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A photograph of two people on stilts in the ocean at sunset. The sky is a vibrant mix of orange, red, and purple. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright glow. The water is dark with some ripples. The people are silhouetted against the bright sky. One person is sitting on a high stilt, and the other is sitting on a lower stilt. They are both holding long poles that extend across the water.

JOURNAL
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SUSTAINABILITY

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PEACE TOURISM IN POST PANDEMIC ERA

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Abstract

Nepal is the land of peace emblem lord Buddha. Peace tourism is the tourism in absence of war or conflicts. At this point of time Nepal is in post war era but fighting with COVID-19 pandemic. New days new hopes are coming that Nepal must be able to manage post pandemic era of peace tourism development. To determine the concept, application and future of peace tourism in post pandemic era the paper has been developed. The study has adopted the qualitative method. It is a review paper is to analyzes the scope and development procedure in tourism industry of Nepal and try to provide answers for the recovery of tourism in Nepal. the study has reviewed six prominent articles about peace tourism of Nepal. In conclusion there are many jargons about Buddhist tourism. Integration of Buddhists philosophy in peaceful tourism can be defined as Peace Tourism in Nepal of course it has to highlight the history of different wars and conflicts of Nepal and Lumbini. At this time Nepal government must be able to impose the peace philosophy of Buddha in tourism to attract global tourists with changing environment, mask and physical distance with complete assurance of security of tourists. In the name of Buddha Nepal can promote Yoga, Meditation, Religious, and Spiritual tourism in Lumbini as well as in Nepal.

Keywords: Buddhist Philosophy, Peace Tourism, Post Pandemic Era

Introduction

Tourism industry christened as a “fickle” industry, “seasonal” industry, “peace” industry, one of the “largest” industries, and so on (Ulak, 2020). Tourism has to play a significant role to uplift the living status of people in specific tourism areas worldwide. Tourism has potential for creating jobs and encourages income-generating activities and it also leads to infrastructure development if the stakeholders are responsible. In Nepal, tourism had uplifted the socio-economical condition of the locals and given them ample opportunity to better lives but the COVID has ruined the industry. It has created path towards the elimination of poverty and has significantly contributed to overall development of the country. It is also one of the major sources of foreign exchange earning of the country. However, due to the impact of COVID-19, tourism has suffered unprecedented setback, and its effect can be seen similar on global economy. It has rendered millions of people unemployed and huge investments have frozen and unable to generate business and move the economy. Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) had adversely affected different sectors, including, tourism in 2020. It had compelled tourism stakeholders to follow additional health, hygiene, and safety measures. But tourism is one of the crucial sectors to develop the least developed countries, like Nepal. It was prioritized by the government to generate money and enhance the local livelihood more sustainably (KC, 2021). The movement of persons can be further clarified by categorizing them into “excursionists” and “foreign tourists” (Bhola-Paul, 2015).

Tourism is one of the world’s largest and fastest growing industries. It acts as an engine for development through foreign exchange earnings and the creation of direct and indirect employment. Peace tourism plays a vital role to uplift the living status of people in specific areas worldwide. Tourism can improve government-to-government, government-to-private citizens and citizen-to-citizens’ relationships. Peace tourism is defined as a phenomenon where every tourist’s activity should be linked with peace as the aim for the visitors: locals, domestic or international visitors (Medhakar & Haq, 2018). The relationship between tourism and peace

has been endorsed by a number of institutions. Such initiatives highlight the co-relation and causal relationship between tourism and peace and support the theory that tourism can be helpful in mitigating conflict and accelerating peace. The relationship between tourism and peace has also been endorsed by a number of international initiatives (e.g., The UN Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, International Bureau of Social Tourism in 1963, The Helsinki Accord in 1975, World Tourism Organization's Tourism Bill of Rights & Tourist Code in 1985, United Nations World Tourism Organization's Sustainable Tourism-Eliminating Poverty 2003, etc.) (Upadhyaya, 2011).

Peace is a vital and most cherished dream of humanity; it is a state that not only indicates the absence of direct violence but also sustains peaceful relationships among all levels and segments of society and between society and nature. 'Peace' the word itself have a great harmony, stress-free, security and calmness. In this sense if we develop tourism sectors in post covid era as a peace tourism which helps to heal the suffering parts of industry. Long-lasting peace and security are vital for a sustainable tourism sector. As tourism is a beneficiary of peace and peace brings hope for travel boom, tourism reciprocally has a key role in peace building by transforming itself in sustainable and participatory forms (Upreti & Upadhyaya, 2010).

Problem Statement

Global pandemic of COVID 19 has had a severe effect in various developing economies, including Nepal itself, as it has seriously engulfed the strongest economies of the world. The tourism industry globally has been paralyzed, and it will take long ahead to get the industry back on track. There are challenges to revive this industry and ensure its tremendous contribution to revitalizing the ailed tourism sector. To drive this situation more efficiently and tactfully, the need for good governance through its leading agencies seem to be much demanding and prevailing (Neupane, 2021). Governments are planning to provide the relief packages to the hardest-hit sectors but seem challenging as not a single sector remains untouched and bothered. The tourism sector being the highest contributor to almost all the economies, in one or another way or form, the relief and resilience packages are to be designed and offered by the governments.

Gautam Buddha who represents as the symbol of peace. Nepal is a beautiful country of having wide possibility in tourism, superior reason is the land of birth place of Buddha and country of Mountains. Tourism is a sensitive industry after cracking the industry due to COVID tourism can be developed as the based on the peace tourism applying Buddhist philosophy. Buddhism and its philosophy now have a global following. The Buddha seeks a middle way between the extremes of dogmatism and skepticism, emphasizing personal experience, a pragmatic attitude, and the use of critical thinking toward all types of knowledge, it explores the right and effective solutions. This study analyses the challenges faced by tourism industry post COVID era in Nepal and try to provide answers for the recovery of tourism in Nepal (Shivakoti, 2021) post pandemic era of peace tourism. The study presents the stature of tourism sectors in Nepal and its contribution to National economy.

In Nepal, the travel and tourism sector contribute to 8 percent of GDP, 6.7 percent of total employment, and it generates 6 percent of the total foreign exchange earnings. Nepal Tourism Board estimates that loss of 85.2 billion USD monthly from tourism sector only and three in five employees lost their jobs due to COVID-19 in Nepal. The "Visit Nepal 2020" campaign had cancelled which aimed to attract 2 million tourists in the country this year. Tourism sector has already suffered a huge loss, and it is going to take quite to restore. The government should form special task force to create economic response package that will support Nepalese, their job, their businesses from the global impact of COVID-19, and to ready the economy to recover

(Panthhe, 2021). There are different sections, sets and subsets in Buddhism, entire all of them follow or pretend to follow the teaching of Gautam Buddha (Leve, 2015). There are also shifts in research priorities arising out of debates in tourism studies, and in surrounding areas of study and established disciplines (Meyer-Arendt, 2004). Tourism is rapidly growing in Nepal which can be largest economic industry for the intake of foreign currency of proper infrastructure development is maintained and security is generated (Karmacharya, 2013, p. 22). The fact is that it is necessary to find out the solutions to increase the tourists in Lumbini or in other Buddhists sites.

Objectives and Method

Every situation every moment and every activity have its own importance and possibilities. 'Everything teaches us something new' likewise from this epidemic, we got chance to learn what are the opportunities of peaceful sustainable tourism strategies? What can be done to overcome this pandemic and contribute to the sustainability of destinations? Why is a sustainable solution so hard to achieve in the tourism industry? What can be the role of circular economy post COVID due to tourism industry? are the specific objectives of the study. Methodologically it is the review of secondary sources to present the strategy and sustainability of Peace Tourism in Post Pandemic Era. The references are used as the list of data sources.

Results

The Nepalese tourism sector has problem on largely remains labour-intensive, political instability and many social issues and due to insufficient investment in quality infrastructure, technology as well as current types of pandemics and these kind of epidemic effects on tourism sectors. Even in this background, the tourism sector contributes a significant share of GDP and employment in Nepal. This paper assists to know what are the effective elasticities to various tourism indicators helps to understand sustainability in tourism in post covid era tourism sector and make sound policy inferences. The travel and tourism industry could not avoid the negative impacts and consequences of these events (Berki, 1986). Moreover, some of these events manifested the vulnerability of tourism both on global and regional levels. Therefore, this fact necessitates the research and study of the relationship between security issues and tourism, including the creation of a new, up to date definition of the notion "security and safety in tourism" (Kunwar & Ghimire, 2012) in this pandemic period.

Discussions

Concept of Peace Tourism

Peace tourism is directly related to dark or war tourism. The absence of war is peace. Buddhism is in present context is not the absence of war however Nepal has recently (2006) turned peaceful country from Maoist insurgency. It would be very useful if then governments were able to develop and promote the significance of people's war to the world. Luis D' Amore propounded the concept of peace tourism. Peace tourism is another phenomenon growing as unique genre of tourism. Definitions of peace tourism vary; however, the core aspect of peace tourism is to realize inner peace and work for world peace through visiting places. Thus, Buddhist tourism can be defined as a dimension of peace tourism. Medhakar & Haq (2019) say, "Peace tourism is defined as a phenomenon where every tourist's activity should be linked with peace as the aim for the visitors: locals, domestic or international visitors (Medhakar & Haq, 2018). Louis D'Amore chaired the First Global Conference: Tourism - A Vital Force for Peace in 1988, attracting more than 1,000 delegates to Canada to discuss the role of the tourism industry in promoting global understanding, trust, and world peace (Litvin, 1998), (D'Amore,

1988). A peace tourism can be an extraordinary example if India and Pakistan agree on Kashmir.

(Lollis, 2014; in Karki, 2018, p. 98) defines “peace tourism as travelling to experience places that authentically represent peace stories and peacemakers of the past and present. Peace activities require varying degrees of planning and preparation but peace places, primarily monuments and museums, are static and available to the tourist most of the time.” The writer Lollis suggests peace as a destination because, according to him, historical or mythical places of peacemakers can be best choices for peace tourism. Exploring the connection between peace and tourism is going on in academia (Karki, 2018).

In a book “International Hand-Book on Tourism and Peace” Peter Van Den Dungen’s paper entitled ‘Peace tourism’, mentions of cities which suffered greatly in war and subsequently resolved to dedicate themselves to its prevention, called ‘peace city’. Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Flemish city, German cities of Osnabrück and Münster, The Hague- ‘international city of peace and justice, Geneva- Mecca for peace tourists, Oslo where every Nobel Peace Prize is awarded, New York have become important for peace tourism etc. Although there are undoubtedly points of convergence, at times war tourism and peace tourism may have little in common, and appeal to largely different publics.

Edwards W. Lollis’s ‘peace as a destination: peace tourism around the world’ defines peace tourism as travelling to experience places that authentically represent peace stories and peacemakers of the past and present. Peace activities require varying degrees of planning and preparation but peace places, primarily monuments and museums, are static and available to the tourist most of the time. America and Canada contain one hundred peace monuments that ‘authentically represents’ ten different peace stories and at least 36 notable historic peacemakers. Many cities and corridors with concentrations of peace monuments are sufficient to sustain peace tourism (Karki, 2018). In that way Nepal can do but we need capable tourism planners.

Peace Tourism in Nepal

Peace is related with war or in other words, peace is absence of war. The absence of war means post-conflict tourism of the destination. Nepal was in long transitional period of 10 years of Maoists’ people’s war. 17000 people has to miss their life. Immediate after the peace agreements, if then governments were able to promote the significance of war through the global peace tourism it has missed the opportunity. Lord Buddha is an emblem of global peace. Nepal along with Lumbini is the land of Buddha, Yoga, Meditation, Religion and Spiritualism. It is the land of Buddha and peace. Meditation tourism may contribute to whole tourism industry in several ways. Meditation tourism may breed peaceful individuals who will inspire many people to visit places for meditation purpose. This can begin with meditation tourism to Lumbini. Therefore, this study suggests the stakeholders to build meditation centres where accommodation, teachers, facilities and required interpretations are available. This tourism helps to establish some ethical values such as non-violence. Buddha suggested non-violence as first precept but in Lumbini, there are many slaughterhouses. This is not ethical according to Buddhism. Meditation practitioners will avoid non-vegetarian food; killing animals in Lumbini will slowly come to end. As people find peace of mind during meditation, they will be ready to pay the meditation centres (Sharma N. P., 2020). Therefore, Peace tourism or Buddhist tourism can be used synonymously.

Peace Tourism in Lumbini

According to 2011 census conducted by Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), Lumbini Sanskritik Municipality was inhabited by mostly the people of Muslim caste with total population of 23,568. Top five castes of people in Lumbini Sanskritik Municipality are Muslim (23,568), Yadav (9,816), Lodh (5,732), Chamar/Harijan/Ram (4,569) and Kahar (3,773) with total population of 47,458, which forms 65.46 percent out of total population of 72,497 in Lumbini Sanskritik Municipality. The land of Buddha is without local Buddhists. It means that entire Muslim, Buddhists, Vedic are living harmoniously. It is a symbol of peace tourism as well. Lumbini as a birthplace of Lord Buddha, a foundation of peace in the world and the heart of the Buddhist circuit has been severely impacted in the arrival of domestic and international tourists since the coronavirus outbreak. According to Lumbini Development Trust (LTD), about 13,107 international, 13,978 Indian and 67,942 Nepali tourists have visited Lumbini in January 2020, which was 48,060 less than in January 2019. The coronavirus had resulted in the closing-down of the tourism activities in Lumbini that has affected the livelihood of many people engaged in tour and travel agencies, hotels and restaurants, transportation companies, tourism institutions, and other businesses related to tourism in Lumbini and its premises (Kunwar B. B., 2021).

Future of Peace Tourism

In Nepal, the tourism sector is an important source of revenue and jobs. According to the Ministry of Tourism there are 129 Star Hotels and 1151 Non-Star Hotels which adds up to 43999 total beds. Similarly, there are 3508 Travel Agencies and 2649 Trekking Agencies. An average tourist spends 12.4 days in 2018 and 12.6 days in 2017 in Nepal the three-year development plan (2016-2018) of the government had aimed to increase the length of stay of foreigners to 14 days by 2018, which ranged from eight to 13.5 days in the past. In 2018, the sector employed 573,000 workers (8 per cent of total employment) and accounted for 26 per cent of total exports. Three-quarters of workers in the tourism sector are in informal jobs, leaving them with no protection and no income as the sector has come to a total stop (Shivakoti, 2021).

Over 4126 tour guides, over 16248 trekking guides, over two hundred river guides along with several hundred naturalists and workers in service industry lost their livelihood due to the pandemic. Similarly, there are over 65 Tourist Vehicle Service providers that employ over four thousand drivers and helpers who are also currently jobless. It is a clear understanding that even when the other sectors will start operating after the situation is under control, tourism along with all the service/hospitality industries will be the last to recover. This situation has rendered millions of people unemployed globally and thousands in Nepal. The government of Nepal or any other authority has not shown any interest whatsoever to compensate or to support these informal workers. In several developed countries like the USA, informal workers received benefit cheque from the government allowing them to maintain their lives. In other countries like Bhutan, they were given alternate jobs so that they can earn their livelihood. But so far in Nepal no concrete step has been taken to provide any form of relief to them. Some of the people involved in tourism have started alternative work, helped by family and friends but not all are lucky enough (Shivakoti, 2021). For the recovery of tourism industry, tourism sub-sectors' employees need extensive trainings and orientations to maintain highest standard of sanitation and hygiene. There should be strong monitoring mechanism for the actual implementation of the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for sanitation and hygiene guided by the protocol in the field, if any breaches or gaps are identified then immediate corrective actions must be taken, it is very essential to keep the employees in discipline to mitigate and eliminate the chance of coronavirus transmission. Hence, this practice will boost up the

confidence level of flaccid travellers and motivates them to travel once again. There will be a behavioural change of both the hosts and the guests as the footprint of the pandemic which will be experienced in tourism sectors in post COVID. Avoiding contact and social distancing; wearing mask and PPEs will decrease the charm of hospitality. Scholars are advocating tourism will revive through the domestic tourist movement and gradually international tourist mobility will help provide oxygen and spectrum to the tourism industry which has gone to coma being a patient of COVID-19 (Ulak, 2020).

The COVID-19

Covid-19 appeared in Wuhan, a city in China, in December 2019. Although health officials are still tracing the exact source of this new coronavirus, early hypotheses thought it may be linked to a seafood market in Wuhan, China. Some people who visited the market developed viral pneumonia caused by the new coronavirus (Panthhe, 2021). The world is facing an unprecedented global health, social and economic emergency with the COVID-19 pandemic. Travel and tourism are among the most affected sectors with airplanes on the ground, hotels closed, and travel restrictions put in the place in virtually all countries around the world. The COVID-19 pandemic, the greatest global challenge faced since World War II, has spread across 213 economies, infecting over 36 million people with more than one million deaths.

On 31 December 2019, WHO was informed of cases pneumonia of unknown cause in Wuhan city, China. A novel coronavirus was identified as the cause by Chinese authorities on 7 January 2020 and was temporarily named “2019-nCoV”. Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. Coronavirus is a type of virus. There are many different kinds, and some caused disease. Covid-19 was first identified as a severe disease-causing atypical pneumonia, accompanied by fever, cough and sometimes a range of other symptoms (Neupane, 2021). The name “coronavirus” was invented in 1968; appeared to be similar to a “corona”- like or crown-like structure when observed through the electron microscope. Thus, the COVID-19 crisis is not the first situation in the world as numerous coronaviruses were encountered in the past years causing serious effects in humans and animals. On January 12, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) initially named “coronavirus” as 2019-novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) and on February 11, 2020, officially titled the disease as coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the 2019-nCoV outbreak to be a public health emergency of international concern as well as a pandemic on January 30, 2020, and March 11, 2020, respectively (Kunwar B. B., 2021).

The COVID-19 has been proven fatal to the world’s tourism sector, including Nepal. The tourist arrivals in Nepal fell by almost 73 percent in March 2020. Nepal Rastra Bank on year-on-year analysis has mentioned that tourist arrival in FY2019/20 is expected to fall by 31.6 percent. The tourism-based sectors such as hotels and restaurants and transportation are expected to hit hard by this pandemic. Similarly, the Central Bureau of Statistics projects a contraction in gross value addition of hotel and restaurant sector and transportation sector by 16.30 percent by 2.45 percent respectively. In 2020, the visit Nepal campaign was aimed at bringing 2 million tourists in the country by the end of the year. But the campaign was called off at the end of March due to the massive outbreak of the corona virus. The tourism sector is likely to lose 85 thousand direct jobs and 36 thousand indirect jobs amounting to a total job loss of 121 thousand (Shivakoti, 2021).

Economic Sustainability through Peace Tourism

Peace tourism expresses the importance of having “positive peace. To tone down the pandemic effects and promote tourism as a sustainable industry, there are three main sectors that should be functioning and coordinated together. Tourism provides the opportunity for communities to generate income even if they are “poor economically, but rich in culture”. It has the potential to provide direct and indirect employment for a large assortment of people in various social strata including part time and seasonal job opportunities for many people. Tourism can also provide supplemental income generation to people who already have other jobs. Taken as a whole, this large web of employment opportunities could generate income for multiple layers in society. Income generation leads to the increase of per capita income and it is one of the preventive factors that mitigate the civil conflict escalation. tourist projects will become beneficial not only for tourists but also for the local people. Another major objective of peace tourism is to cross ethnic, race and regional boundaries. This actually relates with the positive peace theory’s suggestion about global civilization which aimed at improving global partnerships. Peace tourism is not just an income-generating industry, but also a great platform for enhancing positiveness (Herath, 2010). When the storm passes and the dust settles, whether the new world will emerge stronger in the post COVID era.

“Crisis carries risks; it also creates opportunities”. Sustainable effective ability will hinge on our efficiency mitigate the risks while harnessing the opportunities that these social-psychological effects may present the long-term implications of the pandemic are reaching from the economy to governance and from healthcare to education (Chan Ghee Koh, 2020). Using emphasizing personal experience, a pragmatic attitude, and the use of critical thinking towards all types of situations we can get a great solution for sustainability of tourism industry through peace tourism in post covid era.

The COVID-19 outbreak has been considered as the most challenging tragedy that occurred in the world after the 2nd world war. The World Health Organization (WHO) had listed Nepal also as a country with a high-risk zone of COVID-19. The travel restriction and nationwide lockdown implemented by many countries including Nepal have resulted in a stranded traveller’s movement. As the consequences ticket reservation, flight services, transportation, hotel, and restaurants were closed, and several job losses were registered in the tourism sector. The negative effects like fear, threat, frustration, and losing the confidence of tourism entrepreneurs appeared (Badal, 2018). This has brought changes in the tourists’ behaviour and their motivation to travel for the next few years. In Lumbini businesses like lodges, hotels, restaurants, and travel offices were also severely affected by the pandemic. Thus, the tourism sector has been facing serious threats due to the prolonged lockdown and closing of tourism activities than the terror of COVID-19 itself (Kunwar B. B., 2021).

The prominent factors for building resilience in the tourism industry: government response, technology innovation, local belongingness, and consumer and employee confidence. They argue that using such inclusive resilience; the tourism industry may transform into a new global economic order characterized by sustainable tourism, society's well-being, climate action, and the involvement of local communities (Sharma, Thomas, & Paul, 2021). All stakeholders should be prepared to provide quality services including clean healthy environment and advertise tourism with focus on health & hygiene as a given priority to promote domestic tourism and proper management must be done in the tourism sector. They must learn to live with nature as well as develop food banks and wages for the unemployed should be provided (Rana, 2021).

Conclusion

Tourism after the global pandemic is almost in a coma. Tourism entrepreneurs are shifting their business and labourers are working in another field to survive. After the pandemic the tourism will grow slowly. Health issues, economic crisis, Sadness of losing people, depression, uncertainty about the future, instability situation and many other main issues are enduring people due to COVID- 19. The current situation and its expected changes take a social-psychological perspective as well as the potential risks and opportunities arising from three pandemic-attributed effects: depression and mental health issues, domestic violence and nationalism. At this time Nepal government must be able to impose the peace philosophy of Buddha in tourism to attract global tourists with changing environment, mask and physical distance with complete assurance of security of tourists. In the name of Buddha Nepal can promote Yoga, Meditation, Religious, and Spiritual tourism in Lumbini as well as in Nepal. Tourism is not just an income-generating industry but also a great platform for enhancing positive peace.

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IMPLEMENTING A SMART GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE. THE CASE STUDY OF BARCELOS PORTUGAL

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Abstract

Creative tourism offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in experiences that are characteristic of the destinations' cultures. This study main goal is to propose a governance model that might contribute to the sustainable development of Barcelos, as a creative tourist destination, that is part of UNESCO creative cities network. Regarding the research methodology, it was done a literature review on the subject under study, and a primary data collection through semi-structured interviews to ten managers of Destination Management Organizations (DMO), in Portugal. It is argued that the role of stakeholders and DMOs digitization process emerge as key factors to implement a smart governance model in tourist destinations. It might be concluded that Barcelos needs to implement a smart governance structure (including digitization and involving all stakeholders) to achieve this study goal.

Keywords: Governance; Sustainable Development; Destination; Creative Tourism.

Framework

Intangible Cultural Heritage and Creative Tourism

This study main goal is to propose a governance model that might contribute to the sustainable development of Barcelos, as a creative tourist destination, that is part of UNESCO creative cities network. In this sense, it aims at answering to the following research question: what governance model might contribute to the sustainable development of this creative tourist destination?

Barcelos is a territory of Craftspeople, known worldwide for being the birthplace of one of the main symbols of Portuguese tourism, the Rooster of Barcelos (Galo de Barcelos). It is part of the UNESCO creative cities network in the category of Crafts and Folks Art, since 2017. Its Crafts activity is spread across different productions, namely pottery, images, ceramics, embroidery, weaving, wood, iron, and tin, but also other arts and crafts such as leather and contemporary crafts made by creators of potteries and images, which make this territory to be a 'living museum of Crafts and Portuguese Folks Art' (UNESCO, 2017).

Tourism emerges as a potential instrument for the sustainable development of territories. It emerges also as an industry defined by the consumption of visitors, who travel to destinations with the potential to offer them authentic, unique, memorable, and creative experiences. In this sense, it is argued that tourism, if properly planned, might be a tool for the sustainable development of territories. Moreover, it emerges also as an export and job creator industry, contributing to residents' wellbeing (Gonçalves, 2018; Gonçalves & Costa, 2019a, 2019b).

The development of Creative Tourism is part of an innovative approach to tourism, whose main primary input is the intangible cultural heritage and cultures of tourist destinations. In fact, it might offer to visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through in-depth and active participation in characteristic and authentic experiences of tourist destinations (Gonçalves, 2018).

UNESCO (2003; 2006) defines two key concepts within this innovative approach to tourism, namely intangible cultural heritage, and creative tourism. Thus, the concept of intangible cultural heritage refers to practices, representations, expressions, and knowledge, transmitted from generation to generation, created and continuously transformed by communities, depending on the environment and their interaction with nature and history, being heritage because it is transmitted from generation to generation, and being cultural because it provides communities with a sense of identity and continuity, being similar to culture, being intangible because it resides essentially in the human spirit and is transmitted by imitation and immersion through practice, without the need for a location or specific material objects. In fact, Immaterial Cultural Heritage only exists in the present time because the expressions of the past, that are no longer practiced, they belong to History and they might not be Immaterial Cultural Heritage, which is what communities recognize in present time, and it may often be referred as Living Heritage (UNESCO, 2003). In the other hand, Creative Tourism, a new generation of tourism, requires an evolution on the business and institutional level regarding destinations' governance, that should recognize creativity as cities' resources, to offer new opportunities to satisfy visitors' needs, motivations, and interests, which are constantly evolving. Creative Tourism means travelling to have an engaged and authentic experience, including a learning participation in arts, heritage, or a destination special feature, and to connect with residents to create a living culture (UNESCO, 2006).

In this globalization era, visitors are looking for authentic, creative, unique, and memorable experiences in tourist destinations, whose governance is able of creating and offering tourist animation activities. Moreover, destinations' governance should add value to their tourism products, that make visitors dreaming with those experiences. Among tourism demand (visitors) emerge new consumers profiles, with an in-depth knowledge of tourism products and destinations. These 'new' visitors have an in-depth knowledge about culture and environmental issues, willing authentic and immersive experiences, closer to local communities. They wish destinations' supply to reinvent itself and to acquire and develop new skills before a 'new consumer', who is more and more informed and aware of his rights (Carvalho, 2021). Creative tourism and intangible cultural heritage emerge as two related concepts, because both include traditions and crafts, and promote respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.

Barcelos Crafts emerge as local intangible cultural heritage. In this regard, in Infopedia dictionary, 'craftsmanship means the manufacture of objects with raw materials existing in a given region, produced by one or more craftsmen in a small workshop or in the house itself'. Moreover, within the scope of the International Symposium on Handicrafts and the International Market: Commercial and Customs Codification, UNESCO (1997, p. 6) defines 'Crafts products as those produced by artisans, entirely by hand or with the aid of hand tools or even through mechanical means, if the artisan's direct manual contribution is the most substantial component of the finished product. Handmade products might be produced without restrictions in terms of quantity, using raw materials from sustainable resources. Thus, the special nature of Crafts products derives from their distinctive characteristics, which can be utilitarian, aesthetic, artistic, creative, culturally linked, decorative, functional, traditional, religiously, and socially symbolic and significant'. Furthermore, according to Bakas et al. (2019), in rural areas and in small towns or villages, Craftspeople play several roles as network agents, by organizing and offering creative tourist experiences, by linking residents to tourists.

Likewise, according to Hieu and Rasovska (2017), the development of 'Crafts Tourism' produces socio-cultural and economic benefits, contributing to the preservation and sustainable development of Crafts villages, as this type of tourism might help to expand its market, but also to develop production of favourable opportunities. Moreover, it might help to the preservation and promotion of villages cultural values. In fact, Culture and creativity have assumed a key

role in the discussion on how to stimulate urban and rural regeneration processes, particularly in ways that support the symbolic economy, therefore, tourism has become an important tool in the implementation of creative strategies (Richards, 2020).

Crafts has always been intended and recognized as one among the 'creative industries', which are advertising, architecture, art and antiques market, design, fashion, film, interactive leisure software, music, performing arts, publishing, software, television and radio, among others (Potts et al., 2008), however, according to Richards (2021, p.5), the concept of "creative industries" results from the sectoral definition proposed by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport of the United Kingdom United Kingdom, in 1998, which defines 'creative industries being those ones resulting from individual creativity, skills and talents, having a potential to create wealth and jobs by the generation and exploitation of intellectual property'.

In fact, Crafts bridges the gap between the older concept of 'cultural industries and the more recent paradigm of creative industries. Therefore, in advanced economies, creative industries are linked to ideas of innovation and contemporary production, while Crafts are usually linked to traditions and the preservation of the past. Consequently, countries where Crafts are considered an important part of their creative industries tend to be part of 'emerging economies', namely where the temporal and cultural distance between Crafts and contemporary society is smaller. However, Crafts appears to be the 'poor relative' of creative industries, especially in 'developed economies', where Crafts are seen as inferior to artistic creativity. However, in recent years, there has been a change due to the growing relationship between Crafts and Tourism, as this has brought a wider audience into contact with Crafts producers. Moreover, the growing popularity of Creative Tourism has boosted activities of local networks of Crafts producers, and it has encouraged a more local approach to Crafts development (Richards, 2021). In this sense, it might be argued the future of Barcelos Crafts, local intangible cultural heritage, depends on the development and implementation of creative tourism in this tourist destination (Gonçalves & Costa, 2022).

Tourist Destinations

Tourism emerges as a leverage for the sustainable socio-economic development of territories (Costa, 2014; Ferreira, 2014; ICOMOS, 2007; Richards, 2011). Talking about the sustainable development of tourism means talking about territories and tourist destinations. A territory as a tourist destination emerges as the main object of tourism consumption, in fact, the sustainable development of tourism might always involve the valuation of its endogenous resources (Fazenda, 2014). In this sense, tourism is deeply linked to territory, and tourism companies depend much on geographic location, as tourist destinations are unique, with removable products and resources (Brandão & Costa, 2014).

The concept of territory might be defined as a space belonging to a community and a fusion between its physical base and the transformations that human occupation has added to it, being expressed through its visual dimension, its landscape with all its natural and built elements, interactions, and the immaterial dimension that culture adds to it (Umbelino, 2014). In this sense, a territory may be defined as a portion of space appropriated by a social group, according to the logic of political, administrative and economic power, and the values of a cultural, affective, social, symbolic nature, space of daily life, of struggle for survival, of belonging and identity, of solidarity and affections, also being a portion of terrestrial space defined and delimited, occupied, humanized, appropriated, lived, differentiated, unique, identity, organized, managed and ordered by different social groups (Cavaco, 2013). In short, a tourist destination might be defined as a territory with characteristics known by a potential number

of visitors, enough to justify its consideration as an entity capable of attracting visitors regardless of other tourist destinations' attractions (Gonçalves & Costa, 2019b, 2019a).

Destinations' Governance

The concept of governance applied to tourist destinations consists of defining and developing rules and mechanisms for policy, business strategies, that involves all stakeholders. In fact, tourist destinations are territories with political bodies involved, such as municipalities or district governments, and where tourism companies operate. Therefore, tourist destinations' management consists of transactional and personal relationships done in network, while regarding the corporate models, hierarchical relationships are mainly of interest and emphasizing the dyadic perspective. For community-type tourist destinations, the development process involves informal connections, knowledge, and trust, making the dynamic dimension (and therefore a historical view) crucial for the analysis of network formation and evolution (Beritelli et al., 2007). In this sense, governance consists of establishing and developing rules and mechanisms for policy and its implementation, involving all stakeholders in tourist destinations (Mandić & Kennell, 2021). In fact, tourist destinations' governance is one of the most critical issues to be considered, because having excellent resources at all levels is not enough to be successful, in fact, they need to have modern, flexible, and adjusted forms of governance to achieve success. Governance got to have a key role in the development of tourist destinations' strategy, mainly concerning the definition of objectives and development options. In sum, tourist destinations need to be dreamed by all stakeholders and to have a 'soul' (Costa, 2014).

According to Jørgensen (2017), Destination Management Organization (DMO) might be defined as local, regional, provincial, or national organizations in charge of the marketing of a given tourist destination, geographic area, or set of stakeholders that share a connection. DMOs play a key role regarding tourist destinations' governance, mainly the management of destinations' networks, and ensuring good cooperation between all stakeholders. Although DMOs might look like atypical organizations, their operations are evaluated according to their organizational efficiency and effectiveness (Foris et al., 2020). However, in the future, tourism clusters (product-space organizations) will replace the bureaucratic and obsolete organizations based on administrative territories (space-product organizations) (Costa, 2006). In fact, tourists tend to ignore territories' administrative borders, therefore, in the future, the emphasis will be placed on the flexibility of legislation to allow and to stimulate the emergence of sub-regional structures to be responsible for tourism products development, to make this industry to be more competitive, creative, innovative, and sustainable (Costa, Panyik & Buhalis, 2014).

According to Inskip (1991), DMOs should be in charge of improving competitiveness by assuming the management functions of tourist destinations. Furthermore, Dredge (2016) describes DMOs as policy tools, which serve the interests of the tourism industry, organizing and coordinating tourism activity in destinations, and building the capacity of the tourism industry, while Pechlaner et al. (2012) emphasize coordination, communication, and networking functions. Therefore, DMOs became more prominent in the role of responsible for the development of tourist destinations, being catalysts and facilitators within the process of tourism development (Martins, Costa & Pacheco, 2014). Moreover, to face the tourism industry challenges and increasing levels of competitiveness, DMOs' managers need a deep knowledge of the tourism system, to be able of assessing the performance and evolution of tourist destinations and its tourism companies. In this context, the role of Tourism Observatories might be highlighted through the production and dissemination of statistical and management information. In fact, Tourism Observatories might function as important tools to support tourist destinations planning and management (Brandão & Costa, 2010).

According to Errichiello e Micera (2021), stakeholders' role in a tourist destination is decisive for its governance. In this sense, tourist destinations' governance must coordinate the network relationships between all stakeholders, lead the productive process of co-creation, besides carrying out the process of inventorying endogenous resources, interpreting the territory and studying its potential visitors (Gonçalves & Costa, 2019b). In fact, collective actions are necessary to promote the goals of sustainable development of tourist destinations, furthermore, governance is the basis of these collective actions (Bramwell, 2013). However, one of the main difficulties of governance, within the scope of the sustainable development of tourism, is because it crosses several sectors and policy domains, such as planning, transport, climate change, employment, and regional development, therefore, the sustainable development of tourism needs to be integrated with broader economic, social and environmental policy considerations, within an overall framework of sustainable development (Hall, 2008). Moreover, another difficulty regarding tourist destinations' governance is the fact that it requires cooperation and coordination between the various economic sectors and political domains, and these stakeholders have divergent interests, beliefs, and priorities (Bramwell & Lane, 2000). In addition, the sustainable development of tourist destinations depends on the participation of local actors, and on the implementation of realistic policies, that consider the resources and characteristics of tourist destinations, besides all stakeholders needs and perceptions (Fernandes & Eusébio, 2014).

