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REVISITING OLDENBURG'S THIRD PLACE: LEISURE IN THE COFFEE HOUSE

Sonia Khan* Rajinder Kumar**
H, P. University, Shimla, India* NIMS University, Jaipur, India**

Abstract

Oldenburg's 'third places' i.e., public places for relaxation and socialization away from 'home' and 'work' place, contribute significantly to the wellbeing of society. However, with continuous modernization, technological and social transformations, the third places of contemporary times have turned into multipurpose 'mixed spaces' that combine individual leisure, interactions, productive work and even virtual socialization. In view of the rapid transition of 'third places' this study investigates the third-place characteristics and leisure in the Indian Coffee House (ICH), Shimla, an old establishment that has long survived intense competition from modern branded *Café* culture and continues to remain a popular hub for community social bonding. In the current digital era characterized by people seen increasingly withdrawn into their individual virtual cocoons (even when in company), this study concludes that ICH continues to retain its distinct traditional 'authentic third place' appeal where people are still drawn to enjoy real time social interaction 'Together Together', as opposed to enjoying 'Alone Together'.

Keywords: Third Place, Coffee House, Leisure

Introduction

'*Over a Cup of Coffee*', '*Out for Coffee*, '*Coffee Break*' and '*Coffee Talk*' are phrases often heard in common parlance. These phrases usually imply catching up with friends or acquaintances, on serious or non-serious matters sharing a 'cup of coffee', in supposedly 'free time' or a 'deliberate break' taken from obligatory work. Enjoying coffee in a public place has made the 'Coffee House' an important part of the lives of people. The coffee house is regarded as a 'Third Place' (for leisure, rendezvous, and coffee). The concept of 'Third Place' was developed by Ray Oldenburg (1999) who identified 'Home' as the 'First Place', 'Work Place' as the 'Second Place', and the 'Third Place' as any 'public space that hosts the regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals, beyond the realm of home and work' (p.16). Primarily, third places include public places like churches, clubs, parks, tea/coffee houses, gyms etc., where people get to meet others and socialize, while sharing common interests and activities, or where they simply gather to engage in idle leisure.

The establishment of coffee houses as 'third places' has contributed significantly to peoples' lives by way of offering a public space for informal engagement, relaxation and leisurely social interaction (with friends, acquaintance or workmates), on a common platform, other than the confines of 'home' (i.e., first place) or 'work' (i.e., second place). The earliest coffee houses documented in history seem to have appeared in Arabia, Africa, and the Mediterranean region during the Ottoman Empire, later having spread across Europe. While Ottoman coffee houses were primarily a venue for leisure, the English coffee houses were used as a public sphere for socializing, politics and for conducting business. The history of origin of the coffee house indicates that the Ottoman coffee houses widely established in the 16th century became highly popular with the masses for daily 'socializing'. The earliest Turkish coffee houses viz. '*Kahvehane*', that later became known as '*Kiraathane*', have intrigued researchers to investigate the importance and history of the coffee house culture (Ali, 2007; Caykent and Tarbuck, 2017; Cowan, 2014; Heise, 1987; Karababa and Ger, 2011). Kafadar (2014) posits that in early times the coffee house was sought after by people as a 'public house' that would provide an 'excuse' to leave home or

obligatory work, for the purpose of relaxation or for meeting up with friends and strangers to drink coffee. Other than mere 'coffee', many coffee houses also provided the added attraction of the freely available 'newspaper' that people would go to read in order to keep abreast of local and worldly 'going ons.' Rumors and gossip were often sparked within the four walls of the coffee house and hence the coffee house became a daily magnet for people to not miss out on any 'happening'. Other than the 'common man', coffee houses in particular attracted people from the 'civilized' and 'educated' class of society who wished to broaden their intellectual horizons through sharing viewpoints and engaging in discourse/debates on various important matters. Therefore, as a place of 'intellectual critique' the coffee house became highly popular with bureaucrats and the learned. In Britain, the coffee house came to be regarded as a place of 'enlightenment' and was rightly termed as a "Penny University", for the reason, that at the cost of spending a 'penny' (for coffee) one could visit the coffee house to educate himself on diverse subjects through listening to, or participating in enlightening discussions (Ellis, 1956, 2004; McComb, 2015).

As a 'third place', the coffee house also gained recognition of the 'great leveler'. This public space provided a platform where everyone was regarded as an 'equal'. It welcomed people from 'all' walks of life, socio-economic classes, religions, caste, creed, color, and diverse professions. Anyone could walk into a coffee house without any inhibition. On this common platform people felt free to voice their opinion and vociferously engage in any kind of debate or discussion without fear of persecution. Indeed, all coffee houses promoted a culture of 'free expression' and 'enlightenment' (McComb, 2015). History documents that it was in the coffee houses around that many politicians were born, and the seeds of several rebellions too were sown (Habermas, 1989; Pincus, 1995; Plys, 2017). The famous historical English, American and French Revolution are believed to have been sparked from the very 'coffee house' itself (Cowan, 2014).

Hence the importance of the 'Coffee House' as a third place can be acknowledged with respect to the 'leisure', 'enlightenment' and 'in-person' social life it provides for society that is vital for quality of life of human existence. In the present day global 'Café' Culture' times that have set the trend of 'individual consumption' and 'virtual socialization' within the premises of the modern coffee houses, this study recognizes the need to investigate the significance of traditional coffee house establishments that are fast dwindling. This research aims at studying the iconic Indian Coffee House (ICH) branch at Shimla, which has long been patronized by the local community as an ideal 'third place', but now on account of financial losses exacerbated by the Covid pandemic, faces the threat of imminent closure.

Literature Review: Coffee House – A Third Place

The coffee house is an important 'third place'. Oldenburg and Brissett (1982) defined 'third places' as those that "exist outside the home and beyond the 'work lots' of modern economic production, and are places where people gather primarily to enjoy each other's company" (p.269). Research on 'third place' suggests that it is a place for 'voluntary socialization' that facilitates informal community interaction and cohesion (Glover and Parry, 2009; Jeffres, et al., 2009; Oldenburg 1999, 2001, 2013; Rosenbaum et al., 2007; Wexler and Oberlander, 2017).

The comfort and familiarity of the third place is emphasized by Oldenburg (1999) by describing it as a 'home away from home', a 'neutral space', that has an informal 'playful mood, where one can meet 'familiar faces' (other than family) and can engage in 'casual banter' or light-hearted discussions. 'Conversation', 'interaction' and 'socialization' are the main activities in the third place. Third places exude warmth and friendliness and provide a ground for 'community cohesion'. Places like public (town) 'squares', 'local weekday markets', 'street settings' and 'shopping centers', are all examples of third places. Oldenburg (1999) identified certain distinct characteristics of a third place, viz.; a) a third place is a 'neutral space' (all inclusive, where people come and go at their free will), b) it is a 'leveling ground' (where there are no differences of class,

creed or color), c) in a third place, 'conversation' is the main activity, d) there is a 'playful mood' (relaxed and stress free), e) third place is a 'home away from home' (that offers psychological comfort), f) it has an 'unassuming' character (low profile, not impressive and can be rustic and run down), g) is frequented by its 'regulars' (who were once newcomers) and, h) it is a place 'easily accessible' to walk into any time. Places like churches, recreation centers, public libraries, clubs, parks, cafes/coffee houses, etc. all of which have the enumerated characteristics, are included in 'third places'. In essence, a third place is any public space that offers a warm, welcoming, stress free, friendly atmosphere, which attracts people for both relaxation and socialization. Hence people are drawn to congregate in third places away from home and work.

Quality of Life and Leisure in the Third Place

The importance of the third place is often highlighted with respect to 'Quality of Life' (Jeffres et al., 2009). Quality of life is directly related to 'leisure', i.e., willful, and spontaneous engagement in one's free time. While leisure is beneficial for the physical and mental health of the individual, it also contributes to 'social benefits' and 'social welfare' (Adesoye and Ajibua, 2015; Arai and Pedlar, 2003; Argyle, 1996; Dumazdier, 1967; Hickman, 2013; Iso-Ahola, 1980; Kaplan, 1975; Kelly, 1996, 2012; Mair, 2009; Mannell, 2011; Walzer, 1986). Public (third) places provide an ideal arena for both individual and social leisure (Ahari and Sattarzadeh, 2017; Hall and Page, 2006; Lloyd and Auld, 2003; Yuen and Johnson, 2017). Common public places like shopping streets, local markets, tea houses, and parks etc. that are shared with others, offer a common ground for social engagement, and contribute to 'social bonding' and building of 'social capital' (Adler and Kwon, 2002; Cawley, 2010; Glover 2004; Glover and Hemingway, 2005; Hemingway, 1999; Hickman, 2013; Williams and Hipp, 2019). People visit third places for disengagement from daily pressures and to 'let off steam' and 'lighten up' the mind and body. Therefore, a third place is vital for enhancing the quality of life of the individual and society in general.

Coffee House Leisure

The coffee house is an important third place for leisure. Coffee houses have attracted keen attention of researchers with respect to studying the nature of 'coffee house culture' i.e., behaviour and leisure activity that goes on within this third place (Clayton, 2003; Ellis, 2004; Hattox, 1996; Karababa and Ger, 2011; Tucker, 2011). Observations on the nature of engagement in the coffee house suggest that this third place is characterized by 'voluntary socialization' and informal discourse. 'Dialogue'/ 'conversation' (over a cup of coffee), is the main activity of sociability in a coffee house (Caykent and Tarbuck, 2017; Ellis, 2001). Noting the coffee house culture, Cowan (2005) observes that coffee houses are places of sharing news, open discussion, and free voicing of opinion. Other research highlights that people frequent the coffee house to meet familiar faces, enjoy a cup of coffee, read newspapers, catch up on the going on/gossip of town, debate political views, transact business, or else, simply to kill time, sit idle and leisurely watch others (Ellis 2004; Oldenburg, 1989; Robinson, 2014). Lozzi (2011) asserts that people are driven to the coffee houses to 'escape from everyday rituals', i.e., getting away from the confines of home and the pressures and monotony of the workplace. Thus, the coffee house seems to offer a 'breath of fresh air' and is a place for pleasurable leisure (Karababa and Ger, 2011).

Coffee House: A Paradigm Shift in the Third Place

All though the coffee house continues to retain its age-old importance as a social hub, it has undergone a major paradigm shift in terms of an Oldenburg's characteristic third place. This transformation is apparent in terms of changes in structure, ambience, activities, offerings, affordability (pricing), introduction of technology and change in the nature of clientele as well. During the 15th and 16th century (due to limited availability of leisure/recreation activates and the 'but few' places for socialization) the traditional 'coffee house' emerged as the hub for public 'hanging out'. The early coffee houses attracted a distinct category of people, both young and

elderly, intellectuals, barristers, artists, poets, traders, journalists, writers, and idle time passers as well. However, the coffee houses of early times remained characteristically a 'male's domain', with conspicuous absence of females. With the passage of time, the coffee house earned the recognition of a 'civilized (public) place' where people gathered to socialize, educate themselves and hold intelligent discussions. 'Political discourse' became a prime engagement of the coffee house community, and this third place gave birth to many politicians by virtue of allowing free public expression of political thought. Often, the coffee house space became famous, and many times 'notorious', for providing a breeding ground for rebellions. In many coffee houses 'newspapers' were freely available, by way of which the local community could keep itself 'well informed'. The availability of the newspaper was an additional draw, particularly for the literate and educated class. *Kiraathane* of Turkey were known to contain a 'reading room' where people could read newspapers while enjoying coffee. In addition to interaction, discussions, and information exchange, this third place became the Centre point for befriending strangers, meeting with people from the community and expanding one's social circle. Termed as a 'community living room', the traditional 'Coffee House' and the later evolving modern '*Café*' culture gained wide popularity over the years. This is now evident in the growing number of coffee house establishments in towns and cities around the world and expansion of popular global *Café* chains. Research confirms that the modern *Western Café* has quickly spread its roots far and wide on account of globalization (Cleave, 2017; Cowan, 2004, 2005; Montgomery, 1997).

The introduction of modifications in coffee houses in order to enhance 'comfort and services', is a noteworthy feature of the continuing transformation of this third place. In order to attract a significant share of the market in a highly competitive business environment, modern coffee houses are vigorously incorporating all state-of-art technology and facilities in their physical set up, deliverables and ambience to satisfy the demanding customers. Coffee house chains like *Costa Coffee*, *Starbucks*, *Barista*, *Gloria Jean's,* and *Café Coffee Day*, among others, have become popular up-market brands that have captured the coffee market scene and overshadowed the presence of the traditional, lackluster, centuries old, yet still existing, dated coffee houses.

Technological and social transformations in modern society are making their influence visible within the coffee house settings as well. Especially in the modern *Cafes* that provide all comforts and technology to attract customers, more people have started frequenting cafes 'solo' (instead of 'in company'). Besides, in the contemporary 'digital age', the modern coffee houses present a picture of 'high tech workspaces' that attract customers by offering 'free internet access /Wi-Fi'. In a study carried in *Starbucks*, Bar-Tura (2011) makes the observation that nowadays people visit *Starbucks* primarily for two reasons, i.e., to find 'Wi-Fi' and to find 'Restrooms'. Plog (2005) too posits that *Starbucks* has become a lot 'more than a coffee house'. The invasion and use of 'personalized technology' in the third place are apparent from the fact that in modern day coffee houses, lots of people are seen spending time 'alone', on their 'portable digital devices' (i.e., phones, ipads, laptops etc.) either for work, or for virtual (cyberspace) socializing, than engaging in real 'social company' of physically present people around them. Hence, rather than being a third place sought for socialization, *Cafes* are nowadays transforming into places sought for 'personal space' to engage in 'individualized' than 'collective' leisure, or else to conduct of 'productive work' in solitude. Lozzi (2011) rightly asserts that modern cafes have prominently turned from traditional 'social spaces', into modern 'individual private spaces'.

Therefore, the essence of social company in the coffee house is notably fast waning in modern transforming societies. While the primary purpose of earlier coffee houses was to attract people for 'coffee, company and conversation' (Woldoff, Lozzi and Dilks, 2013), nowadays people use this third place as 'individual private space' (Lozzi, 2011) to 'keep to themselves', or else limit their interaction within their 'in-group'. Such a trend marks a drastic change in the very *raison d'etre* of the coffee house as a social third place.

Blurring of 'Place' Boundaries - Creation of a 'Fourth Place' and 'Hybrid Place'

In view of the continuing transformations in the third place, Trugman (2016) expresses the view that the coffee house is now turning into the 'Fourth place' or a 'virtual third place'. Explaining the emerging concept of the 'fourth place', Trugman (2016) associates the digital (virtual) place with the 'fourth place', which on account of its easy and wide accessibility (of cyberspace) is becoming more frequented than 'built up' public third places. The evolution of the virtual space/environment has made it increasingly evident that the 'fourth place' cannot be spatially and functionally defined. Alternatively, the fourth place can be regarded as a 'blurred' or 'mixed space', (i.e., a multitasking space), which cuts across physical boundaries and can be a composite of first place (home), second place (work) and third place (public social space). Further, the fourth place cannot be strictly categorized as 'private' or 'public' as it contains a 'fusion of activities' of the independent 'first, 'second' and 'third' place. Hence, as ideally explained by Aelbrecht (2016), the fourth place is a new 'overlapping' and 'relational' space characterized by 'in-betweenness', diversity of activities/usage, and diverse users. Especially in contemporary times facilitated by technology, modernization, a liberal work environment, and new trends viz. 'work from home', 'workation', 'business lunch meetings', and 'virtual socialization' (among others), the peculiar characteristics of defined spaces seem to be getting obscured. For such 'mixed' overlapping spaces, Crick (2011) uses the term 'hybrid third places' that are a merger of more than one place (traditional, commercial, spectacular and virtual). The use of the coffee house for productive work, or even for virtual socialization, is an ideal example of overflow of one space into the boundaries of the other, thereby resulting in emergence of 'blurred' spaces characterized by intermingling of first, second and third space (Morrison, 2019). In view of the literature tracing the origin of the coffee house as a 'third place' and the global transformation of the same into emergence of the 'beyond the third place', or a 'new third place' (Crick, 2011), this paper makes an attempt to investigate third place coffee house leisure of the long existing traditional, modest 'Indian Coffee House' of Shimla, that has strongly withstood competition from the contemporary emerging modern corporate branded *Café* culture. The study aims at understanding whether, in the modern-day technology aided 'individual consumption culture', the ICH has managed to sustain its authentic third place existence to provide for real (in person) 'social interaction' and leisure.

