

# CAUTHE 2025 CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

TRANSFORMING TOMORROW:  
LEVERAGING OPPORTUNITIES  
TO CREATE CHANGE IN TOURISM,  
HOSPITALITY AND EVENTS

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and Hospitality Education

# TRANSFORMING TOMORROW: LEVERAGING OPPORTUNITIES TO CREATE CHANGE IN TOURISM, HOSPITALITY AND EVENTS

## PROCEEDINGS OF THE 35TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

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# WELCOME FROM THE CONFERENCE CHAIR

Welcome to CAUTHE 2025! The Tourism Discipline at the UQ Business School, The University of Queensland is proud to once again welcome delegates back to Meanjin (Brisbane) for the leading tourism, hospitality and event conference in the region.

Meanjin (Brisbane) is a city that is renowned for its sub-tropical environment and casual “Queenslander vibe”. Yet, as you will see during your visit, it is also a city in transformation; a centre for business, investment, major events, and tourism, with an economy that is expected to grow to \$217 billion over the next decade in the lead up to, and beyond, the 2032 Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The University of Queensland is excited to play a major role in preparing Queensland to welcome the world in 2032 and beyond. The University is committed to contributing to an ongoing legacy in conjunction with government, industry, and communities across Australia.

The conference theme, “Generational transformation. Tourism, hospitality and events: Leverage and learning” reflects the opportunities such events have as catalysts for generational transformation: for the host city, and for the tourism, hospitality, and events sectors across Australasia. We will explore these issues through keynote speeches and panels, Lightning Roundtables, and lunchbox sessions, in addition to standard presentations. The Lightning Roundtables are a new format for 2025, and presenters in these themed sessions have been chosen to bring a diverse range of perspectives, many of which will build upon and extend the morning keynote panel sessions. We hope these various presentation formats encourage discussion, debate and reflection on how we as a sector can actively leverage

opportunities to create a more diverse, inclusive, and sustainable future.

CAUTHE will be hosted across a range of Brisbane’s beautiful heritage buildings. The PhD workshop will be held at UQ Brisbane City, in the historic 308 Queen Street building, and our cocktail welcome reception at UQ Customs House where delegates can enjoy spectacular views of the Brisbane River and Story Bridge. Like our UQ campuses, Brisbane City Hall is one of the city’s premier heritage buildings and our conference venue, conveniently located close to all of the best Brisbane has to offer. The City Hall Main Auditorium will be our conference dinner venue and we hope you enjoy dancing the night away in this spectacular setting.

But as we all know, the social activities are just as important at CAUTHE as the presentations! We have created lots of opportunities for socializing, and each evening have designed post-event venues where delegates can gather together. We will let you know of optional social activities to follow the formal events so please join in and experience a bit more of “Bris-Vegas” with your UQ hosts.

We will also have morning walks of the city, and for those more energetic delegates, you can join a running group. Keep your eye out on the Conference App and social media channels (follow CAUTHE 2025 conference on Facebook) for special offers to various attractions around the city. You might also like to stroll around our sub-tropical city while enjoying City Symphony – see <https://qmf.org.au/events/city-symphony/>

Finally, a special thanks to the many people that contributed to putting the conference together. The UQ Tourism team, our Conference Managers, Leishman Associates, our volunteers, reviewers, sponsors and supporters.

Thank you for joining us in Meanjin for CAUTHE 2025 and I hope that you enjoy CAUTHE 2025.

**Professor Lisa Ruhanen**

The University of Queensland  
CAUTHE 2025 Conference Chair

# REPORT FROM THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

The CAUTHE2025 conference held in Meanjin (Brisbane), Queensland at the iconic Brisbane City Hall, presented an excellent opportunity where prominent industry leaders, researchers, postgraduate students and professionals came together to discuss the fields of tourism, hospitality, events and education in a sharing culture of diversity, collegiality, expertise and scholarly inquiry.

Through the overarching theme of Transforming Tomorrow: Leveraging Opportunities to Create Change in Tourism, Hospitality and Events, CAUTHE2025 equipped thought leaders on how generational transformation events such as the 2032 Games can be leveraged to create legacy, while applying learning to tackle the challenges faced within tourism, hospitality, education and events over the next decade.

An innovation that CAUTHE2025 trialled was the inclusion of lightning presentations. Here, delegates presented their research in a rapid fire five minute presentation with a maximum of five slides. The Scientific Committee saw this as a unique and exciting opportunity for change where delegates had the chance present their research in a short, efficient manner on topics that were being conceptualised or at different stages of data collection or analysis.

CAUTHE2025 received a record 70 full papers, and 184 extended abstracts were submitted. Ultimately, following withdrawals, there were 142 standard presentations and 59 lightning presentations. Papers spanned 15 subthemes as diverse as First Nations and Indigenous Tourism, Tourism Mobility and Transport, Events: Impacts, Legacy and Leverage, and Gender, Diversity and Inclusion. Delegates came from countries as varied as America, Finland, China, Taiwan, New Zealand, Japan, South Africa.

The CAUTHE2025 conference adheres to rigorous standards with all full papers undergoing a double-blind peer process. All lightning presentations were double blind-reviewed by two experts in the research themes that was part of the Scientific Committee. The review process was overseen by the Scientific Committee Chair and a deputy Scientific Committee Chair. All reviewers were part of a Scientific Committee who were personally chosen by the Scientific Committee Chair based on their expertise on one of the research themes. I would like to offer my sincere thanks to all the reviewers of the Scientific Committee in providing quality feedback in a timely manner.

I trust that you find the conference programme relevant, engaging and innovative.

**Dr Aaron Tkaczynski**  
Scientific Committee Chair

# CONFERENCE THEME

## TRANSFORMING TOMORROW: LEVERAGING OPPORTUNITIES TO CREATE CHANGE IN TOURISM, HOSPITALITY AND EVENTS

### SUB-THEMES

- Emerging Trends and Critical Issues in Tourism, Hospitality and Events
- Climate Change and Travel Behaviour
- Sustainable, Ethical, and Regenerative Tourism
- Events: Impact, Legacy, and Leverage
- First Nations and Indigenous Tourism
- Innovation, Technology and ICT
- Transformation, Agility and Adaptation
- Gender, Diversity and Inclusion
- Accessibility
- Destination Management and Marketing
- Risk, Recovery and Resilience
- Higher Education Teaching, Learning and Research
- Tourism, Hospitality and Events Workforce
- Tourism Mobility and Transport
- Other Suitable Topics

# ABOUT CAUTHE



CAUTHE began to form in the late 1980s and was officially established in Sydney on 19 June 1992. CAUTHE is comprised of Chapters covering the various higher education providers of bachelor degree level and above in Australia and New Zealand which are involved in the teaching, research and or administration of tourism, hospitality and/or events education. In addition to Chapter membership, CAUTHE offers Affiliate membership for those organisations interested in hospitality, tourism and/or events. Individuals are eligible for Associate or Student membership. Fellow membership is granted to people in recognition of enduring commitment in the field.

CAUTHE provides opportunities for networking with other academics who are interested in hospitality, tourism and events education and research through involvement in conferences, mid-year meetings, special interest groups and PhD Scholar, Early Career Researcher, Mid-Career Academic and other workshops. The annual conference has traditionally been organised by a host committee drawn from a single institution or a consortium of closely located institutions, for academics, students and industry. The first annual conference was held in 1993, with two conferences having been held prior to the formalisation of CAUTHE in 1988 and 1991.

The official journal of CAUTHE is the Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Editor-in-Chief, Professor Marianna Sigala, and published by Elsevier. The journal has a CiteScore of 13.3 and Impact Factor of 7.6.

# CONFERENCE HOSTS

## THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF QUEENSLAND  
AUSTRALIA

The University of Queensland (UQ) is one of Australia's leading research and teaching institutions. We strive for excellence through the creation, preservation, transfer and application of knowledge. For more than a century, we have educated and worked with outstanding people to deliver knowledge leadership for a better world. UQ ranks among the world's top universities, as measured by several key independent rankings, including the U.S. News Best Global Universities Rankings 2024 (41), the Performance Ranking of Scientific Papers for World Universities 2023 (37), CWTS Leiden Ranking 2024 (41), QS World University Rankings 2025 (40), Academic Ranking of World Universities 2024 (63), and Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2025 (77). UQ was also ranked Australia's top university by The Australian Financial Review (AFR) in 2024 for the second year in a row.

213 Fellows of Australia's 5 learned academies – AAS, AAHMS, ASSA, ATSE, and AAH – are UQ staff (including honorary and adjunct appointments) and emeritus professors.

UQ is one of only 4 Australian members of the global Universitas 21, a founding member of the Group of Eight (Go8) universities, and a member of Universities Australia.

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# FULL RESEARCH PAPERS

# A STUDY ON FOOD WASTE AMONG TOURISTS IN HAINAN PROVINCE BASED ON SIGNAL GAME MODEL: DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSCIOUS TOURISTS AND NON-ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSCIOUS TOURISTS

Zhiren Zeng<sup>a</sup>, Jianxing Cai<sup>a</sup>, Mingwei Li<sup>a</sup> and Jiayu Wang<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>School of International Tourism and Public Administration, Hainan University

## ABSTRACT

In the thriving tourism sector of Hainan Province, food waste has drawn public concern. This paper applies the signal game model to examine the drivers of food waste among tourists, differentiated by environmental awareness. It models the impact of hotel pricing on food waste, showing that high-cost hotels attract eco-conscious tourists and reduce waste through higher prices, while low-cost hotels risk increased waste despite lower prices. Empirical evidence supports these findings, suggesting policies like stricter regulations for low-cost hotels and incentives for greener tourists to curb waste and support sustainable tourism in Hainan.

**Keywords:** *Signal Game; Food Waste; Environmental Awareness; Hotel Pricing Strategy; Hainan Tourism*

## Introduction

Globalization has fundamentally reshaped the economic landscape, with the tourism industry emerging as a pivotal force, contributing over 10% to the global GDP and generating nearly 300 million jobs worldwide (UNWTO, 2023). This trend is particularly pronounced in emerging and developing economies, where the tourism sector has become a cornerstone of economic growth. China, with its vast economic potential and cultural diversity, exemplifies this trend, especially in Hainan Province. Boasting unique tropical landscapes and rich cultural heritage, Hainan has leveraged these assets to bolster its tourism industry significantly since its designation as a special economic zone in 1988.

However, the rapid growth of the tourism industry has not been without its challenges. Environmental concerns, particularly food waste, have become increasingly pressing. Food waste not only squanders valuable resources but also exacerbates environmental degradation and contributes to global warming (FAO, 2013). The environmental consciousness of tourists plays a crucial role in shaping their food consumption and waste behaviors. Empirical evidence suggests that heightened awareness among tourists correlates with reduced food waste (Xie Liping et al.), while a lack of awareness can lead to increased waste (McAdams Bruce et al.).

Addressing the issue of food waste necessitates a deep understanding of tourists' behaviors and how they are influenced by the pricing strategies of hotels. The signal game model, originally proposed by Spence (1973) to address information asymmetry in markets, offers a valuable framework for this analysis. It posits that hotels can convey their commitment to quality and environmental sustainability through pricing, thereby attracting tourists who value these attributes (Huang Yinghua).

This paper employs a signal game model to dissect the impact of various pricing strategies on tourists' food waste behavior. The model elucidates the dynamic interplay between hotels and tourists and its implications for waste behavior. The theoretical contribution of this study lies in its application of the signal game model to understand food waste, providing actionable insights for hotels and a scientific foundation for policymakers to develop environmental policies, particularly in the realms of pricing and education (Spence; FAO, 2013).

The paper will conduct a thorough literature review, detail the construction of the signal game model, and analyze it using empirical data from Hainan. It aspires to provide a holistic set of solutions for sustainable tourism development and waste reduction, not only in Hainan but also on a global scale.

## Literature Review

### *Causes and Influencing Factors of Food Waste*

Food waste is a pervasive global issue with multifaceted causes and influencing factors. A seminal study by Lyon, Thomas P., and John W. Maxwell (2007) highlighted the primary sources of food waste in the catering sector as being the result of both oversupply of meals and the inconsistent ordering patterns of consumers. This oversupply and the tendency of consumers to over-order at restaurants have been shown to frequently lead to substantial quantities of food being discarded. Moreover, broader consumer culture and the deeply ingrained practices within dining habits are also identified as pivotal in shaping the extent of food waste behavior. The influence of these cultural and habitual factors underscores the complexity of addressing food waste, as it requires not only changes at the operational level but also shifts in societal attitudes and behaviors.

### *Introduction and Application of Signal Game Theory*

The signal game theory, first introduced by Spence, serves as a valuable analytical tool for understanding information asymmetry within markets. This theory has been adeptly applied to the tourism industry to dissect how hotels can utilize pricing strategies to communicate their service quality and commitment to environmental sustainability to potential tourists. Rosen (1974) expanded upon this theory by emphasizing the pivotal role that pricing can play as a signal to consumers. In this context, high-cost hotels are able to use their higher prices as a signal of the quality of their services and their dedication to eco-friendly practices, thereby attracting a segment of tourists who are more environmentally conscious. This strategic use of pricing by hotels has profound implications for how tourists make consumption decisions and how much food waste they generate, as it can influence their perception of value and their resulting behavior .

### *Policy Instruments and Management Measures*

In addressing the challenge of food waste, Stenmarck, Asa, et al. (2016) have suggested that governmental policies can play a crucial role. By implementing stricter regulations on food waste and providing economic incentives for waste reduction, governments can stimulate hotels and

consumers to adopt more sustainable practices. Moreover, the role of education and awareness campaigns in shaping consumer behavior should not be underestimated. These campaigns have been shown to be highly effective in enhancing tourists' environmental awareness, which in turn can lead to a reduction in food waste. By fostering a greater understanding of the environmental impact of food waste, tourists can be motivated to make more sustainable choices in their consumption habits while traveling.

#### *Insufficiency of Existing Research and Contribution of This Paper*

Despite the growing body of research on food waste, there remains a significant gap in understanding how different levels of environmental awareness among tourists influence their food waste behavior. This paper seeks to fill this gap by applying the signal game model to explore the nuances of tourist behavior with respect to food waste across varying pricing strategies. The study aims to provide a robust theoretical framework that can inform the development of practical strategies to promote sustainable tourism in Hainan Province. By offering insights into how hotel pricing can influence tourist behavior, the research contributes to the broader goal of reducing food waste and fostering a more sustainable tourism industry. The implications of this study extend beyond Hainan, offering valuable lessons for other tourist destinations grappling with similar challenges.

## **Methods**

This study further analyzes the problem by constructing a signal game model:

#### *Model Assumptions*

To deeply analyze the food waste issue in Hainan Province's tourism industry, we construct a signal game model with the following key assumptions:

#### **Participants**

**Hotels:** There are two types of hotels in the market, namely high-cost hotels (Type H) and low-cost hotels (Type L). High-cost hotels offer higher quality services, while low-cost hotels attract customers with lower prices.

**Tourists:** Tourists are divided into two categories, namely environmentally conscious tourists (Type E) and non-environmentally conscious tourists (Type N). Environmentally conscious tourists are more sensitive to food waste, while non-environmentally conscious tourists may not pay much attention to this issue.

## The Application of Signal Game Model Theory in Tourist Food Waste

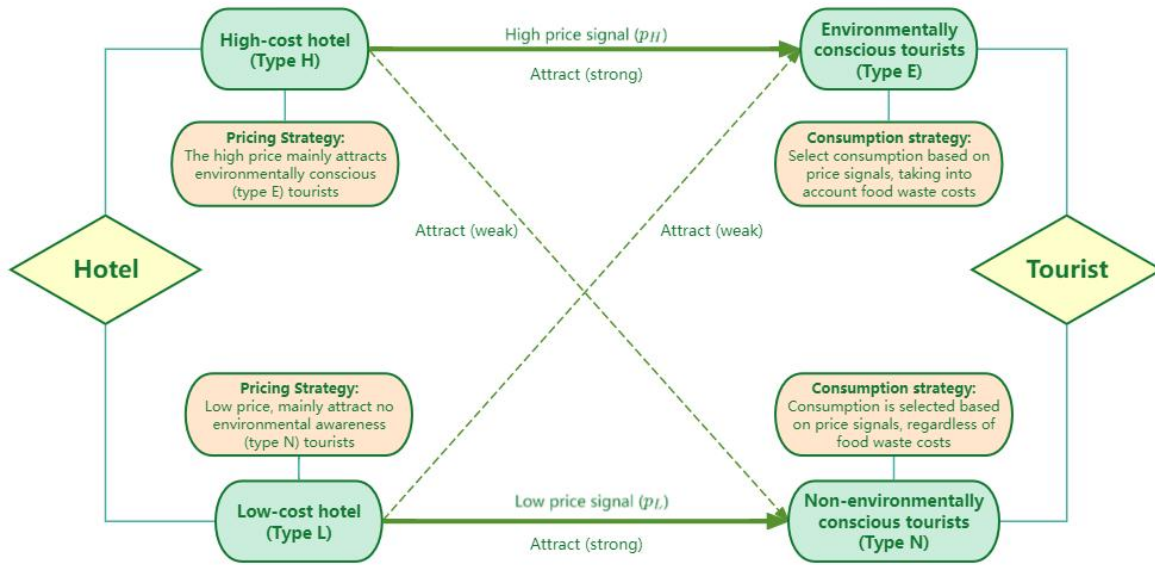


Figure 1 The Application of Signal Game Model Theory in Tourist Food Waste

### Strategies

**Hotel Strategy:** Hotels send signals by setting breakfast prices. High-cost hotels set higher prices, while low-cost hotels set lower prices.

**Tourist Strategy:** Tourists decide their consumption based on the hotel's price signal and their own environmental awareness. Environmentally conscious tourists tend to reduce food waste, while non-environmentally conscious tourists may not actively reduce food consumption.

### Payoff Functions

Payoff function for high-cost hotels:

$$\pi_H(q_E, q_N) = (p_H - C_H(q_E + q_N)) \cdot (q_E + q_N)$$

where  $C_H(q_E + q_N)$  represents the total cost for high-cost hotels to provide services, including food costs, labor costs, etc.

Payoff function for low-cost hotels:

$$\pi_L(q_E, q_N) = (p_L - C_H(q_E + q_N)) \cdot (q_E + q_N)$$

where  $C_H(q_E + q_N)$  represents the total cost for low-cost hotels, usually lower than that of high-cost hotels.

### Tourist Utility Functions

The utility function for environmentally conscious tourists considers both the utility of food and the cost of food waste:

$$U_E(q_E, p) = V(q_E) - W_E(q_E) - p \cdot q_E$$

where  $V(q_E) = a \cdot q_E - b \cdot q_E^2$  represents the utility of food, and  $W_E(q_E) = \alpha \cdot q_E^2$  represents the cost of food waste.

The utility function for non-environmentally conscious tourists only considers the utility of food and the price:

$$U_N(q_N, p) = V(q_N) - p \cdot q_N$$

where  $V(q_N) = a \cdot q_N - b \cdot q_N^2$  represents the utility of food.

### *Model Solution*

#### **Signal Equilibrium in the Game**

This paper seeks a Bayesian Nash Equilibrium, where the strategies of both hotels and tourists are optimal, meaning that no party can obtain higher utility by changing their strategy given the strategies of other participants.

#### **Conditions for Separating Equilibrium**

Separating equilibrium requires different types of hotels to use different price signals to allow tourists to distinguish between them. High-cost hotels attract environmentally conscious tourists who are less sensitive to prices through higher prices, while low-cost hotels attract non-environmentally conscious tourists who are more price-sensitive through lower prices.

#### **Solution of Equilibrium**

Separating equilibrium solution: We first determine the prices  $P_H$  and  $P_L$  so that hotel profits are maximized, and tourists' responses can distinguish between hotel types. This requires solving the following optimization problem:

$$\max_{p_H, p_L} \pi_H(q_E, q_N) \max_{p_H, p_L} \pi_L(q_E, q_N)$$

At the same time, tourists' consumption quantities  $q_E$  and  $q_N$  must also meet the conditions for utility maximization:

$$\max_{q_E} U_E(q_E, p) \max_{q_N} U_N(q_N, p)$$

Mixed equilibrium solution: In a mixed equilibrium, hotels may randomly choose price signals, and tourists choose consumption quantities based on a probability distribution. In this case, both hotels and tourists are choosing optimal strategies in uncertainty.

### *Model Application*



By constructing the signal game model, we can analyze the impact of different pricing strategies on tourists' food waste behavior. The model results will provide strategic suggestions for hotels to reduce food waste and references for governments and related organizations to formulate environmental protection policies.

### *Limitations of the Model and Future Research Directions*

#### **Limitations**

The model assumes that tourists' behavior is entirely determined by price signals, without considering other factors that may affect food waste, such as cultural differences and personal habits.

The parameters in the model need to be estimated based on actual data, which may have certain errors.

#### **Future Research Directions**

Consider more influencing factors, such as social influence and personal habits, to expand and improve the model.

Refine the estimation of model parameters with empirical data to improve the model's predictive accuracy.

Explore how different types of hotels can influence tourists' food waste behavior through non-price factors (such as service quality, environmental arrangements, etc.).

Through the construction of the above model, we can more deeply understand the relationship between hotel pricing strategies and tourists' food waste behavior, and provide a scientific basis for achieving sustainable development in the tourism industry.

## **Results**

In this section, we will conduct an empirical analysis based on the signal game theory model, and deeply study the impact of price strategies on the food waste behavior of tourists in Haikou Intercontinental Resort (H-type hotel) and Hainan University International Academic Exchange Center Hotel (L-type hotel).

### *Data and Assumptions*

Type H hotel (InterContinental Haikou Resort) breakfast price: RMB 198 per person

Type L hotel (Hainan University International Academic Exchange Center Hotel) breakfast price: RMB 68 per person

Daily tourist reception number: 1000 people (Type H hotel), 800 people (Type L hotel)

Proportion of environmentally conscious tourists: 40%, Proportion of non-environmentally conscious tourists: 60%

Utility function parameters:

$$a = 250, b = 0.5, \alpha = 0.02, \beta = 0.01$$

### *Model Solution*

#### **Optimal Consumption Quantity for Environmentally Conscious Tourists**

The utility function for environmentally conscious tourists is:

$$U_E(q_E, p) = V(q_E) - W_E(q_E) - p \cdot q_E$$

where:

$$V(q_E) = a \cdot q_E - b \cdot q_E^2$$

$$W_E(q_E) = \alpha \cdot q_E^2$$

To find the optimal solution, we take the derivative and set it to zero:

$$\frac{d}{dq_E} (a \cdot q_E - b \cdot q_E^2 - \alpha \cdot q_E^2 - p \cdot q_E) = 0$$

$$a - 2b \cdot q_E - 2\alpha \cdot q_E - p = 0$$

$$q_E^* = \frac{a - p}{2(b + \alpha)}$$

#### **Optimal Consumption Quantity for Non-Environmentally Conscious Tourists**

The utility function for non-environmentally conscious tourists is:

$$U_N(q_N, p) = V(q_N) - p \cdot q_N$$

where:

$$V(q_N) = a \cdot q_N - b \cdot q_N^2$$

To find the optimal solution, we take the derivative and set it to zero:

$$\frac{d}{dq_N} (a \cdot q_N - b \cdot q_N^2 - p \cdot q_N) = 0$$

$$a - 2b \cdot q_N - p = 0$$

$$q_N^* = \frac{a - p}{2b}$$

### *Calculation of Food Waste*

#### **Food Waste of Environmentally Conscious Tourists**

The food waste function for environmentally conscious tourists is:

$$W_E(q_E) = \alpha \cdot q_E^2$$

Substituting the optimal  $q_E^*$ , we get:

$$W_E(q_E^*) = \alpha \left( \frac{a-p}{2(b+\alpha)} \right)^2$$

#### Food Waste of Non-Environmentally Conscious Tourists

The food waste function for non-environmentally conscious tourists is:

$$W_N(q_N) = \beta \cdot q_N^2$$

Substituting the optimal  $q_N^*$ , we get:

$$W_N(q_N^*) = \beta \left( \frac{a-p}{2b} \right)^2$$

#### Total Food Waste Quantity

##### High-Cost Hotels (Type H)

Total food waste for environmentally conscious tourists:

$$Waste_{E,H} = 400 \times \alpha \left( \frac{250-198}{2(0.5+0.02)} \right)^2$$

$$Waste_{E,H} = 400 \times 0.02 \left( \frac{52}{1.04} \right)^2 \approx 400 \times 0.02 \times 25.76 \approx 21.01$$

Total food waste for non-environmentally conscious tourists:

$$Waste_{N,H} = 600 \times \beta \left( \frac{250-198}{2 \times 0.5} \right)^2$$

$$Waste_{N,H} = 600 \times 0.01 \left( \frac{52}{1} \right)^2 \approx 600 \times 0.01 \times 2704 \approx 162.24$$

Total food waste for high-cost hotels:

$$Waste_H = 21.01 + 162.24 \approx 183.25$$

##### Low-Cost Hotels (Type L)

Total food waste for environmentally conscious tourists:

$$Waste_{E,L} = 320 \times \alpha \left( \frac{250-68}{2(0.5+0.02)} \right)^2$$

$$Waste_{E,L} = 320 \times 0.02 \left( \frac{182}{1.04} \right)^2 \approx 320 \times 0.02 \times 329.01 \approx 21.39$$

Total food waste for non-environmentally conscious tourists:

$$Waste_{N,L} = 480 \times \beta \left( \frac{250 - 68}{2 \times 0.5} \right)^2$$

$$Waste_{N,L} = 480 \times 0.01 \left( \frac{182}{1} \right)^2 \approx 480 \times 0.01 \times 33124 \approx 155.71$$

Total food waste for low-cost hotels:

$$Waste_L = 21.39 + 155.71 \approx 177.10$$

#### *Hotel Profit Analysis*

The profit function for a hotel can be represented as:

$$\Pi = \text{Revenue} - \text{Cost}$$

where *Revenue* is Total Revenue, *Cost* is Total Cost, which includes food costs and waste costs.

#### *Results Analysis*

By calculating the total food waste for different types of hotels, we can analyze the differences in food waste between high-cost and low-cost hotels. The specific calculations are as follows:

For Type H hotels, assuming  $a = 250, b = 0.5, \alpha = 0.02, \beta = 0.01$ , then:

$$Waste_{E,H} = 400 \times 0.02 \left( \frac{250 - 198}{2(0.5 + 0.02)} \right)^2$$

$$Waste_{N,H} = 600 \times 0.01 \left( \frac{250 - 198}{2 \times 0.5} \right)^2$$

For Type L hotels, with the same parameters:

$$Waste_{E,L} = 320 \times 0.02 \left( \frac{250 - 68}{2(0.5 + 0.02)} \right)^2$$

$$Waste_{N,L} = 480 \times 0.01 \left( \frac{250 - 68}{2 \times 0.5} \right)^2$$

Through these detailed calculations and analyses, we can more accurately assess the performance of different types of hotels in terms of food waste and provide a scientific basis for policy-making.

Table 1 The Solution of Signal Game Theory Model in Empirical Analysis

Tourists Type	Hotel Type	Consumption $q$	Optimal Consumption $q^*$	Food Waste Function $W(q)$	Under the Optimal Consumption $q^*$ , the Food waste function $W(q^*)$	Total food Waste
Environmental protection consciousness (E type)	High-cost (H type)	$q_{E,H} = \frac{a-p_H}{2(b+\alpha)}$	$q_E^* = \frac{a-p}{2(b+\alpha)}$	$W_{E,H}(q) = \alpha \cdot q$	$W_E(q_E^*) = \alpha \left( \frac{a-p}{2(b+\alpha)} \right)^2$	$Waste_{E,H} = 400 \times \alpha \cdot \left( \frac{a-198}{2(0.5+0.02)} \right)^2$
	Low-cost (L type)	$q_{E,L} = \frac{a-p_L}{2(b+\alpha)}$		$W_{E,L}(q) = \alpha \cdot q^2$		$Waste_{E,L} = 320 \times \alpha \cdot \left( \frac{a-68}{2(0.5+0.02)} \right)^2$
Non-environmental protection consciousness (N type)	High-cost (H type)	$q_{N,H} = \frac{a-p_H}{2b}$	$q_N^* = \frac{a-p}{2b}$	$W_{N,H}(q) = \beta \cdot q$	$W_N(q_N^*) = \beta \left( \frac{a-p}{2b} \right)^2$	$Waste_{N,H} = 600 \times \beta \cdot \left( \frac{a-198}{2 \times 0.5} \right)^2$
	Low-cost (L type)	$q_{N,L} = \frac{a-p_L}{2b}$		$W_{N,L}(q) = \beta \cdot q^2$		$Waste_{N,L} = 480 \times \beta \cdot \left( \frac{a-68}{2 \times 0.5} \right)^2$

## Discussions

Based on the results of the empirical analysis, the following series of policy recommendations are proposed for the food waste issue in the tourism industry of Hainan Province. These recommendations aim to reduce food waste and enhance the operational efficiency of hotels through various measures such as price regulation, environmental incentives, education and publicity, policy support and supervision, and technology and innovation, thereby promoting the development of sustainable tourism.

### Price Regulation Strategies

#### Implement Dynamic Pricing Mechanisms

Dynamic pricing mechanisms can assist hotels in adjusting prices according to changes in market demand, thereby optimizing resource allocation and reducing food waste. Specifically, hotels can adjust breakfast prices based on seasonal factors, customer flow, and special events. For instance, moderately lowering prices during the off-peak tourism season can attract more tourists to stay, increasing the occupancy rate; whereas moderately raising prices during the peak season can control the number of tourists, reduce catering demand, and thus decrease food waste. Moreover, according to Xu Shiwei (2005), dynamic pricing can effectively match demand with supply, reducing the waste of resources.

#### Differentiated Pricing Strategies

To incentivize tourists with stronger environmental awareness, hotels can adopt differentiated pricing strategies. For example, offering breakfast price discounts to environmentally conscious tourists can not only encourage them to choose greener consumption patterns but also enhance the competitiveness of the hotel. For tourists with weaker environmental awareness, hotels can

maintain standard or slightly higher prices to reflect the true cost and social cost of food. This measure can help elevate the perceived value of food, prompting tourists to cherish it more and thus reduce waste .

### **Introduce "Eco-Discounts"**

Introducing "Eco-Discounts" is an effective incentive measure aimed at encouraging tourists to reduce food waste. Hotels can establish discounts or point rewards for tourists who reduce food waste during meals. This practice can not only enhance tourists' environmental awareness but also encourage them to take practical actions to reduce waste . For example, hotels can record tourists' eco-friendly behaviors through apps or point systems and provide corresponding rewards based on their actions .

## *Environmental Incentive Measures*

### **Establish an Eco-Point System**

Establishing an eco-point system can effectively encourage tourists to reduce food waste. Hotels can offer points to tourists who reduce food waste, which can be redeemed for discounts or other rewards in future consumption . This measure can motivate tourists to be more restrained during meals and encourage long-term eco-friendly behavior.

### **Set Up "Green Table" Awards**

Hotels can establish "Green Table" awards to publicly recognize and reward tourists who stand out in terms of food conservation. These rewards can include coupons, free stays, etc., aiming to motivate more tourists to pay attention to food conservation and take conservation measures during actual meals . Such awards can not only enhance tourists' environmental awareness but also strengthen their loyalty to the hotel.

### **Personalized Catering Services**

Providing customized catering services for tourists with strong environmental awareness is an effective measure. For example, hotels can offer small-portion meal options to meet the needs of tourists who want to reduce food waste . This personalized service can not only improve tourists' satisfaction but also effectively reduce food waste.

## *Education and Publicity Activities*

### **Conduct Environmental Education Activities**

Environmental education activities can raise tourists' awareness of the food waste issue, thereby prompting them to take action to reduce waste. Hotels can organize environmental lectures, workshops, and interactive activities to popularize knowledge and skills about food conservation . These activities can not only enhance tourists' environmental awareness but also strengthen their sense of identity and loyalty to the hotel .

### **Hotel Internal Promotion**

Placing promotional signs in conspicuous places in hotels, such as "Clean Plate Campaign" reminder signs, can remind tourists to pay attention to food conservation. In addition, hotels can further strengthen the awareness of conservation by providing eco-friendly tableware and plates. These internal promotional measures can effectively guide tourists to take conservation measures during meals .

#### **Utilize Digital Media**

Hotels can use official websites, social media platforms, and mobile applications to publish information and educational content related to reducing food waste . For example, by posting food conservation tips and success stories, hotels can spread environmental protection concepts among tourists and encourage them to take conservation measures during actual meals.

### *Policy Support and Supervision*

#### **Develop Food Waste Management Standards**

The government should establish clear food waste management standards and operational guidelines to provide specific methods for hotels to reduce food waste . These standards can include various stages such as food procurement, storage, preparation, and service, helping hotels standardize operations and reduce food waste.

#### **Provide Financial Incentives**

The government can provide tax relief, subsidies, or other financial incentives to hotels that implement effective food waste reduction measures . Such incentive measures can encourage hotels to invest in equipment and technology to reduce food waste, thereby improving their operational efficiency.

#### **Strengthen Supervision and Evaluation**

The government should regularly evaluate and supervise the food waste management measures of hotels to ensure the effective implementation of policies . For example, by establishing a dedicated regulatory agency to regularly inspect the food waste situation of hotels and penalize violations. This regulatory measure can ensure the enforcement of policies and prompt hotels to take practical actions to reduce food waste.

#### **Promote Industry Cooperation**

The government should encourage the sharing of best practices within the hotel industry through industry conferences, seminars, and other forms to promote the exchange of knowledge and experience. By promoting industry cooperation, hotels can learn more effective methods to reduce food waste and apply them in actual operations.

### *Technology and Innovation*

#### **Smart Catering Management Systems**

Introducing smart catering management systems can optimize food procurement and distribution through data analysis to predict demand . For example, by analyzing historical data and real-time demand, the system can help hotels formulate scientific procurement plans to reduce the production of surplus food.

### **Food Waste Monitoring Technology**

Using Internet of Things and sensor technology to monitor food consumption and waste can provide real-time data support for management decisions . For instance, installing sensors to monitor the actual consumption of food can help hotels adjust their food supply plans in a timely manner and reduce waste.

### **Innovative Catering Models**

Encourage hotels to explore new types of catering service models, such as "order-to-eat," to reduce food waste. This model allows tourists to order meals according to their personal needs, thereby avoiding excessive preparation and waste of food.

### *Implementation Effects and Outlook*

After the implementation of policies, regular evaluation of the strategy effects is key to ensuring their effectiveness and sustainability. The evaluation work should cover multiple dimensions, including but not limited to the reduction of food waste, changes in tourist behavior patterns, and improvements in hotel operational efficiency. Specifically, the reduction of food waste can be quantified through the waste statistics of hotels, while observations of tourist behavior and surveys can reveal trends in their consumption habits. In addition, the operational efficiency of hotels can be measured by financial indicators such as revenue growth rate, cost savings, and customer satisfaction .

To ensure the long-term effectiveness of policies, it is necessary to establish a dynamic feedback mechanism that allows policies to respond to changes in market and social needs in a timely manner. This includes monitoring emerging trends, such as the evolution of consumer preferences, seasonal fluctuations in the tourism market, and updates to environmental policies. The flexibility of policies can be achieved through regular policy reviews, solicitation of opinions from stakeholders, and transparent disclosure of implementation situations .

With these comprehensive policy recommendations, we expect not only to effectively reduce food waste in the tourism industry of Hainan Province but also to enhance the environmental awareness of tourists and the sustainable operation capabilities of hotels . For example, through education and publicity activities, the awareness of tourists about the issue of food waste can be increased, and they can be encouraged to adopt more responsible consumption behaviors. At the same time, hotels can improve resource utilization efficiency by optimizing supply chain management and adopting innovative catering service models.

Furthermore, the implementation of policy recommendations will also have a positive impact on global sustainable development goals. Reducing food waste is directly related to reducing resource consumption, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and protecting biodiversity and other environmental goals . By promoting these policies in the tourism industry of Hainan Province, we



can not only bring dual economic and environmental benefits to the local community but also promote the global tourism industry towards a more green and environmentally friendly direction. Looking forward, we anticipate that these policy recommendations will lay a solid foundation for the sustainable development of the tourism industry in Hainan Province. With the in-depth implementation and continuous improvement of policies, Hainan Province is expected to become a global model for sustainable tourism. At the same time, the effectiveness of these policies will also provide valuable experience and insights for other tourist destinations, promoting the global tourism industry to develop in a more green and environmentally friendly direction.

## Conclusions and Implications

This paper systematically analyzes the food waste behavior of different types of tourists in the tourism industry of Hainan Province through the construction of a signal game model and conducts empirical analysis based on this. The study finds that tourists' environmental awareness has a significant impact on their food consumption and waste behavior. Specifically, environmentally conscious tourists show lower food waste behavior when faced with different pricing signals, while non-environmentally conscious tourists are not significantly affected by these price signals and may still exhibit higher food waste behavior.

Based on the analysis of the model and the verification of empirical data, it is found that high-cost hotels can effectively control tourists' food waste by setting higher prices and achieve higher profits. This indicates that the pricing strategy of high-cost hotels can not only reduce waste to some extent among environmentally conscious tourists but also increase their overall revenue. In contrast, low-cost hotels, due to their lower prices, although they can attract more tourists, also result in higher food waste, which is consistent with the behavior pattern of environmentally conscious tourists in low-cost hotels.

Combining the results of the empirical analysis, we propose targeted policy recommendations, including price regulation, environmental incentives, education and publicity, and policy support. These recommendations not only address how to effectively reduce food waste but also consider how to improve the operational efficiency of hotels and the environmental awareness of tourists. The implementation of these policies can effectively reduce food waste, enhance the level of sustainable hotel operations, and promote the green development of the tourism industry.

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# A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE IN TOURISM, HOSPITALITY AND EVENTS

Minyan Feng<sup>a</sup>, Yueying Xu<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Macao University of Tourism, Macau, China

## ABSTRACT

Immersive experience in the tourism, hospitality, and events (TH&E) sectors has emerged as a focal topic of research due to the significance of immersion as a vital aspect of customer experience and the widespread adoption of immersive technologies. However, the existing body of knowledge on immersion remains fragmented, necessitating a more comprehensive and cohesive research agenda to further develop this important construct. Therefore, this study systematically reviewed 67 articles by following the checklist of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA). This review provides insights concerning the definitions and measurements of immersion and identified four key themes: 1) immersion and consumer experience, 2) immersive experience and technology, 3) storytelling and immersion, 4) the consequences of immersive experience. Both general suggestions and specific future directions for the immersion-related literature are proposed. Through this research, researchers and practitioners can gain a deeper understanding of immersive experience in TH&E domains.

**Keywords:** *Immersive experience, immersion, systematic review, PRISMA*

## Introduction

Immersion has increasingly emerged as a crucial aspect of consumer experience (Acikgoz & Tasci, 2022; Blumenthal & Jensen, 2019; H.-C. Wu et al., 2019). The empirical investigation of immersion across various contexts within tourism, hospitality, and events (hereinafter referred to as TH&E) has gained popularity over the past two decades (Robaina-Calderín et al., 2023; Y. Zhang & Ueda, 2023). An increasing number of researchers are employing the term ‘immersive experience’ directly in their studies, due to the entanglements between immersion and experience (Chen et al., 2023), as well as the developments in technology, particularly in virtual reality (VR), which can more easily facilitate immersive experience (Oh & Kong, 2022; X. Wu & Lai, 2021).

Despite this growth, the existing body of knowledge on immersion remains fragmented, involving various controversial discussions on unclear concepts, diverse contexts, and inconsistent measurements. Three prominent issues can be identified. First, there is ongoing debate regarding the definition of immersion (Y. Zhang & Ueda, 2023). Although the term ‘immersion’ is widely used in the literature, its interpretation varies; some studies emphasize its psychological aspects (Lunardo & Ponsignon, 2020; Y. Zhang & Ueda, 2023), while others focus on technical elements (Karnchanapayap, 2023; Verhulst et al., 2021). Moreover, the concept of immersion has become ambiguous due to its interchangeable use with related terms like presence, flow, and engagement. This imprecise application may lead to misunderstandings and unreliable research outcomes. Second, scholars have proposed varied definitions and classifications of immersion across different contexts (Agrawal et al., 2020; Fu et al., 2022; Nilsson et al., 2016), resulting in discrepancies in comprehension and application. Even within the same context, interpretations of immersion can differ significantly among researchers, adding complexity to the field. Third, the measurability of immersion poses a significant challenge (Blumenthal & Jensen, 2019). While both objective and subjective measurement methods exist, a validated instrument for measuring immersion is

lacking (Agrawal et al., 2020; C. Zhang, 2020).

The fragmented nature of the current literature indicates the necessity for a systematic exploration of immersive experience. Although a few review papers have been published, such as Agrawal et al. (2020), Nilsson et al. (2016), Wilkinson et al. (2021), none specifically address the TH&E domain. Therefore, this study aims to conduct a systematic review to provide a solid foundation and guidance for future immersion research in TH&E. A systematic review can illuminate the historical patterns of the field, offering insights into future developments and implications that contribute to the broader body of knowledge (Dwivedi et al., 2011).

This paper seeks to address the following research questions:

RQ1. How is immersive experience defined in TH&E contexts?

RQ2. What research methodologies and measurement tools have been employed to assess immersive experience?

RQ3. What aspects of immersive experience have been studied in TH&E literature?

RQ4. What are the future directions for research?

## Methods

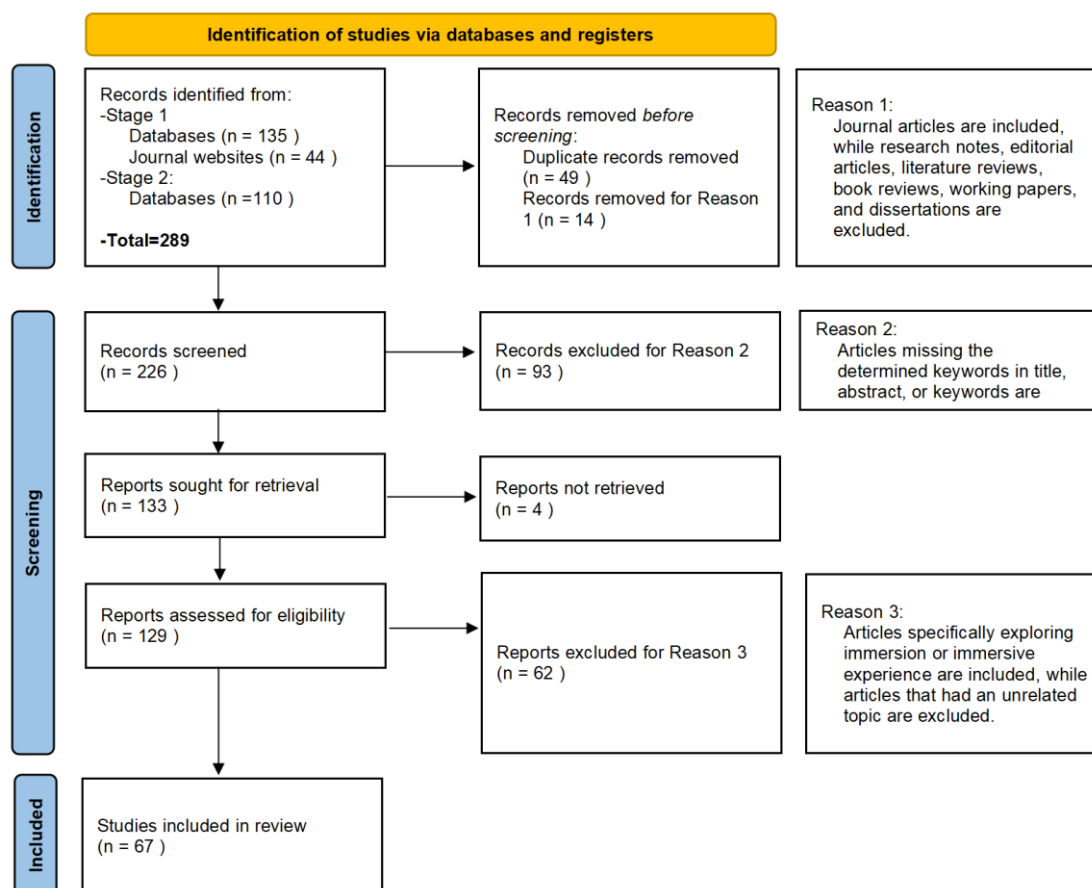
To ensure the rigor and transparency of our review process, this study adhered to the reporting checklist of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020).

### *Sampling and data collection*

A comprehensive literature search was conducted to identify relevant papers for this study. To maintain the quality of the review and facilitate effective synthesis, only original research articles published in journals listed by the Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) were considered. The data collection process comprised two phases. In the first phase, a manual search was performed on seventy-one journals (5 A\*, 16 A, 23B, and 27 C journals) in TH&E domains from the 2022 ABDC Journal Quality List, completed by the end of November 2023. The ABDC list was selected for its comprehensiveness compared to other journal rankings, such as the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) (Pahlevan-Sharif et al., 2019). We searched databases including Science Direct, Emerald, Sage, Taylor & Francis Online, Ingenta Connect, as well as journal websites, for articles published in the selected journals with the term 'immersion' or 'immersive experience' in their titles, abstracts, or keywords. The search was conducted exclusively in English, with no date restrictions.

While prior search normally considered papers published in journals of TH&E, which probably ignored some relevant articles conducted within TH&E contexts that were published in other journals including marketing, business, and human-computer interaction, thereby a second phase of literature search was conducted in January 2024. This phase involved an advanced keyword search across six academic databases: Web of Science, Science Direct, Emerald, Sage, Taylor & Francis Online and Scopus. All research papers published in ABDC journals that contained the aforementioned search terms were considered.

The initial search in Phase 1 yielded 179 articles and the second phase resulted in 110 articles. Exclusion criteria were applied to further refine the collected articles (see Figure 1). We included only empirical articles published in scholarly journals, excluding non-empirical studies, research notes, editorial articles, literature reviews, book reviews, working papers, and dissertations. Articles were initially screened based on their titles and abstracts to ensure they specifically addressed immersion or immersive experience within TH&E contexts.



**Figure 1: The PRISMA flow diagram**

## *Data analysis*

Thematic content analysis was performed using Citavi reference management system (<https://www.citavi.com/en>) to code the collected articles. The coding criteria included study contexts, theoretical frameworks, research methods, definitions of immersion, variables, measurement scales, and study findings. This was followed by a keyword co-occurrence analysis via VOSviewer software (<https://www.vosviewer.com/>). This analysis assumes that co-occurring keywords in articles suggest relationships between sub-topics and can cluster articles by a common main topic (H. Li et al., 2023).

## **Results**

### *Conceptualization of immersion in TH&E*

Approximately two-thirds of the articles (N=45, 67.16%) used the terms ‘immersion’ and ‘immersive experience’ interchangeably. A total of 17 distinct definitions of immersion were identified among the collected articles (see Appendix A). Generally, immersion refers to ‘becoming completely involved in something’ or ‘to put something or someone completely under the surface of a liquid’ (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus, 2024). Murray (1997) followed the term’s origin and described the feeling of immersion in cyberspace as ‘the sensation of being surrounded by a completely other reality... that takes over all of our attention, our whole perceptual apparatus (p. 98)’. Some scholars interpret



Murray's definition as reflecting the depth of one's submersion into a fluid, while others view it as the subjective experience of submersion, categorizing into two paradigms of immersion (Nilsson et al., 2016).

In the technological paradigm, immersion is defined as a technical feature of a device, indicating the extent to which media can deliver a multisensory experience (Slater & Sanchez-Vives, 2016). A system is considered more 'immersive' if it engages multiple sensory modalities. Prior studies classify technologies into three categories: fully immersive (such as a VR headset), semi-immersive (such as mobile applications plus VR glasses), and non-immersive (such as watching videos on a computer screen). Immersion in technological contexts, particularly VR, emphasize sensory encapsulation and richness, highlighting a sense of presence in virtual environments and detachment from the real world. Definitions in this paradigm include those by S. Turner et al. (2016), Williams and Hobson (1995), and Witmer and Singer (1998).

In general contexts (without immersive technology), immersion is often defined as psychological phenomenon. Pine and Gilmore's (1999) definition is the most frequently cited, centering on the concept of distance. Immersion is the opposite of absorption, where the distance between the consumer and the experiential context is minimal (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). According to Cuny et al. (2015) and X. Wu and Lai (2021), immersion reduces physical, psychological, and emotional distances. Definitions in this paradigm often encompass three components: a general description of immersion, a list of specific characteristics, and an explanation of how to achieve the state of immersion.

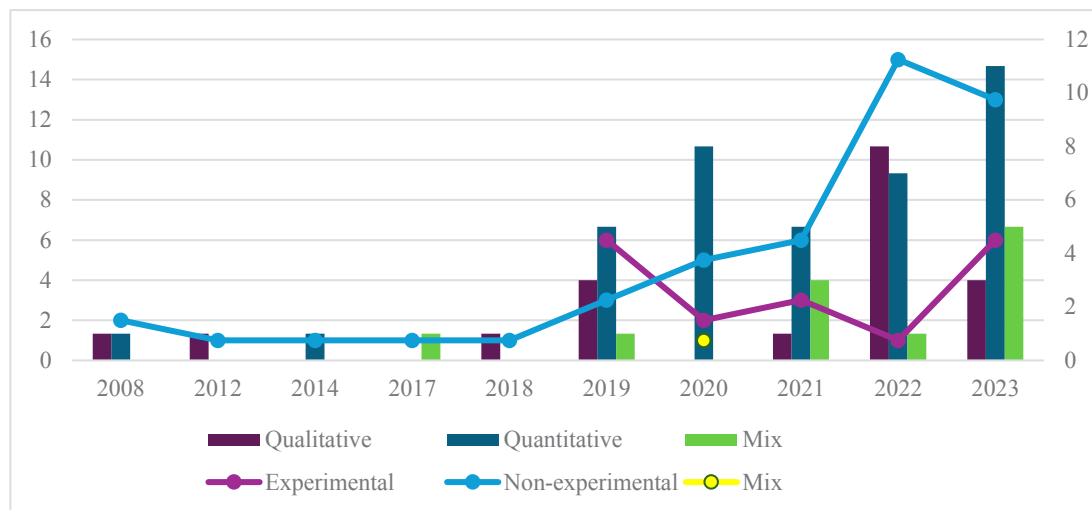
First, immersion is frequently defined as a psychological state (Chang, 2018; Sherman & Craig, 2019; Witmer & Singer, 1998) or feeling (Mainemelis, 2001), in which individuals are deeply involved (Cuny et al., 2015; Hansen & Mossberg, 2013; Sherman & Craig, 2019), absolutely absorbed and engrossed (Chang, 2018; Cuny et al., 2015; Mainemelis, 2001), actively engaged (Ryan, 2001), and totally committed to their activities and surroundings (Cuny et al., 2015). The level of involvement varies across definitions; for instance, Witmer and Singer (1998) emphasize embodied experience, while Carù and Cova (2007) focus on physical and mental participation. Cuny et al. (2015) refer to perceptual and emotional systems. Agarwal and Karahanna (2000) highlight attentional levels, describing it as focused immersion.

Second, the notion of immersion encompasses a deep contextual understanding of the phenomenon with qualitative attributes. Specific characteristics mentioned in the definitions include forgetting one's surroundings (Mainemelis, 2001), a lack of awareness of time and a loss of self-consciousness (Hansen & Mossberg, 2013), as well as suspension of disbelief (Sherman & Craig, 2019; Williams & Hobson, 1995).

Third, definitions may include ways to achieve the state of immersion. Ryan (2001) suggests that immersion in literature and electronic media involves the active use of one's imagination to connect with a story, while Williams and Hobson (1995) argue that immersion in VR within tourism industry is created through multi-sensory simulations.

### ***Methodologies and measurement of immersion in TH&E***

Single-study (N=62, 92.54%), non-experimental (N=46, 69.57%), and quantitative research (N=38, 56.72%) are dominant in our sampled articles. Figure 2 illustrates methodologies of the 67 articles over time. Qualitative research was more prevalent prior to 2019; but there has been a gradual increase in quantitative and mixed methods research since that time.



**Figure 2: Methodological progression of immersion studies over time**

Objective data collection methods, such as physiological measurements and behavioral data, have been employed; however there is currently insufficient evidence linking these indicators to immersion (Agrawal et al., 2020). For instance, S. Zhang et al. (2023) used EEG data to access participants' attention and relaxation levels rather than their immersion. Guerrero-Rodríguez et al. (2020) employed psycho-physiological measures and self-reported questionnaires to evaluate responses to a promotional video for a destination, revealing inconsistencies between the two approaches.

Questionnaires were widely used in quantitative research (N=47, 70.15%). A total of 24 articles employed measuring scales of immersion, although two articles did not specify their instruments. Immersion was commonly used as a mediator variable (N=12, 50%) within measurement models, mediating the relationship between external stimuli and outcome variables (e.g., satisfaction, behavioral intentions). While immersion was only used as a dependent variables in two articles, nine articles explored immersion as independent variables affecting attitudes or behavioral intentions, employing constructs such as perceived value, perceived usefulness, and perceived attractiveness as mediators.

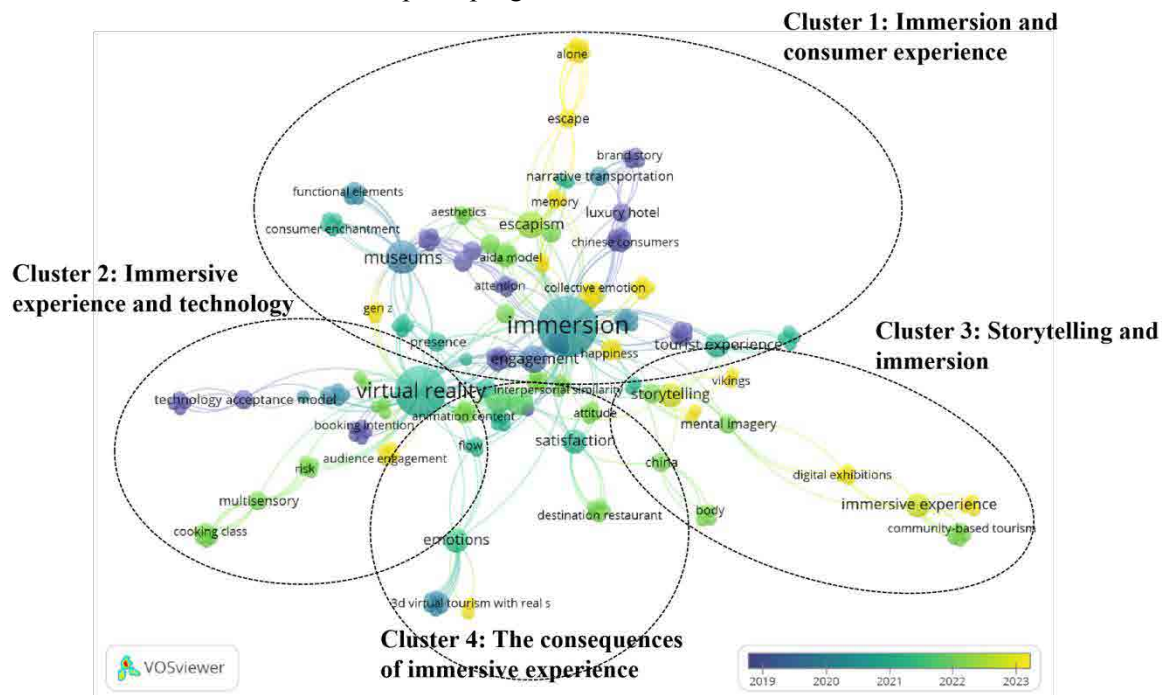
Multi-factorial scales ranging from two to seven items were used to measure immersion; however all were uni-dimensional (see Appendix B). The two most cited measuring scales were from Lunardo and Ponsignon (2020) for general contexts (not involving technologies) and Hudson et al. (2019) for virtual environments. Notably, Lunardo and Ponsignon's (2020) scale is actually focused immersion—a dimension of cognitive absorption developed by Agarwal and Karahanna (2000), which describes attention shifts and involvement in the task environment. Similarly, the four-item scale adopted by Hudson et al. (2019) is derived from the Immersive Experience Questionnaire (IEQ) created by Jennett et al. (2008) for gaming context, which comprises 31 questions. Using only four items from the IEQ is insufficient for a comprehensive evaluation of immersion.

Other studies exhibit similar issues. For instance, Robaina-Calderín et al. (2023) utilized a four-item immersion of individual based on the construct of presence by de Gauquier et al. (2019) and emotional involvement by Kim et al. (2020). Z. Li et al. (2023) employed a four-item immersion that actually represents visibility from Dong and Wang (2018). Furthermore, Irimiás et al. (2021) adapted items from the transportation scale by Green and Brock (2000) and Green et al. (2004) to access participants' immersion in a fantasy world. Although transportation is a characteristics of immersion, relying on the transportation scale to evaluate immersion introduces bias. Overall, these findings suggest a lack of theory-based, reliable, and consistent measurement scales for immersion.



### Keyword co-occurrence analysis

To answer RQ 3, a keyword co-occurrence analysis was conducted. Figure 3 illustrates four main clusters identified in the temporal progression of the literature.



**Figure 3: Keyword co-concurrence by time period**

#### Cluster 1. Immersion and consumer experience

This cluster focuses on publications that examine immersion as a key aspect of consumer experience. Qualitative exploratory research often investigates immersion as an independent concept in non-virtual technology contexts, highlighting its multifaceted nature. Fu et al. (2022) identified four levels of visitor immersion in theme parks: spatial-temporal immersion, sensory immersion, emotional immersion, and non-immersion. Y. Zhang and Ueda (2023) categorized tourists' experiences of immersion in forest bathing into three types: immersion in the action, immersion in the environment, and immersion in the self. The immersion process has been further analyzed by Blumenthal and Jensen (2019) and Isabelle et al. (2019), who proposed new models to explain how consumers become immersed in sailing trips and multi-day holidays.

Immersion has also been explored as a crucial element in various experiences, including VR, participatory events, solo event-goer experiences, embodied pop music concerts, and stay-at-home travel experiences. In these studies, immersion is often considered in conjunction with other experiential constructs such as escapism, presence, and engagement. While immersion and escapism are recognized as distinct experiential factors, they are also closely interconnected. For example, Armbrecht (2020) introduced the item 'participating in this event felt like an escape' to construct immersion into a measuring scale for event quality. Moreover, immersion is similar to presence and engagement (Hudson et al., 2019; Verhulst et al., 2021). X. Wu and Lai (2021) distinguished immersion as a passive act, while engagement was seen as active, finding that both positively influenced the sense of presence in virtual tours. Several studies have integrated immersion with other variables, such as presence and flow, to construct a comprehensive model of immersive experience (Robaina-Calderín et al., 2023).

### **Cluster 2. Immersive experience and technology**

This cluster centers on the adoption, application, and comparison of immersive technologies. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is frequently utilized to examine technology adoption (Vishwakarma et al., 2020a). Immersion is commonly perceived as a valuable attribute that can positively influence attitudes (Zhu & Morosan, 2014), and intention to adopt technology (Vishwakarma et al., 2020a, 2020a, 2020b; Zhu & Morosan, 2014). Further research has investigated how immersive technologies can enhance user experience and influence consumer choices across various contexts. For instance, Hu et al. (2021) investigated the attributes of AR theatrical performances in theme parks, finding that immersion as a quality of AR experience positively influenced visitors' feelings of nostalgia and emotional arousal, which in turn fostered a sense of belonging to the theme park.

There is an ongoing debate regarding whether technologies with distinct immersive attributes result in different user experiences. Some studies confirm that technologies with higher levels of immersivity can create more appealing user experiences (Karnchanapayap, 2023). For example, 360°VR visualization is shown to generate more engaging, realistic and playful experience compared to desktop PCs, mobile phones, or other 2D displays (Flavián et al., 2019; Prandi et al., 2023). Conversely, other scholars argue that the impact of technology on attitudes and behavioral intentions may be less significant than the influence of narratives (Guerrero-Rodríguez et al., 2020; Oh & Kong, 2022).

### **Cluster 3. Storytelling and immersion**

This cluster includes articles that examine the relationship between storytelling and immersion. Immersion is closely associated with storytelling as a major quality that determines the success of a story (Fu et al., 2022). The theory of narrative transportation is often employed to explain how storytelling affects an individual's experience (Irimiás et al., 2021). For instance, Irimiás et al. (2021) found that TV series consumption initially induces escapism, which subsequently leads to immersion and ultimately results in travel intentions, with escapism acting as an antecedent of immersion. Other stream of research investigates the types of storytelling structures that can foster immersion. Ryu et al. (2019) noted that hotel consumers are more likely to become immersed in a brand story when it has an easy-to-follow plot, well-narrated characters, and historical story elements. Additionally, the use of first-person narration can enhance the trustworthiness of a brand story, leading to higher levels of immersion (Mou et al., 2019; Ryu et al., 2019).

### **Cluster 4. The consequences of immersive experience**

This cluster encompasses publications that assess the effects of immersive experience from individual, destination, and brand perspectives. Immersion positively influences various consumer outcome variables, including interest (Lv et al., 2022), satisfaction and loyalty (Hudson et al., 2019; Manchanda & Deb, 2022; H.-C. Wu et al., 2019). Additionally, it affects behavioral intentions, such as travel intention (Irimiás et al., 2021; Manchanda & Deb, 2022), consumption intention (S. Li et al., 2024; Mou et al., 2019), revisit intention, and the intention to visit similar destinations (Shin & Jeong, 2022). Moreover, S. Zhang et al. (2023) explored the psychological recovery effects of immersion in 3D virtual tourism with real scenes. Learning outcomes are also a significant focus within this cluster. From a destination perspective, studies have examined how immersive experience influences tourists' perceptions of destination image at pre-travel stage (Aksenova et al., 2022; X. Wu & Lai, 2021). In brand research, brand immersion is identified as an important antecedent to attitudes toward a brand, impacting cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions (Acikgoz & Tasci, 2022).

## **Discussion**

This section addresses the study's research questions and suggests avenues for future research.

First, while there are divergent viewpoints on how to define immersion across various contexts, the subjective paradigm viewing immersion as a psychological phenomenon is more prevalent in TH&E domain. This aligns with immersion in audiovisual experiences reviewed by Agrawal et al. (2020). This paper further propose that a comprehensive definition of immersion could encompass three components: a general description, specific characteristics, and an explanation of ways to achieve immersion. General descriptions establish the foundational concept, while characteristics elaborate on its specific manifestations, both of which are essential for understanding immersion.

Second, we provide an overview of methodologies for measuring immersion, including subjective measures (questionnaires), physiological and behavioral assessments. We concur with previous studies that there is a pressing need to develop validated instruments (Agrawal et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2023) and physiological methods (Agrawal et al., 2020; Robaina-Calderín et al., 2023) for measuring immersion. Current studies that attempt to operationalize and quantify immersion often yield inconsistent results. While immersion is recognized as a multi-level psychological concept in qualitative research, its potential as a multidimensional construct for quantitative studies remains unclear. Furthermore, adopting a mixed-methods approach that incorporates neuromarketing techniques could provide valuable insights into variables related to immersion.

Third, Figure 4 summarizes our findings on the four identified themes and their future directions. This figure addresses the study's final research question by highlighting gaps in the current literature and proposing questions for future research.

## Conclusions and Implications

This study presents a systematic review of immersive experience in TH&E domain, offering empirical insights into the conceptualization and measurement of immersion. It summarizes key research topics and outlines future research directions. By characterizing studies based on research themes, contexts, and methodologies, this review enhances our theoretical understanding of immersive experience in TH&E, and provides a comprehensive synthesis of the fragmented literature on immersion.

In future studies, researchers should exercise caution when using terminology associated with 'immersion.' Although the terms 'immersion' and 'immersive experience' are often used interchangeably, the latter encompasses a broader definition that may include constructs such as presence, transportation, and engagement. Existing literature indicates distinct paradigms of immersion, each linked to various types, such as sensory immersion and focused immersion. To avoid conceptual ambiguity, future research should explicitly define its chosen paradigm and clarify how the immersive experience under investigation relates to existing forms of immersion. Additionally, we recommend that future reviews employ meta-analysis to examine the antecedents, mediators, and consequences of immersion. This approach could provide a deeper understanding of the causal mechanisms underlying immersive experience.

From a practical perspective, the results of this review can assist practitioners in delineating the boundary conditions of immersive experience and identifying effective measurement strategies. This understanding will enable them to grasp the nature of consumers experiences, and make better-informed decisions based on available evidence. First, valuing the immersive experience of consumers is crucial for service providers, as it plays a significant role at the individual, destination, and brand levels. Immersive experience is a multidimensional concept, encompassing dimensions such as spatial-temporal, sensory, emotional, and action-based immersion, and often interweaving with other experiences to collectively influence the consumer's overall perception. To enhance the immersive experience, service providers can integrate technological elements. For instance, by leveraging advanced technology to

create panoramic, full-sensory interactive scenarios, they can facilitate and foster a deeper level of consumer immersion. Storytelling also plays a vital role in elevating the immersive experience. Storytelling can bridge history and modernity, as well as reality and virtuality, allowing consumers to experience pleasure in an imagined world that is more appealing than a singular sensory immersion. Consequently, service providers can strengthen sensory involvement through emotional connections to enhance the consumer's sense of immersion by crafting captivating narratives.

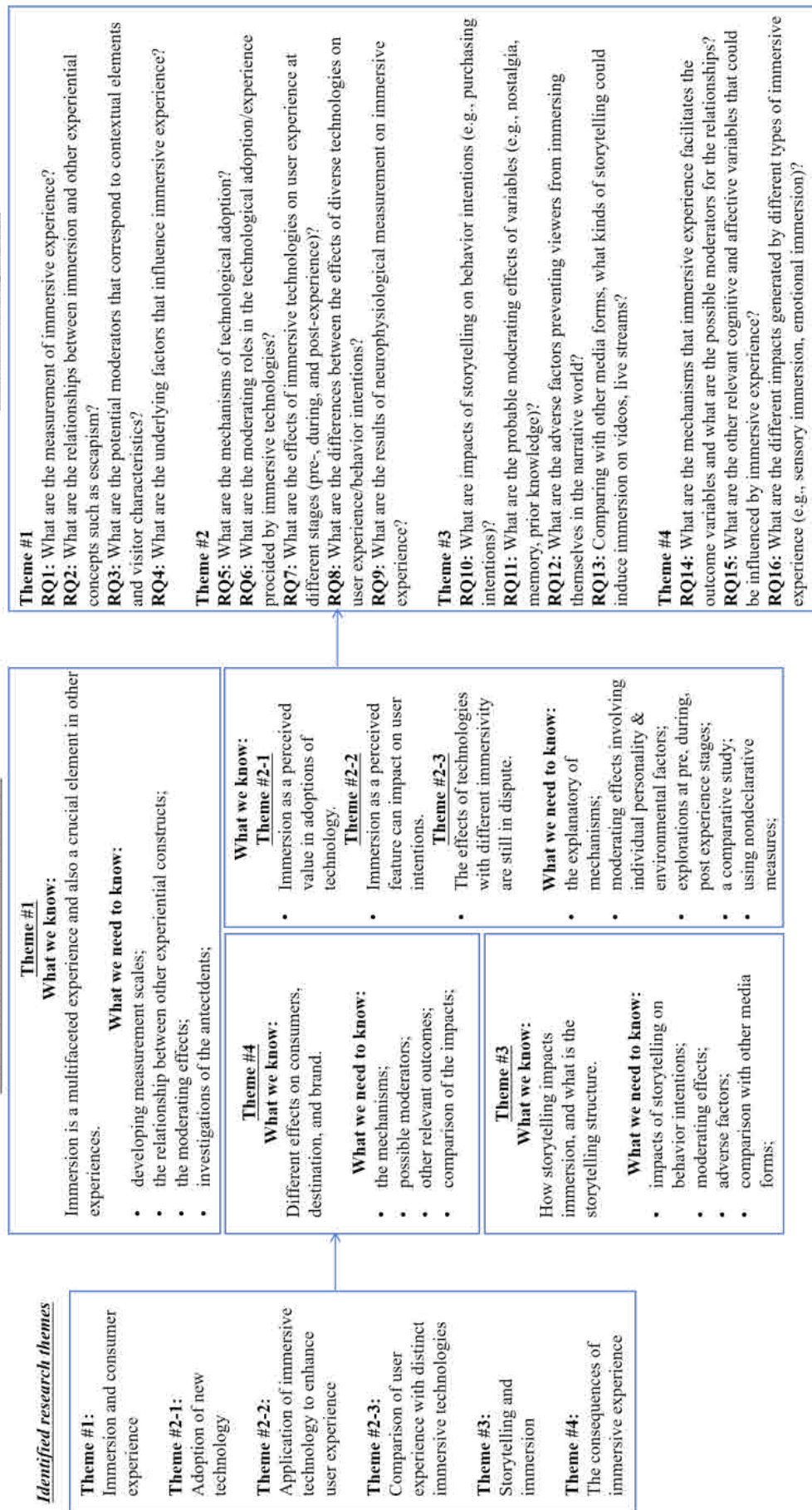


Figure 4: Potential research questions for future research



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## Appendix

**Appendix A: Definitions of immersion**

No.	Context	Author (Year)	Definition	Cited
1	Cyberspace	Murray (1997)	“A metaphorical term derived from the physical experience of being submerged in water” (p.99).	(Fu et al., 2022)
2	Experience economy in general	Pine and Gilmore (1999)	“Becoming physically (or virtually) a component of the experience itself” (p.31).	(Acikgoz & Tasci, 2022; Hu et al., 2021; Jiang & Tu, 2023; Komarac & Ozretić Došen, 2022; Lunardo & Ponsignon, 2020; Vo Thanh & Kirova, 2018; Xie & Li, 2023)
3	Virtual environments	Witmer & Singer (1998)	“Immersion is a psychological state characterized by perceiving oneself to be enveloped by, included in, and interacting with an environment that provides a continuous stream of stimuli and experiences” (p. 227).	(Dieck et al., 2021; Flavían et al., 2019; Manchanda & Deb, 2022; Prandi et al., 2023; X. Wu & Lai, 2021)
4	Consumer experiences and tourism context	Hansen and Mossberg (2013)	“Immersion a form of spatio-temporal belonging in the world that is characterized by deep involvement in the present moment. Immersion involves a lack of awareness of time and a loss of self-consciousness” (p.212).	(Blumenthal & Jensen, 2019; Fu et al., 2022; Hudson et al., 2019; Jiang & Tu, 2023; F. Li et al., 2023)
5	Tourism and hospitality	Chang (2018)	Immersion refers to a psychological state that tourists are absolutely absorbed and engrossed in their activities and the environment.	(F. Li et al., 2023; Lunardo & Ponsignon, 2020)
6	Classical music concerts	(Carù & Cova, 2007)	Immersion, a dimension of experience value, is a subjectively experienced, multifaceted construct involving physical and mental participation.	(Iversen et al., 2023; Y. Zhang & Ueda, 2023)
7	Classical music concerts	Carù and Cova (2006)	“The immersion concept literally implies becoming one with the experience and therefore conveys the idea of a total elimination of the distance between consumers and the situation” (p.5).	(Isabelle et al., 2019)

No.	Context	Author (Year)	Definition	Cited
8	Work activities	Mainemelis (2001)	“Immersion is the feeling of being fully absorbed, surrendered to, or consumed by an activity, to the point of forgetting one’s self and one’s surroundings” (p.10).	(Blumenthal & Jensen, 2019; Iversen et al., 2023)
9	VR	Sherman and Craig (2018)	“Immersion: sensation of being in an environment; can be a purely mental state or can be accomplished through physical means: physical immersion is a defining characteristic of VR; mental immersion is a principal goal of most media creators. Mental immersion: state of being deeply engaged; suspension of disbelief; involvement”. (p.10)	(Flavián et al., 2019)
10	New media for storytelling	Gander (1999)	Immersion means “to be captured by and experience a story and its world, shutting out the ‘real’ world around you” (p.1).	(Fu et al., 2022)
11	literature and electronic media	Ryan (2001)	The concept of immersion is defined as active engagement with a narrative using one’s imagination.	(Irimiás et al., 2021)
12	Websites	(Cuny et al., 2015)	“Immersion implies that the experiential context completely invades people’s perceptual and emotional systems and psychological processes, such that the immersed persons become involved, absorbed, and totally committed” (p.8).	(Lv et al., 2022)
13	Game immersion	Brown and Cairns (2004)	Immersion as a psychological process with graded levels of psychological states having engagement, engrossment and total immersion in that order.	(Manchanda & Deb, 2022)
14	VR within tourism industry	Williams and Hobson (1995)	“Immersion is the degree of suspension of disbelief by the VR participant and is created through a field of view, panorama surrounding the participant, viewer-centred perspective (where images react to the head and body movements), and a body or physical representation of objects” (p.424).	(Robaina-Calderin et al., 2023)

No.	Context	Author (Year)	Definition	Cited
15	Experience with information technology	Agarwal and Karahanna (2000)	“Focused immersion suggests that all of the attentional resources of an individual are focused on the particular task, thereby reducing the level of cognitive burden associated with task performance” (p.675).	(Wei et al., 2022)
16	VR	Slater and Sanchez-Vives (2016)	Immersion is defined as the technical aspects of a device, its ‘physics’ or “how well it can afford people real-world sensorimotor contingencies for perception and action” (p. 37)	(Verhulst et al., 2021)
17	VR	S. Turner et al. (2016)	Immersive experience is defined as “being positively associated with the degree of technologically-mediated sensory richness that facilitates isolation or decoupling from the real world” (p.28).	(Chen et al., 2023)

## Appendix B: Measurement items of immersion

No.	Author (Year)	Construct	Measurement items	Context	Source	Cited
1	Lunardo and Ponsignon (2020)	2 or 3-items immersion	IM1: I was able to block out most other distractions. IM2: I was absorbed in what I was doing. IM3: My attention did not get diverted very easily. (#)	Museum and zoo	(Agarwal & Karahanna, 2000)	(Wei et al., 2022; Xie & Li, 2023)
2	Jiang and Tu (2023)	3-items tourist immersion	TI1: I was able to block out most other distractions. TI2: I temporarily forgot the troubles of daily life. TI3: I was absorbed in tourists activities.	Qiongyou groups (budget travelers)	(Lunardo & Ponsignon, 2020)	/
3	F. Li et al. (2023)	3-items immersion	IM1: It was possible for me to ignore most other distractions. IM2: I was absorbed in my travel experience. IM3: It was hard to get my attention diverted.	General tourism destination (not using VR technologies)	(Lunardo & Ponsignon, 2020; Mütterlein, 2018)	/
4	Irimiás et al. (2021)	3-items immersion in fantasy world	IM1: I like to immerse in the world of Game of Thrones. IM2: I like to be surrounded by the world of Game of Thrones. IM3: I feel to be inseparable from the world of Game of Thrones.	Film tourism	(Green & Brock, 2000; Green et al., 2004)	/
5	Lv et al. (2022)	3-items immersion	IM1: I am deeply engrossed in the tourism live streaming. IM2: I am absorbed in watching the tourism live streaming. IM3: When watching tourism live streaming, my attention is focused.	Tourism live streaming	(Yim et al., 2017)	/
6	Flavián et al. (2019)	3-items immersion	IM1: The technology created a new world that suddenly disappeared at the end of the experience. IM2: During the experience with the technology, I was unaware of my real surroundings. IM3: The technology made me forget about the realities of the world outside.	VR	(Fornerino et al., 2008)	/
7	Dieck et al.	3-items	IM1: I was completely immersed in the VR application.	VR within the	(Hamari et	/

No.	Author (Year)	Construct	Measurement items	Context	Source	Cited
	(2021)	immersion	IM2: I lost track of time while playing the VR application. IM3: I became very involved in the VR application forgetting about other things.	science festival context	al., 2016)	
8	Choi et al. (2023)	3-items immersion value	IM1: When using the metaverse, I felt that I was in another world. IM2: When using the metaverse, I felt disconnected from the outside world. IM3: When using the metaverse, I was unaware of what was happening around me.	Metaverse events	(Aburbeian et al., 2022; Bojic, 2022; Buhalis et al., 2022; Park & Kim, 2022)	/
9	Z. Li et al. (2023)	4-items immersion	IM1: I think livestreaming provides me with detailed pictures and videos of the products. IM2: I think the live streaming makes the product attributes visible to me. IM3: I think the livestreaming makes information about how to use products visible to me. IM4: I think the livestreaming makes me feel like I am there.	Travel livestreaming	(Dong & Wang, 2018)	/
10	Hudson et al. (2019)	4-item immersion	IM1: I could interact with the seascape as if I was in the real world. IM2: I felt detached from the outside world. IM3: I felt completely immersed. IM4: I forget about my everyday concerns.	VR experience	(Jennett et al., 2008)	(X. Wu & Lai, 2021)
11	X. Wu and Lai (2021)	4-items immersion	IM1: While I was perceiving the 360-degree virtual tour, I could interact with the view as if I was in the real world. IM2: While I was perceiving the 360-degree virtual tour, I felt detached from the outside world. IM3: While I was perceiving the 360-degree virtual tour, I felt completely immersed. IM4: While I was perceiving the 360-degree virtual tour, I forget about my everyday concerns.	Virtual video of tourist spots	(Hudson et al., 2019)	(W. Zhang & Wang, 2023)

No.	Author (Year)	Construct	Measurement items	Context	Source	Cited
12	(Vishwakarma et al., 2020a, 2020b)	4-items perceived immersion	<p>PI1: Once into VR, I was unaware of what was happening around me.</p> <p>PI2: Once into VR, I felt disconnected from outside world.</p> <p>PI3: I felt that I was actually travelling during my experience of VR.</p> <p>PI4: During VR experience, I feel I am in another world.</p>	VR for tourist destinations	(Jennett et al., 2008)	/
13	H.-C. Wu et al. (2019)	4-items immersion	<p>IM1: Playing in the VR environment releases me from reality and helps me truly enjoy myself.</p> <p>IM2: I become so involved when I play in the VR environment that I forget everything else.</p> <p>IM3: Playing in the VR environment makes me feel as if I am in another world.</p> <p>IM4: While playing in the VR environment, I forget that time is passing.</p>	VR experience	(Jin et al., 2015)	/
14	Shin and Jeong (2022)	4-items immersion	<p>IM1: I was able to interact with the virtual trip to Orlando, FL.</p> <p>IM2: The virtual trip to Orlando, FL, helped me personalize my virtual trip to Orlando, FL.</p> <p>IM3: The virtual trip to Orlando, FL, allowed me to explore tour options Orlando, FL, based on my preference.</p> <p>IM4: The virtual trip to Orlando, FL, was highly interactive with viewers like me.</p>	Virtual trip	(Vorderer et al., 2004)	/
15	Robaina-Calderín et al. (2023)	4-items immersion of individual	<p>IM1: While I was in the virtual/online experience, I felt like I was in the world that the experience created.</p> <p>IM2: While I was in the experience, my body was in the room, but my mind was inside the virtual/online experience.</p> <p>IM3: While I went through the virtual/online experience, I was totally captivated.</p> <p>IM4: When I went through the virtual/online experience, the time passed very quickly.</p>	VR application in museum tourism	(de Gauquier et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2020; Williams & Hobson, 1995)	/
16	Jafar and	5-items	IM1: The metaverse created a new environment that suddenly disappeared	Metaverse	(F. Li et al.,	/



No.	Author (Year)	Construct	Measurement items	Context	Source	Cited
	Ahmad (2023)	immersion	<p>at the end of the show.</p> <p>IM2: At times, I was unaware of my surroundings.</p> <p>IM3: I am completely immersed on what I am doing on metaverse.</p> <p>IM4: I lost track of the reality of the outside world through the metaverse tour.</p> <p>IM5: My focus does not easily stray when I am on metaverse.</p>	tourism	2023)	
17	Manchanda and Deb (2022)	7-items total immersion from MVR	<p>IM1: I felt that what I was experiencing was something real, instead of a fictional activity.</p> <p>IM2: I was so involved, that I felt that my actions could affect the activity.</p> <p>IM3: I didn't have any irrelevant thoughts or external distractions during the activity.</p> <p>IM4: I lost track of time, as if everything just stopped, and the only thing that I could think about was the activity.</p> <p>IM5: I was so involved in the activity, that in some cases I wanted to interact with the virtual characters/objects directly.</p> <p>IM6: The activity became the unique and only thought occupying my mind.</p> <p>IM7: The activity felt so authentic that it made me think that the virtual characters/objects existed for real.</p>	Multisensory Virtual reality tourism	(Georgiou & Kyza, 2017)	/
18	(Acikgoz & Tasci, 2022)	6-items brand immersion	<p>IM1: When I am interacting with this brand, I forget everything else around me.</p> <p>IM2: Time flies when I am interacting with this brand.</p> <p>IM3: When I am interacting with this brand, I get carried away.</p> <p>IM4: When interacting with this brand, it is difficult to detach myself.</p> <p>IM5: In my interaction with this brand, I am immersed.</p> <p>IM6: When interacting with this brand intensely, I feel happy.</p>	Café brand	(Schaufeli et al., 2002)	

# ACCESSIBLE ADVENTURE TOURISM: SUPPLY-SIDE BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPING INCLUSIVE TOURISM

Belinda Harris<sup>a</sup> and Vikki Schaffer<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> University of the Sunshine Coast

## ABSTRACT

Adventure tourism activities feature varying levels of physical exertion, risk, cognitive and sensory stimuli, are often located in natural environments and involve specialty transport or equipment – all potential barriers to people with disability. Normalising accessibility requires identifying barriers, motivations, and opportunities. Thematic analysis of 12 in-depth interviews conducted between January and June 2023 with tourism operators located in South East Queensland, Australia, revealed inherent and perceived risks in adventure tourism activities, lack of awareness and education, and costs that inhibit product development to enhance participation by people with disability. Results found operators had a strong desire, and open-minded attitudes and were altruistically motivated to seek inclusive approaches. Findings offer unique insights to advance the discourse including the need for broader financial support, directed education and training for staff and guests, and inclusive collaboration.

