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113 Tourism Destination Competitiveness and Entrepreneurial Development
In South-West Region, Nigeria

Elizabeth Abiola-Oke

129 Slum Tourism: Who Empowers and Who is Empowered?

*Cecep Ucu Rakhman, Pita Ratna Sari, Fajar Kusnadi, Kusumah Putra,
and Mohamad Liga Suryadana*

143 Analysis of Almaty's Restaurant Reviews through Topic Modelling

*Alper Kürşat Uysal, Egemen Güneş Tükenmez, Madina Abdikarimova Nurbulatovna,
Murat Alper Başaran, and Kemal Kantarci, Turganbai Abdrassilov Kurmanbaevich, Kultay Adilova Agytaevna,
Kainar Kaldybay Kaldybayulu, Karlygash Aralbekova Amirovna, and Nurzhan Abdirazakov*

163 Camera to Compass: Unravelling the Impact
of Travel Vlogs on Tourist Visit Intentions

Tariqul Islam, Jeetesh Kumar, Wong Foong Yee, Siti Rahayu Hussin, and Neethiahnanthan Ari Ragavan

179 Application of Soft Systems Methodology Approach to Find Sustainable Gastronomic Solutions
in Bali, Indonesia

I Gede Mudana, I Nyoman Cahyadi Wijaya, I Gede Ginaya, and Dedi Gusman

195 Relationship between Health Expenditure
and Tourism at the Macroeconomic Level

Helena Nemeč Rudež, Lana Rudež, and Lara Rudež

207 Abstracts in Slovene – Povzetki v slovenščini

211 Instructions for Authors



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Tourism Destination Competitiveness and Entrepreneurial Development in South-West Region, Nigeria

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The study is based on how tourism destination competitiveness enhances entrepreneurial development. The study aims to assess the factors contributing to the region's tourism competitiveness and examine the role of entrepreneurial activities in fostering its development.

The study adopted a survey research method, a structured questionnaire was used in collecting primary data, and the data were analysed using SMART PLS for structural equation modelling and path analysis.

The study's findings identified the role of tourism competitiveness in entrepreneurship development. The results reveal that facilitating indicators are the most significant measure of destination competitiveness influenced by entrepreneurial development. In contrast, the presence of local businesses at the destination is the most significant measure of entrepreneurial development influenced by destination competitiveness. The observed variables also indicate that destination attraction is critical to the facilitating indicators since it is the most significant variable driving core indicators. Therefore, it is concluded that the competitiveness of tourism destinations plays a significant role in developing entrepreneurship.

Keywords: tourism, tourism destination, destination competitiveness, entrepreneurial development



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Introduction

Tourism substantially impacts economies, as exemplified by its role in job creation and business establishment (Tleuberdinova et al., 2021). This phenomenon underscores the intricate relationship between tourism and entrepreneurship. On the one hand, understanding of entrepreneurship is gaining clarity, but further advancement is required in comprehending policies that can effectively unlock its potential (Szerb et al., 2017). Ambiguities in entrepreneurship measurement and definition have led to debates. While scholars acknowledge the multifaceted nature of en-

trepreneurship (Capello & Lenzi, 2016), substantial improvements are needed in measuring entrepreneurship development. Johnson (2017) suggests assessing entrepreneurship development through local job creation, new business establishments, and enhanced well-being. Entrepreneurship is a global concept that spans diverse sectors of the economy, of which tourism is one of the sectors.

As a significant labour provider encompassing diverse services for tourists, the tourism sector's growth is vital (Akbaba, 2012). Its impact on the economy, society, and the environment is widely acknowledged.

ged (Özyurt and Kantarcı, 2017). Recognising the intertwined influence of tourism and entrepreneurship on the economy, a mutually beneficial relationship emerges. However, existing literature predominantly focuses on entrepreneurship's impact on tourism development, giving rise to the concept of tourism entrepreneurship. Undoubtedly, entrepreneurship often propels tourism development, supported by studies such as Chhanda and Mohammad (2018), Nongsiej and Shimray (2017), and Serafimova and Petrevska (2018). The interplay between tourism and entrepreneurship is reciprocal; enhanced tourism competitiveness attracts more visitors, increasing the demand for services, while a thriving entrepreneurial landscape enhances a destination's allure and competitiveness. This mutual relationship is of interest to researchers seeking empirical evidence of how destination competitiveness drives entrepreneurial growth. Given tourism's pivotal role in economies, it is imperative to harness this potential for economic enhancement, especially in Nigeria, where sluggish development in the tourism sector has hindered competitiveness and entrepreneurial opportunities (Esu, 2015).

Despite the growing recognition of the symbiotic relationship between tourism and entrepreneurship, the specific interplay between tourism destination competitiveness and the entrepreneurial development of host communities in the Southwest region of Nigeria still needs to be explored. While existing literature has highlighted the significance of tourism and entrepreneurship in driving economic growth and job creation, there needs to be more empirical evidence and comprehensive analysis regarding how the competitive attributes of a tourism destination directly influence and foster entrepreneurial activities within the local communities. This gap in the knowledge limits our understanding of the mechanisms through which a competitive tourism destination can stimulate entrepreneurial development and, consequently, enhance the overall economic sustainability of the region. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the impact of destination competitiveness on entrepreneurial development and economic growth. It seeks to ascertain how a competitive tourism destination can foster a conducive environment for entrepreneurial

endeavours within host communities. This research clarifies the limited understanding of how destination competitiveness directly shapes and promotes local entrepreneurial activities, thereby enhancing the economic prospects of the Southwest region in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Tourist Destination Competitiveness

The ability of a tourism destination to increase its appeal to locals and visitors by providing customer-oriented tourism services and high-quality, novel, value-added products that tourists care about, is referred to as tourism competitiveness (Sul et al., 2020). These services help the destination gain domestic and global market share and maintain its market position while competing with its competitors. A tourist destination is envisioned from the supply perspective as a hub of amenities and services specifically designed to meet the various needs of visitors, thereby presenting an amalgamated selection of tourist services rooted in the inherent potential of the destination (Hodson, 2021). In the context of the rising awareness and advancement of tourism on a global scale, fierce competition has formed among destinations, creating a situation where each competing location commands different aspects of patronage (Jose et al., 2022). The essential idea of destination competitiveness is that prominent destinations have clear competitive advantages (Küçükaltan & Pirnar, 2016). The ability of a place to increase tourism expenditure, gradually attract visitors while assuring their satisfaction, and concurrently improve the well-being of the local population sustainably is at the core of its competitiveness (Rey-Maqueira and Ramos, 2016). According to Özyurt and Kantarcı (2017), a destination's competitiveness must be strong to rise above similar locations. Competitiveness refers explicitly to a destination's ability to create and incorporate value-added offerings that sustain its inherent assets and market position relative to rivals (Murayama et al., 2022).

For tourism locations, various scholars have created various competitiveness models (Azzopardi & Nash, 2016; Dupeyras & MacCallum, 2013). The macro-environment and micro-environment supply factors (core resources and attractors, supporting

factors and resources, destination management, and qualifying determinants) that affect destination competitiveness were proposed by Crouch and Ritchie (1999). The attractiveness-based conceptual framework of Vengesai (2003) covers how tourists perceive a destination, whereas destination competitiveness focuses on attaining a favourable competitive position within an industry. As a result, a destination's allure crystallises into its image, illuminating the crucial role that image plays in defining the destination's competitive edge. To remain a tourist contender in the modern day, each place must respect the competition. Customer retention takes priority over acquiring new customers in terms of corporate goals because it increases revenue and reduces costs (Qu et al., 2011). The retention and satisfaction of customers, which are essential components, are the *sine qua non* of destination competitiveness. Every destination is responsible for encouraging visitor retention, which is a requirement supporting its competitiveness. As stated by Buhalis (2000), and supported by Vengesai (2003), the competitiveness of a destination is woven into the fabric of the economic health of the local population. A destination that does not affect its visiting community loses its competitive edge. The yardsticks and markers include numerous variables and indicators to assess a tourism destination's competitiveness.

Perna et al. (2018) contend that uniformly applying a single set of competitiveness indicators across all locations and historical periods would be oversimplified. A generalised method of competitiveness measurement is impossible due to each tourist location's unique traits and nuances. As a result, what constitutes competition for one location may differ significantly for another. The research by Mior Shariffuddin et al. (2022), which discovered that no standard collection of objects, traits, or indicators can assess the competitiveness of tourism locations, lends support to this idea. The complex and varying characteristics of definitions and measurement components from diverse perspectives illustrate the complexity of competitiveness of destinations. The sources of comparative and competitive advantages of tourist destination competitiveness (TDC), focused on elements like destination image, tourism experience, and loyalty,

also have a synergistic relationship (Dupeyras & MacCallum, 2013). Goffi and Marco (2018) studied tourist competitiveness in the context of small and medium locations in Italy. Their findings show that important elements like managerial skill, service quality, and regulations that support local empowerment are necessary for excellent Italian small and medium destinations (SMDS) to be competitive.

The OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) (2016) identifies a wide range of metrics, divided into two areas, to measure the competitiveness of tourism destinations using indicators: (i) core indicators, which include metrics like tourism direct gross domestic product, inbound tourism revenues per visitor by source market, overnights in all types of lodging, exports of tourism services, labour productivity in tourism services, purchasing power parity (PPPs) and tourism prices, country entry visa requirements, natural resources and biodiversity, cultural and creative resources, visitor satisfaction, and the national tourism action plan; and (ii) supplemental indicators. These determinant elements are crucial in determining a destination's status relative to other locations depending on particular characteristics. This can be compared to other places to see how competitive and resilient it is. On the other hand, the indicators reveal a destination's competitive advantages and weaknesses (Dwyer & Kim, 2003).

Tourism Entrepreneurship

The tourism industry is considered a vital part of the economy globally due to its capacity to generate revenue and jobs (Musavengane et al., 2019; Woyo & Slabbert, 2021). Entrepreneurship significantly influences how economic landscapes are shaped by encouraging new business initiatives, facilitating employment openings, broadening market perspectives, and promoting an innovative culture (Moriano et al., 2012). Although there are many different perspectives on entrepreneurship, Hernández-Perlines et al. (2016) emphasises that it comprises a broader vision that involves invention, risk-taking, and proactive initiative in the establishment of a business. These disparities highlight the crucial economic function of

entrepreneurship, which has an impact on a variety of businesses.

Entrepreneurs are proactive seekers of revolutionary shifts, skilled at capturing hidden possibilities and adapting to dynamic circumstances (Drucker, 2017). This proactive outlook supports Pepple and Enuoh's (2020) claim that entrepreneurs prosper when they seize opportunities. This dynamic viewpoint is evident regarding the tourism industry, where business opportunities take on a distinctive dimension. The work of Montañés-Del-Río and Medina-Garrido (2020), who emphasise how the tourism business differs from other sectors regarding perception and conversion of entrepreneurial opportunities into concrete tourism products and services, sheds light on this. Fostering entrepreneurial growth in the tourism industry requires the creation of an ecosystem that values innovative thought, calculated risk-taking, and synergistic engagement between people and businesses. Entrepreneurs are crucial in reshaping this environment. They identify unmet needs in the industry, develop creative solutions, and compile value-added services that suit the constantly changing preferences of travellers. Entrepreneurs are the driving force behind the development of fledgling ideas into successful businesses in this dynamic interplay, while addressing the changing needs of the contemporary tourism landscape (Pepple & Enuoh, 2020). In essence, entrepreneurship's broad impact affects many aspects of economic growth, and in the context of tourism, it acts as a catalyst for innovation, value creation, and adaptable responses to a constantly changing market (Hernández-Perlines et al., 2016; Pepple & Enuoh, 2020).

Tourism Destination Competitiveness and Entrepreneurship

Competitiveness serves as a predictive gauge for the economic sustainability of tourism in destinations, particularly where leakages and linkages with employment and income generation opportunities quantify the magnitude of its economic impact (Mtapuri et al., 2021). Competitiveness is a complex construct, whose measurement has not been standardised, as several aspects are included in its composition

(Dodds & Holmes, 2020; Woyo, 2018). Tourism competitiveness is directly related to a country's economic growth (Michael et al., 2019). Due to the economic benefits of tourism, tourist destinations globally are increasing investments in the industry to boost local economies (Reisinger et al., 2018). Işıka et al. (2019) delved into the potential correlation between tourism and entrepreneurship, revealing a surge in knowledge production in this realm since the 2010s. In the realm of economic growth, the role of entrepreneurship has become progressively more prominent. Nonetheless, the current literature's comprehension of policies to cultivate entrepreneurship's latent potential remains constrained (Szerb et al., 2019).

Koitamet (2018) posits that the dynamics of 'push' and 'pull' factors extend their influence to encompass entrepreneurship, signifying that a medley of forces drives various phenomena, including entrepreneurship. According to Made and Yuni (2018), push factors for tourists are those factors that make a person want to travel and these are mainly internal psychologic motives, while the pull factors are the external factors that affect the wish of tourists to travel for the fulfilment of a need or desire. Within the entrepreneurial context, 'push' factors encapsulate internal and external circumstances that impel individuals toward entrepreneurial endeavours. Such circumstances might involve dissatisfaction with conventional employment, yearning for autonomy, job displacement, or pursuing financial autonomy. Conversely, 'pull' factors beckon individuals towards entrepreneurship by presenting enticing prospects like elevated earnings, the allure of pioneering innovative products or services, a profound resonance with a specific industry, or the prospect of personal and vocational advancement. Therefore, Koitamet's (2018) assertion underscores the intricate interplay between inherent motivations and external opportunities in embracing entrepreneurship, mirroring the multifaceted dynamics that steer other facets of life or phenomena.

Examining Romanian entrepreneurship within the tourism and hospitality sector, Iuliana et al. (2016) dissected micro-level influencers that mould local entrepreneurship and the dynamics affecting the tourism and hospitality industry. Their investigation

Table 1 Operationalisation of Variables

Variable Type	Latent Variable	Observed Variable	Measurement
Independent Variable	Destination Competitiveness (DC)	Core Resource Indicators (CRI) – Safety and Security (CRISS), Accessibility (CRIAC), Infrastructure (CRII) and Hospitality Standard (CRIHOS) Facilitating Indicators (FI) – Quality of visitors’ experience (FIQUE), Attractions (FIATT), Ancillary Services (FIANS), and Climatic and Environmental conditions (FICEC). Supporting Indicators (SI) – Political indicators (SIPI), Economic and Socio-cultural indicators (SIESC) and Destination Management (SIDM)	Questionnaire Items: CRISS 1,2,3; CRIAC, CRII,2,3; CRIHOS 1,2,3,4,5,6 Questionnaire Items: FIQUE 1,2,3,4; FIATT 1, 2,3,4; FIANS 1, 2,3,4; FICEC 1, 2, 3,4 Questionnaire Items : SIPI 1, 2, 3; SIESC 1, 2, 3, 4; SIDM 1, 2, 3, 4
Dependent Variable	Entrepreneurial Development	More local people are employed in the destination as a result of tourism (ED1) The presence of tourism in the destination enhances the creation of jobs (ED2) More local businesses are present at the destination (ED3) There is a high level of creativity and innovation in the destination (ED4) Tourism helps with the welfare of the residents of the host communities (ED5)	Questionnaire Items ED1, ED2, ED3, ED4, ED5,

Note Table showing the operationalisation of the variables used in the study.

disclosed a symbiotic relationship between entrepreneurship and tourism, indicating a mutual influence between the two domains. Hence, the present study in the context of Nigeria, with a particular focus on the southwest region.

Research Methodology

The central objective of this study is to investigate the dynamic interaction between the competitiveness of tourism destinations and the expansion of entrepreneurial endeavours within host communities, with a specific focus on the southwest region of Nigeria. The primary aim is to unveil and comprehend the essential contribution of competitive tourism destinations in propelling economic advancement within the immediate local context. In pursuit of this goal, the study undertakes the identification and comprehensive evaluation of critical variables that serve as quantifiable indicators of tourism destination competitiveness and the evolution of entrepreneurial activities. Through

rigorous analysis, the research delves into the intricate interrelationships between these identified variables for the measure of destination competitiveness (Ferreira & Perks, 2020) and entrepreneurial development (Johnson, 1990). These variables are discussed under the section on measures of destination competitiveness and entrepreneurial development. The study thereby sheds light on how they mutually influence and shape the trajectory of economic progress and sustainable growth within the South-West region of Nigeria.

A survey research design was employed to conduct this study, employing a structured questionnaire utilising a 5-point Likert scale format. This approach facilitated primary data collection, complementing secondary data from a thorough literature review. The study was conducted across six states within the South-West region of Nigeria, encompassing six tourist attractions, one in each state (destination). These attractions include Lekki Conservation Centre (LCC,

Lagos State), Olumo Rock (Ogun State), Ikogosi Warm Springs (Ekiti State), Idanre Hills (Ondo State) and Agodi Park and Gardens (Oyo State). These attractions were selected to encompass a diverse spectrum, including well-established sites with documented visitor arrivals and less-developed ones with varied records of tourist footfall. Visitors to these attractions were selected as the target population for the study. Employing a purposive sampling technique, significant tourist attractions from each state were chosen as the target population, guided by the availability of tourist arrival data to enrich the study's insights. The researcher personally visited these selected attractions to get visitor numbers data, engaging with tourists and operators of small and medium-sized enterprises.

The sampling frame for this study consists of the tourists to the selected attraction in each of the selected states. The questionnaire was distributed using the assistance of research assistants at the different attractions. Each selected attraction is purposively selected based on availability of tourist arrival records. This record provided the data on the population of the study. With a target population of 314,843 individuals (data on tourist arrivals to the six attractions before the COVID-19 pandemic), the sample size was determined as 1,530 using the Raosoft online sample calculator. Data regarding visits to these attractions was acquired before the COVID-19 pandemic. In alignment with this, 1,530 questionnaires were disseminated amongst the participants. The gathered data underwent a rigorous and comprehensive analysis encompassing descriptive and inferential methodologies. The operationalisation of the variables in the questionnaire is outlined in detail in Table 1. Descriptive analyses are showcased through tables displaying frequencies and percentages, thereby elucidating the socio-economic characteristics of the study participants. In contrast, analytical techniques such as the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's test, alongside confirmatory factor analysis, are presented in Table 3 to bolster and underscore the study's methodological robustness. Within the realm of inferential statistics, the process of hypothesis testing unfolds through the conduit of structural equation modelling. This analytical approach explores the influence of destination competitiveness on the host

Table 2 Socio-Economic Characteristic Distribution of Respondents

Demography	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	378	37.5
Female	630	62.5
Age		
16-25	456	45.2
26-35	252	25.0
36-45	180	17.9
46-55	80	7.9
56-65	28	2.8
66-above	12	1.2
Qualification		
Secondary	108	10.7
OND	214	21.2
B.SC/HND	424	42.1
Master's	202	20.2
PhD	40	4.0
Others	10	1
Marital Status		
Single	600	59.5
Married	388	38.5
Divorced	16	1.6
Widowed	4	.4
Occupation		
Student	600	59.5
Civil servants/professionals	172	17.1
Medical practitioners	40	4.0
Entrepreneurs	116	11.5
Artisans/Farmers	44	4.4
Clergy	8	.8
Contractors	12	1.2
Retired	16	1.6
Distribution of Questionnaire		
Osun	48	4.8
Lagos	268	26.6
Ogun	124	12.3
Ondo	60	6.0
Ekiti	68	6.7
Oyo	440	43.7

Note Table showing the socio-economic characteristic distribution of respondents to the questionnaire.

Table 4 Factor Loading of Destination Competitiveness Dimensions and Entrepreneurial Development

	Variables	Factor loading
Core Resources	I feel safe and secure in and around this destination	0.828
Indicators (Safety and Security)	Non-availability of security in place can stop me from visiting the destination	0.871
	If I feel threatened in a destination, it will affect my revisit of the destination	0.833
Core Resources Indicators (Accessibility)	It is always easy for me to access this destination	0.822
	The visa requirements are too stringent	0.821
	The accessibility rules and regulations are too stringent	0.683
Core Resource Indicator (Infrastructure)	The roads are well constructed	0.850
	There is adequate power supply	0.896
	Medical facilities are well situated for accessibility	0.851
	The transportation networks are well organized and there are diverse means of transport	0.866
Core Resource Indicator (Hospitality Standards)	The accommodation services are good	0.772
	There is a diversity of accommodation types in the destination	0.805
	The quality of accommodation services provided are equal to the value for the money	0.801
	The food is a representation of the culture of the destination	0.823
	I look forward to the food provided at the destination	0.810
Facilitating Indicator (Quality of Experience)	The food is well prepared in accordance with safety standards	0.777
	My expectations are met at the destination	0.826
	There is the delivery of high-quality service at the destination	0.857
	I get value for money in the destination tourism experience	0.809
Facilitating Indicators (Attraction)	Management capabilities of tourism firms	0.674
	The attractions are attractive and properly managed	0.802
	The attractions are easily accessible	0.857
	The attractions are well equipped to meet tourists' needs	0.864
Facilitating Indicators (Ancillary Services)	The attractions provide pleasurable and enjoyable experiences	0.866
	There are efficient communication services	0.821
	There are enough souvenir shops at the destination	0.843
	I am fully satisfied with the delivery of service at the Destination	0.863
Facilitating Indicators (Climatic and Environmental)	The staff are well trained for the delivery of quality service	0.802
	The weather at the destination is consistently favourable	0.781
	Environmentally compatible approach to tourism development planning	0.772
	Public sector commitment to minimising negative environmental impacts of tourism	0.822
	The festival of the destination is an attractive element of the destination	0.804
Facilitating Indicators (Social and Political)	I love to participate in the local activities of the destination	0.775
	The government is committed to tourism	0.856
	There is a high level of political lawlessness	0.815
	There is political stability at the destination	0.846

Continued on next page

Table 4 Continued from previous page

	Variables	Factor loading
Supporting Indicators (Socio-Economic)	Regularity of tourist inflows	0.848
	Presence of local businesses	0.830
	Public sector commitment to maximising the economic impacts of tourism on the local community	0.873
	Public sector commitment to minimising negative social impacts of tourism on the local community	0.829
Supporting Indicator (Destination Management)	Effectiveness in crafting tourism experiences	0.796
	Tourist destination communication and visitor satisfaction management	0.788
	Tourist guidance and information	0.770
	Promotion of partnerships among tourist businesses	0.756
Entrepreneurial Development	More local people are employed in the destination as a result of tourism	0.715
	The presence of tourism in the destination enhances the creation of jobs	0.700
	More local businesses are present at the destination	0.785
	There is a high level of creativity and innovation in the destination	0.722
	Tourism helps with the welfare of the residents of the host communities	0.679
	Tourism gives room for more businesses to be established	0.649
	There are no stringent rules to the establishment of a business at the destination	0.698

Note Table 4 is the presentation of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the variables for the study. The table shows adequate loading of each of the variables, showing their significance in the measure of destination competitiveness and entrepreneurship.

communities' entrepreneurial development. The execution of this analysis entails the utilisation of both SPSS and SMART PLS software, thereby facilitating a thorough exploration of the collected dataset.

The Hypothesis of the Study

The study was set to test this hypothesis:

H₀ There is no significant relationship between destination competitiveness and entrepreneurial development

H₁ There is a significant relationship between destination competitiveness and entrepreneurial development

Measures of Destination Competitiveness and Entrepreneurship Development

Destination competitiveness (DC) is measured in core resource indicators – CRI (safety and security – CRISS, accessibility – CRIACC, infrastructure – CRIINF, and hospitality standard (CRIHOS) (Accommodation and Food); facilitating indicators-FI (quality of the visitor's experience (FIQUE), attractions (FIATT), ancillary services (FIANS) and climatic and

environmental conditions (FICEC)); and supporting indicators- SI (Political indicators (SIP1), Economic and Socio-cultural indicators (SIESC) and Destination Management (SIDM)) as indicated by Ferreira and Perks (2020). Johnson (1990) explains that entrepreneurship development is measured by More local people are employed in the destination as a result of tourism (ED1), The presence of tourism in the destination enhances the creation of jobs (ED2), More local businesses are present at the destination (ED3), There is a high level of creativity and innovation in the destination (ED4), Tourism helps with the welfare of the residents of the host communities (ED5). Table 1 is a representation of the operationalisation of the research variables and how each variable was measured.

Findings

One thousand five hundred thirty (1,530) questionnaires were distributed, and 1,008 questionnaires were retrieved and considered usable for analysis. The study achieved a response rate of 65.8 percent, which was considered sufficient for the study based on Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), who assert that 50 per-

Table 5 Internal Consistency and Convergence Validity for the Effect of Destination Competitiveness on Entrepreneurial Development

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
DESCOM	0.970	0.971	0.972	0.536
ED	0.832	0.837	0.874	0.569

Note Table 5 is a representation of reflective measurement which is part of the structural equation modelling. The table shows the internal consistency convergence validity, showing Cronbach's alpha, rho alpha, composite reliability and average variance extracted. Each of these indicates consistency.

Table 6 Discriminant Validity – Fornell-Larcker and HMT for the Effect of Destination Competitiveness on Entrepreneurial Development

		DESCOM	ED
Fornell-Larcker	DESCOM	0.660	
	ED	0.584	0.707
HMT	DESCOM		
	ED	0.646	

Note Table 6 shows the discriminant validity of the variables. This is measured using Fornell-Larcker and HMT tests; both indicate that there are not discriminant issues.

cent is deemed suitable and sufficient for analysis. The following sections further elaborate on the findings of the study.

Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 2 provides a comprehensive overview of the socio-economic attributes exhibited by the surveyed individuals. From 1,008 responses, the gender distribution reveals that 37.5% of the participants are male, while the remaining 62.5% are female. Exploring the demographic composition based on age, the data shows that the age range of 16–25 constitutes the largest segment, accounting for 45.2% of the respondents. Meanwhile, those aged between 26 and 35 make up 25% of the sample, followed by individuals aged 36–45, representing 17.9% of the total. Further segmentation indicates that 7.9% fall within the 46–55 age group, 2.8% are between 56 and 65, and a smaller portion, comprising 1.2%, is 65 years and above. Education levels among the respondents are diverse, with a substantial majority holding B.Sc./HND degrees, constituting 42.1% of the total. Conversely, a minor

fraction of 4.0% possess PhD qualifications. Another segment encompasses individuals whose educational background is unspecified but includes various forms of education, such as diplomas and certificates, totalling 1%.

Marital status reveals that most respondents, amounting to 59.5%, are single, while 38.5% are married. Additionally, a smaller proportion is divided between divorced individuals, constituting 1.6%, and those who are widowed, making up 0.4%. Occupational distribution uncovers that a considerable portion of the participants are students, comprising 59.5% of the respondents. Among other professions, civil servants constitute 17.1%, medical practitioners represent 4.0%, entrepreneurs account for 11.5%, artisans/farmers comprise 4.4%, contractors comprise 1.2%, clergy 8% and retired individuals contribute 1.6%. Geographically, the survey draws participants from various states. Specifically, 4.8% of respondents are from Osun state, 26.6% from Lagos state, 12.3% from Ogun state, 6.0% from Ondo state, 6.7% from Ekiti state, and the largest proportion, totalling 43.7%, hail from Oyo State. This distribution comprehensively represents the socio-economic characteristics observed among the surveyed individuals across different regions.

Test of Model Fit

KMO and Bartlett's test and Confirmatory Factor Analysis were the measures used to test for goodness of fit. KMO measures sampling adequacy (which determines if the responses given with the sample are adequate), which should be close to 0.5 for satisfactory factor analysis to proceed. Kaiser (1974) recommends 0.5 (value for KMO) as a minimum (barely accepted), values between 0.7–0.8 are acceptable, and values abo-

Table 7 Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for the Effect of Destination Competitiveness on Entrepreneurial Development

DCCRIMSS1	2.264	DCFICEC3	2.956
DCCRISS2	2.593	DCFICEC4	2.769
DCCRISS3	2.672	DCFICEC5	2.914
DCCRIACC1	2.330	DCFIQVE1	3.631
DCCRIACC2	2.046	DCFIQVE2	3.267
DCCRIACC3	1.416	DCFIQVE3	2.292
DCINF1	3.719	DCFIQVE4	2.309
DCINF2	3.614	DCSIDM1	3.401
DCINF3	3.704	DCSIDM2	2.776
DCINF4	3.353	DCSIDM3	2.093
DCHOS1	2.794	DCSIDM4	2.538
DCHOS2	3.295	DCSIESCI1	3.294
DCHOS3	3.207	DCSIESCI2	2.545
DCHOS4	3.046	DCSIESCI3	3.274
DCHOS5	3.069	DCSIESCI4	2.711
DCHOS6	2.764	DCSIPI1	2.762
DCFIANS1	3.287	DCSIPI2	2.199
DCFIANS2	2.734	DCSIPI3	3.090
DCFIANS3	3.038	DCSIPI4	3.568
DCFIANS4	2.799	ENTDEV1	1.812
DCFIATT1	2.978	ENTDEV2	1.646
DCFIATT2	3.162	ENTDEV3	1.969
DCFIATT3	2.953	ENTDEV4	1.650
DCFIATT4	3.088	ENTDEV5	1.579
DCFICEC1	2.583	ENTDEV6	1.423
DCFICEC2	2.717	ENTDEV7	1.575

Note Table 7 is a representation of the test of collinearity tested by variance inflation factor. Each of the loadings is below 5.0 which indicates that there is no collinearity issues with the variables.

ve 0.9 are superb. KMO statistics were applied to each latent grouping. The sample is considered adequate if the value of the Kaiser Mayer-Olkin (KMO) measure is more significant than 0.50. Bartlett's test of sphericity for each variable also reached a statistical significance that was reflected by a $p < 0.001$, thereby supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. As shown in Table 3 (see appendix), all the variables for measuring destination competitiveness and entrepreneurial development surpassed the satisfactory value of 0.5. for the measure of destination competitiveness: core resources indicators – safety and security – 0.821, accessibility 0.701, infrastructure – 0.630, hospitality standards – 0.824; facilitating indicators – quality of experience – 0.852, attraction – 0.756, ancillary services – 0.824, climatic and environmental – 0.814, and, social and political – 0.805; and the supporting indicators measured by socio-economic 0.798 and desti-

nation management – 0.830. In contrast, entrepreneurial development variables were: more local people are employed in the destination as a result of tourism, the presence of tourism in the destination enhances the creation of jobs, more local businesses are present at the destination, there is a high level of creativity and innovation in the destination, and tourism helps with the welfare of the residents of the host communities. The summation of these variables was measured with a score of 0.687.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is a multivariate statistical procedure used to test how well the measured variables represent the number of constructs. Hair et al. (2019) established that the CFA measures from .60 and above are sufficient for a specific variable. Hence, the results of the CFA of each variable measured (see Table 4) showed the sufficiency of the various measures as all met with the recommendation of Hair et al. (2019). As shown in Table 3, the KMO and Bartlett's test of all the variables indicates that they support the factorability of the correlation matrix.

Structural Equation Modelling

Multiple regression analysis was conducted through structural equation modelling to evaluate the influence of destination competitiveness on the entrepreneurial development of tourism gateway communities in South-West Nigeria. For this analysis, a measurement model and structural model were carried out. Destination competitiveness was measured using the following dimensions: CRI (Core Resources Indicator), FI (Facilitating Indicator), and SI (Supporting Indicator), while entrepreneurial development was measured using statement items such as 'More local people are employed in the destination as a result of tourism', 'The presence of tourism in the destination enhances the creation of jobs', 'More local businesses are present at the destination', 'There is a high level of creativity and innovation in the destination', 'Tourism helps with the welfare of the residents of the host communities', 'Tourism gives room for more businesses to be established', and 'There are no stringent rules to the establishment of business at the destination'.

Table 8 Path Coefficient of Destination Competitiveness on Entrepreneurial Development

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	2.5%	97.5%	P Values
DESCOM → ED	0.433	0.435	0.030	14.513	0.373	0.489	0.000

Note Table 8 shows the path coefficient analysis of the relationship between destination competitiveness and entrepreneurial development. The result indicates a significant relationship between destination competitiveness and entrepreneurial development.

