaper cost of living than their country of origin. Statistics revealed that long-stay arrivals in the region increased steadily between 2011 and 2015 and within those five years, arrivals increased from 81.3 million to 108.9 million (Siew, 2017). Thailand offers a 'non-migrant type O' visa to foreigners who are aged over 50 with at least 800,000 Thai Baht in a savings account in a Thailand bank. They need to report to immigration authorities every time they spend a night outside Thailand, or every 90 days, as the purpose of their stay may not be income generation, and the visa must be extended annually.

Japan's population is ageing faster than that of any other nation (D.M., 2014). In 2014, 26% were estimated to be 65 or older, and the Health and Welfare Ministry has estimated that over-65s will account for 40% of the population by 2060 ("Japan population to shrink by a third by 2060", 2012). The demographic shift in Japan's age profile has triggered concerns about the nation's economic future and the viability of its welfare state. This demographic crisis is the consequence of the combination of two elements: a high life expectancy and a low fertility rate.

In 2018, Japan had the second highest life expectancy in the world and meanwhile, since the 1970s the country has failed to raise its fertility rate to replacement level. The working culture, a deterioration of employment opportunities for young men and the traditional gender division of labour, are possible explanations for this trend. The consequences of the country's ageing and shrinking population include economic crisis, budgetary challenges, pressure on job markets and depopulation of rural areas. The increasing proportion of the elderly has resulted in an increasing demand for IRM and second homes. Retiree migration has become more popular as its intention is to search for a more affordable living environment and a second home retirement destination. This is a new form of international human mobility, where the movement of elderly people in their later lives to places that offer more favorable features and a better quality of life (Balkir & Kirkulak, 2009). For Japanese retirees who utilise this, the primary purpose of living abroad is to enjoy a warm climate, to explore the cultural and natural attractions that a country offers, and to take advantage of the relatively inexpensive living costs. Therefore, use by those over 65 has increased rapidly, while for those aged less than 65 it is in decline (Hongsranagon, 2005). The purpose of this research is to study the motivational push-pull factors that lead Japanese retirees to live abroad. This research also investigates whether behavioral phenomena like well-being, social integration and life satisfaction play an important role in cultural assimilation.

2. Literature review

International retirement migration normally occurs on a temporary or semi-permanent basis depending on previous experience, time spent in the country of origin and the host destination, and the ownership of property (Mason, 2002; O'Reilly, 2000). Through globalization, according to Warnes (2009), international second homes (ISH) have become a residential strategy for retirees upon leaving their careers and changes in their personal and social conditions (Abellán Garcia, 1993; King et al., 1998). It is worthwhile noting that the term 'second home' may not necessarily refer to the ownership of property in a different country or to permanently leaving their country of origin to reside overseas. Thus, in general, researchers have termed an ISH as a destination on a long-term basis which acts as a residence for someone who comes from a different location (McIntyre, 2014; Visser, 2006). Generally, all motivations can be divided into push and pull factors.

According to Müller (2011), an increasing number of retirees have begun to invest in recreational second homes with the aim to migrate permanently. Retired migrants are presented as a relatively privileged group with few serious problems (Gustafson, 2008), financially better off, immune from economic downturns and less destructive or seasonal than tourists (Rodriguez, 2001). Though less than 0.25% of retirees are estimated to spend their retirement overseas (Banks, 2004), this trend is expected to strengthen with an increasing elderly population (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2022). Cross-border residential mobility has become a growing facet in the broad sphere of lifestyle migration (O'Reilly & Benson, 2009) due to a combination of increasing longevity, thriving international mobility, burgeoning telecommunications and a widening disparity in post-work incomes (Warnes & Williams, 2006).

This shows that there is demand in the second home industry from this specific cohort of the elderly and from retirees from around the globe (Vanhove, 2005). Second homes have become a new preference for retirees due to an increase in wealth, income, mobility and the availability of long-term tourism (Müller, 2006). Among the impacts of an ageing population on a society, particularly in the developing nations, is the increase in financial pressure on a social security system which will eventually be passed on to those younger and making it increasingly expensive for those citizens. As a result, the demand for overseas second home retirement has increased, urging retirees to search for a more affordable living environment which offers a better quality of life and fulfills their 'self-actualization' needs (Wong & Musa, 2014).

2.1. Long-stay international retirement migration (IRM): Japanese retirees in Thailand

Nowadays, many Japanese retirees choose Thailand for long-stay tourism, the second most popular long-stay destination after Malaysia (Long Stay Foundation, 2018). The Thai government, particularly the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), has been actively promoting long-stay tourism since 2001 as part of a national development strategy (Toyota & Xiang, 2012). Long-stay is regarded as staying in a country for more than 30 days and not for sightseeing or work but with the purpose of living but with the intention to return to their home countries (Hongsranagon, 2005). As retirees are the main target group, a special renewable one-year visa is provided for people aged 50 and above who fulfill certain financial criteria. The Thai government has designated Japan as a primary target country and the idea of second home or long-stay was proposed by TAT and approved by the government in 1998. The registration data from 2017 for overseas residents shows that the number of Japanese expatriates had doubled in the previous decade, reaching around 81,000 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2022).

2.2. Migration: Lee's push-pull theory

Everett Lee proposed a comprehensive theory of migration in 1966 to study floating populations and immigrants (Lee, 1966). The theory holds that the reasons are because people can improve their living conditions through migration. Lee states that each place possesses a set of positive and negative factors: positive factors are the circumstances that act to hold people, or attract those from other areas, negative factors tend to repel them (Figure 1).

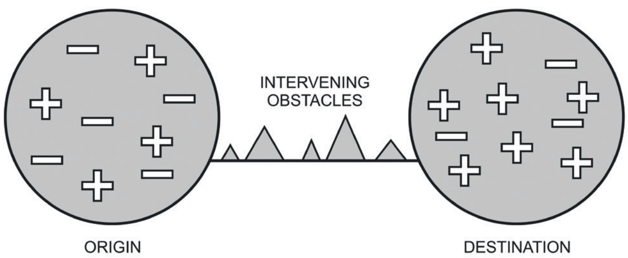

Figure 1. Lee's push-pull theory
Source: Lee (1966)

2.3. Social exchange theory

Social exchange theory is a behavioral theory (Lee & Back, 2006) that attempts to illustrate how individuals' actions are contingent upon rewards from others (Emerson, 1976). From a tourism perspective, social exchange theory attempts to measure and explain social assimilation among retirees toward local society. The theory focuses on the interaction between residents and tourists where the goal of the exchange is to benefit both parties (Mukherjee & Bhal, 2017).

2.4. Retirement migration model

Schiamberg and McKinney (2003) and Wiseman (1980) considered retirement migration as a process and an event that is influenced by several factors such as personal resources, community and housing, along with social factors and support networks. Haas and Serow (1993) believe that retirees often do not stay permanently in the same retirement location, but then decide to move elsewhere. Guided by Haas and Serow's (1993) retirement migration model, this research predicts that retirees demonstrate transnational behavior which affects their ties both with their place of origin and the retirement location. This behavior may either enhance or reduce their overall experience in the retirement destination.

2.5. Cultural assimilation

Keefe and Padilla (1987) define assimilation as the social, economic and political integration of an ethnic minority group into mainstream society (Mukherji, 2005). The process involves taking on the traits of the dominant culture to such a degree that the assimilating group becomes socially indistinguishable from other members of that society.

2.6. Social integration

Social integration can be explained as "the process of promoting the values, relations and institutions that enable all people to participate in social, economic and political life on the basis of equality of rights and opportunity, equity and dignity" (Ferguson, 2008). Social integration refers to the extent to which newcomers experience cooperative social interaction with members of the host society, satisfaction with them, and attraction (Wang & Kim, 2013).

2.7. Language vis-à-vis social integration

Krumm and Plutzar (2008) argue that it is important for immigrants to develop their national language skills so as to integrate and participate in the society; this is critical because at the end of the process they live under the same legal, social and financial conditions as the natives. Language learning can thus be seen as a qualification for achieving social integration.

2.8. Social integration vis-à-vis cultural assimilation

Social integration is very important whereby individuals from different groups gain equal access to resources and opportunities. This makes societies more cohesive and culturally diverse by promoting understanding and acceptance. Social integration is the process during which newcomers or minorities are incorporated into the social structure of the host society. In this research, it is believed that good social integration leads to good cultural assimilation among retirees.

2.9. Subjective well-being vis-à-vis culture assimilation

Research by Angelini et al. (2015) on the 'Life satisfaction of immigrants: does cultural assimilation matter?' indicated a direct association between subjective well-being and cultural assimilation, unmediated by labor market outcomes (e.g. employment status, wages), time-invariant unobserved individual characteristics, or regional controls that capture the external social conditions of migrants. The findings show a strong association between a direct measure of immigrants' subjective well-being and assimilation with a host culture.

2.10. Attitude

Positive attitudes can have a significant impact on culture assimilation. When individuals possess positive attitudes toward different cultures, it fosters an environment of acceptance, openness and understanding. This respect creates an atmosphere where individuals from different backgrounds feel welcomed and included. It also encourages a willingness to learn about other cultures.

2.11. Language barrier

A language barrier can be defined as the difficulty in expressing oneself, difficulty in obtaining directions, difficulty in explaining expectations, poor performance and ineffective communication (McIntire, 2014). Barker and Härtel support this notion, proclaiming that occurrence of ignorance due to differences in communication can prevent immigrants from interacting with locals. Consequently, understanding of the local language is of great importance (Barker & Härtel, 2004).

2.12. External social conditions

External social conditions refer to the contextual factors and circumstances within a society or community that influence individuals' experiences, interactions and well-being. These conditions are external to the individual and encompass various aspects of the social environment including cultural norms, societal values, institutional structures and social relationships. They can significantly shape people's lives and impact their behavior, opportunities and overall quality of life.

3. Methodology

The primary data for this research was collected through a questionnaire that was distributed from January to March 2023. In the questionnaire the respondents were required to fill in their demographic profile as well as to mark each item according to a five-point Likert scale (1 – *strongly disagree*, 2 – *disagree*, 3 – *neither disagree nor agree*, 4 – *agree* or 5 – *strongly agree*), which was inspired by and partially developed from Marjavaara (2008) and Opačić (2009). There will also be some self-constructed items in the form of open-ended questions and it was translated into English from Japanese. Cross-sectional design has been implemented so that the author will collect data over a certain time period in order to be able to identify patterns in the collected data (Bryman, 2012). Since there is limited time for the collecting of data, a cross-sectional design gives a better understanding of the situation at given times (Bryman, 2012). Purposive sampling methods were used in which respondents were recruited on a voluntary basis in cooperation with three Japanese self-help clubs. For the questionnaire, the author managed to find 200 respondents who live in Thailand under IRM. In terms of age, respondents from 55 onwards were involved coming from an older generation (baby boomers) who were born between 1946 and 1964. They are currently between 55–75 years old. For this research, dependent and independent variables, along with moderating and mediating variables were used. Figure 2 is the conceptual framework for this article.

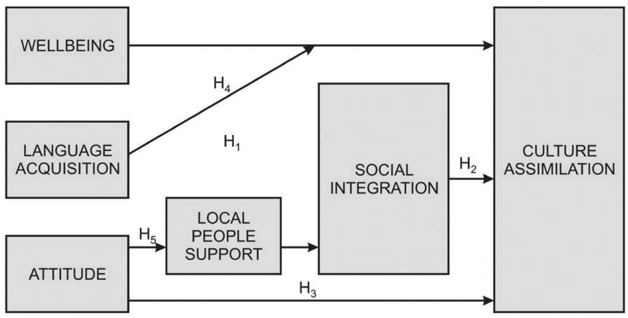

Figure 2. Conceptual framework
Source: author

4. Research findings

Altogether there were 107 male retirees, representing 53.5% of respondents, and almost 70% are above 65. Most were married, followed by widowed, and then single and divorced. Most had graduated from university with 75 holding a bachelor level degree, accounting for 37.5%. About 37.5% have a monthly income between USD 5500 and USD 6499 (Table 1).

Table 1. Respondents' profiles

Characteristic	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	107	53.5
	Female	93	46.5
Age	55–60	52	26.0
	61–64	10	5.0
	65–69	62	31.0
	Over 70	76	38.0
Marital status	Single	24	12.0
	Married	98	49.0
	Widowed	58	29.0
	Divorced	20	10.0
Educational background	Diploma	21	10.5
	Bachelor's-level degree	75	37.5
	Master's-level degree	65	32.5
	Doctoral degree	39	19.5
Income	USD 3500–4499	16	8.0
	USD 4500–5499	54	27.0
	USD 5500–6499	75	37.5
	Above USD 6500	55	27.5

Source: author.

In this article, the pull and push factors have been divided into economic, health and social such as high-income tax, poor living conditions (economic factors), emerging infectious diseases, expensive medical services (health factors), and increased disaster risks and urban sprawl (social factors), scoring the highest means (Table 2).

Table 2. Mean scores for push and pull factors for Japanese retirees

Motivational items		Mean
Push factors from Japan		
Economic factors	Tax code – high income tax to take from pension	4.65
	Poor living conditions – tiny rooms, confining spaces, overcrowding, poverty etc.	4.56
	High pace of lifestyle	4.38
	High cost of living leading to unsatisfactory financial conditions	4.28
Health factors	Emerging infectious diseases – dengue, chikungunya, zika, Ebola, hemorrhagic and yellow fever, avian influenza, respiratory infectious diseases, etc.	4.34
	High cost for medical services	4.33
	Low quality of life due to poor health facilities – lack of hospitals and clinics, poor medical care, lack of space to exercise etc.	4.08
Social factors	Growing disaster risks like earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis and repeated floods	4.53
	Poorly planned urban sprawl leads to congestion and overcrowding as well as having negative effects on people's well-being	4.21
	Extreme weather and seasonal changes	4.19
	Poor social networks for the elderly	4.00
Pull factors to Thailand		
Economic factors	Low cost of living (affordability of housing rent, food etc.)	4.45
	Cheaper labour and service (domestic staff: maid, gardener, etc.)	4.42
	Improving living standards e.g. spacious house, better living, better leisure activities, better well-being etc.	4.35
	Excellent infrastructure and facilities	4.27
	Efficient tax and visa system	4.21
Health factors	Good self-care (yoga, bike-rides, vacation, meditate, spa, wellness therapies)	4.51
	Availability of carers for the elderly	4.39
	Subtropical climate with warm weather and mild temperatures for better health and well-being	4.35
	More rejuvenating wellness retreats	4.32
	Quality medical service and health care at an affordable price	4.27
	Good surrounding and living environment ex. clean air, less pollution and clean water	4.19

Table 2 (cont.)

Motivational items		Mean
Social factors	Existence of Japanese communities and clubs to socialize with	4.50
	Satisfaction from ikigai (living meaningfully, pleasure and enjoyable) activities that promote well-being and improve the quality of life	4.34
	Good communication networks	4.27
	Sheltered life: feeling calm, resilient, safe and secure	4.26
	Available entertainment for leisure (e.g. parks, theatres, clubs, temples, restaurants, shopping malls, street foods, traditional performances etc.)	4.20
	Affordable and hassle-free transportation	4.10
	Friendly and tolerant communities who live harmoniously	4.03
	No social isolation and good social connection among retirees and local people, retirees can mix well with friends and local people and practice Japanese culture freely	4.27
	Full freedom of religion and places of worship for all religions	4.20

Source: author.

Additional motivational factors that influence retirees to reside in Thailand can be divided into those that include support from local people and government and external social condition. A good supply of skilled care workers at affordable prices, acknowledgment by local government (support from local people and government), direct flights to Japan and a world class education system (external social conditions) score highest (Table 3).

Table 3. Mean scores for other motivational factors for Japanese retirees

Other motivational items	Mean
Support from local people and government	
Good supply of skilled care workers (maids) at an affordable price	4.32
Acknowledgment of Japanese people by the government, e.g. special events held like the biennial Bon Odori Festival for Thai-Japanese relations	4.31
Helpful, supportive and empathetic residents	4.28
Encouraging attitudes from Thai people to foreigners	4.26
External social conditions	
Direct flights to Japan makes it easy for families and friends to visit	4.35
World class education system	4.32

Source: author.

To study the level of social integration the questionnaires have been divided into attitudes and socialization. Under attitudes, the statements that score highly are that retirees are willing to socialize with local people through festivals and participate with local activities to understand the culture. The mean for attitude is 4.262 which shows a high level of social integration between the retirees and local people. Good socialization with the locals ensures friendliness with local people and promotes healthy lives, encouraging an environment of respect where people respect different cultures and mix well, scoring the highest. The mean under socialization is 4.286 indicating a high level of social integration (Table 4).

Table 4. Mean scores for social integration among Japanese retirees

Level of social integration	Mean
Attitudes	
Retirees are willing to socialize with local people through festivals and parties	4.53
Retirees participate in local Thai activities to understand the culture	4.41
Retirees are open-minded about learning new cultures and find it simpler to adapt to their new surroundings	4.37
Retirees feel welcome due to high level of social and emotional support from local people	4.34
Retirees build resilience and can cope with the new environment due to interaction and socialization with local people	4.15
Retirees mix well and share experience with local Thai community to improve social aspects	4.08
Socialization	
Good socialization ensures friendliness with local people and promotes healthy lives	4.29
Good socialization encourages an environment of respect where people respect different cultures and can mix well	4.26
Retirees take part in the local activities, making local friends, attending social groups, clubs and events where possible	4.28

Retirees gradually feel more comfortable with the new culture, social lifestyle and the new surroundings, and begin to feel less alien	4.18
Retirees avoid culture shock by exposing themselves to the alien environment and culture to avoid feeling anxiety and nervousness	4.15

Source: author.

Under 'level of well-being', the impact of the new environment in Thailand has improved retirees' psychological wellbeing and social integration. They have more positive emotions and intend to engage in spiritual practices with local people, and these score the highest means. The average mean of subjective wellbeing is 4.3129 which shows a high level (Table 5).

Table 5. Mean scores for subjective wellbeing among Japanese retirees

Level of subjective well-being	Mean
Impact of new environment in Thailand has improved retiree psychological wellbeing and social integration	4.37
Retirees have more positive emotions and intend to engage in spiritual practices with the local people	4.36
Physical wellness of the retirees improves due to the good external social conditions being given by local people	4.30
Retirees feel accepted by local people and therefore happier and healthier	4.23
Retirees experience a good quality of life with better climate, weather and surroundings while mixing well with the locals	4.20
Positive wellbeing motivates retirees to become active and undergo positive ageing	4.08
Retirees enhance wellbeing by sticking to a healthy sleep schedule, choosing nutritious meals, and taking part in stress management techniques such as meditation or yoga	4.00

Source: author.

Under 'cultural assimilation', among the highest mean scores are assimilation into the local society helping the retiree to appreciate culture and get over the hesitation of something different, and assimilation experiences leading to a higher quality of living and better mental health. The mean for cultural assimilation is 4.152 which indicates a high level of cultural assimilation (Table 6).

Table 6. Mean scores for cultural assimilation among Japanese retirees

Level of cultural assimilation	Mean
Assimilation into local society helps the retiree to appreciate culture and get over the fear or hesitation of something different	4.31
Assimilation experiences in Thailand lead to a higher quality of living and better mental health among retirees	4.25
Conducive and efficient facilities provided by Thai authorities have enabled retirees to perform cultural assimilation smoothly	4.21
Retirees are comfortable in making new friends and attending cultural events	4.17
To assimilate well with the local culture, retirees make an effort to learn the local language and become part of that culture	4.13
Retirees tend to adapt to local culture	4.04

Source: author.

To study the factors that hinder cultural assimilation among Japanese retirees, the researcher has divided the questionnaires into language acquisition and culture differences. Under 'language barriers', among the items that receive high scores are retirees experiencing difficulty in their efforts to integrate and communicate in Thailand. The mean for factors that hinder cultural assimilation under language barrier is 4.364 which is very high. Under 'culture differences', among the items that receive high scores are local people eating using fingers, but retirees often use chopsticks or spoon and fork while eating. The mean for factors that hinder cultural assimilation under culture differences is 4.9508 which is very high (Table 7).

Table 7. Mean scores for factors hinder cultural assimilation

Factors that hinder cultural assimilation	Mean
Language acquisition	
Retirees experience difficulty in their efforts to integrate and communicate in Thai	4.61
The native language is very hard to learn and retirees struggle with low confidence when trying to talk in public	4.51
Inability to communicate in Thai leads to problems assimilating to Thai culture among Japanese retirees	4.46
Inability to understand Thai limits retiree opportunities to interact with local people	4.43
Language barriers prohibit retirees from mixing with Thais efficiently	4.27

Table 7 (cont.)

Factors that hinder cultural assimilation	Mean
Inability to communicate with locals makes the retiree feel isolated and alienated	4.15
Culture differences	
Local people eat using fingers but retirees often use chopsticks, or spoon and fork	4.51
Masculinity: Japanese retirees were aggressive and competitive especially while working, but local people are passive and less aggressive. This can cause Japanese and Thais not to understand each other	4.46
Japanese retirees are very punctual as it is a cardinal rule for them but locals are less concerned about punctuality	4.45
Some cultural practices in Thailand do not suit Japanese retirees	4.15
Body language: local people like to smile no matter where they are even in a serious business deal. Japanese retirees are used to having serious talks with serious facial expressions	4.10

Source: author.

To examine the relationship between variables, correlation tests have been conduct using SPSS. Table 8 is the normality test results for skewness and kurtosis for each variable. The distribution of data is normal because values for both are between –1.96 and +1.96 (Table 8).

Table 8. Skewness and kurtosis results for each variable

Factor	Skewness	Kurtosis
Push	0.157	0.554
Pull	–0.327	–0.695
Other	–0.528	–0.612
Level social integration	–0.151	–0.700
Level well-being	–0.943	–0.467
Level life satisfaction	–0.397	–0.045
Level cultural assimilation	–0.285	0.473
Factor hinders cultural assimilation	–0.435	0.720

Source: author.

To understand the relationship between language acquisition and retiree social integration, social integration and retiree cultural assimilation, and retiree attitude and cultural assimilation, correlation tests have been carried out.

Table 9 shows that there is a positive significant relationship between language acquisition and social integration for Japanese retirees who reside in Thailand under IRM, with a Pearson correlation of 0.485 (moderate) and p value (0.000 significant as $p < 0.05$). Secondly, it shows that there is positive significant relationship between social integration and retiree cultural assimilation with a Pearson correlation of 0.503 (strong) and p value (0.000 significant, as $p < 0.05$). Finally, the table shows there is a positive significant relationship between retiree attitude and retiree cultural assimilation with a Pearson correlation of 0.482 (moderate) and p value (0.000 significant, as $p < 0.05$). Furthermore, to understand the moderating effect of language acquisition on the relationship between well-being and cultural assimilation, a multiple regression test has been carried out. The results are shown in Table 10 and Table 11.

Table 9. Correlation test results ($n = 200$)

Character	1	2	3	4
Attitude	1	–	–	–
Social integration	0.562**	1	–	–
Language	0.254**	0.485**	1	–
Cultural assimilation	0.482**	0.503**	0.472**	1

Note: ** correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: author.

Table 10. Regression analysis (moderating effect of language acquisition on wellbeing and culture assimilation)

Coefficient	*SE*	*t*	*p*	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	4.4268	0.0456	96.977	0.000	4.3368
WB	0.2307	0.0475	4.8523	0.000	0.2392
LA	0.3277	0.0449	7.3037	0.000	0.2392
Int_1	–0.0873	0.0439	–1.9902	0.048	–0.1738
Focal predict: WB					
Mod var: LA					

Note: *SE* – standard error, *t* – test of statistical significance, *p* – probability, LLCI – lower limit confidence interval, ULCI – upper limit confidence interval, WB – well-being, LA – language acquisition, Int_1 – interaction value
Source: author.

Table 11. Conditional effects of the focal predictor at values of the moderator(s)

LA	Effect	*SE*	*t*	*p*	LLCI	ULCI
–1.0287	0.3205	0.0612	5.2349	0.0000	0.1998	0.4413
0.0000	0.2307	0.0475	4.8523	0.0000	0.1369	0.3245
0.9550	0.1473	0.0673	2.1907	0.0297	0.0147	0.2800

Note: LA – language acquisition, *SE* – standard error, *t* – test of statistical significance, *p* – probability, LLCI – lower limit confidence interval, ULCI – upper limit confidence interval.
Source: author.

Table 12. Regression analysis (mediating effect of local support on attitude and social integration)

Effect	Path	β	*SE*	95% CI		*t*	*p*
				lower	upper		
Total	Attitude → social integration	0.4250	0.0549	0.3166	0.5333	7.7350	0.0000
Indirect	Attitude → support local people → social integration	0.0102	0.0091	–0.0029	0.0320	–	–
Direct	Attitude → social integration	0.4148	0.0557	0.3053	0.5243	7.4698	0.0000
Complete standardized indirect effect	Attitude → support local people → social integration	0.0115	0.0102	–0.0033	0.0356	–	–

Note: β – coefficient, *SE* – standard error, CI – confidence interval, *t* – test of significance, *p* – probability.
Source: author.

The hypothesized moderated model was tested using multiple regression analysis via PROCESS macro model number 1. The hypotheses proposed that language acquisition moderates the relationship between well-being and culture assimilation. As can be seen in Table 10, the coefficient value for language acquisition moderation on wellbeing and cultural assimilation is –0.0873, which means a negative moderation effect and the *p*-value is 0.0480, which is lower than 0.05. Therefore, the effect is significant and the hypothesis is supported. In conclusion, Table 10 yielded significant results, therefore language acquisition negatively moderates the relationship between wellbeing and culture assimilation. When language acquisition is low ($b = -1.0287$, $p < 0.001$) and medium ($b = 0.000$, $p < 0.001$), wellbeing is associated with higher levels of culture assimilation. However, when the language acquisition is high, $b = 0.9550$, $p < 0.05$, it weakens the relationship between wellbeing and culture assimilation.

In addition, the article also examines the moderating effect of support from local people between attitude and social integration. Table 12 is the result of the multiple regression analysis.

The hypothesis proposed that local support mediates the relationship between attitude and social integration. The hypothesis (indirect effect) was tested using a percentile bootstrap estimation approach with 5000 re-samples. As shown in Table 12, it was observed that the indirect effect of local support on attitude and social integration was not significant (indirect effect = 0.0102, 95% CI = –0.0033, 0.0356). Because the 95% bootstrap confidence interval includes zero, therefore a high level of support from the locals does mediate the association between attitudes and social integration.

5. Discussion and conclusions

The results show the complex interplay of push and pull factors driving Japanese retirees to migrate to Thailand. On the push side, economic factors like poor living conditions in Japan discourage retirees from staying in their home country. Health concerns, such as high medical costs, as well as the threat of natural disasters, also contribute to their motivation to leave. Social factors, including poorly planned urban development and a lack of social networks for the elderly, further encourage them to seek a better life abroad. On the pull side, Thailand offers a range of economic incentives, including a lower cost of living and affordable housing. Health-related attractions include a favorable climate and quality healthcare at affordable prices. Socially, Japanese retirees are drawn to Thailand by the presence of Japanese communities, the concept of ikigai, a strong communication network and numerous entertainment options. According to Wong and Musa (2014), retirees search for a more affordable living environment which offers a better quality of life and fulfils their 'self-actualization' needs.

The passage also highlights the essential role of local support, with Thai residents offering skilled care workers, recognition of Japanese culture by the government, and a generally helpful and empathetic attitude towards Japanese retirees. Additionally, external social conditions, such as direct flights to Japan, a quality education system, strong social connections and religious freedom, further enhance Thailand's appeal as a retirement destination. This exchange provides opportunities to improve the local economy so the interaction between locals and retirees is of benefit to both parties (Mukherjee & Bhal, 2017).

Japanese retirees in Thailand express a strong willingness to engage with the local population through festivals and parties, and actively participate in local activities to better understand Thai culture. They report good socialization with locals, which fosters friendliness and promotes healthy relationships. This positive socialization encourages an environment of respect for different cultures, enabling individuals to mix well and feel comfortable in various social settings. This is shown by the overall mean scores for both attitudes and socialization, indicating a high level of social integration between Japanese retirees and the local population. These findings indicate that the retiree experiences cooperative social interaction, satisfaction and attraction to local society (Wang & Kim, 2013).

Old age is a biological phenomenon with difficult adaptation and environmental interaction (Duangkaew, 2019). Therefore, international migration by elderly Japanese to spend the remainder of their lives in Bangkok or Chiang Mai, in a different country with sociocultural differences, is not easy as Thailand and Japan each have their own cultures. According to the study, problems during long stays by elderly Japanese people in Chiang Mai are mostly due to the absence of smooth participation in social activities due to barriers caused by cultural differences in language, values and ideas as well as laws enforced by Thailand. However, elderly Japanese people have tried finding guidelines for improving relationships with community members to gain acceptance from Thai society and residents in Chiang Mai, but this takes time as social integration is human behavior in a society and a lifelong learning process.

Mental wellbeing is about life satisfaction, optimism, self-esteem, feeling in control, having a purpose and a sense of belonging and support. Older people, including those living in care homes, often experience depression, loneliness and low levels of satisfaction and wellbeing. Taking part in meaningful activities, maintaining and developing personal identity, and getting the right help for any health conditions or sensory impairments have been identified as key to improving mental wellbeing. Each person should feel valued and be offered opportunities and support to express themselves. Therefore, pull factors like helpful, supportive and empathetic residents and good nursing home carers are factors to wellbeing. In Thailand, care staff provide all the support needed to help retirees maintain existing relationships and to develop new ones, to help with activities that motivate them, to learn new skills and increase independence so that they can keep healthy and feel satisfied with life.

The inability to converse in Thai is parallel to research about the effect of language towards cultural assimilation conducted at Ramkhamhaeng University in 2013. The findings came out with some suggestions: promoting assimilation, strengthening relationships and social ties, and improving English speaking skills. It also agreed with Krumm and Plutzar (2008) that it is important for migrants to develop their language skills so as to integrate and participate in the society. Difficulty in living in unfamiliar cultures is caused by differences in patterns of thinking, points of view and physical actions. Learning to understand these different styles is one solution that may help people to live together despite their differences. From previous research, individualism is very different between Thais and Japanese because Japanese people do not live in a large group like Thais. Although both countries share some similarities in terms of practices in society, Thais and Japanese often put harmony in a group over individuals.

The correlation analysis shows that there is a positive, strong association between language acquisition and retiree social integration, a positive, strong association between social integration and retiree cultural assimilation, a positive, strong association between subjective wellbeing and retiree cultural assimilation and a positive, strong association between retiree attitude and cultural assimilation. Furthermore, regression analysis shows language acquisition has a moderating effect on the relationship between cultural assimilation and wellbeing, a dependent variable. However, there is no moderating effect of support from local people towards attitude and social integration.

6. Suggestion

From the study, the researchers would like to suggest a few improvements that could increase the number of participants and also improve the assimilation and wellbeing of the retiree. Firstly, local government could provide incentives towards retirees to encourage them to study Thai such as rewarding the retiree once they able to show that they can communicate in the language. Besides, for the local community, the government could encourage the local language provider to give an attractive package for retirees. As for the Japanese club, it could initiate more collaboration with local higher education or local communities to establish an adoption program for a retiree and a local family. This enables the retiree and local community to get a better understanding of both cultures. Lastly, both Japanese local government or prefecture and Thailand local government or province should do more in order to promote IRM in Thailand to attract and provide necessary information regarding second homes.

7. Limitation

The study's limitations include the use of a purposive sampling method. As this study involves international retirees who perform extensive mobility, the respondents are chosen only from those who migrate to Thailand which may limit the generalizability of the results to Japanese retirees in other areas. Future research could involve a comparative study of Japanese retirees to other destinations for validation.

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Motivational push and pull factors influencing intentions to revisit Jordan as a MICE destination

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of push and pull factors on the intentions of international participants to revisit MICE events held in Amman, given that there are very few existing studies on the topic. This research is quantitative and employs a questionnaire method to collect data. For data analysis, partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was utilized to test the research hypothesis with a purposive sample of 479 international visitors who had attended 14 MICE events held in Amman in 2022. The study revealed that networking opportunities, educational opportunities, destination image, travel cost, destination attraction and accessibility have a significant positive impact on revisit intentions. In terms of implications, these findings contribute to enriching push and pull theory in this context among MICE participants. In practical terms, the findings contribute to empowering planners, managers, marketers and organizers in the MICE industry in terms of creating and promoting effective strategies related to MICE tourism. The findings are anticipated to be useful for conference organizers, enabling them to attract repeat participants in this extremely competitive event industry.

KEYWORDS

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1. Introduction

Meeting, incentive, convention and exhibition (MICE) tourism was designated as one of the fastest-expanding segments in the tourism industry for 2020 (Anas et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2019; Nasir et al., 2019), generating two to four times the revenue of other segments (Anas et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2019). Besides generating high tourism earnings, MICE has also benefited destinations by creating jobs, reducing seasonality, increasing the attractiveness of destinations to tourists, and helping countries develop their tourism services and infrastructure. This, in turn, helps stakeholders attract high-spending tourists (Alananzeh et al., 2019; Anas et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2019; Nasir et al., 2019). Notwithstanding the fact that numerous countries and governments consider MICE an important component for increasing tourism revenue (Cró & Martins, 2018; Whitfield et al., 2014), there are still a number of developing nations that have struggled to market themselves as profitable MICE destinations (Phophan, 2017), one of which is Jordan (Unites States Agency International Development; Jordan Tourism Board, n.d.). In 2018, Jordan only generated about $50 million in revenue from MICE events, which is a comparatively limited compared to that of other countries, accounting for merely 1.7% of the total earnings generated from tourism worldwide (Gedeon & Al-Qasem, 2019). The low MICE revenue can be attributed to tourists' lack of interest in visiting or revisiting Jordan as a MICE destination (Ramadan & Kasim, 2022). This situation also raises questions about the significance of providing MICE facilities and services to attract and retain foreign visitors.

Revisit intentions, derived from behavioural intention, is a powerful predictor of behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Research on its determinants has been widely discussed in developed countries (Abbasi et al., 2021; Al-Dweik, 2020; Allameh et al., 2015; Baniya et al., 2017; Bi et al., 2020; Fitri,2021; Setyaningtyas et al., 2021; Susyarini et al., 2014; Yen, 2020; Yeoh & Goh, 2017), nevertheless, it is rather scarce when it comes to developing countries (Al-Dweik, 2020; Bi et al., 2020). Moreover, factors influencing it have primarily been discussed in the domains of sporting events (Allameh et al., 2015; Cho, 2021), cultural events (Yen, 2020), festivals (Al-Dweik, 2020) and mega-events (Zhang et al., 2022), but rarely in the domain of MICE (Bi et al., 2020; Fitri, 2021; Ramadan & Kasim, 2022; Yodsuwan et al., 2021).

The factors driving visitors to (re)attend events have been gaining increasing research attention (Dragin-Jensen et al., 2018), with motivation being regarded as one of the most crucial (Qi et al., 2019; Ting et al., 2021). To anticipate individual travel motivations, the push and pull theory was developed which has now become the most commonly employed theory in the tourism literature (Baloglu & Uysal, 1996). According to Crompton (1979), push factors help elucidate the reasons why people want to take vacations, while pull factors elucidate the reasons for choosing a certain destination. Several event tourism studies have investigated motivational factors (push and pull) in a variety of event domains, including festivals (Al-Dweik, 2020; Maeng et al., 2016), eco-events (Ye, 2020), cultural events (Maráková et al., 2018; Su et al., 2020) and sport (Jiang & Chen, 2019; Kim, 2018). Even though push and pull factors have been examined in multiple settings, a dedicated study in the MICE setting has not yet been undertaken.

Notably, numerous past studies on the motivation to attend MICE events have been made from the standpoint of meeting planners (Go & Govers, 1999; Houdement et al., 2017; Jago & Deery, 2005; Kang et al., 2005; Tan, 2007; Tanford et al., 2012) and have mostly focused on association conferences (Mair et al., 2018; Mair & Thompson, 2009; Yoo & Zhao, 2010; Zhang et al., 2007) as well as academic ones (Hashemi et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2012; Pavluković & Cimbaljević, 2020), however there have been few conducted from the attendees' perspective as shown in Table 1. Executives ought to know their exact target market, which varies depending on the event, in order to increase participation motivation. Additionally, organizations and academics should focus on the participants' responses when evaluating MICE events, especially their revisit intentions (Lee & Min, 2013). Investigating the attendee's perspective is crucial, as a shift in the target market could have a substantial impact on their motivation to revisit a particular event (Kim & Malek, 2017). To do so, this study aims to explore the motivational push and pull factors which include networking opportunities, educational opportunities, travel cost, destination image, destination attraction and accessibility, from their standpoint and their intention to re-attend MICE events in the future. Thus, the findings may be beneficial for academics in this field, improving the attraction of MICE destinations and drawing repeat visitors.

Table 1. The target respondents and motivation of convention studies

Study	Sample		Motivation dimensions					
	Meeting planners	Others	Networking opportunity (NO)	Educational opportunity (EO)	Destination image (DI)	Travel cost (TC)	Attraction (AT)	Accessibility (AC)
Oppermann and Chon (1997)	–	Educators	+	+	+	+	+	+
Go and Govers (1999)	+	–	–	+	+	+	+	+
Jago and Deery (2005)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Kang et al. (2005)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Tan (2007)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

Tanford et al. (2012)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Houdement et al. (2017)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Rittichainuwat et al. (2001)	–	Hospitality educators	+	+	+	+	+	+
Severt et al. (2007)	–	Not specified	+	+	+	+	+	+
Zhang et al. (2007)	–	Educators	+	+	+	+	+	+
Mair and Thompson (2009)	–	Academic association	+	+	+	+	+	+
Yoo and Zhao (2010)	–	Hospitality industry professionals	+	+	+	+	+	+
Malekmohammadi et al. (2011)	–	Conference attendees	+	+	+	+	+	+
Kim et al. (2012)	–	International academic conventions	+	+	+	+	+	+
Kim and Malek (2017)	–	Medical convention attendees	+	+	+	+	+	+
Mair et al. (2018)	–	Association conference attendees	+	+	+	+	+	+
Pavluković and Cimbaljević (2020)	–	Academic attendees	+	+	+	+	+	+
Hashemi et al. (2020)	–	Academic conferences	+	+	+	+	+	+
Gračan et al. (2021)	–	Convention attendees	+	+	+	+	+	+

Source: authors.