Methodology

For the purpose of studying the Oldenburg's third place coffee house leisure culture, the Indian Coffee House (ICH) of Shimla (India) was selected. Shimla, located in the Indian Himalayas is a small hill town, which on account of both its terrain and cool climate does not offer many opportunities for outdoor leisure. In addition, expensive and modern leisure activities have not set foot into the town and may perhaps not be successful as the local population is dominated by the middle-class population and simple mountain people. Hence there are limited opportunities in the town for leisure engagement outside home (i.e., first place), among which, 'eating out' or 'meeting friends over tea/coffee' is a favored one. As the decades old ICH Shimla is a popular public meeting place for coffee, it was selected for study.

The exploratory study was conducted over a period of twelve weeks (December 2020-February 2021). A mixed method approach was used, taking 'on-site-observation' along with a questionnaire survey based on a self-designed structured questionnaire. Observation was used to observe and note the general atmosphere of the coffee house, indoor settings, ambience, and the behavior of the customers. The questionnaire survey was administered to elicit responses from customers on specific questions related to customer visiting patterns, opinion of the coffee house and leisure activities engaged in therein.

Though lockdown restrictions had eased and eating outlets had opened, the researcher observed that perhaps to keep safe, not many people were visiting the Coffee House. Besides, it was also observed that the ICH was being frequented by daily 'regulars'. Hence once they were

interviewed, the researcher had to find / wait for new respondents each day. For this, the researcher had to make frequent random visits daily, at different times (i.e., forenoon, afternoon, evening) in lookout for new respondents. Considering this constraint, the researcher decided to set a maximum limit of total 100 respondents for the study.

Random cum convenience sampling was used to collect data. All primary data set was coded and analyzed with SPSS10, using descriptive statistics (i.e., simple percentage) for easy comprehension. The study focused on answering the following research questions (RQ).

RQ1. What is the ICH Shimla establishment like?
RQ2. What is composition of ICH society?
RQ3. What is the visiting pattern of community coming to ICH?
RQ3. What is nature of leisure engagement in the ICH?

Through investigating the above research, the aim of the study was to identify and conclude whether or not, the ICH Shimla retains the authentic essence of 'Oldenburg's third place'.

Findings and Discussion

Origin of the Indian Coffee House-An Overview: 'Indian Coffee House' (ICH) properties were established in India during the late 1930s and early 1940s in the pre-independence British era, under the governance of the 'Coffee Board' (i.e., Coffee Cess Committee). However, in mid 1950s due to some policy changes, a number of these coffee houses had to close, shutting doors to a huge number of employees resulting in loss of livelihoods for many. To find a solution to this grave situation, the Indian Communist Leader, A.K. Gopalan, in consultation with and approval of the then Prime Minister, Shri Jawahar Lal Nehru, mobilized the laid off workers to establish 'Indian Coffee Workers Cooperative Societies' to take over the existing coffee houses. The first Coffee House under the Cooperative was started in 1957 and the previous ones were taken over. Subsequently, over the years, under the banner of the 'Indian Coffee House' the chain operation expanded in a number of cities in the country. Presently there are more than 400 ICH properties in India. Similar to the early coffee houses of the West, the Indian Coffee House has been long popular as a hub of conversations and debates, attracting many a budding politicians, writers, political thinkers, intellectuals, activists, and artists. It is widely popular with a particular class of people. According to Venkatesh (2021), the distinctive character of the Indian Coffee house can be described in a few words, i.e., 'unassuming, unostentatious, efficient, reasonably priced' and other similar adjectives, which come to the mind when it is spoken of**.**

Indian Coffee House Shimla: Established in 1957, as displayed on the ICH sign board, the property at Shimla, by the look of it, exudes a 'rustic' ambience of the typical Indian Coffee House (Venkatesh 2021). Situated right in the town centre on the famous pedestrian '*Mall Road*', ICH is easily accessible and is an ideal affordable place to leisurely enjoy 'company and conversation' over a cup of coffee. The ICH Shimla is in walking distance of several government offices like the municipal corporation, deputy commissioner's office, government telephone exchange office (*BSNL*), auditor general's office, the railway board building that houses a number of offices and is also close to several banks and the local Evening College. The ICH is in proximity to the local taxi point to which several shuttle taxis ply under the banner of '*Ride with Pride'*, the 'one and only ride' (primarily for senior citizens) that drops people closest to famous *Mall Road*, making the ICH conveniently approachable. Highly popular with the local community, the property has earned its additional degree of fame for being frequented by many renowned personalities like political leaders and *Bollywood* stars.

The ICH is nestled between commercial shops. It can be located through its modest white display board on which is written 'INDIAN *Coffee* HOUSE' with brown color text. The same name board has existed since long. The exterior is rather simple and bears an old look. The entry door in the

centre is flanked on either side by glass window panels. Indoors, the coffee house is spread over two floors. It is reported that in early times the two floors were named by the Houses of Indian Parliament, the upper floor (at ground level) viz. *Rajya Sabha*, the lower floor viz*. Lok Sabha*. The ground level entry (upper) floor is a huge hall with seating for more than 100 people. Dark chocolate black colored sofas and cushioned chairs with tables are lined along the side walls and there are several tables and chairs in a row in the centre as well. The furniture is rather old. A partitioned cabin has some seating space as well. The lower floor has seating for about 60 people. The lighting in the premises is rather dim for the huge space that is lit up by a few bulbs in lamp shades and a chandelier as well. The bill counter near the entrance is relatively well lit. Natural light comes in from the main entry door and the glass windows panels by its sides. Right across the entry, the other opposite far end cabin has glass windows that too let in natural light. There are a few ceiling fans and exhaust fans in the property. Curtains on the few side windows look shabby, hanging loose with a few broken curtain rings. Electric heaters are available to be used in winters. Earlier charcoal heaters were used from 15th December to 15th March but are no longer used. There are three washrooms in the property. Large sized wooden menu boards are displayed in the property. The coffee house is reasonably priced compared to popular modern *Cafes*. The coffee house does not seem to have been renovated. Simple inexpensive white crockery has been in use for years. There is no interior décor, but a few framed pictures of freedom fighters and some Indian Prime Ministers hang on the walls. There if no Wi-fi facility, no television, or newspapers available. In all, there are 45 staff members comprising various ranks. Most employees are from within the State and some from neighboring States. The uniform of the staff is similar to that of other ICH branches around the country. It is an all crisp white trouser, shirt/coat, and cap. The senior waiters have a colored belt or sash tied around the waist and depending upon their rank, the white turban has a green, golden brown or red band on it. The staff is welcoming and courteous, willing to converse with the guests. As most of the employees have been working in the property for more than 3-5 years, they are familiar with the regular customers. The coffee house remains open all week from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. There are special timings on important days like 25th December, 31st December, and 26th January, or else any important celebration/occasion in town when the timings are from 8 a.m. to 12 midnight.

Despite the ignored maintenance of the property and its old and dull interiors, the languid atmosphere in the coffee house is continuously humming with a mild undertone of activity that increases or decreases throughout the day, depending upon peak and lean hours. The continuous sound of hushed chatter, clatter of cutlery and the fragrance of South Indian food lingers in the surrounds throughout the day.

The Coffee House Society: A summary of the demographics of the ICH society (community) is provided in Table 1. Most (87%) respondents in ICH Shimla were found to be males, while only 13% were females. The finding confirms the observation of Habermas (1989), who noted the rare presence of women in the coffee house. People below 20 years of age were conspicuously negligent in number (i.e., only 2%), perhaps an indication that the younger generation is more attracted towards the modern coffee chains brands where there is a large presence of the youngsters and a pulsating, sprightly ambience created through music, comfort, attractive interiors, and services including free Wi-fi. 12 % respondents were in the age group of 21-30 years, 18%, 31-40 years and 22% each between the age of 41-50 and 51-60 years of age. Maximum (24%) people were the older generation above 61 years of age, indicating that the coffee house is a place patronized by the elderly community.

The educational profile of the coffee house community revealed that 45% had at least a graduate level background, 33% were postgraduates having undertaken higher studies or specialized education, 7% were doctorates, while 7% had pursued some other education. Only 8% were below graduates. The results suggested that largely the coffee society comprised of educated and learned people.

Table 1. Coffee House Society Profile

Gender	Number/Percentage
Male	**87**
Female	13
Age	Number/Percentage
Below 20	02
21-30	12
31-40	18
41-50	22
51-60	22
61 Plus	**24**
Education	Number/Percentage
Below Graduate	08
Graduate	**45**
Postgraduate	33
Doctorate	07
Others	07
Occupation	Number/Percentage
Government Sector Employee	25
Private Sector Employee	07
Self Employed	**33**
Retired	33
Students	02

Note: For each category, the highest percentage is highlighted

The occupational profile indicates that 33% respondents were self-employed (mostly lawyers, orchardists, or other business owners). An equal 33% respondents were retirees, 25% were the employees of government offices, 7% private sector employees, while only 2% students were found to be visiting the coffee house. It was apparent that the coffee house is a place frequented by retirees, self-employed and particularly employees working in government offices located in close proximity of the ICH. It was reported by some respondents, that in earlier times only a distinct category of people like journalists, advocates and politicians would visit the ICH. Nowadays few students and even families walk in for the rather reasonably priced food and drink. Hence the ICH customer base seems to be expanding.

Coffee House Visiting Pattern: The ICH Shimla offers a good alternative 'third place' for the local community. Busy throughout the year, the place is visited both by 'regulars' and infrequent customers. An ideal place to eat, drink and socialize, the coffee house attracts both individual customers and people in company of friends and family as well.

The results for nature of visiting pattern of the coffee house community are depicted in Table 2.

Table 2. *Coffee House Visiting Pattern*

Frequency of visit	Number/Percentage
Daily	**34**
Few times a week	**34**
Few times a month	20
Few times a year	12
Visiting with	Number/Percentage
Alone	07
Friends	**73**
Family	20
Preferred time of visit	Number/Percentage
Forenoon	20

Lunch	30
Evening	**34**
Late Evening	16
Motivation to visit	Number/Percentage
Eat and drink	32
Socialize	**35**
General Pastime	33
Average time spent per visit	Number/Percentage
Less than 1 hour	**40**
1-2 hours	**40**
More than 2 hours	20
Prime feature of the Coffee House	Number/Percentage
Location	25
Ambience	**38**
Inexpensive Food/Drink	37

Note: For each category, the highest percentage is highlighted

From Table 2 an interesting observation is made that maximum (34%) respondents report visiting the coffee house 'every day'. A comment by a respondent sums up the ritualistic visits in the words '*Some people come here as their daily duty*'. '*The day is not complete without visiting the coffee house*'. An equal 34% reported that they visit 'frequently', i.e., few times a month, while 20% and 12% respondents were noted to visit 'few times a week', or merely 'few times a year', respectively.

Answering the question of 'who' they visit with, 73% were found to be visiting with friends (for coffee and company) and 20% with family (primarily to enjoy food/meals). The coffee house is particularly famous for its unique tasting and filling South Indian snack food, i.e., *Dosa*, *Idli* and *Vada-Sambhar*, enjoyed by all family, both young and elders. Only 7% were found visiting the coffee house 'alone'.

As for the preferred time of visit, 20% reported that they choose to visit in low rush hours of forenoon, i.e., between 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., a timing usually preferred by the elderly (i.e., retirees) who, during their daily forenoon leisure walk, drop into the coffee house for a cup of coffee and conversation with friends. Forenoon is also ideal for people who chose the ICH as a 'meeting point' with others and proceed elsewhere after coffee. A significant 30% reported visiting the coffee house during lunch hours. Lunch time is a prime time on account of the attraction of a filling, yet affordable snack lunch. The typical aroma of the coffee and South Indian snacks that fills the air of the surrounding pedestrian *Mall Road* section is inviting enough to draw in people for lunch. Due to its convenient location, ICH is a popular place for lunch for people working in nearby offices. The largest number of respondents (i.e., 34%) was found visiting in the evening, after work hours. Daily, the ICH is throbbing with activity in the pleasant evenings of town. After office hours, in the leftover leisure time of the day, lots of people visit to unwind and refresh themselves with coffee. Mere 16% respondents reported that they prefer late evening hours at the ICH. Late evenings, the crowds usually start thinning out in Shimla, as the town is a cold place and people prefer to be back home before cold and dark.

The prime reason for visiting the coffee house, reported by most respondents (33%) was to 'socialize'. This confirms the importance of the coffee house as a third place for socialization (Oldenburg, 1999). 33% respondents cited visiting the place for casual 'pastime', (i.e., leisure) and a tete-e-tete with friends. 32% reported the moderately priced food and drink to be the prime motivation to visit the ICH.

With regard to the amount of time people spend in the ICH, 40% reported spending an average of 'less than one hour'. Another equal 40 % reported sitting 'one to two hours' in the coffee house. Only 20% were found to spend 'more than two hours' in this place. The people who sit the longest are mostly the elderly retirees (or others who are not constrained by time). The researcher observed that this third place (ICH) has a unique appreciable culture where guests are never asked/indicated to leave, even after having finished their food/drink, or having their table cleared. The bill is served only when asked for by the guest. Hence people can sit as long as they choose, or else they willingly and courteously leave if they notice others waiting for a table.

The prime feature of the ICH Shimla, as reported by majority (i.e., 38%) of respondents was found to be the typical familiar, warm, and rustic 'ambience' of this rather old coffee house establishment. 37% respondents considered 'inexpensive food and drink' as the prime feature. It is apparent that in the present lavish consumerism age where innumerable modern brand chains of *Cafes* have come to dominate the global coffee scene, the existence and survival of a modest, inexpensive, yet quality coffee and food outlet provides a welcome option for the middle-class population. Alternatively, 25% respondents cited the convenient accessible 'location' as a prime feature of the ICH, justifying their preferences of this place on account of its easy approachability.

The findings on pattern of visit to the ICH suggest that third place on account of its long existing popularity, welcoming, informal, unassuming, and home like atmosphere, is highly favored by its significant number of 'regular' customers. The fondness of the ICH is rightly expressed by one 'regular' who makes an interesting remark that he feels '*such a close association with the property*' that just to remain in close vicinity of the coffee house he got himself '*transferred from the Government Forest Office (located quite a distance away) to the Auditor General Office located in near the ICH*!'

Leisure Engagement over a Cup of Coffee: The ICH Shimla, though unimpressive in its built structure, exterior as well as interior, has an exceptionally warm and lively atmosphere that attracts people. Table 3 indicates that 91% respondents reported that they engage in 'active leisure' in the coffee house, i.e., enthusiastic participation in socializing, conversation, gossip and laughter over a cup of coffee. In contrast, very few (i.e., 9%) respondents were found to report sedentary 'passive leisure', choosing to simply sit idle, relax and sip coffee by themselves or in company, and quietly enjoy 'people watching'.

Table 3. Coffee House Leisure

Nature of leisure	Number/Percentage
Active	**91**
Passive	09
Prime conversation	Number/Percentage
Random/casual	**40**
Political	35
Private/Business	25

Note: *For each category, the highest percentage is highlighted*

In terms of the nature of conversation that takes place in the coffee house, the majority (40%) reported that the conversations are usually random and general (nothing in particular), i.e., pastime discussions on weather, daily news, or any happening. An interesting observation is that 35% respondents reported that their conversations were centered on 'political' affairs (both State and Central). One respondent summarized '*ICH conversations predict the politics of the State!*' People enthusiastically voice their political opinions in the coffee house. This finding is in support of several studies that have suggested that the coffee houses around the world were responsible for creating many politicians and also served as platforms where the spark of many a rebellion was ignited (Ellis, 1956; Kafadar, 2007; Pincus, 1995; Plys, 2017). Private or business discussions

were reported by 25% respondents. The striking presence of a large number of people in 'black coats' in the ICH suggests that the place is frequented by many legal practitioners (lawyers) who consider the coffee house as a convenient location to discuss legal matters over coffee 'in private' with their clients.

The findings suggest that the leisure pattern of ICH Shimla is centered primarily on 'socialization, conversation and company', confirming that as Oldenburg's traditional coffee house establishment, ICH Shimla remains a popular social leisure hub.