Table 9 Interaction Between Destination Competitiveness and Entrepreneurial Development

Variables	ED					
	B	SE	B	T-stat	P-Value	
DESCOM	0.433	0.030	0.435	14.513	0.000	
Adj R ²	0.186					
F-Stat	230.121					
P-Value	(.0000)					

Note The analysis shows that an 18.6% (Adj R² = 0.186) variation in destination competitiveness is explained by entrepreneurial development. The result also indicates that a unit increase in entrepreneurial development (B = 0.433) leads to a 0.433 increase in destination competitiveness. The standardised beta ($\beta = 0.435$) shows a direct and positive relationship between entrepreneurial development and destination competitiveness. The t-stat ($t = 14.513$; $p = 0.000$) shows that entrepreneurial development significantly affects destination competitiveness.

Measurement Model

Table 5 represents the internal consistency and convergent validity of the effect of destination competitiveness on the entrepreneurial development of tourism gateway communities. The Cronbach Alpha (CA), rho_A, and composite reliability (CR) met the threshold of 0.70, with a higher value over the minimum standard. For the average variance extracted (AVE), the two variables also met the threshold of 0.50. For destination competitiveness, the CA is 0.970, rho_A is 0.971, CR is 0.972 and AVE is 0.536, while entrepreneurial development has the values CA 0.832, rho_A 0.837, CR 0.874 and AVE 0.569. Overall, the table indicates that both constructs ('DESCOM' and 'ED') have high levels of internal consistency and reliability, as evidenced by the high values of Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, and composite reliability. Additionally, while the AVE values are above the threshold of 0.5, they could be further improved to enhance the convergent validity of the constructs. This suggests that a significant proportion of the variance in the observed items

is captured by the underlying constructs, supporting the validity of the measurement model.

Table 6 is the Fornell-Larcker discriminant validity of the effect of destination competitiveness on entrepreneurial development. The values for the two variables indicate no discriminant value issues as they all met with the threshold of 0.90, with none of the variables higher than that value. The HTM result of discriminant validity, as shown in Table 6, also indicates no discriminant issue as the threshold is not passed. For the Fornell-Larcker criterion, both constructs' diagonal values (square roots of AVE) are higher than the off-diagonal correlation value (0.584). This suggests that there is discriminant validity between the DESCOM and ED constructs; they are distinct. The HMT ratio for ED (0.646) is higher than the correlation between ED and DESCOM (0.584), which indicates that the ED construct is adequately distinct from DESCOM. Based on these results, there is evidence of discriminant validity between the DESCOM and ED constructs. They are distinct concepts, and their

shared variance is reasonable. The HMT ratio further supports the distinctiveness of the ED construct.

Structural Model

Commencing with the collinearity analysis, as depicted in Table 7, it is evident that the prescribed threshold of 5 is satisfactorily met. Notably, none of the values surpass this threshold, aligning harmoniously with the recommendation outlined by Hair et al. (2019) that advocates for a variance inflation factor (VIF) approximation around 3 or even below. The tabulated data furnishes VIF values for diverse variables, wherein VIF serves as a statistical yardstick utilised to assess multicollinearity within a regression analysis. Multicollinearity surfaces when independent variables within a regression model display significant correlation, potentially resulting in shaky and unreliable coefficient estimations. VIF quantifies the extent to which the variance of a deduced regression coefficient escalates due to multicollinearity.

Path coefficient analysis is subsequently conducted to scrutinise the significance of the impact exerted by destination competitiveness on entrepreneurial development. Table 8 delineates this, confirming a substantial and noteworthy influence of destination competitiveness on entrepreneurial development. Path analysis is further elaborated upon in Table 8 and Figure 1. The graphical representation in Figure 1 captures the dynamic interaction between destination competitiveness and entrepreneurial development. The path analysis demonstrates a commendable goodness of fit ($X^2=788$; $df=172$, $p=0.000$; $GFI=0.97$; $RMSEA=0.05$; $IFI=0.96$; $CFI=0.98$). The outcomes reveal that among the measures of destination competitiveness influenced by entrepreneurial development, facilitating indicators ($t=52.925$; $p=0.000$) emerge as the most pivotal. Concurrently, an increased number of local businesses at the destination ($t=60.563$; $p=0.000$) is the most influential determinant of entrepreneurial development impacting destination competitiveness. The variables also underscore the critical role of destination attraction ($t=112.691$) in shaping the facilitating indicators, predominantly as the primary variable steering core resource indicators. This substantiates the findings posited by Perna et al.

(2018), reiterating that a diverse set of competitiveness indicators is imperative, dispelling the notion of a singular set universally applicable across all destinations.

Table 9 further expounds upon the nexus between destination competitiveness and entrepreneurial development. The analysis affirms that entrepreneurial development elucidates an 18.6% variance ($Adj R^2=.186$) in destination competitiveness. Notably, a unit increment in entrepreneurial development ($B=0.433$) correlates with a corresponding increase of 0.433 in destination competitiveness. The standardised beta ($\beta=0.435$) underscores a direct and positive correlation between entrepreneurial development and destination competitiveness. The t-statistic ($t=14.513$; $p=0.000$) validates the substantial impact of entrepreneurial development on destination competitiveness. Based on the data, robust evidence substantiates a statistically significant relationship between the DESCOM and ED variables. This assertion is buttressed by the notably low p-value and the substantial t-statistic. As a corollary, the null hypothesis that posits an absence of a noteworthy relationship between destination competitiveness and entrepreneurial development is effectively discarded. This substantiates the profound influence of destination competitiveness on entrepreneurial development, underscoring its pivotal role. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, while the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Discussion of Findings

The findings show that destination competitiveness significantly drives entrepreneurial development. The more competitive a tourist destination becomes; the more entrepreneurial activities increase. The implication is that a competitive tourist destination in terms of contest or rivalry in providing identical items and addressing the same target demographic to grow sales, earnings, and market dominance increases entrepreneurial activities (Dimoska & Trimcev, 2012). The results reveal that facilitating factors such as attraction and quality climatic conditions are the most significant measures of competitiveness driving entrepreneurial development. The findings are consistent with the positions of Crouch et al. (2000) and Mikić et al. (2017) that a destination's tourism development must

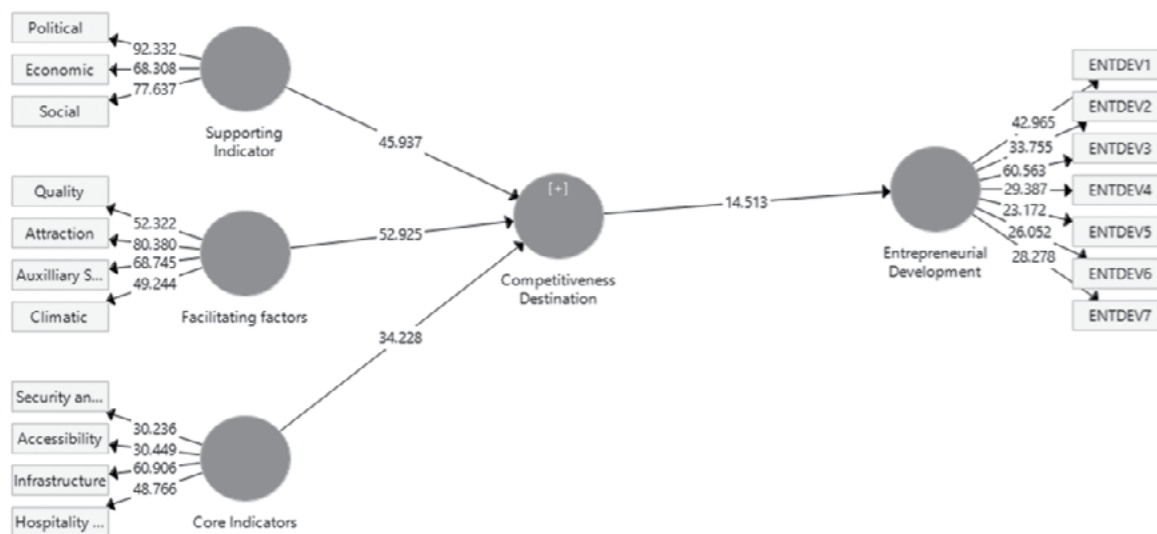


Figure 1 The path analysis achieved a goodness fit ($X^2 = 788$, $df = 172$, $p = 0.000$; $GFI = 0.97$; $RMSEA = 0.05$; $IFI = 0.96$; $CFI = 0.98$).

be sustainable for a destination to be competitive, not just economically and ecologically, but socially, culturally, and politically, leading to different entrepreneurial activities. This implies that for a destination to be competitive, the availability of attractions (both natural and artificial) is essential. According to Aina and Abiola-Oke (2016), the tourist attraction is the primary element for any destination's uniqueness among other destinations, influencing its competitiveness among other elements. Hence, as destinations become competitive, more tourists will visit the destination, creating more jobs and resulting in more local businesses coming into existence. This is because the comfort of a tourist in a destination is essential, hence the need for more service providers. These service providers could be small- and medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) or large businesses, at the destination (Pavlic et al., 2011; Goffi & Cucculelli, 2014). According to Dwyer and Kim (2003), destinations become more competitive based on the ability of the destination to deliver goods and services better than other destinations, which is determined by the experience of tourists at the destination. This is also corroborated by Rey-Maqueira and Ramos (2016) who asserted that destination competitiveness is understood by its

ability to increase the expenditure of tourists through an increase in attracting tourists and ensuring their satisfaction at the destination while enhancing the well-being of the host community dwellers. Comprehensively, looking at the impact of destination competitiveness on entrepreneurial development, Rey-Maqueira and Ramos (2016) opined that the ability of a destination to increase tourism expenditure and the number of tourists to the destination, while satisfying them and ensuring the well-being of the host community sustainably, makes such a destination competitive among other destinations.

In summation, the singular nature of this study emanates from its dedicated focus on the South-West Region, empirical substantiation of the correlation, exploration of diverse entrepreneurial sectors, and pragmatic implications for policy formulation and sustainable development. The study advances the reservoir of knowledge concerning the intricate interplay between tourism and entrepreneurship, thereby proffering insights to guide decision-making and strategy formulation aimed at nurturing economic expansion and sustainable development within the unique context of the South-West Region of Nigeria.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study's findings offer a significant new understanding of the connection between the competitiveness of Nigeria's tourism destinations and the growth of the entrepreneurial sector. The correlation between these two factors is positive and statistically significant, emphasising the significance of improving destination competitiveness as a driver of entrepreneurship and regional economic development. This link strengthens tourism's ability to drive economic growth and employment creation (Cîrstea, 2014; Ajake, 2015). This viewpoint is consistent with Fakokunde's (2017) broadened definition of entrepreneurs, which includes people with the insight to see and seize business opportunities. These findings have numerous ramifications. A comparable rise in demand for numerous services, notably in the promotion area, is predicted as a destination develops and boosts its competitiveness. This increase in demand causes new company opportunities to materialise, thus spurring economic expansion.

Individuals with keen acumen who can identify and exploit these newfound opportunities assume the mantle of entrepreneurs, thereby amplifying the influence of tourism on the overall economy. This aligns with the findings of Çalkın and Işık (2017), who observe that entrepreneurship is becoming more prevalent within the tourism industry, mirroring its growth in other sectors. When appropriately utilised, the predominance of entrepreneurship in the tourism industry is evidence of the sector's substantial impact on a country's economy. This emphasises the significance of maximising the tourism industry's potential for its inherent advantages to local communities and the country's overall economic health (Çalkın & Işık, 2017). The study's distinctiveness comes in its regional emphasis, empirical confirmation of the link, analysis of various entrepreneurial sectors, and practical ramifications for sustainable policy development in the South-West Region of Nigeria. The findings add to the corpus of knowledge about the complex interactions between tourism and entrepreneurship by offering perceptions that can guide strategies for fostering economic growth and development in this particular setting.

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Slum Tourism: Who Empowers and Who is Empowered?

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This study examines how the process of implementing community empowerment for disadvantaged communities through NGOs could be viewed as a tourist attraction in slum tourism. This study used a phenomenological approach and collected data through interviews with four informants. This study emphasises the importance of including community empowerment initiatives led by local community members in slum tourism programmes. The results showed that NGOs play a crucial role in slum tourism. NGOs are considered the empowering entities while disadvantaged communities are considered the empowered entities based on additional studies. NGOs empower marginalised communities to prevent exploitation and enable them to benefit from slum tourism, improving their quality of life. The study emphasises the importance of local community engagement and empowerment in slum tourism, focusing on NGOs as empowering entities. The research highlights the importance of ensuring that slum tourism contributes to the betterment of disadvantaged communities by improving their quality of life rather than exploiting them.

Keywords: empowerment, participatory competence, populist competence, slum tourism, socio-political ability

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Introduction

Tourism in slums could be regarded as a viable alternative to support social advancement and alleviate poverty. It has become a cause of ethical transformation and a method of moving and even transforming

those who encounter it (Altamirano, 2022; Crossley, 2012). Slum tourism can also be a form of alternative imaginative travel (Booyens & Rogerson, 2019). In slum tourism activities, local parties always manage the community visits and reinforce the deep engage-

ment of the community in the slum tourism activity. However, slum tourism activities typically do not engage with the growth spirit that prevails in previously affluent neighbourhoods; tourists, not the local community, are empowered by this activity (Nisbett, 2017). On the other hand, slum tourism organisers can empower formerly affluent communities with political and local expertise and educate tourists about the neoliberalism that emerges from their activities.

Slum tourism is also a popular type of black tourism in developing countries such as India, Brazil, Kenya and the Philippines. It is a new form of tourism that comprises visiting slums to experience the conditions of the less fortunate slum dwellers (Yeganeh, 2015). A country with a tourism advancement policy paradoxically necessitates tourists. However, other policies attempt to control the country's urban image for branding purposes by not promoting slum tourism on a large scale (Dovey & King, 2012). As a result, slum settlements often remain hidden from the sight of tourists, both domestic tourists and, notably, international tourists. From the point of view from which slum tourism activities relate to the community, empowerment programmes should evaluate the residents' opinion of their neighbourhood as a tourist attraction. Nevertheless, there is still a scarcity of research that discusses the local community's viewpoint on slum tourism in the region (Nunkoo et al., 2013). Furthermore, improving the overall well-being and standard of living experienced by individuals within the community, which should be the main attraction of this activity, is neglected (Burgold et al., 2013; Rolfes, 2010).

Prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, slum tourism was a global phenomenon that was the topic of various opinions and controversies, but its popularity has since increased (Lopez, 2020). Slum tourism is contentious because it turns poverty into a tourist commodity. Poverty is a highly complex challenge as it is not merely the difficulty of inadequate satisfaction of everyday needs from a financial perspective, but also from a social, cultural and political perspective (Ras, 2013). Until recently, it was considered that targeted programmes to mitigate poverty and enhance the well-being of the population in deve-

loping countries were ineffective; that is, a top-down procedure that used the community as an advancement object in development programmes resulted in pre-prosperous societies losing their creativity and potential (Ras, 2013).

To activate the creativity and capability of the community, community tourism and public advocacy are necessary before prosperity, and become tools for empowerment activities among people on behalf of poor people (Steinbrink et al., 2012). Realising the notion of strengthening general-focused communities, which is the foundation for strengthening social life advancement communities, must be done from scratch (Soetomo, 2013). Multiple perspectives are required to understand the implementation and efficacy of community empowerment programmes in slum tourism activities. Numerous experts debate the dimensions of community empowerment; the most commonly known are populist competence, socio-political ability, and participatory competence (Bifulco & Facchini, 2016; Frisch, 2016; Kieffer, 1984). Squatter tourism research is an early study of slum tourism using these three dimensions, particularly noting that empowerment through participatory competence had not been formally adopted as an analytical tool before. Therefore, this study explores how community empowerment is integrated into slum tourism activities from these three dimensions.

Theoretical Framework

Slum Tourism

Activities in slums around the world have both advantages and disadvantages. They can improve the quality of life of the community and people experiencing poverty but also have the potential to exploit society and the less fortunate people visited by tourists. The term 'exploited' was devised because the daily lives of the poor became the main attraction for slum tourists (Slikker & Koens, 2015; Whyte et al., 2011). The challenge with slum tourism is to make it part of an empowered society that enhances the community's potential to become financially independent. Various stakeholders, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), can authorise and support these initiatives. While the community holds the power, this is

fundamentally a local issue rather than one involving tourists directly.

There is a growing variety of interplay between local communities and NGOs. Additionally, the interaction between local communities, tourists, and other stakeholders offers the local community invaluable insights that will assist in achieving greater self-sufficiency. This multifaceted approach ensures that slum tourism can be both empowering and sustainable, benefiting all parties involved. Furthermore, improving infrastructure feasibility in slum tourism destinations and preserving the local environment are critical strands of improving the living standards of people experiencing poverty (Bolwell & Weinz, 2008). These efforts are essential in ensuring that slum tourism not only benefits visitors but also provides tangible improvements for the local communities.

The keyword 'inclusivity' can be integrated into implementing empowerment programmes within slum tourism. Until recently, slum tourism was seen as a form of charity rather than an effort to strengthen the community. However, only inclusive tourism industries and activities can offer more significant benefits while prioritising human dignity. This sense of self-respect can inspire people to participate actively in community empowerment activities, primarily through slum tourism initiatives (Bolwell & Weinz, 2008).

Current global tourism policy places more focus on sustainable tourism. Many tourism concepts relate to sustainable tourism, e.g. slow and pro-poor tourism. Slow tourism is a holistic view promoting sustainability in all parts of the visitor journey. It is an option in addition to mass tourism (Krešić & Gjurajić, 2022). Pro-poor tourism is a sustainable tourism component, manifested in various programmes, including slum tourism. However, the term 'poor tourism' cannot be equated with slum tourism if there is no community empowerment programme to optimise the welfare and alleviate the poverty of the population whose houses are adopted as visitor attractions. Slum tourism has a sense of reality that can be divided into two categories based on motivation: social tours, which emphasise participation and authenticity, and dark tours, which portray poverty as a consumable good

and highlight the violence that stems from poverty (Freire-Medeiros, 2009).

As a type of tourism, slum tourism is usually divided into two categories: cultural travel and entertainment travel. Cultural slum tours that concentrate on strands of higher education, e.g. interacting with the local pre-prosperous community, enjoying cultural attractions demonstrated by the community, exploring and purchasing handicrafts produced by the local pre-prosperous communities and others, are presently ubiquitous amongst tourists. Tourists who take cultural slum tours can directly observe the life patterns of the residents and learn how life works in the area. In contrast, tour operators offering entertainment slum tours broadly provide sensation and excitement, viewing poverty as a safari. An example is the Favela tour experience in Brazil, a type of entertainment slum tour (Freire-Medeiros, 2009; Frisch, 2016; Ma, 2010).

Empowerment

Strengthening local communities in tourism activities results in a significant multiplier effect (Bolwell & Weinz, 2008). The multisectoral nature of tourism can enable network cooperation and coordination, which is advantageous for filling existing information gaps. Educating stakeholders with cross-sectoral interests is necessary to prevent future tensions and can positively affect disadvantaged communities, particularly in slum tourism destinations. To increase well-being through activity, tourism requires the active participation of everyone involved, and good tourism development will enhance locals' skills and generate jobs (Bolwell & Weinz, 2008).

There is a close relationship between populist competence and the practice of community development, which typically commences with individual advancement and results in broader social transformation. Local cadres can be defined as individuals or groups serving as a channel for the empowerment movement in the area. These individuals (local cadres) have integrity in their self-identity and everyday life despite their feeling of powerlessness. Underlying attitudes encompass pride, potent determination, deep roots in the community, devotion to independence, relati-

onship, and assistance from caring friends and peers (Strzelecka et al., 2017; Kieffer, 1984).

Socio-political skills are the ability to deal with the freedoms brought about by social movements. These movements can take the form of both education and the politicisation of marginalized groups weak, which can ultimately lead to structural changes based on their objectives. Socio-political ability depends heavily on which parties exercise authority and which do not (Duverger, 2012). Sustained engagement tends to break the cycle of helplessness and oppression; however, the theory lags: it only applies to reflective, context-conscious participation that allows individuals to develop more effective political action strategies, mechanisms, and collective support, as well as enhance their ability to compete more successfully in conducting social development research (Kieffer, 1984; Strzelecka & Wicks, 2015).

The community and other members can collaborate to develop strategies, mobilise resources, and improve language and literacy systems at the grassroots political level through intensive engagement, organisation, or collaboration to enhance awareness and capacity in the social and political spheres. Increased community involvement leads to a more thorough comprehension and a higher drive to take action, resulting in greater proactivity.

Participatory competence is a psychological condition characterised by confidence in one's ability to control oneself and others. In any empowerment effort, communities often encounter internal and external obstacles, but overcoming these obstacles can strengthen people's skills and determination. As individuals increase their ability to participate, they acquire a sense of mastery and competence. Individuals who acquire participatory competence can maintain a feeling of mastery and self-awareness, motivating them to incorporate their personal knowledge and abilities into their daily lives (Strzelecka & Wicks, 2015; Kieffer, 1984).

Tourism activities involving the community must be continuously developed to preserve and foster the community's independence (Shabalala, 2023). Therefore, future generations can benefit from community-based tourism activities. Human progress in the tou-

rism industry should prioritise educating and training individuals to enhance their self-reliance, which is more advantageous in the long term than solely focusing on building infrastructure or offering monetary assistance (Rakhman, 2019).

Human resources are required at several levels in the tourism business, ranging from management to back office and field staff. Consequently, there is a high number of work opportunities available in the tourism activities sector. Typically, jobs in the tourism industry are free of sophisticated or specialised skills. Thus, it is accessible to a wide range of individuals, e.g. women from local communities, to help uplift underprivileged areas (Roe, 2013).

There are more possibilities for establishing small-scale tourist sites and attractions that can be managed by local communities and businesses. Consequently, the communities engaged will directly profit from the growth of tourism (Kamsma & Bras, 2002). The possibility of enabling community members to evolve into business owners and participate in the open travel sector indicates sustainable tourism's effectiveness (Simpson, 2008).

From an economic standpoint, empowerment is viewed as the ability to remove obstacles that prevent individuals who are not yet wealthy from enhancing their abilities and actively participating in the social aspect of the economic system (Adams, 2017). Historically, less prosperous communities have endured social, economic, and political exclusion from power.

Empowerment is crucial for the community to access economic opportunities and benefits (Rahman & Baddam, 2021). However, attracting the interest of disadvantaged individuals in empowerment programmes has several challenges. The community needs more participation; insufficient funds and inadequate knowledge and skills hinder underdeveloped communities from asserting complete control over their involvement in tourism development activities (Scheyvens, 2010). Empowering disadvantaged communities requires clear structure and accountability as motivating these social groups demands specific abilities to instigate a change in mindset towards self-reliance, emphasising that people from less privileged backgrounds grasp the primary responsibility in

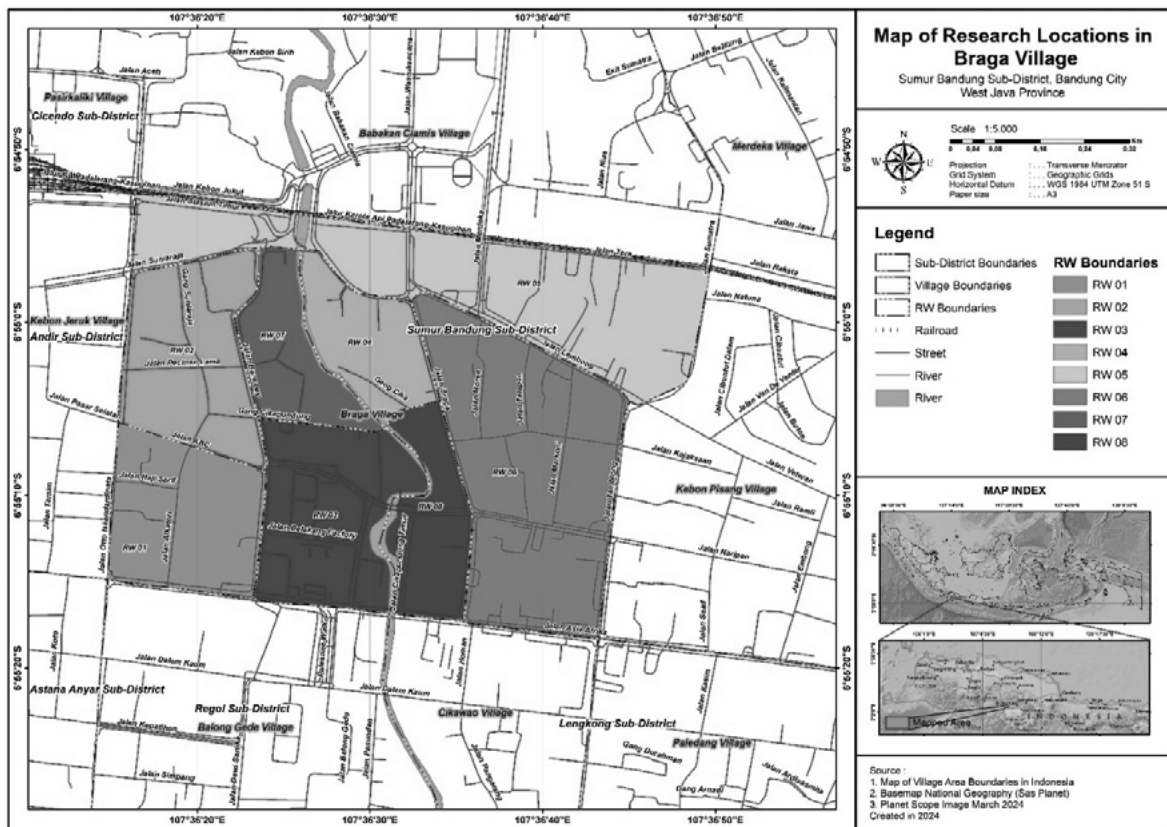


Figure 1 Map of Research Location in Braga Village

changing their living conditions (Ansari et al., 2012). There is a responsibility on the part of NGOs to ensure that community enthusiasm for enhancing self-sufficiency is accommodated in a variety of training programmes created in conjunction with pre-prosperous societies (Batubara et al., 2023).

Involving local people in developing and implementing the programmes is expected to improve the effectiveness of the community empowerment project (Zhao & Ritchie, 2007). Firmness and direction are crucial when selecting individuals to lead underprivileged community groups, determining their level of authority and responsibilities, and ensuring that the empowerment effort progresses as planned and achieving the desired outcomes (Cole, 2008).

Engaging in creative endeavours and participating in artistic activities are vital for enhancing a location's quality. Optimising local community capabilities,

strengthening sustainability, and increasing a destination's competitive value can transform a place's economy. Communities with great creative potential and local cultural values are more inclined to develop a marketable product to increase their income.

Limited community involvement impedes the empowerment of pre-prosperous groups (Zhao & Ritchie, 2007). Thus, stakeholders strongly endorse sustainable tourism advancement through prioritising initiatives that empower the community. Stakeholders need to help create anti-poverty policies in an effective, efficient, and communicative way. All stakeholders must wholeheartedly embrace the planned community empowerment effort. Stakeholders with expertise in laws and regulations should oversee and synchronise the implementation and policies of sectors connecting with tourism to prevent conflicts

Table 1 Informant Characteristics

Gender	Position	Education	Occupation
Female	Chairman of the Creavill Bandung Community	Bachelor of Literature and English	Marketing Assistant Manager at Insurance Company
Female	Creavill Bandung Public Relations Coordinator	Profession of Master of Psychology	Unemployed
Female	Residents of Braga Area	Bachelor of Literature and English	English Private Lesson Teachers
Male	Chairman of the Youth Organisation of the Braga Area	Vocational High School in Bandung	Engineer at pharmaceutical company in Bandung

with slum tourism. All stakeholders must prioritise sustainable tourist development (Byrd, 2007).

Methodology

This study utilised the phenomenological technique, which is well-suited to support scholars in various domains, such as knowledge tourism. Phenomenology is the qualitative examination of individuals' perceptions of their existence in the world (Neubauer et al., 2019). The phenomenological approach helps comprehend how social issues like poverty can enhance the well-being of local communities when adequately addressed and promoted. This concept aligns well with research on slum tourism. The application of phenomenology explores these phenomena and views socially constructed poverty as a unifying force attracting tourists to a community (Simarmata, 2018; Hayllar & Griffin, 2005). This research examines the slum tourism activities arranged by the Creative Village (Creavill) Bandung Community in the Braga area (see Figure 1). Creavill Bandung Community, renowned for its emphasis on empowerment, is crucial in establishing empowered groups within the community for the future.

The Braga area, located in the Sumur Bandung district of Bandung City, West Java, Indonesia, is a vibrant research location of eight neighbourhoods. Each neighbourhood has the potential to offer unique insights into the lifestyle, culture, and economic activity of the local community. Regarding creative activities, the inhabitants of the Braga area are known for their artistic and cultural endeavours. Notable creative activities include producing traditional crafts and

preserving cultural heritage through performances and events. Understanding these activities provides valuable insight into community identity and the potential for pro-poor tourism development.

The research was conducted from January to September 2021. Collecting primary data involved doing direct field observations and in-depth interviews with informants. The investigation commenced with desk research and studying material to understand the regional profile of the Braga Area and the Creavill Bandung Community, which runs The Real Braga Tour activities. Initially, researchers collected location-specific data and possible informants through desk research. An interview with the chairman of Creavill Bandung Community was done through the Zoom app to gather information about Creavill Bandung Community and the operations of The Real Braga Tour. The Real Braga Tour is in a location rich in arts, culture, and Sundanese traditions, making it ideal for non-governmental organisations to organise training programmes focused on empowering residents.

The chief of the Creavill Bandung Community contacted the Creavill Bandung Community public relations coordinator and local cadre, who then met with the researchers in the Braga area. The study included interviews with the second and third informants, accompanied by the chairman of the Creavill Bandung group and the local cadre from the Creavill Bandung Community during the observation in Braga. An interview was conducted with the chairman of Creavill Bandung Community, and an interview via WhatsApp video chat was held with the Creavill

Bandung Community coordinator of public relations, which resulted in obtaining further information. The fourth informant selected is the youth organisation located in the Braga area, to get more data throughout the implementation process observation.

Researchers observed the Braga area and participated in The Real Braga Tour's slum tour. Before commencing observations, field researchers contacted previous employees of the community public relations department at Creavill Bandung in January 2021 to seek authorisation to study and interview an informant about the history of slum tourism in the Braga region. Next, the researcher performed direct observation and follow-up in the Braga area after obtaining authorisation and completing a preliminary data analysis on slum tourism. Researchers participated in The Real Braga Tour from February to April 2021, and in May 2021, they conducted in-depth interviews with four informants (Table 1).

A researcher with experience in the tourism business conducted interviews. Each interview lasted between 2 and 3 hours per informant, varying based on the required facts and information. The ongoing study is currently active; the online interview procedure was initiated due to the spread of COVID-19, but all interactions were completed in person. The interview procedure utilised online media, e.g. the internet and social media. The 120-minute interview with the Chairman of Creavill Bandung Community was performed online with 41 open-ended questions. The interview with the Community Relations Division of Creavill Bandung Community was conducted through social media, consisting of 10 open-ended questions. The interview with local cadre lasted 180 minutes and took place in Bandung, with 39 open-ended questions.

Data was gathered through observation, in-depth interviews, and study documentation, which involved taking images at the site and conducting internet searches. The results of the desk research and field observations were categorised into field notes, interview recordings, images of field circumstances and secondary data before the analysis. Field notes were developed as a tool for choosing content to write about to

enhance arguments in research reports and to find common themes.

Data reduction was employed to organise pertinent information from the acquired data. Data reduction aims to streamline and convert field data into a more manageable format for report generation. Information, e.g. interview dates, informant types and characteristics, and research locations have been condensed and organised according to study needs.

The final processed data is presented in different formats e.g. narrative, charts, flow charts, to facilitate the conversion of field observations into a research report. Effective data presentation enhances other readers' comprehension of the research's objectives, goals, and structure. A triangulation approach and validation audits conducted on informants linked to the research focus ensured the study's coherence and validity with actual life situations (Carter et al., 2014).

Results and Findings

Living Conditions in the Braga Area

The study found that poverty and slums in the Braga area result from residents' lack of legal residence. Braga residents are being removed from land owned by the legal landowner who possesses the land certificate. The occupation of the land in the Braga area lacks legality due to the regional government's failure to help or implement a programme to improve the community's welfare, which frequently requires official approval to access aid.