Stakeholders' role emerges as fundamental for a good tourist destinations' governance; however, the digitization process is also very important. In this sense, the concept of 'smart tourist destinations' emerges within the scope of the development of smart cities (Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2013). Furthermore, according to Errichiello and Micera (2021), the concept of 'smart tourist destinations' is seen in strict continuity with the concept of 'smart city', although, its focus is on the sustainable development of tourism. In this sense, the tourist destinations' governance might be consistent with previously identified smart development goals, and there might be a commitment among all relevant stakeholders to achieve them through cooperation and collective decision-making. Moreover, the literature on 'smart tourist destinations' highlights that investments in the local context are useful to ensure maximum involvement of the resident community (Chourabi et al., 2012). Thus, the digital revolution led to the emergence of the concept of 'smart tourist destinations', in which knowledge and information are accessible to all stakeholders, facilitating the innovation of activities, even more, the use of digital technologies is crucial to have an adequate public collaboration with private consumer, otherwise, it would be impossible to achieve a successful market valuation of the geographic attributes of tourist destinations (Jovicic, 2019). Therefore, the development of 'smart tourist destinations' has been adopted worldwide to strengthen long-term competitiveness in light of rapid technological, social and environmental changes. Therefore, DMOs should be equipped with smart governance tools, as they need to get the necessary capabilities and skills to successfully govern 'smart tourist destinations. However, recent literature highlights the importance of 'smart tourist destinations' governance', but it does not provide much guidance in terms of the roles and functions of 'smart DMOs' (Gretzel, 2022).

In Barcelos, a UNESCO Creative City, Crafts emerge as one of the main heritage elements, but their preservation requires the elaboration of a strategic plan for the sustainable development of Crafts, which might include the creation of a 'living museum of Barcelos Crafts' and 'Crafts tourist itineraries', but the most crucial would be the implementation of 'smart tourist destinations' governance', involving all stakeholders, but mainly the 'Craftspeople Association', the gastronomic brotherhood 'Rooster of Barcelos', and, obviously, the Municipality of Barcelos (Gonçalves, F. & Costa, 2022).

Methodology

Methodology is defined as a systematic form of research, which contributes to the production of knowledge, and the understanding of phenomena that individuals and organizations encounter in their daily activities (Altinay & Paraskevas, 2008). Moreover, according to Galego and Gomes (2005), methodology, theoretical framework, and researcher's skills in the construction of scientific work, altogether make up the triptych, which sustains scientific research. Furthermore, Collis and Hussey (2005) argue that a method is not qualitative or quantitative by classification, but according to its use, therefore, if data collection method is based on the frequency of occurrence of a phenomenon or a variable, therefore the collected data are quantitative (numerical). However, if the data collection is done on the meaning of the phenomenon, then the data obtained are qualitative (nominal). In this sense, a qualitative investigation might begin with the formulation of a research question. Moreover, although a qualitative research is not characterized by deduction, it is important to ask what the literature reflects on the phenomenon under study (Resende, 2016), therefore, within the scope of this article, a literature review was carried out on the themes under study, namely tourism, crafts and creative tourist destinations' governance, and a primary data collection through semi-structured interviews to ten managers of Portuguese DMOs.

This study main goal is to propose a governance model that might contribute to the sustainable development of Barcelos, as a creative tourist destination, that is part of UNESCO creative cities network. In this sense, its aim is answering the following research question: what governance model might contribute to the sustainable development of this creative tourist destination? Therefore, the case study focuses on Barcelos, which is part of the UNESCO creative cities network, in the Crafts and Folks art category, since 2017. The interviews were carried out, via telephone and zoom, during the months of March, April and May 2022, and their transcripts were confirmed, via email. The questions in the interview guide aimed to respond to the specific objectives of this study, namely: to know the DMO structure; its territorial scope; stakeholders; stakeholders' role in DMO; measures implemented or to be implemented for the sustainable development of the destination; importance of creative tourism for destinations; if implementation of creative tourism would imply a different governance model; and finally, to propose an ideal governance model.

Regarding the selection of the sample of interviewed subjects, within the scope of a qualitative investigation, sampling techniques have been developed, that may be encompassed under the term "purposeful sampling", which is determined by the needs of the emerging theory, being open to participants and cases with capacity to provide more opportunities in terms of collecting the most relevant data to answer to the research question (Altinay & Paraskevas, 2008). In this sense, the sample of interviewed subjects is the following: two regional tourism entities (ERT) (interviewees 1 and 2: Porto region and North of Portugal and the Central region of Portugal) plus eight municipal tourism directors (respondents 3 to 10: Arcos de Valdevez, Barcelos, Caminha, Esposende, Famalicão, Guimarães, Terras do Bouro and Vila Verde), based in the North region of Portugal.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Regarding the analysis of qualitative data, within the scope of studies about knowledge in Tourism, it might be argued that many of these primary data result from transcripts of interviews, sessions of focus groups, online surveys (with open questions about the meaning of the phenomenon under study), recorded observation, as well as the analysis of documents, websites, social networks, photos, and multimedia. Within the scope of this study, it was decided to carry out a content analysis, with the aid of the NVivo software. In fact, content

analysis emerges, nowadays, as one of the most common techniques in empirical research carried out by the different Human and Social Sciences (Vala, 1986).

According to Jennings (2005), in the context of a content analysis, the texts must be read, annotated, and coded, as the categories are generated from reading, annotation and coding. Thus, the categories are evaluated in relation to the relevance of the emerging taxonomy in relation to the empirical scenario from which they emerged, involving reflection, and questioning of the attribution of codes and categories, and the real-world context. Qualitative data are not quantifiable (represented in numerical form) and their analysis is a conceptual interpretation of the set of such data as a whole, using analytical and specific strategies to convert raw data into a logical and explanatory description of the phenomenon under study, giving a meaning to what the data say about the research question. In this sense, 'the most significant aspect of content analysis is a clear understanding of the process and the selection of appropriate categories'(Hall & Valentin, 2005, p. 206).

According to Bardin (1977), there are several content analysis techniques, however, the analysis by categories is the first technique to be mentioned, because chronologically it is the oldest one, and, in practice, it is the most used technique. It works by dismembering the text into units and categories, according to analogical regrouping, and presents different possibilities of categorization. However, the thematic analysis is fast and effective, under the condition to be applied to direct and simple discourses. In this sense, the categorization process corresponds to a transformation of raw data into a text to achieve a representation of its content. This process goes through several stages: in the first stage, categories are created (labelling process) based on the interview guide, forming a provisional grid; in the second stage, the interviews might be read, the units of meaning (codes) might be distributed by different categories, although, it might be necessary to create new categories or reorganize the grid (conceptual map); in the third stage, the texts should be read again, but, this time, by category, and it might be recategorized according to the interpretation done; and in the last one, before interpreting the data, the categories created should be validated (Resende, 2016).

According to Creswell (2007), qualitative analysis is a detailed methodological process, which consists of a rigorous approach to data collection and analysis, and to the written report, which is presented below, including the themes and respective key ideas, as well as some of the main citations of the interviewed subjects, regarding the qualitative analysis of data obtained in the scope of the transcription of the interviews. Therefore, based on the research question and the objectives of this study, the process of encoding the data obtained in the context of the interviews was carried out, thus, emerging the themes presented in table 1

Table 1 : Encoding Process

Themes	Key Ideas Emerged from Data Analysis
1. DMO Structure	From the analysis carried out on theme 1 'DMO structure', it emerged two structures: the one of Regional Tourism Entities (ERT) and that of the Municipalities. Thus, ERTs are made up of various nomination and political election bodies, namely the executive committee, general meeting, marketing council and single supervisor. Its board is made up of five members, three elected and two co-opted, namely a representative of municipalities and another of the private sector; the general assembly is composed of a representative of each municipality and as many representatives of the various stakeholders in the destination; the marketing council is elected, representing the municipalities and the private sector (business associations in the sector), being a consultative body that gives a quarterly opinion on the destination's strategy, namely

	<p>on the promotion and development of tourism products and territory planning. In short, these 3 bodies make up the 'DMO', whose mission involves promotion, product structuring and enhancement of the territory. In turn, the municipal 'DMOs' have similar structures, but with some nuances between them: they are run by political power; hierarchies of department heads and divisions (includes the tourism office) (interviewee_3); political power (tourism councilor), head of division and coordinator of the tourism office (interviewee_5); political power (tourism councilor), division of economic development and entrepreneurship and a tourism unit coordinator (interviewee_6). There are no stakeholders, however, there are municipalities that attribute a consultative role to the private sector. For example: "tourism governance passes through the councilor, staff, but also through stakeholders, as we regularly meet with representatives of companies in the tourism sector (accommodation, catering, tourist entertainment, events, and culture) (interviewee_4).</p>
<p>2. DMO Territory</p>	<p>From the analysis carried out on theme 2 'DMO territory', it emerged the following key ideas: each DMO manages a destination corresponding to an administratively defined territory, namely each municipality manages its own territory, being the same regarding 'ERTs', which manage a territory corresponding to a region (NUT II). Respondents' responses were consensual on this topic.</p>
<p>3. DMO Stakeholders</p>	<p>From the analysis carried out on theme 3 'DMO stakeholders', it emerged the following key ideas: according to interviewees 1 and 2, their DMOs stakeholders are municipalities, tourism business associations (AHRESP, APAVT, AHP, ATP, APTP, ARAC, TURIHAB and other associates of tourist entertainment, events, HORECA channel - hotels and catering and/or beverage establishments), higher education and cultural institutions. Regarding municipalities, according to the interviewees responsible for the governance of the municipalities, the process and the degree of involvement is indirect or null.</p>
<p>4. Stakeholders' Role in Destination</p>	<p>From the analysis carried out on theme 4 'stakeholders' role in a destination', it emerged the following key ideas: regarding ERTs, Portuguese law gives predominance to municipalities, which have at least 50% of the quorum, each municipality has one vote. In addition, the number of other stakeholders cannot exceed the number of municipalities, however, in practice, private proposals carry a lot of weight and have always been unanimously approved in this DMO (interviewee 1). Regarding the municipalities, the responses of the interviewees coincide regarding the reduced degree of stakeholder's involvement, which in fact is indirect or null. Quoting interviewee 4 "the involvement of stakeholders in the governance of this destination involves participating in regular meetings in which they give contributions to the promotion and development of tourism, in essence, they are agents for promoting the destination", but on the other hand, interviewee 3 states 'private stakeholders form partnerships with the municipality, namely accommodation, catering, visitor spaces and incoming tourist agencies, but they do not have a role in governance'.</p>
<p>5. Sustainable Development</p>	<p>From the analysis carried out on theme 5 "sustainable development", it emerged the following key ideas: both the subjects interviewed from the "ERTs" and those from the municipalities claim to be committed to the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN)).</p>

	<p>Here are some examples mentioned by the interviewees: ‘we are implementing ACCESSTOUR to develop accessible and inclusive tourism, eliminate barriers to contribute to accessibility throughout the destination, including the entire offer of tourist activities; to make all tourist offices accessible (including lowered counters, Portuguese sign language interpreters and tourist guides in Braille)’ (interviewee 1); ‘We implemented the European project Greentour (circular economy and sustainable tourism), which aims to promote the protection of the environment and the efficient management of natural resources by favoring sustainable tourism practices... and we also implemented the Green Key program, which is an international award that promotes sustainable tourism in Portugal’ (interviewee 4); ‘we implemented the nautical station project ... and we are involved in the project of the CIM do Cávado eco route (NUT III), which will connect the Gerês mountain to the mouth of the Cávado river’ (interviewee 7).</p>
<p>6. Creative Tourism</p>	<p>From the analysis carried out on theme 6 “creative tourism”, it emerged the following key ideas: the interviewed subjects, in a consensual way, value the importance of creative tourism to contribute to the sustainable development of territories. Some examples mentioned by the interviewees: ‘in our territory, we have five cities with all the conditions to become creative tourism destinations, as they have crafts and creativity... to gain markets of creative industries’ (interviewee 1); ‘I consider it important to implement creative tourism in this destination, as we are developing a project called 'BAIRRO C' (creativity, knowledge, culture and community) (interviewee 4); ‘we are part of the CREATOUR project and we will continue to invest in creative tourism...’ (interviewee 6); ‘the implementation of creative tourism in this destination is one of the differentiating products that we work... we are 'UNESCO Creative City', in the Crafts and Folk Art category’ (interviewee 3).</p>
<p>7. Governance</p>	<p>From the analysis carried out on theme 7 ‘governance’, it emerged the following key ideas: the interviewees number 1, 4, 7, 8, 9 and 10 consider creative tourism implies a different governance model, but the four others think it does not. Some quotations from the interviews illustrate these opinions: ‘the implementation of creative tourism implies a different governance model, as it is necessary to capture new players in the scope of the creation of new business areas. Creative tourism destinations need to reinvent new business and governance models. We are talking about governance models that integrate the production of knowledge to be transferred to these new players... it involves creating a governance model in co-creation in close cooperation with higher education institutions (interviewee 1); Interviewee 4 proposes ‘a governance model similar to that of a condominium administration’; Interviewee 7 proposes ‘a different governance model, necessarily involving the 'private', as it is necessary to involve civil society, as community participation is fundamental for its success’; Interviewee 9 regrets the difficulty in involving stakeholders in the governance of the destination: ‘we find it difficult to involve private stakeholders in the dynamics of tourism’.</p>
<p>8. Ideal Governance Model</p>	<p>From the analysis carried out on theme 8 “ideal governance model”, it emerged the following key ideas: four interviewees (1, 2, 5 and 6) point out the current model of ERTs as the ideal model to be implemented in all destinations, but it is not consensual, as other models are also pointed out: for example, interviewees 7 and 9 point to a governance model</p>

	similar to the one of the Peneda Gerês National Park (established by Decree-Law No. 116/2019 of August 21); interviewee 4 proposes 'a governance model similar to that of a 'condominium administration'; the interviewed 10 proposes a model similar to the one of intermunicipal communities (CIM - NUT III), but with the involvement of private stakeholders; and interviewee 3 proposes that 'the ideal governance model of a tourist destination would have to be based on full knowledge of the territory, its culture and its people, involving all local agents in the creation and promotion of the product/destination. The hierarchical, political/technical model seems to me to be the ideal governance model'. In short, the interviewed subjects presented five different proposals regarding the 'ideal governance model', as presented in table 2.
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Findings

Within the scope of the presentation and discussion of findings, it was intended to answer the research question and the objectives of this study, whose main goal is to propose a governance model that contributes to sustainable development in the tourist destination of Barcelos, and whose research question is: what governance model might contribute to the sustainable development of this creative tourist destination?

In this sense, regarding the structure of DMOs, based on the analysis of qualitative data, two models predominate in Portugal, namely the 'ERTs model' and the 'municipalities model'. Further to the literature review, it appears that DMOs might be local, regional, provincial, or national organizations responsible for the marketing of a destination, a geographic area or a set of stakeholders that share a connection (Jørgensen, 2017). Moreover, DMOs have a fundamental role to play in tourist destinations' governance, in the management of destination networks, and in ensuring good cooperation between stakeholders, although being atypical organizations, their operations are evaluated according to their efficiency and organizational effectiveness (Foris et al., 2020). In addition, DMOs have become more prominent in the role of responsible for the development of tourist destinations, acting as catalysts and facilitators in the implementation of sustainable development of tourism, competing with the role of intermediaries in the consolidation of products in tourist destinations, and in electronic distribution with tour operators, travel agents, other players in distribution, as well as with tourist consumers (Martins, Costa & Pacheco, 2014).

Regarding DMO territory based on the analysis of qualitative data, it appears that each DMO manages an administratively defined territory, that is, each municipality manages its own territory, the same happening with ERTs, that manage the territory corresponding to a tourism region (NUT II). The answers of the interviewed subjects were consensual on this subject, however, further to the literature review, it is argued that tourist clusters (product-space organizations) will, in the future, replace the bureaucratic and obsolete organizations, based on administrative territories (space-product organizations) (Costa, 2006).

Regarding DMOs' stakeholders, based on the analysis of qualitative data, it appears that there is a difference between two types of DMOs structures, in Portugal: DMOs like ERTs, that include some stakeholders (municipalities, tourism business associations, among others), but regarding municipalities, the degree of stakeholders' involvement is indirect or almost null. Further to the literature review, it is argued that the governance of a tourist destination should coordinate the network relationships between the various stakeholders, and to lead the productive process of co-creation, namely the process of inventorying endogenous resources, interpreting the territory and to study its potential visitors (Gonçalves & Costa, 2019). In this sense, regarding

stakeholders' role in tourist destinations, based on the analysis of qualitative data, it appears that this subject is regulated by law, in Portugal, however, it is reduced or null role that they play within the scope of municipal governance, although, it is argued that the role of stakeholders in tourist destinations is fundamental for their governance (Errichiello & Micera, 2021). Furthermore, it is argued that good governance consists of establishing and developing rules and mechanisms for a policy that involves all stakeholders in tourist destinations (Mandić & Kennell, 2021).

Regarding sustainable development, based on the analysis of qualitative data, it appears there is consensus among the subjects interviewed, as they all claim to be committed to the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN). In turn, further to the literature review, it is argued that a good governance is the key factor to overcoming the numerous challenges of sustainable tourism development (Trousdale, 1999). In this sense, it is argued that collective actions are necessary to promote the objectives of sustainable development in tourist destinations, and that governance is the basis of these collective actions (Bramwell, 2013).

Regarding creative tourism, based on the analysis of qualitative data, it appears that the interviewed subjects, in a consensual way, value its importance for contributing to the sustainable development of territories. In addition, further to the literature review, it is argued that the development of creative tourism is part of an innovative approach to tourism, which offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in authentic and characteristic experiences of the cultures of the resident communities (Gonçalves, 2018). Thus, the growing popularity of creative tourism has boosted activities of local networks of crafts producers and stimulated a more local approach to crafts development (Richards, 2021). Therefore, it is argued that the future of Barcelos Crafts, its intangible cultural heritage, depends on the development and implementation of creative tourism (Gonçalves & Costa, 2022).

Regarding the governance in creative tourist destinations, based on the analysis of qualitative data, it appears that six interviewees consider creative tourism needs to implement a different model of governance, but the other four disagree. However, further to the literature review, it is argued that tourists ignore administrative borders of territories, therefore, in the future, it will be necessary legislation more flexible to allow and encourage the emergence of responsible sub-regional structures focused on the development of tourism products, thus, making tourism to be more competitive, creative, innovative, and sustainable (Costa, Panyik, & Buhalis, 2014).

Furthermore, within the scope of good governance, the stakeholders' role emerges as fundamental, however, the digitization process emerges as crucial for tourist destinations. In this sense, the concept of 'smart tourist destinations' emerges within the scope of the development of 'smart cities' (Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2013), in fact, according to Errichiello and Micera (2021), this concept is seen in strict continuity with the concept of 'smart city', although its focus is the sustainable development of tourism (Chourabi et al., 2012). Thus, based on the qualitative data analysis, it emerged five different proposals of 'ideal governance model', as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 - Governance Models Proposed by the Interviewees.

Subjects Interviewed	Ideal Governance Models
1, 2, 5, e 6	i) current model of regional tourism entities (ERT);
7 e 9	ii) same model as Peneda Gerês National Park governance (Decree-Law No. 116/2019 of August 21)
4	iii) governance model like a condominium administration
10	iv) governance model like intermunicipal communities (Portuguese NUT III)
3	v) current municipalities hierarchical and political technical model

The subjects interviewed presented five different proposals for an ideal governance model for tourist destinations. There are five different proposals, although the proposal of the current model of Portuguese ERTs emerged as the most consensual. This governance model assigns an active role to stakeholders, although the Portuguese legislation assigns a less relevant role to private stakeholders. However, in the context of the literature review, it is argued that for a good governance, stakeholders' role is fundamental, what was corroborated by the subjects interviewed. However, the literature also points out the digitization process as to be fundamental for DMOs. In fact, the determining role of the digitization process is pointed out by several authors: Chourabi et al. (2012) argue tourist destinations' governance might be consistent with previously identified intelligence development goals, and it might be a commitment of all relevant stakeholders to achieve them through cooperation and collective decision-making; and Jovicic (2019) argues digital revolution has led to the emergence of the concept of 'smart tourist destinations' governance', where knowledge and information are accessible to all stakeholders, facilitating the innovation of activities. Moreover, Gretzel (2022) argues the development of 'smart tourist destinations' has been adopted worldwide to strengthen long-term competitiveness considering rapid technological, social, and environmental changes. Furthermore, DMOs should be equipped with smart governance tools, as they face enormous challenges due to the lack of the necessary skills and competencies to successfully govern 'smart tourist destinations. In sum, recent literature highlights the importance of 'smart tourist destinations governance', but literature does not provide yet much guidance in terms of the functions and roles of smart DMOs.

Conclusion

Further to the literature review and qualitative data obtained through the transcription of semi-structured interviews carried out with managers of ten national DMOs, in Portugal, it might be concluded that tourism emerges as an instrument for the sustainable development of territories, as well as an exporter and job creator sector, that contributes to the well-being of the host communities. It might also be concluded that sustainable development of tourism, and more specifically of creative tourism, depends on good governance, which depends on the degree of involvement of stakeholders and the digitalization process of DMOs, within the scope of 'smart tourist destinations' governance'.

It might also be concluded that although Portuguese DMOs govern 'administrative territories', as stated in the legislation, the literature points out to the implementation of governance models based on tourist clusters 'product-space organizations', which will, in the future, replace bureaucratic and obsolete organizations based on administrative territories, because tourists ignore 'administrative borders' in tourist destinations. Thus, in the future, emphasis will be placed on making legislation more flexible to allow and encourage the emergence of sub-

regional structures responsible for the development of tourism products, making tourism to be more sustainable, competitive, creative, and innovative, based on offering authentic, unique, memorable, and creative experiences to visitors.

The subjects interviewed presented five different proposals for an 'ideal governance model for tourist destinations. They are all different proposals, although the proposal of the current model of Portuguese ERTs emerged as the most consensual, mainly because this model assigns a more active role to stakeholders, although they have, in Portugal, a less relevant role because it is regulated in this way. However, within the framework of the literature review, it is argued that greater stakeholder involvement is needed, the creation of tourist clusters, and the digitization of DMOs as smart governance structures of tourist destinations.

In conclusion, this study main goal was to propose a governance model that might contribute to the sustainable development of Barcelos, as a creative tourist destination, that is part of UNESCO creative cities network. Therefore, it might be concluded the future of Barcelos Crafts, local intangible cultural heritage, depends on the development and implementation of creative tourism in this tourist destination. It might also be concluded that Crafts are one of the main local heritage elements, however, their preservation might involve the elaboration of a strategic plan for the sustainable development of crafts, that includes to create a 'living museum of Barcelos crafts' and 'crafts tourist itineraries', however, it might be essential the implementation of a 'smart governance structure', in this tourist destination, involving all stakeholders, mainly the 'Craftspeople Association', the 'gastronomic brotherhood Rooster of Barcelos' and the Municipality of Barcelos, among others, namely entities representing the companies in the tourism sector, as well as other businesses, cultural and sports associations.

It is recommended to carry out a new study that considers the new trends for the development of more sustainable and more digital tourist destinations, with a greater involvement of all stakeholders, meeting the new concept of 'smart tourist destinations' governance.'

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ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND REMOTENESS IN ISOLATED REGIONS OF NEPAL

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Abstract

In this paper research and findings are presented and discussed in relation to themes of environment, culture and remoteness in Nepal. The research clearly illustrates that due to isolation there are a number of compounding factors that, although possibly similar to other areas in Nepal, are particular to the specific remote location. Themes have emerged from the data during the process of coding and analysis of participants' narratives and field observation notes; and, through the use of the methodological approach of grounded theory.

The environment of the area is presented in relation to the geographic isolation of the research location, the matters of terrain and transport, and the influence of climate on the location. These environmental issues have helped craft the unique economy of the area with its subsistence farming and seasonal migration which has significant impact on the locals. The socio-cultural aspects of the local ethnicity and the influence and demands on this community are presented.

Topography and climate combine to create a dynamic context which also makes its presence felt on the locals. The terrain makes the area not only isolated, but at times dangerous to traverse and locations difficult to access. Further, climate makes community buildings inhospitable especially in the winter months. Solutions to the geography, whether it be longer holidays, *chang*, subsistence farming or *kabela*, all affect the local population.

Keywords: Environment; Culture; Remoteness; Isolation; Nepal

Introduction

Globally, mountain environments have a wide range of characteristics, but in general, they are characterised by their remoteness and the isolation of human settlements. This has led to a high level of self-sufficiency and, in some cases, a forced migration pattern. Markets are remote and government infrastructure is minimal. The mountainous terrain and slopes are steep, which presents a number of potential hazards (Whiteman, 1985).

The growing body of research suggests that the range of adaptation and coping mechanisms employed by poor people in developing countries is quite diverse, and that local-level research is essential for the successful implementation of development strategies (IPCC, 2007b). The mountain regions of the world are home to a variety of rural and remote settlements, which are often characterised as difficult to access, fragile, remote, and host to some of the most impoverished populations in the world (Messerli & Ives, 1997). Due to this, mountain development has been prioritised as a means of aiding mountain regions in their quest for sustainability, as outlined in Valenzuela (1988). This has had a significant impact on the character and functioning of rural communities in other less developed areas (Nepal, 2005; Pawson et al., 1984).

In Nepal, the development of remote settlements in the Everest region can be traced back to at least six factors: the historical migration of Sherpa communities from Tibet; the development of a local economy and service centres, such as the emergence of Namche Bazaar as a transit point during the era of trans-Himalayan trade; the arrival of mountaineers and trekkers, which

necessitated the development of a service-driven tourism industry; the seasonal migration of lowland people to the Everest region looking for employment in tourism; the emergence of selected centres like Namche Bazaar or Lukla as a tourism hub, taking advantage of the influx of government intervention in the provision of services, employment, and utilities (e.g. Sagarmatha National Park and the Khumbu Bijuli company); and the development of the main centre, Namche bazaar, which eventually generates new service centres on the expanding periphery (Nepal, 2005). The isolation of the area is marked by a lack of basic infrastructure, including access to roads, educational institutions, medical facilities, electricity and communications, inadequate services, and limited market access (Gentle & Maraseni, 2012). This paper will discuss the environment, culture, remoteness, and therefore, isolation of a small Himalayan village in the Everest (Chomolungma/Sagarmatha) region of Nepal. A review of the pertinent literature is made clear. This is followed by the explanations and justifications of the methodology utilised for the research. The Findings and Discussion are then presented and are followed by the Implications and Conclusions of the research.

Background

Environment

Rural communities in developing countries rely heavily on ecological resources and services, including water, land that can be cultivated, and forest products made from non-timber materials. Environmental resources and income generation activities play an essential role in rural livelihoods (Mamo et al., 2007; Mcelwee, 2008; Shackleton & Shackleton, 2004; Walelign, 2013). In general, these resources and activities typically support at least one of the four following functions in sustaining or enhancing rural livelihoods: Supply, which supports current year round household consumption needs; Season gap-fill, which covers income or consumption gap caused by seasonality of income generation activities; Safety net, which supports households in overcoming unexpected income loss or subsidizing consumption shortfall caused by unexpected shocks such as crop failure or high expenditures such as wedding, funeral expenses; Pathway out of poverty, which provides households with regular cash income to save and use to buy assets (Angelsen & Wunder, 2003; Cavendish, 2002). The impact of ecological resources and services on rural life can be quantified in terms of monetary resources and forms of environmental income in total household income accounting (Angelsen et al., 2014; Babulo et al., 2009). The ratio of environmental income to total household income shows the extent to which households rely on the environment. In general, rural households tend to rely more on the environment (Angelsen et al., 2014; Babulo et al., 2009; Vedeld et al., 2007; Walelign & Jiao, 2017; Walelign & Nielsen, 2013).

Nepal's economy is based on subsistence agriculture. More than 80% of Nepal's population live in rural areas and most of them rely on subsistence agriculture as their primary source of income (CBS, 2011). Subsistence agriculture is a type of agriculture that combines crops and livestock production with primitive technology on small plots of land under continuous land fragmentation. Per capita arable land has declined more than 50% since 1960, from 0.19 ha to 0.09 ha in 2010, making it one of the world's lowest (World Bank, 2015). The proportion of agricultural production in gross domestic product has been steadily declining over time. In 2010, the ratio of non-agricultural income to total revenue was approximately 54% (CBS, 2011). Recent research has indicated that livelihoods are undergoing a period of rapid socio-economic transformation (Barnett et al., 2005; Chaudhary et al., 2007). In addition, there has also been a steady decline in agricultural activity (Aase et al., 2010; Bhandari, 2013; Khanal & Watanabe, 2006; Paudel et al., 2014) signalling a generational shift where more and more people are moving away from agriculture or pursuing various non-agricultural income options concurrently (Gautam & Andersen, 2016).

On the face of it communities with limited knowledge, limited assets and lack of external support are struggling to adjust to their changing environment. Traditionally, adaptation of agricultural production consisted of crop diversification and drought resistant crop selection. These responses were self-organising, short-term and ad hoc. The local community requires immediate support in the areas of crop diversity, water harvesting and sustainability of natural resources. As new crop varieties failed, there was a need for agriculture and natural resources research to gain a better understanding, testing and adoption of new technologies, methods, and services (Gentle & Maraseni, 2012).

Culture

Nepali culture is renowned for its diversity; however, many parts of the country are characterised by the prevalence of hierarchical structures which are based on caste and kinship, and which are present in almost all interpersonal relations. In rural Nepali village life, one of the most significant characteristics of hierarchy is the presence and expression of interdependence between individuals and groups (Sharma, 1978). This interconnectedness is not only demonstrated in a variety of ideological and ceremonial contexts (Stone, 1983), but also from an economic perspective. For instance, caste and kinship systems determine how and where goods and services are distributed and exchanged. In many contexts, including non-caste and non-kin contexts, one's access to desirable goods and services is highly contingent upon one's capacity to establish, sustain, or manipulate one's place within a larger social structure. Thus, contrary to a view in which personal autonomy, individual initiative, and self-sufficiency are viewed as tools to obtain access to resources, goods and prospects, there is a broad cultural appreciation of and value for mutual dependencies, human connections, and regulated exchanges among individuals and groups (Stone, 1989).

Remoteness

Remote location has a significant impact on human and economic well-being. Jalan refers to a 'geographical poverty trap' where lack of access perpetuates poverty (Jalan, et al., 2002). For instance, several case studies, such as Bird et al., (2002), point out that chronic poverty is most common in rural areas that are isolated by land and/or environment. This is especially true in South Asia where, according to the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Report 2016, 64% of the world's population experiences multidimensional poverty in rural areas (compared to 25% in urban areas) compared to 29% in India and 11% in the rest of the world. In India, every additional 10 km distance from a town reduces average earnings by 3.2% (Asher et al., 2016). For instance, several case studies, such as Bird et al., (2002), point out that chronic poverty is most common in rural areas that are isolated by land and/or environment. This is especially true in South Asia where, according to the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Report 2016, 64% of the world's population experiences multidimensional poverty in rural areas (compared to 25% in urban areas), compared to 29% in India and 11% in the rest of the world (Ray & Ebener, 2008). As a result, many public health investigators and practitioners use travel times to evaluate the effect of accessibility on healthcare use (Banick & Kawasoe, 2019; Buor, 2003; Van Hemelrijck et al., 2009).

Methodology

The contribution to the knowledge of remoteness in Nepal through the exploration of the villagers' perspectives has been achieved through the use of grounded theory as advocated by Charmaz (2006). This methodology provides "systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analysing qualitative data to construct theories 'grounded' in the data themselves"

(Charmaz, 2006, p. 2). Importantly, in the case of this research, it is not about testing hypotheses about reality, but rather, about generating statements about how the villagers interpret reality.

In a grounded theoretical approach, the researcher is not the “objective analyst of subjects’ experiences”, but rather a partner and co-constructor of meaning (Charmaz, 2006; Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006, p. 12). Mills, Bonner and Francis (2006) contend that:

Ontologically relativist and epistemologically subjectivist, ... grounded theory overtly reshapes the interactive relationship between researcher and participants in the research process and in doing so brings the centrality of the researcher as author to the methodological forefront (p. 9).

The research location was chosen due to its isolation. Access to the area is highly limited, with the research location, accessible only by 20-hour bus ride, or alternatively, an aeroplane flight from Kathmandu. The only form of transportation north of the area is a four-hour jeep ride through very rough terrain, from which the nearest villages in the research region are a 1-2 day walk away, with the most remote areas requiring a further 3-5 days of walking. Despite the relatively short distances in kilometres, the mountainous terrain slows down travel (see Banick & Kawasoe, 2019).

A total of eighteen villagers from a remote and isolated area in northeastern Nepal were interviewed. The participants had resided and worked in the area for a minimum of four and a maximum of thirty years prior to the data collection period. The researchers were not known to the participants prior to the interview. Instead, the participants chose to participate in the research when they first encountered the researcher at the research location. All participants were provided with an information sheet in both English and Nepali. All participants were also asked for their consent to participate in the research. All happily agreed.

The data was obtained through interviews, field notes and observations. The interviews were conducted individually, but in two cases, group interviews were conducted. In these cases, participants spontaneously asked to be interviewed as a group. The data was securely stored. Due to the remote location and the risk of loss or failure of recording devices due to natural disasters or power outages, voice data collected from interviews were recorded on two different recording devices. Once the researcher returned to Kathmandu (the capital of Nepal), the interview audio was downloaded and securely stored on a designated computer and an internet server in accordance with university ethical guidelines. Due to the remote location of the research site, access to participants was restricted to a three-week period of data collection only.

The interviews were conducted in the Nepali language because the interviewer was fluent in Nepali. As a result, a translator was not required, and fieldnotes were written directly into Nepali. For all but three of the participants, Nepali was their second language. They felt comfortable sharing their experiences in this language. The fieldnotes were also checked three times for authenticity, and then transliterated into English. Audio data was transcribed by a third-party translation service. Both sets of translations and notes were cross-referenced, evaluated and edited as needed. This process, while time consuming and costly, helped to ensure that the interviewees’ voices were authentic in the English transcriptions. It also served as a valuable tool to engage with the data and the voices of the participants more fully.

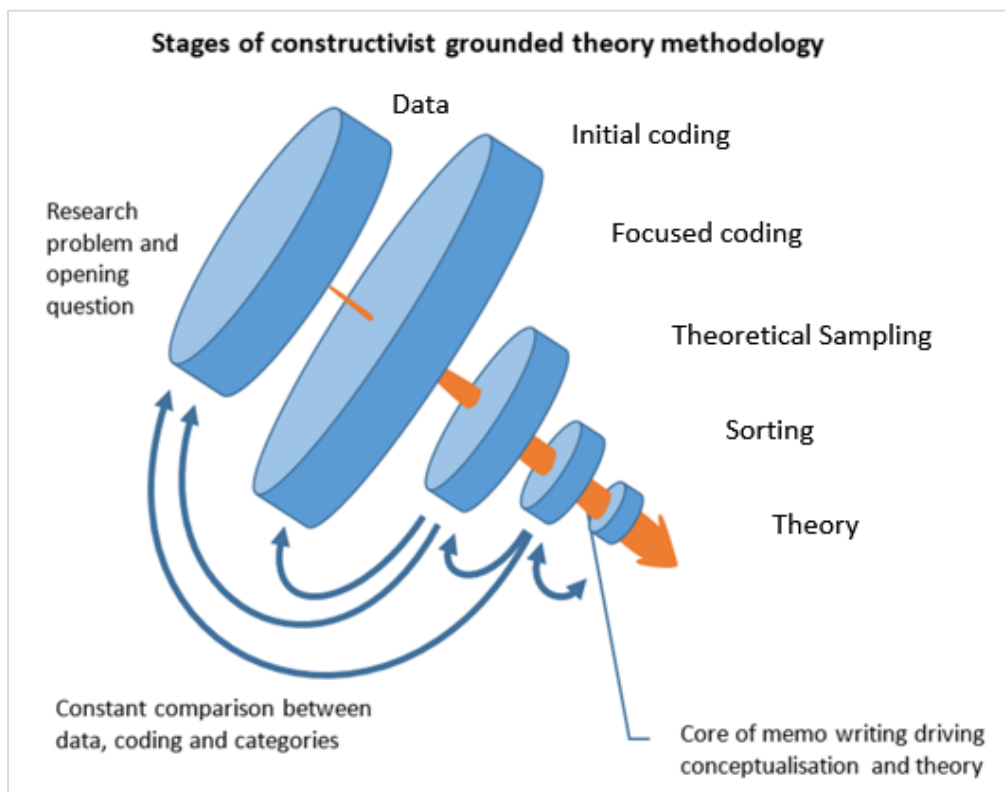
Fieldnotes were taken captured to provide an understanding of the remote context as interviews alone did not provide sufficient data. Fieldnotes are designed to place qualitative studies in a larger social and temporal context (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2017, p. 381). This is

due to the fact that events can only be understood when they are seen in the context of larger social and historical contexts (Bryman, 1988, p. 64 Byrant, 2015). These notes were intended to provide an overview of the research context. Furthermore, attempts were made to collect observational data regarding the geographical setting (e.g., terrain, climate, trails, economic activity, physical condition, cost of living, etc.), as well as photographs of terrain, trails and paths. To avoid any potential third-party identification of the area and participants, no visual records of the participants were kept.