Conclusion

The 'coffee house' has long fulfilled the role of a third place in aiding social bonding. Away from pressures of home, family and work, the coffee house is considered an ideal place for 'pleasurable leisure' (Karababa and Ger, 2011). The present study concludes that the modest, unostentatious ICH Shimla has survived intense competition from the modern day glittering branded *Café* outlets. The ICH has succeeded in sustaining its distinct charm in providing a welcome space for 'socialization', the very purpose for which the origin of the coffee house establishments took place centuries back, in the Middle East and Europe. In terms of the coffee house society, ICH retains its share of patronizing customers who feel a sense of 'belongingness' to this place and express fondness for the same in order to seek 'company and conversation', coffee being an excuse (Kafadar, 2007; Waxman, 2006). Similar to the findings of Oldenburg (1989) and Ellis (2004) the study confirms that other than mere socializing, people visit this place to catch up on the going on/gossip of town, debate political views, transact business, or else, simply to kill time.

The study also concludes that all peculiar characteristics of 'third place' enumerated by Oldenburg (1989) are present in ICH Shimla. As a third place, this coffee house is easily accessible and exudes an unassuming, modest, and rustic (rather run down) ambience, rightly remarked through a comment of a loyal patron who states, '*the coffee house has not changed over the years, it has the same tables, chairs and same taste.*' Another respondent mentions, '*No change, same sofa, same couch, same ceiling, same portraits.*' 'Familiarity' of the place, people (customers and staff), coffee and food, is the magnet that draws the coffee house society to this third place. The place is indeed a 'community living room', patronized by its good share of 'regular' customers. Confirming the findings of Habermas (1989), it is rightly remarked by a respondent that dismissing social status '*all kinds of people come here*', regardless of social, economic, or political standing. Hence the coffee house is indeed a great 'leveler'. However, unlike modern *Cafes* that attract a large number of youngsters, males, females, and families, as well, the ICH Shimla is dominated by the 'middle aged' and 'elderly' crowd and similar to the observation of Cowan (2015), is a rather 'male dominated' preserve. The ICH community is reasonably educated and is attracted to the place for 'voluntary socialization' social bonding and informal discourse'. As observed in ancient coffee houses, 'dialogue'/'conversation' (over a cup of coffee) is the main activity of sociability here (Caykent and Tarbuck, 2017; Ellis, 2001). People participate in intelligent conversations, of which 'political discussions' are an important topic. Though a few respondents point out that the quality of service in ICH Shimla has deteriorated over the years, yet this does not deter the coffee house community from frequenting this 'home away from home'.

Regardless of drastic transformation of most third places brought about by modernization and influence of communication technology which has led to creation of 'staged' and 'commercialized' third places, 'virtual' (cyberspace) third places (Soukup, 2006) and 'hybrid' third places (Crick 2011), ICH Shimla continues to retain its rudimentary unostentatious character. In a digital era that is fast distancing people, withdrawing them into their private cocoons to be 'Alone Together' (Turkle, 2012), the ICH Shimla is one place where people are still seen 'Together Together' (in real social company).

The researchers acknowledge the limitation that the study has taken up the case of a single ICH unit on account of constraints of travel to other cities due to Covid. Nevertheless, the study suggests that traditional coffee houses (though overshadowed by new branded Cafes) are still patronized by a distinct clientele segment, who prefer causal and inexpensive leisure centered on interpersonal interaction in an informal, comfortable, unassuming, and modest, third place setting. The existence and sustenance of such traditional coffee houses should be encouraged by planners considering the significant contribution made by the coffee house third place towards social wellbeing of communities. It is relevant that in the present modern digital age, further research can investigate the essence of survival of similar such age-old coffee house establishments (third places) that have sustained the invasion by the modern *'Café'* culture. Research in social science can also examine how theses authentic third places make a significant contribution to the wellbeing of society by providing for 'real time social bonding' in a fast evolving 'individualistic', technology dependent world of solitary self-contentment.

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Contributors*: Sonia Khan: Professor in Tourism, H.P. University Shimla, India; Rajinder Kumar: Asst. Prof. Tourism, NIMS University, Jaipur, India*

Corresponding Author: *Professor Sonia Khan. Email:*khansonia@hotmail.com

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TRENDS AND POTENTIAL OF ECO-TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN UTTARAKHAND HIMALAYA

Vishwambhar Prasad Sati
Mizoram University, Aizawl, India

Abstract

This paper examines the trends and potential of eco-tourism development in the Uttarakhand Himalaya by analysing both the potential of eco-tourism development and eco-tourism resource base. Data were gathered from the Uttarakhand Forest Statistical Diary 2017-18 and the Uttarakhand Eco-Tourism Corporation, Dehradun, respectively. The trends of eco-tourists' inflow in NPs and WLSs and revenue earned from it were examined. The key results from the data analyses depict that the Uttarakhand Himalaya has plenty of eco-tourism resource bases – six national parks (5006.76 km^2), seven wildlife sanctuaries (2683.73 km^2), and four conservation reserves (212.54 km^2) along with rich faunal, floral, and avifaunal diversity. These resource bases have significant potential for eco-tourism development. The trends of eco-tourists' inflow in the NPs and WLSs are increasing, mainly domestic tourists (r^2= 0.941). However, in comparison to natural and pilgrimage tourism, eco-tourists' inflow is low. In terms of the annual growth rate of eco-tourists' inflow, it has been decreasing (r^2=0.168). The main reasons for decreasing growth rate of eco-tourists' inflow were remoteness, fragile landscape, rugged terrain, geo-hydrological hazards, lacking infrastructural facilities – transportation, accommodation, and institutional support in eco-tourism destinations. This study recommends policy measures for eco-tourism development in the Uttarakhand Himalaya through the creation of eco-tourism circles, development of eco-tourism parks, and providing adequate infrastructural facilities – transportation, accommodation, institutions, and communication.

Keywords: Eco-tourism, national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, trends, eco-tourists' inflow, Uttarakhand Himalaya.

Introduction

The Republic of India has significant potential for eco-tourism development as it has a rich biodiversity, national parks (NPs), wildlife sanctuaries (WLSs), and conservation reserves (CRs), spreading in 23% of its total geographical area (ISFR 2017). These NPs, WLSs, and CRs are world-famous and the major eco-tourism destinations. The Himalaya, located in the north and northeast part of India, has been a centre of attraction for nature lovers for centuries. It has varied and spectacular forest landscapes in the forms of alpine grasslands, the highland coniferous forests, mixed-oak forests in the middle-higher region, pine forests in the middle Himalaya, and mixed-deciduous monsoon forests in the river valleys and plain regions., Above 70% geographical area is forested, with a rich faunal, floral, and avifaunal diversity, therefore, the Himalaya is known as one of the biodiversity hotspots of the world. The four Himalayan states of India – Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh and two union territories – Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh have 25 protected areas as NPs and WLSs with 15,916 km^2, which is 7.6% of the total geographical area (Bhatnagar et al. 2001).

The state of Uttarakhand, an integrated part of the Himalaya and the world-famous eco-tourism destination, has distinct physical features – snow-clad Himalaya, perennial lakes within forest areas, rolling alpine meadows, exotic wildlife, dense forests, and wetland habitats. It supports rich biodiversity in the forms of NPs and WLSs and varied panoramic forest landscapes from the plain regions to Shivalik hills, middle Himalaya, and the snow-capped Himalayan ranges. The Uttarakhand Himalaya has a diversified climate, varies along the altitudes, and accordingly, the faunal, floral, and avifaunal resources vary. Tourism is one of the important service sectors in Uttarakhand. It ranks 12th in the global tourism ranking (Sati, 2013, 2015, 2018) and shares a total of 52% Gross State Development Product (SGDP). Tourism practices vary from pilgrimage tourism to natural tourism, adventurer tourism, and eco-tourism. However, pilgrimage tourism is practiced largely, followed by natural tourism, and adventurer tourism. Eco-tourism is in its initial stage and has yet to be developed. In the meantime, the forest landscape and climate support eco-tourism development in the Uttarakhand Himalaya.

Keeping the spectacular forest landscape in mind, the State Government initiated the development of eco-tourism in Uttarakhand. It has formed an Eco-tourism Development Corporation (ETDC) under the Companies Act of 2013. The main objective to form ETDC was to promote eco-tourism in the state, under the presence of enormous resources related to eco-tourism development. The State Forest Department (SFD) established an 'Eco-tourism Wing' to promote eco-tourism in the NPs, WLSs, and CRs. The eco-parks are also being developed by the SFD for eco-tourism. Even though the state has immense scope for eco-tourism, it is lagging in its development. About 70% of the total population of Uttarakhand lives in rural areas. Their habitats are located in and around the forest areas, upon which the livelihood of the people is dependent, apart from the traditional agriculture and livestock rearing. The development of eco-tourism in rural areas, therefore, will enhance rural livelihoods.

Many scholars researched various themes of eco-tourism in the Uttarakhand Himalaya. Strategy for eco-tourism development (Bagri 1994; Bansal and Kumar 2011; Bhattacharya et al 2011), the concept of eco-tourism, eco-tourism and nature conservation (Bisht and Negi 1998), eco-tourism and environmental sustainability (Gupta and Goel 1998), and eco-lodges role in integration and development (Bagri et al 1997; Kandari and Gusain 2001; Gurung 1995) were among the prominent themes of research. Joshi (2011) described eco-tourism planning and management and Jaini et al (2012) illustrated the practice of tourism in eco-tourism destinations. However, no systematic study was conducted on eco-tourism development (ETD) in the Uttarakhand Himalaya. This study examines the trends and potential of ETD in the Uttarakhand Himalaya in general and in the selected NPs and WLSs in particular. It analyses the trends of eco-tourists' inflows – domestic and foreign tourists, income earned from eco-tourism, and the development of eco-tourism circles and eco-parks. The study suggests policy measures for ETD in the Uttarakhand Himalaya, which will conserve biodiversity resources and will support economic development.

Concept of Eco-tourism Development

The concept of 'Eco-tourism' came into existence in the 1980s to promote sustainable tourism in natural, forest, and cultural areas. It revolves around recreation, which is both nature-based and sustainable. Eco-tourism is believed to be a new name of tourism, which was practiced in natural locales (Wall 1994) in the past. The eco-tourism is termed 'Responsible Tourism', because of its multifaceted nature such as examining the impact of tourism on the environment, community participation in eco-tourism development, and conservation of nature (Black 1996). It also involves imparting education for conservation of the natural environment and ecosystem management (Ballantine and Eagles 1994; Blarney 1995; Bottrill and Pearce 1995; Buckley 1994). The International Eco-tourism Society (TIES) also considers eco-tourism as 'Responsible Tourism' for its nature of conserving the environment and improving the quality of life of the local people. Eco-tourism can also be equated to alternative tourism, green tourism, ecological tourism,

and sustainable tourism (Butler 1980). It controls tourists' inflow in natural areas and frames and implements policies for the conservation of the natural environment and biodiversity (Singh et al, 2009). The community people support eco-tourism for both creations of economic options and conservation of natural habitats (biodiversity resources) and water (Bookbinder et al 1998). Eco-tourism is an important form of nature-based tourism, which not only helps in conserving the natural environment but also supports rural livelihoods through augmenting jobs, generating revenues (World Bank 2018; WTTC 2017; UNWTO 2013, TugbaKiper 2013), and preserving the cultural heritage (WTO 2018; GoI, 2008). It is a market-based approach to the conservation of NPs, WLSs, and CRs (Vaccaro et al 2013), under which, all are benefitted – the environment, local people, and tourists. Eco-tourism also offers tourists a sense to conserve natural habitats, biodiversity resources, tourism, adventure tourism, extreme sports, and agro-forestry in NPs and WLSs.

The eco-tourism resource base and the support system model is described in Figure 2, in which two bases of eco-tourism development are given. The first one is a natural base under which flora, fauna, avifauna, and wetlands are presented. The second is the cultural base – cultural and historical (tangible) and indigenous and rural culture (intangible). Among the support system – transportation, accommodation, and institutional are shown, which are manmade. The role of the State Forest Department (SFD), Eco-tourism Development Corporation (ETDC), and Community Participation (CP) in eco-tourism development is noteworthy.
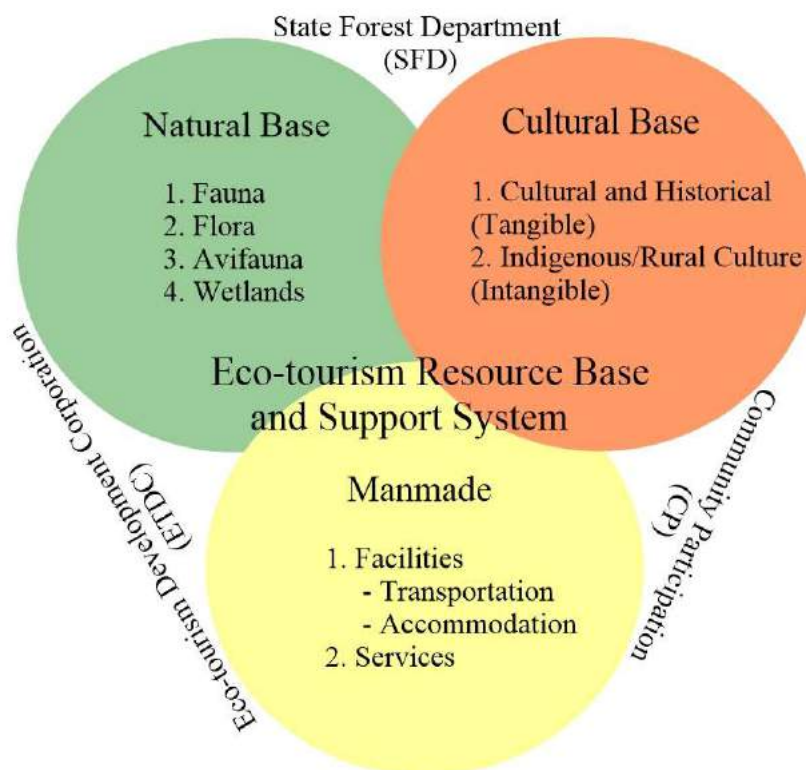
Figure 1: Eco-tourism resource base and support system

The Study Area

The Uttarakhand Himalaya is located in the north part of India and is also known as the Indian Central Himalayan Region (ICHR). Tibet (China) in the north, Nepal in the east, Uttar Pradesh in the south, and Himachal Pradesh in the west delimit its international and national boundary, respectively (Figure 2). The State stretches between 28°43' N to 31°28' N and 77°34' E to 81°03' E, with a total area of 53,483 km², which is 1.63% of the country's geographical area. Forest covers 63.41% of area (FSI 2019), spreads in three-dimensional forest landscapes with rich biodiversity.