Several residences are shaded from direct sunlight, and other occupants reside in semi-permanent constructions along the riverbanks, leading to substandard living conditions. The distance between dwellings is very close or erratic, and the water quality is low. The issue is worsened by the regular flooding in certain parts of the Braga area during the rainy season because of the absence of water-retaining embankments, leading to an inadequate environmental drainage system.

Tourism has the potential to serve as a catalyst for addressing societal concerns in poverty and in the slums. The Creavill Bandung Community is launching The Real Braga Tour as a component of their tourist efforts. The Real Braga Tours focus on more than just

slum tourism, incorporating educational elements like historical tourism in the Braga area. This activity focuses on education and empowering the community, and the Creavill Bandung Community has not faced persecution or confrontations with individuals from the Braga region or any other groups.

The term 'slum tourism' was integrated into The Real Braga Tour activities, which could potentially lead to disagreements. However, an effective socialisation strategy by all members of the organisation, including the community leader, public relations division, local cadre, and Braga area residents, resulted in a unified positive opinion about the tours. The Creavill Bandung Community's transparency in sharing information about the funds earned from activities, such as The Real Braga Tour, on social media has helped build a strong level of confidence among the people and residents of the Braga area towards this community.

Interviews with local cadres from the Braga area revealed that slum tourism programmes, such as The Real Braga Tour, include participation from disadvantaged groups in the planning and execution process. Less affluent community members are not seen as passive bystanders who watch tourists go by. Participants in The Real Braga Tour are encouraged to engage directly with locals through playing activities with local children. Participants in the tours also conversed briefly with residents whose homes they passed during the trip.

Interviews with the chairman of the youth organisation of the Braga area and residents of the Braga area showed that many less affluent individuals in the area are not eager to engage in self-capacity building activities organised by Creavill Bandung Community. Society tends to be apathetic towards activities that do not offer direct financial rewards. The interviews show that only a few individuals in the Braga area are actively involved in the community empowerment events sponsored by Creavill Bandung Community. However, the small stature of the Community has fostered a solid emotional bond over time, leading to a sense of passion. Local leaders actively participated in the Community of Friends of the Museum of the Asian-African Conference. They backed Creavill Bandung Community in organising the Assisted Village pro-

gramme and community empowerment initiatives, such as setting up the Braga Creative Reading Centre. Before 2020, youth organisations, such as Creavill Bandung Community, which were expected to be influential among young people in the Braga area, were not actively involved in their community. The local Creavill Bandung Community can work with youth organisations to enhance living circumstances in the underprivileged population in the Braga area.

Several efforts were made to engage youth organisations in the empowerment plan, but there usually needed to be more participation. Previous organisations in the management sector, who were challenging to collaborate with and often kept their work programmes confidential, have created the perception that the youth in the Braga area do not have a structured platform to engage actively in their community. Youth organisations, as representatives of the younger age, should showcase how the youth movement can enhance the quality of life for a specific population. Youth organisations in the Braga area should enhance their presence by implementing active management, outreach, and communication methods to improve their public image and relations, especially among young people.

Non-governmental organisations are vital in developing ways to execute community empowerment projects to reduce poverty directly. Creavill Bandung Community fulfils various roles in community empowerment programmes linked with slum tourism, such as:

1. educating on middle-class economy issues for lower-class individuals;
2. aiding destinations in identifying key development areas;
3. advocating for specific communities, particularly addressing critical needs of pre-prosperous communities; and
4. enhancing skills in pre-prosperous communities through community-based organisations.

Populist Competence in Slum Tourism Activities

Creavill Bandung Community has strategically selected a local cadre from among the inhabitants of the

Braga region to speed up the development and execution of the community empowerment initiative in the same area. Local cadre represent Creavill Bandung Community programmes in the Braga area and are the main organisers of all Creavill Bandung Community events there. The interviewed local cadre mentioned that participation in the Creavill Bandung Community can enhance the local environment. Someone with integrity, pride, firm resolve, and significant community links is needed to lead community empowerment initiatives. The Creavill Bandung Community evaluates these traits when choosing their local leaders.

The spirit of change for Creavill Bandung Community and the local cadre is disseminated through diplomatic means, e.g. meeting with the public, youth organisations, and residents of the Braga area to disseminate community empowerment programmes for The Creavill Bandung Community and to discuss and negotiate with community elements so that the needs of the Braga area residents can be accommodated in any existing community empowerment programmes. The enthusiasm of Creavill Bandung Community and the local cadre to improve the environmental quality of the Braga area was warmly welcomed by the chairman of the Braga area youth organisation. The chairman plan to initiate scouting training program for residents of the Braga area in collaboration with the local cadre and the Educator's Club of the Museum of the Asian-African Conference.

Populist competency in the Braga Area is lacking, but the Creavill Bandung Community helps improve it. One of the responsibilities of the local cadre in Creavill Bandung Community is to seek residents' consent to engage in participatory activities to assess the inhabitants' potential and requirements. Braga area was chosen as one of the supported communities following a participatory evaluation. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is a technique used to help Creavill Bandung Community map out regional concerns and possibilities. PRA focuses on thorough assessment by community volunteers in collaboration with community leaders, citizens' representatives, and the youth organisation within a specific timeframe.

With the help of the local cadre, programme volunteers conducted observations alongside intervi-

ews to study the life patterns of the local population. These activities were carried out simultaneously with the validation process for new volunteers by Creavill Bandung Community. For example, during the PRA process, a volunteer teacher from Creavill Bandung Community developed a lesson plan for the Braga Creative Reading House (RUMBA) alongside the other program volunteers. Each volunteer group analyses and shares the findings from their observations and interviews. The session presentations also serve as a platform for the entire community to engage in discussions. Each volunteer group follows the pre-established strategy to identify work programs based on the PRA findings.

The Creavill Bandung Community can utilise PRA to engage with the residents of the Braga area. Communities have a key role in designing empowerment projects for their area, ensuring that the programmes are tailored to address specific needs and have a significant impact. This approach involves analysing the area's requirements, vulnerabilities, and potential, as well as the characteristics of its residents.

Despite its proximity to the tourism hub in the Braga area, the community needs more awareness that developing tourism-related skills can lead to economic opportunities that may improve the lives of underprivileged individuals in the region. Hence, an entity or person is required to showcase the positive aspects and perks of tourism endeavours. This approach also aims to increase awareness and motivate underprivileged communities to leave their comfort zone. Without clear and regular standards, those with lower income will face stagnation as they may perceive a lack of opportunity for self-improvement.

Creavill Bandung Community organises slum tourism through The Real Braga Tour and engages in societal empowerment activities such as establishing RUMBA, providing anti-drug and sexual health counselling, and implementing the One Village One Product—One Village One Brand (OVOP-OVOB) program. Proceeds from selling small food items are donated to the community before the items are sold.

Socio-Political Ability in Slum Tourism Activities

Socio-political capability, characterised by strength and public influence, is crucial for society to advocate for itself and the community. Developing relationships through community education developed the Braga region community's socio-political ability. Enhancing a society's knowledge and skills through education will specifically increase problem-solving abilities and the ability to meet its requirements. Enhancing one's abilities and confidence is crucial for promoting self-reliance (Suharto, 2014).

Partnership is essential for maintaining the continuity of Creavill Bandung Community's work plan due to the community's restricted capacity or means to liaise with individual contributors or companies. Creavill Bandung Community must close this gap to ensure the community can benefit from the work programme. Engaging the community in collaborative activities among community members and external stakeholders will facilitate mutual understanding of issues and develop coordinated solutions. Additionally, engaging with individuals other than the residents will assist them in developing their abilities to initiate and negotiate.

Creavill Bandung Community prioritises the community in the Braga area above all else. Establishing local village empowerment necessitates a society with proficient hard and soft skills mastery. Skills are expected to empower those not yet wealthy and enhance the community's ability to participate in decision-making connected to life. Creavill Bandung Community's training programmes, including English Language Training, Public Speaking Training, and Training Guide, have enhanced the socio-political skills of Braga's citizens. Local officials at the Reading House noted that only a few individuals from the Braga region eagerly signed up for an English language training session. After the programme was promoted indirectly through The Real Braga Tour, more people from the Braga area became interested and engaged in the activity.

A training programme is being conducted for the youth in the Braga Area to integrate them with The Real Braga Tour. This initiative is complemented by Creavill Bandung Community ongoing efforts to build the self-capacity of its volunteers through various

training sessions, conducted individually and in collaboration with other institutions, which focusing on developing lesson plans for instructors. These activities aim to enhance the volunteer's expertise for future educational initiatives within the broader community.

Collaborations between these three groups is pivotal for increasing the socio-political capabilities of the community. By assuming roles as role models, mentors allies, instructors and educators, these groups can drive greater community engagement. According to the Youth Organization Chairman of the Braga Area, current levels of community participation, especially among young people, could be improved. Therefore, strengthening collaboration among these entities will foster more active participation in empowerment activities.

Participatory Competence in Slum Tourism Activities

A prosperous society is a community that possesses and can utilise its power to create opportunities and increase its credibility. The pre-affluent community in the Braga area who wish to develop their full potential and leave their comfort zones still require intensive support and mentoring from institutions or communities such as Creavill Bandung Community for a more focused and measurable improvement programme.

Creavill Bandung Community conducted a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) in which residents of the Braga area actively expressed their desires through vocal participation. The community then utilised aspirations to develop empowerment programmes for society. As there is no role for the community in their self-development or the development of their surrounding environment, no significant change will occur regardless of how hard Creavill Bandung Community works unless the community becomes involved.

To develop formative populist competence, it is essential to gradually transform the thinking patterns of pre-prosperous community members in the Braga area, who typically engage in activities solely for immediate financial gain. Regular socialisation efforts can facilitate this transformation by emphasising the long-term financial and non-financial benefits of participating in community empowerment activities. Cre-

avill Bandung Community must also routinely advertise the benefits of the training programme and how skills already mastered can provide decent jobs and assist citizens' economies in recovering. Having undergone the training, the Creavill Bandung Community has become a key figure in opening distribution channels for a society confused by utilitarianism. Creavill Bandung Community organised the community empowerment programme before fully integrating with The Real Braga Tour activity; both programmes provide long-term economic and civic benefits.

This study examined the effect of empowerment implementation on public participation in slum tourism activities during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. It provides empirical evidence that populist competence, socio-political ability, and community participation are increasing in the Braga area, a hub for slum tourism activities. Local cadres are crucial in implementing community empowerment programmes in slum tourism activities, including the "Real Tour" in developing countries. In the context of slum tourism in developing countries, the term "Real Tour" refers to a type of tour that aims to provide an authentic and immersive experience of local communities, particularly those in economically disadvantaged areas. Unlike traditional tourist experiences that may offer a commercialised view, the Real Tour focuses on presenting a genuine and unfiltered perspective of daily life in slum areas (Lopez, 2020; Prasetyanti, 2015).

In the Braga area, the presence of only one local cadre presents a major challenge for the participatory competence dimension. This limited number has led to reduce effectiveness and impact of the local cadre's role in environmental and slum tourism activities. The small workforce and limited availability of the local cadre restrict the area they can cover and the overall effectiveness of their efforts. The role of the local cadre is crucial in guiding and instilling a positive understanding amongst the populace that tourism-related skills, if acquired and mastered, can increase prosperity. Local cadres also act as diplomatic figures with various stakeholders, e.g. local officials, community leaders, youth organisations, and residents, when disseminating community work programmes and inviting constituents to participate in the planning and

execution of activities. These findings are consistent with the previous slum tourism literature (e.g. Lopez, 2020; Prasetyanti, 2015). Furthermore, the result is also consistent with previous literature on the activities of slum tourism, which is one of the empowerment programmes originated for the community. It has the potential to become a pilot project that demonstrates to the residents the real benefits of how tourism activities are integrated effectively with the community empowerment programme (Marzuki & Khoo, 2016; Frenzel et al., 2015).

Conclusions

The strategy to enhance slum tourism activities is being carried out to boost performance. An empowerment plan should be executed by introducing an informal education programme to enhance the self-assurance of socio-political inhabitants, particularly those with lower incomes. Creating slum tourist activities involves enhancing skills and abilities. Braga Creative Reading House (RUMBA) conducts English language training, public speaking, and counselling training to enhance their approach, which is subsequently utilized to support the implementation operations of The Real Braga Tour.

NGOs engage citizens in learning activities and skill development, as well as directly involving them, as suggested by scholars. The objective is to educate people to realise their capabilities as proficient negotiators and decision-makers for their communities while establishing connections with donors and other external entities. Many citizens still need self-confidence and are hesitant to take the initiative or participate actively in empowerment programmes, which aligns with earlier reports on encouraging poverty eradication. The region's population are hesitant to engage in community empowerment initiatives like slum tourism because they prefer activities that offer immediate individual cash gains. To alter this mindset, NGOs and other organisations involved in slum tourism must provide regular education shift perspective and emphasise that participating in capacity-building programmes leads to more significant long-term benefits. The current limited quality of the local cadre affects the effectiveness of community empowerment

programmes in slum tourism. Therefore, it is essential to conduct both formal and informal activities regularly to enhance public awareness of the advantage of engaging in community empowerment initiatives within slum tourism. Formal and informal activities conducted by NGOs are crucial to combat the stagnant mindset prevalent among many individuals, particularly those in the pre-prosperous socioeconomic group. The participation of stakeholders in community empowerment initiatives organized by NGOs in the Braga area is affected by the engagement of local leaders in informing and establishing communication with stakeholders.

The results of the Participatory Rural Assessments (PRA) impact the development of community empowerment programmes in the Braga region. Slum tourism is a form of community empowerment activity that emerges from PRA. Teaching English language training, public speaking, and mentoring can boost poor people's self-confidence. Improving residents' negotiation and decision-making skills is influenced by their level of direct involvement in activities with external parties. Both talents are necessary to develop the self-reliance and resilience of the local community. However, the locals' low self-confidence impedes their engagement in community empowerment programmes in the Braga area. The lack of personal financial incentives in current community empowerment initiatives has also resulted in residents expressing a lack of enthusiasm in engaging in these activities. Regular training provided by local leaders and Creavill Bandung Community on the range of benefits, in both financial and non-financial terms, of active citizen involvement can change citizens' attitudes towards the possibility of improving well-being through community empowerment initiatives in the travel and tourism sector.

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Analysis of Almaty's Restaurant Reviews through Topic Modelling

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This research investigates customers' reviews of the restaurant sector in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Although Kazakhstan offers unique foods, beverages, and establishments, few studies have investigated customers' reviews of the restaurant business. Hence, this is a pioneering study examining problems and concerns of the restaurant sector in the eyes of customers in Almaty, Kazakhstan by implementing big data analysis. The scraped dataset from the TripAdvisor website contains more than 13,000 restaurant reviews in different languages between 2010 through 2023. Generally, English and Russian are the two dominant languages used in reviews in Almaty. Text mining techniques of topic modelling and sentiment analysis are applied in order to derive and understand the main focuses, problems, and concerns of restaurant customers. To do this the collected data between 2010–2023 is split into two roughly

equal datasets that cover the periods between 2010–2017 and 2018–2023, respectively. It is revealed that while restaurant customers were less satisfied with the service process, the most positive reviews, written in both English and Russian, were obtained for the topic 'Atmosphere and Events'. Considering the service process as a holistic process, analysing the conditions affecting good service delivery and making improvements will urge restaurant customers to form positive opinions. This study provides an opportunity for managerial, operational, and marketing departments in Almaty to improve the restaurant business in the eyes of customers. Since no precise information about the themes of the restaurants is available on the restaurant pages, no thematic distinction could be provided.

Keywords: restaurant, online reviews, text mining, topic modelling, Almaty, Kazakhstan



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Introduction

Attracting a variety of customers and generating high revenue is a core factor for the food and beverage industry (Andersson et al., 2017; Jia, 2020). Restaurants aim to attract the attention of customers by offering high-quality services, a wide range of menus, and affordable prices. Customers with positive opinions are not only known as a factor in increasing the popularity of restaurants but also in boosting revenues. Furthermore, restaurant managers should conduct internal activities and raise the awareness of staff in order to deal with several different types of manageable problems posed by customers (Kukanja & Planinc, 2023). However, it is not an easy task to understand the tendencies of customers' opinions and complaints (Jia, 2020; Ryu et al., 2012). Restaurant customers may be influenced by many different factors such as service quality, diner motivation, interaction with staff, and other related factors. Hence, the literature has put much effort into evaluating and mitigating these factors in order to improve the satisfaction of the customers.

In previous efforts, tools such as DINESERV (Stevens et al., 1995) and SERVQUAL (Hansen, 2014; Lee & Hing, 1995) were developed to evaluate meal service quality. These kinds of tools might help in understanding the satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels of restaurant customers. Although such previous efforts have existed, detection of the satisfaction level of

restaurant customers is not a completely known and investigated area. Due to the development in internet technologies worldwide, customers can express their general opinions about the places that they visit and/or the services experienced. Thus, sharing opinions on media platforms about products and services has increased tremendously (Nilashi et al., 2021; Renganathan & Upadhya, 2021; Kukanja & Planinc, 2023, Sedmak et al., 2023). The terminology Word of Mouth (WOM), referring to the transfer of information between two persons face-to-face, is converted to the transfer of information over the internet and called electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) (Kim & Hwang, 2022). eWOM is a way for customers to share their positive or negative experiences with other customers and business owners. It is a critical communication method between customers for intangible products and services provided by restaurants. For this reason, many customers may be influenced by other customers' reviews via eWOM, and it is therefore currently a common behaviour to review customer opinions before deciding to visit any place (Gao et al., 2018).

Within this concept, a study measuring the effects of online reviews on purchasing restaurant services showed that online reviews with high ratings led to the highest trust perceptions (Park et al., 2021). However, expectations of customers also differ in terms of nationality, location, cultural behaviours, etc. To illu-

strate, research aimed at understanding the satisfaction and needs of Eastern and Western travellers as hotel guests was conducted (Sann & Lai, 2023). Reviews of 2,965 Western and 1,035 Eastern customers from 47 different countries were obtained from TripAdvisor for hotels in Cambodia. This research revealed that there was a difference in perceptions of service experience among Western and Eastern travellers according to the results of topic modelling. Similarly, there exist some other studies that performed similar research regarding customers from South Korea (Sutherland et al., 2020) and three other European countries, namely France, Germany, and Italy (Jia, 2020).

However, there exists a limited number of studies concerning the countries in Central Asia, which are Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. In a recent study, the authors collected 8,210 restaurant reviews in the Uzbek language and performed sentiment analysis on this data (Matlatipov et al., 2022). In another study, a questionnaire was applied to 60 guests of a restaurant in Almaty, Kazakhstan, from which the authors aimed to identify the service quality perceptions of customers (Kahl et al., 2019). Nevertheless, a customer-reviewed-based analysis of the restaurant sector in Kazakhstan has yet not been conducted.

To fill this gap in the literature, this study aims to analyse the tendencies of restaurant customers in Almaty, Kazakhstan based on analysis of textual online reviews. To do so, restaurant reviews written in English and Russian were gathered from TripAdvisor in the Almaty region of Kazakhstan, which constitutes most of the restaurant reviews in this region. Then, topic modelling and sentiment analysis were implemented together in order to extract the main focuses and concerns of restaurant customers.

In this study, the following research questions were examined:

1. What are the most common themes expressed in customer reviews of restaurants in Almaty, Kazakhstan?
2. What are the key factors that customers are mostly satisfied and dissatisfied with in restaurants in Almaty, Kazakhstan?

3. Is there any difference in tendencies about the main focuses of customer reviews in terms of language and periods?

The rest of the article is outlined as follows: The second section presents the literature review, the third section is allocated to the methodology that briefly describes topic modelling and sentiment analysis, the fourth section presents the results of the conducted research.

Literature Review

WOM and eWOM in Hospitality

WOM is an intrinsic mode that allows consumers/customers to share their opinions and judgments related to the characteristics of products or services (Lu et al., 2013; Nilashi et al., 2021; Bader et al., 2023). These shared opinions can affect other customers' behaviours either positively or negatively concerning products and services that they consider buying. Due to the swift spread of the internet worldwide, online platforms were quickly developed in order to provide a communication means for customers to share their opinions, so WOM easily transformed into eWOM and has emerged rapidly (Moliner-Velázquez et al., 2019; Nieto-García et al., 2017; Nilashi et al., 2021). While WOM includes face-to-face communication and interaction, eWOM relies on online platforms (Nilashi et al., 2021; Zhou et al., 2020; Şormaz & Ruoss, 2023).

A study aiming to understand the usage of the internet for the selection of restaurants showed that restaurant selection by a tourist mostly relies on recommendations of friends and family rather than advertisements or guidebooks (Litvin et al., 2005). According to the results of a study, feedback from eWOM generates valuable informative resources together with experience from purchases and customer perception (Lee, 2013; Nilashi et al., 2021). Note that managers of hospitality services can allocate more resources to improve the level of eWOM:

Gehrels and Kristanto (2006) suggested that eWOM is an effective mechanism for marketing in culinary restaurants in more than 60 Dutch culinary restaurants. A direct relationship between eWOM and the quality of restaurant services always exists. Hen-

ce, restaurant managers should invest in producing better eWOM.

A survey on eWOM containing 323 people indicated that eWOM content is directly associated with the restaurant atmosphere and overall quality of food (Bangsawan et al., 2017). In another study, Kim aimed to determine the underlying concepts that lead customers to provide eWOM (Kim, 2017). According to the survey results, three main components that motivate the spread of experience on the Internet are company-focused, self-focused, and others-focused concepts, respectively. However, the research's results verify that serious consumers mostly distribute negative experiences and consumers having negative experiences tend to negatively influence business organizations through eWOM.

The Effect of Customers' Online Reviews on Restaurant Selection

Online review tools or platforms are frequently utilized by consumers to communicate with other potential customers, where they share their experiences about specific products or services (Nilashi et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2019). Considering a result of a survey performed in 2017, 97% of customers take into account online reviews for their decisions on their purchases (Wang et al., 2019). There exist accessible online reviews for various products and services such as restaurants, hotels, etc. (Kim et al., 2016). The number of visits and positive reviews can show the reputation and popularity of the restaurants and the probable demand for products. Both customer reviews and reviews of experienced editors or professionals are essential types of reviews on websites (Zhang et al., 2010).

Generally, online review platforms include customer-generated ratings and textual reviews. However, reviews left by professional evaluators for restaurant services are different from those left by regular customers and these two types of reviews may not reflect the same tendency for consumers. Zhang et al. (2010) evaluated the reviews generated by both customers and professionals for restaurant services. According to the results, there is a positive association between the volume of online customer reviews and the popularity of restaurants but there is an inverse relation-

ship between the number of professional reviews and customers who tend to review a restaurant.

Online reviews seem to be the main data source that affects customers' decisions about purchases (Ahmad & Sun, 2018). In this relevant study analysing customers' restaurant selections, 180,000 customer reviews on an online platform were examined. The main factors affecting the decision of customers were people's preferences, customer expectations regarding expenses, and the restaurant's popularity. Results showed that the platform could guess the customers' potential preferences with the help of their previous consumers' behaviours and recommend reviews from customers with identical preferences (Zhang et al., 2018).

The Quality Assessment of Food and Beverages in Restaurants through eWOM

The quality of food is considered an important factor for loyalty of customers/consumers (Nilashi et al., 2021). Online reviews produced by other consumers are trustworthy sources that help consumers assess the quality of foods. According to the findings of a study, restaurant service quality is the most focused part of eWOM communication (Jeong & Jang, 2011). Furthermore, a study undertaken in Slovenia claims that physical evidence such as the cleanliness of a restaurant is the highest-rated 7P indicator for both restaurant managers and customers after a pandemic period (Kukanja, 2022). In Korea, a survey performed among 218 restaurant patrons indicates that there is a positive correlation between satisfaction level and loyalty of consumers and probable revisits (Lee et al., 2005). There exist many studies in the literature focusing on eWOM communication for evaluating the quality of restaurants worldwide (Nilashi et al., 2021). However, there are almost no studies to assess the restaurant business in the eyes of customers in Central Asia, especially Kazakhstan. There also exist few studies that achieved face-to-face communication for determining the satisfaction levels of tourists in Kazakhstan (Kahl et al., 2019; Tagmanov & Ulema, 2023).

Methodology

The main aim of the study is to analyse textual reviews of restaurant customers in Almaty, Kazakhstan based on conducting topic modelling and sentiment analysis. Topic modelling is a type of statistical modelling that employs unsupervised machine learning approaches to group data into a pre-defined number of topics and put similar customer reviews into the same cluster. It functions as a clustering approach that can put relevant words into the same cluster. So, users' reviews in the form of texts will be put into topics to understand the main concerns of restaurant customers in Almaty. There exist several methods used for extracting topics in topic modelling, such as Non-negative Matrix Factorization (NMF) (Obadimu et al., 2019) and latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) (Blei et al., 2003). In this study, the NMF method is used for extracting topics when reviews of restaurant customers are collected. On the other hand, sentiment analysis aims to infer the polarity of textual reviews/documents that show a document's or a sentence's emotional structure and its level such as positive, neutral, or negative. VADER method is one of the examples to sentiment analysis tools which uses a kind of lexicon and some rules. To reveal the sentiment of the collected data, the VADER method is used to understand the polarities of each sentiment (Hutto & Gilbert, 2014).

Topic Modelling with Non-Negative Matrix Factorization (NMF)

The logic behind NMF is that it works on TF-IDF (term frequency-inverse document frequency) weighted data by breaking down a matrix into two lower-ranking matrices (Obadimu et al., 2019). The NMF decomposes its input into a product of a terms-topics matrix and a topics-documents matrix (Chen et al., 2019). Note that it is necessary to apply some pre-processing steps to textual data in order to obtain TF-IDF-weighted data. These steps generally include lowercase conversion, stemming/lemmatization, whitespace removal, etc. Then, textual data is transformed into numeric form by implementing a bag-of-words approach and vector space model (Uysal & Gunal, 2014). When converting textual data to numeric form, TF-IDF weighting is generally applied.

Sentiment Analysis with the VADER Method

Sentiment analysis extracts emotional tone from text data. The emotional tone may be positive, negative, or neutral in most cases. There exist many different methodologies that focus on this task. The VADER tool is a method developed for sentiment analysis and is a kind of lexicon and rule-based approach (Hutto & Gilbert, 2014). Lexicon-based sentiment analysis is known as a popular technique for extracting the emotional polarity of text and relies on predefined dictionaries of words associated with different emotional tones, namely, positive, negative, and neutral.

Results

In this part, the data collection methodology is presented initially and the pre-processing steps applied to raw text data (customer reviews) are explained. Then, the results of the experiments (topic modelling and sentiment analysis) are presented.

The Collection and Pre-processing of the Data

Text data is obtained from the TripAdvisor platform. This platform houses a huge amount of text data for restaurants, hotels, and accommodations. The consumers/customers share their previous experiences via the reviews. The processing and collection of the data was accomplished via a customized web crawler.

The collected data is composed of restaurant reviews in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Note that only reviews in English and Russian are considered since these two languages are the most dominant ones in this region. The constructed dataset contains 4,652 and 8,556 restaurant reviews in English and Russian, respectively. Furthermore, translations of Russian reviews into English are conducted in order to process data in the experiments. Restaurants with five or more reviews were included in the study, so data from more than 400 restaurants were collected. The number of total restaurant reviews was 13,208. In Table 1, the distribution of all data by year is presented. As some reviews do not include the date of visit, the year field is marked as 'UNK'. Note that the reviews whose year field was marked as 'UNK' were not used in experiments.

Similarly, in Tables 2 and 3, the number of reviews in English and Russian are presented. Note that the

Table 1 Distribution of all Restaurant Reviews of Almaty by Years

Year	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	UNK
Count	354	659	724	809	2,464	1,840	1,739	1,777	1,281	677	333	141	46	4	354

Table 2 Distribution of Restaurant Reviews of Almaty in the English Language by Years

Year	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	UNK
Count	188	135	110	164	714	685	689	667	515	241	215	112	38	4	175

Table 3 Distribution of Restaurant Reviews of Almaty in the Russian Language by Years

Year	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	UNK
Count	166	524	614	645	1,750	1,155	1,050	1,110	766	436	118	29	8	-	185

number of reviews in Russian is more than the number of reviews in English.

In the pre-processing stage, lemmatization is applied to all review texts. For this purpose, we used English lemmatizer implementation in spaCy (Srinivasa-Desikan, 2018) for processing texts. Lemmatization/stemming is used for grouping words with similar root forms. For example, when the words 'shops' and 'shop' are converted to root forms, both words will be regarded as the same. We preferred using lemmatization instead of stemming. Stemming may also group words into a common form but the constructed words may not be meaningful sometimes. For example, stemming may transform the word 'changing' into the word 'chang' instead of the word 'change'. In this task, we need to produce meaningful lemmas/root forms in order to interpret the results of topic modelling.

After lemmatization, data is fed into the Orange data mining tool (Demšar et al., 2013) and then this tool is used for further data processing and performing experiments, including topic modelling and sentiment analysis.

The Results of Topic Modelling

The Experiments on All Collected Reviews

In Table 4, topics and representative words with their corresponding weights are listed for all collected data. This data contains reviews from 2010–2023 and the reviews are written either in English or Russian. Af-

ter executing the NMF method, each textual review is assigned to specific topics with probabilities. The probability of the specific topic being closer to 1 than the others is regarded as the main topic for a textual review. Namely, whichever of the topic possibilities in a review is greater than the others, that topic is classified as the name of the relevant review. The number of the determined topics is 5 and the topic coherence value is 0.54961. The distribution of topics is also presented in parenthesis next to the topic titles. According to the representative words for each topic, the names of the topics were determined as follows: 'Service Process', 'International Cuisine', 'Menu and Price', 'Atmosphere and Events', and 'Local Cuisine and Meat Varieties'. For example, Table 4 depicts that while words such as 'order', 'waiter', 'table', and 'bring' represent the 'Service Process' topic, words such as 'dish', 'Indian', 'lunch', and 'sushi' represent the 'International Cuisine' topic. Some topics include words with potential positive or negative emotions. For example, the 'Atmosphere and Events' topic includes 'great' and 'thank', representing positive emotions.

Next, sentiment analysis is applied to customer reviews in order to obtain user satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels, respectively. Figure 1 depicts that the most positive reviews are obtained for the topic 'Atmosphere and Events'. The topic with the second greatest number of positive reviews is 'International Cuisine'. However, the ratio of positive reviews is the lowest in 'Service Process' when compared to the other topics.

Table 4 Topic Modelling Results for all Restaurant Reviews of Almaty

Service Process (0.203187)	International Cuisine (0.225839)	Menu and Price (0.137378)	Atmosphere and Events (0.292146)	Local Cuisine and Meat Varieties (0.141024)
order 0.018883	dish 0.021936	burger 0.055945	great 0.018232	meat 0.047938
waiter 0.016676	Indian 0.017027	steak 0.024697	atmosphere 0.016418	horse 0.026414
table 0.016468	lunch 0.014979	pizza 0.021731	thank 0.015879	try 0.022401
bring 0.01525	sushi 0.012717	wine 0.019461	excellent 0.01577	local 0.019399
wait 0.012999	salad 0.012493	Italian 0.017526	cuisine 0.014612	steak 0.018717
minute 0.012858	soup 0.012023	nice 0.016453	place 0.014594	Kazakh 0.01791
time 0.012816	chicken 0.011887	good 0.015866	music 0.014562	English 0.016684
establishment 0.011297	taste 0.010719	price 0.010951	staff 0.014237	Kazakhstan 0.015256
leave 0.009792	order 0.010422	meal 0.010248	Georgian 0.014044	traditional 0.014534
order 0.018883	sauce 0.009015	pasta 0.010048	evening 0.013333	Asian 0.013194

It seems that the customers are not satisfied with the service process, unlike the other topics.

A similar analysis is performed for different periods in the second part of the experiment. To pay attention to reviews collected in different periods, the collected data is partitioned into two periods to understand whether there exist any similarities or differences between topic names and sentiments of these topics and to reveal the tendency according to the dates of the reviews. To do this, two periods, 2010–2017

and 2018–2023, are constructed by considering almost an equal number of the data.