2. Literature review

Travel motivation and push-pull theory

Motivation is the term used to describe the psychological and biological needs and desires that encompass the underlying forces that elicit, direct and integrate a person's behaviour and activities (Dann, 1981). The explanation of what travellers are looking for and how to address such expectations is provided by their motivation, a crucial component in understanding travel behaviour (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981). Also, it is anticipated that as motivation is thought to be the primary driving force for behaviour, it will have an impact on tourists' attitudes toward revisiting a particular destination (Kim et al., 2013).

In order to understand travel behaviour among tourists, and to characterize the push and pull factors and revisit intentions, push and pull theory is used as the basis for this study. The theory primarily supports the use of two factors in explaining tourists' behaviour, i.e. push factors which are explained by the individual's internal travel goals, and pull factors which are explained by the individual's choice of destination attributes. The push-pull theory explains how tourists behave by identifying the various demands and desires that may influence their final destination choice. Push factors are defined as socio-psychological demands that affect travel decisions, whilst pull factors refer to attributes that attract tourists to select a specific destination after deciding to travel (Preko et al., 2019). This theory suggests that certain push and pull factors drive travel decisions (Dann, 1981). Conventional wisdom holds that push factors come before pull factors (Dann, 1977, 1981). Therefore, previous studies have demonstrated that pull factors cannot be effective without push factors.

Numerous works including those of Crompton (1979), Dann (1981), Iso-Ahola (1982), Baloglu and Uysal (1996), Battour et al. (2012), and Dayour and Atanga Adongo (2015) have acknowledged the significance of the push and pull theory in explaining the motivations of tourists in selecting a travel destination and can be used to shed light on why tourists choose to travel to a specific destination (Baniya et al., 2017; Fila Hidayana et al., 2019; Khuong & Ha, 2014; Kim, 2021). The concept of push-pull was initially applied by Dann (1977), and also by Crompton (1979) who in a more extensive manner listed nine push-pull factors: seven being social psychological push factors (i.e. escape, self-exploration, relaxation, prestige, regression, kinship enhancement and social interaction) and two cultural pull factors (i.e. novelty and education).

Related studies examined push-pull factors in multiple domains including spas (Dimitrovski et al., 2021), health and wellness (Ting et al., 2021), youth tourism (Preko et al., 2019), travel motivation (Luvsandavaajav & Narantuya, 2021), and event tourism (Qi et al., 2019). Furthermore, push-pull theory has been widely used in tourism and event studies (Baniya et al., 2017; Baptista et al., 2020; Dimitrovski et al., 2021; Luvsandavaajav & Narantuya, 2021; Preko et al., 2019; Qi et al., 2019; Yousefi & Marzuki, 2015), thus confirming its applicability in this domain.

Push-pull theory primarily describes correlations among factors when choosing a travel destination. Based on this theory, these factors affect travellers' decisions and behaviour and integrates internal and external factors that facilitate or inhibit revisiting decisions. As such, this theory is deemed superior for elucidating the relationships and how they result in revisit intentions in a MICE setting. As the MICE tourism market has gained recognition as one of the most important segments in the business events setting (Barkiđija Sotošek, 2020; Cassar et al., 2020), it is necessary to examine the motivations of MICE tourists (Altareri, 2016; Micić et al., 2019). Therefore, based on an extensive literature review, this study identified six push and pull factors from the perspective of the attendees as mentioned in Table 1 which include networking opportunities, educational opportunities, travel cost, destination attraction, destination image and accessibility. Thus, this justifies the selection of this theory as the theoretical underpinning of this current study.

Business event motivation

The MICE event sector significantly affects a local economy both directly and indirectly and contributes to the development of many destinations (Dimitrovski et al., 2021). The types of event that influence attendance motivation are different depending on the event. Researchers have long argued the factors motivating attendance (Dragin-Jensen et al., 2018), and event planners and destination marketers usually aim to better understand these motivational factors in order to expand their knowledge and ensure attendee satisfaction (Dragin-Jensen et al., 2018). Yoo and Chon (2008) indicated that numerous motivational factors drive MICE travellers' decisions and behaviours while Anas et al. (2020) stated that motivational factors determine the success of MICE event. The motivational push and pull factors can be used to predict travellers' intent to attend or return to MICE events while Ramadan and Kasim (2022) revealed that the push and pull factors strongly influence an attendee's intention to revisit the same MICE event. Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that when push-and-pull travel motivations are combined, the likelihood of returning to a MICE destination increases; thus, it is essential to understand such events from the perspective of MICE attendees.

MICE tourism studies have classified the motivational drivers into two categories, namely push and pull factors (Gračan et al., 2021; Kim & Malek, 2017; Mair et al., 2018; Malekmohammadi et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2007). As seen in Table 1, the decision-making model developed by Oppermann and Chon (1997) has been widely used for assessing event attendance motivation and a more refined version of the model was later introduced by Zhang et al. (2007). However, empirical testing has never been done on both. Subsequent studies have since continued exploration on the motivational factors and Severt et al. (2007) came up with five motivational dimensions namely activities and opportunities, networking, locational convenience and educational opportunities, as well as products and deals. According to Yoo and Chon (2008), destination stimuli, safety and health situations, attendance cost, networking opportunities and educational opportunities represent the key motivations for MICE event participation.

Mair and Thompson (2009) investigated leisure tourism decision-making models in the context of conferences, with a particular focus on UK conference delegates. The authors identified cost, networking opportunities, destination attractiveness and accessibility as the fundamental factors for attending an association event. Malekmohammadi et al. (2011) identified professional and prestige as push dimensions which include networking and educational opportunities, and destination factors such as cost, image and accessibility as pull dimensions. Kim and Malek (2017) explored the three motivational dimensions for attending medical conventions namely location which includes accessibility and attractions; programme which includes educational opportunities; and personal and professional development which includes networking opportunities. Another study on the factors affecting academic travellers' motivation to attend international conferences was conducted by Pavluković and Cimbaljević (2020) who identified the attributes of costs and accessibility as well as attractiveness. Similarly, Gračan et al. (2021) found that accessibility, attraction, networking and educational opportunities are major factors influencing attendees' behavioural intentions toward MICE events.

Based on the discussion above, Table 1 shows the dimensions of motivational factors in the context of conventions, which are posited to drive the decision to attend MICE events. Table 1 also provides samples of these convention studies, largely comprised of planners, association representatives, educators and academic convention attendees. Despite motivational factors being studied from various perspectives, the present study determined six from the perspective of international attendees, including networking opportunities, educational opportunities, travel cost, destination attraction, destination image and accessibility. These factors have therefore been utilized to develop a conceptual framework for investigating the push-pull factors for re-attending MICE events.

Networking opportunities

Networking opportunities are deemed primary motivators for attending MICE events (Cassar et al., 2020) and are also the main motivation for (re)attending a MICE event. Numerous studies have shown that attendance is influenced by the desire for peer recognition, meeting new professionals, and having more networking opportunities (Barkiđija Sotošek, 2020; Cassar et al., 2020; Dimitrovski et al., 2021; Gračan et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2012). Event participants typically have a natural goal of acquiring new knowledge and skills when attending conventions, and this becomes their primary motivation for doing so. Attendees often choose to re-attend the convention that best meets their networking objectives and relevant research has revealed that networking opportunities have a positive impact on participants' decisions to attend or (re)attend MICE events (Barkiđija Sotošek, 2020; Hashemi et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2012; Lee & Min, 2013; Lee et al., 2019; Mair & Thompson, 2009). Therefore, the hypothesis below is proposed:

H_1: Networking opportunities have a positive impact on the intention to revisit a MICE destination.

Educational opportunities

Educational opportunities are defined as the learning of new ideas, knowledge and skills for MICE event attendees (Kim et al., 2012) while Barkiđija Sotošek (2020) illustrated that educational opportunities make up the primary dimension of attendance in the convention domain. Furthermore, it is a crucial motivating factor for attending MICE events (Mair et al., 2018) and the motivation to attend and re-attend MICE events stems from the acquisition of skills, knowledge sharing and the exchange of ideas among attendees (Barkiđija Sotošek, 2020; Cassar et al., 2020; Gračan et al., 2021; Pavluković & Cimbaljević, 2020). Previous research has detected that educational opportunities pose a positive impact on participants' decisions to re-attend MICE events (Gračan et al., 2021; Hashemi et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2012; Lee & Min, 2013; Pavluković & Cimbaljević, 2020). MICE event participants have a significant opportunity to acquire such opportunities and that strongly motivates them to revisit the same event. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H_2: Educational opportunities have a positive impact on the intention to revisit a MICE destination.

Destination image

Destination image is deemed to be a major predictor of revisit intentions (Al-Dweik, 2020; Houdement et al., 2017; Ramli et al., 2020) and is also deemed a critical element in tourists' decisions to attend MICE events. Destination image significantly affects tourists' intentions to re-participate in events held at the same destination in the future (Al-Dweik, 2020). According to Al-Dweik (2020) a positive image can increase attendee's intentions to (re)attend an event and its destination and give positive recommendations to others, and vice versa. Related studies have found that the destination image positively influences return intentions (Al-Dweik, 2020; Allameh et al., 2015; Fitri, 2021). Based on all the above, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H_3: Destination image has a positive impact on the intention to revisit a MICE destination.

Travel cost

Travel cost is considered a strong factor influencing choices to re-attend MICE events (Elston & Draper, 2012; Kim et al., 2020; Veloutsou & Chreppas, 2015; Yoo & Zhao, 2010). Abbasi et al. (2021) demonstrated that the travel cost for attracting and maintaining repeat visitors is significantly lower than that for attracting first-time visitors. A destination that entails exorbitant travel costs has a negative effect on future attendance, thus causing the failure of the event. In short, unsuitable travel costs make international tourists avoid (re)attending MICE events (Anas et al., 2020; Barkiđija Sotošek, 2020; Houdement et al., 2017). Relevant empirical studies revealed that travel cost has a positive impact on tourists' willingness to (re)attend MICE events (Liang & Latip, 2018; Thong et al., 2020; Watjanasoontorn et al., 2019; Yodsuwan et al., 2021). Based on this, the hypothesis below is suggested:

H_4: Travel cost has a positive impact on the intention to revisit a MICE destination.

Destination attraction

Destination attraction is considered a vital motivational factor for visiting or revisiting a destination (Bi et al., 2020) and has also been identified as a key driver of a tourist's decision to revisit a particular destination (De Nisco et al., 2015). Destination attractiveness also plays an important role in maximizing the economic benefits yielded from event attendance (Hashemi et al., 2020). Ramadan and Kasim (2022) have also declared that a destination that provides various attractions inspires event planners to host MICE activities there and entices travellers to revisit it. Furthermore, a destination that provides more attractions encourages MICE tourists' decisions to revisit it in the future (Hashemi et al., 2018). Related studies have detected that destination attraction has a positive influence on a tourist's decision to revisit (Choi, 2013; Puspitasari et al., 2020; Sianipar et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2020). Based on all the above, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H_5: Destination attraction has a positive impact on the intention to revisit a MICE destination.

Accessibility

Accessibility is considered a significant factor in the MICE context, as it is related to the destination. Alananzeh (2012) elucidated that MICE tourists consider the aspect of accessibility in the pre-, during and post-attendance phases. Whitfield et al. (2014) revealed that such tourists consider accessibility as an essential element in their decision to revisit an event destination while Hashemi et al. (2020) also affirmed that accessibility is an important factor. Barkiđija Sotošek (2020) explained that for a destination with high accessibility, the journey would not take long and would not need numerous modes of transportation. Hence, the higher the accessibility, the more desirable the destination becomes. Previous studies demonstrated that accessibility has a positive impact on the intention to revisit a destination (Giao et al., 2020; Hashemi et al., 2020; Lee & Min, 2013; Ngoc & Trinh, 2015). The following hypothesis is suggested:

H_6: Accessibility has a positive influence on intention to revisit a MICE destination.

Revisit intentions

Travel behaviour has been classified into pre-, during and post-travel behaviours. In the post-travel stage, word-of-mouth recommendations are taken into considered by tourists (Lee et al., 2019) while in each phase, the tourist will use their experience and weigh the pros and cons of the destination. This research focuses on the post-travel stage, specifically revisiting intentions.

The concept of revisit intention is one of the key issues discussed in the event domain (Al-Dweik, 2020; Bi et al., 2020; Fitri, 2021; Tsai, 2021; Yen, 2020). Revisit intention refers to tourists' willingness to make a repeat visit to the same destination (Abbasi et al., 2021). Weru (2021) acknowledged that revisit intentions are the best predictor of post-travel behaviour, when tourists have a strong intention to engage in such behaviour, they prefer to participate in an event or revisit MICE destinations. Revisit intention has been viewed as an extension of the tourists' experience describing their future willingness to revisit the same destination being determined by previous travel experience (Ramadan & Kasim, 2022). Most studies related to MICE focused on destination selection from the standpoint of tourists and meeting planners (Aktas & Demirel, 2019; Crouch et al., 2019; Houdement et al., 2017; Liang & Latip, 2018; Para & Kachniewska, 2014; Pavluković & Cimbaljević, 2020); however, only a handful of studies investigated revisit intentions from the standpoint of tourists in the MICE domain (Bi et al., 2020; Fitri, 2021; Yodsuwan et al., 2021). The intention to revisit is therefore one of the concerns that would be prioritized in the MICE environment to enable successful events, as well as an improved understanding among participants. Consequently, research on revisit intention in the MICE context is still scarce (Bi et al., 2020).

3. Research methodology

This section provides the methodology used in the current study. It consists of the study area, research model, sample size, research design, measurements, questionnaire, data collection tool and sampling technique.

3.1. Study area

Jordan has many vital attributes as a possible international MICE destination as it is situated in the heart of the Middle East, making it an attractive conference venue for international events (Alananzeh et al., 2019). Jordan's MICE industry has come of age and is now developing into an outstanding destination, offering remarkable tourism experiences that would entice tourists to return. According to Alananzeh (2012), Jordan's exceptional destination attributes make up the basis of its global competitive edge. About 68% of its MICE events are held in its capital city of Amman (Alananzeh et al., 2019). The International Congress and Convention Association (2023) reported that 88% of MICE events are concentrated there. Therefore, MICE events play an essential role in boosting Jordan's image as a tourism destination, reducing seasonality, and attracting high-spending tourists to Amman in particular (Alananzeh et al., 2019; Ramadan & Kasim, 2022).

3.2. Sample size

The population for this study includes those international tourists who attended MICE events held in Amman in 2022 and the sample size was determined based on the total number of event attendees in 2021. According to a report by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (2021) approximately 80,000 visitors attended such events in 2021. Sekaran and Bougie (2016) stated that if the population exceeds 75,000, the sample size should be at least 384 which is sufficient for this study.

3.3. Research model, research design, measurements and questionnaire

Figure 1 represents the study model that shows independent and dependent variables and the proposed relationship between them. This study is quantitative in nature, analyzing the push-pull factors affecting revisit intentions and its measurements were derived from past studies and modified accordingly. The constructs of networking opportunities, educational opportunities, destination image, travel cost, destination attraction and accessibility are considered independent variables, and revisit intention is the dependent variable. Networking opportunities (NO) were measured via five items, as suggested by Yoo and Zhao (2010) and Gračan et al. (2021); educational opportunities (EO) were measured through six items as suggested by Gračan et al. (2021), Grant and Weaver (1996), and Kim et al. (2012); destination image (DI) was measured using eight items, as suggested by Xu et al. (2018) and Alananzeh (2012); travel cost (TC) has five items derived from Pavluković and Cimbaljević (2020), Alananzeh (2012) and Rittichainuwat et al. (2001); while five items were used to measure destination attraction (DA), following Hashemi et al. (2020); six items were used to measure accessibility (AC), following Hashemi et al. (2020), Pavluković and Cimbaljević (2020), and Alananzeh (2012). Intention to revisit (RI) was measured using four items, as suggested by Bi et al. (2020).

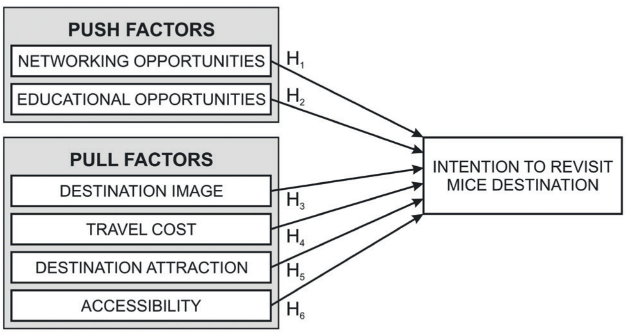

Figure 1. Conceptual framework for the study
Source: authors

The content validity of the research instrument was confirmed by five academic and tourism experts, ensuring that the measures incorporate enough items to represent the concept (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Any potential confusion was alleviated by providing clear definitions of networking opportunities, educational opportunities, destination image, travel cost, destination attraction, accessibility and revisit intentions at the beginning of the evaluation sheet given to the experts. Using these definitions, they were required to identify any deficiencies or contamination in each item and evaluate their suitability for measuring the factors. After collecting all the comments, a consensus analysis was conducted to compare them. Minor modifications were made to the scale based on the agreement of two or more experts. Finally, the instrument design was finalized and the items were evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale, where (1) represented *strongly disagree* and (5) represented *strongly agree*. The questionnaire was developed in English.

3.4. Data collection procedure and sampling technique

This study collected data by self-administering questionnaires and the respondents were chosen using the purposive sampling technique. The researcher was stationed at international MICE events and purposefully approached participants through a screening question to confirm if they were international tourists and if they had attended events in Amman before. Based on the researcher's judgment and knowledge, questionnaires were distributed to 479 international participants attending 14 international MICE events in Amman from June to September 2022.

4. Data analysis and results

Before conducting the analysis, the data were screened to ensure that it was error-free (Pallant, 2013). The SPSS software was used for this purpose, including examinations for data accuracy, missing values, outliers (univariate and multivariate), multicollinearity and normality (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). After confirming that the data was error-free, the partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) method was employed to analyze the latent constructs, and Smart-PLS 3.0 was used to test the hypotheses. PLS-SEM is more suitable for complex models, small sample sizes, non-normal data distribution, reflective measures and predictive research (Hair et al., 2011). Therefore, this study utilized PLS-SEM as a reflective construct.

4.1. Respondents' profile

In Table 2 the demographic variables are utilized to describe the basic information about respondents. Out of the 479, 223 (46.6%) were male, and the remaining 256 (53.4%) female. Considering age, most were between 30 and 39 (29.4%), followed by 40–49 (24.8%), 50–59 (21.7%), 60 and above (12.9%), and 20–29 (11.1%). In the context of education, most of the respondents have a Bachelor's degree (168; 35.1%), followed by a Master's (141; 29.4%), a PhD (123; 25.7%), a college diploma (29; 6.9%), or just high school education (18; 3.8%). Concerning marital status, most are married, 347 (72.4%), whilst the rest are either single – 115 (24.0%), divorced – 10 (2.1%), or widowed – 7 (1.5%). In terms of income, most of the respondents make between $2000 and $3000 (34.7%) per month, followed by $3000 to $4000 (20.7%), $1000 to $2000 (18.4%), more than $4000 (17.5%), and less than $1000 (8.8%). For nationality, most are from Asia (264 or 55.3%), followed by Europe (110 or 22.9%), Africa (67 or 13.9%), America (35 or 7.3%), and only three (0.6%) from Australia.

Table 2. Summary of demographic characteristics (n = 479)

Demographics	Indicators	Frequency	Valid percentage
Gender	Male	223	46.6
	Female	256	53.4
	Total	479	100.0
Age	20–29 years	53	11.1
	30–39 years	141	29.4
	40–49 years	119	24.8
	50–59 years	104	21.7
	60 and above	62	12.9
	Total	479	100.0
Education	High school education	18	3.8
	College diploma	29	6.1
	Bachelor's degree	168	35.1
	Master's degree	141	29.4
	PhD	123	25.7
	Total	479	100.0
Marital status	Single	115	24.0
	Married	347	72.4
	Divorced	10	2.1
	Widowed	7	1.5
	Total	479	100.0
Income	Less than $1000	42	8.8
	1001–2000	88	18.4
	2001–3000	166	34.7
	3001–4000	99	20.7
	More than 4000	84	17.5
	Total	479	100.0
Nationality	Asia	264	55.3
	Europe	110	22.9
	Africa	67	13.9
	America	35	7.3
	Australia	3	0.6
	Total	479	100.0

Source: authors.

4.2. Testing the measurement model

The measurement model assessment entails evaluations of the internal consistency, reliability and construct validity of the measurement scales (Hair et al., 2017). The reliability of each item is determined by its factor loadings on the corresponding constructs (Hair et al., 2017) with normal loadings being at least 0.70, and explaining 50% or more of the item variance as indicated by the constructs (Henseler & Chin, 2010). Hair et al. (2014, p. 107) stated that "indicators with outer loadings between 0.40 and 0.70 should be considered for removal only if the deletion leads to an increase in composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE) above the suggested threshold value". Table 3 shows that items with outer loadings of 0.40 and lower were omitted, hence raising composite reliability and the AVE values (Hair et al., 2014). Overall, eight items out of 39 were omitted for having loadings lower than 0.40. This means that 31 items with loadings above 0.40 were retained. The internal consistency and reliability of the measurement scales were determined using composite reliability. Table 3 demonstrates composite reliability values ranging from 0.853 to 0.950, indicating that the scales are reliable with values exceeding 0.70 (Hair et al., 2017). The validity of the measurement scale was determined through convergent and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2017). Convergent validity involves assessing indicator reliability and AVE. Table 3 shows that all the latent variables' AVE values exceed the cut-off value of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2017), with a range of between 0.592 and 0.826, indicating adequate convergent validity for all the constructs. Meanwhile, discriminant validity, or the degree of differences between the latent variables, was assessed using measures of cross-loadings, the Fornell-Larcker (1981) criterion, and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (Hair et al., 2017). Based on the findings in Tables 4, 5 and 6, each item has a weak correlation with the other constructs. Hence, discriminant validity is confirmed for all the indicators in this study.

Table 3. Convergent validity and reliability analysis ($n = 479$)

Construct	Items	Item loadings	Indicator reliability	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Item(s) deleted
Accessibility (AC)	AC1	0.769	0.591	0.914	0.937	0.749	AC6
	AC2	0.760	0.578				
	AC3	0.940	0.883				
	AC4	0.891	0.793				
	AC5	0.948	0.900				
Destination attraction (DA)	DA1	0.721	0.521	0.929	0.948	0.788	None
	DA2	0.959	0.920				
	DA3	0.819	0.671				
	DA4	0.956	0.915				
	DA5	0.957	0.916				
Destination image (DI)	DI1	0.787	0.619	0.886	0.913	0.638	DI3, DI6
	DI2	0.786	0.618				
	DI4	0.732	0.536				
	DI5	0.729	0.531				
	DI7	0.867	0.753				
	DI8	0.877	0.769				
Educational opportunities (EO)	EO2	0.882	0.778	0.882	0.919	0.739	EO1, EO6
	EO3	0.807	0.650				
	EO4	0.905	0.819				
	EO5	0.842	0.709				
Networking opportunities (NO)	NO1	0.700	0.490	0.785	0.853	0.592	NO5
	NO2	0.785	0.616				
	NO3	0.781	0.610				
	NO4	0.809	0.655				
Revisit intention (RI)	RI1	0.923	0.852	0.928	0.950	0.826	None
	RI2	0.955	0.912				
	RI3	0.949	0.900				
	RI4	0.799	0.639				
Travel cost (TC)	TC1	0.823	0.677	0.826	0.886	0.722	TC2, TC4
	TC3	0.865	0.747				
	TC5	0.861	0.741				

Source: authors.

Table 4. Cross-loadings of indicators

IV'S	Items	AC	DA	DI	EO	NO	RI	TC
AC	AC1	**0.769**	0.655	0.648	–0.560	0.572	0.534	0.557
	AC2	**0.760**	0.580	0.604	–0.452	0.631	0.703	0.639
	AC3	**0.940**	0.654	0.664	–0.554	0.583	0.613	0.591
	AC4	**0.891**	0.557	0.578	–0.492	0.516	0.574	0.523
	AC5	**0.948**	0.627	0.641	–0.538	0.561	0.603	0.575
DA	DA1	0.588	**0.721**	0.655	–0.525	0.594	0.547	0.557
	DA2	0.668	**0.959**	0.689	–0.578	0.604	0.623	0.610
	DA3	0.599	**0.819**	0.654	–0.537	0.570	0.555	0.550
	DA4	0.648	**0.956**	0.676	–0.570	0.593	0.613	0.607
	DA5	0.652	**0.957**	0.684	–0.572	0.598	0.619	0.608
DI	DI1	0.580	0.588	**0.787**	–0.643	0.552	0.519	0.566
	DI2	0.556	0.574	**0.786**	–0.646	0.568	0.495	0.544
	DI4	0.652	0.619	**0.732**	–0.510	0.662	0.719	0.644
	DI5	0.465	0.538	**0.729**	–0.516	0.441	0.407	0.453
	DI7	0.581	0.633	**0.867**	–0.606	0.566	0.518	0.568
	DI8	0.585	0.639	**0.877**	–0.617	0.563	0.528	0.572
EO	EO2	–0.527	–0.507	–0.608	**0.882**	–0.477	–0.383	–0.434
	EO3	–0.466	–0.499	–0.606	**0.807**	–0.566	–0.431	–0.554
	EO4	–0.554	–0.551	–0.645	**0.905**	–0.523	–0.402	0.478
	EO5	–0.513	–0.587	–0.665	**0.842**	–0.583	–0.483	–0.577
NO	NO1	0.410	0.419	0.456	–0.446	**0.700**	0.388	0.417
	NO2	0.443	0.476	0.525	–0.529	**0.785**	0.436	0.497
	NO3	0.469	0.522	0.571	–0.567	**0.781**	0.447	0.550
	NO4	0.645	0.588	0.615	–0.447	**0.809**	0.791	0.806
RI	RI1	0.594	0.555	0.573	–0.414	0.548	**0.923**	0.531
	RI2	0.679	0.655	0.663	–0.488	0.653	**0.955**	0.627
	RI3	0.629	0.597	0.616	–0.438	0.581	**0.949**	0.569
	RI4	0.651	0.599	0.625	–0.456	0.809	**0.799**	0.810
TC	TC1	0.623	0.577	0.610	–0.441	0.791	0.781	**0.823**
	TC3	0.523	0.543	0.592	–0.563	0.556	0.447	**0.865**
	TC5	0.521	0.542	0.598	–0.570	0.550	0.442	**0.861**

Note: AC – accessibility, DA – destination attraction, DI – destination image, EO – educational opportunities, NO – networking opportunities, RI – revisit intention, TC – travel cost.

Source: authors.

Table 5. Fornell-Larcker discriminant validity criteria

IV'S	AC	DA	DI	EO	NO	RI	TC
AC	**0.865**	–	–	–	–	–	–
DA	0.713	**0.888**	–	–	–	–	–
DI	0.728	0.757	**0.799**	–	–	–	–
EO	–0.600	–0.628	–0.738	**0.860**	–	–	–
NO	0.669	0.667	0.716	–0.631	**0.770**	–	–
RI	0.710	0.668	0.688	–0.499	0.727	**0.909**	–
TC	0.674	0.662	0.713	–0.602	0.787	0.713	**0.850**

Note: the diagonal values (bolded) denote the AVE square root, whilst the off-diagonal values denote the constructs' correlations; AC – accessibility, DA – destination attraction, DI – destination image, EO – educational opportunities, NO – networking opportunities, RI – revisit intention, TC – travel cost.
Source: authors.

Table 6. Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)

IV'S	AC	DA	DI	EO	NO	RI	TC
AC		–	–	–	–	–	–
DA	0.776		–	–	–	–	–
DI	0.793	0.830		–	–	–	–
EO	0.670	0.692	0.831		–	–	–
NO	0.741	0.757	0.818	0.761		–	–
RI	0.756	0.715	0.727	0.541	0.762		–
TC	0.738	0.736	0.801	0.706	0.859	0.724	

Note: AC – accessibility, DA – destination attraction, DI – destination image, EO – educational opportunities, NO – networking opportunities, RI – revisit intention, TC – travel cost.
Source: authors.

4.3. Assessment of the structural model

Hair et al. (2017) stated that the coefficients of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2) and predictive relevance (Q^2) of structural models are all measured. The findings shown in Table 7 indicate that the coefficients of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2) and predictive relevance (Q^2) values are acceptable. In this study, the R^2 value of 0.672 for revisit intentions is deemed substantial (Cohen, 1988). The f^2 values for accessibility, destination image, educational opportunities, networking opportunities and travel cost are small (0.043, 0.020, 0.025, 0.046, 0.029) on revisit intentions, while destination attraction has no effect (0.017). The blindfolding procedure was utilized to test the predictive relevance (Q^2) of the model, specifically to obtain the cross-validated redundancy of each endogenous construct (Hair et al., 2017). A Q^2 value of 0.519 was obtained, suggesting the model's adequate predictive relevance. Following structural model assessment, the bootstrapping procedure was used to examine the hypothesized correlation between the push-pull factors and revisit intention.

4.4. Hypotheses testing

The subsequent stage is hypothesis testing, which involves evaluating the causal link identified in the structural model, namely the relationship between the push-pull factors and the intention to revisit. The causality between the variables was examined using the bootstrapping method via 5000 sub-samples (Hair et al., 2017). Hypothesis testing entailed the determination of the *t*-statistic value, which is deemed significant if it is greater than the *t*-table value (1.96). Table 7 demonstrates the outcomes of the hypothesis

Table 7. Results and hypothesis testing of the structural model using partial least squares

Hypothesis	Relationship	Standarized beta coefficient	Standarized error	*t*-values	*p*-value	Decision	f^2	R^2	Q^2
H_1	NO → RI	0.225	0.052	4.433	0.000	Supported	0.046	0.672	0.519
H_2	EO → RI	0.135	0.053	2.644	0.008	Supported	0.025	–	–
H_3	DI → RI	0.168	0.063	2.677	0.007	Supported	0.020	–	–
H_4	TC → RI	0.172	0.047	3.642	0.000	Supported	0.029	–	–
H_5	DA → RI	0.134	0.055	2.444	0.015	Supported	0.017	–	–
H_6	AC → RI	0.206	0.055	3.733	0.000	Supported	0.043	–	–

Note: AC – accessibility, DA – destination attraction, DI – destination image, EO – educational opportunities, NO – networking opportunities, RI – revisit intention, TC – travel cost; f^2 – effect size, R^2 – coefficients of determination, Q^2 – predictive relevance; indicates significant path key: $p < 0.05$ ($t > 1.96$) (2-tailed).

Source: authors.

testing. The PLS-SEM output revealed a significant relationship between networking opportunities and intentions to revisit ($\beta = 0.225$, $t = 4.433$, $p = 0.000$). Hence, H_1 is accepted. The second hypothesis was also confirmed, since there is a significant positive correlation between educational opportunities and revisit intentions ($\beta = 0.135$, $t = 2.644$, $p = 0.008$). So, H_2 is supported. The third hypothesis, that there is a significant positive correlation between destination image and revisit intentions, was confirmed as well ($\beta = 0.168$, $t = 2.677$, $p = 0.007$). So, H_3 is accepted. Additionally, the fourth hypothesis, that travel cost and revisit intentions have a significant positive association, was also confirmed ($\beta = 0.172$, $t = 3.642$, $p = 0.000$). So, H_4 is supported. The fifth hypothesis was confirmed likewise, with a significant positive association between destination attraction and revisit intentions ($\beta = 0.134$, $t = 2.444$, $p = 0.015$). So, H_5 is accepted. Finally, the sixth hypothesis was confirmed too, with a significant association between accessibility and revisit intention ($\beta = 0.206$, $t = 3.733$, $p = 0.000$). So, H_6 is supported.

5. Discussion

Although motivational push-pull factors and their effects on visitors' intentions to return in different tourism and event settings have long been the focus of tourism research, there is still a paucity of literature in this area. Despite the fact that motivation has been extensively studied (Jago & Deery, 2005; Mair & Thompson, 2009; Tanford et al., 2012), it varies depending on the person's background and circumstances. Therefore, there is a crucial need to examine motivation (Kim & Malek, 2017). This present study aims to examine the effects of push-pull factors on the revisit intentions of international MICE participants achieving the main research objective.

Based on the PLS statistical result, it was shown that there is a strong and positive correlation between networking opportunities and revisit intentions ($\beta = 0.225$, $t = 4.433$, $p = 0.000$), suggesting that this would be higher if there are more networking opportunities among tourists at the MICE event. The results of the study agree with those of Gračan et al. (2021), Lee et al. (2019), Mair and Thompson (2009), Malekmohammadi et al. (2011), Kim et al. (2012) and Lee and Min (2013) who revealed that networking opportunities positively and significantly impact revisit intentions. The outcome of this study is also consistent with the theory of push-pull, which justifies networking opportunities as a significant push factor in affecting tourist behaviour (Crompton, 1979). Mair and Thompson (2009) indicated the importance of networking opportunities and the possibility of attending MICE events again in the future. Lee et al. (2019) highlighted networking opportunities as a main driver of reattending a conference among international delegates. Prior studies (Gračan et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2012; Lee & Min, 2013) also demonstrated that networking opportunities are a key motivator for revisiting the same MICE events in the future. Therefore, the more important networking opportunities are as a motivator for attendance, the more likely the tourists are to attend the conference again in the future.

The PLS-based statistical outcomes in this study revealed a significantly positive association between educational opportunities and revisit intentions ($\beta = 0.135$, $t = 2.644$, $p < 0.008$) meaning that high educational opportunities among tourists positively influence their intention to revisit MICE destinations. The result of this study is consistent with the theory of push-pull, which justifies educational opportunities as a push factor that greatly impacts tourist behaviour (Crompton, 1979), aligning with the outcomes of Gračan et al. (2021), Lee and Min (2013), Kim et al. (2012) and Yoo and Chon (2008), who discovered the positive and significant effects of educational opportunities on revisit intentions.

Based on these results, attendees seem to evaluate and revisit MICE events based on their ability to provide educational opportunities which represent a strong motivator for attendance (Barkiđija Sotošek, 2020) as participants typically decide to re-attend conferences due to such opportunities (Jago & Deery, 2005). Repeat tourists are motivated by educational opportunities to attend in the future (Kim et al., 2012) and have a major influence on participants' decisions (Kim et al., 2012; Mair & Thompson, 2009; Tanford et al., 2012; Yoo & Zhao, 2010). Hence, the greater the importance of educational opportunities as a motivating factor for participation, the more likely the attendee will return.

The path coefficient analysis of this study showed a significantly positive association between destination image and revisit intentions ($\beta = 0.168$, $t = 2.677$, $p < 0.007$). This means that an enticing destination image encourages international tourists to revisit the same MICE event. The results of the study agree with those of Al-Dweik (2020), Allameh et al. (2015), and Fitri (2021), which demonstrate the significant positive influence of destination image on intentions to revisit. Tourists are motivated to return to a particular destination if it has a positive and strong image (Al-Dweik, 2020). Ramli et al. (2020) concluded that the destination image has a significant influence on travellers' decision-making and behavioural intentions. Al-Dweik (2020) also confirmed that destination image significantly affects tourists' intentions to participate in events held at the same destination in the future. This outcome supports public-private sector collaborations to improve MICE events in any destination, specifically in developing nations, especially Jordan (Alananzeh et al., 2019). Thus, since MICE events are significant for the economic development of such countries, there is a need for them to develop a positive destination image so that MICE tourists will return there in the future (Al-Dweik, 2020).

Based on the PLS path coefficient analysis result, travel cost and revisit intentions are significantly and positively correlated ($\beta = 0.172$, $t = 3.642$, $p < 0.000$). As travel costs become an increasingly important issue for participants, this implies that reasonable travel costs would increase tourists' revisit intentions for the MICE destination. The result of this study is consistent with the theory of push-pull, which justifies travel cost as a pull factor that significantly affects tourists' decisions and behaviours (Mair & Thompson, 2009; Tanford et al., 2012). This result also aligns with the findings of Yoo and Zhao (2010), Yodsuwan et al. (2021), Thong et al. (2020), Abbasi et al. (2021) and Liang and Latip (2018), all of which detected a positive correlation between travel cost and behavioural revisit intentions (Kim et al., 2020). Oppermann and Chon (1997) discovered that MICE tourists' decisions to revisit the same destination depended highly on the travel cost. Related work demonstrated that a positive travel cost encourages international MICE tourists to visit the destination frequently, thus enabling the destination to profit more (Anas et al., 2020; Barkiđija Sotošek, 2020; Houdement et al., 2017; Mair & Thompson, 2009; Tanford et al., 2012; Whitfield et al., 2014). Therefore, destination marketers and event planners should make more effort to attract this segment of tourists.

Destination attraction and revisit intention were found to be positively and significantly correlated using the PLS-based path coefficient analysis ($\beta = 0.134$, $t = 2.444$, $p < 0.015$). This indicates that a destination with many attractions encourages international tourists to revisit the same events. This result also aligns with the outcomes of Lee and Min (2013), Puspitasari et al. (2020) and Sianipar et al. (2021) which demonstrated a positive correlation between destination attraction and revisit intention. This finding is consistent with the theory of push-pull, which justifies destination attraction as a pull factor that greatly impacts tourist behaviour (Bi et al., 2020). De Nisco et al. (2015) revealed that the attraction of the destination is among the key factors affecting revisit intentions. Maulida et al. (2020) determined that destination attraction significantly influences such intentions. Therefore, destinations with multiple attractions encourage MICE organizers to hold events and motivate tourists to revisit the same one (Anas et al., 2020).