The state has a total of six NPs, seven WLSs, and four CRs. The Corbett National Park (CNP), Sona Nadi Wildlife Sanctuary (SNWLS), Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary (BWLS), Raja Ji National Park (RJNP), the Valley of Flowers National Park (VFNP), Nanda Devi National Park (NDNP), Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary (KWLS), Gangotri National Park (GNP), and Govind Wildlife Sanctuary (GWLS) are the major parks and sanctuaries stretch in the Uttarakhand Himalaya. Besides, four other parks and sanctuaries – Govind National Park (GNP), Mussoorie Wildlife Sanctuary (MWS), Askot Wildlife Sanctuary (AWLS), and Nandhor Wildlife Sanctuary (NWLS) are also located in the Uttarakhand Himalaya. Four CRs – Nanda Devi Bird Conservation Reserve, Pawalgarh Conservation Reserve, Jhilmil Tal Conservation Reserve, and Asan Conservation Reserve stretch in four forest divisions – Nainital Forest Division, Ramnagar Forest Division, Haridwar Forest Division, and Chakrata Forest Division of the state, respectively. These NPs, WLSs, and CRs obtain a total of 7,903 km2 area (14.8% of the geographical area), of which, the NPs occupy a total of 5007 km2 area, WLSs has 2684 km2 area, and the CRs possess 212 km2 area. The oldest national park is CNP, which was established in 1936 with an area of about 520.82 km2 spread in two districts – Pauri and Nainital. The GWLS, the newest one, was established in 1990, situated in Uttarkashi district. The Forest types vary from monsoon deciduous, pine forests, mixed-oak forests, coniferous forests, and alpine grasslands. Uttarakhand has a total of 10.09 million populations, which represents India's 0.83% population (COI 2011).
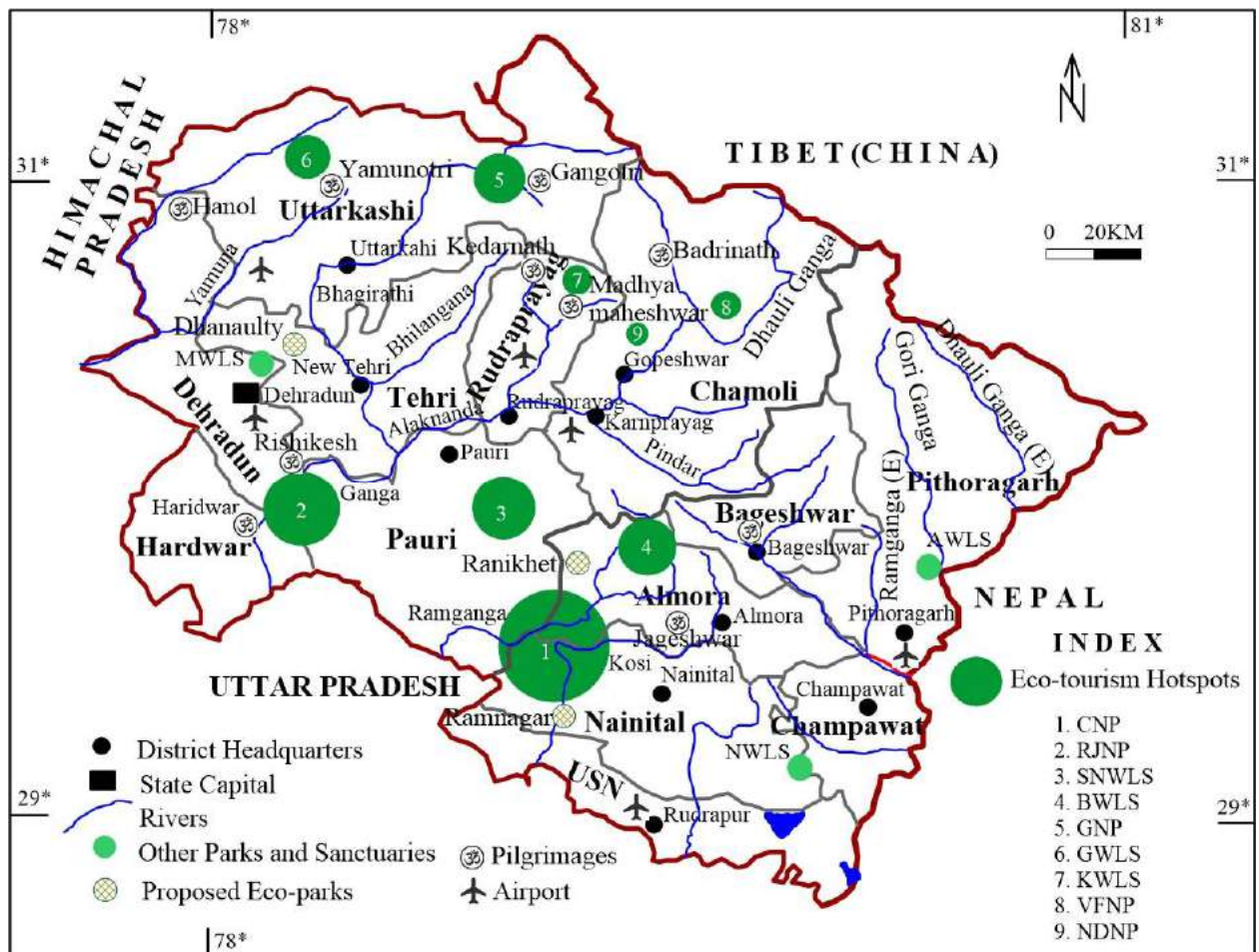
Figure 2: Location map of Uttarakhand Himalaya showing eco-tourism hotspots. The size of circles is as per the number of eco-tourists' inflow in 2018

Methodology
Source of Data

The data were gathered both from secondary and primary sources. The secondary data were collected from the 'Uttarakhand Forest Statistical Diary' (UFSD) 2017-2018, published by SFD, Dehradun, and from ETDC. Firstly, detailed data about the eco-tourism resource base (Potentiality) such as area, major faunal, floral, and avifauna species, and location and accessibility of NPs, WLSs, and CRs were collected. Further, data on the infrastructural facilities – transportation, accommodation, and institutional availability in the NPs and WLSs were gathered. Secondly, data on eco-tourists' inflow – domestic and foreign – in NPs and WLSs, from 2000 to 2018, were gathered from the state ETDC. The revenue earned by eco-tourism from all NPs and WLSs was gathered separately during the reported period and from the same source. Primary data on infrastructural facilities in the eco-tourism destinations were gathered by a participatory approach. The author visited the eco-tourism destinations and interviewed 50 employees working in NPs and WLSs about the infrastructural facilities available in the eco-tourism destinations.

Data Analysis

The collected data – secondary and primary sources – were analysed. Descriptive statistics – minimum, maximum, and mean value and standard deviation were used for describing eco-tourists' inflow and revenue earned. The score-rank method was used to provide ranking to NPs and WLSs on the basin of infrastructural facilities – transportations, accommodation, and institutional. Indices and levels were used to describe eco-tourists' inflow – domestic and foreign in the NPs and WLSs and revenue earned from it. A linear regression approach was also applied to illustrate eco-tourists' inflow and income earned during the reported period.

A detailed description of biodiversity resources – fauna, flora, and avifauna were presented. A location map of the study area was constructed in which, all the basic information was shown. Eco-tourism hotspots were identified based on eco-tourists' inflow in NPs, WLSs, and CRs. The trends of eco-tourists' inflow from 2000 to 2018 were analysed and growth in eco-tourists' inflow was observed. A correlation between eco-tourists' inflow and revenue earned from them in NPs and WLSs was carried out. The eco-tourist circles were identified and eco-parks in three places – Ramnagar, Ranikhet, and Dhanaulty were proposed.

Trends of Eco-tourists' Inflow in NPs and WLSs

Time series data (from 2000 to 2018) on trends of eco-tourists' inflow in NPs and WLSs were gathered from UFSD and ETDC. The eco-tourists were identified as domestic and foreigners and their inflow during the period was analyzed. The details are as follows:

Trends of Domestic Eco-tourists' Inflow

Domestic eco-tourists' inflow in the NPs and WLSs from 2000 to 2018 was analyzed (Figure 3). The trend was noticed increasing with a R^2 value of 0.930. In 2001, tourists' inflow was 60,000, which increased to more than 400,000, with an increase of 7% in 2018. However, the variability in eco-tourists inflow varied from year to year. In 2006, 2011, and 2014, the eco-tourists' inflow has decreased. The highest decrease in eco-tourists' inflow was noticed in 2011. In the meantime, a total of 3,869,280 tourists visited in NPs and WLSs from 2000 to 2018.

$$y = 18061x - 4E+07$$
$$R^2 = 0.930$$
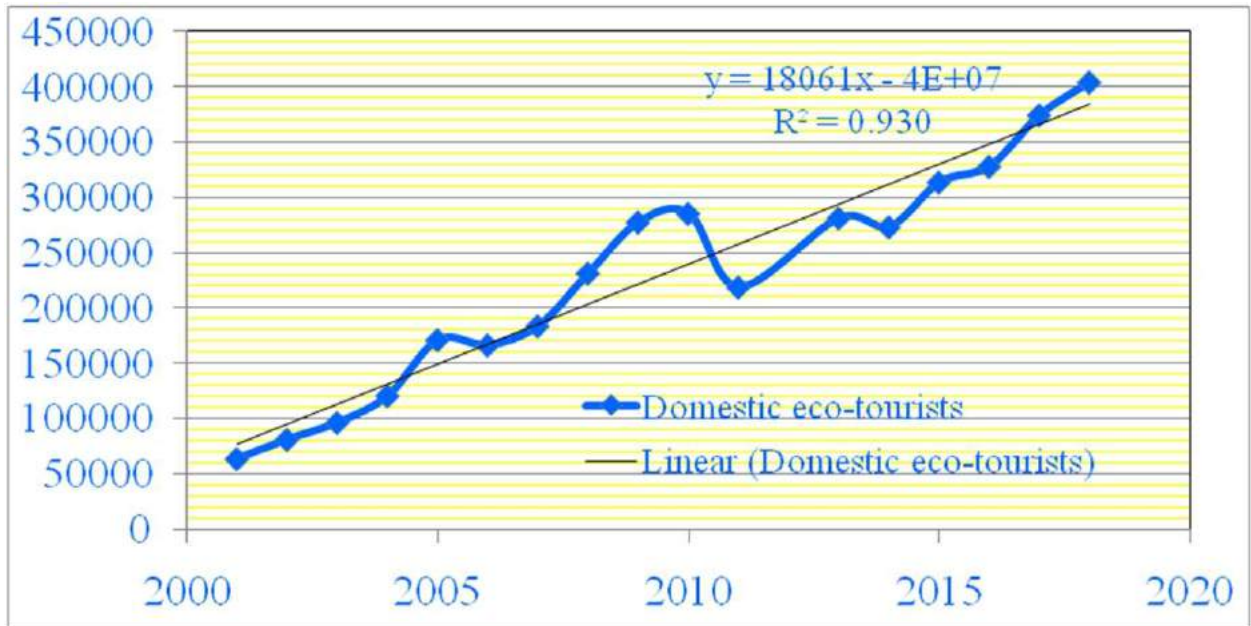
Figure 3: Trends of domestic eco-tourists' inflow

Trends of Foreign Eco-Tourists' Inflow

The trend of foreign tourists' inflow is shown in Figure 4. Out of the total tourists who visited in NPs and WLSs, foreign tourists' shared only 4.72%. The trend has been noticed increasing with a 0.209 R^2 value. The foreign tourists' inflow was 4,500 in 2001, which increased to 14,000 in 2018 with an increase of 32.14%. The inflow was the highest in 2008, which were 16,500 numbers. In 2009, there was a slide decrease in tourists' inflow. After 2010, it continues to decline up to 2015, which decreased from 16,000 to 9000 number eco-tourists during the period. After 2015, the trend was continually increasing with a slide decrease in 2017. Overall, the trend of foreign tourists' inflow was highly variable and changeable.

The important reasons for the low inflow of foreign eco-tourists in the eco-tourism destinations in Uttarakhand are lagging in transportation, accommodation, and institutional facilities. Most of the NPs and WLSs are located in remote areas, where geo-hydrological hazards are very active. The landscape is fragile, and the terrain is rugged. The domestic eco-tourists can adjust to the local environment and manage their visit without substantial facilities. However, the foreign eco-tourists avoid visiting these places and therefore, their inflow is comparatively less.
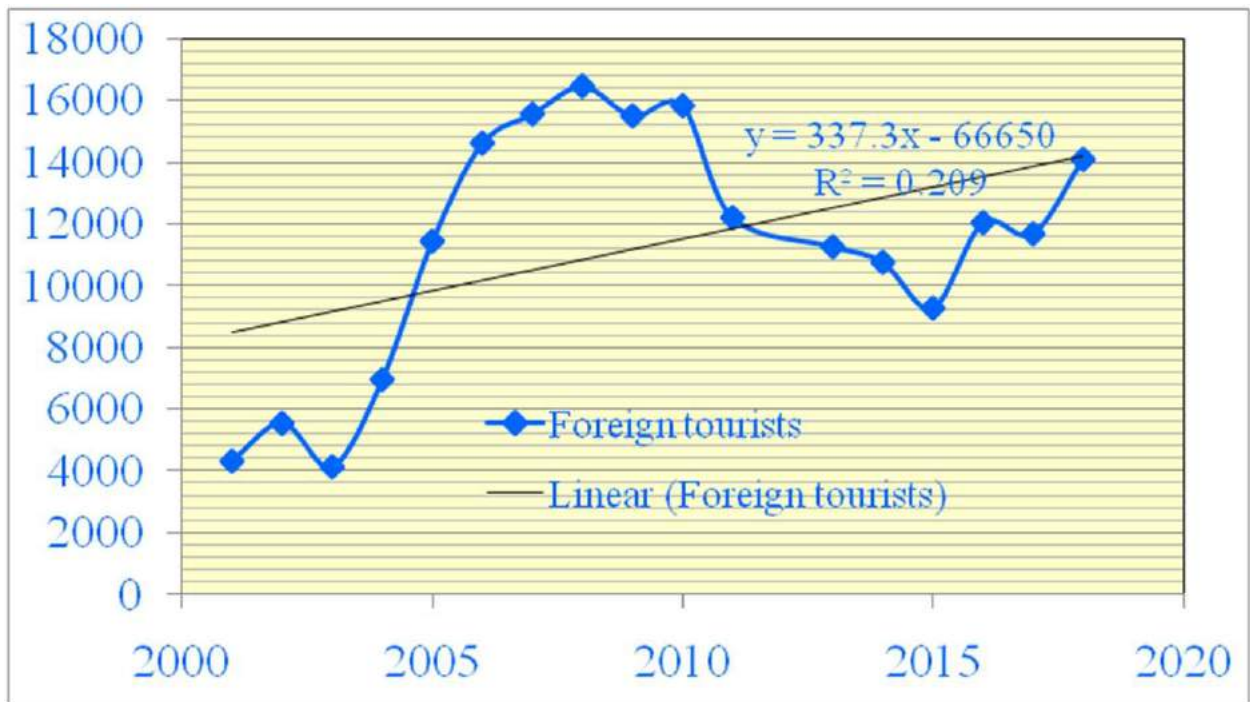
Figure 4: Foreign eco-tourists' inflow in NPs and WLSs

Growth in Eco-tourists' Inflow

The growth in eco-tourists' inflow in NPs and WLSs was analyzed (Figure 5). It has been noticed that tourists' inflow varied from year to year with its declining growth, the R^2 value of which was 0.150. During the period from 2001 to 2018, there were a decrease and increase in the number of times. The highest increase of 43.2% was noticed in 2004-2005, followed by 27.3% in 2001-2002, 27.1% in 2003-2004, 26.72% in 2012.2013, and 24.51% in 2007-2008. A decrease of 23.37% in tourists' inflow was noticed in 2010-12. In 2013-14, the decrease in tourists' inflow was 4% and in 2005-2006, it was 2%. Although the cumulative number in tourists' inflow has been increasing yet growth rate has declined. The tourists' inflow in 2000-2001 was 67,776, which increased to 418,395 in 2017-2018.
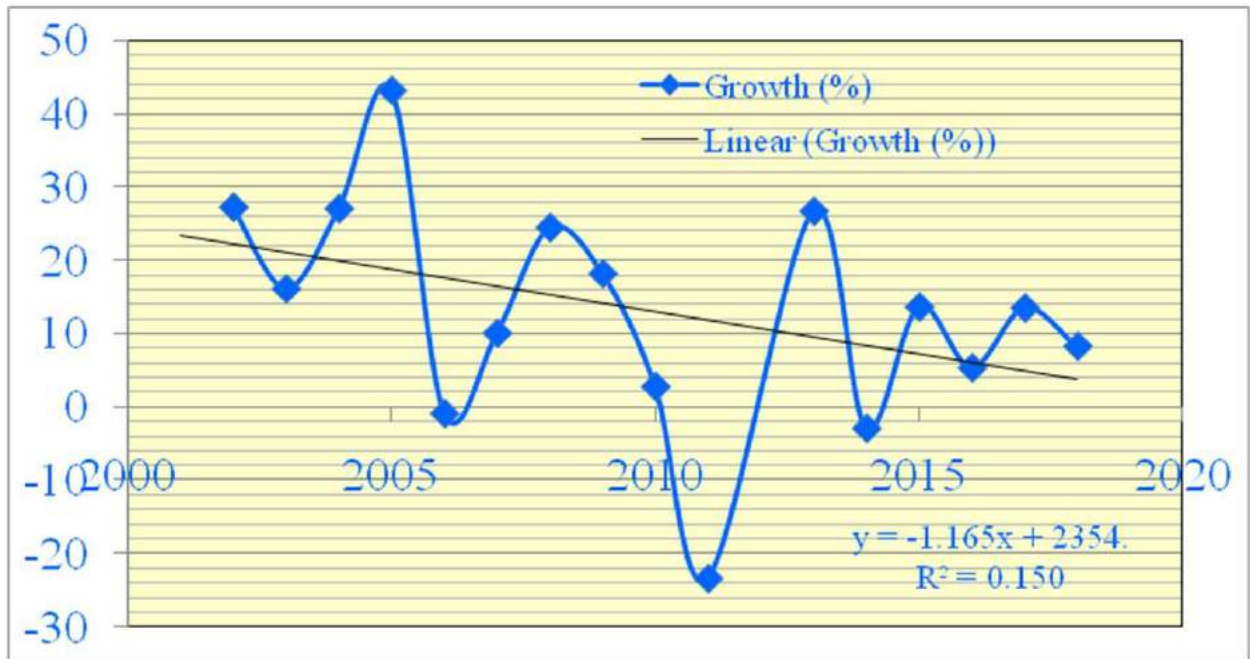
Figure 5: Growth in eco-tourists' inflow (in %) from 2001-2018

Revenue Earned and Eco-tourists' Inflow in Different NPs and WLSs

Data on revenue earned from eco-tourists who visited the NPs and WLSs in 2000-2018 were analyzed. It was observed that the trend has been increasing with the 0.966 R^2 value. In 2000, a total of Rs 4 million revenues were earned from eco-tourism, which was increased to Rs. 120 million in 2018 (Rs. 116 million increase). The growth rate was the highest between 2009 and 2011, and between 2011 and 2012, the growth rate slightly decreased.