In Table 5, topics and associated words with their corresponding weights are listed for all collected data covering the period of 2010–2017. The number of the determined topics is 5 and the topic coherence score is 0.48441. According to the associated words for each topic, the names of the topics are as follows: ‘Service Process’, ‘International Cuisine’, ‘Menu and Price’, ‘Atmosphere and Fine Dining’, and ‘Local Cuisine and Beverage’. Three topics are the same as the ones ob-

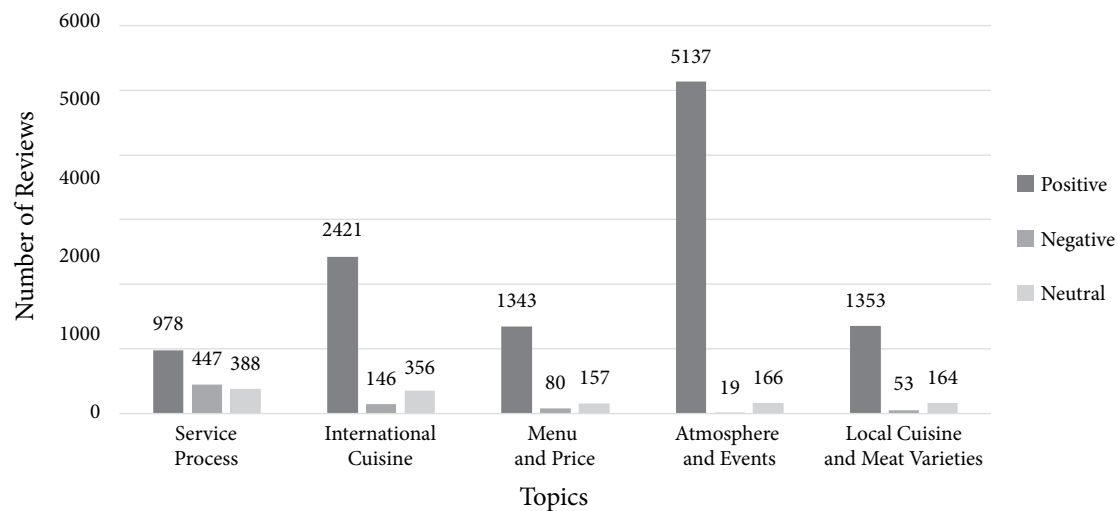


Figure 1 Distribution of Sentiments According to the Topics for all Restaurant Reviews

Table 5 Topic Modelling Results for Restaurant Reviews of Almaty for the 2010–2017 Period

Service Process (0.206667)		International Cuisine (0.208924)		Menu and Price (0.254688)		Atmosphere and Fine Dining (0.212642)		Local Cuisine and Beverage (0.116619)	
waiter	0.017597	dish	0.018017	Russian	0.020186	steak	0.028722	beer	0.047295
table	0.014618	Georgian	0.015669	menu	0.016378	burger	0.023934	pub	0.036709
child	0.013256	soup	0.01434	English	0.01632	breakfast	0.021366	meat	0.024112
time	0.012305	Indian	0.014162	food	0.01541	place	0.019467	horse	0.019094
order	0.011404	order	0.013814	great	0.014096	good	0.014834	bar	0.010905
bring	0.010947	sushi	0.012977	good	0.012662	café	0.0142	drink	0.010869
pizza	0.010575	kebab	0.012095	nice	0.012483	coffee	0.012782	local	0.010851
wait	0.010038	salad	0.011162	local	0.010312	nice	0.012139	meal	0.01048
minute	0.009585	chicken	0.010983	price	0.00988	atmosphere	0.011945	brew	0.010299
leave	0.008797	spicy	0.010139	Kazakh	0.009633	Italian	0.01104	good	0.010019

tained previously using the whole data set. However, ‘Fine Dining’ and ‘Beverage’ emerge as new topics for the 2010–2017 period.

Then, sentiment analysis is applied to customer reviews in order to obtain user satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels for data covering 2010–2017 for the determined topics. Figure 2 depicts that the positive reviews are attained for the topic ‘Menu and Price’ for 2010–2017, unlike results obtained for all data. The topic with the next most positive reviews is ‘Atmosphere and Fine Dining’. However, similarly, the ratio of posi-

tive reviews is the lowest for the topic ‘Service Process’ when compared to the others.

In Table 6, topics and associated words with their corresponding weights are listed for all collected data covering the 2018–2023 period. The number of the determined topics is 5 and the topic coherence score is 0.53467. According to the associated words for each topic, the names of the topics are as follows: ‘Service Process’, ‘International Cuisine’, ‘Menu’, ‘Atmosphere and Fine Dining’, and ‘Bars and Pubs’. Two topics are the same as the ones previously obtained from the

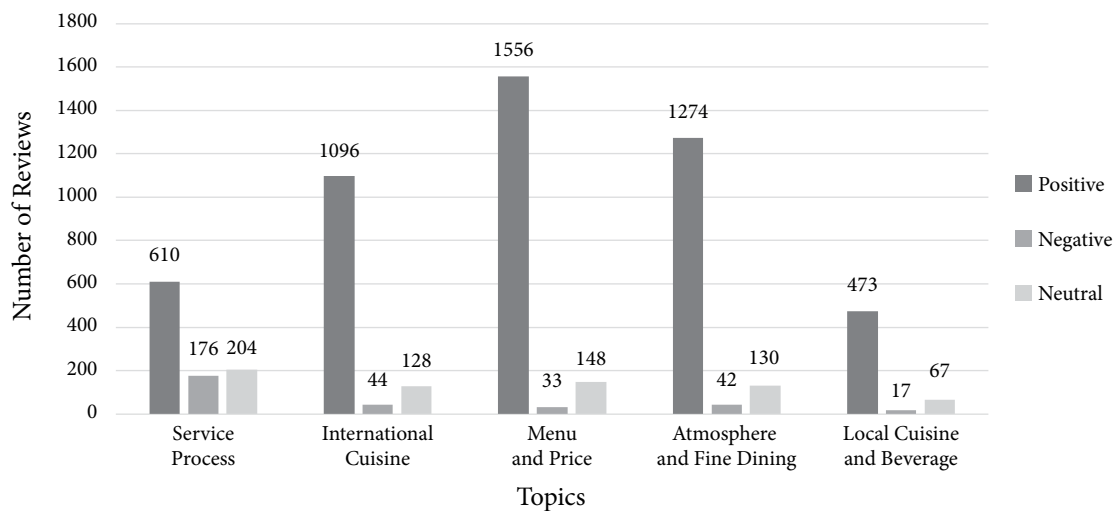


Figure 2 Distribution of Sentiments According to the Topics in the 2010–2017 Period

Table 6 Topic Modelling Results for Restaurant Reviews of Almaty for the 2018–2023 Period

Service Process (0.178847)		International Cuisine Menu (0.105638)			Atmosphere and Fine Dining (0.302881)			Bars and Pubs (0.237687)	
order	0.023792	sushi	0.059421	meat	0.026222	burger	0.027413	Beer	0.023976
bring	0.01852	eat	0.017981	salad	0.018429	great	0.023288	pub	0.015315
waiter	0.015896	minute	0.017283	steak	0.017738	wine	0.02282	dish	0.014893
table	0.015803	wait	0.016303	eat	0.016717	excellent	0.02099	menu	0.012778
establishment	0.015586	order	0.016218	dish	0.016124	place	0.017896	table	0.011955
minute	0.01518	pizza	0.014649	order	0.015828	recommend	0.016013	check	0.011742
time	0.015025	roll	0.013482	make	0.012289	delicious	0.015748	good	0.01127
wait	0.014898	food	0.011216	cook	0.010999	good	0.014899	nice	0.011172
bad	0.012729	delivery	0.01035	breakfast	0.010927	wonderful	0.014143	waiter	0.010646
hour	0.012309	hour	0.010061	coffee	0.010894	atmosphere	0.013904	music	0.009967

whole data set. However, ‘Fine Dining’ and ‘Bars and Pubs’ are obtained for the 2018–2023 period. It seems that customers frequently tend to provide reviews for issues like fine dining, bars, and pubs in addition to the other topics for the 2018–2023 period.

Next, sentiment analysis is applied to customer reviews in order to obtain user satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels for data covering 2018–2023. Figure 3 depicts that the most positive reviews are obtained for the topic ‘Atmosphere and Fine Dining’ for 2018–2023. This finding is similar to the previous results obtained

from all data. The topic with the next most positive reviews is ‘Bars and Pubs’. However, similarly, the ratio of positive reviews is the lowest in ‘Service Process’ when compared to the other topics.

The Experiments on English-Language Reviews

In Table 7, topics and relevant words with their corresponding weights are listed for only English reviews from 2010–2023. Note that the NMF method is used for topic modelling. The number of the determined topics is 5 and the topic coherence score is 0.48873.

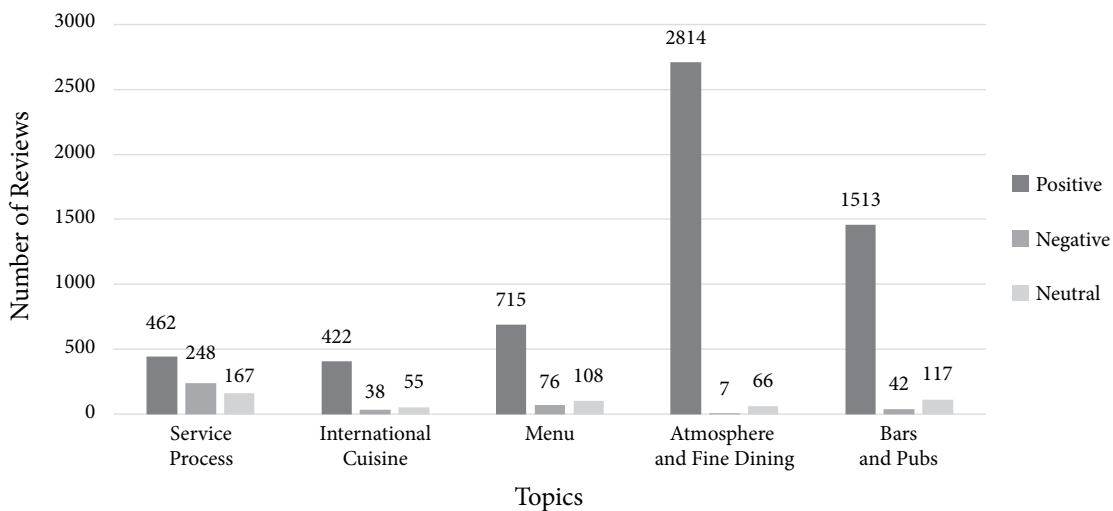


Figure 3 Distribution of Sentiments According to the Topics in the 2018–2023 Period

Table 7 Topic Modelling Results for Restaurant Reviews of Almaty in English

Service Process (0.179359)	Local Cuisine and Meat Varieties (0.135074)	Ethnic Food Varieties (0.186836)	Breakfast and Snacks (0.249554)	Quality of Food and Beverage (0.248719)
waiter 0.02074	burger 0.047103	Indian 0.044815	pizza 0.022374	steak 0.027548
order 0.019432	meat 0.032844	pub 0.019071	Russian 0.015413	beer 0.022857
bill 0.014145	horse 0.018285	authentic 0.014562	menu 0.013875	wine 0.01841
table 0.012937	try 0.013208	visit 0.014138	English 0.013137	price 0.014057
wait 0.012575	Asian 0.012382	excellent 0.013388	breakfast 0.011817	good 0.012462
minute 0.010667	fry 0.011757	food 0.013069	coffee 0.011603	place 0.012034
arrive 0.010457	traditional 0.011637	local 0.012426	make 0.010139	service 0.010686
leave 0.010419	sauce 0.011452	great 0.012273	experience 0.009928	great 0.010473
time 0.010288	central 0.010834	place 0.011475	staff 0.009649	high 0.009986
bring 0.009473	lamb 0.010804	try 0.010835	Turkish 0.009608	nice 0.009771

The distribution of topics is also presented in parenthesis next to the topic titles. According to the representative words for each topic, the titles of the topics are as follows: 'Service Process', 'Local Cuisine and Meat Varieties', 'Ethnic Food Varieties', 'Breakfast and Snacks', and 'Quality of Food and Beverage'. For example, while words such as 'waiter', 'order', 'bill', and 'table' represents the 'Service Process' topic, words such as 'burger', 'meat', and 'horse' represents 'Local Cuisine and Meat Varieties' topic. Some topics include words with potentially positive or negative emotions. For example, the 'Quality of Food and Beverage' topic

includes 'good' and 'great', representing positive emotions.

Then, sentiment analysis is applied to customer reviews in order to obtain user satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels. Figure 4 depicts that the most positive reviews are obtained for the topic 'Quality of Food and Beverage'. The topic with the next most positive reviews is 'Breakfast and Snacks'. However, the ratio of positive reviews is the lowest for 'Service Process' when compared to the other topics. It seems that the customers are less satisfied with the service process, unlike the other topics.

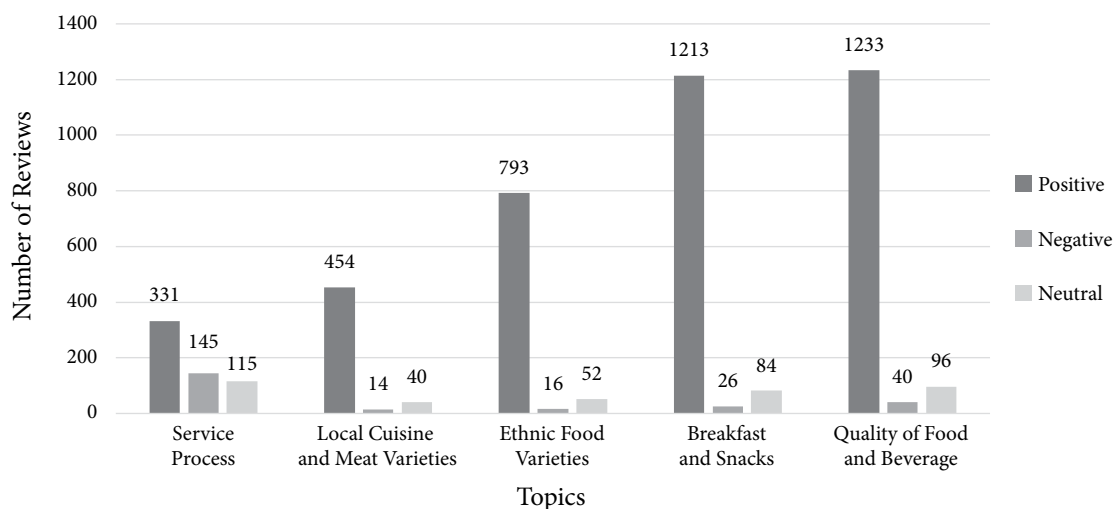


Figure 4 Distribution of Sentiments According to the Topics for Restaurant Reviews in English

Table 8 Topic Modelling Results for Restaurant Reviews of Almaty in English for the 2010–2017 Period

Service Process (0.181268)	Local Cuisine and Meat Varieties (0.181381)	Ethnic Food Varieties (0.179478)	Fine Dining (0.22373)	Regional Cuisine (0.233702)
order 0.018545	burger 0.031145	door 0.0135182	pub 0.0280774	Indian 0.022768
pizza 0.018325	meat 0.020041	shashlik 0.0134266	steak 0.0234481	time 0.01373
waiter 0.016414	horse 0.017039	Turkish 0.0125129	English 0.0139542	visit 0.013608
table 0.014705	local 0.012152	beer 0.011709	nice 0.0130075	meal 0.013601
dish 0.01211	well 0.011141	Chinese 0.0111444	wine 0.0120582	traditional 0.010765
bill 0.011563	Kazakh 0.010996	great 0.0110179	sushi 0.0116791	Georgian 0.010395
soup 0.010018	try 0.010994	table 0.0100663	Italian 0.0110945	order 0.010316
wait 0.009684	menu 0.010919	place 0.00989791	good 0.0106863	food 0.009824
give 0.009522	Russian 0.010258	cafe 0.0097946	night 0.00946928	bit 0.009723
bad 0.009449	floor 0.009878	brew 0.00961037	staff 0.00918334	tea 0.009389

A similar analysis is performed for different periods in the second part of the experiments. To have almost the same number of reviews for different periods, the collected data is segmented into two periods, which are 2010–2017 and 2018–2023, respectively, for the English reviews.

In Table 8, topics and associated words with their corresponding weights are listed for the collected data in English covering the 2010–2017 period. The number of the determined topics is 5 and the topic coherence score is 0.37413. According to the relevant words for each topic, the names of the topics are as follows:

‘Service Process’, ‘Local Cuisine and Meat Varieties’, ‘Ethnic Food Varieties’, ‘Fine Dining’, and ‘Regional Cuisine’. Three topics are the same as the ones obtained from all data. However, the topics ‘Fine Dining’ and ‘Regional cuisine’ are obtained for the 2010–2017 period, unlike all data in English.

Then, sentiment analysis is applied to customer reviews in order to obtain user satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels. Figure 5 depicts that positive reviews were obtained for the topic ‘Regional Cuisine’ for the 2010–2017 period, unlike all data in English. The succeeding topic in terms of positive reviews is ‘Fine

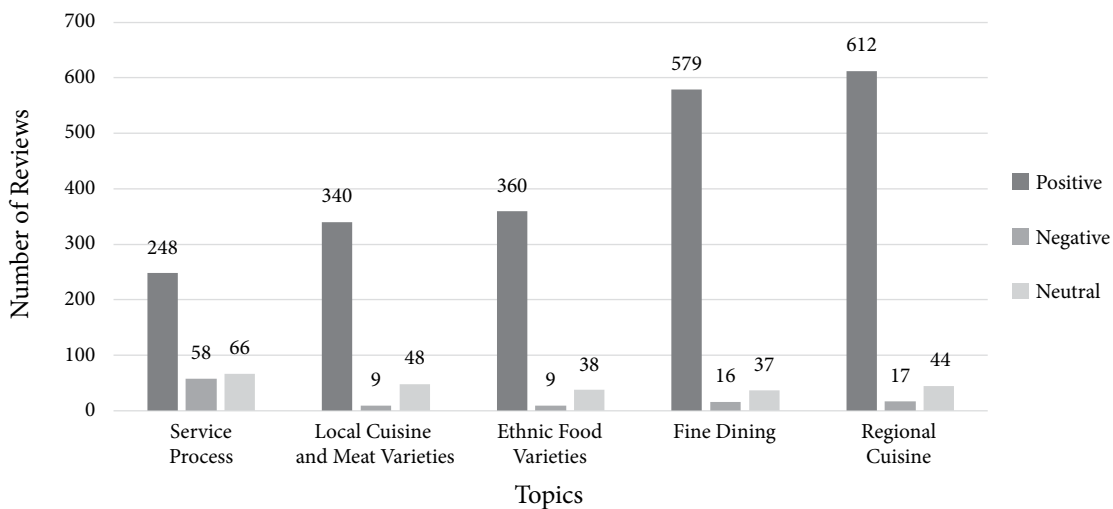


Figure 5 Distribution of Sentiments According to the Topics for Restaurant Reviews in English for the 2010–2017 Period

Table 9 Topic Modelling Results for Restaurant Reviews of Almaty in English for the 2018–2023 Period

Service Process (0.158042)		Local Cuisine and Meat Varieties (0.202183)		Ethnic Food Varieties (0.160219)		Fine Dining (0.193919)		Quality Assessment (0.285267)	
waiter	0.027456	burger	0.026965	beer	0.023036	coffee	0.031833	English	0.014342
order	0.016426	meat	0.019622	Indian	0.020918	steak	0.025716	great	0.014292
arrive	0.014097	try	0.01473	breakfast	0.013221	wine	0.01734	menu	0.012898
experience	0.013555	sauce	0.013172	see	0.012414	meat	0.016892	dish	0.010154
table	0.013128	horse	0.01087	order	0.011682	Turkish	0.011948	visit	0.009641
dish	0.0126	think	0.009505	back	0.011269	service	0.010727	find	0.009592
could	0.011603	perfect	0.008785	craft	0.010677	place	0.009893	local	0.009079
main	0.011351	attentive	0.007983	eat	0.010643	bill	0.008874	café	0.008923
another	0.011165	beef	0.007946	Georgian	0.009678	nice	0.008637	food	0.008887
wait	0.011031	fry	0.00793	something	0.009013	selection	0.008607	real	0.008697

Dining’. However, similarly, the ratio of positive reviews is the lowest in ‘Service Process’ when compared to other topics.

In Table 9, topics and relevant words with their corresponding weights are listed for all collected data covering the 2018–2023 period. The number of the determined topics is 5 and the topic coherence score is 0.48364. The names of the topics are presented as follows: ‘Service Process’, ‘Local Cuisine and Meat Varieties’, ‘Ethnic Food Varieties’, ‘Fine Dining’, and ‘Quality Assessment’. Three topics are the same as the previous ones obtained from all data. However, ‘Fine

Dining’ and ‘Quality Assessment’ are obtained for the 2018–2023 period. It seems that customers frequently tend to provide reviews for issues like fine dining and quality assessment in addition to the other topics for the 2018–2023 period.

Next, sentiment analysis is utilized in customer reviews to attain user satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels. Figure 6 depicts that the most positive reviews are obtained for the topic ‘Quality Assessment’ for 2018–2023. This situation is similar to the results obtained from all data. The succeeding topic in terms of positive reviews is ‘Fine Dining’. However, similarly,

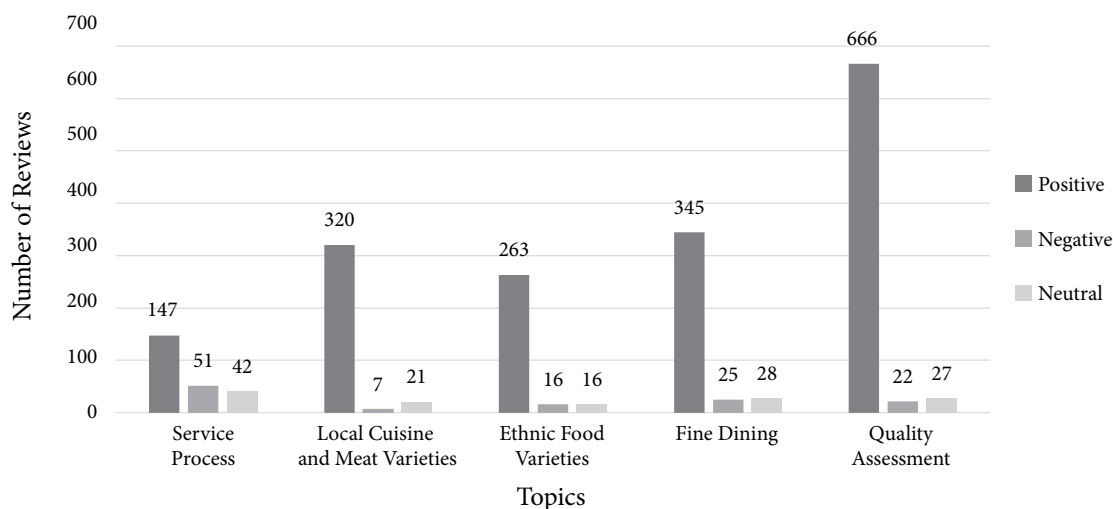


Figure 6 Distribution of Sentiments According to the Topics for Restaurant Reviews in English for the 2018–2023 Period

Table 10 Topic Modelling Results for Restaurant Reviews of Almaty in Russian

Service Process (0.186961)		Menu and Price (0.185447)		Quality of Food and Beverage (0.227884)		Atmosphere and Events (0.227053)		Pubs and Bars (0.172228)	
order	0.030365	lunch	0.020732	meat	0.022452	music	0.025723	pizza	0.025293
bring	0.017497	dish	0.017804	wine	0.021437	great	0.02301	beer	0.024864
minute	0.016994	national	0.016955	steak	0.018911	birthday	0.022436	pub	0.014624
wait	0.016898	tenge	0.016424	staff	0.015293	friend	0.021633	eat	0.013588
waiter	0.015679	pilaf	0.015771	cozy	0.014441	thank	0.018513	well	0.012809
time	0.014833	cuisine	0.013696	delicious	0.014306	evening	0.017766	establishment	0.012039
table	0.014656	large	0.01231	excellent	0.013794	atmosphere	0.01685	drink	0.011371
hour	0.013494	portion	0.01212	place	0.013627	live	0.01607	taste	0.010492
call	0.013075	price	0.012068	recommend	0.012956	celebrate	0.014484	cheese	0.009936
administrator	0.011674	Kazakh	0.011821	friendly	0.012925	good	0.014162	bar	0.009739

the ratio of positive reviews is the lowest in ‘Service Process’ when compared with other topics.

The Experiments on Russian-Language Reviews

In Table 10, topics and relevant words with their corresponding weights are listed for only collected data in Russian reviews from 2010–2023. Note that the topic model applies the NMF methodology. The number of the determined topics is 5 and the topic coherence score is 0.54403. The distribution of topics is also presented in parenthesis next to the topic titles. The names of the parents were determined as follows: ‘Ser-

vice Process’, ‘Menu and Price’, ‘Quality of Food and Beverage’, ‘Atmosphere and Events’, and ‘Pubs and Bars’. For example, while words such as ‘order’, ‘bring’, ‘minute’, and ‘wait’ represents the ‘Service Process’ topic, words such as ‘lunch’, ‘dish’, ‘national’, and ‘tenge’ represents the ‘Menu and Price’ topic. Some topics include words with potential positive or negative emotions. For example, the ‘Quality of Food and Beverage’ topic includes ‘delicious’ and ‘excellent’, representing positive emotions.

Then, sentiment analysis is implemented in customer reviews to attain user satisfaction and dissatis-

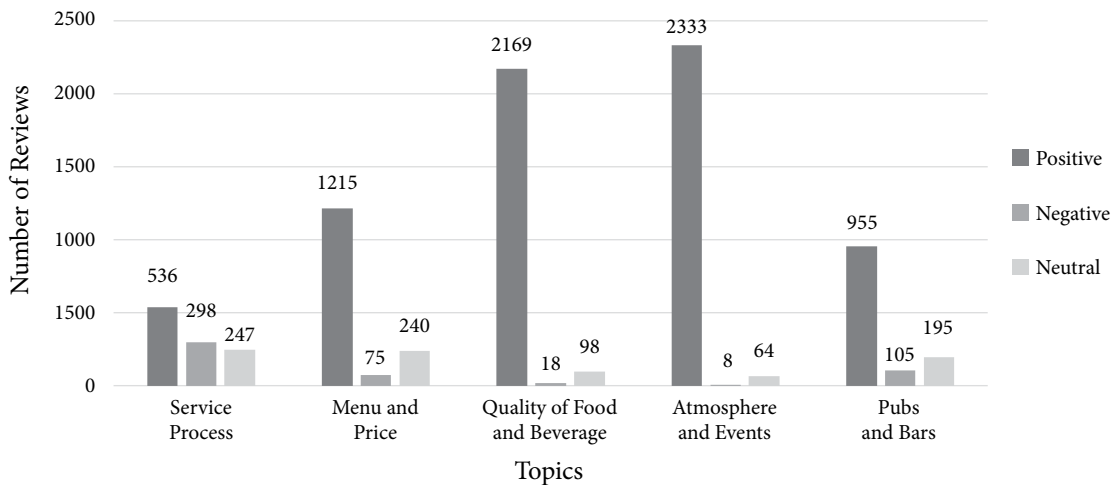


Figure 7 Distribution of Sentiments According to the Topics for all Restaurant Reviews in Russian

Table 11 Topic Modelling Results for Restaurant Reviews of Almaty in Russian for the 2010–2017 Period

Service Process (0.178379)		Menu and Price (0.238516)		International Cuisine (0.226082)		Events and Fast Food (0.17945)		Fine Dining (0.177186)	
order	0.017476	lunch	0.022901	kebab	0.023835	child	0.02828	beer	0.036484
table	0.017034	breakfast	0.022792	Georgian	0.01871	family	0.014992	burger	0.018807
waiter	0.014771	business	0.016587	cuisine	0.015467	pizza	0.012372	steak	0.015341
minute	0.014674	place	0.013339	try	0.01335	waiter	0.011441	wine	0.014986
bring	0.013689	coffee	0.012466	meat	0.013028	guest	0.011037	bar	0.013871
time	0.012841	atmosphere	0.01192	tasty	0.012651	staff	0.010784	good	0.010539
wait	0.011438	great	0.011861	delicious	0.011466	salad	0.010238	selection	0.010438
hour	0.009954	delicious	0.011595	lamb	0.01126	time	0.010229	order	0.009816
call	0.009864	price	0.010958	shish	0.011247	birthday	0.009464	drink	0.00969
two	0.009207	beautiful	0.010861	recommend	0.011027	establishment	0.009076	taste	0.009676

faction levels. Figure 7 depicts that the most positive reviews are obtained for the topic ‘Atmosphere and Events’. The succeeding topic with the most positive reviews is ‘Quality of Food and Beverage’. However, the ratio of positive reviews is the lowest in ‘Service Process’ when compared to the other topics. It seems that customers are less satisfied with the service process, unlike the other topics.

A similar analysis is performed for different periods in the second part of the experiments. To have

almost the same number of reviews for different periods, the collected data is partitioned into two periods, which are 2010–2017 and 2018–2023, respectively, for the Russian reviews.

In Table 11, topics and relevant words with their corresponding weights are listed for the collected data in Russian between 2010–2017. The number of the determined topics is 5 and the topic coherence value is 0.49995. According to the relevant words for each topic, the names of the topics are determined as fol-

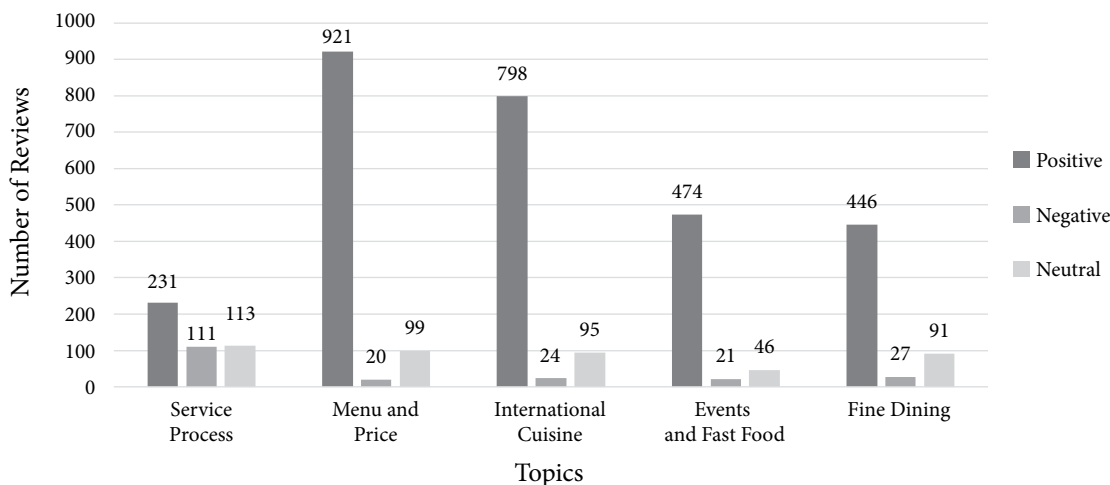


Figure 8. Distribution of Sentiments According to the Topics for Restaurant Reviews in Russian for the 2010–2017 Period

Table 12 Topic Modelling Results for Restaurant Reviews of Almaty in Russian for the 2018–2023 Period

Service Process (0.169675)		Pubs and Bars (0.122826)		Fast Food (0.180599)		Atmosphere and Events (0.269965)		Fine Dining (0.256556)	
order	0.025895	beer	0.043868	pizza	0.022364	thank	0.024644	wine	0.02419
bring	0.018928	order	0.027726	burger	0.016051	pub	0.019771	excellent	0.018212
table	0.014866	wait	0.025863	taste	0.01583	check	0.017989	high	0.018178
dish	0.013485	minute	0.02466	salad	0.015798	birthday	0.016797	table	0.018071
waiter	0.012946	sit	0.021403	sauce	0.013213	evening	0.015846	family	0.017325
call	0.011983	drink	0.018922	cheese	0.013115	great	0.014338	price	0.016867
leave	0.010441	time	0.017984	meat	0.01271	atmosphere	0.014318	level	0.015922
time	0.010342	long	0.017147	fish	0.011458	music	0.014122	steak	0.015592
minute	0.009526	sushi	0.015793	try	0.01145	cuisine	0.012749	place	0.014938
guest	0.009367	hour	0.014725	eat	0.011079	wonderful	0.012211	tasty	0.014377

lows: ‘Service Process’, ‘Menu and Price’, ‘International Cuisine’, ‘Events and Fast Food’, and ‘Fine Dining’. Two topics are the same as the previous ones attained from all data. However, the topics ‘International Cuisine’, ‘Fast Food’, and ‘Fine Dining’ are obtained for the 2010–2017 period, unlike all data in Russian.