The path coefficient results from the PLS-based SEM revealed a significant positive relationship between accessibility and revisit intention ($\beta = 0.206$, $t = 3.733$, $p < 0.000$). This finding indicates that the degree of tourist return intention is greater if tourists have easy accessibility to MICE events. The current finding is in agreement with push and pull theory, which justifies accessibility as a pull factor with a great impact on tourist behaviour in selecting a destination (Ćulić et al., 2021) as well as Giao et al. (2020), Hashemi et al. (2020), Lee and Min (2013), and Ngoc and Trinh (2015) which confirmed that accessibility has a positive impact on revisit intentions. Alananzeh (2012) acknowledged that international tourists consider AC as a very important construct in their participation in MICE events in Jordan. Anas et al. (2020) and Barkiđija Sotošek (2020) declared that when MICE events are held in destinations with high accessibility, the intention of attending or re-attending the same event increases. Thus, accessibility can be the primary driver of attendees' intention to revisit a certain MICE destination.

6. Conclusion

Each event is unique, with a variety of contents, participants, reasons for attending and influential elements. Despite extensive studies on attendance motivation carried out by meeting planners and hospitality educators, with several involving international academics, very few had examined international MICE attendees. Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between the motivations of attendees and their intentions to revisit.

This study contributes to the theory of motivational factors, specifically push and pull theory, which serves as the basis for examining the factors driving international tourists to (re)attend MICE events held in Jordan. This is a pioneering study using a large sample of international MICE travellers which sheds light on the effect of the motivational factors and the association between these constructs and revisit intentions. More importantly, the integrated relationships between the push factors (i.e. networking opportunities and educational opportunities), pull factors (i.e. destination image, travel cost, destination attraction and accessibility), and revisit intentions have yet to be conceptualized and examined in the MICE event literature from the standpoint of international attendees in the context of the Middle East, especially Jordan. By understanding push and pull motivations, tourism marketers can develop specific programs to meet or even surpass the expectations of travellers (Yousefi & Marzuki, 2015). Tourism marketers and planners should be aware of the significance of foreign tourists' travel motivations and concentrate on creating events that will better meet visitors' demands by balancing what they desire (push factors) with what the destination can provide (pull factors) to suit those needs.

Apart from that, this study also offers several practical implications. The findings provide significant insights for event organizers, planners, managers, marketers and associations in Jordan, in planning, developing and marketing MICE tourism using suitable strategies. There is a need for MICE event planners and destinations to collaborate towards strengthening participation motivation and increasing interest in the events being organized. It is hoped that the findings in this study would aid in attracting and retaining attendees in the competitiveness of the global event industry. The focus on international tourists allows meeting planners, organizers and managers to comprehend their motivations and thus take beneficial and informed actions for their MICE tourism event.

As with all other studies, the present one is not free of limitations. This research only focused on Amman, thus limiting the generalizability of the findings. Future works could replicate this study by focusing on other destinations in Jordan such as the Dead Sea and Aqaba. Additionally, this study only concentrated on the motivations of international tourists, so to obtain more comprehensive data, future work could focus on meeting planners, academics and educators. Furthermore, the examination of the push-pull factors was based on a direct relationship. Future studies could incorporate a moderating variable to examine the push-pull relationship in the MICE setting. Finally, this work only analyzed the relationships between the push factors (networking opportunities and educational opportunities), the pull factors (destination image, travel cost, destination attraction and accessibility), and revisit intentions. Future research could incorporate other motivational factors that may significantly improve revisit intentions.

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The U-shaped relationship between corruption and international tourism demand: A gravity model approach

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Abstract

The tourism industry significantly contributes to a country's economic growth and creates a positive image of the destination. This study assesses the impact of corruption on international tourism demand. It employs two-dimensional analyses using the gravity model and a pooled ordinary least square estimator to provide a unique recognition of international tourism demand. The study utilized a conditional quantile regression technique to analyze a dataset of 200 destination countries from 1995 to 2022. The empirical results demonstrate a mixed effect of corruption on international tourism demand. The analysis reveals a non-linear relationship between corruption and international tourism demand, with the inverted-U relationship being statistically significant only at the 50th–75th quantiles and not holding at the upper and lower quantiles. The research confirms that income has a positive impact on tourism across quantiles, but the impact is disproportionate. The sub-period of 2006–2022 experienced a significant decline in gross domestic product (GDP) due to the global financial crisis and its aftershocks, which severely impacted the attractiveness of destination countries for tourists. These valuable insights can inform national tourism policies and businesses.

Keywords

tourism, demand, corruption, gravity model through pooled ordinary least square (POLS), quantile regression

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1. Introduction

Tourism is unequivocally the world's fastest-growing industry. Its economic contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) and employment opportunities have consistently and significantly increased, resulting in a notable reduction in poverty and inflation. As stated by Akama and Kieti (2007) and Iancu et al. (2022), tourism has been declared the dominant industry for national socio-economic development. It increases per capita income, generates revenue and taxes, develops infrastructure and attracts foreign investment and reserves. Tourism is a crucial factor in boosting economic growth. The global tourism industry generated $7 trillion in revenue in 2013 and increased tourist arrivals to destination countries by 4.7% in 2014. It is projected to increase by 3–4% in 2015. The tourism industry contributed 9.5% to global GDP and created 265 million job opportunities worldwide, according to Osinubi et al. (2022).

Developing strategies that promote the growth of the tourism industry is essential to mitigate the higher risk of corruption in government organizations in various countries (Shao & Razzaq, 2022). Therefore, it is crucial to address corruption and showcase the industry's potential for growth and success. As demonstrated in the past, corruption can negatively impact the demand for tourism and it remains a growing concern in many countries, posing a significant challenge for tourists. Despite the allure of traditional and ecological attractions, the industry's effectiveness has been hindered by rising levels of corruption and crime. Tourism has the potential to drive economic growth and sustainability, and it is imperative that corruption is addressed to fully realize this potential. Corruption poses a significant threat to government organizations across various countries. Despite differing perspectives among practitioners, Güvercin (2022) highlights the impact of corruption on the tourism industry, supporting cross-national analysis in research. In their study, Nelson et al. (2021) analyze the correlation between corruption and tourism demand, while effectively controlling for stochastic heterogeneity factors within each country. The study provides a robust cross-national analysis, ensuring the reliability of the findings. To address the limitations of using extended national analyses to observe the relationship between corruption and international tourism demand, the panel data model has been employed by practitioners to examine the impact of corruption on tourism (Seabra et al., 2020). This analysis effectively resolves the issue of unobservable factors and allows for an evaluation of the association between corruption and tourism.

This study addresses an important gap in the research on the relationship between corruption and tourism. While previous studies have focused on the negative impact of corruption on tourism, this study takes a different perspective. Although some scholars share the concern of the negative impact of corruption on tourism, others have a more positive outlook (Alola et al., 2021; Ming & Liu, 2021). Moyle et al. (2021) assert that the increasing level of corruption has not had an indirect impact on tourism, and they propose that incentives are offered to enable travel to tourist destinations for a group of individuals to specific countries. While previous research has concentrated on empirical studies, again this study adopts a distinct perspective.

The study investigates the impact of corruption on international tourism demand across 200 destinations, including islands, sovereign states, territories and regions, from 1995 to 2022. The control of corruption indicator (CCI), a World Governance Indicators (WGI) published by the World Bank Group, is used to measure the data. The econometric model analyzes data by applying pooled ordinary least square (POLS) regression through the gravity model which examines the impact on income at period and sub-period level to explore the determinants (Duong et al., 2021). The ordinary least square (OLS) regression model assumes a constant regression coefficient across the samples and avoids the heterogeneity of tourism demand across entities and this article examines the issue of constant regression coefficient issues. The study conducted by Esquivias et al. (2022) demonstrates a clear relationship between corruption and tourism demand estimates at different quantiles and levels of demand distribution, using quantile regression. Its contribution is significant for two reasons: firstly, it captures the likely heterogeneity across various levels of demand distribution, which goes beyond the aggregate effects of tourism; and secondly, it demonstrates a U-shaped correlation between corruption and international tourism demand. Furthermore, the effect of income exhibits heterogeneity across different demand distributions at different quantiles. A comprehensive understanding of the indicators and factors influencing international tourism demand is supported by empirical evidence.

2. Literature review

Tourism significantly impacts the world's socio-economic development, contributing greatly to GDP growth. Scholarly articles such as Ulucak et al. (2020), Kuok et al. (2023), and Chi (2020) demonstrate a clear and well-supported relationship between income and tourism. It is important to note that all evaluations presented are objective or supported by robust evidence. Kim et al. (2021) establish a strong correlation between weather and tourism. Zenker et al. (2021) established the relationship between transportation and tourism. Rasoolimanesh et al. (2020) demonstrated the impact of security on tourism, highlighting its significance in economic and social development. Notably, recent years have seen a growing focus among tourism researchers on the correlation between corruption and tourism demand. Numerous scholarly articles have definitively established the relationship, identifying significant contributors to this association (Meo et al., 2021; Mushtaq et al., 2021). It is widely acknowledged that corruption poses a major obstacle to economic development (Ming & Liu, 2021; Osinubi et al., 2022).

Haseeb and Azam (2021) and Iancu et al. (2022) assert that corrupt governments misusing resources and hindering sound tourism activities are a significant issue. The negative impact of corruption on tourism has been observed in various countries, including Kenya, for example, Shaikh et al. (2022) reported that the high level of corruption in the Kenyan government prevented the resolution of ecological problems which, in turn, affected the African Centre for Technology Studies in 1998. Several studies have suggested that corruption can facilitate business activities and the circulation of money, however, it is important to note that corruption is a complex issue with negative consequences that cannot be ignored. Addressing and preventing it is crucial to ensure fair and ethical business practices. As demonstrated by Akdemir and Yeşilyurt (2023), corruption can play a significant role in transactional activities, but it is imperative to take action against it. Research unequivocally supports the notion that corruption has a detrimental effect on tourism and these findings confirm the 'sanding the wheels' hypothesis. Ağazade's (2021) study, which analyzed 197 observations in a pooled data model, found that a mere 1% increase in the corruption perceptions index (CPI) resulted in an 8.6% decrease in tourism demand.

Similarly, Gričar et al. (2021) found that a one-unit increase in CPI was associated with a 2–7% decrease in tourism, supporting the above study. Furthermore, Mietzner (2020) observed a robust comeback in tourism demand after a decline in corruption. These findings demonstrate the negative impact of corruption on tourism and the potential benefits of reducing it. It is worth noting that while some studies suggest corruption can facilitate certain processes, the weight of evidence supports the view that it is detrimental to the tourism industry. Osinubi et al. (2022) found that an increase in the CPI does not have an adverse effect on tourism demand. The corruption element was analyzed by observing illegal modes of travel to attractive destinations. It is worth noting that Chinese president Xi declared an onslaught against corruption in 2012, which reportedly had an adverse impact on tourism, with a significant reduction in travel sales by about 50%, as supported by Gill (2020). Uroos et al. (2022) assert that corruption has a significant relationship with tourism demand up to a certain level, beyond which it has a negative impact, resulting in a non-linear and inverted-U relationship between the two. It is evident that corruption can create a favourable climate for tourism up to a certain percentile, but beyond that level, it has a detrimental effect. Despite the existing ambiguity, it is clear that corruption has a noteworthy impact on tourism demand.

According to recent research by Santana-Gallego and Fourie (2022), corruption does not have a significant impact on tourism. While previous studies have produced mixed findings on the relationship, Santana-Gallego and Fourie's empirical study provides more credible evidence. It is worth noting, however, that the study did not consider distributional heterogeneity, which is a major shortcoming. Ha et al. (2021) investigated internal tourism demand in South Korea using the quantile regression method. This study employs a panel quantile regression model to examine the significance of distributional heterogeneity between corruption and international tourism demand. The model effectively determines the impact of corruption on tourism demand and changing behavior patterns at different stages of the conditional demand distribution using fixed effect techniques. We will focus on panel quantile regression approaches to examine the impact of corruption on international tourism demand.

3. Data and methodology

This study analyzes the relationship between corruption and international tourism demand using two-dimensional analyses (destination and year). It considers total tourist arrivals at a particular destination for a given period, using a panel dataset for 200 destination countries and regions from 1995 to 2022. The regress for this study is tourism demand, which is typically measured through tourist expenditure or tourist arrivals (Lassou et al., 2021). Here total tourist arrivals at the destination country (*Tou*) are used as a reliable measure of international tourism demand (Shaikh et al., 2022).

This article focuses on corruption in a specific location and is defined as a form of deception committed by a person or state in a position of authority. This includes inducements or illicit payments made for personal gain, as well as activities such as bribery and misappropriation which is illegal in many countries (Florea & Aivaz, 2022). The CPI provided by Transparency International is a common measure in empirical literature. It is important to note, however, that this index only provides an estimate and not the complete picture of corruption within the public sector. The CPI scale ranges from 0 to 10, with 0 indicating the highest level and 10 indicating the lowest. It is crucial to consider additional sources of information when assessing corruption levels. In 2012, the CPI scale was revised to range from 0 to 100, resulting in the CCI being used in the study instead of the CPI. This change allowed for a more comprehensive and accurate analysis of the World Bank Group's WGI but the CPI has fewer missing values than this index and ranging from –2.5 to 2.5, indicates weak or robust control over corruption.

To account for omitted variable bias, this study adopted a multivariate method, as previous literature suggests that tourism demand may be influenced by other variables. The current article incorporates six control functions and variables, described and sourced in Table 1. Annual GDP growth is a crucial indicator of economic sustainability and living standards in a country. The coefficient ln$GDPpc_{jt}$, which represents the natural logarithm of real GDP per capita income, is a useful proxy for income as higher-income employees tend to be more involved in tourism.

Table 1. Data sources

Functions and variables	Definition	Source
lnTou_{jt}	Natural logarithm of tourist arrivals to the destination country from the origin country	United National World Tourism Organization (n.d.)
ln$GDPpc_{jt}$	Natural logarithm of real GDP per capita of the destination country	The World Bank Group (WBG) (n.d.b)
lnPop_{jt}	Natural logarithm of the population of the destination country	
$RLaw_{jt}$	Rule of law in the destination country	
CC_{jt}	Control of corruption in the destination country	WBG (n.d.a)
VA_{jt}	Voice and accountability at the destination country	Mitchell (2004)

Note: *Tou* – tourism, *CC* – control of corruption, *VA* – voice accounts, *RLaw* – rule of law, *GDPpc* – gross domestic product per capita, *Pop* – population, *j* – period, *t* – time, ln – natural logarithm.

Source: authors.

Hamidi et al. (2020) used lnPop_{jt} as a controlling function for the total population of a state. Similarly, in this study, we have used population with the coefficient in lnPop_{jt} as a controlling function for the total size or population. Levy (2019) confirms the importance of organizations that promote freedom for individuals, associations or media when electing the government. The study used 'voice and accountability' with the coefficient VA_{jt}. The purpose of this variable is to analyze the influence of citizen sovereignty and corresponding rights and obligations. To achieve this, the study incorporates the concept of 'rule of law' with coefficient $RLaw_{jt}$, which measures the degree to which citizens are legally bound to comply with state regulations.

Additionally, these variables encompass the socio-economic and demographic traits and their impact on tourism demand. This study has investigated the impact of corruption on tourism demand across all countries which were divided into two groups: developed with high human development index (HDI) and developing with low HDI. All variables were sourced from the World Bank Group's World Development Indicators (WDI) and WGI. The variable of interest was obtained from the WGI and expressed as a percentage.

$$\ln Tou_{jt} = \alpha + \beta cntr_{jt} + \gamma CC_{jt} + \delta_t + \varepsilon_{jt} \qquad (1)$$

where: $\ln Tou_{jt}$ – natural logarithm of tourism, α – intercept, $\beta cntr_{jt}$ – slope of control, γCC_{jt} – control of corruption, δ_t – yearly variations, ε_{jt} – residuals.

The study employed fixed effects as a control for individual and unobservable country effects, as well as to mitigate omitted variable bias. The function lnTou_{jt} denotes the natural logarithm of total tourist arrivals at destination countries *j*, during a specified period *t*, while the coefficients α and β represent their respective values. The variable $cntr_{jt}$ checks, while CC_{jt} monitors corruption in the destination country during a specified period. The model incorporates panel fixed effects and year fixed effects to account for yearly variations (δ_t) across all countries, with ε_{jt} denoting the error term.

Here $cntr_{jt}$ is described individually as follows:

$$\ln Tou_{jt} = \alpha + \beta_1 CC_{jt} + \beta_2 \ln VA_{jt} + \beta_3 \ln RLaw_{jt} + \\ + \beta_4 \ln GDPpc_{jt} + \beta_5 \ln Pop_{jt} + \delta_t + \varepsilon_{jt} \qquad (2)$$

where: $\ln Tou_{jt}$ – natural logarithm of tourism, α – intercept, $\beta_1 CC_{jt}$ – slope of control of corruption, $\beta_2 \ln VA_{jt}$ – slope of natural logarithms voice accounts, $\beta_3 \ln RLaw_{jt}$ – slope of natural logarithms rule of law, $\beta_4 \ln GDPpc_{jt}$ – slope of natural logarithms gross domestic product, $\beta_5 \ln Pop_{jt}$ – slope of natural logarithms population, δ_t – yearly variations, ε_{jt} – residuals.

The model above identifies four types of control functions: ln$GDPpc_{jt}$, representing the natural logarithm of GDP per capita in the destination country, lnPop_{jt}, measuring the economic size of the country, lnVA_{jt}, controlling for the quality of the institutions, and ln$RLaw_{jt}$ which is subject to legal compliance. Banker et al. (2019) assert that OLS estimation may be misleading when the stochastic term does not follow a normal distribution and the series has non-normal, skewed distribution and heavy-tailed outliers. In such cases, consistent and efficient estimation cannot be guaranteed by OLS. This method provides more accurate estimation when residuals are atypical. Therefore, this article employs conditional quantile regression with a conventional linear functional form to investigate its impact and used to estimate the conditional quantile regression.

3.1. Conditional quantile regression in conventional linear functional form with fixed-effect

This study employs a conditional quantile regression approach in a conventional linear functional form with fixed effects to analyse the impact of corruption on tourism demand at higher and lower levels. The approach effectively addresses residual series non-everyday issues caused by heavy-tailed distribution and outliers, which can lead to misleading results:

$$Q_{\ln Tou_{ij}}(\zeta | ij\ \varepsilon_{ij}) = \alpha + \beta_{1\zeta}\ln GDPpc_{jt} + \beta_{2\zeta}\ln Pop_{jt} + + \beta_{3\zeta}\ln VA_{jt} + \beta_{4\zeta}\ln RLaw_{jt} + \beta_{5\zeta}\ln CC_{jt} + \varepsilon_{jt} \quad (3)$$

where: $Q_{\ln Tou_{ij}}(\zeta | ij\ \varepsilon_{ij})$ – quantile of natural logarithm of tourism, α – intercept, ζ – quantile, $\beta_{1\zeta}\ln GDPpc_{jt}$ – slope of natural logarithms quantile gross domestic product, $\beta_{2\zeta}\ln Pop_{jt}$ – slope of natural logarithms quantile population, $\beta_{3\zeta}\ln VA_{jt}$ – slope of natural logarithms quantile voice accounts, $\beta_{4\zeta}\ln RLaw_{jt}$ – slope of natural logarithms quantile rule of law, $\beta_{5\zeta}\ln CC_{jt}$ – slope of natural logarithms quantile control of corruption, ε_{jt} – residuals.

Meo et al. (2021) demonstrate that the relationship between corruption and tourism is non-linear. To accurately predict a fixed-effect version of the conditional quantile regression model, we expanded equation (3) from a linear to a non-linear form. All variables were utilized in the same manner as the original equation.

3.2. Non-linear quantile regression equation

Secondly study employs a quantile regression approach in a nonlinear form with fixed effects to analyse the impact of corruption on tourism demand at higher and lower levels.

$$Q_{\ln Tou_{ij}}(\zeta | ij\ \varepsilon_{ij}) = \alpha + \theta_{1\zeta}\ln GDPpc_{jt} + \theta_{2\zeta}\ln Pop_{jt} + + \theta_{4\zeta}\ln VA_{jt} + \theta_{5\zeta}\ln RLaw_{jt} + \theta_{7\zeta}\ln {CC_{jt}}^2 + \varepsilon_{jt} \quad (4)$$

where: $Q_{\ln Tou_{ij}}(\zeta | ij\ \varepsilon_{ij})$ – quantile of natural logarithm of tourism, α – intercept, ζ – quantile, $\theta_{1\zeta}\ln GDPpc_{jt}$ – nonlinear slope of natural logarithms quantile gross domestic product, $\theta_{2\zeta}\ln Pop_{jt}$ – nonlinear slope of natural logarithms quantile population, $\theta_{4\zeta}\ln VA_{jt}$ – nonlinear slope of natural logarithms quantile voice accounts, $\theta_{5\zeta}\ln RLaw_{jt}$ – nonlinear slope of natural logarithms quantile rule of law, $\theta_{7\zeta}\ln {CC_{jt}}^2$ – nonlinear slope of natural logarithms quantile control of corruption, ε_{jt} – residuals.

The equation above is non-linear and resembles equation (2), except for squared, cubic or quadratic control of corruption. It exhibits an inverted-U relationship at ζ quantile, where $\theta_{1\zeta} > 0$ and $\theta_{2\zeta} < 0$.

3.3. Turning point

The level of the turning point can be calculated as follows:

$$CC_{\zeta}^{*} = -\frac{\theta_{1\zeta}}{2\theta_{2\zeta}} \quad (5)$$

where: CC_{ζ}^{*} referes control of corruption turning point, $\theta_{1\zeta}$ and $\theta_{2\zeta}$ are the quantiles.

Belaïd et al. (2020) established the coefficients of the linear and polynomial terms of corruption at ζ quantile as $\theta_{1\zeta}$ and $\theta_{2\zeta}$, respectively, through their study of econometric models. They introduced the concept of quantile regression and emphasized the significance of ζ regression quantile estimates $\widehat{B}(\zeta)$ in resolving the dilemma. The parameter ζ ($0 < \zeta < 1$) denotes the quantile in size. In our study, we examined equally weighted quantiles with similar turning parameters, as demonstrated by Law et al. (2019).

4. Empirical findings discussion

This section presents an analysis of the empirical results of the current study on the impact of corruption on international tourism demand in 200 destination countries and regions from 1995 to 2022. The analysis was conducted using a gravity model consisting of a POLS with the fixed effect technique. The first part of the study provides descriptive statistics of the main variables and functions.

The methodology section provides further details on these variables and functions. Table 2 presents a descriptive analysis of the variables and functions used in the regression model, along with their definitions and sources of data. The highest mean tourism demand is 74,372, with a substantial variation of 860,131. The second-highest mean is for the ln population at 15.16, with a standard deviation of 2.41. The mean for ln*GDP*, based on 804,351 observations, is 8.61 with a variation of 1.5. Corruption, voice accounts and law have means ranging from 0.08 to 0.09 and variations ranging from 0.96 to 0.98.

Table 2. Descriptive analysis of variables and functions

Variables and functions	Observations	Mean	Standard deviation	Min	Max
Tou_{jt}	211,073	74,372.76	860,131	0	7.90998
CC_{jt}	792,334	0.083115	0.988187	–1.722930	2.46999
VA_{jt}	803,760	0.097398	0.967273	–2.259160	1.80099
$RLaw_{jt}$	808,882	0.090370	0.971597	–2.178490	2.10027
$\ln GDPpc_{jt}$	804,351	8.614261	1.531559	5.139216	12.17039
$\ln Pop_{jt}$	824,051	15.165850	2.415432	8.384119	21.05974

Note: *Tou* – tourism, *CC* – control of corruption, *VA* – voice accounts, *RLaw* – rule of law, *GDPpc* – gross domestic product per capita, *Pop* – population, *j* – period, *t* – time, ln – natural logarithm.
Source: authors.

Table 3. Pooled ordinary least square (POLS) (income level)

Variables and functions	Development level		
	all countries	developing countries	developed countries
CC_{jt}	0.1400***	–0.2570***	–0.1156***
	0.0384	0.0242	0.0221
	0.0209	0.0159	0.0126
VA_{jt}	–0.1279***	–0.0957***	–0.0493***
	0.0339	0.0143	0.0157
$RLaw_{jt}$	0.0929**	1.0051***	0.2083***
	0.0407	0.0263	0.0280
$\ln GDPpc_{jt}$	0.8068***	0.5693***	0.5498***
	0.0450	0.0106	0.0137
$\ln Pop_{jt}$	0.2948***	0.6254***	0.5713***
	0.0872	0.0052	0.0032
Observations	203,079	87,412	115,667
R^2	0.3922	0.4120	0.6040

Note: *CC* – control of corruption, *VA* – voice accounts, *RLaw* – rule of law, *GDPpc* – gross domestic product per capita, *Pop* – population, *j* – period, *t* – time, R^2 – coefficient of determination; ln – denotes natural logarithm; numbers in parentheses are standard errors; ** denotes significance level at 5% critical level, *** denotes significance at the 1% critical level.
Source: authors.

Table 3 presents the results of the pooled OLS regression on income level. Equation (2) estimated using Tou_{jt} for total tourist arrivals demonstrates a strong correlation between tourist arrivals and income level. The data is segregated according to the development level, distinguishing between those traveling to destination countries for travel or trade. Each column estimates data from all countries and then segregates according to level of development. These findings demonstrate a clear relationship between income level and tourist arrivals, providing valuable insights for policymakers and industry professionals alike. The POLS method estimates all relevant variables for this study. The variable CC_{jt} is utilized to control for corruption in the destination country. The significantly positive coefficient of $\ln GDPpc_{jt}$ indicates that richer countries tend to receive more tourists. Similarly, the significantly positive coefficient of $\ln Pop_{jt}$ demonstrates that an increase in the population of the destination country leads to an increase in the number of tourists.

The coefficient VA_{jt} has a statistically negative relationship with the quality of institutions. This implies that countries that do not respect human rights and freedom may attract fewer tourists. Conversely, the coefficient $RLaw_{jt}$ is positive, indicating that adherence to rules and laws by the people of the destination country can attract more tourists. This study examines the impact of corruption on international tourism demand. To assess the effect of corruption on tourism demand, various studies have used the CPI. However, in this study, we have employed CC_{jt}, an index obtained from the World Bank Group's WGI. This index ranges from –2.5 to 2.5, indicating weak to strong control of corruption. The POLS analysis in conventional linear functional form yielded a coefficient of –0.257 for developing countries and –0.1156 for developed countries. These results suggest that corruption has no statistically significant effect on international tourism demand, which is consistent with the findings of Haseeb and Azam (2021). The study unequivocally demonstrates the detrimental effect of corruption on tourism. Countries with lower levels of corruption indisputably attract more international tourists and have higher tourism demand, as supported by previous research on the topic. It is crucial to note that this relationship holds true for both developing and developed countries.

Examining the impact of corruption on tourism across all countries, the coefficient CC_{jt} is 0.140, which is statistically significant and is not negative and has no higher index. These findings differ from those of both developing and developed countries, as well as from those of Shaikh et al. (2022). Our analysis shows that corruption does not have a significant impact on tourism or international tourist arrivals. Instead, our model indicates that countries with a lower risk of terrorism and stable political conditions tend to attract more tourists. The corruption coefficient displays a positive correlation with less corrupt countries and a negative correlation with more corrupt countries, in both developing and developed countries. It is crucial to note that a positive coefficient does not necessarily indicate significance. However, in this case, corruption does not appear to have a significant impact on tourist arrivals. Countries with lower levels of corruption attract more international tourists, while those with higher levels of corruption are generally less attractive. This trend is observed in both developing and developed countries. However, the impact of corruption on tourism is less pronounced in developed countries, where people are more likely to travel (Fourie et al., 2020; Moyle et al., 2021).

Table 4. Pooled ordinary least square (POLS) (sub-period)

Variables and functions	Sample		
	1995–2022	1995–2006	2007–2022
CC_{jt}	0.1400^{***}	-0.1393^{**}	0.5062^{***}
	0.0384	0.0621	0.0695
	0.0209	0.0345	0.0380
VA_{jt}	-0.1279^{***}	0.4130^{***}	-0.1534^{**}
	0.0339	0.0557	0.0687
$RLaw_{jt}$	0.0929^{**}	-0.1853^{**}	-0.0762
	0.0407	0.0754	0.0280
$\ln GDPpc_{jt}$	0.8068^{***}	1.0560^{***}	0.2338^{*}
	0.0450	0.9922	0.1199
$\ln Pop_{jt}$	0.2948^{***}	-0.4960^{**}	-0.0078
	0.0872	0.2237	0.2212
Observations	203,079	90,565	112,514
R^2	0.3922	0.3971	0.4110

Note: *CC* – control of corruption, *VA* – voice accounts, *RLaw* – rule of law, ln – natural logarithm, *GDPpc* – gross domestic product per capita, *Pop* – population, *j* – period, *t* – time, R^2 – coefficient of determination; * denotes significance level at 10% critical level, ** denotes significance level at 5% critical level, *** denotes significance at the 1% critical level.

Source: authors.

Table 4 presents the results of estimating equation (3) using POLS regression with a fixed effect based on entire periods and sub-periods. The natural logarithm of total tourist arrivals at a destinations country, $\ln Tou_{jt}$, is used as the independent function. The data is divided into three, and the first includes data for 200 destination countries from 1995 to 2022 to assess the overall impact of corruption. Tourism has gradually increased in wealthier countries from 1995 to 2022, as indicated by the statistically significant coefficient $\ln GDPpc_j$ for all countries. This suggests that individuals with higher incomes are more likely to travel. For all countries and the entire period, a 1% increase in real GDP per capita is associated with an increase of 0.8068% in tourist arrivals. The dependent function is expressed as the natural logarithm of total tourist arrivals.

The coefficient values for $\ln GDPpc_j$ are estimated to be 1.056 and 0.2338 for the sub-periods of 1995–2006 and 2007–2022, respectively. However, it is worth noting that an early financial crisis had a global impact. It is important to consider the past, as in 1995 a general financial crisis was observed, following one in Mexico which had caused a devaluation of the Mexican peso in December 1994. Moreover, a second financial crisis occurred in 2007 and 2008, famously known as the global financial crisis, which originated from the subprime mortgage market in the USA. This crisis resulted in a worldwide economic downturn and a severe recession. Our study reveals that the coefficient for $\ln GDPpc_j$ is 0.2338, indicating a relatively low GDP per capita during the sub-period of 2007 to 2022 compared to the other two columns. The global financial crisis of 2007 and 2008 had a significant impact on the GDP worldwide and this is evident from the estimated coefficient value. The coefficient of 0.2338 is significant at a 10% level, but not at a 5% level. During the global financial crisis, which caused a dramatic decline in global GDP, the tourism industry suffered, resulting in a downturn of the $\ln GDPpc_j$ coefficient in 2007 and 2008. The 1% level of significance is only observed during this crisis period.

Similarly, the coefficient $\ln Pop_{jt}$ showed a significant positive correlation at 10%, 5% and 1% levels for all countries throughout the period from 1995 to 2022. An increase of 1% in the population of the destination country is associated with a 0.2948% increase in tourist arrivals. However, there are differences between the two sub-periods. The coefficient value was –0.496 for the period from 1995 to 2006 and –0.0078 for the period from 2007 to 2022, as shown in Table 4. The $\ln Pop_{jt}$ coefficient value of –0.496 had a negative correlation with the sub-period of 1995–2006. During this time, there was a decrease in the number of tourists visiting destination countries. This could be attributed to the financial crisis and its impact in 1995 and beyond, leading to a decline in the population parameter in idestinaton countries. Similarly, in the sub-period 2007–2022, the population parameter is negatively impacted by a coefficient value of –0.0078. This may be attributed to the global financial crisis that originated in 2007 and 2008, which had a ripple effect on the world economy and was felt in 2009 and 2010. During this period, global economies were in a dire state, and real GDP per capita was severely affected. Economists consider the financial crises of 2007 and 2008 to be the worst of the period; GDP declined and people's interest in tourist destinations was also affected.

Table 4 illustrates the results of estimating equation (5) using POLS regression based on sub-periods where the natural logarithm of total tourist arrivals at the destination country, $\ln Tou_{jt}$, is used in this model. The data is divided according to sub-periods from 1995 to 2022. The model isolates the data for all countries by periods and uses three-column analyses. The table presents estimates for all countries from 1995 to 2022. The first column shows data for the entire period, while the second column only covers the years 1995 to 2006. The third column focuses on 2007 to 2022. The study divided the periods into sub-periods to examine the impact of terrorism on international tourism demand over time. The table presents estimates for the period from 1995 to 2022, examining the impact on domestic tourism demand. The data is divided into two sub-periods due to the financial crises in 1995 and 2007–2008. The negative coefficient of VA_{jt} may be attributed to this. This is a case where the country has limited control over enterprises, and weak governance could negatively impact international tourism demand. The coefficient $RLaw_{jt}$ in Table 4 also follows this pattern. The estimated values of the coefficient range from 0.0929 to –0.1853 and –0.0762 for the entire period from 1995 to 2022, sub-period 1995 to 2006, and sub-period 2007 to 2022. For the entire period, the coefficient value is statistically significant only at the 10% and 5% levels, indicating that rules of law have a significantly positive relationship with tourism. Countries with sound rules of law that promote tourism attract tourists to their destinations. However, the coefficient values for both sub-periods differ from those of the entire period. Next, we evaluate the impact of corruption on tourist arrivals in destination countries by examining the effect of CC_{jt}.

However, the coefficient values for the entire period from 1995 to 2022 and the sub-period from 2007 to 2022 are estimated at 0.140 and 0.5062, respectively. These values show significant positive effects at 10%, 5% and 1%, indicating that if there is less corruption in the destination countries or more control on corruption, it tends to attract more tourists. It is important to note that this statement is purely for interpretation purposes and should not be taken as a suggestion that corruption is beneficial for tourism demand. However, the corruption index has not increased significantly during the recent years, indicating that corruption cannot be ignored. In contrast, the coefficient for the sub-period 1995 to 2006 is estimated to be significantly negative with a value of –0.1393, indicating less control of corruption. This suggests that an increase in corruption will reduce the tourist attraction to those destination countries. However, Table 3 shows the opposite trend for developed countries, where corruption has increased the demand for tourism.

Table 5 presents the results of quantile regression using conventional linear functional form with $\ln Tou_{jt}$ as the dependent function. The natural logarithm of total tourist arrivals at the destination country is shown. The estimated equation (4) was investigated without the squared, cubic, or quadratic form of the control on corruption coefficient at five quantiles: $\zeta = 0.1$, 0.25, 0.5, 0.75 and 0.9. Table 5 shows that for the conventional linear quantile regression method, the coefficient CC_{jt} is significant at all stages in Tables 3 and 4. However, in Table 5, when it enters the regression with no significant coefficient at the 10th quantile in linear quantile regression form, the coefficient appears with a value of –0.0391 and an estimated standard error of 0.0284 with the rest of the quantiles through linear quantile regression showing significant coefficients at all the quantiles of the distribution, There is also a marginal effect showing at the higher quantiles of the median and the coefficient of CC_{jt} is insignificant only at the lower quantile i.e. 10th, while in Table 5 it indicates that the coefficient for the 10th quantile is insignificantly changed from the median quantile; whereas, higher quantiles than the median are marginally significantly at the 75th and 90th.

The aim of this study is to investigate whether CC_{jt} has a differential impact on tourism for low and high percentiles of the population. Specifically, we examine whether the β value varies between these two groups. Table 5 shows that corruption has a statistically significant effect on international tourism demand. A one percent decrease in corruption control is associated with an increase in tourism demand of approximately 0.15 to 0.58%. The results appear to support the concept of 'greasing the wheels'. However, according to Emara (2020), corruption plays an augmenting role in the growth of the tourism industry when it exceeds the average level. Law et al. (2019) hold the view that there is an inverted U-shaped relationship between corruption and tourism demand: it increases up to a certain level and then decreases. So, the inverted U-relationship implies that tourism demand tends to increase initially and then decline when corruption is likely to surpass a certain threshold or level.

It is important to note the relationship between income and tourism demand. The impact of GDP per

Table 5. Quantile regression

Variables and functions	Quantiles				
	10	25	50	75	90
CC_{jt}	–0.0391	–0.15480***	–0.3276***	–0.4891***	–0.5714***
	0.0284	0.03110	0.0320	0.0298	0.0386
	0.0183	0.02010	0.0190	0.0141	0.0180
VA_{jt}	–0.1541***	–0.02400	0.1577***	0.0539***	–0.1144***
	0.0235	0.02630	0.0176	0.0160	0.0246
$RLaw_{jt}$	0.4648***	0.27520***	0.3558***	0.5836***	0.6131***
	0.0360	0.04840	0.0395	0.0334	0.0450
$\ln GDPpc_{jt}$	0.1304***	0.20490***	0.2461***	0.4142***	0.6094***
	0.0090	0.01001	0.0092	0.0092	0.0106
$\ln Pop_{jt}$	0.4890***	0.50490***	0.5327***	0.5903***	0.5850***
	0.0047	0.00570	0.0045	0.0049	0.0076
Observations	203,079				
R^2	0.0550	0.05100	0.0601	0.0879	0.1037

Note: *CC* – control of corruption, *VA* – voice accounts, *RLaw* – rule of law, ln – natural logarithm, *GDPpc* – gross domestic product per capita, *Pop* – population, *j* – period, *t* – time, R^2 is the coefficient of determination; *** denotes significance at the 1% critical level.
Source: authors.

capita on tourism demand is shown in Table 5, with positive coefficients in linear quantile regression and is expectedly positive across all quantiles. Table 5 consistently shows that the coefficients $\ln GDPpc_{jt}$ increase in responsiveness as ζ quantile increases from 0.1 to 0.9. This suggests that international tourism demand is more likely to increase with higher income at higher quantiles of the conditional demand distribution and less likely to be affected at lower quantiles. In other words, countries at the 10th quantile increase their tourism demand by 13.04% for every 1% increase in income.