**Keywords:** *accessibility; inclusion; adventure; tourism; operator perceptions; supply-side barriers*

## Introduction

Travel-related experiences, whether for business, religion, cultural, celebratory or leisure, is a fundamental human right. Exercising this right is challenging for many, including people with disability (PwD) (McKercher & Darcy, 2018). World Health Organisation (WHO) (2023) estimated 1.3 billion people worldwide (16%), live with a disability. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires human rights for all, highlighting accessibility and diverse inclusion across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2020; Hall, 2019). This reinforces the social and economic imperatives of accessible tourism ensures the diversity of tourism products mirrors that of tourists.

Accessible tourism denotes access for all, equal and independent participation in tourism (Darcy & Buhalis, 2011). Tourism stakeholders including government, destination organisations, not for profit groups, host communities as well as tourism operators and tourists can, inadvertently, create barriers to access in the planning, consumption and post-experience stages (Darcy & Buhalis, 2011). Research reveals visitors with access issues experience three main barriers: i) physical access (Eichhorn & Buhalis, 2011; Evcil, 2018), ii) attitudinal (Adam, 2019; Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015; Lin et al., 2022) and iii) informational (Darcy & Dickson, 2009; Eichhorn & Buhalis, 2011; Lin et al., 2022). However, research into tourism operator experiences is limited in scope, fragmented and inconsistent (Ambrose, 2012; Fennell & Garrod, 2021) including in adventure tourism (Lopes et al., 2018). Therefore, this paper explores the motivations, barriers, challenges and opportunities adventure tourism operators face in offering inclusive services.

## Literature review

Broadly, supply refers to the tourism products and services sold to tourists along with tourism resources, infrastructure, facilities, entertainment, marketing, and engagement services (Page, 2019). Barriers to developing accessible tourism from the supply-side perspective have been investigated in nature and eco-tourism (Fennell & Garrod, 2021; Wall-Reinius et al., 2022), accommodation (Capitaine, 2016), major travel and leisure companies (Bowtell, 2015) and multiple stakeholder engagement studies (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015). Barriers included lack of knowledge (Capitaine, 2016; Lopes et al., 2018; Wall-Reinius et al., 2022), lack of awareness (Bowtell, 2015; Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015), financial constraints and cost of investment (Bowtell, 2015; Capitaine, 2016; Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015; Wall-Reinius et al., 2022), infrastructure (Bowtell, 2015; Capitaine, 2016; Wall-Reinius et al., 2022) and legislation (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015). These impact investment and resource allocation by governments and operators (Bowtell, 2015; Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015), hindering effective planning and implementation (Capitaine, 2016; Lopes et al., 2018; Wall-Reinius et al., 2022). Thus, more nuanced research—particularly in adventure tourism—is needed to advance both discourse and practice.

### *Accessible adventure tourism*

Adventure tourism is a specialised form of travel involving exploration, discovery, and physical challenges; often associated with physical exertion, risk (Beard et al., 2003; Wang et al., 2019), delivered in natural environments (Janowski et al., 2021) and occurring outdoors. Participation in adventure tourism has benefits such as self-actualisation (Galiakbarov et al., 2024; Pomfret, 2021), risk (Cheng et al., 2018), and hedonic and eudemonic wellbeing (Pomfret, 2021). Adventure tourists seek risk, thrill, personal challenge and achievement (Cheng et al., 2018). PwD are motivated to overcome obstacles and pursue outdoor activities (Shi et al., 2012) and participate in the natural environment as a form of escaping daily routines (Fennell & Garrod, 2021). Furthermore, participation includes a desire for adventure and personal challenge to overcome accessibility obstacles, rather than purely seeking thrill and risk (Chikuta et al., 2017; Shi et al., 2012). Adventure tourism involves varying degrees of physicality, geographic remoteness and diverse terrain that create operational challenges, that coupled with perceptions of risk, may reduce accessibility for PwD (Garrod, 2021). Adventure tourism operators may not adapt products/services to increase accessibility due to limited information and knowledge, the complexity of implementation, and the absence of useful partnerships (Lopes et al., 2018). Noting the limited attention accessibility in adventure tourism has received in previous research, this research addressed the research question: *What barriers, motivations and opportunities do adventure tourism operators face in offering inclusive services?*

## **Methodology**

Semi-structured interviews explored the perspectives and experiences of operators to capture their individual experiences (Jennings, 2001). Qualitative research methods have advanced tourism research by humanising the research process (Wilson & Hollinshead, 2015). Purposeful sampling, a non-probability sampling technique that relies on the judgement of the researcher (Jennings, 2001), was used. Following human ethics approval, a list of adventure tourism businesses located in South East Queensland was generated from publicly available information. Each business was emailed and invited to participate. Those who agreed, answered demographic and professional profile questions, motivations for including accessibility, barriers and opportunities for enhancing accessibility.

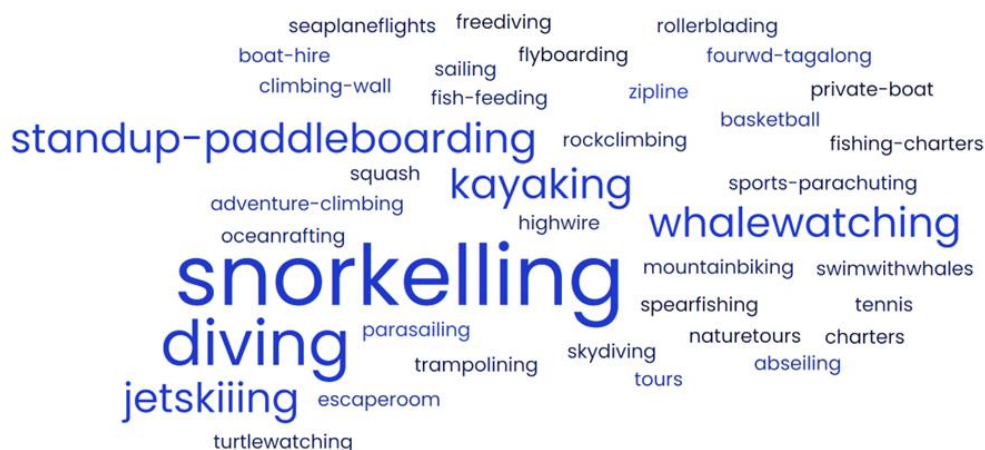
Twelve online interviews were conducted between January and June 2023, with an average duration of 55 minutes. Saunders et al. (2016) argue that twelve is a suitable sample size for qualitative, semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, sampling managers allowed the research to focus on gaining information-rich data directly from the decision-makers, reducing the need for a bigger sample size (Schein 1996). Interviews were assigned a unique identification code number, recorded and transcribed verbatim (using transcription software). Thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), involved identifying, analysing, and interpreting recurring patterns of meaning (or themes) within the data to explore supply-side perceptions of accessible tourism. Commencing with deductive analysis, a list of barriers to accessible tourism was created from the extant literature and Responses were coded to identify barriers mentioned. Next, inductive analysis explored and coded the data to reveal additional themes. Theme identification was independently performed by two researchers for accuracy and consistency.

## Results

### *Participants characteristics*

Twelve adventure tourism owners/managers were interviewed. Most identified as male (n=9, female n=3). The average age was 44.6 years. Average number of years participants had worked in current businesses was 8.3 years, with an average 7.5 years in current roles. Businesses had head offices located on the Sunshine Coast (n=8), Noosa (n=1), Brisbane (n=1) and Gold Coast (n=2). Businesses had been operating between one and 25 years (average 12.7 years). Two adventure tourism businesses offered indoor activities; ten offered outdoor activities and collectively, there were 48 adventure tourism activities of which snorkelling was offered most (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Adventure tourism activities offered by participants**



### *Barriers to accessible adventure tourism*

The characteristics of adventure tourism create accessibility barriers as “*some of the experiences just do require a certain level of mobility, we don't have any flexibility there*” and to “*meet specifications for accessibility is really hard, you can't change it a lot*” (ATI03). Natural environments can create

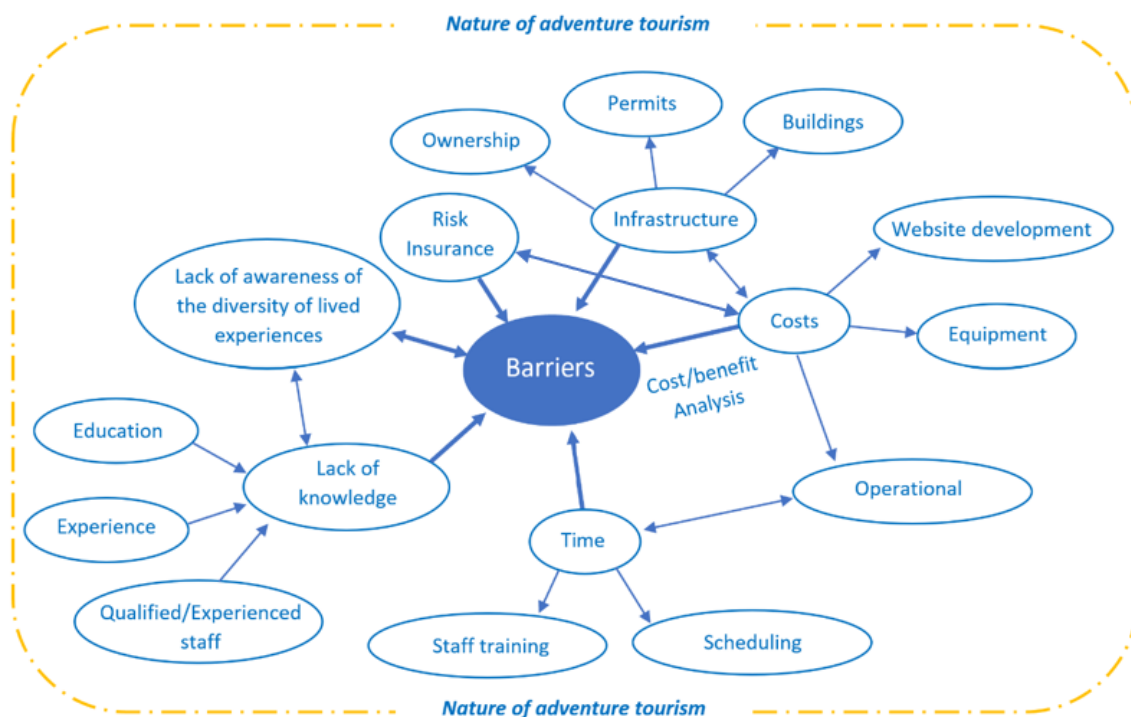
challenges because,

*“a lot of the tracks...do not have wheelchair access, and are difficult to get to” so “when we’re looking at venturing off the beaten track, and going into nature, we need to just think outside the box a little bit” (ATI08).*

Furthermore, participants talked about the type of equipment used not being adaptable and *“trying to build boats to meet specifications for accessibility is really hard”* and *“four-wheel drives are not that accessible for people who don’t have a certain level of fitness, they don’t have any wheelchair access or anything like that”*.

Deductive and inductive analysis revealed six key barriers relating to infrastructure, cost and funding, lack of knowledge and education, insurance, risk, and time. What was revealed was the inter-connected nature of the barriers. Previous studies have identified some of the following barriers, but this study revealed the impact one barrier may have on another (Figure 2). For example, cost permeates across business operations, equipment, staffing, marketing (website development) and infrastructure.

**Figure 2: Nature of adventure tourism barriers**



### Infrastructure

The lack, inadequacy, access to, or modification of infrastructure in built and natural environments were recognised barriers. When renting or leasing premises, making changes e.g., installing lifts or ramps, is impossible *“because we don’t actually own the buildings”* (ATI05). Landlord consent is needed to make changes but due to potential costs, is rarely given. When operating out of a *“heritage listed location”* it is impossible to make changes like putting in *“a lift to the first floor”* (ATI01). Having to *“work within the parameters [of] national parks”* (ATI08) means accessible infrastructure is unavailable, costly, and/or restricted by legislation and permitting. Building or adapting infrastructure is also inhibited by short-term permits e.g., three years, due to the uncertainty of permit renewals thus, reluctance *“to spend, you know, 30 or \$40,000, building something that we may not*



have in a year” (ATI11).

### **Cost and funding**

When adopting accessibility, participants mentioned that *“first and foremost, it usually comes down to cost”* (ATI02) such as for websites, infrastructure, vessels, vehicles, jetties, pathways, *“things like a hoist to get people from the dock”* or *“needing to put in a ramp”*. Infrastructure was considered cost-prohibitive as operators *“don’t have the cash flow”* or have a *“limited budget”* to cover these costs. Specialty or adapted equipment was considered *“expensive”* or *“unavailable”*. Some participants indicated that *“the market is quite small”* (ATI01), resulting in operators taking a costs versus benefits approach: *“...if you’re thinking about how many customers you’re going to get once you’ve invested in all that capital expenditure, .... you wouldn’t get that many compared [to customers]”* (ATI12).

Inductive analysis revealed participant concerns about the inclusion of support workers/helpers. If *“a lot of people ring and want to bring a support worker and helpers and everything else but then they’re still taking up a seat on the boat, which we would sell”* (ATI02) which reduces profits. Cost was linked to funding as to include support workers/caregivers may be possible *“if you got funding where I could then claim, even if 1/2 price or a reduced price, it would be much more effective and far less hesitation”*. Limited funding is a barrier *“for small businesses”* as *“if there’s more funding available then... the possibilities are endless”* (ATI04).

### **Lack of knowledge and education**

Participants suggested that until recently *“accessibility hasn’t been a hot topic”* (ATI09) but it is now evident that *“the lack of knowledge is always a hard one”* (ATI03), as *“not having guidance”* (ATI12) in what to provide, how to address inclusion, or guests needs. Lack of education of operators and staff *“could also be a barrier”* about *“what accessibility means”* and how to *“cater things to niche markets”* (ATI02). One participant indicated they *“didn’t know what I didn’t know. So, I came into it just uneducated”* about accessibility suggesting that *“unless you’re in that situation or around it, you don’t face it.”* (ATI10). One participant *“wouldn’t even know where to start with things”* (ATI10).

While mention of vision, hearing, and cognitive impairments was made (e.g., *“there are issues with accessibility for people on every level”* and age-related disabilities (ATI07), for the most part when referring to disabilities and accessibility needs, participants referred to mobility, with a focus on wheelchair access:

- *“we never design the games for wheelchair access”* (ATI05)
- access and services are limited if guests *“can’t walk or is in a wheelchair”* (ATI02) and
- the *“need to put in a ramp”* (ATI12).

Inconsistency in awareness was evident. Appropriate staff training was a *“constant problem to be honest”* (ATI01). Staff inexperience with PwD can mean that *“when it comes to bit more challenging tasks and stuff, then they kind of hold back a bit as well”* (ATI03) as *“a lot of staff come from areas that just haven’t dealt with that side of things ..... and they’re just nervous about how to deal with this”*. Hesitancy can result from uncertainty and concern about perceived risk and consequence.

### **Risk and insurance**

Operators have business and activity related skills, knowledge and qualifications but training rarely includes working with PwD. Risk was *“the biggest sort of obstacle, liability and risks”* that threaten to *“shut you down if you do one thing wrong”* (ATI12). Insurance was a *“primary issue”* (ATI07) in *“being more accessible, even just trying to get it insured full stop is becoming more and more difficult and you know different circumstances in which our insurance would possibly be void”* (ATI02).

Coverage varies by circumstance and activity e.g., “insurance won't cover us if we take pregnant people out to sea” or “anyone who's 65 or older” (ATI03).

### Time

Time is money. Operationalising accessibility is challenging as “it's just hard to find the time” to “figuring out how we can do this [increase accessibility]” (ATI03). Time, and cost, for planning and staff training were critical for delivering inclusive experiences. Time to deliver quality experiences to those needing it is restricted for example, time is “very limited with our national park permits”. Time restriction whether by permit or environmentally (factoring in weather and tides) don't allow “enough time that people don't feel rushed”. “Specialised trips .... take us longer” (ATI08) to support guests with disability.

Staff training was linked to time as “just finding the time to put my staff on a three- or four-day course that, you know, gives them some basics of how to care for people with accessibility” (ATI08). Training costs can be prohibitive for small businesses, and some are unable “to train every staff member” (ATI01). Predominantly casual, tourism employment includes a “large number of transient staff” (ATI03) and the “rate of staff turnover” (ATI01) makes continuous training unsustainable.

### Motivation for accessible adventure tourism

Some participants were fiscally motivated as “in terms of bottom lines, [accessibility] is beneficial to any business” (ATI02), but responses varied. Financially, “not a lot of people realise this is actually a really big market.” (ATI08). Conversely, accessibility “doesn't have a big commercial benefit for us. But it's something we feel really positive about” (ATI06). Accessibility increases visitation as “the more accessible you are, the wider variety of guests you're going to have” (ATI09) - accompanying friends, family, and carers and “having more accessibility in my business - more people will visit and the more people that are able to use our service, the better it is from a business perspective” (ATI01). Accessibility is advantageous for both businesses and regions as improved accessibility could make a region a “preferred location that people would like to visit” (ATI11).

Altruism, not financial gain, was a stronger motivation, reflected in this response:

*“I build my business and my life around providing experiences for people. So, the more people I can provide that experience to the better that makes me feel and the better that makes me feel the more enthusiastic I'm going to be about running my business. So, for me there's the personal benefits and there's the business advantages for being inclusive”* (ATI01).

Participants stated the “social advantage rather than economic advantage” (ATI08) of accessible tourism was “rewarding” (ATI06, ATI01, ATI09), “uplifting” (ATI06), “it's something we feel really positive about” (ATI06) and “morale is quite high” (ATI09) when “we get them out and take them on this amazing experience. So it's fantastic to be able to offer that to everyone, not just a select few” (ATI05).

Attitude and open-mindedness were important: “just opening up that conversation is really important”, to “just having that mindset that says we're going to try and say ‘yes’, rather than ‘no’ every time someone makes that initial inquiry”, and to talk to all staff concerned “to see if we can get it

done” (ATI06). Accessibility is “*about us having the right mindset. But this [accessibility] is not a profit driver for us. It's more about us being open and accessible*” (ATI06).

### *Opportunities for accessible adventure tourism*

Participants said “*there’s so much opportunity .... especially here in Australia*” (ATI08). 2023 was the Year of Accessible Tourism in Queensland. Participants said this inspired thoughts and action towards accessibility, stating “*our products and what will make it accessible and what we can maybe improve on makes you just think about things a little bit more*” (ATI04), and it’s “*an important conversation that we’ve needed to have for a long time*” (ATI08), that will “*shine a light on accessible tourism and there will be some more educational materials and things available*” (ATI02).

Similarly, the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games are “*a springboard*” to “*create accessible tourism options*” because “*we’re going to have a lot of visitors coming for the years in the lead up to those games*” (ATI01). These events will “*push people to do this more to get prepared*” (ATI10), as “*the Paralympic Games, you know, there’s going to be a whole customer base there of disabled athletes*” and “*obviously, there’ll be lots of spectators things as well*” (ATI04). However, “[we must] make sure you have your products ready” (ATI04) to “*put ourselves on the map as a very welcoming, easy to navigate and accessible destination*” (ATI08). These present an “*opportunity for our government, and all of us in tourism, to pitch and advocate for what we can see that we can easily achieve as an industry*” (ATI08).

To increase awareness and identify opportunities, participants consulted family and friends; “*talking to people to educate myself more*”, “*doing more research; then I can go and put more actions in place*” (ATI10). Paid staff with disability discussed “*the opportunities that we would like to see going forward*” (ATI01) and “*passed on their experience and knowledge to all our other staff members*” (ATI04). Another participant hired “*a carer for a NDIS program*” to increase awareness.

## **Discussion**

The results revealed multifaceted and interrelated barriers, and some unique challenges faced by adventure tourism operators in providing accessible experiences (Figure 2). Specific to adventure tourism, participating operators highlighted that offerings that are delivered natural environments may feature complex or even remote topography, creating challenges for both visitors and operators that influence the adoption of accessible practices (Beard et al., 2003; Wall-Reinius et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2019). In addition to agreement with barriers identified in the literature, participating operators highlighted the intersection of accessibility, risk, and liability. Previous research suggested tourism providers view outdoor activities as too risky for PwD (Burns et al., 2013). Study participants were motivated to include PwD but expressed concern with the potential liability and restrictions required by insurance. Legal frameworks, insurance policies, and liability fears are significant barriers to providing accessible experiences. The diversity of disability and product offerings, call for review, revision and case by case consideration. The strong desire of PwD to participate in outdoor experiences (Shi et al., 2012) underscores the critical need to address these legal and liability concerns. Additional education of risk is needed as out-dated or uninformed information is used in decision making, yet for the most part, PwD and lived experiences have not been part of the discussion.



While financial benefits influence decision-making for accessibility (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2020), this research highlights altruism and social responsibility as key motivators. Tour operators who provided accessible products and services felt a sense of moral responsibility and personal reward (Patterson et al., 2012). Participating operators held a strong desire to promote inclusive employment, believing this enhanced self and staff fulfilment, satisfaction and inspiration. Employing PwD and those with caregiving expertise, and consulting with individuals with lived experiences were all identified as avenues to increasing knowledge and gain the many benefits to individuals, businesses and society. Australian Human Rights Commission (2024) emphasises that employing PwD increases motivation, job satisfaction and engagement for all staff. Valuable insights and innovative ideas can be derived from collective intelligence where PwD hold key roles. Working-aged PwD are more likely to be unemployed (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2024) highlighting an opportunity to support individuals, the tourism sector and society. However, few PwD are employed in tourism (Fennell & Garrod, 2021; Stumbo & Pegg, 2005).

This study found that altruism plays a significant role in accessible adventure tourism and is driving operators to seek solutions. Altruism can translate into economic benefits such as customer engagement, positive word of mouth and repeat visitation, enhanced reputation and trust, market differentiation, attraction and retention of staff, access to new markets and partnerships, development of new products, services, or practices to cater to emerging market needs, all of which can aid in fostering long-term economic resilience. This increases understanding about the underlying motivations that drive operators to invest in accessibility. Operators motivated by social responsibility respond to narratives that inspire actions and make a positive impact on society while being economically viable.

While tourism operators were motivated to provide accessible products and services, the ability to do so was influenced by other factors such as financial position and availability of resources. Also, despite 16% of the global population having a disability, this is considered a small tourism market (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015; Wall-Reinius et al., 2022). Consequently, some operators used a cost-benefit approach when justifying the costs for providing or improving accessibility. This study found that it is more challenging for micro and small adventure tourism providers based on limited financial resources. The availability of financial support in the form of government funding was a recognised opportunity for supporting operators to overcome financial barriers and drive accessibility. In addition, education, funding and collaboration were all seen as opportunities to drive accessible tourism in the lead up to the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

While a lack of knowledge creates barriers (Capitaine, 2016; Lopes et al., 2018; Wall-Reinius et al., 2022), participants reiterated comprehending the unique needs and diversity of disabilities is not possible without open communication. Funding initiatives could provide educational opportunities that support professional development and staff training. In this way, operators and staff can be empowered via disability awareness training to reshape attitudes and spark innovation (Darcy & Buhalis, 2011; Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015).

Simultaneously, the opportunity of collaboration between stakeholders in the entire tourism supply chain could advance individual and collective efforts to effectively increase social well-being, showcase fair labour practices, and a commitment to diversity and inclusion. The literature, and participant responses, highlighted the importance of co-creating experiences for developing services that meet customer needs (Cerdan Chiscano & Darcy, 2023) through mutually beneficial sharing for learning. Collaboration helps inform the design of experiences and enhances overall customer

satisfaction.

## Conclusion and implications

In practical terms, consideration of best practices in developing accessible and inclusive offerings through planning, consulting, advocacy and collaboration for equity of access. Encouragingly, this study identified a genuine desire to improve accessibility for broad inclusion within adventure tourism. Adventure tourism operators need to be supported to cultivate an inclusive mindset (Lopes et al., 2018) and act on altruistic intentions. For more accessible products, assistance for operators to secure financial support, acquire practical skills, understand market demands and effective ways to engage consumers, are needed. To reflect the needs and expectations of PwD in travel, their voices and experiences must be heard to lead, inform and guide decision-making (Darcy & Dickson, 2009; Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015; Nigg & Eichelberger, 2021).

The generalisability of the results in this study are limited due to the focal geographical boundary of the study, South East Queensland. However, the points raised by operators could be explored in future studies by conducting research with larger and more geographically diverse sample of tourism providers to compare access in different regions. Future research into the pre-post and legacy goals and capitalization of events (e.g., 2032 Olympic and Paralympics Games) could evaluate the impact of operator education, effectiveness of training programs and outcomes of collaboration, and the benefits and opportunities of being inclusive of PwD. Providing operators with the tools and resources necessary to increase tacit knowledge of access requirements for informed decision making and actions towards accessible and inclusive experiences that benefit everyone.

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# ADAPTING CRISIS RECOVERY MODELS TO A MULTI-CRISIS TOURISM INDUSTRY: THE CASE OF SRI LANKA

Madura Thivanka Pathirana<sup>a</sup>, Thilini Vimukthika<sup>b</sup> and Upuli Warnakula<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a,b,c</sup>Edith Cowan University Sri Lanka

## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the evolution of crisis recovery models in the context of Sri Lanka's tourism industry, which has faced multiple overlapping crises since 2019, including the Easter Sunday attacks, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the economic crisis. Traditional crisis recovery models, such as Faulkner's Tourism Disaster Management Framework and Ritchie's Crisis and Disaster Management Framework, have proven inadequate in addressing the multi-crisis environment faced by Sri Lanka, where overlapping crises require continuous adaptation. Using a qualitative research approach, interviews with 192 stakeholders from the Sri Lanka Hoteliers Association and the Sri Lanka Inbound Tour Operators Association were conducted. The data were analysed using thematic, narrative, and grounded theory analysis to develop a new framework for crisis recovery that better addresses the complex, evolving nature of crises in the tourism sector. The findings suggest that traditional models need to evolve towards a dynamic, resilience-based approach that incorporates stakeholder collaboration, demographic-driven strategies, and continuous innovation. This research provides valuable insights into how the tourism industry can build resilience in the face of future crises, offering theoretical contributions and practical recommendations for both academia and industry stakeholders.

**Keywords:** *crisis recovery, tourism resilience, multi-crisis environment, stakeholder collaboration, adaptive resilience, Sri Lanka tourism*

## INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka's tourism industry has been a critical driver of its economy, contributing significantly to employment and foreign exchange earnings. Historically, Sri Lanka has been a popular destination for cultural, eco, and adventure tourism, offering unique experiences to international travelers (Ranasinghe, 2015). However, the sector has faced unprecedented challenges since 2019 due to a series of crises. The Easter Sunday terrorist attacks in April 2019 dealt a severe blow to tourist confidence, leading to a sharp decline in arrivals. Just as the industry began to recover, the COVID-19 pandemic further disrupted global travel, bringing the sector to a near standstill (Marwah, R., & Ramanayake, 2021). In 2022, Sri Lanka's economic crisis exacerbated the situation, affecting the infrastructure necessary for tourism operations, including transportation, energy supply, and basic services (Sharma et al. 2022). This multi-crisis environment has exposed vulnerabilities within the tourism sector, necessitating an in-depth exploration of crisis recovery strategies.

Existing literature on tourism crisis recovery, including Faulkner's Tourism Disaster Management Framework and Ritchie's Crisis and Disaster Management Framework, provides valuable insights into how tourism destinations can recover from singular events (Mair et al. 2016; Becken, 2019). However, these models are largely cyclical in nature, assuming that crises occur as isolated events with a clear beginning and end (Ritchie & Jiang. 2019). In contrast, Sri Lanka's tourism sector has been exposed to overlapping crises, requiring continuous adaptation rather than linear recovery. These gaps in existing models highlight the need for a new conceptual framework that better accounts for multi-crisis environments, where crises overlap and require ongoing, dynamic responses (Jurdana et al. 2020; Ritchie & Jiang. 2021).

The aim of this research is to assess how traditional crisis recovery models have evolved and adapted to the unique multi-crisis environment of Sri Lanka's tourism sector, focusing on resilience strategies,



stakeholder collaboration, and the shifts in tourist demographics since 2019. The study seeks to explore how these models have adapted to the challenges posed by multiple overlapping crises, such as the Easter Sunday attacks, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the ongoing economic crisis. Additionally, the research will examine the resilience strategies developed by hoteliers and tour operators, particularly in response to significant changes in tourist behaviour and demographics, such as the rise of younger, budget-conscious travellers to propose a multi crisis management model.

The objectives of this research are threefold: first, to assess the applicability of existing crisis recovery models, including Faulkner's Tourism Disaster Management Framework and Ritchie's Crisis Management Framework, to the Sri Lankan context; second, to identify the new strategies and adaptations that have emerged within Sri Lanka's tourism sector in response to multiple overlapping crises; and third, to evaluate the role of stakeholder collaboration in fostering resilience and supporting recovery efforts in the face of a multi-crisis environment. The research will address the following key questions: How have traditional tourism crisis recovery models been applied or adapted to Sri Lanka's multi-crisis context? What new strategies have been developed by Sri Lanka's tourism sector to recover from the compounded impacts of multiple crises? Through addressing these questions, the research will offer both theoretical insights and practical frameworks for managing crises in the tourism industry, particularly in multi-crisis environments like Sri Lanka's.

## **METHODS**

### **Faulkner's Tourism Disaster Management Framework (TDMF)**

Tourism crisis recovery models have been a major focus of research due to the industry's susceptibility to a wide range of disruptions, such as natural disasters, political instability, pandemics, and economic downturns. This research examines three key frameworks that have significantly contributed to the understanding of crisis recovery. They are Faulkner's Tourism Disaster Management Framework (TDMF), Ritchie's Crisis and Disaster Management Framework. Each framework provides important insights into crisis recovery, but recent challenges, particularly multi-crisis scenarios, expose gaps in these models that necessitate their evolution (Derham et al. 2022; Pongsakornrungsilp et al. 2021). The development of the conceptual framework for this study, focused on Sri Lanka's tourism sector, further highlights these evolving needs.

Faulkner's Tourism Disaster Management Framework (TDMF) (2001) was among the first comprehensive models addressing disaster recovery in tourism (Armstrong, 2008). It provides a cyclical approach with phases such as preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation, assuming crises are single events with clear recovery stages (Dayour et al. 2020). TDMF has been widely applied to disaster situations within tourism, particularly natural disasters like hurricanes and earthquakes (Derham et al. 2022). The model's structured approach offers valuable insights into planning and mitigation strategies. However, recent literature points to limitations in this framework, especially in multi-crisis environments where events overlap, and recovery processes are continuous rather than distinct phases (Ritchie & Jiang, 2019). Faulkner's model assumes that crises operate independently, but this fails to account for the fluid nature of modern crises, where one crisis can disrupt recovery from another (Derham et al. 2022). For instance, Sri Lanka's tourism industry was still recovering from the Easter Sunday attacks when the COVID-19 pandemic struck, followed by the economic crisis (Fernando and Carr, 2024). The cyclic nature of TDMF does not adequately address the complexities of such overlapping events (Derham et al. 2022). Paraskevas et al. (2017) argue for the need for adaptive frameworks that can evolve with the complexity of crises. Similarly, Mair et al. (2016) contend that cyclical models like TDMF do not fully address the socio-political dimensions of crises, where long-term instability can delay recovery efforts. These critiques highlight the necessity for a more dynamic and flexible model that accounts for simultaneous crises and the continuous nature of the recovery process.

### **Ritchie's Crisis and Disaster Management Framework**

Ritchie's Crisis and Disaster Management Framework (2004) extends Faulkner's model by emphasising long-term recovery and the importance of stakeholder collaboration (Ritchie, 2004). It recognises that crises have lasting effects and require a coordinated response from various stakeholders, including government bodies, tourism operators, and local communities (Ritchie and Jiang, 2021). Ritchie's framework stresses the need for planning, leadership, and coordinated efforts in both response and recovery phases (Ritchie, 2004). The model has been applied to crises such as terrorism, pandemics, and economic shocks (Ritchie & Jiang, 2021). Although Ritchie's model adopts a more strategic and collaborative approach to crisis recovery, it also faces limitations in dealing with the complexities of modern tourism crises. One key criticism is its assumption of a linear progression from response to recovery, which underestimates the non-linear nature of many contemporary crises (Casal-Ribeiro et al. 2023). The framework focuses heavily on long-term recovery strategies without adequately addressing the immediate, short-term needs that arise in multi-crisis situations. In the Sri Lankan context, for example, the tourism industry required rapid response mechanisms to manage the simultaneous impacts of health, security, and economic crises (Wickramasinghe & Naranpanawa, 2024). Furthermore, Ritchie's framework tends to view crises as external shocks, such as natural disasters or terrorist attacks, without fully considering internal challenges, such as financial strain, labour shortages, and changes in tourist behaviour (Coles et al., 2021). These internal challenges have become particularly significant following the COVID-19 pandemic, where the global tourism sector experienced a widespread downturn (Sampaio et al. 2023). Although Ritchie's framework highlights the importance of stakeholder collaboration, it does not fully capture the interconnectedness of modern crises, where economic, social, and political factors overlap (Ritchie, 2004). This has prompted calls for more integrated approaches that consider both internal and external factors influencing recovery processes (Casal-Ribeiro et al. 2023).

### **Limitations of Existing Models in Multi-Crisis Environments**

The gaps identified in these three frameworks highlight the need for a new, integrated model that can address the complexities of the multi-crisis environment faced by the tourism industry. The conceptual framework developed for this research integrates elements from Faulkner's and Ritchie's, while addressing their limitations. This new framework emphasises continuous adaptation, collaborative resilience, and demographic-driven strategies, reflecting the reality that crises no longer occur in isolation but often overlap and compound each other. Businesses in the tourism sector must continuously adapt to these crises.

### **Conceptual Framework for Multi-Crisis Recovery**

Recent literature supports this evolution of tourism crisis recovery frameworks. Ritchie & Jiang (2019) highlight the need for integrated and flexible recovery models that address both external shocks and internal challenges. Similarly, Apasrawirote & Yawised (2024) argue that adaptive resilience must go beyond business-level adaptation to include systemic changes, such as public policy interventions and infrastructure development. The conceptual framework developed in this research aligns with these perspectives by integrating adaptive resilience while emphasising the importance of collaborative efforts and demographic adaptability in addressing the evolving challenges of crisis recovery.

### **Development of the Interviews**

The interview guide for this research was developed by drawing on key elements from Faulkner's Tourism Disaster Management Framework (TDMF) and Ritchie's Crisis and Disaster Management Framework, tailored to reflect the unique challenges of overlapping crises in Sri Lanka's tourism industry. Questions were designed to explore how businesses navigated the distinct phases of crisis management outlined in Faulkner's model—preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation. For example, respondents were asked about their preparedness before the Easter Sunday attacks and COVID-19, their immediate responses to these crises, and how the overlap of crises influenced their recovery and long-term mitigation strategies. Drawing from Ritchie's framework, the guide also included questions on the role of stakeholder collaboration and leadership, probing how partnerships

with government bodies and other tourism operators affected recovery efforts. Additionally, questions addressed both external shocks (e.g., terrorist attacks, pandemics) and internal challenges (e.g., financial strain, labour shortages) to assess their combined impact on businesses. Finally, reflecting the need for continuous adaptation, the guide asked respondents how they adapted their services and operations in response to changing tourist demographics, as well as the role of innovation in developing new products and recovery strategies. This comprehensive approach ensured that the interviews provided insights into both the applicability of existing frameworks and the development of new strategies suited to a multi-crisis context.

### Qualitative Approach

This research adopts a qualitative methodology to investigate how the Sri Lankan tourism industry adapted to multiple crises between 2019 and 2023. Through interviews with key stakeholders, including hoteliers and tour operators, the study explores the applicability of established crisis recovery models and the emergence of new strategies. Thematic, narrative, content, framework, and grounded theory analysis were employed to analyse the data and develop a comprehensive understanding of evolving recovery models in a multi-crisis context. The qualitative approach is ideal for exploring the complex, dynamic nature of crisis recovery, particularly in situations where overlapping crises require continuous adaptation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The population for this study included 218 members from the Sri Lanka Hoteliers Association and 151 members from the Sri Lanka Inbound Tour Operators Association, ensuring that the core stakeholders in Sri Lanka's tourism industry were represented (Sri Lanka Association of Inbound Tour Operators (SLAITO), 2024; Tourist Hotels Association of Sri Lanka (THASL), 2024). Using the Yamane formula for finite populations, a sample size of 192 respondents was determined, with proportional representation from both hoteliers (113) and tour operators (79) (Stamatopoulos, 2022). Semi-structured interviews allowed respondents to provide detailed insights into the crises, while ensuring consistent exploration of key topics like the application of crisis recovery models and changes in tourist demographics. Interview questions were framed using Faulkner's TDMF and Ritchie's Crisis Management Framework to assess the models' relevance in a multi-crisis environment.

### Data Analysis Techniques

Thematic analysis identified recurring patterns such as financial strain, operational adaptation, and demographic changes (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Narrative analysis captured the personal and organisational impacts of the crises, while content analysis quantified key terms such as "resilience" and "adaptation" to highlight the most discussed issues (Elo et al., 2014). Grounded theory was then applied to systematically code and develop new categories and core themes, facilitating the creation of an evolved crisis recovery framework that reflects the non-linear adaptation strategies required for the Sri Lankan tourism sector (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Framework analysis validated these findings by comparing them with existing crisis recovery theories, showing how Faulkner's and Ritchie's into a more flexible, collaborative, and demographic-driven approach (Gale et al., 2013). Grounded theory provided the necessary flexibility to identify how traditional models need to adapt to the complex, overlapping nature of contemporary tourism crises (Charmaz, 2014).

In this study, content analysis and narrative analysis were employed as complementary techniques to provide both quantitative and qualitative insights into the adaptation strategies of Sri Lanka's tourism sector. Content analysis focused on systematically quantifying keywords and terms frequently mentioned by respondents, such as "adaptation," "financial strain," and "resilience," to gauge the prevalence of these issues across stakeholders. This method highlighted the most discussed topics, providing a numerical basis for identifying areas of major concern. Narrative analysis, on the other hand, captured the broader, storyline-like experiences and perceptions that emerged from these responses. By examining how themes like *Crisis Fatigue* and *Demographic Shift* were expressed in the participants' accounts, narrative analysis allowed us to interpret how respondents viewed their journey through successive crises. This dual approach not only emphasized the specific challenges faced but also contextualized them within a cohesive narrative framework, offering a comprehensive



understanding of how stakeholders collectively adapted and built resilience in response to overlapping crises

## RESULTS

### Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis process in this study involved systematically coding and categorizing interview data to identify recurring patterns and themes related to the adaptation of crisis recovery models within Sri Lanka's tourism sector. This approach began with a thorough review of interview transcripts, where responses from 192 stakeholders were coded based on the core topics relevant to crisis recovery. Following the guidelines of Braun & Clarke (2019), initial codes were organized into broader themes, capturing the essence of each response. Key themes such as financial strain, operational adaptation, demographic changes, and stakeholder collaboration emerged, each representing a significant aspect of the respondents' experiences. This thematic framework served to structure the analysis of how Sri Lanka's tourism industry has adapted to overlapping crises, guiding the subsequent interpretation of results in a structured and cohesive manner. The findings from this thematic analysis were then cross-referenced with existing models to assess how traditional frameworks like Faulkner's and Ritchie's models might evolve to meet the unique demands of multi-crisis environments.

**Table 1: Frequency of Themes Across 192 Respondents**

Theme	Frequency in Hoteliers (113)	Frequency in Tour Operators (79)	Total Frequency	Percentage of Total Respondents
Crisis Complexity	85	63	148	77%
Changing Tourist Demographics	92	71	163	85%
Operational Adaptation	87	66	153	80%
Financial Strain	94	65	159	83%
Stakeholder Collaboration	79	55	134	70%
Emerging New Strategies	61	46	107	56%

The most prominent theme that emerged from the interviews was the Changing Tourist Demographics, with 85% of respondents discussing this issue. This theme was particularly strong among hoteliers (92 instances), reflecting their need to adapt to the new demographic of tourists—primarily younger, budget-conscious travelers, a significant shift from the high-spending tourists prior to 2019. Crisis Complexity and Operational Adaptation also emerged as dominant themes, mentioned by 77% and 80% of respondents, respectively, emphasizing the industry's need to adapt to multiple crises in a short span of time. The Financial Strain theme was prevalent among 83% of respondents, highlighting the significant economic challenges faced by both hoteliers and tour operators, including debts, reduced revenue, and increased operational costs. The Stakeholder Collaboration theme, mentioned by 70% of respondents, points to the importance of cooperation between various entities (hotels, tour operators, and government bodies) to navigate the crises. Finally, the theme of Emerging New Strategies was observed among 56% of respondents, indicating the evolution of innovative approaches to attract new demographics and improve resilience in the tourism sector.

### Narrative Analysis

In the *Narratives* section, the analysis captures broader, storyline-like insights derived from recurring themes in participants' responses. Unlike the specific themes in the thematic analysis, which highlight distinct factors (e.g., financial strain, stakeholder collaboration), the narratives illustrate overarching

patterns that reflect the collective experiences and perceptions of the respondents. These narratives provide context to understand how multiple themes interact to shape the respondents' overall experiences.

By organizing these insights into key narratives—such as *Crisis Fatigue*, *Demographic Shift*, *Operational Shifts*, *Financial Challenges*, and *Collaboration and Innovation*—the analysis contextualizes the compounded effects of ongoing crises on the tourism sector in Sri Lanka. This narrative approach sets the stage for understanding the main findings by showing how respondents not only responded to each theme but also wove them into coherent accounts of survival, adaptation, and resilience under multi-crisis conditions.

The following table 2 categorizes the key narratives that emerged.

**Table 2: Key Narratives and Frequency of Their Occurrence**

Narrative	Frequency in Hoteliers (113)	Frequency in Tour Operators (79)	Total Frequency	Percentage of Total Respondents
Crisis Fatigue	71	51	122	63%
Demographic Shift	87	69	156	81%
Operational Shifts	75	57	132	69%
Financial Challenges	94	64	158	82%
Collaboration and Innovation	62	47	109	57%

The Demographic Shift narrative was the most frequently mentioned across both hoteliers and tour operators, with 81% of respondents discussing how the profile of tourists visiting Sri Lanka has changed significantly post-2019. Respondents noted that they are seeing more Gen Z travelers, backpackers, and budget-conscious tourists, which has forced them to rethink their service offerings and pricing strategies. For instance, one hotelier explained, "The luxury packages we used to offer don't appeal to these new tourists. We had to lower prices and offer budget rooms." This shift was similarly reflected in tour operators, many of whom said they had to adapt their itineraries and price points to appeal to solo travelers and small groups. Crisis Fatigue was another common narrative, cited by 63% of respondents. This theme reflects the exhaustion felt by both hoteliers and tour operators in dealing with multiple crises back-to-back without sufficient time to recover between events. A tour operator noted, "We were just beginning to recover from the Easter attacks when COVID hit, and then came the economic crisis. It feels like we are always in survival mode." Financial Challenges was mentioned by 82% of respondents, revealing the widespread financial difficulties encountered due to decreased tourist numbers and revenue, compounded by debt and ongoing operational costs. Some respondents discussed taking loans to keep their businesses afloat, while others mentioned having to lay off staff. Operational Shifts and Collaboration and Innovation were also prominent narratives, with 69% and 57% of respondents discussing how they had to adjust their operations (e.g., reducing staff, closing sections of their hotels, or offering new travel packages). Collaboration between industry players and government bodies was cited as essential for long-term recovery and building resilience in the face of ongoing crises.

### Content Analysis

The following table 3 presents the most common keywords mentioned during the interviews, providing evidence of how often certain crisis-related terms were discussed.

**Table 3: Content Analysis – Frequency of Key Terms in Interview Transcripts**

Keyword/Phrase	Frequency in Hoteliers (113)	Frequency in Tour Operators (79)	Total Frequency	Percentage of Total Respondents
"Adaptation"	91	68	159	83%
"Budget travelers"	89	65	154	80%
"Government support"	63	48	111	58%
"Financial strain"	97	71	168	88%
"Resilience"	54	37	91	47%
"Collaboration"	72	53	125	65%

The term "Adaptation" was mentioned by 83% of respondents, signaling a strong emphasis on the need for constant changes in business models, operations, and strategies to survive in the face of the multiple crises. The frequent mention of "budget travelers" by 80% of respondents also underscores the change in tourist demographics that the sector has had to adapt to. One respondent noted, "Before 2019, we catered to high-end tourists, but now we see more backpackers and Gen Z travelers looking for budget options." The term "financial strain" was the most commonly used phrase, mentioned by 88% of respondents, illustrating the deep economic impact the crises have had on the industry. This is particularly reflected in statements about financial burdens, such as paying off loans and dealing with reduced revenues. In contrast, "government support" was mentioned by 58% of respondents, indicating that many industry players feel that more assistance is needed from public authorities to help them recover and build resilience. "Resilience" and "Collaboration" were also key terms, mentioned by 47% and 65% of respondents, respectively. These terms suggest that while resilience is a growing focus, collaboration between stakeholders—particularly between hotels, tour operators, and the government—is seen as a crucial component of recovery.

### Framework Analysis and Grounded Theory Development

The insights from thematic, narrative, and content analyses reveal that the three original crisis recovery models—Faulkner's TDMF, Ritchie's Crisis Management Framework, and the Adaptive Resilience model—are no longer fully applicable to the current realities of the Sri Lankan tourism industry. The industry has been forced to develop a new approach to crisis recovery that emphasizes multi-crisis adaptation, collaboration, and demographic-driven strategies. This new approach can be described as an evolution of the traditional models, leading to the development of a Grounded Theory of Evolved Crisis Management for Multi-Crisis Tourism Recovery.

**Table 4: Key Components of the New Crisis Recovery Framework for Sri Lanka**

Original Model Component	Adapted Component	Description of New Component Based on Data
Crisis Cycle (Faulkner's TDMF)	Continuous, Overlapping Crisis Cycle	Crises are no longer experienced as discrete events; they overlap, requiring constant adaptation rather than cyclical recovery.
Long-Term Recovery (Ritchie's)	Short- and Long-Term Adaptation	Recovery must be both short-term (reactive to immediate changes in tourist behavior) and long-term (sustainable resilience).
Resilience (Adaptive Resilience)	Resilience through Collaboration and Innovation	Resilience is built not just through flexibility but also through active collaboration between stakeholders and innovative approaches to tourism.

The new crisis recovery framework for Sri Lankan tourism, derived from the analysis, indicates that traditional crisis management strategies are evolving to better fit the complex, multi-crisis environment faced by the industry. While the original models emphasized cyclical recovery, data from respondents suggest that a continuous and overlapping crisis management approach is more appropriate. The traditional recovery phases are no longer sufficient, as crises often overlap, requiring constant adaptation. Demographic-driven adaptation has become a central component of the recovery

process, as both hoteliers and tour operators noted the shift in tourist demographics towards budget-conscious travelers. This shift requires immediate operational changes, such as adjusting pricing strategies and offering new types of services, while long-term strategies focus on building financial resilience and adapting to future crises. This evolved framework emphasizes the importance of stakeholder collaboration, demographic flexibility, and the need for a continuous, non-linear crisis management strategy to help the Sri Lankan tourism sector not just survive, but thrive, in a multi-crisis environment.

## DISCUSSION

The analysis of the qualitative data collected from 192 respondents in Sri Lanka's tourism sector reveals significant insights into how traditional crisis recovery models have evolved in response to the unique multi-crisis context experienced since 2019. The tourism industry in Sri Lanka has faced a series of overlapping crises—most notably, the Easter Sunday attacks, the COVID-19 pandemic, and an economic crisis. The findings indicate that the traditional cyclical models of crisis management, such as Faulkner's Tourism Disaster Management Framework (TDMF) and Ritchie's Crisis and Disaster Management Framework are insufficient in addressing the complexities of simultaneous crises. The study highlights a need for a more dynamic, continuous framework that better accommodates the interconnectedness of crises, changing tourist demographics, and the necessity of stakeholder collaboration and financial resilience.

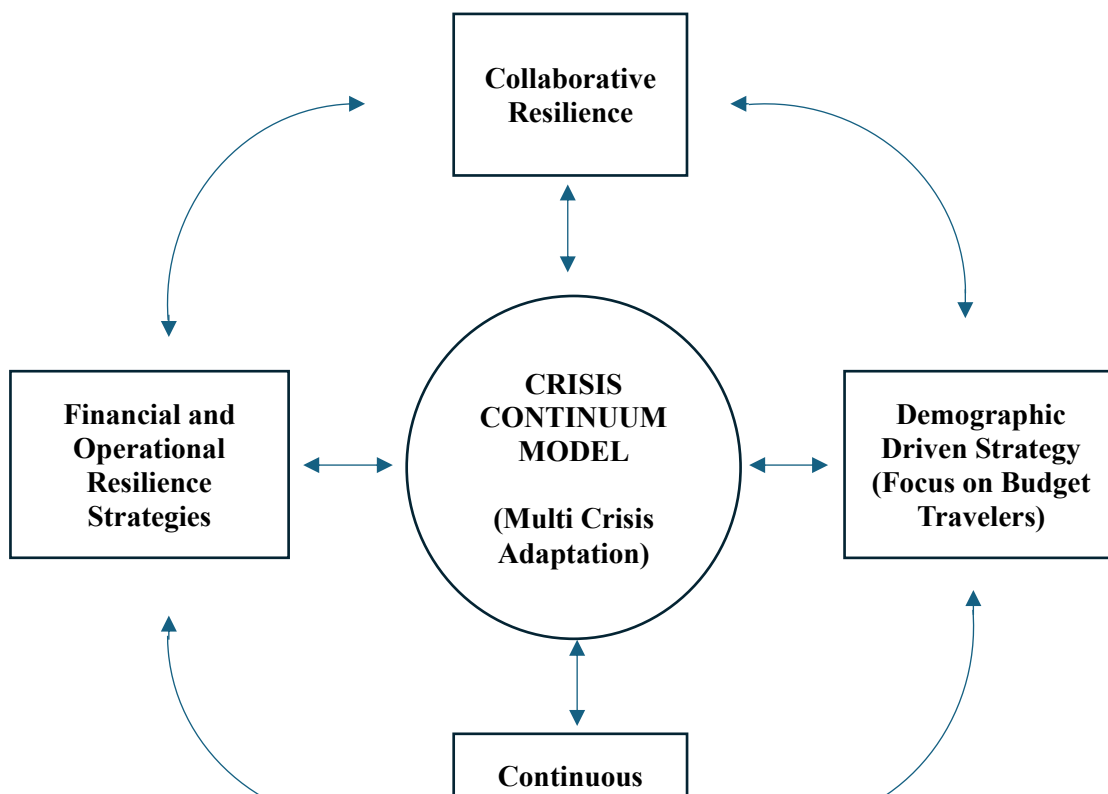
Faulkner's TDMF, widely recognised for its structured, cyclical approach to disaster management, assumes that crises are discrete events with clear stages of recovery, from preparation to mitigation (Faulkner, 2013). However, the findings from this research suggest that in the context of Sri Lanka, where crises overlap and compound each other's effects, the cyclical nature of Faulkner's model does not suffice. Respondents consistently reported the need to adapt continuously to the evolving nature of the crises. For example, one hotelier explained that while health protocols were being managed due to COVID-19, the simultaneous economic crisis created additional financial strain, preventing a complete recovery. This aligns with Paraskevas et al. (2017), who argue that tourism recovery frameworks must evolve to accommodate multi-crisis environments where simultaneous shocks disrupt the linear recovery processes traditionally outlined by models like TDMF. Additionally, Mair et al. (2016) point out that many cyclical models do not consider the socio-political dimensions of crises, such as prolonged political instability, which further delays recovery. In Sri Lanka, the ongoing political and economic crises exacerbated the challenges posed by the pandemic, highlighting the limitations of Faulkner's TDMF. The findings of this research suggest that businesses need to remain in a constant state of readiness, adjusting their strategies in response to multiple crises occurring simultaneously, rather than progressing through distinct stages of recovery. This shift is consistent with recent studies, such as Ritchie & Jiang (2019), which suggest that crisis recovery frameworks in tourism must be more flexible and responsive to overlapping crises.

Ritchie's Crisis and Disaster Management Framework extends Faulkner's model by focusing on stakeholder collaboration and long-term recovery strategies. This research found that stakeholder collaboration is crucial for the Sri Lankan tourism sector's ability to recover. Nearly 70% of respondents emphasised the need for a coordinated approach between the government, tourism operators, and other stakeholders. However, the findings also suggest that the traditional models of stakeholder collaboration, as outlined in Ritchie's framework, are not fully applicable in a multi-crisis context. For example, respondents noted that navigating government regulations and visa policies posed challenges in attracting high-spending tourists from key markets. These issues were further complicated by a lack of government financial support for businesses trying to recover from the compounded crises. The need for deeper, more integrated partnerships between the government and tourism operators is increasingly important in environments where multiple crises interact. Lachhab et al. (2023) argues that stakeholder collaboration during multi-crisis events must go beyond immediate crisis management to incorporate long-term, proactive strategies that focus on rebuilding trust and infrastructure. The findings from this research align with this perspective, indicating that Sri Lanka's tourism sector needs more sustained, long-term collaboration with the government to support

ongoing recovery efforts. One tour operator noted that, “continuous dialogue with the government is needed, not just in response to crises, but to ensure future preparedness.” This evolved approach to collaboration highlights the concept of collaborative resilience, where partnerships between stakeholders are crucial not only for crisis response but for sustained recovery and future crisis preparedness (Mair et al. 2016).

Moreover, the findings emphasise the importance of financial and operational resilience in surviving and recovering from multi-crisis contexts. Financial strain was a recurring theme among respondents, many of whom noted difficulties in managing debt and reducing operational costs in the wake of prolonged crises. Building financial resilience by managing liquidity, restructuring debt, and optimising operations has become central to recovery efforts. According to Sharma et al. (2021), resilience in tourism must extend beyond the immediate crisis to include strategies that ensure long-term financial stability and sustainability. The findings of this research support this view, highlighting the need for businesses to prioritise financial management as part of their broader recovery strategies. Finally, continuous innovation emerged as a key strategy for maintaining relevance and competitiveness in the face of changing market conditions. Respondents highlighted the need to introduce new tourism products and services, such as eco-tourism, experiential travel, and digital solutions like online bookings and digital marketing. These findings are consistent with the growing body of literature on the importance of innovation in tourism recovery (Hussain, 2021). As businesses adapt to changing tourist demographics and preferences, continuous innovation becomes crucial for staying competitive in the global tourism market.

This research proposed a new crisis continuum model. This model developed from this research integrates elements of Faulkner’s TDMF and Ritchie’s Crisis and Disaster Management Framework while evolving these models to address the realities of a multi-crisis environment. Continuous innovation, Financial and Operational Resilience Strategies, collaborative resilience, and demographic-driven strategies form the foundation of this framework, reflecting the need for businesses to remain flexible, resilient, and responsive to overlapping crises. By integrating these concepts, the framework offers a dynamic, holistic approach to crisis recovery that aligns with the lessons learned from Sri Lanka’s multi-crisis environment. This model presents significant implications for both academia and industry, providing a more comprehensive understanding of how tourism businesses can recover and build resilience in the face of complex, interconnected crises.





## Conclusions and Implications

This research explored the evolution of crisis recovery models in the context of Sri Lanka's tourism industry, which has faced a unique set of challenges due to overlapping crises since 2019. Traditional models, such as Faulkner's TDMF and Ritchie's Crisis and Disaster Management Framework, have proven insufficient in addressing the complexities of a multi-crisis environment, where crises are not isolated but intertwined. The study revealed that a new, dynamic framework is needed. Through qualitative analysis, a grounded theory was developed, illustrating how the tourism industry has shifted towards a more resilience-based approach that focuses on financial stability, operational flexibility, and collaborative innovation.

The findings of this research underscore the need for both academia and industry stakeholders to rethink existing crisis recovery models in light of the multi-crisis environment facing the tourism sector. For the academic community, this research demonstrates the limitations of cyclical crisis recovery models, such as Faulkner's TDMF and Ritchie's Crisis and Disaster Management Framework, which are largely based on singular, event-driven crises. Scholars should focus on developing more dynamic frameworks that account for the continuous nature of crises and the interplay between external shocks and internal challenges, such as financial strain and changing tourist demographics. Future research should also explore how different demographic segments respond to crises and what resilience strategies are most effective for targeting emerging tourist markets, such as Gen Z travelers and budget-conscious tourists.

For industry stakeholders, particularly in Sri Lanka's tourism sector, the findings suggest that stakeholder collaboration is critical for building resilience. Government agencies, hoteliers, and tour operators must work together to develop integrated crisis management strategies, focusing on financial resilience, regulatory support, and infrastructure improvements. Businesses should also invest in digital solutions and eco-tourism offerings that cater to changing tourist preferences, helping to attract a more diverse range of visitors. Furthermore, industry players should engage in continuous innovation, adapting their products and services to meet evolving market demands.

Future research could explore the effectiveness of the proposed model in other multi-crisis contexts and assess the long-term impacts of sustained crises on the tourism labour market and economic recovery.

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# AIRPORT-CITY REGION, BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM AND THE SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIPS: ATTRIBUTES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF EMERGING GLOBAL CITY REGIONS

Andrey Pchelkin<sup>a</sup> and Bojana Spasojevic<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>School of Engineering and Built Environment, Griffith University

## ABSTRACT

Airports are strategic enablers for city-region economies, with their growth and global emergence being mutually dependent. Despite their interdependence, growth strategies, and objectives can vary, potentially hindering the effective exploitation of global opportunities for mutual benefits. This paper analyses the symbiotic relationships between airports and city regions, as integral parts of business ecosystems and how they can contribute for the development of emerging global city regions and assist professionals and stakeholders to capitalise on global opportunities more effectively. Guided by a pragmatic paradigm and employing a case study approach, this multi-disciplinary paper explores the symbiotic relationships between airports and city regions in Southeast Queensland, Australia, in the context of a business ecosystem under the lens of Complexity theory focusing on six global city attributes: Connectedness, Networks, Governance/Management, Size/Scale, Informational Technology, and Migration/Tourism. The results are then compared across large, medium, and small city regions and their respective airports, providing findings on the symbiotic relationships and highlighting the potential for future research on emerging global city regions.

**Keywords:** *Airports; City regions; Global city attributes; Complexity theory; Business ecosystem; Symbiotic relationships*

## Introduction

Historically, global city regions emerged through a timely growth and coevolution of various stakeholders, including transport providers, and are characterised as significant economic, cultural, and political hubs (Abrahamson, 2004; Bagheri et al., 2024; Friedmann, 1986; Hall, 1966, 2014; Sassen, 2001a, 2001b). These regions serve as highly connected nodes that attract people, businesses, tourists and capital, underscoring the pivotal role of air transport in their development (Addie, 2014; Friedmann, 1986; Goerzen et al., 2024; Sassen, 2005; Taylor et al., 2009). In the context of globalisation and increasing interconnectedness, many cities and regions have focused on airports as strategic assets to seize global opportunities in commerce, trade, and tourism, some drawing inspiration from the success of cities like Singapore and Dubai and thereby enhancing their global emergence (Acuto, 2022; Dimitrios et al., 2017; Freestone & Baker, 2011; Goetz & Budd, 2014; Kasarda, 2000; Lohmann et al., 2009).

Airport-city region relationships mirror the business ecosystem concept, where participants co-evolve and create value through complex interactions (Moore, 1993, 1996). These relationships are characterised by multifaceted responses to globalisation and heightened competition (Baker et al., 2015; Dempsey & Gesell, 1997; Green, 2007; Munkkala & Tervo, 2013; Zhang & Graham, 2020). Despite extensive studies on global city regions, the dynamics within airport-city region relationships and their roles in developing emerging global city regions remain unexplored (Díez-Pisonero, 2019; Li et al., 2022; Sun & Ma, 2020; Tolcha et al., 2023). This paper addresses these gaps by examining the following research question: “What symbiotic relationships exist between airports and city regions across key global city attributes, and how do they impact the emergence of global city regions?” Adopting Complexity theory (Turner & Baker, 2019; Wolfram, 1984) and the Business Ecosystem approach (Moore, 1993) this study examines the symbiotic relationships through six key global city

attributes across large, medium, and small size airport-city regions, revealing effectiveness of their interdependencies. The findings provide actionable insights for airport managers, businesses, and government and non-government agencies on which global city attributes exhibit deficiencies of symbiotic relationships and how these can be improved to enhance mutual benefits, additionally opening new avenues for further research.

## Literature review

### *Complexity Theory and the Business Ecosystems Approach*

Complexity theory examines the intricate systems of interconnected elements or participants interacting nonlinearly to growth, adapt, and evolve (Anderson, 1999; Sammut-Bonnici, 2015; Sherman & Schultz, 1998; Wolfram, 1984). The theory provides a framework for understanding the dynamics of complex systems in various environments, including biology and other natural sciences. This theory explains how simple rules and interactions between participants lead to emergent and self-organising patterns and behaviours at higher levels of organisation (Karaca, 2022; Kauffman & Johnsen, 1991; Manson, 2001). The Complexity theory generally integrates the complex adaptive systems (CAS), incorporating tenets like path dependence, system history, non-linearity, emergence, irreducibility, adaptiveness, operating order and chaos, and self-organisation (Kauffman & Johnsen, 1991; Turner & Baker, 2019). Despite the claim that the use of Complexity theory remains limited in many social sciences (Byrne & Callaghan, 2022; Turner & Baker, 2019), there has been a surge in complexity research in economic disciplines, particularly exploring the tenets of self-organisation, emergence, coevolution, and adaptation within Business ecosystems (Frederick, 1998; Kelly & Allison, 1999; Miskiyah et al., 2024; Mitleton-Kelly, 2003; Moore, 1996; Peltoniemi & Vuori, 2008; Wilkinson & Young, 2002; Yoon et al., 2022).

Moore (1993) pioneered the business ecosystem concept by mirroring it to a natural ecosystem with various participants, such as companies, governments, consumers, and competitors, acting as species primarily sharing two goals: survival and co-evolution. According to Moore (1996), a system's participants offer products or services on a platform aimed at creating value through interactions within the business ecosystem.

Yoon et al. (2022) explain that symbiotic relationships within business ecosystems are inherently dynamic, capable for evolving from mutualism to commensalism or parasitism as participant dynamics shift. In mutualistic relationships, all participants benefit; in commensalistic relationships, one participant benefits without impacting the other. Parasitic relationships, however, involve one participant benefitting at the expense of another. These shifts underscore the fluid nature of symbiotic interactions, driven by changes in the roles and conditions within the ecosystem. This evolution is often influenced by a keystone species, an influential leader in the ecosystem that strategically manages relationships with other participants, such as dominant species, flagship species, hub landlords, and niche players, to ensure the overall ecosystem's success. Iansiti and Levien (2004) initially categorised participants in the business ecosystem as keystones, dominators, hub landlords and niche players. Yoon et al. (2022) added flagship species, further refining the concept.

Despite evidence highlighting the positive impact of symbiotic relationships on self-organisation and coevolution within a business ecosystem (Basole & Karla, 2011; Iansiti & Levien, 2002; Khanagha et al., 2022), research on the effectiveness of interconnections between the symbionts that drive business ecosystem emergence and growth remains limited (Martín-Peña, 2024; Rong et al., 2024; Turner & Baker, 2019). Moreover, Foster (2005), Snowden and Boone (2007) and Byrne and Callaghan (2022) suggest that applying Complexity theory in economics to explain interactions and relationships in today's complex and constantly changing environment can equip social scientists and practitioners with skills to compete effectively in the global business realm. This underscores the necessity for

further theoretical development and validation of business ecosystem concepts. Peltoniemi and Vuori (2008) and Yoon et al. (2022) emphasise the importance of investigating symbiotic relationships in diverse environments, including established and emerging ecosystems, such as airport-city regions, to better understand global dynamics and industry-specific characteristics.

### *Airports and Symbiotic Relationships*

Like species within business ecosystems, airports and their associated city regions (across different nations) coexist and evolve, often inadvertently, in a mutually supportive relationship. The literature suggests that air transport is crucial for unlocking a region's economic potential, sparking debates over whether airports drive or result from economic growth (Baker et al., 2015; Dempsey & Gesell, 1997; Green, 2007; Kaya & Aydın, 2024; Mukkala & Tervo, 2013). While multiple studies articulate the beneficial impacts of airports on regional economies, limited research on their relations or adverse effects on businesses, governments or other organisations has been conducted (Baker et al., 2015; Bråthen & Halpern, 2012; Zhang & Graham, 2020). What is evident, however, is that airports and cities or regions are interdependent in today's globalised landscape (Donnet et al., 2018; Freestone & Baker, 2011; Kane, 2007; Raihan et al., 2024).

Generally, airports are economically focused, emphasising long-term profitability, business expansion, and stakeholder benefits (Jarach, 2005). In Australia, for example, airports follow the same pretext and leverage government-leased land for commercial development while still serving as integral components of regional transport infrastructure (Freestone & Baker, 2011). Güller and Güller (2003) underline that airport regions comprise various stakeholders, including airport owners, operators, investors, developers, local authorities, and infrastructure providers. The argument is that businesses and organisations (as other affiliated stakeholders) in larger cities with well-connected airports can strategically plan their expansion, leveraging global connectivity accordingly.

Conversely, enterprises in smaller cities face constraints due to limited air services and connectivity at their local airports, potentially impeding their ambitious growth plans (Brueckner, 2003). The contemporary urban planning discourse underscores the imperative of inclusive governance in airport region (Pauwels et al., 2024). This collaborative responsibility pertains to airport operators and public authorities, as Güller and Güller (2003) emphasised. Freestone and Baker (2011) and Novák et al. (2024) underscore the regional significance of airports in urban planning and economic development. The authors advocate for integrating airport master plans with broader urban and regional planning, stressing the importance of collaborations with public and private stakeholders.

### *Global city regions and the role of airports*

Hall (1966) was the first to identify London, Tokyo, Paris and New York as *world cities*, highlighting their global economic, political, and cultural significance. His seminal work laid the ground for future studies on *global cities* and their influence on international networks and economies. Friedmann (1986) expanded on this by introducing the *world city hypothesis*, linking urbanisation to global economic forces and positioning global cities as hubs for international capital and migration, particularly following the shift to post-industrial economies in the 1970s and 1980s. Sassen (1991) further conceptualised global cities as command points in the world economy, focusing on finance, production and innovation. Later, contributions from Castells (1996), Sassen (2005) and Taylor et al. (2009) explored how technology has reshaped urban dynamics, transforming cities into networked global spaces.

Taylor et al. (2009), Ursic and Kriznik (2012) and Curtis (2016) suggest that the pursuit of global city status, viewed as a path to prosperity and well-being, motivates cities of all sizes in today's interconnected world. Singapore's city-state model exemplifies how strategic resource mobilisation and governance can effectively seize global opportunities for mutual interests (Olds & Yeung, 2004). However, achieving this status is far from guaranteed. In the lead-up to the 2000 Olympics, for

instance, Sydney became overly focused on its global city branding but struggled to actualise this vision due to the administrative complexities of metropolitan governance. Similarly, while prioritising economic gains and global visibility, other Olympic host cities, such as Barcelona and Seoul, neglected social considerations, resulting in problems such as population gentrification (Lemanski, 2007; Ursic & Kriznik, 2012). Hence, Ursic and Kriznik (2012) emphasised that effective urban planning must balance the interests of public, private and civil society stakeholders, which fosters global competitiveness, enhances positive city image, and improves the quality of life, ultimately contributing to global city emergence.

Kasarda and Appold (2014) emphasised the importance of airports for city regions by introducing the *Aerotropolis* concept, which positions modern airports as economic satellites of their perspectives cities, focusing not only on passenger connections but also on facilitating global trade through Just-In-Time (JIT) logistics. They argued that the time-sensitive nature of these facilities adds value for global producers and enables the attraction of multinational companies (MNCs) to the emerging city regions. However, while such airport concept functionality offers clear economic benefits, Sun and Ma (2020) find it underexplored in global city literature. Despite airports' pivotal role in accelerating economic growth, much global city literature examines cities' complex functions, rankings and networks (Addie, 2014; Díez-Pisonero, 2019; Sun & Ma, 2020; Tian et al., 2024; Trincado-Munoz et al., 2024).

While existing studies on global city regions and airports provide valuable insights, they primarily emphasise economic perspectives, interpreting results quantitatively but offering a limited qualitative understanding of the reciprocal relationships. Moreover, Díez-Pisonero (2019) underscores that cities are inseparable from airports, which rely on cities for passengers, cargo, and economic viability, promoting crucial connectivity. This interdependence necessitates further research into the symbiotic relationships, especially in the context of globalisation and its competitive, responsive and dynamic nature (Zhang & Graham, 2020).

## Method

This study, grounded in Complexity theory and the Business ecosystem approach, aims to analyse how symbiotic relationships between airports and their respective city regions generate mutual benefits to the development of emerging global city regions. The rationale for selecting the Business ecosystem approach lies in its ability to examine complex and interdependent relationships within socio-economic ecosystems and explore co-evolution and self-organisation between various stakeholders (Iansiti & Levien, 2004; Moore, 1996). Adopting an exploratory, multi-disciplinary, and qualitative approach, the research employs theoretical analysis and a case study methodology. This study focuses on six key global city-region attributes and investigates large, medium, and small city regions in Southeast Queensland (SEQ), Australia, including all featuring airports with international passenger traffic. The research explores the dynamics of symbiotic relationships and how they differ based on city-region size.

The study's methodological framework is rooted in the pragmatism paradigm, supported by two primary rationales. First, the research question was pre-determined, which aligns with the work of Tashakkori et al. (1998) and Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2004), who suggest that pragmatist researchers begin by defining the research question rather than focusing on ontological and epistemological concerns. These scholars emphasise that contemporary researchers often employ the method most appropriate to their specific studies, viewing research philosophy as a continuum rather than opposing positions. Second, this study adopts a multi-disciplinary approach, integrating air transport and urban studies, reflecting a growing trend among researchers to employ collaborative and flexible techniques to address complex questions (Pabel et al., 2021).



Given this research's exploratory nature, semi-structured interviews will serve as the primary data collection method, integrating with theoretical analysis. This qualitative approach is effective for gathering in-depth insights into participants' experiences, attitudes, and perceptions, balancing structured questions with flexibility to probe deeper, thus enabling a comprehensive exploration of complex social phenomena (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014; Bryman, 2016).

Based on Iansiti and Levien (2004) and Yoon et al. (2022), in this study, the Business ecosystem approach frames airports as *keystone species* essential for global connectivity and economic activity that enable travel, trade, and logistics (Graham, 2013). Various roles represent city regions: government agencies as *hub landlords* providing critical infrastructure and regulations (Porter, 1990); businesses as *dominant species* shaping economic activity, market dynamics, and industry standards (Christensen, 1997); and educational, cultural, and entertainment institutions, as *flagship species*, symbolising the intellectual and cultural assets of the Business ecosystem, fostering innovation, talent, and local identity (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000).

To categorise the symbiotic relationships between the airports and city regions, the research analysis will be guided by specific theoretical typologies such as mutualism, commensalism and parasitism identified in the business ecosystem approach (Yoon et al., 2022). Through the lens of Complexity theory, the interactions between airports and city regions in this study will be analysed across six global city attributes, examining the principles of co-evolution, self-organisation, emergence and adaptation and how this impact the economic and infrastructural development of airports and city-regions.

A case study approach, as outlined by Crowe et al. (2011), enables a comprehensive, multi-dimensional investigation of complex issues within real-life contexts, ideal for addressing "how" and "why" research questions, especially when a detailed and extensive description of a social phenomenon is required (Yin, 2009). Informed by the literature review, participants from large, medium, and small city region airports, government and non-government agencies, businesses, and educational, cultural, and entertainment organisations across different sectors within the SEQ region, one of Australia's fastest-growing regions (Queensland Government, 2024), will be recruited for semi-structured interviews.

A thematic analysis of semi-structured interview data will be conducted using NVivo, with transcriptions coded deductively based on mutualism, commensalism and parasitism frameworks (Yin, 2014). This approach systematically identifies relevant codes and themes, verifying established theoretical constructs in specific contexts, thus supporting the study's aim (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

### **Preliminary results (data analysis in progress)**

Interviews with 22 professionals from SEQ's large, medium, and small city regions (airports, government agencies, federal, state, and regional destination management organisations, businesses, and educational, cultural, and entertainment organisations) reveal that airports acting as keystone species and government agencies as hub landlords exhibit strong mutualistic relationships in the context of connectedness as a global city attribute. Contrary to previous studies suggesting that some airports and airport land developers operate entirely focusing on their objectives, SEQ airports are shown to be integral to regional infrastructure, collaborating closely with government agencies to support air connectivity and regional development (Blanton, 2004; Kane, 2007). These relationships are driven by shared economic goals, maximising benefits from trade, tourism, and investment, consistent with insights from Jarach (2005) and Dimitrios and Maria (2018).

The study also identified self-organised, regular meetings as a mechanism for sustaining collaboration, aligning with theories of Complex Adaptive Systems (Anderson, 1999; Prigogine &

Stengers, 1984). Meanwhile, businesses acting as dominant species and educational, cultural, and entertainment organisations as flagship species exploit airport connectivity without reciprocal engagement, indicating a more commensal relationship that falls short of mutual symbiosis. Notably, larger airports maintain closer ties with government agencies than smaller airports, which face resource limitations, challenging their ability to attract international airlines. Furthermore, despite recognising connectivity's social benefits, integrating social priorities with economic goals remains inconsistent, especially in smaller regions where limited connectivity constrains market access and potential collaborations (Lemanski, 2007; Zhang & Graham, 2020).

## Conclusion and implications

This exploratory research aims to address the knowledge gaps present in the business ecosystem approach and symbiotic relationships between airports and city regions in the context of global city attributes in established and emerging global city regions. This study suggests that the symbiotic relationships between airports and city regions have the potential to generate mutual benefits and contribute to the development of emerging global city regions. As airports and city regions become increasingly globally focused and seek to capitalise on global opportunities, they must prioritise strategic alignment for mutual benefits. This calls for exploring their current relationships, emphasising integrating a broader range of stakeholders that may have been previously overlooked. Re-emphasising these relationships within the wider business ecosystem and identifying gaps could enhance the symbiosis between airports and city regions, fostering a more cohesive approach to address global economic opportunities collaboratively and ultimately contributing to the development of global city regions.

Furthermore, this research holds the potential to provide industry professionals with a conceptual framework grounded in complexity theory and the business ecosystem approach that underpins the processes on how to foster symbiotic relationships with various stakeholders in city regions for mutual benefits that support the economic growth and leads to the development of emerging global city regions.

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# CAN RETAILERS COMPENSATE CUSTOMERS WHEN THEY SENSE A PRIVACY THREAT? THE CASE OF SURVEILLANCE CAPITALISM IN TOURISM RETAIL INDUSTRY

Chong Fo Lei<sup>a</sup> and Henrique Fátima Boyol Ngan<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Faculty of Creative Tourism and Intelligent Technologies, Macao University of Tourism, <sup>b</sup>Centre for Teaching and Learning Enhancement, Macao University of Tourism

## ABSTRACT

With the advancement of technology, retailers have different means to understand their consumer's need. Tourism retail businesses are now relying on consumers' biometric data through surveillance cameras, that may cause some privacy concerns. Under the lenses of the Protection Motivation Theory (PMT), the current study examines how external factors influence customers' privacy protection behavior, and explore the interventions that retailers can adopt to mitigate these threats. This includes offering monetary incentives and control compensations as stipulated by the privacy calculus theory. Thus, a 3 (environmental awareness: low/medium/high)  $\times$  2 (company disclosure: yes/no) online experiment was conducted with customers from mainland China. The findings revealed that transparency on data collection affects perceived susceptibility, while environmental awareness influences perceived severity. Both perceived severity and susceptibility positively impact protective behavior. Control compensation negatively affects perceived susceptibility, while monetary compensation reduces perceived severity. The interaction effect of monetary compensation and company disclosure on perceived susceptibility is significant. Taken together, the current study offers new insights of consumer privacy in a context that has been overlooked – surveillance capitalism in the tourism retail industry, that contributes theoretically and practically.

**Keywords:** *consumer privacy, surveillance capitalism, protection motivation theory, privacy calculus, tourism retail*

## Introduction

The experience of traveling includes shopping, which is a primary objective for many tourists (Sharma et al., 2018). In the field of tourism research, it has been established that retailing activity and tourism demand are intimately connected (Dudding & Ryan, 2000). Research topics about retail in tourism are mainly centered around shopping as a way to satisfy tourists' leisure and relaxation requirements (Sharma et al., 2018). Historically, buying souvenirs served as universal reminders of special moments or occasions and travel experiences are validated and prolonged when souvenirs are brought home (Swanson, 2004). Therefore, scholars defined tourism retail sector as one of the industries in tourism that combines traditional retail elements with a strong focus on tourists as primary customers (Wan et al., 2023). While there is a growing trend of adopting advanced technologies that could be transformational and disruptive for the overall tourism industry (Buhalis, 2020), new technologies such as surveillance technology (Brooksbank et al., 2022) and shopper-facing technology (Inman & Nikolova, 2017) are being used more frequently in the tourism retail sector in recent years.