Out of the total 404,306 domestic eco-tourists who visited all the case studies, NPs, and WLSs from 2001-2018, the highest inflow (59.37%) of eco-tourists visited CNP, followed by 14.30% eco-tourists who visited RJNP. The other NPs and WLSs received significantly fewer eco-tourists. A total of 14,089 foreign eco-tourists visited NPs and WLSs, which was 3.37% of the total eco-tourists' inflow. Out of which, the highest inflow was in the two NPs – CNP (47.05%) and RJNP (26.08%). For the other NPs and WLSs, the inflow was significantly less. Revenue earned from the eco-tourists in these NPs and WLSs was Rs. 1168.1 Lakh from 2001 to 2018, of which, the highest revenue was earned by CNP (70.37%), followed by RJNP (11.04%). The other NPs and WLSs have earned less than 20% revenue (Figure 6).
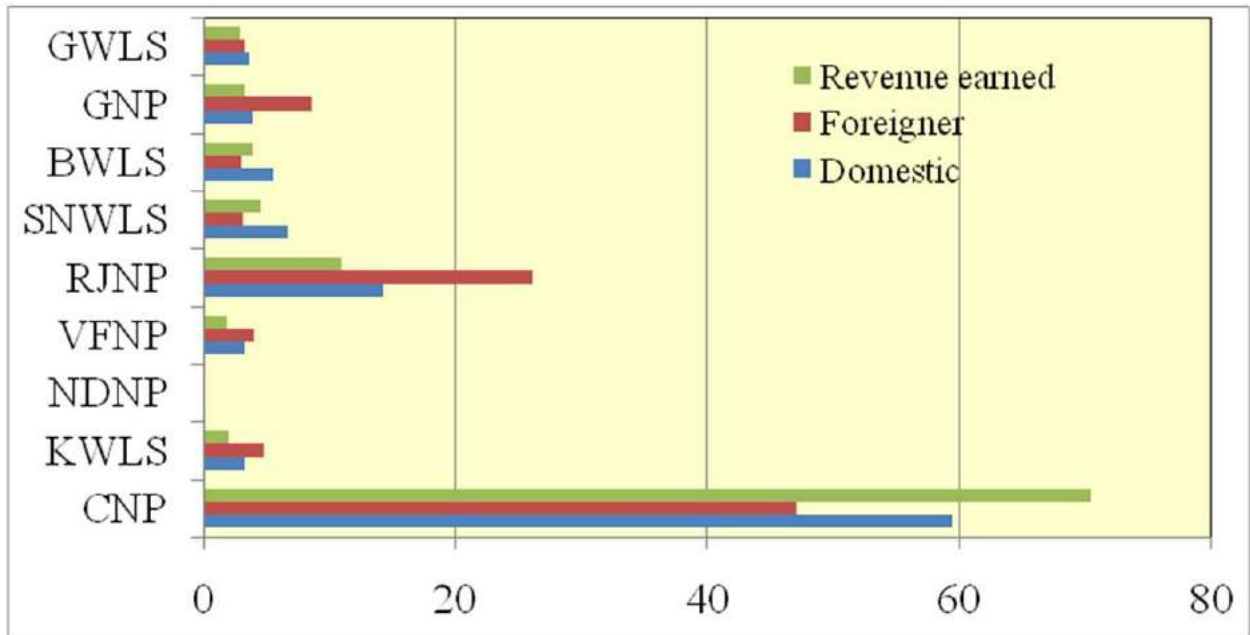
Figure 6: Revenue earned from eco-tourists at NPs and WLSs level

Domestic and foreign eco-tourists and revenue earned from both was indices and levels were given to each NPs and WLSs (Table 1). The high domestic eco-tourists' inflow was noted in CNP, which was >40%, followed by 10-40% (medium) eco-tourists' inflow in RJNP. All other parks have low domestic eco-tourists' inflow, which is <10%. Similarly, in terms of foreign eco-tourists' inflow, the CNP and RJNP had the same status as it was of domestic eco-tourists. The same trend followed in revenue earned from eco-tourists both domestic and foreign. The high revenue was earned by CNP, and medium revenue was earned by RJNP. Others have earned low revenue.

Table 1: Share of eco-tourists' inflow and revenue earned in selected NPs and WLSs

Indices	Levels	Tourists' inflows
Domestic eco-tourists' inflow (Total 404306)		
>40%	High	CNP
10-40%	Medium	RJNP
<10%	Low	SNWLS, BWLS, GNP, GWLS, KWLS, VFNP, NDNP
Foreign eco-tourists' inflow (Total 14089)		
>40%	High	CNP
10-40%	Medium	RJNP
<10%	Low	GNP, KWLS, VFNP, GWLS, SNWLS, BWLS, NDNP
Revenue earned (Total Rs. 116.81 million Rupees)		
>40%	High	CNP
10-40%	Medium	RJNP
<10%	Low	SNWLS, BWLS, GNP, GWLS, KWLS, VFNP, NDNP

Minimum, Maximum, and Mean Value of Eco-tourists' Inflow

Descriptive statistics of eco-tourists' inflow in 18 years were analyzed and the minimum, maximum, mean value and standard deviation were noticed (Table 2). The mean value of domestic eco-tourists' inflow in all the parks and sanctuaries was 227,605 with 63,440 minimum values and 404,306 maximum values. The number of foreign tourists was significantly less with a mean value of 11,282. The minimum value was 4,150 and the maximum value was 16,463. Revenue earned from eco-tourists was substantial with a mean value of 54.5 million rupees. The maximum revenue earned was 117.1 million and the minimum revenue earned was 8.5 million.

Table 2: Eco-tourists' inflow in parks and sanctuaries (n=18)

Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Domestic tourists	63440	404306	227605	102311
Foreign tourists	4150	16463	11282	4023
Total tourists	67776	418395	238886	104743
Revenue earned (lakh)	8.5	117.1	54.5	39.6

Potential of Eco-Tourism Resource Base

The Uttarakhand Himalaya has a rich eco-tourism resource base (Table 3) – suitable and varied climate, spectacular three-dimensional forest landscapes, river valleys, middle latitudes, highlands, alpine meadows, glaciers, the snow-capped Himalaya, rapids, waterfalls, and rich biodiversity for the sustainable eco-tourism development (Sati 2020, 2019). As these NPs and WLSs are located in all physiological divisions and altitudes, therefore, they cover all types of forest landscapes and climates. Two world-famous national parks – CNP and RJNP are located in the Doon valley and *Tarai* region, which have a mainly flat surface with small hills. SNWLS and BWLS are located in the middle altitudes and all other NPs and WLS are located in the highland with a substantial proportion of land covered by snow (Figure 7).

The Uttarakhand Himalaya has rich biodiversity – faunal, floral, and avifauna (Figure 8). About 24 major species of fauna with a number of 145,295 wildlife are found here (SFD 2018). Forest diversity varies from sub-tropical monsoon deciduous forests (< 800 m) to pine forests (800 m-1800 m), mixed-oak forests (1800 m-2200m), coniferous forests (2200 m-2800m), and alpine grasslands (> 2800m). A report published by the Botanical Survey of India (BSI) stated that Uttarakhand has 4,700 flower plant species (25% of India's flowers) out of which, 93 are endemic species. Besides, a total of 487 species of fern and 18 species of gymnosperm are noted in the state. Uttarakhand has 221 wetlands found in both highlands and lowlands, besides numerous glacial-fed perennial rivers, which make the environment sound. The climatic conditions vary from the river valleys to middle altitudes, and highlands provide suitable conditions for eco-tourists in all eco-tourist destinations. Many world-famous river valleys and highland pilgrimages are located within the NPs and WLSs. Uttarakhand has a traditional society, rich culture, and cultural heritage. Folklores, fairs, and festivals, and traditional food and beverages have diversity, which further supports eco-tourism development in Uttarakhand.
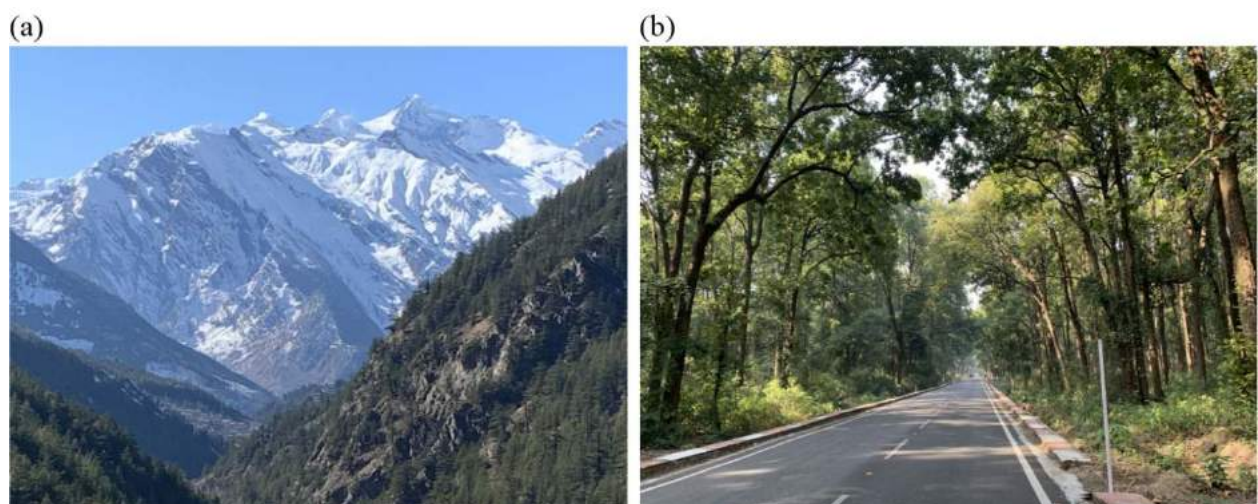
Figure 7: (a) Gangotri National Park (b) Raja Ji National Park
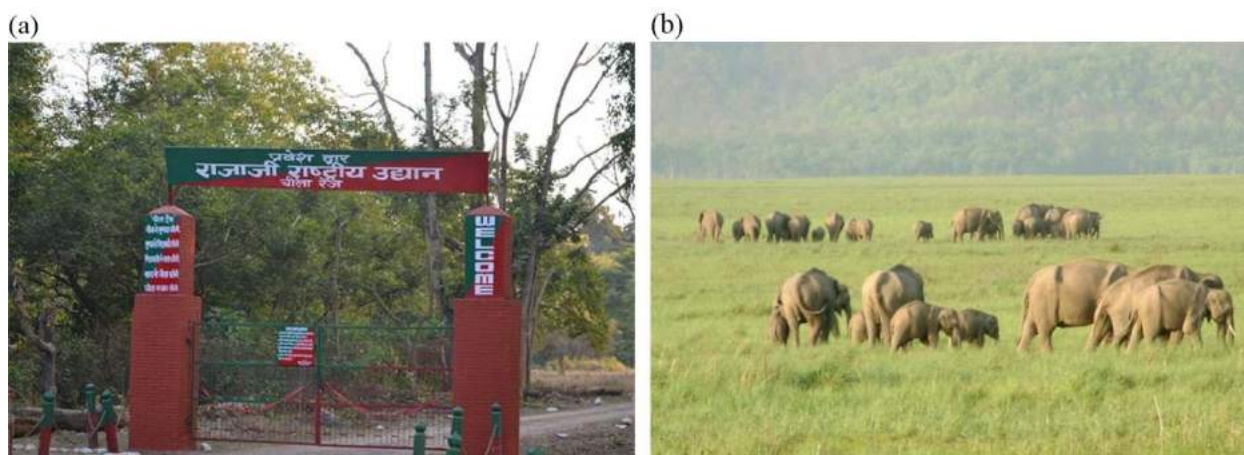
Figure 8: (a) Chila Wildlife Sanctuaries (b) A herd of elephants in Chila Wildlife Sanctuaries

Table 3: Natural and cultural eco-tourism resource base in Uttarakhand

Parks/Sanctuaries	Natural base	Cultural base
CNP	Kosi River, beautiful landscape, and rich biodiversity, winters are feasible, and summers are hot, healthy air and water quality.	Rich culture and cultural heritage.
KWLS	Snow-capped Himalaya, numerous natural streams, Mandakini, Son, and Madhyamaheshwar rivers, waterfalls, rapids, and alpine meadows; winters are snow-capped, and summers are very feasible, healthy air and water quality.	Two highland pilgrimages – Kedarnath and Madhyamaheshwar.
NDNP	Panoramic landscape, waterfalls, rapids, streams, conducive climatic conditions – snow-capped in winter and feasible climate in summer, healthy air and water quality.	Rich culture and cultural heritage, Tungnath, Ukhimath, and Mandal are the cultural places.
VFNP	Spectacular landscape, snow-capped Himalaya, alpine meadows, rapids, waterfalls, high flower diversity, and healthy climate, winters are cold, and summers are feasible.	Hem Kund Sahib (the highland pilgrimage).
RJNP	The Ganga River flows through RJNP, winters are conducive, summers are hot.	Haridwar and Rishikesh are river valleys pilgrimages.
SNWLS	Moderate climate, spectacular landscape, Sona Nadi (river of gold) flows through this WLS	Rich and traditional rural culture
BWLS	Panoramic landscape and rich biodiversity	Rich culture and cultural heritage. Binsar is a folk deity and Jageshwar pilgrimage is located here.
GNP	Close to the greater Himalaya, perennial rivers, rapids, waterfalls, glaciers, alpine meadows, snow-capped during winter and cold during summer.	Gangotri and Gaumukh two highland pilgrimages.
GWLS	Close to the greater Himalaya, perennial rivers, rapids, waterfalls, glaciers, alpine meadows, snow-capped during winter and cold during summer.	Rich Jaunsari culture. Yamunotri and Hanol are pilgrimages.

Infrastructural Facilities

Infrastructural facilities play a significant role in the development of eco-tourism. Uttarakhand has 93% area mountainous, where the terrain is rugged and precipitous, and the landscape is fragile. The two parks – RJNP and CNP are well connected by air, train, and roadways. On the other hand, some NPs and WLSs are connected only by roadways. KWLS, GNP, and GWLS are remotely located, inaccessible can only be reached by trekking. Helicopter services are available in Kedarnath meanwhile, it is expensive. The accommodation facilities also vary, depending upon the accessibility and physical features of NPs and WLSs. Meanwhile, these facilities are lagging in eco-tourism destinations. As per the UFSD 2018, there are a total of 176 tourist rest houses (6164 beds), 4813 hotels and paying guesthouses (1560 beds), and 261 forest rest houses. The available accommodation facilities are insufficient to accommodate tourists, therefore, most of the tourists come back from NPs and WLSs on the same day, and therefore, revenue generation from eco-tourism is nominal.