The interview and observational data were analysed using the grounded theory approach of initial and focused coding (see Figure 1 below). This approach is supported by Charmaz (2006) in her constructivist formulation of grounded theory. Cho and Lee (2014) succinctly summarised the approach as follows: “In Charmaz’s (2006) coding process, initial coding is similar to open coding, during which the researcher develops categories of information. Focused coding is a process designed to narrow initial codes down to frequent and important codes” (p. 8). Throughout this process, memo writing is used to define codes, but more and more, it is also used to define categorisations, the conceptual components of theory (Charmaz, 2006).

Constant comparison was used in the data analysis. Constant comparison is “a method of analysis that generates successively more abstract concepts and theories through inductive processes of comparing data with data, data with category, category with category, and category with concept” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 187). The concept of constant comparison is not one that is applied at a specific point in the data analysis process, but rather throughout the entire process. It is both a means of aiding conceptualisation and a means of controlling and limiting conceptual inferences made due to researcher bias. (Charmaz, 2006).

Figure 1. Visual Representation of Grounded Theory Analysis



Source: Developed for the research

Ethical considerations limited the researchers' ability to identify the people as a community; however, they are referred to as participants and have names, and although their faces are absent and invisible in these words, every effort has been made to ensure their voices are heard from their 'isolated' location.

Findings and Discussion

Environment

Typography and climate combine to create a dynamic context which also makes its presence felt on the local inhabitants. The terrain makes the area not only isolated, but at times dangerous to traverse and locations difficult to access. Further, climate makes community buildings inhospitable especially in the winter months. Two solutions the community use are *Chang* and *Kabela*.

Chang

There are subtle climatic influences on the community, such as in the use of *Chang*. *Chang* is a millet or wheat-based alcohol drunk by most of the population in the research location, including children, to stave off the cold in the winter months. Especially in the colder months, children and infants as young as three months are given *Chang*. *Chang* is also often called Tongba (Tibetan name).

While debating the issues of the effects of *Chang*, *Chang* has a nutritional value that is important to the malnourished families in the area. There is, however, very clear research to show the negative effects of alcohol on childhood development, on liver function, cognitive ability, and increasing the chance of alcoholism (Newbury-Birch et al., 2009; McLean & McDougall, 2014). *Chang* is also used for cultural purposes in all ceremonies and official occasions.

Interviewee 14, speaking about the positive impact the community could have on encouraging locals not to be drunk, discloses that:

"If there were educated people then they could teach about abstaining from drinking wine and alcohol and being on time to [work]. But the society is just the opposite, therefore it isn't possible to field [quality workers]".

Interviewee 14 described this acceptance of alcohol misuse as a cultural or 'social factor' impinging on conduct.

Kabela

The local participants have adopted a culture of migration southward to lower areas and warmer climates in the winter months. This migration is referred to as *Kabela*, which is partly due to the cold weather, but also a form of economic activity. According to the Tegu language, *Kabela* is defined as a Bill of Sale or a Grant. The Telugu language is one of the languages spoken in Andhra Pradesh and is spoken by more than 75 million people worldwide. It is the second most spoken language in India after Hindi and is considered by linguists to be Dravidian in origin. Therefore, *Kabela* and its meaning have originated from trade interactions with other groups in India.

Participant 6 describes that:

“... before, about 90% would migrate during the months of January and February”.

Participants explained that long winter months mean crops are unable to be planted from November to March; therefore, participants must either purchase or store food or find other means to exist in winter. During the warmer months the ‘local ethnicity’ grows, gathers or prepares *chirpi* (Chirpi is also known as Chhurpi or Durkha, and is an indigenous fermented milk based pale-yellow cheese that is typically made within the mountain region of Nepal), medicinal herbs, spices and incense to trade in the south. Traditionally, as winter arrives, whole households board up their homes and migrate south, only to return just before Spring.

Culture

It must be noted that *kabela* or even the use of *chang* are not simply decisions made by people, but are embedded in cultural behaviour, historical practice and sustained adaption to the local environment.

The term culture can be confusing. Spencer-Oatey (2008) a thinker on inter-cultural pragmatism, defines culture as:

... a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member’s behaviour and his/her interpretations of the ‘meaning’ of other people’s behaviour. (Spencer-Oatley, 2008, p. 3)

Therefore, culture can refer to an ethnicity or a group of people or even an organisational culture like a school. Culture is dynamic, not only in terms of social interactions within a culture, but also in terms of the social environment in which people live; and how they interact with other cultures.

The culture of the participant area is characterised by an economy that is limited to seasonal migration and subsistence agriculture. In this economy, the entire community is employed, including children and locals. As participants explain, the seasonal peak periods of planting and harvesting necessitate a significant amount of labour, which impacts the attendance of children at school and prevents others from undertaking any other forms of labour.

In a subsistence economy where time equates to food on the table, time is evaluated against economic need. Interviewee 3, talking about local villagers, states that:

“The people in this area aren’t at ease. In order to eat a single daily meal they must work all day long. If they rest for even an hour, they begin to get anxious”.

As a result, Interviewee 15 explains that students:

“[... in their spare time] in the morning and evening, have to work”.

Interviewee 17 confirms this, saying:

“The village experience is a little like this—there they have to work more than schooling”.

Interviewee 6, while stating that learning is affected by labour demands, explains that other workers are also affected by their own subsistence farming:

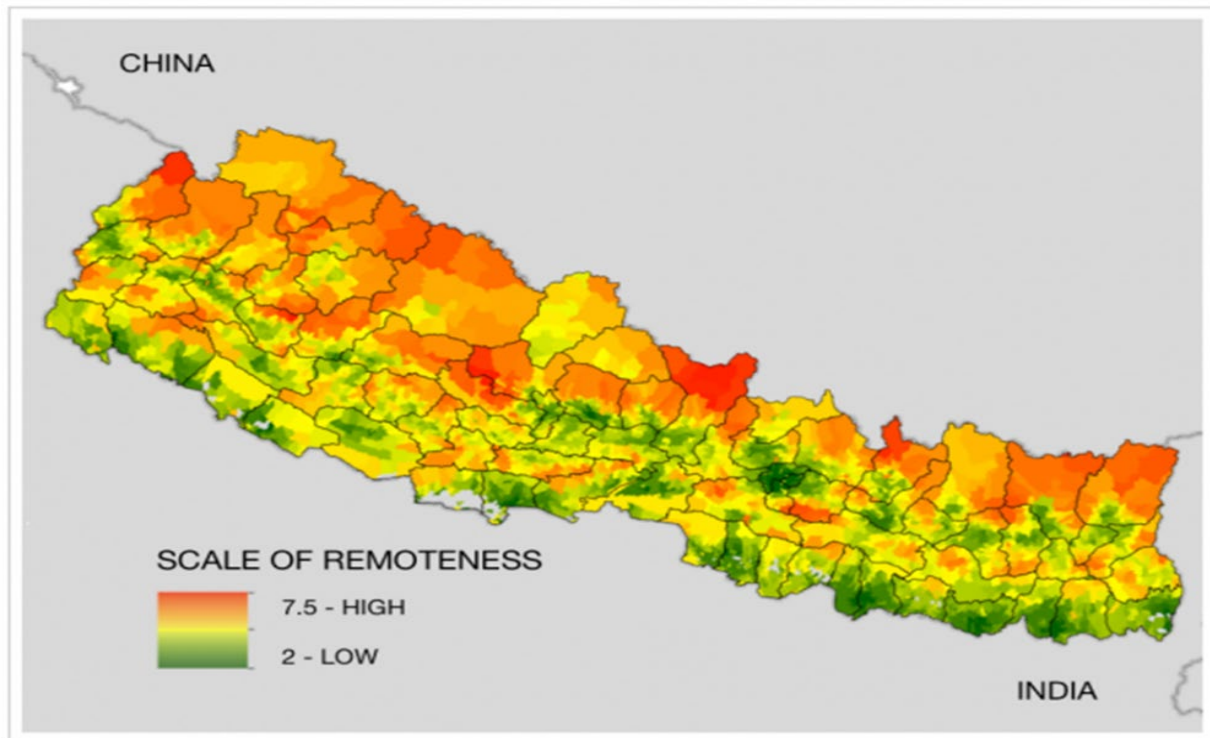
“... as the month of Ashar [mid-June-July–summer in Nepal] arrives then the parents themselves ask for permission to let their children not attend [school] because they have to help in farming, shepherding, and helping in household work”.

During the peak agricultural season, workers experience a heightened level of stress due to the potential for crop failure. This stress is exacerbated by the necessity to engage in economic activities away from their usual work, such as agriculture.

Remoteness (durgam chhetra bhaeko kaaranle) [being remote and being a remote area]

In most cases, the definition of remoteness refers to the distance a population is physically able to travel to centres of goods and markets and, as a result, as the opposite and inverse to those centres. Remote areas are sparsely populated locations that have very restricted accessibility to goods, services and socio-political engagement (see Bird, et al., 2002). In Nepal, restricted access is characterised by physical distances measured in time needed to travel to the District Headquarters or other major urban service centres and by social exclusion which also distances people from access to public services.

Figure 2: Dempsey’s Scale of Remoteness in Nepal



Source: Dempsey (2016, N.P.)

In Nepal, the concept of remoteness is defined by Dempsey (2016), which focuses on measuring distance from roads, airports and district headquarters, slope and elevation, land cover, and presence of rivers. Figure 2 illustrates the highly remote nature of the northern mountain districts of Nepal. This scale is particularly useful as it does not measure distance in kilometres, but rather the time taken to get to service centres. The scale also considers geographical features, including mountain slopes, rivers, and vegetation (e.g. time taken to climb and

descend mountains or to cross a river). It is important to note that, due to the accessibility of airports and well-established road networks, some parts of the northern mountain regions are more accessible and therefore are not considered highly remote. The participants defined the physical nature of *being remote* in terms of three major aspects: terrain, transport and climate.

Participant 10 states that “*we risk our lives*”, “we put our lives at risk” due to the logistics of constructing temporary bridges over rivers and streams. The terrain is challenging in terms of the amount of time required to traverse it and is hazardous for those living with its geographical dangers. Furthermore, the participants report that the soil is infertile, lacks crop diversity, and necessitates significant labour and extensive fertilisation to produce satisfactory yields.

Due to the absence of transportation, physical accessibility to the area is limited, making it isolated and undeveloped. As participant 14 states:

“If there would be transportation then other development would automatically come”.

Participant 3 concurs with the notion that their locality is characterised by backwardness and poverty:

“harik kuraamaa pechaDi ekar hunalai” [in everything fallen behind].

The mountainous landscape has limited road infrastructure, which has contributed to the enduring remoteness of the area. Until recently, all goods have been transported solely by porters or the owners of the goods, which is a laborious and time-consuming process that adds to the cost of goods. Participant 3 continues:

“In order to bring salt, they have to go by foot on these sorts of trails for 5 days to [name of District Headquarters] and then back”.

Over the past few years, mule trains have also been used to transport heavy goods like [essential commodities] and to save time away from “Roads End”. However, remote life is still defined by distance and time. For some, even going to a meeting can involve a 4-hour return walk. These themes of seclusion and isolation are prevalent not only within the region's infrastructure and development, but also within the narratives and experiences of participants.

Implications and Conclusions

This research has provided insight into the concept of remoteness in Nepal by examining the experiences and attitudes of a inhabitants of a small village in a particular remote area of northeastern Nepal. The aim was to gain a better understanding of the concept of remoteness by examining the perspectives of this group of individuals, and ultimately to develop a theory that accurately describes and elucidates the attitudes and beliefs of these remote dwellers. The transformation of rural areas and landscapes has been extensively discussed. It is widely accepted that the growth of settlements in remote mountain areas is dependent on their dynamic economic, social, cultural and geographical conditions. The size, purpose and design of remote mountain settlements are the result of the physical, sociological, economic and political conditions. Changes in human populations, the emergence of economic alternatives and the connection of the local economy to the wider world all contribute to the development of mountain settlements (Nepal, 2005).

Remote villages, not only in the Himalayas, but also in the rest of the world, are changing drastically in terms of their size, features, functions and geographical spread as a result of

tourism development (Nepal, 2005). Today, however, the area is economically better off, thanks in part to the cash crop of cardamom and migratory work, and now only approximately 50–60 percent of the community makes the traditional journey south. The figure of 50–60 percent of population seasonal migration was gathered from discussions with community members while in the area; and participant 6's interview data.

Being remote is a finding that explains the aspects of the phenomena of the remote; the existent state of the 'remote' defined by its geography, economy and culture. It is a state that is shaped and defined by the rhythm of life regarding subsistence livelihoods, the *going and coming*, the concepts of future. While it is geographic, it is also a mental state of mind; one sees local identity shaped not only by perceptions of place, and ethnicity but also by broader pervasive concepts of modernity and development that are characterised by their absence.

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UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ATTITUDE, EXPERIENCES,
AWARENESS, AND STUDENT SATISFACTION WITH SUSTAINABLE FOOD: A CASE STUDY
IN HO CHI MINH

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the impact of perception, attitude, and consumer experience on student satisfaction regarding sustainable food in Ho Chi Minh City. A quantitative research method was employed, and data were collected from 395 students. After filtering, 300 responses were used for analysis. The study used SPSS software to measure perception, attitude, experience, and satisfaction reliability. The Smart-PLS software was used to test the research framework. The research findings indicate that perception, attitude, and consumer experience positively impact student satisfaction when consuming sustainable food. The study provides valuable insights into students' perceptions, attitudes, experiences, and satisfaction regarding sustainable food. It identifies the positive effects of perception, attitude, and consumer experience on the ultimate satisfaction of students with sustainable food. Therefore, improving student satisfaction is necessary to improve their perception, attitude, and experience towards sustainable food.

Keywords: Sustainable Food, Perception, Attitude, Experience, Satisfaction, Students

Introduction

One of the primary goals of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, established in 2015, is to ensure the production and consumption of sustainable food (Colglazier, 2015; Grosso et al., 2020). Ensuring sustainability in food production and consumption plays a crucial role in addressing food security and nutrition challenges while also being an important part of safeguarding the environment, promoting sustainable economic development, and building a sustainable future for future generations (Pachapur et al., 2020).

In contemporary Western society, sustainable food consumption is becoming an important aspect of sustainable development (Hoek et al., 2021; Rehman et al., 2022). The global food system significantly impacts climate change and gives rise to serious environmental issues such as biodiversity loss, water exploitation, and pollution (Baloch et al., 2023; Rehman et al., 2022). Consumers in developed countries are increasingly concerned about community health, quality of life, and natural resource conservation, leading to a clearer preference for sustainable food choices and the emergence of selectively and rigorously managed products (Marinova et al., 2022).

Promoting sustainable food is not limited to developed nations but is a matter of global significance (Adesogan et al., 2020; Qaim, 2020). In Vietnam, advocating for sustainable food consumption is crucial in the country's sustainable development strategy (Yagi & Kokubu, 2020). The Vietnamese population is becoming increasingly aware of the significance of consuming sustainable food for personal well-being and environmental preservation (Nguyen et al., 2021). Nevertheless, numerous challenges persist, such as raising awareness, shaping consumer attitudes, improving experiences, and strengthening the management and adherence to sustainable food standards.

Examining student groups is crucial as they represent a youthful demographic that significantly impacts future societal trends and consumption patterns (Bui et al., 2021; Luong & Nguyen,

2024). This research establishes the relationship between perception, attitude, experience, and student satisfaction concerning sustainable food consumption. The study employs SPSS and Smart-PLS software to analyze survey data to achieve research objectives. The results of this inquiry will provide significant knowledge regarding the interrelation of these variables and positively contribute to the progression of sustainable consumption, particularly sustainable food consumption.

Literature Review

Sustainable Food

From a product lifecycle perspective, sustainable consumption behavior encompasses the stages of purchase, use, and disposal or, more specifically, buying and using sustainable products and managing and disposing of used products (Geng et al., 2017). This definition highlights the efficient use of products and services, reducing the use of natural resources and hazardous materials, and minimizing pollution emissions (Nguyen et al., 2021). Sustainable food consumption ensures food security, nutrition, and a healthy life for the present and future (Clark et al., 2020) (19). Sustainable food consumption respects biodiversity and ecosystems, ensures economic fairness and affordability, and optimizes natural and human resources (Biesbroek et al., 2023).

Attitude

Consumers' attitude towards sustainable food products can influence their shopping experience and overall satisfaction. Previous research has indicated that consumer attitudes towards sustainable food can impact their shopping experiences (Costa et al., 2021; Hoek et al., 2017). Furthermore, an individual's attitude can also affect their intention to consume and behavior toward sustainable food products (Ajzen, 1991; Hill et al., 1977). Therefore, it is proposed that:

Hypothesis H1: Attitude has a significant impact on the satisfaction levels of consumers regarding sustainable food.

Perception

Previous studies have examined the relationship between perception, behavior control, and purchase intention across various domains, including the food sector (Ran et al., 2022; Shin et al., 2020). For instance, the relationship between risk perception and benefit perception in consumer food consumption behavior has been investigated (Li et al., 2020; Nardi et al., 2020). Risk and benefit perceptions are important theoretical constructs that explain consumer behavior and purchase intentions when selecting products or services (Luong & Ho, 2023; Nardi et al., 2020). Furthermore, attitude, trust, subjective norms, and behavior control influence green consumption intentions and behaviors (Ajzen, 1991; Luong & Ho, 2023; Rita et al., 2019). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis H2: Perception significantly impacts satisfaction with sustainable food consumption.

Experience

Previous research has demonstrated that when consumers feel satisfied with a product and have positive experiences, they are more likely to become satisfied and loyal consumers of sustainable food in the future (Arslan, 2020; Cachero-Martínez et al., 2024). Furthermore, they may share their positive experiences with others, creating a positive ripple effect for sustainable

food products (Cachero-Martínez et al., 2024). Satisfaction responds to consumers' understanding and evaluation of their experiences (González-Rodríguez et al., 2020). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis H3: Consumer experience significantly impacts satisfaction with sustainable food. Figure 1 displays the research framework:

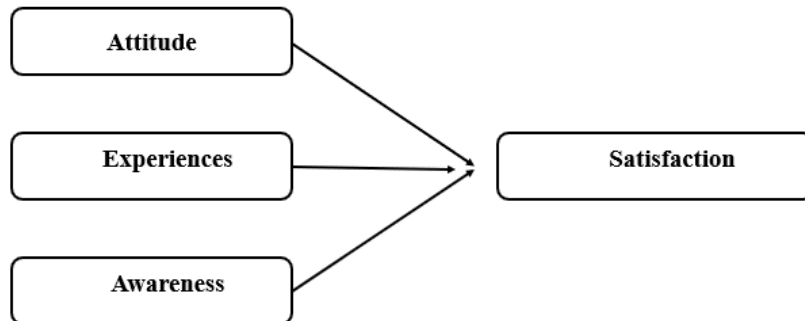


Figure 1. Research Framework

Methodology

Measurements

This study employed a questionnaire to gather information on four factors: perception, attitude, experience, and satisfaction of students regarding sustainable food consumption in Ho Chi Minh City. The questions were constructed based on hypotheses and theoretical foundations from previous research in the food domain. The survey consisted of 26 questions divided into four main sections. The initial questions were drafted in English and professionally translated into Vietnamese to ensure accuracy and consistency. A 5-point Likert scale was used for all the questions.

Part 1 comprised 7 attitude-related questions, adapted and modified from previous studies (Luong & Nguyen, 2024). Part 2 consisted of 6 perception-related questions, adjusted and revised from previous studies (Simeone & Scarpato, 2020; Zhang & Dong, 2021). Part 3 included 6 experience-related questions, adjusted and revised from previous research (Arslan, 2020). Part 4 comprised 7 satisfaction-related questions, adjusted and revised from previous research (Parashar et al., 2023). Additionally, there were demographic questions related to students' loyalty towards sustainable food consumption.

Data Collection and Analysis

After determining the age group and sample size, the researcher proceeded with the survey following the steps outlined below:

Step 1: The author designed a questionnaire using Google Forms, consisting of Part I for collecting personal information and Part II for the main survey questions. Subsequently, a survey link and QR code were generated for convenient sharing.

Step 2: The survey link was published and distributed to research groups in multiple universities in Ho Chi Minh City through social media platforms such as Facebook and Zalo. Additionally, the research team visited some universities in Ho Chi Minh City to randomly survey students, aiming to enhance the effectiveness and accuracy of the study. This approach allowed for wide accessibility and facilitated the collection of diverse responses. By leveraging

the popularity and accessibility of these platforms, the researchers aimed to maximize the survey's visibility and encourage the participation of many individuals.

Step 3: The survey was conducted from February 21, 2024, to March 7, 2024, and received 395 responses. The data was efficiently collected and screened to ensure its relevance to the research topic. Finally, 300 valid responses were retained after excluding 95 invalid responses. On May 10, 2024, the research team transferred the data to SPSS 22 and Smart-PLS 4.10 software for analysis.

Results

Participant Demographic

SPSS was used to analyze the data collected through survey research. The following is a statistical description of gender, age, marital status, income, residence, and consumer behavior. The male-to-female ratio was 31.3% (n=94), and the female-to-male ratio was 68.7% (n=206). Among the participants, 38.3% (n=115) fell into the age range of 18 to 21. Notably, 52.7% (n=158) were in a romantic relationship with the opposite gender, and 38.3% (n=115) of students had a monthly income of over 5 million Vietnamese dong. Additionally, 40% (n=120) of the participants lived in rented houses or apartments, and 43.7% (n=131) were in university dormitories. The ratio between those who participated in self-cooking was 48% (n=144), and those who used processed food was 52% (n=156), nearly equal. Remarkably, 42% (n=126) prioritized using clean and organic food. Regarding health, most of them did not follow restrictive diets, with a rate of 98.7% (n=296). (Table 1)

Table 1. Participants Demographic

Items	Frequency	Percent (%)	
1. Gender	Male	94	31,3
	Female	206	68,7
2. Age	Under 18 years old	26	8,7
	18 to 21 years old	115	38,3
	22 to 24 years old	87	29
	Over 24 years old	72	24
3. Marital status	Single	118	39,3
	In a relationship	158	52,7
	Married	24	8
4. Monthly income	Below 1 million VND per month	25	8,3
	1 to 3 million VND per month	73	24,3
	3 to 5 million VND per month	87	29
	Above 5 million VND per month	115	38,3
5. Accommodation	Rented accommodation or apartment	120	40
	Residing in the university dormitory	131	43,7
	Own a house in Ho Chi Minh City	49	16,3
6. Type of eating	Cook their meals	144	48
	Consume pre-prepared food	156	52
7. Diet status	Prioritize using clean, organic food	126	42
	Do not follow any specific dietary rules	174	58
8. Limitation in eating	Yes	4	1,3
	No	296	98,7

Measurement Descriptive

Table 2 provides descriptive information about the constructs and their corresponding items, including the mean values, standard deviations, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients. To focus on the highest mean values for each construct, the following descriptions can be provided:

Attitude: The item with the highest mean value is "You care about the food preservation methods of suppliers" (Mean = 4.22). **Perception:** The item with the highest mean value is "You are concerned about animal welfare" (Mean = 4.17). **Experience:** The item with the highest mean value is "You understand the origin and production process of the food you consume" (Mean = 4.14). **Satisfaction:** The item with the highest mean value is "You have switched to using sustainable food more frequently" (Mean = 4.28).

Reliability

Cronbach's alpha analysis was used to assess the reliability of each construct. Cronbach's alpha values greater than or equal to 0.7 are generally acceptable (42). Table 2 shows the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for attitude (Cronbach's alpha = 0.835), perception (Cronbach's alpha = 0.808), experience (Cronbach's alpha = 0.858), and satisfaction (Cronbach's alpha = 0.898), all of which exceed the threshold of 0.7. Therefore, all items are considered reliable within an acceptable range (Table 2).

Table 2. Measurement Descriptive

Construct/Items	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Attitude			0,831
You prioritize shopping at supermarkets.	4,21	0,979	0,809
You are concerned about the food preservation methods of the supplying establishments.	4,22	0,943	0,81
You are willing to pay a higher price to obtain higher-quality food.	4,02	0,976	0,803
You prioritize purchasing food that represents the local region.	4,04	1,066	0,789
To save costs, you should refrain from using food nearing its expiration date.	4,09	0,941	0,811
Awareness			0,832
You care about environmental protection.	4,11	1,083	0,745
You care about pesticide residues in food.	4,14	1,072	0,761
You care about animal welfare.	4,17	0,952	0,778
You would use genetically modified food if it has health benefits.	4,07	1,09	0,754
Experiences			0,849
Sustainable food provides better nutritional value.	4,04	1,014	0,839
Using sustainable food helps limit environmental waste.	4,03	1,142	0,833
You clearly understand the origin and production processes of the food you consume.	4,14	0,962	0,836
You have the financial means to afford the cost of regularly using sustainable food.	4,01	1,108	0,81
Sustainable food is not necessarily completely free of chemicals.	4,12	1,016	0,835
Satisfaction			0,899
You are satisfied with the quality of sustainable food.	4,1	1,148	0,881

You are satisfied with the health benefits that sustainable food brings.	4,21	1,075	0,88
You are satisfied with the variety of sustainable food and its processing methods.	4,09	1,083	0,874
You trust the information provided on food packaging.	4,18	1,067	0,874
You trust the credibility of suppliers of sustainable food.	4,18	1	0,886
You have switched to using sustainable food more regularly.	4,28	0,816	0,754

SEM results

After all the tests, the effects were assessed using the Bootstrapping method with 5000 samples to determine statistical significance. Figure 2 and Table 3 present the statistical analysis of the hypotheses/pathways related to the relationships between different variables. Statistical significance is generally attributed to a p-value below 0.05, which suggests that the observed relationship between the variables is improbable to have occurred by coincidence.

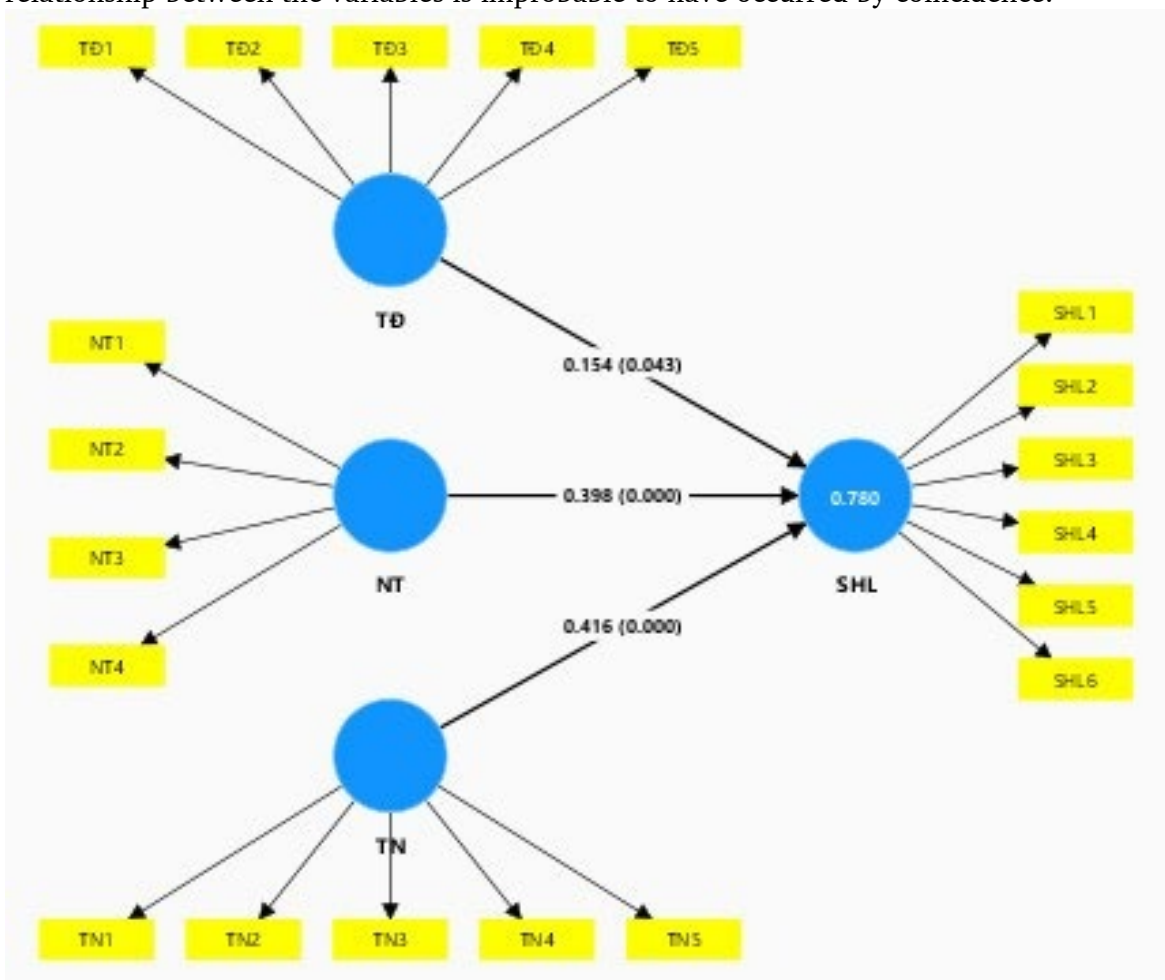


Figure 2. PLS-SEM Results

Based on the results in Table 3, attitude positively influences satisfaction ($\beta = 0.154$, $t = 2.021$, $p < 0.05$), supporting hypothesis 1. Perception positively influences satisfaction ($\beta = 0.398$, $t = 6.365$, $p < 0.05$), supporting hypothesis 2. Experience positively influences satisfaction ($\beta = 0.416$, $t = 7.040$, $p < 0.05$), supporting hypothesis 3.

Table 3. PLS-SEM Results

Hypotheses	O	M	STDEV	T	P
H1: Attitude -> Satisfaction	0.154	0.156	0.076	2.021	0.043
1H2: Awareness -> Satisfaction	0.398	0.397	0.063	6.365	0.000
H3: Experiences -> Satisfaction	0.416	0.415	0.059	7.040	0.000

Note: "Original sample (O); Sample mean (M); Standard deviation (STDEV); T statistics (O/STDEV); P values (P)".

Predictive

The coefficient of determination, R-squared (R^2), represents the model's predictive ability and the proportion of variance explained by the independent variables. R^2 values range from 0% to 100%, with higher values indicating better predictive accuracy (Hair et al., 2019).

The R^2 value of 0.780 indicates that the independent variables explain 78% of the variability observed in the satisfaction construct. Based on Table 4, the adjusted R^2 value of 0.778 suggests that the independent variables account for 77.8% of the variability observed in satisfaction. The R^2 value indicates that the independent variables significantly impact the dependent constructs, suggesting that the model has a robust explanatory capability in forecasting experience and satisfaction.

Table 4. The Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Constructs	R-square	R-square adjusted
Satisfaction	0.780	0.778

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

Table 5 summarizes that attitude influences students' satisfaction with sustainable food (H1). Specifically, students' attitudes towards the store's location, consumer behavior, food preservation methods of suppliers, local food products, and the seasonal nature of food impact their satisfaction with sustainable food products (Csordas et al., 2022; Feil et al., 2020).

Secondly, the findings of this study demonstrate that positive perception influences consumers' satisfaction with sustainable food (H2). Specifically, perceptions of sensory value, food safety, environmental protection, pesticide residues, animal welfare, and genetically modified foods contribute to overall satisfaction with sustainable food (Ajzen, 1991; Luong, 2023).

Thirdly, experience positively impacts consumers' satisfaction with sustainable food (H3). Specifically, experiences related to nutritional value, sensory attributes, origin and production process, packaging information, price, and acceptance that sustainable food does not necessarily have to be entirely chemical-free contribute to the formation of positive satisfaction with sustainable food (Geng et al., 2017; González-Rodríguez et al., 2020).

Table 5. Results of Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Decision
H1 Attitude influences satisfaction.	Supported
H2 Awareness influences satisfaction.	Supported
H3 Experiences influence satisfaction.	Supported

Theoretical Implications

The study emphasizes the crucial role of attitude, perception, and experience in shaping students' satisfaction with sustainable food consumption (Kim & So, 2022; Luong & Nguyen, 2024). The findings of this study confirm the influence of attitude on consumer satisfaction, highlighting the importance of fostering a positive attitude towards sustainable food (Feil et al., 2020; Parashar et al., 2023). This implies a challenge for the government and businesses to devise strategies for improving consumer attitudes towards sustainable food products, thereby altering their consumption behavior.

Furthermore, the research underscores the role of perception in promoting consumer satisfaction, particularly regarding sensory values, food safety, environmental preservation, and other factors related to sustainable food (Feil et al., 2020; González-Rodríguez et al., 2020). This necessitates sustainable food businesses consistently providing accurate and transparent information to consumers and impart knowledge about the benefits of consuming sustainable food to enhance consumer awareness (González-Rodríguez et al., 2020; Luong, 2023).

Ultimately, the study also emphasizes the impact of various experiential factors on consumer satisfaction, including sensory attributes, nutritional value, and packaging information (Simeone & Scarpato, 2020; Zhang & Dong, 2021). This creates opportunities for researchers and businesses to develop marketing strategies and products that optimize consumers' experiences and satisfaction with sustainable food.

In conclusion, this study's findings and theoretical significance contribute to the existing knowledge base and guide future theoretical and empirical research on sustainable food consumption, particularly within the specific context of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

Practical Implications

This study's results have various real-world applications for those working to encourage healthy eating habits among Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam's student population.

Due to the influence of attitudes on satisfaction with sustainable food, interventions should be made to foster a positive attitude towards sustainable food among students. Student organizations at universities in Ho Chi Minh City can collaborate with educational institutions, government bodies, or sustainable food businesses to develop educational programs, workshops, lectures, or discussions on sustainable food. These activities can provide students with alternative perspectives on sustainable food and contribute to cultivating increasingly positive attitudes.

Since perception influences satisfaction with sustainable food, efforts should focus on raising students' awareness. Educational programs, workshops, and information campaigns can be organized to educate students about the health, environmental, and community benefits of consuming locally sourced and regional specialty food products. It is also important to emphasize the significance of understanding the information provided on food packaging. These actions contribute to enhancing students' awareness of sustainable food products. Additionally, businesses that sell sustainable food products should provide clear and transparent information about their products through accurate labelling. Furthermore, reliable and accessible online information channels are needed to help consumers seek the necessary information to make informed consumption choices.