It has become more and more common for different companies in the tourism and hospitality industry to adopt the concepts of big data and data analytics in order to remain competitive (Mariani, 2020).



By collecting more customer data, companies could explore more business insights and improve business strategies (Li et al., 2018). Other than the customer data automatically generated by company owned systems and platforms, using advanced technologies such as facial recognition to capture customers' biometric data is getting commonly executed by service providers like facial recognition check-in services at hotels (Xu et al., 2021). Although some people may actively provide personal biometric information to improve an individual's quality of life, and it may seem like a harmless process to them. For example, unlocking a mobile phone with facial information. However, collecting biometric data in a commercial setting may result in a negative outcome that causes consumers to act in a protective manner. An explanation for this phenomenon can be found in the privacy calculus theory. When individuals give out biometric information, they are expecting some form of values in return (Xie & Lei, 2022). For instance, when hotel customers give out facial information during the check-in process, they can save time and improve security level (Boo & Chua, 2022). In contrast, consumers may not receive any forms of value in return while passively giving out biometric information in today's shopping environment. This is particularly true when the data was collected through a surveillance camera, a security tool that is permitted to be placed in public areas and generally accepted by the public for safety purpose (Goold et al., 2013).

Due to the rapid development of advanced technology, the process is becoming easier for tourism retail operators to collect customers' biometric data through surveillance cameras with very minimal or barely any notice to customers. While it seems like a harmless activity to collect customer biometric data while they are shopping in a retail store, the potential consequences of what companies are doing with these data may pose threats to customer's privacy. In the tourism retail industry, surveillance cameras could be the tools to serve this purpose, either intentionally or indirectly. since it is difficult to remove surveillance cameras in a store as it was originally designed for safety purposes (Goold et al., 2013), customers in turn, left no choice but being exposed under surveillance. Zuboff (2015) coined the term "surveillance capitalism" to reflect on the situation where companies predict customers behavior for commercial purposes by analyzing the data captured through surveillance cameras. This seemingly unavoidable situation may force customer to behave differently in order to protect their own privacy. No wonder Son and Kim (2008) introduced the concept of information privacy-protective responses (IPPR), which is a set of actions taken by internet users when they sense a privacy threat. Examples of privacy-protective actions could be refusing to give information, falsify personal information, spread negative word-of-mouth, and file complaints to the company (Son & Kim, 2008).

With the growing concerns of consumer privacy protection and the potential threats of data breaches (Gwebu & Barrows, 2020), research specifically focus on tourism retail context is much needed to explore how consumers may induce privacy protection behavior while giving out biometric data under surveillance. In particular, the present research aims to study whether external factors such as the effects of surveillance cameras and company disclosure of data collection would trigger consumer's privacy protection in a retail environment. In addition, as grounded in privacy calculus theory, this research also explores the effectiveness of offering compensations to consumers as a way to remedy the loss of personal data. In order to fully investigate the psychological process of how individuals evaluate a potential privacy threat, the Protection Motivation Theory (PMT) has been employed as the theoretical framework of the present study (Rogers, 1975).

## Literature Review

### *Perceived Severity, Perceived Susceptibility, and Privacy Protection Behavior*

It was found that the PMT theory had been applied to a significant number of past literatures to explain privacy protection behavior (Adhikari & Panda, 2018; Boerman et al., 2021; Giwah et al., 2020; Menard et al., 2017; Mousavi et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Priego et al., 2022; Vance et al., 2012). According to the PMT theory, people will go through two streams of appraisals (threat appraisals and coping appraisals) when they encounter an event and evaluate whether this event is risky enough to trigger protection motivation. When motivation is triggered, people are very likely to exhibit protective behavior to prevent the threats. Specifically, the threat appraisals evaluate the perceived severity and perceived susceptibility/vulnerability of the threat and both appraisals are found to be

highly relevant to privacy protection behavior (Adhikari & Panda, 2018; Boerman et al., 2021; Mohamed & Ahmad, 2012; Mousavi et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Priego et al., 2022). Perceived severity refers to the process in which individuals evaluate the severity of a threatening event. When the event is considered highly severe, individuals are more motivated to take privacy protective measures. While evaluating the severity is important, believing that such a threat will affect them is another vital factor in determining protection behavior. The process of believing the event will pose real threat to individuals is termed perceived susceptibility (or perceived vulnerability in some research). When individuals resulted high level of perceived susceptibility of an event, which means they believed the threat is very likely to affect them, they are more likely to take protective measures (Rodríguez-Priego et al., 2022).

While research about privacy protection research in retail surveillance is lacking, existing literature have proven the effect of perceived severity and perceived susceptibility/vulnerability in predicting privacy protection behavior in online context. Adhikari and Panda (2018) found out that perceived severity and perceived vulnerability were significantly affecting users' information privacy concerns (UIPC) and thus significantly trigger privacy protection behavior in social networks. With the similar study context in social network site, Mousavi et al. (2020) also found significant relationship between perceived severity and perceived vulnerability with privacy protection motivation and thus affect individual's self-disclosure and privacy settings on social network site. In addition, Rodríguez-Priego et al. (2022) looked into the issue of sharing location data in mobile applications. In the study, the authors also found that perceived severity and perceived vulnerability are significantly affecting behavioral intention of privacy protection and the actual behavior (Rodríguez-Priego et al., 2022). While the majority of studies examined privacy protection behavior were in an online environment, the current research extends its application to a physical retail context by applying the threat appraisals in PMT theory. The following hypothesis are proposed:

H1a. Customers' perceived severity is positively related to privacy protection behavior in a physical retail context

H1b. Customers' perceived susceptibility is positively related to privacy protection behavior in a physical retail context

#### *Environmental awareness of surveillance cameras*

While the threat appraisals in PMT theory described how individuals evaluate a potential threat, the current research argues that two external factors particularly in the retail industry may trigger customers' privacy protection behavior, one of the factors being is the presence of surveillance cameras. Earlier study van Rompay et al. (2009) discovered security cameras could lead to prosocial behavior, which supported the assumption that the presence of surveillance cameras could affect human behavior. In addition, Cumming and Johan (2015) conducted an experiment to compare the sales performance of retail stores with and without video surveillance and the results showed significant sales increase in retail stores with video surveillance. This idea further backed up by a concept termed "servicescape", which refers to how environmental factor such as tangible objects like surveillance cameras would affect customer's behavior in service environment (Rosenbaum & Massiah, 2011). Previous study by Bonfanti (2016) introduced the concept of servicescape surveillance management (SSM) to service operators and investigated the quantity and visibility of surveillance in service environments while ensuring the customer experience was pleasant. With the growing popularity of surveillance capitalism, companies are relying surveillance cameras to capture customers' biometric data and therefore may increase the exposure of cameras in the shopping environment. Due to this reason, the following hypothesis are proposed:

H2a. Environmental awareness of surveillance cameras is significantly related to customers' perceived severity

H2b. Environmental awareness of surveillance cameras is significantly related to customers' perceived susceptibility



### *Company disclosure of data collection*

Besides the awareness of surveillance cameras, another proposed external factor that may trigger threat appraisal is company disclosure of data collection. Some companies may prefer to be more open about customer data collection as a way to show transparency and honesty such as voluntarily adopting the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and improving the readability of privacy statements for consumers (Zhang et al., 2020). However, the result of such action could be two-fold. Earlier research Wakefield (2013) indicated that while there is positive affect to customer's data disclosure, negative affect also involved, in which customers may feel nervous and stressed about completing a transaction on an unfamiliar website and their personal information was disclosed. In addition, Ioannou et al. (2021) developed a measurement scale for Travelers' Online Privacy Concerns (TOPC) and the authors further investigated how traveler's privacy concerns may affect the willingness of disclosing personal information. Ioannou et al. (2021) revealed that different level of privacy concerns will lead to different degree of trust and risk, and thus may affect traveler's willingness to disclose some of the personal information including biometric, identifiers, biographic, and behavioral data. Since consumers with privacy concerns may not willing to disclose much personal information, a question remained unknown is whether consumers will consider company's disclosure of data collection as a privacy threat rather than an action to show transparency and honesty. Therefore, the present research aims to find out whether company's disclosure of data collection will trigger consumer's threat appraisals and the following hypothesis are proposed:

H3a. Company disclosure of data collection is significantly related to customers' perceived severity

H3b. Company disclosure of data collection is significantly related to customers' perceived susceptibility

### *Monetary and control compensation for customer data usage*

Other than being more open to customers about data collection, some companies may provide certain compensations to ensure a pleasant customer experience during the collecting process. In general, companies are offering two types of compensations namely "control compensation" and "monetary compensation". It is argued that the reason why some people may sense a privacy threat while disclosing personal data is because the lack of control over how many different types of personal data are being collected by the company and how the data are being used and for what purposes (Gabisch & R. Milne, 2014). Additionally, as grounded in privacy calculus theory, the present research also explores the possibility of offering monetary compensation to consumers as monetary values in return when they are giving out personal data to companies (Weydert et al., 2019). Similar studies have been done by Gabisch and R. Milne (2014) in the context of sharing personal data online and the results showed that monetary compensation could reduce consumer expectations for privacy protection. On the other hand, Weydert et al. (2019) explored the context of sharing personal data to data brokers and found that offering control compensation increased willingness to disclose personal data, yet offering monetary compensation was negatively affecting people's willingness to disclose personal data. Since the existing literature showed opposing results and there is lack of study that focus on the context of surveillance capitalism in the retail industry, the present research aims to explore the effectiveness of offering "control compensation" and "monetary compensation" to reduce the imbalance of losing personal data under surveillance cameras in a retail context. The following hypothesis are proposed:

H4a. Monetary compensation is significantly affecting customers' perceived severity

H4b. Monetary compensation is significantly affecting customers' perceived susceptibility

H4c. Control compensation is significantly affecting customers' perceived severity

H4d. Control compensation is significantly affecting customers' perceived susceptibility

### **Methodology**

The current study conducted an online experiment through the Tencent Questionnaire platform (<https://wj.qq.com/>) by employing a 3 (environmental awareness: low/medium/high)  $\times$  2 (company

disclosure: yes/no) between-subjects design. Environmental awareness was manipulated by varying the number of cameras in the retail space, while company disclosure was manipulated by the presence or absence of a statement about collecting data for customer profiling. Eligible participants are customers from mainland China, who had to have visited a physical retail store at least once in the past 6 months. A total of 554 participants were recruited, and were randomly assigned to one of the six experimental conditions with a shopping scenario and store photo shown (with the respective cameras). Subsequently participant's environmental awareness, company disclosure, perceived severity, perceived susceptibility, monetary compensation, control compensation and protective behavior were measured using items adapted from previous studies (Adhikari & Panda, 2018; Esmark et al., 2017; Margulis et al., 2020; Masur et al., 2017; Mousavi et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Priego et al., 2022; Son & Kim, 2008). Manipulation check was conducted to ensure that the experimental conditions were designed to reflect the intended manipulation for each condition. There were 40 participants randomly assigned to each condition, and they were asked to rate how realistic each shop was and how many cameras were present. The results showed significant differences in the perceived number of cameras between conditions, and the photos were considered realistic and representative of typical stores.

## **Results**

### *Model assessment*

An assessment of the validity and reliability of the constructs of the measurement model was done prior to the main analysis. As an indication of reliability, all factor loadings of the constructs were above the recommended threshold of 0.7, with minimum cross-loadings (

Table 1). Furthermore, the Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) and composite reliability (CR) values for all constructs were above the recommended threshold of 0.7, demonstrating good internal consistency reliability (Table 2). As an indication of convergent validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) values were above the recommended threshold of 0.5. Using the Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio, discriminant validity was assessed. The results revealed that all HTMT values were below the recommended threshold of 0.90. Another measure taken to examine discriminant validity was the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Specifically, the AVE for each construct (shown in bold on the diagonal of the Fornell-Larcker matrix) exceeds the interconstruct (

Table 3).

Table 1. Factor Loading of measurements

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
CD1	<b>0.85</b>	0.18	0.47	0.19	0.07	0.11	0.17
CD2	<b>0.88</b>	0.20	0.45	0.20	0.03	0.09	0.18
CD3	<b>0.87</b>	0.21	0.44	0.21	0.03	0.06	0.15
CD4	<b>0.88</b>	0.15	0.43	0.12	0.15	0.16	0.18
CD5	<b>0.88</b>	0.20	0.43	0.20	0.08	0.13	0.15
CD6	<b>0.86</b>	0.21	0.38	0.21	0.03	0.09	0.13
CD7	<b>0.74</b>	0.11	0.29	0.01	0.26	0.37	0.32
CPB1	0.19	<b>0.93</b>	0.10	0.67	-0.10	-0.11	-0.11
CPB2	0.18	<b>0.94</b>	0.08	0.64	-0.13	-0.12	-0.11
EA1	0.40	0.08	<b>0.86</b>	0.06	0.14	0.18	0.16
EA2	0.45	0.08	<b>0.88</b>	0.10	0.15	0.16	0.20
EA3	0.37	0.05	<b>0.88</b>	0.08	0.08	0.19	0.19
EA4	0.45	0.11	<b>0.89</b>	0.11	0.12	0.19	0.21
MPB1	0.12	0.63	0.09	<b>0.93</b>	-0.09	-0.14	-0.08
MPB2	0.18	0.68	0.09	<b>0.93</b>	-0.17	-0.13	-0.08
PB3	0.15	-0.08	0.14	-0.13	<b>0.86</b>	0.38	0.36
PB4	0.15	-0.15	0.14	-0.14	<b>0.89</b>	0.39	0.40
PB5	0.12	-0.10	0.12	-0.10	<b>0.90</b>	0.36	0.37
PB6	0.13	-0.11	0.10	-0.11	<b>0.89</b>	0.38	0.40
PS1	0.17	-0.11	0.19	-0.14	0.38	<b>0.92</b>	0.64
PS2	0.21	-0.10	0.18	-0.13	0.41	<b>0.94</b>	0.67
PS3	0.23	-0.12	0.19	-0.14	0.39	<b>0.92</b>	0.67
PSV1	0.23	-0.14	0.18	-0.10	0.41	0.68	<b>0.88</b>
PSV2	0.20	-0.10	0.18	-0.08	0.43	0.68	<b>0.92</b>
PSV3	0.23	-0.14	0.20	-0.10	0.38	0.61	<b>0.91</b>
PSV4	0.23	0.00	0.20	0.05	0.27	0.49	<b>0.76</b>
PSV5	0.21	-0.10	0.20	-0.11	0.38	0.62	<b>0.89</b>

Table 2. Reliability assessment

	Cronbach $\alpha$	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
CD	0.94	0.95	0.73
CPB	0.85	0.93	0.87
EA	0.90	0.93	0.77
MPB	0.85	0.93	0.87
PB	0.91	0.94	0.78
PS	0.92	0.95	0.86
PSV	0.92	0.94	0.76

Table 3. Discriminant Validity assessment

Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio							Fornel-Larcker Criterion						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>1. CD</b>							<b>0.85</b>						
<b>2. CPB</b>	0.23						0.20	<b>0.93</b>					
<b>3. EA</b>	0.52	0.10					0.48	0.09	<b>0.88</b>				
<b>4.MPB</b>	0.22	0.83	0.11				0.16	0.70	0.10	<b>0.93</b>			
<b>5. PB</b>	0.12	0.14	0.15	0.16			0.15	-0.12	0.14	-0.14	<b>0.89</b>		
<b>6. PS</b>	0.18	0.14	0.23	0.17	0.47		0.22	-0.12	0.20	-0.15	0.43	<b>0.93</b>	
<b>7. PSV</b>	0.23	0.13	0.24	0.12	0.47	0.77	0.25	-0.12	0.22	-0.09	0.43	0.71	<b>0.87</b>

### Hypothesis Testing

The analysis of the structural model revealed several significant relationships among the constructs (Figure 1). Company Disclosure (CD) had a significant positive effect on Perceived Susceptibility/Vulnerability (PSV) ( $\beta = 0.289$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), support H3a. Control Compensation (CPB) negatively influenced PSV ( $\beta = -0.190$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ), partial support on H4c. Environmental Awareness (EA) positively affected Perceived Severity (PS) ( $\beta = 0.225$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), H2a supported. Monetary Control Compensation (MPB) had a negative impact on PS ( $\beta = -0.150$ ,  $p = 0.022$ ) (partial support H4a). Both PS ( $\beta = 0.240$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and PSV ( $\beta = 0.250$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) positively influenced Protective Behavior (PB), supporting H1a and H1b. The interaction effect of MPB and CD on PSV was significant ( $\beta = 0.118$ ,  $p = 0.011$ ). However, the interaction effect of CPB and EA on PS was not significant ( $\beta = 0.038$ ,  $p = 0.405$ ).

### Total Indirect Effects

The analysis of total indirect effects showed that CD ( $\beta = 0.072$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), EA ( $\beta = 0.054$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ), and the interaction of MPB and CD ( $\beta = 0.030$ ,  $p = 0.036$ ) had significant positive indirect effects on PB. The indirect effects of CPB ( $\beta = -0.057$ ,  $p = 0.073$ ) and MPB ( $\beta = -0.040$ ,  $p = 0.204$ ) on PB were not significant.

### Specific Indirect Effects

The examination of specific indirect effects revealed that the interaction of MPB and CD positively influenced PB through PSV ( $\beta = 0.030$ ,  $p = 0.036$ ). CD positively affected PB via PSV ( $\beta = 0.072$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). CPB negatively influenced PB through PSV ( $\beta = -0.047$ ,  $p = 0.033$ ). EA positively impacted PB via PS ( $\beta = 0.054$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ). The specific indirect effects of MPB on PB through PS ( $\beta = -0.036$ ,  $p = 0.062$ ), CPB on PB through PS ( $\beta = -0.010$ ,  $p = 0.563$ ), and the interaction of CPB and EA on PB through PS ( $\beta = 0.009$ ,  $p = 0.435$ ) were not significant.

### Total Effects

The total effects analysis indicated that CD had a significant positive total effect on PB ( $\beta = 0.098$ ,  $p = 0.044$ ) and PSV ( $\beta = 0.289$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). EA positively influenced PS ( $\beta = 0.225$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). MPB negatively affected PS ( $\beta = -0.150$ ,  $p = 0.022$ ). Both PS ( $\beta = 0.240$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and PSV ( $\beta = 0.250$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) had significant positive total effects on PB. The interaction of MPB and CD positively influenced PB ( $\beta = 0.030$ ,  $p = 0.036$ ) and PSV ( $\beta = 0.118$ ,  $p = 0.011$ ). The total effects of CPB on PB ( $\beta = -0.057$ ,  $p = 0.073$ ), PS ( $\beta = -0.040$ ,  $p = 0.548$ ), and PSV ( $\beta = -0.190$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ), as well as the total effects of



not to exceed the minimum acceptable threshold of cameras that would trigger a sense of severity and, consequently, their engagement in protective behavior (Bonfanti, 2016).

The findings also revealed that by offering monetary compensation as a financial “incentive” for individuals to disclose their personal information, it can effectively reduce the perceived severity to privacy risks (Gabisch & R. Milne, 2014). Taken together, companies should consider employing monetary incentives when collecting personal information from customers, as it may lower their perceived severity. When considering monetary compensation and company disclosure, the results suggest that there is an interaction effect on perceived susceptibility. That is, the impact of monetary compensation on individuals' perceptions of susceptibility is dependent on the level of company disclosure. When companies provide clear and comprehensive privacy disclosures, the effect of monetary compensation on perceived susceptibility may be mitigated.

Consistent with the core principle of PMT, both perceived susceptibility and perceived severity were found to have significant positive effects on protective behavior (Adhikari & Panda, 2018; Boerman et al., 2021). It is critical that companies engage in managing customers privacy concerns, namely the perceived susceptibility and severity to minimize the protective behaviors of customers. Taken together, organizations should be open on their data collection practices and disclose just enough information for customers to make an informed decision, otherwise it may backfire. Companies should not be too aggressive in collecting privacy related information and the number of cameras placed, as it may impact customers' privacy concerns. Finally, “sharing is caring”, when financial incentives are provided as a “token of appreciation” for the availability of data, customers are more receptive of the idea of privacy data collection.

Future research could further elaborate on these aspects, and investigate how individual differences can impact the effectiveness of these strategies, and what potential responses and behaviors can result from it that was not covered in the present study. Could it impact customer satisfaction, purchase decisions, and customer loyalty? All of which that are worth investigating as it provides valuable insights to retailers. Another interesting aspect that is worth investigating is the effectiveness of different types of privacy disclosures that could potentially influence customers willingness to share personal data.

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# CHINESE TOURISTS IN AUSTRALIA: A NETWORK ANALYSIS OF AIRPORT AND REGIONAL VISITS USING GEO-LOCATED TRAVEL BLOG DATA

Xuna Zhu<sup>a,b</sup> and Abraham Leung<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Griffith Institute for Tourism, Griffith University, Australia, <sup>b</sup>School of Engineering and Built Environment, Griffith University, Australia

## ABSTRACT

This paper leverages user-generated content as a novel data source to geo-locate travel and analyse tourist behaviour as well as the structure of travel networks. Focusing on Chinese tourists in Australia, the study draws on data from Ctrip to examine travel patterns and network dynamics. The analysis reveals the following: (1) Major airports, such as Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane, serve as central hubs within the travel network, frequently used by Chinese tourists. (2) There is considerable spatial variation in tourist behaviour, with network analysis identifying distinct clusters of tourist flows between airports and tourism regions. (3) The majority of visits are concentrated in the states of Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland, often at the expense of other regions, which remain under-visited despite their potential. However, certain peripheral regions attract significant tourist numbers due to specific attractions. These findings provide valuable insights for Australian tourism authorities, highlighting the need for targeted marketing strategies to promote not only key hubs but also less-visited regions, encouraging a more even distribution of tourist flows across the country.

**Keywords:** *regional dispersal; travel blog; travelogue; user-generated content; network analysis*

## Introduction

In Australia, tourism is an important driver of regional development, contributing to economic growth and helping to reduce spatial disparities by encouraging the spread of visitors across various destinations. Encouraging tourists to visit regional destinations not only alleviates the pressure on overvisited sites and also provides economic benefits to peripheral areas. Despite the potential for wider dispersal, tourists often concentrate on well-known, iconic sites, overlooking 'hidden gems' that are not as well known. This imbalance in tourist distribution poses a challenge for sustainable tourism development. In addition to overtourism, achieving regional equity and spreading the benefits of tourism remains a major concern. This is especially relevant to Australia, where the regional dispersal of visitors has been a long-standing policy priority for tourism policymakers at national and state/territory levels (Australian Trade and Investment Commission, 2023; Commonwealth Department of Tourism, 1992; Queensland Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport, 2022).

In scholarly research, tourism dispersal has been explained using the core-periphery theory, which describes the flow of tourists from areas with well-developed tourism infrastructure to peripheral, less-developed regions (Christaller, 1964). Cooper (1981) conceptualised dispersal as the tendency to travel to less familiar areas. Influenced by policies promoting regional dispersal in Australia, Koo et al. (2012) expanded on this concept by defining regional dispersal as involving at least one overnight stay in a peripheral area, thereby highlighting the movement of visitors beyond main gateways.

However, studying tourist dispersal has been challenging due to the limitations of conventional data sources, such as surveys and interviews. These methods often face issues including limited sample sizes, respondent bias, and logistical challenges in collecting comprehensive data across large geographic areas (Zhu et al., 2020). User-generated content (UGC), such as travel blogs, social media

posts, and online reviews, provides broad coverage, minimal response bias, and valuable insights into the authentic experiences of travellers (Chen et al., 2021b; Paül I Agustí, 2021; Vu et al., 2015). Online travel blogs, in particular, have emerged as a rich data source, offering not only images but also detailed itineraries and narratives that capture tourists' emotional and experiential journeys.

Despite the potential of UGC for dispersal studies, a key challenge lies in mapping and visualising the complex web of connections between multiple destinations. While understanding where tourists travel is relatively straightforward, identifying the hierarchy and spatial relationships between visited locations requires more sophisticated analytical approaches. Network analysis offers a powerful tool for this purpose, enabling researchers to model and visualise the geographic dispersal of tourists as a network of interconnected destinations (Scott, Baggio, et al., 2008). By applying network analysis to travel itineraries derived from online travel blogs, this study aims to geographically illustrate the dispersal patterns of Chinese tourists in Australia.

With China's growing economic status and increasing outbound tourism activities, it is important to study the movements of Chinese tourist. Due to the uniqueness of Chinese culture, their travel patterns may differ from those of other tourists. Australia has been a popular destination for Chinese tourists due to its relative proximity, exotic nature, and 'relaxed' culture. Chinese tourists also have a higher propensity to use travel blogs and social media as sources of information (Keeve & Nicolaides, 2019), making these platforms a valuable resource for researchers. This can complement existing data sources, such as visitor surveys conducted at airports (e.g., the International Visitor Survey (IVS)).

This paper seeks to use this novel data source to address several key questions: Which tourism regions are Chinese tourists more likely to visit? Are their visits concentrated in specific areas, or are they distributed across multiple regions? Are there inter- or intra-state connections between the tourism regions they visit in Australia? The answers to these questions will contribute to a deeper understanding of tourist behaviour and provide valuable insights for regional tourism planning and policymaking.

## Methods

### *Australian tourism regions and airports as a tourism network*

Tourism regions are geographic areas defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in collaboration with Tourism Research Australia (TRA). These regions are primarily used for research and policy purposes and reflect tourism-related administrative boundaries. Notably, they do not cover all parts of Australia. Notably, territories such as the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Christmas Island, Norfolk Island, and Jervis Bay are excluded from this classification. Special-purpose codes are also not incorporated into the tourism regions framework. In total, there are 76 tourism regions in total, including eight capital/core regions – comprising the seven capital cities of Australia's states and the Gold Coast in Queensland – and 68 regional/periphery regions. The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) contains only one capital tourism region. This classification facilitates the study of tourism flows and regional dispersal, enabling the identification of key tourist hubs and peripheral destinations. In addition, airports serve as vital gateways for Australia as an island nation. There are 11 airports with international connections function as gateways for inbound visitors to Australia.

### *Data collection and itinerary re-construction*

Publicly available online travel blog records were crawled from *Ctrip*, one of the leading Chinese online travel agencies (OTAs). *Ctrip* hosts a rich source of user-generated travel content, making it an ideal source for outbound travel data. *Ctrip's* content offers more extensive narratives and detailed itineraries, particularly for outbound tourism, which includes destinations such as Australia.

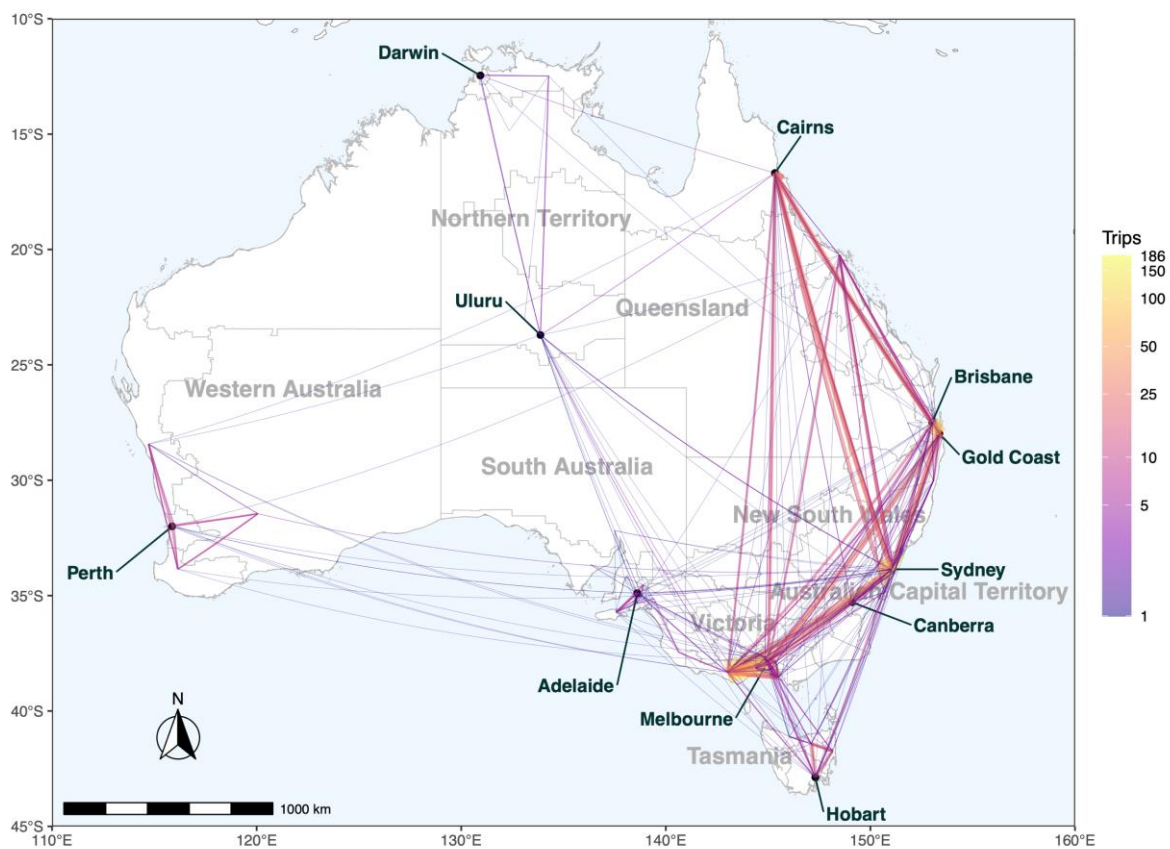


Data was crawled from *Ctrip* in June 2022, capturing the information available on the platform at that time. Following data cleaning and identification, which involved removing incomplete itineraries and redundant entries (e.g., itineraries split across multiple travel blogs), 466 valid travel records were retained for further analysis. The timestamps of these entries ranged from 2005 to 2021, resulting in 3,091 unique visits across 64 nodes (airports and tourism regions) and 2,625 edges connecting them.

Each travel blog was systematically coded according to the tourism regions visited, and itineraries were reconstructed chronologically to reflect the sequence of movements across different regions. This process provided a comprehensive overview of the tourism regions visited by Chinese tourists in Australia, facilitating the subsequent network analysis.

Using internet and social media data in research involves significant ethical considerations, with evolving standards and often ambiguous guidance. However, researchers should adhere to some key ethical principles: (i) data must be public; (ii) informed consent should be obtained if data is expected to be private; (iii) analysis must ensure user anonymity; and (iv) there must be no risk of harm (Townsend & Wallace, 2017). This analysis complies with these principles by using data solely for reconstructing trip trajectories, which were scraped from a public platform, and by redacting and anonymising all user metadata and identifiable information. This approach aligns with similar studies on Chinese social media platforms (Chen et al., 2021b).

Figure 1 shows the trajectory of these trips and their distribution in Australia. The largest edge represents 186 trip trajectories (Sydney Airport to Sydney Tourism Region), and the top 20 connections predominantly in the Southeast as shown in Table 1. The top three connections recorded over 100 flows, exhibiting a strong primary effect. Victoria was the most visited state (34.9%), followed by Queensland (23.5%) and NSW (22.2%). Figure 2 separate these flows by airports (left) and regions (right). Sydney International Airport (SYD) is the most used airport (42%), but this does not necessarily translate to more visits to regions within the same state, suggesting there may be some outflows or trips only transferred from SYD.



**Figure 1. The spatial distribution of the travel trajectories of Chinese tourists in Australia**

**Table 1. The top 20 tourism flows made by Chinese tourists**

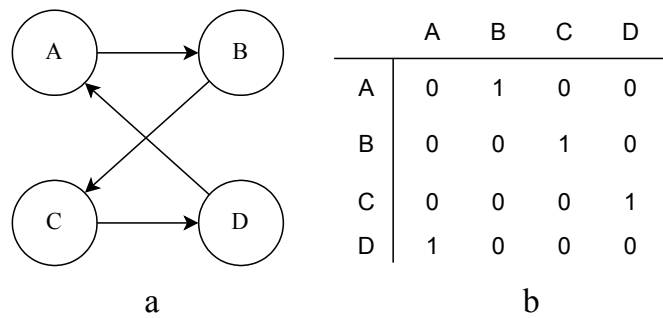
Rank	Edge flows	From	To
1	186	Sydney International Airport (SYD)	Sydney
2	126	Melbourne International Airport (MEL)	Melbourne
3	117	Melbourne	Great Ocean Road
4	86	Sydney	Sydney International Airport (SYD)
5	77	Sydney	Blue Mountains
6	77	Brisbane	Gold Coast
7	60	Geelong and the Bellarine	Great Ocean Road
8	55	Great Ocean Road	Melbourne International Airport (MEL)
9	43	Melbourne	Phillip Island
10	40	Sydney	Melbourne
11	39	Melbourne	Geelong and the Bellarine
12	32	Great Ocean Road	Sydney
13	32	Blue Mountains	Sydney International Airport (SYD)
14	30	Tropical North Queensland	Brisbane
15	30	Gold Coast	Melbourne
16	29	Melbourne	Yarra Valley and the Dandenong Ranges
17	29	Gold Coast	Sydney
18	29	Gold Coast	Brisbane
19	28	Sydney	Tropical North Queensland
20	27	Perth International Airport (PER)	Destination Perth



**Figure 2. Most popular airports (left) and tourism regions (right) visited**



To explore the spatial relationships between tourism regions and the structure of tourist flows, we applied network analysis based on graph theory. In this framework, tourism regions are treated as ‘nodes’, and the travel routes between them are considered as ‘edges’. Figure 3 illustrates a simplified network diagram depicting the travel routes between four regions, from which a destination matrix (Figure 3b) was constructed. This matrix serves as the foundation for building the full network of 76 tourism regions, along with major airports (n=11). However, only 64 of these tourism regions and airports were visited. The resultant 64 x 64 matrix summarises the number of tourist flows between each pair of regions, allowing for the identification of key patterns in regional connectivity.



**Figure 3. A simplified example of a connected network with four regions**

The analysis was conducted using the R programming language, with associated network analysis packages (igraph and ggraph) utilised to perform the network analysis. Several network analysis metrics were applied:

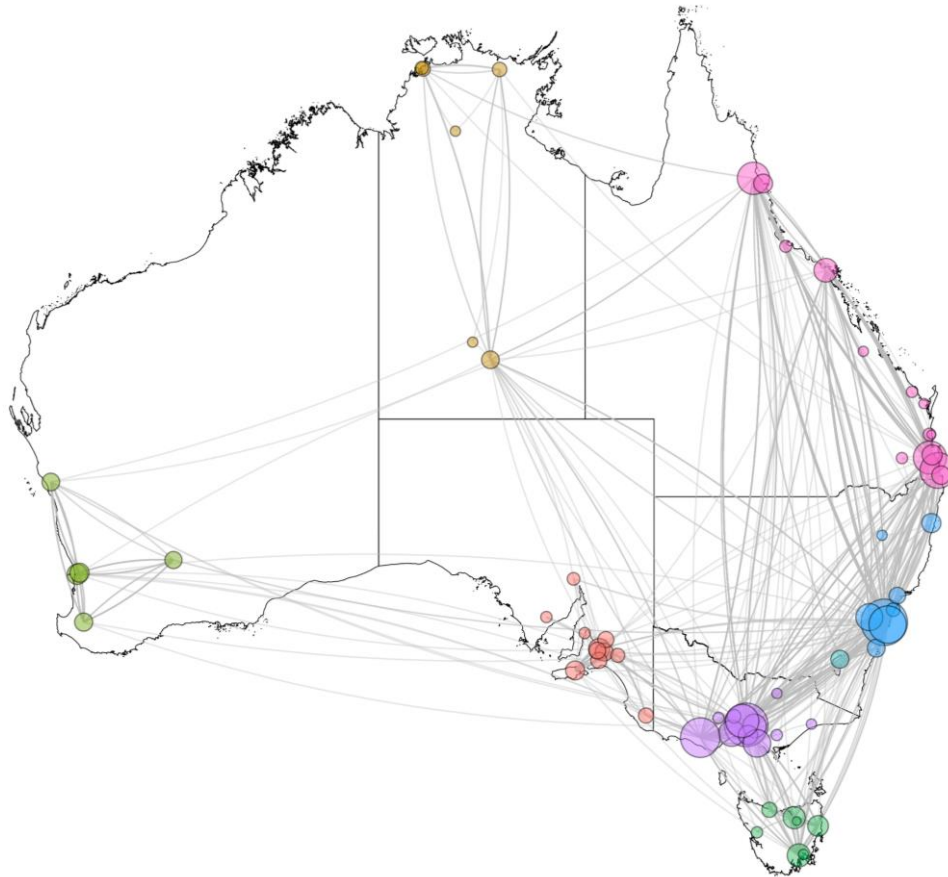
- *Node Degree*: Counts the number of direct connections a node has with other nodes, indicating the node’s importance within in the network.
- *Betweenness Centrality*: Reflects the degree of control (or influence) a target node has over other nodes in the network. A maximum flow measure is used rather than the shortest path.
- *Average Shortest Path Length*: Indicates the average distance between all nodes and, reflecting the overall efficiency of the network.
- *Average Clustering Coefficient*: Represents the average tightness of connections between all nodes in the network.

In addition to network statistics, the network was clustered using community detection based on modularity. This approach divides the network into clusters or communities, where nodes within the same cluster are more densely connected compared to those in different clusters (Newman, 2006). Community detection reveals hidden structural patterns in the network, providing insights into how regions and airports are grouped based on tourist flows (Fortunato, 2010). Modularity is measured on a scale from -0.5 (indicating no modularity) to 1 (indicating highly modular networks with distinct clusters). Networks with high modularity suggest that tourists tend to move between regions of the belonging community group, rather than dispersing across different regions.

By applying these network metrics, valuable insights were obtained into the structural properties of tourist flows across Australian regions, with patterns of regional clustering and the hierarchical relationships between core and peripheral tourism destinations uncovered.

## Results

To analyse the spatial characteristics of Chinese tourists' behaviour, the trajectory data was used to construct a tourist flow network illustrating movements between and within the States and Territories of Australia (Figure 4). The same colour scheme as in Figure 2 was applied for consistency.



**Figure 4. Visitation network structure of Chinese tourists in Australia**  
(size of nodes and thickness of lines are adjusted by trips)

#### *Network statistics*

The analysis of the tourism region network revealed several key insights into the structure and connectivity of Australian tourism regions. The network's modularity score was 0.449, indicating a moderately strong division of the network into distinct communities or clusters. This suggests that while there are dense connections between nodes (tourism regions) within the same module, the connections between nodes across different modules are relatively sparse. This modularity is crucial for understanding how tourist flows are structured and how certain regions act as hubs within specific clusters.

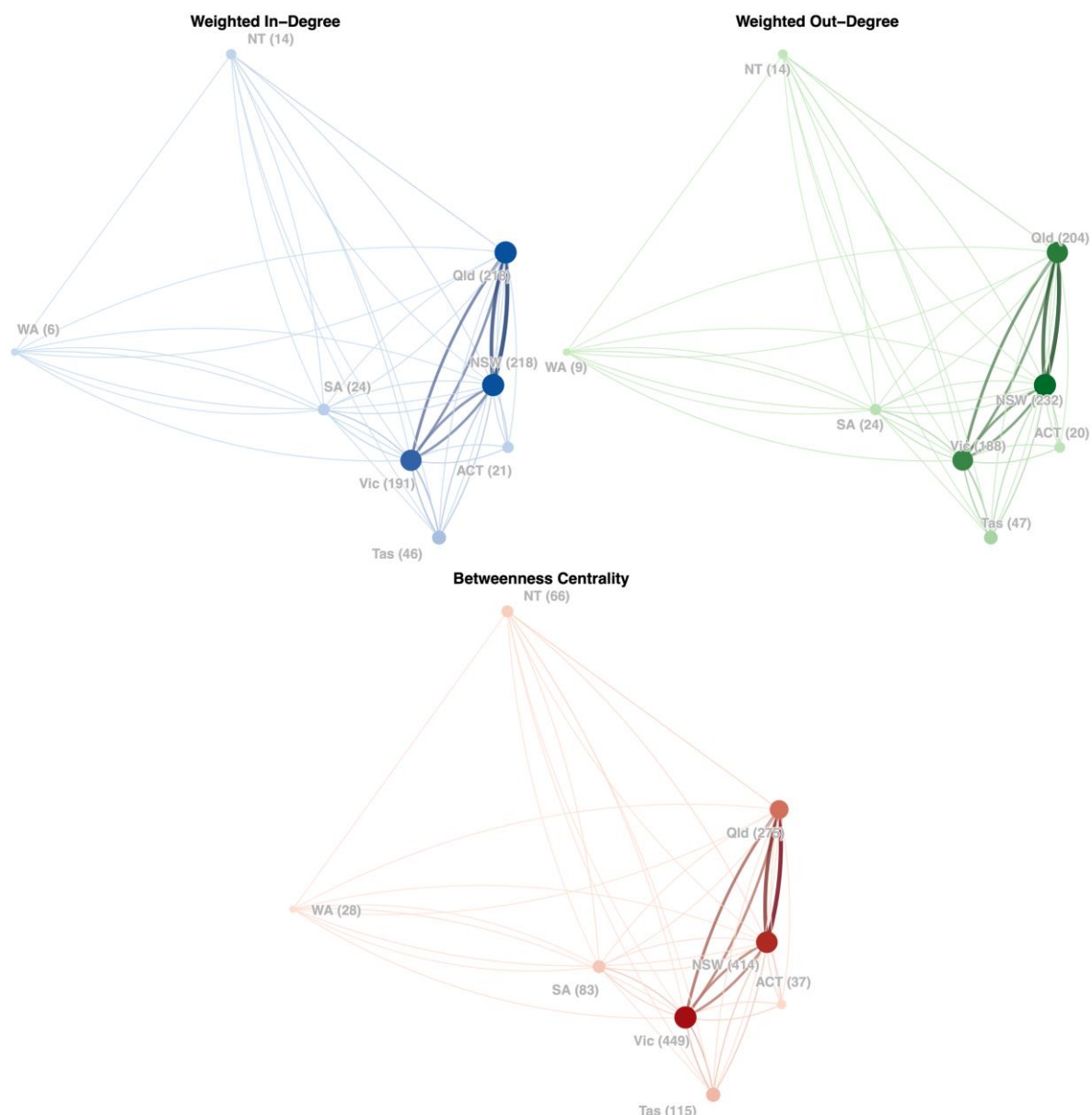
Table 2 presents additional summary statistics for the network-level measures across the 64 nodes, subdivided by State/Territory. This highlights the distribution of the weighted in- and out-degrees of the tourist flow network between the Australian states/territories. NSW, Victoria, and Queensland emerge as the primary hubs for cross-border travel by Chinese tourists in Australia. This interpretation is further supported by the distribution of betweenness centrality, as shown in Figure 5.

Despite Sydney in NSW being Australia's largest gateway airport, NSW is a 'net exporter', with more tourist outflows than inflows. In contrast, Victoria and Queensland 'import' more tourists by comparison. Another useful metric is the *Betweenness Centrality* of flows, in which Victoria has the highest value (449), followed by NSW, Queensland, Tasmania, and SA. This indicates the tourist flow connections are the strongest between these states. Meanwhile, regions in other states/territories are not as well connected due to isolation (WA) or a lack of appeal (ACT). Relatively speaking, the

NT is not the worst performer despite its remoteness from the most visited southeastern states, as it is able to attract a considerable number of tourists due to the appeal of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park. While cross-border network analysis at the State/Territory level provides only an overview of the network structure, it is evident that tourism flows are more fluid than the borders. Further investigation is needed to understand these connections using additional methods, such as clustering through community detection.

**Table 2. Key network statistics for Australia and its subnational entities**

<b>Network name</b>	<b>Number of nodes</b>	<b>Number of edges</b>	<b>Average weighted degree</b>	<b>Average shortest path length</b>	<b>Average clustering coefficient</b>
<i>Across Australia</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>2625</i>	<i>82.03</i>	<i>2.28</i>	<i>0.55</i>
New South Wales (NSW)	8	528	132.00	1.25	0.88
Victoria (Vic)	12	745	124.17	1.76	0.66
Queensland (Qld)	14	390	55.71	1.88	0.44
South Australia (SA)	11	125	22.73	1.44	0.67
Western Australia (WA)	5	108	43.20	1.00	1.00
Tasmania (Tas)	7	93	26.57	1.57	0.73
Northern Territory (NT)	6	28	9.33	1.33	0.81
Australian Capital Territory (ACT)	1	0	N/A	N/A	N/A



**Figure 5. The weighted (in and out) degree and betweenness centrality distributions of the tourist flow network with states/territories as nodes.**

### *Regional dispersal pattern*

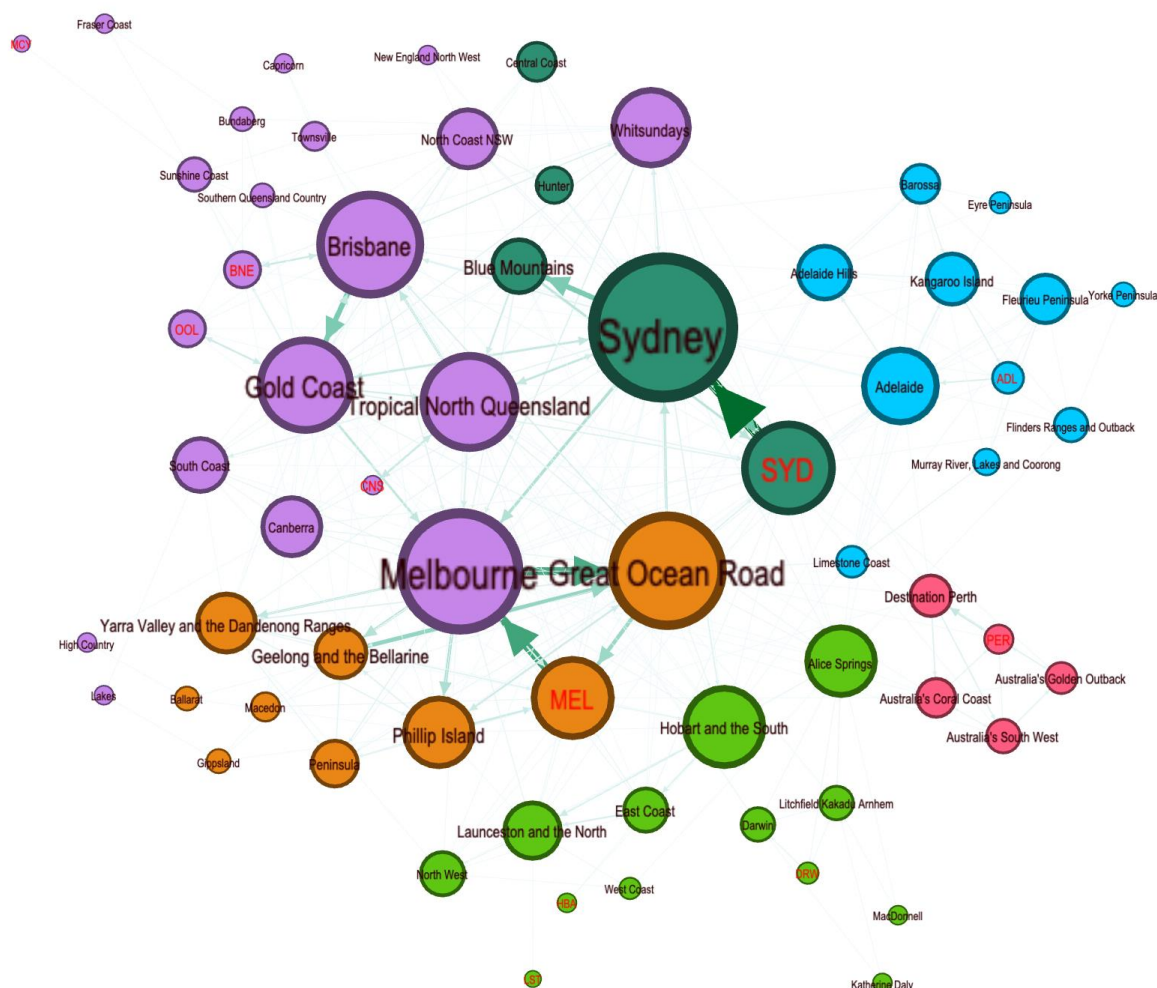
The analysis revealed distinct regional dispersal patterns among Chinese tourists, with notable variations in the prominence and influence of different tourism regions. Table 3 summarises the key characteristics of each identified cluster, emphasising the dominant tourism regions with eigenvector centrality values exceeding the mean of 0.23. Figure 6 visually represents the directed network clustered by community detection, illustrating the spatial configuration of the Chinese visitor tourism network derived from the travel blog data.

Unsurprisingly, Chinese tourists predominantly favour Victoria, NSW, and Queensland for interstate travel, with the capital tourism regions of Melbourne, Sydney, the Gold Coast, and Brisbane being the most visited. These capital regions function as primary hubs (cores) with high eigenvector centrality, reflecting their critical role in connecting various tourism regions. These core regions not only attract the majority of tourists but also facilitate movement to peripheral regions, which although less

connected, remain significant in the overall network. For instance, the strong connection between Melbourne and the tourism regions in Queensland, particularly Tropical North Queensland, exemplifies this core-periphery dynamic. Melbourne acts as a central node from which tourists disperse to peripheral but highly attractive regions such as Tropical North. Similarly, the Great Ocean Road and its neighbouring regions form a cohesive cluster around the Melbourne core, integrating into the broader network through this central node. Interestingly, the tourism regions in the NT are closely integrated with those in Tasmania, further emphasising strong interstate connections between these peripheral yet significant regions.

**Table 3. Main characteristics of each cluster**

Cluster (C), %	Eigenvector Centrality	Dominant tourism regions	Gateways
C 1, 32.82%	0.293	Melbourne, Tropical North Queensland, Brisbane, Gold Coast, Whitsundays, Canberra, North Coast NSW, South Coast	BNE, CNS, MCY, OOL
C 2, 20.31%	0.144	Hobart and the South, Alice Springs, Launceston and the North	DRW, HBA, LST
C 3, 17.19%	0.129	Adelaide	ADL
C 4, 14.06%	0.294	Great Ocean Road, Yarra Valley and the Dandenong Ranges, Phillip Island	MEL
C 5, 7.81%	2.411	Sydney and Blue Mountains	SYD
C 6, 7.81%	0.087	Destination Perth (0.25)	PER





### Figure 6. Network map of tourism regions (red label are airports)

At an intrastate level, two regional tourism areas – namely the Great Ocean Road in Victoria and Tropical North Queensland – are particularly prominent, while Sydney in NSW stands out distinctly. Conversely, regional tourism regions in other states, particularly Tasmania and WA, exhibit significant visitation rates despite lower overall tourist numbers. Alice Springs, in particular, distinguishes itself as a prominent regional tourism region in the NT. Tasmania exhibits a similar pattern, with Hobart and Launceston acting as regional cores that connect both capital-regional and regional-regional areas. By comparison, SA and WA exhibit more independent intrastate dispersal patterns with limited connections to other states. This suggests that while they have internal cores, their peripheral regions do not extend significantly beyond state borders, reinforcing their relatively isolated positions in the national tourism network.

The alignment of international airports with dominant tourism regions further underscores the core-periphery structure. Major airports in core regions such as SYD, MEL, and BNE play crucial roles in directing tourist flows. Additionally, domestic airports in regional areas with strong connections, such as CNS in Queensland and LST in Tasmania, serve as key gateways, facilitating access to peripheral regions and enhancing the overall connectivity of the tourism network.

### Discussion

Consistent with prior research on Chinese tourist dispersal (Tourism Research Australia, 2019), this study reinforces the finding that Chinese tourists tend to concentrate their visits in capital tourism regions that serve as international gateways, such as Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane. These regions, act as core nodes in the network, functioning both as primary destinations and hubs for further regional dispersal. However, beyond the capital regions, certain peripheral yet highly attractive tourism areas also play a critical role. Tropical North Queensland, renowned for the iconic Great Barrier Reef, and the Great Ocean Road are two prominent regional destinations that draw significant number of Chinese tourists to Australia's less urbanised areas.

This study has revealed a unique and multi-layered dispersal pattern among Chinese tourists. The findings indicate that tourism regions in Australia exhibit a hierarchical core-periphery structure across different geographical scales. On an interstate scale, NSW, Victoria, and Queensland function as core states, attracting the majority of tourists, while other states, such as WA, NT, and SA, remain comparatively peripheral. At the intrastate level, regions such as Melbourne, Brisbane, and the Gold Coast serve as core nodes within their respective states, whereas regional destinations like the Great Ocean Road and Tropical North Queensland function as peripheral yet highly connected areas.

These findings highlight the complexity of regional tourism networks, suggesting that tourism policymakers and researchers should adopt a multi-level analytical approach to better understand how tourists disperse between core and peripheral regions (Scott, Cooper, et al., 2008). Such an approach could provide valuable insights into managing tourism flows and mitigating overcrowding in core regions, and enhancing the visibility and accessibility of peripheral regions.

Furthermore, the application of social network analysis to online travel blogs has demonstrated the effectiveness of this method in capturing comprehensive tourist itineraries. Unlike traditional approaches that often rely on fragmented travel data, this method provides a more holistic view of tourist behaviour, revealing the interconnectedness of destinations. By accounting for the entire travel journey, researchers can overcome the limitations of big data applications that focus on isolated pieces of information (Wasserman, 1994). Future research should continue to employ integrated approaches that reflect the full complexity of tourist movements between core and peripheral regions (Bonacich, 2007).



### *Limitations and future directions*

Despite the significant insights gained from this study, several limitations must be acknowledged. One limitation is the lack of an in-depth exploration of the qualitative information embedded in travel blogs. Future research could apply thematic analysis using advanced models, such as the structural topic model (Roberts et al., 2019), to uncover deeper insights into tourists' dispersal behaviour, revisit intentions, and emotional experiences. This would add a richer layer of interpretation to the quantitative data by examining tourists' motivations and preferences in greater detail.

Additionally, the scope of this study was constrained by its reliance on geo-located travel blog data from a specific platform, Ctrip.com. While geo-located data is valuable for understanding travel patterns of tourist behaviour, the lack of sample representativeness is a potential concern (Duggan et al., 2015). This demographic skewness may limit the generalisability of the findings. Moreover, geo-located social media data, such as travel blogs, often exhibit biases related to who shares the data, where they travel, when they post, and what they choose to highlight in their content (Yuan et al., 2021). Future research should address these biases by using some form of objective screening or filtering.

A possible next step would be to integrate data from additional travel sources, such as other social media platforms with geographic information, including microblogs from platforms such as Weibo (Chen et al., 2021b) or Twitter (Chen et al., 2023), and geo-tagged photos from Flickr (Li et al., 2018) or Panoramio (Orsi & Geneletti, 2013). Incorporating a broader range of platforms would provide a more representative understanding of tourists' travel behaviours. Future studies should also consider video-based user-generated content (UGC), as characteristics such as video length, colour schemes, and user interactions could offer further insights into tourist experiences (Zhu et al., 2024). Platforms like *Instagram* and *the Red (Xiaohongshu)*, which are gaining popularity among younger generations, are promising sources. Increasingly, posts are made as 'stories,' which are time limited. Obtaining data from these platforms poses additional technical challenges, as videos and stories are more difficult to crawl compared to static text- or photo-based sources.

This research also has implications for methodological development. The manual reconstruction of tourist itineraries facilitated an in-depth analysis but was labour-intensive and time-consuming. Technological advancements, such as machine learning and natural language processing, could streamline and scale this process, enabling more efficient data collection and analysis across larger datasets (Chen et al., 2021a).

Finally, it is essential to consider cultural and social factors that influence tourist behaviour, particularly for outbound Chinese tourists. Chinese society is shaped by unique historical and philosophical influences, such as Power Distance Belief, which affects preferences for prestigious destinations (Bae et al., 2024). Future research should explore how these cultural dimensions shape travel behaviour to avoid potential misinterpretations.

### **Conclusion and implication**

This network analysis has provided valuable insights into the travel behaviour and regional dispersal patterns of Chinese tourists in Australia. The findings show that Chinese tourists are attracted to both major hubs and regional destinations, with key gateways like Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane facilitating travel across different areas.

The use of network analysis on travel blog data with geographic information effectively captured the full scope of tourist itineraries. The results highlight clear hierarchical patterns in tourist flows between core and peripheral regions in Australia. These insights have practical implications for

tourism management and policy. Tourism authorities should develop strategies to promote not only primary tourism hubs but also regional areas, ensuring more equitable economic benefits.

The findings further underscore the need for investment in infrastructure, particularly in regional areas. Airports and transport links in these regions are critical for connecting tourists to less-visited destinations, as demonstrated by the roles of Cairns and Launceston. Strategic investment in transport infrastructure could further support sustainable tourism development in these areas. Consistent with THRIVE2030 national tourism strategy and previous experiences, events can serve as an effective means to attract visitors and encourage regional dispersal (Australian Trade and Investment Commission, 2023; Baum & Hagen, 1999).

This study has demonstrated the value of combining quantitative and qualitative data sources to achieve a more nuanced understanding of tourist behaviour. Advanced techniques, such as social network analysis alongside machine learning and artificial intelligence, can help researchers process vast amounts of user-generated content more efficiently. Future research could incorporate diverse data sources, including multimedia content from platforms like Flickr and Weibo, to produce richer and more comprehensive analyses of tourist flows.

In conclusion, understanding the dynamics of core and peripheral tourism networks is essential for managing sustainable tourism in Australia. As tourism continues to evolve, balancing the promotion of major destinations with the development of regional areas will be important for ensuring equitable and sustainable growth.

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# DO OR DO NOT? TOURISM OPERATORS' ECO-CERTIFICATION CONSIDERATION

Georgia Snare<sup>a</sup> and Aaron Tkaczynski<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Queensland

## ABSTRACT

Tourism as an industry is reliant on nature and its growth in the past half-century has meant that the socio-cultural and environmental costs of tourism often outweigh the benefits. In a post COVID-19 world, tourists are increasingly seeking sustainable tourism experiences, but they are uncertain how to find them or verify the operator's commitment to sustainability. This paper draws on literature from sustainability, sustainable tourism, ecotourism and certification to explore operators' motivations and barriers to eco-certification. Findings indicate that both external (e.g. validity and credibility, regulation) and internal (e.g. organisation commitment, business development) motivations for eco-certification dominate research enquiry. Barriers (e.g. implementation, sustainability understanding and market) that limit the uptake of eco-certification are frequently acknowledged within the literature. There are significant implications from this research including the opportunity for eco-certification bodies such as Ecotourism Australia to boost participation by addressing operators' motivations and barriers as well as for the wider Australian tourism industry to be better prepared for the transition to a more sustainable visitor economy that aligns with global trends.

**Keywords:** *sustainability, sustainable tourism, ecotourism, eco-certification, motivations, barriers*

## Introduction

The significant growth of tourism, particularly since the mid-twentieth century, has meant the environmental and social costs of tourism may eventually outweigh the economic benefits (Archer et al., 2005; Mason, 2020). Sustainable tourism and ecotourism have been offered as ways to ensure positive impacts for people and planet as well as profit (Blackman et al., 2014; Sørensen & Grindsted, 2021). Consequently, sustainable tourism and ecotourism have experienced rapid growth in recent decades as in addition to operators seeking to limit destruction of natural resources in offering tourism offerings, but tourists are also increasingly demand sustainable experiences (Font et al., 2016; Margaryan & Stensland, 2017). While sustainable tourism is largely considered an approach to tourism that considers and minimises negative environmental, socio-cultural, and economic impacts (Herrero et al., 2022; Sharpley, 2020), ecotourism is environmentally, socio-culturally and economically sustainable tourism in natural areas with added focus on interpretive education and conservation (Buckley, 1994; Matysek & Kriwoken, 2003).

According to the recent 2023 Booking.com Sustainable Travel Report, 80% of global travellers confirmed that travelling more sustainably is important to them (Booking.com, 2023). This study also determined that 74% of tourists want travel companies to offer more sustainable options. However, nearly half of the tourists were unsure how to find sustainable operators. Visibility of sustainability efforts is considered an important measure for operators overcome this perceived barrier for consumers (Diez-Busto et al., 2022). One way for a tourism operator to demonstrate commitment to sustainability practices is through eco-certification (Esparon et al., 2014; Matysek & Kriwoken, 2003). Eco-certified is defined by Honey and Rome (2001, p. 5) as “voluntary procedure that assesses, monitors, and gives written assurance that a business, product, process, service, or management system conforms to specific requirements”. While each certification inevitably has its own regional characteristics, sustainability certifications have the common aim to improve business' sustainability (Diez-Busto et al., 2022; Matysek & Kriwoken, 2003).

Despite the rapid rise of eco-certification schemes and the desire for sustainable options from tourists, limited academic research have principally investigating motivations and barriers to sustainable tourism and ecotourism certifications from an operator's perspective. This is a significant gap considering the increased demand for sustainable tourism and ecotourism in recent years both in Australia (Tourism Research Australia, 2020) and globally (Booking.com, 2023). To meet this demand, operators not only should increase their sustainability efforts but demonstrate their genuine commitment to sustainable practices through the adoption of sustainable tourism and ecotourism certifications, such as eco-certification. This necessitates an understanding of motivations and barriers to eco-certification to be able to reduce barriers and increase uptake of eco-certification. This therefore provides the impetus for this study. In other words, this paper reviews reasons why operators do or do not choose eco-certification.

## Method

Twenty-six journal articles within the literature studied motivations and/or barriers to tourism sustainability practices, sustainability certification or sustainable tourism and eco-certification classification. Most research was published in either the *Journal of Cleaner Production* (38.5%) or the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* (15.4%). The majority of research was conducted in the *United Kingdom* (26.9%), *Australia* (23.1%) or *Spain* (15.4%). Although all tourism business types such as wineries (Berghoef & Dodds, 2013; Delmas and Gergaud, 2014), parks (Sørensen & Grindsted, 2021) and events (e.g. Mair & Jao, 2010), were studied, there was a focus on *accommodation providers* within the review, with roughly a quarter (26.9%) focusing on only operator type. Although most studies included tourism operator type of all sizes (small, medium and large), slightly over a fifth (23.1%) dedicated research into only small to medium enterprises. Despite three-quarters (73.1%) of studies researched both motivations and barriers to sustainability and or eco-certification, almost a quarter (23.1%) focused on motivations, whereas one study researched barriers to eco-certification. Fourteen (53.8%) studies employed a quantitative methodology, with a survey prevalent, whereas interviewing operators (30.8%) was also frequent.

## Motivations

The literature on motivations, relevant to the research context, has been split into two categories: motivations for sustainability broadly, motivations for sustainable certifications, and motivations for sustainable certification (eco-certification) in the tourism context. The identified motivations have been grouped into external motives and internal motives. A summary of the external and internal motivations and descriptions can be found in Tables 1 and 2 respectively. Each motivation is correlated with a number and where the author covered the specific motivation, the number is listed as a superscript after the year of publication. Some authors identified multiple motivations, and so multiple numbers appear after their publication.

As observed in Table 1, the motivations for implementing sustainability practices and the motivations for adopting eco-certification, both in the tourism context and more generally, are relatively similar. A count of the occurrence of the motivations identified in the reviewed literature is provided. Validation and credibility motives (14) are the most frequently identified external motivation for sustainable tourism and ecotourism eco-certification, followed by marketing motives (13), customer-centric motives (12) and regulation motives (12), community influence motives (7), certification trait motives (5), and external environment motives (5). Organisational commitment motives (13), personal motives (12), and economic motives (12) are the most frequently identified internal motivations followed by business development motives (9) and business strategy motives (6).



### Barriers to eco-certification

While there are a wide variety of reasons why tourism operators would choose to achieve sustainable tourism and ecotourism eco-certifications, there are also a wide range of barriers or demotivating factors that influence their decision. Table 3 provides an overview of the barriers to being eco-certified from the review. Barriers were again grouped into overarching categories. For example, when the author covered a specific barrier, the number is listed as a superscript after the year of publication. The categories of barriers are implementation, business, sustainability understanding, market, and economic barriers. The literature, which occasionally used previously certified operators as study participants, also identified barriers to retention experienced after having attained eco-certification.

As observed in Table 2, implementation barriers (16), such as time and resource capacity and the administrative burden of eco-certification, are most frequently cited barriers to pursuing eco-certification in the literature. These are followed by economic barriers (14), sustainability understanding barriers (13), market barriers (11) and business barriers (7). Retention barriers (4) were also noted, however are not a barrier to entry unlike the barriers to adoption.

The barriers identified in Table 3 are closely related with motivations to sustainable practice and eco-certification adoption in many cases where the reverse of a motive was found to also be a barrier. For example, awareness of eco-certification is identified as a motivation (Ayuso, 2006; Margaryan & Stensland, 2017) while lack of awareness of eco-certification was found to be a barrier to implementation (Matysek & Kriwoken, 2003; Mzembe et al., 2021; Sampaio et al., 2012). Marketing benefits such as promotional value are also identified as an external motivation (Buckley, 2012; Mzembe et al. 2020) but it is also seen as a barrier due to a lack of belief in financial benefit (Chi et al., 2012; Sampaio et al., 2012). This trend commonly occurred throughout the literature, although not every study observed the opposing motivations and barriers.

**Table 1. External motivations**

Motivation	Tourism Sustainability Practices	Sustainability Certification	Sustainable Tourism and Ecotourism Certification
<b>Validation and credibility motives</b> <i>-Credibility and image<sup>1</sup></i> <i>-Legitimisation, reinforcement, and validation of practices<sup>2</sup></i> <i>-Visibility of good practices to customers<sup>3</sup></i> <i>-Association with credible body<sup>4</sup></i> <i>-Become an industry leader<sup>5</sup></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Font et al. (2016)<sup>1 2</sup></li> <li>Mair and Jago (2010)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>Zeppel and Beaumont (2013)<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alvarez-Garcia et al. (2018)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>Berghoef and Dodds (2013)<sup>5</sup></li> <li>Diez-Busto et al. (2022)<sup>3</sup></li> <li>Flagstad et al. (2022)<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ayuso (2006)<sup>1 3</sup></li> <li>Chi et al. (2022)<sup>1 3</sup></li> <li>Dunk et al. (2016)<sup>1 2 3</sup></li> <li>Matysek and Kriwoken (2003)<sup>4</sup></li> <li>Mzembe et al. (2020)<sup>2 4</sup></li> <li>Mzembe et al. (2021)<sup>2</sup></li> <li>Tepelus and Cordoba (2005)<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Marketing motives</b> <i>-Marketing benefits and promotion value<sup>1</sup></i> <i>-Market advantage and differentiation<sup>2</sup></i> <i>-Expanding into new markets and increased customer base<sup>3</sup></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Font et al. (2016)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>Mair and Jago (2010)<sup>1 2</sup></li> <li>Revell et al. (2010)<sup>3</sup></li> <li>Zeppel and Beaumont (2013)<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diez-Busto et al. (2022)<sup>2</sup></li> <li>Flagstad et al. (2022)<sup>2 3</sup></li> <li>Gavronski et al. (2008)<sup>1 2</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Buckley (2012)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>Dunk et al. (2016)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>Jarvis et al. (2010)<sup>1 2</sup></li> <li>Margaryan and Stensland (2017)<sup>1 2</sup></li> <li>Matysek and Kriwoken (2003)<sup>1 2</sup></li> </ul>



			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mzembe et al. (2020)<sup>2 3</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Customer-centric motives</b> <i>-Customer demand for sustainability<sup>1</sup></i> <i>-To improve guest experience<sup>2</sup></i> <i>-Influence guest behaviour<sup>3</sup></i> <i>-Attract like-minded guests<sup>4</sup></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Font et al. (2016)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Mair and Jago (2010)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Sørensen and Grindsted (2021)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Zeppel and Beaumont (2013)<sup>4</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delmas and Gergaud (2014)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Diez-Busto et al. (2022)<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ayuso (2006)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Dunk et al. (2016)<sup>2 3</sup></li> <li>• Matysek and Kriwoken (2003)<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Mzembe et al. (2020)<sup>4</sup></li> <li>• Tepelus and Cordoba (2005)<sup>1 4</sup></li> <li>• Tzeschentke et al. (2008)<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Regulation motives</b> <i>-Meet legal requirements and regulations<sup>1</sup></i> <i>-Meet requirements of group or chain<sup>2</sup></i> <i>- Stay ahead of regulations<sup>3</sup></i> <i>- Environmental taxes<sup>4</sup></i> <i>-Extended protected area permit<sup>5</sup></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Font et al. (2016)<sup>1 2</sup></li> <li>• Mair and Jago (2010)<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Revell et al. (2010)<sup>4</sup></li> <li>• Sørensen and Grindsted (2021)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Zeppel and Beaumont (2013)<sup>3</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Berghoef and Dodds (2013)<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Gavronski et al. (2008)<sup>1 3</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ayuso (2006)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Dunk et al. (2016)<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Matysek and Kriwoken (2003)<sup>5</sup></li> <li>• Mzembe et al. (2020)<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Tzeschentke et al. (2008)<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Community influence motives</b> <i>-Peer pressure from network<sup>1</sup></i> <i>-Become part of a community<sup>2</sup></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Font et al. (2016)<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alvarez-Garcia et al. (2018)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Berghoef and Dodds (2013)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Delmas and Gergaud (2014)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Diez-Busto et al. (2022)<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ayuso (2006)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Dunk et al. (2016)<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Certification trait motives</b> <i>-Positive beliefs about certification<sup>1</sup></i> <i>-Awareness of certification<sup>2</sup></i> <i>-Auditing and support<sup>3</sup></i> <i>-Incentives from certification body<sup>4</sup></i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Berghoef and Dodds (2013)<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ayuso (2006)<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Dunk et al. (2016)<sup>1 3 4</sup></li> <li>• Margaryan and Stensland (2017)<sup>1 2</sup></li> <li>• Mzembe et al. (2020)<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Contextual environment motives</b> <i>-Proximity to protected areas<sup>1</sup></i> <i>-Technological developments<sup>2</sup></i> <i>-Reaction to external situation<sup>3</sup></i> <i>-Media push for sustainability<sup>4</sup></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mair and Jago (2010)<sup>4</sup></li> <li>• Sørensen and Grindsted (2021)<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gavronski et al. (2008)<sup>3</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Margaryan and Stensland (2017)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Tzeschentke et al. (2008)<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>

**Table 2. Internal motivations**

<b>Motivation</b>	<b>Tourism Sustainability Practices</b>	<b>Sustainability Certification</b>	<b>Sustainable Tourism and Ecotourism Certification</b>
<b>Organisational commitment motives</b>  <i>-Business commitment to sustainability and environmental protection<sup>1</sup></i> <i>-Have a positive environmental impact<sup>2</sup></i> <i>-Maintain acceptable standards of behaviour<sup>3</sup></i> <i>-Business ideology<sup>4</sup></i> <i>-Working towards SDGs<sup>5</sup></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Font et al. (2016)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Mair and Jago (2010)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Revell et al. (2010)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Zeppel and Beaumont (2013)<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alvarez-Garcia et al. (2018)<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Berghoef and Dodds (2013)<sup>1 4</sup></li> <li>• Diez-Busto et al. (2022)<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blackman et al. (2014)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Jarvis et al. (2010)<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Margaryan and Stensland (2017)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Mzembe et al. (2020)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Sampaio et al. (2012)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Tzeschentke et al. (2008)<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Personal motives</b>  <i>-Personal beliefs, values, and attitudes<sup>1</sup></i> <i>-Morality, doing the right thing, and environmental ethics<sup>2</sup></i> <i>-Altruism<sup>3</sup></i> <i>-Interest in conservation<sup>4</sup></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carlsen et al. (2001)<sup>1 4</sup></li> <li>• Font et al. (2016)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Mair and Jago (2010)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Revell et al. (2010)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Zeppel and Beaumont (2013)<sup>1 2</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Berghoef and Dodds (2013)<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dunk et al. (2016)<sup>1 2</sup></li> <li>• Jarvis et al. (2010)<sup>1 2</sup></li> <li>• Margaryan and Stensland (2017)<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Mzembe et al. (2020)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Sampaio et al. (2012)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Tzeschentke et al. (2008)<sup>1 2</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Economic motives</b>  <i>-Cost reductions and economic gains<sup>1</sup></i> <i>-Grant and funding opportunities<sup>2</sup></i> <i>-Financial stability<sup>3</sup></i> <i>-Attract investment<sup>4</sup></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revell et al. (2010)<sup>1 2</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alvarez-Garcia et al. (2018)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Berghoef and Dodds (2013)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Diez-Busto et al. (2022)<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Gavronski et al. (2008)<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ayuso (2006)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Blackman et al. (2014)<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Dunk et al. (2016)<sup>1 2</sup></li> <li>• Jarvis et al. (2010)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Margaryan and Stensland (2017)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Mzembe et al. (2020)<sup>4</sup></li> <li>• Tzeschentke et al. (2008)<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Business development motives</b>  <i>-Business assessment and benchmarking<sup>1</sup></i> <i>-Learning and continuous improvement<sup>2</sup></i> <i>-Stability and quality of product<sup>3</sup></i> <i>-Attract and retain committed staff<sup>4</sup></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Font et al. (2016)<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Revell et al. (2010)<sup>4</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Berghoef and Dodds (2013)<sup>1 2</sup></li> <li>• Delmas and Gergaud (2014)<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Diez-Busto et al. (2022)<sup>1 2 4</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ayuso (2006)<sup>2 4</sup></li> <li>• Dunk et al. (2016)<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Margaryan and Stensland (2017)<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Matysek and Kriwoken (2003)<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>

<b>Business strategy motives</b>  <i>-Integration of sustainability into strategy<sup>1</sup></i> <i>-Expand operations through sustainability practices<sup>2</sup></i> <i>-Gain a better understanding of their market<sup>3</sup></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carlsen et al. (2001)<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Mair and Jago (2010)<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alvarez-Garcia et al. (2018)<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dunk et al. (2016)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Margaryan and Stensland (2017)<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Sampaio et al. (2012)<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>
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**Table 3. Barriers**

Barrier	Tourism Sustainability Practices	Sustainability Certification	Sustainable Tourism and Ecotourism Certification
<b>Implementation barriers</b> <i>-Time consuming and limited resource capacity<sup>1</sup></i> <i>-Flawed implementation strategy or too difficult to implement<sup>2</sup></i> <i>-Already sustainable (certification redundant)<sup>3</sup></i> <i>-Administrative burden<sup>4</sup></i> <i>-Anger and frustration<sup>5</sup></i> <i>-Black and white structure of certification<sup>6</sup></i> <i>-Lack of staff communication and incentives<sup>7</sup></i> <i>-Loss of privacy with certification<sup>8</sup></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Font et al. (2016)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Mair and Jago (2010)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• McLennan et al. (2016)<sup>6 7</sup></li> <li>• Revell et al. (2010)<sup>1 2</sup></li> <li>• Zeppel and Beaumont (2013)<sup>1 3</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alvarez-Garcia et al. (2018)<sup>4</sup></li> <li>• Berghoef and Dodds (2013)<sup>2 6 8</sup></li> <li>• Diez-Busto et al. (2022)<sup>2 7</sup></li> <li>• Flagstad et al. (2022)<sup>1 6</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ayuso (2006)<sup>7</sup></li> <li>• Chi et al. (2022)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Jarvis et al. (2010)<sup>4 6</sup></li> <li>• Margaryan and Stensland (2017)<sup>3 4</sup></li> <li>• Matysek and Kriwoken (2003)<sup>1 2 4</sup></li> <li>• Tzeschentke et al. (2008)<sup>3</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Economic barriers</b> <i>-Too expensive</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Font et al. (2016)</li> <li>• Mair and Jago (2010)</li> <li>• Revell et al. (2010)</li> <li>• Zeppel and Beaumont (2013)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alvarez-Garcia et al. (2018)</li> <li>• Berghoef and Dodds (2013)</li> <li>• Diez-Busto et al. (2022)</li> <li>• Flagstad et al. (2022)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chi et al. (2022)</li> <li>• Jarvis et al. (2010)</li> <li>• Margaryan and Stensland (2017)</li> <li>• Matysek and Kriwoken (2003)</li> <li>• McLennan et al. (2016)</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainability understanding barriers</b> <i>-Lack of awareness/knowledge of sustainability or certification<sup>1</sup></i> <i>-Lack of motivation or concern<sup>2</sup></i> <i>-Not enough support and information<sup>3</sup></i> <i>-Too hard<sup>4</sup></i> <i>-Greenwashing concerns<sup>5</sup></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Font et al. (2016)<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Revell et al. (2010)<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Sørensen and Grindsted (2021)<sup>1 2</sup></li> <li>• Zeppel and Beaumont (2013)<sup>4 5</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alvarez-Garcia et al. (2018)<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Diez-Busto et al. (2022)<sup>1 2</sup></li> <li>• Flagstad et al. (2022)<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ayuso (2006)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Jarvis et al. (2010)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Matysek and Kriwoken (2003)<sup>1 3 4</sup></li> <li>• Mzembe et al. (2021)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Sampaio et al. (2012)<sup>1 2 4</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Market barriers</b> <i>-Lack of belief in financial benefit<sup>1</sup></i> <i>-Not enough market recognition<sup>2</sup></i> <i>-Lack of customer/supplier demand<sup>3</sup></i> <i>-Not a requirement<sup>4</sup></i> <i>-Political barriers<sup>5</sup></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Font et al. (2016)<sup>3 6</sup></li> <li>• Revell et al. (2010)<sup>1 3</sup></li> <li>• Zeppel and Beaumont (2013)<sup>4</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alvarez-Garcia et al. (2018)<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chi et al. (2022)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Dunk et al. (2016)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Jarvis et al. (2010)<sup>1 2</sup></li> <li>• Margaryan and Stensland (2017)<sup>1 2</sup></li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lack of belief in value<sup>6</sup></li> <li>-Competing certification/recognition schemes<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matysek and Kriwoken (2003)<sup>1 2 5 7</sup></li> <li>• Sampaio et al. (2012)<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Business barriers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Business size<sup>1</sup></li> <li>-Not a strategic priority<sup>2</sup></li> <li>-Internal resistance to sustainability/certification<sup>3</sup></li> <li>-Lack of measuring and monitoring<sup>4</sup></li> <li>-Lack of long-term planning<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zeppel and Beaumont (2013)<sup>1 2</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diez-Busto et al. (2022)<sup>2 3 4 5</sup></li> <li>• Flagstad et al. (2022)<sup>1 3</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Margaryan and Stensland (2017)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Matysek and Kriwoken (2003)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Tzeschentke et al. (2008)<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Retention barriers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lack of actualised benefits<sup>1</sup></li> <li>-High renewal costs<sup>2</sup></li> <li>-Issues with criteria and ongoing implementation<sup>3</sup></li> <li>-Adoption of own sustainability program<sup>4</sup></li> <li>-Left membership body requiring certification<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flagstad et al. (2022)<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chi et al. (2022)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Dunk et al. (2016)<sup>1 2 3 5</sup></li> <li>• Mzembe et al. (2020)<sup>1 2 4</sup></li> </ul>

## Conclusions and implications

Understanding motivations and barriers to eco-certification adoption are crucial for determining tourism operators' awareness of eco-certification programs, their popularity and appeal to operators, as well as the challenges and gaps in understanding that operators may face in adopting sustainable practices. When considering the literature specific to eco-certification, the predominant perspective has focused on the consumer behaviour side (Chi et al., 2022; Esparon et al., 2014) and paid comparatively little attention to the business perspective, particularly in relation to motivations to participate in voluntary certification schemes (Margaryan & Stensland, 2017; Sampaio et al., 2012). This paper identified that validation and credibility motives are the most frequently identified external motivation for sustainable tourism and eco-certification, followed by marketing motives. Conversely, organisational commitment motives are the most prevalent internal motivations found in the review. Barriers such as implementation, economic and sustainability also dominate research enquiry. Although these motivations are hardly surprising considering that eco-certification offers a way that tourism operators can enter current or new markets through providing a pro-environmental focus (Chi et al., 2022; Font et al., 2016), there is a significant lack of regulation in the tourism industry and, consequently, adoption of eco-certification remains largely voluntary and subject to moral judgement and personal ideology (Sørensen & Grindsted, 2021; Tepelus & Cordoba, 2005). Incentivising the uptake of sustainability practices through regulatory mechanisms across the broad spectrum of business types in the tourism industry is therefore a specific challenge for sustainable tourism and eco-certification bodies (Black & Crabtree, 2007). As the tourism industry has grown and become more institutionalised globally, the number of eco-certification programs has simultaneously expanded (Black & Crabtree, 2007; Haaland & Aas, 2010). Jamal et al. (2006, p. 155) suggested, "the rise of certification programmes and ecolabelling schemes reflect industry and operator efforts to gain credibility and visibility in an increasingly competitive marketplace". As these programmes grow in number and popularity (Haaland & Aas, 2010; Jamal et al., 2006), it is crucial to understand businesses' motivations for participating in voluntary sustainable tourism certifications.