A score-rank analysis of infrastructural facilities was carried out based on the physical features, accessibility, transportation, and accommodation (Table 4). Scores from 1 to 4 were given and based on it, the NPs and WLSs were given ranks. Two national parks – CNP and RJNP are ranked in the first position, followed by SNWLS. The BWLS has the third rank. Here, infrastructural facilities are similar to SNWLS (scored two in each variable) except accommodation, which scored two. The fourth rank was obtained by GWLS, where the score from physical features and accessibility was the least, whereas transportation and accommodation have scored two each. The KWLS and VFNP ranked fifth. Both had the least score in physical features, accessibility, and transportation whereas, in accommodation, they scored two. The other two – NDNP and GNP obtained the last rank sixth.

Table 4: Score-rank analysis of infrastructural facilities

Name	Score				Rank
	Physical Features	Accessibility	Transportation	Accommodation	
CNP	4	4	4	4	First
KWLS	1	1	1	2	Fifth
NDNP	1	1	1	1	Sixth
VFNP	1	1	1	2	Fifth
RJNP	4	4	4	4	First
SNWLS	2	2	2	3	Second
BWLS	2	2	2	2	Third
GNP	1	1	1	1	Sixth
GWLS	1	1	2	2	Forth

Index: Physical features: Mountainous with tough terrain = 1, Mountainous with normal terrain = 2, Partially mountainous = 3, and Plain = 4
Accessibility, Transportation, and Accommodation: Very low = 1, Low = 2, High = 3, Very high = 4

Correlation Among Infrastructural Facilities, Tourists' Inflow, and Revenue Earned

The correlation among infrastructural facilities, tourists' inflow, and revenue earned from eco-tourists was analyzed (Table 5). It was noticed that infrastructural facilities – accessibility, transportation, and accommodation – are directly associated with eco-tourists' inflow. The eco-tourists' inflow is high in the areas where infrastructural facilities are substantial. Further, with an increase in the number of eco-tourists in NPs and WLSs, revenue earned was high with R^2 value of 0.992. The role of physical features is significant in determining eco-tourists' inflow. It was noticed that the eco-tourists' inflow was less in areas, which have tough physical features.

Table 5: Correlation between infrastructural facilities, tourists' inflow, and revenue earned

Variables	Correlation methods	(TI)	(R)	(P F)	(A)	(T)	(A)
Tourists' Inflow (TI)	Pearson Correlation	1	.996**	.772*	.772*	.758*	.709*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.015	.015	.018	.033
Revenue (R)	Pearson Correlation		1	.719*	.719*	.708*	.652
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.029	.029	.033	.057
Physical Features (PF)	Pearson Correlation			1	1.000**	.965**	.910**
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.000	.000	.001
Accessibility (A)	Pearson Correlation				1	.965**	.910**
	Sig. (2-tailed)					.000	.001
Transportation (T)	Pearson Correlation					1	.913**
	Sig. (2-tailed)						.001
Accommodation (A)	Pearson Correlation						1
	Sig. (2-tailed)						

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

This study described eco-tourism development in the Uttarakhand Himalaya. It has been observed that the Uttarakhand Himalaya has tremendous potential for eco-tourism development as it has abundant eco-tourism resource bases with high potentiality. Uttarakhand obtains a large area under forest cover, of which, 14.8% area comes under NPs and WLSs. The infrastructural facilities and landscape vary and therefore eco-tourists' inflow in these NPs and WLSs is not uniformed. For instance, two parks – CNP and RJNP are located in the plain regions with a maximum altitude is 500 m. They are well connected by roads, railways, and airways. Accommodation facilities are substantial. It is, therefore, the eco-tourists' inflow was the highest in these parks. Out of the total eco-tourists, more than 70% of eco-tourists visited CNP and RJNP in 2018. Further, SNWLS and BWLS are located in the middle Himalaya, which are moderately accessible, connected by roads and the physical features are feasible. Climate is quite suitable during the summer therefore the tourists' inflow is substantial. However, it was observed that the major drivers of eco-tourism development such as infrastructural facilities – transportation, accommodation, and institutions are lagging in most of the NPs and WLSs. They are inaccessible and their physical features are rugged and precipitous. Among them NDNP, VFNP, GNP, and GWLS are prominent. They are situated above 3000 m altitudes, close to the mighty snow-clad Himalaya with harsh climate and inaccessibility. Accommodation facilities in these areas are inadequate to facilitate the eco-tourists. Therefore, the eco-tourists' inflow in these NPs and WLSs is just negligible. It has been noticed that the inflow of domestic eco-tourists is quite high than the foreign eco-tourists. One of the reasons is that the domestic eco-tourists are well adapted to the terrain and climate of the highland and remotely located NPs and WLSs. They visit eco-tourism destinations comparatively frequently. Trekking in the highland NPs by domestic eco-tourists is an important means.

The other drivers, which are affecting eco-tourists' inflow in the Uttarakhand Himalaya, are geo-hydrological hazards. The tremendous decrease in eco-tourists' inflows in several years such as 2006, 2011, and 2014 was due to the geo-environmental hazards. Most of the NPs and WLSs is

located in the highlands, which are snow-capped during the winter, and during the monsoon season, heavy rain occurs, which limits the eco-tourists' inflow. Further, the landscape is highly vulnerable and ecologically fragile. Flash floods, debris flows, landslides, and mass movements are very frequent and intensive in NPs and WLSs. Eco-tourism activities are mostly unplanned. Poor solid waste management, poor road quality, fragile slopes along the roads, inadequate and poor quality of accommodation, lagging in rail and air connectivity, insufficient public convenience facilities, and poor health facilities are the drivers causing fewer eco-tourists' inflow and loss of biodiversity and environmental degradation (Kala 2012).

Policy measures for the development of eco-tourism in Uttarakhand need to be revised. Development of infrastructural facilities – transportation, accommodation, and communication; imparting training to tour and travel guides, service providers, and local people; conservation of nature – biodiversity, eco-tourism circles, and eco-parks; and community participation in the promotion of local food and beverages, promotion of local culture, and homestay in trekking routes are to be ensured and provided (Figure 9).
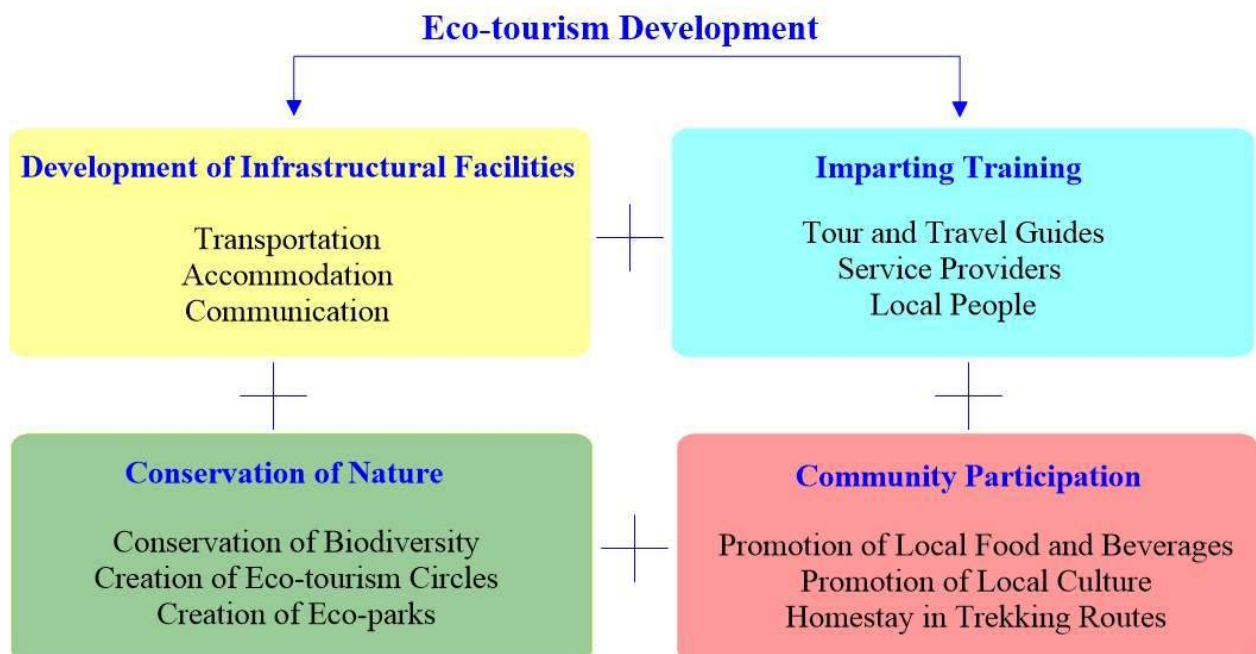
Figure 9: Policy measures for eco-tourism development

Given the suitable forest landscape for eco-tourism in Uttarakhand, eco-tourism circles can be developed. This initiative will lead to biodiversity conservation and economic development of the rural community. Four eco-tourism circles are identified – two each in Garhwal and Kumaon regions. In Garhwal region: Yamuna -Tons valley and Dehradun-Rishikesh-Tehri, and in the Kumaon region, Tanakpur-Champawat-Devidhura and Ramnagar-Almora-Nainital are prominent circles. There are three important eco-parks – Ramnagar, Ranikhet, and Dhanaulty, which can be developed as eco-tourism destinations. Further, reopening and the development of old trek routes in the forest areas are proposed. All these circles and old routes have rich biodiversity, and they cover the entire Uttarakhand state. For the development of eco-tourism circles, eco-parks, old routes, and carrying capacity analysis of eco-tourists destination need attention. The SFD and ETDC are the key institutions for eco-tourism development. Community participation in eco-tourism development is inevitable to conserve biodiversity resources and economic development.

Conclusions

This study revealed that the Uttarakhand Himalaya has rich biodiversity, and it is one of the biodiversity hotspots. It has spectacular three-dimensional forest landscapes, which provide suitable bases for eco-tourism development. However, eco-tourism development could not take shape because the eco-tourism resource bases are not harnessed sustainably. Therefore, harnessing eco-tourism resource bases sustainably for the development of eco-tourism is the need of the hours, which can augment employment and generate income for the local people and revenue to the state government. Conservation of wildlife in their habitat is important. The following suggestions can be given for eco-tourism development in the Uttarakhand Himalaya. Sufficient infrastructural facilities in terms of transportation, accommodation, and institutional can be provided in the eco-tourism destinations. Coordination among SFD, ETDC, and CP shall be ensured. The rich biodiversity shall be maintained with the help of the forest departments along with the development of eco-tourism activities. A proper development planning for eco-tourism shall be ensured with the help of CP for equitable distribution of benefits and socio-economic development of native people. For forest/nature-based eco-tourism viz. nature interpretation camps, nature camps, bird watching, and the nature tour programs shall be organized by SFD and ETDC with providing substantial facilities. Eco-tourism without harming nature and wild animals shall be ensured. Training shall be imparted to tour guides and local people on eco-tourism development. All these measures can support eco-tourism development in the Uttarakhand Himalaya.

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Contributors: Professor Vishwambhar Prasad Sati: Department of Geography and Resource Management, Mizoram University, Aizawl – 796004, Mizoram, Aizawl, India.

Corresponding Author: *Professor Vishwambhar Prasad Sati.* **E-mail:** *sati.vp@gmail.com*

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SOCIAL CAPITAL AND RESIDENTS' PARTICIPATION TO RURAL COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: AN INITIAL EXPLORATORY STUDY IN NORTH CENTRAL COASTAL VIETNAM

Trinh Thi Thu
Institute of Social Sciences of Central region, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences

Abstract

Research on regional tourism development has traditionally focused on economic factors and resource values. Less is known about the social capital, community needs, and this may not be fully explored in order to be a successful regional development tool. This paper examines how community participation has been structured in the context of rural areas. Based on data and information derived from surveys conducted with 104 households that have participated and collaborated in community-based rural tourism initiatives in the rural areas in North Central Coastal Vietnam's provinces. The results indicated that residents' perceptions of environmental and economic impacts of tourism influenced community support and satisfaction with their resident community. Additionally, perceptions of their social capital were also found to be attached to the levels and forms of tourism and was sensitive to rural tourism development. The study suggests that residents' participation and social capital can be instrumental for the good governance of rural tourism provided that its potential negative consequences are recognized and dealt with appropriately.

Keywords: Social capital, residents' participation, rural tourism development, North Central Coastal Vietnam

Introduction

Rural tourism has been widely promoted as a supplementary support for the local rural economies in Vietnam, and indeed may well become a significant force for change in the restructuring of Vietnam's economy. The mainstay of employment for much of the North Central Coastal Vietnam's rural areas is agriculture, and this significantly effects patterns of life and local culture. The core, and attractiveness of rural tourism in Vietnam lies in in its forms of agricultural production and the resultant rural lifestyles, values and culinary arts arising from community participation in those practices. Additionally, in Vietnam under current policies, rural community-based tourism is often linked to both sustainable development and environmental conservation. The government perceives tourism as a viable means for developing traditional rural industries because it can provide economic benefits to local residents and offset the decline of traditional industries in rural Vietnam. Consequently, some rural communities have begun exploring the ways in which they can strengthen their economic resources for rural community development through rural village tourism based on traditional culture, arts, crafts, and cuisine, through introducing tourists to traditional farming and fishing, and encouraging ethnic minority peoples to also participate in festivals and displays of local culture and heritage.

One example of this lies within the framework of the Vietnam-Japan cooperation agreement of 2013, by which the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT) collaborated with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to edit and publish the *Handbook practical development of rural tourism in Vietnam* on the basis of an examination of existing projects designed to support the development of tourism in the Vietnamese rural countryside. However, while much was written about capital and infrastructure development the role of residents and local community involvement was, to a large degree, not addressed in the envisaged tourism

development process. Equally, other market-oriented research has also been done relating to tourist demand and behaviours (Bui Thi Lan Huong, 2014), tourist satisfaction or the determinants of tourist decisions to rural destinations (Đào Duy Tuấn; 2011), but which have not always addressed the role of communities in the supply chain.

While the notion of rural community-based tourism is not new in tourism studies, it continues to evolve and take forms not previously examined. Numerous research studies on tourism development in rural areas have confirmed the belief that community participation is an essential requirement for ensuring sustainability. An important lesson for tourism researchers and practitioners is that social capital can also be a useful basis for fostering positive attitudes but may also act as an impediment to tourism development if not well managed (Park, Nunkoo & Yoon, 2015). Key research questions have been debated regarding community participation for sustainable rural development such as "what degree of participation or involvement of community is required at a given destination to ensure rural tourism development is socially sustainable? Are there ways in which a rural tourism community can be satisfied, and social capital enhanced while permitting economic improvement but not diminishing the quality of every-day life?

This paper therefore describes community attitudes and the role of social capital in shaping residents' participation and reactions to rural tourism development. For such individuals, neighborly collaboration acts as a basis for social capital, and soc development but and trust is often central for rural community-based tourism development and an enhancement of community satisfaction. The purpose of this paper is to examine these relationships because the patterns through which community participation and social capital are formed are often context specific and vary across cultures and countries (Zhao et al., 2011). In that sense, the paper is exploratory, description and tends to the pragmatic in seeking to identify potential determinants and is a report of a process that will lead to the authorities better understanding the process that underlies tourism development in the villages. It is a small-scale piece of research for the case study village is relatively small, and the value of the study lies in a modest aim of identifying resident attitudes that will influence subsequent policy formation by the authorities in the context of Communist State of Vietnam. It is suggested that this has value in itself, while the paper also provides a comparative case study for other researchers studying how residents of small agricultural communities perceive the impacts of tourism.

Literature Review

Community participation refers to a form of voluntary action in which individuals confront opportunities and responsibilities of citizenship. In particular, these opportunities for such participation include joining in a process of self-governance, responding to authoritative decisions that impact on one's life, and working co-operatively with others on issues of mutual concern (Tosun; C; 2000). Community participation is a bottom-up approach by which communities are actively involved in rural tourism projects to solve their own problems. As such it has been touted by various stakeholders as a potent approach to sustainable tourism development because it is assumed to ensure a greater conservation of natural, rural, and cultural resources, empowers host communities, and improves their socio-economic well-being. It is often regarded as not solely being a function of government alone, nor something a single powerful rural tourism organisation can develop, but rather it is recognised that the tourism destination planning, decision-making and management is a consequent of collaborative action involving local community groups, indigenous people's groups, and local residents (Saito & Ruhanen, 2017).