The research results highlight specific factors that impact consumer satisfaction, such as the location of food vendors, consumer behaviour, supplier food preservation practices, local food products, and seasonal characteristics of food. Experiential factors related to sensory attributes and nutritional value significantly influence consumer satisfaction. The affordability of sustainable food products is also a concern for students with unstable incomes. Therefore, stakeholders must pay attention to these issues and propose reasonable solutions to promote student satisfaction, ultimately increasing their preference for sustainable food products.

Limitations and Recommendations

Self-reporting results could be affected by social desirability bias, which is when people answer in a way they think is socially normal or desirable instead of giving honest feedback. Furthermore, the study did not consider other factors that may have influenced participants' responses, such as mood, current circumstances, or external events. The study's small sample size also raises doubts about the generalizability of the findings. The findings may not necessarily apply to a larger group of students across Vietnam. Additionally, the focus of the study on students in Ho Chi Minh City may limit the generalizability of the research to other regions of Vietnam or other countries. Therefore, the interpretation and generalization of the findings should consider these factors. Suggestions for future research include using larger and more diverse samples and employing objective measures of attitudes, perceptions, experiences, and satisfaction to address these limitations and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issue.

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EXPLORING THE DYNAMICS OF VOLUNTOURISM AND TRAVEL PHILANTHROPY: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This study explores the concept of travel philanthropy and voluntourism, focusing specifically on the dynamics, effects, and ethical considerations related to both forms of tourism. This document examines the causes of these activities, their contribution to promoting sustainable tourism, and the possible negative effects they may have on the communities that host them. Furthermore, it underscores the need of fostering relationships with local stakeholders and ensuring that endeavours are in line with the needs of the community. In addition, the study addresses ethical concerns, including the potential for sustaining neocolonial mindsets and prioritising volunteers over long-term well-being. The research findings indicate that a sophisticated methodology that achieves a harmonious combination of positive influence, ethical engagement, and community empowerment is necessary in the realm of global travel and volunteers.

Keywords: Host Communities; Travel Philanthropy; Voluntourism; Ethics; Desire; Sustainability

Introduction

In an era marked by increasing globalization and a burgeoning desire for socially responsible travel experiences, the intertwined phenomena of voluntourism and travel philanthropy have captured the imagination of travellers and scholars alike. This research paper embarks on a critical examination of the dynamics inherent in voluntourism and travel philanthropy, seeking to unravel their complexities, assess their impacts, and navigate the ethical considerations surrounding these practices. As voluntourism continues to grow in popularity as a means of combining leisure travel with altruistic endeavours, and travel philanthropy emerges as a conduit for charitable giving within the context of exploration, understanding the nuances of these phenomena becomes imperative. Through this critical analysis, we aim to shed light on the multifaceted nature of voluntourism and travel philanthropy, informing discussions within academia, the tourism industry, and civil society about responsible and ethical approaches to global engagement.

Definition and Background of Voluntourism and Travel Philanthropy

Voluntourism, a portmanteau of "volunteer" and "tourism," refers to a form of travel where individuals participate in volunteer work, often in developing countries, as part of their vacation. Volunteering ranges from environmental protection to community improvement. These projects usually require short-term commitments of a few days to several weeks. Voluntourism advocates say it lets people contribute while also learning about other cultures and developing themselves. However, critics worry that voluntourism might perpetuate harmful stereotypes, encourage foreign aid, and prioritize volunteers' experiences over local needs. The primary objectives of voluntourism are to contribute to the welfare of the host community and to provide a meaningful and enriching experience for the volunteer. Activities in voluntourism can range from teaching and childcare to construction, conservation, and healthcare support.

Travel philanthropy includes a variety of charity and community assistance activities. It includes donating to local groups, fundraising, and supporting community development while traveling. (Rajesh, 2013) Unlike voluntourism, travel philanthropy involves giving local organizations money or goods rather than volunteering. Travel philanthropy allows travellers to assist sustainable development in their destinations, according to advocates. Sceptics say that travel philanthropy may perpetuate unequal power dynamics, increase reliance on external aid, and prioritize short-term solutions over long-term structural change.

This discrepancy highlights the complexity of voluntourism and travel philanthropy and the importance of properly examining their effects and implications. This research compares and contrasts views to understand voluntourism and travel philanthropy dynamics. The purpose is to contribute to ethical global engagement conversations.

Importance and Relevance of the Topic

Voluntourism and travel charity are important topics in modern travel and citizenship. Changing views on tourism, charitable giving, and cultural exchange have increased these habits. Multiple scientific articles argue that understanding these publications' dynamics is important for many reasons.

Voluntourism and travel charity are novel ways to combine pleasure and duty. These acts allow travellers to interact with locals, advance progress, and understand cultures as they seek meaningful experiences. Travel philanthropy and voluntourism help people learn about social and environmental issues.

Voluntourism and travel philanthropy also indicate a shift towards ethical tourism. As travellers become more aware of their travel's social and environmental impact, they seek sustainable, equitable, and community-empowering experiences. Voluntourism and travel philanthropy support local communities and help travellers attain these goals.

However, voluntourism and travel philanthropy must be carefully assessed for risks and unintended effects. Voluntourism can benefit local self-governance and empowerment, but it also commercialises empathy and perpetuates neocolonialism. (Lyons & Wearing, 2008) Voluntourism and travel charity must be sustainable, respectful to local culture, and beneficial to visitors.

Purpose of the Research Paper

The study article investigates voluntourism and travel philanthropy, achieving numerous key goals supported by scientific literature. One goal is to study voluntourism and travel philanthropy motivations and experiences. Understanding voluntourists' motivations – personal growth, cultural integration, and positive impact – is crucial to research. The study analyses these incentives to understand voluntourism and travel philanthropy. (Jamal & Stronza, 2009)

Evaluation of voluntourism and travel charity projects is also crucial. Research emphasises the need of evaluating voluntourism initiatives' ability to promote community development or environmental conservation. The essay analyses voluntourism and travel philanthropy programmes' tangible effects on host communities and environments to better understand them.

The report examines voluntourism and travel philanthropy's ethical challenges. Voluntourism researchers emphasise power relations, cultural sensitivity, and dependency. Critically

evaluating voluntourism and travel philanthropy issues contributes to discussions on responsible and ethical actions. (Butcher & Smith, 2010) (Centre for Responsible Travel | Transforming the Way the World Travels, 2023)

The research project aims to inform tourism and civil society policy and practices. It emphasises evidence-based policymaking for sustainable tourism. Factual insights and practical guidance from the research report aim to help stakeholders improve voluntourism and travel philanthropy. (Borland & Adams, 2013)

The study paper seeks to improve understanding, assess effects, identify challenges, and inform tourism and related policy and practice. Using literature and empirical research on voluntourism and travel philanthropy, the project strives to improve global engagement conversations.

Evolution and Trends

- The study of voluntourism and travel philanthropy has seen substantial changes over time, mirroring the changing patterns of global travel, discussions on development, and societal beliefs. Gaining insight into the progression of this study subject offers significant context for analysing its present dynamics and future trajectories. (Wearing, S., & McGehee, N. G., 2013)
- **Emergence of Voluntourism:** Voluntourism began in the late 20th century as people wanted to travel while helping others. A few academics have found that voluntourism, which lets tourists volunteer while exploring new places, has become popular. The early research on voluntourism focused on defining the phenomenon, finding its causes, and assessing its pros and cons.
- **Expansion of Travel Philanthropy:** Travel philanthropy, like voluntourism, helps charity causes while travelling. Travel philanthropy is giving local communities money or supporting community development projects. Travel philanthropy research now examines philanthropic travellers' motivations, their gifts' consequences, and the ethical issues surrounding charity giving in tourism. (Wearing & McGehee, 2013)
- **Critique and Debate:** Academics and others have criticised voluntourism and travel philanthropy's rise. Academics worry about voluntourism reinforcing negative stereotypes, turning kindness into a commodity, and power imbalances in many volunteer tourism programmes. Critical discussion has led to further research into voluntourism and travel philanthropy's ethical implications, highlighting the need for careful consideration and implementation. (Benson, A. M., 2011)
- **Integration of Sustainability and Social Justice:** Voluntourism and travel charity projects are increasingly embracing ecological and social justice ideals. Ethical tourism should prioritise local communities, environmental preservation, and inequality and social injustice, according to several researchers. Voluntourism and travel philanthropy research now emphasises community empowerment, cultural sensitivity, and long-term sustainability.
- Research on voluntourism and travel philanthropy mirrors the tourism industry's shift towards ethical and responsible travel. Studies on voluntourism, travel philanthropy, and their critique and discussion have helped us understand their causes and effects. Future research may focus on sustainability, social justice, and responsible practices. This research will promote ethical voluntourism and travel philanthropy worldwide.

Historical Development of Voluntourism and Travel Philanthropy

The origins of voluntourism and travel philanthropy can be traced back to several forms of selfless travel and charity donation traditions throughout history. Although voluntourism and

travel philanthropy are relatively new notions, they can be traced back to past instances of travel with social, religious, and humanitarian intentions. (Budeanu et al., 2016)

- **Historical Precedents:** For millennia, pilgrimages, missionary expeditions, and exploration missions have been used for unselfish purposes. The Hajj trip to Mecca and the Camino de Santiago in Spain sometimes involve helping fellow pilgrims and locals. Missionaries travelled far and wide to spread religion and help native populations.
- **Colonial and Imperial Expeditions:** Travel during colonial and imperial times sometimes featured altruism, paternalism, and civilisation. European colonial administrations and philanthropists provided education, healthcare, and infrastructure to "civilise" or "enhance" indigenous communities. However, these efforts were often driven by colonial interests and maintained power imbalances.
- **Humanitarian Tourism:** Voluntourism began with humanitarian tourism in the late 20th century. Humanitarian tourism involves travellers volunteering to help during natural disasters, conflicts, and development issues. Travellers could volunteer with Habitat for Humanity and Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) help rebuild, treat, and develop disaster-stricken areas. (Smith & Butcher, 2015)
- **Rise of Travel Philanthropy:** Travel philanthropy – donating money, resources, or time to charity while traveling – also increased. Travel philanthropy includes fundraising, donating to local non-profits, and helping community development projects. Philanthropic tourism activities have increased as travellers are more likely to actively contribute to good change.
- **Voluntourism and travel philanthropy reflect travel, humanitarian, and sustainable development trends.** Voluntourism and travel philanthropy have evolved with cultural values and aspirations. (Burrai et al., 2016) Altruistic travel has evolved into projects that help locals and promote conservation. Understanding the history of voluntourism and travel philanthropy is essential to understanding their effects.

Emergence of Voluntourism as a Popular Trend in the Travel Industry

The rise of voluntourism as a prevalent phenomenon in the travel sector signifies the coming together of different elements, such as evolving consumer preferences, globalisation, and an increasing focus on social responsibility. An in-depth comprehension of the development of voluntourism offers useful perspectives on its underlying motivations, effects, and ramifications for the tourism sector and beyond.

- **Changing Consumer Preferences:** Voluntourism is growing due to consumer aspirations towards more meaningful and authentic travel experiences. Explorers today want to grow themselves, experience other cultures, and improve society. Voluntourism allows people to immerse themselves in local communities and contribute to important projects while exploring new places.
- **Globalization and Connectivity:** Voluntourism has increased due to globalisation and connectivity, which makes volunteer activities internationally more accessible. Online platforms, social media, and volunteer organisations make voluntourism trips easier to coordinate. ("Tourism and the Less Developed World: Issues and Case Studies," 2001) This makes these experiences more accessible to more travellers.
- **Desire for Social Impact:** Voluntourism attracts tourists who are driven by a desire to have a beneficial influence and contribute to the communities they visit. Voluntourists are attracted to projects that prioritise community development, environmental conservation, and humanitarian help. They aim to use their time and abilities to tackle urgent social and environmental issues.

- **Marketing and Promotion:** Voluntourism has been popularised by the travel industry. Tour operators, travel agencies, and voluntourism associations promote volunteer programmes as a way for tourists to combine leisure with social responsibility. This marketing strategy has increased voluntourism participation.
- **Media and Celebrity Endorsement:** Media coverage and celebrity endorsements have also promoted voluntourism. Celebrities, influencers, and public personalities often post about their voluntourism on social media or in traditional media, raising awareness and encouraging others to participate. Voluntourism has grown in popularity due to positive media coverage.

Voluntourism is growing because to consumer preferences, globalisation, marketing initiatives, and media coverage. Understanding voluntourism's causes and methods is essential for tourism professionals to responsibly capitalise on it. This will ensure that voluntourism projects benefit communities and provide meaningful travel experiences.

Current Trends and Practices in Travel Philanthropy

The current trends and practices in travel philanthropy indicate a rising inclination among travellers to assist charity causes and create a beneficial influence during their trips. These trends are influenced by multiple causes, such as evolving consumer preferences, technological improvements, and growing worldwide awareness.

- **Socially Conscious Travel:** Currently, there is an increasing inclination towards socially conscious travel, wherein tourists actively seek out chances to contribute to charitable causes and participate in philanthropic endeavours while on their journeys. Travellers are progressively seeking opportunities to contribute to the communities they visit and support sustainable development initiatives.
- **Corporate Social Responsibility:** Several travel organisations, including airlines, hotels, and tour operators, are integrating corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities into their business strategies. These corporations are collaborating with non-profit organisations, adopting sustainable practices, and endorsing community development projects in destination locations.
- **Volunteer Programs:** Volunteer programmes provided by travel businesses and organisations are highly sought-after by travellers seeking to combine their travels with selfless pursuits. These programmes encompass a variety of durations, from brief volunteer stints to more extended commitments. They involve a diverse range of activities, including teaching, conservation work, and community development projects.
- **Micro-Donations and Fundraising:** Micro-donations and fundraising activities are growing more common in the travel industry, enabling travellers to make tiny financial contributions to charity organisations. Numerous hotels, airlines, and tour operators provide consumers with the opportunity to contribute donations when making a reservation or while travelling.
- **Community-Based Tourism:** Community-based tourism initiatives are increasingly being seen as a means to empower local communities and foster sustainable development. These efforts entail the cooperation of local communities and tourism partners to develop tourism experiences that both benefit locals and safeguard cultural and environmental heritage.
- **Educational and Awareness Initiatives:** Certain travel philanthropy efforts prioritise education and awareness campaigns, with the goal of enlightening visitors about global challenges and motivating them to engage in proactive measures. These projects may encompass cultural immersion experiences, guided

tours facilitated by local experts, and educational workshops focusing on subjects such as environmental protection and social justice.

- The current trends and practices in travel philanthropy demonstrate an increasing inclination among travellers to have a positive influence and contribute to charitable causes while they are on their trips. Travellers have multiple options to participate in charitable activities and support sustainable development efforts worldwide, ranging from volunteer programmes and corporate social responsibility projects to micro-donations and community-based tourism.

Motivations and Participants

To get a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of voluntourism and travel philanthropy, it is essential to comprehend the motives of participants. This understanding will provide valuable insights into their behaviour, experiences, and the effects of their actions. Studies suggest that voluntourism and travel philanthropy appeal to a wide variety of individuals, each with their own distinct motives and interests.

- **Personal Growth and Learning:** Volunteers and philanthropic travellers seek personal growth, cultural integration, and education. Voluntourism is seen as a way to broaden perspectives, learn new skills, and better understand global issues, according to studies.
- **Altruism and Social Impact:** Participants in voluntourism and travel philanthropy want to make a difference and support meaningful causes. Research shows that people are often motivated by compassion and empathy to help local communities, environmental efforts, or humanitarian efforts.
- **Cultural Exchange and Connection:** Voluntourism and travel philanthropy allow people to communicate across cultures, interact with local communities, and form meaningful relationships with people from all backgrounds. Studies show that voluntourism's cultural immersion and human relationships enhance travel experiences and broaden viewpoints.
- **Resume Building and Career Development:** Voluntourism can help people get experience, build their resume, or explore career options in global development, humanitarian aid, and environmental preservation. Voluntourism may provide participants with skills, relationships, and perspectives that can enhance their charity or similar careers, according to studies.
- **Ethical and Responsible Travel:** Ethical and responsible travel that prioritises host communities, environmental preservation, and social justice is becoming more popular. Voluntourism and travel charity appeal to those who want to align their travels with their values and improve society and the environment, according to research.
- **Volunteering and travel philanthropy** are motivated by personal growth, selflessness, cultural exchange, professional achievement, and ethics. Understanding these motives is essential to understanding voluntourism and travel philanthropy, which determine participants' actions, experiences, and impacts on the communities and environments they visit. Researchers can better comprehend voluntourism and travel philanthropy by studying why people participate.

Motivations Driving Individuals to Engage in Voluntourism

Voluntourism motivations differ by values, experiences, and goals. Many volunteers wish to aid the poor. They actively seek opportunities to offer time, knowledge, and money to local development, needy populations, and social and environmental concerns. Volunteering helps

people learn new skills. Volunteering overseas helps participants gain self-confidence, develop themselves, and learn about global challenges. Voluntourists experience other cultures, traditions, and lifestyles via volunteering. Many explore different cultures, learn from indigenous people, and promote intercultural understanding out of curiosity. Some enjoy voluntourism, which blends travel with charity. They want to travel, build memories, and make a difference. Voluntourism connects people with similar interests worldwide. Voluntourists like meeting new people through volunteer work or cultural exchanges. Volunteers care about the environment and wish to conserve in addition to social benefits. People can volunteer for wildlife conservation, habitat maintenance, or sustainable farming to match their principles. Businesses and institutions are incorporating voluntourism into their CSR. Voluntourism builds teamwork, philanthropy, and corporate social responsibility in employees, students, and affiliates. Students and professionals can learn or investigate through voluntourism. People can deliberately seek hands-on experience, on-site research, or important social, environmental, or developmental study.

Understanding voluntourism's motivations – kindness, personal growth, cultural immersion, adventure, social bonding, environmental responsibility, and job promotion – is essential to creating ethical, sustainable, and meaningful experiences for participants and host communities. (Bristow, 2021)

Profile of Voluntourism Participants: Demographics and Characteristics

Voluntourism volunteers have diverse backgrounds and possess varied features, which reflects the wide attraction of volunteer travel experiences. Although there is no one profile that encompasses all voluntourists, research and observations have discovered numerous demographic patterns and common qualities associated with this group:

- **Age:** Voluntourism attracts young folks, professionals, families, and retirees. Young adults and students often participate in activities during gap years, summer holidays, and academic programmes. Voluntourism is available to working professionals during breaks or as part of corporate volunteer projects. Retirees may volunteer travel to find purpose and fulfilment, while parents with children may actively hunt for voluntourism initiatives for families.
- **Education:** Voluntourism participants range from high school grads to advanced degree holders. Students and new graduates can gain practical experience, complete academic requirements, or pursue career interests. Professionals may join in voluntourism to use their skills and knowledge in a different setting, help community development projects, or build capacity.
- **Income and Socioeconomic Status:** Voluntourism is open to people of all income levels, however socioeconomic status can affect programme selection, destination, and duration. Some voluntourists can afford programme fees, travel, and housing, but others may choose cheaper options or seek for scholarships.
- **Motivations:** Voluntourism participants are driven by several motives, such as altruism, self-improvement, cultural interchange, thrill-seeking, social bonding, and environmental preservation. Their reasons may be shaped by personal ideals, life experiences, work objectives, or desires for significant travel experiences.
- **Skills and Expertise:** Voluntourism volunteers bring many skills, talents, and knowledge to their positions. These may include education, healthcare, construction, environmental preservation, community development, marketing, IT, and other specialties. Participants can volunteer, work with local organisations, or help host communities.

- **Interests and Preferences:** Voluntourism participants choose volunteer opportunities and destinations based on varied interests. Some people are drawn to education, healthcare, orphan care, wildlife preservation, sustainable agriculture, and disaster response. Some people like rural or urban settings, cultural immersion sessions, exhilarating activities, or local interaction.
- **Previous Travel Experience:** Prior travel experience can influence voluntourism activity since experienced travellers seek unique and immersive experiences. Seasoned travellers are comfortable visiting new places, adapting to different cultures, and enjoying the challenges and rewards of voluntary travel.
- **Duration of Participation:** Voluntourism enthusiasts can volunteer for a few days, months, or years. Students, professionals, and people with limited availability prefer short-term voluntourism initiatives, however long-term positions may appeal to those seeking deeper involvement and lasting impact.
- **Voluntourism volunteers** come from all backgrounds and share a commitment to improving the world via volunteer work, cultural exchange, and ethical travel. Understanding voluntourism participants' demographics and attributes is essential for generating meaningful, long-lasting volunteer travel experiences that benefit participants and host communities.

Role of Personal Fulfilment and Cultural Immersion in Voluntourism Experiences

Personal fulfilment and cultural immersion play significant roles in shaping the voluntourism experience, influencing participants' perceptions, motivations, and outcomes. (The Volunteer Management Handbook, 2011)

Personal Fulfilment

- **Sense of Purpose:** Engaging in voluntourism often provides individuals with a sense of purpose and fulfilment by allowing them to contribute meaningfully to community development projects, social causes, or environmental initiatives. The act of giving back and making a positive impact on others can enhance self-esteem, satisfaction, and overall well-being.
- **Personal Growth:** Voluntourism offers opportunities for personal growth and development, enabling participants to acquire new skills, expand their perspectives, and overcome challenges. Through volunteering, individuals may enhance their leadership abilities, communication skills, adaptability, and resilience, fostering personal and professional growth. (Benali et al., 2023)
- **Emotional Rewards:** Voluntourism experiences can evoke a range of emotions, from joy and gratitude to empathy and compassion. Building connections with local communities, witnessing the impact of one's contributions, and experiencing moments of shared humanity can elicit profound emotional responses that contribute to a sense of fulfilment and fulfilment.

Cultural Immersion

- **Experiential Learning:** Cultural immersion is a cornerstone of voluntourism experiences, offering participants the opportunity to learn about different cultures, customs, traditions, and ways of life through firsthand experiences. Engaging with local communities, participating in cultural activities, and living in homestays facilitate experiential learning and deepens understanding. (Correia & Dolnicar, 2021)

- **Cross-Cultural Exchange:** Voluntourism allows individuals to meet people from different cultures, discuss opinions, and make lasting connections. Voluntourists learn about global concerns, challenge preconceptions, and foster mutual respect through these experiences. (Faganel & Trnavcevic, 2012)
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Voluntourism fosters cultural awareness, empathy, and intercultural competency. Volunteers can connect more genuinely with host communities, reduce cultural misunderstandings, and build genuine relationships based on mutual respect and admiration by following local conventions, norms, and values.

Personal fulfilment and cultural immersion strengthen voluntourism travels and improve participants' enjoyment and learning. Voluntourism participants can better understand themselves and the world by actively improving, doing meaningful things, and sharing culture. Additionally, they can benefit the areas they visit.

Facilitators and Intermediaries

Facilitators and intermediaries affect voluntourism outcomes. Facilitators match volunteers with impoverished communities or organisations to promote voluntourism. Community leaders, non-profits, and voluntourism companies are options. Facilitators help volunteers and local stakeholders interact to ensure voluntourism fits the needs and preferences of the communities being helped. Voluntourism intermediaries link volunteers, host communities, and service suppliers. Volunteer placement agencies, tour operators, and community groups can participate. Intermediaries manage voluntourism trips, meet expectations, and promote communication and teamwork. They may create ethical problems regarding power, resource distribution, and selflessness commercialization. To comprehend voluntourism and travel philanthropy's intricacies and impacts, facilitators and mediators must be investigated.

Role of Tour Operators and Travel Agencies in Promoting Voluntourism

Tour operators and travel firms match volunteers with charities in need, manage logistics, and give a meaningful and safe experience. Volunteer coordinators connect volunteers to local groups. Their supervision is crucial during voluntourism.

Voluntourism tour providers may organise volunteer assignments, housing, transportation, and cultural immersion, according to study. These tour companies collaborate with local partners on sustainable tourism and community development to guarantee voluntourism activities suit host communities' needs.

The Centre for Responsible Travel (CREST) found that travel operators encourage voluntourism by offering packages, organising group trips, and providing volunteer information. Travel companies promote voluntourism, social and environmental awareness, and responsible tourism using their expertise.

According to research, tour operators and travel companies are essential to voluntourism's ethical and practical administration. They screen volunteers and projects for compatibility and local impact. Tour operators and travel firms must teach volunteers cultural awareness, ethics, and voluntourism. (Gertner, 2019)

To conclude, tour operators and travel corporations encourage voluntourism by offering volunteer opportunities, logistics, awareness, and responsible and meaningful community

connections. However, their participation creates important ethical considerations that require more investigation.

Involvement of Non-Profit Organizations and NGOs in Facilitating Travel Philanthropy

Travel philanthropy uses NPOs and NGOs to discover community needs, organise volunteers, and conduct sustainable development projects. These organisations connect travellers who want to help with impoverished communities. They advise and help throughout.

Study examines how NPOs and NGOs promote volunteer tourism. It shows their ability to collaborate, mobilise resources, and tackle difficult social and environmental concerns. These organisations have strong networks and community development skills to find exceptional volunteer opportunities and link travel philanthropy with local priorities and sustainable development goals. (Benson, 2011)

CREST found that NPOs and NGOs place volunteers, coordinate community-based projects, and analyse volunteer impact to promote responsible travel philanthropy. These organisations develop volunteer projects with local stakeholders that promote community ownership, cultural sensitivity, and sustainability.

Research also demonstrates that NPOs and NGOs assist volunteers and local communities communicate, increase cultural understanding, and promote positive social change. (McCool & Martin, 1994) These organisations inspire local travel generosity, trust, and connection.

To assess community needs, coordinate volunteer efforts, and implement sustainable development initiatives, travel philanthropy programmes need NGOs. Participation ensures responsible and impactful host community contact and positive social, economic, and environmental consequences.

Partnerships Between Voluntourism Organizations and Local Communities

Voluntourism organisations and local communities must collaborate to ensure long-term viability, cultural appropriateness, and beneficial influence on communities. These relationships allow volunteers and locals to connect, share resources, and learn. These ties are important in voluntourism, according to multiple studies.

- A 2013 study found that voluntourism organisations and local communities should collaborate to achieve sustainable development and empower host communities. The study stresses the role of community-based organisations (CBOs) and grassroots initiatives in fostering meaningful volunteer-citizen engagement, cultural exchange, and community needs.
- According to research, voluntourism programmes must partner with local communities to alleviate poverty and promote social inclusion. To enhance voluntourism's benefits to communities hosting volunteers, the study emphasises incorporating many stakeholders in decision-making, developing skills and resources, and guaranteeing fair distribution of benefits.
- Voluntourism organisations and local communities work together to promote community ownership, cultural preservation, and sustainable development, according to the Centre for Responsible Travel (CREST) research. The report emphasises trust, discussion, and local stakeholder involvement in voluntourism plan design and implementation.
- Research also shows that partnerships can reduce voluntourism's negative consequences, such as cultural commercialization and dependence on outside funding. The study suggests that strong partnerships between voluntourism companies and local communities can promote responsible tourism, preserve local cultures, and empower communities to manage their own development.

Voluntourism organisations must partner with local communities to promote sustainable development, host community strengthening, and cross-cultural engagement. These alliances promote cooperative decision-making, resource sharing, and mutual respect, ensuring that voluntourism benefits volunteers and locals.

Impacts on Host Communities

Voluntourism can exert both beneficial and detrimental effects on the communities that host it. It is crucial to analyse these consequences in a discerning manner to guarantee that voluntourism efforts make a beneficial contribution to the welfare and advancement of host communities.

Positive Impacts of Voluntourism and Travel Philanthropy: Economic Empowerment, Capacity Building, Cultural Exchange

Voluntourism and travel philanthropy assist host communities economically, build capacity, and promote cultural interchange. Voluntourism and travel philanthropy boost the economy. These projects fund lodging, meals, transportation, and souvenirs, boosting local businesses. This spending supports the economy and produces jobs for local businesses. Cities sponsoring voluntourism events can strengthen their economy by supporting community development. (Higham & Lück, 2002)

Travel charity and voluntourism benefit from capacity building. These projects frequently entail skill sharing, training, and infrastructure. These activities enhance community problem-solving. Building schools, clinics and clean water infrastructure with volunteers improves local services. (The Routledge Handbook of Volunteering in Events, Sport and Tourism, 2021) Voluntourism organisations work with local stakeholders to create sustainable, community-specific solutions. This builds resilience and independence.

Through cultural exchange, voluntourism and travel charity foster understanding, admiration, and diversity. Volunteers learn about community members' lives and create close bonds by fully experiencing local cultures, traditions, and customs. Cultural contact improves volunteer experiences, builds positive host community relationships, dispels myths, and promotes global citizenship.

Travel philanthropy and voluntourism benefit host communities immensely. Volunteers increase local economies, skill-sharing, infrastructure, and cultural exchange. Volunteers develop local respect and understanding.

Negative Impacts and Challenges: Dependency, Cultural Commodification, Environmental Degradation

- Voluntourism and travel charity projects cause dependency, cultural commercialization, and environmental damage.
- Dependency occurs when host communities rely on voluntourism for income. This can cause communities to rely on foreign aid instead of finding long-term solutions. Dependent communities can lose their autonomy and maintain unequal power dynamics between volunteers and community members.
- Voluntourism projects that market local traditions as tourist attractions or volunteer experiences commercialise them. This can lead to the commercialization of cultural heritage, as traditional behaviours and practices are altered to satisfy

tourists. Cultural commercialization can damage a culture's authenticity, social norms, and traditional knowledge and rituals.(Clarke, 2009)

- Voluntourism and travel charity also harm the environment, which is concerning. Voluntourists can degrade habitats, pollute, and upset species in fragile ecosystems with minimal resources. Deforestation, wildlife handling, and improper waste management can harm biodiversity and ecosystems.
- Lack of skills can lead to resentment between host communities and volunteers. (Coghlan, 2015)
- People are more into decorating their resumes rather than truly being involved.
- To overcome these issues, a comprehensive strategy that prioritises sustainability, community development, and responsible tourism is needed. Environmentally friendly regulations may be needed. Community-led projects that stress local ownership and decision-making are also encouraged. Volunteers and host communities must also develop cross-cultural understanding and respect.

Case Studies Highlighting the Diverse Impacts on Host Communities

Case Study 1: Economic Empowerment in Cusco, Peru

This study examines how voluntourism contributes to economic empowerment in Cusco, Peru, through spending on accommodations, food, and local goods. It analyses the role of voluntourism in stimulating economic growth and providing employment opportunities for residents. (Shahzar et al., 2023)

Case Study 2: Capacity Building in South Africa

This case study explores how voluntourism initiatives in South Africa facilitate capacity building by providing training programs and skill-sharing opportunities for local communities. It assesses the impact of these initiatives on enhancing the community's ability to address local challenges independently.

Case Study 3: Cultural Exchange in Thailand

This study investigates the cultural exchange facilitated by voluntourism initiatives in Thailand. It examines how volunteers interact with local communities, learn about Thai culture and traditions, and contribute to cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.

Case Study 4: Dependency in Nepal

This case study explores the issue of dependency created by voluntourism initiatives in Nepal. It examines how communities may become reliant on external assistance, impacting local autonomy and perpetuating unequal power dynamics between volunteers and community members.

Case Study 5: Cultural Commodification in Costa Rica

This study investigates the cultural commodification associated with voluntourism in Costa Rica. (Shahzar et al., 2023) It examines how traditional cultural practices are commodified for tourist experiences, leading to the commercialization of cultural heritage and potential loss of authenticity.

Case Study 6: Environmental Degradation in Cambodia

This case study examines the environmental degradation caused by voluntourism initiatives in Cambodia. It assesses the impact of activities such as deforestation, wildlife handling, and improper waste management on fragile ecosystems and natural resources.

Case Study 7: Community Empowerment in India

This study explores how voluntourism initiatives empower local communities in India. It assesses the role of community-led projects, decision-making processes, and resource allocation in promoting community empowerment and sustainable development.

Case Study 8: Socio-cultural Impacts in Fiji

This case study examines the socio-cultural impacts of voluntourism initiatives in Fiji. It investigates how voluntourism activities affect local traditions, social norms, and community cohesion, highlighting both positive and negative outcomes.

Case Study 9: Health and Well-being in Kenya

This study assesses the impact of voluntourism initiatives on health and well-being in Kenya. It explores how healthcare volunteering projects contribute to improving access to healthcare services, promoting health education, and enhancing overall community well-being. (Pastran, 2014)

Case Study 10: Long-term Sustainability in Ecuador

This case study investigates the long-term sustainability of voluntourism initiatives in Ecuador. It examines the effectiveness of community-based projects, resource management strategies, and stakeholder engagement in promoting sustainable development and preserving natural and cultural resources. (Tomazos, 2022)

These case studies offer unique perspectives on the varied effects of voluntourism and travel philanthropy programmes on communities who host them. They emphasise the need to consider both positive results and difficulties in order to promote sustainable and responsible tourism practices. (Managing Volunteers in Tourism, 2012)

Ethical Considerations

Ethics are crucial to voluntourism and travel charity. To ensure responsible and respectful engagement with visiting communities, careful planning and action are needed. (Gillett, 2016) Reciprocity emphasises reciprocal gain and respect in all relationships and is essential to ethics. Involving and securing the consent of hosting communities is essential to prioritise their needs, wants, and independence. Voluntourism organisations and individuals must also be culturally sensitive to avoid exploiting local cultures and traditions. Voluntourism requires transparency and responsibility, including clear goals, consequences, and results. Sustainability is also essential to ethical voluntourism, ensuring that host communities are truly empowered and self-sufficient beyond the volunteers' stay. Ethical considerations guide appropriate and productive voluntourism that prioritises volunteer and host community well-being and dignity.

Critique of Voluntourism Practices and Potential Neo-Colonial Attitudes

Studying voluntourism shows its neocolonial roots. Voluntourism can aid the poor but maintain power inequities and neocolonialism. Volunteers' ignorance of their beneficiaries' complex social, economic, and cultural contexts is a major critique. This misperception may lead to external parties imposing paternalistic solutions on local communities instead of letting them solve their own issues. Voluntourism may romanticise host communities as passive beneficiaries of help rather than active development partners. This can silence local voices and keep aid dependent.

Volunteering sometimes puts volunteers' demands before communities' long-term well-being and independence. Volunteers choosing unsustainable cosmetic operations may not benefit the community. Compared to neocolonialism, voluntourism includes Western volunteers dominating disadvantaged people while claiming to help. This promotes power inequalities, preexisting notions, and local groups' inability to act freely. Last, voluntourism is blamed for promoting neocolonialism and inequality. Voluntourism organisations and participants must evaluate their operations, promote community autonomy and self-governance, and seek equitable and long-term involvement.

Importance of Ethical Engagement and Community Empowerment

Essential elements that should be the foundation of all voluntourism and travel philanthropy efforts are ethical participation and community empowerment. Ethical involvement involves carrying out activities in a conscientious and considerate way, giving priority to the welfare and autonomy of the communities being visited. Community empowerment entails nurturing the ability of local inhabitants to actively engage in decision-making processes and assume responsibility for development activities.

Ethical Engagement

To engage in ethical voluntourism, adhere to transparency, responsibility, and cultural sensitivity. Communication with host communities on voluntourism goals, affects, and results is crucial, as is respecting local customs, traditions, and values.

Community Empowerment

This is vital for ensuring the long-term sustainability and beneficial impact of voluntourism on host communities. It involves involving local communities in decision-making, helping them identify their needs, and creating context-specific solutions.

Impact on Sustainable Development

Ethical involvement and community empowerment improve sustainable development by fostering cooperation, promoting local ownership, and strengthening host communities. They help align voluntourism with local goals, making it more meaningful and effective.