In contrast, countries at the 25th, 50th, 75th, and 90th percentiles experience an increase in tourism demand of 20.49%, 24.61%, 41.42%, and 60.94%, respectively, when all other factors remain constant. However, Table 4 shows that the coefficient of GDP for the sub-period from 1995 to 2006 is 1.056, which is significantly higher than the coefficients for the periods from 1995 to 2022 and 2006 to 2022, which are 0.86 and 0.2338, respectively. This indicates a lower impact on tourism demands during these periods compared to the earlier period. This could be attributed to the global financial crisis in 2007–2008 and its aftermath. So, to some extent tourism demand declined in these periods, the reason may be that the developed countries had less impact on tourism demand as compared to developing countries during the global financial crisis.

In Table 5, we estimated the conditional linear quantile regression model for different variables and their effects by different quantiles. Table 6 now presents the nonlinear conditional quantile regression model. The purpose of this model is to determine whether this nonlinear relationship is consistent across quantiles or whether there is a smaller or marginal effect at different quantiles of the distribution by adding some squared, cubic and quadratic terms of CC_{jt} added with the variable of interest in model by estimating equation (5). However, the coefficients of the linear quantile regression through the linear term were significant throughout the distribution, except for the last 10th quantile. Here, the corruption coefficient of the quadratic term is statistically different from the median up to the 10th quantile and marginally significant at the 50th to 75th quantiles, then at the 90th quantile, but less so at the 10th and 25th quantiles. From this phenomenon, one could conclude that there is a threshold and as soon as the extent of corruption exceeds the threshold, it can lose its effect. At the same time, the cubic term of corruption shows a significant difference between the coefficient values from quantiles to the right of the distribution to those of the left. Similarly, quadratic terms have significantly different values from the median to the 90th quantile and different ones for lower quantiles such as the 10th to 25th quantiles (Fourie et al., 2020; Yerdelen Tatoglu & Gul, 2020).

Table 6. Non-linear model

Sample/Method	Quantiles				
	10	25	50	75	90
CC_{jt}	0.1076***	0.1177***	–0.0329	–0.2390***	–0.4933***
$CC2_{jt}$	–0.0630***	–0.1754***	–0.3740***	–0.3660***	–0.2760***
$CC3_{jt}$	0.0447***	0.0177	–0.0526**	–0.0903***	0.0271
$CC4_{jt}$	–0.0302***	–0.0135	0.0549***	0.0832***	0.0228***
Observations	203,079				
R^2	0.0561	0.0529	0.0619	0.0893	0.1046

Note: *CC* – control of corruption, *j* – period, *t* – time, R^2 – coefficient of determination; ** denotes significance at the 5% critical level, *** denotes significance at the 1% critical level.
Source: authors.

Consequently, the values in Table 6 are statistically different from the lower quantiles to the upper quantiles. Thus, the results for the lower and upper quantiles indicate the concept of bribe hypothesis, which means that corruption has a significant positive impact on tourism for underdeveloped and developed countries, at a certain level it plays a reinforcing role in the tourism industry and decreases when it exceeds a certain threshold. Thus, the model shows that its quadratic term is significant only in the 50th to 75th quantiles, while the cubic term has a marginal impact even from the median to 75th. Similarly, the quadratic term has the same effect on the different quantiles from bottom to top. In contrast, the lower quantiles are statistically different from median and higher quantiles, but at the same time also show marginal effects on the 50th to 75th quantiles. This indicates that the inverted U-relationship is only significant around the 50th to 60th quantiles of the demand distribution. In addition, the result may also be possible by calculating the inflexion point of the demand distribution (Ghalia et al., 2019; Rosselló Nadal & Santana Gallego, 2022).

5. Conclusion

The aim of the study is to analyse the relationship between corruption and international tourism demand for 200 destination countries from 1995 to 2022. The data were analysed using POLS and a fixed effects technique to account for unobservable country effects that are constant over time. Therefore, the multivariate method was also used to reduce omitted variable bias to examine the impact of corruption on international tourism demand; panel quantile estimation techniques were also used due to the unusual consideration of demand distribution. This study examined the impact of corruption on tourism demand as a function of a country's attractiveness or lack of it to tourists and its level of development, such that the analysis revealed that corruption has a mixed effect. More specifically, it is statistically significant and has a positive effect on tourism attractiveness in both the most and least corrupt countries.

Consequently, the study finds a non-linear relationship between corruption and international tourism demand in countries with medium levels. Our results show that the relationship between corruption and tourism is only significant at the 50th and 75th quantiles, suggesting that tourism demand first increases and then decreases. Furthermore, our study focussed on the relationship between income and demand. This study also concludes that the dramatic decline in GDP in the 2006–2022 sub-period is due to the global financial crisis of 2007–2008 and its aftershocks; as a result, tourism demand has subsequently suffered drastically worldwide.

The coefficients of population, rule of law, voice and accountability are also not statistically significant for the sub-period 2006–2022, indicating the financial crisis and its negative impact on tourism demand. Our findings may be useful for policy makers and the results may recommend that policies for tourism are not equally likely in all countries with different levels of demand; similarly, income has positive but different effects; therefore, policy makers should realise that tourism attraction can be increased to increase income, and this needs to focus on countries with less attractive tourism demand. This study is based on two-dimensional analyses (destination and year) considering data only for total tourist arrivals in the destination country and year; furthermore, the study is based on a three-dimensional analysis (origin, destination and year) of the subject of interest, which is left for a future study.

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Destination brand identity as a mediator between accessibility and tourist perception: Promoting Bama Yao as potential wellness tourist destination in China

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the impact of accessibility and destination brand identity on Chinese wellness tourist perceptions. It considers Bama Yao autonomous district's growth towards longevity tourism and contributes to empirical work on the Chinese wellness tourism market. This quantitative research incorporated a post-positivism paradigm with the non-probability convenience sampling method to collect paper-based questionnaires: a total of 346 were coded for data analysis. The results demonstrated that accessibility positively influenced destination brand identity and tourist perceptions. Equally destination brand identity positively influenced tourist perception. Meanwhile, destination brand identity mediated the relationship between accessibility and tourist perception for wellness tourism destinations. However, the cross-sectional study's results cannot be generalizable, and the sample may be one of its limitations. The present study provides policymakers and practitioners with the theoretical and practical basis to understand and predict tourists' perceptions of wellness tourism destinations in China.

KEYWORDS

Bama Yao autonomous district, destination brand identity, push and pull theory, tourist perception, accessibility, wellness tourism destination

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1. Introduction

Wellness tourism is usually understood as when tourists undertake a journey specifically to improve their well-being and health (Piatto Clerici et al., 2024). In contrast to medical tourists who embark on trips to search for a way to cure their illnesses (Wang et al., 2024), wellness tourists focus on pursuing relaxation during their stays through activities such as spas, massages, hiking and so on (Phuthong et al., 2023). China has been identified as one of the most rapidly growing wellness markets with an increase from $12 billion to $30 billion by 2018 (Eyefor

Travel, 2018). In 2021, China became the second-largest market in the wellness field valued at $19.9 billion (Stasha, 2023), meaning that wellness tourism has become a popular form of relaxation for the Chinese people. Historically, ancient books record that Chinese wellness medical practices can be dated back to as early as 1000 BC (Quintela et al., 2016), resulting in the establishment of *yangsheng* culture in China (Wanning, 2016). The word *yangsheng* first appeared in Zhuangzi's Taoist literary text known as *Zhuangzi: Health preservation aster* (Yang, 2018). In Chinese the character *yang* means keeping healthy, while *sheng* refers to life and survival (Zhang & Cheng, 2012). The *yangsheng* principle in Taoism refers to activities that help individuals maintain their physical and mental health while promoting longevity through methods such as qigong, bigu, wushu etc. (Jenzen, 2008). In China, nearly all wellness tourism-related literature has been published in Chinese using either the terms '*yangsheng* tourism', 'longevity tourism' or 'longevity *yangsheng* tourism' instead of wellness tourism. The difference between these usages and the language used in publications has led to a great gap between China and the global wellness tourism market.

Bama Yao autonomous district (abbreviated as Bama) is known to be among the fastest-growing wellness tourist destinations in the world (Huang & Xu, 2018). Early in the Qing Dynasty (1636–1912), Emperor Guangxu (1875–1908) bestowed a plaque on which was written *Wei ren zhe shou* [*Only the kind live longer*] to a Yao centenarian Deng Chengcai who lived in Bama (Zhao, 1995). Bama was famous due to the number of centenarians living there, and this remains the case even up to the present. In 2020, out of Bama's 0.23 million residents, there were 5974 above the age of 80, and 102 living in the area were centenarians (Bama Yao Autonomous County Statistical Bureau, 2021). Bama is the only wellness location in the world where the number of centenarians has continued to rise steadily through the years (Bama Yao Autonomous County Statistical Bureau, 2021). Thus, Bama is regarded as the most attractive longevity tourism destination in China. Accordingly, Bama was selected as a study site because (a) the region is the most famous destination due to its unique *yangsheng* culture and activities; (b) Bama's unique tourism has rarely been studied in the literature previously; and (c) longevity tourism attracts large numbers of tourists not only from nearby cities but also from distant parts of China (e.g. Harbin and Mudanjiang). Thus, Bama's tourists are considered to be typical of travellers to other wellness destinations in China.

Despite reflecting the cultural characteristic of longevity, its poor accessibility (transportation) had failed to keep up with the tourism boom, resulting in the unsuccessful promotion of Bama to the public. While the influence of accessibility on tourist perceptions regarding destinations has been investigated in the past, most researchers have focused on the fairness factor affecting the disabled (Israeli, 2002). The connection between accessibility and tourist perception is still insufficiently explored (Wang et al., 2021). In particular, most of the previous studies considered the influence of accessibility on destination selection at city or national level (Wu & Chen, 2022). However, accessibility is also always the key to promoting tourism development for small and medium-sized destinations, and few studies have investigated its influence on perceptions towards a particular destination (Hu et al., 2012).

Moreover, tourist perception is an important process for conceptualizing destination image (Tukamushaba et al., 2016). Understanding this perception and the experience of the industry would be useful in contributing to marketing efforts and offering specialized activities in the health tourism field (Nazem & Mohamed, 2016). However, investigations of such perceptions are mainly focused on developed Western nations and pay little attention to Asian tourists' (Lim et al., 2014), resulting in an insufficient understanding towards a particular tourism type (e.g. wellness) in the literature (Tukamushaba et al., 2016).

In addition, the push and pull theory has been widely applied to studies of tourist motivation in the health and wellness industry (Tuzunkan, 2018). Push and pull are two aspects used to study motivation in their decision-making process (Su et al., 2020). Personal travel motivations (push factors) are affected by background, education, culture and past personal experience. Pull factors, on the other hand, are destination attributes, strongly linked to on-site attractions. Nevertheless, previous research in the health and wellness sector based on this theoretical foundation mainly focuses on investigating push motivations (Tuzunkan, 2018). The extension of the theory into pull motivations, influencing selection of a wellness destination, is rather challenging for scholars and has yet to be undertaken. In particular, accessibility and destination brand identity have been conceived as separate important pull predictors in influencing perceptions and behaviors (Chen et al., 2017; Saraniemi & Komppula, 2019). However, previous studies seem to ignore the effects of accessibility on brand identity, and subsequently, perceptions and behaviors (Wu & Chen, 2022) regarding wellness activities in tourism marketing.

Therefore, this study developed a conceptual model of the linkages between accessibility, destination brand identity and tourist perceptions towards visiting wellness destinations in China. The main research objectives are (a) to test the effect of accessibility on destination brand identity and tourist perception individually; (b) to test the effect of destination brand identity on tourist perception; and (c) to test the mediation effect of destination brand identity between accessibility and tourist perception.

2. Literature review

2.1. Push and pull theory

This research adopted push and pull theory (Dann, 1977; Su et al., 2020), and this has been integrated into the conceptual model. The push and pull model has been applied by many scholars in the tourism domain (Cai, 2002), particularly when investigating motivation in the health and wellness sector (Tuzunkan, 2018). The push factor can be regarded as concerning the socio-psychological factors that motivate behavior including a desire for relaxation, wanting to escape mundane environments, prestige, wanting to enhance kinship or relationships, seeking to explore or evaluate oneself, or hoping to create opportunities that facilitate social interaction (Dryglas & Salamaga, 2018; Wang et al., 2021). The pull factor is identified as a destination's attributes and attractions (Mak et al., 2009) with previous tourism-related health studies being identified as the destination's infrastructure, environment and cultural heritage (Huang & Xu, 2018; Nazem & Mohamed, 2016). Although the push and pull theory has been applied to marketing studies developed to analyze tourist perceptions and behavior, little in the literature has explored this theory in terms of wellness in China. In the present study, accessibility and destination brand identity are considered as pull factors that affect tourist perceptions to visit wellness destinations. Figure 1 illustrates the application of push and pull theory in this study.

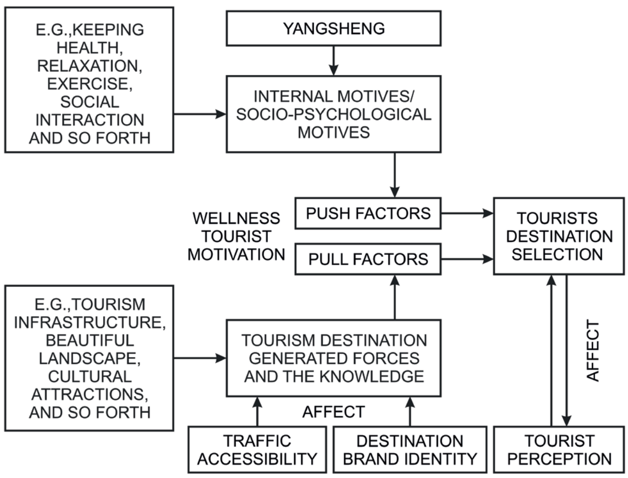

Figure 1. The application of push and pull theory in this study
Source: Baloglu and McCleary (1999), Chen et al. (2008), Crompton (1979), Gnanapala (2015), Uysal and Jurowski (1994), Tukamushaba et al. (2016)

2.2. The impact of accessibility

Accessibility is a basic concept in transport geography and metropolitan planning (Chen et al., 2017; Fang et al., 2010), and a vital factor to assess the strength or potential of a city's development (Antunes et al., 2003). Accessibility always concerns the main activity locations (e.g. home, workplace) and the transportation services offered to assess relative advantages (Wu & Miller, 2001). Within tourism marketing, previous studies on perceptions and accessibility behavior have only addressed industrial companies' perspectives and indicated their significance (Wang et al., 2021). However, recent studies have shown that accessibility appears to have a significant value in shaping a tourist's decision-making process (Wang et al., 2021) since accessibility can be understood as a tourists' trade-off between travel (e.g. physical distance or travel time) and the cost required (Wu & Miller, 2001). Adequate infrastructure, locations and facilities are necessary for improving tourists' perceptions and satisfaction (Tukamushaba et al., 2016). However, research on the connection and relationship between accessibility and wellness tourism development is still insufficient (Kovačić & Milošević, 2016). Specifically, Chinese scholars often concentrate on large and medium-sized cities, with little attention being granted to medium and small-sized cultural tourist destinations (Hu et al., 2012). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H_1: There is a significant relationship between accessibility and tourist perceptions towards visiting Bama wellness tourism destination.

Moreover, the attractiveness and popularity of a tourism destination is heavily influenced by its accessibility (Jian & Juan, 2013) because this is a significant factor that builds destination brand identity (Wu & Chen, 2022). On the one hand, accessibility reflects the ease with which tourists may access predetermined locations in their travelling, a crucial factor when selecting a destination (Darcy & Dickson, 2009; Wong & Zhao, 2016); on the other hand, accessibility is a reflection of the development of destinations (Sorupia, 2005). Certain studies have demonstrated how accessibility affects the destination competitiveness and whether tourists decide to visit these places or not. For example, accessibility is a primary concern for tourists when they select their wellness destinations, and sufficient infrastructure and amenities are important to improve brand identity (Tukamushaba et al., 2016) because tourists expect their accessibility needs to be satisfied (Hącia, 2016). In addition, Jian and Juan (2013) demonstrated that accessibility is a critical spatial characteristic of regional tourism resources. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H_2: There is a significant relationship between accessibility and destination brand identity as regards Bama wellness tourism destination.

2.3. The impact of destination brand identity

A brand is an idea of a product or service (Bastos & Levy, 2012). Indeed, destination branding is a combination of all attributes associated with a place and offers potential tourists a destination image that distinguishes it from others (Campelo et al., 2014). Accordingly, brand identity is regarded as a location's essence (Saraniemi & Komppula, 2019) since tourism destinations should promote a recognizable brand to differentiate and identify their competitive advantages over others (Ashton, 2015). Practitioners usually present and manage destination branding as a marketing method for attracting people (Choo et al., 2011) because a strong brand identity not only helps to articulate and communicate its position to target tourists, but also implies what practitioners will and can do over time (Kneesel et al., 2010). Thus, brand identity can be regarded as the perception of a place reflected in images retained in a tourist's memories (Cai, 2002), or the images posted by a destination to promote its brand are part of its identity (Anand & Kumar, 2023).

Previous studies demonstrated how destination brand identity influences perceptions in tourism marketing. For instance, Aaker (1996) indicated that recognizing the important role of brand identity is a key element to achieving a successful tourism brand and attracting more tourists, while destination experiences significantly affect brand identification (Ashton, 2015). In addition, the branding process increases the tourist's identification with the area, which subsequently influences perception and loyalty (Kumar & Kaushik, 2018). Meanwhile, perceptions of a destination are typically shaped by the familiarity of tourists with it (e.g. accessibility, facilities, amenities) (Herrero et al., 2017). In particular, the process of branding can also greatly affect its value as perceived by tourists, which means that the brand identity of a destination can also be seen in terms of a tourist's perceived value recognition (Mohd Yusof & Ismail, 2014). Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H_3: There is a significant relationship between destination brand identity and tourist perception as regards visiting Bama wellness tourism destination.

H_4: Destination brand identity mediates the relationship between accessibility and tourist perception as regards visiting Bama wellness tourism destination.

2.4. Tourist perception

Tourist perception is regarded as the process of the image formation of a destination in tourists' minds (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999), and this process typically includes emotional, affective, and cognitive components to help people form a holistic picture of the destination that they intend to visit or are visiting (Gnanapala, 2015). Tourist perception is an important process for conceptualizing a destination image, but it has received little attention in tourism marketing (Tukamushaba et al., 2016). Understanding perceptions and experience in the tourist industry would be useful in contributing to marketing efforts and offering specialized activities in the health tourism field (Nazem & Mohamed, 2016). However, investigations of destination perceptions are mainly focused on developed Western nations and pay little attention to an Asian tourist's perceptions (Lim et al., 2014). Estimating factors that affect perceptions of longevity in *yangsheng* tourism in Bama would be a novel and attractive research subject. Therefore, based on an understanding of the push and pull theory discussed above, this study updates a theoretical framework (see Figure 2) to assess the impact of these possible factors on tourist perceptions in Bama.

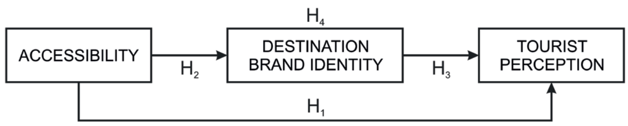

Figure 2. Conceptual research model
Source: authors' own work

3. Method

3.1. Measures

The post-positivism paradigm, which derives from a merger of positivist and interpretivist theories (Panhwar et al., 2017), was deployed in this present study as the research philosophy. Post-positivism concentrates on the subjectivity of reality while not neglecting the impersonal stance posited by logical positivists (RePrac, 2016). A quantitative research approach was used and primary data were gathered from a questionnaire survey. The first section of which included six items that captured socio-demographic background information from the respondents, including gender, marital status, age, place of residence and frequency of engaging in *yangsheng* or longevity activities. The second section involved the independent variables: six items on accessibility were adapted from Adeleke and Ogunsusi (2019), Tverijonaite et al. (2018), Vural Arslan et al. (2018), Pechlaner and Hammann (2006) and Konecnik (2002); five items on destination brand identity were adapted from Pechlaner and Hammann (2006), Fuchs and Reichel (2006), Tverijonaite et al. (2018), Gnanapala (2015) and Konecnik (2002). The last section focused on the dependent variable, tourist perception, and five items were adapted from Tverijonaite et al. (2018), Fuchs and Reichel (2006) and Konecnik (2002). In addition, a closed questionnaire was distributed to respondents using a seven-point Likert scale: 1 corresponded with *I very strongly disagree*, while 7 corresponded with *I very strongly agree*.

3.2. Data collection

The anonymous questionnaire distributed through this survey was used to collect tourist information through travel agencies and tourism locations from December 2019 to September 2020. Data was gathered from wellness tourists by using a paper questionnaire in Bama. To ensure the adequacy of the sample, the primary data of this research was collected from Baimo Cave, Baimo Town, Bama Town and Poyue Village, which are locations that most domestic tourists visit in Bama. Only visitors who intended to visit Bama, have been to Bama or were present at the targeted locations were involved in the investigation. Tourists over the age of 15 were surveyed, as those below were considered unable to financially support their wellness trips.

Dolnicar et al. (2014) suggested that the sample size prepared for tourism studies should be at least 70 times the number of variables, the sample size for this study was calculated through formulas whose results indicated that the sample size here should be at least 210. In order to calculate the required size for this study, the response rate from the questionnaire collection was considered. After distributing questionnaires to the respondents, staff assisting the survey reminded them to complete it. The expected response rate was beyond 85% therefore, a minimum of 247 should be collected to enable data analysis in the subsequent phase. Finally, after performing both direct and archival screening methods, 346 samples were determined as an appropriate size for this study.

4. Data analysis and results

Cronbach's alpha coefficient and principal component analysis with the varimax rotation were conducted to validate the underlying basic structure of key dimensions in this research. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was applied using the AMOS version 23.0 to test the research model. The results of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) demonstrated that all scales used formed adequate measurement models, thus offering evidence for their construct validity.

Table 1. Demographic information (n = 346)

Items	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	159	46.0
	Female	187	54.0
Age	15–25	49	14.2
	26–35	57	16.4
	36–45	75	21.7
	46–55	46	13.3
	56–65	60	17.3
	66–75	30	8.7
	76–85	27	7.8
	86–95	1	0.3
	96 and above	1	0.3
Martial status	Single	108	31.2
	Married	116	33.5
	Separated	31	9.0
	Divorced	75	21.7
	Rather not to say	16	4.6
Place of residence	Northern China	94	27.2
	Southern China	152	43.9
	Western China	30	8.7
	Eastern China	70	20.2
Had you heard about *yangsheng* or longevity culture before?	Yes	299	86.4
	No	36	10.4
	Rather not say	11	3.2
Have you previously joined any *yangsheng* or longevity activities?	Within the last 12 months	86	24.8
	12 months or more but less than 2 years ago	86	24.8
	2 years or more but less than 3 years ago	40	11.6
	3 years ago, or more	30	8.7
	No	101	29.2
	Rather not say	3	0.9

Source: authors' own work.

4.1. Demographic characteristics

The demographic profile and personal information of the respondents are stated in Table 1 and there were 159 (46%) males and 187 (54%) females. More than a hundred individuals reported that they were single (31.2%) and 33.5% married. Regarding residence, individuals living in Southern China accounted for the highest number, with 152 representing 43.9% of the sample group. Moreover, the majority of Bama tourist respondents (24.8%) stated that they have engaged in *yangsheng* and longevity activities within the last 12 months or the past two years.

4.2. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

The acceptable value of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test should be 0.80 or above (Hazra, 2013), and the cut-off value for Cronbach's alpha should be 0.7 (Tengku Ismail & Sulaiman, 2010). Specifically, the results of the varimax rotation EFA demonstrated that the KMO measure achieved a sampling adequacy value for items (KMO > 0.80) with 0.822. Therefore, the collected data are appropriate for data analysis (Eyduran et al., 2010). Cronbach's alpha for all values in this research was greater than Tengku Ismail and Sulaiman's (2010) recommended threshold of 0.7, thus indicating that internal consistency is appropriate and acceptable (i.e. accessibility = 0.843; tourist perception = 0.816; destination brand identity = 0.787). For this study, 0.6 is considered the recommended cut-off factor loading (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010), while items with poor factor loadings of less than 0.6 were discarded through the validation test process.

4.3. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

Politis (2005) proposed that the average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) of each construct should exceed 0.5 and 0.7 respectively (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As shown in Table 2, the AVE of all three constructs was above 0.5, and all variables' CR values exceeded 0.7, meaning the convergent validity of the construct is adequate.

Table 2. Reliability and convergent validity of the measurement model

Construct (Cronbach's alpha)	Items	Factor loading	Composite reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Accessibility (A) (α = 0.843)	A1. Geographical location of Bama affects my decision to visit Bama	0.809	0.883	0.559
	A2. Parking conditions affect my decision to visit Bama	0.796		
	A3. Transportation safety affects my decision to visit Bama	0.787		
	A4. Transportation system affects my decision to visit Bama	0.762		
	A5. Time saving in transportation affects my decision to visit Bama	0.669		
	A6. Congestion concerns affect my decision to visit Bama	0.646		
Tourist perception (TP) (α = 0.816)	TP1. I am pleased that I decided to visit Bama	0.791	0.867	0.566
	TP2. Visiting Bama is very valuable for me	0.784		
	TP3. I feel that visiting Bama is a rest and relaxation decision	0.738		
	TP4. Bama is a good place to develop tourism business	0.731		
	TP5. I will recommend Bama to my colleagues, friends, and relatives	0.714		
Destination brand identity (DBI) (α = 0.787)	If you have been/will visit to Bama, how important is:		0.850	0.532
	DBI1. Climate	0.775		
	DBI2. Friendliness of the local people	0.767		
	DBI3. Quality of the accommodation	0.726		
	DBI4. The destination can be easily reached	0.688		
	DBI5. Purified water and foods	0.685		

Source: authors' own work.

Table 3. The correlation between constructs

Construct	Accessibility	Tourist perception	Destination brand identity	AVE	MSV	ASV
Accessibility (A)	0.748	–	–	0.559	0.024	0.022
Tourist perception (TP)	0.139	0.752	–	0.566	0.035	0.027
Destination brand identity (DBI)	0.156	0.188	0.729	0.532	0.035	0.030

Note: AVE – average variance extracted, MSV – maximum shared variance, ASV – average shared variance.
Source: authors' own work.

For discriminate validity, maximum shared squared variance (MSV) and average shared squared variance (ASV) values should be lower than average variance extracted (AVE) values (Sürücü & Maslakçi, 2020). Table 3 shows the values of the square root of the AVE were all greater than the inter-construct correlations (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), suggesting that an adequate discriminant validity for all constructs in the current research.

4.4. Structural equation modeling (SEM)

The model fit values of SEM test show that the chi-square minimum/degree of freedom (CMIN/*df*) value returned is 2.187, goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = 0.925, adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) = 0.899, root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.059, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.935, and incremental fit index (IFI) = 0.936. Summarily, the recommended measurement model in this research implied a good fit with the collected data. The results of this study are tabulated in Table 4. Furthermore, bootstrapping is used in the second mediating process to assess the mediation effect (Efron & Tibshirani, 1993; Hayes, 2009) by observing the estimated standard error, point estimate, bias-corrected confidence intervals, and bootstrapped percentile for mediating effects. This analysis reported results with unstandardized estimates (Marsh et al., 2004) (see Table 5).

5. Discussion and conclusions

This research attempts to examine accessibility and destination brand identity concerning tourist perception of *yangsheng* wellness destinations in China. Nowadays, travel for wellness reasons is booming

Table 4. Hypothesis testing results

Items	Parameter	Unstandardized estimates	Standardized error	Critical ratio	p-value	Standardized estimates
H_1	Accessibility → tourist perception	0.223	0.104	2.137	0.033	0.138
H_2	Accessibility → destination brand identity	0.202	0.066	3.059	0.002	0.213
H_3	Destination brand identity → tourist perception	0.413	0.119	3.465	***	0.243

Note: *** denotes p-value < 0.001.
Source: authors' own work.

Table 5. Illustration of standard and bootstrap mediation methods

Effect	Point estimate	Product of coefficients		p-value	Bootstrapping			
					bias-corrected 95% CI		percentile 95% CI	
		SE	*Z*-score		lower	upper	lower	upper
Total effects (c)	0.307	0.120	2.558	0.010	0.076	0.558	0.082	0.567
Indirect effects (a × b)	0.083	0.042	1.976	0.048	0.018	0.192	0.017	0.187
Direct effects (c′)	0.223	0.117	1.906	0.057	0.003	0.456	0.004	0.465

Note: Unstandardized direct, indirect and total effects of the hypothesized model (mediator); estimates are unstandardized, unstandardized estimating of 1000 bootstrap sample; *SE* – standardized error, *Z*-score measures the distance between a data point and the mean using standard deviations, CI – confidence interval.
Source: authors' own work.

around the world (Phuthong et al., 2023) and in China (Yen et al., 2021). As a popular method for Chinese people to keep healthy, longevity *yangsheng* tourism has been gradually accepted in Chinese society in modern times (Zhou et al., 2023). Although it is still in its infancy, it provides vast business opportunities and strengthens the overall market competitiveness in China's wellness industry (Wang et al., 2020). An increasing number of people are interested in acquiring knowledge of China's wellness tourism market. Although a huge source little is understood about the characteristics, motivations and preferences of wellness travelers (Liu et al., 2022) but there is reason to believe that this study will help to bridge the Chinese wellness market to the global industry.

This study assumes a relationship between accessibility and tourist perception. The results show that accessibility has a significant and positive association with tourist perception ($\beta = 0.138$, $p < 0.05$), indicating H_1 is supported. The result is confirmed by Le-Klähn and Hall (2015), who investigated differences in tourist perceptions of the level of accessibility (e.g. public transport use) by tourists between rural and urban destinations. Quintal et al. (2014) also proved that accessibility has a significant and positive association with perceptions by comparing local and international visitors' perceived services in the destination.

This study has examined the relationship between accessibility and destination brand identity. According to the statistical results, it has shown that accessibility is positively associated with destination brand identity ($\beta = 0.213$, $p < 0.05$). Thus, hypothesis 2 is supported. This agrees with previous studies on the relationship between accessibility and destination brand identity (e.g. Ruiz-Real et al., 2020; Schabbing, 2018) which show its importance in the tourism industry.

This study has assumed the relationship between destination brand identity and tourist perception. The results demonstrate that brand identity indeed has a significant and positive association with tourist perception ($\beta = 0.243$, $p < 0.05$), thus supporting hypothesis 3. This potential relationship is also supported by Šajinović (2016), who verified brand identity as one of the most significant factors in perceptions of tourism service quality and products. Features of a personalized brand can affect the mentality of tourists visiting a destination. Meanwhile, Della Corte et al. (2015) investigated the main elements that can influence tourist satisfaction in wellness destinations and also verified that there is a relationship between destination brand identity and tourist perception.

Furthermore, the indirect effect (0.017 to 0.187, with a point estimate of 0.083) and total effect (0.082 to 0.567, with a point estimate of 0.307) are statistically significant at the 0.05 level (p-value < 0.05). The direct effect (0.004 to 0.456, with a point estimate of 0.223) is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level with a p-value = 0.057. The result of the bootstrap test confirmed the existence of a positive and significant full mediating effect for destination brand identity between accessibility and tourist perception (unstandardized indirect effect = 0.083, $p < 0.05$). Based on 1,000 bootstrap samples, it returned 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals of indirect effect (a × b) (0.018, 0.192), direct effect (c′) (0.003, 0.456) and total effect (c) (0.076, 0.558) excluding zero, thereby supporting the conclusion that there is an indirect effect between accessibility and tourist perception through the mediating effect of destination brand identity.

5.1. Theoretical contributions

The push and pull theory has been widely applied by scholars in the tourism field, but few have explored theory in terms of wellness tourism in China. China's *yangsheng* lifestyle has existed for thousands of years but is rarely discussed in the wellness tourism industry (Liu et al., 2022). Although wellness and *yangsheng* concepts have long been established in the Chinese mind and remain a philosophical school of thought in Chinese history, they have not been comprehensively developed as tourism concepts (Turner, 2023). This study applies the push and pull theory to develop a *yangsheng* tourist perception framework in which the three dimensions of accessibility, destination brand identity and tourist perception were all combined for analysis. The results of this study have provided further insights to broaden the view of wellness tourism in China by investigating how accessibility and destination brand identity affect tourists' perceptions. It should be highlighted that this research is among the earliest attempts to connect push and pull theory to *yangsheng* tourists' perceptions.

Secondly, theoretical implications also concern the interplay of accessibility, destination brand identity and tourist perception on the push and pull model. Although results from the previous literature demonstrated that accessibility and destination brand identity are both verified as pull factors that are independently associated with tourist perceptions (Chen et al., 2017; Saraniemi & Komppula, 2019), little attention has been devoted so far to investigating the interplay of these three factors (Wu & Chen, 2022). Our results demonstrate that accessibility positively influences destination brand identity, and subsequently, tourist perceptions concerning visiting wellness destinations. This study, using the case of Bama, is the first to examine whether destination brand identity mediates the relationship between accessibility and tourist perception.

Furthermore, the relationship between tourism accessibility and perception is still insufficiently explored (Wang et al., 2021) although accessibility is an essential factor for building destination brand identity (Wu & Chen, 2022). Besides, few works have investigated the influence of accessibility on tourist perceptions of a particular destination (i.e. destination brand identity) (Hu et al., 2012). This study's results show that accessibility positively influences destination brand identity and tourist perceptions towards visiting wellness destinations respectively. The framework and propositions provide a first step toward developing a foundation for a greater understanding of the role of accessibility and brand identity in tourist perception, particularly in the wellness field. These results have begun to determine the influencing factor of tourist perception from a pull factor (i.e. accessibility and brand identity) perspective empirically.

5.2. Practical implications

From a practical stance, this work presents a novel research direction for practitioners of China's wellness tourism sector. Firstly, Bama's tourism bureau and local government should continue to develop both the accessibility of *yangsheng* tourist destinations and advertise the *yangsheng* brand to the public to improve tourists' perceptions. Establishing a convenient transportation infrastructure will contribute to building effective *yangsheng* branding for Bama. In other words, although efforts are in place to develop a high-speed rail network in the region, such efforts will arguably have little effect on developing longevity and *yangsheng* tourism. This is because tourists' perceptions will not improve by developing accessibility without the mediating effect of *yangsheng* brand identity and promotion. Destination brand identity and marketing promotion of *yangsheng* tourism is the most important factor in improving tourist perceptions and transforming the local government's investment in tourist facilities into profits. Therefore, there seems to be a pressing need to implement an effective governance system in Bama *yangsheng* tourist locations.

Second, highlighting the key competitive characteristics related to promoting *yangsheng* wellness tourism in Bama is necessary. For instance, the alkaline water found there is usually regarded as a competitive advantage for the *yangsheng* tourism industry. The local government should advertise this spring water as one of the most popular resources to attract wellness tourists. Practitioners can amplify the goodness of the water found in Bama for health and well-being. As a result, Bama spring water could be an important product used by the local government as a channel to attract tourists. Referring to the study outcomes, the respondents claimed that climate conditions, the friendliness of the local people, the quality of accommodation, and a destination that can be easily reached were all attractive as destination brand identities that influence perception towards visiting Bama. Thus, the local government and practitioners should adjust their marketing strategies to satisfy tourists' needs and wants.

In addition, this research investigated the accessibility and destination brand identity that influenced tourist perceptions within the context of China's traditional *yangsheng* longevity tourism. This fresh study may be beneficial to provide a benchmark methodology to analyze the *yangsheng* tourism market in Bama. As such, local government bodies and related businesses can use this research to conduct marketing predictions for the *yangsheng* tourism industry and identify market changes to direct their actions and businesses.

5.3. Limitations

There are several limitations present in the findings of this investigation. Firstly, due to time and resource constraints, the nature of this study is cross-sectional. Therefore, the results cannot represent all settings and need to be confirmed in future studies. Secondly, more than 10 per cent of respondents had never heard of *yangsheng* tourism before and more than 20 per cent had never engaged in *yangsheng* tourism, however they still participated in the investigation. The results should be replicated in the future to confirm their reliability and usefulness. Thirdly, this study has a very limited scope, i.e. Bama. Hence, the outcomes cannot represent all populations, and the framework should be applied in different places. Moreover, there is a high correlation between tourist perception and destination image (Tukamushaba et al., 2016), and destination image is an important reliable predictor of tourist intentions to visit (Wang et al., 2022). Therefore, future research should expand the current study's framework from destination image to increase its usefulness.