Despite the tourism industry being dominated by small tourism operations (Font et al., 2016; Tepelus & Cordoba, 2005), the literature review identified that sustainability and eco-certification uptake has tended to be from large organisations. Font et al. (2016) comments that despite the variability of motivations for sustainable behaviour, the literature has largely focused on defending the business case for the adoption of Corporate Social Responsibility and sustainability practices within large organisations. However, the tourism industry is predominately comprised of small tourism businesses (Tepelus & Cordoba, 2005) and as many as 95% of Australian tourism firms are classified as small operations with fewer than 20 employees (Tourism Research Australia, 2023). In comparison with large entities, small businesses possess different motivations and face distinct challenges related to sustainability adoption (Font et al., 2016). Font et al. (2016) found that tourism small to medium enterprises were more likely to hold more altruistic motivations for sustainability adoption, such as environmental protection or improvements in society, compared to large enterprises. However, small to medium enterprises were less likely to actually communicate these practices to customers. Due to the fact that many small businesses are directly managed by their owner (Font et al., 2016), motivations for sustainability cannot be viewed in isolation from the social and personal complexities of the owner-manager (Tzeschentke et al., 2008). Consequently, future research could be conducted for small to medium organisations, particularly for tourism organisations that are not accommodation providers. Here, it could be determined if the motivations and barriers within this area of research enquiry mirror or contrast what has been found in this study.

There has been no recent study into the motivations and barriers to eco-certification uptake conducted in the context of Australia and so it is unknown how motivations (e.g. organisational commitment and validity and credulity) and barriers (e.g. implementation, business) apply in the current Australian context. This is despite an emphasis on eco-certification in the literature and the uptake of certification of operators from organisations such as Ecotourism Australia. Ecotourism Australia as the national peak body for sustainable tourism and ecotourism and the administrator of the eco-certification program and allows them to better understand the motivations and challenges faced by their members and the wider industry. Increased Business to consumer marketing by Ecotourism Australia and their members about sustainability principles and the meaning of eco-certification is needed in order to maximise market recognition of the certification, ensure promoted benefits are actualised and therefore increase appeal of the certification program. Understanding the barriers and challenges faced by operators will allow Ecotourism Australia to address these with the aim of lowering barriers to entry and minimising complications with the application and renewal process.

There has also not been a study of eco-tourism certification motivations and barriers undertaken since the COVID-19 lockdown began and so it is necessary to determine whether the pandemic has impacted any of the motivations and barriers to certification. The global shutdown of tourism meant that operators were greatly affected by having to close their operations for a period of time although Ecotourism Australia's (2020) *State of the Industry Report* found that over a third of certified and applicant operators and destinations were using the lockdown time to repivot their business towards greater sustainability. While ongoing COVID-19 recovery measures was discovered to be a priority for some businesses and so acted as a deterrent to eco-certification, more research is needed to fully understand the impact of the pandemic on motivations and barriers to eco-certification.

An additional opportunity for further research is examining the potential influence of a carbon positive and sustainable 2032 Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games on the motivations and barriers to certification as the industry transitions towards a more sustainable visitor economy (Queensland Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport, 2022). This current study could be expanded to include questions related to the Olympic Games and how operators perceive it may impact sustainable tourism and ecotourism from a supply and demand perspective in the Southeast Queensland region.



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# EDUTAINMENT EXPERIENCE IN EDUCATIONAL TRAVEL - ATTRIBUTES AND DIMENSIONALITIES

Yanping Feng<sup>a</sup>, Lianping Ren<sup>a</sup>, Cora Un In Wong<sup>b</sup> and Xianjun Liu<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Macao University of Tourism, Macao, China, <sup>b</sup>Macao Polytechnic University, Macao, China,

<sup>c</sup>Northeast Forestry University, China

## ABSTRACT

Edutainment, a coined word combining education and entertainment, has been widely included in tourism with a purpose of learning during travel. Although extant studies have touched on the concept of edutainment, the context was not grounded in educational travel. This study explored the desirable attributes of an edutainment experience in educational travel, and the underlying dimensionalities, via a mixed-method approach which included both interviews (N=22) and a survey (N=317). The research was conducted in China. Content analysis was applied to the interview transcripts, and exploratory factor analysis was adopted for factor exploration of the items that could measure edutainment experience in educational travel. Five dimensions were identified in which 22 items were included. The five dimensions include attractive learning program, fun learning approach, contextual on-site learning, manageable learning program and interactive learning. The result of this study expands the knowledge of edutainment experience in the tourism context and provides important reference to the educational travel operators for better designing and marketing educational travel products.

**Keywords:** *Edutainment experience, educational travel, attributes, dimensionalities*

## Introduction

Educational travel was defined as a way that participants travel away from home for one or more nights, with the primary or secondary purpose of learning and knowledge acquisition (e.g., Li & Liang, 2020; Ritchie, 2003). Traveling with the purpose of learning has become increasingly popular around the world (Stone & Petrick, 2013). In China, educational travel has received no less attention from all stakeholders. The Chinese Ministry of Education and eleven other official departments conjointly published the “Opinions on Promoting Study Travel for Primary and Secondary School Students”. The document provided the definition of study travel and incorporated it into the teaching plan of primary and secondary school students in China (MEPRC & 11 OD, 2016). Since the official promulgation, study travel has been actively implemented by all levels of educational authorities. It is estimated that the market scale of China’s study travel will reach RMB 42.2 billion, the income generated will reach RMB20.73 million, the number of study travel companies will reach 15,400 and the number of study travel tourists will amount up to 20.73 million in 2029 respectively (IAI, 2022). It is thus apparent that educational travel will become another powerful force both in

the tourism and education industries.

A key concept in educational travel is edutainment (e.g., Tong et al, 2020)). Edutainment could be translated into learning while having fun (e.g., Pojani & Rocco, 2023) and it has been reported to be influential to tourists' learning experience, satisfaction, well-being and revisit intention (Chan, 2019; Lee et al., 2020). Wyatt et al. (2022) argues that the integration of edutainment interpretation into dark tourism can enable the tourists to enjoy learning histories. Besides, the application of edutainment method could facilitate students' participation and overall experience during study tour (Yin & Borbon, 2022). Radder and Han (2015) developed a measurement scale for edutainment to evaluate tourists' museum experience. Edutainment performance was also examined in Chan's (2019) study but in the context of a theme park museum experience. While the existing literature which touched upon the topic of edutainment is informative, thus far no research has delved into the edutainment experience in the context of educational travel. Most importantly, the learning environment of museum tourism is quite structured in a specific place, but the learning environment of educational travel ranges from formal to informal in different places (McGladdery & Lubbe, 2017). Therefore, this study aims to supplement the existing research gap by adopting a mixed-method approach to reveal the attributes and dimensions of edutainment experience in the context of educational travel in China.

## **Literature review**

### *Underpinning theories*

#### **Embodied cognition theory**

The embodied cognition theory, which emphasizes the essential role of body in shaping cognitive processes and experiences, has been widely applied in various sectors, including tourism and education (e.g., Shapiro, 2019). This theory highlights the interplay between the body, environment, emotions, and cognition (e.g., Gefei, 2023). It suggests that human's cognition roots in the physical interactions with the world (Shapiro & Spaulding, 2024). In the educational context, embodied cognition theory was applied to highlight the importance of involving the body in learning practices, thereby contributing to learning experiences (Macrine & Fugate, 2020). Physical involvement has been examined as a factor that positively affects students' learning effectiveness and learning satisfaction in educational travel (Li & Liang, 2020). Educational travel as discussed above is regarded as a pedagogy which allows students to learn outside of the traditional classroom setting and facilitates students to have physical interaction with an alienated learning environment. Embodied cognition theory is thus an important dimension which contributes to the formation of edutainment experience.

#### **Experiential learning theory**

Experience was considered as an essential element of the learning process (Dewey, 1986). Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory provides a significant framework which

emphasizes the importance of experience while learning. This theory is frequently adopted in hospitality and tourism education and advocates learning as a cyclical process encompassing four distinct yet interconnected stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). This model suggests that learning is a fluid and continuous journey where each experience lays the foundation for the next, allowing for the gradual accumulation and integration of knowledge (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2009). Due to physical involvement and immersion into the learning environment, experiential learning is deemed to be a pedagogy which can enhance students' learning effectiveness and learning satisfaction (e.g., Li & Liang, 2020) as well as the relationship between participants' engagement and their acquired educational benefits (Yang & Lau, 2019). Therefore, experiential learning theory contributes to the formation of edutainment experience in educational travel, especially about how physical involvement could contribute to students' learning effectiveness.

### *Educational travel*

Educational travel is a pedagogy which facilitates students to acquire knowledge via on-site observation, participation and interaction with the learning setting and involved actors. A variety of experiential learning approaches in educational travel can contribute to students' positive experiences, such as industry and teaching practice (e.g., Lin et al., 2017), participating in local activities (e.g., Li et al., 2024) and interacting with different people (e.g., Li & Kovacs, 2021). By participating in local activities, students experienced a sense of achievement and satisfaction because knowledge is learnt via hands-on experience rather than spoon-feeding (e.g., Li et al., 2024). This is the outcome of active learning in which physical involvement and high concentration are required during the course of educational travel (Li & Liang, 2020). It is in such a learning setting that students learn about how to apply the knowledge they acquire in the real world, not only the knowledge and skills they can obtain from educational travel (e.g., Dabamona & Cater, 2019), but also a sense of self-growth and satisfaction (Achen et al., 2019; Li & Kovacs, 2021).

### *Edutainment experience*

Edutainment was defined as a learning method that combines education and entertainment (Buckingham & Scanlon, 2005). Edutainment as a learning method has been widely applied in teaching and learning, which could enhance students' interest in learning and have a direct impact on their learning attitude (Etete, 2021). In tourism context, edutainment has been applied as an effective strategy to enhance students' engagement in learning during travel in which their learning effectiveness is improved. Rusman and Ismail (2020) further suggested that implementing the concept of edutainment in attractions could enhance children's willingness to engage in and pay attention to learning. Wyatt et al. (2022) indicated that the application of edutainment method to heritage tourism enabled students to have a deeper understanding of local culture and history.

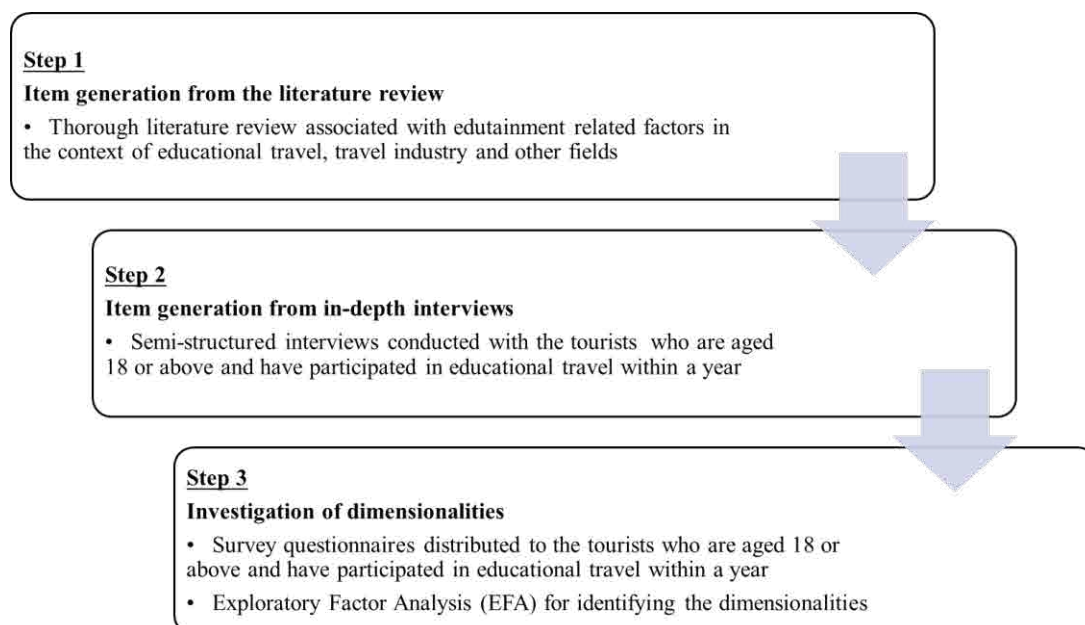


Etete (2021) stated that the application of edutainment method improved students' learning attitude through playing games, interacting with companions, utilizing visual material and story-telling. Jamil et al. (2018) and Rusman et al. (2019) stated similarly that the concept of edutainment helped develop an enjoyable interactive learning environment via playing, exploration and experimentation. By recognizing the importance of edutainment, some scholars developed measurement scales of edutainment in the context other than educational travel. For example, Radder and Han (2015) developed a measurement scale of edutainment to evaluate tourists' museum experience and its items include experience sharing with families and friends, stimulating curiosity, increasing knowledge, feeling emotionally stimulated, enhancing philosophy of living, having fun, interaction in the museum, having a usual experience and relaxing physically. As the context of this scale is grounded in the context of museology, some measurement items are not directly applicable in the context of educational travel, particularly when educational travel is not meant to be a relaxing trip, rather it is an intensive process in which learning is a primary or secondary purpose. Likewise, the physical involvement and interaction is not limited to a particular nuclei, a museum per se, but the whole learning agenda in which students travel to different nuclei in order to acquire learning experience. Chan's (2019) study included 'edutainment performance' in which four measurement items were derived from Kim and Moon (2009). Though Chan's study is informative, the context is grounded in a theme park experience in which the focus is on the predictive power of edutainment performance on tourists' wellbeing, satisfaction, and revisit intention in a structured learning environment. In a nutshell, an absence of attributes and dimensionalities identified specifically for measuring edutainment experience in educational travel illuminates the need of research inquiry of the current study.

## Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-method approach to explore the attributes and dimensionalities of tourists' edutainment experience in educational travel. Mixed-method research has been widely adopted in recent publications due to its data-crystallization and complimentary power when more than one research method is applied (e.g., Creswell, 2012). Figure 1 illustrates the three research procedures of this study. An extensive literature review and in-depth interviews were conducted to generate the initial attributes of edutainment experience. Forty items were initially identified and included in the survey questionnaire. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed to identify the potential dimensionality of edutainment experience.





**Figure 1: The details of research procedures**

### *Generating items from literature*

An extensive literature review was conducted to generate sample items that were associated with edutainment experience. The researchers reviewed previous studies related to edutainment experience, educational travel including educational tours, study abroad, field trips and school trips, and the ensued tourist positive changes in addition to the learning attributes. Additionally, given that the number of edutainment related studies on educational travel is small, the researchers proceeded one step further to examine literature on the travel industry and other sectors, such as heritage tourism, family travel, creative tourism, volunteer travel, undergraduate education, consumers' consumption experience etc. A few items were further added to the item pool, such as multi-sensory experience, interacting with the destination environment, helpful collaborative learning method etc.

### *Generating items from in-depth interviews*

In-depth interviews were conducted with educational travel tourists to explore the attributes of their edutainment experience. Twenty-two educational travel tourists who had participated in educational travel at least once within twelve months prior to the interview date were invited to participate in the interviews from September to November 2023. Purposive and snowball sampling strategies were utilized for recruiting the interviewees. In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted as it allowed participants to share their opinions freely, as long as they remained on track with the main research inquiry (Morse, 2016). The interview guiding questions were developed:

- 1) Recall of and evaluate the overall experience of the participants' last educational trip.
- 2) Elaborate the positive experiences that the participants mentioned when they recall and

evaluate their overall educational travel experience.

- 3) Describe the cues of their positive experiences in details, especially those in relation to happy learning.

The interviews were conducted in Chinese and recorded by using a digital voice recorder to produce verbatim scripts. The transcripts were then translated into English for coding by the first author, and were subsequently translated back to Chinese by the other authors of the research team to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the translation. The sample size was determined by data saturation (Patton, 1990). The results of interviews with 22 educational travel tourists did not yield any new insights on edutainment experience, suggesting that the data collected had reached saturation. Among the 22 interviewees, seven were male and fifteen were female. Most of the interviews lasted from 30 minutes to 75 minutes.

The unit of analysis is per informant's interview and the data were managed via QSR NVivo 12, particularly for the node generation and coding process. In addition, the researchers performed open coding to break the data and extract initial codes by evaluating and purifying the textual data. Axial coding was employed to find the connections among the initial codes and group similar codes into specific categories. Thirdly, selective coding was conducted to systematically classify and synthesize all the sub-categories into more core categories. The categorized interview data were then compared with the items extracted from the extant literature. Appendix A presents the two sources for item generation. Most of the items developed from the interviews align well with those mentioned in the literature, with a few exceptions, including "suitable learning methods", "suitable learning contents", "association with hot topics" and "achievable tasks". In total, 40 preliminary items were generated to be examined in the quantitative phase.

### *Questionnaire design*

The survey consisted of three parts. The first part contained three filtering questions to ensure the respondents' appropriateness, including if an individual participated in an educational tour before or not; if one is 18 or above; and whether the participation took place within the last two years. The second section contained 40 generated items. Participants were asked to indicate their evaluation in a 7-point Likert scale for their level of agreement, 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree, based on their most recent educational tour experience. The question item is described as "The educational tour I joined had interesting contents". The third section contained demographic information which includes gender, age, marital status, occupation, education, and monthly income. A total of 456 questionnaires were distributed to educational travel tourists who had participated in educational travel within one year from May 7 to May 10, 2024. The surveys were distributed online by using Credamo, which is a professional online data collection platform in China with an extensive dataset of over three million participants (Credamo, 2024). In total, 380 valid questionnaires were completed and returned, of which 317 were retained, resulting in a response rate of 83.4%.

## **Results**

Of the 317 respondents, over 60% were female (64.4%), with almost 60% (59.3%) aged under 30. More than 65% of the respondents were employed personnels and over 90% of them were well-educated who possessed bachelor's degree or above. The respondents on average earn less than 20,000 RMB per month. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to explore the fundamental dimensions of tourists' edutainment experience via the method of principle component analysis and varimax rotation. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of the dataset was 0.915 ( $>0.5$ ) and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ( $p < 0.000$ ), which means that this dataset was appropriate for conducting factor analysis (Kaiser, 1974). The item selection criterion was based on the factor-loading value greater than 0.5 (Hair et al. 2010). EFA identified five factors comprising 22 items. Only factors with large eigenvalues above 1.0 were retained in the analysis. The total variance explained by these factors was approximately 53.0%. Communalities ranged from 0.414 to 0.673, indicating that the variables were effectively explained by the five factors. The factor loadings of all these five factors exceeded 0.5. Cronbach's alpha values for the first two factors, namely "attractive learning program" and "fun learning" were above 0.7, demonstrating a favorable internal consistency for these two factors. Although the Cronbach's alpha value for the other three factors was slightly lower, ranging from 0.623 to 0.631. They are considered acceptable due to the exploratory nature of this research (Hair, 2010).

The first factor is comprised of six items, namely providing helpful materials, association with hot topics, unique themes, professional services, valuable outcomes, and applying learned things in practice. These six items showcase uniqueness and attractiveness of the main components of an educational travel program. Therefore, this factor was named "attractive learning program". The second factor consists of seven items, namely visiting interesting sites, participating in fun activities, interesting contents, learning while having fun, participating in interactive activities, feeling relaxed, and immersion in local culture. All seven items highlight the fun and enjoyable aspects of tourists' educational travel experience. Thus, the name "fun learning" was given to this factor. The third factor includes three items, they are helpful facilitators, suitable learning contents, and a sense of achievement at accomplishing tasks. All those three items involved in an educational travel program make the participants feel fulfilling, viable and user-friendly. Hence, the third factor was given the name of "manageable learning program". The fourth factor is also composed of three items, including interacting with destination environment, participating in practical activities, and helpful real-world context. This factor captures the characteristics of real-world and on-site experience provided by educational travel. Therefore, it was named "on-site learning". Similarly, the last factor consists of three factors, namely interacting with local people, making new friends and inspiring experts, which are all associated with interactive features. So, it was given the name "interactive learning". Detailed results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: The details of EFA results for edutainment experience (EE)**

Dimensions and items	Cronbach's alpha	Communalities	Factor loading	Eigenvalue	Variance explained (%)
<b>EE1 Attractive learning program</b>	<b>0.784</b>			<b>6.696</b>	<b>30.437</b>
Providing helpful materials		0.577	0.729		
Association with hot topics		0.535	0.716		
Unique themes		0.521	0.629		
Professional services		0.535	0.592		
Valuable outcomes		0.477	0.527		
Applying learned things in practice		0.424	0.519		
<b>EE2 Fun learning</b>	<b>0.779</b>			<b>1.642</b>	<b>7.462</b>
Visiting interesting sites		0.547	0.709		
Participating in fun activities		0.491	0.617		
Interesting contents		0.457	0.566		
Learning while having fun		0.512	0.564		
Participating in interactive activities		0.456	0.556		
Feeling relaxed		0.414	0.553		
Immersion in local culture		0.502	0.551		
<b>EE3 Manageable learning program</b>	<b>0.631</b>			<b>1.222</b>	<b>5.553</b>
Helpful facilitators		0.673	0.752		
Suitable learning contents		0.546	0.669		
A sense of achievement at accomplishing tasks		0.596	0.533		
<b>EE4 On-site learning context</b>	<b>0.623</b>			<b>1.069</b>	<b>4.859</b>
Interacting with destination environment		0.595	0.741		
Participating in practical activities		0.598	0.709		
Helpful real-world context		0.518	0.552		
<b>EE5 Interactive learning</b>	<b>0.624</b>			<b>1.026</b>	<b>4.665</b>
Interacting with local people		0.563	0.643		
Making new friends		0.587	0.600		
Inspiring experts		0.530	0.543		

## Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the in-depth interviews and a review of the extant literature, 40 preliminary items were generated to be attested in the quantitative phase. The result reveals that edutainment

experience contains 22 measurement items which belong to five respective dimensions, namely attractive learning program, fun learning, manageable learning program, on-site learning context and interactive learning. Though a few studies have reported the concept of edutainment in tourism context, such as Chan (2019) and Radder and Han (2015). Those studies failed to capture the complexity of the edutainment phenomenon in educational travel and thus there were only a few measurement items included in their scales. For instance, while Kim and Moon's (2009) study reports edutainment performance, the four respective measurement items focused only on a single attraction and whether the exterior and interior of the attraction is attractive and interactive enough. In the context of educational travel with the primary purpose of learning, tourists do not simply make their judgement on a single entity, but how learning effectiveness is facilitated in a web of knowledge chain which is formed by different entities and learning programs.

The 5 dimensions and 22 measurement items as identified in this study supplement the existing literature on edutainment experience within the context of educational travel. As evidenced in the EFA results, "attractive learning program" and "fun learning" are the two most important dimensions. Results as such corroborate previous research that having unique themes of an educational program are influential to tourists' edutainment experience (Li & Liang, 2020; Zin & Zin, 2010) in addition to getting rewarding learning outcomes (Fuller & France, 2015; Li et al., 2024) via a fun learning process (Stone et al., 2014), such as visiting interesting sites (Li et al., 2024), participating in fun activities (Rusman & Ismail, 2020), immersing in local culture (Pennings et al., 2019). It is important to note too that the third dimension "manageable learning program" is a nuanced discovery that contributes to the formation of edutainment experience, especially the attribute of "suitable learning contents" that generated from interviews. The results suggest that the students will obtain a sense of achievement and feel happier during educational travel when the learning contents are age or ability appropriate. This new dimension has seldom been reported, though similar comments were made by Nadelson and Jordan's (2012) study that accomplishing a task successfully would lead to a memorable learning experience. Additionally, having the opportunity to experience on-site learning through participating in various practical activities in a real site is deemed to be essential importance for valuable learning experience during study tours. This finding is in line with previous studies, such as Pennings et al. (2019) who argue that it was an amazing learning experience by witnessing the manufacturing process of products in a real context. The attribute of interactivity was mentioned frequently in previous literature, such as interacting with experts (Pennings et al., 2019) and making new friends (Lo & Lee, 2011) during educational travel. However, results of this study pointed out that interactive learning was a small part of edutainment experience in educational travel.

### **Implications and limitations**

Theoretically, the current study supplemented the existing knowledge of edutainment experience, especially in the context of educational travel. Previous studies in this vein by and large are simplistic and have a fragmented understanding of tourists' edutainment experience in the context of educational travel. The adoption of mixed-method in the current study also

addresses the limitation of many previous studies which adopt either only a quantitative or a qualitative approach to investigate this research inquiry. Our findings show that there are 5 dimensions in total of which 22 measurement items were generated. These findings further supplement the edutainment instrument (Radder & Han, 2015) that only has one dimension (9 attributes) mainly pertaining to valuable outcomes and fun experience in museum. However, the result of this study strengthens the explanation power of edutainment experience with educational travel by investigating more dimensions (5 dimensions) with diverse attributes (22 attributes). In addition to the two main dimensions, our findings also reveal that “manageable learning program” is deemed to be the third important dimension which can contribute to students’ sense of achievement and satisfaction. This new dimension though is subtle, it sheds light on the importance of having an appropriate level of challenges and difficulties is crucial, or else a sense of failure might be felt and could potentially hinder the formation of edutainment experience. Findings as such have important practical implications too, as the weights of importance of those 5 dimensions illuminate how their future products should be designed.

Although a holistic set of attributes and dimensionalities of edutainment experience grounded in the context of educational travel was identified in this study, several limitations exist. This study was conducted by using an exploratory method without any confirmatory analysis to verify the validity and reliability of the identified attributes and dimensionalities. Future study should conduct confirmatory factor analysis to ensure the composite reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity of the measurement scale (Churchill, 1979). The scale can as well be tested in future in a different geographical terrain other than in China.

Notes: the detailed demographic information of interviews questionnaires as well as the example of coding process are available upon the request.



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## Appendix A

### Items of edutainment experience developed from literature review and interviews

Items derived from literature and/or interviews		Literature (terms that appear at least once in the extant literature)	Interviews
1	Suitable learning methods	-	√
2	Suitable learning contents	-	√
3	Interesting contents	e.g., Li and Liang (2020)	√
4	Association with hot topics	-	√
5	Unique themes	e.g., Zin and Zain (2010)	√
6	Clear learning objectives	e.g., Achen et al. (2019)	√

7	Achievable tasks	-	√
8	A sense of achievement at accomplishing tasks	e.g., Nadelson and Jordan (2012)	√
9	A sense of achievement at participating in challenging activities	e.g., Cavender et al. (2020)	√
10	Consciousness of learning	e.g., Li and Liang (2020)	√
11	Manageable leaning	e.g., Li and Liang (2020)	√
12	Free learning environment	e.g., Xie (2004)	√
13	Exploring new things	e.g., Dabamona and Cater (2019)	√
14	Participating in fun activities	e.g., Rusman and Ismail (2020)	√
15	Participating in practical activities	e.g., Dabamona and Cater (2019)	√
16	Participating in local activities	e.g., Dabamona and Cater (2019)	√
17	Visiting interesting sites	e.g., Li et al. (2024)	√
18	Muti-sensory experience	e.g., Li et al. (2024)	√
19	Contextual on-site learning	e.g., Pennings et al. (2019)	√
20	Applying learned things in practice	e.g., Fuller and France (2015)	√
21	Active engagement	e.g., Nadelson and Jordan (2012)	√
22	Immersion in local culture	e.g., Pennings et al. (2019)	√
23	Interacting with destination environment	e.g., Rusman et al. (2019)	√
24	Participating in interactive activities	e.g., Chan (2019)	√
25	Interacting with different people	e.g., Achen et al. (2019)	√
26	Interacting with companions	e.g., Li and Kovacs (2021)	√
27	Interacting with local people	e.g., Stone et al. (2014)	√
28	Making new friends	e.g., Lo and Lee (2011)	√
29	Building good interpersonal relationship with others	e.g., Achen et al. (2019)	√
30	Helpful staff	e.g., Ghail and Standing (2019)	√
31	Helpful real-world context	e.g., Li and Liang (2020)	√
32	Professional services	e.g., Chau (2019);	√
33	Valuable outcomes	e.g., Li et al. (2024)	√
34	Learning while having fun	e.g., Etete (2021)	√
35	Happy environment	e.g., Tang and Qiu (2015)	√
36	Feeling relaxed	e.g., Radder and Han (2015)	√
37	Helpful collaborative method	e.g., Fuller and France, (2015)	√
38	Helpful facilitators	e.g., Li et al. (2024)	√
39	Inspiring experts	e.g., Pennings et al. (2019)	√
40	Providing helpful materials	e.g., Etete (2021)	√

# ELICITING SUBJECT WELL-BEING IN THE LITERARY TOURISM: EVIDENCE FROM ONLINE REVIEWS

Xinrui Fang<sup>a</sup>, Li Cheng<sup>a</sup> and James Kennell<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Tourism School, Sichuan University, Chengdu, People's Republic of China, <sup>b</sup>School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, University of Surrey, Guildford, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

## ABSTRACT

The role of tourism in promoting positive psychological states is well documented. However, current academic research primarily explores aspects like the existence and structural models of happiness, while the relationship between context and emotion has largely been overlooked. Therefore, this study, based on a theory of scenes, employs a mixed-method approach utilizing big data, integrating grounded theory, natural language processing, and complexity causal analysis. We analyzed text data of 1,833,527 words and 12,748 online reviews from tourists regarding literary tourism experiences to investigate the impact of literary scene experiences on subjective well-being. The results reveal that literary scene experiences encompass three dimensions—legitimacy, theatricality, and authenticity—and seven concepts (perceived service quality, social connection, nostalgia, creative experience, aesthetic experience, objectivist authenticity, and constructivist authenticity). Additionally, we identified complex causal effects on subjective well-being and found the unique role of aesthetic experience and the distinctive dimension of nostalgia in literary tourism. The aim is to elucidate the immense potential of tourism in fostering positive psychological states and to reveal how different structures of literary scene experiences influence subjective well-being. Finally, this study suggests that tourism managers should focus on scene building in tourist destinations to fulfil the role of tourism in promoting positive psychology.

**Keywords:** *a theory of scenes; subjective well-being; literary tourism; fsQCA; natural language processing*

## Introduction

In the field of positive psychology, the concept of well-being is a central topic, with researchers striving to uncover its deeper meaning. Scholars such as Ryff (1989), Seligman (2002), and Newman (2014) have proposed various models to explain the multidimensional nature of well-being, including the concept of well-being itself, the Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment (PERMA) model, and the Desire, Relevance, Attitude, Mindfulness, Mastery, Accomplishment (DRAMMA) model. While these models have enhanced our understanding of well-being, existing research often focuses on problems related to well-being, with the relationship between context and emotion being largely overlooked (Atkinson, 2013). Therefore, the academic community should shift its focus to the specific contexts and emotional factors that contribute to well-being.

Xiaojing et al. (2016) have confirmed that service environment attributes shape consumers' well-

being and emphasized the importance of the physical service environment. However, some researchers argue that promoting well-being involves not just a physical container (Fleuret & Prugneau, 2015), but also the connections and interactions people have with the space, which include other individuals, objects, and the contextual and emotional aspects of specific spaces (Gustafson, 2001). Silver and Clark (2010) propose a theory of scenes to address this gap. They define a scene as a public good oriented towards amenities, which encompasses various scenes and the cultural values and lifestyles inherent in these scenes. This theory highlights how scenes influence different populations and lead to varying regional development outcomes. It focuses on discovering real objects or phenomena, obtaining genuine experiences, and enjoying pleasurable and joyful displays through identification. It involves the relationship of "seeing" and "being seen," and the enjoyment of consensus in affirming correctness or opposing errors (Silver & Clark, 2010). Thus, this theory can be applied to explain well-being by integrating physical contexts, specific situations, and emotional factors.

Additionally, the role of tourism in promoting well-being is widely recognized (Hills & Argyle, 2002; Holm et al., 2017). While research on specific tourism activities (such as diving and pilgrimages) and various contexts (such as traditional Chinese medicine tourism and Temple tourism) is extensive, literary tourism—strongly dependent on literary contexts, works, and personal emotions (Hoppen et al., 2014)—has received less attention. Literary tourism serves as a connection between literary sites, literary works, and authors. Due to the varying experiences, knowledge, and interests of tourists, an interactive relationship occurs during the tourism experience (Jiang & Yu, 2019; Yu & Xu, 2016). However, we have not yet fully explored this process, which involves multiple sensory and cognitive dimensions. In the context of China, previous research on literary tourism has predominantly focused on the influence of literary works and their contextual or interpretive analysis, while empirical studies on the consumption of literary tourism remain scarce (Cowan & Ketron, 2019; Kirillova, 2023). Furthermore, as a tourism type that heavily relies on the construction of scenes, literary tourism involves tourists deriving meaning from literary sites, making the creation of these scenes crucial. Scene theory, as an important framework for explaining the construction of cultural spaces and consumption practices, plays a significant role in understanding this phenomenon (Silver & Clark, 2016). Therefore, this study will use a theory of scenes as the research framework to explore the mechanisms by which literary scenes stimulate well-being. The study poses the following key questions: (1) What are the structural characteristics of literary scene experiences that stimulate subjective well-being? (2) What is the complexity of how literary scene experiences stimulating subjective well-being? To address these questions, this study employs a mixed-methods approach, analyzing online reviews, quantifying textual data, and conducting complexity causal analysis to examine the impact of literary scene experiences on tourism-related subjective well-being.

## Methodology

To reveal the structural characteristics of literary scenes and their mechanisms in stimulating subjective well-being in tourism, the study utilizes data from online reviews shared by tourists on travel websites. Compared to surveys or face-to-face interviews, online reviews avoid high costs and interviewer biases (Alaei et al., 2017). In July 2024, we collected 1,833,527 words from tourists and 12,748 text data from the Dianping website using Python software. Table 1 illustrates that the research framework includes qualitative research (Study 1) and quantitative research (Study 2). Study 1 employs



content analysis to identify how tourists' subjective well-being can be influenced by literary scenes. The study uses grounded theory coding techniques, specifically open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In Study 2, quantitative methods are used to leverage big data to reveal the quantitative relationship between literary scene experiences and tourism-related subjective well-being. This is based on the conceptualization from Study 1. The crucial step in Study 2 is converting textual data into numerical data. Thus, training models and employing large-scale predictive models to process extensive textual reviews are necessary, with Python being a widely recognized platform for converting text data into numerical data in the tourism field (Mehraliyev et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2024). This approach enables the extraction of numerical data related to independent variables (dimensions of literary scene experiences) and dependent variables (tourism-related subjective well-being), which is further analyzed through complexity causal analysis.

**Table 1: Analysis procedure and research method.**

Study 1: Dimension identification
<p><b>Data collection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UGC data from dianping.com (n=1,914,487 words)</li> </ul> <p><b>Content analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By drawing on coding techniques of grounded theory: randomly coding 1000 reviews from 17428 online reviews with 203,906 words</li> </ul> <p><b>Variable</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Independent variable: identify 7 core factors of scene experience</li> <li>Dependent variable: identify connotation of tourism subject-wellbeing</li> </ul>
Study 2: Exploration of complex causal relationships
<p><b>Numerical data preparation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Convert each textual reviews into numerical data</li> <li>Partially automate label data and train a custom model.</li> <li>Use the custom model for inference</li> <li>Use the Large language model (LLM) for scoring</li> </ul> <p><b>Complex causal relationships analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data calibration and counterfactual analysis</li> <li>Fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis(fsQCA)</li> </ul>

## Results

### *Study 1: Identification of Literary Scene Experience Dimensions*

Content analysis was based on 17,827 online reviews, totaling 1,914,487 words. We randomly sampled 1,000 reviews for coding, amounting to 150,000 words. Coding was halted when categories reached saturation. During open coding, the text was repeatedly reviewed and coded around “literary tourism scene experience and subjective well-being,” resulting in 867 free nodes and 82 initial concepts.

After comparing, reviewing, and adjusting the 82 initial concepts, 31 sub-categories were ultimately extracted (Table 2). Axial coding further refined these sub-categories and analyzed their interrelations (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), leading to the extraction of eight main categories: perceived service quality, social connection, nostalgia, creative experience, aesthetic experience, objective authenticity, constructive authenticity, and subjective well-being. Selective coding helped integrate all categories, constructing a theoretical framework that connects these categories, thereby optimizing the impact mechanism of literary scene experience on subjective well-being.

**Table 2: Categories, sub-categories, and their corresponding connotation**

Category	Sub-category	Initial concepts	Descriptions and explanations
Perception of service quality	Guided Services	Scenic area signage	Services that provide guidance and assistance, typically helping tourists find destinations or understand site facilities.
		Self-service audio guide	
		Scenic area map	
	Attitude of Service Staff	Tour guide service attitude	The attitude and behavior of service staff towards customers, including friendliness, professionalism, and politeness.
		Shop staff attitude	
	Emergency Handling Capability	Emergency response speed	The ability to handle unexpected situations, including quickly and effectively solving problems and providing support.
		Emergency response capability	
	Humanized Services at the Scenic Spot	Care for disabled individuals	Service design focused on tourists' needs and comfort, offering a more thoughtful and convenient experience.
		Discounts for seniors and students	
		Accessibility facilities	
		Baby strollers	
	Environmental Hygiene	Scenic area hygiene	The cleanliness and sanitary conditions of the site, including the tidiness of public areas and facilities.
		Toilet cleanliness	
	Crowding Level Catering Services	Visitor flow	The level of crowd density at a site or during a specific time period.
		Social distancing	
		Food and drink prices	The quality of food and beverage services, including variety, taste, and hygiene.
		Dining specialties	
		Traffic order	

Nostalgia	Transportation tools	Public transport convenience	The transportation options provided, including public transport and internal site transportation facilities.
	Automated Services at the Scenic Spot	Online ticketing ID card entry	The use of automation technology in attractions to enhance visitor experience and operational efficiency, such as self-service ticket machines.
	Information Notification	Closing information Venue renovation information Holiday information Scenic area event information	Services providing relevant information to visitors, including activity schedules and safety instructions.
	Personal Nostalgia	Remembering the time of reciting poetry Remembering my past self Remembering friends or family	Emotional reflection and nostalgia for past experiences and memories.
	Historical Nostalgia	Remembering the atmosphere of ancient times Remembering historical scenes Traveling through time Understanding history	Emotional tracing and appreciation of past historical periods and cultures.
	Architectural Aesthetics	Harmonious colors Artistic design Rich layers	Aesthetic evaluation and appreciation of architectural design and style.
	Visual Aesthetics	Natural scenery Atmospheric perception	Aesthetic perception of visual elements such as color, shape, and design.
	Auditory Aesthetics	Harmonious cicada chirping Quietness of the scenic area Fresh air	Aesthetic experience of sounds and music.

	Olfactory Aesthetics	Fragrance of flowers	Sensory experience and evaluation of smells and fragrances.
	Tactile Aesthetics	Comfortable temperature	Aesthetic experience of materials and textures.
		Quality of the scenic area	
	Cultural and Creative Products	Imagination Novelty Originality Fashionable	Products incorporating cultural elements and creative design, such as art and souvenirs, primarily evaluated for their creativity.
Creative experience	Innovative Activities	Poetry recitation Ancient style photography Plant exhibition	Organizing new ideas and trending events.
	Interactive Atmosphere	Assistance Cooperation	Interactive and participatory experiences that encourage active communication and engagement.
Social connection	Relationship Development	Accompanying parents Parent-child interaction Enhancing friendships Deepening love	The growth and improvement of relationships among family, romantic partners, and friends.
	Heritage Authenticity	Completeness of poetry Authenticity of poetry	Emphasizing that the existence of things should be based on objective facts and evidence, not subjective feelings or interpretations.
Objectivist authenticity	Historical Authenticity	Real historical events Authenticity of ruins	Ensuring that something accurately reflects or represents a specific historical period or event.
	Local Authenticity	Local memories Local emotions Local knowledge	Reflecting the unique characteristics, traditions, and identity of a particular place or community.
Constructivist authenticity	Scene Creation	Poetry wall interaction Degree of commercialization Scenic creation Thatched cottage scene production	Designing and constructing a setting or environment to evoke a specific mood or context.

Subjective well-being	Popularity Creation	Social media Television media	Popularity production refers to using various strategies and methods to enhance the popularity and recognition of a tourist attraction
	Architectural Authenticity	Restoration of history Trace back to the original site	Preserving or replicating the architectural style and details true to a particular historical or cultural context.
	Positive Emotions	Pleasant mood Mental and physical peace Love Gratitude	Emotions that bring joy, satisfaction, happiness, and optimism, contributing to psychological comfort and positive physical responses; part of overall well-being.
	Immersion	Immersion Imagination and association	A state of complete immersion and focus on activities or experiences in a tourist attraction.
	Escapism	Relaxation Stress relief	Seeking temporary rest or relaxation from real-life difficulties or stress.
	Self-Enhancement	Knowledge acquisition Cultivating national sentiment Self-reflection	The process of enhancing personal abilities and qualities through learning and development.

## ***Study 2: Quantitative analysis of literary scene experience and subjective well-being***

The content analysis from Study 1 identified the elements of literary scene experiences and tourism well-being. To explore quantitative relationships between these variables, it was necessary to convert the text data into numerical data, including independent variables (perceived service quality, social connection, nostalgia, creative experience, aesthetic experience, objectivist authenticity, constructivist authenticity) and the dependent variable (subjective well-being). Data processing and model construction were carried out using Python software and large language models.

### **Numericalization of text data and model training**

First, Data Cleaning: We need to remove duplicate content, comments shorter than 30 characters, and delete non-Chinese characters, numbers, useless symbols, emojis, and spaces from the comments. After cleaning, the final dataset includes 12,748 tourist reviews, with a total corpus of 1,833,527 characters. Next, Model Training: Based on the content analysis of 1,000 data samples from Research 1, semi-automated labeling will be determined. Experiments will be conducted using small sample sizes of 100, 300, 500, and 1,000 labeled data samples. The parameters are set as Epoch=3, maximum length

is 1,024, and the data split ratio is 2:8. A custom model that meets the inference requirements will be derived. Training will be based on the large language model (LLM) ERNIE 4.0. Subsequently, Prompt Instruction Testing: Instructions will be continuously compared and modified against the code and results. For example, suppose you are a fine-grained scorer required to identify whether the following text contains any of the eight categories: Perceived Service Quality, Social Connection, Nostalgia, Creative Experience, Aesthetic Experience, Objectivist Authenticity, Constructivist Authenticity, and Subjective Well-being. Extract comments corresponding to each category, and if a category is not present, label it as "Not Identified." Output the results in jsonl format. The data model is based on a pretrained custom model.Fourth, Data Scoring: For example: You need to identify whether the following text contains any of the eight categories: Perceived Service Quality, Social Connection, Nostalgia, Creative Experience, Aesthetic Experience, Objectivist Authenticity, Constructivist Authenticity. Provide confidence scores for each category using your app's original text and the text classification extraction results in json format. For the extracted results, scoring requirements are as follows: Requirement 1: Score each category from 0 to 100, with zero for unrecognized categories. Requirement 2: When scoring each category, evaluate the quality of the text description. Requirement 3: Provide an overall emotional score for the original text. The scoring rule is the same as for the eight categories, and output the category as positive sentiment with a score. The format should be {Positive Sentiment: Confidence Score}. The text to be analyzed is: PROMPT. The extraction result classification json is: COMPLETION. Training is based on the large language model (LLM) ERNIE 4.0. Fifth, Format Unification and Data Assignment: This involves converting between jsonl and csv formats and assigning values for fsQCA data. Based on the frequency of each variable and data smoothness analysis (Ragin, 2009), the values are assigned as follows: Perceived Service Quality, Social Connection, Nostalgia, and Objectivist Authenticity, Constructivist Authenticity are assigned (100, 50, 10); Aesthetic Experience is assigned (100, 80, 10); Subjective Well-being is assigned (100, 75, 10). (Partial codes see Appendix B)

### fsQCA Analysis Results

Table 3 presents the fsQCA results for subjective well-being, as shown in configuration models A and B. We constructed two causal models (Model A and Model B) based on seven variables. The fsQCA results for Model A, indicate that two causal models (Model A: M1-M2) lead to high levels of subjective well-being (solution coverage: 0.723; solution consistency: 0.915). M1 has the highest consistency value (0.957), suggesting that high levels of perceived service quality, objectivist authenticity, social connection, nostalgia, aesthetic experience, and constructivist authenticity are sufficient to yield a high score for subjective-wellbeing. M2 indicates that high levels of perceived service quality, objectivist authenticity, social connection, nostalgia, creative experience, and constructivist authenticity are sufficient to achieve a high score for subjective-wellbeing. Therefore, perceived service quality, objectivist authenticity, social connection, nostalgia, and constructivist authenticity, are crucial for high levels of subjective-wellbeing. Model B predicts low levels of subjective well-being with the following results (solution coverage: 0.613; solution consistency: 0.894). M3 shows that when perceived service quality, objectivist authenticity, social connection, nostalgia, creative experience, and constructivist authenticity are high and ~aesthetic experience is present, subjective-wellbeing is high.

**Table 3: Configurations for subject-wellbeing and its negation.**

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Models for predicting high level SWB			
	RC	UC	C



Model A:  $xfg = f(fwzl, kgzs, shlj, hj, smty, cyty, jgzs)$   
M1=  $fwzl*kgzs*shlj*hj*smty*jgzs$  0.643 0.002 0.957  
M2=  $fwzl*kgzs*shlj*hj*cyty*jgzs$  0.721 0.080 0.916  
solution coverage: 0.723; solution consistency: 0.915

#### Models for predicting low level SWB

Model B:  $\sim xfg = f(fwzl, kgzs, shlj, hj, smty, cyty, jgzs)$

	RC	UC	C
M3= $fwzl*kgzs*shlj*hj*\sim smty*cyty*jgzs$	0.613	0.613	0.894

solution coverage: 0.613; solution consistency: 0.894

Note: The symbol  $\sim$  indicates negation. The symbol  $*$  indicates the separation of the variables and their inclusion in the model evaluation. RC = raw coverage; UC = unique coverage; C = coverage.

$fwzl$ =perceived service quality,  $kgzs$ =objectivist authenticity,  $shlj$ =social connection,  $hj$ =nostalgia,  $smty$ =aesthetic experience,  $cyty$ =creative experience,  $jgzs$ =constructivist authenticity,  $xfg$ =subjective-wellbeing

## Discussion

This study establishes a continuous analytical framework based on a theory of scenes and well-being theory, using a mixed-methods approach to explore the relationship between literary scene experiences and subjective well-being. The findings reveal three dimensions of literary scene experience: authenticity, legitimacy, and theatricality. The legitimacy dimension aligns with the study by Bell, Hickman, and Houghton (2023), which confirms that perceived service quality is a precursor to well-being. However, while current academic focus tends to be on the physical attributes of service scenes, there is a lack of attention to situational and emotional attributes. This study introduces a new perspective on the role of cultural values in scene attributes. Additionally, we validate the relationship between literary scene experience and well-being, confirming the complex causal relationship and noting that creative and aesthetic experiences positively impact well-being, consistent with research by Hartwell (2018), Kang (2020), and Bae et al. (2019). Finally, we identify the structural characteristics of literary tourism scenes. Although authenticity has been widely recognized (Hartwell et al., 2018; Yu, Li, and Xiao, 2023), our empirical findings highlight nostalgia as a unique attribute, expanding the research on literary tourism scenes.

## Conclusions and Implications

### Conclusions

First, we reclassified literary scene experiences. This paper defines literary scene experiences as the various aspects of interactions that occur between tourists and the tourism activities they engage in, as well as between tourists and destinations, tourists and places, and tourists and objects. Based on the results of grounded analysis, we categorized literary scene experiences into three dimensions

(authenticity, legitimacy, and theatricality) and seven categories (perceived service quality, social connection, nostalgia, creative experience, aesthetic experience, objectivist authenticity, and constructivist authenticity). Next, we established the complex causal relationships between literary scene experiences and subjective well-being. We found that high levels of subjective well-being are primarily driven by perceived service quality, place identity, social connection, nostalgia, and authenticity perceptions. While high levels of creativity and aesthetic experiences are sufficient conditions for high levels of subjective well-being, low levels of aesthetic experiences lead to low levels of subjective well-being. Finally, we identified a unique attribute of literary scenes: nostalgia has a distinctive impact on subjective well-being.

### ***Implications***

**Theoretical Significance:** First, this study reveals the structural characteristics of literary scene experience from the perspective of tourists, encompassing legitimacy, authenticity, and theatricality. It establishes an environment conducive to cultivating happiness. Second, The research integrates large language models and prompt instructions to explore additional causal relationships, addressing limitations of traditional manual and dictionary methods in big data usage.

**Practical Significance:** From the perspective of tourism market development, managers should focus on shaping the legitimacy, authenticity, and theatricality aspects of literary museums. Specifically, tourism professionals should enhance visitor engagement in intangible cultural heritage museums through displays, explanations, and interactive activities, showcasing poets' spiritual traits and personal charm while incorporating innovative elements to offer multi-layered sensory experiences. Moreover, the role of tourism in fostering positive psychology should be emphasized. Professionals should tailor tourism products to meet visitors' happiness needs and facilitate collaboration among various stakeholders to create environments that promote well-being.

### ***Limitations***

It must be acknowledged that this study has some limitations. First, existing research on well-being has not differentiated between the mechanisms of hedonic and eudaimonic subjective well-being, and as such, our findings may not capture all potential variations. Additionally, this study is exploratory in nature, and the data are primarily derived from literary tourism destinations. Future research should extend this study to other case sites for further validation.

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# ENHANCING CULTURAL HERITAGE THROUGH FESTIVAL TOURISM: THE SYNERGY BETWEEN DALI PIANO ART FESTIVAL AND YUNNAN WAMAO

Mingwei Li<sup>a</sup>, Jianxing Cai<sup>a</sup>, Jiayu Wang<sup>a</sup> and Hong Wang<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Hainan University

## ABSTRACT

In the era of the digital economy, the fusion of modern festivals and traditional cultural heritage has gained new momentum through innovative collaborations. This paper explores the successful collaboration between the Dali Piano Art Festival and Yunnan Wamao using cooperative game theory. By leveraging the Shapley value model, the study illustrates how equitable benefit distribution and sustained collaboration can be achieved among diverse stakeholders, including cultural practitioners, festival organizers, digital platforms, and public participants. The integration of digital platforms plays a pivotal role in extending the reach of Wamao culture, while the synergy created by this partnership enhances both the economic and cultural value of Yunnan Wamao. Furthermore, this collaboration not only revitalizes traditional practices but also attracts a broader audience, fostering a deeper appreciation for cultural heritage. By showcasing local talent and traditions through modern mediums, the partnership exemplifies how cultural tourism can thrive in a digital landscape. This study provides a valuable model for integrating cultural heritage into modern tourism practices, offering insights for future applications in cultural tourism.

**Keywords:** *Cultural Heritage, Cooperative Game Theory, Dali Piano Art Festival, Digital Economy, Festival Tourism, Shapley Value*

## 1. Introduction

The digital economy is reshaping industries across the globe, and the tourism sector is no exception. The rise of digital platforms has provided new opportunities for cultural heritage preservation and promotion, particularly in regions rich with local traditions and crafts. This paper examines the collaboration between the Dali Piano Art Festival, a modern cultural event, and Yunnan Wamao, a traditional handicraft with deep historical roots, to explore how the synergy between cultural heritage and festivals can enhance both cultural identity and economic outcomes.

By applying cooperative game theory, this study highlights how various stakeholders—including cultural practitioners, festival organizers, and digital platforms—can collaborate to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. The key question addressed in this paper is: How can cooperative frameworks, supported by the digital economy, ensure fair distribution of benefits while promoting cultural heritage through modern festival tourism?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Cultural Heritage and Festival Tourism

Cultural festivals, as platforms for cultural activities, play a crucial role in promoting local culture and facilitating cultural exchange. In recent years, many cultural festivals have collaborated with local traditional cultures, not only enriching the content of the festivals but also enhancing the visibility and influence of local culture (Hill & Zhao, 2023). The cooperative model between cultural festivals and local culture has seen widespread success both domestically and internationally. For example, a county in Sichuan Province, China combines traditional ethnic sacrificial culture with local science and technology festival activities to attract tourists to visit and play there (Liu & Wang, 2023).

Liu and Wang (2023) studied the collaboration between cultural festivals and local traditional crafts in a certain area of China, finding that this cooperation effectively promoted the commercialization and branding of local culture. Meanwhile, Chen and Li (2023) highlighted the key role of digital media in the promotion of cultural festivals across multiple Asian countries, emphasizing that digital media demonstrates powerful communicative capacity, particularly in attracting young audiences and international participants.

## *2.2 Cooperative Game Theory and the Shapley Value*

Cooperative game theory is a mathematical method for analyzing how multiple participants can maximize their collective interests through cooperation (Bousquet & Le Page, 2004). Shapley value is a model based on the principle of fairness in game theory, which quantifies the contributions of all parties in a collaborative project by calculating the marginal value of a single feature. The Shapley value model can allocate reasonable benefits to all parties involved and improve the incentive mechanism for cooperation (Shapley, 1953). This theory is widely applied in fields such as economics, management, and political science, particularly in resource allocation, cooperative decision-making, and interest coordination. In the cultural industry, cooperative game theory can help analyze how different stakeholders can effectively integrate and promote cultural resources through collaboration.

One of the core aspects of cooperative game theory is how to fairly distribute the benefits generated by cooperation. The Shapley value, as an important distribution scheme, provides a standard method for calculating the entitled earnings of each participant in a collaboration. Kim and Lee (2024) point out that the application of the Shapley value in cultural heritage management can ensure a fair distribution of interests among all parties, thereby promoting the sustainability of cooperation. Zhang and Wang (2023) further elaborate on the application of the Shapley value in various cultural projects, emphasizing its effectiveness in addressing complex interest distribution issues.

## *2.3 The Role of Digital Platforms in Cultural Promotion*

The rise of the digital economy has brought revolutionary changes to the cultural industry. Digital technologies such as big data, artificial intelligence, blockchain, and virtual reality are redefining the production, distribution, and consumption of cultural products. The



digitization of cultural products not only enhances dissemination efficiency but also breaks through geographic and temporal limitations, allowing cultural resources to reach a global audience more widely.

Many studies indicate that digital platforms play a critical role in the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage. Smith and Anderson (2023) point out that the application of digital technologies enables traditional culture to be better preserved and disseminated, especially when faced with the impacts of modernization on traditional culture; digitization has become an effective means of protection. Furthermore, Lee and Chang (2023) further analyze the dual role of digital platforms in cultural communication: not only as distribution channels for cultural products but also as interactive platforms for cultural exchange, promoting cultural identity and diversity protection on a global scale.

### **3. Methodology**

This study adopts a case study approach, focusing on the collaboration between the Dali Piano Art Festival and Yunnan Wamao. The analysis is based on cooperative game theory, using the Shapley value to quantify the contributions and benefits of each stakeholder involved in the project.

#### *3.1 Data Collection*

Primary data were collected through interviews with key stakeholders, including the festival organizers, Wamao artisans, and digital platform operators. Additionally, social media and digital platform engagement data were analyzed to measure public participation and the effectiveness of promotional activities.

Secondary data were obtained from academic literature, festival records, and digital platform reports.

#### *3.2 Data Analysis*

**Qualitative Analysis:** Conduct thematic analysis of interview transcripts and notes from participant observations to summarize the main viewpoints, motivations, and contributions of all parties involved in the cooperation process. By coding and categorizing, key factors driving cultural inheritance and promotion under the digital economy are identified. Additionally, content analysis will be performed on user comments and interaction data from social media and digital platforms to explore public feedback and participation motivations regarding the promotion activities of Wamao culture.

**Quantitative Analysis:** Based on cooperative game theory, a game model is constructed for the collaboration between the Dali Piano Arts Festival and Wamao in Yunnan. By calculating the Shapley value, the contributions and benefits of each party in the cooperation are quantified. The calculation steps for the Shapley value are as follows: First, identify the

participants and determine the main parties involved in the cooperative game, such as the organizers of the Dali Piano Arts Festival, inheritors of Wamao culture in Yunnan, digital platform operators, and event participants (e.g., netizens who named the event). Next, determine the cooperative outcomes by defining the total benefits generated from the cooperation, including the effects of cultural promotion, economic benefits (such as increased sales of Wamao handicrafts), and enhanced brand recognition. Then, calculate the marginal contributions: by individually calculating the marginal gains brought by each participant's inclusion in the collaboration, assess their specific contributions to the cooperative outcomes. Finally, apply the Shapley value formula to calculate the profit distribution each participant deserves. This calculation will help analyze whether the distribution of interests among the parties in the cooperation is reasonable and provide references for further optimizing the cooperation model.

#### **4. Case Study: Dali Piano Art Festival and Yunnan Wamao**

##### *4.1 Overview of the Dali Piano Art Festival and Yunnan Wamao*

The Dali Piano Art Festival is a large-scale event held in Dali City, Yunnan Province, China since 2021. The event attracted tens of thousands of domestic and foreign participants, and once held, it became the largest piano art and cultural event in Yunnan Province. The goal of this art festival is to discover more outstanding pianists and piano music enthusiasts through international art exchange activities, while spreading Chinese excellent culture through piano art, making the piano art festival a new highlight of local cultural development.

Wamao refers to a decorative item placed on rooftops by Yunnan people. It is usually made of clay and shaped like a cat with a big mouth open. According to local legend, placing a tile cat on the roof of a new house can protect it from wild boars and ensure the health and safety of everyone living inside. Wamao is rich in local characteristics of Yunnan, and is a traditional art form and intangible cultural heritage with profound cultural significance. However, the process of manufacturing tile cats is complex and time-consuming. In recent years, with the development of the times, this skill has lost its appeal among young people and is facing a situation of extinction.

##### *4.2 Collaboration between Dali Piano Art Festival and Yunnan Wamao*

However, through cooperation with modern art festivals such as the Dali Piano Art Festival, Wamao has found new ways of promotion and economic feasibility.

As a traditional cultural symbol of Yunnan, Wamao was integrated into multiple cultural exhibitions during the Dali Piano Art Festival. For example, stage design, visual elements, and souvenir design for art festivals. This allows the audience participating in the art festival to have a more intuitive exposure and understanding of Wamao culture.

On digital platforms, the Dali Piano Art Festival actively promotes the cultural value of Wamao through its extensive media influence. The application of digital platforms has not only increased the exposure of Wamao, but also driven the online sales of Wamao handicrafts, enabling more young generations to recognize and accept this traditional cultural symbol.

In terms of interaction with the public, the organizers of the art festival held an online "Naming for Wamao" event, inviting viewers to design new names for Wamao through social media. This not only stimulates the audience's enthusiasm for participation, but also enhances their emotional connection to Wamao culture.

In terms of cultural and creative product development, Dali Piano Art Festival has collaborated with Wamao inheritors to launch a large number of cultural and creative products related to Wamao. These products were widely promoted and sold during the art festival, directly driving the development of the local handicraft industry.

### 4.3 Model Construction

To understand how the stakeholders—festival organizers, Wamao artisans, digital platform operators, and public participants—contribute to the success of the festival, we apply cooperative game theory to calculate the Shapley value for each participant.

Firstly, we need to identify all parties involved.

1. Festival Organizers (A): Responsible for organizing the event, providing the infrastructure, and attracting audiences. Their main contribution is providing a platform that enables the inclusion of Wamao artisans. Their cost  $C_A$  is including expenses for event organization, marketing, resource integration, etc., the revenue  $R_A$  is obtained through tickets and sponsorships. Their profits  $\pi_A = R_A - C_A$ .
2. Wamao Artisans (B): Provide the unique cultural content that adds depth to the festival, contributing both culturally and economically through the sale of Wamao products. Their cost  $C_B$  is including production, display, promotion and other expenses, the revenue  $R_B$  is obtained through product sales and cultural dissemination. Their profits  $\pi_B = R_B - C_B$ .
3. Digital Platform Operators (C): Manage the promotion of the event and Wamao culture through online media, e-commerce, and social engagement activities like naming contests. Their cost  $C_C$  is including technical operation and promotion expenses, the revenue  $R_C$  is obtained through traffic monetization and advertising revenue. Their profits  $\pi_C = R_C - C_C$ .
4. Public Participants (D): Actively engage with the festival and Wamao products, contributing to the festival's success through participation in online activities and purchase of products. Their cost  $C_D$  is including time and opportunity costs, the revenue  $R_D$  is obtained through a sense of participation, prizes, or discounts. Their profits  $\pi_D = R_D - C_D$ .

The total profit after cooperation is the sum of the profits of all parties involved:

$$\Pi = \pi_A + \pi_B + \pi_C + \pi_D$$

Among them, the profit  $\pi_i$  of each participant comes from their earnings minus costs, that is:

$$\Pi = (R_A - C_A) + (R_B - C_B) + (R_C - C_C) + (R_D - C_D) + \Delta R$$

$\Delta R$  It is the value-added part brought by cooperation, reflecting the value-added effect of cooperation.

#### 4.4 The Application of Shapley Value Model and Simulation

In order to further analyze the impact of parameter changes on game evolution and verify the effectiveness of cooperative game models and Shapley value allocation mechanisms, we introduce simulation analysis. By analyzing the previously obtained second-hand data, we first set the cost function  $C_i$  and the marginal revenue function  $M_i$  to simulate different input levels and revenue growth potentials of different participants. Obtained: (in 10000 yuan)

$$C_A \sim U(20,30)$$

$$C_B \sim U(10,20)$$

$$C_C \sim U(15,25)$$

$$C_D \sim U(5,15)$$

The marginal returns of each participant are also randomly generated.

Then, we calculate the joint benefits:

Set the overall benefits of cooperation  $V(S) = \alpha \cdot (\sum M_i + \sum C_i)V(S)$

Among them,  $\alpha$  is the benefit coefficient used to adjust the scale of overall revenue.

$V(S)$  is the value generated by any subset  $S$  of participants.

For each stakeholder, the marginal contribution is calculated in the context of every possible coalition. Let's break this down for each participant:

- Festival Organizers (A): Contribute by organizing the event and creating the platform. Their contribution is evaluated based on how much additional value they bring to various coalitions.

For example, their contribution to the coalition with Wamao artisans and digital platforms is:

$$v(\{A, B, C\}) - v(\{B, C\})$$

- Wamao Artisans (B): Their contribution lies in providing the unique cultural product. Their marginal contribution when joining the coalition of organizers and digital

platforms can be evaluated as:

$$v(\{A, B, C\}) - v(\{A, C\})$$

- Digital Platform Operators (C): Contribute by promoting the event online and managing e-commerce platforms. Their marginal contribution to the cooperation of festival organizers and Wamao artisans is:

$$v(\{A, B, C\}) - v(\{A, B\})$$

- Public Participants (D): The public participates in the event through purchases and engagement, contributing to the festival's success. Their contribution is evaluated as:

$$v(\{A, B, D\}) - v(\{A, B\})$$

The Shapley value for each participant  $i$  is then calculated as the average of their marginal contributions across all possible coalitions. This ensures that each participant's contribution to the total benefit  $v(N)$  is fairly compensated.

The Shapley value for any participant  $i \in N$  is calculated as:

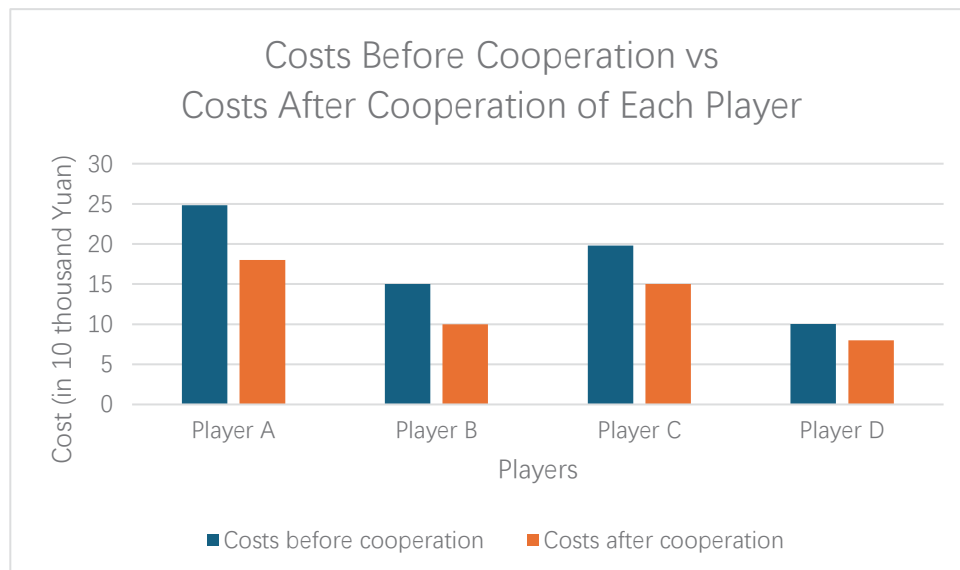
$$\phi_i(v) = \sum_{S \subseteq N \setminus \{i\}} \frac{|S|!(|N| - |S| - 1)!}{|N|!} \cdot (v(S \cup \{i\}) - v(S))$$

This formula ensures that the Shapley value distributes the total benefit  $v(N)$  among the participants based on their marginal contributions across all possible coalitions.  $N$  is the set of all stakeholders (Bousquet & Le Page, 2004).

## 5 Results

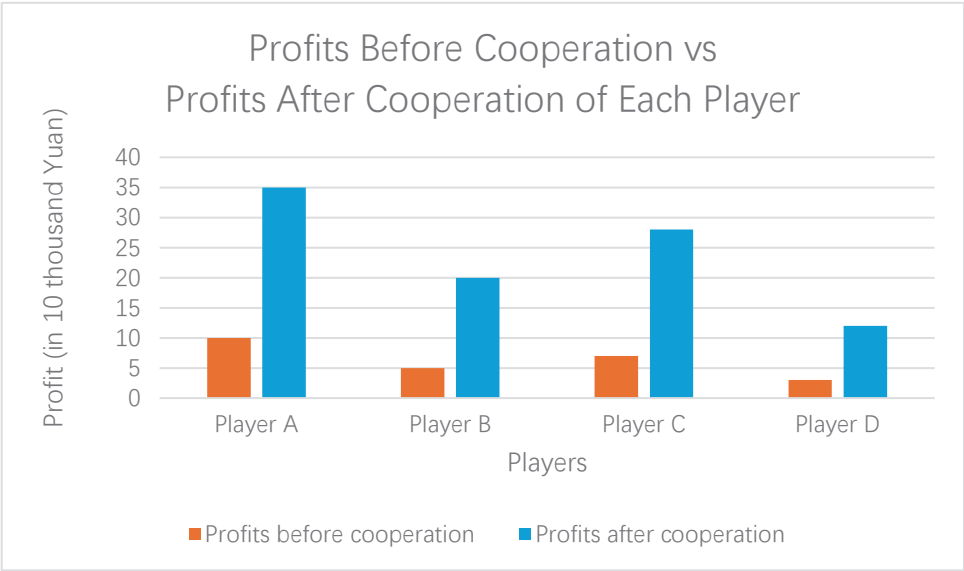
After 1000 simulation calculations, we obtained the average costs, profits and marginal effects of each participant as follows.

Table 1: Costs Before Cooperation vs Costs After Cooperation of Each Player



When each participant acts independently, they are responsible for all costs, and the costs of operation and promotion are relatively high, as well as the opportunity cost for public participation in activities( Anderson& Ellwood, 2023). After cooperation, with the support of digital platforms, the marketing costs of the piano art festival organizers and Wamao craft inheritors are reduced. Digital platforms can attract user traffic through cooperation, and operating costs can also be shared. The perceived cost of public participation in activities also decreases as a result (Gupta& Maheshwari, 2023).

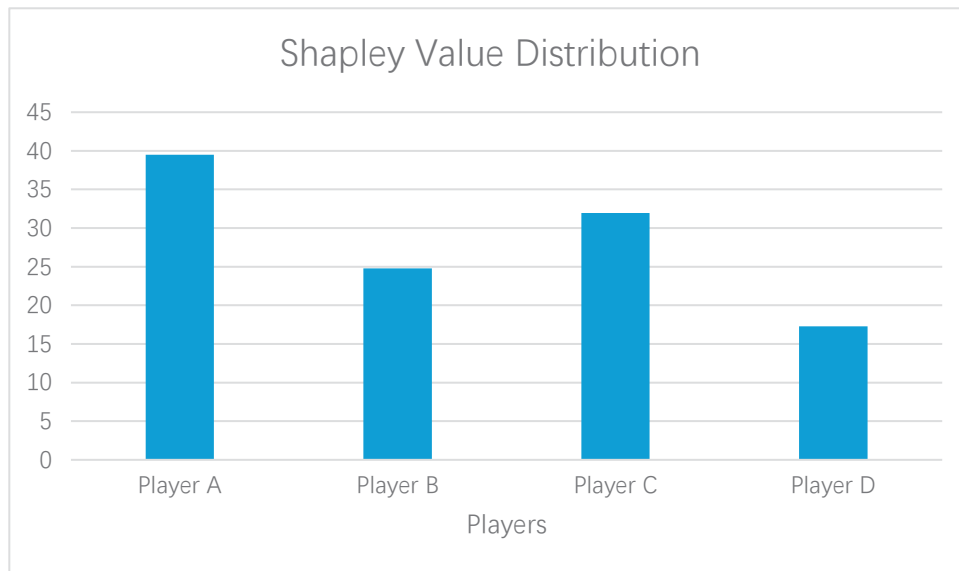
Table 2: Profits Before Cooperation vs Profits After Cooperation of Each Player



After the cooperation, the popularity of WaMao has increased, and the income of the craft inheritors has significantly increased. The Piano Art Festival has received more attention, more sponsors, and more income. The digital platform has increased its advertising and data monetization opportunities due to user participation. The public has gained richer cultural experiences and knowledge benefits through participating in the event (Zhang & Li, 2023).

Table 3: Shapley Value Distribution





From this, it can be concluded that in this collaboration, all participants contributed marginal benefits and also gained more benefits than before the collaboration. They not only achieved their own goals, but also created greater overall benefits through cooperation than acting alone, achieving a win-win situation for all parties. This proves that under the influence of digital platforms, combining modern festivals with traditional culture for marketing can attract more audiences and achieve more benefits.

## 6 Discussion

### 6.1 The Role of Digital Platforms

Digital platforms have played a crucial role in expanding the influence of Wamao culture. By utilizing online marketing strategies, interactive competitions, and e-commerce, Wamao's cultural influence extends beyond local festival participants to global audiences. This expansion of coverage has significantly increased the sales of Wamao products, provided economic benefits for craftsmen, and strengthened Wamao's cultural influence on a wider scale.

### 6.2 Synergy Between Modern Festivals and Cultural Heritage

The successful cooperation between Dali Piano Art Festival and Yunnan Wamao demonstrates how modern festivals can become carriers for promoting the inheritance of cultural heritage. Integrating traditional elements such as Wamao into contemporary festivals not only adds cultural depth to the event, but also enhances the visibility and economic feasibility of local crafts. This synergistic effect creates a win-win situation for modern festival organizers and traditional cultural practitioners.

### *6.3 The benefits generated by cooperation*

According to statistical data, during the Dali Piano Art Festival, the sales of Wamao handicrafts increased by more than 30%, and the online order volume also increased significantly.

In addition to economic growth, the cooperation between Dali Piano Art Festival and Yunnan Wamao has also had significant cultural impacts, highlighting the broader value of combining traditional heritage with modern festivals. For example, it has won more cultural promotion opportunities for Wamao inheritors, including participating in other cultural festivals and accepting media interviews (Zhang& Xu,2023). This festival provides an innovative platform where traditional Chinese crafts and modern cultural forms (such as piano music) coexist and complement each other. This symbiotic relationship enhances the overall cultural value of the festival and regards Wamao as a living tradition, adapting to modern environments and enhancing cultural resilience.

## **7. Conclusions and Implications**

This article uses cooperative game theory, especially the Shapley value model, to analyze how the Dali Piano Art Festival and Yunnan Wamao achieve value-added benefits through cross-border cooperation under the promotion of digital platforms, in order to maximize profits. The conclusion proves the enormous potential of combining local traditional culture with modern cultural activities in the context of the digital economy. Through the rational design of cooperation mechanisms and profit distribution methods, multi-party cooperation in cultural projects can achieve mutual benefit and win-win outcomes. This cooperation model provides valuable experience for other collaborations in the cultural industry.

Looking ahead, this collaboration provides insights into how other cultural activities can integrate local heritage into a broader and more global framework. Future research can explore how to apply similar patterns to other traditional crafts and festivals, and may even expand to international cooperation to further promote cultural heritage on the global stage.

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# EXPLORING FLOW EXPERIENCE IN AI GUIDED TOURS

Fan Liu<sup>a</sup> and Lianping Ren<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Macao University of Tourism

## ABSTRACT

Artificial intelligence (AI) tour guides have been adopted in many attractions to save labor and to boost experience, during which the AI tour guides and their platform features on social media play important roles. However, how tourists perceive the AI tour guiding platforms has been seldom explored. Hence, under the lens of flow theory, the current study fills the gap by developing a theoretical model and empirically testing it via a survey (N=510). Specifically, the study tests the influence of the AI tour guide's automated social presence, platform perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use on tourist flow experience and their behavioral intentions. The findings demonstrate positive results. Additionally, flow experience acts as a mediator between the AI tour guide's automated social presence and users' behavioral intention, as well as between platform perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and users' behavioral intention. Implications for attraction managers and tour operators are discussed.

**Keywords:** *AI tour guide, Automated social presence, Flow theory, Perceived usefulness, Perceived ease of use, Behavioral intention*

## Introduction

As Artificial intelligence becomes increasingly widespread, the hospitality and tourism industry is at a pivotal stage of digital transformation, offering significant opportunities for intelligent automation (Buhalis et al., 2019). Recently, the Conversational User Interface (CUI) has quickly emerged as a crucial interface in numerous products, including automobiles and computers (McDonnell & Baxter, 2019). As a form of CUI, AI tour guiding platforms are becoming increasingly important in the development of human-centered AI technology on social media. AI tour guides differ from tour guide robots (Vásquez & Matía, 2020) and tour guide chatbots (Orden-Mejia & Huertas, 2022), as they not only provide AI tour guides who feature a virtual appearance that emulates the behaviors of human guides (Wang et al., 2023), but also collaborate with social media. Social media users can scan the QR code to enter the platform and interact with the AI tour guide. For instance, the Tengwang Pavilion in China, launched an AI tour guide named “Wang Bo” on the WeChat platform on 1 May 2023, receiving 200 users on average every day, with over 12,000 engagements in total in just 7 days (Sohu, 2023). This performance indicates significant growth potential for AI tour guiding platforms.

Automated social presence (ASP) refers to “the extent to which machines (robots) make consumers feel that they are in the company of another social entity” (Van Doorn et al., 2017). ASP plays an essential role in shaping the quality of interaction between AI tour guides and humans on social media platforms. For instance, Yoganathan et al. (2021) confirmed the positive impact of service robots' ASP



on consumers' behavioral intentions via social-cognitive assessments on services delivered by robots at the frontline of hotels in the tourism context. Liao et al. (2024) further conceptualized ASP in AI service, with a measurement scale developed and validated. In addition, ASP plays a crucial role in accurately characterizing AI-Humans interactive actions. Using this concept and its scale, we are now able to test this important feature of AI guides and understand how it influences tourists' experience. However, the effect of the ASP of AI tour guides has not been tested so far.

In addition, as AI tour guides are often embedded in social media, it is also necessary to understand the platform features. However, AI tour guide is regarded as a brand-new product (Wang et al., 2023), so far little research has been conducted to understand the integrated effects of AI tour guide attributes such as ASP, platform perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEU) on users' behavioral intention (BI). To fill the research gap, this study aims to investigate how AI tour guide features (i.e. ASP) and platform features influence users' experience and their consequences (BI) by applying flow theory. Specifically, this study answers four research questions: 1) How does ASP in AI guided tours influence tourist flow experience as well as their behavioral intentions? 2) How do platform features (PU and PEU) in AI guided tours influence tourist flow experience and behavioral intentions? 3) How does tourists' flow experience lead to behavioral intentions? 4) Does flow experience mediate between ASP and BI, as well as between PU/PEU and BI?

## Literature review and hypotheses

### *Flow theory*

Flow theory is pertinent for this study as it provides a foundational framework for understanding how users become fully engaged and immersed in AI-guided tours. In the context of AI tour guides, flow explains the psychological state in which tourists feel absorbed and lose track of time due to a seamless interaction with the AI system (Kim & Ko, 2019).

Flow has been defined as a sensation that results in deep engagement in an activity, during which an individual experiences a diminution of self-awareness, along with deep immersion (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). Flow significantly predicts the human-computer interaction in virtual agents such as AI-powered chatbots (Baabdullah et al., 2022).

Flow is associated with social presence within the realm of robotics (Shin & Choo, 2011). In addition, Konya-Baumbach et al. (2023) confirmed that the social presence of anthropomorphized robots is linked with flow experience. Therefore, this study posited the following hypothesis:

*H1: ASP positively affects flow experience.*

In an online environment, flow can be influenced by PU (Hsu et al., 2013). Flow experience is significantly related to PEU in mobile gaming (Ha et al., 2007). Similarly, Chang and Wang (2008) found that PEU influences the flow experience of online users. Therefore, this study posited the following hypothesis:

*H2: PU positively influences flow experience.*  
*H3: PEU positively influences flow experience.*

Flow theory indicates that the flow experience, beyond mere functional advantages, profoundly affects user behavior during interactions through computers (Hoffman & Novak, 2009). Current studies concentrate on the initiation of flow experience online, which significantly influences the quality of user experience and BI (Yang & Quadir, 2018). Therefore, this study posited the following hypotheses:  
*H4: Flow experience positively affects BI.*

#### *Automated social presence and behavioral intention*

Through the ASP lens, Yoganathan et al. (2021) conducted studies on elderly care and intelligent travel involving robotic interaction with humans and emphasized the capacity of AI to enhance the quality of customer services. Liao et al. (2024) explored an ASP scale that merges components of functionalism and anthropomorphism within five dimensions: social affability (SA), empathy (EM), responsiveness (RE), communication versatility, (CV) and competence (CO). After conducting an analysis of each item's content across the five dimensions of the ASP scale and consulting nine experts for evaluation, Liao et al. (2024) redefined these five dimensions. Table 1 shows the definitions of each dimension.