To promote ethical and sustainable voluntourism, ethical engagement and community empowerment are essential. By prioritising host community agency and well-being, voluntourism can improve social, economic, and environmental outcomes.

Guidelines for Responsible Voluntourism and Travel Philanthropy

Guidelines for responsible voluntourism and travel philanthropy are essential to ensure that these initiatives contribute positively to host communities while respecting their autonomy, dignity, and well-being. Here are some key guidelines:

- **Community-Centred Approach:** Give priority to the needs and desires of the communities where the project is taking place by involving them in decision-making, showing respect for their cultural customs and traditions, and obtaining their permission and cooperation at every stage of the project.
- **Sustainability:** Emphasise the importance of long-term sustainability by backing initiatives that yield enduring advantages for the communities they serve, foster environmental preservation, and enable local residents to assume responsibility for development endeavours.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Ensure that volunteers, donors, and host communities are provided with unambiguous and easily understandable information regarding the objectives, effects, and results of voluntourism initiatives. Establish accountability by consistently monitoring, evaluating, and reporting project activities.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Demonstrate reverence for the cultural norms, values, and beliefs of host cultures through the acquisition of knowledge about their practices, traditions, and languages. Strive to prevent the adoption or exploitation of elements from other cultures, and instead encourage volunteers and community members to develop a deep appreciation and regard for different cultures.
- **Capacity Building:** Enhance the abilities of community members by offering training, opportunity to develop skills, and resources that enable them to autonomously tackle their own needs and issues.
- **Partnerships and Collaboration:** Engage in cooperation with local stakeholders, community-based organisations, and NGOs to utilise and benefit from local knowledge, expertise, and resources. Establish collaborative alliances founded on trust, reciprocal esteem, and common objectives to promote enduring and sustainable progress.
- **Impact Assessment and Evaluation:** Perform comprehensive impact evaluations to gain a comprehensive understanding of the social, economic, and environmental effects of voluntourism programmes on the communities that host them. Utilise this knowledge to consistently enhance project design, execution, and results.
- **Responsible Volunteering Practices:** Encourage responsible volunteering by choosing volunteers based on their expertise, credentials, and dedication to ethical values. Deliver pre-departure orientation and training to equip volunteers with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate cross-cultural interactions and meet project goals.
- **Avoiding Dependency:** To prevent reliance on outside help, focus on programmes that enhance local capabilities, encourage self-sufficiency, and empower communities to independently meet their own development needs in a sustainable manner.
- **Continuous Learning and Adaptation:** Embrace feedback, acquire knowledge from previous encounters, and modify strategies according to the insights gained. Adopt a culture of ongoing development and innovation to guarantee that voluntourism projects adapt to the changing demands and circumstances of the community.
- By following these recommendations, voluntourism organisations and individuals can contribute to responsible and meaningful involvement with host communities, promoting positive social, economic, and environmental results for all parties involved.

Future Directions and Recommendations

Voluntourism and travel philanthropy should improve and lower barriers.

Evaluation can show voluntourism and travel philanthropy's social, economic, and environmental impacts. Impact assessments, longitudinal research, and best practise evaluations guide programme design and delivery. (Miller, 2015)

Pick capacity-building projects that allow hosts manage development. Sponsoring education, skills development, and commercial activities helps local communities grow. Foster strong voluntourism, community, government, and NGO partnerships. This requires democratic decision-making that prioritises local needs and ambitions, collaborative project planning, and knowledge and resource sharing.

Set ethical voluntourism and travel philanthropy standards. Certification, accreditation, and behaviour rules ensure host community respect.

Pre-departure training, cross-cultural education, and immersion workshops help volunteers and travel philanthropists appreciate and respect diverse cultures. Voluntourism and travel charity should be sustainable. Eco-friendly behaviour, conservation, and travel reduction are promoted.

To empower and own the community, involve residents in project conception, execution, and assessment. Local capability, leadership, and community-focused decision-making are included. Make voluntourism and travel philanthropy fair for disabled, young, and impoverished people. This requires overcoming engagement hurdles and encouraging diversity, fairness, and inclusivity in programme development and recruiting. Address poverty, injustice, and environmental devastation with sustainable development to leave a legacy. Funding infrastructure, education, healthcare, and economic growth benefits communities for years.

Amend laws to promote voluntourism and travel charity. We must work with governments, international organisations, and civil society to promote ethics, protect human rights, and regulate voluntourism.

These ideas can raise awareness, sustain, and influence voluntourism and travel philanthropy in local communities and participants.

Opportunities for Enhancing the Positive Impacts of Voluntourism and Travel Philanthropy

There are multiple possibilities for amplifying the beneficial effects of voluntourism and travel philanthropy initiatives:

- Promote skills-based volunteering by offering chances for volunteers to apply their knowledge in fields such as education, healthcare, business growth, or environmental conservation. This method optimises the value of volunteer participation and guarantees that initiatives are in line with the particular requirements and goals of host communities.
- Promote education and awareness initiatives highlighting the benefits of voluntourism and travel philanthropy, emphasising responsible and ethical involvement. This involves educating volunteers, funders, and host communities about sustainable development goals, social justice, and cross-cultural understanding.
- Give priority to projects that enhance the agency and opportunities of marginalised communities, such as women, youth, indigenous peoples, and ethnic minorities.

Facilitate avenues for these communities to engage in decision-making procedures, obtain resources, and contribute to development endeavours that specifically target their distinct requirements and obstacles.

- Conduct periodic impact assessments and evaluations to gauge the efficacy and results of voluntourism and travel philanthropy activities. Utilise this data to enhance programmatic advancements, discern optimal strategies, and disseminate acquired knowledge to stakeholders.
- By taking use of these opportunities, voluntourism and travel philanthropy programmes can amplify their beneficial effects, promote long-lasting development, and contribute to favourable social transformation in communities hosting them globally.

Strategies for Addressing Ethical Concerns and Promoting Sustainable Development Goals

Addressing ethical concerns and promoting sustainable development goals in voluntourism and travel philanthropy requires a multifaceted approach. Here are some strategies:

- Establish ethical standards for voluntourism and travel philanthropy organisations, including openness, accountability, cultural sensitivity, and community empowerment. Make sure these criteria are considered throughout programme design, execution, and evaluation.
- To help volunteers, staff, and participants understand ethics, cultural differences, and sustainable development, offer pre-departure training and orientation. Encourage ethical volunteering, cross-cultural conversation, and respectful local contact.
- Collaborate with local communities, grassroots organisations, and NGOs to create and implement community-focused programmes. Include community people in decision-making and align projects with their cultural values, traditions, and goals.
- Prioritise long-term host community programmes over temporary ones. Fund projects that help local communities develop skills and resources, promote economic independence, offer education and healthcare, and preserve the environment for future generations.
- Environmental sustainability can be integrated into voluntourism and travel philanthropy by lowering carbon emissions and supporting conservation efforts. Encourage volunteers and participants to reduce litter, conserve water, and promote local animals.
- Evaluate voluntourism and travel philanthropy's social, economic, and environmental impacts with extensive monitoring and evaluation. Gather feedback from host communities, volunteers, and others to track progress, identify challenges, and make informed improvements. (Buckley, 2012)
- Change local, national, and global policies and regulations to promote ethics, human rights, and accountability in voluntourism and travel philanthropy. Partner with governments, politicians, and civil society organisations to improve rules and promote ethics.
- Promote cooperation and information exchange between academia, business, government, and civil society to address ethical challenges and achieve sustainable development goals. Create innovative solutions and foster collaboration by using the knowledge, assets, and connections of various people and organisations.
- Promote social justice and fairness in voluntourism and travel charity by addressing inequities, encouraging inclusive participation, and amplifying marginalised voices. Make sure efforts benefit women, youth, indigenous peoples, and other marginalised populations.

- Showcase ethical leadership and sustainable development goals in all volunteerism and travel philanthropy initiatives. Maintain honesty, respect, and social accountability and inspire others to promote positive change and change the world.
- Through the implementation of these tactics, organisations involved in voluntourism, and travel philanthropy can effectively tackle ethical concerns, advance sustainable development goals, and generate significant positive effects that benefit both the communities being visited and the persons involved.

Future Research Directions and Areas for Further Exploration

Future research directions and areas for further exploration in voluntourism and travel philanthropy can contribute to advancing knowledge, improving practices, and addressing emerging challenges in the field. Here are some key areas for future research:

- **Long-Term Impacts:** Perform longitudinal research to evaluate the enduring effects of voluntourism and travel philanthropy on host communities, volunteers, and local economies. Examine the progression of actions over time and their enduring impact on social, economic, and environmental results.
- **Community Perspectives:** Examine the viewpoints and personal encounters of the community regarding voluntourism and travel philanthropy, encompassing their beliefs about the advantages, difficulties, and ethical aspects. Examine the perspectives of host communities regarding their duties, ability to act, and the dynamics of power in relation to external volunteers and organisations.
- **Intersectionality and Equity:** Analyse the interconnectedness of many identities and experiences in the context of voluntourism and travel philanthropy, encompassing factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, and disability. Examine the ways in which these factors come together to influence the involvement, availability, and results for a range of individuals and groups.
- **Alternative Models:** Examine several ideas and methods of voluntourism and travel philanthropy that prioritise sustainability, fairness, and community empowerment. Explore endeavours such as community-based tourism, volunteer exchanges, and social impact travel that foster reciprocal learning, reciprocity, and collaboration.
- **Ethical Dilemmas:** Examine ethical considerations and difficulties encountered by voluntourism organisations, volunteers, and host communities, which encompass power dynamics, cultural appropriation, and unintentional repercussions. Examine methods for effectively dealing with moral dilemmas and encouraging accountable participation.
- **Impact Measurement:** Create and improve techniques for quantifying and assessing the societal, financial, and ecological effects of voluntourism and travel philanthropy. Discover novel methodologies, instruments, and criteria for evaluating results, monitoring advancement, and guiding decision-making.
- **Policy and Regulation:** Analyse the policy and regulatory structures that control voluntourism and travel philanthropy at the local, national, and international levels. Conduct a thorough examination of the efficiency of current legislation, pinpoint any deficiencies and obstacles, and suggest measures to enhance ethical standards and ensure accountability.
- **Technology and Innovation:** Examine the impact of technology and innovation on voluntourism and travel philanthropy, specifically focusing on digital platforms, virtual volunteering, and remote monitoring tools. Examine the ways in which technology may improve involvement, communication, and evaluation of results, while also considering issues related to the digital gap and safeguarding personal information.

- **Crisis Response and Resilience:** Examine the impact of voluntourism and travel philanthropy on crisis response, disaster relief, and community resilience. Examine how these efforts can assist nearby communities in times of crises, enhance their ability to withstand challenges, and encourage the adoption of sustainable methods for recovery.
- **Cross-Cultural Understanding:** Analyse techniques for fostering cross-cultural comprehension, compassion, and intercultural communication proficiency among volunteers and participants. Examine the impact of cultural immersion experiences, intergroup discussion, and global citizenship education on promoting mutual tolerance and solidarity in various cultural settings.

Through the examination of these study directions and areas for more investigation, researchers, practitioners, and policymakers have the opportunity to enhance understanding, guide practices, and promote ethical, sustainable, and meaningful involvement in voluntourism and travel philanthropy.

Conclusion

Our extensive research on voluntourism and travel philanthropy shows their complexity and impact on host communities, volunteers, and society. We examined voluntourism and travel philanthropy's ethics and merits and cons. Ethics, community empowerment, and sustainability must guide future volunteerism and travel charity. These projects may promote social transformation, cross-cultural understanding, and responsible, influential sustainable development. Voluntourism and travel philanthropy are interconnected, as described by. (A Comprehensive Analysis of Motivational Factors in Voluntourism, 2023)

Through volunteering and travel philanthropy, cultures can be shared and empowered. Community service and learning are possible in these initiatives.

Power imbalances, cultural appropriation, and environmental sustainability are voluntourism/travel philanthropy ethical issues. Transparency, accountability, and community empowerment are needed for ethical issues.

Voluntourism and charitable sustainability empowers host communities. Communities become more resilient and self-sufficient via local ownership, involvement, and capacity building.

Reliance, cultural commodification, and unexpected consequences plague voluntourism and travel philanthropy. Power dynamics, ethics, and long-term effects must be examined to tackle these issues.

Voluntourism and travel philanthropy research and practice should improve benefits, ethics, and sustainability. Explore the lasting repercussions, collective perspectives, alternate frames, and connectivity of numerous identities and experiences.

Comprehensive study shows that voluntourism and travel philanthropy are complicated with potential and challenges. Sustainability, ethical involvement, and community empowerment can help stakeholders foster meaningful voluntourism and travel philanthropy for host communities and participants.

World travel and volunteering are voluntourism and charity. They provide unique opportunities to participate and have meaningful experiences. These projects promote intercultural understanding, personal growth, and community progress. Community improvement through volunteering and travel philanthropy addresses social, economic, and environmental challenges. Voluntourism and travel philanthropy may promote global

solidarity, inclusive development, and a more equal and sustainable future by prioritising ethics, community empowerment, and sustainability.

Voluntourism and travel philanthropy necessitate ethical sustainable development cooperation. Ethics, community empowerment, and environmental sustainability may alter the world. We must consult local communities and respect their decision-making power. Voluntourism and travel philanthropy can promote social justice, a fair and sustainable future for future generations via humility, empathy, and a shared vision. Let us go on this journey with unity, empathy, and shared responsibility, knowing our actions will affect the future.

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POTENTIALITY OF DEVELOPING MOUNTAIN TOURISM IN SRI LANKA: CASE OF CENTRAL PROVINCE SRI LANKA

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Abstract

There is a rising trend in increasing the number of arrivals to mountain tourism. The key reason behind such is the growing demand to engage with nature and culture to avoid stress and to increase physical and mental wellness. Most of the South Asian countries have become potential destinations for mountain tourism and these destinations are using this rising influx to develop economic conditions. Sri Lanka tourism is recovering after three main crises and now focusing to develop with wider tourism product portfolio. Adding to this, Sri Lanka exists with a wide range of biodiversity and geographical uniqueness. The key aim of this research is to identify the financial and non-financial potentialities of developing mountain tourism as a tourism product to increase the revenue of tourism. The methodology of this study is a qualitative approach and data were gathered using in-depth interviews with stakeholders of the tourism industry. A total of 28 interviews were carried out. During the analysis, the applicability of diversity, ease of access, aesthetics, and how to add recreation and development activities were analysed in relation to the data set. Additionally, more, it was further evaluated with the behavioural expectation of hikers, backpackers, mountain climbers, and general visitors. A conceptual framework was developed and proposed as the implementation framework to gain financial and non-financial benefits from mountain tourism in Sri Lanka. Adding more, the proposed framework assists in identifying suitable mountains to implement mountain tourism and planning as well.

Keywords: Mountain Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Destination Development

Introduction

Background

Mountain tourism, which includes a wide range of activities that take place in mountainous terrain, is a fast-expanding subset of the worldwide tourism business (Río-Rama et al, 2019). Hiking, trekking, mountain climbing, and fully immersing oneself in another culture are some of these pursuits. The appeal of mountain travel is its ability to give visitors the chance to interact with untouched natural settings, push their physical limits, and engage in-depth with local cultures (Río-Rama et al, 2019).

Mountain Tourism Activities Worldwide

A worldwide phenomenon, mountain tourism draws visitors from all over the world. Mountain vacation spots are popular because of the variety of activities they provide. Intense hikes and treks, mountain biking courses, or simply taking in the spectacular splendour of high-altitude scenery are all options for tourists. The rich fauna and flora that thrive in these areas attract wildlife enthusiasts. Additionally, mountainous areas frequently have a rich cultural legacy, giving visitors the chance to participate in authentic cultural encounters.

Central Province Tourism in Sri Lanka

Despite being a small country, Sri Lanka has a great variety of scenery, including a central region filled with rocky terrain and grand mountains. Particularly in the Central Province of Sri Lanka, scenic mountains with distinct natural beauty and cultural value, like Adam's Peak, the

Knuckles Range, and Horton Plains, are well-known. The potential for the growth of mountain tourism in these mountains is enormous (Ranaweera et al, 2019).

The tragic Easter Sunday assaults in 2019 and the far-reaching effects of the COVID-19 epidemic are only two of the recent difficulties that Sri Lanka's tourism industry has encountered. There is a growing understanding of the need to expand the country's tourism offers beyond the well-travelled routes of sun, sand, and sea as it works diligently to recover and rebuild its tourism economy. A possible route to achieve this diversification and tapping into fresh sources of income and growth is through mountain tourism.

At the centre of the island country, Sri Lanka's Central Province is a popular destination for mountain travellers. Stunning panoramas, lush forests, and immaculate rivers make up its landscapes. The area is an ecological treasure trove since it is home to a variety of plants and wildlife, including many indigenous species. The Central Province's rich cultural legacy, which includes historical buildings, temples, and customs waiting to be discovered, adds another level of interest. Both domestic and foreign travellers find the province to be an appealing destination. However, the mountain tourism opportunities in the area have not yet reached their full potential.

Mountain Tourism in Sri Lanka

Despite Sri Lanka's enormous potential for mountain tourism, its existing offerings fall far short of what it could provide. Sri Lanka needs to take a diversified approach to fully realise its potential.

1. Identification and development of new mountain sites as tourist destinations with an emphasis on preserving their aesthetic value and cultural importance.
2. Developing the facilities and infrastructure required to make mountains accessible and comfortable for visitors is the process of turning mountains into tourism destinations.
3. The development of a varied range of mountain tourism activities to accommodate various tastes and interests.
4. Promoting and assisting companies and service providers that cater to the mountain tourism industry.
5. Working together to effectively advertise mountain tourism products both domestically and beyond through destination management companies (DMCs).

Potential of Mountain Tourism in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka, sometimes known as the "Pearl of the Indian Ocean," has a special combination of scenic beauty and cultural diversity. Although the nation is well known for its immaculate beaches, beautiful rainforests, and historical landmarks, its middle mountainous region nevertheless remains a hidden gem that has yet to be fully discovered (Ranaweera et al, 2019). Sri Lanka is positioned to become a prime location for mountain tourism thanks to its tropical climate, abundant biodiversity, and breathtaking mountain ranges (Ranaweera et al, 2019).

The Central Province of Sri Lanka offers a variety of hilly landscapes with enormous potential for tourism growth. A UNESCO World Heritage site, the Knuckles Mountain Range, displays a tapestry of craggy peaks, thick forests, and tumbling waterfalls. Adam's Peak, also known as Sri Pada locally, is well-known for having a "sacred footprint" at the summit and attracts both hikers and pilgrims. Rolling plains, towering escarpments, and World's End, a vertical cliff with stunning views, may all be found in the Horton Plains National Park (Ranaweera et al, 2019).

Each of these alpine regions has a distinct appeal that offers visitors a range of experiences. The highlands of Sri Lanka provide a variety of activities, including strenuous hikes, tranquil nature walks, cultural exchanges, and pleasant respites from the rush of urban life (Ranaweera et al, 2019).

The mountains of Sri Lanka are not only beautiful to look at but also important ecologically. Many of the plants and animals found in these areas are endemic and in danger of extinction. Birdwatchers will enjoy viewing species like the Sri Lanka blue magpie and the Sri Lanka whistling thrush. Sambar deer, leopards, and even the elusive and endangered Sri Lankan leopard call the verdant forests home.

This biodiversity needs to be protected, and promoting sustainable tourist practises is not only morally right, but also competitive. Responsible eco-tourism activities can result in a win-win situation where visitors enjoy themselves while also helping to preserve these important ecosystems. The tourism industry in the mountains draws a wide variety of visitors, including adventurers and lovers of the outdoors. The central region of Sri Lanka provides opportunity for exhilarating excursions, difficult climbs, and tranquil nature walks. A further draw is the temptation of viewing magnificent sunrises or sunsets from high vantage spots like Adam's Peak (Ranaweera et al, 2019).

Mountain biking, rock climbing, and paragliding are thrilling possibilities for adventure seekers. Along with promoting active and healthy lifestyles, these activities also cater to adrenaline junkies, following the worldwide wellness tourism trend (Río-Rama et al, 2019). Adopting mountain tourism as a specialist product will significantly boost Sri Lanka's economy and promote long-term tourism development (Río-Rama et al, 2019). Infrastructure, hotel, and service investments should be boosted for the central region's advantage. Local communities can discover work and business opportunities, particularly in guiding, lodging, and traditional crafts.

Additionally, mountain tourism has appeal outside of Sri Lanka's borders. Destinations like Sri Lanka's central mountains are becoming more and more popular with international travellers looking for uncommon and off-the-beaten-path experiences. This interest can encourage an even distribution of visitors throughout the year, lessen the seasonality of tourism, and assist diversify the tourism industry (Río-Rama et al, 2019).

Research Objectives

This research aims to:

1. Identify the financial and non-financial potentialities of developing mountain tourism in Sri Lanka.
2. Analyse the applicability of diversity, ease of access, aesthetics, and recreational activities in relation to mountain tourism.
3. Evaluate the behavioural expectations of various types of mountain tourists.
4. Propose a conceptual framework for the successful implementation of mountain tourism in Sri Lanka.

Literature Review

The core of this study is the literature review, which provides a thorough examination of key ideas and theories that support the investigation of contemporary visitor behaviour, niche

tourism, and theoretical frameworks pertinent to mountain tourism. Understanding the changing demands and preferences of today's tourists, the crucial role of niche tourism in influencing strategic tourism development, and the practical implementation of theoretical models to improve the mountain tourism experience all depend on these insights.

Modern Tourist Behaviour and Expectations

Traveller behaviour and expectations have undergone a significant transition in the modern travel environment (Río-Rama et al, 2019). Today's travellers are not just looking for vacations; they are also searching for real, engaging experiences that allow them to form lasting bonds with people and the environment. This change in preferences shows a greater desire to go on excursions that are more than just for sightseeing and make a lasting impression (Bonadonna et al, 2017).

One of the characteristics of modern tourists is their fixation with authenticity. In contrast to prior generations who may have been content with surface-level interactions, modern tourists aspire to delve deeper into the core of their chosen locations (Hsu et al, 2010). They see these interactions as essential parts of their travel experiences and actively seek out opportunities to interact with the local people, cultures, and traditions (Río-Rama et al, 2019). The focus is on real, unfiltered interactions whether it be taking part in traditional festivities, enjoying regional cuisine, or learning indigenous crafts. Modern travel has made personalisation one of its pillars. Nowadays, tourists look forwards to experiences that are carefully catered to their unique interests, values, and preferences (Hsu et al, 2010). One-size-fits-all travel plans are becoming less common as personalised tours that take into account each visitor's particular goals take their place. The creation of full trip experiences is also individualised, in addition to the choice of attractions and lodgings (Río-Rama et al, 2019).

Modern travellers have a fundamental and unwavering expectation of sustainability. Travellers are making more ethical decisions as a result of increased environmental awareness around the world (Bonadonna et al, 2017). They give top priority to travel destinations and experiences that have a low impact on the environment, benefit local populations, and enhance the sociocultural fabric of the areas they visit (Hsu et al, 2010). Sustainable tourism strategies have evolved from being specialised concerns to essential standards for choosing vacation itineraries (Hsu et al, 2010). This includes environmentally friendly housing options, accountable tour operators, and a dedication to eco-friendly practises throughout the tourist supply chain (Bonadonna et al, 2017).

Niche Tourism and Its Role

One of the best examples of niche tourism is mountain tourism, which is distinguished by its specialised and distinctive features. The ability to cater to specialised traveller groups with shared interests, preferences, or motives is what defines niche tourism segments. When it comes to mountain tourism, these visitors have a deep respect for the untamed beauty, spirit of exploration, and tranquilly that are inherent to mountainous settings (Bonadonna et al, 2017).

Creating experiences that appeal to certain, well-defined subsets of the travelling public is the essence of niche tourism (Novelli et al, 2022). These groups have grown more important in influencing the current tourism scene since they are frequently distinguished by their distinctive interests or motives (Novelli et al, 2022). These are the people who, in the context of mountain tourism, fervently seek consolation in the tranquilly of mountain summits, desire for the rush

of mounting difficult slopes, or savour the chance to immerse themselves in the cultural tapestry woven into these high-altitude worlds (Bonadonna et al, 2017).

Niche tourism is a deliberate approach that takes use of the variety of traveller motivations, not only a replacement for mass tourist. A broad and generalised audience is frequently the objective of mass tourism, which is driven by sheer visitor numbers (Bonadonna et al, 2017). Contrarily, niche tourism consciously focuses on specialised niches, crafting experiences that are specific to their own preferences. By doing this, it changes the tourism industry into a kaleidoscope of options that may satisfy all the different traveller goals (Novelli et al, 2022). The importance of speciality travel extends to the broad level of national travel policies. These tactics are now expected to promote sustainability, increase competitiveness, and reduce dependency rather than just increase tourist numbers. In this situation, niche tourism plays a crucial role. Countries may build a strong and diverse tourist portfolio by locating, fostering, and utilising particular segments. Through diversification, the risks of relying too heavily on a particular market or product are reduced (Bonadonna et al, 2017).

Mountain tourism serves a specific market niche and advances the overarching objectives of national tourism policies (Novelli et al, 2022). By providing something distinctive and alluring, it strengthens a destination's competitive edge by differentiating it from rivals. The alignment with modern travellers' preferences for authenticity, adventure, and nature-based experiences also positions a place as trend-aware (Moss and Godde, 2000).

Theoretical Framework for Mountain Tourism

Delivering excellent experiences requires a deep understanding of and a commitment to meeting the requirements and expectations of mountain travellers. To do this, it is necessary to apply the right theoretical frameworks that illuminate the dynamics of visitor experiences, service excellence, and destination management within the special mountain tourism setting. The Tourist Experience Model is a thorough framework that acknowledges the multifaceted nature of travel experiences and how they are influenced by a wide range of variables, such as motivation, emotions, and general satisfaction (Nepal and Chipeniuk, 2005). This concept contends that a tourist's journey is a comprehensive interaction with a destination rather than just a series of activities. Applying the Tourist Experience Model to the field of mountain tourism provides important insights into how visitors view and interact with mountainous surroundings (Nepal and Chipeniuk, 2005).

Through the lens of this model, it is possible to analyse the numerous aspects of a mountain tourist's journey. It dives into what inspires people to go on mountain expeditions, whether it's the rush of reaching the top of a difficult peak or the need to commune with untainted nature (Musa et al, 2015). The awe-inspiring views that elicit amazement and the sense of accomplishment after finishing a challenging walk are just two examples of how emotions play a crucial role in this situation. In the end, the model emphasises that these aspects have an impact on how satisfied people are with their whole experience (Nepal and Chipeniuk, 2005). The Tourist Experience Model is a useful tool for destination administrators and service providers in mountain tourism to improve the visitor experience. Managers may strategically create and adjust products to suit traveller expectations by identifying critical touchpoints along the tourist journey, from trip planning and arrival to on-site activities and post-visit evaluations (Nepal and Chipeniuk, 2005). For instance, recognising that visitors to mountain areas frequently want both adventure and cultural enrichment can result in the development of guided cultural experiences in addition to physical activities (Musa et al, 2015).

By focusing on the aspects of service quality that directly affect visitor happiness, the Service Quality Model complements this viewpoint. Service excellence goes much beyond the standard hospitality features of lodging and transportation in the mountain tourism industry. It includes companies that offer adventurous activities, safety precautions, cultural encounters, and environmental stewardship (Musa et al, 2015).

This model provides a methodical way to evaluate the efficiency of service provision in alpine destinations. Mountain tourist service quality includes making sure that adventure activities are carried out safely, that guides are informed and empathetic, and that cultural interactions are polite and genuine. As maintaining the pristine mountain landscapes is essential to the long-term survival of mountain tourism, it also calls for a commitment to environmental sustainability.

Destination managers can methodically assess each dimension of service quality and pinpoint areas for improvement by adopting the Service Quality Model (Musa et al, 2015). Regular safety inspections of adventure tour operators, for instance, can boost visitor confidence, and cultural sensitivity training for tour guides can increase cross-cultural relationships. The perception of service quality in mountain locations is also influenced by eco-certifications and sustainable practises.

Leveraging Destination Image and Branding in Mountain Tourism

Strategies for promoting mountain tourism should be shaped by theoretical perspectives on destination image and branding (Hosany et al, 2006). It goes beyond simple marketing to create a captivating and genuine picture of mountain places; it becomes a potent magnet that draws in visitors looking for interesting and fulfilling experiences (Hosany et al, 2006).

Destination Image: The perception that potential tourists have of a destination is referred to as its image. This picture has the potential to evoke strong emotions in the context of mountain tourism (Hosany et al, 2006). Travellers may be drawn to a destination by a strong mental image created by the untamed grandeur of towering peaks, the tranquilly of alpine lakes, and the friendliness of the local people. Theoretical insights imply that a favourable and resonant location image might arouse travellers' wanderlust and influence their decision-making (Qu et al, 2011). By highlighting their natural and cultural features, mountain destinations may carefully craft their image. Examples of important components of this picture are the promise of pristine natural beauty, heart-pounding experiences, and genuine interactions with mountain communities (Qu et al, 2011). Tourism authorities may effectively communicate what makes mountain tourism unique by matching the destination's image with the objectives and wishes of target travellers (Qu et al, 2011).

Branding: By encasing the destination image in a unique identity, branding goes beyond the destination image. This identity captures the essence and promise of the place and goes beyond a simple logo or tagline. According to theoretical viewpoints on branding, a skilfully developed brand can build a strong emotional bond with customers. It communicates not simply what a place has to offer but also why it's important. Branding for the mountain tourism industry can highlight sustainability, authenticity, and the power of the mountains to transform people (Konečnik 2010). It can convey that travelling to these places is more than just a vacation; it's a journey of discovery of oneself, a connection with nature, and an absorption in fascinating cultures. Mountain locations are promoted as places where visitors may embrace the unusual and transcend the ordinary by having a strong brand (Konečnik 2010).

The Tourist Experience Model and the Service Quality Model, two theoretical frameworks that can be used to better understand and improve the nuances of mountain tourism, have also been introduced in this review. In the context of mountain destinations, these frameworks clarify the varied character of tourist experiences, the aspects of service quality, and the importance of destination management.

These observations will serve as a springboard for the research paper's succeeding sections, which will examine the financial and non-financial prospects of promoting mountain tourism in Sri Lanka's Central Province. It will look at how the special qualities of this area can be used to give travellers life-changing experiences while promoting Sri Lanka's tourist industry's sustainable growth.

Methodology

Data Collection

In order to acquire a thorough understanding of the possibilities for growing mountain tourism in Sri Lanka's Central Province, this study uses a qualitative research methodology. Because it enables a thorough investigation and interpretation of the data, qualitative research is particularly well suited for examining complicated and context-dependent phenomena, such as the development of the tourism industry.

32 people who were closely connected to the Central Province tourism industry were interviewed in-depth as the main technique of data collection. These participants were carefully chosen in order to offer a well-rounded representation of various perspectives and levels of competence within the mountain tourist business. This diverse group of participants includes representatives of local, national, and international mountain tourists in addition to representatives from the destination management companies (DMCs), which are in charge of marketing and logistical aspects, and the tourism industry in the Central Province. Furthermore, the presence of academic academics with relevant expertise broadens the range of viewpoints used in this study.

Study Area Selection

Due to its excellent qualities and outstanding potential for the development of mountain tourism, Central Province was chosen as the best study area. This area is unique due to its stunning natural scenery, extensive cultural legacy, and undeniable sense of authenticity, making it the ideal location to assess Sri Lanka's Mountain tourist potential. Popular mountain ranges like Adam's Peak, Knuckles Range, and Horton Plains are located in Central Province, adding to its attraction. These highlands provide enticing possibilities for future tourist destinations because of their stunning natural beauty and significant historical and cultural value.

The Central Province was chosen in line with the study's objective, which is to assess the financial and non-financial potentialities of mountain tourism in Sri Lanka. By concentrating on this area, the research seeks to offer particular insights that can direct future development initiatives, ensuring that they are tailored to the particular qualities and requirements of the hilly terrain of Central Province. This deliberate selection increases the study's findings' relevance and applicability to the wider context of Sri Lanka's tourism business.

The findings from the in-depth interviews will be discussed in more detail in the following sections, along with their implications for the growth of mountain tourism in Central Province and, indirectly, Sri Lanka.

Findings

Research Objective 1: Identify the Financial and Non-financial Potentialities of Developing Mountain Tourism in Sri Lanka

Thematic Finding 1: Economic Opportunities

Several financial opportunities for mountain tourism in Sri Lanka were mentioned by interviewees. They emphasised the potential for higher revenue generation for the tourism industry due to an increase in visitor numbers. Numerous economic opportunities could be generated by the growth of mountain tourism, particularly for local residents in the Central Province. It can also encourage tourism-related businesses like adventure tour operators, resorts, and restaurants, which will boost the economy.

Thematic Finding 2: Cultural and Environmental Preservation

Potentials focused on preserving culture and the environment rather than money. Respondents emphasised the potential for mountain tourism to protect the Central Province's delicate ecosystems and rich cultural heritage. It can help with the preservation of indigenous customs and biodiversity by encouraging responsible tourism practises and involving local populations. This is in line with Sri Lanka's larger objectives of environmental sustainability and cultural preservation.

Research Objective 2: Analyse the Applicability of Diversity, Ease of Access, Aesthetics, and Recreational Activities

Thematic Finding 3: Diverse Tourist Interests

Various tourist interests in mountain tourism were shown by interview data. Respondents emphasised the usefulness of diversity, pointing to the potential to appeal to outdoor enthusiasts, environment lovers, and cultural explorers. The availability of activities like trekking, animal viewing, cultural experiences, and adventure sports reflects these diverse interests. A big lure for travellers was thought to be the variety of offerings.

Thematic Finding 4: Access and Infrastructure

Accessibility turned out to be a key element in the viability of mountain tourism. The need of enhancing infrastructure, such as road systems and lodging, was raised by respondents as a way to make alpine areas more approachable and comfortable. They emphasised the necessity of visitor centres, well-kept paths, and safety precautions. Mountains that are easily accessible were thought to be more appealing to tourists and conducive to a good experience.

Thematic Finding 5: Aesthetics and Natural Beauty

The aesthetics of mountain tourism were highly alluring. Respondents praised Sri Lanka's hilly terrain for its beauty, describing it as both aesthetically pleasing and culturally significant. These mountains are popular with tourists because of their natural beauty, cultural heritage, and pristine environs. Aesthetics were supposed to foster a deep emotional connection to the location.

Thematic Finding 6: Recreational Diversity

Diverse leisure options were thought to be essential for mountain tourism. The importance of offering a wide variety of activities to satisfy the varied preferences and interests of tourists was stressed by the respondents. Trekking, hiking, mountain riding, wildlife viewing, and cultural immersion were all mentioned as activities. This variety of experiences was thought to be essential for ensuring that mountain tourism was inclusive and appealing to a wide range of people.

Research Objective 3: Evaluate the Behavioural Expectations of Various Types of Mountain Tourists

Thematic Finding 7: Diverse Tourist Segments

A variety of tourist groups, including hikers, backpackers, mountain climbers, and casual tourists, were acknowledged by interviewees. Each component displayed certain expectations for behaviour. While cultural explorers were interested in immersing themselves in the local culture, adventure enthusiasts sought out difficult terrain and physically demanding activities. All segments shared a common expectation for convenience and safety, emphasising the necessity of well-marked paths, emergency response systems, and trained employees.

Thematic Finding 8: Safety and Convenience

Among all different sorts of mountain tourists, safety and convenience emerged as universal behavioural expectations. The necessity of feeling secure while exploring mountainous places was emphasised by respondents. Clear signage, quick access to emergency aid, and competent employees were all included in this. The need of ensuring visitors' comfort and safety was emphasised, not only for luring tourists but also for raising their level of pleasure.