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Tourist lifestyle: Food and travel activities at a gastronomy destination in Türkiye through the mediating role of destination familiarity

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Abstract

This work aims to determine the effect of the travel preferences of domestic and foreign tourists visiting Gaziantep province in Türkiye and their participation in destination food and travel activities, as well as examining the mediating role of destination familiarity. The research model includes three sub-factors for travel lifestyle: preference for proximity and comfort, interest in new and local culture, and preference for activities and adventures. While preference for destination food activities has two sub-factors: interest in food activities and tasting local flavors. Additionally, destination familiarity and preference for destination travel activities are the measures used in the research model. The research sample consists of domestic and foreign tourists visiting Gaziantep between March and April 2022; 418 questionnaires were filled in by participants chosen by random sampling. Data analysis was made using SPSS and SmartPLS. As reflective and formative scales were used together in the data analysis, the partial least squares method (PLS-SEM) was used. The research results suggest that preference for proximity and comfort, interest in new and local culture, preference for activities and adventures, and destination familiarity have a positive significant effect on interest in food activities. While interest in the new and local culture and preference for activities and adventures, have a positive significant effect on tasting local flavors; preference for proximity and comfort and destination familiarity do not have such an effect. It was also found that preference for proximity and comfort, interest in the new and local culture, preference for activities and adventures, and destination familiarity have a positive and significant effect on preferences for destination travel activities. Lastly, interest in new and local culture and preference for activities and adventures have a positive significant effect on destination familiarity while preference for proximity and comfort do not.

Keywords

travel lifestyle, food activity preference, travel activity, destination familiarity, Gaziantep

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1. Introduction

Gastronomy-based travel is one of the biggest motivational factors for tourists who want to participate in tourism activities (Kivela & Crotts, 2006). Approximately one-third of all tourist expenses at destinations are food and drink-related (Mak et al., 2012). There are many factors determining participation in food-related activities: demographic features such as age, education and income status, as well as psychological characteristics such as worldview, lifestyle and attitude to food. The strongest factor is a lifestyle and its reflection in travel (Acevedo & Nohara, 2004). Travel lifestyle reflects how and why people decide to travel and their behaviors. Sirakaya and Woodside (2005) argue that travel lifestyle is a fundamental factor in determining journeys and can affect other decision-making determinants. A further factor for participating in food-related activities is destination familiarity. The image that tourists have of a destination can play a part in their participation (Lee et al., 2008). Destination familiarity can make tourists feel comfortable and safe which can encourage them to participate in food-related activities.

This work aims to determine the effect of the travel lifestyles of tourists on participation in food and travel activities, and to determine whether destination familiarity mediates this relationship. For this purpose, it is important to determine the motivations for traveling, such as proximity or comfort, interest in new and local culture, seeking activities and adventure, and whether these affect their tendency to participate in local food activities and taste local flavors. Determining these factors can contribute to the literature. The biggest problem in destination management is to make a destination more attractive and to lead tourists to buy local products. All the variables are thought to contribute to destination management. The results will provide an opportunity to develop product concepts and will help create accurate and effective market segmentation while the findings regarding destination familiarity can guide destination managers in terms of effective promotion strategies.

Certain destinations have competitive advantages thanks to their cultural, historical and gastronomic aspects which stimulate tourism activities in a region (Quan & Wang, 2004). Gaziantep is one of those destinations. Being one of the first settlements in Anatolia, this region has hosted many different cultures and civilizations throughout history. Being a trade center and a hub for Arabs, Kurds, Armenians and Turkmen during the Ottoman Empire has greatly contributed to its culture and this diversity has successfully been reflected in the cuisine of the region (Aksoy & Sezgi, 2015). With these aspects, Gaziantep is an important tourism destination that offers many travel and food activities for different tourists to enjoy.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. The effect on destination food activities

Lifestyle is the most effective variable among the psychographic classification criteria and has been studied by many different researchers in the travel industry (Khan, 2019; Lee & Cox, 2007; Lee & Sparks, 2007; Sünnetçioğlu et al., 2020). Travel lifestyle refers to a way of living that prioritizes travel and exploration as a central part of identity and daily routine. People who embrace a travel lifestyle often seek new experiences, cultures and adventures, and may place a strong emphasis on discovering the world (Reisinger, 2009). As components of travel lifestyle, frequent travel, cultural immersion, adventure and exploration, minimalism and mobility, remote work or location independence, community and networking, environmental consciousness, financial management, balancing routine and exploration can be put forward (Circella et al., 2018; Van Acker et al., 2016). Lifestyle can be more effective in travel behaviors than demographic variables (Woodside & Pitts, 1976). Weinstein and Cahill (2014) focused on the advantages of psychographic classifications such as travel lifestyle and travel habits in understanding the decision-making of visitors. Veal (1993) studied lifestyle from many aspects and one of them was the decision to participate in travel and in destination activities. In all societies where people are free to make their decisions, lifestyle affects all choices including participation in destination food activity. The activities of a tourist in a travel destination are directly related to lifestyle and decisions on activities chosen are based on profession, leisure activities and perceived level of stimuli (Wahlers & Etzel, 1985). Based on this theoretical framework, two hypotheses were developed to test the effect of travel lifestyle on destination food activities:

H_1: Travel lifestyles positively affect interest in food activities.

H_2: Travel lifestyles positively affect tasting local flavors.

2.2. The effect on destination travel activities

Destination travel activities are important factors in decision-making. Du and Zhang (2003) found that 47.1% of tourists are interested in sightseeing, 18.3% in entertainment and 13.1% in adventures. Zhou et al. (1998) stated that 81% of tourists in Australia are interested in shopping, 60% in beach tourism and 47% in wildlife tourism. While tourists visiting the USA mostly participate in activities like shopping, sightseeing, entertainment and visiting theme parks and historical sites (Cai et al., 2001). The interest of tourists in different activities in different countries can result from how the destination is perceived as well as lifestyle choices. The following hypothesis was developed to test this:

H_3: The travel lifestyles positively affects participation in destination travel activities.

2.3. Destination familiarity and the mediation effect

The relationship between travel lifestyle and participation in destination food activities can be investigated from destination familiarity. This familiarity, which represents an emotional evaluation, is closely associated with many aspects that determine the relationship between the destination and the visitor, including travel lifestyle and participation in food activities (Carneiro & Crompton, 2010; Han & Yamana, 2016; Henry, 2006; Kuhzady et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2008).

Familiarity offers hints for knowing and managing a destination and activity preferences (Benedicktus et al., 2010). There is a lot of evidence in the literature that destination familiarity affects travel lifestyle and activity preferences by creating a sense of comfort and security (Carneiro & Crompton, 2010). Lee et al. (2008) also point out that destination familiarity reduces the perception of destination risk and creates a sense of trust so that tourists will be more inclined to participate in local culture and local food activities when they feel more secure. However, destination familiarity can have disadvantages as well. Familiarity is a result of a tourist's knowledge of a destination. If this knowledge and these experiences have been formed in a negative context, there will be negative repercussions for the destination. For example, such familiarity may play a negative role especially in the participation of novelty-seeking tourists in destination food activities (Assaker et al., 2011; Toyama & Yamada, 2012). In the light of this information, the following hypotheses were developed for the research:

H_4: Travel lifestyles positively affect destination familiarity.

H_5: Destination familiarity positively affects interest in food activities.

H_6: Destination familiarity positively affects tasting local flavors.

H_7: Destination familiarity positively affects preferences for destination travel activities.

Providing clues that destination familiarity can have either a positive or a negative effect, studies in the literature have raised the question of whether this variable will mediate the relationship between travel lifestyle and participation in food activities and this is the focus of this work. There are also studies in the literature that examine the relationship between preference for proximity and comfort, and destination familiarity, as this includes having prior knowledge of destinations and accordingly the desire to obtain more information (Gursoy & McCleary, 2004; Johnson & Russo, 1984; Rao & Sieben, 1992). Wen and Huang (2019) and Basala and Klenosky (2001) found that travel preferences affect destination familiarity. There are also studies examining whether this familiarity affects interest in food activities, tasting new flavors, and participating in travel activities as an independent variable (Chi et al., 2020; Tan & Wu, 2016). The following hypotheses were developed based on this theoretical framework:

H_8: Destination familiarity positively mediates travel lifestyle and interest in food activities.

H_9: Destination familiarity positively mediates travel lifestyle and tasting local flavors.

H_{10}: Destination familiarity positively mediates travel lifestyle and preference for destination travel activities.

In this research, the model shown in Figure 1 is examined. While the travel lifestyle scale is included as the independent variable in the research model, scales for the preference for destination food activities and preference for destination travel activities are the dependent variables. Additionally, the destination familiarity scale was used as a moderating variable.

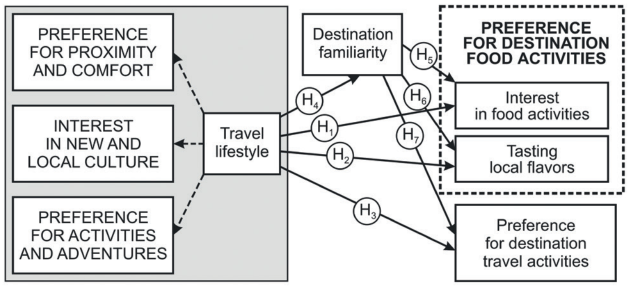

Figure 1. Research model proposal
Note: scales in the gray section are the sub-dimensions of travel lifestyle; the variables inside the dashed shape are preference for destination food activities
Source: authors' own work

3. Methodology

The research population consists of individuals who are over 18 and have previously visited Gaziantep Province of Türkiye. As there is no statistical data for this population, the study used sampling as there were time and cost limitations. In order to determine the sample size based on the proposal by Ural and Kılıç (2005) that 384 are necessary for populations larger than 100,000, a total of 418 data sets were collected. The data were collected between March and April 2022 using a simple random sampling method through questionnaires.

The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first includes questions regarding age, gender, marital status, education status, and income level, while the second includes five items on the preference for proximity and comfort (PPC) – which is one of the sub-factors of travel lifestyle (Lee et al., 2015; Schul & Crompton, 1983); two on interest in new and local culture (ILC); and four on the preference for activities and adventures (PAA). Secondly, there are six items on the interest in food activities (IFA) and six on tasting local flavors (TLF) which are the sub-factors of preference for destination food activities (Lee et al., 2015). Lastly, there are six items on preference for destination travel activities (DTA) (Lee et al., 2015) and three on destination familiarity (DestF) (Gursoy & McCleary, 2004). The item answers were in the form of a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The scales were translated into Turkish from English because they were addressed to Turkish participants. They were then re-translated to English to check for differences in meaning by five experts for any faults. The results were collected afterwards.

Research model analysis was made using SmartPLS and SPSS. The data encoded in the SPSS statistical program were analyzed for validity and reliability and structural equation modeling analysis was conducted in the SmartPLS. The main reason for using the SmartPLS statistical program is that it presents the results of measurement model assessment, structural model assessment and structural equation model, so there is no need for distribution normality, and it provides an opportunity to determine the analysis method. For data analysis, confirmatory tetrad analysis (CTA) was performed first to determine whether the scales belong to formative or reflective structures. Since the number of indicators of interest in new and local culture, tasting local flavors and destination familiarity was less than four items during the CTA analysis phase, indicators for any variable (DTA5 and DTA4 were additionally used in this study) were added to the relevant scales (Bollen & Ting, 1993). Since 25 indicators are formed per structure in CTA analysis, at least four indicators are needed for each. Two additional indicators have been added since tasting local flavors, and interest in new and local culture had only two, and an additional indicator has been added to destination familiarity because it had just three.

Confirmatory tetrad analysis examined the adjusted confidence intervals and was calculated using Bonferroni correction (see Table 1): tasting local flavors and interest in new and local culture variables were found to be formative, while the others were reflective. PLS-SEM was used for data analysis. Measurement model assessment was made first using Cronbach's alpha (α) and rho_A analyses were performed to determine the reliability coefficient in reflective structures. Composite reliability (CR) was calculated to determine internal consistency, and the average variance extracted

Table 1. Confirmatory tetrad analysis results

Measures	*t*-statistics	*p*-value	CI low adjust	CI up adjust	Result
1: DTA1, DTA2, DTA3, DTA4	2.706	0.007	–0.010	0.518	Reflective
2: DTA1, DTA2, DTA4, DTA3	2.350	0.019	–0.046	0.501	
1: DTA5, DestF1, DestF2, DestF3	2.108	0.036	–0.316	0.008	Reflective
2: DTA5, DestF1, DestF3, DestF2	0.393	0.694	–0.210	0.147	
1: IFA1, IFA2, IFA3, IFA4	6.652	0.000	0.511	1.245	Reflective
10: IFA1, IFA2, IFA4, IFA5	2.434	0.015	–0.823	0.055	
1: DTA4, DTA5, ILC1, ILC2	6.191	0.000	0.480	1.027	Formative
2: DTA4, DTA5, ILC2, ILC1	5.730	0.000	0.429	0.984	
1: PAA1, PAA2, PAA3, PAA4	2.461	0.014	0.015	0.349	Reflective
2: PAA1, PAA2, PAA4, PAA3	2.010	0.045	–0.014	0.329	
1: PPC1, PPC2, PPC3, PPC4	4.430	0.000	0.184	0.708	Reflective
2: PPC1, PPC2, PPC4, PPC3	2.007	0.045	–0.072	0.556	
1: DTA4, DTA5, TLF1, TLF2	6.669	0.000	0.689	1.388	Formative
2: DTA4, DTA5, TLF2, TLF1	6.460	0.000	0.665	1.373	

Note: CI – confidence interval, DTA – preference for destination travel activities, DestF – destination familiarity, IFA – interest in food activities, ILC – interest in new and local culture, PAA – preference for activities and adventures, PPC – preference for proximity and comfort, TLF – tasting local flavors.

Source: authors' own work.

(AVE) was calculated for convergent validity. The Fornell-Larcker criterion and the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio were calculated for discriminant validity. In formative constructs, convergent validity, linearity, statistical significance and level of relevance were examined. Model goodness of fit values were also calculated.

The research model includes three sub-factors for travel lifestyle: preference for proximity and comfort, interest in new and local culture and preference for activities and adventures. While preference for destination food activities has two sub-factors: interest in food activities and tasting local flavors. Additionally, destination familiarity and preference for destination travel activities are measures used in the research model. To detect any multicollinearity problems, inner variance inflation factor (VIF), determination coefficient (R^2), model predictive power (Q^2), the predictive power of independent variables (q^2), model effect size (f^2) and PLSpredict were calculated. Lastly, the hypotheses were tested by structural equation modeling analysis. Tests using indirect effect coefficients produced results for those hypotheses considering a mediating effect.

4. Results

4.1. Participant profile

Of the individuals participating in the study 87.6% were national citizens and 12.4% were foreigners; 32.5% were aged between 25–34, 26.3% were 18–24, 17.7% were 35–44, 10% were 45–54, 5.5% were 55–64, 4.3% were 65 or older, while 3.6% were under 18; 50.2% of the participants were male and 49.8% were female, 56% were married while 44% were single (see Table 2).

Table 2. Demographics of the participants (n = 418)

Characteristics		Number of participants	Percentage
Nationality	Local	366	87.6
	Foreigner	52	12.4
Age distribution	Under the age of 18	15	3.6
	18–24	110	26.3
	25–34	136	32.5
	35–44	74	17.7
	45–54	42	10.0
	55–64	23	5.5
	65 and over	18	4.3
Gender	Male	210	50.2
	Female	208	49.8
Marital status	Married	234	56.0
	Single	184	44.0
Education status	Primary school	14	3.3
	High school	71	17.0
	Associate degree	91	21.8
	Bachelor's degree	175	41.9
	Master's degree/ PhD	67	16.0
Perception of income by the standards of the country of residence	Very low	5	1.2
	Low	102	24.4
	Medium	162	38.8
	High	128	30.6
	Very high	21	5.0

Source: authors' own work.

In terms of education, 41.9% of the participants had a bachelor's degree, 21.8% a lower degree, 17% graduated from high school, 16% have master's/PhD and 3.3% only attended primary school; 38.8% think that their income is middle, 30.6% think of it as high, 24.4% think it is low, 5% think that it is very high and 1.2% think it is very low.

4.2. Measurement model assessment

During measurement model assessment, the reflective and formative characteristics of the scales were taken into account. As "tasting local flavors" and "interest in new and local culture" scales were formative, their validity and reliability analyses were made separately. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the reflective scales was higher than 0.70 for each (Hair et al., 2017) and rho_A was higher than 0.70 (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015). Composite reliability scores were examined for the internal consistency of the scales and the score for each was found to be above 0.60 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Outer loadings were examined for indicator reliability and were found to be above 0.50 for each scale (Kaiser, 1974). For convergent validity, AVE values were examined and the scores for scales other than interest in food activities were above 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Although the AVE value of interest in food activities scale is very close to 0.50, the reliability scores and factor loadings were acceptable. Fornell and Larcker (1981) state that even if more than 50% of the variance is caused by error, the convergent validity of the construct can be accepted by considering other convergent validity scales. A composite reliability value higher than 0.60 is considered sufficient for convergent validity when AVE is between 0.40–0.50 (Huang et al., 2013; Lam, 2012). The convergent validity of the scale was acceptable because the other validity and reliability values were high: AVE was higher than 0.40 (0.47) and CR was 0.84 (see Table 3).

During the measurement model assessment of interest in new and local culture and tasting local flavor scales, outer VIF, statistical significance (*p*-value/*t*-statistics), and outer weights/loadings were calculated (see Table 4).

Table 3. Validity and reliability results for reflective scales

Scales and items	λ	α	rho_A	CR	AVE
Travel lifestyle					
Preference for proximity and comfort (PPC)		0.839	0.847	0.885	0.607
The best vacation is the one where I relax and do nothing	0.782	–	–	–	–
I really like to visit places that my friends visited before me	0.803	–	–	–	–
I prefer a guided tour when I visit a destination	0.797	–	–	–	–
I prefer to stay in the best places on vacation	0.792	–	–	–	–
I prefer to visit places where people speak the same language	0.718	–	–	–	–
Preference for activities and adventures (PAA)		0.841	0.856	0.894	0.679
I try to do a lot of things while I am on vacation	0.821	–	–	–	–
I prefer to do a wide range of activities and visit attractions	0.945	–	–	–	–
The best vacation for me is one with nightlife	0.694	–	–	–	–
When I go on vacation, I look for adventures and stay away from mediocrity	0.774	–	–	–	–
Preference for destination food activities					
Interest in food activities (IFA)		0.791	0.840	0.842	0.476
I like to buy gastronomy-related books	0.662	–	–	–	–
I like to attend cooking classes in gastronomic destinations	0.572	–	–	–	–
I like to buy local products at gastronomic destinations	0.775	–	–	–	–
I like to read recipes and menus of the destination I am visiting	0.823	–	–	–	–
I like to cook my own meals on my trips, if possible	0.550	–	–	–	–
I like to participate in gastronomic events and festivals	0.718	–	–	–	–
Preference for destination travel activities (DTA)		0.885	0.907	0.914	0.643
I like visiting gastronomic destinations	0.826	–	–	–	–
I like visiting the traditional markets in Gaziantep	0.899	–	–	–	–
I like living like a local in Gaziantep	0.783	–	–	–	–
I like to enjoy Gaziantep to the fullest	0.883	–	–	–	–
I like to be flexible in the destinations I go to	0.796	–	–	–	–
I prefer to stay in small family-owned hotels instead of large chain hotels	0.582	–	–	–	–
Destination familiarity (DestF)		0.838	0.864	0.902	0.753
I am more familiar with gastronomic destinations than the average person	0.880	–	–	–	–
I am more familiar with gastronomic destinations than my circle of friends	0.889	–	–	–	–
I am more familiar with gastronomic destinations than those who travel a lot	0.833	–	–	–	–

Note: λ – indicator loadings, α – Cronbach's alpha, rho_A – construct scores are generated by means of mode A of PLS, CR – composite reliability, AVE – average variance extracted.

Source: authors' own work.

Table 4. Formative scales significance and validity results

Scales and items	Outer VIF	Weights/ Loadings	t-statistic	p-value
Interest in the new and local culture (ILC)				
I try to do a lot of things while I am on vacation	2.405	0.265 (0.879)	2.527	0.012
I prefer to do a wide range of activities and visit attractions	2.670	0.778 (0.987)	8.224	0.000
Tasting local flavors (TLF)				
The best vacations for me are those with nightlife	1.552	–0.042 (0.763)	0.275 (11.733)	0.783 (0.000)
When I go on vacation, I look for adventures and stay away from mediocrity	1.690	1.032 (0.995)	8.954	0.000

Note: VIF – variance inflation factor.
Source: authors' own work.

The results show that the outer VIF values for tasting local flavors and interest in new and local culture scales are less than 5.00 (Mason & Perreault, 1991) and that there was no multicollinearity problem. Both scales were examined for their outer loadings and significance levels. The interest in new and local culture items were statistically significant at the 0.05 level (t-statistics > 1.96), but the outer weight of the ILC1 items was below 0.50 (0.265). TLF1 items were statistically significant at the 0.05 level (t-statistics > 1.96) and the weight of the indicator was above 0.50. However, TLF2 was not statistically significant, and the weight of the indicator was below 0.50. Outer loadings of scale items were also examined showing that interest in new and local culture and tasting local flavors were statistically significant, with outer loadings above 0.50. Although the outer weights did not give the desired result, levels of suitability and significance were accepted by taking into account the outer loadings of the scales.

The chi-square (X^2) value of the research model was calculated as 1376.891. Standardized-root mean square residual (SRMR) was 0.067 (≤0.080) (Hu & Bentler, 1999), and the normed fit index (NFI) was 0.81 (≤0.80) (Byrne, 1994). The squared euclidean distance (d_ULS) was found as 1.798 and the geosedic distance (d_G) as 0.546, and the full compliance criteria were higher than their original values (>0.05) (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015). The root mean square (RMS) theta value was higher than 0.12 (0.146) in model goodness-of-fit values (Henseler et al., 2014). Finally, goodness-of-fit (GoF) was calculated to be higher than 0.36 (0.65) (Tenenhaus et al., 2005). Thus, it has been determined that the goodness of fit values for the research model are acceptable (see Table 5).

Table 5. Model goodness of fit (GoF) values

Criteria	Model scores	Critical value
Chi-square (X^2)	1203.534	–
SRMR	0.068	≤ 0.08
d_ULS	1.852	> 0.05
d_G	0.491	> 0.05
NFI	0.816	≤ 0.80
RMS theta	0.146	≤ 0.12
GoF	0.412	≥ 0.36

Note: SRMR – standardized root mean square residual, d_ULS – the squared euclidean distance, d_G – the geosedic distance, NFI – normed fit index, RMS theta – root mean square theta.
Source: authors' own work.

To test the discriminant validity of the scales, the Fornell-Larcker criterion was calculated, and it were found to be higher than the correlation coefficients (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Secondly, heterotrait-monotrait ratio values were examined and found to be below 0.90 (Henseler et al., 2015) (see Table 6).

Table 6. Fornell-Larcker criterion and heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio

Scales	DTA	DestF	IFA	PAA	PPC
DTA	**0.802**	–	–	–	–
DestF	0.395 (0.459)	**0.868**	–	–	–
IFA	0.486 (0.528)	0.338 (0.371)	**0.691**	–	–
PAA	0.484 (0.548)	0.394 (0.459)	0.404 (0.452)	**0.824**	–
PPC	0.447 (0.496)	0.310 (0.355)	0.426 (0.483)	0.512 (0.601)	**0.779**

Note: the values in bold indicate the AVE square root values; the values inside parentheses show the heterotrait-monotrait ratio results; PPC – preference for proximity and comfort, PAA – preference for activities and adventure, IFA – interest in food activities, DTA – destination travel activity preference, DestF – destination familiarity.
Source: authors' own work.

Finally, the cross-loading values of the scales were calculated for discriminant validity, and it was determined that the correlation loadings between the indicators of each scale were higher than other correlation loadings (Hair et al., 2019) (see Table 7).

Table 7. Cross loadings

Items	DTA	DestF	IFA	PAA	PPC
DTA1	**0.826**	0.299	0.458	0.389	0.386
DTA2	**0.899**	0.321	0.456	0.470	0.445
DTA3	**0.784**	0.291	0.395	0.351	0.300
DTA4	**0.883**	0.303	0.427	0.413	0.420
DTA5	**0.797**	0.368	0.342	0.411	0.358
DTA6	**0.582**	0.343	0.217	0.250	0.175
DestF1	0.294	**0.880**	0.260	0.303	0.238
DestF2	0.398	**0.889**	0.366	0.385	0.312
DestF3	0.316	**0.833**	0.229	0.323	0.242
IFA1	0.210	0.144	**0.663**	0.177	0.229
IFA2	0.225	0.177	**0.573**	0.193	0.201
IFA3	0.462	0.354	**0.774**	0.403	0.417
IFA4	0.375	0.247	**0.822**	0.322	0.320
IFA5	0.215	0.182	**0.551**	0.194	0.224
IFA6	0.383	0.201	**0.718**	0.264	0.278
PAA1	0.434	0.330	0.296	**0.856**	0.420
PAA2	0.469	0.382	0.387	**0.892**	0.472
PAA3	0.308	0.293	0.286	**0.747**	0.393
PAA4	0.364	0.283	0.354	**0.793**	0.397
PPC1	0.348	0.282	0.373	0.422	**0.782**
PPC2	0.400	0.276	0.370	0.411	**0.803**
PPC3	0.311	0.160	0.263	0.388	**0.797**
PPC4	0.413	0.238	0.319	0.458	**0.792**
PPC5	0.235	0.226	0.315	0.293	**0.718**

Note: the values in bold indicate the AVE square root values; DTA – preference for destination travel activities, DestF – destination familiarity, IFA – interest in food activities, PAA – preference for activities and adventures, PPC – preference for proximity and comfort.

Source: authors' own work.

4.3. Structural model assessment

In the structural evaluation process of the scales in the research model (see Table 8), inner VIF values were examined first for linearity and the values yielded results below the threshold value of 5 (Becker et al., 2015). Secondly, the coefficient of determination (R^2) was calculated. The coefficient of determination of the independent variables is low for destination travel activity preference (0.25 ≤ 0.357 ≤ 0.50) and interest in food activities (0.25 ≤ 0.279 ≤ 0.50) and low for tasting local flavors (0.234 ≤ 0.25) and destination familiarity (0.201 ≤ 0.25) (Henseler et al., 2009). Effect sizes (f^2) were calculated in the third step. The effect of interest in new and local cultures and preference for activities and adventure on destination familiarity was low (0.02 ≤ 0.037 ≤ 0.15) (Chin, 1998) while that of preference for proximity and comfort was insufficient (0.007 ≤ 0.02). The effect of independent variables on destination travel activity preference was low (0.02 ≤ 0.037; 0.050; 0.031; 0.036 ≤ 0.15). The effect of destination familiarity, interest in new and local cultures, and preference for proximity and comfort on interest in food activities was low (0.02 ≤ 0.023; 0.035; 0.047 ≤ 0.15) while preference for activities and adventure was insufficient. Preference for activities and adventure on tasting local flavors and interest in new and local cultures was low (0.02 ≤ 0.037; 0.035 ≤ 0.15) while destination familiarity and preference for proximity and comfort were insufficient (0.006; 0.008 ≤ 0.02). Fourth, the predictive power (Q^2) of the model was calculated. The predictive power of destination travel activity preference (0.224 ≤ 0.25), interest in new and local cultures (0.115 ≤ 0.25), tasting local flavors (0.167 ≤ 0.25), and destination familiarity (0.142 ≤ 0.25) on dependent variables was low (Hair et al., 2019). Fifth, the partial predictive power (q^2) was calculated. The partial predictive powers of the scales were 0.02–0.15 at a low level (Chin, 1998). There are insufficient results for preference for proximity and comfort on interest in food activities (0.016 ≤ 0.02) and moderate results for the effect of destination familiarity on destination travel activity preference (0.15 ≤ 0.016 ≤ 0.35).

Table 8. Structural model evaluation analysis

Scales	f^2 and inner VIF				R^2	Q^2
	DestF	DTA	IFA	TLF		
DTA	–	–	–	–	0.357	0.224
IFA	–	–	–	–	0.279	0.115
TLF	–	–	–	–	0.234	0.167
DestF	–	1.251 (0.037)	1.251 (0.023)	1.251 (0.006)	0.201	0.142
ILC	1.613 (0.037)	1.673 (0.050)	1.673 (0.035)	1.673 (0.037)	–	–
PAA	1.672 (0.037)	1.733 (0.031)	1.733 (0.011)	1.733 (0.035)	–	–
PPC	1.462 (0.007)	1.472 (0.036)	1.472 (0.047)	1.472 (0.008)	–	–

Note: the values shown in parentheses are the f^2 model effect size scores; VIF – variance inflation factor, PPC – preference for proximity and comfort, PAA – preference for activities and adventure, IFA – interest in food activities, DTA – destination travel activity preference, DestF – destination familiarity, ILC – interest in new and local culture, TLF – tasting local flavors, R^2 – coefficient of determination, Q^2 – predictive power.

Source: authors' own work.

Table 9. PLSpredict analysis

Items	Partial last squares (PLS)				Linear regression model (LM)			
	RMSE	MAE	MAPE	Q^2_predict	RMSE	MAE	MAPE	Q^2_predict
DTA4	1.100	0.887	35.270	0.247	1.106	0.885	35.267	0.239
DTA6	1.403	1.190	55.819	0.060	1.414	**1.206**	56.774	0.045
DTA1	1.133	0.913	36.952	0.227	1.141	0.900	36.664	0.216
DTA3	1.232	1.014	42.994	0.132	1.233	1.013	43.444	0.131
DTA2	1.004	0.790	3.529	0.323	1.001	0.772	29.119	0.326
DTA5	1.102	0.910	35.353	0.218	1.110	0.908	34.860	0.208
DestF3	1.233	1.021	45.083	0.112	1.251	**1.038**	45.771	0.086
DestF1	1.243	0.992	44.291	0.110	1.248	**1.001**	44.603	0.104
DestF2	1.134	0.910	38.513	0.183	1.140	**0.915**	37.884	0.174
IFA6	1.306	1.064	51.413	0.131	1.317	**1.079**	51.787	0.117
IFA5	1.447	1.269	73.922	0.033	1.425	1.227	71.243	0.062
IFA3	1.066	0.851	35.281	0.249	1.066	0.836	33.293	0.249
IFA1	1.503	1.296	71.684	0.016	1.491	1.290	7.928	0.032
IFA4	1.212	0.966	45.016	0.152	1.222	**0.981**	45.376	0.138
IFA2	1.385	1.199	67.596	0.040	1.396	**1.220**	68.391	0.024
TLF1	1.237	1.021	45.086	0.117	1.242	1.018	44.744	0.111
TLF2	1.209	1.002	42.415	0.211	1.217	0.999	42.393	0.199

Note: LM MAE values in bold show those higher than PLS MAE values; DTA – preference for destination travel activities, DestF – destination familiarity, IFA – interest in food activities, TLF – tasting local flavors, RMSE – root mean squared error, MAE – mean absolute error, MAPE – mean absolute percentage error, Q^2_predict – represents the predictive ability of a model.

Source: authors' own work.

PLSpredict analysis was conducted to determine the predictive error level of the final analysis in the structural evaluation (see Table 9). As a result of the analysis, the PLS MAE values of the items were compared with the LM_MAE values for predictive errors, and it was determined that the PLS-SEM analysis had medium predictive power (Hair et al., 2019) and the Q^2_predict values of the items were higher than 0.

4.4. Structural equation modeling

The results show that preference for proximity and comfort ($\beta_{PPC \rightarrow IFA} = 0.223$, $t = 3.925$, $p < 0.001$), interest in the new and local culture ($\beta_{ILC \rightarrow IFA} = 0.206$, $t = 3.408$, $p < 0.001$) and preference for activities and adventure ($\beta_{PAA \rightarrow IFA} = 0.115$, $t = 1.966$, $p < 0.05$) have a positive and significant effect on interest in food activities. Thus, hypotheses H_{1a}, H_{1b} and H_{1c} were accepted. While interest in new and local culture ($\beta_{ILC \rightarrow TLF} = 0.218$, $t = 3.620$, $p < 0.001$) and preference for activities and adventure ($\beta_{PAA \rightarrow TLF} = 0.216$, $t = 3.644$, $p < 0.001$) have a positive and significant effect on tasting local flavors, preference for proximity and comfort ($\beta_{PPC \rightarrow TLF} = 0.095$, $t = 1.695$, $p < 0.001$) does not have a positive and significant effect on tasting local flavors. Hypotheses H_{2b} and H_{2c} were accepted while H_{2a} was not. The effect of preference for proximity and comfort ($\beta_{PPC \rightarrow DTA} = 0.185$, $t = 3.676$, $p < 0.001$), interest in new and local culture ($\beta_{ILC \rightarrow DTA} = 0.233$, $t = 4.304$, $p < 0.001$) and preference for activities and adventure ($\beta_{PAA \rightarrow DTA} = 0.187$, $t = 3.407$, $p < 0.001$) on destination travel activities were found to be positive and significant. Hence, hypotheses H_{3a}, H_{3b} and H_{3c} were accepted. While interest in new and local culture ($\beta_{ILC \rightarrow DestF} = 0.220$, $t = 3.679$, $p < 0.001$) and preference for activities and adventure ($\beta_{PAA \rightarrow DestF} = 0.221$, $t = 3.771$, $p < 0.001$) affect destination familiarity positively and significantly, preference for proximity and comfort ($\beta_{PPC \rightarrow DestF} = 0.090$, $t = 1.587$, $p < 0.001$) does not have an effect on destination familiarity. Hypotheses H_{4b} and H_{4c} were accepted while H_{4a} was not. Destination familiarity has a positive and significant effect on interest in food activities ($\beta_{DestF \rightarrow IFA} = 0.143$, $t = 3.141$, $p < 0.01$) and participation in destination travel activities ($\beta_{DestF \rightarrow DTA} = 0.173$, $t = 3.437$, $p < 0.001$) while it has not on tasting local flavors ($\beta_{DestF \rightarrow TLF} = 0.074$, $t = 1.437$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, hypotheses H_5 and H_6 were accepted while H_7 was not (see Table 10).

Table 10. Results of the structural equation modelling

Hypotheses		β	$\bar{X}$	*SD*	*t*-statistics	*p*-value	q^2	Result
H_{1a}	PPC → IFA	0.223	0.227	0.057	3.925	0.000^{***}	0.016	Accepted
H_{1b}	ILC → IFA	0.206	0.205	0.060	3.408	0.001^{***}	0.028	Accepted
H_{1c}	PAA → IFA	0.115	0.113	0.058	1.966	0.049^{*}	0.032	Accepted
H_{2a}	PPC → TLF	0.095	0.094	0.056	1.695	0.090	0.068	Not accepted
H_{2b}	ILC → TLF	0.218	0.217	0.060	3.620	0.000^{***}	0.035	Accepted
H_{2c}	PAA → TLF	0.216	0.218	0.059	3.644	0.000^{***}	0.032	Accepted
H_{3a}	PPC → DTA	0.185	0.188	0.050	3.676	0.000^{***}	0.068	Accepted
H_{3b}	ILC → DTA	0.233	0.232	0.054	4.304	0.000^{***}	0.051	Accepted
H_{3c}	PAA → DTA	0.187	0.183	0.055	3.407	0.001^{***}	0.055	Accepted
H_{4a}	PPC → DestF	0.090	0.089	0.057	1.587	0.113	0.086	Not accepted
H_{4b}	ILC → DestF	0.220	0.220	0.060	3.679	0.000^{***}	0.037	Accepted
H_{4c}	PAA → DestF	0.221	0.221	0.059	3.771	0.000^{***}	0.033	Accepted
H_5	DestF → IFA	0.143	0.143	0.045	3.141	0.002^{**}	0.076	Accepted
H_6	DestF → TLF	0.074	0.075	0.052	1.437	0.151	0.130	Not accepted
H_7	DestF → DTA	0.173	0.173	0.050	3.437	0.001^{***}	0.159	Accepted

Note: PPC – preference for proximity and comfort, IFA – interest in food activities, ILC – interest in new and local culture, PAA – preference for activities and adventure, TLF – tasting local flavors, DTA – preference for destination travel activity, DestF – destination familiarity, *SD* – standard deviation, β – beta coefficient, $\bar{X}$ – arithmetic mean, q^2 – predictive relevance of scales; * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$.

Source: authors' own work.

4.5. Mediation effect results

The study examined the mediating effect of destination familiarity between dependent and independent variables. If the direct effect and the mediation effect are significant, there is partial mediation while if the direct effect is insignificant and the mediation effect is significant, there is full mediation (Zhao et al., 2010).

The research results suggest that destination familiarity does not have a mediating role

Table 11. Destination familiarity mediation effect results

Hypotheses		β	$\bar{X}$	*SD*	*t*-statistics	*p*-value	Result
H_{8a}	PPC → DestF → DTA	0.016	0.015	0.011	1.434	0.152	Not accepted
H_{8b}	ILC → DestF → DTA	0.038	0.038	0.014	2.661	0.008^{**}	Accepted
H_{8c}	PAA → DestF → DTA	0.038	0.039	0.017	2.237	0.025^{*}	Accepted
H_{9a}	PPC → DestF → IFA	0.013	0.013	0.009	1.404	0.160	Not accepted
H_{9b}	ILC → DestF → IFA	0.031	0.032	0.014	2.189	0.029^{*}	Accepted
H_{9c}	PAA → DestF → IFA	0.032	0.032	0.013	2.361	0.018^{*}	Accepted
H_{10a}	PPC → DestF → TLF	0.007	0.006	0.006	1.033	0.302	Not accepted
H_{10b}	ILC → DestF → TLF	0.016	0.017	0.013	1.268	0.205	Not accepted
H_{10c}	PAA → DestF → TLF	0.016	0.017	0.013	1.284	0.199	Not accepted

Note: β – beta coefficient, $\bar{X}$ – arithmetic mean; PPC – preference for proximity and comfort, DestF – destination familiarity, DTA – destination travel activity preference, ILC – interest in new and local culture, PAA – preference for activities and adventure, IFA – interest in food activities, TLF – tasting local flavors, *SD* – standard deviation; * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$.