**Table 1: Definitions of ASP dimensions**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Social affability	Consumers perceive AI beings as sociable, personal, warm, and amiable.
Empathy	AI beings address consumer needs and provide consumers with a sense of personalized attention and comprehension.
Responsiveness	The extent to which consumers perceive AI beings to appropriately address and fulfill their demands.
Communication versatility	The extent to which consumers recognize AI beings' ability to utilize various languages and representations of symbols."
Competence	Consumers perceived AI beings' model as highly proficient and trained.

ASP enhances customers' trust, which in turn influences their behavior (Wirtz et al., 2018). In the tourism and hospitality context, Yoganathan et al. (2021) confirmed the positive relationships between the ASP of humanoid service robots and consumer BI via socio-cognitive assessments. Fan et al. (2022) found that hotel guests with lower satisfaction toward high ASP of voice assistants exhibit varied behavioral intentions. Thus, this study hypothesized:

*H5: ASP positively influences BI.*

#### *Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and behavioral intention*

In this study, "platform features" refer to the PU and PEU of the AI tour guide platform. These features were chosen based on their established relevance in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) literature (Davis, 1989). PU represents the extent to which a consumer believes that utilizing a specific system would improve job or task performance, while PEU reflects the extent to which a consumer perceives that operating a specific system will be effective and straightforward (Davis, 1989). Together, these attributes contribute to the overall effectiveness of the platform in fostering a seamless and engaging user experience.

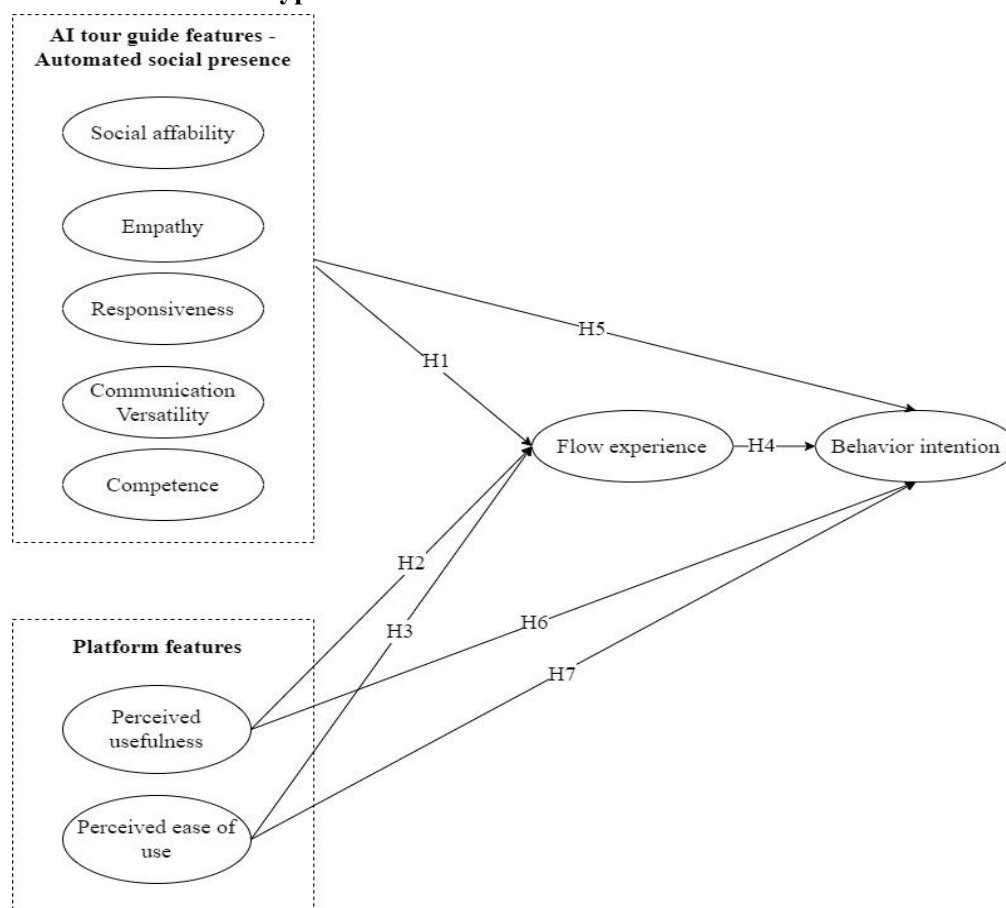
Numerous studies have demonstrated that PU substantially influences continuance intention (Mouakket, 2015; Tang et al., 2014). In the tourism and hospitality setting, the PU of information systems in hotel has a positive effect on employees' BI to utilize the technology (Varol & Tarcan, 2009). PU is regarded as one of the significant favorable attitudes, which influences users' BI (Ku & Chen, 2024; Teng et al., 2024). Thus, this study proposed the following hypothesis:

*H6: PU positively influences BI.*

In the tourism and hospitality setting, PEU serves as an antecedent to the BI to utilize technology (Luo et al., 2007). Moreover, users' intention to use voice assistants in hotel is significantly impacted by PEU (Cai et al., 2022). Thus, this study proposed the following hypotheses:

*H7: PEU positively influences BI.*

**Figure 1: Research model and hypotheses**



### *Mediating role of flow experience*

Flow is chosen as a mediator because it may directly connect AI tour guide attributes (like ASP, PU, and PEU) and could explain how and why these attributes lead to positive outcomes by creating a deeply engaging experience that, in turn, influences users' BI. This mediation structure provides a clearer, theory-driven explanation for how AI tour guides enhance user engagement and satisfaction through flow.

In previous studies, Jin (2011) explained the link between presence and behavioral intention through the mediating effect of flow in communication setting. More recently, Dong et al. (2023) confirmed the mediating role of flow experience between social presence and consumption intention.

Thus, this study posited the following hypotheses:

*H8: Flow experience plays a positive chain mediation role in ASP and BI.*

*H9: Flow experience plays a positive chain mediation role in PU and BI.*

*H10: Flow experience plays a positive chain mediation role in PEU and BI.*

## **Method**

### *Questionnaire design and data collection*

This study examines tourists' experience with some popular AI tour guides (i.e., “Xiaodan”, “Wangbo”) in Chinese tourist destinations (See Figures 2).

**Figure 2: AI tour guides “Xiaodan” and “Wangbo”**



The online questionnaire included 44 questions: 36 questions related to the 5 constructs (ASP, PEU, PU, flow experience and BI), two filtering questions, and six demographic questions. It had three parts: Part 1 screened potential respondents by asking whether they interacted with “Xiaodan” or “Wangbo” on a social media platform. All respondents must have either experience. The respondents were asked to choose an AI tour guide that left the most profound impression. Part 2 measured the five constructs of the conceptual framework with 36 items. Part 3 gathered demographic information from respondents. Subsequently, respondents were required to respond to the ensuing online questionnaire from the Credamo platform. Credamo facilitated the selection of respondents to meet specific quotas based on gender, age, profession, education level and monthly income in China. Adult participants over the age of 18 were chosen to represent a broad population demographic. All data was collected between June and July 2024. 650 questionnaires were retrieved via Credamo.com, and after excluding those with short response times or failed lie detection tests, 510 questionnaires (78.46%) were retained for analysis. Table 2 presents demographic details of the participants:

**Table 2: Profiles of the sample**

	Sample (N=510)	
	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<b>Age</b>		
18-25	176	34.5%
26-35	161	31.6%
36-45	101	19.8%
46-55	44	8.6%
56-65	27	5.4%
Above 65	1	0.1%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	234	45.9%
Female	276	54.1%
<b>Profession</b>		
Self-employment	114	22.4%
Employee	297	58.2%
Retiree	4	0.8%
Student	31	6.1%
Other	64	12.5%
<b>Education level</b>		
Secondary and under	51	10%
High school	157	30.8%
Undergraduate	266	52.2%
Postgraduate	36	7.1%
<b>Monthly income (CNY)</b>		
0-5000	311	61%
5001-10000	141	27.6%
10001-15000	34	6.7%
15001-20000	11	2.2%
20001-25000	12	2.3%
Above 25000	1	0.2%

### *Measurement*

The study's measurement scale included five constructs. All items were measured by a 7-point Likert-type scale (from 1, "strongly disagree" to 7, "strongly agree") (Dawes, 2008). The scales of the five constructs were all adopted from prior studies: The ASP scale that appeared in Liao et al. (2024) was adopted. An example includes: "This AI tour guide makes me feel a sense of personalness". Scales for PU and PEU were adopted from those appearing in Assaker (2020), with the example of "This platform is easy to learn to use". The flow experience scale that appeared in Wang et al. (2017) was deemed suitable for this study, and adopted. An example includes: "I feel time passes quickly while using this platform to interact with AI tour guide". For BI, we used the scale that appeared in Lin and Hsieh (2007), a sample item being: "I want to use this AI tour guiding platform again".

### *Data analysis*

This study applied Common method bias (CMB) test, multi-collinearity analysis, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation modeling (SEM). CMB test was used to avoid the problem of common approach deviations, multicollinearity confirmed the appropriateness of data for regression analysis (Qiu & Zuo, 2023). CFA validated constructs (ASP, PU, PEU, flow experience, and BI), while SEM was chosen to examine complex direct and mediating effects (Holbert & Stephenson, 2003), aligning well with the study's objective to explore relationships between constructs, ensuring model fit and reliability of observed relationships (Raykov & Shrout, 2002).

#### **Analysis of common method bias and multicollinearity**

The analysis for CMB and multicollinearity was performed using SPSS 27.0. Harman's Single Factor test was applied to check CMB in the data analysis. Principal component analysis revealed that the first principal component accounted for 34.19% of the variance, which was below the 50% threshold (Harman, 1976), indicating there is no concern regarding CMB. Additionally, Variance Inflation Factor values for all variables were under 10, confirming no multicollinearity among the independent variables.

#### **Reliability and validity**

This study employed AMOS 28.0 for evaluating the Model Fit with the suggested threshold from Cheung and Rensvold (2002), and the results indicated the indices such as CMIN/DF at 1.215 (below 3), GFI at 0.931 (above 0.9), AGFI at 0.921 (above 0.9), CFI at 0.987 (above 0.9), and RMSEA at 0.021 (below 0.07), where all demonstrated good model fit.

Cronbach  $\alpha$ 's values of each construct were calculated to verify internal consistency. Nunnally (1978) noted that values above 0.7 indicate reliability. All Cronbach's alpha values of the constructs tested exceeded 0.7, demonstrating strong reliability and substantial internal consistency for each construct. The standardized factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) scores were measured to verify convergent validity with the suggested threshold from Fornell and Larcker (1981). Factor loadings for each construct showed strong correlations with at least 0.7 and AVE values for each construct surpassed 0.5, which demonstrated high reliability and convergent validity of each construct. The respective Cronbach  $\alpha$  values, standardized factor loadings, AVE and



CR scores for each construct are shown in Table 3:

**Table 3: Measurement model**

Construct	Statement	Factor loading	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha
Automated social presence			0.555	0.965	0.879
Social affability	SA1	0.785			
	SA2	0.745			
	SA3	0.759			
	SA4	0.762			
	SA5	0.776			
Empathy	EM1	0.719			
	EM2	0.751			
	EM3	0.738			
	EM4	0.759			
	EM5	0.749			
Responsiveness	RE1	0.716			
	RE2	0.757			
	RE3	0.706			
	RE4	0.707			
	RE5	0.715			
Communication versatility	CV1	0.725			
	CV2	0.7			
	CV3	0.721			
	CV4	0.724			
Competence	CO1	0.776			
	CO2	0.819			
	CO3	0.771			
Perceived usefulness	PU1	0.855	0.741	0.92	0.919
	PU2	0.857			
	PU3	0.859			
	PU4	0.872			
Perceived ease of use	PEU1	0.847	0.72	0.911	0.911
	PEU2	0.852			
	PEU3	0.822			
	PEU4	0.872			
Flow experience	FE1	0.836	0.72	0.885	0.885
	FE2	0.841			
	FE3	0.868			
Behavioral intention	BI1	0.868	0.748	0.899	0.899
	BI2	0.87			
	BI3	0.856			

#### Discriminant Validity

To ascertain discriminant validity, this study employed a more stringent AVE analysis. This approach examined whether the square roots of the AVE values for each latent variable substantially exceeded the correlations among any pairs of these variables, as per Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criteria. The results presented in Table 4 indicate that the square roots of AVE values (referenced in Table 2) surpassed the standardized correlation coefficients off the diagonal. This finding substantiates the

discriminant validity of the constructs under investigation.

**Table 4: Correlation and Discriminant validity**

	ASP	BI	FE	PEU	PU
ASP	<b>0.745</b>				
BI	0.434	<b>0.865</b>			
FE	0.322	0.615	<b>0.849</b>		
PEU	0.331	0.569	0.425	<b>0.849</b>	
PU	0.2	0.504	0.53	0.414	<b>0.861</b>

## Results

### *Structural model*

To verify the hypothesis, SEM was executed in AMOS 28.0 to assess the overall structure of the model, and maximum likelihood estimation was applied to derive path coefficients with suggested threshold from Cheung and Rensvold (2002). In addition, the overall model demonstrates a good fit with the data: CMIN/DF =1.155 (below 3), RMSEA=0.017 (below 0.08), CFI=0.991 (above 0.9) and GFI=0.991 (above 0.9).

### *Path coefficient*

As the result presented in Table 5 demonstrates, all paths are significant, and therefore support all hypotheses of this study.

**Table 5: Structural model evaluation indices and hypotheses test outcomes**

Hypothesis Path	Standard Coef.	SE	CR	P	Result
H1: ASP→FE	0.454	0.138	3.296	***	Support
H2: PU→FE	0.37	0.039	9.392	***	Support
H3: PEU→FE	0.222	0.04	5.596	***	Support
H4: FE→BI	0.384	0.056	6.895	***	Support
H5: ASP→BI	0.483	0.138	3.495	***	Support
H6: PU→BI	0.166	0.042	3.984	***	Support
H7: PEU→BI	0.335	0.041	8.13	***	Support

Note: \*\*\*,  $p < 0.001$ .

### *Mediating effects*

To examine the mediating effects of ASP, PEU, PU and BI on the relationship of flow experience, this study applied the bootstrapping method recommended by Jose (2013) configured the bootstrap samples at 2000 and established a confidence level of 95%. In line with the methods and processes

proposed by Macho and Ledermann (2011), this study calculated mediating effects, and derived the corresponding p-values and confidence intervals shown in Table 6. None of the confidence ranges from the mediating tests contained zero, all p-values were significant ( $<0.005$ ), confirming that all the mediating effects of flow experience between ASP and BI, as well as between PU/ PEU and BI were appropriate.

**Table 6. Test of mediation: Bootstrap analysis**

Mediation hypothesized paths	Estimates	SE	Bias-Corrected Percentile		
			95%CI		
			Lower	Upper	P value
ASP→FE→ BI	0.064	0.023	0.024	0.116	0.003
PU→ FE→ BI	0.156	0.03	0.102	0.219	0.000
PEU→ FE→ BI	0.089	0.022	0.052	0.14	0.000

## Conclusion and implications

This study adopted a quantitative method and focused on the most popular Chinese AI tour guiding platform on WeChat, developed a theoretical model under the theoretical lens of flow theory and examined how the ASP of an AI tour guide, as well as platform PU and PEU influenced users' BI. This study used Credamo online survey platform and collected 510 valid online responses. The findings reveal that the ASP, PU and PEU positively influence users' BI through flow experience.

### *Theoretical implications*

While AI technology has fundamentally and swiftly reshaped the nature of services, numerous customers highly value the advanced functionalities of AI tour guides (Wang et al., 2023). However, studies that systematically explored the relationship between AI tour guiding platform attributes and users' BI remain scant. Thus, this study has filled the research gap concerning AI tour guides on social media platforms and provided the initial evidence to understand better how AI tour guide and platform features can foster users' BI. Existing research in tourism setting such as Zhang et al. (2023) demonstrated the positive relationships between personalization, anthropomorphism of AI-based chatbots for tourism and consumers' intention to use. Additionally, Wang et al. (2023) concentrated on the influence of AI tour guide design cues (i.e., dress and conversation) on customer intention. Based on a thorough examination of the intrinsic design mechanisms of AI tour guiding platforms, this study has expanded the AI tour guiding platform attributes to a wider scope, while precisely evaluating the potential factors including ASP, PEU, PU that influence users' BI. The theoretical finding provides insights for the design of AI tour guiding platforms on social media.

Moreover, this study identified and verified the role of flow experience in mediating between AI tour guide features (ASP) and users' BI, as well as in mediating between platform features (PU, PEU) and users' BI. Consolidated by flow theory, the ASP of AI tour guides can effectively stimulate the flow

experience, which subsequently drives users' behavioral intentions. Similarly, the platform's PU and PEU can also positively influence the flow experience, leading to users' behavioral intentions. Thus, theoretical finding demonstrates that the ASP of the AI tour guides and the platform PU and PEU both affect users' BI through flow experience.

### *Practical implications*

First, this study offered suggestions on future deployment of AI tour guiding platforms. Specifically, tour operators and destination marketers can consider applying the ASP measuring instrument to attributes when designing and developing AI tour guide features. For instance, tour operators and destination marketers can track the performance of AI tour guides in terms of ASP to evoke consistent psychological responses in users, while also identifying areas that require improvement.

Second, this study examined ways to enhance ASP and platform functions and offered important insights and practical recommendations. The findings indicate that all ASP functions (including social affability, empathy, responsiveness, communication versatility, and competence) are positively linked to users' BI. For example, companies and tourist destination marketers should make sure that AI tour guide traits (including friendliness, sensitivity, interaction effectiveness, multilingual capability, communication adaptability, expertise, and problem-solving skills) are interesting and attractive. In addition, platform functions also positively impact BI. Tour operators and destination marketers should maintain platform function quality to ensure users' positive feedback. For instance, they can ensure the learnability, accessibility, clarity, timesaving function, and efficiency of platforms for users.

Third, tour operators and destination marketers should monitor and evaluate users' flow experience. Flow experience plays an essential mediating role between AI tour guide attributes and BI, as well as between platform attributes and BI. Specifically, the favorable performance of the AI tour guide and platform leads to better flow experience, which can arouse positive BI. Therefore, besides AI tour guide and platform functions, tour operators and destination marketers need to concentrate on user experience, which occupies the most important position in monitoring flow experience.

### *Directions of studies in the future*

This study has several limitations. First, the sample is limited to China, lacking a global perspective. AI tour guides, like “Waddi” in Denmark (Omogunwa, 2024), are expanding internationally, so future studies could consider collecting data from other parts of the world. Second, the findings of this study are predominantly based on a young Chinese sample (66.1% aged 18–35), the specific engagement patterns and preferences of this young and tech-savvy group may not fully represent the experiences of older or less digitally accustomed populations. Future studies could examine this model across age-diverse samples and in international settings, particularly as AI tour guide platforms expand globally.

## Note

Scales used in this paper are available upon request.

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# EXPLORING THE HALO EFFECTS OF ART ELEMENTS IN HOTELS

Luyang Wang<sup>a</sup> and Lianping Ren<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Macao University of Tourism, Macao, China

## ABSTRACT

Art leverages its glamour to accentuate hotels' attractiveness and distinctiveness. While hotel art gains popularity among customers, the effects of art on hotel customers received scant attention from the academia. This research aims to fill the research gap by examining the influences of visual art on perceived service quality, attitudes and behavioral intentions in hotels via the theoretical lens of halo effect. A quantitative approach, with survey as the main instrument, was used to explore the relationship among the variables. A total of 366 valid responses were collected from customers who had patronized hotels with recognizable artistic features within one year from both online (N=247) and offline (N=119). Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was conducted for data analysis. Results suggested that customers' visual art perception significantly enhances perceived service quality, attitudes towards the hotel and behavioral intention. The results provide useful references for the hoteliers in their future hotel furnishing.

**Keywords:** *hotel art, visual art perception, halo effects, service quality, attitude, behavioral intention*

## Introduction

In the hospitality space, customers are exposed to artistic elements, including but not limited to exterior and interior design, paintings, sculptures and art displays. In many hotels, artistic features are mainly used for the decoration and environment beautification (Latour & Joy, 2022), while in others art is not just aesthetics. When art is treated as aesthetics, the aesthetically pleasant environment can make consumption more enjoyable and induce consumers' positive emotions and behaviors (Huang et al., 2019). But when art is presented as art on its own, it can engender affiliations with luxury, rarity and uniqueness (Chailan, 2018; Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008), beyond the aesthetic function. Therefore, hotel art should be considered an individual feature and "not driven solely by design aesthetic" (Tully, 2011, p. 10).

Aesthetics can contribute to hotel businesses in various ways, for example, building up hotel reputations, stimulating consumer spending, retaining revisit intention and spreading positive referrals (Alfakhri et al., 2018). It is evident that how customers assess hotel aesthetics can transfer to the evaluations towards hotel services (Kirillova & Chan, 2018). Empirical evidence proved hotel aesthetics (i.e., lobby design, image quality) as a significant antecedent of expected service quality during the online booking process (Kirillova & Chan, 2018; Ryu et al., 2022). However, how visual art influences the perceived quality of hotel services in the actual experience is unknown. Existing studies mainly touched on art under the concept of servicescapes or aesthetics, placing little emphasis on the art itself. Visual art in hotels remains as a significant research gap. In response to the call of investigating the influences of art on customers' attitudes and behavioral intentions in the accommodation setting (Godovykh & Baker, 2022), this research aims to examine whether customers' perceptions towards visual art in hotels can permeate to hotel appraisals (i.e., service quality, attitudes towards hotels) through the lens of halo effects. Specifically, this research tries to address the following questions:

- 1) How does hotel customers' perception toward visual art influence their appraisals of hotel service quality and their subsequent behavioral intention toward the hotel?
- 2) How does hotel customers' perception toward visual art influence their attitudes toward the hotel and their subsequent behavioral intention?

- 3) How does hotel customers' perception of service quality and attitudes toward the hotel play a chain-mediating effect between their visual art perception and behavioral intention?

## Literature review and hypotheses development

### *Theoretical background*

#### **Halo effect of visual art on hotels**

Halo effect raised by Thorndike (1920) unveils human's unconscious tendency to use a noticeable feature to infer the other features of the same object. This theory states that individual judgments towards a trait can influence the evaluation of other traits and the overall object, and the converse effect also works (Blum & Naylor, 1968). Pham and Hwang (2022) pinpoint that "people's evaluation of a certain target is influenced by 'more easily identifiable traits' related to the target" (p. 2). The influence of a halo can be positive or negative, dependent on the nature of referred trait. Previous studies have investigated the benefits brought by a positive halo. For example, hotels' email signature with the awards can enhance customers' perspectives towards hotels (Magnini & Honeycutt, 2009). A restaurant's green image and practices make customers perceive the company as favorable and trustful (Cho et al., 2023). Even across different organizations, online travel agencies' service satisfaction positively influences hotels' offline service satisfaction (Prassida et al., 2021). Large-scale center pieces at the lobby as well as conspicuous artistic elements throughout a hotel usually catch customers' eyes and create a distinctive hotel vibe. Upon guests' arrivals, they can sense their surroundings with art. Servicescape refers to the built environment in a service organization which include a dimension with artifacts (Bitner, 1992). As the most important dimension of upscale hotels' servicescape (Lockwood & Pyun, 2020), visual aesthetics plays a critical role in hotels. Aesthetic features exert positive effects on hotels, namely experience improvement, satisfaction, loyalty and booking intention (Alfakhri et al., 2018; Baek & Ok, 2017). Given the advantages above, this research uses the theory of halo effect to understand how visual art as a prominent hotel attribute influences perceived service quality, overall attitude towards a hotel and behavioral intention.

### *Visual art perception, perceived service quality, attitudes towards the hotel and behavioral intention*

When encountering visual art, individuals naturally engender cognitive and emotional responses. According to Hagtvedt et al. (2008), perception is considered a process to comprehend an object with receiving, inferring and organizing sensory information. Therefore, visual art perception is regarded as the cognitive evaluation towards visual art. Visual art serves as one of the tangible cues in hotels. When determining the quality of intangible services, customers tend to rely on tangible indicators (Parasuraman et al., 1985), which makes visual art a possible criterion of hotel services. Perceived service quality is defined as an attitude indicating the difference between customers' perceptions and expectations for services (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Service quality, as a common customer demand, is a key influential factor to determine the success of hotel businesses. Hoteliers have tried to enhance service quality by various means, one of which is via the aesthetic presence in the service environment. Customers' evaluations towards hotel servicescapes design positively influence hotel experience quality (Lin, 2016). In the retail setting, the aesthetic formality and appeal of retailers' websites can enhance perceived service quality (Wang et al., 2011). Similarly, Kirillova and Chan (2018) found that hotels' visual aesthetics projected online increases customers' expectations before the hotel visit. These hotels are anticipated to offer better facilities and more reliable services with trustful staff. More importantly, visual appeals greatly eliminate the influence of hotels' functionality on perceived quality, signifying the power of aesthetics on hotel services. The online image quality of hotel rooms also affects customers' inferred service quality of luxury hotels (Ryu et al., 2022).

Attitudes refer to evaluations towards an entity in a positive or negative level (Eagly & Chaiken, 2007). Art can exert significant effects on Airbnb customers' attitudes and booking intentions during

the online reservation process (Godovykh & Baker, 2022). Despite the significance of art for hotels, few research has investigated visual art, especially its effects on hotels. Therefore, the following hypotheses were proposed:

- H1: Visual art perception positively influences perceived service quality of hotels.
- H2: Visual art perception positively influences attitudes towards the hotel.
- H3: Visual art perception positively influences behavioral intention.

Service quality can determine the overall attitude towards the service provider (Ryu et al., 2022). The positive relation between hotels' service quality and behavioral intention was also proved by empirical evidence (Tajeddini et al., 2021). Behaviors can be explained by attitudes ones hold (Gawronski, 2007). Besides, the aesthetic appreciation of luxury hotel rooms' image positively influences service quality inference and that leads to brand attitudes and purchase intention (Ryu et al., 2022), indicating service quality and brand attitudes can mediate the relationships among those variables in tandem. Based on the aforementioned literature review, the following hypotheses were established:

- H4: Perceived service quality of hotels positively influences attitudes towards the hotel.
- H5: Perceived service quality of hotels positively influences behavioral intention.
- H6: Attitudes towards the hotel positively influences behavioral intention.
- H7: Perceived service quality mediates the relationship between visual art perception and attitudes towards the hotel.
- H8: Perceived service quality mediates the relationship between visual art perception and behavioral intention.
- H9: Attitudes mediate the relationship between visual art perception and behavioral intention.
- H10: Perceived service quality and attitudes chain-mediate between visual art perception and behavioral intention.

Figure 1 shows the proposed conceptual framework.

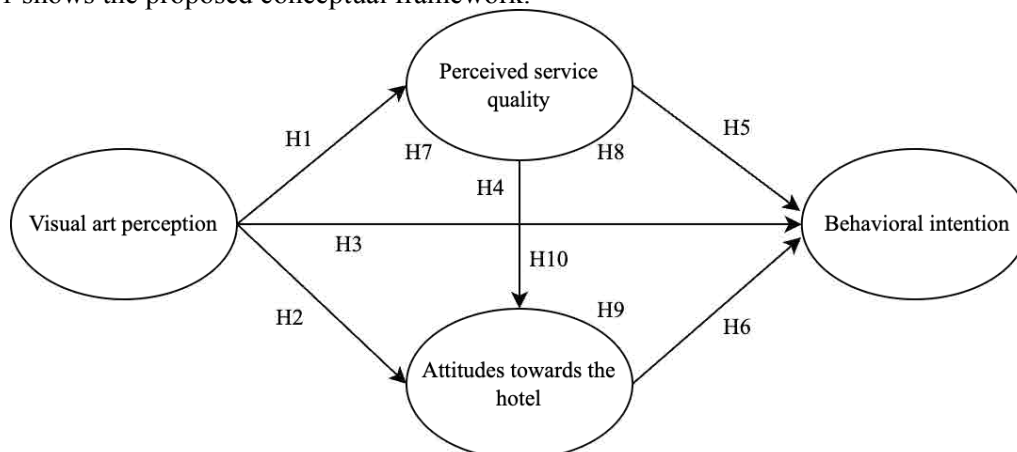


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

## Methods

Quantitative research investigates the interrelationships between variables to verify existing theories (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Therefore, the quantitative nature fits this study to understand the halo effects of visual art on prospect perception and behaviors in hotels.

To test the constructs in the proposed theoretical framework, questionnaires were designed and distributed both physically and online for data collection in August 2024. The online data collection was performed by a web survey panel, Credamo and 305 surveys were distributed in total. Some of the surveys were incomplete and removed, receiving a response rate of 98.0%. Invalid surveys indicating

the same answer for all the items were eliminated and the acceptable responses (N=247) were kept. Simultaneously, the authors collected data offline and sent a total of 138 surveys. The offline response rate was 94.2% after refusing the incomplete questionnaires. The usable data (N=119) were retained excluding the inappropriate ones. Criteria sampling was used to approach the target participants, who have consumed or stayed in hotels within a year and noticed visual art in any of the hotels. Screening questions were set in the beginning to select the appropriate respondents; “Have you consumed or stayed at a hotel in the past twelve months?” and “During your hotel experiences within the past 12 months, did you notice any visual art elements?”. Only respondents with confirmatory answers proceeded to the main questionnaire. Respondents were also asked to specify the types of hotels’ visual art, and base the rest of the responses on their most impressive art imbedded hotel experience. Measurement scales of constructs under testing were employed from previous research, including visual art perception (VAP; Hagtvedt et al., 2008), perceived service quality (SQ; Hartline & Jones, 1996; Yen et al., 2023) and behavioral intention (BI; Ahn & Kwon, 2019; Kim et al., 2009). The 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) was used. Attitudes towards the hotel (ATT) were measured by seven semantic differential scales adopted from Kim et al. (2017). As this study focuses on cognitive perceptions towards visual art, the cognitive dimensions of VAP scale (Hagtvedt et al., 2008) were adopted. The rest of the questionnaire included demographic questions including gender, age, education, occupation and income. The questionnaire went through one round of pilot (N=50) to check the face validity of the measurement items and smoothness of the language. Adjustments were made on the wordings. One item (*Visual art elements in this hotel are original.*) was removed due to the fact that most respondents were not able to make this evaluation. The questionnaire was designed in English, and translated into Chinese with a back-translation technique. Both languages were made available during data collection.

Table 1 presents the respondents’ demographic profiles. Partial least squares-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was operationalized for the model assessment and data analysis. Given VAP as a reflective-formative second-order construct, the disjoint two-stage approach was utilized (Sarstedt et al., 2021). In Stage 1, only lower-order constructs were considered in the model. With the calculated construct scores, the higher-order construct was analyzed in Stage 2.

**Table 1. Demographic profiles of respondents**

Demographics		Number of respondents (N=366)	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>	Male	137	37.4
	Female	229	62.6
<i>Age</i>	18-25	100	27.3
	26-35	163	44.5
	36-45	64	17.5
	46-55	20	5.5
	56-65	18	4.9
	> 65	1	0.3
<i>Occupation</i>	Employed	262	71.6
	Self-employed	9	2.5
	Student	73	19.9
	Retired	19	5.2
	Others	3	0.8
<i>Educational background</i>	Master’s degree or above	87	23.8
	Bachelor’s Degree	225	61.5
	Higher diploma	40	10.9
	High school or below	14	3.8
<i>Monthly income (RMB; 1 USD = approximately 7 RMB)</i>	≤ 5,000	86	23.5
	5,001-10,000	97	26.5
	10,001-15,000	94	25.7
	15,001-20,000	35	9.6
	20,001-25,000	28	7.7

<i>Place of residence</i>	25,001-30,000	18	4.9
	> 30,000	8	2.2
	Mainland China	356	97.3
	Macao	2	0.5
	Hong Kong	2	0.5
	Taiwan	2	0.5
	United Kingdom	2	0.5
	Philippines	1	0.3
	Singapore	1	0.3

## Results

A full collinearity test was performed to examine the common methods bias (CMB). Following the instructions of Kock and Lynn (2012), the results showed every variable's variance inflation factor (VIF) is between 1.023 to 2.037, falling in the acceptable value scope of below 3.3. Accordingly, CMB was not an issue in this study.

To start with, the reliability and validity were assessed. The majority of the factor loadings were greater than 0.7 with two factor loadings (ATT2 and Cur2) were slightly below 0.7. All variables' Cronbach's alpha ranged between 0.737 to 0.897, above the suggested value of 0.7. These results showed a good reliability and internal consistency (Table 2). The convergent validity was also satisfactory, because all average variance extracted (AVE) values exceeded 0.5. Meanwhile, the values of composite reliability (CR) were higher than 0.7 from 0.742 to 0.899. Discriminant validity was checked in dual ways. Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) suggests the values should be less than 0.9 and Fornell-Larcker criterion requires the square root of AVEs for each component greater than the correlations between components. All the constructs performed as desirable (Table 3).

**Table 2. Results of first-order constructs**

Constructs/Items	Loading	$\alpha$	AVE	CR
<b><i>Curiosity appeal (Cur)</i></b>		0.737	0.560	0.742
Cur1. Visual art elements in this hotel are interesting.	0.784			
Cur2. Visual art elements in this hotel arouse my curiosity.	0.674			
Cur3. Visual art elements in this hotel are fascinating.	0.783			
Cur4. Visual art elements in this hotel are intellectually stimulating.	0.746			
<b><i>Aesthetic appeal (Aes)</i></b>		0.762	0.583	0.763
Aes1. Visual art elements in this hotel are aesthetically pleasing.	0.762			
Aes2. Visual art elements in this hotel are attractive.	0.770			
Aes3. Visual art elements in this hotel are beautiful.	0.787			
Aes4. Visual art elements in this hotel appeal to my senses.	0.736			
<b><i>Creativity (Cre)</i></b>		0.817	0.732	0.819
Cre1. Visual art elements in this hotel are distinct.	0.832			
Cre2. Visual art elements in this hotel are creative.	0.870			
Cre3. Visual art elements in this hotel are inventive.	0.864			
<b><i>Skill (Ski)</i></b>		0.782	0.695	0.787
Ski1. Visual art elements in this hotel are of excellent workmanship.	0.824			
Ski2. Visual art elements in this hotel are well crafted.	0.838			
Ski3. Visual art elements in this hotel are skillfully made.	0.840			
<b><i>Perceived service quality (SQ)</i></b>		0.821	0.651	0.822
SQ1. This hotel delivered excellent service.	0.836			
SQ2. The service of this hotel is high quality.	0.805			
SQ3. This hotel provided superior service in every way.	0.787			
SQ4. This hotel's service quality is much better than I expected.	0.798			



<i>Attitudes towards the hotel (ATT)</i>		0.871	0.564	0.874
ATT1. Unfavorable–Favorable	0.784			
ATT2. Negative–Positive	0.682			
ATT3. Bad–Good	0.771			
ATT4. Dislike–Like	0.750			
ATT5. Punishing–Rewarding	0.709			
ATT6. Unattractive–Attractive	0.769			
ATT7. Worthless–Valuable	0.787			
<i>Behavioral intention (BI)</i>		0.897	0.660	0.899
BI1. I am planning to consume or stay at this hotel in the future.	0.841			
BI2. I prefer to consume or stay at this hotel next time.	0.837			
BI3. I will make an effort to consume or stay at this hotel in the future.	0.802			
BI4. I will try to consume or stay at this hotel next time.	0.806			
BI5. I would recommend this hotel to other people.	0.808			
BI6. I would tell other people positive things about this hotel.	0.777			

**Table 3. Discriminant validity – Results of HTMT and Fornell-Larcker criterion**

	ATT	Aes	BI	Cre	Cur	SQ	Ski
ATT	<b>0.751</b>	<i>0.637</i>	<i>0.703</i>	<i>0.516</i>	<i>0.586</i>	<i>0.711</i>	<i>0.556</i>
Aes	0.780	<b>0.764</b>	<i>0.672</i>	<i>0.578</i>	<i>0.654</i>	<i>0.573</i>	<i>0.595</i>
BI	0.792	0.812	<b>0.812</b>	<i>0.548</i>	<i>0.646</i>	<i>0.706</i>	<i>0.580</i>
Cre	0.609	0.729	0.638	<b>0.855</b>	<i>0.612</i>	<i>0.482</i>	<i>0.686</i>
Cur	0.729	0.872	0.793	0.791	<b>0.748</b>	<i>0.588</i>	<i>0.673</i>
SQ	0.838	0.722	0.819	0.589	0.754	<b>0.807</b>	<i>0.539</i>
Ski	0.667	0.771	0.685	0.855	0.888	0.670	<b>0.834</b>

Note. Results of HTMT and Fornell-Larcker criterion (*in italic*) are respectively shown in the vertical and horizontal order. The square root of AVE shows on the diagonal (**in bold**).

Next, latent scores attained from the above were utilized as indicators for the formative higher-order construct, VAP. Table 4 showed that most outer weights were significant excluding *creativity*. If an indicator's outer weight is not significant, its outer loading more than 0.5 can still be accepted (Hair et al., 2012). Therefore, all the components remained in the model. Besides, all the VIF values were lower than 5, suggesting no multi-collinearity issue. With the order of outer weight values, we can see that the dimensions' relevancy with VAP started with *aesthetic appeal* and followed by *curiosity appeal*, *skill* and *creativity*. Accordingly, VAP was proved as a valid construct with four dimensions. The model's predictive power was assessed by the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) and blindfolding ( $Q^2$ ).  $R^2$  ranged from 0.515 to 0.757 and  $Q^2$  more than 0 indicated a good prediction power (Hair et al., 2019).

**Table 4. Higher-order model results**

Higher-order construct	Lower-order constructs	Outer weight	p value	Loading	VIF
Visual art perception	Aesthetic appeal	0.496	0.000	0.907	1.969
	Creativity	0.105	0.297	0.746	2.131
	Curiosity appeal	0.352	0.000	0.877	2.310
	Skill	0.201	0.015	0.806	2.408

Hypotheses were tested through a bootstrapping procedure with 5000 subsamples. As shown in Table 5, VAP exerted positive influences on SQ ( $\beta = 0.651$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), ATT ( $\beta = 0.393$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and BI ( $\beta = 0.388$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), thereby H1, H2, H3 were supported. SQ positively affected ATT ( $\beta = 0.455$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and BI ( $\beta = 0.291$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting H4 and H5. ATT influenced BI in a significant and positive way ( $\beta = 0.229$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) which supported H6. Mediation analysis was performed (Table 6). The indirect effects of SQ on the relationships between VAP and ATT ( $\beta = 0.296$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) as well

as VAP and BI ( $\beta = 0.189$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) were evident. ATT also significantly mediated the path from VAP to BI ( $\beta = 0.090$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). In the path from VAP to BI through SQ and ATT, the chain-mediating effect of SQ and ATT was also significant ( $\beta = 0.068$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Therefore, H7, H8, H9 and H10 were supported. The 95% confidence intervals without 0 value further validated the significant mediation results.

**Table 5. Hypotheses results**

Direct path	$\beta$	t value	Result	$f^2$
H1 VAP -> SQ	0.651***	14.419	Supported	1.063
H2 VAP -> ATT	0.393***	6.650	Supported	0.145
H3 VAP -> BI	0.388***	5.975	Supported	0.186
H4 SQ -> ATT	0.455***	8.318	Supported	0.763
H5 SQ -> BI	0.291***	4.699	Supported	0.197
H6 ATT -> BI	0.229**	2.953	Supported	0.044

**Table 6. Mediation results**

Indirect effect	$\beta$	t value	Result	95% Confidence interval	
				Lower bound	Upper bound
H7 VAP -> SQ -> ATT	0.296***	7.837	Supported	0.223	0.371
H8 VAP -> SQ -> BI	0.189***	4.289	Supported	0.108	0.284
H9 VAP -> ATT -> BI	0.090**	2.618	Supported	0.032	0.166
H10 VAP -> SQ -> ATT -> BI	0.068**	2.606	Supported	0.024	0.127

Note. p value < 0.01\*\*, 0.001\*\*\*

## Conclusions, discussion, and implications

This research examined the halo effects of customers' visual art perception on perceived service quality, attitudes towards the hotel and behavioral intention. A model was built and tested empirically. The results confirmed all hypotheses. Firstly, this research proved VAP's positive effects on SQ, ATT and BI. This means that when customers hold a positive evaluation of visual art in hotels, this positive evaluation will spill over to hotels' core aspects (services), overall appraisals and future behavioral intentions. Prior studies found that during the online booking, hotel aesthetics could positively influence expected service quality (Kirillova & Chan, 2018) and art could determine Airbnb customers' attitudes and behaviors (Godovykh & Baker, 2022). Notably, this research validated the results in the context of visual art and real hotel experiences explained by a positive halo. Meanwhile, the significant relationships among SQ, ATT and BI were reported as the existing research suggested (Ryu et al., 2022; Tajeddini et al., 2021). Besides, SQ and ATT played the partial mediating role and produced both respective and chain mediating effects among the indirect paths. In support of the previous research (Godovykh & Baker, 2022), the findings further extended that service quality and attitudes can influence how visual art predicts hotel consumers' behavioral intentions. This also confirmed the mediating effect of brand attitudes on inferred service quality and purchase intention in the online reservation setting (Ryu et al., 2022).

This research provides theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the study findings fill the research gap of visual art's influences on hotel consumers. The study verified the halo effect in the hotel context, with art as the trigger. The halo effect was tested in other contexts such as restaurants' green practices (Cho et al., 2023) and hotel honors (Magnini & Honeycutt, 2009), but this is the first time that the halo effect of visual art in hotels was tested. The result provides ground for future investigations on the effects of visual art. In addition, the study attested the mediating roles that perceived service quality and attitudes play between visual art perception and behavioral intentions. This is in line with prior studies such as Ryu et al. (2022), no matter what, service quality matters for the hotel experience, and attitudes play a crucial role in shaping their future behavioral intentions.

From the practical perspective, the hospitality industry can have a better understanding of the power of

visual art and contemporary customers' preferences. This can facilitate hoteliers' support for visual art which eventually drives the hotel businesses. Easily identifiable as it is, visual art is an exceptional feature in hotels that can shape customers' perceptions towards the properties compared with those without art. Spielmann et al. (2012) pointed out that customers' appraisals can hardly avoid the halo effect, either the good or the bad. Therefore, instead of being driven in an unsatisfactory direction, the halo effect should be wisely used through art to generate beneficial outcomes for hotels. Art elements are advised to display at hotel areas where they get most patrons' attention and subsequently engage them in novel ways. For example, through staff's storytelling about art and its linkage with hotels, customers unconsciously transfer their assessments of art to hotels. Furthermore, while hotels' visual art essentially prompts favorable feedback and behaviors, services as a core should not be undervalued. Only by both visual art and services maintaining good qualities can they actually offer guests satisfactory and unique experiences.

This study has a few limitations. The majority of the sample came from Mainland China with a small percentage from other locations. The findings may be applicable to Chinese market to the large extent while are unknown for other markets. Future research can examine the generalizability of the conceptual model across hotel consumers from other regions of the world. As personal characteristics may influence how individuals perceive art elements (Hager et al., 2012), it is suggested to further explore whether people with varied degrees of characteristics (i.e., interest in art) respond differently in this context. Besides, hotel category is likely to influence customers' perceptions towards visual art and services, which should be taken into account in the future.

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# EXPLORING TOURIST WELL-BEING IN WINE TOURISM

Chengkai Yang<sup>a</sup> and Lianping Ren<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Macao University of Tourism

## ABSTRACT

Tourism literature has noted how wine tourism provides unique and memorable experiences, yet how such experiences promote tourist well-being is less explored. This study investigates the impact of the four realms of the experience economy—education, entertainment, esthetics, and escapism—on arousal and involvement, and how these factors subsequently affect both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being among wine tourists. Data were collected from 512 wine tourists in China through a structured questionnaire. Using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), the findings reveal that all four experiential dimensions significantly enhance tourists' arousal and involvement. Moreover, both arousal and involvement positively influence hedonic well-being and eudaimonic well-being. By identifying arousal and involvement as mediators, this study extends the existing literature by providing a more nuanced understanding of the psychological processes linking experiential offerings to tourist well-being in wine tourism. The results offer practical implications for winery managers and tourism operators, suggesting that a strategic focus on enriching educational content, entertainment value, esthetic appeal, and opportunities for escapism can foster deeper engagement and enhance overall well-being of tourists.

**Keywords:** *Wine tourism, Experience economy, Arousal, Involvement, Hedonic well-being, Eudaimonic well-being*

## Introduction

Wine tourism is defined as "tourism whose purpose is visiting vineyards, wineries, tasting, consuming, and/or purchasing wine, often at or near the source" (UNWTO, 2024). It significantly contributes to rural and economic development, promotes sustainability, and enhances the cultural dimension in wine regions, making it a valuable and increasingly important area of study (Campos-Andaur et al., 2022; Crespi-Vallbona & Mascarilla-Miró, 2020). Wine tourism faces challenges as tourists seek unique and memorable experiences, pushing operators to offer more engaging and distinct activities. Recent studies highlight the need for a holistic approach to the wine tourism experience (Bruwer & Rueger-Muck, 2019).

An essential concept that links destinations and consumption is Pine and Gilmore's (1999) "experience economy". Various studies (e.g., Hayes & MacLeod, 2007; Oh et al., 2007) have demonstrated that the "experience economy" effectively captures the essence of what tourists seek when visiting a destination. The theoretical lens of the experience economy offers a suitable avenue for understanding the nature of experience in wine tourism, as all four E's (entertainment, esthetics, education, and education) are relevant in the process of wine tourism (Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011; Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2012, 2013). It has been a popular and effective framework for studying and improving wine tourism experiences over the past decade (Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2016; Thanh & Kirova, 2018; Zhang et al., 2023). Therefore, this study adopted the theory of experience economy as the theoretical underpinning in developing the research framework.

Tourists travel to pursue wellness (Voigt et al., 2011), which applies to the context of wine tourism as well. Prior studies have seldom connected tourists' experience (entertainment, esthetics, education, and education) with well-being, and few have identified the underlying relational mechanism. Croce and



Perri (2017) note that the connection between visitors and the physical environment is stronger in wine tourism than in other types of tourism. Upon arriving at a wine destination, visitors experience key aspects of the area, such as terroir, environment, region, and landscape. Moreover, wine tourism differs from general sightseeing tourism, as it often involves hands-on activities such as wine tasting, grape picking, and manually blending wine. As identified by Bruwer and Rueger-Muck (2019) and Quadri-Felitti and Fiore (2012), tourists' active participation and involvement lead to enhanced satisfaction and well-being. Therefore, it is intriguing to identify the role of tourists' involvement in connecting their experience and well-being. In addition, despite extensive research, ambiguity persists regarding the arousal elicitation process in tourism contexts. There is a need for a more nuanced understanding of how different tourism experiences uniquely influence arousal and, subsequently, well-being (Jiang et al., 2020). Therefore, this study also aims to investigate the mediating role of tourist arousal and involvement between their experience and well-being.

Taken together, the objective of this study is to explore how tourists' experience in wine tourism promotes their well-being. Specific research questions are shown below.

- (1) How do the four dimensions of experience (entertainment, esthetics, education, and education) promote tourists' hedonic and eudaimonic well-being in the context of wine tourism?
- (2) How do the four dimensions of experience (entertainment, esthetics, education, and education) influence tourists' arousal and involvement?
- (3) What role does tourists' arousal and involvement play in connecting tourist experience with their ultimate goal of well-being?

The study is one of the first to connect tourists' experience and well-being in the context of wine tourism. The result expands our understanding of wine tourism, especially regarding how it transforms tourist experience into a state of well-being via the transformers of arousal and involvement. The study provides practical references to wine tourism operators and destination managers in designing and offering their future experiential products.

## Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

### *Experience Economy*

Pine and Gilmore (1998, 1999, 2011) conceptualized consumer experiences into four realms—educational, entertainment, esthetic, and escapism (the “4 E’s”)—within a framework based on consumer participation (active or passive) and connection (absorption or immersion). active participation occurs when customers directly influence a performance or event, while passive participation entails observation without affecting outcomes. Absorption refers to mental engagement, whereas immersion involves being physically or virtually enveloped in the experience. In wine tourism, these 4 E’s often coexist, with tourists shifting between passive and active roles.

Educational experiences fulfilling tourists desire to learn about wine production processes and tasting techniques (Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2012; Thanh & Kirova, 2018). Such experiences enhance visitors' knowledge and skills, leading to enriched experiences, greater satisfaction, and intentions to revisit (Oh et al., 2007). Entertainment experiences offer passive enjoyment through concerts, festivals, and performances that blend wine with other attractions (Carlsen, 2004; Hede, 2008). Esthetic experiences involve appreciation of the physical environment, such as vineyards, architecture, and scenic vistas, shaping visitors' perceptions and behaviors (Alant & Bruwer, 2004; Cohen & Ben-Nun, 2009). Escapism experiences motivate individuals to break from daily routines through immersive activities

(Getz & Page, 2019). Participatory experiences like grape stomping and vineyard cycling tours allow tourists to immerse themselves and temporarily forget their everyday lives (Bruwer, 2003; Thanh & Kirova, 2018).

### *Arousal*

Arousal is defined as a physiological or psychological state of being (Cahill et al., 1994). In tourism, arousal is an emotional response to experiences, measured through factors like excitement, stimulation, interest, and enjoyment (Oh et al., 2007). Within Pine and Gilmore's framework, different types of tourism experiences evoke varying levels of arousal, affecting cognitive engagement and emotional responses (Hosany & Witham, 2010; Oh et al., 2007).

In terms of the four E's in tourist experience, educational experiences engage wine tourists cognitively and stimulate curiosity, leading to moderate arousal (Kastenholz et al., 2018; Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2013). Entertainment experiences provide sensory stimulation and enjoyment, evoking positive emotions and elevated arousal through amusement and fun (Hosany & Witham, 2010). Esthetic experiences induce awe and tranquility through passive immersion in scenic vineyards and winery architecture, resulting in varying arousal states (Loureiro, 2014; Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011). Escapism experiences offer active immersion and a break from daily routines, fostering high levels of engagement and arousal through excitement and immersion (Su et al., 2016; Timonen et al., 2009). Thus, H1 was proposed as follows:

**H1:** Wine tourism experience (a. educational, b. entertainment, c. esthetic, d. escapism) positively influences tourists' arousal.

### *Involvement*

Involvement reflects the perceived personal relevance or interest an individual attaches to a product, service, or activity (Zaichkowsky, 1985). In tourism, it signifies the importance and enthusiasm tourists associate with their experiences and destinations (Prayag & Ryan, 2012). Wine tourists often have a personal connection with the product, and their perceived importance and interest in wine are associated with high levels of involvement (Bruwer & Alant, 2009; Yuan et al., 2005).

All four dimensions of Pine and Gilmore's experience economy concept are important antecedents of tourists' involvement. Educational experiences in tourism actively engage tourists' minds, encouraging their participation and appealing to their desire for knowledge and learning (Hosany & Witham, 2010). Tourists are particularly drawn to cultural entertainment experiences, which drive their engagement and willingness to stay longer (Borowiecki & Castiglione, 2014; Rather & Hollebeek, 2020). Esthetics in heritage tourism positively impacts tourist involvement, as the beauty and design of sites enhance engagement (Yang et al., 2022). Escapism enhances visitor engagement by offering relief from daily stress, deepening involvement through immersion and entertainment (Xu et al., 2024). Hence the following hypothesis was developed.

**H2:** The experience of wine tourism (a. educational, b. entertainment, c. esthetic, d. escapism) positively influences wine tourists' involvement.

### *Well-Being*

Well-being refers to the overall quality of an individual's life, encompassing both hedonic and

eudaimonic dimensions (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Hedonic well-being focuses on sensory pleasure and life satisfaction, emphasizing positive emotions (Diener, 2000). Eudaimonic well-being emphasizes personal growth, self-development, and self-realization (Cloninger, 2004).

In wine tourism, both arousal and involvement have good potential to influence tourist well-being. Wine tourism emphasizes that hedonic motivations drive visitors' behaviors, with emotional states such as pleasure and arousal being integral to the experience (Bruwer & Rueger-Muck, 2019; Kotur, 2022). Arousal enhances hedonic well-being by intensifying immediate emotional responses. The emotional responses elicited by arousal, such as pleasure and excitement, are crucial for hedonic well-being. (Bigné et al., 2005; Orth et al., 2012). Moreover, arousal contributes to eudaimonic well-being, as the broader range of positive emotions evoked by a destination experience increases the likelihood of personal growth and skill development in tourists (Knobloch et al., 2017).

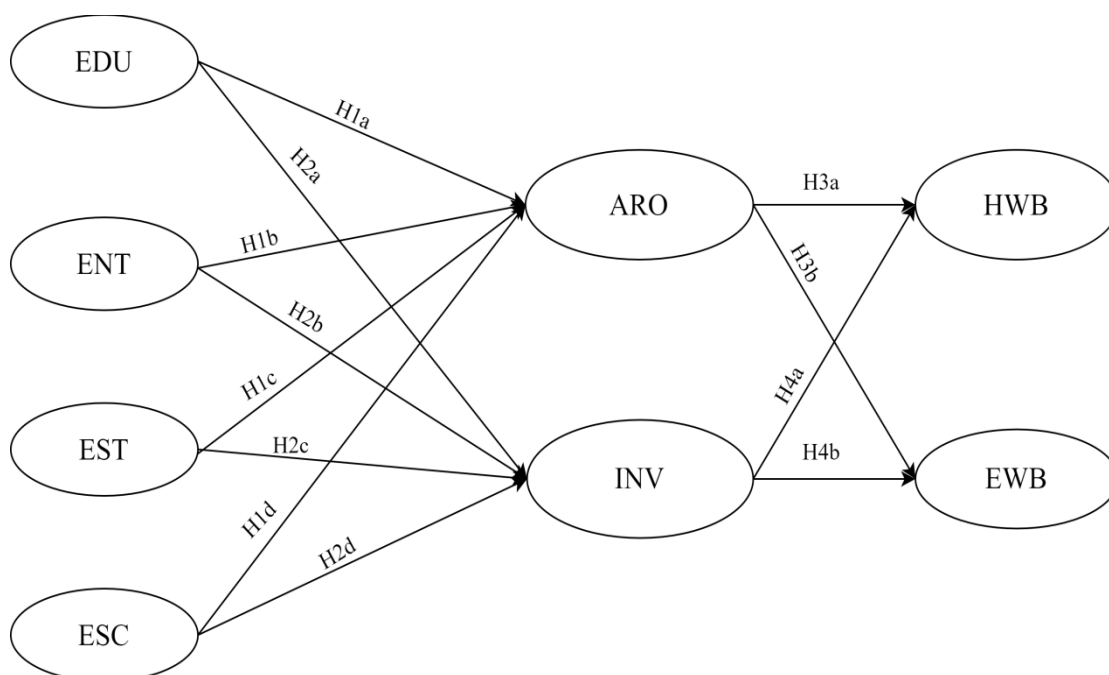
**H3a:** Arousal positively influences wine tourists' hedonic well-being.

**H3b:** Arousal positively influences wine tourists' eudaimonic well-being.

Tourist involvement plays as a crucial factor influencing tourists' well-being outcomes in the context of travel experiences (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017; Filep, 2014). Tourists attentive to sensory aspects—such as the taste of wines, visual appeal of vineyards, and overall ambiance—experience heightened pleasure (Bruwer et al., 2013 ; Bruwer & Rueger-Muck, 2019). High levels of involvement leads to elevated emotional arousal and pleasure (Su et al., 2020), which are key components of hedonic well-being characterized by happiness and sensory pleasure (Ryan & Deci, 2001). In addition, Tourist involvement enhances eudaimonic well-being by fostering reflection, meaningful experiences, and empowering tourists to apply their skills in co-creating better service design (Gupta et al., 2023).

**H4a:** Involvement positively influences wine tourists' hedonic well-being.

**H4b:** Involvement positively influences wine tourists' eudaimonic well-being.



**Fig. 1.** Conceptual research model

Note: EDU= education; ENT= entertainment; EST= esthetics; ESC= escapism; ARO= arousal; INV= involvement; HWB= hedonic well-being; EWB= eudaimonic well-being.

Research Method

Questionnaire Design

The study utilized measurement items from previously validated scales, adapting the wording to fit the wine tourism context. The survey comprised two sections. The first section employed a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) to evaluate 16 items across four experiential dimensions: education (four items), entertainment (four items), aesthetics (four items), and escapism (four items) , adapted from Hwang and Lyu (2015). Additionally, the arousal construct was measured with four items based on Oh et al. (2007), and involvement was assessed using three items from Huang and Choi (2019). Hedonic well-being was measured with five items from Vada et al. (2019), and eudaimonic well-being with four items from Qiu et al. (2022). The second section collected demographic information, which included gender, age group, educational background, type of occupation, marital status, and range of monthly income.

Sample and Data Collection

To ensure reliability and validity, a pilot test was conducted involving a tourism management professor, seven doctoral students, and 70 wine specialists and practitioners. Feedback from the pilot led to revisions of wordings, resulting in a refined questionnaire. Data were collected via Credamo, a reputable online survey platform known for its strict credit verification and used by over 2,000 universities globally, including MIT, New York University, and Tsinghua University.

The survey was distributed and collected between July and September 2024, with respondents compensated with 3 Chinese Yuan (CNY) each. Participants had to be at least 18 years old, and they had to have participated in winery tourism within the past year, verified by the eligibility question: “Have you participated in winery tourism in the past year?” A total of 687 questionnaires were collected. After excluding responses with identical answers across all items or completed too quickly (less than 2 minutes), 512 valid responses were retained. The demographic features reflect a good diversity of respondents, with 54.3% female and 45.7% male participants. Most respondents were aged 31–40 (39.3%), and 56.4% held a bachelor's as their highest degree. The majority were employees (77.3%), 65.2% were married, and 33.2% earned a monthly income of 5001–10000 CNY.

Results

Measurement Model

We used SmartPLS 4.0 for model testing, employing confirmatory composite analysis to assess convergent and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2020). Item loadings, CR, and AVE values exceeding 0.70, 0.70, and 0.50, respectively, confirmed item reliability, structural reliability, and convergent validity (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 1: Results of assessment of measurement model

Variable	Item	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
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EDU	EDU1	0.811	0.817	0.879	0.646
	EDU2	0.787			
	EDU3	0.817			
	EDU4	0.799			
ENT	ENT1	0.858	0.868	0.910	0.717
	ENT2	0.808			
	ENT3	0.859			
	ENT4	0.861			
EST	EST1	0.868	0.858	0.903	0.700
	EST2	0.827			
	EST3	0.827			
	EST4	0.824			
ESC	ESC1	0.857	0.886	0.921	0.744
	ESC2	0.851			
	ESC3	0.889			
	ESC4	0.853			
ARO	ARO1	0.860	0.882	0.919	0.739
	ARO2	0.842			
	ARO3	0.889			
	ARO4	0.846			
INV	INV1	0.882	0.816	0.891	0.731
	INV2	0.822			
	INV3	0.860			
HWB	HWB1	0.844	0.871	0.906	0.659
	HWB2	0.832			
	HWB3	0.834			
	HWB4	0.777			
	HWB5	0.768			
EWB	EWB1	0.787	0.831	0.888	0.665
	EWB2	0.856			
	EWB3	0.780			
	EWB4	0.835			

Table 1 displays the factor loadings for each item, all of which were above 0.7. The AVEs for each item greater than 0.5, and both the Cronbach's alphas and CRs were greater than 0.7, as also seen in Table 1. Consequently, the proposed model proved to be reliable and fulfilled the criteria for convergent validity.

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) technique. As shown in Table 2, the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeded 0.7 and was higher than its correlations with other constructs (Hair et al., 2019). Table 3 demonstrates that

the HTMT values were all below 0.9 (Henseler et al., 2015). These PLS indicators confirmed the convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement models.

**Table 2: Fornell-Larcker criterion**

	ARO	EDU	ENT	ESC	EST	EWB	HWB	INV
ARO	<b>0.860</b>							
EDU	0.456	<b>0.804</b>						
ENT	0.595	0.419	<b>0.847</b>					
ESC	0.507	0.389	0.519	<b>0.863</b>				
EST	0.426	0.321	0.413	0.416	<b>0.837</b>			
EWB	0.573	0.362	0.412	0.416	0.325	<b>0.815</b>		
HWB	0.592	0.351	0.346	0.394	0.322	0.639	<b>0.812</b>	
INV	0.539	0.509	0.502	0.586	0.493	0.549	0.534	<b>0.855</b>

**Table 3 : HTMT ratio**

	ARO	EDU	ENT	ESC	EST	EWB	HWB	INV
ARO								
EDU	0.536							
ENT	0.681	0.497						
ESC	0.571	0.457	0.591					
EST	0.481	0.376	0.474	0.473				
EWB	0.666	0.438	0.486	0.484	0.381			
HWB	0.670	0.414	0.392	0.445	0.369	0.751		
INV	0.635	0.622	0.597	0.688	0.584	0.666	0.627	

### *Structural Model Analysis*

In the theoretical model constructed in this chapter, to validate the proposed model and hypotheses, this study employed the visualization capabilities of SmartPLS 4.0 for PLS-SEM analysis. Additionally, the significance of the path coefficients in the constructed model was assessed using the Bootstrapping method with 5000 resamples.

The R-squared values for ARO, INV, HWB, EWB are 0.455, 0.497, 0.416, 0.410, respectively. Values greater than 0.4 suggest that each has moderate explanatory power (Hair et al., 2019). In this study, aiming to investigate the impact of independent variables such as education, entertainment, esthetics, and escapism on the dependent variables of hedonic well-being and eudaimonic well-being. Additionally, the mediating roles of arousal and involvement were examined within this framework. All hypotheses were supported. The details are shown in the Table 4 below.

**Table 4: Structural model evaluation indices and hypotheses test outcomes**

Hypothesis Path	Path coefficient ( $\beta$ )	STDEV	t	P	Result
H1a: EDU -> ARO	0.186	0.054	3.441	0.001	Support



H2a: EDU -> INV	0.255	0.042	6.119	0.000	Support
H1b: ENT -> ARO	0.362	0.057	6.407	0.000	Support
H2b: ENT -> INV	0.137	0.045	3.049	0.002	Support
H1c: EST -> ARO	0.138	0.048	2.867	0.004	Support
H2c: EST -> INV	0.220	0.040	5.535	0.000	Support
H1d: ESC -> ARO	0.189	0.049	3.901	0.000	Support
H2d: ESC -> INV	0.324	0.043	7.460	0.000	Support
H3a: ARO -> HWB	0.429	0.037	11.613	0.000	Support
H3b: ARO -> EWB	0.391	0.042	9.378	0.000	Support
H4a: INV -> HWB	0.302	0.041	7.354	0.000	Support
H4b: INV -> EWB	0.338	0.044	7.734	0.000	Support

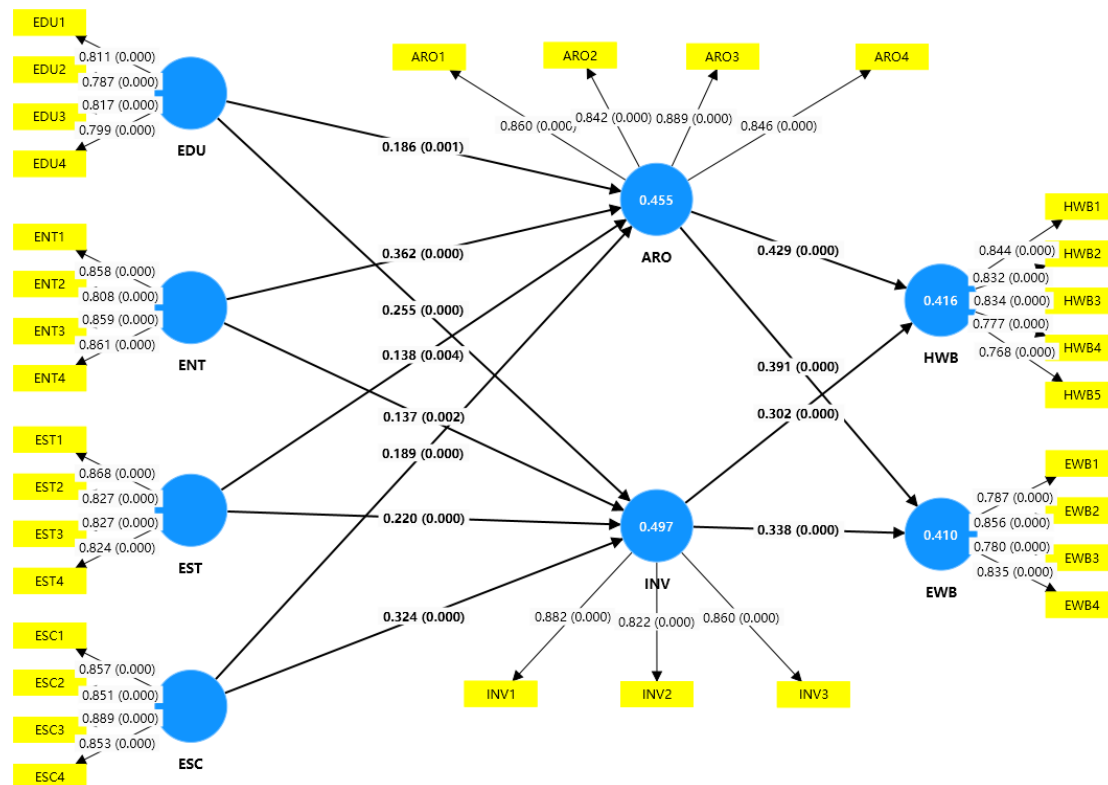


Fig. 2. PLS-SEM results.

## Discussion

This study examined how the four dimensions of Pine and Gilmore's (1998, 1999) experience economy—education, entertainment, esthetics, and escapism—affect arousal, involvement, and tourists' well-being (hedonic and eudaimonic) in wine tourism. Analyzing data from 512 wine tourists in China, we tested hypotheses based on the experience economy framework. Our results demonstrate that all four dimensions significantly enhance both arousal and involvement among wine tourists, supporting hypotheses H1-H2. Educational experiences, such as learning about wine production, increase

cognitive engagement and enthusiasm. Entertainment activities like wine festivals boost positive emotions and enjoyment. Esthetic experiences, including the appreciation of scenic vineyards, enhance sensory and emotional engagement. Escapism activities, such as grape harvesting, foster high levels of involvement and excitement.

Furthermore, both arousal and involvement positively impact hedonic well-being (H3a, H4a) and eudaimonic well-being (H3b, H4b). Arousal contributes to immediate pleasure and long-term psychological fulfillment, while involvement enhances emotional engagement and personal growth. Importantly, arousal and involvement mediate the relationship between the four E's and well-being, highlighting that these experiential dimensions enhance well-being by first increasing arousal and involvement. This mediation underscores the critical roles of emotional stimulation and personal engagement in driving both immediate and long-term well-being outcomes for wine tourists. By identifying these mechanisms, the study provides a deeper understanding of how different experiential elements contribute to tourists' psychological experiences, offering valuable insights for enhancing wine tourism offerings and promoting overall tourist satisfaction and well-being.

## Conclusions and Implications

### *Theoretical Implications*

This study offers several theoretical contributions to the literature on tourism experiences and well-being. First, this study connects tourist experience and well-being in the context of wine tourism, by applying Pine and Gilmore's (1998, 1999) experience economy framework to wine tourism. Via a survey, we provide empirical support for the relevance and effectiveness of the four experiential dimensions in enhancing tourists' arousal, involvement, and well-being.

Second, our findings illuminate the mechanisms through which experiential dimensions impact tourists' well-being, by identifying arousal and involvement as key mediators. While prior studies have acknowledged the importance of arousal and involvement in tourist experiences (e.g., Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Loureiro & Kastenholz, 2011), our study explicitly tests and confirms their mediating roles between the 4 E's and both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being.

Third, by examining both hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of well-being, we contribute to a holistic understanding of tourist well-being in the context of wine tourism. Prior research has often focused on hedonic well-being, emphasizing pleasure and satisfaction (Diener, 2000). Our study extends this focus by also considering eudaimonic well-being, which encompasses personal growth and fulfillment (Ryan & Deci, 2001). The positive associations between arousal, involvement, and both types of well-being suggest that wine tourism experiences can contribute to tourists' immediate enjoyment as well as their long-term psychological flourishing.

Finally, our research on wine tourism contributes to knowledge by leveraging the inherent integration of agricultural, cultural, and leisure elements within wine tourism. This integration provides an interdisciplinary platform to explore how interactions among these domains influence visitor experiences and enhance the understanding of tourism's multifaceted nature. Our findings create opportunities to investigate how arousal and involvement mediate well-being across broader tourism sectors, elucidating the impact of diverse experiences on tourist well-being.

### *Practical Implications*

This study offers practical implications for winery managers, tourism operators, and destination marketers aiming to enhance tourists' experiences and well-being in wine tourism. Firstly, integrating educational experiences positively impacts tourists' arousal, involvement, and well-being. Wineries should offer elements like wine tasting workshops, guided tours of the winemaking process, or interactive activities such as grape harvesting or wine blending to foster excitement and personal connection. Secondly, the importance of entertainment experiences suggests that wineries should provide engaging activities that capture tourists' attention. Organizing events like wine festivals, live music performances, culinary events can create a lively atmosphere, emotionally stimulating tourists and encouraging deeper involvement. Thirdly, Investing in visually pleasing settings like attractive architecture, tasteful interior design, and scenic viewpoints. Fourthly, Wineries can offer immersive opportunities that allow tourists to escape daily routines, such as vineyard stays, wellness retreats, cycling tours or hot air balloon rides over the vineyards. Additionally, recognizing the roles of arousal and involvement means designing experiences that not only stimulate but also encourage active engagement. Providing opportunities for personalization and offering novel, stimulating experiences can elevate arousal levels, contributing to immediate enjoyment and long-term fulfillment. Finally, marketing communications should highlight the well-being benefits of wine tourism, emphasizing both pleasure and enjoyment and opportunities for personal growth, learning, and meaningful engagement. By promoting these aspects, wineries and destination marketers can appeal to tourists seeking enriching and fulfilling experiences.

## Note

Scales used in this paper are available upon the request.

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# EXTENDING THE ATTRIBUTION THEORY TO CUSTOMERS' RESPONSES TO MARKETING-MIX STRATEGY CHANGES BY AIRLINES DURING COVID-19 CRISIS

Sherif Keryakes<sup>a</sup>, Sameer Deshpande<sup>a</sup>, Marie-Louise Fry<sup>a</sup> and Charles Jebarajakirthy<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of Marketing, Griffith Business School, Griffith University

## ABSTRACT

This study proposes a conceptual model examining how the attribution of responsibility for tourism organizations' marketing mix strategies during COVID-19, along with brand equity and demographic factors, moderates customer responses to these strategies. Drawing on a literature review and case studies, the model identifies factors that shape customer perceptions of crisis-related marketing mix changes. Findings indicate that customer responses are influenced not only by crisis communication but by all marketing mix strategies, with perceived responsibility for these strategies acting as a key moderating factor. Additionally, demographic factors and brand equity also moderate the relationship between crisis strategies and customer responses. This framework offers a novel application of Attribution Theory in crisis marketing, expanding its relevance beyond traditional crisis communication and providing valuable insights for the airline, tourism, and hospitality industries in managing customer reactions during low-responsibility crises.

**Keywords:** *Crisis marketing, Customer response, Attribution Theory, Airline crisis management*

## Introduction

The unprecedented COVID-19 crisis significantly impacted the hospitality industry, which lost 7.7 million jobs (Franck, 2020), and the airline industry, which incurred cumulative losses of 179.8 billion United States Dollars (USD) in 2020 and 2021 (IATA, 2022). Many scholars have investigated the impact of COVID-19 on the hotels and airline industries and their strategic responses to the crisis (Albers & Rundshagen, 2020; Scheiwiller & Zizka, 2021; Vinod, 2021; Waller & Abbasian, 2022), while some have explored customers' responses (Monmousseau et al., 2020; Waller & Abbasian, 2022; Zhang et al., 2021). However, few studies have explored the marketing mix strategies implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic and customers' responses to them. The extant literature has primarily focused on the hotels, airlines, and other tourism sector companies' crisis communication strategy (Berbekova, et al., 2021; Gossling et al., 2020; Kim and Pomirleanu, 2021; Liu-Lastres, 2022; Waller & Abbasian, 2022), while often overlooking marketing mix strategies, involving promotions, products, prices, and places.

Customers respond when an airline changes prices, reschedules flights, and changes its network during a crisis (Azzolina et al., 2021; Yetimoğlu & Aktürk, 2021). Similarly, in the tourism industry, customers are sensitive to price changes, availability, and changes in any service offerings during crises (Kim and Pomirleanu, 2021; ). Tourism businesses used flexible pricing, modified cancellation policies, and changed their services to align with changes in regulations or demand during the crisis, impacting customer satisfaction and loyalty (Kim et al., 2021). Customers' responses are likely to depend on the organization's crisis strategy, experience with the company, and their understanding of the crisis. (Chung & Lee, 2021; Ma et al., 2019; Nikbin et al., 2016; Singh & Crisafulli, 2020). Based on Situational Crisis Communications Theory (SCCT) (Coombs, 2007) and Attribution Theory (Heider, 1958), this paper contends that the attribution of the cause of the event informs the perception of responsibility. Therefore, it can be contended that customers' perceptions of an organization's responsibility for its marketing mix strategies likely depend on their understanding of the attribution of the cause of the strategy.

Airlines and hotels adopt new marketing strategies to address a crisis (Handa & Bhalla, 2023). For example, the airlines changed to an online distribution network and used differential pricing strategies, attributing the changes to the crisis-led operational limitations. Similarly, hotels adopted online booking platforms and incorporated dynamic pricing models to reflect fluctuating demand and operational constraints (Guizzardi et al., 2022). The external attribution of causes involves the nature of the crisis (Coombs, 2007), government regulations, travel restrictions, and health protocols (Monmousseau et al., 2020). On the other hand, any internal attribution of causes may relate to the airline's objectives, operational requirements, financial position, and management capabilities (Hsiu-Ying Kao et al., 2020).

Tourism organizations largely strived to attribute external causation to any changes in their strategy during COVID-19 (Rivera-Prieto et al., 2022). Kimberley and Härtel (2008) have noted that the crisis triggers an emotional response that frames customers' evaluation of the strategies. Factors like crisis history and the organization's reputation also influence the link between crisis responsibility and reputation (Coombs, 2007). However, SCCT does not account for the role of promotional marketing mix strategies—such as price, product, and place—in the organization's crisis response. While most research has focused on understanding the crisis communication strategies of airlines and hotels (Albers & Rundshagen, 2020; Amankwah-Amoah, 2021; Ou & Wong, 2021; Suk & Kim, 2021; Scheiwiller & Zizka, 2021; Waller & Abbasian, 2022), there have been only a few studies exploring the impact of strategic marketing mix changes. The lack of consolidated research on the impact of tourism companies' strategic marketing-mix changes during COVID-19 on customers' responses, underscores the need for this study. Hence, this study aims to establish a conceptual model based on Attribution Theory and SCCT that expands communication activities to include the impact of marketing mix strategies on customers' responses during the COVID pandemic.

## Methodology

An integrative methodology is used to combine theoretical and contextual insights (Snyder, 2019). A theoretical framework is developed based on Coombs' (2007) SCCT and extending the Cognitive Response Theory (Hollan, 2008) to include additional stimuli like marketing strategies. Additionally, a literature review is included based on published English-language journal articles in the tourism industry between 2015 and 2024. The review yielded a gap in the literature on the relationship between marketing mix strategies implemented during a crisis and customers' responses, based on which, the current research then proposes a model to examine customers' responses to marketing mix strategies based on their perceptions of the cause of these strategies, pre-existing brand equity, and demographic factors.

The study also employs a case study approach, where desk research is used to collect data and collate three case studies involving Qantas Airlines, AirAsia, United States (US) Travelers, Hilton, and Ski Boarding Companies. The data for the case studies was collected online through available records in the public domain during 2020 and later.

The main research question guiding this study is:

*What are the moderating factors impacting consumers' response to marketing-mix strategies adopted by tourism companies during the COVID-19 crisis?*

## Theoretical Background and Literature Review

### *Responsibility perception and customer response*

Heider's (1958) Attribution Theory argues that,

*"People search for the causes of events (make attributions), especially those that are negative and unexpected."* (Coombs, 2007, p.165).

Weiner (2006) proposed that customers attribute the cause of the event as a cognitive framework to solve future problems. In line with Heider's Attribution Theory, Coombs defines a crisis as,

*"The type of events that generate attributions of cause."* (Coombs, 1998, p. 181).

Tourism companies implement crisis communication strategies as part of their service recovery to minimize any reputational or financial damage caused (Coombs, 2007) to mitigate fear and improve trust (Gössling et al., 2020; Zheng et al., 2021). The COVID-19 outbreak has been perceived as a low-responsibility crisis, and this appeared to be reflected in their crisis communications strategies (Leung et al., 2022; Scheiwiller & Zizka, 2021), which appeared to be aligned with Coombs' (2007) SCCT.

However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the airlines' and hotels' communication strategies have not been limited to crisis communication; instead, their marketing mix strategies. Too, have been affected and this is reflected in their marketing communication. Therefore, customer response cannot be said to be only shaped by crisis communication strategies. This was also noted by Scheiwiller and Zizka (2021), who evaluated the effectiveness of secondary strategies in a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, as an enhanced response strategy may improve customer response (i.e., behavioral intention to book a flight) more than a bolstering strategy. Leung et al. (2022), too, have considered other factors previously introduced by Coombs (2007). This paper therefore contends that while consumers' responses are influenced by their perception of crisis attribution, these responses are not limited to airlines' crisis communications strategies, but also to marketing-mix strategies.

### *Crisis Marketing Strategies (CMS)*

Varadarajan (2010) has defined a marketing strategy as,

*"An organization's integrated pattern of decisions that specify its crucial choices concerning products, markets, marketing activities, and marketing resources in the creation, communication, or delivery of products that offer value to customers."* (Varadarajan, 2010, p. 128).

However, most research has focused on crisis communications strategy, as in the case of the Northwest Airlines pilot strike in 1998 (Cowden & Sellnow, 2002), where their management attributed the crisis' cause to the pilots. During COVID-19, crisis strategies included product modification strategies such as new boarding procedures, empty middle seats, and contactless check-in (Milne et al., 2021). New destinations and improved online booking channels (place and distribution networks strategy) were introduced (Cloud, 2020). Hotels and airlines also increased fares (price strategy) during COVID-19 (Guizzard et al., 2022; Kotoky, 2022). The communicated marketing mix strategies during the pandemic elicited varied customer responses based on the strategy type, customer perception, and attribution of the strategy's cause (Chung & Lee, 2021). Extending Coombs' (2007) SCCT, customers' perceptions of organizations' responsibility for these strategies may moderate their cognitive responses.

### *Antecedents of customers' responses*

#### **Crisis attribution and Situational Cues like the Marketing-Mix Strategy**

Coombs (2007) noted that attributing crisis responsibility elicits anger or sympathy, which then shapes behavioral intention. Emotional and cognitive responses directly affect behavioral responses (Ainsworth & Ballantine, 2017; Sweeney & Wyber, 2002; Williams & Dargel, 2004). While the perception of crisis attribution impacts consumers' cognitive response as per Cognitive Response Theory (Lim, 2015), crisis attribution may not be the only stimulus (Lim, 2015). The cognitive process model highlights the role of prior beliefs regarding an organization and situational factors at the time of exposure to stimuli in forming a cognitive response (Wright, 1973). It can therefore be presumed, that the consumers' cognitive response during COVID-19, as outlined by Coombs (2007), resulted from exposure to multiple factors including the crisis marketing strategies (4Ps) the crisis' context, consumers' prior beliefs about the organization's crisis history, and the airlines' previous reputations. Thus, the consumers' responses can be explained using Heider's (1958) Attribution Theory (customers search for a cause of the event) and Cognitive Response Theory (consumers use situational cues like the airline's response to the crisis in the form of their marketing-mix strategies) (Martinko et al., 2007).