Discussion

Objective 1: Identifying Financial and Non-financial Potentialities

Finding the financial and non-financial potentialities of growing mountain tourism in Sri Lanka was one of the study's main goals. The data collection procedure revealed a wealth of both economic and non-economic prospects for the nation that mountain tourism holds. The study emphasises the potential for mountain tourism to generate income, which is fuelled by an increase in visitors, the creation of jobs, and the growth of tourism-related businesses in the Central Province. The tourism industry's diversification of revenue sources has the potential to greatly boost Sri Lanka's economic stability and prosperity.

The study emphasises the cultural and environmental advantages that mountain tourism might have on a non-financial level. The country's natural and cultural riches may be preserved and displayed on a large scale in Sri Lanka's mountainous regions, which are renowned for their rich biodiversity and cultural legacy. Mountain tourism can also strengthen local communities' sense of pride and community while promoting the preservation of these vulnerable ecosystems. Therefore, it is clear that mountain tourism in Sri Lanka has both financial and non-financial potentials that are consistent with the country's overarching objectives of economic development and cultural and environmental preservation.

Objective 2: Analysing Applicability of Diversity, Ease of Access, Aesthetics, and Recreation
Analysing the relevance of diversity, accessibility, beauty, and recreational activities to mountain tourism was another important goal of this study. The study's conclusions show how diverse Sri Lanka's mountainous regions are in terms of both natural elements and cultural experiences. This variety appeals to a wide range of tourist inclinations, drawing adventure seekers, nature lovers, and cultural explorers alike. Tourist decisions are significantly influenced by how easy it is to reach these alpine destinations. According to the study, increasing accessibility through infrastructure growth can greatly increase tourist arrivals and improve their entire experience.

The visual appeal of these landscapes is a primary pull for travellers, and aesthetics are crucial in mountain tourism. The mountains of Sri Lanka have the power to enthrall visitors with their beautiful scenery, cultural value, and pure habitats. The study also emphasises the value of leisure pursuits, which provide visitors with a variety of experiences like trekking, hiking, mountain biking, animal viewing, and cultural immersion. Because there are so many different things to do, there are also many different kinds of traveller interests, which makes Sri Lanka's Mountain tourism both alluring and welcoming.

Objective 3: Evaluating Behavioural Expectations of Mountain Tourists

Another important research goal was to comprehend the different types of mountain tourists' behavioural expectations. According to the survey, various mountain tourism subgroups, such as hikers, backpackers, mountain climbers, and casual visitors, have distinct expectations and preferences. For instance, whereas culture explorers are interested in becoming fully immersed in the local culture and traditions of the alpine regions, adventure enthusiasts seek out difficult terrain and physically demanding experiences. The research aids in customising the mountain tourism experience to fit the unique preferences of each group by assessing these behavioural expectations.

The survey also acknowledges the significance of ease and safety as fundamental needs shared by all kinds of mountain tourists. This includes elements like clearly defined pathways, emergency response mechanisms, and knowledgeable personnel. Providing for visitors' needs is essential for increasing their overall pleasure as well as drawing in more tourists. By taking into account these varying behavioural expectations, Sri Lanka may create focused plans to cater to the demands of various mountain tourist groups, providing them with distinctive and satisfying experiences amidst the alluring mountain scapes of the island.

Strategies for Developing Mountain Tourism in Sri Lanka

The effective growth of mountain tourism in Sri Lanka requires a diversified approach that integrates a number of initiatives and methods. These tactics are intended to make the most of the gorgeous alpine regions of the nation, protect their aesthetic value and cultural relevance, and give visitors interesting experiences.

1. Development of Mountain Sites

Finding and developing new mountain sites as tourist attractions is one of the main tactics for increasing mountain tourism in Sri Lanka. The Knuckles Range, the Horton Plains, and Adam's Peak are just a few of the many mountain ranges in Sri Lanka that are endowed with their own special charms and allure. Striking a balance between development and conservation is essential if we are to fully realise these sites' potential.

The preservation of these mountains' natural beauty and cultural significance ought to come first. This calls for sustainable development methods, such as eco-friendly building techniques, effective garbage disposal, and initiatives to lessen the negative effects of tourism on the environment. Sri Lanka can provide visitors with a genuine and untainted mountain experience by protecting the integrity of these areas.

2. Transforming Mountains into Tourist Destinations

It is essential to build the facilities and infrastructure required to make mountains accessible and comfortable in order to draw a variety of tourists. This entails creating visitor centres, maintaining trails and pathways, and building lodgings that can accommodate guests with various needs and tastes. The objective is to make sure that tourists can easily and conveniently explore these mountainous areas.

Furthermore, safety must always come first. This requires putting in place safety precautions like signage, emergency response systems, and staff who are trained to help tourists. Mountains that are safe and easy to reach not only draw more visitors, but also improve their whole experience.

3. Creating a Variety of Activities

To satisfy a wide range of tourists' preferences and interests, diversity is essential. Sri Lanka should create a wide portfolio of mountain tourism activities to accomplish this. These may consist of:

- i. **Trekking and Hiking:** There are trails for both inexperienced and seasoned hikers, with varied degrees of difficulty.
- ii. **Mountain biking:** Specific Mountain biking routes that provide exhilarating rides amid beautiful scenery.
- iii. **Wildlife Viewing:** Tourists have the chance to see and study the abundant wildlife of these hilly areas.
- iv. **Cultural experiences:** Activities that provide visitors the chance to fully experience the local culture, including contact with indigenous groups.
- v. Sri Lanka can cater to adventurers, nature lovers, cultural explorers, and families by providing a variety of activities, ensuring that mountain tourism is inclusive and appealing to a wide audience.
- vi.

4. Establishing Specialized Service Providers

Sri Lanka should encourage and assist companies and service providers who specialise in mountain tourism in order to raise the quality of the mountain tourism experience. This comprises companies that run adventure tours, eco-lodges, offer local guides, and sell outdoor gear. Specialised service providers have the knowledge and skills to give travellers safe, interesting, and memorable experiences.

Collaboration with regional groups is also essential. Participating in tourism activities with indigenous communities can help them develop economically and culturally while giving visitors real and interesting experiences.

5. Engaging DMCs for Marketing

To draw both domestic and foreign visitors, it is crucial to market mountain tourism offerings effectively. Promotion and sales of these experiences are greatly aided by destination management firms (DMCs). The awareness of Sri Lanka's Mountain tourism can be greatly increased by partnerships with DMCs that have a significant presence in important source markets. The marketing campaigns should emphasise the special selling characteristics of Sri Lankan Mountain tourism, emphasising its natural

splendour, cultural diversity, and range of activities. Reaching a global audience can be facilitated by participating in targeted marketing initiatives, attending foreign travel trade shows, and utilising digital marketing tools.

Implementation Model for Mountain Tourism in Sri Lanka

1. Enhancing Accessibility

Objective: To make mountainous regions easily accessible to a diverse range of tourists.

- **Developing Roads and Transport:** Improve Road infrastructure leading to mountainous areas, ensuring well-maintained and safe access for tourists.
- **Public Transport:** Introduce reliable public transportation options, such as buses or shuttles, connecting major cities to mountain tourism hubs.
- **Airport Connectivity:** Promote air travel to nearby airports, followed by efficient ground transportation to mountain destinations.

2. Infrastructure Development

Objective: To create essential facilities and amenities in mountainous regions.

- **Visitor Centres:** Establish visitor centres at key mountain destinations to provide information, maps, and assistance to tourists.
- **Accommodations:** Construct a variety of accommodations, including eco-friendly lodges, boutique hotels, and budget-friendly hostels, catering to different traveller preferences.
- **Safety Measures:** Implement safety precautions like signage, emergency response systems, and trained staff to ensure visitor safety.
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3. Cultural Experiences

Objective: To offer tourists enriching cultural interactions and experiences.

- **Community Engagement:** Collaborate with local communities, including indigenous groups, to develop cultural activities, workshops, and events.
- **Cultural Immersion:** Create opportunities for tourists to participate in local traditions, rituals, and culinary experiences.
- **Heritage Preservation:** Support initiatives to safeguard and celebrate the cultural heritage of mountain regions.

4. Safety and Responsible Tourism

Objective: To prioritize visitor safety and promote responsible tourism practices.

- **Emergency Response:** Establish effective emergency response systems, including medical facilities and trained personnel.
- **Environmental Conservation:** Implement sustainable practices like waste management, wildlife protection, and conservation efforts.
- **Tourist Education:** Educate tourists about responsible tourism practices and the importance of preserving the natural environment.

5. Marketing and Promotion

Objective: To effectively market mountain tourism offerings.

- **Destination Management Companies (DMCs):** Collaborate with DMCs with expertise in international marketing and sales to promote Sri Lanka's Mountain tourism.
- **Digital Presence:** Develop a strong online presence through an official website, social media, and digital marketing campaigns targeting key source markets.

- Participation in Trade Shows: Attend international travel trade shows and exhibitions to showcase Sri Lanka's Mountain tourism.
- Targeted Campaigns: Launch marketing campaigns highlighting the unique selling points of Sri Lankan Mountain tourism, including its natural beauty, cultural diversity, and diverse activities.
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Sri Lanka may realise the full potential of its mountainous regions as thriving and sustainable tourist destinations by putting this approach into practice. This all-encompassing strategy guarantees accessibility, infrastructure growth, cultural amplification, security, and successful marketing while protecting the natural and cultural legacy of these locations.

Conclusion

Mountain tourism presents a sizable possibility for Sri Lanka's tourism sector since it offers the promise of adventure, scenic beauty, and cultural immersion. The country, which is endowed with a variety of mountain ranges, provides a fantastic setting for the production of this speciality produce. As the nation rebuilds its tourism industry in the wake of several catastrophes, such as the attacks on Easter Sunday and the global COVID-19 pandemic, diversification is crucial. Mountain tourism could contribute significantly to this initiative if used appropriately.

The numerous techniques necessary to improve mountain tourism in Sri Lanka have been covered in detail in this paper. These tactics cover a wide range of endeavours, such as the creation of specialised service providers, the development of mountain locations while preserving their ecological and cultural significance, the conversion of mountains into easily accessible and secure tourist destinations, and the efficient marketing made possible by destination management firms. When carefully carried out, these tactics have the potential to establish Sri Lanka as a well-known mountain tourism destination, luring a variety of tourists, from thrill-seekers looking for adventure to those looking to fully immerse themselves in the local culture.

Due to their tropical warmth, abundant biodiversity, and tranquil alpine panoramas, Sri Lanka's mountainous regions present a distinctive opportunity. Because of these natural resources, mountain tourism is made even more alluring and serves as a key engine for both sustainable development and economic growth. Sri Lanka may develop a comprehensive plan that balances economic growth with the preservation of its cultural and natural legacy by taking this potential into account.

According to the implementation model, a number of critical elements are necessary for mountain tourism to succeed, including increased infrastructure, improved accessibility, the facilitation of cultural experiences, safety measures, and aggressive marketing campaigns. To accomplish these goals, cooperation between the state sector, private businesses, local communities, and destination management organisations is essential. These initiatives could spark the development of Sri Lanka's mountainous regions into thriving, environmentally sound, and culturally rich tourism attractions.

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MOBBING IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY EVIDENCE FROM GREECE
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Abstract:

The present work examines and reviews the current knowledge concerning work harassment, mobbing and sexual harassment in the hospitality industry in Greece. Having access to the recent data for the years 2021 and 2022, the authors conduct a qualitative research on how the Hellenic Labour Inspectorate, dealt with the accusations applied by the victims of workplace mobbing. The authors examined victims' and abusers' profiles, aiming to find out the reasons that provoked this criminal attitude as well as the dimensions of mobbing phenomenon. Further studies should be applied concerning employers' attitude towards moral and sexual harassment at workplace.

Keywords: Mobbing, Work Harassment, Hospitality Industry, Hotels

Introduction

Over the last twenty years or so research over mobbing, bullying emotional abuse and harassment at work, as a distinct from harassment based on sex or race and primarily of a non-physical nature, has emerged as a new field of study in Europe, Australia, South Africa and the USA. Heinz Leymann (Leymann, 1986,1990,1992) introduced the word «mobbing» being aspired by the aggressive behavior among school children, aimed at evicting out individual children for negative treatment, to pioneer systematic studies of similar types of behavior in the world of work. Much earlier Konrad Zacharias Lorenz (Lorenz, 1968) an Austrian zoologist, ethologist and novelist observed the attitude of animals in the wild nature, beating and mistreating on daily basis members of their team, aiming to singling out the unwanted animals.

In the 80's these immoral attitudes were examined in the workplace first in Scandinavia by Stale Einarsen and later in the USA by Loreleigh Leashly (Leashly, 1998) and Carroll Brodsky, (Brodsky, 1976) focusing in the hostile behaviors that may be relevant to workplace bullying emotional abuse, mistreatment. By all means a hostile work environment, in which insulting or offensive remarks, persistent criticism, personal abuse, or even physical abuse and threats prevail, is a reality for many employees in both public and private organizations.

Mobbing, or workplace bullying, is unfortunately a common issue in many industries, including the hotel industry. It can take many forms, including verbal abuse, exclusion, intimidation, and even physical violence. In the hotel industry, mobbing can occur between colleagues, between management and employees, or between employees and customers. For example, a manager may consistently belittle and criticize an employee in front of their coworkers, or a group of employees may exclude and isolate a new employee.

Mobbing can have serious consequences for both the individual being targeted and the hotel as a whole. It can lead to decreased job satisfaction, increased turnover, and a negative impact on the hotel's reputation and bottom line. To prevent and address mobbing in the hotel industry, it is important for hotels to have clear policies and procedures in place for reporting and addressing incidents of workplace bullying. Managers and supervisors should also receive

training on how to identify and address mobbing behavior, and employees should be encouraged to speak up if they experience or witness bullying.

These personal negative feelings and attitudes contribute to low business performance indicators, such as high turnover rate and little profitability. Needless to say, that the high prevalence of violence forms a negative image for the tourism and hospitality industry in general. Although, the hospitality industry adds net income to the world economy, creating new jobs each year exponentially (Alola et al. 2019), and has shown tremendous growth, it still faces challenging working conditions. Recent studies (Einarsen et al 2004 ,2009) defined mobbing in the tourism sector as repeated and unwanted actions or practices with the intention to humiliate, punish, evict, and frighten a targeted subject.

The present work examines and reviews the current knowledge and conditions concerning work harassment, mobbing and sexual harassment in the hospitality industry in Greece. Having access to the recent data and reports for the years 2021 and 2022, the authors conduct qualitative research on how the Hellenic Labour Inspectorate, dealt with the accusations applied by the victims of workplace mobbing. The profile of the victims i.e. age, gender, workplace positions, educational levels might be or not relevant with the misbehavior they faced. Moreover, the authors examine the abuser's profile, aiming to find out the reasons that provoked this criminal attitude.

The study is consisted of three main parts. The first part includes the literature review where the terms of violence and harassment at workplace are clarified by the presentation of previous studies. It also includes the definition of anti-bullying policies and the relevant research on this topic along with recent findings with regard to hospitality industry and mobbing. The second part includes the research tool and the general context of the study, that is to say the working environment of hospitality sector in Greece and the official organizations for the implication and supervision of labor laws in the particular country from the second semester of 2021. It also includes the presentation of the elements and findings that derived from the analysis of data and relevant documents. The final section provides a core of actions, policies and agenda rules, along with the recent law applied in Greece in June 2021, that can potential contribute as intervention tools against mobbing.

Literature Review

Defining Bullying, Mobbing and Moral Harassment

Workplace harassment arises when a senior manager or a coworker displays unwanted aggressive behavior against a subordinate, a colleague or rarely to a supervisor (Keashly & Jagatic, 2003). In addition, it relates behavior appearing in the work environment in which superiors abuse their professional authority, including their positions or interpersonal relationships, causing mental or physical pain to their subordinates (Rospenda & Richman, 2004).

Moral and psychological violence is nothing more than psychological violence perpetrated either by one person or by a group of persons, against one person or, similarly, against a group of persons. In essence, it refers to a sequence of offending behavior which, while prima facie not related to each other, is part of an overall picture of humiliation andhumiliation of the victim (Leymann 1996). It is characterized as an extreme form of stress building in the workplace (Zapf, Knorz and Kulla 1996). The particular method aims at a systematic, long-term and insidious tactic with many repetitions, which aims at the psychological and occupational annihilation of theworker (Leymann 1966, Einarsen and Skogstad 1996, Zapf

1999). In many cases, when the violence comes from the administration and there is a lot of tension and pressure on the worker, cases of suicide are found related to the workplace circumstances. (Karakioulafis, 2011).

Various cultures and languages define “Bullying at work” in different ways and shades. The current review adopted the definition provided by Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, and Cooper (2003, p. 3): “*The systematic mistreatment of a subordinate, a colleague, or a superior, which, if continued, may cause severe social, psychological and psychosomatic problems in the victim*”. The bullying reflects a structural imbalance of strength among the victim and the bully(s) (Einarsen et al., 2003).

‘Mobbing’ is a bullying status when a club of individuals offends one victim (Hoel & Einarsen, 2003). It is more severe than abusive supervision, including repetitive and deliberate acts of offensive nature toward others, creating an oppressive work environment (Rai & Agarwal, 2016). In the long run, the definition ‘bullying’ was widely used in English-speaking countries, while “mobbing” was preferred in German-speaking countries. In contrast, in France and Belgium, researchers have used the term “moral harassment” (Einarsen et al., 2000). Moreover, other terms such as ‘abusive behavior,’ ‘emotional abuse,’ ‘workplace harassment,’ and ‘workplace trauma’ have also been used in the USA (Bloisi & Hoel, 2008). However, all these terms tend to refer to the same paradox. The present review follows also Bentley et al.’s (2012) definition, which is “a situation where one or several individuals perceive themselves to be on the receiving end of negative actions from one or more persons persistently over a period of time, in a situation where the targets have difficulty defending themselves against these actions” (op.cit., p. 352). Key features of bullying at work are (1) an imbalance of power between the two parties involved, (2) repeated negative actions or practices over an extended period, (3) directed at one or more people, which are (4) unwanted and (5) cause distress and/or damage (Bloisi & Hoel, 2008).

Anti-Bullying Policy

An anti-bullying policy is the most common organizational intervention to address workplace bullying (Hoel, 2013; Richards and Daley, 2003; Salin, 2003). Anti-bullying policies present important visible standards for interpersonal behaviour, signaling recognition that bullying is unethical and highlighting employees’ rights not to be exposed to it. Yet, there are very few attempts to evaluate their effectiveness.

It has been demonstrated that the presence of a policy is a significant predictor of lower rates of workplace bullying (O’Connell et al., 2007), and employers with a robust policy in place are less likely to lose a case against them on Power and inaction 267 ground of bullying or harassment (Rockett et al., 2017); yet, qualitative studies have found negative experiences even in organizations with an anti-bullying policy (Hodgins and Mannix McNamara, 2019; Hodgins et al., 2018; Vickers, 2012), indicating that it is not a straightforward relationship. Policy may be better, broadly speaking, than no policy, but how it is implemented depends on a range of factors. A cynical view is that policy may reduce litigation against the organization, which in fact protects the organization rather than the employee.

However, it may be unfair to impute such negative motivations on all senior managers, and it is fair to say that anti-bullying policies are complex interventions (Cambell et al., 2000) in complex settings, i.e. there are many contextual and implementation factors at play. For example, awareness of policy is a pre-requisite for use, yet organizations do not always inform staff of the availability of a policy. Only 67% of the Finnish municipalities gave information on their policy to staff, and only 27% provided training for managers (Salin, 2003). In a study of

two Irish public sector organizations, one-quarter did not know or had incorrect information about their organization's policy (Hodgins, 2004). More importantly, employers may well be remiss in following their own policies (Ferris, 2004; Hoel, 2013; Namie, 2012; O'Higgins and Kiernan, 2015). While 38% of the targets in a US study reported the presence of an anti-bullying policy, for 35% of these, it was applied unevenly or was considered too weak (Namie, 2012). In a UK study, only 30% of the respondents felt their organizational policies were effective for addressing bullying, while 27% felt procedures were not effective (Evenson and Oxenbridge, 2015). To the extent that formal action can be taken as an indicator of confidence in the organizational system (Shallcross et al., 2013), it is worth noting that very few employees who believe they are bullied take formal action (O'Connell et al., 2007; Task Force on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying, 2001). Low confidence may be well placed; a study of public service personnel in Australia found that of 155 complaints received between 2010 and 2016, 72% were unsubstantiated (Crimp, 2017).

Hospitality Industry and Mobbing

According to Ram 2018, the hospitality industry has the highest ratio of reported incidents of bullying and harassment among all sectors (Ram, 2018). A labour union in Australia, called United Voice, claimed that 86% of the respondents in their survey of employees in the hospitality industry had reported feeling insecure in their workplace (Bowling, 2017). While such negative feedback has been reported about working conditions in the hospitality industry, hospitality scholars and leaders alike emphasize that employee welfare and human development is paramount for the development and promotion of the hospitality industry (Rivera, 2017).

The unfavourable working conditions in the hospitality industry might exacerbate a hostile environment in the workplace that may result in bullying incidents (Anasori et al., 2020). Hershcovis et al. (2015) reported that a stressful working environment is the optimal condition in which mobbing will appear. Higher workload (Baillien et al., 2011) and job stressors (De Cuyper et al., 2009) are also familiar to exercise a critical influence on the occurrence of harassment or offensive behaviors in the workplace. Employees in hotels have exposure to more harmful and stressful situations compared with other services because they work within constrained spaces under the culture of "orders from managers should be obeyed without fail" (Bentley et al., 2012). According to Kitterlin, Tanke, and Stevens (2016), verbal abuse, sexual intimidation, and harassing behaviours are considerably more frequent in the hospitality service industry than in the non-hospitality service industry.

Various studies focus on workplace harassment in the hospitality industry, for example Bloisi and Hoel (2008) recommended that the social interactions/standing of cooks should be improved in hotel kitchens, consistent education and training programs should be conducted at the organizational level, and employers should display interest and support for reducing violence and harassment in kitchens. Moreover Mathisen et al. (2008), claims that workplace harassment in restaurants is a common issue responsible for job dissatisfaction and subsequent reduction in creativity among employees, and it substantially increases negative effects, such as burnout and turnover intent. It is wise to mention that, Mathisen, Einarsen, and Mykletun (2010) supported that managers with severe neurosis harass their subordinates or colleagues more often than those without neurosis, and that superiors' stress represents a significant factor that could increase harassing behaviours. With accordance to Bentley et al. (2012), 10% of all employees in the travel business experience workplace harassment: those who are harassed show lower levels of self-evaluation and thus experience higher stress and increased intent to leave the organization than those who have not been harassed.

Ali et al. (2015) found that employees in the hospitality industry regularly deal with various people in the provision of services and are exposed to several types of harassment in their workplace; further, physical harassment and aggressive behaviours are important reasons why hotel employees leave their jobs. Yap and Ineson (2015) claimed that employees face several types of harassment during internships in the hospitality industry, resulting in negative emotions and deteriorated physical health. Likewise, Holm et al. (2015) observed that harassment by superiors or colleagues as perceived by employees in a hotel or restaurant has a significant consequence on their negative performance, and Cho, Bonn, Han, and Lee (2016) reported that workplace harassment as experienced by restaurant employees reduces their service performance and financial income of the business.

According to Kusluvan (Kusluvan et. al, 2010) in hospitality and tourism businesses the impact on production is greater. The tourism industry, in contrast to purely commercial enterprises, does not simply offer a material good to the customer, but in combination with an intangible service based mainly on the employee's personality (Chen 2013). That is, quite simply, in the case of the hotel product guests do not put a coin in a vending machine to get a soft drink. Here the product is offered and prepared by a worker in a specific environment (Gumbus and Lyons 2011) where not only the satisfaction of the thirst need from the drink is sought, but also the satisfaction of the customer's additional expectations. Thus, the effects on the production of the hotel product, mainly due to its dual nature, is more affected than any other product of the other business branches, since the personality, character, behaviour of the hotel employee are also traits and skills of his professional profile. However, it is not only the quality of the produced product that is damaged by workplace mobbing, as it is the result of a multitude of psychological and physical damages, (Brees et al., 2013) such as anger outbursts, work stress, alopecia, intense sweating, sleep disorders, frequent changes in the working environment and the transfer of these problems to the family environment, resulting in the disruption of domestic peace.

Unquestionably mobbing in the hospitality industry ruins the image of the hospitality tourism image, causes to employees' distress and exhaustion, not to mention the sickness absenteeism phenomenon, where fewer people are left with more work, in a climate of uncertainty (Rivera et al 2016). The existence of mental and moral harassment has contributed decisively to the burden of the quality of working conditions. It is one of the most basic forms of workplace harassment (Zapf 1999) with a highly corrosive and toxic effect on the modern work environment (Sandvik et al. 2008). The effects of this phenomenon are so negative on health, safety, the quality of the work produced as well as on the dynamics of the competitiveness of businesses within the capitalist arena of everyday life (Papalexandri 2011).

Methods, Context and Findings Analysis

Content Analysis

As the particular study is a first attempt for examining the mobbing phenomenon in the hospitality sector in Greece, the content analysis was preferred since it combines qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Since two of the authors work officially in the field of monitoring and prevention of violence and harassment at workplace, the provision of data was immediate and accurate. The authors have also witnessed and, in many occasions, have handled labour disputes so they had the opportunity to study profoundly many reported cases and testimonies of violence and harassment in the work environment. Three types of document sources were used for the content analysis: (a) the annual data of the Independent Department for Monitoring Violence and Harassment at Workplace, (b) reported charges related with the mobbing at workplace, provided by two central Regional Directorates of Labor Relations

Inspection and (c) reported accusations of work harassment in hospitality sector, provided by the Hotel Employees' Union of Heraklion, Crete. Confidentiality was preserved in the process of acquisition and elaboration of accusations and testimonies.

The New Role of The Hellenic Labour Inspectorate (H.L.I.)

Violence and harassment were until recently a taboo subject in the workplace, a fact that was reflected in the design and content of the institutional framework. As society changes and more and more voices are heard demanding a decent job that will fulfil certain qualitative conditions, the issue of violence and harassment now has been in prime concern by official bodies to investigate its dimensions and the forms of its manifestation and then be limited or eliminated through the design and implementation of appropriate strategies and measures. The Labor Inspection Body is called upon to compensate and bridge the subjective interpretations of the manifestations of violence and harassment with the applicable rules required by the legal framework and good morals, through its contribution to the elimination of such phenomena and to motivate victims of such behaviours to proceed to complaint and effective treatment of the damage suffered.

Labor Inspectors are called upon to take action to prevent and manage working conditions that pose psychosocial risks for workers, acting as links between the mandates and dictates of the legislative framework for the implementation of policies aimed at preventing and dealing with psychosocial risks and employers who are obliged to ensure the implementation of these rules. Therefore, the role of the modern Labor Inspector is more expanded as it is not only limited to the detection of violations and the imposition of fines, but is called upon to inform, educate, advise and guide employers and workers in order to create the right environment that will bring profits in the business while at the same time it will contribute to safeguarding and strengthening the mental, spiritual, physical health and well-being of the employee (Weissbrodt, Arial et al., 2018).

At the present time Greek businesses submit their anti-mobbing policy and in the absence of it, a fine is guarantee. The implementation of the Greek labour law 4808/21 imposes the operation of an anti-bullying policy for every business above 70 employees. The anti-bullying policy must be approved by the local Hellenic Labour Inspectorate. In addition, enterprises with more than 20 employees are obliged to apply an internal policy against violence and harassment (Law 4808/21, article 9) so as to show their willingness to combat mobbing at work. The aim of those regulations is to encourage enterprises in Greece to acquire a philosophy and a specific attitude and behaviour where the employee will feel safe and in case he/she has been a victim, will feel comfortable expressing himself/herself and confiding in his/her superiors.

The Mobbing Phenomenon in 2021

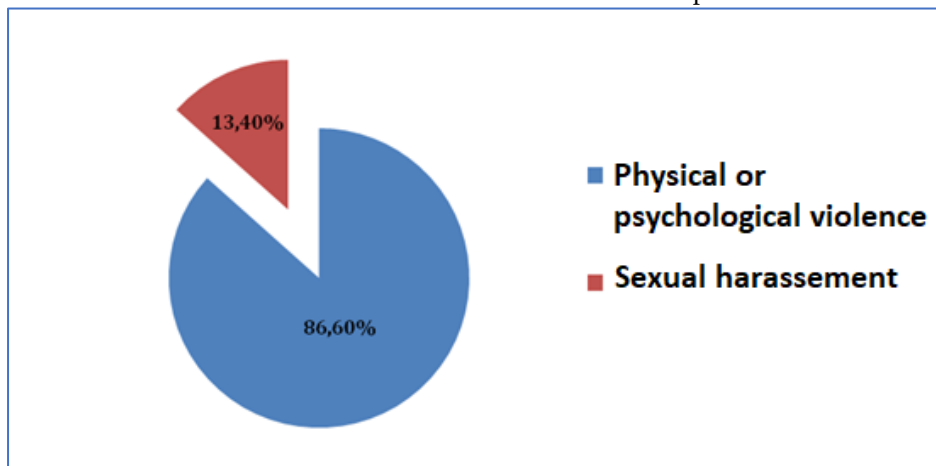
According to the annual report for the year 2021 from the Independent Department for Monitoring Violence and Harassment at Work, 37 local Inspection dept.'s around Greece declared complaints about labour disputes regarding violence and harassment at work have been forwarded to the Department since 05/7/2021, when its operation actually began, and until 31/12/2021 (reference year).

Labor Relations Inspection Departments across the territory corresponded to a total of ninety-seven (97) related applications for labour disputes and one hundred and one (101) applicants. Regarding the gender of the complainants, sixty-eight (68) were women and thirty-three (33) were men, and regarding the subject of the complaint, eighty-four (84) were related to

incidents of violence, verbal, physical and psychological and harassment in general, and all thirteen (13) in cases of sexual harassment. Of the ninety-seven (97) labour dispute applications, seventy-seven (77) have been processed and twenty (20) are ongoing, while in sixty-three (63) of them the issue is related to violence and harassment caused by the employer himself and in the other thirty-four (34) the complainant is another employee (supervisor, shift manager) or another person.

The sectors of business activity where most incidents are reported concern catering, trade, hotels, electricity distribution, production, product manufacturing, IT services, entertainment. The vast majority of labour disputes concern incidents of violence, verbal, physical, psychological and in general harassment according to the new concepts and responsibilities introduced by articles 4, 17 and 18 of the recent labour Law 4808/2021 and at a rate of 86.6% against 13,4 % of the corresponding cases of sexual harassment (Table 1).

Table 1: Forms of Work Harassment in Greece – Annual Report 2021of Hellenic Labour Inspectorate



It is noteworthy that 33% of the complainants - "affected" are men, while the female gender occupies the first place with a percentage of 67% (Table 2). It was also noticed that 65% of the alleged persons of harassment are owners, employers or employers' representatives, managers and supervisors whereas 35% of the alleged persons are colleagues or employees (Table 3).

Table 2: Complainants' Categorization According to Gender- Annual Report 2021of Hellenic Labour Inspectorate

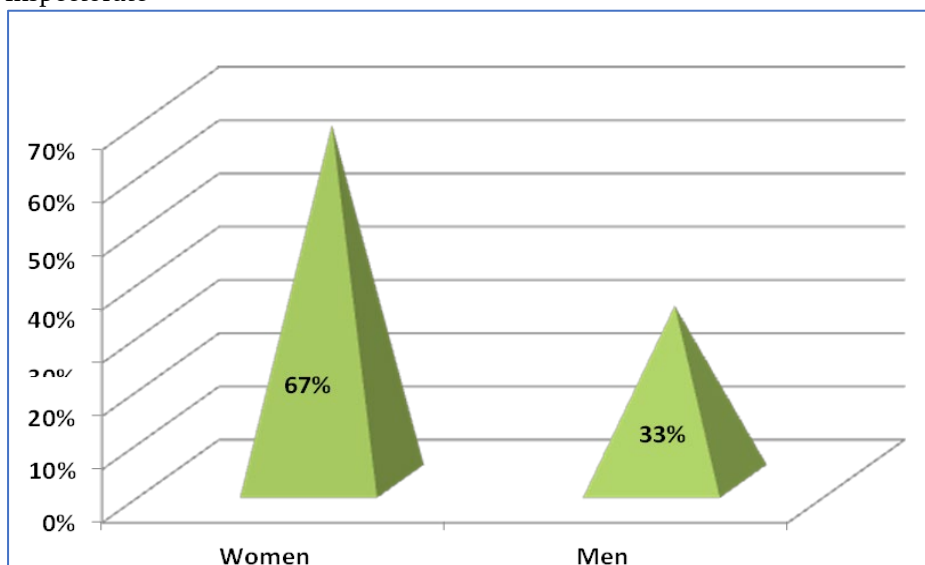
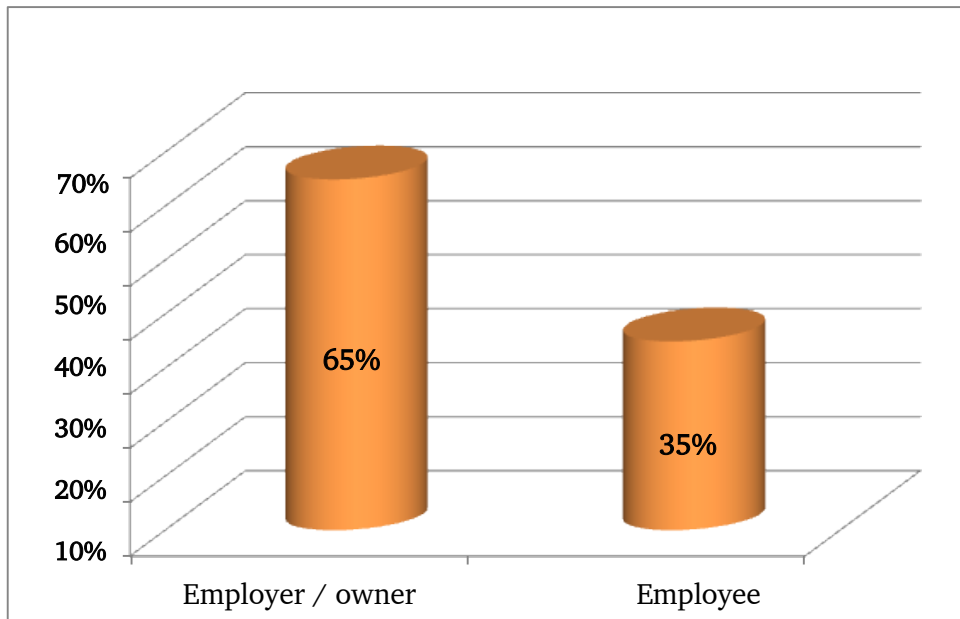


Table 3: Rates of Alleged Persons' Work Positions.