Then, sentiment analysis is employed in customer reviews to attain user satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels. Figure 8 depicts that the most positive reviews are obtained for the topic ‘Menu and Price’ for 2010–

2017, unlike all data in Russian. The succeeding topic with the next most positive reviews is ‘International Cuisine’. However, similarly, the ratio of positive reviews is the lowest in ‘Service Process’ when compared to the other topics.

In Table 12, topics and relevant words with their corresponding weights are listed for the gathered dataset in Russian between 2018–2023. The number of the determined topics is 5 and the topic coherence value is 0.56388. The names of the topics were

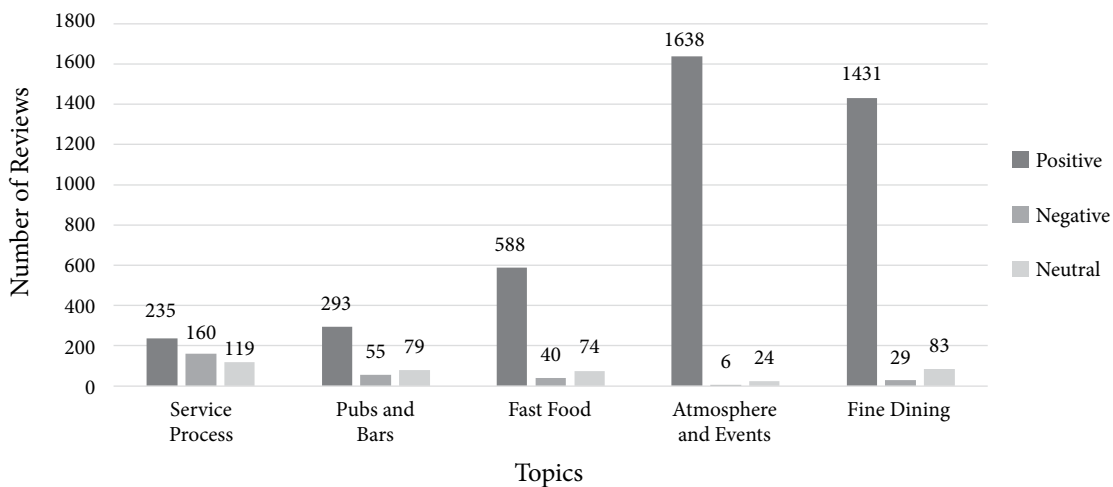


Figure 9 Distribution of Sentiments According to the Topics for Restaurant Reviews in Russian for the 2018–2023 Period

determined as follows: 'Service Process', 'Pubs and Bars', 'Fast Food', 'Atmosphere and Events', and 'Fine Dining'. Three topics are the same as the previous ones obtained from all data. However, 'Fast Food' and 'Fine Dining' are obtained between 2018–2023. It seems that customers frequently tend to review issues like fast food and fine dining in addition to the other topics for the 2018–2023 period.

Then, sentiment analysis is applied to customer reviews to obtain user satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels. Figure 9 depicts that the most positive reviews are obtained for the topic 'Atmosphere and Events' for 2018–2023. This situation is similar to the previous results obtained from all data. The succeeding topic with the most positive reviews is 'Fine Dining'. However, the ratio of positive reviews is the lowest for the topic 'Service Process' when compared to the others.

Discussion

The number of analyses regarding customers' restaurant reviews is very limited, not only in Central Asian states but also in Kazakhstan. This study is one of the pioneering efforts to understand customers' main focuses and potential problems in the restaurant sector in the metropolitan city of Almaty, Kazakhstan, and provides substantial insights into the restaurant business. A dataset is constructed by using a customized web crawler from TripAdvisor. A comprehensive analysis was performed with more than 13,000 reviews in two different languages, namely, English and Russian, which are the two dominant languages used by customers when they provide opinions and complaints on TripAdvisor. The text data includes reviews from 2010–2023. After pre-processing unstructured text data, topic modelling and sentiment analyses are applied to derive insights based on different languages and periods.

Customers are generally less satisfied with service processes in the restaurants in Almaty; for the whole dataset, the ratio of positive reviews is the lowest for 'Service Process' when compared to the other topics. For all English and Russian reviews, the most positive reviews are obtained for the topics 'Atmosphere and Events' and 'Quality of Food and Beverage'. Thus, it is claimed that 'Atmosphere and Events' is an impor-

tant and attractive topic for the restaurant sector in Almaty.

For all data between 2010–2017, the most positive reviews are obtained for the topic 'Menu and Price'. The most positive reviews are obtained for the topics 'Regional Cuisine' and 'Menu and Price' when both the English and Russian languages are under consideration. It can be said that 'Menu and Price' is an important and attractive topic for the restaurant sector in Almaty.

For all data between 2018–2013, the most positive reviews are obtained for the topic 'Atmosphere and Fine Dining'. The most positive reviews are obtained for the topics 'Quality Assessment' and 'Atmosphere and Events' when both English and Russian are considered. Thus, the common keyword 'Atmosphere' is an important and attractive topic for the restaurant sector in Almaty.

This study reveals the underlying concepts that customers focused on in the restaurant sector in Almaty, Kazakhstan between 2010 and 2023, covering both English and Russian texts. While satisfaction levels for the topic 'menu and price' were the highest between the 2010–2017 period, those for the topic 'atmosphere and fine dining' were highest for the 2018–2023 time period for customers. Therefore, it can be said that there is a difference in tendencies concerning satisfaction levels of restaurant customers for various topics during different periods. Similar changes in tendencies were observed for customers leaving reviews in both English and Russian.

Conclusion and Implications

The performance of all types of restaurants serving food and beverages in a decorated ambiance with personnel has been gauged by web-based technology and the results shared for potential and current customers via various platforms. For example, TripAdvisor shares a great chunk of reviews collected from restaurants in any city around the globe. This technology has started to transform the industry, just as is happening in the hotel industry. Hence, the issues of potential areas to develop, and reengineering the business and attracting more customers, especially more tourists, can be detected easily based on deep analyses of the

texts, and better solutions can be found to improve the restaurant business. Since the written reviews are remarks, opinions, criticisms, feelings, and compliments, they include sentiments that can be used for analysing the fundamentals of the restaurant business.

In this research, the reviews from TripAdvisor are used, which accommodates the largest number of reviews when compared to other platforms for restaurants in Almaty, Kazakhstan between 2010–2023. The data is split into 2 almost equally represented data sets, so almost equal numbers of reviews are analysed to detect how the topics of the restaurant sector have changed during the whole period. Since Central Asian countries joined the global community after the Soviet Union collapsed, how Kazakhstan's important city Almaty has changed its status and improved in the restaurant business needs to be understood to develop a better food and beverage service for customers and tourists.

Even though the food and beverage sector has issues expressed by customers and tourists, especially in service quality due to personnel incompetency, it has several advantages such as the variety of meals, tasty foods, and meats, accommodating international cuisines, providing an enriched atmosphere and events, and serving customers and tourists in their languages.

Theoretical Implications

With the increase in digital channels, customers can deliver opinions and complaints about products and services that they experience to businesses and other consumers more quickly and directly with Web 2.0 technologies. Thus, the factors that create service quality and customer satisfaction can emerge from different perspectives, and these elements can be examined effectively and efficiently by businesses to segment the market. In this study, the analysis of customers' reviews for restaurants in Almaty provides substantial insights that can be broadly beneficial to the restaurant business and the tourism industry.

In general, the profile of customer satisfaction is seen as a unified structure. Along with the service marketing mix elements, physical evidence, people, and process elements were revealed as the factors

that most affect customer satisfaction in restaurants in Almaty. In addition to the menu, product features, product differences, price, and themes of the restaurants, the atmosphere offered by the restaurants, and the activities they organize are important components that contribute to people's positive reviews. Additionally, different customer segments are also distinctly affected by these factors. However, defects that occur in the service process negatively affect the satisfaction of consumers. The findings can be easily expanded to other Central Asian states that want to develop a robust tourism industry, since they have very similar characteristics.

Practical Implications

This study presents an opportunity to help managerial, operational, and marketing managers when decisions and strategies are developed for the management of restaurants in Almaty, since a very limited number of studies exist. When looking at the general characteristics of the restaurants in Almaty, positive impressions were left in the reviews mostly about the atmosphere, the variety of products, reasonable prices, and menus. Other metropolitan cities can also benefit from these findings as they probably have similar issues.

In addition, the problems and deficiencies that usually occur in the service process appear as a factor that negatively affects the satisfaction of consumers. In this context, considering the service process as a holistic means of analysing the situations that affect good service delivery and making improvements in the relevant area will enable customers to revisit and promote to others in their reviews for the restaurants in Almaty.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

One of the main problems experienced in the topic modelling carried out is the formation of semantic integrity of the words that form the topic clusters. For this reason, the pre-processing phase and the topic modelling algorithm were tried many times to ensure the semantic integrity of the topics, and it is a time-consuming step at this stage to reveal meaningful topics from the obtained dataset. Furthermore, since no

precise information about the themes of the restaurants is available on the restaurant pages, no thematic distinction could be added. On the other hand, most of the reviews are built from English and Russian. Since a dataset other than these languages could not be used, topic modelling could not contain other languages.

For future studies and research, reviews of other travel platforms about restaurants or other food and beverage establishments in the Almaty region can be used to make comparisons of these platforms. Furthermore, restaurant reviews in other Kazakh regions can be studied to reveal which topics are addressed more by tourists and how these topics are distributed positively and negatively. Also, other text mining and natural language processing algorithms and machine learning methods can be used to obtain different information and perspectives about the restaurant business.

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Camera to Compass: Unravelling the Impact of Travel Vlogs on Tourist Visit Intentions

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Travel vlogs are considered as video forms of online review, usually generated by tourists and mainly shared on social media platforms. They provide a visual and personal perspective of a destination, inspiring and guiding viewers on where to go and what to do. This study identified the impact of travel vlog videos on tourists' visit intentions by collecting 231 responses from Bangladeshi residents with a structured, self-administered survey. The findings indicated that tourists perceive travel vlog videos as valuable and trustworthy based on the quality of travel vlog information and vlogger credibility, which subsequently influence the tourists to adopt the vlog information and their visit intention. Theoretically, this study contributes by extending the Information Adoption Model (IAM) with information trust and tourists' visit intention. Practically, the present study provides several implications for tourism stakeholders, specifically destination marketing organisations (DMOs). Finally, the study concludes by indicating several limitations and recommendations for future research.

Keywords: travel vlog, information quality, vlogger credibility, information usefulness, information trust, visit intentions, destination marketing organisation

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Introduction

A vlog is a type of online review that enables users to share their perceptions and opinions with other potential tourists regarding products and services they have experienced or consumed (Chen & Dermawan, 2020). Vlogs have emerged as a significant information source for marketers and tourists regarding products and services. Online consumer reviews (OCRs) are vital in tourism and hospitality. Tourism is an intan-

gible product, and tourists often struggle to evaluate the quality and characteristics of intangible products before experiencing them (Liu et al., 2022). Reviews shared in vlogs assist the consumer in evaluating the intangible product before purchasing. Living in the era of technology has significantly altered the tourist experience. Tourists frequently depend on information from user-generated platforms to determine travel-related choices and develop beliefs and perceptions

about destinations and tourism amenities. According to research, 59.4% of American travellers utilise online reviews about accommodations, tourist destinations, and tourist activities to assist them in planning their tours (Alhemimah, 2019). In consequence, the abundance of information accessible on the internet has increased issues concerning trustworthiness.

Moreover, travel vlog videos have emerged as an information source for tourists as they serve as contemporary storytelling, bridging geographical distances and cultural disparities (Xu et al., 2021). Unlike traditional travel guides or documentaries, vlogs offer a personalised perspective, enabling viewers to connect with destinations more intimately. Tourists increasingly use travel vlog reviews to schedule their tours rather than content generated by the marketer (Silaban et al., 2022; Islam et al., 2024). Most travel vlogs are created based on individuals' travel experiences. Vlogs are simple and convenient for developing effective interaction and have a strong appeal and high trust. This communication method through video has significantly transformed the usual way of transmitting tourism information, which influences the behaviour of prospective tourists (Lin et al., 2022).

Furthermore, tourists have the opportunity to access a plethora of news, reviews, and advertisements through various online platforms. Their behaviour is also affected by inaccurate or misleading advertisements, reviews, and information. Rubin (2022) revealed that tourists become highly distrustful of advertising when encountering deceptive advertisements. Reviewers may influence tourists' decisions by presenting deceptive, inaccurate, or fraudulent advertisements and information: TripAdvisor acknowledges that 93% of hotels are involved in posting fake reviews (Longwell, 2021).

Therefore, credibility becomes even more significant in planning tours, given the intangible character of tourist products and the comparatively high financial and intellectual risks involved with travel decisions (Zhu et al., 2022). Due to this, more tourists are turning to user-generated content (UGC) websites for travel-related information submitted by tourists rather than service providers. Tourists may use user-generated content, such as travel vlogs, to find

the best destinations for food and accommodation, evading inferior products and services and enhancing their decision-making. Thus, it is essential to understand how individuals adopt information from travel vlogs and utilise this to shape their visit intention. The Information Adoption Model (IAM) is a widely utilised theory to comprehend how information is adopted from online platforms. Several studies have investigated the role of information quality, vlogger credibility, and information usefulness in adopting information from travel vlogs (Fileri et al., 2023; Santateresa-Bernat et al., 2023). Information trust is a significant element that impacts tourists' decision-making (Mariani et al., 2019). However, the role of information trust is yet to be studied in the context of travel vlogs and tourist visit intention.

While the influence of travel vlogs on tourists' intention to visit has been studied in the context of several countries (Hu et al., 2024; Zhou et al., 2023), there remains a significant gap in research within the Bangladeshi context. Specifically, there is a lack of studies that integrate both the quality of vlog information and the credibility of vloggers in shaping tourists' visit intention. Therefore, the current study examines the role of vlog information quality and vlogger credibility on Bangladeshi tourists' visit intention with the mediating role of information usefulness, information trust, and information adoption.

Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development Travel Vlog and Information Adoption Model (IAM)

The travel vlog is a popular information source for prospective tourists to plan their trips. It provides the viewers with a virtual experience and plenty of information regarding the destination. Tourists adopt information about the local culture, food, and activities of the destinations from travel vlog videos, which trigger their visit intention. The influence of travel vlogs on consumer visit intention can be explained by the Information Adoption Model (IAM), as it provides a framework for comprehending how people adopt new information and make decisions based on that information. Sussman and Siegal (2003) developed the IAM theory to explain how individuals adopt information and thus change their intentions and behaviours by

integrating four variables: argument quality (AQ), source credibility (SC), information usefulness (IU), and information adoption (IA). Argument quality refers to the persuasive power of arguments in an information message (Bhattacharjee & Sanford, 2006). Source credibility indicates the extent to which information receivers consider an information source reliable (Martínez et al., 2020). Information usefulness refers to the degree to which the receiver perceives the information will assist them when making a better purchase decision (Sussman & Siegal, 2003). Information adoption is how individuals purposely use information (Sirithanaphonchai, 2017). Information Adoption Model theory explains how individuals are persuaded to adopt information from online platforms. Several researches utilised the IAM theory to explain how online information (e.g. e-WoM, online reviews, travel vlogs, and blogs) is adopted by individuals (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Islam et al., 2022).

Information Adoption Model theory has been employed to understand how tourists utilise information from travel vlogs to shape their visit intentions. Argument quality in the context of travel vlogs refers to the persuasiveness and reliability of the information presented in the videos. Viewers are more likely to consider visiting a destination if the arguments presented in the vlogs are compelling and relevant to their interests (Santateresa-Bernat et al., 2023). Source credibility becomes crucial in evaluating the vloggers' or content creators' trustworthiness and expertise. Tourists are more inclined to believe the information provided by vloggers, perceived as knowledgeable and experienced in travel (Filiari et al., 2023). Information usefulness pertains to the practical value and relevance of the information conveyed in travel vlogs. Viewers assess the usefulness of the content based on its ability to meet their specific travel needs (Islam et al., 2024; Silaban et al., 2022; Santateresa-Bernat et al., 2023). Useful information enhances viewers' understanding of a destination and can positively influence their intentions to visit. Information adoption represents the extent to which individuals incorporate the information from travel vlogs into their decision-making process regarding tourism activities. The degree of information adoption is influenced by the

perceived quality, credibility, and usefulness of the information presented in the vlogs (Filiari et al., 2023; Santateresa-Bernat et al., 2023).

Moreover, IAM revealed that AQ and SC influence individuals to adopt information with the mediating role of IU. However, previous studies mentioned that IAM does not indicate individual behavioural intention (Erkan & Evans, 2016). Information trust (IT) also influences individuals to adopt information, which was not examined in the IAM model (Chang et al., 2013). The IAM model has been utilised in many studies on consumer behavioural intention in tourism. Numerous studies employed argument quality as information quality, and source credibility as information provider credibility (vlogger credibility) (Liu & Ji, 2018). As a result, the current study has adopted the IAM to comprehend better how tourists adopt information from online tourist review platforms such as travel vlogs to determine the tourists' visit intention.

Information Quality (IQ), Information Usefulness (IU), and Information Trust (IT)

The information quality in travel reviews is essential, as it can strongly influence an individual's travel decisions and experiences (Islam et al., 2022). Tourists rely on travel reviews as an essential information source when planning a trip. Therefore, inaccurate or misleading information in travel reviews can result in a negative experience. Information quality is the overall quality of online reviews posted and shared by the consumer (Dedeoglu, 2019). It also indicates the persuasive power of information in an online review (Bhattacharjee & Sanford, 2006). When tourists have need of decision-making requirements and behavioural assistance, online review quality assists them. Santateresa-Bernat et al. (2023) mentioned that IQ directly impacts the usefulness of travel reviews to prospective tourists. Accurate and reliable information assists tourists in making informed decisions and effectively planning their travels. In contrast, low-quality information in travel reviews can be deceptive or inadequate, resulting in a lack of usefulness (Kim, 2021). Jiang et al. (2021) highlighted that high-quality information provides comprehensive, accurate,

timely, and efficient content to assist tourists in understanding the product and service quality.

Tourists' perception that utilising information will improve their performance is referred to as perceived information usefulness (Talwar et al., 2020), which aligns with the IAM theory. According to Sussman and Siegal (2003), information quality and information source credibility are primary predictors of IU. The IAM theory posits that the consumer's assessment of review information quality and credibility influences their perceived usefulness. Tourists perceive the information as useful based on the depth and comprehensiveness of the information (Ho et al., 2015). Cheung (2014) stated that when the readers and viewers of online reviews perceive the review information as genuine and accurate, they consider it useful. In addition, Hussain et al. (2017) indicated that information relevancy, accuracy, timeliness, and comprehensiveness are significantly related to online review usefulness. Moreover, Horrich et al. (2024) investigated the relationship between information quality and information usefulness within the context of social media information adoption, revealing a positive correlation.

Information trust refers to the tourists' perceptions of the originality and reliability of the information on online review platforms (Borchert & Heisel, 2022). Song et al. (2021) mentioned that information trust seems to be more connected with tourists' perceptions of online information quality. Cooley and Parks-Yancy (2019) concluded that the quality of information assists tourists in determining its trustworthiness. The degree to which people trust the information they receive is directly impacted by its quality. Information trust is essential in travel reviews because it influences a consumer's decision-making process and confidence in the accuracy of the information conveyed (Coronel Padilla & Smith, 2023), whereas if tourists have doubts about the quality of the review, they will rethink whether to trust and adopt. Previous research findings have consistently demonstrated a positive correlation between information quality and trustworthiness (Alhemimah, 2019). In addition, Jiang et al. (2021) showed that higher levels of information quality lead to increased perceptions of information trustworthiness. Hence, the current study hypothesised that:

H1 *There is a significant and positive relationship between IQ and IU.*

H2 *There is a significant and positive relationship between IQ and IT.*

Vlogger Credibility (VC), Information Usefulness (IU), and Information Trust (IT)

The prospective tourist obtains information from various sources, including watching travel vlogs, before making any travel decision (Ong et al., 2022). The credibility of information sources in online travel reviews is essential for tourists to make decisions, evaluate the accuracy and reliability of the information, develop trust, manage business reputations, and encourage tourists (Filiari et al., 2015). It promotes transparency and ensures that tourists can access reliable and trustworthy resources for shaping their travel experiences. Hence, it is essential to ensure the information source's credibility. In the context of a travel vlog, the vlogger is the source of information. Perceived source credibility comprises two components: perceived source expertise and perceived source trustworthiness (Ismailova et al., 2020). Kang and Namkung (2019) defined source expertise as the knowledge and capability of the sources to deliver the correct information and source trustworthiness as the perceived willingness of the sources to be honest and believable. Sussman and Siegal (2003) stated that source credibility is the information recipients' perception of the trustworthiness and expertise of information providers.

González-Rodríguez et al. (2016) found that reviewers' online reviews are more useful when they come from an expert source, aligning with IAM's emphasis on the importance of source credibility in information adoption. Expertise establishes credibility and encourages viewer belief. Travel vloggers with extensive knowledge and expertise in travelling, exploring destinations, and providing insightful commentary are credible information sources (Le & Hancer, 2021), enhancing the perceived usefulness of their travel reviews, a notion supported by the IAM theory. Consequently, when a consumer perceives the source of the review as trustworthy, they will be more inclined to perceive it as valid, reflecting IAM's emphasis on the relationship between source credibility and informati-

on adoption. Thus, the source's credibility influences the perceived usefulness of a travel review. The relationship between a source's credibility and a review's usefulness depends mainly on trustworthiness, expertise, accuracy, and relevance (Lee & Hong, 2019). Tourists place a higher value on reviews from credible sources because they believe the information provided is accurate, reliable, and relevant to their requirements, thereby increasing the review's usefulness in their travel decision-making. González-Rodríguez et al. (2016) found that in the context of online reviews, perceiving the usefulness of the review information is influenced by the trustworthiness of the review source. Chong et al. (2018) stated that source trustworthiness positively influences perceived information usefulness. In addition, Horrich et al. (2024) examined the relationship between source credibility and information usefulness in the context of social media information adoption, revealing a significant positive correlation.

Perceived trustworthiness refers to the extent of trust and acceptance generated by the review information receivers toward the source (Daowd et al., 2020). Tourists trust the information from a renowned review platform and consider it more trustworthy than information on an anonymous review platform (Lee & Hong, 2019). Ladhari and Michaud (2015) found that hotel review information is perceived as trustworthy if the reviewer is perceived as credible. Muda and Hamzah (2021) found that the review source credibility and the expertise of the vlogger are vital for determining the trustworthiness of online reviews. Trustworthy sources and expert vloggers are recognised for their credibility, in-depth knowledge, transparency, authenticity, and consistency, which impact tourists' belief in the provided information (Maggiore et al., 2022). The perceived trustworthiness of travel reviews is essential to tourists' decision-making process, and their trust depends on the reviews when making travel plans. Chih et al. (2020) stated that the consumer is likelier to trust review information provided by a reviewer with more expertise, experience, abilities, or knowledge. However, Alhemimah (2019) studied the correlation between source credibility and information trust within the realm of online review adoption, revealing a posi-

ve correlation. Hence, the current study hypothesises that:

- H3 *There is a significant and positive relationship between VC and IU.*
 H4 *There is a significant and positive relationship between VC and IT.*

Information Usefulness (IU), Information Trust (IT), Information Adoption (IA), and Tourists' Visit Intention (VI)

Information adoption in the context of online reviews refers to how an individual adopts online review information after thoroughly evaluating the information included in the online review (Hussain et al., 2018). Prior researchers found the usefulness of information to be the primary determinant of information adoption and an individual's behavioural intention (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Sussman & Siegal, 2003), aligning with the IAM perspective. Tourists should review the predicted results before adopting technology or purchasing any product, as depicted in the Theory of Reasoned Action and Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989; Fishbein et al., 1975). Arora and Lata (2020) found that tourists watch online videos on YouTube while deciding whether to visit a destination. If they perceive the videos as applicable, then the possibility of adopting information increases. Furthermore, tourists are more inclined to interact with, evaluate, and employ beneficial travel review information, reflecting the interplay between IAM and tourists' decision-making processes.

Insufficiency of trust has been identified as an obstacle to tourists adopting online reviews (Chang et al., 2013). Information adoption highly depends on trust because when tourists believe the information provided in travel reviews, they establish faith in its accuracy, trustworthiness, and relevance (Su et al., 2022). Their trust in the information provides a strong foundation for them to contemplate adopting and integrating information into their decision-making process. Park et al. (2021) mentioned that online information trust significantly influences tourists' online purchase intention. Prior research has established that perceived trust in information predicts

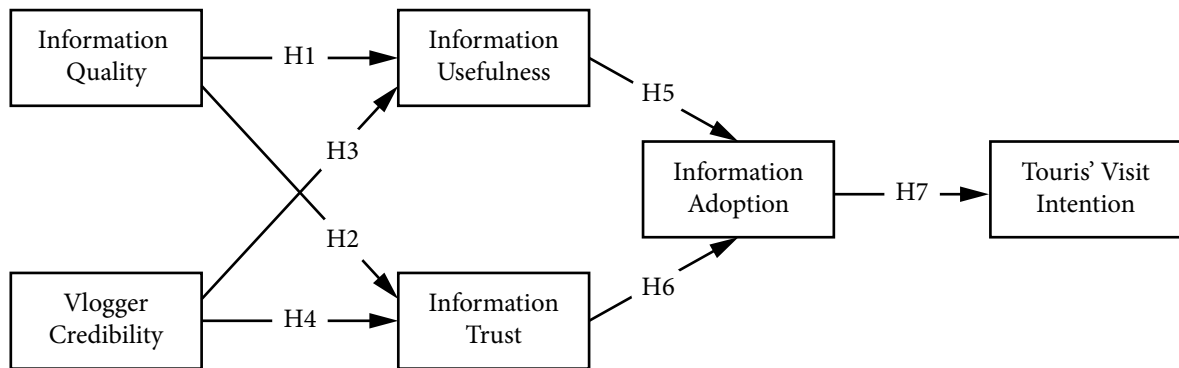


Figure 1 Conceptual Research Framework

information adoption (Fileri et al., 2015). Moreover, Park and Oh (2021) identified information trust as a determinant of information adoption from social media platforms (YouTube). Several studies have found that trust is essential in online behavioural intention and purchase decisions (Lee & Hong, 2019; Park et al., 2021). In addition, Guzzo et al. (2022) provided empirical evidence supporting the notion that the content and sentiment of online reviews strongly influence tourists' intentions to purchase tourism products online. Moreover, Arora and Lata (2020) revealed a significant influence of online reviews on tourists' purchase intentions for tourism products, highlighting the pivotal role of user-generated content in shaping consumer behaviour in the tourism sector. Thus, the current study hypothesised that:

H5 *There is a significant and positive relationship between IU and IA.*

H6 *There is a significant and positive relationship between IT and IA.*

H7 *There is a significant and positive relationship between IA and VI.*

Methodology

The current research was designed as a quantitative, survey-based study due to its nature, aims, and the requirement for a greater sample size. The respondents of this study were Bangladeshi residents familiar with travel vlog videos and with prior experience in leisure tourism. No statistical data is available about the number of people familiar with travel vlog

videos. Hence, the non-probability sampling method was adopted. The purposive sampling technique was employed to collect the data as it assists in collecting data from target respondents. Before starting the survey, three screening questions were asked of the respondents (Q1: Are you currently a resident of Bangladesh? Q2: Are you familiar with travel vlog videos? Q3: Have you participated in leisure tourism activities (both day trips and multiday trips) in the past 12 months?); their positive responses to all the questions led them to participate in the study.

Moreover, the respondents were requested to share the survey link with their peers. Determining sample size has always been an essential and complex element in data collection. A large sample size is generally required for conducting structural equation modelling (SEM); however, it is not yet specified how large a sample is needed (Hair et al., 2021). A previous study suggested using G* Power analysis to estimate the sample size when the research population number is unknown (Memon et al., 2020). According to the G* power analysis, the minimum sample size was estimated at 138.

To collect data, a structured, close-ended, self-administrated questionnaire was utilised, and the measurement items were adapted from the previously published existing literature (see Appendix A). The data were collected through an online questionnaire survey. A 5-point Likert scale was adopted to evaluate the respondents' perceptions in the questionnaire. Two academicians pre-tested the questionnaire, and the pilot study was conducted by collecting responses

from 30 respondents. The current research collected data from 1st October 2023 to 31st December 2023, which made the present study cross-sectional. A total of two hundred and thirty-six responses were collected from online surveys. After screening the data, a total of 231 entries were considered valid for proceeding to the further data analysis. Among 231 respondents, the majority were male (62.3%) and belonged to the age group of 18 to 24 years old (54.5%). Most respondents were either university students or had a university degree (90%). Additionally, most of the respondents had been familiar with travel vlog videos for 2–3 years (44.2%). In terms of travel frequency, 44.59% of respondents claimed they had travelled 2–3 times in the past 12 months. Respondents' demographic information is indicated in Table 1.

Harman's single-factor test was carried out to examine the common method bias (CMB) issue. Consequently, the present research conducted a single-factor test on six constructs (IQ, VC, IU, IT, IA, and VI) and their 31 items. Podsakoff et al. (2003) suggested that CMB occurs in research when the overall variance extracted by one component surpasses 50%. The statistical outcome indicates no common method bias in the present study, as the total variance extracted by one component is 42.638%, which is lower than the suggested cut-off value of 50% (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Data Analysis and Result

Assessing the Measurement Items

Hair et al. (2021) recommended to validate a measurement model. Table 2 represents the results of the reliability and validity of the constructs, and it was assessed through factor loading, Cronbach's alpha (CA), composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). The outcomes revealed that all constructs' CA values were between 0.893 to 0.956, CR values were between 0.921 to 0.966, and each item's factor loading values were between 0.7 to 0.9. Hair et al. (2021) suggested that a CA, CR, and AVE value above 0.7 is accepted. A value of AVE equal to or greater than 0.5 is accepted, and it confirms that the latent variable satisfactorily explains the average variance of its indicators, which is considered sufficient (Henseler et al., 2015; Hair et al., 2021). Therefore, there are no issues

Table 1 Respondents' Demographic Profile

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	87	37.7
	Male	144	62.3
Age	18–24 years	126	54.5
	25–34 years	81	35.1
	35–44 years	19	8.2
	45–54 years	3	1.3
	55 and Above	2	0.9
Level of Education	Secondary	3	1.3
	Higher Secondary	10	4.3
	University	208	90
	Others	10	4.3
Familiar With Travel Vlogs	Less than 2 years	36	15.6
	2–3 years	102	44.2
	4–5 years	49	21.2
	More than 5 Years	44	19.0
Travelling Frequency in the Last 12 Months	Less than 2 times	55	23.81
	2–3 times	103	44.59
	4–5 times	50	21.64
	6 times and above	23	9.96

regarding the constructs' reliability and convergent validity (Hair et al., 2021).

In addition, the discriminant validity was evaluated through the Fornell-Larcker criterion in the current study (see Table 3). The Fornell-Larcker criterion denoted that the square root of the AVE value of a construct should be greater than the inter-correlation values between constructs. (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As indicated in Table 3, the calculated square root of the AVE values was more significant than the construct's intercorrelations with the other constructs in the model, denoting acceptable discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Assessing the Structural Model

Once the measurement model is in place, the validity of the structural model must be evaluated (Hair et al., 2021). Various statistical tests, including the direction coefficient (β), predictive relevance (Q^2), effect size (f^2), and determination coefficient (R^2), are employed to assess the structural model.