## Brand equity

The SCCT proposes that customers' perceptions of responsibility for a crisis vary based on their previous knowledge of the organization's crisis history and relationship reputation. Additionally, pre-existing brand equity may moderate the relationship between consumer response and marketing activities during a crisis (Ertaş et al., 2021; Hegner et al., 2014; Rea et al., 2014). Aaker (1982) defines brand equity as,

*"The differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand."*

This definition of brand equity aligns with SCCT's contention that customers' perceptions of responsibility for a crisis vary based on their previous knowledge of the organization's crisis history and relationship reputation. However, since the COVID-19 pandemic was a natural crisis, brand equity was likely to impact the consumers' response to the marketing mix strategies, rather than moderating their understanding of the responsibility for the crisis.

## Psychographic and demographic factors

Consumers' cognitive responses reflect their perceptions of risk or value (Lim, 2015) based on their demographics psychographics, experience, and knowledge (Brug et al., 2004; Lepp and Gibson 2003; (Neuburger & Egger, 2021). However, the literature has mostly overlooked the influence of demographic factors on the relationship between marketing mix strategies and customer responses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

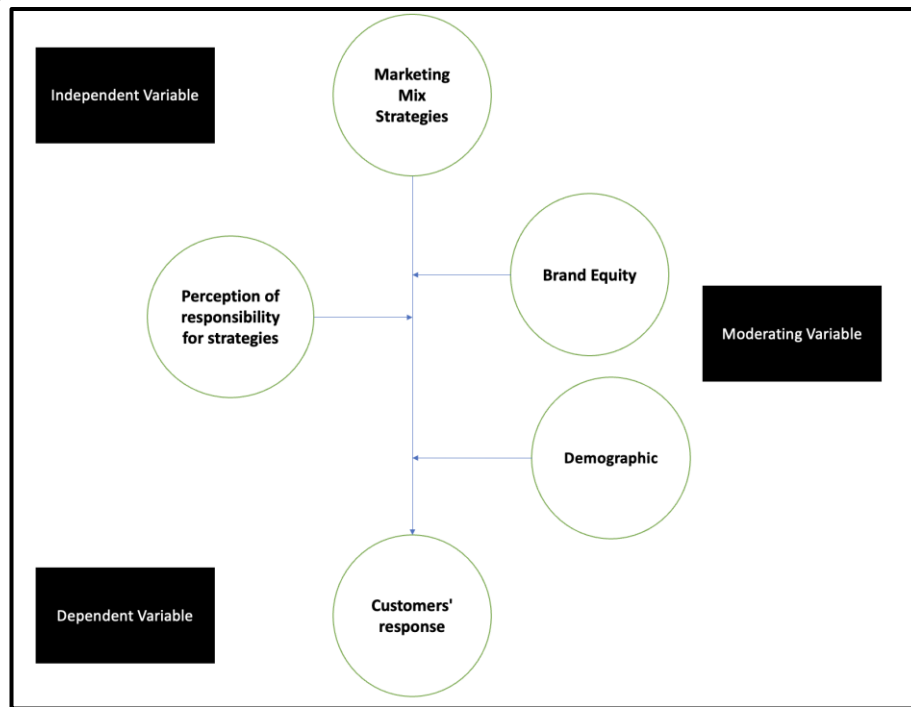
### *Research gaps and model development*

There is a lack of studies exploring the impact of marketing-mix strategies on consumers' responses within the context of their perceptions of crisis attribution. Further, the impact of brand equity and psychographic or demographic factors on consumers' responses to marketing mix strategies is largely unstudied. Previous research in crisis management has not focused on the simultaneous effect of multiple factors on consumer response (Bundy & Pfarrer, 2015). The current research, therefore, aims to examine the effect of marketing mix strategies on customer response in the presence of multiple influence factors, such as pre-existing brand equity (Rea et al., 2014), perception of responsibility (Coombs, 2007), and demographic characteristics (Lim, 2015).

## Conceptual Model

It was seen that the customers' responses result from exposure to stimuli, namely, the marketing mix strategies introduced by the organizations as part of their strategic response. Hence, customer response to the marketing mix strategies can be presumed to be moderated by customers' perceptions of the organizations' responsibilities for their crisis marketing strategies. Further, the literature review underscored the role of brand equity and psychographic and demographic factors in moderating the customers' response. Based on the literature, the following mode was built (Figure 1 below),

**Figure 1 Impact of Marketing Mix Strategies on Customers' Responses during the COVID-19 Pandemic**



Independent Variable - Marketing Mix strategies (4Ps)

Dependent Variable - Customer response (cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses).

Moderating Variables: Perception of Responsibility for the strategy (Coombs, 2007; Heider, 1958); Brand Equity ((Ertaş et al., 2021; Hegner et al., 2014; Keller, 1993); and Demographic Factors (Neuburger and Egger, 2021).

## Results

Three case studies were developed using a common understanding of terms like marketing mix, consumer responses, brand equity, and crisis attribution as discussed in the literature. The case studies are based on the information available in the public domain, and as such, may not include all 4ps.

### *Case Study 1: AirAsia's improved service delivery during the pandemic*

AirAsia (Kuala Lumpur) is one of the leading low-cost airlines, flying to 165 destinations. It witnessed a 10-fold increase in customer inquiries during the pandemic and adapted its communication strategy. It retrained staff on communication technology and consolidated its 17 call centers into one consolidated center, improving case resolution rate from 50% to 90% and overall customer satisfaction (Cloud, 2020). This case highlights that non-crisis communication strategies developed as a part of the marketing mix strategy stimulated a positive customer response. As such, the case study supports that marketing mix strategies elicit consumer response, though there may be moderating factors involved. This conforms with the conceptual model presented in this paper.

### *Case Study 2 – Customer response to Qantas Airline's product changes*

During the pandemic, Qantas Airlines laid off over 2,000 employees and outsourced its ground handling during the pandemic, causing significant disruption to baggage delivery. Customers blamed Qantas' decision regarding layoffs and reported intense anger and frustration (Burrowes, 2022). Similarly, customers' complaints to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (Burrowes, 2022



soared in response to a change in the cancellation policy from a refund to a voucher. In this case, the attribution of the cause of the changed strategy was internal, leading to customers' negative responses.

Customers however did not have a negative response to Qantas' shutting down service and sales desks and substituting them with self-handling kiosks (Hatch, 2020) as they saw this airline's implementing health precautions. This case, therefore underscores the importance of attribution of the cause of the changed marketing-mix strategy as a moderating factor for consumer response and conforms with the conceptual model presented in this paper.

*Case Study 3: U.S. travelers during COVID-19: The moderating effect of demographic factors on customers' responses*

McKinsey & Company and Skift Research conducted a case study on the impact of COVID-19 on the travel industry in 2021 (Krishnan et al., 2021). Customers' confidence and travel intentions were associated with the demographic characteristics of passengers, as U.S. passengers showed higher confidence in their bookings, while Asians were conservative. Surprisingly, the overall level of customer satisfaction was higher during COVID-19, at 47%, compared to 5% pre-COVID-19 (Krishnan et al., 2021). Airlines' communications generated a positive response, as 47% of customers were satisfied during the COVID-19 crisis, compared to 6% pre-COVID-19. In addition, the booking process achieved a 45% level of satisfaction, compared to 2% pre-COVID-19. However, customers' responses differed by segment. The leisure segment understood these strategies more and was more satisfied with their experiences than before the COVID-19 outbreak. In contrast, business travelers were less satisfied and responded negatively compared to pre-COVID-19. These findings align with the literature and the conceptual model presented in this paper to confirm the moderating effect of demographic factors on customer responses.

*Case Study 4: Ski and Snowboard Industry's 4P Changes during COVID-19*

Ski and snowboard companies like Burton, Aspen Skiing Company (ASC), and Vail Resorts, adapted their marketing mix strategies during COVID-19. Burton expanded its Step On technology to new sizes, while Vail Resorts used Epic Coverage, which enabled pass holders to get redeemable credits for COVID-19-related disruptions. Thus, Burton expanded its customer base while Vail Resorts retained customer loyalty. Also, ASC released a sustainability report that encouraged eco-conscious travelers and resonated with customers creating positive responses. Additionally, Burton focused on customer education and built trust through demos and providing online resources. These efforts resulted in generally positive consumer responses, especially from leisure travelers who valued flexible and sustainable options. However, responses were mixed among more experienced travelers, indicating that tailored communication is crucial (Bruton, 2022).

*Case Study 5: Hilton's Marketing Mix Strategies during COVID-19*

Hilton launched the "Travel the World" campaign, encouraging guests to explore local alternatives to international destinations. It introduced the "CleanStay" hygiene campaign with Lysol and launched new properties like LXR in Kyoto and Home2 Suites in Shenzhen. They added features like Digital Key Share for contactless access on their Honors app and initiated the "Dine Like a Member" program, giving loyalty points at in-property restaurants (Sachitanand, 2021).

## **Propositions**

We propose four propositions based on the case studies and the literature review.

Proposition 1: Customers' responses to the organizations' crisis strategies were stimulated by marketing-mix strategies



Proposition 2: Customers' perceptions of the organizations' responsibility for crisis marketing-mix strategies moderate their responses.

Proposition 3: Demographic variables moderate the relationship between crisis marketing mix strategies and customers' responses.

Proposition 4: Pre-existing brand equity moderates the relationship between crisis marketing mix strategies and customers' responses.

## Conclusion and Implications

The study presents a novel initiative in proposing a framework that can enhance the marketing mix strategies of tourism organizations during a low crisis responsibility situation. The framework is the first of its kind to establish a relationship that considers the customers' perception of the organization's responsibility for the marketing mix strategies. The framework can be extended to other service industries that share similarities in their marketing mix with the airline industry, such as tourism and hospitality.

This extends the application of Attribution Theory in crises beyond the scope of the SCCT. Further, it extended the application of Cognitive Response Theory, by proposing that multiple stimuli, including brand equity and demographic factors moderate consumers' responses to marketing-mix strategies adopted by airlines during COVID-19.

Understanding how multiple stimuli influence customer responses to crisis marketing strategies can help managers optimize crisis management strategies. Additionally, it encourages organizations to test and predict customer responses across demographic segments and varying levels of brand equity before implementing marketing strategies.

It also underscores the importance of customer education regarding internal and external factors that influence strategies during the crisis and encourages organizations to invest in their brand equity.

The limitation of the study is that the proposed conceptual model is based on the literature in the crisis management field. However, the model should be empirically tested to validate the proposed relationships. It is also worthwhile to test the model with various types of crises, such as man-made crises, for which the organization bears a high level of responsibility.

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# FOOD SOUVENIRS IN THE EYES OF TOURISTS AND GIFT-RECEIVERS

Yueying Xu<sup>a</sup> and Yueying Wang<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Macao University of Tourism

## ABSTRACT

Souvenirs including food souvenirs are important to both tourists and destinations. The study examines how two types of consumers, namely tourists and gift-receivers, perceive the consumption value of food souvenirs, and whether the perceived value affects the food destination image and consumer behavioural intentions related to the destination and the souvenirs. With convenience sampling method and based on Macao, China as the study context, a total of 353 was collected from the on-site venues (for tourists) and an online data collection platform (for gift-receivers) for data analysis. The results show that in general the consumption value of Macao food souvenirs was perceived highly in taste value and emotional value. Gift-receivers perceived epistemic value and price value significantly higher than tourists did. In addition, the taste, epistemic, and social value of the food souvenirs are found to have significant effects on the image of food destination, which further affects consumers' visit intention to Macao and repurchase intention of Macao food souvenirs. Also, food destination image influences tourists' loyalty to destination and food souvenirs, but the effect is not found for gift-receivers. By combining the perspectives of both tourists and non-tourists (gift-receivers), the study adds new knowledge to the literature on food and tourist souvenirs fields. Practical implications of the results are discussed.

**Keywords:** *Food souvenirs, perceived value, consumption value, food destination image, food tourism, visit intention*

## Introduction

Shopping is an essential activity for most tourists and souvenirs are often among the items purchased (Swanson & Timothy, 2012). Souvenirs, as tangible and concretized objects, help people preserve memories and bring them back to experience (Gordon, 1986). Tourists buy the souvenirs as gift, as evidence, and/or as an aid to memory (Wilkins, 2011). Souvenirs also contain and convey many messages linked to the image of a place (Thirumaran et al., 2014). In addition, the prosperity of the souvenirs industry brings revenues to tourist destinations and promote their economic development (Kong & Chang, 2012). Among the many kinds of souvenirs, local food is of high interest to tourists which can be consumed on site (Henderson, 2004) or at home, and/or used as gifts (Kim & Littrell, 2001; Lin, 2017). The tourism statistics data report of the third quarter of 2023 in Macao shows that tourist average expenditure on food souvenirs is 258 Macanese patacas (approximately USD32) (Government of Macao Special Administrative Region Statistics and Census Service (DSEC), 2023). Considering that the tourist arrivals are expected to reach 33 million in 2024 (Macao Daily Times, June 18, 2024), the total revenue from food souvenirs injected to the Macao economy would be quite impressive. Food specialty and food souvenirs can also promote the development of other local industries than tourism, such as agriculture, forestry, fishery, and dairy industry, etc. (Lin & Mao, 2015).

Compared to common souvenirs like postcards, key chains, or T-shirts etc., food souvenirs may have a closer relation with the destination because they showcase the local culture, the food practices, the geographical conditions, and the history, etc. (Hashimoto & Telfer, 2007). Food not only satisfies people's needs biologically and hedonistically, but also plays a role in the social and psychological aspects. For example, showing that they are familiar with foods of destination when returning home may



be regarded a way to increase the tourist's self-esteem and prestige (Henderson, 2004). Sharing foreign food purchased from the destination with family members and friends at home is an important part of tourism experience sharing and a social activity. Meanwhile, by receiving food souvenirs as gifts and then tasting the food, people learn new knowledge about a place they have not visited before, through which they may form an attitude toward the place. In that case, food souvenirs function as a marketing tool for destinations (Kong & Chang, 2012).

Research on souvenirs with a wide range of themes are increasing, but literature focusing food souvenirs is still limited. The influence of food souvenirs might be underestimated. In addition, there is no research investigating the different impacts of value perception of food as souvenirs on destination image and consumer behavioral intention of different groups of consumers, e.g., tourists and gift-receivers. The inclusion of gift receivers of food souvenirs in the study is mainly because they are potential tourists and may someday pay a visit to the origin of the souvenirs. To fill the research gap and to add knowledge to the literature of tourist shopping and food souvenirs, the following research questions are raised: 1) Do tourists and gift-receivers of food souvenirs perceive the consumption value of food souvenirs differently? 2) How do the consumption values of food souvenirs affect the food destination image? 3) How do the consumption values of food souvenirs affect the behavioral intentions of tourists and gift-receivers of food souvenirs?

## Literature

### *Food Souvenirs and food consumption value*

Tourists shop for food and beverage souvenirs on holidays (Lundberg, 2023). When people try or receive specialty foods from friends or family who have recently travelled, they would like to buy the specialty foods themselves afterwards (Seaman & Schroeder, 2022). Food souvenirs is a unique type of souvenirs and could perform better to engage consumers because the smells, tastes, shapes, and packages with sounds and sights of tourist attractions could be evoked after tourists return home (Lin & Mao, 2015). The extraordinary flavors and experiences tourists acquired from their travel may be easy to be recalled by the taste and smell of food souvenirs. Meanwhile, the symbolism of souvenirs allows food to serve as a tool to present local culture, connecting tourists with the landscape of the visited destination as well as the unique way of life of local people (Harrington & Ottenbacher, 2013).

Consumption value is regarded as the utility perceived by consumers during the process of the product consumption (Choe & Kim, 2018; Sheth et al., 1991; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). It is generally consider a multi-dimensional concept. In a study of retail, a 19-item measurement was developed for consumer values which included emotional, social, quality/performance, and price/value for money, which could explain consumers' attitude and behavior (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). In a study of organic food products, Finch (2006) developed the measurement of consumption value to include functional value (health value, value for money), social value, conditional value, emotional value and epistemic value. Novelty value was also added to the measurement of consumption value in tourism contexts (Williams & Soutar, 2009).

Acknowledging that consumption values of different products are different, and that local food tasted by tourists is different from manufactured tangible products or other tourism attractions, Choe and Kim (2018) developed a new scale of tourist's local food consumption value (TLFCV). The authors argued that local food consumption value should comprise of values in taste/quality, health, price, emotional, prestige, interaction, and epistemic aspects. Enjoyment and fun generated from tourism activities such as wine tasting was regarded to be emotional value (Choe & Kim, 2019). The social value refers to not only individual recognition or prestige which people could gain from tourism activities, but also social interactions that happen during travel among family members or in communications between sellers and consumers (Choe & Kim, 2019; Williams & Soutar, 2009; Williams et al., 2015). Some scholars believe that groups of different cultural backgrounds hold different value perceptions of food in the destination (Hsu et al., 2022). For example, while epistemic and cultural values form the food experience positively

for Eastern travelers, emotional value has negative effects on Western travelers' food experience (Hsu et al., 2022).

#### *Food souvenirs, destination image, and consumer behavioral intention*

Souvenirs play an important role as a bridge between the projected image and the perceived image (Schlüter, 1998). They reflect a certain image of the destination itself but at the same time reflect tourists' expectations (perceived image) (Marine-Roig, 2011). Tourists may develop an attachment to a destination because of the ability of souvenirs to fulfil specific goals or activity needs and/or because of its symbolism (Marine-Roig, 2011). That developed place attachment directly affects customer satisfaction. The positive affective and cognitive associations with a place also influence individuals' critical evaluation of and loyalty to a place (Yuksel et al., 2010). On the other hand, memorable food experiences help form a positive image of a destination and an emotional connection to the destination visited, which contribute to enhancing place attachment and destination image (Hsu & Scott, 2020; Sthapit et al., 2017). The decision to visit a destination for food is mainly driven by tourists' prior knowledge of the destination's food and cuisine, and the images of food can affect potential tourists' visit intentions (Lai et al., 2020).

Food souvenirs function as part of a destination that can be brought back home by tourists (Sthapit, 2017), which they can keep and share. Via influencing tourists' attitude toward both local food and the food destination image, the perceived consumption value of food souvenirs exert positive impacts on the behavioral intention of tourists (Choe & Kim, 2018). A study of heritage food states that the consumption and experience value of food have significant predictive effect on tourists' attitude; and the perceived destination image and behavioral intention could be significantly stimulated by tourists' favorable attitudes toward food (Mohammad et al., 2022).

However, different aspects of consumption values are found to exert different impacts on consumer behaviors. The study about young Australian tourists' consumption values by Phau et al., (2014) shows that emotional/epistemic, social, and functional values have significant influence on the tourists' perception of favorable image of the destination, but only social and conditional values had significant effect on participants' destination choice intention (Phau et al., 2014). It is also possible to promote a destination from a consumer to a potential tourist, either through sending souvenirs gifts or recommendation, so that the potential tourist can imagine the destination and thus may be willing to visit it in the future (Botoş et al., 2013).

## **Methodology**

#### *Measurements and questionnaire development*

The questionnaire composes of five parts. The first part is to collect basic information to find respondents who had consumed Macao's food souvenirs, via self-purchasing or gift-receiving, and check whether they have been to Macao. The following three parts include measurement items of food consumption value of Macao's food souvenirs, Macao food destination image, and behavioral intentions of respondents. The final part collects demographic information. An English version of questionnaire was firstly developed and then translated into Chinese by one author. The Chinese version was back translated to English by the other author, and then the two versions were compared by the two authors to make sure that the meanings were consistent and corresponding to each other. Both the final two versions were presented to the respondents who could choose whichever they preferred to fill out.

Regarding the food consumption value of Macao food souvenirs, a multidimensional scale of tourist's local food consumption value (TLFCV) was adapted in current study and modified a little (Choe & Kim, 2019; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). The dimensions used to measure the food consumption value of food

souvenirs include emotional, epistemic, health, prestige, taste/quality, price and interaction value with corresponding items. Regarding measuring food destination image, some items were referred to and selected from past study (Choe & Kim, 2018). The behavioural intention (including loyalty to the destination and the food souvenirs) was measured by items adapting from past studies as well (Jin & Lee, 2013; Lam & Hsu, 2006). The behavioural intention is mainly about intention to (re)visit Macao, to (re)purchase food souvenirs, to recommend and spread positive things about the destination and food souvenirs. A 5-point Likert scale was used for the above measurements. For questions related to price value, an option “I don’t know” was provided because gift-receivers may not know the price. **Table 1** shows the measures and scales applied in this article.

#### *Sampling and data collection*

The targeted study population includes consumers who have consumed Macao food souvenirs, either at the destination as a tourist, or at home where they had not visited Macao but received the food souvenirs as gifts. Convenience sampling method was adopted and to increase the sample size, a combination of online and offline data collection was used.

Before the formal data collection, a pretest was conducted on 30 real tourists and the questionnaire was proved to be fine. Then the researchers firstly collected data in-person with paper-and-pencil questionnaires in the popular streets where most Macao tourists visit to shop for food souvenirs. These streets are full of Macao local food souvenirs and tourists can freely taste the food before they purchase. The respondents were approached and asked to participate in the study while they were tasting the food or waiting in line to check out. For the consumer group who were not tourists and only received Macao food souvenirs as gifts, an online survey seems more appropriate because they were not in the destination and scattering around the country. So, at the second stage, an online data collection platform called Credamo (credatmo.com) with large numbers of consumer panels was applied to collect the data.

Data collection covered one month from March to April 2023 and a sample of 353 usable questionnaires was secured, consisting of 200 tourists collected in Macao and 153 gift-receivers from the online channel. The total response rate was 92.7%.

## **Findings**

#### *The sample*

Table 1 shows the profile of the sample, including gender, age, marital status, education, and income of the respondents. The majority of them are women, young, married, holding an least a bachelor’s degree, and have an income of less than 200,000 Macanese patacas (equivalent to around USD25,000)

**Table 1: The sample profile**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Tourists (N=200)</b>		<b>Gift-receivers (N=153)</b>	
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent(%)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent(%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	68	34.0	59	38.6
Female	132	66.0	93	60.8
<b>Age</b>				
18-25	30	15.0	56	36.6
26-35	92	46.0	68	44.4
36-45	46	23.0	17	11.1
46-55	21	10.5	8	5.2
56 and above	11	5.5	4	2.6
<b>Marital status</b>				
Never married	66	33.0	69	45.1
Married	123	61.5	82	53.6
Prefer not to tell	11	5.5	2	1.3
<b>Highest Education</b>				
Junior high or lower "	10	5.0	1	0.7
Senior high school	49	24.5	3	2.0
Diploma or vocational school	79	39.5	40	26.1
Bachelor's degree	52	26.0	85	55.6
Master's degree or above	10	5.0	24	15.7
<b>Yearly salaries (Macau Pacatas)</b>				
Less than 50,000	41	20.5	38	24.8
50,001–100,000	67	33.5	39	25.5
100,001–200,000	57	28.5	48	31.4
200,001–300,000	16	8.0	10	6.5
300,001–500,000	8	4.0	10	6.5
More than 500,000	11	5.5	8	5.3

Table 2 is about the descriptive statistics of the specific consumption value of Macao food souvenirs. Taste/quality value, Emotional value, and Health value are with the highest mean scores in the perceptions of both tourist groups and gift-receiver group. However, Prestige value is the lowest for both groups of consumers. A further independent-sample t-test show that compared to tourists, gift-receivers perceived better value in the epistemic and price aspects of the consumption value.

**Table 2: The consumption value of Macao food souvenirs**

	Total sample (N= 353)		Tourists (N= 200)		Gift-receivers (N= 153)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Emotional value	4.28	0.5900	4.28	0.738	4.29	0.306
<b>Epistemic value</b>	<b>4.06</b>	<b>0.733</b>	<b>3.92</b>	<b>0.893</b>	<b>4.25**</b>	<b>0.370</b>
Health value	4.19	0.611	4.23	0.719	4.15	0.428
Prestige value	3.44	0.953	3.42	1.059	3.47	0.797
Taste/quality value	4.33	0.532	4.30	0.659	4.37	0.290
<b>Price value *</b>	<b>3.74</b>	<b>1.442</b>	<b>3.60</b>	<b>0.865</b>	<b>3.98**</b>	<b>0.726</b>
Social value	3.88	0.818	3.87	0.918	3.90	0.668

\* Out of the 153 gift-receivers, 44 expressed 'Don't know'.

\*\* The mean difference of the group of Gift-receivers is significantly higher than that of the group of Tourists at p=0.000.

#### *Effects of consumption value*

Two linear multiple regression models were run separately on the two sub-samples of tourists and gift-receivers, with the seven consumption value aspects as the independent variables and food destination image as the dependent variable. The two models were both statistically significant with an R square of .478 for tourists and 0.391 for gift-receivers. Results from the regression coefficient analysis show that Epistemic value, Taste/quality, and Social value can significantly predict tourists' food destination image of Macao, while Emotional value, Epistemic value, and Taste/quality value can predict gift-receivers' destination image (Table 3). The effects of the values on tourists' destination image are stronger than those on gift-receivers.

**Table 3 : Effects of consumption value dimensions on Macao food destination image**

Independent variable	Tourists (N=200)					Gift-receivers (N=153)				
	b	$\beta$	t	Sig.	VIF	b	$\beta$	t	Sig.	VIF
Constant	1.434		5.538	0.000		1.666		5.060	0.000	
<b>Emotional value</b>	-0.024	-0.026	-0.332	0.740	2.294	0.192	0.210	2.335	<b>0.021*</b>	1.831
<b>Epistemic value</b>	0.171	0.230	2.857	<b>0.005*</b>	2.361	0.157	0.208	2.383	<b>0.018*</b>	1.724
Health value	-0.029	-0.031	-0.389	0.698	2.399	0.06	0.092	1.020	0.309	1.823
Prestige value	-0.016	-0.026	-0.316	0.752	2.478	-0.013	-0.038	-0.410	0.682	1.932
<b>Taste/quality value</b>	0.362	0.358	3.622	<b>0.000**</b>	3.576	0.230	0.240	2.609	<b>0.010*</b>	1.905
Price value	0.070	0.091	1.457	0.147	1.430	0.014	0.096	1.345	0.181	1.142
<b>Social value</b>	0.171	0.236	3.221	<b>0.002*</b>	1.968	-0.011	-0.027	-0.287	0.775	2.031

\*  $p < 0.05$ \*\*  $p < 0.001$ 

To find the effects of consumption value of food souvenirs, more regression models were run, with the seven consumption value aspects as the independent variables; destination revisit intention and recommend intention, as well as food souvenirs repurchase intention and recommend intention as the dependent variables. The results are summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4: Summary of the regression analysis results: Effects of consumption value**

	Destination revisit intention		Destination recommend intention		Food souvenirs repurchase intention		Food souvenirs recommend intention	
	Tourists	Gift-receivers	Tourists	Gift-receivers	Tourists	Gift-receivers	Tourists	Gift-receivers
Emotional value					Sig.		Sig.	
Epistemic value			Sig.					
Health value		Sig.				Sig.		
Prestige value						Sig.		
Taste/quality value	Sig.				Sig.	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.
Price value								Sig.
Social value			Sig.				Sig.	

Note: Sig. means the value has a significant effect on the dependent variables. Detailed statistics are available upon request.

## Conclusion and implications

Different aspects of consumption value of food souvenirs are scrutinized for their specific effects on a few outcome variables related to the destination and the food souvenirs. The effects are compared between tourists on site and gift-receivers who have not visited the destination. The findings show that in general the consumption value of food souvenirs can affect food destination image, revisit/repurchase intention and recommend intention to the destination and to the food souvenirs itself. This is consistent with results from previous studies (e.g., Choe & Kim, 2018; Hsu & Scott, 2020; Lai et al., 2020). But the effects are different between tourists and gift-receivers. Taste/quality value and Epistemic value of food souvenirs are found to significantly influence the food image of a destination for both types of consumers. However, Social value affects only tourists' destination image but not gift-receivers', while Emotional value is a significant factor only for gift-receivers. Taste/quality value is also significant in affecting tourists' revisit intention to the destination; and the repurchase intention and recommend intentions of the food souvenirs



as a tangible tourism product. The latter effect applies to both groups of consumers. Nevertheless, the consumption value has little influence on gift-receivers regarding their behavioral intentions toward the destination, indicating the weak direct link between food souvenirs and behavioral intention among people who have not set foot on the destination. The positive side is that these consumers would form a favorable image via food souvenirs if they perceive high quality value, epistemic value, and emotional value in the consumption experience of the food souvenirs. And thus, the marketing function of food souvenirs (Botoş et al., 2013; Thirumaran et al., 2014) sustains.

To destination marketing organizations and the local food souvenirs industry of Macao, the study provides a few implications: 1) The food souvenirs are overall perceived high in consumption value among customers. 2) To improve, they can invest more on finetuning the taste and quality of food souvenirs. Research can be conducted among consumers to find out their preference of taste which is quite subjective. Macao cuisine belongs to the South China system and so the preference of consumers from the Northern China needs to be learned. Prior research (Ho et al., 2021) has stressed the paramount importance of quality of food souvenirs. 3) Adding more information about local food and culture on the packages would help increase the epistemic value of the souvenirs so as to boost the food destination image among the gift-receivers who could someday become tourists. 4) Although gift-receivers may not be motivated to visit Macao by the consuming experience of food souvenirs, they have high intention to purchase and to recommend the souvenirs. There exists an ‘unseen’ market for the food souvenirs, people who don’t visit Macao but buy Macao products. Therefore, Macao food souvenirs entrepreneurs should build appropriate distribution channels for this market segment, for example, online shopping platforms. Cultivating reliable brands is key because consumers attach more importance to brand awareness than local relevance when they buy food souvenirs on the internet (Yuan et al., 2022). The government can also help with building the logistics-related infrastructure.

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# FROM THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN: NATIONAL CUISINES AND THE RHETORIC OF VISUAL REPRESENTATION

Rob Richardson<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>School of Hospitality & Tourism, Auckland University of Technology

## ABSTRACT

It is widely held to be true that food is a definer of culture and ethnicity, a signifier of inclusion and belonging. It is also true that we first eat with our eyes. Yet, in a world awash with visual imagery, we no longer need to actually consume food for it to have an impact on us - food imagery is increasingly being used as a means of conveying power, narrative and ownership. Synthesizing fundamental literature, this theoretical research paper will present a foundational framework within which the visual representation of cuisine as narrative of modern nationalism could be explored. As countries grapple with increasing migration, globalisation, and changing demographics, the author argues that the role food plays as a means of inclusion and exclusion needs to be better understood within the context of visual food imagery. The paper points out that for Australia this will be an issue that will become increasingly pertinent as planning begins for its hosting of the 2032 Olympic Games.

**Keywords:** *National Identity, National Cuisine, Gastronationalism, Food, Imagery, Culture*

## Introduction

This theoretical paper evolved out of the authors current PhD research exploring visual food imagery and identity. The paper will build upon Michaela DeSoucey's concept of gastronationalism which is widely used to describe the increasing culinary protectionism practiced by nation-states juxtaposed against rising globalisation. The paper will draft a framework within which to ground further research surrounding the visual representation of cuisine as a narrative of modern nationalism. Linking key concepts that underpin the roles food imagery and art play as forms of communication, this paper combines Jacques Derrida's writings on imagery as language, John Dewey's belief in the aesthetic experience of art, and Anna Triandafyllidou's assertion that national identity is formed in contrast to the 'other.'

### *Imagery as a form of language*

Humans have the ability to express themselves in many different ways. Historically, the most common form of human communication has been language in a monomodal form – either in a verbal manner such as spoken word, or through non-verbal or symbolic images like writing or drawing. Imagery has been recognised as a significant means of communication from an early stage of human development – cave drawings have been found in Indonesia that are over 45,500 years old whilst the oldest alphabets date to around 2000 BCE. More recent has been the development of the photographic image in 1826.

The ability to combine communication forms – multimodality – for widespread consumption is, from the perspective of human evolution, also relatively recent (Alerby, 2015). Including images in early book printing was technically difficult in anything more than single one-off copies, and so the first printed illustrated book was not published until 1461 and the first to contain photos in 1844. This desire

to accompany written or spoken language with images was brought about by recognition that words are often not enough to convey intended meaning. In his work exploring language and meaning, Jacques Derrida (1998) disagreed with the premise that reasoning and logic underpinned by language was the best way to communicate. Derrida believed that many of the most important things we feel can never be neatly expressed in words spoken or written. In this way, an image can be seen as a way of providing context to support what it is that the author is trying to say - if an image is worth a thousand words, then that image allows us to convey meaning in a way that words may not.

Equally, within those thousand words, an image often tell us more than was what intended as the image itself becoming a signifier of wider social and cultural structures and hegemony (Barthes, 1993; Tagg, 2009). In this way, an image may take on a life of its own, as once it is open to public interpretation then its creator risks losing control over how it is viewed as the intentions behind its creation become lost in the translation of understanding. In choosing an image as representation we are making a cognizant decision that often reveals both conscious and subconscious biases (Tagg, 2009). This is in part due to a photographic image inevitably being viewed within a context, but that context often differs between viewers. Dependent on the context within which it is being viewed, for some a food image may bring feelings of belonging and nostalgia, of life and location and connection. To others, that same image may induce feelings of exclusion, of uncertainty and difference. Even repeated viewings by an individual may lead to changing perceptions due to changes within the wider socio-cultural/political contexts (Barrett, 2010). Food imagery, thus, has no meaning until it is given one by the viewer and this meaning is subject to repeated revision.

When we engage with an image of food, we are participating in what John Dewey described as ‘an aesthetic experience’ whereby our interaction with that image ‘unites the very same relation of doing and undergoing, outgoing and incoming energy that makes an experience to be an experience’ (Dewey, 2005, p. 50). Aesthetic experience unites these differing strands – the practical, the emotional, and the intellectual – into a single whole. In many cases it is possible to untie these different strands, but in the moment of experience they are all active in constituting aesthetic experience for the whole that it is (Walsh & Baker, 2020). Regardless of the intention behind the creation of an image, the image itself says nothing and carries no meaning until it is interpreted and given meaning during that moment of aesthetic experience by its audience: ‘images provide insights, information, and knowledge only if we interpret them’ (Barrett, 2010, p. 149). Dewey believed that the act of producing art – the artistic - and that of appreciating it – the aesthetic - are the same thing (Dewey, 2005). Rather than being separate states the two are intertwined. Yet, as Walsh & Baker point out ‘the aesthetic is the side of the consumer, the perceiver’, and is closely connected to Bourdieu’s (1984) concept of taste.

This dichotomy between artist and aesthetic interpretation of an image can be seen when exploring an image deemed representative of a nation’s cuisine. The viewer of that image could be expected to receive the same ‘experience’ as its creator if they both share an inherent understanding of the visual aesthetic and its cultural and social connections to that nation. The experience will be different, though, to a viewer who cannot tap into those same nationalistic emotions. For the intended audience to be able to interpret the image in the way its creator intended, they too must be able to recognise and view it within the intended context and be cognisant of the social and cultural myths that that image is meant to represent (Barthes, 1993).

### *Gastronationalism and the image*

Derrida (1998) also believed that rather than a word being a signifier of something, our interpretation or understanding of that word was more often based on what it did not. To use a very basic analogy, within Derrida’s understanding the word dog represented a dog because it does not represent a cat. It



has often been argued that the concepts of nationalism and national identity are built on that very same premise, and that a nation's identity is based on what it is not rather than what it is. Anna Triandafyllidou (1998) points out that, for a nation to exist, it is presupposed that there is some other nation from which it needs to differentiate itself. In her words, 'national identity has no meaning per se. It becomes meaningful in contrast to other nations' (Triandafyllidou, 1998, p. 599).

This tendency to self-define in relation to the 'other' can be seen in the concept of national cuisines in which the idea of 'us v them' – we eat this, they eat that – is often ingrained in cultural understanding and even codified in religious practice (Dursteler, 2019; Sibal, 2018). A nation's cuisine is a confluence of history and location resulting in a shared core mythology and common ideology that binds the people of that nation to the land and to each other. As such, food and by extension a nation's cuisine is 'packed with social, cultural and symbolic meanings' (Bell & Valentine, 2013, p. 3).

These meanings, though, are only relevant to people who identify with that nation and hold some form of intrinsic understanding of its identity. It is this complexity in understanding that often makes a nation's cuisine hard to clearly explain or put into words. As Derrida alluded to, language may not be enough to fully and clearly convey a person's experiences, beliefs, knowledge and visions (Alerby, 2015). Often, when asked to explain their national identity, Michael Billig (1995) argued that rather than offering a spoken definition a person will point to symbols such as a flag, an animal, or a sporting team. Food images representing national cuisines can be seen as examples of what Billig described as banal nationalism: the gradual, almost subconscious reinforcement of everyday national identity (Calhoun, 2017). Today, that identity is more often linked to citizenship of a state or nation-state due to the subsumption of the historical understanding of nationhood (Conversi, 2023; Sindic, 2011).

In terms of a national cuisine, it is often to specific dishes or food items that they will turn to in an attempt to explain the intrinsic connection they feel (Neill, 2018). As Roland Barthes' pointed out, 'For what is food? It is not only a collection of products . . . It is also, and at the same time, a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behaviour' (Barthes, 2018, p. 21). Barthes believed that food is a sign and as such it communicates something more than what it simply depicts. This makes food a perfect medium through which to explore national/state identity and explains why food is so often used to convey nationalistic connection and understanding (Hung, 2022; Ranta & Ichijo, 2022). This does, though, place the visual representation of a nation's cuisine at the forefront of national identity debate.

As an example, if one were to attempt to articulate Japanese cuisine where would they start? Perhaps you would start by describing it as rice based, often accompanied by fish or meat seasoned with soy and pickles. Or do you attempt to describe sushi as raw fish with rice, or tempura as deep-fried vegetables. You could just as easily be describing any number of national cuisines, and due to the global migration of food the key ingredients described are themselves not specific to Japan. Nor does any of the above do any real justice as an attempt to communicate the nuances of such a majestic cuisine, one that is culturally unique and imbued with critical aspects of historical, territorial, and social importance (Cwierka, 2006; Rath, 2016; Stalker, 2018).

Yet, most people will recognise the above dishes as being of Japanese origin if they were placed in front of them or viewed them in an image. This is a result of the globalisation of food cultures and the all-encompassing world of food imagery that surrounds us today. It could be argued that this desire for the visual ties into the concept of the omnivore's paradox (Fischler, 1980) in that before we eat something new, we seek recognition – is this food safe, i.e. culturally our own. If not, whose cuisine is it, and do I accept it? It's also an acknowledgement of sight being the most dominant of our senses, and that regardless of the level of gastronomic knowledge we possess we always eat with our eyes first (van der Laan et al., 2011). In doing so, we are participating in the consumption of visual identity.



Scholliers (2023) points out that stereotyping nations and states by the means of food is not new, nor is the deliberate ‘nationization’ of food, aspects of which can be traced back to the formation of the earliest city states. In her seminal essay, Michaela DeSousey (2010) made the point that:

*‘The sociological relationship between food and globalization is an especially rich juxtaposition because it highlights the dialectic produced by globalism’s homogenizing tendencies and the appearance of new forms of identity politics.’*

As nations jostle for position within the gastro-tourism and globalised food markets, their response often takes the form of branding or protectionism - a response DeSousey branded gastronationalism. As has been seen within the wider context of European Union collectivism, food, its production and cultural representation, remains fiercely contested. National origin labelling or geographical indicators all form a means of continued national control and thus, independent identity. Atsuko Ichijo (2020), though, points out in his more recent revision of DeSousey’s paper that the term has taken on a border context within the food and national identity discussion and no longer refers only to protectionism, but also now to the projection of state nationalism through food identity.

Historically, national cuisines helped define the included and the excluded - the ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Ranta & Mendel, 2014). Yet, it can be argued that the food we eat today is becoming increasingly uniform (Hanus, 2018; Phillips, 2006). The hybridity of peoples and products due to globalisation, free trade agreements and international supply chains, mean that supermarkets the world over now stock the same or very similar food items (dell’Agnese & Pettenati, 2018). This makes the visual representation of a nation’s cuisine increasingly important as it attempts to distinguish itself from what it is not, at the same time as linking itself back to its peoples and historical roots.

#### *Food, the image, and interpreting meaning*

Cookbooks are widely seen as being increasingly responsible for the construction and codification of national cuisines (Appadurai, 1988; Berno et al., 2018). In doing so, cookbooks become a formalisation of an oral culinary history, reflecting not only a societal evolution but also establishing a narrative for national identity. Ferguson (2010) suggests that recipe books define a set of standards and practices, often telling the reader what a specific regional or national cuisine should consist of.

Modern nationalistic cookbooks, with their glossy high-resolution images, often lean into a visual aesthetic associated with the nation they pose to represent. In doing so, they attempt to legitimise the food portrayed as being true, pure, and authentic through a connection to an aesthetic heritage. They promote what might be termed an edible aesthetic, whereby the ingredients, the food styling, use of props and background, composition and lighting all feed into a perceived national aesthetic or visual appearance. This nationalistic aesthetic references and draws heavily from mediums such as art and architecture - each of which itself is shaped in relation to and as a conflation of symbolic cultural representations that includes a nation’s global location, domestic natural environment, cultural and historical understandings, social structures and mythological beliefs (Walsh & Baker, 2020).

This resulting nationalist aesthetic creates its own cultural mythology and a form of non-verbal communication – a language for those with the qualitative understanding to speak it: the *Us*. For *Them*, or the *Other*, this visual presentation of cuisine heavily linked to a national aesthetic serves a symbolic function as a means of maintaining that society’s boundaries and reinforcing existing stereotypes and class structure (Fraser & Knight, 2019). Applied to food, this national aesthetic becomes a powerful

definer of identity, and this effect is enhanced when the food and its imagery is elevated into the realm of art and itself becomes both a signifier and the signified (Kuehn, 2005).

When discussing the role of food as art, it can be argued that the very ephemeral nature of its existence establishes food as such. For as Kuehn points out, food has a unique characteristic that no other art form has in that it must actually be consumed and thus destroyed in order to be experienced and enjoyed. In doing so, a person is not only consuming the artwork but allowing it to become a physical part of them. The artwork is thus not only experiential, but physically transformative (Okri, 2015). In terms of national identity, it becomes a form of identity communion – we take it, consume it, and become it. It becomes emotional, a shared communal aesthetic experience (Dewey). It is this awareness of the qualitative tensions and integrated interaction that underpin the experience that allows food to be, both, a signifier of national identity and elevates it as an art form and thus the signified. It is this merger of these two aspects within food – identity and art - that makes the concept of an edible aesthetic so powerful within the discussion over national belonging.

### *Food imagery and the rhetoric of visual representation*

Dewey, though, was dismissive of the separation of art from everyday life. He believed that it was due to the desire to elevate status, or what Bourdieu (2011) deemed ‘capital’. Dewey highlighted the tendency of Nations to take their greatest artistic treasures and place them ‘upon a remote pedestal’ (Dewey, 2005, p. 11). In doing so, ‘artworks took on a holier than thou aura, which reinforced their esoteric character as something opposed to everyday life’ (Walsh & Baker, 2020). It was Dewey’s belief that when we call something art, we remove it from the community and thus from the everyday. If we agree with the premise of food as art, the question then becomes what do we achieve by placing it on that pedestal? In terms of national identity, are we simply achieving a state of stasis, a dish stuck in time, of continued recognition but no evolutionary change. This seems at odds within a world of increasing social and cultural global migration with its resulting flux, uncertainty, and change. Perhaps, it is this very uncertainty itself that allows food to be seen as nationalistic, its role as that of an anchor stone holding our identity in place as we float the unsettled waters of modern society.

Dewey held that art is the best window to another culture, a form of communication that is non-verbal but still a universal language, and the expression of the life of a community. The question then becomes to which community are we speaking? When a visual image of a food item is held up by a certain group within society as representing national history and identity, there will inevitably be some who do not identify with that image or see it as representing them. Dewey argued that art is a universal language, but however we view it, art always belongs to someone, not everyone, just like food. This division or creation of social and cultural boundaries along food lines can be unintentional or deliberate, and distrust is often felt toward those who blur these boundaries – an increasingly common situation in an increasingly multicultural world as migrant peoples and communities seek ways to, both, assimilate and retain cultural identity.

Identity promotion gains strength during the build up to and during internationally recognised events – the Olympic Games and FIFA Football World Cups being obvious examples. As already discussed, for many countries identity formation is inextricably tied to food due to deep geographical and historical connections that are wrapped in complex layers of social and cultural mythology (Kittler et al., 2017; Montanari, 2006). This relationship with food is heavily utilised in the promotion of those countries as tourist destinations and for state aspirations of gastro-tourism – Italy’s official tourism site places food and wine as the first option on its ‘What to Do’ list (*ITALIA.IT*). Gastro-tourism is an increasingly lucrative market, with one study (Wondirad & Verheye, 2023) finding 87% of respondents consider

food when choosing potential tourism destinations, whilst Seo et al. (2017) confirmed that food plays a significant role in the formation of a tourists cognitive and affective evaluation of a destination.

As countries seek ways to highlight their achievements and promote themselves as tourism destinations, visual interpretation of national cuisine is often used in promotional material and media as a means of visually conveying state identity. The concern must be as to whom this visual food imagery is speaking and what is it saying – in promoting a national cuisine, who is it intentionally or unintentionally including or excluding? Italy's tourism site showcases images of pasta, pork products, and wine, but not everyone who identify themselves as Italian will consume these products (Nowak, 2012; Parasecoli, 2022). In France, pork products have been declared an essential part of French cuisine. This has led to increased social division as those who believe themselves to be French but do not eat pork question their place within French society (Wallenbrock, 2015; Wright & Annes, 2013). The issue becomes, arguably, even more complex in countries with an increasingly diverse multicultural population and an opaque culinary identity (Grey & Newman, 2018; Perry, 2017).

## Conclusions and implications

To verbally explain a cultural or national identity can be a difficult, and so visual food imagery is often used as a language with which to convey understanding and intrinsic connection. Increasingly the case when it comes to the discourse around national cuisines and their use, reinvigoration, and promotion (Ichijo, 2020), it is particularly pertinent in countries with high ethnic and cultural diversity (Reddy & van Dam, 2020) such as Australia and New Zealand where indigenous peoples form a minority (Morris, 2010; Veracini, 2022), or countries with contested identity (Ranta & Mendel, 2014). It raises the question over whether that narrative is positive or not within the context of increasing divisive political rhetoric (Bieber, 2018; Mithani, 2024).

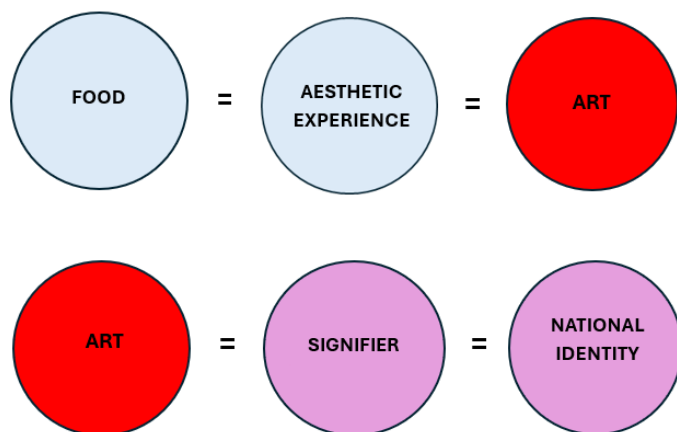
This paper presents a foundational framework within which the visual representation of cuisine as a narrative of modern nationalism can be explored. Within the context of the literature covered by this paper, the theoretical framework centres upon Dewey's belief in the 'aesthetic experience,' using it as a means with which to understand the interaction between the image and the viewer:

- An aesthetic experience is created through the convergence of three key strands of energy – the practical, emotional, and intellectual.
- For this convergence to take place, the person engaging in that experience must interpret it in a way that gives that meaning. This interpretation, though, may differ from the artistic experience of its creator.
- Food has the ability to unite these three strands thus creating an aesthetic experience.

Within this concept of aesthetic experience, we establish justification for linking food to art. If we agree then that food is art, then we agree that the two share a similar status with the resulting implications:

- In determining that something is art, we consciously separate it from the everyday community and hold it aloft as a symbol of status, power.
- Artworks then become, both, signifiers of national identity and the signified.

Visually, this framework would look like:



Related back to Triandafyllidou's belief that a nation's identity forms in contrast to another nation, the question naturally arises over what role the visual representation of a nation's cuisine plays within the context of gastromationalism as conceived by DeSoucey, and the wider narratives and discussions that surround modern nationalism. As an important definer of identity, this places food and its visual representation at the centre of a country's identity discussion. Yet, food is always political and as highlighted, the role that this visual imagery plays in defining who is included and excluded is often overlooked – as are the intentions and the veiled hegemony that underpins these discussions – and is an area in need of further academic exploration. It begs the question whether the imagery used to portray a nation's cuisine is being used as a means for positive inclusion, or does it simply provide another lightning rod for division?

As Australia begins stepping up its preparations for hosting the 2032 Olympic Games, the inevitable discussion surrounding Australian identity that will accompany it could form an ideal case study on which to apply the framework. If we take Benedict Anderson's (2016) idea that nations are really just imagined communities - too large for everyone to actually know each other or have a blood connection – what might this single imaginary Australian community look like in 8 years' time? Considering the obvious social and cultural issues that this type of question raises, is such a concept even possible? Yet, somewhere, someone in Australia is about to start grappling with that exact question – who are 'Australians' and what is it that 'Australians' eat? They will do so whilst knowing that they will have to find some sort of representative imagery with which to answer it. The role of defining a singular national identity that can be showcased to the world - that is an incredible amount of power in the hands of a small, not necessarily representative, and undemocratically chosen group of people. Yet answer it that group will, the famous phrase, "Tell me what you eat, I'll tell you who you are" taking on a slightly more cynical tone in this context. Yet, their decision on what an Australian national identity looks like will be seen splashed in visual form across television, social media, and on the sides of buses in the lead up to and throughout the 2032 Olympic Games in an attempt to show the world just who they think Australians are.

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# IMPULSIVE VS. REFLECTIVE PATHWAYS: EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF FOOD-RELATED FACTORS AND INFLUENCER ATTRIBUTES ON DINING INTENTIONS

Choi Peng Cheong<sup>a</sup> and Henrique F. Boyol Ngan<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Macao University of Tourism (UTM)

## ABSTRACT

The current study examines how social media influencer characteristics and food related factors influence dietary choices amongst young diners, moderated by self-control under the lens of dual-pathway model. Data was collected from 410 young diners aged 18-30 who actively engage with food influencers on social media. SmartPLS was used to conduct PLS-SEM to examine the structural relationship between the core variables. Based on the results of the present study, influencer attributes such as attractiveness and food-related characteristics like location, visual appeal, and social influence significantly impact dining intentions. In contrast, factors such as price, convenience, taste, influencer credibility, and authenticity were not significant predictors. The findings extend the theoretical application of the Dual-pathway Dietary Decision Model to the social media context and offer practical implications for restaurant managers to attract young diners.

**Keyword:** *Dual-Pathway dietary model, social media, food, influencer, dining*

## Introduction

The way that consumers shop has considerably changed in recent years. Purchase decisions are now heavily influenced by social media, with more than 50% of consumers researching products on social media platforms prior to their actual purchase (GWI, 2024). In fact, social media usage has been growing exponentially, with 5.07 billion people worldwide using social media platforms (Chaffey, 2024). Interestingly though, the influence of social media can be either positive or negative, where influencers can indeed enhance the trust of the brands and products being advertised, as well as its perceived usefulness that ultimately influences purchase decision (Peković et al., 2019). However, when there is an overreliance on social media for consumption purposes, it can backfire, leading to greater levels of anxiety, reduced self-esteem, and overspending due to peer pressure (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). Despite the outcomes, its effectiveness is largely dependent on several factors. For instance, the type of message has been found to affect consumers' attitudes and how they view the brand (Duan & Dholakia, 2017; Ghanbarpour et al., 2022). Likewise, the endorsement of the influencer (e.g. being a celebrity) can also have an impact on consumers (Dimitriu & Guesalaga, 2017). With respect to food influencers on social media, they can showcase restaurants and visually appealing dishes, significantly influencing followers' dining choices (Anjos et al., 2022). While food-related characteristics play a critical role in consumption decisions (Deliens et al., 2014; Deliens et al., 2016) research comparing the impact of influencer characteristics versus food-related factors on this demographic's restaurant choices remains limited. On one hand, influencer characteristics like authenticity, attractiveness, and credibility are thought to drive their impact on followers' attitudes and food consumption (Audrezet et al., 2020). Whereas on the other hand, food-related factors like price, location, convenience, social influence, visual appeal, and taste also shape dining decisions (Deliens et al., 2016). College students, despite being financially less capable, are open to new food experiences and subject to peer influence on their food choices (Nusair et al., 2013). Moreover, this demographic cohort are more reliant on social media platforms, with greater exposure to food-influencers (Poínhos et al., 2014).

To that end the present study proposes a dual-pathway model where influencer characteristics and food-related factors independently predict college students' restaurant intentions, moderated by self-control.

## Literature Review

### *Dual-pathway Dietary Decision Model*

Food decisions can be best understood under the lens of the dual-pathway dietary decision model when considering both influencer-related factors and food-related factors. Its core principle suggests that dietary decisions are influenced by two pathways, one reflective and the other impulsive (van Malderen et al., 2021). Specifically, individuals can rationalize their decision-making process, adopting a more deliberate and conscious approach (van Malderen et al., 2021). In the context of restaurant choices, this pathway encompasses factors such as taste preferences, health considerations, and budget constraints (Deliens et al., 2014; Deliens et al., 2016). Dietary choices are determined partly by these factors (Deliens et al., 2016). Alternatively, individuals can act more impulsively, where food choices are driven by external cues and emotional responses that automatically trigger a reflex-like decision (van Malderen et al., 2021). This pathway is where social media influencers and their characteristics play a significant role (Anjos et al., 2022). The credibility, authenticity, and attractiveness of food influencers (Boerman, 2020; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017) can trigger impulsive desires to visit the restaurants they promote. The content presented is often more appealing than what is conveyed by the influencers (Anjos et al., 2022) and can evoke positive emotions and create a sense of social desirability associated with specific dining experiences that can further drive impulsive decision-making (Deliens et al., 2016).

### *Social Media Influencer*

There are a few characteristics of influencers from social media that have reportedly affected the food consumption of their followers, including credibility, authenticity, and attractiveness. It is worth noting that authenticity and attractiveness are not only determined by physical appearance, but also by factors such as the influencer's knowledge, background, and expertise in the food industry. Celebrity chefs may not necessarily be physically attractive, yet they can be perceived as highly authentic and attractive due to their culinary expertise and reputation (Moulard et al., 2015). When referring to credibility, it is important that the content being presented by the influencer is perceived to be genuine and trustworthy. No matter how tasty the food is the information being presented is not convinced by the audience as genuine. As demonstrated in previous research, the effectiveness of communication is based on the credibility and trustworthiness of the source (Giffin 1967) and is generally associated with followers' attitudes and purchase intentions (Djafarova and Rushworth 2017). Evidence also shows that credible influencers can enhance brand loyalty (Urrutikoetxea Arrieta et al. 2019). Their effectiveness in influencing others comes from the fact that they are seen as role models and celebrities (Martensen et al. 2018). Another closely related, yet different attribute refers to the influencer's authenticity (Becker et al. 2019; Beverland and Farrelly 2010). Empirical evidence shows that it can be conceived as passionate and transparent (Audrezet et al. 2020) and is critical for the success of the influencer. Followers are more receptive to communications from the influencers that are perceived as authentic (Balaban and Szabolcs 2022). It shapes the followers' attitudes and can influence dietary choices (Pöyry et al. 2019). Finally, physical attractiveness is another key characteristic that influences consumer views (Boerman 2020) and contributes to the effectiveness of communication (Wilson and Sherrell 1993). Visually appealing influencers are more likely to attract attention from the followers and more easily influence their perceptions and attitudes towards the products or brands they are presenting (Djafarova and Rushworth 2017). Considering the above, it is reasonable to assert that:

- H1.** Influencers' Credibility will positively influence consumer's food Choice.
- H2.** Influencers' Authenticity will positively influence consumer's food Choice.
- H3.** Influencers' Attractiveness will positively influence consumer's food Choice.

### *Food-related factors*

It is clear that it would be difficult (though not impossible) to rely merely on social media influencer

characteristics for dietary decisions. In accordance with the Dual-pathway dietary decision Model, there are food-related characteristics that shape food choices. Specifically, these factors refer to taste, price, convenience, and health considerations (Deliens et al., 2014). It is not surprising that taste is considered as one of the most important factors in determining food choices among young adults (Hebden et al., 2015). In some cases, it is prioritized over other equally important factors (e.g. nutrition and health benefits) (Deliens et al., 2014). Naturally, another decisive factor is price, as young consumers tend to have limited financial resources and be constrained by a rather modest budget (Bukhari et al., 2020). It is unlikely that they seek luxurious dining experiences on a regular basis, in fact, most likely they would choose more affordable dining options (Deliens et al., 2014). These options tend to be more easily accessible and convenient to them, thus, convenience is another key consideration (especially considering their busy schedules and limited time and knowledge for cooking) (Hebden et al., 2015). Likewise, restaurants that are in an easily accessible location and offer quick service are generally preferred (Deliens et al., 2014). Seeing that eating is also a social activity, many college students are influenced by their peers and social norms in their food choices (Deliens et al., 2014). The popularity of a restaurant can also reflect this social aspect of food. Finally, the visual appearance of the dishes and restaurant can also affect student's desire to attend these restaurants (Anjos et al., 2022). Social media influencers can present food in a more visually appealing manner, which captures their followers' attention. Food that is neatly presented tends to gain more traction and influence dietary food choices and students' restaurant choices.

- H4.** Price will negatively influence consumer's food Choice.
- H5.** Location will positively influence consumer's food Choice.
- H6.** Convenience will positively influence consumer's food Choice.
- H7.** Peer and Family Influence will positively influence consumer's food Choice.
- H8.** Visual Appeal will positively influence consumer's food Choice.
- H9.** Taste Preferences will positively influence consumer's food Choice.

## Methodology

### *Research Design & Sampling*

The current study adopted a quantitative research approach to achieve the research objectives as previously stipulated. Specifically, a cross-sectional design was adopted, where data collection occurred at a single point in time. The target sample consisted of college students aged between 18 and 30 who actively use social media platforms and follow food influencers. Participants were recruited through popular social media platforms (ie. XiaoHongShu) due to its visual nature and popularity among food influencers. Participation was entirely voluntary and did not involve any monetary incentive. A total of 410 participants were recruited.

### *Instrumentation*

Those who agreed to participate in the current research had to respond to the online survey that consisted of questions related to dietary choices and social media habits, food-related factors, influencer-related factors, self-control, food-choice factors, and demographic-related. The core variables, food-related factors, and influencer-related factors were measured using Likert scale items adapted from previous research.

The core variables of food-related factors consisted of 20 Likert scale items divided into psychological factors and sensory factors. The psychological factors included price (4 items adapted from Peng et al. (2015) Chandra Verma (2018), location (3 items adapted from Islam and Ullah (2010), convenience with 3 items adapted from Ab Karim and Chi (2010); Steptoe et al. (1995) and Eu and Sameeha (2021), and peer and family influences (3 items adapted from Schaffer and Debb (2020). The sensory factors focused on visual appeal (4 items adapted from Yariş and Aykol (2022) and taste preferences (3 items adapted from Chandra Verma (2018). Regarding the influencer-related factors, credibility (4 items adapted from Calvo-Porrall et al. (2021), authenticity (3 items adapted from Jun and Yi (2020), and attractiveness (3

items adapted from Calvo-Porrall et al. (2021) of food influencers on social media comprised of 10 Likert scale items. Participant's ability of self-control was measured using 3 items adapted from Tangney et al. (2004). To measure participant's Food choice intention, 3 items were used from Kazancoglu and Sati (2020). Demographic questions were asked at the end of the survey that aimed at collecting participant's background information such as age, gender, monthly income. All scale items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

## Results

### *Reliability and Validity*

Prior to the main analysis, the validity and reliability of the measures employed was assessed based on the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Fornell and Larcker Criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT). Amongst all predictors, the VIF values were all below the recommended threshold of 10 (Hair Jr et al., 2017), indicating that there are no issues with multicollinearity. Additionally, internal consistency / reliability was assessed based on the Cronbach's Alpha of each construct. The results showed that the Cronbach's Alpha values for all constructs ranged from 0.7 to 0.9, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1979), indicating good internal consistency / reliability. Further examination of reliability was done through the assessment of CR. None of the constructs had CR values below the recommended value of 0.7 (Hair Jr et al., 2017), indicating good internal consistency. In terms of convergent validity, it was confirmed with the AVE values for all constructs that were below the recommended threshold of 0.5 (Hair Jr et al., 2017). Discriminant validity was established based on the Fornell and Larcker Criterion, where none of the intra-correlations between the same constructs were lower than the intercorrelations between different constructs. In addition, the HTMT ratios between pair of constructs were examined and it is evident that constructs were distinct from each other (with values below .90)

### *Hypothesis Testing*

PLS-SEM was conducted to examine the relationships between various factors and dietary choice intentions. The results revealed that FOOD-RELATED\_Social ( $\beta = 0.159$ ,  $SD = 0.050$ ,  $t = 3.157$ ,  $p = .002$ ), FOOD-RELATED\_Visual ( $\beta = 0.111$ ,  $SD = 0.052$ ,  $t = 2.135$ ,  $p = .033$ ), FOOD-RELATED\_location ( $\beta = 0.114$ ,  $SD = 0.047$ ,  $t = 2.439$ ,  $p = .015$ ), and INFLUENCER-RELATED\_Attractive ( $\beta = 0.179$ ,  $SD = 0.071$ ,  $t = 2.534$ ,  $p = .011$ ) had significant effects on Intention, supporting hypotheses H7, H8, H5, and H3, respectively. However, F-Price ( $\beta = 0.023$ ,  $SD = 0.051$ ,  $t = 0.439$ ,  $p = .661$ ), FOOD-RELATED\_Convenience ( $\beta = 0.019$ ,  $SD = 0.046$ ,  $t = 0.411$ ,  $p = .681$ ), FOOD-RELATED\_Taste ( $\beta = 0.089$ ,  $SD = 0.057$ ,  $t = 1.564$ ,  $p = .118$ ), INFLUENCER-RELATED\_Authenticity ( $\beta = 0.091$ ,  $SD = 0.072$ ,  $t = 1.260$ ,  $p = .208$ ), INFLUENCER-RELATED\_Credibility ( $\beta = 0.114$ ,  $SD = 0.072$ ,  $t = 1.594$ ,  $p = .111$ ), and all interactions involving self-control (all  $p > .05$ ) did not show significant direct effects on Intention, leading to the rejection of hypotheses H4, H6, H9, H2, H1, and all self-control related hypotheses. The proposed model fits the data well as reflected in the  $R^2$  values, and demonstrates strong predictive power when applied to data that was not used in its development (out of sample data) as shown by the values of  $Q^2$  predict that are well above 0.

## Discussion & Contributions

Provided the lack of comparative analysis of the food-related factors and influencer-related factors, the present study was set out to examine its effect on dietary choice based on the Dual-pathway dietary decision Model. Specifically, the current study focused on the dining choices of young adults (ie. College students) and how these choices are influenced by social media food influencers and food-related factors. The results of the present study revealed that social factors (FOOD-RELATED\_Social), visual appeal (FOOD-RELATED\_Visual), location (FOOD-RELATED\_location), and attractiveness of the influencer (INFLUENCER-RELATED\_Attractive) significantly predicted intention. Consistent with previous



findings that highlight the importance of social influence (Deliens et al., 2014), visual appeal (Anjos et al., 2022), and location in shaping dietary choices. Regarding the influencer factors, only attractiveness was found to impact food choice, which is consistent with previous studies (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Lee et al., 2021).

Unexpectedly though, neither price (F-Price), nor convenience, nor taste showed any significant effects on intention, which contradicts some previous findings (Deliens et al., 2014; Hebden et al., 2015). These differences in results could be related to the specific context of study, and perhaps more importantly, it highlights the impulsive aspect of consumption as stipulated in the dual-pathway dietary decision model may be more prominent, where social and visual cues are prioritized over factors such as price and convenience that requires a more “reflective” nature.

Other non-significant factors include authenticity and credibility of the influencer on intention, which appears to be in contrast with previous research (Boerman, 2020; Lee et al., 2021). It is reasonable to assert that students are driven by physical appearances such as attractiveness, more so than the authenticity or credibility of the communication.

Finally, self-control failed to exhibit any moderation effects on the relationship between influencer and food related factors on intention. Unexpectedly different as previous research highlighted the importance of self-control in dietary decision-making (Deliens et al., 2014).

The present study extends previous findings of factors influencing dietary choices by examining traditional factors (food related factors) with those that are contemporary (social media influencer characteristics). It lends support from the Dual-Pathway Dietary Decision Model (van Malderen et al., 2021) by highlighting the importance of the impulsive pathway, driven by social and visual cues, in shaping intentions. It extends the application of the theory that is commonly employed in eating disorder contexts.

In practical terms, the findings reveal some important implications for restaurant managers. It is clearly evident from the results that restaurants should focus on social factors and visual appeal as their marketing strategies for attracting young customers. Likewise, it is recommended that the hiring of physically attractive social media influencers to promote the restaurant, as this is deemed as an effective strategy in influencing dietary choices. Additionally, restaurant managers can consider marketing campaigns that emphasize the social aspect of dining.

## Limitations and Future Research

While the present study offers valuable contributions theoretically and practically, it is important to acknowledge some of the shortcomings associated with it. The current study has narrowly focused on two major aspects that were hypothesized to influence dietary choices (food related factors vs influencer related factors). There are other factors that could have been considered such as cultural differences. To that end, subsequent studies could establish a cultural comparison of the existing model to verify if differences exist. Moreover, the present investigation measured dietary choices as expressed in terms of intentions rather than actual behavior. While evidence shows that intentions precede actual behavior, it is worthwhile to incorporate measures of actual restaurant choices in future research.

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# MEASURING EVENT IMPACT: LEVERAGING OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRANSFORMATION IN TOURISM, HOSPITALITY, AND EVENTS

Johanna Heinonen<sup>a,b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Eastern Finland, <sup>b</sup>LAB University of Applied Sciences

## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the transformation potential of large-scale events within the tourism, hospitality, and events sectors by examining the case study of "Suomen Paras Vappu" (Finland's Best May Day) held in Lappeenranta in 2024. The research applies a comprehensive measurement framework incorporating social, economic, and environmental dimensions to assess the event's overall impact. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, with a structured survey distributed to 338 attendees, representing 13.5% of the event's participants. Metrics such as the Net Promoter Score (NPS) measured customer satisfaction, while economic and carbon footprint analyses evaluated the event's economic contributions and environmental sustainability. Results show a remarkably high attendee satisfaction, with an NPS 66, highlighting the positive impact of large-scale events on customer experience. The event also demonstrated environmental responsibility, with a relatively low carbon footprint (0,06 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e/km per attendee). Findings suggest that when comprehensive measurement frameworks are employed, events can serve as platforms for promoting diversity, inclusion, and sustainability. The study underscores the importance of adopting multi-dimensional tools to capture long-term transformative outcomes, offering a blueprint for event organisers to foster inclusive and sustainable communities.

**Keywords:** *event management, impact measurement, sustainability, tourism*

## INTRODUCTION

The tourism, hospitality, and events sectors are at the forefront of a transformative era driven by global challenges such as climate change, social inequality, and economic disparity. Events, from large-scale sporting events to community festivals, are not just gatherings but powerful catalysts for long-term societal and industrial transformation. This recognition inspires hope for the future, as these events have the potential to reshape cultural narratives, promote social inclusion, and support environmental sustainability.

Recent academic discussions have highlighted the urgent need to reconsider how event impact is measured. Scholars argue that relying solely on financial metrics underestimates the value of events to host communities and their environment. The urgency of this research gap lies in the lack of comprehensive frameworks that can measure the multi-dimensional impact of events—particularly their capacity to drive long-lasting changes within industries or societies. In addition to economic and environmental dimensions, there is a pressing need for studies that explore the socio-cultural impacts of events, such as their role in fostering community cohesion, preserving cultural heritage, or shaping social values. Developing a broader approach to event measurement incorporating these dimensions would provide a more holistic understanding of their transformative potential.

The Net Promoter Score (NPS) has become an increasingly relevant metric for assessing attendee satisfaction and advocacy in the events industry. This score categorises attendees into promoters, passives, and detractors, offering insights into satisfaction levels and areas for improvement. Higher NPS scores have been linked to repeat attendance and exhibitor satisfaction. Feedback from detractors is vital for identifying and addressing issues that could harm the event's reputation. Therefore, the NPS plays a crucial role in understanding and improving the overall event experience, an essential aspect of event impact measurement.

This paper aims to answer the research question: How can comprehensive measurement frameworks actively contribute to the long-term transformation of the events sector by promoting a diverse,

inclusive, and sustainable future? This question is crucial because events can potentially drive societal change, yet without effective measurement frameworks, their full impact may remain unrealised (Mair & Laing, 2013). Current approaches fail to integrate social cohesion, community engagement, and environmental sustainability into their impact assessments despite growing recognition that these factors are central to events' long-term success and transformative power (Getz & Page, 2016).

By proposing a multi-dimensional measurement framework that integrates economic, social, cultural, and environmental metrics, this paper seeks to fill the gap in the current academic discourse. Such a framework is necessary to fully leverage the opportunities events present for fostering inclusive, diverse, and sustainable communities. As Collins and Cooper (2017) argue, incorporating these broader metrics will provide a more accurate assessment of event success and ensure that events contribute meaningfully to the societal transformations needed to address global challenges.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Beyond numbers – Measurement of the Economic Impact

Historically, event impact measurement has primarily focused on short-term economic metrics such as visitor spending and local business revenues (Safari et al., 2021). While these provide precise data for stakeholders, they overlook broader, long-term contributions. Crompton (2006) criticised economic impact studies for being used as political tools that exaggerate benefits while downplaying costs like public infrastructure expenditure. Kersulić et al. (2020) argue for a more comprehensive approach that includes direct and indirect contributions to regional development, job creation, and economic resilience. Significant events like the Olympics can lead to urban renewal and lasting economic assets (Getz & Page, 2016), but ensuring long-term benefits for local communities remains challenging (Jones, 2022).

Shifting focus from short-term to long-term economic effects, such as sustainable infrastructure investments and job creation, is crucial for meaningful transformation. Events can foster urban regeneration and boost economic activity in underserved areas, but only if the planning process is inclusive and benefits are shared with local communities (Bellato & Cheer, 2021). Recurring cultural festivals and industry conferences contribute to regional development by establishing local value chains and promoting knowledge exchange (Arcodia & Whitford, 2006; Hiller, 2012).

Economic analyses should also consider job creation during the pre-and post-event phases and opportunities for skills development, which contribute to long-term stability (Jones, 2022). Furthermore, sustainable economic practices are vital, as unsustainable actions like over-tourism can negate the long-term benefits of events. Emphasising eco-friendly tourism, investing in green infrastructure, and ensuring local communities benefit can help maintain economic transformation (Collins et al., 2009).

Understanding the multiplier effect is critical for assessing the total economic impact of events. The multiplier effect refers to the additional economic activity generated by initial spending. While direct spending is easy to measure, the indirect effects—such as increased demand for local suppliers and tax revenues—require more complex analysis. However, measurement frameworks must account for potential economic displacement, where particular groups or industries benefit disproportionately. Therefore, understanding and incorporating the multiplier effect is essential for a comprehensive and accurate assessment of the economic impact of events.

Furthermore, customer satisfaction and NPS are increasingly relevant for understanding the economic impact of events (Reichheld, 2003). These metrics illuminate attendee experiences and loyalty, influencing future attendance and spending. Integrating NPS into economic analyses can help identify areas for improvement and foster long-term engagement. (Adamyan, 2024.) High customer satisfaction can also enhance indirect economic benefits, such as increased local supplier demand and tax revenues, while mitigating risks of economic displacement (Baquero, 2022). Satisfaction metrics with sustainable economic practices ensure that event benefits extend socio-cultural impact in the form of local communities and meet attendee preferences for environmental impact through eco-friendly initiatives (Alsiehemy, 2023). By including customer satisfaction and NPS alongside long-

term economic indicators such as sustainable infrastructure investments and job creation, event impact studies can provide a more comprehensive and accurate assessment of immediate and lasting contributions.

## **Building Inclusive Communities with Social and Cultural Impact**

Events have a significant social and cultural impact, serving as platforms for reshaping societal norms, fostering inclusion, and building social capital. Unlike traditional economic metrics, social and cultural impacts emphasise intangible benefits such as community pride, cultural enrichment, and social cohesion (Fredline & Faulkner, 2000). These elements contribute to long-term community development by addressing global challenges like inequality and exclusion (Stevenson, 2021). Events encouraging intercultural dialogue help to normalise inclusive practices and challenge societal power structures (Laing & Mair, 2015).

Events are vital in building social capital, defined by networks of trust and reciprocity that strengthen community ties (Arcodia & Whitford, 2006). By fostering shared experiences, events help bridge social, cultural, and economic divides, especially in multicultural societies (Oliveira, 2024). Events also provide civic engagement and volunteerism platforms, further building social connections and community well-being (Stevenson, 2021). Traditional economic metrics fail to capture the profound social benefits of events. Therefore, tools like the NPS, social cohesion surveys, and well-being indices have gained popularity to measure community impact and cooperation (Reichheld, 2003).

Events also play a pivotal role in preserving and promoting cultural heritage. Cultural festivals enable the transmission of traditions and practices, ensuring that local customs are passed down through generations (Dychkovskyy & Ivanov, 2020). Events foster pride and cultural identity by showcasing local art, music, and customs, contributing to local distinctiveness and global cultural dialogue (Getz & Page, 2016; Del Barrio et al., 2012).

A critical concern is the accessibility of events to marginalised groups. Research suggests that inclusive practices, such as accessible venues and diverse programming, lead to positive social outcomes (Laing & Mair, 2015). Engaging marginalised communities in planning results in more equitable and transformative experiences (Walters et al., 2021). Advances in technology, such as virtual and hybrid events, have broadened participation, overcoming geographical and physical barriers (Meyer et al., 2021). Social media further enhances the reach of events, fostering ongoing connections, and real-time sentiment analysis offers insights into participants' experiences (Antón-Maraña et al., 2024).

As noted, events' social and cultural dimensions are central to their transformative potential. To realise this potential, events must prioritise inclusivity, community engagement, and cultural representation. Sophisticated measurement tools are essential for understanding and enhancing these broader societal contributions, making events a crucial driver for a more inclusive, diverse, and sustainable future.

## **Driving Sustainability with the Environmental Impact**

As the global focus on sustainability intensifies, the environmental impact of events has emerged as a critical concern for stakeholders across the tourism, hospitality, and events sectors. Events, by their nature, generate significant environmental footprints due to the concentration of resources required, such as energy consumption, transportation, waste production, and water use. This has prompted a growing demand for more sustainable event management practices, with scholars and practitioners emphasising the need for rigorous environmental measurement frameworks. Jones (2017) argues that events present challenges and opportunities: while they can exacerbate environmental degradation if poorly managed, they offer a unique platform for showcasing and implementing sustainable practices.

In recent years, there has been a clear shift towards more comprehensive environmental assessment tools, emphasising tracking carbon emissions, waste management, and resource consumption. Carbon footprint calculators and lifecycle assessment tools are increasingly used to measure the environmental impact of events, particularly in areas such as transport, accommodation, and event



infrastructure (Collins et al., 2009). For instance, many large-scale events now incorporate real-time data monitoring systems to track energy usage and waste production, allowing organisers to identify inefficiencies and reduce the overall environmental burden during and after the event (Mair & Laing, 2013).

Events can act as powerful catalysts for environmental change by modelling sustainable behaviours and promoting eco-friendly initiatives. Research highlights that events can mitigate environmental harm, drive awareness, and foster behavioural change among participants, attendees, and stakeholders (Orthodoxou et al., 2022). As increasingly visible platforms, events can highlight the importance of sustainable practices, from using renewable energy sources to waste reduction strategies (Trendafilova et al., 2021).

Furthermore, events can engage participants in sustainability initiatives, such as carbon offsetting programs, which allow attendees to offset the emissions generated from their travel to and from the event. This raises awareness about individual carbon footprints and encourages participants to take responsibility for their environmental impact (Mair et al., 2023). The use of sustainable transport options, including public transportation, cycling, and electric vehicles, is increasingly being promoted by event organisers as a means of reducing the carbon emissions associated with attendee travel, which often constitutes a significant portion of an event's overall environmental footprint (Kitamura et al., 2020).

## **The Triple Bottom Line and Sustainable Event Management**

The tourism, hospitality, and events sectors have embraced the "triple bottom line" framework, which evaluates events based on their economic, social, and environmental performance (Tseng et al., 2020). This approach emphasises the need to balance these three dimensions to achieve long-term sustainability. Events prioritising environmental sustainability focus on renewable energy, waste reduction, recycling, and supporting local economies using organic, locally sourced products (Maynard et al., 2020). Adopting zero-waste strategies further reflects the shift toward sustainable event management (Gulak-Lipka & Jagielski, 2020).

Technology is vital in sustainability efforts, offering tools like real-time data monitoring to track energy and waste usage and helping optimise resource allocation (Antón-Maraña et al., 2024). Smart grids and AI technologies enable event organisers to reduce environmental impacts by controlling energy consumption and predicting attendee behaviour (Aktepe & Demirci, 2024). Blockchain also enhances transparency in sustainability claims, ensuring that materials used in events are ethically sourced (Aktepe & Demirci, 2024).

Furthermore, certifications such as ISO 20121 and Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) standards guide event organisers in their sustainability efforts, emphasising transparency and continuous improvement (Cavallin Toscani et al., 2024). These certifications attract environmentally conscious sponsors and attendees, particularly younger generations who prioritise sustainability (Liu & Lei, 2021).

Despite progress, challenges remain, including balancing sustainability with cost, as green initiatives often require significant investment (Kersulić et al., 2020). There is also a need for standardised frameworks to measure environmental impacts consistently (Antón-Maraña et al., 2024). Future innovations in the event industry must focus on reducing environmental harm while using events to promote sustainability and educate participants on sustainable behaviours (Orthodoxou et al., 2022).

## **METHOD**

This paper aims to apply a multi-dimensional measurement framework that integrates economic, social, cultural, and environmental metrics to evaluate the transformative potential of large-scale events. Through the case study of "Suomen Paras Vappu," the research demonstrates how such frameworks can provide a comprehensive understanding of events' impacts and contribute to fostering sustainability, inclusivity, and community engagement in the tourism, hospitality, and events sectors.



The methodology for assessing the impact of the "Suomen Paras Vappu" (Finland's Best May Day) event, held in Lappeenranta on April 30, 2024, integrates quantitative and qualitative measures to evaluate attendee satisfaction, economic contributions, and environmental sustainability. Using a mixed-methods design, the study focuses on structured surveys. It combines quantitative metrics such as the NPS, economic impact analysis, and carbon footprint assessment, aligning with best practices in event evaluation (Creswell, 2014).