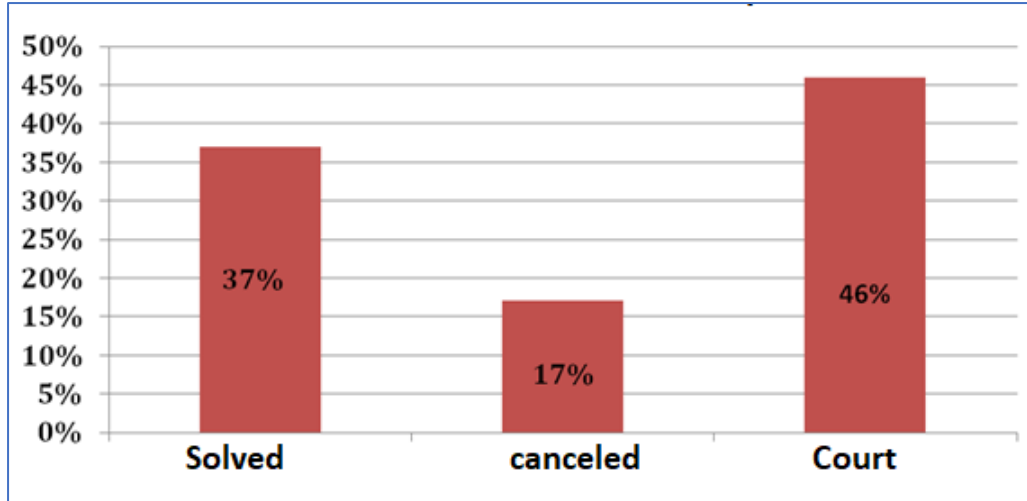


Management, Conduct, Outcome of Audits and Labor Disputes During 2021

A special procedure is foreseen by the Labor Inspectorate, which refers to the management of registered complaints submitted to the Inspectorate about the violation of the legal provisions that regulate the prohibition of violence and harassment at work. The affected person has the choice to apply for a labour dispute related to violence and harassment (articles 4,12,13) either to the manager at the Head of the competent Regional Directorate of Labor Relations Inspection, or to manager at the Head of the competent Department, who are responsible to conduct the dispute resolution process.

Twenty-eight (28) cases have been resolved by taking the appropriate and corresponding measures by the police, according to Law 4808/21, relevant recommendations to the police for a work world without violence and harassment and their relative monitoring by the competent inspectorate, i.e. a percentage of 37% of all processed labour disputes with prospects for an increase, as the outcome of the results of other labour disputes is expected at a percentage of 20.6%. Thirteen (13) cases have been aborted - a rate of 17% - either due to non-appearance of the complainant during the scheduled discussion, or due to a written statement of the latter, or because specific incidents of violence and harassment were not further analysed during the discussion, so that to be subject to the special procedure of article 18 of Law 4808/2021. In thirty-six (36) cases - a percentage of 46% - a reasoned recommendation to appeal to the competent courts has been recorded due to conflicting claims on contested factual and legal issues (Table 4).

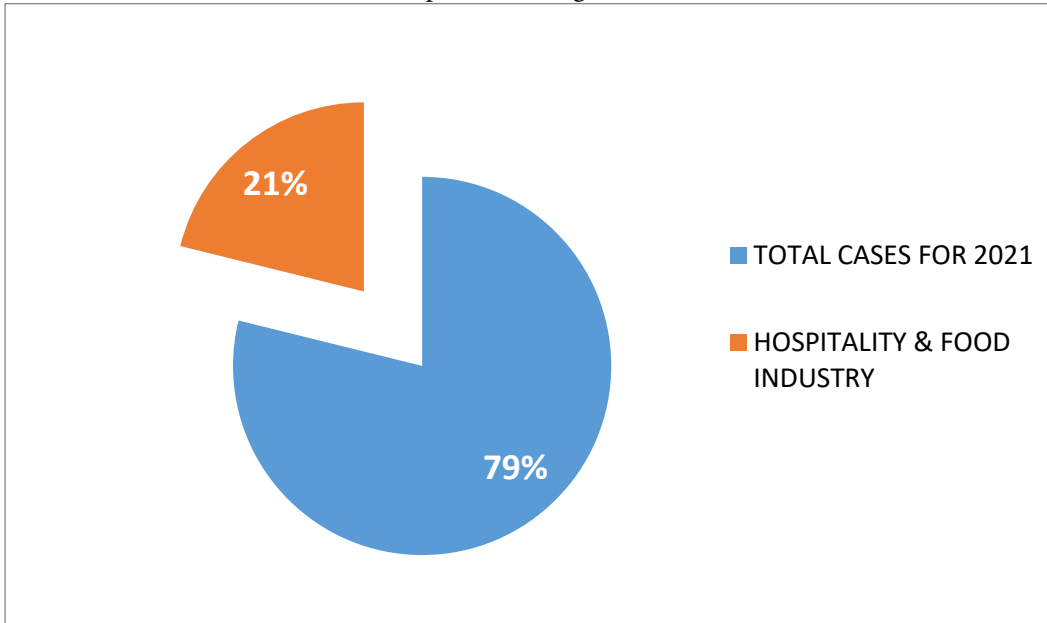
Table 4: Outcome of the Labour Disputes - Annual Report 2021 of Hellenic Labour Inspectorate



Cases Of Mobbing Issues in The Hospitality Industry In 2021

As stated in the annual report 2021 of the Independent Department for Monitoring Violence and Harassment at Work, 21% of the work harassment cases declared refer to the hospitality and food service industry (Table 5).

Table 5: Work Harassment Cases Reported during the Second Semester of 2021 in Greece.

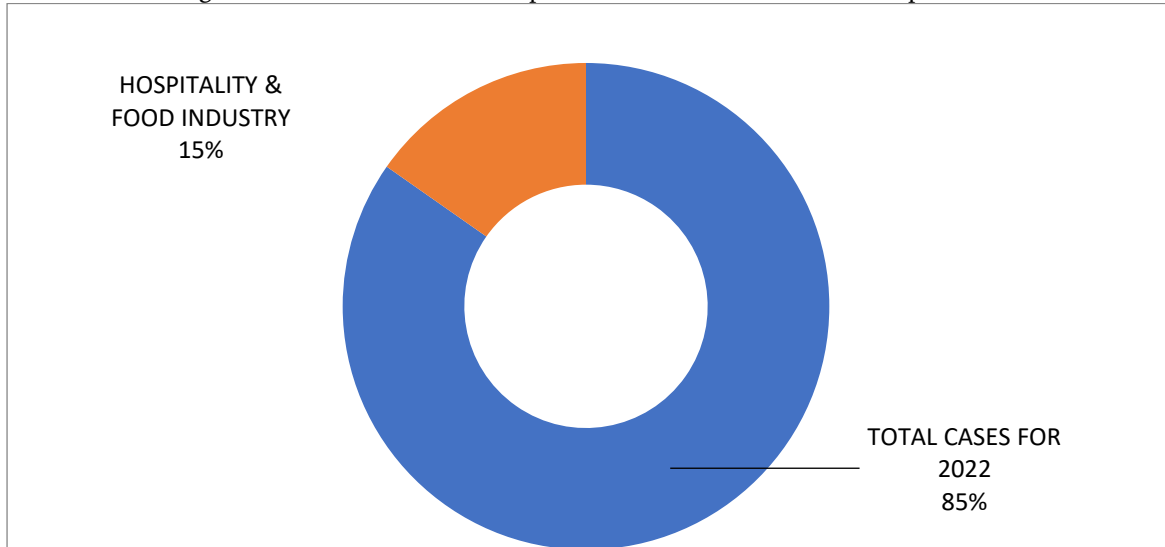


The percentages tend to increase rapidly for the year 2022. The particular department started to accept accusations of work harassment from June 2021 since the new labour law 4808/21 was applied and established the above department. Moreover in 2021 it was not widely spread in the public the operation and the role of the Independent Department for Monitoring Violence and Harassment at Work. The authors considered not to compare years 2021 and 2022 since the year 2021 doesn't represent the actual size of the work harassment epidemic. Therefore, the findings of 2022 will be presented autonomously.

Work Harassment Epidemic In 2022

With accordance to the official records of the Independent Department for Monitoring Violence and Harassment at Work, individuals had submitted 172 accusations of work harassment in Greece in 2022. Among them 31 cases represent mobbing at the hospitality and food service industry. At the Table 6, it is noticed that 15 % of the total work harassment submissions are related to the hospitality industry for the year 2022

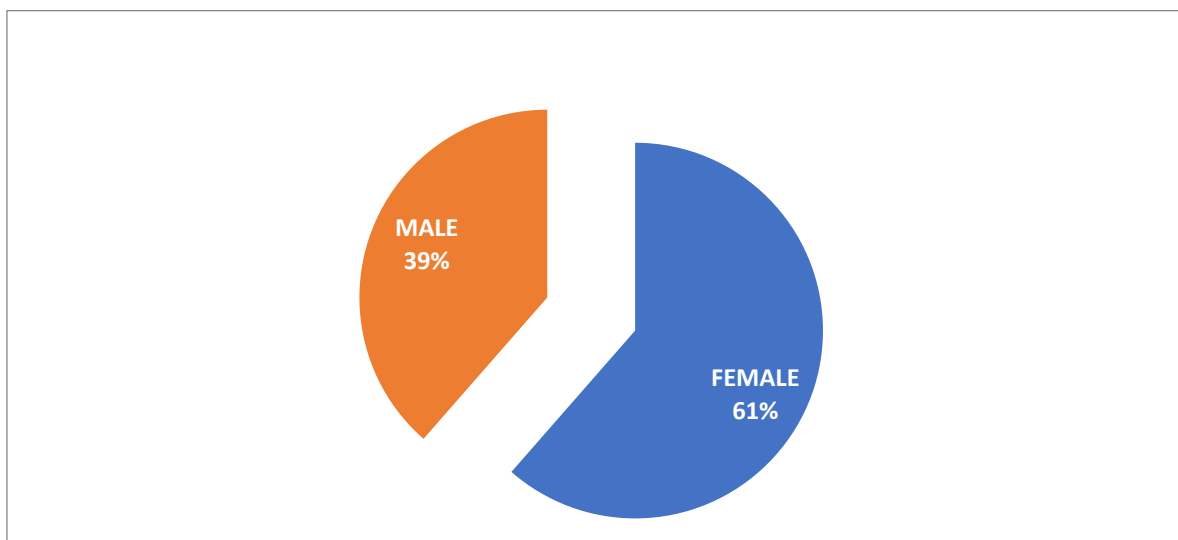
Table 6: Mobbing Cases for 2022- Annual Report 2022 of Hellenic Labour Inspectorate



Unformal sources from the Hotel Employees Union in Iraklion Crete, underlines the fact that decades of incidents do not see the light of publicity at the formal government agencies. Small communities discourage employees from expressing official the mobbing they are facing. Seasonal work in the hospitality industry, uncertainty for the future level of reservations lead victims to endure psychological sufferings rather than fighting to extinguish the problem.

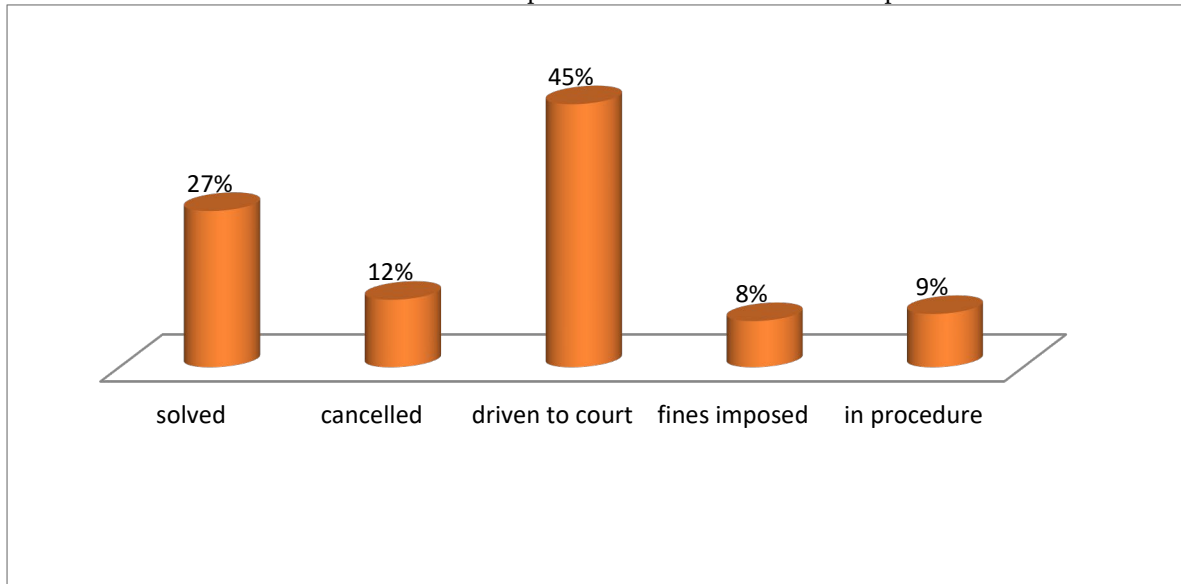
Since most of the data for the year 2022 are under process, it's remarkable to notice some vital outcome. Concerning the gender of the victim 61% of the cases represent female victims, whereas men might be a minority with a respectable percentage of almost 40% (Table 7)

Table 7: Rate of Victims' Gender – Annual Report 2022 of Hellenic Labour Inspectorate



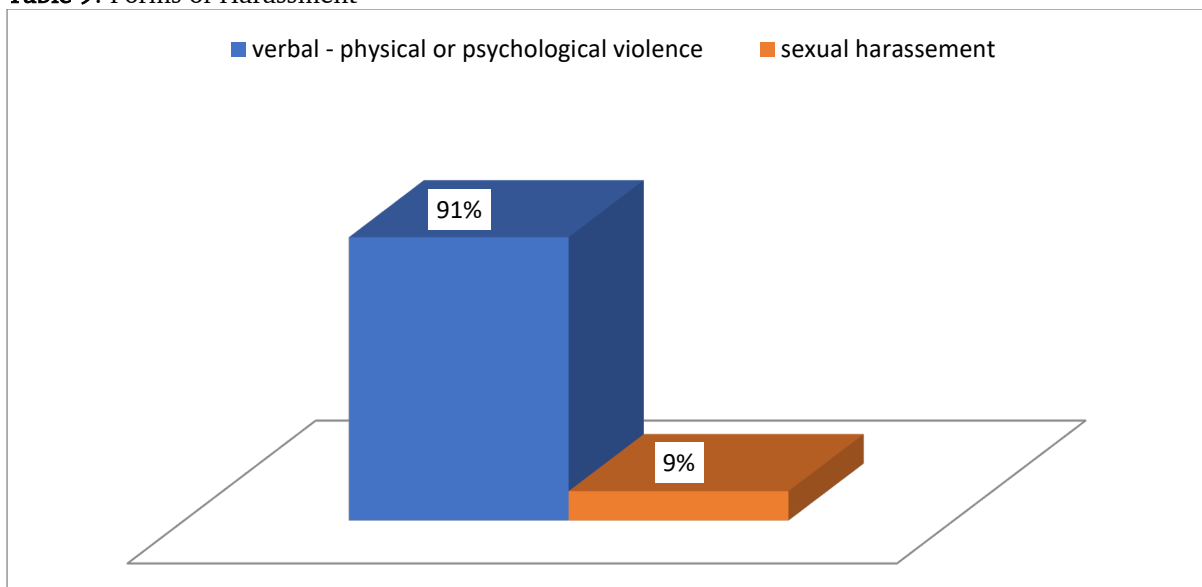
It's remarkable to acknowledge (table 8) that 27% of the cases submitted by civilians were solved effectively in a few weeks, 12% were cancelled, and almost half of them couldn't reach a solution and were driven to court. An amount of 25,150 euros was imposed to business which didn't have developed and anti-bullying policy and some others are still in procedure.

Table 8: Work Harassment Cases- Annual Report 2022- Hellenic Labour Inspectorate



With reference to the types of the harassment (table 9) only 9% of them suffer a sexual violence. Though, authors share the strongest conviction that sexual harassment is not expressed officially, especially among small community groups.

Table 9: Forms of Harassment



Hotel Employees' Union of Heraklion Prefecture

Apart from the official data, provided by the Hellenic Labour Inspectorate, authors approached the president of the Hotel Employees' union of the Heraklion Prefecture Mr. Nikolaos Kokolakis who willingly assisted and gathered from December 2022 to March 2023 the number of 27 accusations of work harassment in the hospitality industry.

Heraklion is the capital of Crete and one of the Mediterranean region's most fascinating and vibrant cities. Heraklion is the largest region of Crete and a major tourist destination in Greece and Europe. Tourism is one of Crete's primary industries, with 5,287,600 international visitors and 4,573,656 international visitor hotel arrivals in 2019, of which about 44% visited the region of Heraklion. Tourism is a major economic source for the region of Heraklion. The total direct revenue from tourism for 2019 was 3.6 billion euros. Heraklion also has the biggest port on the island regarding cruise passenger numbers, with 307,043 arrivals in 2019. More than 1.7 million passengers arrived by ferry in the same year, either for tourism or other purposes. The port has an annual passenger capacity of up to 0.5 million for cruise tourism, hosting up to 5 cruise ships at once. While boosting Heraklion's economy, this growth is unavoidably linked with operational difficulties and challenges to the city's social, cultural and environmental resources.

All the above inputs led to acknowledge that the evidence from the above union is a significant key to the whole study. The analysis of the data collected will be a trigger for new research of the authors, examining also the reason of the victims' reluctance to declare officially the work harassment they face. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that 64% of the complaints support the opinion that the hotel managers are aware of the mobbing incidents and do nothing to combat it, underestimating the importance of it. Another astonishing element of the data is that 39% of the mobbing cases were conducted by female supervisors (housekeeping dept.'s) to female employees.

Conclusions – Suggestions

Both, from the complaint's examination and from the international literature, it appears that the abuser, like the victim, does not have a specific gender, since both men and women can perfectly play the role of the abuser even if they were once victims themselves. Also, it derives from the examination of the relevant reported cases and data that victims' reluctance to openly express mobbing incidents is the biggest obstacle for the agencies involved to examine and provide an effective solution to the alleged incident. This reluctance gives ground to the spread of the phenomenon, as the bad example easily finds imitators. It is important then for employees to protest and report when they receive repeated attacks of any kind (physical, verbal, body language, etc.) either to their manager, or to the Labor Inspectorate and the Ombudsman. Workers' hesitations to express the drama they experience, give grounds to every abuser to continue his reprehensible work. So, there is a constant repetition of mobbing behaviours by the perpetrators since impunity not only motivates them to continue, but also to find colleagues who reproduce the same behaviours.

Concerning the sexual harassment in hotels, in some cases it was not easy for the receivers of inappropriate behaviours to express their claims without getting confused, since the alleged persons often claimed that, what was considered as an incident of sexual harassment, it was just a misunderstanding, caused due to the different culture background. Even in occasions with repeated misbehaviour from a harasser against his/her colleagues, the substantiation of his/her guilt was not an easy task as lack of proofs is a common feature in most of these cases.

Another important clue that came to light was the general managers' indifference. The manager of a business has the duty to investigate reported instances of work harassment. However, it was noticed that most of the managers in hospitality sector did not give any or enough attention to employees' complaints about cases of violence or harassment. The usual excuse for their indifference on these matters is that they have to handle a lot of tasks and duties in a confined time. Thus, they underestimate the significance of the problem and prefer to ignore employees' complaints about supervisors' and senior managers' insulting and indecent behaviour.

But it is not only managers' indifference which leads to the escalation of violence and harassment in hotels; it is also the colleagues' apathy. Even when the abuser expressed his/her harassing behaviour against his/her victim in front of colleagues' eyes, they want to have no interference. The phrase: *"They pretend that nothing is happening"*, has been referred many times in complaints' reports, when they are asked about colleagues' attitude. The result of reluctance and indifference is the delay in the investigating process of incidents of violence and harassment and, consequently, the loss of proofs and evidence and the weakness of complaints' credibility.

In order to limit and suppress workplace harassment, it is necessary to take action by the victims themselves, but also by their colleagues who must react to the gross injustice and address the appropriate agencies to resolve and - above all - prevent such negative incidents. Employees should feel protected and not ignored by their general manager and feel convenient to submit a possible mobbing action. Mobbing in most cases can be solved and cured at the internal environment of the company and this is the issue that authors want to speak out.

With reference to the New Greek Labour, the employer apart from sharing an anti-bullying policy, should also apply a procedure to investigate and eliminated incidents of work harassment in the business. The authors share strongly the perception that employers should be the defenders of mobbing occasions in their own business by applying effective policies and transparent procedures. Employers should strive to ensure that employees understand its policies and procedures, as well as its commitment to preventing and correcting inappropriate conduct in the workplace (Graves et al., 2021). Special treatment should be taken not to disadvantage the victim of the alleged harassment in order to avoid the perception of retaliation (McTernan et al., 2013).

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**EXPLORING YOGA TOURISTS' PROFILE, MOTIVATIONS AND BEHAVIOUR: EVIDENCE
FROM GREECE**

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Abstract

Yoga tourism is a niche within the wellness tourism market and a form of special interest tourism that has attracted global interest in recent years as it is considered that it can contribute to the sustainability of destinations. This paper focuses on the island of Lesbos in Greece, a rising yoga destination, and seeks to investigate and identify yoga tourists' profile, motivations and travel behavior, providing a better understanding of this segment of the wellness market. Survey was conducted via a structured questionnaire in a sample of 73 yoga tourists. The findings of the study revealed that yoga tourists have quality characteristics (highly educated, high income, long stay at the destination) that make them desirable tourists for any destination. Moreover, the three most important criteria when choosing a yoga destination are: (1) the yoga instructor, (2) the yoga programme, and (3) the safety in the destination. In addition, the main motivations for yoga practitioners to engage in yoga tourism are: (1) to acquire new knowledge, (2) to enhance mental well-being, and (3) to seek an authentic yoga experience. Findings and discussion of this study are useful to Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), tourism professionals and academic researchers interested in wellness and yoga tourism.

Keywords: Yoga Tourism, Wellness Tourism, Travel Motives, Travel Behaviour, Greece

Introduction

Yoga belongs to the category of mindful movements. In addition to yoga, this category includes other activities such as tai chi, qigong, Pilates, stretch and barre, which are exercise methods that combine movement with mental focus, body awareness and controlled breathing to improve strength, balance, flexibility, posture and alignment of the body, and overall health. Consumers typically turn to these methods for the purpose of improving mind and body health, mental focus, and for stress relief, mindfulness, recovery or pain management, as well as physical exercise (Global Wellness Institute, 2023).

Yoga boomed during the COVID-19 pandemic, as social distancing measures that led to the closure of gyms and other exercise spaces led consumers to seek alternative ways of exercising at home and dealing with stress (Global Wellness Institute, 2023). Yoga has become an increasingly widespread activity (Öznlbant & Alvarez, 2020) that led many consumers to travel to yoga destinations for practice (Telej & Gamble, 2019) and to seek more balanced vacations (Dillette, Douglas & Andrzejewski, 2019). This modern trend quickly turned into a distinct form of tourism called yoga tourism (Lehto et al., 2006). Yoga tourism is a niche within the wellness tourism market, whose value is estimated at \$651 billion in 2022 (Global Wellness Institute, 2023). According to Ali-Knight (2009, p. 87) yoga tourism is about "travel to a destination to engage in the practice of yoga and in related activities that will enhance the physical, mental or spiritual wellbeing of the tourist". It is a form of special interest tourism that has emerged and grown with the 'travel to feel well' trend (Lehto et al., 2006), and has experienced increased interest in recent years due to the changing landscape of spirituality in the western world (Dillette et al., 2019). It is also considered as a form of sustainable tourism,

due to the lifestyle and travel choices of yoga tourists, which have been innately sustainable as part of their belief system for a long time (Kaptan, 2020).

Yoga was born in India which is still today the epicentre and the most popular destination for yoga tourism (Bowers & Cheer, 2017). Since then, tourism businesses and destinations around the world are trying to attract this niche of the market by creating yoga retreats, seminars, festivals and other mindful activities. However, in order to successfully market or meet the demands of yoga tourists, a deep understanding of these group's unique characteristics and their key motivations when choosing a yoga destination is crucial. While the literature on yoga tourism is growing, there is little research on yoga tourism in Greece, as the country is not considered an established destination for yoga tourists. This chapter intends to partly fill this gap and contribute to the existing literature. In this context, the aim of this chapter is by focusing on the Greek island of Lesbos, to explore yoga tourists' profile, motivations and travel behaviour, providing a better understanding of this niche within the wellness tourism market. Lesbos is the third largest island in Greece and is located in the northeastern Aegean Sea, very close to the coast of Turkey. It has a total population of 83,755 residents (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2021). Tourism is not the main economic activity on the island, as its inhabitants are mainly engaged in the production of agricultural products, mainly olive oil. However, the island is considered an alternative tourist destination, which remains unspoiled from mass tourism (Trihas & Tsilimpokos, 2018). The tourism industry on the island has been developing in recent years and based on recent statistics there are currently 104 hotels of all categories operating (Hellenic Chamber of Hotels, 2023). Lesbos is considered a rising yoga destination. Every September in Molyvos – a popular tourist destination in the northern part of the island – the Lesbos Euphoria International Festival is taking place, which aims to promote Lesbos for its alternative character and unique energy through the advancement of mental and psychological health (Lesbos Euphoria International Festival, 2024).

The structure of the paper is as follows. This introduction is followed by the literature review and research methodology. The results of the research are then presented, and the paper concludes with the conclusion section, which discusses implications, limitations and provides directions for future research.

Literature Review

Yoga tourism is a distinct form of special interest tourism and the literature studying it is constantly growing. Part of this literature focuses on the profile, characteristics and motivations of yoga tourists, which many authors have attempted to define. To begin with, adopting and adapting the Global Wellness Institute's (2023) definition of wellness tourists, we would say that there are two categories of yoga tourists: (a) Primary yoga tourists: Tourists who are primarily motivated by yoga and whose travel decisions regarding either destination choice or choice of experiences or other services are always influenced by yoga, (b) Secondary yoga tourists: Tourists who travel with different motivations than yoga, but who during their trips, whether leisure or business, are interested in maintaining their physical, mental or spiritual wellbeing. Although not primarily motivated by yoga, all their travel choices are influenced by their values and lifestyle as shaped by yoga; for example, during their travels they eat healthy food.

Bowers and Cheer (2017) argue that yoga travellers are more likely to be women, highly educated, professional, from developed Western countries. This profile matches the one outlined by Lehto et al. (2006), who describe the typical yoga tourist as a woman in her forties or older, working, with a high level of education and high income. In addition, they suggest that yoga tourists are spiritual rather than religious, follow the modern trend of vegetarianism

and prefer to eat organic food, and show an interest in alternative medicines. Kelly and Smith (2009) also are talking for tourists who are usually professional women in the 30 to 50 age group, with a high income and a high level of education. In the research of Ali-Knight and Ensor (2017), the typical yoga tourist is female, single or married, employed, middle-aged with high income.

A number of studies have attempted to shed light on the motivations of yoga travellers. For example, Bowers and Cheer (2017) argue that yoga travellers are mostly motivated by the chance to undergo fundamental life changes. According to Öznalbant and Alvarez (2020), yoga tourism is not a homogeneous activity and yoga travelers have different motivations. This means that in some cases they may have a spiritual motivation whereas in others they may have a wellness or a cultural motivation. Nautiyal, Albrecht and Carr (2022) suggest that the multiple motivations of yoga travellers allow them to be categorized to reflect distinct sub-segments of the yoga market. The authors propose a new typology of yoga travellers consisting of seven categories of travellers. Lehto et al. (2006) agree that the motivations of yoga tourists are multidimensional with the more important being: to renew themselves; to relax; to be more flexible in body and mind; to let go of stress from a busy life; and to help them gain a sense of balance. These motivations, according to the authors, are connected with the benefits which yoga practitioners seek through their engagement with yoga: spirituality, physical and mental health, and emotional balance. Similarly, Ali-Knight and Ensor (2017) found that the top five motivations for yoga tourists are: to increase their yoga knowledge; to have a deeper understanding of yoga practice; to enhance mental well-being; to interact with people with similar interests; and to let go of stress from a busy life. In the same direction, Jia (2018) concluded that yoga travellers' motivations include improving physical and psychological condition, gracing appearance and establishing social connection. According to Ince and Keskin (2023), yoga tourists travel for the purposes of self-improvement, mental and physical health, deepening the practice of yoga, and finding more inner peace. Finally, Kainthola et al. (2024) in their study on motivations for spiritual tourism, which is connected to yoga tourism, concluded on the following motivations: escape the pattern of life, find meaning, come closer to oneself or higher authority, and foster spiritual betterment through personal experiences.

Methodology

As mentioned in the introductory section, the aim of this paper is to investigate and identify yoga tourists' profile, motivations and travel behaviour, providing a better understanding of this niche within the wellness tourism market. Based on the above, the main objectives of the paper are to examine:

- The demographic characteristics of yoga tourists,
- The travel behaviour of yoga tourists,
- The criteria for choosing a yoga destination,
- The motivations for engaging in yoga tourism,
- Yoga tourists' satisfaction from Lesvos as a yoga destination.

In order to meet this aim, a structured questionnaire was designed which consisted of 4 sections and 19 questions. In the first section, participants were asked to provide some information about their trip to Greece. The second section included questions about practicing yoga in their country of origin. In the third and main section, the questionnaire focused on yoga tourism and participants' travel behaviour. In the last section, participants were asked to describe their profile, providing some demographic information (i.e., gender, age, marital status, education, occupation, income and nationality). The survey was conducted between July 1st and September 30th, 2021, in the village of Molyvos in the island of Lesvos. The sample consisted

of yoga practitioners staying in the area at the time of the study. They were approached at random by two researchers in their accommodations and yoga seminars held at that time in the study area. After being informed of the purpose and nature of the survey, they were asked to take part in the survey. Those who accepted were interviewed in person by the researchers. Each survey lasted about 20 minutes. Finally, 73 fully completed and usable questionnaires were collected. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0 was used for the statistical analysis of the data.

Results

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the participants. Female participants dominate with 86.3% versus 13.7% of men. More than half of the participants (54.8%) are over 55 years old, followed by the age groups 45-54 with 34.2% and 35-44 with 11%. Most participants are married (or in a civil partnership) (42.5%), followed by single persons (38.4%), divorced (13.7%) and widowed (5.5%). The educational level of the participants is remarkably high, as 45 of them (61.6%) hold a Master's or PhD degree, followed by another 32.9% that hold a Bachelor's degree. 33 of them are employed (45.2%), while the rest are either business owners (27.4%) or pensioners (27.4%). The majority of them have a high income, with 24.7% earning more than €50,000 per year, while 42.5% earn €30,000-50,000 per year. Finally, participants come from different countries, mainly from the USA (41.1%), Denmark (16.4%), Germany (13.7%), the UK (12.3%), or other countries (i.e., Austria, Australia, Iceland, Romania, Israel).

Table 1: Respondents' Profile – Demographic Characteristics

		N	%
Gender	Male	10	13.7
	Female	63	86.3
Age	35-44	8	11.0
	45-54	25	34.2
	55+	40	54.8
Marital status	Single	28	38.4
	Married / Civil partnership	31	42.5
	Divorced	10	13.7
	Widowed	4	5.5
Educational level	Basic	4	5.5
	Bachelor's degree	24	32.9
	Master / PhD	45	61.6
Occupation	Employed	33	45.2
	Business owner	20	27.4
	Retired	20	27.4
Annual personal income	< 15,000 €	2	2.7
	15,000-30,000 €	22	30.1
	30,001 – 50,000 €	31	42.5
	> 50,000 €	18	24.7
Nationality	USA	30	41.1
	UK	9	12.3
	Germany	10	13.7
	Denmark	12	16.4
	Other	12	16.4
TOTAL		73	100

In the first part of the survey, participants were asked to provide some information about their trip to Lesvos Island. For most of the participants (80.8%) this is not their first trip to Greece, but for about half of them (47.9%) it is the first time they visit Lesvos. More than half of them (54.8%) are solo travellers, while the rest are accompanied either by friends (34.2%), a partner (5.5%) or colleagues (5.5%). The majority (61.6%) had planned to stay on the island for 8-14 days, while 21.9% of them would stay for a maximum of one week, 11% for 15 to 30 days and finally 5.5% for more than 30 days.

In the next part of the survey, the questions aimed to find out how experienced the participants were in yoga and yoga tourism. As their answers show, all of them practice yoga when they are in their country but with different frequency. 41.1% of them practice yoga 1 to 3 times a week, 27.4% of them 4 to 6 times a week, while 31.5% practice yoga every day. The vast majority are experienced in yoga, with 78.1% having more than 10 years of experience. Of the others, 2.8% have 6 to 10 years of experience, 8.2% have 3 to 5 years and 11% have up to two years of yoga experience. Moreover, most of them (67.1%) have made more than 3 yoga trips in the past. For only 16.4% (12 participants), this trip to Lesvos is their first yoga trip.

One of the main purposes of this research was to investigate how yoga travellers choose their destinations. As can be seen from their responses (Table 2), travellers have many different criteria on the basis of which they choose a yoga destination. The most important of these seem to be the yoga instructor (mean=4.89), the yoga programme (mean=4.56), safety in the destination (mean=4.44), attractiveness of the destination (mean=4.07), and facilities of the destination (mean=4.05). Other important factors include offering healthy food at the destination (mean=3.86), the price of the yoga trip (mean=3.60) and accessibility to the destination (mean=3.52). Less important factors seem to be the existence of a wide variety of activities in the destination (2.84), the geographical proximity of the destination to the travellers' country of origin (mean=2.59), and the familiarity of the destination (mean=2.34). How popular a yoga destination is (mean=1.90) and whether travellers have not visited the destination before (mean=1.90) do not seem to influence travellers' choice of yoga destination.

Table 2: Criteria for Choosing a Yoga Destination

	Mean	SD
Yoga instructor	4.89	0.315
Yoga programme	4.56	0.764
Safety in the destination	4.44	0.726
Attractiveness of the destination (climate, nature, attractions etc.)	4.07	0.694
Facilities of the yoga destination	4.05	0.780
Healthy food (e.g. organic, vegetarian, vegan)	3.86	1.084
Price of the yoga holiday	3.60	0.795
Accessibility of the destination	3.52	1.002
Wide range of activities (hiking, cooking, painting, etc.)	2.84	1.041
Distance from home / geographical proximity	2.59	1.103
Familiarity of the destination	2.34	1.366
Popular yoga destination	1.90	1.238
Not visited before the destination	1.90	0.900

Next, the reasons (motivations) that drive participants to travel to destinations in order to practice yoga were explored. As the results show (Table 3), there is no single motivation but the decision to participate in a yoga trip is driven by many different factors. Specifically, the main reasons why participants decided to realize this yoga trip to Lesvos are to acquire new knowledge (mean=4.26), to enhance mental well-being (mean=4.18), to seek an authentic

yoga experience (mean=4.15), to deepen their spirituality (mean=4.12), to relax (mean=4.11), to be more flexible in body and mind (mean=4.10), to renew to renew themselves (mean=4.08), and to remember to be happy and grateful (mean=4.07). Other important reasons for participating on this yoga trip are to better understand self and meaning of life (mean=3.96), to remain physically fit and improve their physical health (mean=3.95), to escape from the stressful everyday life (mean=3.86), to help them gain a sense of balance in life (mean=3.81), to help them not feel anxious and manage stress (mean=3.58), to attend yoga seminars that are not available in their home area (mean=3.44), to give them clarity in making decisions (mean=3.41), to help them control their negative emotions (mean=3.36), to get away from daily routines (mean=3.33), to meet and interact with people with common interests (mean=3.26), and to seek immersion in yoga culture (mean=3.08). Less important reasons for the participants are to retain their daily yoga routines during their holiday (mean=2.97), to keep them from overeating or to help them lose weight (mean=1.74), and finally to improve their status and prestige (mean=1.66).