Source: authors' own work.

between preference for proximity and comfort ($\beta_{PPC \rightarrow DestF \rightarrow DTA}$ = 0.016, t = 1.434, p < 0.001) and participation in destination travel activities. While there is a positive mediation effect between interest in new and local culture ($\beta_{ILC \rightarrow DestF \rightarrow DTA}$ = 0.038, t = 2.661, p < 0.001), preference for activities and adventures ($\beta_{PAA \rightarrow DestF \rightarrow DTA}$ = 0.038, t = 2.237, p < 0.001) and participation in destination travel activities. Hence, hypotheses H_{8b} and H_{8c} were accepted while H_{8a} was not. There is partial mediation for hypotheses H_{8b} and H_{8c}.

Destination familiarity does not have a positive and significant mediation effect between preference for proximity and comfort ($\beta_{PPC \rightarrow DestF \rightarrow IFA}$ = 0.013, t = 1.404, p < 0.001) and interest in food activities. However, there is a positive and significant mediation effect between interest in new and local culture ($\beta_{ILC \rightarrow DestF \rightarrow IFA}$ = 0.031, t = 2.189, p < 0.001), preference for activities and adventure ($\beta_{PAA \rightarrow DestF \rightarrow IFA}$ = 0.032, t = 2.361, p < 0.001) and interest in food activities. Therefore, hypotheses H_{9b} and H_{9c} were accepted and H_{9a} was not. There is partial mediation for hypotheses $H_{9b\ and}$ H_{9c}. Destination familiarity does not have a positive or significant mediation effect between preference for proximity and comfort ($\beta_{PPC \rightarrow DestF \rightarrow TLF}$ = 0.007, t = 1.033, p < 0.001), interest in new and local culture ($\beta_{ILC \rightarrow DestF \rightarrow TLF}$ = 0.016, t = 1.268, p < 0.001), preference for activities and adventure ($\beta_{PAA \rightarrow DestF \rightarrow TLF}$ = 0.016, t = 1.284, p < 0.001), and tasting local flavors. Hypotheses H_{10a}, H_{10b} and H_{10c} were, therefore, not accepted (see Table 11).

5. Discussion and conclusions

The consumer behavior of tourists has attracted the attention of many researchers over the last thirty years (Bello & Etzel, 1985; Cohen et al., 2014). The tourism sector has focused on different aspects of tourist behaviors such as consumer behavior research and understanding the travel decision-making process (Decrop, 1999; Lin et al., 2014). There are many factors affecting the travel decision-making process. Among these factors, there are past experiences and personality in addition to lifestyle and travel life preferences (Chen et al., 2009; Sönmez & Graefe, 1998). Travel decisions do not only affect destination choices but also affect destination activity choices (Lee et al., 2014).

Investigating the mediation effect of destination familiarity and the effect of lifestyle on participation in food and travel activities, this study found that preference for proximity and comfort, interest in new and local culture, and preference for activities and adventure positively affect interest in food activities. Lee et al. (2014) detected the effect of interest in new and local culture on food and travel activities. However, there were no other similar effects. This could be because the study was focused on the slow food movement. Food activities and interest in new and local culture may have been emphasized more in the slow food movement. However, since this study was not handled from that perspective, any travel choice may have had an impact on participation in food and travel activities. Bardhi et al. (2010) found that American tourists on a ten-day trip to China preferred familiar products due to feelings of alienation. This result can be interpreted indirectly as meaning that as tourists' interest in local culture increases, the feeling of alienation disappears and they become more involved in food and travel activities. Since a significant proportion of the tourists in the research sample are domestic tourists, it is understandable that they do not experience a feeling of alienation and participate in food and travel activities as their interest in local culture increases.

All dimensions, except for the preference for proximity and comfort, positively affect tasting local flavors. Previous studies also offer similar results (Chang et al., 2010; Molz, 2007). The underlying reason for this may be that tourists who prioritize proximity and comfort find it risky for their health and palate to taste local flavors and therefore avoid them. On the other hand, tourists who prioritize proximity and comfort may tend to participate on inflexible pre-determined tours, as they are generally risk-averse. This explains why, even if they are interested in local culture, this may not lead to participation in food and travel activities. The study by Caber et al. (2020), which determines the effect of perceived risk level, which is closely related to comfort perception, on tourist behavior, supports this idea.

Another finding is that all dimensions, except the preference for proximity and comfort, positively affect destination familiarity. This result is compatible with the study of Basala and Klenosky (2001). Basala and Klenosky (2001) who also pointed out that travel lifestyle preferences affect destination familiarity. It is also among the important findings of the study that destination familiarity positively affects interest in local culture and participation in travel activities but does not affect tasting local flavors positively. The results of the mediating effect of the destination showed that travel lifestyle preferences (except for the preference for proximity and comfort) mediated between interest in food activities and interest in new and local culture, but not participation on travel activities. There are studies in the literature examining the mediating effect of destination familiarity in this context (Bettman & Park, 1980; Hernández-Maestro et al., 2007; Park & Lessig, 1981). Baloglu (2001) emphasized that destination familiarity has the potential to affect the destination research behaviors of tourists and the processes that would affect these behaviors. The most striking aspect of this study is that the preference for proximity and comfort among travel lifestyle preferences generally does not have an effect on the dependent variables, and accordingly, destination familiarity does not mediate the effect of this variable on other variables. This stems from the fact that tourists, who prefer proximity and comfort, are hesitant to participate in many kinds of activities, mainly food or travel, and are reluctant to go beyond their comfort zones. So much so that these people may prefer to stay away from these activities as they involve the dangers of participating in travel and food activities and tasting new flavors that would disrupt their comfort. Additionally, the fact that destination familiarity does not mediate between travel lifestyle preferences and participation in travel activities is a noteworthy result obtained in this study and does not overlap with many of the existing studies in the literature (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987; Milman & Pizam, 1995). This could be due to the period when the data were collected during COVID-19, which greatly affected the travel motivations and activities and the effect of destination familiarity on travel activities may have decreased. However, in general, destination familiarity can be said to play a mediating role between travel lifestyle preferences and participation in food and travel activities. Many studies showing similar effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourist behavior have led to this belief (Li et al., 2020; Moya Calderón et al., 2022; Neuburger & Egger, 2021).

6. Implications

The study revealed that the lifestyle preferences of tourists and destination familiarity are extremely important in participation in food and travel activities. For this reason, the decision-makers of a destination should consider the compatibility of destination identity with the lifestyle preferences when forming the identity of a destination. Destinations can also adopt strategies that will promote it to large audiences and increase familiarity with the destination, instead of only high-cost advertisements. This study includes indications of how Gaziantep can better focus on branding and marketing strategies for international destinations. It can be suggested that Gaziantep develops alternatives to travel and food activities that would appeal to different lifestyles. Other pioneering studies such as this one are needed to examine other reasons for participation in travel and food activities to contribute to the presence of Gaziantep on the international market.

7. Limitations and future research

In this study, only tourists visiting the Gaziantep region of Türkiye were selected as the sample. In addition, the research included an evaluation of destination awareness. These points show the limitations of the research. In future studies, the tourism services offered in different cities can be taken into account and comparisons can be made. In particular, current catering concepts and practices can be examined. In addition, the research could be evaluated through different theoretical models. The mediation role used in the research could be evaluated with different variables. In future research, travel activities and destination awareness could be evaluated taking into account demographic characteristics.

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Oud Batavia as a heritage site within Jakarta: Tourist revisit intentions

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study is to explore the dynamics of heritage tourism in Oud Batavia, the Old City of Jakarta, specifically focusing on perceived price, perceived authenticity and perceived value, and how they influence tourist satisfaction and revisit intentions. By using a quantitative design, data was collected from 406 valid responses through a questionnaire distributed in the Old City. The findings confirmed positive and significant relationships highlighting the importance of preserving historical buildings and emphasizing the role of perceived factors in enhancing the overall tourist experience. The study contributes valuable insights for stakeholders, urging the Jakarta city government and the Ministry of Tourism to focus on preserving cultural heritage buildings and employ adaptive reuse strategies to increase tourist visits. The limitations of the study include its exclusive focus on domestic tourists in the Old City of Jakarta, suggesting avenues for future research to explore broader topics such as city branding and foreign tourist perspectives. The study concludes with recommendations for strategies to commercialize historical tourist destinations and a call for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization recognition of the Old City as a world historical heritage site.

KEYWORDS

perceived price, perceived authenticity, perceived value, revisit intentions, heritage

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1. Introduction

Cities with an outstanding heritage of culture can emerge as a new sector in the global tourism industry. Heritage tourism has the potential to create significant income for tourism employees while additionally contributing to the growth of local communities (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017). Oud Batavia, located in Jakarta since 1620, has been recognized as a heritage tourism area and provides a comprehensive knowledge of historical and cultural tours in Dutch-European colonial architecture. It was built by the Dutch who governed Indonesia and has a conventional Javanese port city design, complete with forts, canals and city walls.

Eryudhawan (2017) notes that several structures in Jakarta were purposely demolished with unknown ownership to facilitate the city's growth before being abandoned. The original building components of Batavia Fort were reused and incorporated into Daendels Palace, which now serves as the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia. Since 1972, this area has been transformed with significant cultural value which the Dutch government considers to be a priceless assets. The Jakarta City government has recently accepted responsibility for its preservation (Steinberg, 2008).

The increasing number of tourists in heritage tourism has led to the necessity of studying the elements that influence their intentions to revisit heritage sites, making it a crucial topic of discussion (Chhabra, 2015; See & Goh, 2019). Tourist satisfaction with the value, pricing and authenticity of their experience is an important part of historical tourism (Lee, Phau et al., 2016; See & Goh, 2019; Zhang et al., 2021). Price variables have a substantial impact on product purchases, including those related to tourist destinations and have been frequently used as an indicator of product quality (Chiang & Jang, 2007), furthermore, consumers expect excellent quality when the price increases. Consumers who believe they get more value for their money are more willing to spend it (Chiang & Jang, 2007).

While the concept of authenticity in the tourism literature is identified as an essential element for special tourism such as for heritage (Laing et al., 2014), authenticity also significantly influences tourist loyalty and behavior (Lee, Chang & Luo, 2016). Perceived value is also the main construct in understanding tourist behavior (Kim et al., 2015) referring to the overall advantages and costs experienced by consumers when considering both tangible and intangible characteristics including quality, service and pricing (Chiu et al., 2014). However, there are a limited number of studies that focus on the effects of perceived price, perceived authenticity and perceived value on satisfaction (Khuong & Nguyen, 2017). Hence, the main objective here is to investigate and understand the influence of these three perceptions in the context of heritage tourism. By examining factors such as tourist satisfaction with the value, price and authenticity of their experience, the research seeks to contribute valuable insights into changes in heritage tourism. The findings can provide a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between perceived price, perceived authenticity and perceived value, shedding light on their impact on tourist behavior and satisfaction in the realm of heritage tourism, especially in the unique historical and cultural context of Jakarta. The study adopts a quantitative method with data analysis using structural equation modeling, illustrated in Figure 1.

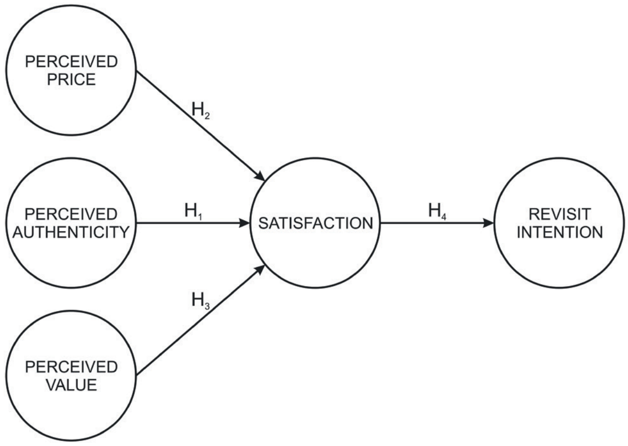

Figure 1. Research model
Source: authors

2. Literature review and hypothesis development

2.1. Perceived price

Price can be used to indicate the quality of a product or service. When the product's price is high, it can be assumed to have excellent quality. Perceived price is the result of balancing perceived quality against absolute price; when the price is low, consumers consider it acceptable and favorable. On the other hand, when prices rise, consumers may regard this as unfair, or more precisely, as unfavorable. However, when prices rise within a consumer's acceptable price range, there is a perceived enhancement in quality (Dodds et al., 1991), indicating that higher prices are associated with improved quality.

A tourist typically prefers to pay higher rates for accommodation that offers easy access near landmarks because it helps them to save time and effort for further exploration. Nicolau (2011) determined that tourists show price sensitivity when they become informed that an element of the price is designated for repairs and maintenance of cultural heritage buildings and archeological sites. Li et al. (2013) proposed that tourist destinations affect the prices perceived by tourists when they are consuming products. For example, travelers who are looking for an adventure will have excellent tolerance for accommodation prices. Based on this, it can be concluded that an hypothesis for this research is:

H_1: Perceived price influences Oud Batavia's revisit intentions positively and significantly.

2.2. Perceived authenticity

The concept of authenticity is essential and has long been a focus in the tourism industry, especially in heritage tourism (Gao et al., 2020; Yi et al., 2022). Research has indicated that authenticity should be regarded as an outcome of an interpretive process guided by specific criteria, such as architectural heritage (Castéran & Roederer, 2013; Stober et al., 2018) or location qualities (Buchmann et al., 2010). Shen et al. (2014) argued that existential credibility (i.e. attractions, characters, moods and events in one place) significantly impacts tourists' loyalty to China's World Heritage sites while Lee, Chang & Luo et al. (2016) emphasized that authenticity significantly impacts tourist behavior.

Meng and Choi (2016) found that tourist perceptions of authenticity, directly and indirectly, influence their desires and research on perceived authenticity is typically conducted within the field of cultural tourism (Ramkissoon et al., 2011). Kolar and Zabkar (2010), and Lin and Wang (2012) identified cultural motivation influencing perceived authenticity and the relationship between it and tourist intentions to buy ceramic souvenirs from the Yingge Ceramics region of Taiwan. As part of the Christmas market in Strasbourg, France, Castéran and Roederer (2013) suggested that individuals who perceive the market as unrealistic visit 30.2% less frequently. If tourists experience a real destination, then their willingness to visit will increase (Castéran & Roederer, 2013; Lin & Wang, 2012; Ramkissoon et al., 2011). It is therefore assumed that:

H_2: Perceived authenticity positively and significantly affects Oud Batavia's revisit intentions.

2.3. Perceived value

Marketing researchers emphasize perceived value as the primary structure for understanding consumer behavior (Chiu et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2015; Woo et al., 2015). Perceived value is also known as consumer value, and the definition depends on the marketing material. Zeithaml (1988) proposed that the perceptual value concept is the benefit of a product (or service) based on the perception of what is offered and what is received. Chiang and Jang (2007) defined perceived value as a money-oriented benefit from a possession: if the perceived profit is higher than the price paid, therefore the value is higher. Service providers could improve those elements of their product or service that are relevant to the specific situation in order to help tourists understand how perceived value influences their intentions (Sparks, 2007).

Value is derived not only from tangible entities and natural environments, but also from instances of human interaction and the physical locations that constitute object-oriented experience destinations (Buchmann et al., 2010). Gallarza and Gil (2008) found that perceived value varies from product to product, for example, it undergoes a transformation when a tourist modifies their destination in response in order to consume a product (Gallarza & Gil, 2008).

Empirical studies in the context of tourism have used perceived value to predict behavioral intentions (Chen & Chen, 2010; Tsai et al., 2012). Hutchinson et al. (2009) investigated how perceived value, fairness and satisfaction affect the behavioral intentions of golf travelers. Studies show how destination attributes influence perceived value and affect insights into the Slovenian tourism business. In addition, many researchers agree that perceived value has a profound effect on the behavioral intentions of tourists (Khajehshahkoohi et al., 2022; Rodrigues et al., 2022). This study also includes price awareness, experience quality, perceived credibility, social impact and visit intentions (Levrini & Jeffman dos Santos, 2021). Therefore, the following can be assumed:

H_3: Perceived value affects revisit intentions positively and significantly.

2.4. Satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction is an assessment of tourist experience and has been extensively researched in tourism studies (Gao et al., 2020; Prayag & Ryan, 2012). According to Oliver (1999, 2015), customer satisfaction is the customer's response to the assessment of what a product can provide for the fulfillment of pleasant or unpleasant needs. Baker and Crompton (2000) and Nguyen et al. (2020) defined satisfaction as the emotional state of a tourist after experiencing a tourist trip. Albaity and Melhem (2017), Chen and Chen (2010) and Truong and Foster (2006) defined satisfaction as the result of the difference between expectations and what has been experienced. Whereas Albaity and Melhem (2017) and Pizam et al. (1978) defined satisfaction as the difference between pre-trip expectations, actual experiences and post-trip reflections. In general, satisfaction results from comparing expectations and performance before and after consumption (Oliver, 2015). According to Yoon and Uysal (2005), the concept of satisfaction in tourism can be understood as the difference obtained from comparing individual expectations and the actual tourist experience (Huete-Alcocer et al., 2019). It has been recognized that emotions can play an essential role in satisfaction. Affective attributes (i.e. post-consumption emotions) have also been added to its conceptualization (Gao et al., 2020; Rodríguez del Bosque et al., 2009). Thus, satisfaction is defined as 'cognitive-affective' originating from the experiences felt by consumers, and the hypothesis here is:

H_4: Satisfaction affects revisit intentions positively and significantly.

2.5. Revisit intentions

A fundamental comprehension of human decision-making behavior is provided by the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) where behavioral intentions are reportedly impacted by attitudes and subjective norms. In the present context, 'attitude' denotes the degree to which an individual harbors a positive or negative assessment or judgement about behavior. Conversely, subjective norms symbolize societal expectations imposed by an individual's immediate social circle, including family, friends and relatives to either engage in or refrain from specific behavior. Thus, within the domain of the tourism sector, attitudes, beliefs and emotions regarding products or services are formed by consumers using their cognitive processes and perception.

According to Sparks (2007), within the tourism sector, consumers' tendency to visit a specific destination can be anticipated based on the degree to which they place importance on positive experiences and maintain favorable attitudes towards them. However, intentions to return can be influenced by a variety of factors, such as the type of tourism, location, features of the tourism industry, external factors and even marketing strategies (Rondan-Cataluña & Rosa-Diaz, 2014). Intentions to revisit reflect the level of willingness of the tourist.

3. Methodology

3.1. Measurement design

This study tries to explore the interrelationships among perceived price, perceived authenticity, perceived value, satisfaction and revisit intentions using a quantitative design (Ayazlar & Yüksel, 2018). The questionnaire was developed utilizing a Google Form and physical copies were disseminated throughout the Old City of Jakarta. A number of tourists evaluated each question to ensure that there were no ambiguities and that the questionnaire does not contain any double-meanings.

3.2. Sampling and data collection

An accidental sampling method was used, and only tourists who were encountered by the researcher were included in the sample. The minimum sample was 191 and derived for this study through the utilization of Cohen's table with 1% significance level (Hair et al., 2014). However, the researchers collected as many as 406 samples of tourists from the Old City of Jakarta. The questionnaire items were adapted from previous research conducted by See and Goh (2019).

3.3. Data screening

The questionnaire consists of eight parts. The first part describes personal aspects consisting of gender, age, last level of education completed, marital status, occupation and domicile of residence. The second part describes the experience of visiting (how many visits and with whom). The third describes the amount of monthly income earned. Questions four to eight are related to perceived price, perceived authenticity, perceived value, satisfaction and revisit intentions. Each variable item is provided with five answer choices ranging from *strongly disagree* (represented by the number 1), to *strongly agree* (represented by the number 5) (Nguyen, 2020). PLS-SEM was utilized to analyze all of the data with the most recent version of the SmartPLS application.

4. Result

4.1. Demographic profile

The respondents' demographics were analyzed descriptively including information regarding gender, age, education, marital status and monthly income, visit frequency and visit group. Data collection was conducted from February to the end of March 2022 with 406 of the 450 questionnaires being completed and valid. Furthermore, the information collected was processed using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM).

Based on Table 1, tourists are dominantly male, most were aged 21–25, usually referred to as generation Z, the influencer or technology generation. This enables the spreading of positive reviews about destinations via online or social media and electronic word of mouth which tourism businesses may use as a marketing strategy in the future. Mostly, they came to the Old City of Jakarta more than three times, and they went with friends or family.

Table 1. Demographic profile

Variables		*N*	Percentage
Gender	Male	250	61.6
	Female	156	38.4
Age	15–20 years old	111	27.3
	21–25 years old	130	32.0
	26–30 years old	54	13.3
	31–35 years old	31	7.6
	36–40 years old	37	9.1
	41–45 years old	14	3.4

	46–50 years old	9	2.2
	50 years old and above	20	4.9
Education	Elementary	9	2.2
	Middle school	75	18.5
	High school	197	48.5
	Diploma	20	4.9
	Bachelor	77	19.0
	Master	26	6.4
	Doctorate	2	0.5
Marital status	Single	250	61.6
	Married	145	35.7
	Widow/widower	11	2.7
Monthly income	No income	117	28.8
	Below Rp 3 million	100	24.6
	Rp 3 million–Rp 6 million	133	32.8
	Rp 6 million–Rp 9 million	38	9.4
	Rp 9 million–Rp 12 million	12	3.0
	Rp 12 million and above	5	1.2
Visit frequency	First time	89	21.9
	Second	84	20.7
	Third	46	11.3
	More than three	186	45.8
Visit group	Alone	26	6.4
	Friends/family/colleagu-es/partner	360	88.7
	Tour group	19	4.7

Source: authors.

4.2. Measurement and structural modelling

The data collected were processed using the partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The design included numerous constructs that were evaluated for validity and reliability using measurement model evaluation.

The model evaluation is measured by factor loading and internal consistency reliability (composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, rho_A). Convergent validity is measured by average variance extracted (AVE) and discriminant validity as assessed by crossloadings. Table 2 presents the factor loadings to describe the extent to which each indicator influences the construct they represent. Convergent validity testing is an essential component in assessing the relationship between an indicator and a construct, as determined through the examination of the loading factor and the AVE value. When the factor loading value exceeds 0.70 and the AVE value surpasses 0.50, an indicator can be considered to show convergent validity and to a high degree (Chin & Todd, 1995; Hair et al., 2019). Two statement items were eliminated because they did not meet the requirements for calculating factor loading. They are PEP1 (the museum ticket is cheap) and PEP11 (the average ticket price to museums is reasonable). In Table 2, both the factor loading value and the AVE value are equal to or exceed 0.70, consequently, it can be concluded that all variables fit the criteria for acceptable convergent validity. Therefore, the hypothesis measurement model can be relied upon to evaluate the relationship between constructs.

Table 3 presents the findings regarding the cross-loading values of the variables of perceived price, perceived authenticity, perceived value, satisfaction and revisit intentions among the question items. There is no association between question items whose values exceed the criterion.

Table 2. Factor loading for measurement model

Items	Convergent validity		
	Factor loading	Average variance extracted	Composite reliability
Perceived price (PEP) (modified – See & Goh, 2019)	–	0.64	0.95
PEP1: Museum tickets are cheap	–	–	–
PEP2: Culinary prices are affordable	0.76	–	–
PEP3: Souvenir prices are cheap	0.79	–	–
PEP4: The price for renting bicycles is cheap (Rp 20,000 per 30 minutes including colorful hats)	0.78	–	–
PEP5: The cost correlates with the level of service provided to visitors	0.76	–	–
PEP6: Culiunary costs represent its level of quality	0.84	–	–
PEP7: The cost of souvenirs correlates with a product's quality	0.81	–	–

Table 2 (cont.)

Items	Convergent validity		
	Factor loading	Average variance extracted	Composite reliability
PEP8: The rental fee for bicycles is proportional to the duration of the rental	0.78	–	–
PEP9: Culinary costs are affordable for all individuals	0.80	–	–
PEP10: The cost of bicycle rental is affordable for all individuals	0.76	–	–
PEP11: The average ticket price to museums is reasonable	–	–	–
PEP12: Culinary prices are reasonable	0.84		
PEP13: Rental bicycle prices are reasonable	0.84		
Perceived authenticity (PEA) (modified – Ramkissoon et al., 2011; See & Goh, 2019)	–	0.64	0.91
PEA1: In my opinion, the museum as an old building in the Old City of Jakarta has its own history	0.78	–	–
PEA2: I think the restaurant/cafe as an old building in the Old City of Jakarta has its own history	0.81	–	–
PEA3: In my opinion, old structures in the Old City of Jakarta have been officially designated as historic by the Indonesian History Agency	0.84	–	–
PEA4: In my opinion, the historic structures in the Old City of Jakarta have been designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site	0.75	–	–
PEA5: In my opinion, the museum in the Old City of Jakarta has its own history	0.79	–	–
PEA6: In my opinion, cafes and restaurants in the Old City of Jakarta repurpose historic structures	0.81	–	–
Perceived value (PEV) (modified – Chiang & Jang, 2007; See & Goh, 2019)	–	0.78	0.91
PEV1: It is an important privilege to visit Old City of Jakarta	0.89	–	–
PEV2: It is a worthwhile experience to visit the Old City of Jakarta	0.89	–	–
PEV3: Visiting the Old City of Jakarta was an experience that surpassed all my expectations	0.87	–	–
Satisfaction (SAT) (modified – Huete-Alcocer et al., 2019; Yoon & Uysal, 2005)	–	0.59	0.93
SAT1: A visit to the Old City of Jakarta provided me with a more profound comprehension of the city's history	0.77	–	–
SAT2: A visit to the Old City of Jakarta lived up to my expectations	0.79	–	–
SAT3: I really enjoyed visiting the Old City of Jakarta	0.78	–	–
SAT4: Visiting the Old City of Jakarta is well worth the time spent away from home	0.76	–	–
SAT5: It is completely worthwhile to visit the Old City of Jakarta	0.78	–	–
SAT6: It was absolutely worthwhile to spend money to see the Old City of Jakarta	0.74	–	–
SAT7: Overall, I feel satisfied visiting the Old City of Jakarta	0.79	–	–
SAT8: Overall, the services (facilities, service performance) provided by museum/restaurant employees in the Old City of Jakarta are very satisfying	0.76	–	
SAT9: By visiting the Old City of Jakarta, I have a better visiting experience than for other destinations in Jakarta (Monas, Ancol, Istiqlal Mosque)	0.73	–	–
Revisit intentions (REI) (modified – Pai et al., 2020)	–	0.74	0.92
REI1: I will revisit the Old City of Jakarta in the future	0.87	–	–
REI2: Revisiting the Old City of Jakarta will bring benefits to me	0.88	–	–
REI3: I will come more often to the Old City of Jakarta	0.81	–	–
REI4: I would recommend the Old City of Jakarta to family, friends and coworkers	0.88	–	–

Source: authors.

Table 3. Cross-loading

Items	Perceived price (PEP)	Perceived authenticity (PEA)	Perceived value (PEV)	Satisfaction (SAT)	Revisit intentions (REI)
PEP1	–	–	–	–	–
PEP2	**0.76**	0.42	0.46	0.58	0.50
PEP3	**0.79**	0.45	0.46	0.56	0.46
PEP4	**0.78**	0.44	0.42	0.52	0.44
PEP5	**0.77**	0.58	0.56	0.66	0.58
PEP6	**0.84**	0.57	0.56	0.64	0.54
PEP7	**0.81**	0.58	0.58	0.60	0.56
PEP8	**0.78**	0.56	0.54	0.57	0.55
PEP9	**0.80**	0.55	0.47	0.56	0.49
PEP10	**0.76**	0.50	0.52	0.53	0.49
PEP11	–	–	–	–	–
PEP12	**0.84**	0.55	0.53	0.59	0.55
PEP13	**0.84**	0.52	0.51	0.58	0.54
PEA1	0.48	**0.78**	0.51	0.52	0.55
PEA2	0.56	**0.81**	0.55	0.52	0.56
PEA3	0.52	**0.84**	0.59	0.56	0.57
PEA4	0.52	**0.76**	0.53	0.51	0.58
PEA5	0.47	**0.80**	0.56	0.48	0.56
PEA6	0.58	**0.81**	0.56	0.57	0.56
PEV1	0.54	0.66	**0.89**	0.63	0.70
PEV2	0.55	0.60	**0.89**	0.63	0.66
PEV3	0.60	0.56	**0.87**	0.67	0.66
SAT1	0.49	0.53	0.53	**0.77**	0.62
SAT2	0.50	0.50	0.56	**0.79**	0.58
SAT3	0.52	0.52	0.57	**0.78**	0.59
SAT4	0.47	0.47	0.51	**0.76**	0.49
SAT5	0.49	0.49	0.54	**0.78**	0.53
SAT6	0.51	0.51	0.56	**0.74**	0.54
SAT7	0.56	0.56	0.63	**0.79**	0.62
SAT8	0.51	0.51	0.57	**0.76**	0.58
SAT9	0.50	0.50	0.56	**0.74**	0.61
REI1	0.53	0.63	0.67	0.65	**0.87**
REI2	0.56	0.61	0.67	0.65	**0.88**
REI3	0.59	0.57	0.61	0.62	**0.81**
REI4	0.58	0.63	0.66	0.65	**0.88**

Source: authors.

5. Hypothesis testing

The structural model test consists of three tests: *R*-squared, path coefficient, and *t*-test (significance). The R^2 test was used to determine how much influence independent factors had on the dependent variable and can be seen in Table 4, while the path coefficient test and *t*-test (significance) were conducted to test whether or not the hypotheses constructed in this study were proven.

Table 4. Inner model

Variable	Original sample	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation	t-statistic	p-values
Perceived price → satisfaction	0.39	0.39	0.05	7.66	0.00
Perceived authenticity → satisfaction	0.14	0.14	0.06	2.54	0.01
Perceived value → satisfaction	0.38	0.38	0.05	7.06	0.00
Satisfaction → revisit intentions	0.75	0.75	0.03	26.97	0.00

Source: authors.

Based on Figure 2 and Table 4, the original sample of the perceived price variable has a positive influence (0.393) and is more significant than an alpha value of 0.05 (5%) on satisfaction and has a p-value of 0.000. This means that the first hypothesis (perceived price influences satisfaction) is therefore supported. The perceived authenticity variable has a positive influence (0.144) on satisfaction and has a p-value of 0.011. This means that the second hypothesis, that there is an influence between perceived authenticity and satisfaction, is supported. The perceived value variable has a positive influence (0.377) on satisfaction and has a p-value of 0.000. This indicates that the third hypothesis, which states an influence between perceived value and satisfaction, is supported. The satisfaction variable has a positive effect (0.747) on revisit intentions and has a p-value of 0.000, so the fourth hypothesis states that it is supported as well.

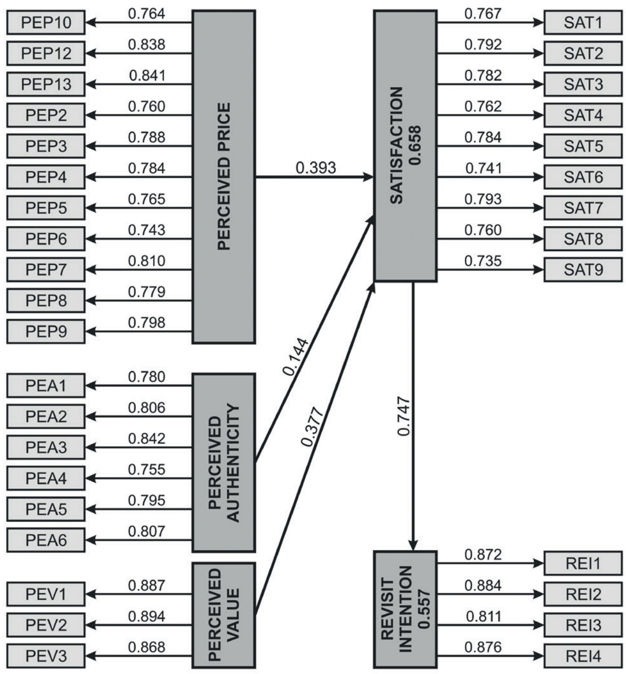

Figure 2. Results of testing hypothetical model
Source: authors

6. Discussion and implications of study

Based on Figure 2 and Table 4, the first hypothesis (H_1) is supported, perceived price has a positive and significant effect on satisfaction. Domestic tourists will feel satisfied, which leads to an intention to visit again if they think that the prices offered on heritage town tours are cheap and appropriate (museum ticket, culinary delights, souvenirs and bicycle rental). The results of this study are also in line with research by Chiang and Jang (2007), Li et al. (2013) and See and Goh (2019) on heritage hotel tourism. They found that tourists may perceive hotel room pricing as inexpensive, despite significantly higher prices as tourists prefer a heritage hotel that offers a unique experience. In line with See and Goh (2019), culinary prices in the Old City of Jakarta are considered affordable and follow the taste of traditional Betawi cuisine including gado-gado, kerak telor, asinan Jakarta, Rujak Pengantin, Soto Betawi, Nasi Goreng, Sop Buntut, Sate Ayam, Bakso, Bir Pletok. Chinese and European ethnic cuisine menus (such as Dimsum, Chinese noodles, Kung pao chicken, and various pastas) are also served in several restaurants in the Old City to introduce the cultural flavors that built Jakarta's Old City. There is also Café Batavia, which has a traditional Dutch colonial décor and it is popular with Dutch tourists. Dutch European specialties are provided, such as Erwtensoup, Poffertjis and other European specialties that satisfy international tourist tastes while remaining affordable. These can be prepared by chefs brought directly from European countries bringing food with tastes identical to the original. The Old City of Jakarta has a selection of cuisines from all around the archipelago and the prices remain affordable to the domestic tourist.

The price for bicycle rental, the typical vehicle for the Old City of Jakarta, is also considered reasonable, only 20,000 rupiah for 30 minutes. Tourists can take pictures in the style of the former Dutch and feel the sensation of living in the Dutch colonial period. The Onthel Bike Community was deliberately formed and managed under the supervision of the Old City of Jakarta and in collaboration with several other communities such as Sculpture Humans, Astrologers and Creative Painters. Furthermore, Onthel bicycle is expected to become a favorite for young couples as a pre-wedding photo theme or as a background for school yearbook photos.

The second hypothesis (H_2) concludes that perceived authenticity positively and significantly affects satisfaction. This is in line with the research conducted by See and Goh (2019) and Zhang et al. (2021) who believe that perceived authenticity can improve by including dramatic elements into hotel design, materials, exhibits and furnishings. In the Old City of Jakarta, the domestic tourist believes that the buildings are original structures from the Dutch colonial era where they have received extra attention to protect their authenticity and sustainability. Tourists believe that the Indonesian government has acknowledged this as a cultural and historical landmark. Although United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has yet to officially recognize the Old City of Jakarta, the Indonesian government is still striving to convince the United Nations (UN) organization to designate it as a world cultural heritage site and since 2016, the Indonesian government has worked to make Old City one of the top ten tourist destinations in Indonesia (Lee & Syah, 2018).

The third hypothesis (H_3) concludes that the effect between perceived value and satisfaction is positive and significant. The finding is consistent with those of Hsieh (2012) and See and Goh (2019) who verified that perceived value influences revisit intentions. Domestic tourists believe that visiting Old City of Jakarta provides a worthwhile experience by returning to the Dutch colonial period. Due to the daptive reuse concept, the structures remain in excellent condition, an attraction not found in other destinations in Jakarta (Aigwi et al., 2020). The experience of cycling while enjoying the fresh air (the Old City of Jakarta is emission-free), snapping selfies and enjoying the works of street artists (antique paintings, souvenirs, live music) is seen as worthwhile regardless of cost, time and effort. There is a community of fortune-tellers who share their sensations when tourists use their services to predict their future fate.

Tourists believe that visiting the Old City of Jakarta has a significant purpose. This might be read to suggest that the old structures inherited from the Dutch colonial authority, as well as the exhibits on show in the museum, have deep significance in the history of the Indonesian people's struggle. The Sijagur cannon, dungeons, the statue of the god Hermes, and even antique furniture from the Dutch colonial era have their own mystery stories. The third hypothesis concludes that perceived value has a positive and significant effect on revisit intentions. In line with the research conducted by See and Goh (2019), respondents believe the Old City is a historically significant tourist attraction worth visiting. Historic buildings from the Dutch colonial era have a vital historical significance and visitors can learn how the city of Jakarta was built during the Dutch colonial era; their experience is considered commensurate. In contrast to other popular destinations in Jakarta, the Old City offers an authentic experience that is believed to exceed expectations.

The fourth hypothesis (H_4) concludes that satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on revisit intentions. This indicates that domestic tourists are satisfied when visiting the Old City of Jakarta as it offers an overview of the heritage tourism destination that tourists expect (Mandić & Kennell, 2021; Wang et al., 2021). Cheap entrance and culinary pricing, a variety of culinary tastes, the authenticity of the buildings and the historical objects on show, a cozy setting and easy transit are some of the benefits that contribute to tourist satisfaction.

7. Conclusion

From the results of the discussion described, it can be concluded that preserving historic buildings in a big city like Jakarta supports the success of historical tourist destinations. Tourists will feel satisfied if the perceived price, perceived authenticity and perceived value are closer to their expectations of historical destinations. The higher the level of satisfaction among domestic tourists, the higher the rate of repeat visits to certain tourist destinations.

The conclusion of this study provides information to stakeholders such as the Jakarta city government and the Ministry of Tourism to maintain and preserve cultural heritage buildings as historical tourist destinations. Stakeholders should prioritize the preservation and maintenance of such buildings in Jakarta, especially in the Old City. The strategy designating it as one of the top ten tourist destinations can be more strongly focused on increasing tourist visits. Adaptive reuse of cultural heritage buildings is also an effort to preserve them. Many are abandoned, not maintained, and even owned by private agencies or individuals who do not understand their importance. The government has carried out the reuse of buildings without changing their original form but needs focus and improvement in its implementation. This is achieved as one of the programs to increase the commercialization of historical tourist destinations so that business activities can help preserve such buildings. It is also hoped that this research can be considered by UNESCO to inaugurate the Old City of Jakarta as a world-historical heritage site.