The strength of the structural model was evaluated through R^2 value. Hair et al. (2021) categorised

Table 2 Construct Reliability and Validity

Variables	Items	Factor Loading	CA	CR	AVE
IQ	IQ1	0.863	0.933	0.947	0.750
	IQ2	0.904			
	IQ3	0.847			
	IQ4	0.841			
	IQ5	0.872			
	IQ6	0.869			
VC	VC1	0.868	0.893	0.921	0.702
	VC2	0.889			
	VC3	0.880			
	VC4	0.770			
	VC5	0.774			
IU	IU1	0.910	0.948	0.96	0.827
	IU2	0.922			
	IU3	0.896			
	IU4	0.906			
	IU5	0.914			
IT	IT1	0.904	0.956	0.966	0.850
	IT2	0.942			
	IT3	0.948			
	IT4	0.915			
	IT5	0.901			
IA	IA1	0.809	0.898	0.925	0.711
	IA2	0.784			
	IA3	0.881			
	IA4	0.853			
	IA5	0.886			
VI	VI1	0.889	0.921	0.941	0.761
	VI2	0.885			
	VI3	0.879			
	VI4	0.836			
	VI5	0.872			

the model's strengths based on R^2 value as substantial (0.75), moderate (0.50), and weak (0.25). The current study's coefficient of determination (R^2) result indicates that the exogenous variables had a moderate and substantial impact on the endogenous variable (see Table 4). In addition, a Q^2 value of more than zero

Table 3 Discriminant Validity Result

Fornell Larcker Criterion Result						
Constructs	VI	IA	IQ	IT	IU	VC
VI	0.872					
IA	0.792	0.843				
IQ	0.592	0.759	0.866			
IT	0.65	0.832	0.71	0.922		
IU	0.67	0.907	0.772	0.808	0.91	
VC	0.855	0.856	0.764	0.7	0.771	0.838

for an endogenous variable indicates the presence of predictive relevance in the path model, as Hair et al. (2021) recommended. Table 4 indicates that the values are above 0, meaning that the construct with an exogenous role has predictive relevance.

Moreover, the researchers utilised Cohen's recommended f^2 values to identify the relative effect size of a predictor variable on an endogenous variable (Cohen, 2013). In the current study (see Table 5), statistical outcomes indicated that information adoption on tourists' visit intention and information usefulness on information adoption had a high effect. In addition, information trust and vlogger credibility had a small effect on information usefulness. In contrast, the rest of the relationship between predictor and endogenous variables had a medium effect. In addition, the multicollinearity test was evaluated through the inner variance inflation factor (VIF) value. All the inner VIF values in the present study were between 1 to 4.003 (see Table 5). Pallant (2020) suggested that the values of VIF more than 10 and less than 0.1 indicate multicollinearity. The present study has no multicollinearity problem, as all the VIF values are less than 5.

In addition, the present study developed seven hypotheses. The bootstrapping process was conducted to identify path estimation and the relationship between the hypotheses. The t-statistics values range from 3.313 to 18.419, and the path coefficient values range between 0.180 and 0.792 (see Table 5). All the proposed hypotheses have been accepted as all the t statistics were greater than 1.96, and the p values are lower than 0.05 (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 4 Results of Coefficient of Determination (R²) and Predictive Relevance (Q²)

Coefficient of Determination (R ²)			Predictive Relevance (Q ² Value)				
Endogenous Variables	R ²	Magnitude	Endogenous Variables	SSO	SSE	Q ²	Remarks
VI	0.627	Moderate	VI	168.489	89.6	0.468	Yes
IA	0.886	Substantial	IA	158.413	55.628	0.649	Yes
IT	0.564	Moderate	IT	160.856	61.755	0.616	Yes
IU	0.675	Moderate	IU	165.532	68.8	0.584	Yes

Table 5 Result of Hypotheses Test, Effect Size (f²), and Multicollinearity Test

Hypothesised Relationship	Sample Mean	T Statistics	P Values	Hypotheses Test Result	Effect Size (f ²)	f ² Magnitude	Inner VIF
IQ -> IU	0.442	4.495	0.000	Accepted	0.248	Medium	2.404
IQ -> IT	0.42	3.829	0.000	Accepted	0.168	Medium	2.404
VC -> IU	0.432	4.738	0.000	Accepted	0.137	Small	2.404
VC -> IT	0.38	3.641	0.000	Accepted	0.241	Medium	2.404
IU -> IA	0.476	7.114	0.000	Accepted	0.505	High	4.003
IT -> IA	0.18	3.313	0.001	Accepted	0.089	Small	3.193
IA -> VI	0.792	18.419	0.000	Accepted	0.979	High	1.00

Discussion

The present study’s findings revealed that all the developed hypotheses were found to be significant; therefore, the quality of travel vlogs and the credibility of vloggers influence the tourist intention to visit with the mediating role of IU, IT, and IA.

The first hypothesis indicated the association between IQ and IU (H1). The statistical outcome of the current research (*t*-value = 4.495 and *p*-value = 0.000) indicates that IQ has a significantly positive relationship with perceived IU. Similar findings were indicated by other researchers in the field (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Sirithanaphonchai, 2017). Cheng and Ho (2015) identified that tourists perceive the information as useful when the provided online review information is detailed and comprehensive. Travel vlogs and comprehensive information are perceived as more valuable in online-based communication. In addition, the second hypothesis of this study showed the association between IQ and perceived IT (H2). The statistical outcome of the current study (*t*-value = 3.829 and *p*-value = 0.000) reveals that IQ has a significantly

positive relationship with IT, and the previous study also revealed the same findings (Alhemimah, 2019). Song et al. (2021) found that tourists’ perception of information trust in social media is connected with the quality of the information. Tourists perceive social media information as more trustworthy if the information quality is good.

The association between VC and IU was indicated in the third hypothesis (H3). The statistical outcome of the current study (*t*-value = 4.738 and *p*-value = 0.000) illustrates that VC has a significantly positive relationship with IU, and the result is supported by other previous researchers (Silaban et al., 2022; Cheng & Ho, 2015; Filieri et al., 2018). A previous study also found that prospective tourists always determine whether the reviews are helpful and perceive them as more beneficial when experienced reviewers share them (Ismagilova et al., 2020). When tourists consider the review source to be trustworthy, they will be more inclined to perceive that as applicable. González-Rodríguez et al. (2016) found that the review source’s trustworthiness influences the perceived usefulness of

the online review information. Moreover, the association between VC and IT was mentioned in the fourth hypothesis (H4). The statistical outcome of the current study (t -value = 3.641 and p -value = 0.000) reveals that VC has a positive relationship with IT. Previous researchers also indicated a significant relationship between vlogger credibility and information trust (Alhemimah, 2019; Yin & Zhang, 2020). When tourists feel that the information source is trustworthy and shared by an expert reviewer, they are more likely to perceive that review information as credible. Ladhari and Michaud (2015) found that the hotel review information is perceived as reasonable if the reviewer is perceived as trustworthy.

The fifth hypothesis of this study is to determine the association between IU and IA (H5). The statistical outcome of the present study (t -value = 7.114 and p -value = 0.000) shows that IU has a significant and positive relationship with IA, and a similar result was indicated by previous researchers (Sirithanaphonchai, 2017). Arora and Lata (2020) found that if tourists perceive the travel vlog videos on YouTube as useful, the likelihood of adopting the information from those videos will increase. In addition, the sixth hypothesis (H6) of this study has been accepted (t -value = 3.313 and p -value = 0.001); therefore, IT has a positive relationship with IA, and a similar result was indicated by other researchers (Alhemimah, 2019). Filieri et al. (2015) identified IT as a strong predictor of adopting information. When tourists can build trust in the information included in an online review, their intention will be inclined to adopt the information, and similar findings were found by Park and Oh (2021).

The seventh hypothesis of this study (H7) was accepted (t -value = 18.419 and p -value = 0.000); hence, the association between IA and VI was found to be significant, and the current study's findings were confirmed in a previous study (Alhemimah, 2019). Tourists seek assistance by asking questions on online platforms to make the perfect purchase. In addition, Pop et al. (2022) stated that prospective tourists go through the online reviews and comments that experienced tourists share before purchasing tourism products.

The unique socio-cultural landscape and tourism offerings of Bangladesh significantly shape the findin-

gs and implications of this research (Horaira & Devi, 2021). Focusing on Bangladeshi residents is crucial as their perceptions and behaviours are influenced by culturally specific factors. Bangladeshi society's distinct preferences and expectations regarding travel destinations and information sources necessitate understanding how they engage with travel vlogs. Insights gained can inform destination management organizations (DMOs) in Bangladesh, aiding marketing strategies, destination management efforts, and tailored tourism product development. This contextualisation enriches understanding of the dynamics between travel vlog videos, information adoption, and tourists' visit intentions, offering theoretical insights and practical implications for the tourism industry in Bangladesh.

Theoretical Implications

The most significant contribution is developing a comprehensive theoretical model describing how travel vlogs influence tourists' visit intentions in connection to destinations. The present study's theoretical framework extends the IAM theory developed by Sussman and Siegal (2003). In the current study, IQ and VC have acted as the argument quality and source credibility. The IAM theory was extended to IT and VI. IAM describes how an individual is influenced by the information derived from web-based communication. IAM can also be utilised to comprehend how individuals adopt and associate information.

However, it has been found that the IAM does not indicate behavioural intention when explaining how information from an online review is adopted (Erkan & Evans, 2016). Tourists' intention to visit has been added to the current model. The positive relationship observed between information adoption and tourists' intention to visit signifies that tourists' intention is indeed the ultimate behavioural response within the context of this study. The present study has contributed by including tourists' visit intention as the next phase of adopting information through travel vlogs.

Trust is essential in adopting online information, and inadequate trust was recognised as an obstacle to tourists' adoption of online reviews. Moreover, the IAM theory fails to describe information trust issues. A travel and hospitality review platform enables po-

tential tourists to assess the opinions of previous tourists who have used the service. It also helps potential tourists adopt those opinions and develop confidence and trust in that information. In the present study, the IAM theory has been extended with information trust, which mediated the information quality and vlogger credibility with information adoption.

Practical Implications

This study significantly contributes to destination management organizations (DMOs) by describing the influence of travel vlogs on tourists' visit intentions. Tourists' final selection of a specific destination can be predicted by their intention to visit that destination. It was found that travel vlogs influence tourists' intention to visit; hence, DMOs need to pay more attention to online reviews, mainly travel vlogs.

Moreover, the DMOs need to invest in high-quality vlog content as it is crucial to capture potential tourists' attention and interest. Allocating resources to produce visually appealing and informative content authenticates experiences available in Bangladesh. High-quality content positions tourism entities as reliable sources of information and inspiration, enhancing their ability to influence visit intentions. These techniques may significantly enhance the tourists' travel experiences. Vendors in the tourism industry can develop strategies to attract prospective tourists to share their experiences and reviews by generating and posting travel vlog videos on social media platforms. Those strategies will enhance the number of travel vlogs regarding a specific destination. The quickly identified information will likely enhance the tourists' intention to visit a destination.

In addition, travel organisations and destination marketers can collaborate strategically with influential travel vloggers to enhance tourists' visit intentions. These partnerships leverage vloggers' credibility and reach to create compelling content showcasing Bangladesh's unique attractions. Engaging potential tourists on platforms where they seek travel inspiration increases the likelihood of positively influencing their visit intentions. DMOs can generate their travel vlogs to demonstrate their products and services in a visually appealing and informative manner to attract prospecti-

ve tourists. To reach a larger audience and stimulate interest in their products and services, DMOs can also include travel vlogs in their marketing strategies.

Moreover, the current study provides long-term practical implications for DMOs. DMOs can emphasise experiential marketing by providing distinctive and memorable experiences to draw tourists and provide material that can be shared on social media. The emergence of virtual reality and other immersive technologies has allowed DMOs to employ these technologies in their promotional strategies to provide tourists with a more fabulous immersive experience.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Research

The study was conducted to identify the influence of travel vlog information quality and vlogger credibility on tourists' visit intention with the mediating role of information usefulness, trust, and adoption. This study found a significant relation in all the hypotheses. Additionally, the current research makes valuable contributions in both theoretical and practical aspects. Theoretically, the current study extends the IAM theory with information usefulness, information trust, and tourists' visit intention.

This study provides numerous substantial contributions to the existing body of knowledge in academic research, but a few limitations cannot be avoided. Firstly, the current study has been conducted based on 231 respondents. Though the sample size (231) is enough to perform Structural Equation Model (SEM) analysis, a larger sample size could improve the result and make the study more generalisable. Secondly, the present study was cross-sectional, which limits its ability to fully reflect the complex tourists' visit intention based solely on online reviews. It is possible to examine the replication of the existing findings in the research utilising alternative techniques, such as longitudinal design. In addition, the conceptual framework has been mainly validated on Bangladeshi tourists; hence, the results provide only a limited understanding of the perception of Bangladeshi tourists. In addition, the conceptual research framework was only assessed in the tourism industry, specifically in the context of tourists' visit intention. To evaluate the

framework's generalisability and validity in the future, it would be interesting to replicate the framework in other domains of tourism and hospitality.

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Appendix A: Measurement Items of the Variables

Variables	Measurement Items	Source
Vlog Information Quality (IQ)	IQ1 I feel that the information on the travel vlog regarding destinations was accurate.	Alhemimah, 2019; Filieri et al., 2015
	IQ2 I believe that the travel vlog information regarding destination was relevant to meet my needs.	
	IQ3 I perceive that the information on the travel vlog regarding destination was current and updated.	
	IQ4 I feel that the amount of information on the travel vlog regarding destinations was sufficient and detailed.	
	IQ5 I believe that the travel vlog information regarding destinations helped me to evaluate the quality of destination characteristics.	
	IQ6 I perceive that the information on the travel vlog regarding destination has guided my decision to choose a specific destination.	
Vlogger Credibility (VC)	VC1 I believe that the person who made the vlog about that tourist destination was credible.	Filieri et al., 2015; Sutanto & Aprianingsih, 2016
	VC2 I feel that the person who created the vlog about that tourist destination was experienced.	
	VC3 I perceive that the person who made the vlog about that tourist destination was trustworthy.	
	VC4 I believe that the person who made the vlog about that tourist destination was expert.	
	VC5 I perceive that the person who made the vlog about that tourist destination was honest.	
Perceived Information Usefulness (IU)	IU1 I feel that the information on the travel vlog regarding destinations enhanced my online tourist attraction choice effectiveness.	Alhemimah, 2019; Erkan & Evans, 2018
	IU2 I found the travel vlog information on destinations very useful before intending to visit a tourist destination.	
	IU3 I found that the information on the travel vlog regarding destinations was informative.	
	IU4 Using the travel vlog information regarding destinations enables me to accomplish my destination-choosing tasks more quickly.	
	IU5 I found that the information on the travel vlog regarding destinations was very advantageous.	
Perceived Information Trust (IT)	IT1 I feel that the information on the travel vlog regarding destinations is trustworthy.	Alhemimah, 2019; Erkan & Evans, 2018
	IT2 I perceive that the information on the travel vlog regarding destinations is credible.	
	IT3 I feel that the information on the travel vlog regarding destinations is convincing.	
	IT4 I believe that the information on the travel vlog regarding destinations is accurate.	
	IT5 I found that the information on the travel vlog regarding the destination is dependable.	
Information Adoption (IA)	IA1 I believe that the information on the travel vlog regarding destinations made it easier for me to make a destination-choosing decision (e.g. Visit or not to Visit).	Erkan & Evans, 2018; Filieri et al., 2015)
	IA2 I believe that the information on the travel vlog regarding destinations has enhanced my effectiveness in my destination-choosing decision.	
	IA3 The information on the travel vlog regarding destination has motivated me to make the destination-choosing decision.	
	IA4 The last time I watched a travel vlog, I adopted vloggers' recommendations and visited (or declined to visit) that destination.	
	IA5 I would consider watching travel vlog videos on social media for collecting information about the tourist destination.	
Visit Intention (VI)	VI1 After watching a travel vlog video about any destination, my intention to visit that destination becomes high.	Alhemimah, 2019; Sutanto & Aprianingsih, 2016
	VI2 I am willing to visit that destination after watching a travel vlog video about any destination.	
	VI3 In the future, I will choose the destination based on the travel vlog videos on social media.	
	VI4 My likelihood of choosing and visiting a destination based on travel vlog videos is high.	
	VI5 I found travel vlog content has given me good information, and I am willing to visit the suggested destination in the near future	

Application of Soft Systems Methodology Approach to Find Sustainable Gastronomic Solutions in Bali, Indonesia

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The research described spans from December 2022 to September 2023, covering the application of Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) to understand stakeholder interactions and gastronomy tourism elements in Bali, Indonesia, and the subsequent exploration of sustainable gastronomic solutions within this timeframe. The study utilizes a case study approach to investigate the challenges and opportunities of gastronomy tourism development in Bali. Through interviews, document study, and observations, diverse stakeholder perspectives, including those of local communities, tourists, restaurateurs, and government bodies, are captured and modeled. The findings underscore preserving culinary traditions, supporting local businesses, and ensuring environmental sustainability for gastronomy tourism's positive impact. SSM proves effective in promoting inclusive and sustainable practices in gastronomy tourism development. Insights from the case study stress the need for context-specific strategies and engaging diverse stakeholders in decision-making processes. The study advocates for the widespread adoption of SSM in gastronomy tourism initiatives, fostering a harmonious blend of cultural heritage preservation, local economic growth, and ecological sustainability in Bali and similar destinations worldwide. It has value for ongoing discourse regarding the development of sustainable and culturally sensitive gastronomic tourism.

Keywords: Soft Systems Methodology, gastronomy tourism, Balinese cuisine



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Introduction

Gastronomy tourism, a rapidly growing niche within the broader tourism industry, has garnered significant attention in recent years due to its potential for sustainable local development and cultural preservation (Hall, 2008; Sharpley & Telfer, 2016). This paper delves into the complexities of gastronomy tourism develop-

ment in Bali, Indonesia, recognizing the island's rich culinary heritage and its significance as a global tourist destination. Moreover, by blending culinary experiences with cultural heritage, gastronomy tourism offers a unique opportunity to showcase a destination's authentic identity and create meaningful interactions between tourists and local communities (Santich, 2004).

The rise of gastronomy tourism can be attributed to travellers' growing desire to explore authentic flavours and culinary traditions (Long, 2016). Additionally, destinations worldwide have acknowledged the economic benefits of promoting gastronomy tourism, leading to concerted efforts to showcase local food and beverage offerings. However, effective development of gastronomy tourism requires a nuanced understanding of the intricate interplay between culture, heritage, economics, and sustainability (Pipan & Gaćnik, 2021; Razpotnik Visković & Komac, 2021).

Bali, renowned for its cultural richness and natural beauty, has embraced gastronomy tourism as a means to highlight its authentic culinary identity. However, the transition from an agrarian society to a tourism-centric one has brought about profound changes, shaping the island's societal fabric and culinary landscape (Mudana et al., 2021).

The transformation of Bali from an agrarian society to a tourist-oriented one has been profound, a phenomenon catalysed by anthropologists like Clifford Geertz who propagated the notion of Bali as the 'garden of Eden' during the 1970s up until the early 2000s. This period witnessed massive development that reshaped the societal fabric.

Bali, as a province consisting of more than 3,000,000 people, is often considered a remote island despite its significant population density. Geographically, Bali is divided into 8 regencies and 1 capital city, with 51 districts and 565 villages (Pendit, 2001). Each regency/city in Bali contributes its own chapter to the story of Balinese cuisine, preserving age-old traditions while embracing innovation and adaptation (Wijaya et al., 2022). Moreover, the gastronomic richness of Bali show in Table 1.

In exploring the culinary landscape across Bali's eight regencies and its capital city, Denpasar, one embarks on a journey through a mosaic of flavours, each reflecting the distinct character of its locale. From the lush greenery of Tabanan to the bustling streets of Badung, every region contributes its unique ingredients, techniques, and narratives to Bali's gastronomic tapestry. In Tabanan, nestled amidst verdant rice terraces, traditional dishes like *Bebek Betutu* (slow-cooked duck) and *Lawar* (a mixed vegetable salad) are emblematic

of the region's agrarian roots. Here, meals are often prepared with ingredients sourced directly from local farms, celebrating the land's bounty and the farmer's labour. Travelling eastward to Bangli, the landscape shifts to rugged mountains and pristine lakes, influencing a cuisine characterized by hearty soups and grilled meats. Dishes like *Sate Lilit* (minced meat skewers) and *Babi Guling* (suckling pig) reflect the resourcefulness of the highland communities, utilizing every part of the animal in flavourful concoctions. In Gianyar, renowned for its cultural heritage, culinary traditions are deeply intertwined with artistic expression.

Venturing to Klungkung, with its historical significance and coastal charm, seafood takes centre stage in the local cuisine. Fresh catches like *Ikan Bakar* (grilled fish) and *Pepes Ikan* (steamed fish in banana leaves) showcase the bounty of the sea, while subtle spice blends evoke the region's maritime influences. In Karangasem, where the majestic Mount Agung looms large, flavours are as bold and vibrant as the volcanic landscape. Signature dishes such as *Be Siap Mesanten* (chicken in coconut milk) and *Lawar Kacang* (bean salad) are infused with aromatic spices, reflecting the region's fertile soil and rich cultural heritage. The urban hub of Denpasar, bustling with activity, offers a melting pot of culinary influences from across the archipelago. Here, street food stalls and warungs (small eateries) serve up a diverse array of dishes, from *Nasi Campur* (mixed rice) to *Mie Goreng* (fried noodles), catering to the eclectic tastes of locals and visitors alike.

Ubud, which is a tourist destination in Gianyar Regency, was known for the art and richness of the culinary, in 2018 Ubud was proposed as a design prototype by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemendikbud). Following a comprehensive series of evaluations and processes conducted by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Ubud was officially designated as a UNWTO Gastronomy Tourism Project in 2023 (UN Tourism, 2023). This designation signifies a pivotal achievement, highlighting Ubud's rich culinary heritage and its potential as a premier destination for gastronomy tourism. The recognition underscores the strategic importance of Ubud in promoting sustainable and culturally enriching tourism practices. Moreover, by delving into

Table 1 The Cuisine Among Regencies/Cities in Bali

Regency/city	Cuisine	Dish	
Denpasar	Denpasar cuisine can be referred to as 'Pasar Cuisine' or 'Market Cuisine', reflecting its association with the bustling markets and vibrant culinary scene of the capital city.	Nasi Jinggo Nasi Campur Ayam Betutu Nasi Kuning Sate Lembang Botok Peda Bandeng Bumbu Bali Bebek Goreng Bebek Betutu Lempet Lawar Kuwir	Lawar Gurita Gondo Plecing Jukut Ares Klepon Kue Putu Batun Bedil Sambal Embe Sambal Matah Jukut Urap
Gianyar	Gianyar cuisine can be termed 'Royal Cuisine' or 'Heritage Cuisine', highlighting its rich cultural heritage and traditional culinary practices passed down through generations.	Lawar Plek Tipat Kare Ayam Betutu Gianyar Topot	Nasi Tepeng Nasi Tahu Ayam Betutu Urutan
Badung	Badung cuisine can be known as 'Coastal Cuisine' or 'Beachside Cuisine', emphasizing its focus on fresh seafood and flavours influenced by its proximity to the coast.	Berengkes Nyawan Be Pasih Mesambel Matah	Nasi Be Genyol Nasi Lawar Tipat Kalas
Klungkung	Klungkung cuisine can be called 'Palace Cuisine' or 'Royal Court Cuisine', underscoring its association with the historic Klungkung Palace and the royal culinary traditions of the region.	Serombotan Ledok Nusa Penida Sate Languan Bulung Kuah	Ikan Bakar Lawar Ikan Pepes Ikan Opokan Rujak Bir
Karangasem	Karangasem cuisine can be referred to as 'Mountain Cuisine' or 'Volcanic Cuisine', reflecting its unique flavours and ingredients sourced from the fertile volcanic soil of Mount Agung and the surrounding highlands.	Nasi Sela Plecing Telengis Pepes Telengis Sate Serapah Blayag Pecok Sagu	Komoh Be siap mesanten Be siap kalasan Lawar kacang Es Salak
Jembrana	Jembrana cuisine can be known as 'Rural Cuisine' or 'Countryside Cuisine', highlighting its focus on simple, rustic dishes made with locally-sourced ingredients from the region's picturesque countryside.	Jaje Bendu Lawar Klungah	Loloan Kondo

Continued on the next page

Ubud's culinary landscape, one can unravel the stories woven into each dish, from the farmers' fields to the dining table, and gain a deeper appreciation for the cultural heritage that sustains Bali's culinary legacy.

Bali's allure as a tourist destination primarily stems from its rich cultural heritage. Within the realm of cultural traditions, one aspect that warrants particular attention in this research is the culinary culture,

where the concept of gastronomy holds sway. The Triangle Concept of Indonesian Gastronomy (Figure 1) is a conceptual framework that provides a comprehensive understanding of the intricate interplay between culture, spices, and storytelling within Indonesian cuisine. It serves as a guiding principle for exploring the depth and richness of culinary traditions across the Indonesian archipelago.

Table 1 Continued from the previous page

Regency/city	Cuisine	Dish	
Bangli	Bangli cuisine can be termed ‘Temple Cuisine’ or ‘Spiritual Cuisine’, acknowledging its connection to the sacred temples and religious ceremonies of the region, with dishes often prepared for ceremonial occasions.	Jukut Kara and Waluh Sambal Tuung Kanji Suna Cekuh Sate Kebek Oret	Kripik Bayam Bebean Sate Lilit Babi Guling Lawar Penyon
Buleleng	Buleleng cuisine can be called ‘Northern Cuisine’ or ‘Highland Cuisine’, showcasing its distinct flavours and culinary traditions influenced by the region’s mountainous terrain and cooler climate.	Tipat Blayag Entil Bubuh Mengguh Siobak Tipat Cantok Jukut Undis Lodek Jukut Buangit Jukut Antug-Antugan	Jaje Uler Jaje Gambir Dodol Tuak Manis Don Pokat Kopi Munduk Es Bir Rujak Es Biu Klutuk
Tabanan	Tabanan cuisine can be referred to as ‘Rice Terrace Cuisine’ or ‘Agricultural Cuisine’, highlighting its reliance on rice cultivation and agricultural practices, with dishes often featuring locally-grown rice and fresh produce from the region’s fertile fields.	Entil Sambel Bejek Laklak Pisang Kuwir Nyatnyat Bubuh Baas Tambusan	Nasi Bejek Bebek Betutu Lawar Teh Beras Merah Nasi Angin

Note Source Wijaya et al. (2022)

This conceptual framework elucidates how culture, including ritual/ceremony in food and the spices used to cook the food, connect with the history of how the food is made and served and the way of eating thro-



Figure 1 The Triangle Concept of Indonesian Gastronomy, (Akademi Gastronomi Indonesia, 2016)

ugh storytelling. Storytelling intertwines to elucidate the essence of a dish. In the context of Bali, this translates into a vibrant tapestry of flavours and narratives woven into its culinary landscape. Each dish becomes a vessel for cultural expression, steeped in traditions passed down through generations. Through the lens of gastronomy, Bali’s culinary heritage becomes not merely sustenance but a portal into its rich cultural tapestry. The transition of Bali’s society from agrarian to tourism-centric has undoubtedly shaped its culinary landscape. Traditional dishes once confined to local kitchens have now found global acclaim with the influx of tourists seeking authentic cultural experiences. However, this transformation has also brought about challenges, such as preserving authenticity amidst commercialization and adapting to evolving tastes and preferences. Therefore, understanding and documenting the nuances of Bali’s gastronomic heritage are imperative, not only for the preservation of cultural identity but also for fostering sustainable tourism practices. By examining the dynamic inte-

raction between culture, spices, and storytelling within the Triangle Concept of Indonesian Gastronomy, one gains a deeper appreciation for the diversity and complexity of Indonesian cuisine. This framework not only highlights the importance of preserving culinary heritage but also underscores the role of gastronomy in fostering cultural exchange, promoting sustainable tourism, and celebrating Indonesia's rich cultural identity on the global stage.

This study delves into the development of gastronomy tourism in Bali, Indonesia by employing the Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) as a comprehensive approach to address the intricate challenges and opportunities within the domain. Previous works have provided valuable insights into successful gastronomy tourism initiatives worldwide and have examined various methods applied to investigate and address the challenges destinations face in this domain (Sio et al., 2021; Lozanski & Baumgartner, 2020). The literature survey reveals that while several research efforts have explored gastronomy tourism development, there is still a notable gap concerning comprehensive frameworks that integrate the diverse perspectives of stakeholders. Additionally, limited attention has been given to employing rigorous methodologies that facilitate collaboration among stakeholders and ensure sustainable outcomes (Adams, 2020; Andereck & Vogt, 2023).

The primary objective of this study is to conducting a comprehensive investigation, we aim to foster inclusive stakeholder engagement, preserve cultural heritage, promote local economic growth, and ensure environmental sustainability. This research endeavour contributes to advancing the understanding and practice of gastronomy tourism development, offering a holistic approach tailored to Bali's unique context. Moreover, employing SSM helps the authors' aim to create a detailed and dynamic model that captures the intricacies of Bali's gastronomy tourism landscape.

Literature Review

The authors required important and relevant literature studies related to the existing ontological phenomena to address the research questions. Leong et al. (2016) study supports the concept of gastronomic

tourism in destination development, emphasizing the importance of experience, engagement, knowledge, and the combined influence of gastronomy and destination attractiveness in creating meaningful satisfaction for gastronomic tourists. Their quantitative approach, utilizing cross-sectional surveys and structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis, revealed that prior experience is the most influential factor, highlighting the significance of destination quality and the combined effect of gastronomy and destination attractiveness on tourist satisfaction.

Yariş et al. (2019) research on gastronomic tourism in Turkey found that strategies focusing on gastronomic tourism development can enhance destination attractiveness, stimulate local community participation, and create unique tourism experiences. These findings align with Leong et al.'s earlier study in 2016, reinforcing the idea that gastronomic tourism provides new experiences and satisfaction for tourists. Yariş et al.'s overall research in 2019 supports previous findings emphasizing the importance of gastronomic tourism development in building the local economy, increasing community participation, and enhancing tourist experiences.

Kastenholz et al. (2012) explored the development of tourist villages in Portugal, emphasizing the active participation of the local community in conveying the history and culture to visitors. The study highlighted the crucial roles of tour guides and local communities in explaining the village's history and culture to visitors. The research also indicated that local gastronomic experiences can create new tourism experiences through souvenirs, cooking classes, and raw material education, ultimately extending the tourists' stay in the village. This aligns with research in Bali, Indonesia, demonstrating the significant potential of local gastronomy in developing village tourism and creating sustainable social, cultural, economic, and environmental changes.

Renko et al. (2010) evaluation of tourists' perceptions of local food and its promotion in Croatia supports previous findings that local food has potential as an attraction in gastronomic tourism. Emphasizing the importance of promoting and strengthening the image of local food, the study concluded that knowl-

Table 2 Research timeframe

Activity	Time Frame
Conducting semi-structured interviews with stakeholders	December 2022 until February 2023
Collecting observational data during site visits to Bali, Indonesia	February 2023 until May 2023 (twice a month for data triangulation)
Data Analysis and Compilation	June 2023 until September 2023
Additional data visualization	April 2024

edge of local gastronomy, regional identity, and easily accessible information about authentic food contribute to enhancing the gastronomic tourism experience.

Jecan and Chaigasem (2021) qualitative study in Maha Sarakham Province, Thailand, focused on heritage-based cultural gastronomy. Identifying the primary motivations of tourists and the unique experience as significant influences, the research highlighted the reinforcing role of gastronomic tourism in creating satisfying experiences for tourists. Reflecting on the research context of Bali, Indonesia, Jecan and Chaigasem's findings emphasized the importance of understanding local gastronomy as a foundation for gastronomic tourism development. The study also underscored the need to educate gastronomic tourists to enhance their experiences. Overall, the reflection on previous research highlights the importance of relevant literature reviews, diverse research approaches, the role of gastronomy in tourism development, local community involvement, and the promotion of and information about local food.

This literature review demonstrates the significance of developing gastronomic tourism in Bali, Indonesia. The coherence among the findings in the literature mutually reinforces each other and strengthens the argument for conducting research in Bali, Indonesia. This research is crucial for designing, implementing, evaluating, and maintaining a research model for the development of gastronomic tourism involving active community participation, such as culinary training, to create satisfying gastronomic experiences for tourists.