Community based tourism, and especially rural based community tourism is perceived as a grassroots movement wherein the local community is the majority stakeholder, and the primary beneficiary that is involved in the planning, development, and management of the tourism destination areas (Pawson, D'Arcy, & Richardson, 2017). As such, it is always important to

understand the context of the tourism initiatives to understand if (a) tourism is being introduced to diversify the national or local economy, (b) to learn if specific efforts to make are being made to benefit the local community participation within which it develops, (c) if any diversification of the tourism product is meant to primarily expand the profitability of the corporate sector of the tourism industry with local communities simply engaged as a secondary party; or (d) whether tourism diversification aims to meaningfully engage the local communities for their own benefit ahead of the interests of the wider tourism industry and national economy (Mensah, & Ernest, 2013).

Nonetheless, a number of legitimate constraints on community participation in tourism development, particularly in developing countries, may well exist, these include the following. It is anticipated that social capital could facilitate community participation in tourism development but may be limited. According to Bourdieu (1986, p.248), social capital is: "The aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition. For Putnam (2000, p.19), social capital refers to: "Connections among individuals, and the social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them". Over the past decade, social capital has gained much significance in a number of academic disciplines. The concept was introduced in response to the notion that market failures are the rule rather than the exception and that governments are not sufficiently informed and accountable to correct market failures (Bowles & Gintis, 2002).

Economic behaviour based on rationality and self-interest often fails to consider aspects of social capital such as shared knowledge, values, norms, traits, and social network that are socially determined (Dhesi, 2000). Bowles and Gintis (2002) argue that communities are essential parts of good governance because they can address problems that cannot be handled by an individual acting alone, or by the market and government. Yet, while strong social networks among community members bind them together, they can effectively bar others from access. Waldinger's (1995) study clearly demonstrates that control by certain ethic groups over the construction and trade business led to the marginalization of other groups. He notes that while trust and solidarity bounded members of the key group, "... the same social relations that enhance the ease and efficiency of economic exchanges among community members implicitly restrict outsiders" (p. 557). Therefore, social planning models which emphasize development of social capital have been widely criticized for failure to address issues of power (Fisher & Minklee, 1997). Consequently, several implications arise. First, in tourism, strong social networks and bonding among stakeholders can create power imbalances in favour of some groups over others in policy decisions, adversely influencing the attitudes of marginalized actors to tourism development. Secondly, such considerations imply a need for external intervention (generally governmental) to monitor situations to (a) enhance the social capital capabilities of local communities to address deficiencies in skill sets etc, and (b) to ensure as afar as is possible, and equitable distribution of benefits between all members of the community.

Methodology and Results

With a long coastline and many border gates adjacent to Laos, The North Central Coast area comprises six provinces: <u>Thanh Hóa</u>, <u>Nghệ An</u>, <u>Hà Tĩnh</u>, <u>Quảng Bình</u>, <u>Quảng Trị</u>, <u>Thừa Thiên–Huế</u>. The region has a particularly important position in the economic and tourism development between Vietnam and other countries in the region on the East-West corridor. In addition, the North Central Coast is home to 25 different ethnic groups with rich and diverse folklore treasures, including prominent river dances in Thanh Hoa, Nghe Tinh, Quang Binh, Quang Tri and Hue, and valuable historical, cultural, and architectural relics including the Hue citadel, the Ho Chi Minh trail or Vinh Moc tunnel, the Truong Son cemetery, the Con Tien base, and Quang Tri ancient citadel. The region is also the home of many unique festivals such as the Lam Kinh festival (Thanh Hoa), Cuong temple festival (Nghe An), and the Hon Chen temple festival (Thua Thien-Hue). In

particular, the Hue Festival held every two years has become an international cultural event that attracts many domestic and foreign tourists.

Regarding the methodology to do research on "Social capital", it is indicated that, this concept is a complex issue that benefits from the coherent integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches (Dudwick, N., Kuehnast, K., Jones, V. N., & Woolcock, M; 2006). This combination is to enable clarify issues adequately and develop robust basis in the light of policy recommendations (Bamberger; M; 2000; Rao and Woolcock 2005). Researchers in the field of tourism development are strongly encouraged to adopt the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods that best correspond to the specific nature of the issues under investigation. Initial in-depth interviews were thus conducted to explore the attitudes of community participation in tourism and how social capital was shaping residents' participation and reactions to rural tourism development before conducting a formal survey.

The selection of case studies for this research was based on a purposeful sampling strategy. In particular this approach initially focused on selecting information-rich cases for initial study according to the purpose and rationale of the total research project in order to understand the role of social capital in rural community – based tourism development and their participation. Then, the survey was conducted with 104 households that have participated and collaborated in community-based rural tourism initiatives in the rural areas in North Central Coastal Vietnam's provinces. Before the formal fieldwork was conducted, the research proposal was presented and then it was approved and supported by 5 provinces and local committees of tourism development to proceed the research process. In this paper, the perceptions of their social capital were explored to be attached to the levels and forms of tourism, the residents' perceptions of environmental and economic impacts of tourism with their satisfaction were also recognized and dealt with appropriately. Consequently, two tourism destination communities that experienced rural community participation in tourism development were selected and in this study area, six rural villages in Quang Binh and Nghe An rural areas were involved as shown in Figures One. The initial findings are discussed below.

Figure 1
Advertising tourism activities offered Quang Binh and Nghe An rural areas

The concepts of "bridging" and "bonding" social capital, e.g., inclusive, and exclusive types of social capital, are fruitful concepts to apply in an anthropological fieldwork setting. A mixed methods approach is being used to explore and describe the involvement of local citizens in developing community-based rural tourism (CBRT), and the study is emphasizing relationships between villages and social capital with patterns of local governance. The key question centered on understanding how local communities participated in the tourism industry and how barriers and/or deficiencies social capital (if any) influenced their participation in the sector. In effect these factors were seen important as to the role of tourism as a strategy of growth development and poverty reduction.

Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents

Variable	Number of respondents (N=104)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	45	43.2
Female	59	56.7
Age		
Under 20 years	0	0
21-30 years	9	8.6
31-40 years	32	30.7
41-50 years	23	22.1
50 years above	22	21.1
Income (million VND)		
<2.0	9	8.6
2.1-4.0	30	28.8
4.1-5.0	19	18.2
5.1-6.0	14	13.5
6.1-10.0	15	14.4
>10.1	8	7.7

Table 1 illustrates the demographic profile of respondents. There were 59 female respondents (46%), and 45 male respondents (46%); hence making a total of 104 respondents. In terms of age, a majority of the respondents were middle-aged from 31 to 40 years of age (30.7%) and 42 to 50 years (22.1%, while the younger age group (21-30 years of age) made up 8.6% of the respondents. With respect to the income levels, the highest percentage was 35.0% for those earning a monthly income between RM 2001 and RM 3000, whereas the smallest percentage was those with a monthly income of more than 10 million VND with only 7.7%.

Factors and barriers facilitating or hindering participation tourism activities were classified in the light of responses and are identified in Table Two. The classifications used were based upon past literature, observation, interviews with respondents and finally used as questions in such interviews using a five-point scale of agreement where "5" represented the strongest degree of agreement and "1" the strongest level of disagreement.

Table 2: Local participation in rural community-based tourism development and implementation

Statement	N	Of no interest	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
Willing to participate in local meetings on rural tourism development	104	2.9	1.0	2.9	37.5	56.7	4.45	.811

Willing to link with neighboring villages to develop rural community tourism	104	2.9	1.0	3.8	35.6	57.7	4.45	.822
Willing to help neighbors participate in rural community tourism development	104	2.9	1.9	5.8	40.4	51.0	4.36	.836
Willing to call and persuade other neigbours to participate in activities of local rural community tourism	104	2.9	1.0	3.8	47.1	45.2	4.30	.836
Regularly keep good contacts with local authorities and tourism businesses	104	1.9	1.9	3.8	49.0	43.3	4.29	.799
Regularly participate in meeting with local officials in organizing and developing tourism	104	10.6	1.9	11.5	45.2	30.8	4.16	.935
Be informed and consulted about developing plan of local tourism	104	3.8	1.9	9.6	49.0	35.6	4.09	.929
Being consulted by local officials how to do tourism business	104	10.6	1.9	11.5	45.2	30.8	3.80	1.20

The greater engagement of local community and stakeholders in the decision-making process is a critical element for tourism to become sustainable (Graci & Dodds, 2010). The survey explored the likelihood of respondents to be included in decision-making process and the result was presented in Table 02. Regarding the social capital values and residents' participation in rural community-based tourism development, the research has indicated the willingness to help neighbours participate in rural community tourism development and the willingness to persuade, motivate other neigbours to participate in activities of local rural community tourism. Results showed that more than 90 percent of participants agreed and supported the tourism development. A majority of respondents felt that the likelihood of their being included in the decision-making process is improving (78%). However, 5% believed that the likelihood of their participation was declining, while the other 17% remained unsure. The greater engagement of local community and local stakeholders, then it also seems the more is governance collaboration in the participation, and the more that process becomes a critical element for tourism to become sustainable (Graci & Dodds, 2010). That findings are consistent with the notion identified above that for community participation in tourism development to be successful, the greater is the need for external monitoring and support for social capital development. That would, it is suggested, is important in the development stage until the community reaches a stage of maturity where it can handle its own affairs entirely.

The study also revealed that 44% of the total respondents agreed that they have been involved actively in the implementation and uses of the tourism attractions and are enjoying the benefits of tourism. The participation activities include in informing tourists about historical buildings, mangrove swamps, seaweed, coral reefs, and lagoons. While other businesses that contribute to the positive improvement in social capital are participated by providing consultancy services to the tourism attractions and were actively involved in forming associations to coordinate and operate tourism ventures. In addition, other activities like providing for or investing in the renting of land and buildings for tourist hotels through joint ownership and operations of tourist hotels and tour companies need to collaborate with others. However, this form of collaboration in these forms of business seems to be weaker. In particular, the respondents argued that they had been actively involved in some way in the implementation and operationalization of the tourism attractions found in the case study area. More than 80% of respondents would like to be informed and consulted about developing plan of local tourism. In general, the area of implementation and operationalization of tourism attractions has a great implication in the improvement of the livelihood of the villagers since it provides greatest opportunities for the various stakeholders and villagers in particular to obtain jobs and hence generate additional income.

Discussion and Conclusion

Residents possessing high social capital are likely to be very sensitive to the impacts of tourism development, and negative impacts may adversely affect their satisfaction with the community and their support for tourism development. Greater engagement and collaboration is a part of the local community's social capital, and collaborative decision making process is a critical element for tourism to become sustainable (Graci & Dodds, 2010). The survey also explored the likelihood of respondents to be included in decision-making process and the results were presented in Table 2. The research paper highlighted that the rural community-based tourism development seems to be not fully explored and slow in the Central Viet Nam compared to other forms of tourism. This paper must also be affirmed that rural community participation is unlikely to survive and develop based solely on agriculture and vice versa, this form of tourism cannot exist if it is separated from community collaboration, the level of trust in social capital, especially from the support of agricultural communities. The combination of a diverse range of rural tourism products and the marketing of rural community products would be in the light of community perspectives and also with the needs of tourists that are diverse, including a combination of entertaining activities such as horse riding, golf, rural activities such as walking and cycling, community craft villages, farm visits, gardening, and relaxation while the rural infrastructure and community's capabilities are limited. As such, researching and applying certain level/ models of community participation and social capital can ensure the success of a sustainable rural tourism development. Additionally, further research on community participation should be considered well within the tourism life cycle and development stages in term of Exploration, Involvement, Development, Consolidation, Stagnation, Rejuvenation, Decline.

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Contributors*: Dr Trinh Thi Thu: Director, Center for Economics Research, Institute of Social Sciences of Central region, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences*

Corresponding Author: *Dr Trinh Thi Thu. Email:* trinhthudng@gmail.com

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IS 'VIRTUAL' THE NEW 'REALITY' FOR THE EVENTS INDUSTRY?

Amy O'Connor & Wendy Sealy
University of Chichester, UK

Abstract

The corona virus (covid-19) has had an unprecedented impact on the tourism, events, and hospitality industries. To date the direct and indirect cumulative economic impacts are still unknown and will be difficult to quantify. As of March 2020, the events industry had already lost £10 bn due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic (UFI, 2020). Event industry revenues for 2020 represented only 28% of the revenues recorded in the previous year. 52% of companies faced reduced profits and 30% of businesses recorded a loss of more than 50% (UFI, 2021). Furthermore, 17% of event and exhibition businesses permanently ceased trading during 2020 and 126,000 jobs were lost during the same period (Conference-News, 2020). Covid-19 has irrupted the events industry resulting in businesses adapting and innovating to survive.

Keywords: Corona Virus, Impacts, Tourism, Events, Hospitality, Business Innovation

Introduction: The New Normal

The covid-19 pandemic brought about an unprecedented structural transformation on MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences & Exhibitions) events unrecorded in history. The sector has had to find new and innovative ways to engage with audiences. The application of technological communications software to produce events online has been a life-saviour and provided the answer to mitigating the restrictions placed on large gatherings and a ban on international travel (Seraphin, 2020). With the use of already existing information technologies such as 'Zoom', 'Vimeo' and 'Splash' many congresses, conferences and meetings were able to convert to virtual delivery rather quickly. Virtual events became the 'new normal' (Madray, 2020) as the pandemic went on for longer than anticipated. It soon became clear that virtual events would not be a short-term solution and event professionals would need to think more strategically about how they would compete in the virtual events market in the long term.

Project co-ordinator for an event company in the south of England explained that the company invested in virtual software which, whilst costly, has enabled them to provide exceptional virtual events for their clients with outstanding feedback. Organisations who rapidly adopted virtual technologies and platforms were able to leverage their resources most effectively to achieve a competitive advantage during the pandemic (Aventri, 2021). This source also revealed that they sold their office to relocate to a smaller site since management discovered their employees are productive working from at home. This strategic move enabled the business to become more profitable by reducing the fixed mortgage cost of the office and eliminating office overheads such as heating and electricity. This UK company use the money saved to invest in specialist employees and equipment that help to achieve a resource-based competitive advantage in virtual event delivery (Porter, 1998).

Virtual Events

The rise of corporate events since Covid-19 has been driven by the virtual events market which is expected to grow by £200.2 bn between 2021 and 2025 (Technavio, 2021). Virtual delivery costs approximately 75% less than face-to-face events (Aventri, 2021) since office overheads, venue hire and travel expenses are eliminated (Welch *et al*, 2010). Informants commented that virtual events have enabled them to minimise expenditure. Cost and time savings are a significant factor for businesses' choice to use virtual communication over face-to-face (Padalinskaya, 2013). Therefore, the combination of market growth, cost and time reduction suggests the continuation of virtual events as a strategic direction for organisations to become more profitable in the future.

Virtual events are also advantageous to sponsors, clients and event companies as they heighten brand exposure due to their potential to reach a wider global audience (Harrison, 2020). The strategic future use of virtual events is extensive. Virtual events can be recorded to extend consumer access (Dern, 2020), and recordings can be used for future marketing purposes (Roos *et al*, 2020). This event executive commented: 'There has been a high uptake of views on recorded events which can be tracked to measure the success of the event and sponsorship'. They also claimed that recordings are used as a marketing tool to encourage attendance for future virtual events. All respondents agreed that they had seen an increase in sponsorship since switching to virtual events, suggesting they are strategically better for receiving sponsorship. Another informant commented that virtual events have seen a rise in delegate numbers with one face-to-face attendee to every four virtual attendees, therefore sponsors benefit from being exposed to a wider audience.

Research Findings

However, can virtual events replace face-to-face encounters in the long term as a sustainable alternative? What this research has discovered, so far, is that an essential quality of any event is the engagement and interaction that occurs (Berridge, 2007), however, this, alongside 'screen fatigue' are key issues facing virtual products (Foramitti *et al*, 2021). According to this source:

…. it is clear that virtual events do not guarantee the same levels of engagement as face-to-face events. The attentiveness levels fluctuate throughout the event, often dropping to 50% at some points as people multitask between checking emails and listening to what is being said….