Surveys were distributed digitally and in-person to 338 attendees, representing 13.5% of the total 2,500 participants, sufficient for statistical analysis (Holtom et al., 2022). The survey measured satisfaction, the likelihood of recommending the event, spending, and environmental behaviours. Following the method proposed by Reichheld (2003), NPS was used to gauge customer satisfaction, resulting in a score of 66, above the national average for similar events. Economic contributions were analysed based on spending by day tourists, overnight visitors, and locals, following methodologies from tourism studies (Crompton, 2006). To address environmental sustainability, a carbon footprint analysis was conducted, calculating CO<sub>2</sub> emissions based on attendees' travel (kgCO<sub>2</sub>e/km), a growing concern in the context of climate change.

## RESULTS

### Customer satisfaction

The primary metric used to assess customer satisfaction was the NPS, widely regarded as a reliable measure of customer loyalty and advocacy (Reichheld, 2003). The event achieved an NPS of 66, slightly above the national average of 65 for similar events, suggesting high satisfaction among attendees.

Of the 338 respondents, 46% were classified as 'promoters,' indicating a high likelihood of recommending the event to others. This aligns with promoters as key advocates who return to the event and encourage others to attend, generating organic growth and enhancing the event's brand image (Reichheld, 2003). Conversely, only 6% were classified as 'detractors,' indicating a shallow level of dissatisfaction. This low detractor percentage highlights the event's success in delivering an experience that met or exceeded expectations for most attendees, reassuring the audience about the event's quality.

The survey revealed that 87% of respondents rated their overall satisfaction with the event as eight or higher on a scale from 0 to 10. Furthermore, 93% expressed a willingness to return to the event. This high level of satisfaction can be attributed to the diverse range of activities and cultural offerings, which, as discussed in previous research, are critical factors in creating memorable and fulfilling event experiences (Getz & Page, 2016). These findings support the theoretical framework that customer satisfaction in event management is closely tied to the perceived quality and diversity of the offerings (Crompton, 2006).

### Economic impact

The economic contributions of "Suomen Paras Vappu" were analysed through a combination of spending data collected from local attendees and tourists. The economic impact analysis reveals that the event positively influenced Lappeenranta, contributing €131,000. This aligns with Crompton's (2006) theory that public events can significantly boost local economies by attracting local consumers and out-of-town visitors.

The findings show that tourists, both day visitors and overnight guests, spent €24,000 in Lappeenranta during the event. This aligns with Crompton's (2006) argument that tourism-related spending constitutes a significant component of the economic benefits of events. Day tourists spent an average of €86 per person, while overnight tourists contributed €111 per person. Although most attendees were locals (91%), this tourist spending still represents a significant injection into the local economy, particularly in the hospitality and retail sectors.

Local attendees spent approximately €107,000 during the event, reflecting their engagement with the local economy. This spending level emphasises events' role in fostering local economic activity and enhancing community involvement, as Stevenson (2021) suggested. Moreover, the significant participation of locals in economic activities during the event highlights the importance of community-oriented events in promoting local spending and economic sustainability, fostering optimism about the event's future.

## **Environmental Sustainability**

The environmental sustainability of the event was measured using carbon footprint analysis, specifically focusing on the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions generated by attendees' travel. The study found that the event had a relatively low carbon footprint of 0.06 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e/km per attendee, significantly lower than the national average for similar events (0.09 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e/km). This finding suggests that "Suomen Paras Vappu" attracted attendees primarily from local regions, reducing long-distance travel and its associated environmental impact.

The relatively low carbon emissions generated by the event can be attributed to several factors. First, 91% of attendees were locals, which reduced the need for long-distance travel. Second, the event organisers' emphasis on promoting sustainable transportation methods, such as public transportation and carpooling, likely contributed to the lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. This reflects Collins and Cooper's (2017) argument that sustainable event management practices can significantly reduce the environmental impact of large-scale public events. The success in reducing the event's environmental impact should encourage the audience about the event's sustainability efforts.

## **Social Impact and Sustainability Awareness**

While not a primary focus of this study, the survey data indicated that "Suomen Paras Vappu" had positive social impacts on the community. 89 % of attendees agreed that the event fostered a sense of community and togetherness, supporting the idea that public events play a critical role in enhancing social cohesion and local pride (Mair et al., 2023). This finding underscores events' broader cultural and social significance, as they contribute to economic development and the community's social fabric.

The study also revealed that 72% of respondents were aware of the event's sustainability initiatives, such as waste reduction and promoting eco-friendly transportation. This awareness aligns with Mair and Laing's (2013) assertion that event organisers can influence attendee behaviour by promoting sustainability practices, thus reducing the overall environmental footprint of the event. The high level of awareness among attendees suggests that future events could further enhance sustainability outcomes by building on this foundation of environmentally conscious practices.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS: LEVERAGING EVENTS FOR FUTURE TRANSFORMATION**

### **Leveraging Comprehensive Measurement Frameworks for Transformation**

This study explored how comprehensive measurement frameworks can transform the events sector by promoting a diverse, inclusive, and sustainable future. The case study of "Suomen Paras Vappu" provides significant insights into the potential for public events to drive long-term changes across social, economic, and environmental dimensions. The findings underscore the value of adopting multi-dimensional measurement tools to assess and enhance event outcomes, which aligns with broader theories on the transformative power of public events (Getz & Page, 2016).

In response to the research question, How can comprehensive measurement frameworks actively

contribute to transforming the events sector by promoting a diverse, inclusive, and sustainable future? The findings suggest that multi-dimensional measurement frameworks are essential for identifying and leveraging the full impact of events. These frameworks do more than evaluate immediate outcomes; they provide a basis for implementing strategies that foster inclusivity, sustainability, and community engagement. The study identified three key ways in which measurement frameworks contribute to this transformation:

*Comprehensive frameworks that incorporate social impact metrics*, such as community engagement and diversity, allow event organisers to intentionally design events that cater to a broader range of demographics. The "Suomen Paras Vappu" event successfully fostered a strong sense of community cohesion and inclusivity, with 89% of attendees agreeing that the event enhanced a sense of togetherness. This supports Mair et al.'s (2023) argument that public events can strengthen local identity and cultural diversity. By *incorporating detailed demographic and sentiment data*, event planners can create experiences that resonate with a diverse audience and promote social inclusion. *Integrating environmental impact assessment* into the measurement framework highlights the critical role of events in addressing sustainability challenges. The low carbon footprint of "Suomen Paras Vappu" (0.06 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e/km) demonstrates how regional events can minimise their environmental impact while delivering a memorable experience. These findings align with Collins and Cooper's (2017) work on incorporating sustainability practices in event management. A measurement framework that tracks environmental metrics in real-time can guide event organisers toward more sustainable practices, ensuring that future events reduce their ecological footprint and contribute to global sustainability goals.

The economic impact analysis reveals that comprehensive frameworks provide a detailed understanding of events' short- and long-term financial benefits. The €131,000 in total spending generated by "Suomen Paras Vappu" underscores the importance of local and tourist engagement in event-driven economic growth. Crompton's (2006) theory of event-based economic impact supports the notion that events boost immediate economic activity and foster long-term economic resilience, particularly in smaller communities. Event organisers can plan for long-term financial sustainability and local economic development by systematically measuring and evaluating economic outcomes.

Transformational change through event metrics requires shifting from traditional economic measures to a comprehensive approach that includes social, environmental, and knowledge-based indicators. These metrics can reveal broader impacts, such as enhanced community cohesion, cultural preservation, and improved resource efficiency. Also, tracking NPS and legacy impacts, such as urban regeneration and economic resilience, reinforces the broader value of events (e.g. Jones, 2022). Aligning metrics with sustainability goals ensures long-term contributions to global development priorities

## Practical Implications for Future Events

The insights from this study emphasise that comprehensive measurement frameworks are critical for enabling event organisers to design more inclusive, sustainable, and economically beneficial events. Event planners should move beyond traditional metrics, such as attendance numbers and essential economic impact, and adopt a more holistic evaluation approach. AI-driven sentiment analysis, real-time carbon tracking, and multi-stakeholder engagement surveys can better understand an event's impact across diverse dimensions. AI-driven sentiment analysis could provide deeper insights into attendee experiences, uncovering trends related to diversity, inclusivity, and social dynamics. Real-time carbon tracking would allow organisers to monitor environmental impact as it happens, facilitating quick adjustments to minimise the ecological footprint. Economic tracking tools can provide granular insights into spending patterns, allowing for more targeted marketing and resource allocation. By utilising these innovative tools, event organisers can improve the immediate outcomes of their events and create blueprints for long-term success that align with societal goals of diversity, inclusion, and sustainability.

The findings suggest that comprehensive measurement frameworks can catalyse transformation within the events sector. The multi-dimensional approach in the "Suomen Paras Vappu" case demonstrates how event organisers can strategically align their events with broader societal imperatives. By actively

incorporating metrics that track inclusivity, sustainability, and community cohesion, event planners can drive long-lasting change within the industry.

When designed with comprehensive frameworks, public events can support diversity by creating inclusive spaces that welcome participants from various demographic and cultural backgrounds. They can promote sustainability by minimising environmental impact through conscious planning and innovative practices. Lastly, they can foster economic resilience by supporting local businesses and generating sustained economic benefits.

As the events sector continues to evolve in response to global challenges such as climate change, social inequality, and economic volatility, the role of events as platforms for transformation becomes increasingly critical. This shift requires a commitment to measurement frameworks that assess outcomes and actively contribute to shaping the industry's future.

## Evaluation of the Study

While the findings offer valuable insights into the potential for events to contribute to transformation, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of response bias, particularly in the economic and environmental sections of the study. Self-reported spending, for example, may not always accurately reflect actual financial behaviour, and incomplete or inaccurate travel data might skew estimates of carbon footprints. Additionally, the small proportion of tourist respondents (9%) limits the generalizability of the findings regarding non-local attendees' economic and environmental impact.

Future studies could incorporate more precise data collection tools, such as real-time spending trackers linked to payment systems or digital platforms that record environmental impact based on geolocation data, to address these limitations. Furthermore, increasing the sample size and ensuring a more balanced representation between local and tourist attendees would provide a fuller picture of the event's diverse impacts.

## Future Research

This study opens several pathways for future research. First, longitudinal studies that track the impact of events over multiple years would provide deeper insights into how public events contribute to long-term social, economic, and environmental change. Such research could examine how recurring events, like "Suomen Paras Vappu," evolve and generate sustained impacts on the local community and environment.

Second, further research into the role of technology in event evaluation is critical. Li and Kaplanidou (2013) suggested that technologies such as big data, AI, and blockchain can enhance the precision of measurement frameworks. Future studies could explore how these technologies can be applied in real-world event settings to track social, economic, and environmental outcomes accurately.

Finally, there is a need to investigate how comprehensive measurement frameworks can advance inclusivity within the events sector. Research could focus on how events can actively engage underrepresented populations as participants and beneficiaries. This would align with global trends toward social justice and equity in event management, providing practical tools for event organisers to design more inclusive and impactful events.

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# MORE THAN JUST EASY TO USE: STT UTAUT AND TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

Mei Hang Fong<sup>a</sup>, Henrique F. Boyol Ngan<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Macao University of Tourism (UTM)

## ABSTRACT

The adoption of Smart Tourism Technologies (STTs) are on the rise, and is changing dramatically how tourists experience their journey. Currently much of the attention has been focused on the impact of Smart Tourism Technologies (STT) on travelers experience, while the underlying reasons for adoption of these technologies remains largely unknown. Thus, the current study addresses this gap by employing the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) framework to examine the determinants of STT adoption and its impact on travel satisfaction. Data was collected from 550 travelers using online data survey platform. A PLS-SEM model was developed and tested to analyze the relationships between UTAUT constructs (performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions), attitude towards STTs, and travel satisfaction. The results indicate that performance expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, and effort expectancy significantly influence travelers' attitudes towards STTs, ultimately impacting their travel satisfaction.

**Keyword:** *Smart Tourism Technology (STT), Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), Satisfaction*

## Introduction

With the rapid development of technology, smart tourism technologies have been integrated seamlessly in every stage of a visitor's journey, influencing purchase decisions and shopping experience before, during and even after the trip. Almost every traveler at some point has relied on some STT, and it is estimated to grow exponentially soon. The main reason for the popularity of STT is that they provide the connectivity necessary for tourism and hospitality organizations to gain a comprehensive understanding of tourists' needs and behaviors, enabling them to provide customized services and products that are tailored to travelers' specific needs. As a result, tourists experience services and products that are customized to their unique needs and preferences, enhancing their happiness (Lee, Lee, Chung, & Koo, 2018) and satisfaction (Um & Chung, 2021) encouraging further use of STT.

Empirical evidence suggests that a variety of STTs are indeed conducive of a pleasant travel experience through increased satisfaction (Um & Chung, 2021), memorable experiences (Elshaer & Marzouk, 2024) and even revisit (Zhang, Sotiriadis, & Shen, 2022). However less attention has been paid to understanding the underlying reasons for accepting and adopting these technologies. In particular, little is known about what causes tourists use STTs and sustain its adoption that is critical to obtain the necessary data for organizations to enable a customized service and experience. While Sujood, Bano, and Siddiqui (2024) provided initial evidence that STTs adoption is due its perceived usefulness and ease of use as stipulated in technology acceptance model (TAM), there are no further studies to endorse these results. Moreover, the findings reported in their study is limited to a narrow sample (e.g. only English speaking) and perhaps more importantly, is the fact that TAM does not incorporate social aspects nor technical aspects associated with the STTs.

As evidenced in technology-related studies, individuals' adoption of technology is best understood through the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) which posits four critical constructs: performance expectancy (the belief that the technology will enhance performance), effort expectancy (the perceived ease of use), social influence (the perceived pressure from important others to

use the technology), and facilitating conditions (the availability of support and resources). Despite being relatively well established and tested in multiple contexts, the novelty of STTs with emerging and disruptive technologies (e.g. AI-powered chatbots, augmented reality applications, and sophisticated data analytics platforms in tourism experiences) calls for a separate examination. More importantly, available evidence of UTAUT refers to specific applications, and may not be applicable to STTs that are more multifaceted in nature.

Given the gaps presented in the literature, the present study was set out to examine the determinants of STT adoption within the tourism context and its impact on satisfaction by employing the UTAUT framework.

#### Research Objectives

1. Investigate the factors influencing traveler adoption of STTs.
2. Examine the relationship between traveler acceptance of STTs and their overall travel satisfaction.
3. Analyze the mediating role of attitudes towards STTs in the relationship between UTAUT constructs and travel satisfaction.

## Literature review

### *Theoretical Framework & Hypotheses Development*

With the growing adoption of technology in the tourism and hospitality industry, there has been increasing attention paid to the underlying reasons for technology acceptance among travelers. While different models have been employed to explain technology acceptance, the framework developed by Davis (1989) known as TAM, is perhaps the most widely applied in tourism and hospitality context, including hotel front office systems (Kim, Lee, & Law, 2008), augmented reality (Ngan & Lei, 2024), service robots (Kao & Huang, 2023), and online hotel booking (Agag & El-Masry, 2016). The assumption of TAM stipulates that individuals perceiving technology as easy to use and useful to assist in carrying out the tasks (perceived usefulness), positive attitudes are formed, resulting in an increased likelihood of adopting the said technology (Sujood et al., 2024). Despite its popularity, there are contradictory results presented in the literature, where perceived ease of use does not always predict attitudes and subsequent adoption (Sun & Zhang, 2006) which calls for alternative models.

In fact, the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) has emerged as a framework for understanding technology adoption in a range of contexts (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, & Davis, 2003). Unlike TAM, UTAUT provides a more comprehensive analysis of the determinants for technology adoption by including additional factors (e.g. social influence and facilitating conditions). The core tenets of the UTAUT suggest that intention and usage of technology are largely dependent on performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions.

Specifically, individuals need to perceive that the use of technology can enhance their (job) performance, which would not be otherwise possible without it – *Performance expectancy*. The use of technology must be effortless for it to be well received by the user – *Effort*. Individuals must perceive that others believe that the use of technology is important – *Social Influence*. Equally important are the technical and infrastructure that support the use of Technology-facilitating conditions.

These additional constructs to the original TAM are particularly relevant in the context of smart tourism technologies (STTs). Social influence has been found to play a significant role in shaping adoption decisions for various technologies, including mobile payment services (Oliveira, Thomas, Baptista, & Campos, 2016) and mobile travel booking (Vahdat, Alizadeh, Quach, & Hamelin, 2021). Most importantly, evidence from previous comparative studies has often highlighted the superior predictive power of UTAUT compared to TAM (Escobar-Rodríguez & Carvajal-Trujillo, 2014; Morosan & DeFranco, 2016). As a result, recent studies have generally adopted the UTAUT as a framework in a variety of contexts. For instance, by employing the UTAUT theoretical framework, Gupta, Dogra, and George (2018) found that use of mobile apps for travel planning was influenced by performance expectancy, effort expectancy, and facilitating conditions. Likewise, Palau-Saumell, Forgas-Coll,

Sánchez-García, and Robres (2019) used UTAUT to examine the determinants of mobile apps usage among cruise passengers, reported similar results, highlight the importance of performance expectancy, effort expectancy, and social influence in shaping adoption behaviors.

Although a wealth of evidence confirms the theoretical framework of UTAUT in explaining technology acceptance and adoption, much uncertainty still exists concerning STTs due to their emerging and dynamic nature. STTs are evolving and developing at an exponentially growing pace; thus, the critical factors for determining their adoption may change accordingly and require further examination. As such, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**H1:** *Performance expectancy positively influences travelers' attitudes towards STTs.*

**H2:** *Effort expectancy positively influences travelers' attitudes towards STTs.*

**H3:** *Social influence positively influences travelers' attitudes towards STTs.*

**H4:** *Facilitating conditions positively influence travelers' attitudes towards STTs.*

## **STTs and Travel Satisfaction**

The use of STTs has, without a doubt, changed the travel experience (Chang, 2022) and how visitors engage in a destination (Balakrishnan, Dwivedi, Malik, & Baabdullah, 2023), considering the benefits and convenience brought to the user (Gretzel, Sigala, Xiang, & Koo, 2015). Evidence shows that STTs have significantly influenced travelers' satisfaction (Um & Chung, 2021), a critical aspect that many DMOs aim to address. Yet, the affective component of STTs – Attitude – and its impact on travellers' satisfaction remains largely unknown despite its importance. Attitudes refers to the positive or negative evaluations of an object, person or event, that precedes behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Specific to the context of STTs, a traveler's attitude refers to how they evaluate the STTs and adoption, that can effectively influence their overall satisfaction (Um & Chung, 2021).

Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H5:** *Travelers' attitudes towards STTs positively influence their travel satisfaction.*

Moreover, the constructs of UTAUT may also contribute to travelers satisfaction indirectly. That is, performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions are can influence the attitudes towards STTs and subsequently their travel saitsfaction.

**H6a:** *Attitudes towards STTs mediate the relationship between performance expectancy and travel satisfaction.*

**H6b:** *Attitudes towards STTs mediate the relationship between effort expectancy and travel satisfaction.*

**H6c:** *Attitudes towards STTs mediate the relationship between social influence and travel satisfaction.*

**H6d:** *Attitudes towards STTs mediate the relationship between facilitating conditions and travel satisfaction.*

To date, studies investigating STT and its impact on travel experience has been isolated from the antecedents of STT's. Examining the antecedents and consequences is critical to enable a more holistic understanding of the matter.

## **Methodology**

### *Sample & Sampling*

A quantitative approach was adopted in the present study, to test the hypothesized relationship between the core constructs of UTAUT, attitudes towards STTs and travel satisfaction. Data was collected through online surveys from travelers that who had used STTs during their recent trip(s). Participants were recruited from WeChat Tencent, a mobile messaging platform that has 1.3 billion active users (Thomala,

2024). Data collection occurred during the first half of 2024, with an effective sample size of 550, comprised of 59% female and 41% male respondents, with ages ranging from 18 to 65 years old.

### *Measurement*

Participants who agreed to participate had to complete the survey that consisted of UTAUT constructs (performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions), measured using items adapted from San Martín and Herrero (2012). Regarding participants attitudes towards STTs, it was measured using items adapted from Davis (1989). Finally, travel satisfaction was measured using items adapted from Yoon and Uysal (2005). Participants provided their responses on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). At the end of the survey, participants provided demographic-related information (e.g. age, gender, occupation, marital status, monthly income, travel related questions).

### *Data Analysis*

Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0. A preliminary analysis was conducted to examine the psychometric qualities of the measurement model (validity and reliability), followed by the main analysis of the structural model with the hypothesized relationships. PLS-SEM was chosen over covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) due to its less stringent requirements (Hair, Matthews, Matthews, & Sarstedt, 2017). In particular, PLS-SEM typically requires a lower sample size and can still provide robust results even with non-normally distributed data (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, & Ringle, 2019). Additionally, as the current proposed model involves multiple constructs and structural paths, PLS-SEM is better suited compared to CB-SEM (Sarstedt et al., 2022). Finally, PLS-SEM's predictive relevance for out-of-sample data can be assessed through the  $Q^2$  predict statistic, and its predictive accuracy can be evaluated using RMSE and MAE, whereas CB-SEM does not offer these capabilities (Shmueli et al., 2019; Shmueli, Ray, Velasquez Estrada, & Chatla, 2016).

## **Results**

### *Measurement Model Assessment*

It is critical to ensure the measurement model's psychometric qualities to ensure the results' validity and reliability (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2022). In the current study, the measurement model was examined in terms of its internal consistency with the values of compositive reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha, both of which exhibited values above the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Table 1). All items loaded properly on their respective constructs, though some items were removed due to cross-loading issue (strong loading on multiple factors) (Table 1). In regard to the convergent validity, it was examined using the average variance extracted (AVE). In the current model, none of the values were below 0.5, exhibiting satisfactory levels of convergent validity (Table 1). Finally, discriminant validity was assessed using heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations, where all values were below 0.90, confirming the satisfactory discriminant validity (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015) (Table 2).

**Table 1: Measurement Model Assessment Results**

	Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
ATT		0.75	0.75	0.66
ATT1	0.825			
ATT2	Deleted			
ATT3	0.823			
EE		0.86	0.86	0.70
EE1	0.862			
EE2	0.836			
EE3	0.782			
EE4	0.866			
FC		0.76	0.76	0.58
FC1	Deleted			
FC2	0.775			
FC3	Deleted			
FC4	0.733			
PE		0.76	0.77	0.59
PE1	0.796			
PE2	0.808			
PE3	0.76			
PE4	Deleted			
SAT		0.76	0.77	0.68
SAT1	0.816			
SAT2	0.814			
SAT3	Deleted			
SS		0.74	0.74	0.66
SS1	0.824			
SS2	0.78			
SS3	0.826			

**Table 2. Discriminant and Convergent Validity**

Fornell Larcker Criterion						
	ATT	EE	FC	PE	SAT	SS
ATT	0.88					
EE	0.59	0.84				
FC	0.55	0.66	0.86			
PE	0.64	0.58	0.54	0.78		
SAT	0.54	0.62	0.56	0.55	0.87	
SS	0.63	0.63	0.57	0.65	0.63	0.81
Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT)						
EE	0.75					
FC	0.809	0.889				
PE	0.89	0.762	0.816			
SAT	0.787	0.823	0.855	0.824		
SS	0.869	0.796	0.829	0.88	0.897	

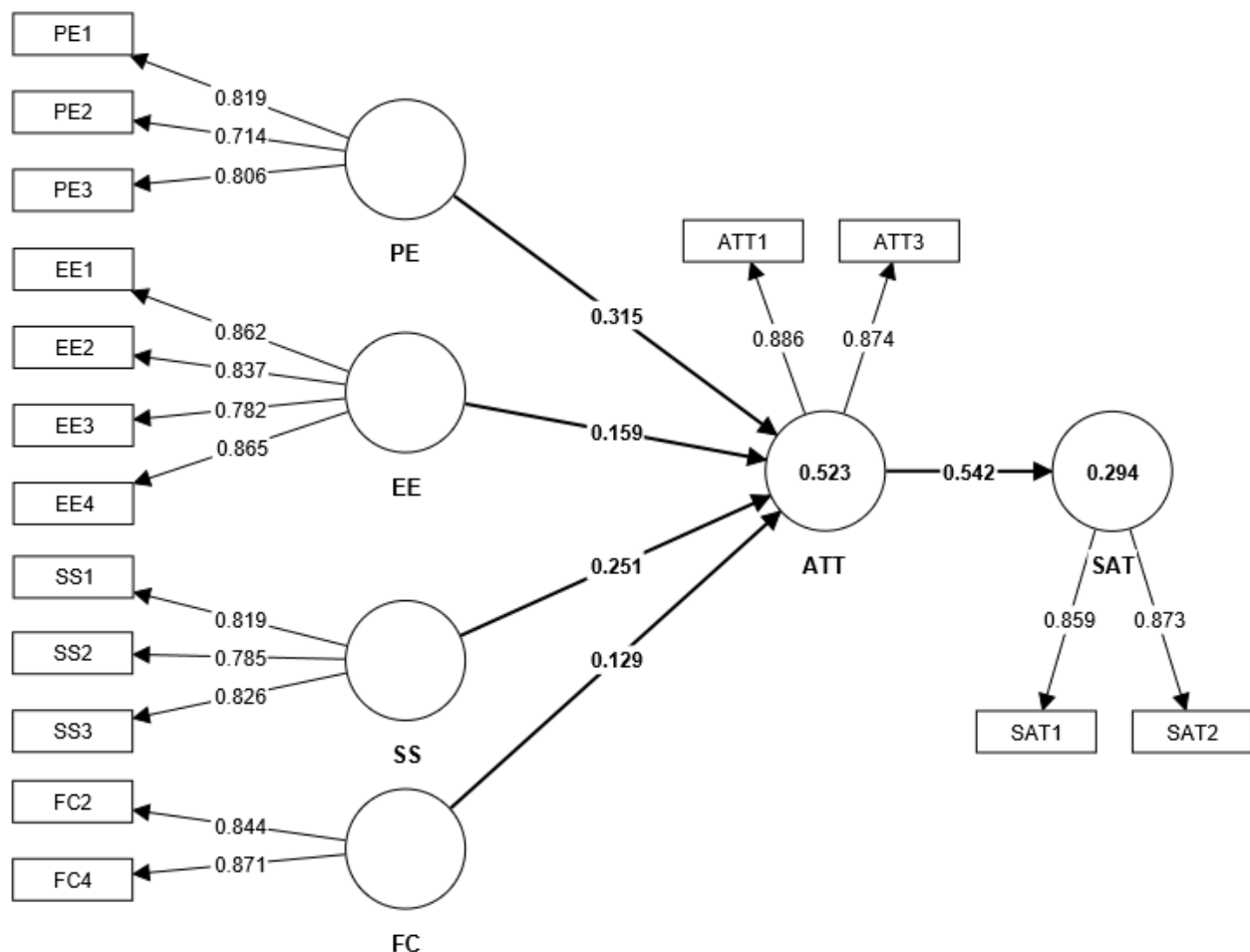
## Main analysis

The structural model explained a significant portion of the variance in attitudes towards STTs ( $R^2 = 0.52$ ) and travel satisfaction ( $R^2 = 0.29$ ). Additionally, the structural model exhibits desirable predictive relevance and accuracy, seeing that the  $Q^2$  predict values for attitudes towards STTs ( $Q^2 = 0.51$ ) and travel satisfaction ( $Q^2 = 0.39$ ) were both above zero (Hair et al., 2019). Furthermore, the model also demonstrated good predictive accuracy, with low root mean squared error (RMSE) and mean absolute error (MAE) values for both endogenous constructs.

The path coefficients and their significance levels supported all the hypothesized relationships, where performance expectancy ( $\beta = 0.315$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), effort expectancy ( $\beta = 0.159$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), social influence ( $\beta = 0.251$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and facilitating conditions ( $\beta = 0.129$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) all had significant positive effects on attitudes towards STTs, supporting H1, H2, H3, and H4, respectively. Attitudes towards STTs had a strong positive influence on travel satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.542$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting H5.

Furthermore, mediation analysis shows that there are significant indirect effects from all UTAUT factors on SAT through ATT, supporting all hypotheses from H6a-d. Specifically, performance expectancy had a significant indirect effect on SAT ( $\beta = 0.171$ ,  $p < .001$ ), suggesting that travelers who believe the STTs will enhance their performance are more likely to have a positive attitude towards it, leading to greater satisfaction. Social Influence also had a significant indirect effect on SAT ( $\beta = 0.136$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that the perceived social pressure to use STTs influences satisfaction through its impact on user attitudes. Facilitating conditions demonstrated a significant indirect effect on SAT ( $\beta = 0.070$ ,  $p < .019$ ). When travelers perceive the system to be easy to use and well-supported, they also show more positive attitudes that contribute to higher satisfaction. Finally, effort expectancy also had a significant, indirect effect on SAT ( $\beta = 0.086$ ,  $p < .003$ ), suggesting that perceived ease of use influences satisfaction through its impact on attitudes.





**Figure 1: PLS-SEM Results**

## Discussion & Implications

The purpose of the present study was to examine the antecedents and consequences of STTs adoption, based on the UTAUT framework. The findings reveal a significant influence of the UTAUT constructs on travelers' attitudes towards STTs, consistent with previous studies that have applied the UTAUT framework in different technological contexts (Gupta et al., 2018; Palau-Saumell et al., 2019).

More specifically, the significant influence of performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions on travelers' attitudes towards STTs (H1-H4) is consistent with the UTAUT framework (Venkatesh et al., 2003). It is reasonable to assert that travelers who perceive STTs as useful, easy to use, socially endorsed, and supported by necessary resources and infrastructure are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward these technologies.

Regarding the significant positive relationship between travelers attitudes towards STTs and the respective satisfaction (H5), this finding aligns with Um and Chung (2021) and others that reported a positive influence of STTs on travelers (Balakrishnan et al., 2023; Chang, 2022). Afterall, attitudes are a key determinant of behavioral outcomes (Ajzen, 1991), and how individuals perceive these technologies can lead to enhanced travel satisfaction. As denoted earlier, STTs has the potential to enhance tourists experience by providing a more customized and seamless experience to its users.

In addition to the direct effects of UTAUT that most of the previous studies emphasize, the present study extends the framework by further examining the indirect effects of the UTAUT constructs on travel

satisfaction. All mediation analyses were confirmed, which indicates that attitudes towards STTs partially mediate the relationship between UTAUT constructs and travel satisfaction. Available evidence has focused on its direct effects on different aspects of the travel experience (Huang, Goo, Nam, & Yoo, 2017; Wang, Xiang, & Fesenmaier, 2016), whereas the current study highlights the indirect effects through the formation of positive attitudes. Clearly, the impact of STTs on travel satisfaction cannot be solely based on the functional benefits but extends to other psychological processes that determine travelers' perceptions and evaluations of their experience.

Taken together, the current study makes important theoretical contributions, such as extending the UTAUT by including attitudes as a mediator, which provides a greater understanding of the underlying psychological processes associated with technology adoption. Additionally, it extends the UTAUT to STTs that have been overlooked in the literature. In terms of practical implications, it is clearly evident from the results of the present study that STTs offer clear benefits and value to travelers and should be managed with the utmost diligence by DMOs. The priority should be designing STTs in line with the main constructs of UTAUT to enhance travelers experience and satisfaction.

## Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

There are some limitations associated with the current study that can be improved future research. Despite of the number of active users in the data collection platform, it is predominantly used by Chinese citizens, which restricts the generalizability of the results to a specific cultural context. It is recommended that future research replicate the current study in a culturally different context to examine the cultural differences in the adoption and impact of STTs. The current study has limited to a generic term of STTs (with some examples provided to the respondents. Future research could examine the same model as proposed in the current study but with STTs identified by the users themselves. Finally, there are moderating variables that were not accounted for in the present study that could have affected the results. It is important to identify these boundary conditions that affect the adoption of STTs and their impact on travelers' experience.

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# NATURE-BASED AND ECOTOURISM OPERATORS' MOTIVATIONS AND BARRIERS TO ECO-CERTIFICATION

Georgia Snare<sup>a</sup> and Aaron Tkaczynski<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>The University of Queensland

## ABSTRACT

Tourists are increasingly seeking sustainable tourism experiences. Eco-certification provides tourists with assurance that a tourism product is meeting an accepted standard of sustainability. Despite research focusing on tourists' perceptions of eco-certification, there is a lack of understanding of the motivations and barriers to eco-certification from an operators' perspective. These research gaps provide the impetus for this study. Operators' motivations and barriers to eco-certification were uncovered through in-depth semi-structured interviews with nature-based and ecotourism operators from the Noosa and Scenic Rim regions in Australia. Findings revealed each operator held diverse, personalised, and deep-seated motivations and barriers to eco-certification. Five external and three internal motivations were observed, and seven barriers were discovered. Research implications include tourism operators being better prepared for the post COVID-19 transition to offer more sustainable tourism experiences.

**Keywords:** *eco-certification, motivations, barriers, Noosa, Scenic Rim*

## Introduction

Eco-certification has arisen to encourage and promote sustainability and provide assurance that a tourism product is meeting an accepted standard against environmental, social, cultural, and economic sustainability indicators (Esparon et al., 2014; Spenceley & Bien, 2013). As eco-certifications are primarily voluntary, the result the uptake of certification remains a personal and business decision rather than a regulatory requirement (Black & Crabtree, 2007). This poses a challenge to certification bodies to incentivise and motivate businesses to participate in certification schemes.

Despite the rapid rise of eco-certification schemes, there have been only a select number of studies principally investigating operators' motivations and barriers to sustainable tourism and eco-certifications around the world (Flagstad et al., 2022; Mzembe et al., 2020). To date, only one study has been conducted in an Australian context (Matysek & Kriwoken, 2003), a country marketed for its natural experiences (Tourism Australia, 2023). Additionally, there has been no known academic literature investigating tourism operators' eco-certification motivations and barriers since COVID-19. Ecotourism Australia's (2020) State of the Industry Report conducted in the wake of the 2019/20 bushfires and COVID-19 lockdowns revealed that 59% of the 104 eco certified and applying operators and destinations were investing their time during the lockdown to review and improve their operations and 38% of businesses were pivoting their direction to become more sustainable. This suggests that the lockdown period has afforded ecotourism businesses to develop more sustainable options in line with rising consumer demand.

The aim of this study is to explore nature-based tourism and ecotourism operators' motivations and barriers to eco-certification uptake post COVID-19 in action. To support this aim, the following research objectives were developed.

1. To understand why nature-based and ecotourism operators are motivated to attain eco-certification.

2. To identify the barriers to eco-certification experienced by nature-based and ecotourism operators.

## Methods

The context for this study were two regions (Scenic Rim and Noosa) within South-East Queensland, Australia. These two regions were selected based on their involvement with the Eco Destination Certification program in Scenic Rim (Ecotourism Australia, n.d.) and EarthCheck Sustainable Destination program in Noosa (EarthCheck, n.d.). Semi-structured interviews were conducted online via Zoom to capture participants' thoughts, feelings and/or experiences relating to their motivations and barriers towards eco-certification. Interviews ran between January and March 2023 and on average, lasted for 35 minutes. Interview questions were separated into two streams depending on whether the operator was eco-certified or not. For example, for eco-certified operators the following two questions were asked (1) Can you tell me a bit about what motivated you and/or your organisation to pursue eco-certification? (2) Did you experience any barriers to eco-certification? If so, could you elaborate on some that you have been faced with? For non-certified operators, the following questions were asked (1) Do you think there are any barriers for either your or other businesses getting certified? (2) Do you have any future intention (motivations) for eco-certification? This process was applied as non-certified operators would not be able to answer questions related to the role of certification in the business and eco-certified operators would not be able to answer why they do not have certification.

Eco-certified operators were identified by using Ecotourism Australia's Green Travel Guide. To identify non-certified operators, the local and regional tourism websites were consulted. Twenty-nine tourism operators were identified, with 11 representing the sample (see Table 1). The reasons operators chose not to participate included being too busy, the manager was on holidays, and lack of interest. To preserve participants' anonymity, they were each assigned a participant code based on their location of operation, where 'N' represents Noosa and 'SR' represents Scenic Rim.

**Table 4: Participant Profile**

Participant Code	Business Type	Number of Employees	Year Operation Established	Certification Status	Level of Certification	Year Certified
N1	Tours	11	2011	eco certified	Nature Tourism	2012
N2	Tours	8	2002	eco certified	Advanced Ecotourism	2018
N3	Tours	12	1998	Cancelled	-	-
N4	Tours	2	2001	non eco-certified	-	-
SR1	Tours	3	1997	eco certified	Advanced Ecotourism	2000
SR2	Accommodation	40	1933	eco certified	Advanced Ecotourism	1997
SR3	Accommodation + Attraction	100	1999	Applicant	-	-
SR4	Tours	1	2009	eco certified	Ecotourism	2009



SR5	Accommodation	6	1991	eco certified	Advanced Ecotourism	2002
SR6	Accommodation	130	1926	eco certified	Advanced Ecotourism	1998
SR7	Attraction	20 - 25	2015	non eco-certified	-	-

Data were analysed using iterative thematic content analysis in a five-phased iterative cycle (Yin, 2015). Inductive coding allowed themes to emerge from the data itself using the participants' own words (Skjott Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). The transcripts were disassembled into fragments by assigning descriptive codes that represented key ideas to fragments of the transcripts (Mason et al., 2010). These codes were then grouped into broader categories allowing the researcher to reassemble and rearrange the data. Categories were then combined to create overarching themes of motivations and barriers. To effectively display the data, tables were created to first summarise the categories represented in each transcript, then arrange the categories against the related theme, and finally map the themes against each participant (Cloutier & Ravasi, 2021).

## Results

### *Motivations*

The eight themes related to motivations for eco-certification are summarised in Table 2. All interviewees discussed their motivations for eco-certification, apart from two non-certified operators (N3, N4) who expressed no motivation for eco-certification.

**Table 2. Motivations for eco-certification**

	N1	N2	N3	N4	SR1	SR2	SR3	SR4	SR5	SR6	SR7
<b>External</b>											
Validation	ü	ü			ü	ü	ü		ü	ü	ü
Credibility	ü				ü			ü			ü
Marketing					ü		ü	ü			
Quality assurance							ü	ü	ü		
Influence from networks							ü				ü
<b>Internal</b>											
Business development tool	ü	ü				ü	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Personal commitment	ü	ü				ü			ü		ü
Organisational alignment	ü							ü			

### External motivations

Most (8) participants sought *validation* as a motivation for attaining eco-certification as it presented a means to strengthen and verify sustainability claims. “*When I heard about Ecotourism Australia, well, it was sort of a way of just fortifying that, or sort of strengthening the idea that we really were eco*” (SR1). This was echoed by another who said, “*It becomes important for our business that we not only say we are sustainable, but we are able to demonstrate that we are working towards that*” (SR3). Seeking *credibility* was noted by four participants as a motivation for pursuing eco-certification. One respondent stated, “*I did think it would help with the credibility of the business, which it did*” (N1) and another expressed “*The reputation of the brand, that’s important*” (SR4).

Another motivator was the perceived *marketing* benefit of eco-certification. For example, “*The product that there is in the Green Travel Guide, it’s got this eco-certification... So, it adds to the value of the brand*” (SR4). Furthermore, one participant, currently in the process of applying for eco-certification, stated, “*It would be silly to pretend it’s not also a good marketing tool*” (SR3). Three participants saw the opportunity to provide *quality assurance* to guests as eco-certification motivation. One participant mentioned “*I think people would be generally assured to see if a product has been eco-certified carries quality ticks, and all overall scheme of things, there’s a better chance than not that it’s a good product*” (SR4). Another participant related eco-certification as an important step to achieving their organisational aim of maximising the guest experience. They expressed, “*We have to provide exceptional experiences for our guests in a natural environment. Now, and we have to do that [eco-certification] if we’re going to continue to do it in a sustainable way*” (SR3).

The *influence of networks* was a significant factor motivating for two operators to pursue eco-certification. One individual articulated, “*There’s a couple of ecolodges, eco-farms around here that have started up that I’ve spoken to those guys... and I thought ‘Oh well, I’ll go through this process and see what it’s like’*” (SR7). Another mentioned “*We were probably made aware of it through our local tourism bodies, and I think it was generally agreed by [wife’s name] and myself, and our management team that, ‘Yeah, that’s a good idea’*” (SR3).

### Internal motivations

The majority (8) of participants saw eco-certification as a business development tool. One participant cited, “*We had no systems in place, you know, it was just all ad hoc. We had worm farms through the waste, and we had all these good things going on, but it was never documented or consistently applied*” (SR2). Another participant they reflected on the opportunity for continuous development

through the criteria, “*I like that there’s a base criteria and I like that you can improve on that, and if you’re a good business person, I think my wife talks around, with this continuous improvement*” (SR5).

Five participants were motivated because of their personal commitment to sustainability, believing that eco-certification would improve the sustainability practices of their business. One participant said, “*If you were motivated to become more sustainable, it (eco-certification) helps you become more sustainable*” (N2). For others, the eco-certification was a manifestation of their personal beliefs. One individual who spoke extensively on their emotional connection to the land and environmental sustainability stated, “*It’s our personal and business ethos that drives it. Ecotourism Australia manifests that in a recognition*” (SR5).

Three participants were motivated to achieve eco-certification because of their alignment with the values and mission of Ecotourism Australia. For example, one participant said, “*I’m going to continue to pay for it, and continue to be part of the program, because I believe in the program’s mission*” (N1). For others, their personal involvement with Ecotourism Australia was a motivation and one respondent shared the involvement of a family member was an important influence, “*It wasn’t until my brother got involved with it, that he said, ‘I think we should get certified’*” (SR6).

### Barriers

Most (8) participants identified *lack of motivation* as a barrier to pursuing eco-certification (see Table 3). One participant stated intent from the owner was necessary, “*Intent. A strong intent, I suppose. That’s what’s needed. I mean, anything you implement in a business has to come from the top*” (N2). The idea that eco-certification is too hard and overwhelming to achieve was also shared. “*I think a lot of people get overwhelmed by these things as well, that it’s just too hard*” (N1).

**Table 3. Frequency of barriers to eco-certification**

	N1	N2	N3	N4	SR 1	SR2	SR 3	SR4	SR 5	SR6	SR7
Lack of motivation	ü	ü	ü	ü		ü			ü	ü	ü
Resourcing challenges	ü	ü	ü			ü	ü	ü			ü
Scepticism	ü		ü	ü						ü	ü
Non-requirement	ü	ü		ü				ü			ü
Competing priorities	ü		ü	ü		ü					ü
Challenges with criteria	ü				ü			ü	ü	ü	
Lack of awareness and understanding	ü			ü			ü				

Seven participants expressed *resourcing challenges* as an eco-certification barrier. One participant was looking to progress to the Advanced Ecotourism level, “*We can get our advanced. I just have not had the time to sit down and do the paperwork*” (N1). The expense of eco-certification was a challenge as “*If we pay more money for eco branding, are people going to... are we able to pass that on to consumers. I don’t think so, we are already too expensive*” (SR7). Lack of human resources were a resource challenge. “*When you’ve got over a hundred staff, it’s easier to find somebody with*

*half a day to put into doing something. When you've got 40 or 50 staff, you just do not have that luxury*" (SR3). One participant expressed eco-certification is a bigger cost for smaller businesses, *"For a bigger business that's not such a big cost. But for a small business, mom-and-dad type business, that's a big cost"* (SR2). This was echoed by another interviewee, *"It's easier for us now that it was, say five years ago"* and when prompted why they replied, *"Because we're bigger"* (SR3).

Five participants identified scepticism as a significant eco-certification barrier. One non-certified operator expressed concern about businesses potentially being untruthful in their documentation, *"If you undeservedly attain it, maybe. So you might be able to tell them what they want to hear"* (N4). Another discussed being able to mislead customers by having eco-certification, *"A token which allows them to sell stuff to consumers and, I suppose, bluff them that they're actually doing something environmentally credible"* (SR7). Another believed the significance of eco-certification was watered down as operators increasingly gained certification. They said, *"If everyone gets it, it sort of lessens the value of it"* (N4).

Five participants also stated the non-requirement was a barrier for eco-certification. One participant speculated, *"Membership of industry groups, like Ecotourism Australia, people might say, 'Why should I pay \$550? I don't have to do it, so why should I get certified'"* (SR4) whereas another mentioned the lack of funding available to transition to sustainability, *"There needs to be subsidies for consultants to come into businesses, and help businesses make small changes, go through the certifications"* (N1). A non-certified operator also didn't see a personal need for eco-certification, *"It wasn't something that we thought that we really needed to get"* (N4).

Competing priorities was cited by five interviewees. One individual highlighted that financial stress is an impediment to eco-certification, *"Our efforts into more and more environmental sustainability came when I wasn't stressed out of my mind worrying about where the next bank payment was going to come from"* (SR5). Financial survival priority after the COVID-19 pandemic was also noted, *"We've got, I suppose, bigger problems with financial survival. We've had COVID-19, we've had bushfires. We've had everything thrown at us in the last couple of years just to survive"* (SR7). The demand of meeting customer service standards was also expressed as a priority over attaining certification. One participant shared, *"The customer service side of it is so demanding to get right, that a lot of, and naturally, and they should, operators will always prioritise customer service and looking after their team over diving their business forward"* (N1).

Five participants also noted challenges with criteria as an eco-certification barrier. One participant found the structure inflexible, stating *"Butting up against a black and white system like certification always has its inherent challenges"* (SR5). One participant mentioned having to switch to individually packed food items because of health and safety regulations difficult as it conflicted with the eco-certification criteria, *"Some of the things that I wanted to do for environmental sustainability, even though we were doing it hygienically, we weren't allowed to do"* (SR1). Another stated eco-certification was difficult as, *"It wasn't something that we did overnight. It took a while for it to implement all the changes that we did implement"* (N2).

Lack of awareness and understanding was as a barrier to eco-certification for three respondents. One individual stated, *"I didn't know I could. Probably I just haven't checked whether we're actually eligible for it"* (N4). For one non-certified operator they said how the certification process was confusing to begin and understand, *"I guess I didn't go far into it because then there's all these different layers and there's none of the same, and it seemed also quite convoluted as far as where we fit"* (N4). Another interviewee expressed how the level of understanding of sustainability as well as certification could be a barrier, *"I guess for other operators who aren't so fanatical about it, it would be time and education"* (N1).

## Discussion and Conclusions

### *Why nature-based and ecotourism operators are motivated to attain eco-certification*

In understanding why nature-based and ecotourism operators are motivated to attain eco-certification, it was concluded that respondents were motivated for both external and internal reasons. Validation, the most noted external motivation in this study is a key aspect of sustainability certification as a certification body is consistently found in the literature to provide the assurance to customers of the business' conformity is at an accepted standard (Dunk et al., 2016; Spenceley & Bien, 2013). Most operators were already implementing sustainability practices prior to gaining eco-certification and were seeking validation for these practices. A desire to enhance the image of a business through voluntary certification (Chi et al., 2022; Font et al., 2016) was identified in this study. As four of the operators who identified credibility also indicated they were motivated for eco-certification as a validation of their practices, this indicates that not only do these operators wish to be perceived as green by visitors but also have the validation to back their practices up.

Marketing benefits are a significant motivator for attaining eco-certification (e.g. Margaryan & Stensland's, 2017) and the eco-certification schemes such as those employed in this study are designed as a market instrument through the awarding of a certification logo to compliant businesses (Ayuso, 2006; Honey & Rome, 2001). The ability to improve the guest experience and provide quality assurance was also a motivator for eco-certification (Flagstad et al., 2022; Margaryan & Stensland, 2017) was also confirmed in this study. As sustainable and nature-based tourism in Australia increases (Ecotourism Australia, n.d), demand for high-quality experiences may rise, leading to higher sustainability performance and potentially also higher uptake of eco-certification programs. Local peak bodies and industry associations can have a significant effect on uptake of eco-certifications due to being perceived as a trustworthy source by operators (Berghoef & Dodds, 2013; Delmas & Gergaud, 2014). These motivations were confirmed in this study with the influence from peers and networks having a significant influence in making Scenic Rim and Noosa operators aware of eco-certification and giving them the encouragement required to take a step that is potentially risky and uncertain, especially if they see the success of other operators. Therefore, local tourism bodies should continue to promote the benefits that eco-certification can provide to all operators in a region that emphasises sustainable practices.

Business development represented an eco-certification motivation, and participants placed priority on the capability of eco-certification as a business tool. Based on Dunk et al.'s, (2016) argument, Ecotourism Australia should continue to promote the business development tool benefits of certification and manage expectations of potential applicants to ensure congruency between anticipated and realised benefits. Conversely, Font et al. (2016) determined that lifestyle motivations were among the most common motivations for acting sustainably and in their study the lifestyle cluster reported undertaking the most sustainable practices as it implicitly formed part of their everyday business operations. In many cases, the personal beliefs of the owner/manager in this study have carried over into the business' decision to adopt eco-certification. Wanting to educate and inspire others out of their own personal commitment to sustainability was also a frequently noted motivation for eco-certification. This finding was similarly identified in Dunk et al. (2016) that linked these aspects to demonstrating commitment to sustainability. However, organisational alignment was a motive for a few participants who identified with the mission and values of Ecotourism Australia or had had personal involvement with the organisation. This is a new area not previously touched on in the literature, suggesting that this may not be an important motivation relevant for other certification programs. It also hints at the unique nature of Ecotourism Australia, which was created for industry, by industry and based on the vision of several key individuals.

### *What barriers to eco-certification experienced by nature-based and ecotourism operators*

In answering the second research objective, lack of motivation (Alvarez-Garcia et al., 2018; Sampaio et al., 2012) and lack of motivated staff to maintain certification (Diez-Busto et al., 2022; Tzeschentke et al., 2008) are noted as leading barriers to eco-certification in this study. Two non-certified participants stated they were not interested in pursuing certification in the future as they remained focused on recovering from COVID-19 impacts. Furthermore, the difficulty of eco-certification has



been discussed as a deterrent to certification attainment (Diez-Busto et al., 2022; Matysek & Kriwoken, 2003) and was also prevalent in this study. Participants did not seek eco-certification due to the volume of work required for the application or to progress to a higher level. Similarly to the literature, several operators expressed the size of their business, and the limited number of available staff was a barrier to eco-certification. The prevalence of micro and small to medium sized businesses in the Australian tourism industry (Tourism Research Australia, 2023), which mirrors the sample respondents in this study, also suggests that the industry within these regions is too understaffed to manage customer demand for tourism as well as maintain eco-certification requirements. This indicates that eco-certification is potentially over-intensive for time-poor, small operators who do not have the time or staff to dedicate to completing the application in addition to their daily operations and business administration. To minimise perceptions and experiences of extreme difficulty in attaining eco-certification, it is recommended that certification bodies could increase applicant support and tourism industry bodies should assist operators to enhance their green practices to give them the ground-level sustainability foundation for eco-certification.

The eco-certification cost was noted within this study as too high and a disincentive for participation in the program. The expense of certification is a widely recognised barrier in the literature (Alvarez-Garcia et al., 2018; Chi et al., 2022) although all operators shared examples of sustainability practices already implemented in their business, demonstrating at least a basic level of commitment to good environmental practices. Similarly, scepticism surrounding the trustworthiness and watered down meaning of eco-certification were identified within this study. Lack of information or transparency about the eco-certification program and its ethical uses could be contributing to mistrust in this instance. Furthermore, non-requirement of certification from a regulatory, customer demand and personal standpoint are noted barriers in this study and the literature. Without a compulsory requirement, the uptake of certification remains a challenge for certification bodies as the decision remains entirely voluntary for the operator (Dunk et al., 2016; Margaryan & Stensland, 2017) and businesses can choose not to follow a certification program if not required to operate their tourism experience.

The limited marketing benefit of certification was tied to the non-requirement of certification from the customer demand perspective. While sustainable travel studies by organisations such as Booking.com (2023) have consistently found that consumer desire for sustainable tourism is rising, operators, at least those who participated in the interviews, are not seeing the results of this. Participants also expressed how they did not believe eco-certification was a priority for customers and that a significant portion of customers were even unaware of the existence and meaning of eco-certification. Font et al. (2016) proposed the perceived lack of customer demand meant that several operators did not view eco-certification as a necessity for their business. They also found that many small tourism businesses were shy to communicate and promote their sustainability initiatives to attract customers (Font et al., 2016), which was reflected in the interviews as operators expressed their limited marketing efforts around eco-certification.

Difficulty with eco-certification criteria was another noted challenge to overcome. This is supported within the literature where operators considered certification schemes too strict (Berghoef & Dodds, 2013) or too rigid (Flagstad et al., 2022; Jarvis et al., 2010). It could be suggested that eco-certification programs need both standardised, core criteria as well as an element of customisation to allow for the diversity of tourism experiences to make it more appealing to new applicants and promote retention for existing operators. Respondents also indicated that the inflexibility and nation-wide application of eco-certification meant that it isn't sensitive to localised challenges. Although eco-certification follows specific criteria recognised by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, this suggests that certification bodies could look at localising requirements to cater for specific challenges (e.g. need for training of staff) in diverse regions.

Lack of awareness and understanding was noted by non-certified participants in this research and in the literature (Jarvis et al., 2010; Sampaio et al., 2012). Responses suggested that certification should be reserved for those who excel in sustainability and ecotourism practices which echoes Matysek and



Kriwoken's (2003) finding. Providing accessible information and education for operators about sustainability and ecotourism, is suggested to increase eco-certification uptake (Jarvis et al., 2010).

#### *Limitations and opportunities for future research*

This study is not without limitations. By interviewing only nature-based and ecotourism operators from Noosa and Scenic Rim, this potentially limited the scope of businesses to gain diverse insights from other regions. As both the number of interviewees and size of the businesses targeted were small, all full motivations and barriers relevant to eco-certification within these two regions may not have been identified. A future research opportunity would be to extend the study areas to other localities within and external to Australia to determine if similar or different motivations and barriers are identified.

One interesting finding was the belief that eco-certification returned minimal marketing benefit. However, most operators were not actively promoting their certification status. This self-feeding cycle offers an interesting question surrounding the value and promotion of eco-certification. Research could investigate the marketing benefit of eco-certification with operators concurrently with the preferences of customers. A greater appreciation of the value of eco-certification from an operator and tourist perspective is needed to better understand the demand and benefit of eco-certification and ensure promoted benefits are actualised.

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# RECASTING PERSONAL NOSTALGIA AND SUBJECTIVE VITALITY WITH AN ILLUSTRATIVE CASE STUDY OF MACAO

Lianping Ren<sup>a</sup> and Cora Un In WONG<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Macao University of Tourism, Macao China, <sup>b</sup>Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Macao Polytechnic University

## ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this article is to recast personal nostalgia's role in the realm of tourist motivations, a task meant to demarcate personal nostalgia-inspired tourism as an idiosyncratic borderline form of tourism. It contributes some conceptual clarifications warranted by the fact that, in the tourism literature in which 'nostalgia' is often related to place attachment or induced by historic belongingness. Current findings shed light on the extant literature of personal nostalgic tourism which is often entangled with just a sight or spatial attachment. The current research highlights the important dimension of being 'activity-based nostalgic', which is indeed the key seed that contributes to ones' subjective vitality which has not been put under scrutiny in the existing literature. For the sake of illuminating the conceptual discussion, thematic interviews with 12 tourists who revisited Macao were conducted for revealing their purposes and activities of enticing back to Macao via personal nostalgia.

**Keywords:** *Personal Nostalgia, vitality nostalgia, subjective wellbeing, Macao.*

## Introduction

This article is concerned with tourism motivated by personal nostalgia, which is a subjective, an emotional form of tourism. Personal nostalgic tourism is a journey that makes an individual return to his/her past. It consists of revisiting a destination that one has known in the past and remembers well (Hsu et al., 2007; Shi et al., 2021). The nostalgic feeling is triggered by some cues, a kind of involuntary recall from one's autobiographical memory. The scale of personal nostalgia developed by Marchegiani and Phau (2011, p. 31) contains dimensions that center on one's "memories of good times from my past". Gitelson & Kerstetter (1992) stated too that 80% of their informants had revisited as adults the location of a childhood holiday. In the tourism context that is of interest here, revisiting a destination that one already knows *prima facie* precludes, most of the activities that sightseeing tourists typically indulge in (Sedikides et al., 2008). According to Sedikes et al. (2008), stimuli for arousing one's personal nostalgia could come from external, such as a familiar place, or alternatively, from internal inspirations, such as one's past emotional state that is associated with a place. While the extant literature is informative, previous research studying on the cues that trigger personal nostalgia focused more on revisiting 'a particular place' or emotion that is associated with a place (Zheng et al., 2021) rather than re-enacting the 'liturgical process'. The latter is remembered in one's memory and as the main 'marker', in Leiper's (1990) word, triggers personal nostalgia (Li & McKercher, 2016; Newman et al., 2020). Thus far little research has examined what do tourists do to gain a sense of personal nostalgia in the event that the exact memorable nuclei no longer exist due to social and cultural changes, in addition to a city's revamp and

urbanization. How could a sense of personal nostalgia be triggered in this regard has become the core focus of this conference paper.

The core objective of this article is to examine (1) when there is a removal or relocations of the memorable nuclei, what do personal nostalgic tourists look for in such a nostalgic journey. (2) How could one's personal nostalgia be triggered or reconnected with sceneries that no longer exists, and how in this regard can personal nostalgia connote a sense of subjective wellbeing? Findings of the current study complement the existing personal nostalgia literature. In particular, findings lend support to the initial claim that personal nostalgia is a distinct form of tourism (Marchegiani & Phau, 2011). In addition, findings show that "being activity-based nostalgic" is an overlooked dimension which is deemed to be equally important as 'being nuclei nostalgic' and 'spatial nostalgic'. to one's personal nostalgia and subjective vitality.

## Literature review

### *Personal Nostalgia*

Nostalgia *per se* has received much attention. While originally viewed as a 'medical' condition in need of remedy, its occasional occurrence is now viewed as a common psychological practice which can contribute to one's subjective wellbeing (Marchegiani & Phau, 2011; Ryan & Frederick, 1997; Stephan, Sedikides & Wildschut, 2018). Here it is important to distinguish between personal nostalgia and historical nostalgia for the latter is not the focus of the current research. Machu Picchu is not a heritage to a Frenchman. If those tourists are motivated by an emotion-laden yearning to connect with the cradle of their civilization or with their ancestry, they are cultural or historical and heritage nostalgia tourists. In contrast, personal nostalgia tourists are altogether different as their nostalgic responses are induced by individuals' past memories rather than the history or heritage resources of a place (Havlena & Holak, 1991). Motivations of personal nostalgia are on the other realm. Davis (1979) reports that a personal nostalgic journey helps reaffirm one's identity and Tannock (1995) interprets the ultimate goal of a personal nostalgic journey is to regain a sense of vitality, the meaning of life, and 'being young once again'. What matters in personal nostalgia is not the nature of the nucleus itself but the existence of long-term memories associated with it which can generate personal nostalgic feelings and subjective vitality (Ryan & Frederick, 1997). In other words, the "*liturgical process*" (what has been done) matters more in such a 'secular pilgrimage journey'.

### *Goal-Setting Theory*

If personal nostalgia is not related to culture or heritage (Stern, 1992), but to gain a sense of vitality and meaning of life via revisiting a place or space that is of significant to one's past and that can contribute to one's subjective wellbeing, then it is indeed prevalent to reveal what goals are set by such tourists that can trigger their personal nostalgic feeling and subjective vitality. Existing research often suggests that personal nostalgia is related to a specific place that is of significant meaning to an individual, which might be bereft of any cultural interests (Haylena & Holak, 1991). Ricky-Boyd (2013, p. 683) argues, "Place matters in existential authenticity", and for personal nostalgia-induced tourists, place appears to be

everything. It is a nostalgic recall from actual autobiographical memory, thus requiring an individual to travel to a specific locus. Subjective vitality in this regard is associated with a sense of agency, a memorial place *per se*, which can facilitate aliveness and personal wellbeing (Shi et al., 2021). In other words, tourists intentionally travel to a particular place with a specific goal to feel (re)vitalized. The subjective vitality thus emanates from and expresses the self, which is not an outcome achievable via a random visitation to a destination (Davis, 1979; Li & McKercher, 2016).

Edwin Locke developed *Goal-setting theory* in 1968 which is originally an organizational psychology theory. This theory is often used in organization behavior and students' engagement (see Huang, et al., 2019). According to this theory, goals that are clearly defined with specific and challenging objectives set are more motivating than vague goals or easy goals. Oh, Assuf and Baloglu (2016) explain that tourists gain a higher satisfaction and stronger motivation to engage in a particular tourist activity when goals are properly set. Bagozzi and Dholakia (1999), suggest that goal-driven consumption theory makes tourism purchases more engaging as the specific goals can help facilitate tourists' decision making on what, where and how to visit a destination (Bettman 1979; Higgins 2002). The theory of goal-setting theory in this regard is particularly important to personal nostalgic tourism for tourists who engage in such form of tourism do not undertake random visitations to any nucleus. But any visitation that is associated with the past and can facilitate a tourist's subjective wellbeing. Reexperiencing one's autobiographical memory via a '*liturgical process*' appears to be a common practice. This is the reason why the extant literature related to personal nostalgia is often associated with a place (Chen, et al., 2014), with which an individuals' affection and nostalgic emotion is connected. The big inquiry then arises. In the event that there is a nucleus removal or relocation, how would personal nostalgic tourism take place? Particularly when visiting a particular place is set as 'the goal' of the journey. Thus far, no direct research has applied the notion of goal-setting theory in explaining the 'cues' or 'markers' that would lure personal nostalgic tourists to visit a particular destination. The current research aims to supplement.

#### *Macao as an illustration*

As a former Portuguese colony dating back to the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, Macao is endowed with an architectural heritage displaying a unique blend of Portuguese and Chinese styles. Macao is thus of considerable interest as a cultural destination. Large hotel/casino complexes have been built since 2005 on Taipa and Colane islands. Peninsular Macao is also a residential living city where most of the population of the territory lives, with a lot of cafés, restaurants, shops and pedestrian areas. Henceforth, 'Old Macao' refers to peninsular Macao as it was before 2005, about the time at which changes became noticeable due the gaming concession right which was opened in 2002. For instance, Sands casino was inaugurated in Macao in 2005 (Feng, Wong & Ren, 2023). This was a watershed for peninsular Macao, that used to be almost tourist-free, and whose sidewalks and public spaces are now crowded to saturation by hordes of tourists, mostly from mainland China. In 2019, Macao received some 39.41 million tourists before the pandemic while in 2023, the city in total received 28.21 tourists (DSEC, 2024).



Therefore, Macao, the research locus that has been chosen for the empirical investigation of this article, is actually a destination that has been much reshaped in the course of the last two decades since its handover to China in 1999 and is opening gaming concession right. From that perspective, Macao is a good candidate for a personal nostalgia-tourism undertaken by someone who has known the ‘Old Macao’ well. By using Macao as an illustrative example, the current research aims to reveal the cues that connote tourists’ personal nostalgia and contribute to tourists’ subjective wellbeing.

## Methodology

The current research adopted a qualitative framework in which thematic interviews were launched in 2023 from February to April. Interviewees were invited via friends’ referral as well as advertisement on social media platforms including Line and Wechat in order to reveal what and how their personal nostalgic feelings were triggered by revisiting Macao, in particular how their sense of subjective vitality was obtained in their revisit journeys. This meant interviewing tourists who were in the territory and had either visited Macao at an earlier occasion before 2005, or had stayed in Macao before the pandemic. While a short list of questions had been prepared beforehand, the interviews quickly turned into much unstructured ones that were practically conversations, with the informants needing to be given little direction for them to share their perceptions and feelings of personal nostalgia that one can obtain from Macao and how. Each interview lasted on average 40 minutes at café lounges and via phones, depending on the informants’ availability. Each informant was given a token of appreciation which is 12.5 US dollars’ worth for contributing to the research. The interviews were conducted in Cantonese, Mandarin and English. Interview questions revolved around what they were looking for in this nostalgic journey. In particular they were asked how their sense of personal nostalgia was obtained when the nuclei that they missed had vanished. Table 1 summarizes the profiles of the twelve informants. In addition, due to the fact that those informants acknowledged Macao has changed a lot in which many old nuclei that were on their wish-list to visit no longer exists. Their self-report sense of subjective vitality is also presented in Table 1 as Appendix A.

The age of informants ranged from 40s to 70s. Three of the interviewees had spent their childhood in Macao and were revisiting it for a short period after years of residence in a foreign country where they had settled. The others were people who had visited Macao as tourists, before 2005. Interview notes were transcribed into English and independently analyzed by the authors based on thematic analysis. Table 2 below illustrates the coding process. Common categories were identified and, for further meaningful interpretation, they were allocated to a common theme (Marshall and Rossman, 2014). For instance, when red bean cake shop vanished, one’s personal nostalgic feeling was evoked by undertaking activity-based nostalgia activity, that is, eating an egg tart. Though the original goal was not fully achieved, still the sense of subjective vitality was sustained at a medium level.



**Table 2** Example of the coding analysis process

Text	Initial codes	Sub-themes	Themes
Anna: I remember somewhere nearby the Ruins of St. Paul, there was a red bean cake street hawker selling red bean cakes, they were extremely delicious. Unfortunately, I could not find it this time. This is one of the things I really want to do this time. It is really a pity. I ate an egg tart instead and walked around nearby only (did not go up to Ruins of St. Paul). All shops are different now from what I remember. The toy shop that sold kites also disappeared.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No more red bean cakes. An egg tart became a substitute</li> <li>- Toy shop disappeared.</li> <li>- walked around nearby only</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No nucleus nostalgia but activity-based nostalgia was undertaken-looked for a substitute to patronize some similar food – an egg tart</li> <li>Spatial nostalgia -Wander around in that area, but did not go up to Ruins of St. Paul</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lost of familiar places, goals were not fully achieved</li> <li>- Medium nostalgic experience is felt</li> <li>- Lost of familiar places</li> </ul>
Sheng: It (Leal Senado) used to be a fun place to visit at night as those fortune tellers sat there under the balcony. I remember I paid for a blind fortune teller and he used his tortoise to do predictions for my future life. It was fun and he was accurate! However now everything has changed, the feeling is not the same, not to mention about the exact place or things to do to have the same fun like what I did some 40 years ago. To me it is a pity and not much nostalgic is felt, both in terms of the activities and what I could reconnect with this place. So I did not walk around further in that area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Everything has changed, feeling is not the same. It is a pity, not much nostalgic is felt</li> <li>- Exact nuclei of the fortune teller stall disappears</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-No activity based nostalgia nor nucleus nostalgia as the Fortune telling service vanishes</li> <li>- No spatial nostalgia: Did not walk further or around that place</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Low sense of nostalgic feeling. Disappointment.</li> </ul>

## Findings

Organizing the interview material revealed that there were basically two themes revolve around informants' personal nostalgic journey in Macao. (1) The first has to do with 'the loss of familiar places'. The bitter-sweet comments on how Macao has lost much of its charm and many shops 'disappear'. Those comments spell out the obvious changes that have taken place during the last two decades: more congestion, higher prices, crowds of tourists, etc. Macao has become more modern was repeatedly

mentioned but the informants had nothing positive to say about its new modernity, nor much negative either; they tended to simply overlook all that is new. According to the informants, the Old Macao of their memories are associated with the small shops, eateries, street hawkers, small restaurants in narrow alleys. Though the majority of the informants claimed that the cityscape of Macao remains similar to what they remembered, the substance inside is different. Perhaps as driven by the goal-driven consumption intention, some informants could not manage to achieve their goals, appear to be less satisfied in gaining a sense of nostalgic feeling and subjective wellbeing. Both Anna and Brian said that the price in general in Macao has gone up a lot and the shops that they used to visit were no longer there. Sheng commented similarly that there were not so many shops or people at the Leal Senado Square in the past and shops were distinctive selling different products or services. Dorathy corroborated and said “the shops seem to sell similar products nowadays at Leal Senado”. The similarity of the retail shops not only limits the choice of activities that those nostalgic tourists can undertake in this area, but also hampers their sense of personal nostalgia. They all expressed in common that “it is a pity” to show their ‘disappointment’, some even chose to walk away in which ‘spatial nostalgia’ was not even undertaken.

(2) In terms of goal-setting achievement, the city’s revamp and fast growth development were regarded as the major hazard for informants to get a sense of personal nostalgia. Luk, Bao and Chan highlighted the fact that though they could search in advance on the internet for the places that they would like to revisit, it is indeed hard for them to identify whether the “news on the internet” is updated or not. Their intentional search again lends support to the fact that personal nostalgic journey involves a series of intentional goal-setting. Informants were even more disappointed when they thought the familiar places still ‘exist’ after they searched on the internet. As Sam commented, “old news and updated news often are put together” on the internet and it happened to him that only when he arrived at the place where he remembered he had “very good wonton noodles long time ago”, then he realized that the shop had been closed. Emotionally speaking, Sam frankly admitted that he was disappointed and he did not even wander around that area further. Being spatial-nostalgia in this regard is not apparent. In contrast, it is a sense of activity-based nostalgia that Sam wishes to experience and in his own words “eating at the same shop with the same food is a way to experience one’s youth again”.

#### *Nuclei, spatial and activity-based nostalgia*

When all the informants responded to “what did they do” when they were again at places that were marked in their memories, three themes, including, “nuclei nostalgia”, “activity-based nostalgia” and “spatial nostalgia” naturally emerged. The three themes reflected the activities they undertook for their personal nostalgic journey as well as whether their sense of nostalgia can be satisfied. To the informants, Macao has changed a lot. To satisfy their sense of personal nostalgia in which past memories were connected with, informants often wanted to go to the exact same nuclei (shops, attractions, restaurants) where they experienced something enchanting before. However, due to a city’s revamp, social, cultural and economic changes, the exact nuclei of those old good days today have disappeared or become something new from which the informants had no connection with. Sheng’s sharing is exemplifying.

When Sheng was young, she witnessed the “interesting” and “simple” part of Macao where she could have fortune telling services at the Leal Senado Square. According to Sheng, fortune tellers had different talents, some held small birds, some kept tortoises for doing predictions for their clients. Not surprisingly, Sheng today can no longer find any fortune telling services at the Square, even though she was physically at the same location where she had fun some 40 years ago. The exact nucleus has today become a jewellery and watch shop. Because of this, Sheng said,

“to me it is a pity and not much a sense of nostalgic is felt, both in terms of the activities and what I could reconnect with this place. So I did not walk around further in that area”.

Sheng also did not try to look for fortune telling services from elsewhere in Macao. She said,

“it is meaningless, not the same because it is only when you are there and experiencing the same activity again, you feel vitalized again. It is the kind of vitality the I miss and emanates from the inner self, not (from) the spot”.

It is worthy of attention that when the exact nuclei “*tastes/presents*” differently, informants reacted to the changes differently too. Some informants, such as Anna, Brian, Candy, Sunday and Dorathy would actively engage in “activity-based nostalgia”, that is, they intentionally search for similar activities/settings from which the informants could experience ‘liveliness’ once again via the activities they had undertaken when they were young. For instance, both Candy and Sunday could not find the exact same pork chop bun shop they patronized before 2005, so they sought alternative and ate pork chop buns from another eatery which was located nearby the original eatery. Their comments show that though the buns are from a different eatery, they could still feel a high sense of nostalgia by engaging in the “*activity-process*”, that is, they intentionally looked for a bus route that can go to the Old Taipa Village in order just to eat “the buns” and “do again what they did when they were young”. In their memory, the pork chop buns were the highlight of visiting the Old Taipa Village. The change of the exact “nucleus” – anew pork chop bun eatery, did not inhibit their sense of personal nostalgia. Indeed, after eating, they explored further in that area whence they visited the Bei Di Temple. They said they practically took the same walking route as what they did in the past. By re-enacting the same ‘vitality procedure’ via activities, the couple said they were happy. The couple further commented that the village was where they had dating when they were young and spent some weekends in Macao years ago. To the couple, the activities that they did again in the current visit connote a sense of subjective vitality.

The informants clearly described that a sense of subjective vitality exists when they visit the places where the local daily life of Macao residents take place. Interestingly, they used the word ‘friendly’ or ‘hospitable’ to describe the locals who surrounded them even if those locals did little more than simply being there. Several informants commented that, after all, the “Old Macao still exists but one has to look for it”. Both Sisi and Peter managed to revisit the residential areas of Macao and lucky enough, they both managed to find the places and intentionally visited those nuclei in their trips respectively. Sisi revisited the Three Lamppost area and it reminded her the old good days of Macao, “the taste was authentic” and

tasted the same as what she remembered. Food, restaurants and cafés occupied a surprisingly prominent place in connoting a sense of personal nostalgia and subjective vitality, yet it is not necessarily restricted to a particular shop. Be it as eating, shopping, getting fortune telling service, mimicking what had been done in the past appears to be more important than visiting the exact nuclei. As presented in Table 1, a high sense of subjective vitality is still achievable if activity-based and spatial nostalgia are undertaken while a no to low sense of subjective vitality is reported if only spatial nostalgia is taken alone.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The current study sheds light on the importance to put personal nostalgic tourism under scrutiny. While nuclei (places) have been described as a core magnet in personal nostalgia due to its association with place attachment, such as tourists would like to patronize the same hotels where they had good memories (Shi et al., 2021), findings of the current study complement the existing literature by showing the importance of “activity-based nostalgia” as well as the “spatial nostalgia”. Both play important roles in influencing tourists’ sense of subjective vitality. It is particularly true when facing social, economic and cultural changes, many nuclei could vanish or become entirely different. As evidenced in the informants’ excerpts, what appears to matter more is about what they did in the past, which allows them to experience their state of vitality. Findings as such corroborate the ones reported by Ryan and Frederick (1997) that activity provide a sense of agency from which subjective vitality is felt. Often tourists might not be able to find the exact places where they did something interesting in the past, but they do remember what were the interesting things. As Wood (2020) suggested that in the tourism industry, the most valuable commodity that tourism can offer is the memory of travel in which tourists do play a large part in building up their travel memory. Findings present how “nucleus nostalgia”, “activity-based nostalgia” and “spatial nostalgia” are interwoven and influencing tourists’ sense of personal nostalgia and their subjective wellbeing. According to the informants, what they really want to do at “their familiar places” is to re-enact and experience again what were remembered in the past. Their sense of nostalgia is thus not necessarily rendered even when the shops or buildings disappear. What matters more to them is “what were done” in the past. Therefore “activity-based nostalgia” becomes the most superior cue which contributes to tourists’ sense of subjective vitality. As evidenced in the case of Luk and Bao, when “activity-based nostalgia” could not be undertaken due to the removal of nucleus (shops *per se*), they did not have a high sense of personal nostalgic feeling. Disappointment was commonly expressed by the informants when the same “liturgical performance” could not be undertaken in their personal nostalgic journey. It is perhaps due to the fact that their goals often were related to re-enactment rather than revisiting the same places.

The current research highlights the important weight of “activity-based nostalgia” which could influence the sense of personal nostalgia and subjective vitality. In the event that nuclei have changed, tourists’ nostalgic feeling could still be satisfied if the “activity-based nostalgia” could be undertaken. The example of the Hong Kong couple’s goal-set consumption of pork chop buns in Macao is the case in point, even though the shop is not the same eatery anymore.

The present article is a contribution to the emerging literature enlarging upon the consideration of single tourism occasions by situating them in a person's career as a tourist. Investigating personal nostalgia as a motivation has clearly something to contribute, as it is a case where reexperiencing ones' personal experience is the source of motivation for future tourism activities. This exploratory article is also the first article to apply goal-setting theory in explaining personal nostalgia. It comprises a core conceptual contribution and an ancillary supporting illustrative case study. Findings show that all personal nostalgic tourists do set prior-goals before they revisit Macao. Their goals represent tourists' desires that they want to reconnect with subjective vitality via the activities that they did before. In other words, the core agency to induce a person's nostalgic feeling is the "*liturgical process*", which is activity-based, rather than location-based or spatial-based. Only in this way, can the tourists experience the "vitalized-self" again that is in line with the one that exists in their memory. Findings of the current research thus corroborate Ryan and Frederick's (1997) study that subjective vitality is associated with activities that one can enhance the self. Memories that are casted in one's life often are related to the activities that one had performed in which aliveness is associated with. The current research thus supplements the extant literature by highlighting the important role of 'activity-based nostalgic' in the form of personal nostalgia. Future studies should conduct quantitative validation to examine how the cues of personal nostalgia will be consequential to one's subjective wellbeing.

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## Appendix A

Table 1: Informants' profiles and intentional nuclei in their personal nostalgic journey.

Pseudonym	Age + gender	Origin	Nuclei of intentional visit under the goal-set theory (Locke, 1968) and goal-set consumption driven theory (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 1999)	Conditions of the "must-see nuclei" - E-exists - V-vanishes - C-changes	Types of nostalgia (1) nucleus nostalgia (2) activity-based nostalgia (3) spatial nostalgia	Substitutional nuclei/activity	Self-report one's sense of subjective vitality obtained High/Medium/Low
1. Anna	56 F	Quebec	Red bean cake food hawker stall and kite shop at Ruins of St. Paul	V	(1) No (2) Yes (3) Yes	Yes – ate an egg tart nearby	Medium
2. Brian	60 M	Quebec	St. Dominic's square sweet cake shop and a Macanese restaurant	V	(1) No (2) Yes (3) Yes	Yes- ate at another Macanese restaurant nearby	Medium
3. Sam	47 M	Malaysia	- Wonton noodles shop located nearby the Lou Kou Garden  - Old Taipa Village snack food and photo taking	V  E	(1) No (2) No (3) No  (1) Yes (2) Yes (3) Yes	No  No need	Low  High
4. Candy	55 F	Hong Kong	- Pork Chop Bun shop at the Old Taipa Village	C	(1) No (2) Yes (3) Yes	Yes – ate Pork chop buns but from another eatery	High
5. Sunday	63 M	Hong Kong	- Pork Chop Bun shop at the Old Taipa Village  - Bei Di Temple at the Old Taipa Village	C  E	(1) No (2) Yes (3) Yes  (1) Yes (2) Yes (3) Yes	Yes – ate Pork chop buns but from another eatery  No need	High
6. Peter	42 F	Shenzhen	Crab Congee at Areia Preta	E	(1) Yes (2) Yes (3) Yes	No need	High
7. Chan	53 M	Singapore	456 Shanghai restaurant inside Hotel Lisboa  Pedicab ride in Macao peninsula	E  E	(1) Yes (2) Yes (3) Yes	No need	High
8. Dorathy	51 F	Singapore	Chestnuts and sweet hawker food and a cheap clothes retail store at Leal Senado Square	C	(1) No (2) Yes (3) Yes	Yes – ate other snack food in that area and shopped in another retail shop	High

9. Luk	63 M	Japan	Snake rice wine and Chinese sausage clay pot rice nearby Patane and Camoes Garden	V	(1) No (2) No (3) Yes	No	Low
10. Sheng	76 F	Sian	Fortune tellers with tortoises located at Leal Sendao Square	V	(1) No (2) No (3) No	No	Low
			Long Kei Chinese restaurant at Leal Senado Square	V	(1) No (2) No (3) No	No	Low
11. Sisi	50 F	Sian	Three lamppost street food and the market at Bairro Horta da Mita	E	(1) Yes (2) Yes (3) Yes	No	High
			Chi Kei beef casserole at San Ma Lou	E	(1) Yes (2) Yes (3) Yes	No	High
12. Bao	47 M	Thailand	Barbecue eatery at Coloane Village	C	(1) No (2) No (3) Yes	No	Low

# SO WHAT ABOUT ‘CIVIC HOSPITALITY’?

Erwin Losekoot<sup>a</sup>, Geesje Duursma<sup>b,c</sup> and Rodney Westerlaken<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Edith Cowan University, Australia, <sup>b</sup>Duursma Advies, The Netherlands, <sup>c</sup>NHL Stenden University of Applied Science, The Netherlands

## ABSTRACT

While hospitality research has predominantly focused on commercial hospitality (business transactions) and private hospitality (between friends and family), the third domain - civic hospitality, which concerns the structured welcome of strangers by institutions and communities - remains less explored. However there are a large group of people who are welcomed to a new city or country where they have no prior connections, among them business people and visiting dignitaries, but also international students. The destination benefits from the skills and capital that these people bring, and therefore it needs to make them feel welcome and assist them without there being an immediate commercial benefit to doing so. This action is what we call ‘social or civic hospitality’, which has a history going back to the Greeks, Romans and Persians. This paper is based on a case study of one non-governmental membership organisation which has been operating in Perth Western Australia since 1987 as a facilitator between education agents, institutions, and the students who come to Perth. A focus group of 11 staff and three individual interviews form the basis of this research. Thematic analysis was used to develop a new ‘civic hospitality model’ which illustrated how important elements such as welcoming spaces, immediate support, cultural recognition, staff motivation and stakeholder collaboration come together to make international students feel welcome in Perth. These are all elements that resonate with the literature review and ideas such as philoxenia, place-induced hosting and contentious hospitality. The study suggests some long and short term strategies for making the stranger feel welcome.