Methodology

This research employs a case study methodology to investigate the development of gastronomy tourism in Bali, Indonesia. A case study approach allows for an in-depth exploration of a real-life context, providing rich and context-specific insights into the complexities of gastronomy tourism development. In this case, semi-structured interviews were conducted with various stakeholders involved in gastronomy tourism development in Bali, Indonesia such as Forum Komunikasi Desa Wisata (Association of Tourism Villages), Perhimpunan Hotel dan Restaurant Indonesia (Indonesian Association of Hotels and Restaurants) and Bali Tourism Board (BTVB) a private bodies for tourism and the Board of Tourism in Bali's Government. Observational data were collected during site visits to Bali, allowing the authors to gain first-hand knowledge of the village's gastronomy tourism practices, culinary offerings, and interactions between tourists and locals.

Based on the information provided in the paragraph above, the interviews and data collection for the research on gastronomy tourism development in Bali were conducted using a case study methodology. Here is an estimated timeline (see Table 2):

SSM is this study's guiding theoretical framework (Lewis, 1992). It is a participatory and qualitative methodology that facilitates the exploration of complex, real-world problems from multiple perspectives using Clients, Actors, Transformation, World View, Owner, and Environment, or CATWOE (Kurniawan & Maulana, 2022). It allows for the creation of models that capture the various elements and relationships in the system under study, enabling the identification of potential improvements and solutions (Checkland & Scholes, 1990).

Research Findings

The study's results reveal significant insights into the development of gastronomy tourism in Bali, Indonesia, obtained through stakeholder interviews, workshops, focus groups, and site observations. The findings are summarized below.

Challenges and Opportunities

The CATWOE analysis has provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities in gastronomy tourism development in Bali, Indonesia. By examining the Customers, Actors, Transformation Process, Weltanschauung (World View), Owner, and Environment, the authors have gained a holistic understanding of the complex dynamics and diverse perspectives surrounding these issues. Several challenges were identified using the SSM data analysis approach of CATWOE (Customers, Actors, Transformation Process, Worldview, Owner, and Environment) (see Table 3).

Firstly, the challenges of striking a balance between commercialization and cultural authenticity, ensuring fair economic distribution among stakeholders, and addressing environmental sustainability concerns reflect the multifaceted nature of gastronomy tourism development (Naumov & Dutta, 2020). The CATWOE analysis has revealed the involvement of various stakeholders, ranging from local communities and restaurateurs to tourists and government bodies (Jamal & Stronza, 2009). Understanding the transformation process and worldview associated with these challenges is crucial to developing effective and context-specific solutions (Hsu et al., 2022).

Secondly, the identified opportunities for promoting local agricultural products, enhancing culinary training and infrastructure, and developing unique gastronomy tourism packages signify promising pathways for sustainable growth and enhancement of the tourism experience (Jecan & Chaigasem, 2021). The CATWOE analysis has emphasized the importance of collaboration between stakeholders, such as local communities, government bodies, and industry players, to capitalize on these opportunities successfully (Akmeşe et al., 2019).

Thirdly, the CATWOE analysis has highlighted the centrality of the local community as the primary owner and the critical role of government bodies and tourism authorities in shaping the development process (Jamal & Stronza, 2009). Recognizing the significance of environmental considerations and the aspirations of tourists and local communities is crucial to aligning the transformation process with sustainable

and culturally sensitive objectives (Secuk & Secim, 2023; Sorcaru, 2019).

Finally, the CATWOE analysis provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the challenges and opportunities in gastronomy tourism development and informs the need for inclusive and collaborative decision-making (Checkland & Poulter, 2006). By leveraging this understanding, stakeholders can devise targeted interventions to promote sustainable and authentic gastronomy tourism experiences in Bali by ensuring long-term benefits for all involved parties and preserving the destination's cultural heritage and natural resources (Stone et al., 2022; United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2012).

Interconnection and Intervention

The application of SSM led to creating a comprehensive model that captured the interactions and interdependencies of various elements influencing gastronomy tourism in Bali, Indonesia. The picture is divided into several sections, each representing a different aspect of gastronomy tourism development.

At the centre of the picture is the local community, which is connected to various other elements, including tourists, local SMEs, cultural heritage, culinary practices, economic factors, environmental sustainability, and government bodies. The local community is depicted as a central element because it is the foundation of gastronomy tourism development, and its involvement and engagement are crucial for the success of the industry.

Tourists are attracted to Bali because of its unique cultural heritage and culinary practices, which are closely tied to the local community, offering an immersive experience through traditional practices and culinary delights, by engaging the local community in tourism development, stakeholders can promote cultural heritage preservation and provide authentic culinary experiences for tourists.

Local SMEs are also closely connected to the local community and tourists. SMEs are often family-owned businesses that offer traditional culinary experiences and products. By supporting local SMEs, stakeholders can promote economic development and provide

Table 3 CATWOE Approach to Identify Challenges and Opportunities

	CATWOE attributes	Roles/Identify as
Challenge 1: Striking a balance between commercialization and cultural authenticity	Customers	Tourists, local community
	Actors	Local community, restaurateurs, tourists, government bodies, tourism authorities
	Transformation process	Developing gastronomy tourism offerings that attract tourists while preserving and promoting local cultural authenticity
	Worldview	Local communities value cultural heritage and authenticity, while tourists seek unique and memorable experiences.
	Owner	Local community, tourism authorities
Challenge 2: Ensuring fair economic distribution among stakeholders	Environment	Cultural heritage sites, local cuisine and culinary practices, tourist influx, economic factors
	Customers	Local community, restaurateurs, tourists
	Actors	Local community, restaurateurs, tourists, government bodies, tourism authorities
	Transformation process	Implementing strategies to ensure fair distribution of economic benefits among stakeholders involved in gastronomy tourism
	Worldview	Equity and fair economic opportunities are crucial for the sustainable development of the local community and the tourism industry.
Challenge 3: Addressing environmental sustainability concerns	Owner	Local community, government bodies, tourism authorities
	Environment	Local businesses, tourism revenue, employment opportunities, economic growth
	Customers	Local community, tourists, environmental organizations
	Actors	Local community, restaurateurs, tourists, government bodies, environmental organizations
	Transformation process	Integrating eco-friendly practices and initiatives into gastronomy tourism activities to minimize environmental impact
	Worldview	Emphasis on preserving natural resources and protecting the environment for future generations.
	Owner	Local community, government bodies, environmental organizations
	Environment	Natural resources, ecosystems, waste management, carbon footprint

Continued on the next page

opportunities for the local community to benefit from gastronomy tourism.

Cultural heritage and culinary practices are depicted as interconnected elements, as they are often closely tied together in Bali. By promoting traditional culinary practices, stakeholders can help preserve cultural heritage and provide authentic experiences for tourists.

Economic factors and environmental sustainability are also closely connected. By promoting sustainable practices, stakeholders can minimize waste and

promote eco-friendly practices, which can help reduce the environmental impact of gastronomy tourism.

Government bodies are depicted as a separate element, as they play a crucial role in regulating and supporting gastronomy tourism development. By developing policies and regulations that support the local community, SMES, and cultural heritage preservation, government bodies can help promote sustainable gastronomy tourism development.

To conclude, the rich picture illustrates the complex relationships between the key elements of gastro-

Table 3 Continued from the previous page

	CATWOE attributes	Roles/Identify as
Opportunities 1: Promoting local agricultural products	Customers	Tourists, local community
	Actors	Local community, restaurateurs, tourists, government bodies, agriculture associations
	Transformation process	Developing marketing strategies to promote and utilize locally sourced agricultural products in gastronomy tourism offerings
	Worldview	It values and supports local farmers and agriculture for sustainable and authentic gastronomy experiences.
	Owner	Local community, restaurateurs, government bodies
	Environment	Local agriculture, food supply chain, culinary diversity
Opportunities 2: Enhancing culinary training and infrastructure	Customers	Local community, restaurateurs, tourists
	Actors	Local community, restaurateurs, tourists, government bodies, culinary schools, hospitality industry
	Transformation process	Investing in culinary training programmes and improving infrastructure to elevate the quality of gastronomy tourism experiences
	Worldview	We recognize the importance of skilled chefs and well-equipped culinary facilities to enhance tourism appeal.
	Owner	Local community, government bodies, culinary schools
	Environment	Culinary schools, hospitality establishments, culinary training facilities
Opportunity 3: Developing unique gastronomy tourism packages	Customers	Tourists, local community
	Actors	Local community, restaurateurs, tourists, government bodies, tour operators
	Transformation process	It creates distinctive gastronomy tourism packages offering diverse and authentic experiences to attract visitors.
	Worldview	It leverages cultural diversity and gastronomic uniqueness to differentiate Bali, Indonesia from other destinations.
	Owner	Local community, government bodies, tour operators
	Environment	Gastronomy tourism offerings, cultural events, tourism marketing

onomy tourism development in Bali, Indonesia. By visualizing these relationships, stakeholders can better understand the dynamics of gastronomy tourism development and develop more effective strategies for promoting sustainable and inclusive development. The system's complexities allowed for the identification of potential interconnection and interversions (see Table 4)

Table 3 presents a Table of the interactions and interdependencies of various elements influencing gastronomy tourism in Bali, Indonesia. The key elements, such as local community, tourists, restaurateurs,

and government bodies, are interconnected based on their relationships and influences on the gastronomy tourism system. The table highlights the collaborative activities, including workshops and information exchange, facilitating stakeholder engagement and collective decision-making.

The interventions are suggested actions or strategies to address challenges and improve the gastronomy tourism system. For instance, to promote cultural heritage preservation, the intervention includes promoting traditional culinary practices and engaging locals in tourism development. Similarly, the intervention

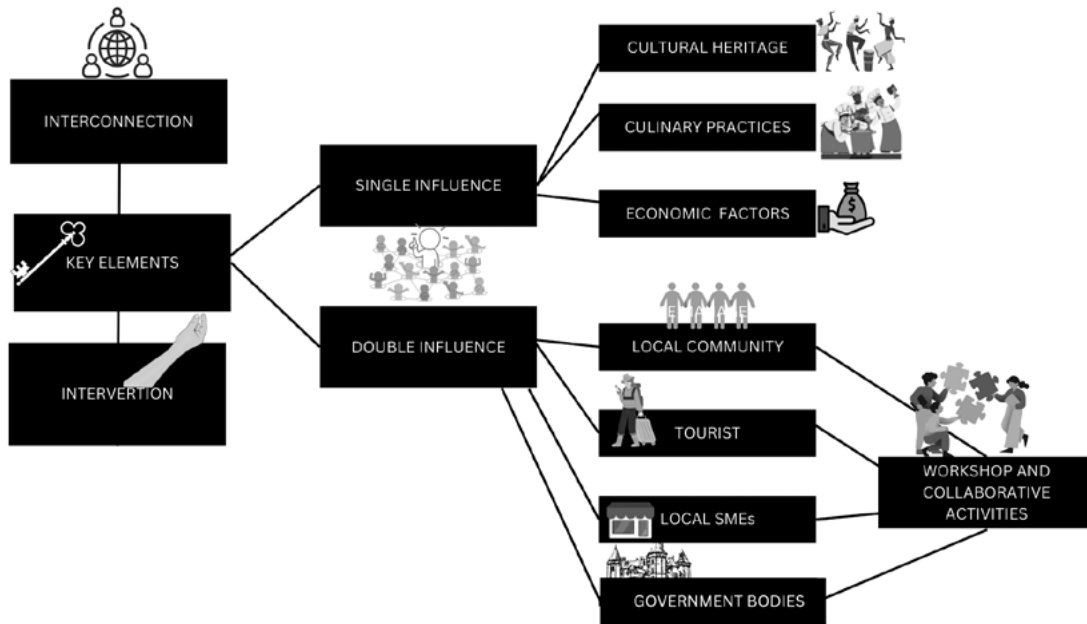


Figure 2 Key Element Relationship

encourages sustainable tourism practices to enhance authentic gastronomy tours.

Overall, the table provides a comprehensive visual snapshot of the complexities of gastronomy tourism in Bali, Indonesia and enables a better understanding of the potential improvements and interventions that can be implemented for sustainable and culturally sensitive development.

The Effectiveness of Soft Systems Methodology

This study was designed to assess the effectiveness of ssm in addressing the challenges of gastronomy tourism development, even though specific hypotheses still need to be formulated. The research objectives focused on evaluating the utility of ssm as a valuable approach to foster inclusive stakeholder engagement and generate context-specific solutions. The compelling findings affirm the hypothesis that ssm is a powerful tool for promoting collaborative problem-solving and tailored interventions within the context of gastronomic tourism (Scarpato & Danielle, 2003; Sormaz et al., 2016). The successful application of ssm in this study demonstrates its efficacy as a practical

and adaptable framework that facilitates a comprehensive understanding of complex systems (Pavlidis & Markantonatou, 2020) and facilitates the co-creation of sustainable solutions in gastronomy tourism development (Razpotnik Visković & Komac, 2021).

The absence of specific hypotheses in the study design aligns with ssm, which is described as a learning for action’ methodology. The focus on evaluating the utility of ssm highlights its value in engaging with stakeholders (Jamal & Stronza, 2009) and addressing multifaceted challenges in gastronomy tourism. The approach’s flexibility and adaptability resonate with Sukerti and Marsiti (2020) and Holwell (2010) notion of systems approaches as practical tools for managing change.

The successful application of ssm in this study validates its potential to guide practical decision-making in the complex context of gastronomy tourism (Gössling et al., 2021). This echoes Su and Crouch (2003) emphasis on a comprehensive and systematic approach to destination management. The co-creation of solutions through ssm aligns with the collaborative nature of stakeholder engagement emphasized

Table 4 Interconnection and intervention matrix

Key elements	Interconnections	Intervention
Local community	Cultural heritage preservation	Engage locals in tourism development Promote traditional culinary practices
Tourists	Culinary experiences	Encourage sustainable tourism practices Enhance authentic gastronomy tourism
Local SMES	Local product	Source ingredients locally Collaborate with local community
Government bodies	Economic development	Support sustainable tourism initiatives Implement policies for cultural preservation
Cultural heritage	Impact on local community and tourists Culinary practice	
Culinary practices	Offer authentic food experiences.	
Economic factors	Impact on local businesses and tourism	
Environmental sustainability	Impact on natural resources and ecosystems	
Workshops and collaborative activities	Information exchange	Foster stakeholder engagement Encourage dialogue and collaboration

by Jamal and Stronza (2009) in sustainable tourism practice.

In conclusion, this study's findings demonstrate ssm's effectiveness in gastronomy tourism and contribute to the broader discourse on sustainable tourism development. The absence of predetermined hypotheses highlights the exploratory nature of the research, which draws support from the principles of ssm (Checkland & Scholes, 1990). The study's success in generating tailored solutions reinforces the significance of systems thinking in addressing challenges that span cultural, economic, and environmental dimensions. Through this application, ssm has proven valuable for promoting collaborative and sustainable gastronomy tourism development (Gössling et al., 2021; Jamal & Stronza, 2009).

The findings of this study hold significant implications for the development of gastronomy tourism in Bali, Indonesia and contribute valuable insights to the broader field of sustainable tourism and cultural preservation. By applying ssm, this research successfully captures the intricate dynamics of gastronomic tourism, considering the perspectives of diverse sta-

keholders (Lewis, 1992). The discussion below highlights the significance of the results, compares them with existing literature, and explores their implications for future research and practice, presented in five points.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer several practical implications for gastronomy tourism development in Bali, Indonesia, and similar destinations. The interconnections between key elements are visualized in Figure 3, which shows that stakeholders can have a better understanding of the complex dynamics of gastronomy tourism and identify opportunities for collaboration and improvement. There are four points to highlight to understand the rich picture:

1. **Strengthening Local Community Involvement:** The rich picture highlights the importance of engaging the local community in tourism development. Research by (Cavicchi & Santini, 2014) addressing in a rich tapestry, community engagement emerges as a vital thread in tourism development. Moreover, by championing traditional culinary customs

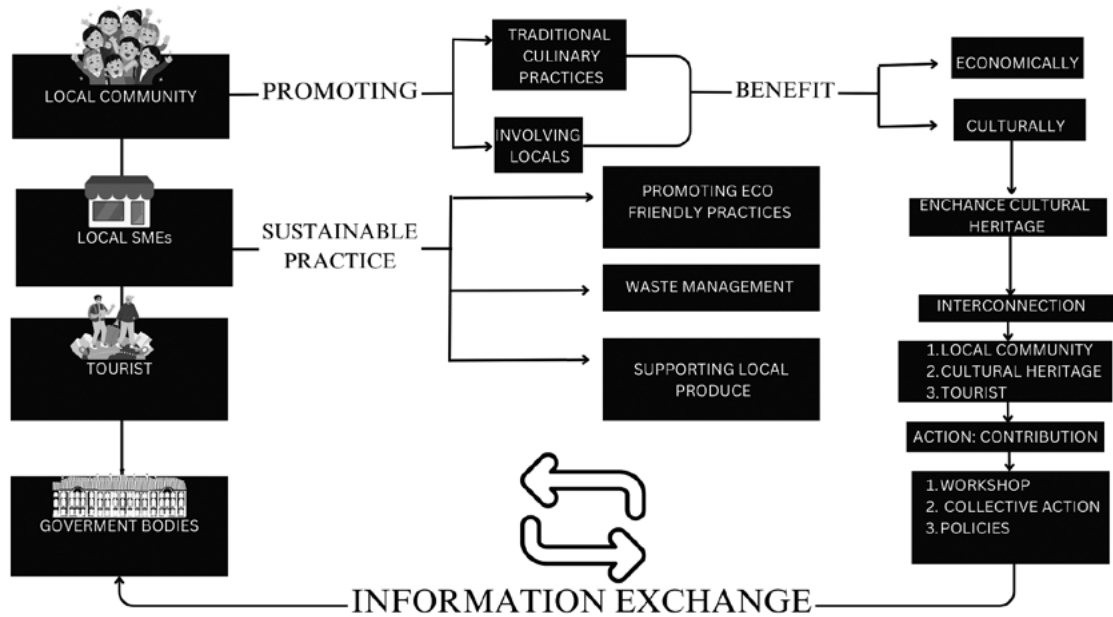


Figure 3 Rich Picture of Stakeholder Interconnection

and involving locals in decision-making processes, communities stand to reap both economic and cultural rewards from gastronomy tourism. This symbiotic relationship not only preserves heritage but also enriches the tourism experience, fostering a deeper appreciation for the flavours and stories woven into the fabric of each destination.

2. Top of Form

3. Enhancing Cultural Heritage Preservation: The interconnections between local community, cultural heritage, and tourists suggest that promoting traditional culinary practices can help preserve cultural heritage. As in the study by Borah et al. (2024) understanding the culinary knowledge also reinforces the importance of preserving traditions amidst modernization.

4. Fostering Sustainable Practices: Addressing the multifaceted issue of food waste is integral to promoting environmental sustainability within gastronomy tourism. Stakeholders play a pivotal role in advocating for eco-friendly practices, efficient waste management systems, and the utilization of

locally sourced produce that align with sustainable approaches. This imperative is underscored by the pressing challenges posed by the surge in biodegradable waste, notably food waste, which imposes significant burdens on local authorities tasked with waste management responsibilities (Karim Ghani et al., 2013; Stefan et al., 2013).

5. Encouraging Collaborative Activities: The study from Blešić et al. (2021) exploring food waste management in restaurants aligns with the broader understanding of sustainability issues in gastronomy tourism. While the study focuses on consumer behaviour regarding food waste, it parallels the need for collaboration and information exchange highlighted in gastronomy tourism development. Together, these perspectives advocate for a holistic approach to sustainability, integrating individual actions and collective efforts to mitigate environmental impacts and foster responsible practices in the hospitality sector.

Understanding Stakeholder Perspectives

The stakeholder perspectives gathered in this study align with the existing literature on gastronomy tourism, emphasizing the importance of preserving cultural heritage while ensuring sustainable development (Jamal & Stronza, 2009; Su & Horng, 2012). The local community's concerns about cultural commodification mirror findings from previous research, underscoring the need for responsible tourism practices (Lozanski & Baumgartner, 2020). Similarly, tourists' appreciation for authentic culinary experiences resonates with studies highlighting the growing demand for accurate and immersive travel experiences (Yanthy, 2018). These similarities affirm the validity of the data obtained in this study.

Addressing Challenges and Opportunities

The study identified several challenges, including the delicate balance between commercialization and cultural authenticity, economic disparities, and environmental sustainability concerns. Such challenges have been recurrent themes in gastronomy tourism research, indicating their universality across destinations. Adopting SSM, this research presents a systematic approach to addressing these challenges, emphasizing the need for collaborative stakeholder engagement and context-specific solutions (Checkland & Scholes, 1990; Sukerti & Marsiti, 2020). The model's flexibility and adaptability offer a promising avenue for tackling similar challenges in other gastronomy tourism contexts.

Implications for Future Research

This study also provides valuable insights for future research within the field of gastronomy tourism. The rich picture can serve as a framework for further investigation into the interconnections between key elements and the effectiveness of various interventions.

1. Exploring Interconnections: Future research can delve deeper into the interconnections between elements, such as the relationship between cultural heritage preservation and economic factors. This can help stakeholders better understand the complex dynamics of gastronomy tourism and develop more effective strategies.

2. Evaluating Interventions: The rich picture can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of various interventions in addressing challenges and enhancing positive interactions. This can help stakeholders identify best practices and refine their approaches to gastronomy tourism development.
3. Comparative Studies: The rich picture can be adapted to other destinations to facilitate comparative studies. This can help identify common challenges and best practices in gastronomy tourism development and contribute to the development of a more comprehensive understanding of the field.
4. Longitudinal Studies: Longitudinal studies can be conducted to track changes in the interconnections and interventions over time. This can help stakeholders understand the long-term impacts of gastronomy tourism development and adjust their strategies accordingly.

Broader Significance

The insights from this research are not limited to Bali, Indonesia alone but have broader global implications for developing gastronomic tourism (Lozanski & Baumgartner, 2020; Stone et al., 2022; United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2017). Employing SSM, destination managers, and policymakers can foster inclusive and participatory decision-making processes, ensuring local communities have a voice in shaping their tourism future (Holden, 2017). Additionally, the emphasis on cultural heritage preservation and sustainable practices aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly goals related to cultural preservation, economic growth, and environmental sustainability (Sormaz et al., 2016; United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2017).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the utilization of the Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) has yielded a comprehensive understanding of gastronomy tourism development in Bali, Indonesia. By engaging with stakeholders and collecting observational data, this study has identi-

fied key perspectives, challenges, and opportunities, laying the groundwork for responsible and sustainable development practices in the region.

The application of ssm aligns with existing literature on gastronomy tourism while offering a unique approach to addressing complex issues within the field. The integration of theoretical insights from ssm with practical findings from the methodology underscores the importance of holistic and participatory approaches in tourism development.

Furthermore, the insights gained from this study have implications for future research, policy-making, and community-driven tourism development efforts not only in Bali but also in other destinations worldwide. By understanding the dynamics of gastronomy tourism through a systems perspective, stakeholders can better navigate the complexities of the industry and work towards fostering sustainable and culturally sensitive tourism practices.

In essence, this study contributes valuable insights to the ongoing discourse on sustainable gastronomy tourism development, emphasizing the importance of collaborative and holistic approaches in shaping the future of tourism. By bridging theory and practice, this research aims to catalyse positive change in the way gastronomy tourism is conceptualized, planned, and implemented globally.

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Relationship between Health Expenditure and Tourism at the Macroeconomic Level

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This paper examines the potential relationship between health expenditure and tourism at the macroeconomic level to identify the need for further research. By analysing data over a time horizon from 2000 to 2019, focusing on four Central European countries (Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary and the Czech Republic), some significant correlations between health expenditure and tourism indicators at the country level are identified. The results indicate different correlations between health expenditure and tourism indicators, mostly positive, strong and moderate. This article therefore proposes further research that extends to longitudinal panel analysis using advanced econometric techniques to determine the nature of the relationship between health expenditure and tourism at the macroeconomic level.

Keywords: health expenditure, tourism, health, correlation



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Background

Health crises have a significant impact on international tourism (Xiong & Tang, 2023) and various studies have examined the impact of specific diseases on tourism (e.g. Haque & Haque, 2018; Novelli et al., 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, has increased interest in researching the relationship between tourism and health, leading to a large number of studies looking at the impact of COVID-19 and health measures on tourism and highlighting the crucial importance of health status in the tourism sector. For example, Gössling et al. (2020) and Sabiote-Ortiz et al. (2024) examined the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the tourism industry. In addition to specific diseases and

pandemics, there are many other areas where studies on tourism and health overlap, such as healthy aging and tourism (Hu et al., 2023), the effects of tourism on physical health (Godovykh & Ridderstaat, 2020) and wellbeing (Godovykh et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the broader relationship between health and tourism from a macroeconomic perspective is still largely unexplored.

Global health spending reached 10% of global GDP in 2018, of which 59% came from domestic public sources and 41% from private health spending, but it remains unequal across countries, 75% of the spending being in the Americas and Europe (World

Health Organization, 2020). This can have an impact on the tourism sector, as countries with higher health expenditure often have better healthcare, which can influence tourism flows. Indeed, health expenditure is important for the evaluation of health care or health outcomes (Lichtenberg, 2004; Nixon & Ulmann, 2006; Wubulihassimu et al., 2016; Rahman et al., 2018). Following the OECD (2023), health status depends on the healthcare system, its accessibility, quality, healthcare expenditure and financing, health workforce, the pharmaceutical sector, aging and long-term care; health status is also influenced by risk factors for health (such as obesity and smoking) and factors that influence the healthcare system, such as the demographic, economic and social context.

There are a few studies that have examined the impact of health on tourism at the macroeconomic level. Indeed, health factors influence tourism flows (Prideaux, 2005). Konstantakopoulou (2022) examined the impact of health quality on international tourism receipts in 44 developing countries and 39 developed countries in the period 2000–2016 using the World Bank World Development Indicators. The impact of the growth of health services in the case of Turkey on inbound health tourism is also confirmed (Uçak, 2016). For the Iranian economy, a short- and long-term relationship between health care and international tourism was investigated in the period from 1971 to 2016 (Feshari & Hosseinzadeh, 2018). ‘Health and hygiene’ is one of the pillars that measure a country’s tourism competitiveness in the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (World Economic Forum, 2024). Moreover, health has a positive and significant impact on outbound tourism expenditure (Olya & Mehran, 2017). As noted by Kim et al. (2003), health is also recognized as a push motivational factor in tourism.

On the other hand, there are some studies that examine the impact of tourism on health expenditure or life expectancy from the macroeconomic perspective. For example, using time series data from 1995 to 2015, Qureshi et al. (2017) analysed the impact of international tourism receipts, tourist arrivals, tourism expenditures and tourist departures on the health expenditure of 80 international destinations

in 37 countries. At the country level, tourism (measured by the number of international arrivals) leads to CO₂ emissions, which in turn leads to high health expenditure in Mexico; there is a significant positive relationship between tourism, CO₂ emissions and health expenditure in both the short and long term (Fan et al., 2022). In addition, Godovykh and Ridderstaat (2020) found an effect of international tourist arrivals in Spain on the health of residents (measured as life expectancy at birth), which is negative in the short term but positive in the long term.

Thus, both directions of causality between tourism and health have been explored. Hu et al. (2022) examined the relationship between international tourism expenditure, international tourism receipts, international tourist arrivals, international tourism exports and tourism as a percentage of exports with the number of total COVID-19 cases, cases per million people, average rate of increase, and daily growth of COVID-19 cases in 178 countries and territories. The relationship between health and tourism has also been studied on a sample of Chinese respondents (Wen et al., 2022) but broader macroeconomic studies are still scarce. Such findings are central to understanding the relationship between tourism and healthcare at country level, and also the linkages between both sectors in the long term.

The bidirectional causality relationship between health expenditure (total, private and public) and per capita income in BRICS countries and Turkey is examined by Canbay and Kırca (2022). This raises the question of the interaction between health and tourism, as the latter is an important part of the economy. As there is little research that demonstrates the link between health expenditure and tourism at the macroeconomic level, this article examines whether tourism and health expenditure are linked at a country level. The hypothesis of the present study suggests that there is a positive correlation between health expenditure and tourism indicators at the macroeconomic level. For this reason, the correlations between tourism and health expenditure indicators are examined over a longer period of time to shed light on these relationships and thus decide whether further research steps are necessary.

Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research design and uses secondary data sources to examine the relationship between health-related and tourism indicators. Following previous research, there are a variety of indicators that can be used to measure healthcare at the country level, such as life expectancy, health expenditure, or other measures. Jagrič et al. (2023) underline the complexity of measuring the quality of healthcare services. In this study, we focus on health expenditure indicators. Tourism is measured using various indicators at the macro level, with tourism expenditure being a more accurate variable for macroeconomic environment than those using physical tourism measures.

Four Central European countries (Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary and the Czech Republic) are selected for the analysis to ensure a more homogeneous sample in terms of cultural background and EU membership, so that the results are more reliable and applicable in the specific context of European socio-economic studies. Countries that are geographically close often have similar healthcare systems (Jagrič et al., 2023).

A time series analysis is performed to assess the correlation across the selected Central European countries in the period 2000–2019, using annual data. The data from 2020 to 2022 are not included as COVID-19 events would distort the results. Secondary data from the World Bank Group (n.d.) was retrieved separately for the four countries, including variables on health expenditure and tourism:

- health expenditure is measured with number of community health workers per 1,000 people, current health expenditure (% of GDP), current health expenditure per capita (current USD), domestic general government health expenditure (% of GDP), domestic general government health expenditure per capita (current USD), domestic private health expenditures (% of current health expenditure), domestic private health expenditures per capita (current USD);
- tourism is measured with international tourism expenditures (% of total imports), international tourism expenditures (current USD), international tourism expenditures for travel items (current

USD), number of international arrivals, number of international departures, international tourism receipts (% of total exports), international tourism receipts (current USD), international tourism receipts for travel items (current USD).

Descriptive statistics are calculated for each variable to summarize its central tendency and dispersion. The bivariate Spearman correlation coefficients are calculated to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between the pairs of tourism variables on the one hand and the health-related variables on the other. The collected data are analysed using SPSS 29.0.

Results and Findings

No data was available for the indicator 'number of community health workers per 1,000 people' for the selected countries so this indicator is excluded from analysis. In addition, complete data for the entire 20-year period (2000–2019) is not available for some indicators. In these cases, a shorter period was taken into account depending on data availability.

Descriptive statistics of health-related variables and tourism indicators for each selected country, including mean value, standard deviation, and minimum and maximum value, are presented in Table 1 and Table 2. Table 1 shows that the mean value of current healthcare expenditure as a percentage of GDP ranges from 6.9% in the Czech Republic to 8.2% in Slovenia, which means that healthcare expenditure in the period between 2000 and 2019 is not very different between countries. The mean value of domestic general government health expenditure as a percentage of GDP is also similar, ranging from 4.9% in Hungary to 5.9% in Slovenia, with a difference of 1 percentage point. These indicators are important for understanding the extent to which a country invests in its healthcare system and thus in the quality and accessibility of healthcare services. In addition, three indicators showing health expenditure per capita (current expenditure, domestic government expenditure and domestic private expenditure) show the highest mean values in Slovenia. The percentage share of domestic private health expenditure in current

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Health-Related Indicators

Country	Item	Mean	Min	Max	SD*
Slovenia	Current health expenditure (% of GDP)	8.22	7.51	8.74	0.36
	Current health expenditure per capita (current USD)	1720.65	797.00	2219.00	470.35
	Domestic general government health expenditure (% of GDP)	5.89	5.28	6.20	0.26
	Domestic general government health expenditure per capita (current USD)	1233.35	569.00	1606.00	338.46
	Domestic private health expenditures (% of current health expenditure)	28.33	27.57	29.76	0.76
	Domestic private health expenditures per capita (current USD)	487.35	228.00	613.00	132.97
Croatia	Current health expenditure (% of GDP)	7.03	6.14	8.08	0.58
	Current health expenditure per capita (current USD)	850.75	371.00	1259.00	273.25
	Domestic general government health expenditure (% of GDP)	5.84	4.85	6.69	0.54
	Domestic general government health expenditure per capita (current USD)	707.45	305.00	1055.00	230.00
	Domestic private health expenditures (% of current health expenditure)	17.00	13.57	20.99	1.80
	Domestic private health expenditures per capita (current USD)	143.30	56.00	204.00	45.48
Hungary	Current health expenditure (% of GDP)	7.20	6.28	8.12	0.47
	Current health expenditure per capita (current USD)	869.35	313.00	1117.00	233.73
	Domestic general government health expenditure (% of GDP)	4.90	4.29	5.68	0.37
	Domestic general government health expenditure per capita (current USD)	590.70	216.00	757.00	156.37
	Domestic private health expenditures (% of current health expenditure)	31.96	29.65	35.16	1.48
	Domestic private health expenditures per capita (current USD)	278.80	98.00	360.00	78.80
Czech Republic	Current health expenditure (% of GDP)	6.89	5.70	7.62	0.71
	Current health expenditure per capita (current USD)	1195.51	342.92	1803.05	467.25
	Domestic general government health expenditure (% of GDP)	5.85	5.01	8.44	0.54
	Domestic general government health expenditure per capita (current USD)	1009.08	304.19	1526.63	385.13
	Domestic private health expenditures (% of current health expenditure)	15.01	11.30	19.00	1.94
	Domestic private health expenditures per capita (current USD)	186.43	38.74	276.42	83.40

Note * Standard deviation

healthcare expenditure is 15% and 17% in the Czech Republic and Croatia, respectively, and around 30% in Slovenia and Hungary. This could be influenced by the differences in the healthcare systems of the individual countries.