Staying concentrated throughout a virtual event is a challenge. This reflects the experience of many teleworkers who are currently confined, in that virtual communication can be more exhausting than face-to-face interaction. The intensive use of computer technologies as a substitute for face-to-face experiences is not the best solution in the long term, because attendees cannot be expected to sit in front of a computer for hours and days which in itself will not be good for the health and wellbeing of participants (Hessel, 2016). This could be improved by changing the programming and extending the event over a longer period of time. What is also needed is a different approach to designing events. To keep audiences engaged 'event planners would need to become 'event producers' and utilise the technology available to enhance the virtual experiences. Television production practice and skills such as presenting, hosting, colour commentary, Q & As, expert interviews and other fillers like 'behind the scenes' stories will also become necessary to maintain the interest of audiences (Sealy & O'Connor, 2021). Attention would need to be paid to camera angles, props, lighting, hair, make up and wardrobe. Skills development and training would need to shift away from the traditional logistical and operational aspects to an understanding of audience psychology and more creative use of technology for advance production quality. More branded experiences with interesting transitions, customized graphics, multi-video feeds, advanced layouts, dynamic backgrounds, virtual green and breakout rooms and changing environments would be necessary to compete in the virtual events market.
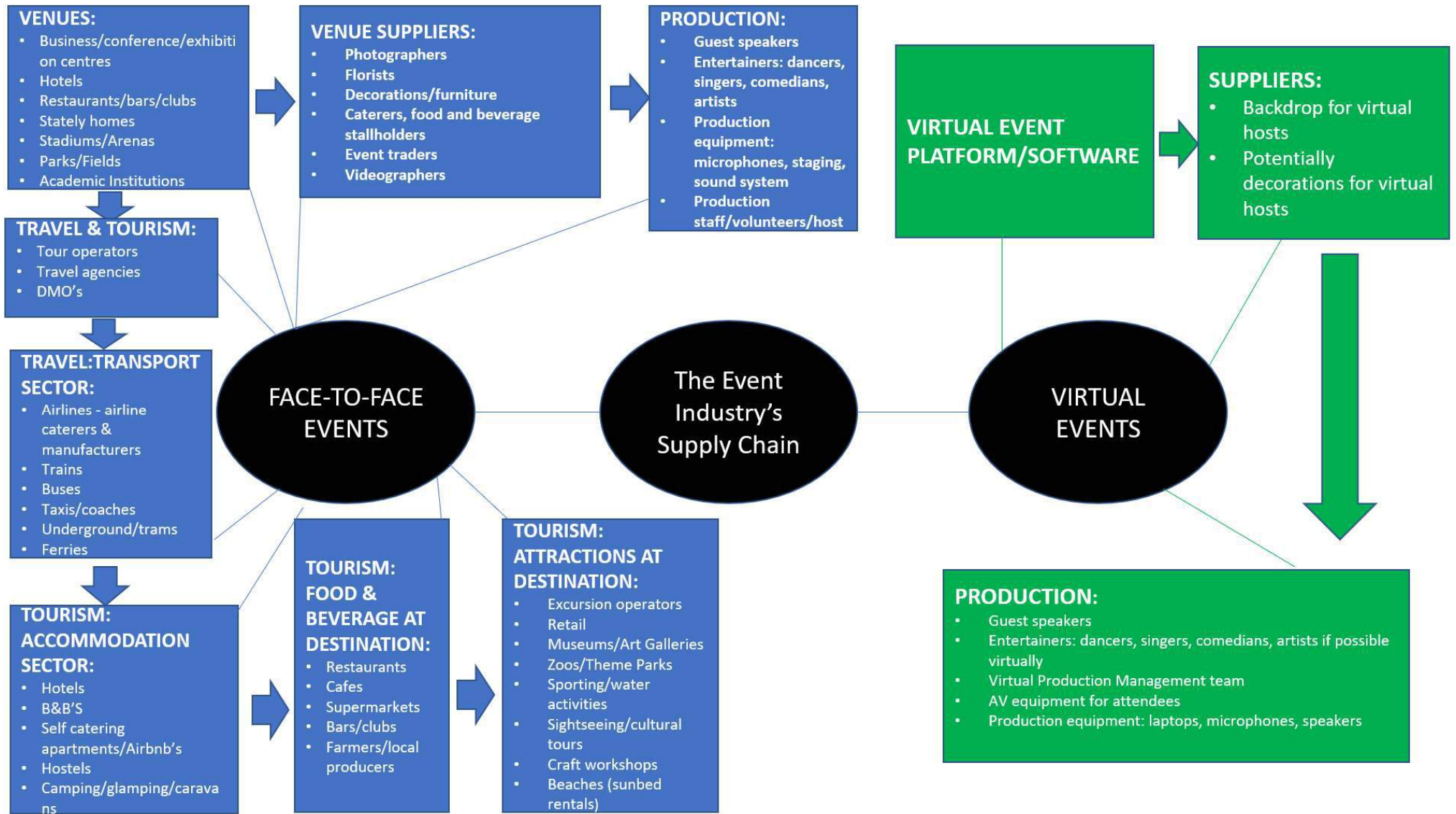
Discussion

As virtual events became more common there is the added expectation of more immersive audience experiences and more spectacular and professional productions. High end virtual platforms have offered solutions through their interactive features (Copans, 2020). More spectacular events are now achieved through the use of sophisticated technologies, some from the gaming industry, like 'Twitch' and others like Restream, Touchcast, Ecamm, Teevid, virtual reality and alternative reality technologies and others (Keenan, 2020). However, some informants claimed they experienced significantly low conversion rates in their virtual products than with their face-to-face events. This could be due to marketing teams' lack of experience in marketing virtual events. Training, re-training and up-skilling of staff in the marketing and promotion of virtual events will be an important part of the transition to this new event genre. Tactical promotional measures should be put in place to encourage attendance such as WhatsApp, email and text reminders; and incentives such as discounts for future virtual events (Solaris, 2020) or credit-card charges for missed attendance.

Environmental activists would be pleased to note that one of the major advantages of a virtual conference is that it reduces the carbon footprint and although emissions associated with IT infrastructures are not negligible (Houston and Reay, 2011) the impact on the environment is significant since travel is not involved. However, the virtual event increases participation and are more accessible for those who do not wish to, or cannot afford to travel, eliminating the need for travel facilitates and attractions. Since the price per participant of virtual events is much lower than for physical conferences, this enables the participation of people with limited budgets from various disciplines, including non-scientists such as journalists or practitioners. However, there are 'relationship risks' associated with remote working and engagement. Working from at home affects knowledge sharing and teamwork amongst employees (Bolisani *et al*, 2020). This also impacts the client/supplier relationship since employees may not understand or be working towards the same goal (Po-Chedley, 2001). Small coffee shops, retail establishments and transport also depend on the trade from workers who travel to work. The negative impacts from this economic fallout could negate the positive environmental impacts caused from the reduction in travel, not least to mention the social cost in peripheral destinations and those overly dependent on tourism or the movement of people.

If the surge of virtual events continues, this could have a devastating impact on the survival of the travel, tourism, and events supply chain, since virtual delivery has eliminated most suppliers and sectors associated with face-to-face events' (Sarkis, 2020). Figure 1 shows the interconnectedness and interdependency of the tourism/events supply chain. The face-to-face events supply chain is extensive including destinations, hotels, airports, airlines, taxi, coach and train companies; decorators, live experience producers, actors, entertainers, crafters, retail outlets, restaurants, attractions and the list goes on.

Figure 1: A Comparison Web Diagram, Showing the Differences Between the Supply Chain of Face-To-Face Events and Virtual Events.

VENUES:
- Business/conference/exhibition centres
- Hotels
- Restaurants/bars/clubs
- Stately homes
- Stadiums/Arenas
- Parks/Fields
- Academic Institutions

VENUE SUPPLIERS:
- Photographers
- Florists
- Decorations/furniture
- Caterers, food and beverage stallholders
- Event traders
- Videographers

PRODUCTION:
- Guest speakers
- Entertainers: dancers, singers, comedians, artists
- Production equipment: microphones, staging, sound system
- Production staff/volunteers/host

VIRTUAL EVENT PLATFORM/SOFTWARE

SUPPLIERS:
- Backdrop for virtual hosts
- Potentially decorations for virtual hosts

TRAVEL & TOURISM:
- Tour operators
- Travel agencies
- DMO's

TRAVEL:TRANSPORT SECTOR:
- Airlines - airline caterers & manufacturers
- Trains
- Buses
- Taxis/coaches
- Underground/trams
- Ferries

FACE-TO-FACE EVENTS

The Event Industry's Supply Chain

VIRTUAL EVENTS

TOURISM: ACCOMMODATION SECTOR:
- Hotels
- B&B'S
- Self catering apartments/Airbnb's
- Hostels
- Camping/glamping/caravans

TOURISM: FOOD & BEVERAGE AT DESTINATION:
- Restaurants
- Cafes
- Supermarkets
- Bars/clubs
- Farmers/local producers

TOURISM: ATTRACTIONS AT DESTINATION:
- Excursion operators
- Retail
- Museums/Art Galleries
- Zoos/Theme Parks
- Sporting/water activities
- Sightseeing/cultural tours
- Craft workshops
- Beaches (sunbed rentals)

PRODUCTION:
- Guest speakers
- Entertainers: dancers, singers, comedians, artists if possible virtually
- Virtual Production Management team
- AV equipment for attendees
- Production equipment: laptops, microphones, speakers

Prior to the pandemic event organisations were frequently attending overnight face-to-face events domestically and internationally, which entailed the use of venues, suppliers, hotels, transport, and restaurants (as shown in figure 1) that virtual events do not require. There were 1.48 million conferences and meetings in the UK in 2018, attended by 95.3 million delegates which generated £18.3 bn of direct expenditure for the supply chain (BVEP, 2020). Revenue is likely to reduce significantly if virtual events continue, thus impacting the sustainability of the supply chain.

The airline sector is a case in point. The coronavirus restrictions limited business travel and consequently airlines worldwide saw an approximate revenue loss of £300bn in 2020 (Statista, 2021).

Table 1: Airlines impacted by COVID-19

Flybe (UK): A British regional airline that operated about 40% of domestic flights in the UK, ran out of cash and declared bankruptcy on Thursday 5th March 2020.
Trans States Airlines (US): A Missouri-based regional airline, plans to consolidate operations with ExpressJet Airlines – both United's regional carriers.
Compass Airlines (US): A regional carrier for American Airlines, and owned by Trans States Holdings, Compass shut down in April as America had to cut capacity by 80% by May and thus, has less of demand for contract airlines.
Virgin Australia (Australia): entered voluntary administration, the Australian equivalent of Chapter 11 bankruptcy, on Tuesday 21st April 2020.
Avianca (Colombia): One of Latin America's largest and oldest airlines, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in May.

(Slotnick, 2020 cited in Loo *et al*, 2021)

Business passengers purchase higher fare tickets and ancillaries than other travellers and therefore can drive up to 75% of profit for major airlines (Borko *et al*, 2020). Business travel is an 'endangered species' that is unlikely to reach even 40% of revenue seen in 2019 (CAPA, 2021). When people are not travelling it impacts the entire tourism/events supply chain. This is due to virtual technology substituting business conferences and events for greater convenience and cost cutting (CAPA,2021). It is estimated that 37% of office workers will regularly work from home post the pandemic (CIPD, 2020). Consequently, airlines would have to change their business models and innovate new ways to increase revenue (Bauer *et al*, 2020).

Business travellers spend on average three times more than leisure visitors at the destination (Davidson, 2021). 49% of business travellers extend corporate trips to spend leisure time in a destination thereby increasing the multiplier effect of the tourism spend (Booking.com (2017) and 70% of 25-35-year-olds desire to extend business trips for leisure purposes (Hilton Hotels, 2019). These extended stays benefit food and beverage, retail, and attraction businesses at destinations, thus the continuation of virtual events will have a significant negative impact on the entire tourism supply chain. Stakeholders at peripheral destinations will be severely affected, particularly small communities and entrepreneurs who are over dependent on tourists. Destination marketing companies will need to devise strategies to lure face-to-face events back to their destination, maybe through incentives and various subsidies. Already some destinations are looking at alternative forms of tourism and penetrating non-traditional markets and tourist's types. For instance, Barbados is pursuing tourists from Africa and the Middle East and establishing air lift between the destination and countries in these regions.

66% of event professionals are increasingly concerned of virtual events' low barriers to entry (Evnt, 2020). One informant explained: 'virtual events are becoming saturated and offering something new is becoming harder.' 96% of event professionals do not think virtual events have

the potential to replace face-to-face events and 68% of event professionals are investing in hybrid event technology (Bizzabo, 2020). All informants agreed that face-to-face events are best for networking and revealed their companies are planning both domestic and international hybrid events post the pandemic. Hybrid events add value by providing new content delivery options to reach wider delegate numbers (Nillson, 2020), but attendees may join virtually due to convenience or tightened corporate budgets which will continue to impact the supply chain (Porpigila *et al,* 2020).

However, the biggest drawback of virtual events is the limited networking and social interaction between participants (Reshef *et al,* 2020) with 68% of event marketers agreeing that providing networking opportunities is challenging (Bizzabo, 2020). Since human contact, emotions and affections are almost impossible to replicate online (Porpiglia, 2020), in-person events are the most efficient way of doing business (Denstadli *et al*, 2013) as they allow industry experts to network before, during and after events (Denstadli *et al*, 2013). Consequently, businesses will have to travel to successfully build business relationships (Räsänen, *et al*, 2010), thus saving the supply chain. Although virtual events may continue to grow in frequency, and in importance as a revenue stream for as long as the pandemic survives, in the long term they will more likely be in addition to and not a substitute for live event experiences (Sealy,2020).

The return to face-to-face events will depend more on the willingness of individuals to travel than the willingness of event organisers to return to venues at home and abroad. The Meetings Industry Association's (2021) study of 250 venues, hotels and suppliers found that 90% claim that without government support they will not survive beyond the next two years after average revenue losses of more than £2,560,000. Moreover, if events remain virtual, the supply chain will be directly impacted, and venue owners may need to sell their buildings to avoid bankruptcy.

Indeed, while government policy will play a part, businesses at the destinations, hotels and attractions would need to convince travellers that it is safe to travel with the implementation of safe hygiene and health protocols. Already we are seeing the use of artificial intelligence and other robotics in the hospitality industry in the provision of concierge, housekeeping, food, and other services (Kim, Kwak & Kim, 2021). Menus are now available for guests to order via a mobile device and contactless check-in is in use in various hotels across the world. Other innovations and development of technologies at the destination would be tantamount to the delivery of events. Higher bandwidth Wi-Fi will be needed for those who may want to travel to the destination but join a conference socially distanced from their hotel room or some other space. Hospitality businesses would need to invest widely, not only in technology but in the re-training and up-skilling of their staff. Greater levels of personalisation would eliminate mass consumption gatherings and person-to-person contact. Consumer behaviour and preferences will be the driving force behind the return to face-to-face events and travel.

Conclusion

In the future virtual events can be an alternative source of revenue and an adjunct to meeting in-person for those who are unable to travel. It is unlikely that virtual events will replace meeting in-person in the future. What is more likely is a move to hybrid events with events continuing to be delivered for a face-to-face audience with an adjunct virtual version from which revenue can be earned. As Goldblatt (2011) stated, when humans meet it stimulates the human hormone 'pheromones', the feel-good hormone, which is activated when people come together face-to-face. Consequently, virtual events will grow in frequency and importance as they provide an additional revenue stream for event organisers, but they will be in addition to, and not a substitute for, live event experiences in the long term. Virtual events could, however, present new opportunities as destination marketing tools to lure people back to the destination; and destination marketers would be wise to work with event producers to formulate the right promotional content that can promote the destination during the webcast. Events are a global industry, worth trillions annually

(Events Industry Council & Oxford Economics, 2018), and the recovery of the industry will take years and will require the co-operation of all stakeholders at the local and international level. It is expected that the World Tourism Travel Council will take the lead in mobilising all stakeholders in the industry's full recovery.

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Contributors: *Amy O'Connor & Dr Wendy Sealy, University of Chichester, UK*

Corresponding Author: *Dr Wendy Sealy, University of Chichester, UK. Email: W.Sealy@chi.ac.uk*