Special promotions or unique events can be implemented to attract repeat visitors while marketing campaigns can highlight the unique historical and cultural features of the Old City of Jakarta, emphasizing its significance as a must-visit destination.

In promoting the commercialization of historical tourist destinations as a sustainable means to fund preservation activities guided tours, cultural events and souvenir shops can contribute to maintenance and restoration the historical structure and revisit intentions of tourist.

The researchers consider that this study has significant limitations. It focuses exclusively on one of Indonesia's most popular tourist destinations and only addresses such destinations in the Indonesian capital with domestic tourists as the subject. It is hoped that future studies will focus on broader topics such as city branding or intelligent cities, as well as foreign tourists.

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An analysis of Pakistan's destination attributes and their effects on international tourists' intentions to visit

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to generate a clear understanding of Pakistan's important attributes and their direct and indirect influence via perceived destination images on international tourists' intentions to visit for a holiday. It employed quantitative research methods through the use of a correlation research design. Both direct and indirect effects of destination attributes on visit intentions were examined and a self-administered online survey was distributed across several social media platforms. The results of multiple regression analysis revealed that landscape, services, local attitudes toward tourists, safety and risk, sport and special events were found to be statistically significant predictors of such intentions. However, all the destination attributes were found to have an indirect influence on international tourists via the perceived destination image of Pakistan.

KEYWORDS

destination image, visit intentions, destination attributes, Pakistan, tourism

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1. Introduction

Tourism has become a key driver of economic and socio-economic development in many countries. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the industry added 9.258 billion US dollars to the global economy and generated 330 million jobs worldwide in 2019 (WTTC, 2019). As the competition to attract tourists grows stronger, a question arises: which factors can effectively attract tourists to a particular destination?

This study aims to generate a clear understanding of Pakistan's important attributes and their direct and indirect influence via perceived destination image on international tourists' intentions to visit on a holiday. In doing so, this research will render useful implications for both businesses and policymakers working in the tourism sector in Pakistan. Tourism is a multifaceted and multi-cultural activity that contributes significantly to a country's economic growth by generating jobs and business and a tourism destination is the foundation of a tourist's experience. According to Keyser (2009), a tourism destination is a defined geographical region where visitors stay for at least one night and includes tourism products such as accommodation, transportation, infrastructure, facilities and services. Prior research has identified a wide range of destination characteristics that influence the overall attractiveness of a destination such as culture and history, transport, service quality, tourism infrastructure, events and activities, and hospitality resources (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Keyser, 2009; Morrison, 2013; Rauf et al., 2022). This study, therefore, seeks to identify and examine the impact of Pakistan's most important destination attributes on international tourists' intentions to visit and these studies will be relevant information for further strategic plans in the country.

Like other products or services, tourists usually go through thorough planning and decision-making processes while choosing a holiday destination. To better understand the selection decision, this research will utilize a consumer motivation theory which states that "consumer motivation is one of the most crucial determinants of consumer behaviour" (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007, p. 169). Based on this theory, a destination can be viewed as a product or service, and visitors as customers. The process of such a selection decision is equivalent to the process of a consumer's buying decision and there are several motivators and/or factors that influence the selection of one destination over another.

Prior research has identified a wide range of "so-called" travel motivators for tourists. Krippendorf (1987) argued that tourists' motivation is self-centred and guided by the desire to "get away from" rather than "get closer to" something. Building on this, Swarbrooke and Horner (1999, p. 54) developed a model typology for travel motivation and attempted to categorize motivators into six broad categories: (a) physical, (b) emotional, (c) personal, (d) personal development, (e) status and (f) cultural. Dann (1977) argued that tourists' destination selection is affected by both internal and external factors which he called push and pull. Push factors can be viewed as endogenous forces that influence tourists' decisions about "whether to travel". Pull factors can be understood as exogenous forces that influence decisions about "where to travel". The pull factors are supply components from attractions or destinations which can include features, attractions or attributes of the destination, such as the environment, culture, price, infrastructure, service, climate and so on (Thiumsak & Ruangkanjanases, 2016). This research exclusively focuses on pull factors, also known as destination attributes, to examine international tourists' intentions to visit Pakistan.

In a more recent study (Woyo & Slabbert, 2021), destination competitive factors (termed in this paper as destination attributes) were studied from suppliers operating in Zimbabwe, a country with political and economic challenges similar to Pakistan. Comparing both studies, natural attractions such as landscape, culture and history were ranked first. Hospitality/destination quality – which includes human resources, ground and airport infrastructure, hotels and tourism facilities – was ranked second for travellers regardless of economic conditions, which is consistent with this study. Tourism destinations include many important attributes that draw visitors and satisfy their needs once they arrive. Zhou (2005) identified the 13 most commonly used destination attributes by comparing 28 studies on selection or related topics. Those attributes are: (a) culture and history, (b) landscape, (c) services, (d) entertainment, (e) relaxation, (f) climate, (g) price, (h) sport, (i) safety (personal), (j) local attitudes toward tourists, (k) special events and activities, (l) accessibility (information available), and (m) adventure. These frequently used destination attributes will be used as a reference to determine Pakistan's important destination attributes. Pakistan is the home of many ancient civilizations and cultures, notably the Buddhist Gandhara civilizations, the Indus valley civilizations, the Mughal Empire, and the world's oldest living culture known as Kalasha (Fakhar, 2010). The country offers amazing activities for adventure tourists, and it features five of the world's fourteen highest peaks, including K-2 (8611 m) and Nanga Parbat (8125 m) (Arshad et al., 2018). There is also a variety of cultural festivals and sporting events for tourists to experience during their trip to Pakistan.

Despite the attractions, there are some factors which have disadvantaged Pakistan as a tourist destination. One of them is infrastructure. The earthquake in 2005 caused massive infrastructural damage in several tourist destinations (Arshad et al., 2018). Other factors include difficulty in getting visas, price competitiveness and safety. Safety and security are perhaps of the most concern for tourism in Pakistan while perception of a destination's attributes helps tourists decide whether to travel there or avoid it (Klenosky, 2002; Um et al., 2006). As a result, it can be argued that the perceived attractiveness of a destination's attributes can have an impact on their choice (Zhou, 2005). Conceptually, the tourist's perceived attraction to a destination's attributes is best defined as a cognitive appraisal of the systemic model of attitude (Bowie & Chang, 2005).

Another key factor that plays an important role in shaping tourists' destination choice is destination image and many studies in the past have demonstrated that image has a significant impact on selection (see Hunt, 1975; Milman & Pizam, 1995; Yousefi & Marzuki, 2015; Wisniewski et al., 2015). Destination image is a multidimensional construct with the two main ones being cognitive and affective (Lawson & Baud-Bovy, 1977). The cognitive component includes perceptions and information about its physical attributes, while the affective dimension refers to an assessment of the nature of feelings toward those physical attributes and the surrounding environment (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). A tourist's perceptions of a particular destination's attributes form the basis of its image (Lumsdon, 2000), and based on past studies (e.g. Thiumsak & Ruangkanjanases, 2016; Zhou, 2005), a conceptual model is developed (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Conceptual model
Source: authors

2. Methodological procedures

The purpose of this research is explanatory, as it examines the direct and indirect impacts of the attractiveness of destination attributes on foreign tourists' intentions to visit Pakistan via perceived destination images. This study employs the deductive research approach to develop and test hypotheses during the research process. The selected research design proved to be effective for analysing the identified variables and testing the presented hypotheses.

The target research population comprised leisure travellers of all age groups (from 16 years old), cultures, ethnic and religious backgrounds, and social classes from all over the world. The data was gathered using a non-probability, convenience sampling technique as this was the most effective sampling method considering no databases or structured information were available for data collection for this destination. Multiple international travel blogs, Facebook pages and other online platforms were consulted to reach the specified target sample. This was necessary for collecting valid and reliable data with an acceptable balance of all genders, age groups, education levels and income groups, so as to reduce any bias in the responses. The cross-sectional data were collected between November and December 2021. Respondents were approached online via different social networks, specifically on micro-blogging sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram. Response from 217 research participants was received. Although the limited response rate is one of the limitations of the research, it provided valid and reliable data for useful statistical inferences. The findings cannot be generalized based on the small sample size but this was not the aim of this study. The following online platforms were used to post the questionnaire for data collection:

– Travellerspoint forum,
– Tripadvisor forum,
– Whirlpool forums,
– Fodor's Travel (Pakistan travel forum),
– Lonely Planet Travelers (Facebook group),
– Solo Travellers (Facebook group),
– international colleagues and friends.

The questionnaire was divided into five sections with a total of 16 closed questions. These included the respondents' demographic and traveling profiles. Other sections included the perceived attractiveness of destination attributes, their ranking, the overall image of Pakistan as a holiday destination, and intentions to visit. The survey concluded with an open-ended question asking respondents for their comments/suggestions. This was important to find some explanations for their quantitative responses. The dependent variable in this research was international tourists' intentions to visit and the independent variable was the perceived attractiveness of Pakistan's destination attributes and perceived destination image. To assess how well destination attributes motivate international tourists to choose Pakistan as their next holiday destination, the perceived attractiveness of the attributes was investigated as the main independent variable.

All the instruments used were based on prior research on destination attributes or related topics in the tourism literature (see Bui et al., 2021; Carvalho & Fernandes, 2022; Chen et al., 2021; Eusébio & Vieira, 2013; Hsu et al., 2009; Woyo & Slabbert, 2021; Yilmaz, 2021; Zhou, 2005). Therefore, the validity of the instruments was ensured by using previously employed statistical measures. In order to address reliability, a pilot survey was conducted using a sample of 15, and Cronbach's alpha value of 0.95 for all the scales used indicates that the instruments are reliable. In order to test the first three hypotheses, a multiple regression analysis was conducted using SPSS version 26. Multiple regression analysis appeared to be an appropriate statistical technique since it examines the strength of the relationship between two or more independent variables (i.e. the perceived attractiveness of destination attributes and perceived destination image) and one dependent variable (i.e. visit intentions). For hypothesis four, this study performed a mediation analysis to investigate the mediating effect of the perceived image, using the Preacher and Hayes (2004) process macro in SPSS. This provided specific insights into the relationship between dependent and independent variables.

The following hypotheses were formulated:
Hypothesis 1:

H_0: Each of Pakistan's destination attributes will have no impact on international tourists' intentions to visit.

H_1: Each of Pakistan's destination attributes will have a significant positive impact on international tourists' intentions to visit.

Hypothesis 2:

H_0: Each of Pakistan's destination attributes will have no impact on international tourists' perceived destination image.

H_1: Each of Pakistan's destination attributes will have a significant positive impact on international tourists' perceived destination image.

Hypothesis 3:

H_0: The perceived destination image of Pakistan will have no impact on international tourists' intentions to visit.

H_1: The perceived destination image of Pakistan will have a significant positive impact on international tourists' intentions to visit.

Hypothesis 4:

H_0: The perceived destination image of Pakistan will not mediate the impact of its destination attributes on international tourists' intentions to visit.

H_1: The perceived destination image of Pakistan will mediate the impact of its destination attributes on international tourists' intentions to visit.

3. Pakistan

Pakistan is located just north of the Tropic of Cancer, bordering India, the Arabian Sea, Iran, Afghanistan and China. It has a total population of 220 million with the majority being Muslim followed by Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Hindus and Parsis (Rana & Bhatti, 2018). Following the 9/11 incidents, Pakistan was adversely impacted by terrorism, extremism and sabotage (Raza & Jawaid, 2013). Furthermore, a presumably biased mass media created a negative image of Pakistan as country and tourist destination (Yousaf & Huaibin, 2014), often depicting it as a proponent of "jihadism" (Sayira & Andrews, 2016). Several initiatives launched by Pakistan's security agencies to combat terrorism activities have considerably improved its security condition (Arshad et al., 2018), however, to succeed on the international tourism market, tourism planners need to clearly understand the (destination) attributes that are vital to international tourists in their decision to choose it as a future holiday destination.

4. Discussion of results

With respect to travel frequency, 40.6% of respondents took a vacation once a year, followed by frequent travellers who took a vacation several times (2–4 times) a year (28.6%) and light travellers who travel only every few years (27.6%). Finally, a sizable percentage of respondents indicated they had previously visited Pakistan (40.1%). The demographic profile of respondents could be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents (n = 217)

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	133	61.3
	Female	84	38.7
Age	16–25	52	24.0
	26–35	127	58.5
	36–45	26	12.0
	56 years old and more	6	2.8
Level of education	High school or lower	10	4.6
	College	19	8.8
	Bachelor's degree	113	52.1
	Master's degree	69	31.8
	PhD	6	2.8
Employ-ment status	Student/intern	30	13.8
	Unemployed	17	7.8
	Self-employed	42	19.4
	Employed	128	59.0
Annual family income	Less than USD 20,000	86	39.6
	USD 20,000–USD 39,999	72	33.2
	USD 40,000–USD 59,999	22	10.1
	USD 60,000–USD 79,999	15	6.9
	USD 80,000–USD 99,999	11	5.1
	USD 100,000 or more	11	5.1
Traveling frequency	Once a year	88	40.6
	Several times (2–4 times) a year	62	28.6
	More than 4 times a year	7	3.2
Visited Pakistan before	Yes	87	40.1
	No	130	59.9

Source: authors.

Demographic profiles

Table 2 illustrates Pakistan's perceived attractiveness on several destination attributes. As seen in Table 2, landscape, local attitudes toward visitors, adventure and price appear to be the most appealing attributes for international tourists, while nightlife and entertainment, and safety and risk appear to be the least appealing. This makes intuitive sense, given that Pakistan's nightlife is not particularly appealing compared to EU countries, and the country still has to make significant reforms to ensure the safety of international travellers.

Table 2. Perceived attractiveness of destination attributes (n = 217)

Attribute	Min	Max	Mean	*SD*
Landscape	1	5	4.02	1.016
Culture and history	1	5	3.83	1.005
Nightlife and entertainment	1	5	2.36	1.214
Services	1	5	3.44	1.104
Accessibility	1	5	3.18	1.147
Local attitudes toward visitors	1	5	3.94	1.074
Safety and risk	1	5	3.16	1.271
Relaxation	1	5	3.86	1.077
Climate	1	5	3.68	1.075
Price	1	5	3.89	0.968
Sport	1	5	3.22	1.231
Special events	1	5	3.52	1.255
Adventure	1	5	3.94	1.239

Note: *SD* – standard deviation.
Source: authors.

Mean ranking of attributes

In addition to measuring Pakistan's perceived attractiveness on destination attributes, respondents were asked to rank each attribute in terms of its importance when it comes to selection decisions, with 1 being *the most important* and 9 being *the least important*. Table 3 displays the mean ranking of destination attributes in ascending order. The attribute with the lowest mean rank is the most significant, while the attribute with the highest is the least significant. As shown in the table, the most important attributes for international tourists in their destination selection are landscape, culture, and history; and hospitality and security; while nightlife and entertainment are the least important. Overall, these findings are consistent with past findings of the perceived attractiveness of destination attributes.

Table 3. Mean ranking of attributes (n = 217)

Attribute	Min	Max	Mean	*SD*
Landscape, culture and history	1	9	3.58	3.131
Hospitality	1	9	4.45	2.121
Security	1	9	4.50	2.236
Relaxation and climate	1	9	4.80	1.884
Services and accessibility	1	9	4.83	2.247
Value for money	1	9	5.02	2.226
Adventure activities	1	9	5.44	2.417
Sports and special events	1	9	5.96	2.783
Nightlife and entertainment	1	9	6.43	2.831

Note: 1 – *most important*, 9 – *least important*; *SD* – standard deviation.
Source: authors.

Pakistan's perceived destination image

Table 4 displays the mean value of the perceived destination image, which serves as the mediator variable in this research. This study posits that the perceived destination image will influence the relationship between Pakistan's perceived attractiveness on destination attributes and visit intentions. A series of semantic differential scales were used to assess respondents' general impression of Pakistan as a holiday destination, with 1 reflecting *a negative image* and 7 representing *a positive image*. As seen in the table, the mean rating of Pakistan's perceived destination image is highly positive (5.8184), indicating that its perceived image as a vacation destination is on average quite positive.

Table 4. Perceived destination image (n = 217)

Item	Min	Max	Mean	*SD*
Destination image	1.00	7.00	5.8184	1.22112

Note: *SD* – standard deviation.
Source: authors.

Visit intentions

Table 5 displays the mean value of international tourists' intentions to visit Pakistan on a holiday, which acts as the dependent variable in this study. Respondents were asked to rate their intention to visit on a holiday using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). As seen in the table, the mean visit intention is highly positive (3.9647), indicating that on average international tourists indeed intend to visit on a holiday.

Table 5. Visit intentions (n = 217)

Item	Min	Max	Mean	*SD*
Visit intentions	1.00	5.00	3.9647	1.02954

Note: *SD* – standard deviation.
Source: authors.

Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis 1 states that "the perceived attractiveness of each of Pakistan's destination attributes will have a significant positive impact on international tourists' intentions to visit". To examine the impact of the attractiveness of Pakistan's destination attributes on visit intentions, a multiple regression analysis was performed whereby all thirteen variables are simultaneously entered into the calculation.

Table 6a presents the ANOVA output, which shows that the regression model is statistically significant. Table 6b provides the regression output, including the effects and their significance. For example, the table illustrates that the attractiveness of the landscape attribute had a positive and statistically significant impact on visit intentions. This means that the higher the attractiveness of Pakistan on the landscape attribute the greater will be the tourists' intentions to visit on a holiday. Similarly, services, local attitudes towards visitors, safety and risk, sports activities, and special events were all statistically significant predictors of visit intentions. Furthermore, the standardized coefficients column indicates that local attitudes towards visitors were the most important attribute in attracting international tourists to Pakistan, followed by landscape and services.

Table 6a. ANOVA

Model	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*-test	Sig.
Regression	70.407	13	5.416	6.935	0.000
Residual	158.544	203	0.781	–	–
Total	228.951	216	–	–	–

Note: dependent variable: visit intentions; *SS* – sum of squares, *df* – degrees of freedom, *MS* – mean square, Sig. – significance.
Source: authors.

On the other hand, culture and history, nightlife and entertainment, accessibility, relaxation, climate, pricing and adventure were found to be statistically insignificant. Therefore, the findings provided partial support for hypothesis 1, since as many as 7 of the 13 destination attributes were statistically insignificant in influencing the visit intentions of international tourists.

Hypothesis 2 states that "the perceived attractiveness of each of Pakistan's destination attributes will have a significant positive impact on international tourists' perceived destination image".

Table 7a presents the ANOVA output, which shows the overall significance of the regression model. As

Table 6b. Regression of visit intentions on the perceived attractiveness of destination attributes

Attribute	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
	β	*SE*	β	*t*-test	Sig.[a]
(Constant)	1.371	0.327	–	4.189	0.000^{***}
Landscape	0.164	0.078	0.162	2.109	0.018^{**}
Culture and history	0.002	0.074	0.002	0.033	0.487
Nightlife and entertainment	–0.008	0.056	–0.009	–0.138	0.445
Services	0.140	0.070	0.150	1.991	0.024^{**}
Accessibility	–0.011	0.071	–0.012	–0.151	0.440
Local attitudes toward visitors	0.162	0.082	0.169	1.973	0.025^{**}
Safety and risk	0.090	0.060	0.111	1.494	0.068^{*}
Relaxation	0.007	0.079	0.008	0.092	0.463
Climate	–0.030	0.073	–0.031	–0.414	0.339
Price	0.005	0.079	0.005	0.065	0.474
Sport	0.090	0.064	0.108	1.394	0.082^{*}
Special events	0.102	0.072	0.124	1.409	0.080^{*}
Adventure	–0.003	0.077	–0.004	–0.045	0.482

Note: dependent variable: visit intentions; β – the slope between the variables, *SE* – standard error; Sig. – significance, [a] *p*-values are one-tailed, $^{*}\ p < 0.10$, $^{**}\ p < 0.05$, $^{***}\ p < 0.01$.
Source: authors.

Table 7a. ANOVA

Model	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*-test	Sig.
Regression	132.845	13	10.219	10.962	0.000
Residual	189.241	203	0.932	–	–
Total	322.086	216	–	–	–

Note: dependent variable: destination image; *SS* – sum of squares, *df* – degrees of freedom, *MS* – mean, Sig. – significance.
Source: authors.

seen in the table, the regression model is statistically significant (F = 10.962, significance = 0.000). Table 7b provides the regression output, including the effects and their significance. In comparison to the effects of destination attributes on visit intentions, the influence on destination image was slightly different. Like visit intentions, the table illustrates that attractiveness of landscape, local attitudes towards visitors and sports activities were statistically significant predictors of the perceived destination image. The adventure attribute was also statistically significant in positively influencing international tourists' perceptions of Pakistan's image as a holiday destination. However, services, safety and risk, and special events turned out to be without statistical significance. Looking at the standardized coefficients column, it can be seen that landscape was the most important attribute in enhancing the perceived destination image of Pakistan as a vacation destination, followed by local attitudes towards visitors and adventure attributes.

On the contrary, culture, and history, nightlife and entertainment, accessibility, safety and risk, relaxation, climate, pricing and special events were found to be statistically insignificant. Like hypothesis 1, the analysis of perceived destination image only found partial support for hypothesis 2, as 9 of the 13 destination attributes were statistically insignificant in influencing international tourists' image perceptions of Pakistan.

Hypothesis 3 states that "the perceived destination image of Pakistan will have a significant positive impact on international tourists' intentions to visit".

Table 8a presents the ANOVA output, which shows the overall significance of the regression model. By looking at the F value and significance, the regression analysis of perceived destination image and visit intentions is statistically significant. Table 8b provides the regression output, including the effects and their significance, by analysing the β value and significance. First, most of the demographic characteristics of respondents, including gender, age, level of education

Table 7b. Regression of perceived destination image on the perceived attractiveness of destination attributes

Attribute	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
	β	*SE*	β	*t*-test	Sig.[a]
(Constant)	2.038	0.358	–	5.699	0.000***
Landscape	0.248	0.085	0.206	2.919	0.002**
Culture and history	0.028	0.081	0.023	0.341	0.367
Nightlife and entertainment	–0.013	0.062	–0.013	–0.209	0.417
Services	0.090	0.077	0.082	1.175	0.120
Accessibility	0.013	0.078	0.013	0.173	0.431
Local attitudes toward visitors	0.194	0.090	0.170	2.157	0.016**
Safety and risk	0.030	0.066	0.031	0.454	0.325
Relaxation	0.080	0.086	0.070	0.925	0.178
Climate	0.050	0.079	0.044	0.624	0.266
Price	0.033	0.087	0.027	0.385	0.350
Sport	0.120	0.070	0.121	1.709	0.044**
Special events	–0.006	0.079	–0.006	–0.077	0.469
Adventure	0.130	0.084	0.132	1.538	0.062*

Note: dependent variable: destination image; β – the slope between the variables, *SE* – standard error; Sig. – significance, [a] p-values are one-tailed, * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.
Source: authors.

and employment status were found to be statistically insignificant in influencing visit intentions. Annual family income had a negative and statistically significant effect which suggests that tourists belonging to a higher income category were less inclined to visit Pakistan on a holiday. Moreover, visiting Pakistan previously had a positive and statistically significant effect on visit intentions. This implies that international tourists who had already visited were more likely to visit again as compared to those who had not.

Table 8a. ANOVA

Model	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*-test	Sig.
Regression	98.365	7	14.052	22.490	0.000
Residual	130.587	209	0.625	–	–
Total	228.951	216	–	–	–

Note: dependent variable: visit intentions; *SS* – sum of squares, *df* – degrees of freedom, *MS* – mean square, Sig. – significance.
Source: authors.

Table 8b. Regression of visit intention on perceived destination image

Attribute	β	*SE*	*t*-test	Sig.[a]
(Constant)	2.602	0.507	5.133	0.000***
Gender	–0.060	0.114	–0.529	0.298
Age	–0.075	0.072	–10.041	0.149
Level of education	0.029	0.072	0.398	0.345
Employment status	–0.023	0.053	–0.437	0.331
Annual family income	–0.057	0.041	–1.373	0.085*
Visited Pakistan before	0.527	0.119	–4.436	0.000***
Destination image	0.438	0.049	8.992	0.000***

Note: dependent variable: visit intentions; β – the slope between the variables, *SE* – standard error; Sig. – significance, [a] *p*-values are one-tailed, * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.
Source: authors.

Finally, the coefficient for perceived destination image was positive and statistically significant at a 1% significance level, showing that a favourable image perception of Pakistan would indeed encourage international tourists to visit Pakistan. Therefore, the results showed full support for hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 4 states that "the perceived destination image of Pakistan will mediate the impact of the perceived attractiveness of each of its destination attributes on international tourists' intentions to visit". To investigate the mediating effect of this perceived image, this study performed a mediation analysis. The authors also suggest using a Sobel *z*-test to establish mediation on the statistical significance of the indirect effect of the independent variable via the mediator variable.

To conduct mediation analysis, using Zhao et al.'s (2010) approach, this study implements the Preacher and Hayes (2004) process macro in SPSS. This technique uses the bootstrap method to determine the significance of the indirect effect. The bootstrap method computes the 95% confidence interval for the estimates, and an estimate is considered statistically significant if the confidence interval does not contain 0. The mediation model applied in this research is as follow (Figure 2).

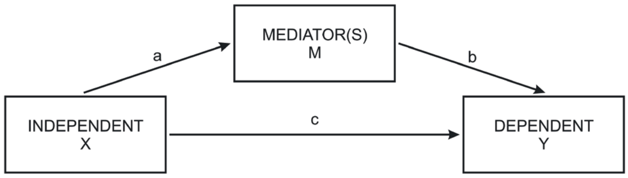

Figure 2. Results of testing hypothetical model
Source: authors

Table 9a shows that the total effect of each destination attribute on visit intentions is positive and statistically significant, as the *p*-values were less than 0.05.

Table 9a. Total effect of X on Y

Attribute	Effect	*SE*	*t*-test	Sig.
Landscape	0.3023	0.0625	4.8397	0.000***
Culture and history	0.2602	0.0616	4.2236	0.000***
Nightlife and entertainment	0.1568	0.0522	3.0014	0.000***
Services	0.3137	0.0551	5.6892	0.000***
Accessibility	0.2069	0.0551	3.7576	0.000***
Local attitudes toward visitors	0.3459	0.0555	6.2314	0.000***
Safety and risk	0.2278	0.0483	4.7139	0.000***
Relaxation	0.2925	0.0563	5.1936	0.000***
Climate	0.2502	0.0585	4.2763	0.000***
Price	0.2848	0.0645	4.4174	0.000***
Sport	0.2511	0.0510	4.9230	0.000***
Special events	0.2720	0.0502	5.4192	0.000***
Adventure	0.3016	0.0505	5.9764	0.000***

Note: X – perceived attraction of destination attributes, Y – visit intentions; *SE* – standard error; Sig. – significance, *** $p < 0.01$.
Source: authors.

Table 9b shows the direct effects of the attractiveness of destination attributes on respondents' intentions to visit Pakistan for holidays. Except for landscape, culture and history; and climate; the table revealed that all other destination attributes had a statistically significant direct effect on visit intentions at 10%, 5% and 1% significance levels.

Table 9b. Direct effect of X on Y

Attribute	Effect	*SE*	*t*-test	Sig.
Landscape	0.0967	0.0623	1.5523	0.122
Culture and history	0.0778	0.0593	1.3128	0.191
Nightlife and entertainment	0.0796	0.0460	1.7300	0.085*
Services	0.1687	0.0531	3.1798	0.002***
Accessibility	0.0865	0.0503	1.7190	0.087*
Local attitudes toward visitors	0.1631	0.0574	2.8421	0.005***
Safety and risk	0.1195	0.0447	2.6717	0.008***
Relaxation	0.1110	0.0564	1.9699	0.050**
Climate	0.0867	0.0558	1.5540	0.121
Price	0.1100	0.0613	1.7954	0.074*
Sport	0.1145	0.0487	2.3499	0.020**
Special events	0.1513	0.0473	3.1991	0.002***
Adventure	0.1366	0.0517	2.6413	0.009***

Note: X – perceived attraction of destination attributes, Y – visit intentions; *SE* – standard error; Sig. – significance, * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.
Source: authors.

Table 9c shows the indirect effects of the attractiveness of destination attributes on respondents' intentions to visit. These indirect effects demonstrate the impact on respondents' visit intentions that occur via destination image. As shown in the table, no bootstrap confidence interval contains the value 0 which means that the indirect effect of each destination attribute is statistically significant at a 5% significance level. In other words, the perceived destination image of Pakistan indeed mediates the effect of the attractiveness of destination attributes on visit intentions. As a result, the findings fully supported hypothesis 4.

Table 9c. Indirect effect of X on Y through M

Attribute	Effect	Boot *SE*	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Landscape	0.2055	0.0474	0.1210	0.3046
Culture and history	0.1823	0.0403	0.1094	0.2680
Nightlife and entertainment	0.0772	0.0269	0.0296	0.1350
Services	0.1450	0.0359	0.0793	0.2195
Accessibility	0.1204	0.0312	0.0642	0.1866
Local attitudes toward visitors	0.1827	0.0405	0.1041	0.2656
Safety and risk	0.1083	0.0286	0.0551	0.1677
Relaxation	0.1815	0.0436	0.1010	0.2750
Climate	0.1636	0.0370	0.0953	0.2421
Price	0.1748	0.0432	0.0984	0.2666
Sport	0.1366	0.0336	0.0739	0.2064
Special events	0.1206	0.0307	0.0651	0.1837
Adventure	0.1650	0.0362	0.098	0.2409

Note: X – perceived attraction of destination attributes, Y – visit intentions, M – destination image; Boot *SE* – bootstrap standard error, Boot LLCI – bootstrap lower limit confidence interval, Boot ULCI – bootstrap upper limit confidence interval.
Source: authors.

4.1. Hypothesis testing

In this subsection, we examine the empirical support for the proposed hypotheses regarding the influence of various destination attributes on international tourists' visit intentions and perceived destination image of Pakistan.

Hypothesis 1: The findings provided partial support for hypothesis 1, since 7 of the 13 destination attributes were statistically insignificant in influencing the visit intentions of international tourists (Tables 6a and 6b).

Hypothesis 2: Landscape was the most important attribute in enhancing the perceived destination image of Pakistan, followed by local attitudes towards visitors, and adventure attributes (Tables 7a and 7b). The analysis of perceived destination image found only partial support for hypothesis 2, as 9 of the 13 destination attributes were statistically insignificant in influencing international tourists' image perceptions of Pakistan.

Hypothesis 3: Based on Tables 8a and 8b, most of the demographic characteristics of respondents were found to be insignificant in influencing visit intentions. Tourists belonging to a higher income category were less inclined to visit Pakistan. Moreover, international tourists who had already visited were more likely to revisit. Finally, a favourable image perception of Pakistan would indeed encourage international tourists to visit. Therefore, the results showed full support for hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 4: The findings showed that the total effect of each destination attribute on visit intentions is positive and statistically significant (Table 9a). It also shows that after controlling for the effects of respondents' demographic characteristics, the direct effect of the services attribute to international tourists' intentions to visit Pakistan was statistically significant and positive (Table 9b). Lastly, the indirect effect of each destination attribute on visit intentions is significant (Table 9c). In total, the perceived destination image of Pakistan indeed mediates the effect of the attractiveness of destination attributes on visit intentions. As a result, the findings fully supported hypothesis 4.

The summary of the results of hypothesis testing is shown in Table 10.

Table 10. Hypothesis testing

Hypotheses		Results
H_1	The perceived attractiveness of each of Pakistan's destination attributes will have a significant positive impact on international tourists' intentions to visit	Partially supported
H_2	The perceived attractiveness of each of Pakistan's destination attributes will have a significant positive impact on international tourists' perceived destination image	Partially supported
H_3	The perceived destination image of Pakistan will have a significant positive impact on international tourists' intentions to visit	Fully supported
H_4	The perceived destination image of Pakistan will mediate the impact of the perceived attractiveness of each of Pakistan's destination attributes on international tourists' intentions to visit	Fully supported

Source: authors.

5. Final considerations: Limitations, implications for hospitality, tourism research and industry practice

The following summarizes the answers to all four research questions, respectively:

1. The multiple regression analysis highlighted six destination attributes (landscape, services, local attitudes towards tourists, safety and risk, sports and special events). Pakistan should focus on these attributes throughout its market positioning activities.
2. Only four attributes (landscape, local attitudes towards visitors, sports and adventure) were found to have a significant influence on Pakistan's perceived destination image.
3. The perceived destination image has a significant effect on tourists' visit intentions and the variable also indicates that people who had already visited were more likely to visit again.
4. All the attributes have an influence on Pakistan's destination image and thus influencing tourists' intentions to visit.

Overall, this study revealed that destination attributes play a significant role in forming the overall image of Pakistan, which leads to favourable visit intentions. It is worth mentioning that some of the attributes are related to the tourist attraction type and items focused on the tourist infrastructure. Both are central points to future tourist planning and should be considered in a tourist national and regional plan. Based on the analysis the following recommendation can be made:

1. Pakistan must highlight its natural attractions.
2. The government should improve the infrastructure including roads and bridges.
3. Local attitudes towards female visitors should be addressed – the government should raise public awareness of women's rights in society to increase the female tourists' confidence and provide safety, one of the more important attributes found in the study.
4. More lodgings should be built since they are part of the tourist infrastructure and, according to the data, this item can also influence tourists' decisions.
5. Universities should include hospitality and management in their academic curriculum to develop a professionally qualified workforce.
6. The government should promote international events or sports festivals since these events could convert Pakistan into a showcase to other countries and it can be an opportunity for free promotion.
7. The government together with local administrations should develop and publicize worldwide tourism promotional material focused on relevant attributes to increase the perceived image of the destination.

One limitation of this is that a survey does not provide in-depth knowledge of the study variables. Future researchers could use "focus groups" and perform qualitative research. Secondly, the perceived destination image was used as a mediation factor, but there may be other factors that modify the influence of the perceived destination image. Other research possibilities are expanding the scope to specific regions, comparing the impact of destination attributes on visit intentions between Pakistan and its rival countries, and examining both international and domestic tourists' visit intentions.

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A tourist facility with a ban on children playing: The principle of non-discrimination and the statement of the Bulgarian court

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ABSTRACT

Recently, both in Bulgaria and abroad, it is increasingly common to find accommodation, restaurants and entertainment facilities that advertise and offer a wide range of services. However, these are not intended for general consumers but only those who have reached maturity (excluding minors and the under-aged). According to press publications hotels and restaurants that pre-select their guests based on their age are mainly concentrated on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast and in the mountains or they specialize in spa and balneo procedures. It turns out that consumers find it easier to stay with a pet, albeit at an extra cost, than go on vacation with their teenage children. Such practices adopted by representatives of the tourism industry raise some questions of a moral, ethical and legal nature. The current article traces the development of a specific administrative and judicial proceeding initiated to establish the presence of discrimination against consumers in a tourist facility – a restaurant. An overview of the claims and arguments of the claimant is made as well as an analysis of the reasons and considerations given by the competent administrative and judicial authorities. The author's opinion on the issue is expressed.

KEYWORDS

discrimination, unequal treatment, law on tourism, anti-discrimination law

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1. Concept of discrimination Legislation and interpretation

In its preamble, in art. 6, para. 2, the *Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria* (*Konstitutsia na Republika Bulgaria*, 1991) declares the equality of citizens as a fundamental principle of civil society. The principle of equality under the law manifests itself in two varieties: a ban on arbitrary inequality and an obligation of equal treatment. In other words, the principle means equality of rights but also an obligation for equal treatment of citizens by public authorities.

Equality of rights requires the creation of a favorable environment and the same conditions for citizens so that they can develop in all areas of public life. Equal treatment is expressed in the obligation of state authorities to treat all persons who are affected or might be affected by their actions equally. Both in modern legal doctrine and in the practice of the Constitutional Court, the understanding of equality is permanently maintained as relative rather than absolute (*Reshenie*

№ 12/2018 na Konstitutsionnia sad na Republika Bulgaria po konstitucionno delo № 1/2018).

The basic law creates inadmissibility for the unfavorable treatment of individual citizens based on certain characteristics such as race, nationality, origin, ethnicity, etc. The stated constitutional principle of universal equality under the law, similar to the multiple principles that make up the basic law, is both generally and abstractly formulated. This requires consistent development and concretization in the *Anti-discrimination law* (*Zakon za zashtita ot discriminatsia*, 2003) providing an absolute ban. The law regulates the means of protection when exercising individual civil rights, the state authorities specialized in the prevention of discrimination as well as the proceedings for administrative and judicial protection. From the adopted classification, the *Anti-dsicrimination law* plays the role of a general (framework) law, its rules are applicable in all cases for which there is no regulation in another normative act.

According to the meaning of this law, discrimination manifests itself in direct and indirect ways. Art. 4, para. 1 (*Zakon za zashtita ot discriminatsia*, 2003) outlines although not in details a wide range of protected features where less favorable treatment of a specific person, i.e. placing them in a non-equal position is inadmissible. The concept of "non-equal treatment" in its key meaning in the studied case is explicitly defined in para. 1, p. 7 of the additional provisions to the law as a

> Deed, action or inaction that lead to less favorable treatment of one person comparaed to another person on the grounds of the features under art. 4, para. 1 or they can place a person/persons, bearers of a feature according to art. 4, para. 1 in a particularly unfavorable position comparaed to other persons (*Zakon za zashtita ot discriminatsia*, 2003).