Table 2 contains indicators measuring both international tourism expenditure (total and on travel items) and international tourism receipts (total and on travel), which is in line with the study's aim of identifying correlations. All four countries have more international tourism receipts (total and for travel items) than international expenditure abroad (total and for travel items), which shows that they earn more from tourism than they spend abroad for tourism purposes. Similarly, each of the four countries had more arrivals from international tourism than departures on average between 2000 and 2019. Croatia has the lowest international tourism expenditures

and the highest international tourism receipts of the four countries. In terms of international tourism receipts as a percentage of exports, Croatia is also at the top of the four selected countries with an average of 40.56%, which shows its high dependence on tourism. The international tourism expenditure as a percentage of imports, on the other hand, is very similar between the countries, with mean values between 3.41 (for Hungary) and 4.77 (for Slovenia).

Tables 3–6 show the correlation coefficients between selected tourism indicators on the one hand and selected health expenditure indicators on the other. The statistical significance is determined at a probability level of 0.05 for rejecting the null hypothesis. Table 3 shows the Spearman rank correlations between selected tourism and health-related indicators for Slovenia. International tourism expenditure in monetary units shows statistically significant and strong or

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for Tourism Indicators

Country	Item	Mean	Min	Max	SD*
Slovenia	International tourism expenditures (% of total imports)	4.77	3.75	6.27	0.53
	International tourism expenditures (current billion USD)	1.29	0.51	1.86	0.45
	International tourism expenditures for travel items (current billion USD)	1.17	0.51	1.74	0.40
	International tourism arrivals (million)	2.25	0.88	4.70	1.01
	International tourism departures (million)	0.54	0.44	0.68	0.70
	International tourism receipts (% of total exports)	8.46	7.35	10.14	0.83
	International tourism receipts (current billion USD)	2.35	1.01	3.38	0.81
	International tourism receipts for travel items (current billion USD)	2.20	0.96	3.18	0.76
Croatia	International tourism expenditures (% of total imports)	4.74	3.28	8.26	1.48
	International tourism expenditures (current billion USD)	0.98	0.63	1.81	0.32
	International tourism expenditures for travel items (current billion USD)	0.94	0.57	1.76	0.32
	International tourism arrivals (million)	48.42	29.21	60.02	0.77
	International tourism departures (million)	4.18	2.58	5.53	1.10
	International tourism receipts (% of total exports)	40.56	31.96	52.13	4.41
	International tourism receipts (current billion USD)	8.13	2.60	11.97	2.81
	International tourism receipts for travel items (current billion USD)	7.90	2.49	11.75	2.76
Hungary	International tourism expenditures (% of total imports)	3.41	2.37	5.48	1.14
	International tourism expenditures (current billion USD)	2.68	1.59	3.85	0.56
	International tourism expenditures for travel items (current billion USD)	2.26	1.54	3.23	0.42
	International tourism arrivals (million)	41.49	28.8	61.40	9.31
	International tourism departures (million)	16.58	10.62	24.86	3.49
	International tourism receipts (% of total exports)	7.41	5.15	13.14	2.28
	International tourism receipts (current billion USD)	6.20	3.62	10.22	1.94
	International tourism receipts for travel items (current billion USD)	5.14	3.57	7.28	1.11
Czech Republic	International tourism expenditures (% of total imports)	3.50	2.94	4.63	0.45
	International tourism expenditures (current billion USD)	4.25	1.80	6.07	1.30
	International tourism expenditures for travel items (current billion USD)	3.73	1.28	5.97	1.59
	International tourism arrivals (million)	26.81	20.11	37.20	5.34
	International tourism departures (million)	7.00	5.27	9.67	1.36
	International tourism receipts (% of total exports)	5.85	4.27	9.08	1.47
	International tourism receipts (current billion USD)	7.13	3.38	9.23	1.62
	International tourism receipts for travel items (current billion USD)	5.89	2.96	8.21	1.83

Notes * Standard deviation, ** The number of arrivals from the World Bank Group (n.d.) for the 4 countries includes to-tourists and same-day visitors, with the exception of Slovenia, where the number of arrivals only refers to overnight visitors as shown in UNWTO (2022), where the categories are broken down.

moderate correlations with the health expenditure indicators, with the exception of domestic private health expenditure as a percentage of current health expenditure, which shows no statistically significant correlation. The inbound tourism indicators (international tourism receipts in monetary units and international tourism arrivals) show mostly statistically significant, strong or moderate correlations (with the exception

of domestic private health expenditure as a percentage of current health expenditure), underlining the importance of health indicators in attracting tourists to Slovenia. In contrast, the number of international departures shows no statistically significant correlations with health expenditure indicators (with one exception). In fact, we can conclude that the statistically significant correlations between tourism expen-

Table 3 Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficients Between Tourism Indicators and Health Indicators for Slovenia

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
International tourism expenditures (% of total imports)	0.385 (0.094) <i>n</i> = 20	- 0.244 (0.301) <i>n</i> = 20	0.361 (0.118) <i>n</i> = 20	- 0.211 (0.373) <i>n</i> = 20	- 0.192 (0.416) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.275 (0.240) <i>n</i> = 20
International tourism expenditures (current USD)	0.621* (0.003) <i>n</i> = 20	0.950* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	0.681* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	0.955* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	- 0.295 (0.205) <i>n</i> = 20	0.899* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20
International tourism expenditures for travel items (current USD)	0.650* (0.002) <i>n</i> = 20	0.923* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	0.698* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	0.925* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	- 0.265 (0.259) <i>n</i> = 20	0.884* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20
Number of international arrivals	0.581* (0.007) <i>n</i> = 20	0.758* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	0.611* (0.004) <i>n</i> = 20	0.756* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.151 (0.498) <i>n</i> = 20	0.768* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20
Number of international departures	-0.689* (0.004) <i>n</i> = 15	-0.139 (0.621) <i>n</i> = 15	-0.508 (0.053) <i>n</i> = 15	- 0.136 (0.630) <i>n</i> = 15	-0.314 (0.254) <i>n</i> = 15	-0.345 (0.208) <i>n</i> = 15
International tourism receipts (% of total exports)	0.000 (1.000) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.478* (0.033) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.045 (0.850) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.457* (0.043) <i>n</i> = 20	0.035 (0.885) <i>n</i> = 20	- 0.493* (0.027) <i>n</i> = 20
International tourism receipts (current USD)	-0.569* (0.009) <i>n</i> = 20	0.926* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	0.592* (0.006) <i>n</i> = 20	0.916* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.194 (0.413) <i>n</i> = 20	0.921* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20
International tourism receipts for travel items (current USD)	0.579* (0.008) <i>n</i> = 20	0.919* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	0.614* (0.004) <i>n</i> = 20	0.913* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.209 (0.376) <i>n</i> = 20	0.912* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20

Notes Column headings are as follows: (1) Current health expenditure (% of GDP), (2) Current health expenditure per capita (current USD), (3) Domestic general government health expenditure (% of GDP), (4) Domestic general government health expenditure per capita (current USD), (5) Domestic private health expenditures (% of current health expenditure), (6) Domestic private health expenditures per capita (current USD). Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

diture (in terms of outbound tourism) and tourism receipts and arrivals from international tourism (in terms of inbound tourism) on the one hand and all health-related indicators except one on the other are in general positive and strong or moderate, suggesting that outbound and inbound tourism go hand in hand with healthcare. The correlation between the share of tourism in total imports and the share of tourism in total exports on the one hand and healthcare expenditure on the other does not give a clear picture of their relationship as it is not statistically significant in most cases, while in some cases there are statistically significant but negative and moderate correlations. Due to some missing data in some cases, there are fewer than 20 cases for calculating the correlation.

The Spearman rank correlations between selected tourism and health expenditure indicators for Croatia are shown in Table 4. Health expenditure (total, government and private) per capita correlates statistically significantly, strongly or moderately with international tourism expenditure, international tourism receipts and international tourism arrivals. Similar to the case of Slovenia, the number of international departures is not significantly correlated with the health-related indicators. It would be worth investigating further why the health-related indicators are not statistically significantly correlated with the indicator showing the importance of tourism as an economic sector in Croatia (receipts from international tourism as a percentage of total exports). Current health expenditure as a

Table 4 Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficients Between Tourism Indicators and Health Indicators for Croatia

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
International tourism expenditures (% of total imports)	-0.141 (0.552) <i>n</i> = 20	- 0.422 (0.057) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.198 (0.399) <i>n</i> = 20	- 0.447* (0.048) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.508* (0.023) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.310 (0.183) <i>n</i> = 20
International tourism expenditures (current USD)	0.135 (0.571) <i>n</i> = 20	0.730* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	0.046 (0.849) <i>n</i> = 20	0.699* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	0.085 (0.722) <i>n</i> = 20	0.778* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20
International tourism expenditures for travel items (current USD)	0.110 (0.645) <i>n</i> = 20	0.723* (<0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	0.029 (0.905) <i>n</i> = 20	0.690* (<0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	0.092 (0.700) <i>n</i> = 20	0.782* (<0.001) <i>n</i> = 20
Number of international arrivals	-0.020 (0.982) <i>n</i> = 20	0.592* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.054 (0.821) <i>n</i> = 20	0.555* (0.011) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.126 (0.596) <i>n</i> = 20	0.660* (0.002) <i>n</i> = 20
Number of international departures	0.273 (0.417) <i>n</i> = 11	0.382 (0.247) <i>n</i> = 11	0.247 (0.465) <i>n</i> = 11	0.500 (0.117) <i>n</i> = 11	-0.077 (0.821) <i>n</i> = 11	0.202 (0.552) <i>n</i> = 11
International tourism receipts (% of total exports)	-0.058 (0.808) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.020 (0.935) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.029 (0.905) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.015 (0.950) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.041 (0.863) <i>n</i> = 20	- 0.178 (0.454) <i>n</i> = 20
International tourism receipts (current USD)	0.087 (0.715) <i>n</i> = 20	0.780* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	0.045 (0.850) <i>n</i> = 20	0.753* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.158 (0.506) <i>n</i> = 20	0.791* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20
International tourism receipts for travel items (current USD)	0.066 (0.782) <i>n</i> = 20	0.767* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	0.020 (0.935) <i>n</i> = 20	0.738* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.132 (0.580) <i>n</i> = 20	0.797* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20

Notes Column headings are as follows: (1) Current health expenditure (% of GDP), (2) Current health expenditure per capita (current USD), (3) Domestic general government health expenditure (% of GDP), (4) Domestic general government health expenditure per capita (current USD), (5) Domestic private health expenditures (% of current health expenditure), (6) Domestic private health expenditures per capita (current USD). Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

share of GDP also does not correlate significantly with any of the selected tourism indicators, which could be due to different spending priorities at country level. In summary, Croatia has fewer statistically significant correlations between health-related and tourism indicators compared to the other selected countries.

Table 5 shows the correlations between health-related indicators and tourism indicators for Hungary over a period of 20 years. Current health expenditure per capita and domestic general government health expenditure per capita indicators are statistically significantly, positively and strongly or moderately related to almost all selected tourism indicators. This suggests that better healthcare is related to the attractiveness of the destination and that residents travel

and spend more abroad for tourism purposes. Since international tourism arrivals and international tourism receipts are statistically significant, positive and strongly or moderately correlated with domestic private health expenditure per capita, further research in regard to the attractiveness of tourism, especially health tourism, would be welcome. The number of international tourist arrivals is statistically significantly, positively and moderately correlated with various health-related indicators, some of which show positive and some negative correlations, making it difficult to draw interpretations.

The Czech Republic also shows statistically significant, positive and strong or moderate correlations between international tourism expenditure and all

Table 5 Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficients Between Tourism Indicators and Health Indicators for Hungary

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
International tourism expenditures (% of total imports)	0.185 (0.435) <i>n</i> = 20	- 0.615* (0.004) <i>n</i> = 20	0.362 (0.116) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.545* (0.013) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.466* (0.039) <i>n</i> = 20	0.702* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20
International tourism expenditures (current USD)	-0.165 (0.486) <i>n</i> = 20	0.814* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.128 (0.591) <i>n</i> = 20	0.852* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	0.114 (0.634) <i>n</i> = 20	0.645* (0.002) <i>n</i> = 20
International tourism expenditures for travel items (current USD)	0.020 (0.935) <i>n</i> = 20	0.606* (0.005) <i>n</i> = 20	0.101 (0.673) <i>n</i> = 20	0.660* (0.002) <i>n</i> = 20	0.138 (0.561) <i>n</i> = 20	0.423 (0.063) <i>n</i> = 20
Number of international arrivals	-0.471* (0.036) <i>n</i> = 20	0.683* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.541* (0.014) <i>n</i> = 20	0.642* (0.002) <i>n</i> = 20	0.335 (0.148) <i>n</i> = 20	0.652* (0.002) <i>n</i> = 20
Number of international departures	-0.281 (0.230) <i>n</i> = 20	0.511* (0.021) <i>n</i> = 20	0.260 (0.268) <i>n</i> = 20	0.571* (0.009) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.212 (0.369) <i>n</i> = 20	0.327 (0.159) <i>n</i> = 20
International tourism receipts (% of total exports)	-0.438 (0.054) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.501* (0.025) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.305 (0.191) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.454* (0.045) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.439 (0.053) <i>n</i> = 20	- 0.641* (0.002) <i>n</i> = 20
International tourism receipts (current USD)	-0.502* (0.024) <i>n</i> = 20	0.929* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.553* (0.011) <i>n</i> = 20	0.813* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	0.343 (0.139) <i>n</i> = 20	0.736* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20
International tourism receipts for travel items (current USD)	-0.454* (0.044) <i>n</i> = 20	0.845* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	-0.499* (0.025) <i>n</i> = 20	0.839* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	0.369 (0.110) <i>n</i> = 20	0.754* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20

Notes Column headings are as follows: (1) Current health expenditure (% of GDP), (2) Current health expenditure per capita (current USD), (3) Domestic general government health expenditure (% of GDP), (4) Domestic general government health expenditure per capita (current USD), (5) Domestic private health expenditures (% of current health expenditure), (6) Domestic private health expenditures per capita (current USD). Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

selected health-related indicators (Table 6) In addition, international tourism receipts on travel items and the health-related indicators mostly show statistically significant, positive and strong or moderate correlations. Surprisingly, the number of international tourist arrivals is not significantly correlated with most of the health-related indicators. Apart from the share of tourism in total imports and the physical measures (number of international arrivals and number of international departures), the tourism indicators generally show moderate or strong positive statistically significant correlations. Therefore, the correlations for the Czech Republic are mostly statistically significant, which is an important starting point for further investigation of the interrelations between the two sectors.

Conclusion

This study examines the relationship between tourism and health expenditure at country level to improve understanding of the link between the health sector and the tourism sector. It complements previous research by examining correlations at the macroeconomic level and comparing them between countries with similar backgrounds. The study demonstrates a positive correlation between health expenditure and tourism indicators at the macroeconomic level, thus, it supports the proposed hypothesis.

Based on the selected indicators and taking into account the differences between the countries, tourism indicators generally show statistically significant correlations with current health expenditure per ca-

Table 6 Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficients Between Tourism Indicators and Health Indicators for the Czech Republic

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
International tourism expenditures (% of total imports)	-0.230 (0.358) <i>n</i> = 18	- 0.288 (0.247) <i>n</i> = 18	-0.176 (0.484) <i>n</i> = 18	-0.296 (0.233) <i>n</i> = 18	-0.152 (0.548) <i>n</i> = 18	-0.172 (0.494) <i>n</i> = 18
International tourism expenditures (current USD)	0.587* (0.010) <i>n</i> = 18	0.878* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 18	0.544* (0.020) <i>n</i> = 18	0.827* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 18	0.509* (0.031) <i>n</i> = 18	0.858* (<0.001) <i>n</i> = 18
International tourism expenditures for travel items (current USD)	0.698* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	0.904* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	0.647* (0.002) <i>n</i> = 20	0.868* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	0.645* (0.002) <i>n</i> = 20	0.992* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20
Number of international arrivals	0.434 (0.082) <i>n</i> = 17	0.495* (0.043) <i>n</i> = 17	0.458 (0.064) <i>n</i> = 17	0.475 (0.054) <i>n</i> = 17	-0.007 (0.978) <i>n</i> = 17	0.333 (0.191) <i>n</i> = 17
Number of international departures	-0.495* (0.043) <i>n</i> = 17	-0.110 (0.673) <i>n</i> = 17	-0.446 (0.073) <i>n</i> = 17	-0.088 (0.736) <i>n</i> = 17	0.123 (0.639) <i>n</i> = 17	0.110 (0.673) <i>n</i> = 17
International tourism receipts (% of total exports)	-0.688* (0.002) <i>n</i> = 18	-0.841* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 18	-0.668* (0.002) <i>n</i> = 18	-0.802* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 18	-0.406 (0.095) <i>n</i> = 18	- 0.707* (0.001) <i>n</i> = 18
International tourism receipts (current USD)	0.432 (0.073) <i>n</i> = 18	0.756* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 18	0.377 (0.123) <i>n</i> = 18	0.777* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 18	0.558* (0.016) <i>n</i> = 18	0.851* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 18
International tourism receipts for travel items (current USD)	0.630* (0.003) <i>n</i> = 20	0.853* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	0.561* (0.010) <i>n</i> = 20	0.868* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20	0.645* (0.002) <i>n</i> = 20	0.914* (< 0.001) <i>n</i> = 20

Notes Column headings are as follows: (1) Current health expenditure (% of GDP), (2) Current health expenditure per capita (current USD), (3) Domestic general government health expenditure (% of GDP), (4) Domestic general government health expenditure per capita (current USD), (5) Domestic private health expenditures (% of current health expenditure), (6) Domestic private health expenditures per capita (current USD). Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

pita, domestic government health expenditure per capita and domestic private health expenditure per capita. The significant correlations are almost all positive, strong or moderate. This underlines the need for further research and a deeper understanding of the interdependence and mutual influence of health expenditure and the tourism sector. In addition, the correlations between domestic private health expenditure as a percentage of current health expenditure are in general less statistically significant with the tourism indicators, but this should be understood in line with the specific characteristics of each country's health system.

Since global health expenditure accounts for 10% of global GDP (World Health Organization, 2020) and

current health expenditure as a percentage of GDP is significantly correlated with international tourism arrivals and international tourism receipts in two, respectively three, out of four selected countries, this opens up new challenges for the study of the interrelationship between health expenditure and tourism economic activity. Comparing the study by Konstantakopoulou (2022), which found for developed countries that domestic general government health expenditure as a percentage of GDP has a positive and significant impact on international tourism receipts, the positive correlation is also found for some countries in the present study based on Spearman rank correlation.

The correlation between the importance of tourism for exports and expenditure in the healthcare sector draws attention to investment challenges. The need for additional studies and explanations arises from the observation that in three countries a statistically significant negative correlation is found between some health-related indicators and the importance of tourism as an economic sector (international tourism receipts as a percentage of total exports).

The evidence-based research supports the need for a larger study on this topic, suggesting further research that extends to longitudinal panel analysis using advanced econometric techniques to determine the directions, causality and extent of the relationship between health expenditure and tourism indicators. Research can also explore the mutual benefits of health care and tourism development. It is expected that the results of further research will significantly influence the development of strategies to promote tourism through healthcare. So far, the Spearman coefficient provides a valuable first insight into the relationship between the health expenditure and tourism sectors but lacks causality between the variables.

There is a need for caution in generalizing the present results due to the small sample of countries included. Extending the geographical scope beyond the selected countries to other countries and regions could offer insights into the generalizability of the present findings and provide a more global perspective. Further, the study focuses on developed countries, which means that some indicators of diseases that are more common in developing countries or associated with malnutrition have not been addressed. It is recommended that indicators related to diagnosed common diseases that pose a public health challenge due to the high prevalence of diagnoses be included in further research, too. These include diabetes, depression and anxiety, hypertension, asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (Carlsson et al., 2013). As the present investigation suggests that healthcare and tourism are related, mediating effects such as country development and others should be included in further research.

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Konkurenčnost turistične destinacije in podjetniški razvoj: primer jugozahodne regije, Nigerija

Elizabeth Abiola-Oke

Raziskava temelji na tem, kako konkurenčnost turistične destinacije krepi podjetniški razvoj. Cilj raziskave je oceniti dejavnike, ki prispevajo k konkurenčnosti turizma v regiji, in preučiti vlogo podjetniških dejavnosti pri spodbujanju njenega razvoja. Pri raziskavi smo uporabili metodo anketne raziskave. Pri zbiranju temeljnih podatkov smo uporabili strukturiran vprašalnik, podatke pa smo analizirali z uporabo metode SMART PLS za modeliranje strukturnih enačb in analizo poti.

Ugotovitve raziskave so pokazale vlogo konkurenčnosti turizma pri razvoju podjetništva. Rezultati razkrivajo, da so podporni kazalniki najpomembnejše merilo konkurenčnosti destinacije, na katero vpliva podjetniški razvoj. Nasprotno pa je več lokalnih podjetij na destinaciji najpomembnejše merilo podjetniškega razvoja, na katerega vpliva konkurenčnost destinacije. Opazovane spremenljivke tudi kažejo, da je privlačnost destinacije ključnega pomena za podporne kazalnike, saj je najpomembnejša spremenljivka, ki poganja osnovne kazalnike. Zato lahko zaključimo, da konkurenčnost turističnih destinacij igra pomembno vlogo pri razvoju podjetništva.

Ključne besede: turizem, turistična destinacija, konkurenčnost destinacije, podjetniški razvoj

Academica Turistica, 17(2), 113–128

Turizem revnih območij: kdo daje moč in kdo je opolnomočen?

Cecep Ucu Rakhman, Pita Ratna Sari, Fajar Kusnadi in Kusumah Putra

Pričujoča raziskava preučuje, kako bi se lahko nevladne organizacije (NVO), ki uvajajo opolnomočenje prikrajšanih skupnosti, obravnavale kot turistična atrakcija v turizmu revnih območij (obisk revnih četrti). Raziskava je uporabila fenomenološki pristop in zbrala podatke preko intervjujev s štirimi informatorji. Poudarja pomen vključevanja iniciativ za opolnomočenje skupnosti, ki jih vodi lokalni člani skupnosti, v programe turizma revnih območij. Na podlagi podatkov, zbranih z opazovanjem in intervjuji, je izstopila ključna vloga NVO-jev pri turizmu revnih območij. Identificirani so bili kot subjekti, ki opolnomočijo, medtem ko se prikrajšane skupnosti na podlagi dodatnih raziskav obravnava kot subjekte, ki so opolnomočeni. NVO-ji opolnomočajo marginalizirane skupnosti, da preprečijo izkoriščanje in jim omogočijo koristi od turizma revnih območij, s čimer izboljšujejo njihovo kakovost življenja. Raziskava raziskuje, kako lahko NVO-ji omogočijo skupnostim, da postanejo turistična atrakcija v turizmu revnih območij. Poudarja pomen vključevanja lokalne skupnosti in opolnomočenja v tej vrsti turizma, pri čemer izpostavlja NVO-je kot subjekte, ki opolnomočajo. Raziskava izpostavlja, da turizem revnih območij prispeva k izboljšanju prikrajšanih skupnosti z izboljšanjem njihove kakovosti življenja namesto izrabljanja teh skupnosti.

Ključne besede: opolnomočenje; participativna kompetenca; populistična kompetenca; turizem revnih območij; sociopolitična sposobnost

Academica Turistica, 17(2), 129–141

Analiza recenzij restavracij v Almatyju s pomočjo tematskega modeliranja

Alper Kürşat Uysal, Egemen Güneş Tükenmez*, Madina Abdikarimova Nurbulatovna, Murat Alper Başaran, and Kemal Kantarci, Turganbai Abdrasilov Kurmanbaevich, Kultay Adilova Agytaevna, Kainar Kaldybay Kaldybayulu, Karlygash Aralbekova Amirovna in Nurzhan Abdirazakov

Pričujoča raziskava preučuje ocene strank v gostinskem sektorju v Almatyju v Kazahstanu. Čeprav Kazahstan ponuja edinstvene jedi, pijače in gostinske obrate, je le malo raziskav raziskalo ocene strank v okviru gostinskega posla. Zato je to pionirska raziskava, ki preučuje težave in skrbi gostinskega sektorja skozi oči strank v Almatyju z uporabo analize velikih podatkov. Zbrani podatkovni niz s spletne strani Tripadvisor vsebuje več kot 13.000 ocen restavracij v različnih jezikih iz obdobja med letoma 2010 in 2023. Kot prevladujoča jezika ocen sta na splošno uporabljeni angleščina in ruščina. Uporabljene so tehnike rudarjenja besedil, kot sta modeliranje tem in analiza čustev, s čimer izpeljujemo in skušamo razumeti glavne poudarke, težave in skrbi gostov restavracij. Zbrani podatki iz obdobja med letoma 2010 in 2023 so razdeljeni na dva približno enaka podatkovna niza, ki zajemata obdobji med letoma 2010 in 2017 ter 2018 in 2023. Razkrito je bilo, da so bili gostje restavracij manj zadovoljni s procesom storitve, medtem ko so bile najpozitivnejše ocene podane za temo »Vzdušje in dogodki« in so bile napisane tako v angleščini kot v ruščini. Glede na to, da je proces storitve celosten proces, bo analiza pogojev, ki vplivajo na dobro izvedbo storitev in izboljšave, spodbudila goste restavracij k oblikovanju pozitivnih mnenj. Raziskava ponuja priložnost za vodstvene, operativne in marketinške oddelke v Almatyju, da skozi oči strank izboljšajo gostinski posel. Ker na straneh restavracij ni natančnih informacij o temah restavracij, ni bilo mogoče upoštevati tematske razlike.

Ključne besede: restavracija, spletne ocene, rudarjenje besedil, modeliranje tem, Almaty, Kazahstan

Academica Turistica, 17(2), 143–162

Od kamere do kompasa: razkrivanje vpliva potovalnih videodnevnikov na turistične namene obiska

Tariqul Islam, Jeetesh Kumar, Wong Foong Yee, Siti Rahayu Hussin in Neethiahnathan Ari Ragavan

Potovalni vlogi so videooblike spletnih ocen, ki jih običajno ustvari turisti in so večinoma objavljene na platformah družbenih medijev. Omogočajo vizualno in osebno podajanje dožemanja destinacije ter navdihujejo in usmerjajo sledilce, kje in kaj naj počnejo. Raziskava raziskuje vpliv potovalnih vlogov na namero turistov, da obiščejo destinacijo. V njej je bilo anketiranih 231 prebivalcev Bangladeša (s predhodnimi izkušnjami s potovanji in potovalnimi vlogi). V presečni raziskavi je bilo uporabljeno namensko vzorčenje. Ugotovitve so pokazale, da turisti dojemajo videoposnetke potovalnih vlogov kot uporabne in zaupanja vredne predvsem na podlagi kakovosti informacij potovalnega vloga ter verodostojnosti vlogerja, kar posledično vpliva na sprejemanje informacij iz vloga in namero turistov, da obiščejo destinacijo. Raziskava ima teoretični in praktični prispevek. V obstoječi model sprejemanja in-

formacij (Information Adoption Model – IAM) sta bili dodana parametra zaupanje v informacije in namera turistov, da obiščejo destinacijo. V praksi pa raziskava nudi podlage za kratkoročne in dolgoročne odločitve deležnikov v turističnem gospodarstvu. Podanih je tudi več omejitev raziskave in priporočil za prihodnje raziskovanje.

Ključne besede: potovalni vlog, kakovost informacij, verodostojnost blogerja, uporabnost informacij, zaupanje v informacije, namera obiska

Academica Turistica, 17(2), 163–177

Uporaba pristopa metodologije mehkih sistemov za iskanje trajnostnih gastronomskih rešitev na Baliju v Indoneziji

I Gede Mudana, I Nyoman Cahyadi Wijaya, I Gede Ginaya in Dedi Gusman

Predstavljena raziskava je primer uporabe metodologije mehkih sistemov (MMS) za razumevanje kompleksnih interakcij med deležniki in večplastnimi elementi gastronomskega turizma ter iskanje trajnostnih gastronomskih rešitev pri razvoju gastronomskega turizma na Baliju v Indoneziji. Opisana raziskava se je raztezala od decembra 2022 do septembra 2023 in zajema uporabo MMS za razumevanje interakcij med deležniki ter elementi gastronomskega turizma na Baliju v Indoneziji ter kasnejše raziskovanje trajnostnih gastronomskih rešitev v tem časovnem okviru. Raziskava uporablja pristop študije primera za raziskovanje izzivov in priložnosti za razvoj gastronomskega turizma na Baliju v Indoneziji. Z intervjuji, s preučevanjem dokumentov in z opazovanji so zajeti ter modelirani pogledi različnih deležnikov, vključno z lokalnimi skupnostmi, s turisti, z managerji restavracij in administrativnimi organi. Ugotovitve poudarjajo pomen ohranjanja kulinarične tradicije, podpore lokalnim podjetjem in zagotavljanja okoljske trajnosti za pozitiven vpliv gastronomskega turizma. MMS se je izkazala za učinkovito pri spodbujanju vključujočih in trajnostnih praks v razvoju gastronomskega turizma. Spoznanja iz študije primera poudarjajo potrebo po strategijah, specifičnih za kontekst, in vključevanju različnih deležnikov v procese odločanja. Prispevek se zavzema za široko sprejetje MMS v gastronomskih turističnih pobudah, ki spodbujajo harmonijo med ohranjanjem kulturne dediščine, lokalno gospodarsko rastjo in ekološko trajnostjo na Baliju ter podobnih destinacijah po vsem svetu. Izsledki raziskave dopolnjujejo stalni diskurz o razvoju trajnostnega in kulturno občutljivega gastronomskega turizma.

Ključne besede: metodologija mehkih sistemov, gastronomski turizem, balijska kuhinja

Academica Turistica, 17(2), 179–194

Odnos med izdatki za zdravje in turizmom na makroekonomski ravni

Helena Nemeč Rudež, Lana Rudež, and Lara Rudež

Pričujoči prispevek prikazuje, da obstaja povezava med zdravstvenimi izdatki in turizmom na makroekonomski ravni, in s tem nakaže potrebo po nadaljnji raziskavi. Z analizo podatkov v časovnem obdobju med letoma 2000 in 2019 ter s poudarkom na štirih srednjeevropskih državah (Sloveniji, Hrvaški, Madžarski in Češki) so bile ugotovljene nekatere pomembne korelacije med zdravstvenimi izdatki in kazalniki turizma na ravni držav. Rezultati kažejo različne korelacije med kazalni-

ki zdravja in turizma, večinoma so pozitivne, močne in zmerne. Zato se v okviru prispevka predlaga nadaljnje raziskave, ki bi zajemale longitudinalno panelno analizo z uporabo naprednih ekonometričnih tehnik za določitev narave odnosa med zdravjem in turizmom na makroekonomski ravni.

Ključne besede: izdatki za zdravje, turizem, zdravje, korelacija

Academica Turistica, 17(2), 195–205

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