Table 3: Motivations for Yoga Tourism

<i>One of the reasons I chose to come on this trip was...</i>	Mean	SD
To acquire new knowledge	4.26	0.834
To enhance mental well-being	4.18	1.072
To seek an authentic yoga experience	4.15	1.186
To deepen my spirituality	4.12	1.247
To relax	4.11	0.843
To be more flexible in body and mind	4.10	1.069
To renew myself	4.08	1.164
To remember to be happy and grateful	4.07	1.032
To better understand self and meaning of life	3.96	1.419
To remain physically fit / improve my physical health	3.95	0.998
To escape from the stressful everyday life	3.86	0.887
To help me gain a sense of balance in life	3.81	1.198
To help me not feel anxious / manage stress	3.58	1.053
To attend yoga seminars that are not available in my home area	3.44	1.527
To give me clarity in making decisions	3.41	1.289
To help me control my negative emotions	3.36	1.262
To get away from daily routines	3.33	1.167
To meet and interact with people with common interests	3.26	1.106
To seek immersion in yoga culture	3.08	1.431
To retain my daily yoga routines during my holiday	2.97	1.190
To keep me from overeating / lose weight	1.74	1.041
To improve my status and prestige	1.66	1.057

Finally, participants were asked to evaluate their experience in this trip to Lesvos compared to their prior expectations. The majority of them (37 persons) characterized their experience as expected, while the rest of the participants said they had a better (10 participants) or much better (26 participants) experience than they expected.

Conclusions

Yoga tourism is a niche within the wellness tourism market and a form of special interest tourism which, especially in recent years, has attracted academic and business interest mainly because of the benefits it can bring to tourism businesses and destinations. Let us not forget that yoga retreats tend to be expensive and targeted at the premium tourist. However,

understanding the characteristics, motivations and behaviour of this group of tourists is considered critical for effective marketing by tourism businesses and destination management organizations (DMOs). In this context, this paper contributes to the existing literature by focusing on yoga tourists in an emerging yoga destination in Greece, the island of Lesbos.

Based on the results of the survey, the profile of the typical yoga tourist can be formulated as follows: female, middle-aged or older, married or divorced, highly educated, medium or high income, coming from developed countries in the West (USA or northern European countries). This profile matches that outlined in previous studies, whether they are specific to yoga tourists (Ali-Knight & Ensor, 2017; Bowers & Cheer, 2017; Kelly & Smith, 2009; Lehto et al., 2006) or tourists from other sectors of the wellness market, such as spa visitors (Trihas & Konstantarou, 2016). Most yoga tourists travel solo, it is not their first-time visiting Greece, however for many of them it is their first trip to Lesbos, where they have planned to stay up to two weeks. All of the above leads to the conclusion that yoga tourists are an attractive group of tourists: they are repeat visitors, have a high income and stay for a long time in the destination they visit.

Focusing on yoga, all of them practice yoga in their own country (1 out of 3 daily), and are experienced both in yoga, as most of them have more than 10 years of experience, and in yoga tourism as most of them have made more than three trips for this purpose in the past. These findings confirm those of Ali-Knight and Ensor (2017). Lehto et al. (2006) have shown that the more one practices yoga, the greater the chances are of travelling in the future with yoga as a primary motivation. One question that arises here, however, is what criteria do travellers use to choose their next yoga destination? The results showed that the criteria here are multiple and can be divided into two categories: (a) those related to yoga, which are the strongest (yoga instructor, yoga programme) and those that function more generally as pull factors (Nikjoo & Ketabi, 2015) for all tourists regardless of their motivation (safety, attractiveness, infrastructure, cost, accessibility of the destination). Therefore, tourism businesses and DMOs should understand that it is not enough to have everything that makes a destination popular to attract the interest of yoga visitors, it is not enough to simply have a room for yoga sessions, but above all they should offer an attractive, unique, exciting, differentiated programme at a competitive price from an instructor who can give the practitioners more than they expect. According to Sharma and Nayak (2019), marketers should design a programme will create memorable experiences for yoga tourists, as these unique experiences will influence their level of satisfaction and shape their future travel behaviour. Of course, combining this programme with the provision of healthy food (e.g. organic, vegetarian, vegan) and other parallel activities in nature (e.g. hiking, cooking, painting, etc.) enhance its attractiveness. The destination also does not need to be a popular and established yoga destination. Even unknown and rising destinations can attract visitors for yoga as long as they have these features.

It is also important for tourism businesses and DMOs that want to attract visitors to yoga to know the motivations that drive this market segment to travel, and then try to satisfy them with appropriate facilities and services. The research revealed that these motivations are multiple. The top ten most important ones that primarily drive yoga practitioners to travel are to acquire new knowledge, to enhance mental well-being, to seek an authentic yoga experience, to deepen their spirituality, to relax, to be more flexible in body and mind, to renew themselves, to remember to be happy and grateful, to better understand self and meaning of life, and to remain physically fit and improve their physical health. These findings confirm those of previous researchers (Lehto et al., 2006). Lesbos as a yoga destination seems to satisfy these motivations of its visitors, as the experience they had while staying on the island and participating in yoga activities was either as they expected, or better or much better compared to their previous expectations. This is very important as the research of Leou and Wang (2023) revealed that when yoga tourists' expectations are met or even better exceeded, this increases

their satisfaction levels and influences their future travel behaviour.

This research has one major limitation. It was carried out on a relatively small sample of yoga visitors in a specific village on a specific island in Greece. This means that the survey participants may have specific characteristics that may not allow generalization of the results to the whole of this market segment. A new survey of a larger and more representative sample of yoga tourists could be conducted in the future. It would also be useful to carry out similar surveys in other yoga destinations in Greece, both established and emerging, both on the islands and the mainland, in order to compare the findings and have a more complete picture of the profile, motivations and behaviour of yoga practitioners visiting the country.

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STUDY ON RELIGIOUS THOUGHTS AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY THROUGH TOURISM

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Abstract

The study of religion through tourism is considered a new approach to carrying out research activities and acquiring knowledge. Tourism, as a tool of study, has a large potential for theological research and exploring universal cultural diversity. Pilgrimage, the extract of religious tourism unveils the truth, science of faith, and doctrines of theology. Factors and dynamics of the social influences, politics, and international events affecting religions can be studied through tourism. In a heterogeneous society, theology and mutual doctrines administer the belief system of people and enrich religious diversity. Tourism intercepts sacred motivations for pilgrimage and exploring the religious and cultural schools of thought. The amount of respect among tourists and local communities creates religious tolerance and the belief system. Studying cultural diversity through tourism indicates the secularity of religious thinking and dynamics inside human thoughts. Ethnic and cultural belongings of religion express the social and economic utilities through tourism. Religious culture is a highly intense and immensely powerful reality with sacred and ethical values. It builds a tendency to reconstruct religious thoughts with cultural diversity to develop the future of mankind. This article endeavors to find out the academic potentiality of tourism to understand the application to exploring religious thoughts and cultural diversity in the contemporary period.

Keywords: Belief System, Theology, Religious Diversity, School of Thought, Religious Tourism.

Introduction

Study through tourism is a present issue of education. Learning through tourism generally includes trips and visiting places with desired components for experiencing the issues (Custer, 2013). Educational tourism is one of the good ways to study religious thoughts and to gain a good perspective of new cultures and experiences by communicating with the indigenous population.

The school of theology is the backbone of a religion. But it needs a diet of religious truths with new responsibilities. All the elements of religion must be consulted in theological research, where tourism may be used as a tool. In this way, research can discover the way of belief and live with faith throughout the age. On the contrary, the school of religious culture is the breath of society, the hope of integration, and building units of peace boat. Tourism can play a great role in social transformation and the administration of religious diversity as an exploring tool. Religious tourism leads to understanding the knowledge that reinforces spiritual prejudices and emphasizes differences in belief systems and therefore their physical manifestation (Andriotis, 2009). Religious tourism creates some special demands in a team with special responsibility to the destination. Skill sets are not much needed for sacred purposes, but cultural components of religion have a large impact on both emphasizing the sacred purpose and mission of maximizing revenues (Levi & Kocher, 2009; Collins-Kreiner, 2010). In all cases, tourism is to be utilized to conduct the study.

The dynamics of religions and the scientific ideas of intellectuals tend to study religions more deeply with the help of tourism. The tendency of reconstruction of religion and social influences, political activities, and international events affect the theological parts of religions. Cultural diversity belongs to the existence of religious thinking dynamics. This is also an effort to understand and practice religion in the context of the time. The scholars point out that

tourism is necessary to understand religions and develop a methodology to experience the dynamics of religious life (Ghazali, *et. al.* 2017).

Scope

Tourism acts as part of a deeper understanding of the concept and components of life. Pilgrimage type of tourism helps individuals aiming to create a philosophy of life with theological thoughts. Education through tourism can play a great role in exploring many assumptions of performances. As a great field, tourism is influenced by the characteristics of theology and religious culture. Conceptualizing religious tourism, commoditization, and consumption involving images, and cultures (Meethan 2001). Tourism researcher Britton (1982) in his seminal works argued that tourism rather than benefiting peripheral destinations and contrary to popular belief in many cases led to new forms of life components. All these can be studied to use tourism as a tool. Awareness of globalization and such derived discourses, directly of cross-cultural contacts changes in the lifestyle of people. In this context, tourism acts as a unique type of cognitive element for studying the satisfaction and interests of a person with religious cults, rituals, and rites, observing, and living with them to obtain religious property.

Review of Literature

After reviewing the numerous articles, a few studies have identified tourism a medium of research. In this context, very few researchers conducted to study on various issues through tourism. Keeping this reality in mind, the following review of literature has been collected.

A theological approach to religion seeks to understand the meaning of believing within its terms, and how that system works. Understanding a set of beliefs, thoughts, attitudes, expectations, and other mental events creates some belief in one's abilities (Masoud, 2014). On the other hand, cultural globalization implies intensity and the daily increase of exchanges of cultural symbols. The status of religions influences society as a changing factor. Kärkkäinen (2003) indicates how beliefs differently engage in society. Religious values and theological viewpoints accept many people without question, but some ask the reasons too. So, Dupuis (1997) explains the perspectives of theology and the form of religion. It has been interpreted as the universal religious experience of humankind and investigates the relationship between the relevance of faith and religion.

Knitter (1974) mentions religion as a cultural-historical, individualistic, and evolutionistic theory to explain the development of religions. He also mentioned that consecutive engagements with specific historical perspectives lead religion to a deeper and more spiritual one. On the other hand, Hendrik Kraemer (1958) divided religions into two main groups: revelation and natural religions. Revelation is the key to theological understanding. He also mentioned that the true religion is worshipping God. Natural religions are manmade from the natural experience of mankind. As a central cultural factor, religion influences perceptions, attitudes, values, and behaviours (Eid and El-Gohary, 2015). So, religious destinations brand their sacred issues to pilgrims normally (Nyaupane *et al.*, 2015). But these sites are not isolated from living communities and consequently residents can be exposed to high volumes of tourists. Few researchers have investigated the impact of religious affiliation on community attitudes (Zamani and Musa, 2012) even as pilgrimage-based tourism (Nyaupane *at al.*, 2015). Scholars have tried to define the concept of cultural diversity of religion and defined dimensions necessary to operationalize, measure, and make significant cross-cultural comparisons (Earley, 2006). Culture operates in a highly complex context with other factors (Bertsch & Warner-Søderholm, 2013). Rysbekova *et al.* (2014) said that religious tourism is a

unique kind of cognitive tourism. It attempts to satisfy incentives and live through a religious process of ceremonies and rituals. Nyaupane *et al.* (2015) explained the motivation for religious tourists is different from that of their conventional thoughts. But tourist behaviors can sometimes provoke the values and beliefs of residents (Zamani and Musa, 2012). But their contribution to the economies, and socio-environmental areas is big.

Tourists motivated by religious theology have a propensity to undertake pilgrimages or visits to religious places (Wang *et al.*, 2016). Relevant religious tourism studies have investigated diverse destinations (Abbate & Di Nuovo, 2013), religious tourist attractions (Bond *et al.*, 2015), pilgrimage routes (Amaro *et al.*, 2018), and festivals (Suntikul & Dorji, 2016). These studies have been done with tourism.

Objectives

- a. To explore the theological approaches of religions and cultural diversity.
- b. To find the uses of tourism as a tool for studying religious thoughts.

Methodology

This is a descriptive study approach to tourism that identifies the correlation between cultural diversification and religious thoughts. Some experienced investigations take place under close control and observation. The study approach of religions through tourism is the path systematic understanding of religion. In the context of religious thoughts and cultural diversity, religions are studied within a variety of religious beliefs. It helps to awaken and can make the vision understand the religion's essence. So, the methodology is the study uses tourism as a scientific tool for gaining knowledge in religious investigation. Methodology deals with the cognitive properties of tourism as the principal features of the study. This is the systematic combination of investigating theology and the cultural part of religion. This process belongs to conceptualization, abstraction, judgment, observation, generalization experimentation, induction, deduction, the argument of analogy, and finally the understanding itself (Ghazali, A. M., *et. al.* 2017).

Discussion

Tourism is commonly treated as a socio-economic and cultural activity that entails the movement of people outside their usual environment. It acts as a process of spending time in pursuit of recreation, relaxation, and pleasure while making use of the commercial provision of services. Modern tourism provides an increasingly intensive, business-oriented set of activities whose roots can be found. But tourism can acts also to introduce secular pilgrimage to religious places. Using tourism as a tool for the study of the self-realization metaphor is a great step toward religious tourism. Contemporary sociology and religion are highly diversified in terms of their philosophical premises. It seeks 'truths' to emphasize perspectives, from seeking the principles of social order to studying social transformations (Cohen and Cohen, 2019).

Park (2008) mentioned that approximately 90% of the world's population is religious. Iannaccone (1998) posits that several global trends in world religions correlate with this high figure. The trends all indicate that even in contemporary society, religious dimensions are still an intrinsic element at the global level (Parboteeah *et al.*, 2009). However, the inner universal meaning of theology and cultural diversity is still undiscovered. The origin, nature, and essence of religion stand on the fundamental theological issues. That's why, religious phenomena have the most important theological theories. Religion has some essence for the understanding itself.

Religious thoughts belong to theologies of certain religions. The value system constructs the influences on religious norms. In addition to other factors language, gender, ethnicity, race, and other social issues belong to religious thoughts and cultural diversity (Søderholm and Kriger, 2014). The sociological study of tourism can diversify the reflection of these trends and topics. While a limited number of theoretical perspectives, gazing, and the creation of modernist tourism are analysed and understood in the depth of sociology.

Religion is one of the key defining factors of culture (Carnegie, 2009). So, no one should avoid religious and cultural diversity. The variables of religion and culture are strongly correlated (Geertz, 2004). Conceptualizing religious values within culture, it is difficult to maintain multifaceted constructs. Consequently, some presumptions of Del Rio and White (2012) on religion and spirituality are implicit elements of cultural diversity. The diversity within each religion will also always be present in a practicing believer of any religion. Religious tourism creates the opportunity for a better life and opens up how religious and cultural values systems are often mirrored in our behaviour. It shows the reflection of different issues of conception, gender expectations, non-verbal behaviour, and expression of emotions (Victor, 2009). Analysis and nature of tourism have undergone a major shift to the point of origin of tourists. However, most religious destinations used to be biased in early tourism theorizing (Winter, 2009).

Factors of socio-cultural religious tourism are the integration of culture aiming to decrease social tension in a place of cultural heritage. A growing interest of people in their historical roots, religions, sacred and memorable places, religious practices, and rituals. The religious purposes of life are a natural attempt of a person to comprehend religious experience and the essence of physical and spiritual life. So, tourist activity is based on the human factors of tourism (Kurmanaliyeva *et al.*, 2014). Religious tourism frameworks the visiting religious centres, functioning cults, and memorable ones. It acts as a unique cognitive tourism allowing observing and living through religious ceremonies and rituals. Religious tourism attracts not only religious places and monuments, but also historical, cultural, and artistic heritages. At the same time, it is compulsory to respect other cultures and perfectly understand the values, and the importance of preservation of historical and cultural heritage. A 'narrative discussion' is an approach that allows for consolidation, summation, and identification of gaps (Grant & Booth 2009).

Religious tourism raises awareness and secularity of common heritage. It also preserves religious resources, because pilgrimage is never over. Pilgrimage connects people to spiritual elements, self-discovering, exploring cultural identity, and visiting holy places (Collins-Kreiner, 2018). Tourist experience largely their emotions and gains greater from spiritual and mental phenomena (Collins-Kreiner, 2018). It is a set of tourism activities arising from the spiritual quest and religious practice in places and events related to institutional religions, regardless of creed or ethnic origin. Onions (1983) stated that Pilgrimage is a journey made by a pilgrim, who travels from place to place. It helps to gain special mental health and peace. The main underlying cause of this is the desire of people to escape from the tense and stressful environment of daily life. Stressful life and other factors cause people to experience various health problems. From this point of view, tourism movements that people carry out to a different place from where they live to protect, improve, or treat their health. Researchers identify tourism as a tool of better mutual understanding, which can drive society to a peaceful destination.

According to estimates from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2014) promoting the valuable contribution of pilgrimages and religious tourism to intercultural and interfaith dialogue and understanding, universal respect for the spiritual values of humanity, and

socioeconomic development. Travel experiences to a religious place can intensely result in discovering their religion and culture through introspection. The goals show that religious and cultural tourism extends beyond the limiting of the historical study of pilgrimage. It also encourages to promotion of further knowledge of holistic experiences in tourism. The theological part of religion administers pilgrimage tourism, which creates cultural diversity. In all cases, tourism plays an intermediary factor in understanding, experiencing, and owning the universal colour of religion and culture.

Conclusion

This is rare to find a methodological study of religions through tourism. But tourism contributes to the realization of a harmonious religious life, better understanding, and mutual respect in a heterogeneous society. It also plays a great role in studying religion not judging the truth, but understanding the essence of application to society. Implementing the equity of the religious and cultural dimensions, tourism motivates to experience the needs and consumption patterns. The cultural diversity of religions indicates the truth and thinking dynamics. Religious thoughts play the role of driving forces to build a better life and harmonize a peaceful society. The study of religious thoughts through tourism unveils the universal characteristics of theological and secular cultural phenomena. Tourism scholars are trying to develop a tourism model of systemic understanding of religions, the level of mutual tolerance, and the dynamics of religious life to create an integrated society. Religious and cultural diversity makes the theological part of religion much stronger and more acceptable through tourism activities. People in society feel motivated when tourism acts as an interface between religion and socio-cultural phenomena.

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POLICIES TO PRACTICE IN GREENING ACCOMMODATION AT WORLD HERITAGE SITE

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Abstract

The accommodations sector has embarked on 'greening' as this eco-friendly tendency transforms into a significance for survival and success in a highly competitive market. Despite the increased number of people who travel with green requirements and pressures from national and international regulations, the sector still lacks an understanding of the expectations of lodging managers. The article reports the findings of in-depth interviews conducted with hoteliers, homestay hosts and from reports of local tourism Departments to support a direction for green tourism the Hoi An world heritage site, the perspectives in influences of policies on the green approach are identified. Accommodation owners respond actively and also demonstrate their own initiative in response to the sustainable practice patterns after the Covid 19-pandemic crisis. This study contributes to the hospitality literature as it sought to uncover contemporary challenges in green tourism policies to practice for which obstacles can be addressed in order to achieve the sustainability at a World Heritage Site.

Keywords: Green Accommodation; World Heritage Site (WHS); Green Tourism Policies

Introduction

Tourism is traditionally considered a relatively green industry as a smokeless industry. Because of its associated impacts mainly on transportation and natural, land development, it has become an area of concern (Font and Tribe, 2001). The negative impacts of tourism development in developing countries have recently been discussed, therefore, recommendations and implications on green tourism products have been made by scientists, leaders and stakeholders to regulate the negative impacts of tourism. Indeed, green tourism is one of global efforts and emphasis on environmental and social aspects sustainably, taking into account the needs of industry, tourists and local communities. Much attention is paid to tourism industry development in recent years, particularly to the accommodation sector as an essentially eco-friendly part of the product creation process that determines its quality and competitiveness. An important trend of Vietnamese tourism development is the product differentiation and establishment of a green tourism industry which is recognized to be a driver of sustainable economy and green growth. Following the global trend, the greening processes of the accommodation sector as a tourism product essential component also contributes in strengthening ecological requirements for lodging sector in terms of international green standards.

Quang Nam is the only province in Vietnam with two World Tangible Cultural Heritages: Hoi An Ancient Town and My Son Temple Complex in which there is 01 Representative Intangible Cultural Heritage of humanity is Bai Choi Art; World Biosphere Reserve Cu Lao Cham - Hoi An. Quang Nam is also a place where many world cultures intersect, with more than 400 historical and cultural relics and more than 120 typical folk festivals; hundreds of traditional craft villages and preserving many indigenous cultural features of ethnic minorities in the western mountainous region. Besides, in addition to the 125km long coastline with many beautiful beaches, Quang Nam is also known as a province with rich ecosystems and biodiversity; many areas with poetic natural landscapes along the Thu Bon and Vu Gia river systems; The mountainous region has a cool climate and high forest coverage with Song Thanh Nature Reserve, Pomu forest. All have created the potential to develop many unique types of tourism in the Quang Nam province.

In addition to the negative impacts of tourism development, climate change and especially after a long period of being affected by the Covid-19 epidemic, green tourism development is considered the appropriate direction to recover and sustainable development of tourism industry. In that context, Quang Nam has made a move to invest and pioneer the trend of green tourism development with policy and specific plan No. 5177 of Quang Nam province announced and dated on August 10th, 2021 on green tourism development until 2025-2030 period that aims to enhance new, diverse, attractive tourist destinations and suit the needs of the tourist market. Thereby, the lodging sector also aims to attract a market of tourists with high spending levels, long stays together with conscious and civilized actions to contribute to sustainable development at this World heritage site. After more than 2 years of implementing the plan, green tourism development policies, along with certain achievements, many issues and challenges that need to be resolved.

Using secondary data from local tourism reports and fieldwork's results combined with 16 in-depth interviews with hoteliers and homestay host with subjects related to the green tourism development policies in Quang Nam province, the article aims to address two perspectives in policies to practice: cognitive and practical performance perspectives. The variety of the strategies suggested by Altinay and Paraskevas (2008) and Patton (1990) were applied to enhance the validity in the research methodology of this study. The results also identified a number of issues and challenges that need to be resolved in order for Quang Nam's tourism industry to achieve a green and sustainable development model in general and in hospitality's competitiveness advantage in particular at a World Heritage site in Vietnam. The following parts of the article are doing to present findings and implication in terms of:

- Green tourism and the hotelier's cognitive perspectives towards policies to practice in greening accommodation at World Heritage site in Quang Nam province
- Issues, challenges in greening accommodation process for green tourism development at World Heritage site
- Implications and conclusion

Green Tourism and the Hotelier's Cognitive Perspectives Towards Policies to Practice in Greening Accommodation at World Heritage Site in Quang Nam Province

Green tourism is not a new topic and commonly used to label nature holidays or exotic destinations (Wight, 1994), or used for tourism activities that do not harmful to the environment in which it occurs (Font and Tribe, 2001). Green tourism is a form of eco-tourism development concept and also the term used in the practice of sustainable tourism that secure the future needs of sufficient environmental, economic, social and cultural resources (Sarker, T., & Azam, M., 2011). Green tourism is an important component of sustainable tourism in which attractive destinations are home to diverse flora and fauna and cultural heritage (Furqan et al, 2010). According to Dodds and Joppe (2001), green tourism includes four components: (1) Environmental responsibility; (2) Local economic development; (3) Preserve and promote local cultural diversity; (4) Rich and satisfying experiences, engaging with nature, people, places and cultures. In short, green tourism is responsible tourism development associated with preserving culture, nature and sharing community benefits.

Green tourism is one of sustainable tools and the merits of any sustainability and green policy lie in the ability to implement it in an effective manner. Policy implementation has widely been understood as "the process through which ideas and plans are translated into practice" (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007 p. 170). Ideally, successful sustainable tourism development should involve various government departments, public and private sector companies, community groups and experts (Pigram, J. J., & Wahab, S.; 2005). These aspects have also given the complexities of

destination management with direct and indirect interests in which the dominance of small and medium enterprises (e.g., in lodging sector) with limited resources and expertise and the competing political agendas of local, regional and national governments (Faulkner & Vikulov, 2001).

In Quang Nam province, the green tourism development policies has been announced and implemented while a given attention to lodging sector has been highlighted to promote the green tourism at locally, nationally and internationally. The public administration in the Quang Nam Province tends to adopt both a top-down and down-top approach, with the central government directing many local government activities and in some aspects of flexible, and most importantly, viewed as being relevant to local needs if local stakeholders are directly involved in the process to apply policies in the heritage site context (Thu, T. T; et al). One of the significant approaches is the raise the cognitive and awareness of related bodies about the contribution in green tourism development and implementing green practices in accommodation sector in particular. Specifically, how do this 'industry practitioners' understand about green tourism and its policies?

The lodging owners' awareness of green tourism would lead to green tourism practices effectively while it is a fact that not all related bodies have the same understandings and approaches to green tourism (Merli, R., et al; 2019). Results of in-depth interviews with accommodation establishments' owners in Quang Nam province, particularly at Hoi An world heritage site, indicated that middle managers of accommodation establishments believe in the benefits of operating green approach to gain the competitiveness and implementing green tourism policies is the real actions of being green hotels. One respondent shared: "....." This aim to provide customers with not only a clean accommodation environment and good for health, which is common need after the Covid-19 pandemic but also the green establishment standards of green tourism, including: green space, closeness to nature, retaining the eco-friendly soul of the accommodation establishment and local cultural values.....bringing comfort, freedom, and relaxation to visitors..."

Similar comments of other managers mentioned: "Green tourism is sustainable development, greening from space itself, construction materials, energy use and limiting plastic waste, recycling organic waste..., zero plastic waste-free hotel..." (Tra Que Green Homestay's sharing).

Although green tourism has not been fully recognized by all related bodies, in general, officials and the accommodation service business community have a more advanced awareness of building an increasingly civilized tourism environment, environmental friendliness. The strong transformation in changing awareness about green tourism development in Quang Nam province is the result of propaganda efforts to raise awareness and activities to transform the green tourism model in the business community, residents, tourists and state tourism management officials. The adaption process has positively been made day by day. In particular, from on-site observation, many tourist accommodation service businesses have practiced green tourism with specific and practical actions, depending on the business owner's ideal of life and business philosophy, and the internal capacity of the business and awareness of green tourism. With a simple understanding of green tourism, it is shared and observed that "green tourism practices of this type of accommodation only do at some tasks related to the environment, such as: changing the packaging of utilities (one simple time) to easily disposed materials; Or shower gel and shampoo containers that can be reused by refilling; Use biodegradable garbage bags; Carry out waste classification at source and provide organic kitchen waste/food scraps to local farmers for livestock production; Create many green areas in the accommodation area, wooden windows decorated with plant pots with or flowers to naturally block sunlight and

create fresh air... Initiatives on saving energy, saving raw materials and detergents are also encouraged with the goal of reducing operating costs. These accommodation establishments use disposable bottled water (plastic bottles) but can still provide "green" services using glass bottles/glasses at the request of customers when organizing events. Say no to plastic waste event here.”

As the number of businesses subscribing to metrics relating to awareness raising and promoting green and sustainable behaviours, it has been one of the authors’ experiences that compliance with the types of initiatives identified by the certification is significant. The certified property as “green” is one of the practical implementations of green tourism policies in the Quang Nam Province. Homestay is one of the popular tourist accommodation services in Hoi An world heritage site and it seems that homestay’s owners have their “own green understanding’ that comes to their actions more clearly when they are trained about green practices of ‘green homestay” from training programs delivered by Tourism and Hospitality Associations.

Some similar sharing’s from homestay owners in green implementation can be grouped into two broad categories of “place attachment of heritage values”, “perceived relevance of green operationalization. Most interviewees and respondents described the increase in quality tourists, high-end tourist that also have concerns about the environment, have good attitudes toward the environment of a World Heritage Site, tourists are looking for green accommodations. The demands motivate lodging business to perform green operationalization and the sense of place attachment of heritage values is perceived of its relevance along with natural, heritage resources and its local rural atmosphere of accommodation services. One of the common implementations is actually a sense of ‘renovation” to be greener and eco- friendly which could be listed in 6 main aspects as below:

- Take advantages of the unique, available gardener's locations (with front or back garden, near the green fields...) to renovate and turn a homestay into a “green” one with many natural, fresh green trees and local herbal plants that makes that “pure sense of leaf, of each tree in cultural surroundings.
- Utilize kitchen waste to make organic detergents for use in homestays and open workshops on making this cleaning enzyme so that guests can experience and spread its benefits to the community.
- Encourage visitors to bring personal items (brushes, toothpaste...) and only serve when guests announce a need; Place an instruction card if the customer does not need to change the pillowcase cover to limit washing and save water.
- Create a fresh living space, less plastic waste, quiet... targeting tourists with a slow, nature-oriented lifestyle; and as a spillover effect in the opposite direction, customers of this homestay also gradually have the habit of protecting the environment; less discharge into the environment.
- Preserve folk culture and rustic rural lifestyle at the homestay via story- telling, artifacts show, local products’ exhibitions at the receptions.
- Use segregated trash bins in common areas, green tourism practices at this homestay tend to be ecological, creating freedom for visitors and for the staff, too.

On the other hand, green tourism policies and practices have been understood and implemented at certain angles and levels, from small to large scale and in the different stages to be certified as “green tourist accommodation”, and the fact that it has created positive changes in the green direction. As of January 2024, Quang Nam province has 09 businesses/accommodation establishments; 03 travel businesses, and 08 attractions that meet green tourism criteria. This number is still quite limited among the total of 410 accommodation service businesses and 20,707 individual economic establishments providing services,

accommodation and catering in Quang Nam province by the end of 2022 (Department of Statistics). Quang Nam province, 2023). So, what are the challenges in Policies to implementation in greening accommodation at World Heritage site.

Issues in Greening Accommodation Process for Green Tourism Development at World Heritage Site

In general, lodging sector's awareness of green tourism policies is still not really consistent among subjects, it is mainly approached conceptually but has not gone deep into its inner meaning. The initial goal of practicing policies green tourism in accommodation service businesses is actually the 're-decoration, renovation" of physical structures and eco-friendly items and mostly to reduce costs to increase profits, but not really towards the noble goal of protecting the environment. Therefore, the first step of implementing the green tourism development plan over the past two years of Quang Nam province in 2021-2022 is to train tourism entities on the economic benefits from green tourism practices, raising awareness of the economic benefits of green tourism, willingness, and active participation to lead to real actions in the business process of the enterprise. In the new period, to reap more results from green tourism, to lengthen the list of businesses and accommodation establishments achieving green certification, 03 issues and challenges facing Quang Nam province need to be resolved as below.

Firstly, the accommodations are located in the heritage site and in the light of heritage cultural tourism product, not purely a tourist accommodation service and thus must be supplemented by separate regulations for the City People's Committee to prohibit actions in which standards such as integration, password construction, and space organization for each type of accommodation service in the heritage site have to be under the supervision of regulations for preserving heritage values. Thus, it is crucial that the awareness of workforce in this sector plays an important factor in practicing green tourism practices in addition to the pressure of international commitments, climate change and industry trends. Furthermore, it is shared by an official of the Quang Nam Tourism Association that: "The important factor is whether every business can keep up with the globally eco-friendly practices and is willing to change their business model to meet the green trends. Besides, businesses with large (scale) systems are often more difficult to convert than small and medium-sized businesses. In fact, there are large lodging businesses and system-based businesses that have established supply chains of common items for operations (also the identity of the business), which are often difficult to convert to meet the needs of green tourism criteria. Instead, these businesses have plans to "innovate certain steps in the operation, including waste treating, collecting plastic cups for recycling, or contributively participate in environmental protection activities and programs in various scope internally and externally. The issue is that these positive actions need to be recognized and should also be considered a green practice in tourism. Meanwhile, small businesses are more flexible in how they do business and can easily change business plans to keep up with trends. In particular, it will be easier for start-ups to implement green tourism, because they can design green right from the beginning in their startup idea. Therefore, building and having policies to support the green tourism startup ecosystem is a way for green tourism models to be formed and replicated in the province.

Second, the type of tourist greatly influences changes in green tourism practices. In fact, over the years, Hoi An city has good green tourism practices as international tourist groups and experts from Europe as there are high requirements for businesses in terms of social-environmental responsibility. To meet the requirements of this segment of tourists, tourism operators must be self-aware and self-change to survive. Meanwhile, after the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the tourist market to Hoi An in particular and Quang Nam in general has

many fluctuations, the group of international visitors from Asia tends to increase. On the other hand, domestic tourist groups also have differences, such as: MICE tourists tend to enjoy life's amenities rather than care about services that contribute to environmental protection (which can even be difficult). endure not being fully served with essential needs, or not trusting the quality of replacement materials...); Young tourist groups often follow trends; and the fact that the group of domestic tourists who consider green tourism as necessary and actively practice green tourism is still small. This requires accommodation service establishments in particular and businesses operating in the tourism sector in general in Quang Nam to have a full understanding of the customer market, and to locate customer groups to have changes in green tourism practices, both ensuring to meet customer needs, achieving business efficiency and contributing to the implementation of the province's green tourism plan.

Third, the proactive participation of businesses related to tourism activities in the province is still limited, green tourism practices have not been organized in most areas. This is partly due to the lack of a support mechanism to encourage businesses and tourist attractions to transform their business activities and provide services to meet the requirements of the Criteria or build a tourism model. Built according to green and sustainable criteria. The activities of Plan 5177 only stop at propaganda, guidance, training... on how to practice green tourism, the set of Green Tourism criteria implemented in Quang Nam province, and certifications. Green tourism only has local value; therefore, it is difficult for businesses to find benefits when participating in this set of criteria. The problem in the future is promoting and spreading the program and enhancing the value of Green Tourism certification to the national and international level. At the same time, build a support and incentive mechanism to attract investment resources and cooperation with international organizations to develop green tourism.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Quang Nam province is the first model in Vietnam that has been implementing green tourism, responsible tourism for the environment, cultural preservation and for community in both practice and policy with the issuance and announcement of the country's first set of green tourism criteria. After more than 2 years of implementing the green tourism plan and applying the Green Tourism Criteria, the awareness of tourism entities in the province has had positive changes. The transition to green tourism has also been realized through basic small to large, standard green tourism practices in many fields, especially in accommodation establishments and heritage destinations. However, facing world tourism trends, climate change and especially the position of the Green Tourism Criteria, Quang Nam province needs to have solutions on policy mechanisms to promote provincial tourism development towards green and sustainable approach.

Particularly, policy implementation is only as effective as the policy are appealing and possible to operationalize in a meaningful manner as the policies also have SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely) with a combined approach as related stakeholders in terms of "who" is involved in green tourism policy from business, local community, visitors, research unit/ schools, tourism administration, UNESCO, UNWTO.. that can define the benchmarks that need to achieve. The objectives would have the stages with indicators of an outcome-based approach, the commitments, responsibilities, the on-going instructions and management so that stakeholders get interested, get involved and get attached progressively to make the change and adaptation for stakeholders in tourism and hospitality industry and for communities at a world heritage site.

At the same time, the on-going orientation, funding, supports, incentives for accommodation sector greening is significant and greening should be considered as a strategic goal of the

nations that have economy national regulatory framework development and also create real opportunities and tools for the involvement of businesses as domestic accommodation establishment' competitiveness has been improved in the domestic and world markets in the future to achieve sustainable development goals. This study was primarily qualitative and more quantitative studies are recommended, whether by hotel characteristic, tourists' behaviours travellers', responsible behaviour in Practical Tips for the Global Traveler in order to reach a more comprehensive understanding green tourism development at world heritage site and to ensure the sustainable ecosystem to support the vitality of the local economy, businesses and communities sustainably while the trend towards value- based green tourism would be increasingly significant approach.

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