The phrase "protected features" used in the *Anti-discrimination law* is not legally defined but judicial practice has comprehensively clarified the content of this concept. Protected features are interpreted as legally defined personal/social qualities related to their presence in a particular person whose presence is excluded from being a prerequisite for different treatment of this person in exercising rights or fulfillment of obligations, comparable to another person who lacks these qualities.

The principle objective of the *Anti-discrimination law* (*Zakon za zashtita ot discriminatsia*, 2003) enshrined in its art. 1 which should be a guide for the law enforcement authorities is the establishing and sanctioning of anyone placed in an unequal position not only according to the features listed in this law but also according to any other features mentioned in a special law or international treaty that is in force in Bulgaria. This leads to the expansion of the scope of action of the *Anti-discrimination law*, also including special cases or specific hypotheses subject to a separate regulation. The latter undoubtedly ensures a more comprehensive protection of the rights and interests of citizens.

When examining and resolving legal disputes regarding manifestations of discrimination, the Bulgarian court accepts as a basic postulate that each participant in social life must provide an opportunity for all other persons who meet certain conditions, determined by the nature of the benefit offered, to use it. In this sense, it is inadmissible to exclude anyone from the circle of potential consumers on the grounds of features specified in art. 4, para. 1 of the *Anti-discrimination law* (*Zakon za zashtita ot discriminatsia*, 2003). The effective protection of equal treatment implies both a ban on direct reference to such a feature, direct discrimination, as well as a ban on a policy which although pointing to ensured equality, actually leads to the same result denied by the legal order, indirect discrimination (*Reshenie № 1031/2023 po grazhdansko delo № 7195/2023 na Sofiyski rayonen sad*).

The rule on the inadmissibility of discrimination declares the latter as incompatible with the principles and foundations on which a democratic society is built as well as with the establishment of equality between people as the base of civilized societies (*Reshenie № 4281/2023 po grazhdansko delo № 8999/2023 na Sofiyski rayonen sad*).

The issue of the prerequisites on the grounds of which an act or behavior can be qualified as discriminatory has been extensively discussed in court practice. The supreme judges state that in order for there to be a manifestation of direct discrimination, it is necessary to have committed a specific violation that constitutes a real composition with certain elements: different treatment or unwanted behavior towards the person and a direct causal link between the unfavorable treatment and its reason expressed in a feature under art. 4 from the *Anti-discrimination law* (*Zakon za zashtita ot discriminatsia*, 2003).

However, in the practice of the court, not every unequal treatment is recognized as discrimination, but only that which is based on at least one of the legally established features. If it is not proven in the case that the claimant corresponds to such a feature that distinguishes him/her from other persons treated more favorably, a causal connection between illegal actions and a specific protected feature cannot then be found. Even if such actions were carried out, the court accepts that they do not constitute discrimination within the meaning of the law.

Whether one person is placed in a more unfavourable position compared to others cannot be considered discrimination, since the meaning of the protection against discrimination is that the different treatment is comparable to another person or a group of persons in a similar situation (*Reshenie № 2/2019 po grazhdansko delo № 3203/2018 na Varhoven kasacionen sad, 3-to grazhdansko otdelenie*). In other words, in order to conclude discrimination based on any of the legal features, a comparison should be made between the way the person claiming to be discriminated against is treated and the way other persons who are in the same or similar situation, i.e. where there are present comparable similar circumstances (*Reshenie № 5959/2012 po administrativno delo № 1526/2012 na Varhoven administrativen sad*).

Therefore, in each individual case of discrimination, a protected feature must be established for the person, a causal link between the disputed treatment and the corresponding protected feature. It is sufficient to establish that this feature constitutes a main, significant reason for the less favorable treatment (*Reshenie № 5970/2021 po administrativno delo № 14588/2019 na Varhoven administrativen sad*).

There is anti-discrimination legislation in European Union law with particular emphasis on preventing gender discrimination in employment (European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, 2015). In this direction, Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council *On the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast)* was adopted (published in the Official Journal L 204/23) (Craig, 2007; Krizsan et al., 2012). Another important line is the fight against discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin, Directive 2000/43/EC *On the implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin* (published in the Official Journal L 180/22) (Fibbi et al., 2021).

Considering the importance of this sphere of public relations for modern states, the concept of "discrimination" is subject to clarification by acts of international law (*Handbook on European non-discrimination law*, 2018). In international conventions, discrimination is defined as a difference, exception, limitation or preference of an individual according to specific characteristics, aiming to violate equality of treatment (Fredman, 2011; Khaitan, 2015).

2. Facts and circumstances of the case

A complaint was submitted to the Commission for Protection against Discrimination (CPD) (Komisiya za zashtita ot diskriminatsiya, n.d.) by Zh. A. demanding an investigation to establish a violation of the anti-discrimination legislation and its termination, as well as imposing the appropriate sanction on the violators. The complaint claims that in June 2015 the claimant visited "Bizar bar & dinner" restaurant managed by "Expert 007" LTD, in the city of Stara Zagora. A sticker was placed prominently on the menu with the following text: "Welcome! A restaurant without a playground! Children not allowed to play! In case of violation, the bill will be 50% higher! (minimum BGN 20)". The claimant was forced to leave the restaurant because she could not guarantee that her three children, aged 8, 10 and 12 respectively, would refrain from playing. The situation stressed her and left her feeling insulted, hurt and humiliated for having to leave the restaurant from which she was in practice kicked out for being a mother.

In exercising its authority as provided for in the law, the CPD creates a file and conducts an investigation where it applies the opinions and evidence of the participants in the proceedings. With *Decision № 115/2016* (*Reshenie № 115/2016 na Komisiyata za zashtita ot diskriminatsia*), the CPD established that by "Expert 007" LTD, represented by T.G. and L.Sh., there was no discrimination based on "family status" on the grounds of art. 4, para. 1 of the *Anti-discrimination law* (*Zakon za zashtita ot discriminatsia*, 2003). The administrative body accepts that the text written in the menu introducing a ban on playing does not constitute unequal treatment on the grounds of "family status" of the complainant in her capacity as a mother of three children, since she was not denied access to a service, nor was she provided service of a lower quality or under less favorable conditions with the specific cause of being a mother of the children. According to the CPD, in this particular case it is rather a condition set by the managers of the restaurant aiming to protect both the health of customers, regardless of their age, as well as to ensure normal working in the facility. The sticker in the menu is considered as an instruction aiming to prevent accidents unfavorable both for the trader and the consumers. The CPD considers that the sign does not create a restriction to a certain type of service related to the family status of the customers in the restaurant, nor is there a refusal to provide a service under less favorable conditions. It concerns a requirement regarding the behavior of children who are under the supervision of accompanying adults. The decision was signed with a specific opinion of one of the members of the commission according to whom the mere presence of such a sign in the menu is sufficient to suggest unequal treatment of a discriminatory nature.

Dissatisfied with the decision, Zh. A. contested it in court. The administrative court in the city of Stara Zagora stated (*Reshenie № 3074/2019 po administrativno delo № 56/2019 na Administrativen sad – Stara Zagora*) that the discussed measure is disproportionate, since even if it is accepted that it aims to protect the life and health of children, it goes beyond what is necessary to achieve it. Despite the above conclusion, the court does not find the measure discriminatory. The reasons are that the case lacks a protective feature that would be grounds for less favorable treatment, as well as that there are no actions against Zh. A. representing different treatment. Therefore, what happened to the person is not considered as a form of direct discrimination under art. 4, para. 1 of the *Anti-discrimination law* (*Zakon za zashtita ot discriminatsia*, 2003).

Zh. A. appealed to the Supreme Administrative Court (SAC) that the decision was illegal and without foundation. The cassation authority, after discussing the collected evidence in the case, and the opinions and arguments of the parties, reached the following conclusion (*Reshenie № 1944/2019 na Varhoven administrativen sad*) if non-compliance with the condition for not allowing children to play is sanctioned with a figure that is linked to the bill (according to the text written in the menu) it follows that if a representative of the restaurant considers that a violation has been committed, different, higher prices are introduced for the corresponding category of visitor, compared to those for other customers. This undoubtedly places the mentioned visitors in a more unfavourable situation. In this way, on the one hand, the ban introduced in the law on tourism on the provision of tourist services, being on a different scale compared to individual consumers, is violated and at the same time there is less favorable treatment based on "family status", constituting a form of direct discrimination.

In its reasons (*Reshenie № 1944/2019*), the court notes that the assessment of the existence of discrimination rests on an objective criterion and does not depend on the subjective attitude of the person who made it where in the specific case such a fact was realized. Therefore, the issue of whether the prohibitive condition is set for the safety of the children, or for the protection of the facility's property during play, should not be discussed. It was concluded that the label in the menu introduces a disproportionate measure and its consequence is discriminatory. It is stated that the administrative court did not ascertain the lack of reasons in part of the decision of the CPD (*Reshenie № 115/2016*), nor did it comment the application of art. 37 of the *Anti-discrimination law* (*Zakon za zashtita ot discriminatsia*, 2003) in the assessment of the specific facts and conditions. According to the SAC, the noted omissions of the court of first instance led to the formation of an erroneous legal conclusion regarding the legality of the appealed decision. Guided by the above, the SAC cancels the decision as incorrect and orders instead that a new decision be made on the merits of the dispute, which will cancel the decision of the CPD. The case shall be returned to the administrative body for a new statement.

Finally, the file was returned to the CPD and the case proceedings were resumed. The rapporteur prepares a conclusion in which it is assumed that the circumstances of the dispute are fully clarified from the factual and legal side. Following the instructions given by the court on the interpretation and application of the law, the administrative body reaches a new ruling. With the new decision the CPD considers it proven that the restaurateur discriminated against the claimant, and that this constitutes a violation of the law. A pecuniary sanction of BGN 1,000 was imposed on the trader (*Reshenie № 5190/2020 na Komisiyata za zashtita ot diskriminatsia*).

My opinion is that in the presented case, the position of the chief justices and the arguments in its support must be shared. The above facts point to establishing and functioning of a vicious practice in a commercial facility, a restaurant. This commercial practice was introduced by the restaurateur under the seemingly legitimate pretext of ensuring working processes and the health of visitors but the actual result of its application is unequal treatment of a specific group of citizens. Along with the above, it is necessary to highlight several important points: in accordance with what was noted by the court, it is imperative to discuss the text of art. 37, para.1 of the *Anti-discrimination law* (*Zakon za zashtita ot discriminatsia*, 2003) in order to clarify the legal side of the dispute. The provision refers to a specific hypothetical protection when exercising specific subjective rights, as it exclusively prohibits the provision of goods or services of lower quality or under less favorable conditions based on any of the features under art. 4, para. 1. Since the current case concerns a service in the public sector, the provision of art. 37 of the *Anti-discrimination law* (*Zakon za zashtita ot discriminatsia*, 2003) must find direct application.

The *Tourism act* (*Zakon za turizma*, 2013), as a specific compared to a general law, defines in art. 37, para. 1 of the *Anti-discrimination law* the prohibition on equal relations in tourism introduced there. In particular, art. 3, para. 4 of the *Tourism act* (*Zakon za turizma*, 2013), obliges hoteliers and restaurateurs to announce the same prices for services offered to all visitors and unequal treatment of tourists or placing some of them in a less favorable position is totally unacceptable. The cited provision of the law is a special anti-discrimination norm aiming to specifically protect the consumers' interests for tourist services along with the provisions of the *Anti-discrimination law* without excluding its application. In a comparative interpretation of the two norms, it becomes clear that art. 3, para. 4 of the *Tourism act* (*Zakon za turizma*, 2013), achieves greater detail and refinement of the hypothetical discrimination in the field of public relations, regulated by it, since the provision of art. 3, para. 4 of the *Tourism act* (*Zakon za turizma*, 2013), forwards to art. 4, para. 1 of the *Anti-discrimination law* (*Zakon za zashtita ot discriminatsia*, 2003) on the content of features of discrimination. That is why the prohibition of discrimination provided for by the *Tourism act* is an additional protection for persons who have been discriminated against in the field of tourist services, in addition to the one regulated in the *Anti-discrimination law*.

Moreover, when it comes to offering and providing restaurant services, the rule of art. 3, para. 4 from the *Tourism act* (*Zakon za turizma*, 2013) is maximally detailed in the provision of art. 117, para. 4. The restaurateurs are obliged when preparing menus to have the same prices for culinary products and drinks for all tourists. The non-fulfillment of the obligation or its fulfillment but not in the specified manner, entails property liability for the trader, the amounts of which vary from BGN 500 to BGN 2000.

In addition to these considerations, one more may be mentioned. In para. 1, p. 1 the additional provisions of the *Tourism act* (*Zakon za turizma*, 2013), define the concept of "tourist" as a physical person who visits a destination outside his permanent residence for a certain period (shorter than one year) for the purpose of tourism. Nowhere does the text mention reaching a minimum age as a necessary and mandatory condition for acquiring identity as a "tourist". Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that minors and under-aged children are tourists and they have the same rights to access and use tourist services as other category of visitor.

3. Conclusion

The legal case discussed confronts us with a situation that will not be excluded in the future and is more likely to be repeated. On the one hand, the reason for this can be found in the ever-increasing demands and expectations of consumers of tourist services who nowadays have become more demanding and picky and are driven by the belief that they are entitled to the highest possible level of comfort as long as they can afford it. At the same time, representatives of tourist businesses – who strive to meet increased public needs and being motivated by the desire to attract more and more wealthy customers, introduce and implement new forms of service in their tourist facilities. The result is a collision between two seemingly divergent interests. One is the interest of families who, although on vacation, remain focused on the care and needs of their children. The other is the group of consumers of middle and older age, financially secure, who have enough free time to look for peace, privacy and isolation from the mass of the people to fully experience their vacation. There is an opposition between two categories of citizen each of which has the same legal interest in using tourist services. This situation is as undesirable from legal position as it is unacceptable for society. Is it possible to find a fair solution?

It is hardly realistic to expect that the application of such practices by hoteliers and restauranteurs will be discontinued in the future. On the other hand, it is undoubtedly irrational to build and operate tourist facilities only for certain category of consumers. One acceptable solution is to build or separate a room (hall, corner, sector) on the territory of the facility or the place of accommodation intended for families and visitors with children. Thus, both groups will have the opportunity to access the offered services during their stay without making it inconvenient for the rest. However, it should be noted that although in practice possible, this kind of approach would provoke quite a few objections by entrepreneurs in the tourist sector. The latter would oppose with the reason that such readjustment in their facility in most cases will need significant organization, material and personnel resources or that it is impossible to be realized. The issue discussed in this research remains in disput.

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Digital mapping of tourism destinations in Bangka Regency based on the wellness tourism model

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ABSTRACT

In the dynamic landscape of global tourism, a notable shift has occurred with the rising importance of wellness tourism. This research aims to systematically identify and evaluate tourism destinations within Bangka Regency that have successfully implemented indicators of the wellness tourism model. The study employs scalogram analysis to assess the service capacity of these destinations for visitors, considering factors such as accessibility, facilities, attractions, destination cleanliness and the implementation of health protocols. The findings reveal a nuanced categorization of destinations into five groups. From the 14 samples, approximately 34.71% of the destinations exhibit extensive facilities (I), while 14.29% possess satisfactory (II), another 14.29% have adequate (III) and again of 14.29% have destinations with less than adequate (IV). Furthermore, 21.42% of the destinations are characterized by insufficient (V). The identified groupings offer insights for policymakers, stakeholders and businesses to enhance wellness tourism experiences, thereby contributing to the overall development of the tourism sector in the region.

KEYWORDS

wellness tourism, scalogram analysis, tourism destination

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1. Introduction

In recent years, the primary revenue source for Bangka Belitung has undergone a notable shift from tin mining towards the burgeoning tourism industry. Particularly, Belitung Island has emerged as a prominent destination for domestic tourists, gaining heightened popularity following the release of the best-selling novel and film entitled *Laskar Pelangi*. The surge in tourist influx to Belitung Island has consequently influenced the visiting statistics of Bangka Island.

Tourist numbers experienced a consistent upward trajectory until late 2019, instilling optimism for the progressive development of the tourism sector.

However, the trajectory was abruptly disrupted by the global propagation of the COVID-19 virus, precipitating a substantial decline in tourist numbers throughout 2020. As of December 2021, the recorded occupancy of star-rated hotels in the Bangka Belitung Islands Province stood at 48,086 individuals, indicating a 15.99% increase in domestic guests (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2021).

Bangka Regency is strategically directing its efforts towards the enhancement of its tourism sector. Covering an extensive area of approximately 3,028 km^2, Bangka Regency is actively fostering the development of specific regions within its jurisdiction, designating them either as tourism sites or as areas possessing untapped potential for tourism growth. These initiatives are meticulously designed to exert a profound influence on various facets, including economic advancement, societal and cultural enrichment, sustainable management of natural resources and environmental support. Beyond the fundamental components integral to tourism, the identified areas slated for tourism development must showcase products distinguished by their unique characteristics and themes. These themes encompass the realms of natural, cultural and artificial tourism, adding an additional layer of exclusivity and allure to the region's burgeoning tourism landscape.

Research on wellness tourism during the recovery phase of Bangka Island's tourism suggests that the efficacy of wellness tourism in the region hinges on the enhancement and rejuvenation of hotels and tourism destinations. This imperative arises from the need to sustain growth and ensure tourists experience a profound sense of immersion, spirituality and community engagement. The analysis of stakeholders underscores the pivotal role played by entities situated in quadrant II (key players) are groups that have high influence and interest, in steering the recovery of Bangka Belitung tourism amidst the new normal (Valeriani et al., 2021). Notably, the government, state-owned enterprises (Badan Usaha Milik Negara), academics and tourism-awareness groups emerge as the stakeholders with the most significant impact (Valeriani et al., 2021).

The research findings pertaining to the inner wellness tourism model for the recovery of tourist activities on Bangka Island during the new normal have revealed that the wellness tourism model in Bangka Regency encompasses the following indicators: (a) high standard sanitation; (b) high standard security; (c) staycation; (d) niche tourism; (e) private travel tours; (f) virtual tourism. Each of these indicators is intricately linked to aspects such as transportation, food, activities, health, service promotion, rooms, management and environment (Valeriani et al., 2021).

Despite the growing importance of wellness tourism and the increasing use of digital mapping tools in destination analysis, there remains a notable gap in the current research landscape concerning the application of scalogram analysis to assess the implementation of wellness tourism indicators in tourism destinations, particularly within the context of Bangka Regency. Existing literature primarily focuses on general wellness tourism models and digital mapping applications, yet a comprehensive investigation into the specific nuances of how these indicators are applied and manifested in the tourism landscape of Bangka Regency is lacking. This research aims to bridge this gap by employing scalogram analysis as a novel approach to discern the varying degrees of implementation of wellness tourism indicators across different destinations within Bangka Regency, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the integration of wellness principles in the region's tourism offerings.

This research significantly contributes to the field by advancing our understanding of wellness tourism and its manifestation in the tourism landscape of Bangka Regency through the innovative application of scalogram analysis. The primary objective is to systematically identify and assess the destinations within Bangka Regency that have effectively implemented the indicators of the wellness tourism model, thereby facilitating a nuanced comprehension of the region's wellness-oriented tourism offerings. This study not only enhances theoretical knowledge but also offers practical implications for policymakers, destination managers and stakeholders involved in shaping the future trajectory of tourism in the region.

2. Literature review

2.1. Wellness tourism position in tourism sector

According to Kaspar (1996, as cited Mueller & Kaufmann, 2007), wellness tourism is positioned as a sub-category within the broader domain of health tourism, alongside various other forms of tourism. Health tourism, in turn, encompasses segments such as illness prevention tourism and convalescence tourism. The following provides an overview of the contextual placement of wellness tourism within the tourism sector.

The framework depicted in Figure 1 assumes critical importance when contemplating wellness tourism as an academic subject necessitating examination and evolution into a contemporary, contextually pertinent, construct concerning both supply and demand.

Examining it from the supply side, wellness tourism emerges as a modifiable product within the realm of tourism services, adaptable and able to be constructed through diverse approaches contingent on the social and environmental dynamics inherent to a given destination (Kaspar, 1996, as cited in Mueller & Kaufmann, 2007). Viewed from the demand perspective, wellness tourism has emerged as a prevailing trend within the global community, serving as a conduit for the promotion of fitness, preventive healthcare and self-satisfaction. Furthermore, as health and wellness tourism continue to permeate lifestyle choices, its appeal extends not only to foreign visitors but also to the local urban consumer demographic (Mueller & Kaufmann, 2007).

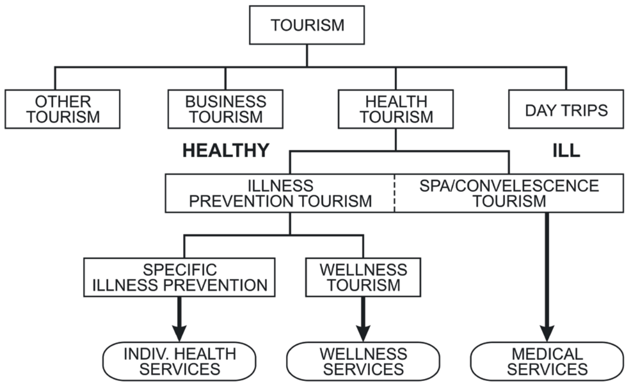

Figure 1. Demarcation of wellness tourism in terms of demand
Source: Mueller and Kaufmann, 2007

2.2. Wellness tourism in Bangka Island

Tourism is a dynamic and intricate system subject to ongoing evolution and transformation, necessitating both continuous proactive and reactive interventions. It embodies an environmental context and a systemic perspective. The components within the communities examined in this study encompass various entities such as the retail and wholesale travel trade, transportation, accommodation, attractions, tourism and convenience suppliers, as well as food and retail services. Additionally, it involves local, state and national destination management organizations, tourism-related media and numerous other commercial and non-commercial agents (Pramono, 2013).

Wellness can be characterized as a dynamic process wherein individuals deliberate and partake in activities that foster a healthy lifestyle, consequently yielding positive effects on their overall health (de la Barre et al., 2005). The demand for health and wellness products is anticipated to persist in its growth trajectory, exhibiting diversification contingent upon factors of social and environmental awareness (Mueller & Kaufmann, 2007). Luthfiani and Suryani (2022) asserted the necessity for strategic guidance in the development of tourism sites, emphasizing the importance of acquiring access to diverse resources and encouraging the involvement of external stakeholders to enhance human resource capacity, financial access, connectivity and digitization.

3. Methodology

3.1. Population and sample

The population in this study included all tourist destinations in Bangka Regency. The sample selected is of destinations with above 200 tourist visits on average per day. Fourteen destinations determined for Bangka Regency:

1. Tikus Emas Beach,
2. Batu Bedaun Beach,
3. Tongachi Beach,
4. Parai Beach,
5. Matras Beach,
6. Dewi Kwan Yin,
7. Rambak Beach,
8. Uber Beach Bay,
9. Tanjung Pesona Beach,
10. Cemara Beach,
11. Tirta Tapta Pemali,
12. Tri Agung Castle,
13. Turun Aban Beach,
14. Temberan Beach.

3.2. Data collection and measurement

Data collection in this study employed the observation method, entailing direct scrutiny of the chosen tourist attractions by the researcher. The research team then completed the research instruments, based on on-site observations.

Before embarking on the observational study of the selected tourist destinations, the researcher meticulously designed the research instruments to be evaluated during the observation process. The instruments under scrutiny pertain to the availability of facilities within the respective tourist sites, as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Measurement indicator

No.	Indicator	
1	Good road condition to destination	Accessibility
2	Distance from city center	
3	Journey time	
4	Road markings	
5	Transportation	
6	Clean restaurants	Facilities
7	Ticket booths	
8	Lodgings	

Table 1 (cont.)

No.	Indicator	
9	Prayer rooms	Facilities
10	Shops	
11	Interesting photo spots	
12	Rest area	
13	Automated teller machines	
14	Cultural attractions	Attractions
15	Sport attractions	
16	Other activities (biking/ riding speed boat/ banana boat/ swimming etc.)	
17	Clean restaurants	Destination cleanliness
18	Clean and appealing lodgings	
19	Clean prayer rooms	
20	Clean shops/stores	
21	Clean rest area	
22	Clean toilets	
23	General cleanliness	
24	Garbage bin availability	
25	Appointed janitors	
26	Health protocol signs	Implementation of health protocols
27	Health protocol equipment	
28	Workers wearing health protocol equipment	

Source: processed by authors, 2022.

For data collection, the researcher constructed a matrix, delineating rows and columns to show the facilities present at each location. A numerical system was employed, wherein zero denoted the absence of a facility in a specific area, while one signified its presence.

3.3. Data analysis

In this study, the researcher employs scalogram analysis to assess the service capacity of establishments, including hotels, restaurants/cafés and tourism destinations, within a specific geographical area. Higher-order values associated with these establishments signify a heightened proficiency in delivering services which encompass various facilities provided at hotels, restaurants/cafés and tourism destinations. Scalogram analysis was employed to identify the most suitable candidates for serving as focal points for tourism growth. These entities were categorized into five groups: (I) – extensive, (II) – satisfactory, (III) – adequate, (IV) – less than adequate and (V) – insufficient. The stages of scalogram analysis are as follows:

1. Generate a matrix by delineating rows and columns to identify the facilities present at each respective location.
2. Assign 'zero' to signify the absence of a facility in a given area, 'one' to denote its presence.
3. Arrange the facilities both horizontally and vertically, specifically by sorting the facility column and the area column according to facility availability. The area boasting the greatest number of facilities is positioned at the top, with the left column indicating the highest facility count and the right column reflecting the lowest facility count.
4. Determine the group for each area using the Sturges formula:

$$\text{number of groups} = 1 + 3.3(\log n)$$

where:
n = numbers of destinations.

5. Determine the interval for each group:

$$\text{interval} = \frac{\text{highest number of facilities} - \text{lowest number of facilities}}{\text{number of groups}}$$

6. Determine the coefficient of reproducibility (COR) through the following formula:

$$\text{COR} = 1 - \frac{\sum e}{n \times k}$$

where:
$\sum e$ = total number of errors,
n = total number of facility types,
k = total number of areas.

A COR value ranging from 0.9 to 1 signifies a minimal error rate in the scalogram analysis, rendering it suitable and feasible for rigorous examination.

7. Discern and analyze a group by considering the quantity of facilities within a given area. A higher value signifies an elevated group (Nandya, 2016).

Scalogram analysis is employed to ascertain the hierarchical order of a location based on the quantity and types of available facilities. The analysis involves determining whether a place possesses certain facilities or lacks them, without specifying the actual quantity. This ranking of existing facilities is not contingent on functional aspects but rather on the diversity and quantity present (Ismiwati & Sayuti, 2019).

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Results

Conducting scalogram analysis served to assess the service capacity of tourism destinations for visitors. A destination's increased proficiency in service provision is associated with a higher order of available facilities. Criteria such as accessibility, facilities, attractions, overall cleanliness and the implementation of health protocols were utilized to classify the services provided.

4.2. Scalogram analysis results

The steps of scalogram analysis of tourism destinations are as follows:

1. The group: based on the data, there were 14 tourism destinations and 28 facility indicators. Here is calculation of a group:
   total group = 1 + 3.3(log n)
   total group = 1 + 3.3(log 14)
   total group = 1 + 3.3(≈ 1.15)
   total group = 1 + 3.795
   total group = 4.795 ≈ 5
   Based on the results above, the number of classes was 4.795, rounded up to 5 groups.
2. Determine the range or class intervals: after gaining the number of groups, the researcher determines the class intervals or ranges for the five groups obtained using the following formula:

$$\text{range} = \frac{\text{highest number of facilities} - \text{lowest number of facilities}}{\text{number of groups}}$$

   where:
   range = $\frac{27-17}{5}$
   range = 2
   The range of values obtained is 2, based on the number of facility type (Table 2), the highest number of facilities are 27 facilities and the lowest number of facilities are 17 facilities, ranges or intervals obtained for each group (I to V) is 2. The results of the survey on types of facility in 14 samples of tourism destinations in Bangka Regency are presented in Table 2.
   The following are the groups and scalogram ranges in this study (Table 3):

Table 3. Group and scalogram range

Group	Intervals	Category
I	25.01 to 27	Extensive
II	23.01 to 25	Satisfactory
III	21.01 to 23	Adequate
IV	19.01 to 21	Less than adequate
V	17 to 19	Insufficient

Source: processed by authors, 2022.

Table 2. Types of facility in tourism destinations in Bangka Regency

Facilities		Batu Bedaun Beach	Matras Beach	Tikus Emas Beach	Teluk Uber Beach	Tanjung Pesona Beach	Rambak Beach	Tirta Tapta Pemali	Parai Beach	Cemara Beach	Tongachi Beach	Turun Aban Beach	Tri Agung Castle	Tem-beran Beach	Dewi Kwan Yin
Accessibility	Good road condition to destination	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
	Distance from city center	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Journey time	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Road markings	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Transportation	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Facilities	Clean restaurants	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Ticket booths	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
	Lodgings	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Prayer rooms	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0

Table 2 (cont.)

Facilities		Batu Bedaun Beach	Matras Beach	Tikus Emas Beach	Teluk Uber Beach	Tanjung Pesona Beach	Rambak Beach	Tirta Tapta Pemali	Parai Beach	Cemara Beach	Tongachi Beach	Turun Aban Beach	Tri Agung Castle	Tem-beran Beach	Dewi Kwan Yin
	Shops	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1
	Interesting photo spots	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
	Rest area	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Automated teller machines	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Attractions	Cultural attractions	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
	Sport attractions	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	Other activities (biking/ riding speed boat/ riding banana boat/ swimming etc.)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Cleanliness	Clean restaurants	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Clean and appealing lodgings	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Clean prayer rooms	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0
	Clean shops/stores	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0
	Clean rest area	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Clean toilets	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	General cleanliness	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Garbage bin availability	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Appointed janitors	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
Health protocol implemen-tation	Health protocol signs	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Health protocol equipment	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Workers wearing health protocol equipment	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Number of facility types		27	27	26	26	26	24	24	23	23	21	21	19	19	17

Note: 1 – *facilities available*, 0 – *facilities not available*.
Source: survey results, 2022.

3. The concluding step involved ascertaining the coefficient of reproducibility (COR), with a total of 30 errors identified. The COR was computed utilizing the formula:

$$\mathrm{COR} = 1 - \frac{\sum e}{n \times k}$$

$$\mathrm{COR} = 1 - \frac{30}{28 \times 14} \approx 0.923$$

The COR value approximately is 0.923, falling within the range of 0.9 to 1. This signifies that the results of the scalogram analysis regarding tourism destination facilities are deemed viable. Tourism destinations in Bangka Regency were categorized into five groups based on the scalogram analysis results as outline in Table 4.

Table 4. Scalogram analysis on tourism destinations

No.	Tourist destination	Total	Group
1	Batu Bedaun Beach	27	I
2	Matras Beach	27	
3	Tikus Emas Beach	26	
4	Teluk Uber Beach	26	
5	Tanjung Pesona Beach	26	
6	Rambak Beach	24	II
7	Tirta Tapta Pemali	24	
8	Parai Beach	23	III
9	Cemara Beach	23	
10	Tongachi Beach	21	IV
11	Turun Aban Beach	21	
12	Tri Agung Castle	19	V
13	Temberan Beach	19	
14	Dewi Kwan Yin	17	

Source: processed by authors, 2022.

Group I comprised destinations with extensive facilities, such as the beaches at Batu Bedaun, Matras, Tikus Emas, Teluk Uber and Tanjung Pesona, offering 26 to 27 types of facilities. Group II included those with satisfactory facilities, namely Rambak Beach and Tirta Tapta Pemali, providing 24. Group III involved those with adequate facilities, encompassing Parai and Cemara Beaches, which offered 23. Group IV, those with less adequate facilities, namely Tongachi and Turun Aban Beaches, with 21. Finally, Group V consisted of destinations with insufficient facilities, including Puri Tri Agung, Temberan Beach and Dewi Kwan Yin, offering only 17 to 19.

4.3. Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate a discernible variation in the availability of wellness tourism facilities among different tourism destinations in Bangka Regency. The classification into five groups, as indicated by the outcomes of the scalogram analysis, offers a systematic framework for comprehending the array of wellness tourism experiences presented in the area.

Group I destinations, such as the beaches at Batu Bedaun, Matras, Tikus Emas, Teluk Uber and Tanjung Pesona, stand out for their extensive facilities, encompassing a wide array of facilities that cater to various wellness tourism needs. These locations are strategically positioned to appeal to wellness tourists seeking all-encompassing wellness experiences.

Destinations categorized under group II, specifically Rambak Beach and Tirta Tapta Pemali, present a satisfactory standard of facilities, offering an array of facilities to facilitate wellness tourism activities. Although not as extensive as those in group I, these destinations still offer viable alternatives for wellness tourists seeking a well-rounded wellness experience.

Destinations classified under group III, such as Parai and Cemara Beaches, furnish sufficient facilities, presenting an assortment of facilities that cater to fundamental wellness tourism requirements. These locations might attract wellness tourists seeking a more rustic or cost-effective wellness experience.

Group IV destinations, specifically Tongachi and Turun Aban Beaches, showcase facilities that are comparatively less adequate, offering a restricted set of facilities geared towards wellness tourism. These locations might be appropriate for wellness tourists who prioritize particular wellness activities or seek a more secluded experience.

Destinations categorized under group V, such as Puri Tri Agung, Temberan Beach and Dewi Kwan Yin, lack in terms of wellness tourism facilities, providing only a limited array of facilities. These locations might need substantial upgrades to improve their attractiveness to wellness tourists.

The results of this study are consistent with prior research emphasizing the significance of well-established facilities in drawing wellness tourists (Han et al., 2020; Khuong & Phuong, 2017; Pandža Bajs, 2015; Pyke et al., 2016; Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin, 2017; Singh et al., 2022; Thawornwiriyatrakul & Meeprom, 2020). Destinations equipped with extensive wellness tourism facilities are more capable of meeting the varied needs and preferences of wellness tourists, thereby enhancing their potential to attract and retain this expanding segment of the tourism market.

Apart from the presence of facilities, the significance of attracting wellness tourists is also influenced by the quality and distinctiveness of wellness experiences. Destinations that provide inventive and genuine wellness experiences can set themselves apart from competitors and draw a broader spectrum of wellness tourists in search of unique and distinctive wellness encounters (Khuong & Phuong, 2017; Nawijn & Filep, 2016; Pandža Bajs, 2015; Pyke et al., 2016; Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin, 2017; Ritpanitchajchaval et al., 2023; Singh et al., 2022; Thawornwiriyatrakul & Meeprom, 2020).

Moreover, the successful promotion and marketing of wellness tourism services are crucial for enticing wellness tourists to particular destinations. Destinations that adeptly highlight their potential in wellness tourism through focused marketing initiatives and partnerships with stakeholders in the wellness tourism sector can proficiently draw in and sustain the interest of wellness tourists (Chen et al., 2014; Nawijn & Filep, 2016; Page et al., 2017; Pandža Bajs, 2015; Pyke et al., 2016, 2016; Singh et al., 2022; Smith et al., 2010).

5. Conclusions

5.1. Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, scalogram analysis has successfully categorized tourist destinations into five groups based on the availability of their facilities. The distribution reveals that approximately 35.71% of the sampled destinations align with group I, characterized by extensive facilities. Additionally, 14.29% exhibit satisfactory facilities (group II), another 14.29% boast adequate facilities (group III), while a further 14.29% fall into the category of less than adequate facilities (group IV). Lastly, 21.42% are identified under group V, denoting destinations with insufficient facilities. These discerning categorizations provide a nuanced understanding of the diverse capacity levels within the tourism infrastructure of Bangka Regency.

5.2. Theoretical implication

This research contributes theoretically by advancing the understanding of wellness tourism in Bangka Regency through the application of the wellness tourism model and scalogram analysis. The systematic identification and evaluation of destinations based on wellness tourism indicators establishes a conceptual framework for appraising the service capacity of these tourism destinations. The categorization into five distinct groups (I to V) elucidates the diverse levels of facility provision, presenting a nuanced taxonomy that enhances the conceptual understanding of wellness tourism destinations. This categorization establishes theoretical groundwork for subsequent studies, providing a foundation for comparative analyses and facilitating the exploration of factors influencing wellness tourism at the destination level.

5.3. Managerial implication

This research findings offer valuable insights for destination managers, policymakers and stakeholders in Bangka Regency. Destinations falling under group I with extensive facilities can strategically position themselves as comprehensive wellness hubs, targeting tourists seeking a holistic experience. Those in group II and III can leverage their satisfactory and adequate facilities to enhance specific aspects of wellness offerings, catering to diverse preferences. Destinations in group IV and V, facing challenges with less than adequate or insufficient facilities, can use this information to identify areas for improvement and prioritize resource allocation. The results guide strategic planning, allowing for tailored interventions to enhance wellness tourism infrastructure and elevate Bangka Regency's competitiveness in the growing wellness tourism market.

5.4. Limitation and future suggestions

Bangka Regency government and all stakeholders should provide assistance for tourism destinations, especially in terms of facilities. This is important because less than 80% of tourism destinations in Bangka Regency have them. Especially automated teller machines are not yet available in the 14 sample of tourism destinations. In addition, improvement and addition of facilities are required for tourism destinations that are included in group IV and V. Better facilities will provide more comfort for visitors, as well as increase the number of visits.

However, this research has some limitations, including the reliance on a specific sample of tourism destinations in Bangka Regency, potentially limiting the generalizability of findings. The scope of the scalogram analysis focused on select indicators and the study provides a snapshot at a specific point in time, overlooking longer term changes. Future research suggestions include expanding the sample size for a more comprehensive representation, employing a more exhaustive evaluation framework, incorporating dynamic elements into digital mapping approaches, involving collaborative efforts with local stakeholders, conducting longitudinal studies and exploring comparative analyses with other regions. These approaches aim to address limitations and contribute to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of wellness tourism in Bangka Regency.

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