**Keywords:** *civic hospitality, hospitality, international student, social domain, strangers, welcome*

## Introduction

The concept of hospitality has evolved significantly from its ancient origins as a sacred duty of welcoming strangers to its contemporary manifestations in commercial, private, and social domains. While considerable attention has been paid to commercial and private hospitality (Brotherton, 1999; Lynch et al., 2021), the social or civic dimension of hospitality remains relatively unexplored in contemporary contexts. This gap is particularly significant given the increasing mobility of global populations and the growing importance of cities as sites of welcome and integration for diverse communities.

This paper introduces and examines the concept of ‘civic hospitality’ - the structured, intentional practices through which cities and their institutions create environments of welcome and integration for newcomers. While traditional hospitality research has focused primarily on commercial transactions or private hosting relationships, civic hospitality represents a distinct phenomenon that operates at the institutional and community level, transcending both commercial and private domains.

The study addresses three critical gaps in current hospitality literature:

1. The lack of empirical research on contemporary manifestations of civic hospitality
2. Limited understanding of how institutions operationalize welcome and integration at a civic level
3. Absence of frameworks for implementing civic hospitality in modern urban contexts

Through a detailed case study of Study Perth, an organisation dedicated to supporting international students in Western Australia, this research examines how civic hospitality is conceptualized, implemented, and experienced in practice. The organisation's unique position as a bridge between government, educational institutions, and international students provides valuable insights into the operational dynamics of civic hospitality.

The paper makes three primary contributions to hospitality scholarship:

1. It develops a theoretical framework for understanding civic hospitality that bridges ancient concepts of philoxenia with contemporary urban realities
2. It provides empirical evidence of how civic hospitality operates through institutional structures
3. It offers practical insights for destination marketing organisations and civic institutions seeking to implement effective welcome strategies

By examining civic hospitality through this institutional lens, the research provides valuable insights for both scholars and practitioners. For scholars, it extends hospitality theory beyond commercial and private domains into civic spaces. For practitioners, particularly those in destination marketing and civic institutions, it offers concrete strategies for implementing effective welcome practices at a community level.

## Literature review

The end of the last century and the beginning of this one were a fertile time for the development of and discussions around the nature of hospitality, its conceptualisation and development, the relationship between hospitality management and hospitality studies, and the application of hospitality to different fields within and outwith the commercial hospitality industry (Burgess, 1982; Cassee & Reuland, 1983; King, 1995; Lugosi, 2008, 2009; Nailon, 1982). Discussing ancient times, King (1995, p. 221) explained, 'In such societies, a host was bound by a code of hospitality to protect his guest from robbery or bodily harm. At the same time, the guest was under an obligation not to harm the host'. However, such hospitality was not, in reality, without limitations. French philosopher Derrida (1930-2004, p. 7) challenged people, saying 'pure hospitality consists in welcoming whoever arrives before imposing any conditions on him, before knowing and asking anything at all, be it a name or an identity "paper"'.

While the move from 'hotel, catering and institutional management' to the arguably more marketable 'hospitality' was generally accepted without much discussion, the theoretical framework (Lashley & Morrison, 2000) that has formed the basis of much academic debate over the past twenty years suggests three broad forms of 'hospitality' – private, commercial and social. Private hospitality has been studied by Lynch et al. (2011, 2021) and Di Domenico and Lynch (2007), and commercial hospitality by Brotherton (1999, p. 168) with the well-known quote about hospitality management being 'a contemporaneous human exchange, which is voluntarily entered into, and designed to enhance the mutual well-being of the parties concerned through the provision of accommodation and food or drink'. Hemmington (2007, p. 750) suggests hospitality 'is made up of: hosts and guests; generosity; theatre and performance; lots of little surprises, and the safety and security of strangers'. Hepple et al. (1990, p. 308) point to hospitality being 'conferred on some guest... by some host... is interactive... a blend of both tangible and intangible factors... provides for the guest's security, the guest's psychological comfort and the guest's physical comfort'.

What has received less attention but can be seen as providing an important historical perspective or analysis of custom and culture is the social hospitality part of the theoretical framework. Lashley and Morrison (2000, p. 4) argue that 'hospitality can be conceived as a set of behaviours which originate within the very foundations of society'. This focus on the 'social domain' is explained as a set of shared beliefs leading to a particular set of acceptable behaviour towards 'the stranger' and 'any

failure to act appropriately was treated with social condemnation' (p. 6). They make the point that in many cultures and religions, this is seen as a sacred duty, as is the offering, sharing and consumption of food and drink together. This idea of 'social hospitality' is located in its historical context by O'Gorman (2007, 2010), who uses the term 'civic hospitality' and reminds people that 'hospitality has an ancient origin and honourable tradition' (O'Gorman, 2007, p. 17) and that the welcome of strangers is 'enshrined in the Old Testament' (p. 22) as well as in the religious texts of other major religions. He discusses Plato's 'laws' covering the different types of guests and how they should be welcomed, depending on whether they were merchants travelling on business, cultural visitors coming to view performances, civic dignitaries on official business or occasional high-status cultural visitors. Showing these people hospitality was considered an honour to the god Zeus, the Patron of Strangers. Civic hospitality was clearly evident in the relationship between Rome and the city of Caere of the Gauls and was a form of '*hospes publicus*' (O'Gorman, 2010, p. 80). The above quotes and examples provide an overview of the beliefs and actions that may lead to hospitable actions, but there is, however, little explanation of or guidance about what form 'civic hospitality' should take, and what its impact would be, particularly in a contemporary setting. Recent studies have also explored the concept of philoxenia, an ancient Greek tradition of hospitality, and its relevance to contemporary civic hospitality. Christou and Sharpley (2019) examined philoxenia in the context of rural tourism in Cyprus, finding that it embodies genuine care, love, and friendship towards guests, transcending commercial transactions. Singleton (2023) further explored philoxenia as a moral imperative and unconditional commitment to the stranger, arguing for its potential to create peaceful relations at individual, group, and societal levels. Both studies highlight challenges to practising philoxenia in modern society, such as materialism and fear of strangers, but also suggest its continued relevance, particularly in settings that foster personal connections. Lugosi (2008, 2009) points out that hospitality extends beyond functionality and transactions to encompass emotional exchange. This exchange occurs not only between the host and guest but also among the guests themselves. Lugosi also emphasises that perceptions and expectations significantly influence the hospitable experience for both hosts and guests. He also noted that perceptions and expectations shape the hospitable experience of the hosts and guests. Expanding on the concept of civic hospitality, Munasinghe et al. (2022) argue that tourists seek a 'sense of place' in their travel experiences, which includes feelings of being welcomed and integrated into the local community. This sense of place is created through interactions with hosts and is a crucial component of the overall tourism experience. Bell (2007a, 2007b) emphasizes the social significance of mundane moments of hospitality in everyday urban life, which shape the ethics of social relations and contribute to a broader sense of place. By highlighting diurnal 'moments' of hospitality—whether during commutes, at mega-events, or through everyday interactions in city spaces—Bell illustrates how these transient yet meaningful exchanges between hosts and guests foster a shared urban experience, reinforcing the civic fabric and enhancing the communal identity of urban environments. These insights into philoxenia offer valuable perspectives on the nature and practice of civic hospitality, suggesting that principles of unconditional welcome and genuine care for strangers could inform more inclusive and cohesive community practices.

Munasinghe et al. (2022) introduce the concept of 'place-induced hosting', which they explain as hosting behaviours and attitudes influenced by place or context-related factors, including socio-cultural, economic, and political influences. This concept aligns closely with the notion of civic hospitality, as it emphasises the role of place in shaping hospitality practices. The COVID-19 crisis has also prompted a reconsideration of the relationship between global and local dimensions of hospitality. Tomassini and Cavagnaro argued in 2020, during the pandemic, that while the global dimension appears more fractured than ever, the importance of belonging to the local has become increasingly evident. They suggested that the crisis may lead to a 'potentially positive transformation in terms of activation of local relations, networks, connections, and multiplicities able to open up such space to multiple novel functions designed not just for tourists and travellers but also for citizens' (p. 2).

Recent research has expanded our understanding of how hospitality practices can foster civic engagement. Hossain et al. (2020) examined customer citizenship behaviour (CCB) in the hospitality industry, defining it as 'voluntary and discretionary actions by individual customers, which are not

directly or explicitly expected or rewarded but may aggregate into higher service quality and promote the effective functioning of service firms' (p. 2). This concept of CCB aligns closely with notions of civic hospitality, as it involves customers voluntarily contributing to the broader social environment of the hospitality setting. In relation to that, Merikoski (2021) introduces the concept of 'contentious hospitality' in the context of Finnish citizens hosting asylum seekers in their homes. She argues that this form of hospitality is 'both an act of solidarity and a form of resistance; an act against the politics that are increasingly restrictive of humanitarian migration and a disruption to the usual guest-host relations in asylum seekers' reception practices' (p. 91). The notion of civic hospitality emphasises the political nature of hospitality towards asylum seekers.

Bradby et al. (2023) explore the concept of hospitality in healthcare settings, particularly focusing on the experiences of ethnic healthcare staff in Sweden. They argue that 'hospitality is broadly defined by "reciprocity and exchange"' but that it 'coexists... with hostility where the guest is construed as challenging or threatening to take over the host's social position as a medical provider' (p. 971). This concept of 'hostipitality' aligns closely with the notion of civic hospitality, highlighting the complex power dynamics at play in institutional settings. Bradby et al. (2023) found that racialised healthcare staff often experience a form of conditional hospitality in their workplaces, where their professional status is frequently challenged. They note that 'racialised minority staff are vulnerable to the hostility that is implicit in hospitality: as healthcare providers, they are required to maintain a good ethic of service towards patients, regardless of the hostility they receive, while also being "othered" as potentially illegitimate strangers who must actively demonstrate their clinical worth' (p. 971). This tension between professional hospitality and personal hostility offers insights into the complexities of civic hospitality in diverse societies. Duursma et al. (2024) introduced the concept of "hospitension" in a hospital setting. This term refers to situations where the principles or practices of hospitality are in conflict or tension with other factors or elements of the operation or management focus. Such conflicts can arise due to cultural differences, resource limitations, organisational policies, and discrepancies between expectations and reality. Derrida (2000) coined the term 'hostipitality' to capture the ambiguity and duality inherent in hospitality, highlighting that it encompasses ethical and political dimensions within both personal and societal contexts.

One of the few to use the term 'civic hospitality' recently in academic literature is Smith (2023) in the context of Christian hospitality, and he uses it when discussing civic engagement in civic spaces. He argues that there is a difference between 'tolerance' in which people can live side by side in 'enclaves' while politely ignoring each other's 'cultures, goals, ideologies, and priorities' (Smith, 2023, p. 5) and what he sees as genuine hospitality. He explains, 'while tolerance merely asks me to endure those who are different... hospitality asks me to actively make space for them and intentionally care for them because of the worth that God places on them' (Smith, 2023, p. 5). He points out that tolerance may lead people to not openly say what they think and feel, but in doing so, it also 'contains little that would move us to actively make things better' (Smith, 2023, p. 5). He also warns that the word 'hospitality' is now used in so many different contexts that it is reduced to 'something that focuses on preparing nice meals for your friends, showing off your lovely home, and networking with the folk who can be helpful to you' (Smith, 2023, p. 6) and that this is certainly not the vision of hospitality found in a variety of ancient religious texts (pointing out the Bible urges people to 'love your neighbour as yourself' and to 'love the stranger as yourself'), especially if these are people who may not repay us. Instead, he suggests (Smith, 2023, p. 6),

'Civic hospitality does not imply that we agree with everyone or approve of everything; to welcome others well, one does not need to become them. It does, however, imply being quick to listen, quick to serve, quick to care even in the face of differences that might tempt us to fearful dismissal and preservation of our own comfort. It challenges us to love our neighbour even when the neighbour is a stranger and to actively seek their good. It asks us to do more than tolerate others as long as they leave us alone.'



The above quote does start to put some flesh on the bones of a contemporary concept of ‘civic hospitality’. A much earlier theologian (Nouwen, 1975, p. 46) seems to say something similar when speaking of,

‘our world full of strangers, estranged from their own past, culture and country, from their neighbours, friends and family ... to offer an open and hospitable space where strangers can cast off their strangeness and become our fellow human beings ... to convert the *hostis* into a *hospes* and to create the free and fearless space.’

A little further on, he summarises this as,

‘Hospitality, therefore, means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy... hospitality is not a subtle invitation to adopt the lifestyle of the host, but the gift of a chance for the guest to find his own’ (Nouwen, 1975, p. 51).

Munasinghe et al. (2022) propose a triadic conceptualisation of hospitality in tourism, comprising host, guest, and place. This framework provides a useful lens through which to understand civic hospitality, emphasising the interconnected roles of hosts (local community members), guests (tourists), and place (the civic environment) in creating hospitable experiences. The flow between place and space can be explained as follows: “Space appears both as the terrain upon which walls, gateways or paths are inscribed, and as the tracery of relations from which diagrams, structures, and thresholds materialise” (Dikeç et al., 2009, p. 13). Hossain et al. (2020) also highlight the importance of customer involvement in fostering citizenship behaviours. They found that higher levels of customer involvement strengthen the relationship between customer love and citizenship behaviour. This finding has implications for civic hospitality, suggesting that creating opportunities for deeper engagement with local communities could enhance the civic aspects of hospitality experiences. Tomassini and Cavagnaro (2020) proposed reimagining hospitality spaces in light of the COVID-19 crisis. They envision spaces with ‘multiple relations, more networks than the strict tourism-related ones, a multiplicity of functions going beyond commercial hospitality, and a different power-geometry opening up these spaces to the local community and making them also a resource for local residents’ (p. 5). This vision aligns closely with the concept of civic hospitality, suggesting a more integrated approach to hospitality that serves both visitors and local communities. Merikoski (2021) concludes that ‘understanding the political importance of home in solidarity mobilisations can broaden our understanding of citizenship and the spaces in which it is performed and negotiated’ (p. 102). This perspective reinforces the concept of civic hospitality as having a form of political agency that extends beyond traditional public spaces into the private sphere of the home. There is a considerable body of research around hospitality studies and hospitality management but there is very little (contemporary) research into ‘civic hospitality’. This study will, therefore, use a case study (Stake, 1995; Woodside, 2010; Yin, 2009) of an organisation called Study Perth, based in Perth, Western Australia, to understand the forms and motivations around 21st-century civic hospitality.

## Methodology

This research employed a qualitative case study approach (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009), selected as an appropriate method for exploring how civic hospitality operates within a real-world institutional context. Study Perth was chosen as a critical case example, being one of few organisations explicitly focused on implementing civic hospitality in an international education context. Study Perth was founded in 1987 as *Perth Education City* to promote Perth as a study destination and to facilitate education consultants recruiting students for study. It was later renamed *Study Perth* to match similar organisations in other cities in Australia. Its goal is to be a welcoming, supportive, and stimulating partner for education agents, students, and local businesses, as well as to act as a hub and facilitator between these stakeholders. It works with partners to provide information on Perth as an education destination, welcomes new students at Perth Airport with a ‘Welcome Desk’, runs events for international students, assists them with bureaucracy (for example, applying for a free tax number), helps with accommodation, and facilitates part-time and permanent work and legal advice. The hub in

Perth CBD is open each day for students to have a place to meet, work, and get advice, and it hosts many events for students and education agents. Study Perth also coordinates events at partners such as Ritz-Carlton hotels (a barista course) and universities and colleges. While it does receive a government grant, much of its income comes from a membership scheme that education agents, universities (ECU, Curtin, UWA and Notre Dame) and businesses can join for a fee. This makes them less reliant on state funding compared to a number of similar organisations in other Australian states.

Prior to starting the research, ethics approval was requested and granted. Data collection combined two complementary methods: a semi-structured focus group that allowed for organic discussion while ensuring coverage of key civic hospitality themes, followed by in-depth interviews to explore emerging concepts further. The focus group included eleven participants (representing approximately 70% of Study Perth's core team), with three key informants subsequently selected for individual interviews based on their strategic roles in implementing civic hospitality initiatives. These interviews lasted up to 80 minutes and were recorded and transcribed by one of the researchers.

While the sample size is modest, it captures diverse perspectives across the organisation, with roles ranging from volunteers to senior management, lengths of service from 3 months to 3.5 years, and an age range of 27 to over 50 years, with equal gender distribution. We acknowledge that findings from a single case study have limitations for generalizability, and the sample size constrains the breadth of perspectives. However, the combination of focus group and interview data provides some rich insights into the important yet under-researched topic of how civic hospitality operates in practice.

Analysis employed thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2019, 2021) methodology, with each researcher independently analyzing the transcripts before collaboratively agreeing on themes.

## **Findings**

Three key themes emerged related to civic hospitality in practice: the perceived role of Study Perth, staff motivation and roles, and operational manifestations of civic hospitality. Each of these is briefly discussed.

### *Perceived Role of Study Perth*

Participants consistently identified Study Perth's primary role as promoting Perth as a welcoming destination for international education. This role encompasses not only marketing activities but also direct support for students and liaison between various stakeholders in the international education sector. One participant articulated this multifaceted role: "To support our education members in their student recruitment activities. To help promote Perth as a welcoming and supportive study destination. To welcome and support students who have chosen Perth as their place to study and live."

The organisation's function extends beyond mere promotion to include active support for students throughout their educational journey. Participants emphasised the importance of helping students settle into their new environment and providing opportunities for community building. As one staff member noted, "We are here to support them and educate them so their journey is smooth and without hiccups, but we are also here to help if they do find themselves in trouble".

Study Perth also plays a crucial role in advocacy and problem-solving. Participants described the organisation as a "middle person between all the stakeholders", working to address potential issues before they become significant problems. This proactive approach to student support is seen as a key aspect of civic hospitality in practice.

### *Staff Motivation and Roles*

The study revealed a strong alignment between staff members' personal values and the mission of Study Perth. Many participants expressed a deep commitment to improving the international student experience, often drawing from their own experiences as former international students themselves. One staff member reflected, "I just love seeing new students every day, listening to them and trying to make something good or better for them".

The positive work environment at Study Perth was frequently cited as a motivating factor. Participants described a supportive team culture and appreciated the flexibility in work arrangements. This positive atmosphere was seen as crucial in enabling staff to then support students and embody the principles of civic hospitality effectively.

Staff roles at Study Perth encompass a wide range of functions, including marketing and promotion, event organisation, student support services, and strategic planning. Despite the diversity of roles, a clear common thread was the focus of all staff on creating a welcoming and supportive environment for international students.

### *Civic Hospitality in Practice*

The study identified several key ways in which Study Perth embodies and promotes civic hospitality:

*Creating Welcoming Spaces:* Central to Study Perth's approach is the provision of welcoming physical spaces, primarily "the Hub". This space serves as a meeting place and supportive environment for students. One participant described its impact: "Knowing that you have a place to go and ask for help and knowing that someone will be there to listen to you makes the difference".

*Immediate Welcome and Support:* Study Perth's civic hospitality begins at the point of arrival, with an airport greeting service providing immediate assistance to newly arrived international students. This service was described as crucial in creating a positive first impression and alleviating the stress of arriving in a new country.

*Cultural Recognition and Exchange:* The organisation places significant emphasis on cultural recognition and exchange. This is exemplified through cultural events where students can showcase their heritage, and other symbolic gestures, such as displaying flags from various nations. These practices not only celebrate diversity but also help students maintain connections to their home cultures while integrating into their new environment.

*Practical Assistance:* Study Perth's approach to civic hospitality includes addressing students' practical needs. For example, the organisation has implemented a food distribution program and second-hand clothing swap to support students facing financial challenges. This practical support is seen as an essential component of making students feel truly welcome and cared for.

*Community Building:* The organisation facilitates community building through various events and activities. These initiatives provide opportunities for students to socialise, integrate, and form supportive networks. As one participant noted, "Events where students can come and be themselves. Fun and free."

*Advocacy and Education:* Study Perth extends its practice of civic hospitality to the broader community through advocacy and education. This includes engaging with potential employers to address misconceptions about the perceived challenges of hiring international students and facilitating knowledge sharing among education providers. These efforts aim to create a more welcoming and supportive environment for international students beyond the immediate confines of the organisation.

*Impact of Civic Hospitality:* The study revealed several positive outcomes of Study Perth's approach to civic hospitality. Participants reported that students experienced an increased sense of belonging, opportunities for cultural exchange, and feelings of safety and support. The organisation's efforts also facilitated students' ability to maintain connections with their families back home by providing experiences worth sharing.

The organisation's commitment to civic hospitality was particularly evident in times of crisis. One participant recounted an instance of providing comprehensive support to a student who had lost all of their possessions in a house fire, demonstrating the depth of care and support offered.

Furthermore, Study Perth's efforts extend to supporting students' professional development and working to address barriers to employment for international students. This aspect of civic hospitality recognises the importance of long-term integration and success beyond the immediate period of study.

These findings demonstrate that Study Perth's approach to civic hospitality is comprehensive and multifaceted, encompassing physical, emotional, cultural, and professional dimensions of the international student experience. The organisation's efforts go beyond logistical support, aiming to create a genuinely welcoming and supportive environment that facilitates both immediate comfort and long-term integration and success – an example of modern civic hospitality. This concept is represented in Figure 1 and explained in the section thereafter.

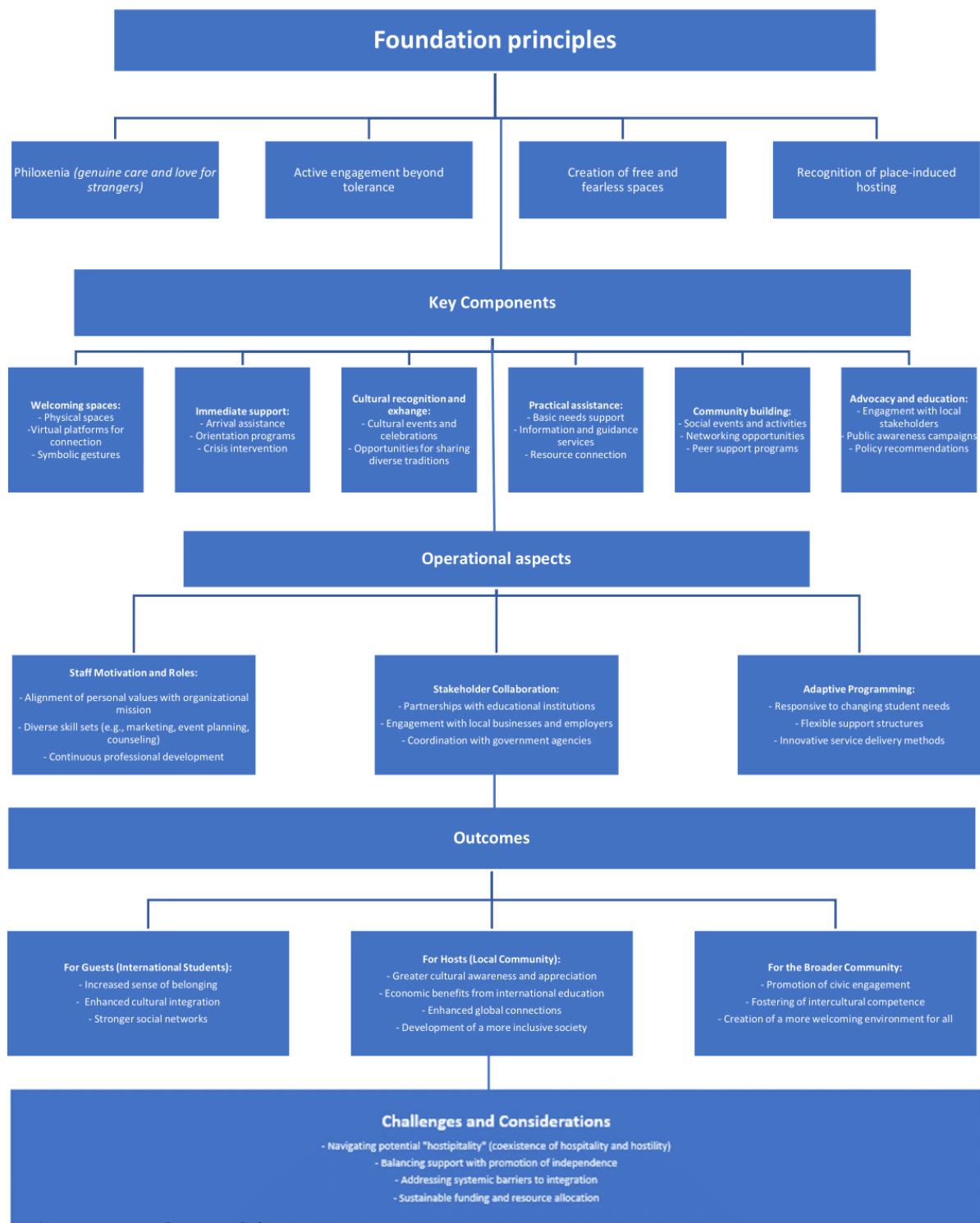


Fig 1: Civic Hospitality Model

## Discussion

The Civic Hospitality Model (Figure 1) synthesizes the key components identified in both the Study Perth case and the literature. Rather than attempting to capture every aspect of civic hospitality, the model focuses on three essential elements: foundation principles, key operational components, and outcomes. This framework provides a practical tool for understanding and implementing civic hospitality in various institutional contexts. At its core are the foundation principles of philoxenia, active engagement, creation of free and fearless spaces, and recognition of place-induced hosting, aligning with concepts from Christou and Sharpley (2019), Nouwen (1975), and Munasinghe et al. (2022). The model illustrates how these principles inform key components such as welcoming spaces, immediate support, and cultural recognition, which were evident in Study Perth's practices. The operational aspects, including staff motivation and stakeholder collaboration, reflect the organisational elements necessary to implement civic hospitality effectively. Finally, the model outlines outcomes for guests, hosts, and the broader community, echoing the multifaceted impact of civic hospitality discussed in the literature and observed in the case study. This model provides a framework for understanding and implementing civic hospitality in various contexts, bridging theoretical concepts with practical applications.

### *Alignment with Civic Hospitality Concepts*

The practices and ethos of Study Perth strongly resonate with Smith's (2023) conception of civic hospitality. Smith argues that genuine hospitality goes beyond mere tolerance, requiring active space-making and intentional care for others. This is evident in Study Perth's multifaceted approach, which encompasses creating welcoming physical spaces (like "the Hub"), providing immediate support upon arrival, and offering ongoing practical assistance. These actions embody Smith's call for being 'quick to listen, quick to serve, quick to care even in the face of differences' (Smith, 2023, p. 6). Furthermore, Study Perth's approach aligns with Nouwen's (1975) vision of hospitality as creating a free and fearless space where strangers can become friends. The organisation's emphasis on community building and cultural exchange events provides opportunities for international students to form connections and integrate into their new environment while maintaining their cultural identities. This practice resonates with Nouwen's idea that hospitality should offer 'the gift of a chance for the guest to find his own [lifestyle]' (Nouwen, 1975, p. 51).

### *Extending Philoxenia in Modern Context*

The findings also demonstrate how Study Perth's practices align with and extend the ancient Greek concept of philoxenia, as discussed by Christou and Sharpley (2019) and Singleton (2023). The organisation's commitment to genuine care and support for international students, extending beyond mere commercial transactions, embodies the spirit of philoxenia. This is particularly evident in the organisation's response to crises, such as providing comprehensive support to a student who lost possessions in a house fire. Such actions reflect the "unconditional commitment to the stranger" that Singleton (2023, p. 171) associates with philoxenia.

*Place-Induced Hosting and Sense of Place* Study Perth's approach aligns closely with Munasinghe et al.'s (2022) concept of "place-induced hosting." The organisation's efforts to promote Perth as a welcoming destination for international education while also facilitating students' integration into the local community demonstrate how hosting behaviours are shaped by place-related factors. Moreover, the focus on creating welcoming spaces and facilitating cultural exchange contributes to the "sense of place" that Munasinghe et al (2022) argue is crucial for positive tourism and hospitality experiences.

### *Customer Citizenship Behaviour in Civic Context*



While Hossain et al.'s (2020) research on customer citizenship behaviour (CCB) focused on commercial hospitality settings, Study Perth's practices suggest an extension of this concept to civic hospitality. The organisation's efforts to engage students in cultural events and community-building activities encourage a form of "civic citizenship behaviour," where students voluntarily contribute to the broader social environment. This aligns with Hossain et al.'s finding that fostering emotional connections can encourage behaviours that benefit the wider community.

### *Contentious Hospitality and Political Dimensions*

Although Study Perth's context differs from the asylum-seeking scenario described by Merikoski (2021), there are parallels in how the organisation navigates the political dimensions of hospitality. Study Perth's advocacy efforts, such as engaging with potential employers to address misconceptions about hiring international students, reflect a form of "contentious hospitality" that challenges existing norms and practices. This aligns with Merikoski's argument that hospitality can be both an act of solidarity and a form of resistance.

### *Reimagining Hospitality Spaces*

Study Perth's approach aligns with Tomassini and Cavagnaro's (2020) vision of reimagined hospitality spaces in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. The organisation's focus on creating multipurpose spaces that serve both international students and the local community exemplifies the 'multiplicity of functions going beyond commercial hospitality' that Tomassini and Cavagnaro advocate (Tomassini & Cavagnaro, 2020, p. 5). This approach bridges the global and local dimensions of hospitality, emphasising the importance of local connections and networks.

### *Challenges and Complexities*

While the findings predominantly highlight positive aspects of civic hospitality, it is important to acknowledge potential challenges and complexities. Bradby et al.'s (2023) concept of "hostipitality", Duursma et al.'s (2024) 'hospitension', and Derrida's hostipitality (2000) remind us that hospitality can coexist with hostility, particularly in diverse settings. While not explicitly mentioned in the findings, Study Perth's role in advocating for international students suggests an awareness of potential tensions or challenges these students may face in their (new) host community and the role that civic hospitality can play in addressing these.

### *Broader Applications*

The findings from Study Perth suggest several possibilities for applying civic hospitality principles in different contexts. While this study focused on international education, the core practices identified could be adapted for other destination marketing organisations seeking to create welcoming environments, municipal governments developing community integration programs, cultural institutions working to engage diverse populations, healthcare institutions implementing patient-centered care, and corporate entities pursuing community engagement initiatives.

For destination marketing organisations specifically, the Study Perth case offers practical strategies through creating physical welcome points, developing cultural integration programs, building stakeholder networks, implementing crisis support systems, and ensuring cultural competency in staff training. These implementations can lead to increased visitor satisfaction, enhanced destination reputation, stronger community engagement, improved visitor retention, and increased economic benefits through longer visitor stays.

The key success factors identified in Study Perth's approach - creating welcoming spaces, providing immediate support, facilitating cultural exchange, and offering practical assistance - could be modified to suit various institutional settings. However, implementation would need to consider local cultural and social contexts, available resources and institutional capacity, specific needs of target populations, existing community support structures, and local policy and regulatory environments.

## Conclusion

This case study of Study Perth provides rich insights into how civic hospitality operates within a contemporary institutional context. The research demonstrates that effective civic hospitality combines physical space-making, practical support, cultural exchange, and advocacy efforts. Study Perth's practices show how ancient concepts like *philoxenia* can be operationalized in modern, diverse societies, particularly in supporting international students.

This study makes three key contributions to hospitality scholarship. First, it provides empirical evidence of how civic hospitality principles can be implemented within institutional structures. Second, it extends theoretical understanding of how place-induced hosting operates in practice. Third, it demonstrates the continued relevance of traditional hospitality concepts in contemporary urban settings.

The findings suggest that implementing civic hospitality principles can significantly enhance visitor experiences through creating welcoming spaces and support systems, potentially leading to increased visitation rates and longer stays. For businesses, the adoption of civic hospitality practices can result in improved patronage through better community integration, enhanced reputation, and stronger stakeholder relationships. The Study Perth case demonstrates how structured welcome initiatives can transform visitor experiences from mere transactions into meaningful engagements that benefit both visitors and host communities.

Further research could explore civic hospitality in different institutional contexts, examine long-term impacts on both guests and host communities, and investigate how digital technologies might enhance civic welcome practices. Such research would further enhance our understanding of how civic hospitality can contribute to creating more welcoming and inclusive urban environments.

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# THE ENDURING IMPACT OF SELF-SERVICE TECHNOLOGIES IN HOSPITALITY SERVICES: LESSONS FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Mengni Fu<sup>a</sup>, Charles Arcodia<sup>a</sup> and Barry Fraser<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of Tourism, Sport & Hotel Management, Griffith Business School, Griffith University

## ABSTRACT

Due to its dynamic operational environment, the hospitality industry always faces numerous challenges and is vulnerable to unexpected events, such as the COVID-19 outbreak. This paper explores how hotel consumers perceive the utilisation of self-service technologies (SSTs) in hospitality services during and after the pandemic. It focuses on exploring whether consumers would continue to use these technologies, which were initially motivated by the pandemic, in their future hospitality consumption. Through in-depth interviews with a diverse age of customers who used SSTs in hospitality consumption throughout the pandemic in China, this study reveals that heightened health concerns during a pandemic significantly accelerates the adoption of SSTs. While the pandemic situation has improved and major health risks have been mitigated, the convenience, efficiency, and safety provided by SSTs have solidified their use in the hospitality industry. Notably, age did not appear to have a substantial impact on customers' technology adoption. Finally, this paper discusses the future research directions and practical implications for future service designs in a world where health crises are an ongoing concern.

**Keywords:** *Self-service technologies, hospitality services, post-pandemic, consumer behaviour, technology adoption*

## Introduction

As a traditional human-intensive industry, hospitality confronts a substantial risk of virus transmission and has previously been negatively affected by various infectious diseases, such as SARS, Ebola, the Zika virus, and the recent coronavirus, resulting in decreased consumer demand and sales revenue, as well as exacerbated labour shortages (Chuah et al., 2022; Huang & Liu, 2022). To cope with these unexpected health crises, hospitality operators are forced to adjust and adapt their operations to conform with government policies and increasing safety demands from consumers and employees (Boo & Chua, 2022). Specifically, the COVID-19 pandemic, which began in late 2019, brought unprecedented challenges to the global hospitality industry due to the highly contagious nature of the virus and the resulting public health measures, forcing hotels to rethink their service delivery methods (Hao, 2021). One significant shift was the rapid adoption of self-service technologies (SSTs), which allowed for the continuation of service delivery while minimising direct human contacts during the pandemic (Foroudi et al., 2021). Technologies, such as mobile check-ins, digital menus, QR coding ordering, facial recognition and service robots, were employed to replace human services for the survival of hospitality businesses during the health crisis (Sujood et al., 2022).

As the world gradually moves beyond the peak of the pandemic and various government restrictions lifted, it is crucial to examine whether these self-service technologies, adopted out of necessity, are still important for customers when consuming hospitality services. Especially, as the implementation of SSTs often entails a large capital investment and not all consumers prefer using SSTs over human services, even during a pandemic (Choi et al., 2022). Accordingly, this paper seeks to understand the enduring effects of the pandemic-induced adoption of SSTs in the hospitality industry. Specifically, it aims to explore whether customers' preference for SSTs will persist in a post-pandemic context and



how hospitality businesses can leverage these insights to inform purchase decisions and enhance service delivery in the future.

## Literature Review

Self-service technologies (SSTs) are any technological interface which enables customers to serve themselves without interacting directly with service employees (Meuter et al., 2000). Accordingly, customers are not only consumers but also service producers and value co-creators. Prior to COVID-19, SSTs have already been introduced into the hospitality industry as either a replacement or complement to human services (Oh et al., 2016) such as online or offline self-check-in/check-out, self-ordering kiosks, and hotel mobile applications. Following, because of the constant advancement in artificial intelligence, more sophisticated AI-enabled self-service technologies, such as service robots and virtual assistants, can now perform repetitive and monotonous tasks independently while also interacting with customers (Ho et al., 2020). However, unlike the extensive adoption of SSTs in other service sectors, such as transportation, retailing, entertainment, and banking, SST adoption in hospitality industry is relatively low for a variety of reasons, including the long-lasting emphasis on human interactions, uncertain return on investment, privacy concerns, and customers' skepticism about these innovations (Hou et al., 2021). Therefore, SSTs used in hotels were initially perceived more as a novelty rather than a legitimate service instrument (Lukanova & Ilieva, 2019).

Nevertheless, the sudden outbreak of COVID-19 changed customers' expectations and preferences towards hospitality service encounters (Gupta & Pande, 2023). Consumers have become accustomed to contactless services, whereas human services have become unfavorable and undesirable (Kim et al., 2021). For example, Chuah et al. (2022) discovered that restaurants offering robot services are more appealing to customers during COVID-19 in Thailand, and customers are willing to pay more for dining in robotic restaurants, due to their desire for physical distancing. This finding is further confirmed by Huang and Liu (2022), who observed that the pandemic accelerated the replacement of human service staff with service robots in numerous restaurants across China, Korea, and the Netherlands. Moreover, Kim et al. (2021) revealed that customers in South Korea prefer contactless service deliveries due to the highly contagious nature of the coronavirus. Furthermore, while COVID-19 discouraged customers from consuming hospitality services, the use of SSTs creates a safer service environment, thereby increasing customers' visit and revisit intentions (Rahimizhian & Irani, 2020). Consequently, the pandemic has accelerated the adoption of SSTs in hospitality services (Chen & Girish, 2023), with the aim of providing social distancing, improved hygiene standards, and enhanced service safety (Jiang & Wen, 2020). Despite the rise of SSTs, human interactions are perceived as irreplaceable, offering a greater sense of sincerity, warmth, and friendliness compared to technological services (Song et al., 2022).

Accordingly, as the immediate threat of the pandemic recedes, the question arises: Will customers' demands for SSTs persist? Will hospitality services go back to the same as pre-covid period? Several studies have suggested that the changes in consumer behaviour caused by the COVID-19 pandemic are expected to last, and the hospitality operations and customer demand will never return to the same as pre-covid (Peco-Torres et al., 2021). The familiarity and comfort gained with these technologies during the pandemic may sustain customers' preference for SSTs in hospitality services. However, limited studies have investigated how consumers will react to the use of SSTs in hospitality services during and post the COVID-19 pandemic (Liu et al., 2022), and how the SSTs adoption will evolve along with the development of the pandemic (Zhang et al., 2022).

## Methods

This study adopts an interpretivist paradigm to explore individual consumers' perspectives on SST adoption and how these evolve through the pandemic. Unlike the positivist worldview, which seeks universal truths, an interpretivist approach acknowledges diverse individual views without a singular



explanation for consumers' SST adoption (Tracy, 2013), thereby being more appropriate for this study. Accordingly, a qualitative research method is employed using semi-structured interviews with hotel consumers. Specifically, qualitative research is more effective at exploring understudied or unknown phenomenon while disclosing prevalent trends in consumers' thoughts (Park & Park, 2016), making is pertinent to this study.

### *Research Context*

China was the first country to experience COVID-19 in late 2019, and Chinese service providers were the early adopters of SSTs to cope with the pandemic (Liu & Hung, 2021). For example, the largest hotel chain in China, Huazhu group, has equipped most of their hotels across hundreds of Chinese cities with contactless services offered by SSTs since the COVID-19 outbreak (Hao et al., 2020). Moreover, Yunji, the largest hospitality service robot provider in China, has provided service robots to over 3,000 hotels in China by the end of 2020 (Liu & Hung, 2021). Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, a meta-event held during the pandemic, has also adopted AI-powered service robots to disinfect athlete rooms and public venues, deliver food, and prepare drinks (Chi et al., 2023). Accordingly, due to the extensive use of SSTs in China, it is feasible and appropriate to recruit Chinese customers with relevant SST usage experiences for this study. Fittingly, the Chinese hospitality industry is used as the research context.

### *Sampling*

Convenience and purposive sampling were used to recruit Chinese customers of varying ages who have used SSTs when consuming hospitality services during the past 12 months. Specifically, convenience samplings are accessible, affordable, and appropriate for exploratory research (Taherdoost, 2016), and the use of purposive sampling ensures the selected participants being either knowledgeable about the research topic or having desired attributes (Tracy, 2013). Participants were recruited via the researchers' social network and selected based on a screening question "Have you used SSTs in hospitality consumption over the past 12 months?". Only those who answered 'yes' were recruited. Consequently, as shown in Table 1, twenty-five Chinese customers from 12 cities across seven provinces, aged between 21 and 68, were recruited. Fifty six percent of participants were female, while 44% were male. The mean age was 35.68, and the median age was 28. Based on Weiss and Zhang (2020)'s age classification for Chinese population, this study divided all participants into four age groups. The largest age group is the "Post 80/90 Generation", representing 52% of the total participants, whereas the other three age groups accounted for 16% of the total participants respectively. This is understandable because the age span of "Post 80/90 Generation" is larger and incorporates the majority age cohorts in China (Statista, 2022). Moreover, the most popular SST was QR code self-ordering with a 100% usage rate among research participants, followed by service robots (40%) and mobile app self-ordering (32%).

**Table 1: Participants' demographics and SSTs usage**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>No. of participants</b>	<b>Relative frequency</b>
Male	11	44%
Female	14	56%
<b>Age Classification</b>		
Post-00 Generation (18-22)	4	16%
Post 80/90 Generation (23-42)	13	52%
Cultural Revolution Generation (43-56)	4	16%
New China Generation (57-73)	4	16%
<b>Hospitality services</b>		
Hotel lodging & Dining	13	52%
Dining only	12	48%

SSTs Used	No. of participants	Usage Rate Among Participants
QR code self-ordering	25	100.00%
Robot delivery services	10	40.00%
Mobile app self-ordering	8	32.00%
Self-ordering machine/kiosks	3	12.00%
Facial recognition check-in	2	8.00%
iPad self-ordering	2	8.00%
Self-check-in/out kiosks	2	8.00%
Online mobile check-in	1	4.00%

### *Data Collection and Analysis*

Following, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted, which enables participants to express their opinions and justify their behaviours in their preferred way (Tracy, 2013). Fifteen interview questions were developed based on two well-established theoretical frameworks, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Protection Motivation Theory (PMT). Specifically, TAM explores the impact of a technology's perceived ease of use (PEOU) and its perceived usefulness (PU) on people's attitudes and intentions to use the technology (Davis, 1989), which has been extensively used in technology adoption studies across diverse disciplines. Moreover, Rogers' (1975) Protection Motivation Theory (PMT) is a well-known disease prevention and health promotion theory, which explains how individuals assess health risks and decide whether to take protective actions. The use of these two theories was to develop trustworthy interview questions with theoretical underpinnings and to ensure the questions adhered to the research objectives.

Before formal interviews, a pilot test was conducted with five Chinese international students studying in Australia, and adjustments were made based on their feedback. In total, 25 interviews were conducted online via Microsoft Teams, each interview lasting about 45 minutes. The saturation point was reached after the 21st interview with the saturation ratio remaining continuously below 5%, tracked by the saturation tracking metrics developed by Guest et al. (2020). To ensure the accuracy in translation, back-translation and member-checks were adopted. Furthermore, Braun and Clarke (2006) six-step thematic analysis was adopted to synthesise core themes from participants' responses, and three key findings were elaborated in the following sections.

## **Findings**

The findings of this study highlight several key trends in consumer behaviour and attitudes toward self-service technologies (SSTs) in hospitality services, particularly in the transition from the pandemic to the post-pandemic era.

### *Initial adoption driven by health concerns*

During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the primary motivation for adopting SSTs in hospitality settings was consumers' health and safety concerns. Specifically, this study discovered that, because of the unexpected COVID-19 outbreak, consumers became more cautious when selecting service providers and tended to adopt risk-averse strategies when their perceived health risk was high, such as reducing or cancelling leisure or gathering activities, avoiding human interactions during services, and choosing high-end or luxury hospitality providers. Moreover, because of their increased perceived health risks and intentions to protect their own health and safety, most participants in this study, regardless of age, expressed a strong preference for using SSTs to consume hospitality services during the pandemic, such as QR code self-ordering, service robot deliveries, mobile apps, and self-service kiosks. They believed that the use of these SSTs can mitigate their risk of contracting viruses through maintaining social distance, reducing interpersonal and shared-surface contact, offering contactless

services, avoiding the use of cash, and preventing cross-contamination, which conforms with the findings of previous studies (Jiang & Wen, 2020; Seyitoğlu et al., 2021).

For example, Participant 18 stated:

*“I think self-service technologies can inhibit the spread of COVID-19, because the use of these technologies reduces the frequency of human contact and communication. For example, if you use manual check-in, a front desk staff in a hotel may have to deal with numerous customers a day. If one of these customers carries COVID-19, the attendant is at risk of infection. Once the attendant is infected, he/she may transmit the virus to other customers or his/her colleagues.”*

Furthermore, this finding aligns with the Protection Motivation Theory (PMT), which suggests that perceived threats (in this case, the coronavirus) and the perceived efficacy of coping mechanisms against the threats (in this case, perceived efficacy of SSTs in preventing virus transmission) influence individuals' intention to take the protective actions (in this case, individuals' intention to use SSTs as a coping strategy against COVID-19) (Floyd et al., 2006).

#### *Sustained use of SSTs post-pandemic*

As the pandemic situation improved and the immediate health concerns began to subside, the study found that participants would continue to use SSTs because of other utilitarian values provided by these technologies, such as enhanced convenience and efficiency. In addition to increased safety, participants mentioned a variety of other benefits that SSTs can provide to them, including ease of use and usefulness, time-saving, reduced mental burden and embarrassment, cost-saving, protection of personal privacy by not disclosing personal information to a third person, self-control, freedom, and improved service quality. Furthermore, past research has shown that using SSTs can speed up service delivery and minimise customer waiting time, particularly during peak periods when numerous customers are waiting to be served by service staff (Kokkinou & Cranage, 2015). Customers can also execute services at any location and any time using their mobile devices at their own convenience (Safaeimanesh et al., 2021). Additionally, in order to boost SST usage rate, several hospitality operators provide low-cost incentives to consumers, such as discounts and/or vouchers. These characteristics imply that customers who choose to utilise SSTs can benefit from both efficiency and financial gains. This is consistent with Mohamad et al. (2021)'s findings that the use of SSTs can bring additional pricing benefits to customers, boosting the adoption of these innovations. As a result, customers' initial adoption of SSTs was driven by necessity caused by the pandemic outbreak, but sustained use was attributed to the perceived benefits these technologies provided beyond health safety.

As an example, Participant 13 stated:

*“I think the use of self-service technologies is a major trend and will become more popular in the future. Due to the pandemic over the past few years, most people have got used to using these convenient technologies, so I don't think people would like to go back to the less efficient manual services.”*

The improvement of COVID-19 pandemic witnessed a move from health-driven adoption to a focus on the practical advantages of SSTs, particularly the two variables of perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) underlined by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM).

#### *Minimal Impact of Demographic Factors*

This study also revealed that customers across different ages can operate most SSTs offered by hotels, because of SSTs' ease of use, customers' accumulated usage experiences, and appropriate assistance provided by service staff. Firstly, SSTs have been extensively applied in many other service sectors for some time, such as ATMs at banks, self-check-in kiosks at airports, ticket vending machines at cinemas and amusement parks, and self-ordering kiosks at fast-food chains (Lukanova & Ilieva,

2019). This means that customers have already encountered numerous SSTs in their daily lives, regardless of whether they are voluntary or forced to adopt these technologies. Consequently, the use of such technologies in hospitality services is not an entirely new experience for them. Moreover, as SST usage experiences accumulate, customers become more accustomed to using these technologies, thereby finding them easier to use and having greater confidence in using them (Lee & Lyu, 2019). Zhao et al. (2008) found that when individuals become familiar with a particular SST through practice, they are more likely to employ similar SSTs in the future due to the confidence they obtained from earlier interactions.

In addition, younger consumers are accustomed to using digital technologies on a daily basis; thus, they are confident in operating SSTs independently and expect hospitality providers to provide similar technologies they encountered elsewhere during their hotel stays (Demirciftci et al., 2023). In contrast, senior customers have a degree of technological anxiety because they tend to overestimate the difficulty of operating SSTs prior to their first experience (Zhang et al., 2023). Nevertheless, this study disclosed that after experiencing SSTs, older participants were more likely to find them valuable and not overly difficult to learn and apply, particularly when assisted by younger generations or service personnel.

For example, Participant 21 indicated:

*"I'm 65 years old, still working. I like to learn new things. When I was learning how to use these self-service technologies, I thought they were acceptable, nothing particularly difficult. Most self-service systems offer you tips and instructions, and you just need to follow the given instructions step by step. In my opinion, people should conduct life-long learning and these new technologies make our life easy."*

This finding is supported by Zhao et al. (2008), who revealed that by providing training and appropriate assistance to the elderly, their perceived ease of use and perceived benefits of using SSTs will increase while their technology anxiety will diminish, facilitating their future use intention of SSTs. Therefore, it is critical for hospitality service providers to provide senior consumers, particularly those using SSTs for the first time, with the appropriate guidance.

## Discussion and Implications

The findings of this study have several important implications both theoretically and practically, especially in understanding the evolving role of SSTs in hospitality services post the COVID-19 pandemic.

### *Theoretical Implications*

Firstly, the study demonstrates that consumer attitudes and usage behaviours toward SSTs can evolve over time and are affected by the occurrence and development of external events, such as a health crisis like COVID-19. Initially, SST adoption was driven by the need to mitigate increased health risks during the pandemic, but as those risks diminished, the focus shifted to the utilitarian values provided by these technologies. This finding illustrates the dynamic nature of customer service expectations and technological preferences, thereby suggesting conducting further longitudinal studies to explore how consumers' attitudes towards different hotel technologies evolve over time (Vitezić & Perić, 2021). Moreover, this study challenges the conventional belief that SSTs are primarily appealing to younger, more tech-savvy consumers. In this study, age was not found to affect customers' willingness to use SSTs in service encounters. This contradicts the findings of prior research, which revealed a negative relationship between age and customers' SST usage intention (Kim et al., 2012). The disparity between the current and previous studies could attribute to SSTs' already high popularity in China. Especially, technologies like QR coding ordering and service robot delivery have been extensively used in people's daily lives in China. Consequently, many senior

citizens in China have been using SSTs for some time, allowing them to gradually become accustomed to these technologies and benefit from the convenience and safety that SSTs provide. As a result, this contracting finding suggests that customers' technology adoption in hospitality services can be influenced by the technological penetration of the country or region in which they live, highlighting the need for cross-country studies on technology adoption in the future (Fu et al., 2024).

### *Practical Implications*

Practically, this study demonstrates customers' perceived efficacy of SSTs in preventing virus transmission and their strong preference for using SSTs during the COVID-19 pandemic. This finding encourages hoteliers to consider technological solutions as pandemic coping and recovery strategies in the future. Moreover, health crises and other communicable infectious diseases, like COVID-19, are expected to occur more frequently in the future (Peco-Torres et al., 2021). For example, in early 2023, when the COVID-19 infection was slowing down, China experienced an influenza outbreak, provoking panic and anxiety among the public and forcing legislators to re-consider lockdown measures (Lau & Hauser, 2023). Consequently, the demand for SSTs in hospitality services is projected to persist in the future (Gursoy & Chi, 2020). Moreover, the study's findings are applicable not only to the COVID-19 pandemic, but also to the future management of similar health threats that can negatively affect hospitality businesses. In addition, besides the COVID-19 pandemic, this study discovered that customers are motivated to use SSTs for numerous other reasons, including convenience, time and cost savings, reduced mental burden, increased self-control and flexibility, and enhanced service quality. Consequently, customers indicated a propensity to continue using SSTs post pandemic during future hospitality consumption. This on-going desire demonstrates to service providers the long-term viability of investing in SSTs (Romero & Lado, 2021). Furthermore, this study suggests that when designing and implementing SSTs, the utilitarian values of these technologies should be prioritised, and clear instructions and sufficient assistance should be offered on-site to ensure that customers across all ages can operate these technologies efficiently.

### **Conclusion**

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated SST adoption in the hospitality industry, while diverse utilitarian values of SSTs, particularly the perceived usefulness and ease of use, as highlighted in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), encourage consumers to keep embracing these technologies in the future. As health crises continue to be a global concern, SSTs will remain as an important element in hospitality service delivery. Furthermore, external factors like health crises have enduring impacts on consumer behaviour, and once SSTs are normalised in hospitality services, their prominence will persist even after any unexpected external factors subside. However, this study employed a qualitative research method, conducting interviews with Chinese hotel consumers. Thus, the research findings may not be applicable to the other countries, and in the future, further cross-country and longitudinal research is recommended.

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# THE MEASUREMENTS OF CUSTOMER EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES IN INTERNET-FAMOUS RESTAURANTS

Irene Cheng Chu Chan<sup>a</sup>, Zhaoyu Chen<sup>a</sup> and Daisy X. F. Fan<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Faculty of Creative Tourism and Intelligent Technologies / Faculty of Innovative Hospitality Management, Macao University of Tourism, Macao, China, <sup>b</sup>Faculty of International Tourism and Management, City University of Macau, Macao, China

## ABSTRACT

This study seeks to develop a measurement scale for customers' emotional experience before, during, and after dining at Internet-famous restaurants. A total of 27 interviews were conducted to generate the initial items reflecting customers' emotions experienced at various stages of their service encounter at restaurants. A survey was administered to collect responses from 425 customers to purify the items. Exploratory factor analysis was then performed to identify the dimensionality of the scale. The resulting measurement reflects five restaurant emotional experiences containing 34 items. They are pre-dining expectation in the pre-service encounter stage, amid-dining positive affect, amid-dining negative affect, and amid-dining esteem during service encounter, and post-dining distress in post-service encounter stage. The findings enhance current knowledge related to emotional experiences of restaurant and provide suggestions for future research.

**Keywords:** *internet-famous restaurant; check-in tourism; emotional experience; scale development; measurement*

## Introduction

Consumption emotions refer to the emotional responses elicited when consumers use a product or experience a service (Westbrook & Oliver, 1991). Building on existing studies in tourism and hospitality (Hosany & Gilbert, 2010; Torres et al., 2019), this research defines emotional experiences as the overall emotions associated with the consumption of tourism products, such as restaurants. These emotional experiences are critical determinants of consumers' evaluations and satisfaction with their dining experiences, influencing future behaviors such as the intention to revisit and recommend the restaurant (Meng & Choi, 2017; Ribeiro & Prayag, 2019).

While emotional experiences in restaurants have garnered significant attention from hospitality researchers, several gaps remain. First, existing studies have primarily relied on consumer emotion theories to explore emotional experiences with restaurants, such as Richins (1997)'s Consumption Emotion Set (CES) scales (Han et al., 2010; Han & Jeong, 2013), Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) Pleasure-Arousal-Dominance (PAD) model (Hwang et al., 2012; Tantanatewin & Inkarojrit, 2018; Ryu & Jang, 2007), and Watson et al.'s (1988) Positive Affect and Negative Affect Scales (PANAS) (Chen et al., 2015; Ribeiro & Prayag, 2019). Despite providing valuable insights into emotional responses in restaurants, these theories, rooted in general consumer research, may not fully capture the unique characteristics of dining experiences (Hosany & Gilbert, 2010; Liu et al., 2023). For example, emotional responses specific to restaurant settings, such as regret stemming from expectation disconfirmation, and vigilance resulting from heightened awareness in decision-making, have been largely overlooked in existing emotional experiences scales used in restaurant research (Chan & Chen, 2024).

Second, existing research predominantly focuses on customers' emotional experiences in a single stage of service consumption (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011; Tsaur & Lo, 2020; Tsiotsou & Wirtz, 2012), that is either on the service encounter stage, or the post-encounter stage (e.g., Chen et al., 2015; Han & Jeong, 2013; Ribeiro & Prayag, 2019). Thus, customers reflect on the emotions they experience during or after their dining experiences at the restaurants. However, various emotions, such as interest and anticipation, which arise in the pre-encounter stage before visiting the restaurant, have been underexplored (Oh & Kim, 2022). These pre-consumption emotions play a crucial role in customers' evaluations of their dining experiences (Chen et al., 2015). Thus, customers' emotional experiences at different stages of restaurant service encounter have been largely overlooked.

To address the above gaps in the literature, this study seeks to develop a comprehensive measurement scale that captures the full range of customers' emotional experiences associated with Internet-famous restaurants, from the pre-encounter stage, service encounter and post-encounter stages (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011; Tsiotsou & Wirtz, 2012). Different from traditional restaurants, Internet-famous restaurants are very popular among internet users, as they leverage social media and micro-celebrities for visibility and promotional efforts (Huang et al., 2021). They are known for their innovative food offerings, visually appealing dishes, and unique ambiance (Gao et al., 2022), which attract patrons and encourage online sharing behaviors. This novel form of dining venture tends to create rich emotions at different stages of the consumption process (Chen & Chan, 2024; Tang et al., 2023).

Following existing guidelines of scale development (Churchill, 1979), this study first extensively reviewed existing research on restaurant emotional experience and conducted in-depth interviews with customers who have experiences dining at internet-famous restaurants, in order to generate initial set of measurement items. Afterwards, item purification was done using quantitative surveys and exploratory factor analysis (EFA). It is expected that distinct emotions will emerge across the three different stages of restaurant consumption.

## **Methods**

The standard procedure of scale development involves item generation and content validation, item purification, scale validation and application, and scale replication (Churchill, 1979).

### *Item generation*

Measurement items were generated based on literature review and qualitative research. A systematic literature review has been conducted on research related to restaurant and dining experiences, to identify 30 items relevant to emotional experiences (e.g., Cheng et al., 2015; Han & Jeong, 2013; Laros & Steenkamp, 2005; Oh & Kim, 2022; Ribeiro & Prayag, 2019; Ryu & Jang, 2007; Tsaur & Lo, 2020). Afterwards, 27 respondents were recruited in late 2023 to collect qualitative data. In-depth interviews were used to identify the respondents' emotional experiences in the three consumption phases at Internet-famous restaurants. First, the respondents were asked to recall and share their experiences dining at an internet-famous restaurant. Specifically, questions such as "what were the emotions you experienced before visiting the restaurant?", "what were the emotions you had when you were dining at the restaurant?", and "what emotions did you feel when you had left the restaurant?" were asked to obtain responses related to the emotions specific to each service encounter stage. Through content analysis of the interview transcript, additional 16 items were obtained. Thus, a total of 46 items have been generated at this stage.

### *Item purification and content validity*

Five experts, who have previously conducted research in restaurant context, were invited to review the 46 items to enhance content validity and readability of the measurement items (Bussier & Shulga, 2018).

Based on the definition of restaurant emotional experience given by the researchers, the experts rated the relevance of each item to the measurement scale of restaurant emotional experience from 1 to 5, and provided suggestions on the wordings. Items that were rated below 3 were removed. This process results in the removal of 4 items. The remaining 42 items were considered to have face validity, and were therefore included in the next phase.

#### *Scale purification and dimensionality*

An online survey was carefully designed to collect quantitative data. Since the phenomenon of internet-famous restaurant is growing rapidly in China, Chinese customers are the target respondents of this study (Han, 2022). The 42 items identified in the preceding stages were translated into Chinese. The survey contains three main sections. In the first section, consent from the respondents to take part in the study was obtained, followed by a screening question to confirm that the respondents had experiences visiting an Internet-famous restaurant. In the second section, the respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement to the emotional experience items in respect to the three consumption stages, namely before, during, and after consuming at the Internet-famous restaurant. Attention check questions, such as “please select ‘strongly disagree’ for this item” have been included to ensure data quality. In the last section, demographic information of the respondents, such as gender, age, level of education, and occupational status, have been collected.

Data collection was conducted in early 2024. The respondents were recruited through wjx.com ([www.wjx.cn](http://www.wjx.cn)), which provides access to panel members of various backgrounds and experiences. Data collected through wjx.com have been widely used in hospitality research (Huang et al., 2024). After removing incomplete and invalid responses, a total of 425 responses have been collected. Exploratory factor analyses (EFA) using promax rotation were performed to identify the different emotional experiences of customers during the three service encounter phases. Promax rotation is considered more appropriate for the current study since it assumes that the factors are correlated.

## Results

Among the 425 respondents in the sample, more than half of the respondents are female (59%). Approximately 45% of them aged 31 to 40 years old. Most of them have an undergraduate degree (88%) and are working as an enterprise staff (83%).

The results of the EFA are presented in Table 1. The total variance explained is 57.09%, while the Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity ( $X^2=6748.88$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO = 0.921) both indicate satisfactory results. Throughout the analysis, eight items have been removed, and a total of five emotional experiences with eigenvalues greater than 1 have been identified.

The first emotional experience is labeled ***pre-dining expectation*** (2 items, alpha value = 0.649), which reflects customers’ expectations and curiosity prior to visiting the internet-famous restaurant. Three subsequent emotional experiences are closely related to the emotions elicited during the dining experience. ***Amid-dining positive affect*** (13 items, alpha = 0.907) refers to the pleasant emotions, such as joy, delight, happiness, and enthusiasm, experienced while dining. In contrast, ***amid-dining negative affect*** (9 items, alpha=0.895) capture the unpleasant emotions, such as sadness, anxiety, frustration, and anger, which customers feel during their visit. ***Amid-dining esteem*** (3 items, alpha=0.712) is the respect and assurance that customers felt throughout their dining experience. Finally, the last emotional experience is labeled as ***post-dining distress*** (7 items, alpha=0.874), which describes the discomfort and negative feelings experienced after dining, such as distrust, disappointment, and regret.

Table 1. Exploratory factor analysis

Factors and items	Factor loadings	Variance Explained (%)	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity
<b>Emotional experience</b>		57.090	0.921	6748.88***
<i><b>Pre-dining expectation</b></i>				
I could not wait to dine at this restaurant	0.803			
I am very curious about this restaurant.	0.708			
<i><b>Amid-dining positive affect</b></i>				
I am very excited to eat at this restaurant.	0.763			
I think this dining experience is entertaining.	0.758			
I am surprised by my dining experience at this restaurant.	0.700			
I feel joyful with this dining experience.	0.686			
I think it is worth eating at this restaurant.	0.681			
I am fulfilled with this restaurant experience.	0.674			
I am delighted when I dine at this restaurant.	0.654			
I feel happy dining at this restaurant.	0.654			
I trust this restaurant.	0.608			
This restaurant is worth the wait.	0.590			
I am enthusiastic about this dining experience.	0.584			
I feel warm when dining at this restaurant	0.575			
I feel comfortable in this restaurant.	0.562			
<i><b>Amid-dining negative affect</b></i>				
I feel upset eating at this restaurant.	0.793			
This restaurant makes me feel embarrassed.	0.763			
This restaurant makes me angry.	0.744			
I am disgusted by this restaurant.	0.722			
I feel depressed while dining at this restaurant.	0.718			
This dining experience makes me feel sentimental.	0.711			
I feel annoyed by this restaurant.	0.708			
Dining at this restaurant makes me feel embarrassed.	0.653			
Eating at this restaurant makes me feel anxious.	0.651			
<i><b>Amid-dining esteem</b></i>				
The staff at this restaurant is very friendly.	0.708			
This restaurant makes me feel welcome.	0.655			
I feel assured when I dine at this restaurant.	0.535			
<i><b>Post-dining distress</b></i>				
After dining at this restaurant, I do not trust the recommendations online.	0.777			
I am frustrated with this dining experience.	0.732			
This restaurant is not what I have expected.	0.712			
I do not trust this restaurant.	0.709			
This restaurant makes me disappointed.	0.653			
I do not have any special feelings after dining at this restaurant.	0.601			



## Discussions

The findings of this study show that customers' emotional experiences related to internet-famous restaurants are highly complex, which vary significantly across the three stages of dining experience. Prior to their visit, customers develop expectations that play a crucial role in shaping their overall dining experience (Siu et al., 2014). These expectations are often influenced by the restaurant's popularity, as well as positive word-of-mouth reviews from peers and social media platforms (Huang et al., 2021). This pre-visit phase is critical, as it sets the tone for the customer's anticipated experience and can greatly affect their satisfaction. During the dining experience itself, three key emotional dimensions emerge. While internet-famous restaurants typically elicit positive affect, they can also generate negative emotions in customers, such as sadness, anger, disgust, and anxiety. This duality aligns with existing research on restaurant experience, which highlights the multi-faceted nature of customer emotions (Chen et al., 2015; Largos & Steenkamp, 2005; Oh & Kim, 2022; Peng & Chen, 2021; Ribeiro & Prayag, 2019). Notably, the study also finds that customers experience a sense of esteem when dining, indicating that high service quality provided by friendly and welcoming staff contributes positively to their experiences. However, this study reveals a concerning trend: the only emotional experience observed in the post-dining stage is post-dining distress. This finding is important as it suggests that the positive emotions felt during the dining encounter do not carry over into the post-dining phase. Instead, customers may leave with feelings of regret, disappointment, or discomfort, which can diminish their overall satisfaction with their experience. Such post-dining distress is likely to adversely impact their intention to revisit the restaurant in the future (Kim, 2021). This represents a significant difference from the findings related to emotional experiences at traditional restaurants, which tend to be predominated by a mix of positive emotions and negative emotions (e.g., Chen et al., 2015; Ribeiro & Prayag, 2019; Tantanatewin & Inkarojrit, 2018).

## Conclusions and Implications

This study contributes to the literature on emotional experiences by examining the content-specific nature of restaurant encounters, and the diverse range of emotions associated with each of the three stages of service interaction. The five emotional experiences identified offer useful implications for practitioners in the restaurant industry. First, managing customer expectations is essential. This can be achieved through clear communication and effective marketing strategies. Restaurants should provide accurate and comprehensive information about menu offerings, service quality, and dining experiences in the internet. This proactive approach helps align customer expectations with the actual experience, reducing the likelihood of disappointment in later stage. Second, it is important for restaurants to address any issues that arise during the dining experience promptly and effectively. By doing so, they can mitigate feelings of regrets or disappointment that may lead to post-dining distress. Implementing feedback mechanisms and staff training programmes focused on customer service can foster a more positive dining experience and build long-term customer loyalty.

This study has several limitations. First, the respondents for both the item generation and scale purification and dimensionality are all from China. They may not fully represent the diverse demographic background of customers visiting internet-famous restaurants. This affects the generalizability of the findings. Future research could extend the study by exploring the emotional experiences of customers in different cultural contexts. Second, the use of self-reported data after customers' dining experience may introduce bias, since respondents may not accurately recall their emotional experiences in the three consumption stages. Future research may conduct longitudinal studies by tracing customers' emotions

before, during, and after their visit to internet-famous restaurants.

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# THE PERCEIVED LEARNING LANDSCAPE OF SENIOR TOURISM STUDENTS AT A UNIVERSITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

Uwe P Hermann<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Tshwane University of Technology

## ABSTRACT

The higher education landscape in tourism is influenced by various factors, with students being one of the most critical. The current generation of students exhibits dynamic characteristics and differs significantly from previous cohorts, necessitating curriculum transformation to ensure that higher education institutions remain relevant. This study employs a survey research design to examine the perceptions of senior tourism students at a South African university regarding their learning environment. The findings offer valuable insights into students' preferences for learning settings and styles, shedding light on their expectations for educational delivery. These results suggest potential opportunities for curriculum reform in response to the evolving needs of this student population. Furthermore, the lessons derived from this study may be applicable to other tourism curricula, particularly those facing similar challenges in adapting to the demands of a new generation of learners. The study highlights the importance of aligning higher education curricula with the preferences and expectations of contemporary students to enhance both learning outcomes and institutional relevance.

**Keywords:** *Tourism curriculum, student perceptions, curriculum design, constructivism*

## Introduction

It is often forgotten that the student is the most imperative stakeholder in any curriculum. The cohort of students constituting today's higher education landscape are fundamentally different from previous cohorts from a few years or decades ago. The consideration of the learning environment is crucial, especially as generations evolve, bringing forth unique characteristics that distinguish them from their predecessors, and as such, higher education environments need to cater to the distinctive needs of this new generation – Generation Z (Jaleniauskiene & Juceviciene, 2015).

Generation Z, essentially comprises students born between 1995 and 2012; these students offer a unique set of attitudes, societal norms and behaviours (Levin, 2019). This generation brings forth a suitcase of challenges for higher education institutions. Also known as 'digital natives' this cohort has grown up in a globally connected world. They are accustomed to technology, especially those around information technology and communication (Daukseviute, 2016). This generation is resolute that they have a voice, and they are not fearful to demonstrate their opinions (Browne & Foss, 2023), which in some cases have been violent, such as in South Africa. Browne and Foss (2023) found that this generation reportedly felt cheated and let down by the higher education sector. They felt that higher education is not inspirational, not worthwhile nor academically challenging.

With the growth of free and easy to access learning resources online, there are questions around the need for higher education (Garcia-Morales et al, 2021) with some students having openly questioned the role and purpose of higher education. Browne and Foss (2023:53) warn that the Generation Z cohort in higher education does not adhere to the norm of complacency; "They have a voice and they are prepared to use it. They are expecting a different cultural experience today, and they want more from the university courses for which they registered. They expect an awareness by university faculty of the fragility of this world and the ability to provide them with answers. They want their qualifications to be worthwhile and to help them make a difference". From this, it is evident that universities and lecturers need to break out of the current complacent comfort zone and adapt teaching and learning to accommodate the needs of Generation Z students, improving quality without losing it (Hermann, 2023).

In the development of curricula, the concept of the student voice is crucial, as highlighted by Brooman et al (2015). The assumption that curricula will automatically be welcomed by students is challenged by the acknowledgment that a lecturer-led curriculum may not provide a holistic learning journey. Collaborative engagement between students and educators can reveal different priorities, emphasising the importance of involving students in shaping their own learning experiences (Mihans et al., 2008). According to Tribe (2002), each student is on their unique learning journey, underlining the significance of students having a stake in what is being learned and a sense of ownership in the learning process (Chicoine, 2004).

Weimer (2013) introduces the concept of 'learner-centred teaching,' which focuses on enhancing engagement with students and their learning experiences. In this approach, students become partners in the learning process, and lecturers are challenged to explore new teaching methods while actively reflecting on their practices (Weimer, 2013). Lubicz-Nawrocka (2018) outlines three main benefits of involving students in co-creating curricula: promoting shared responsibility, respect, and trust; fostering a collaborative learning community; and contributing to individual satisfaction and development. The involvement of students in the learning process is crucial for the authenticity of their learning experiences, as emphasised by Ruhanen et al (2020).

Constructivism, is an approach to transforming curriculum design which implies that the student takes charge of their learning; the student, therefore, becomes a key stakeholder in the actuation of the curriculum, which is essential for enhanced buy-in by students (Weimer, 2013; Brooman et al, 2015) which I believe gives a student a *voice* in the learning process. The evidence of learning is generally determined by means of assessment, or as Slabbert et al (2009) advocates more specifically authentic assessment. Social or socio-constructivism may be seen as the development of knowledge constructed by an individual's interaction with the social dynamics in which they find themselves. Knowledge may be constructed by the individual themselves by means of their intrapersonal intelligence, or it may be collaboratively generated through meaning-making among individuals or the generation of interpersonal intelligence (Gardner, 2011). Although many students learn cooperatively, they still experience the learning opportunity individually. Students thus have opportunities for learning from not only their own experiences but also from the experiences of others (Weimer, 2013). From Gardner's (2011) perspective, it implies that learning should be self-regulated by the student and not based on the subjective lecturer-led learning opportunities. Humanity is constantly exposed to the learning experiences of life, many of which are passive and not deliberately designed for active learning, hence the lecturer's role in providing authentic learning opportunities, which allow for active learning experiences. A student, in essence, deconstructs the meaning which a lecturer has provided and thus implies the opposite of constructivism. Students are, therefore, in the prime position to co-construct new meaning as a collective, based on lived experiences to which Whitehead (2009, p.85) refers, to 'giving birth to living theory' which Whitehead (2009) advocates as a means to derive lifelong learning by means of action research.

Self-regulated learning and collaborative learning may also depend on the psychological state of mind of students in terms of their comfort and ease in working with other students. Class composition and student personality were found by Beckerson et al (2020) as determining variables in the success of a curriculum that promotes active learning among students. Therefore, a student's introversion or extroversion personality may have an effect on their comfort to work independently or in groups and the energy exerted to work. It is known that no student is totally aligned towards extroversion or introversion, and thus elements of both these personality traits may present themselves simultaneously, although preference may be for one or the other (Nittle, 2022).

Higher education institutions need to actively engage with Generation Z students, providing them with the necessary constructive learning opportunities and tools in a language that they are able to relate to in order to shape a new agenda for the world. It calls for a commitment to the sustainability agenda,



hands-on problem-solving experiences, teamwork with stakeholders, and increased involvement of research students in disseminating transformative research. Higher education curriculum developers need to be proactive in collaborating with the next generation to contribute to positive societal transformation. Not adapting may, in effect, jeopardise the future of higher education (Browne & Foss, 2023).

I am a lecturer in both the advanced and postgraduate diplomas in Tourism Management at the Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa. In order for the effective implementation of a constructivist-aligned curricula, it is imperative for me as a lecturer, to familiarise myself with their respective cohort of students, specifically to how they perceive their learning environment. This information should provide input towards the effective development of curricula and learning tasks that promote authentic learning. In order to achieve this, I utilised a constructivist action research approach to better understand the learning landscape of my students so as to adapt my teaching practice to better incorporate the dynamics of students in order to promote authentic learning.

## Methods

A structured survey was developed for data collection from Advanced Diploma Tourism Management (ADTM) and Postgraduate Diploma Tourism Management (PDTM) students. These students were selected primarily due to convenience as they are the cohort of students that I am involved with in my practice and as an action-research project, would provide valuable insights into enhancing my own practice. The questionnaire was developed around a number of themes including learning experiences (based on work by Mihans et al., 2008; Weimer, 2013; Ruhanen et al, 2020; McLeod, 2023), and the holistic student (based on work by Tribe, 2002; Ring et al, 2009; Hayes & Tucker, 2022).

The questionnaire was pre-tested and then uploaded to Survey Monkey. A link to the survey, along with an introductory information leaflet, was sent to the institutional email address of each registered student. Data collection took place from 14 June to 31 August 2023, with a total of 33 student responses. Of these, 11 out of 12 PDTM students participated (92% participation rate), while 22 out of 40 ADTM students participated (55% participation rate).

As the questionnaires were completed electronically, there was the additional advantage that the data could easily be extracted onto a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. This data, once downloaded, was first cleaned to ensure that there was no duplication in rows and that the columns were correctly labelled. This data was then uploaded to Stata version 18 for statistical analysis. Data analysis included descriptive statistics were run to determine frequencies, means and standard deviations for each variable.

## Results

The results will be presented in two parts. Firstly, the results pertaining to the student's perceptions of their learning landscape are presented, followed by a presentation of results related to their potential to pursue further study.

### The student learning landscape

Although lecturers may create environments for students to develop their cognitive capacities, a student will always have a preferred thinking preference or set of intelligences within which they are most comfortable engaging in the world around them (Gardner, 2011; Shorey et al, 2021). For this reason, I deemed it necessary to delve deeper into the concept of the student landscape of learning and to better understand how students interact with this landscape and what their perceptions are of their learning environment. In this section, 32 variables associated with the student landscape are assessed on a five-point Likert scale where 1 represented *strongly agree* and 5 represented *strongly disagree*. The results of this section, together with associated mean scores and standard deviations, are presented in Table 1.



Table 1: The student learning landscape

ADTM group						PDTM group										
Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean (Sd Dev)	The student landscape					Mean (Sd Dev)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
65.0	30.0	0	0	5.0	<b>1.50</b> (0.95)	I feel that a step-by-step method is best for solving problems.					<b>1.36</b> (0.50)	63.6	36.4	0	0	0
10.0	40.0	35.0	10.0	5.0	<b>2.60</b> (0.99)	Daydreaming has provided the impetus for the solution to my more important problems.					<b>2.36</b> (0.81)	9.1	54.6	27.3	9.1	0
45.0	40.0	10.0	5.0	0	<b>1.75</b> (0.85)	I like people who are most sure about their conclusions.					<b>2.27</b> (1.10)	18.2	54.6	18.2	0	9.1
60.0	20.0	15.0	5.0	0	<b>1.65</b> (0.93)	I would rather be known as a reliable than an imaginative person.					<b>1.45</b> (0.52)	54.6	45.4	0	0	0
10.0	15.0	15.0	55.0	5.0	<b>3.30</b> (1.12)	I often get my best ideas when doing nothing in particular.					<b>3.18</b> (1.40)	9.1	27.3	27.3	9.1	27.3
15.0	45.0	35.0	5.0	0	<b>2.30</b> (0.80)	I rely on hunches or my ‘gut feeling’ when making decisions.					<b>2.64</b> (1.36)	27.3	18.2	27.3	18.2	9.0
10.0	25.0	15.0	45.0	5.0	<b>3.10</b> (1.16)	I sometimes get a kick out of breaking the rules and doing things I am not supposed to do.					<b>3.45</b> (1.29)	9.0	9.1	36.4	18.2	27.3
26.3	31.6	26.3	5.3	10.5	<b>2.40</b> (1.26)	Much of what is important in life cannot be expressed in words.					<b>2.45</b> (1.44)	27.3	36.4	18.2	0	18.2
35.0	45.0	10.0	10.0	0	<b>1.95</b> (0.94)	I am more competitive by myself than with others.					<b>1.64</b> (0.92)	54.6	36.4	0	9.1	0
25.0	15.0	25.0	20.0	15.0	<b>2.85</b> (1.42)	I enjoy spending an entire day alone with my thoughts.					<b>2.09</b> (1.37)	45.4	27.3	9.1	9.1	9.1
21.0	63.2	15.8	0	0	<b>1.94</b> (0.62)	I prefer certainty and predictability.					<b>2.09</b> (0.83)	27.3	36.4	36.4	0	0
10.0	30.0	50.0	5.0	5.0	<b>2.65</b> (0.93)	I prefer to work with others in a team rather than solo.					<b>3.18</b> (1.40)	18.2	9.1	27.3	27.3	18.2
30.0	50.0	20.0	0	0	<b>1.90</b> (0.72)	It is important for me to have a place for everything and everything in its place.					<b>1.81</b> (0.75)	36.4	45.4	18.2	0	0
21.1	57.9	15.8	5.3	0	<b>2.05</b> (0.77)	Unusual ideas and daring concepts interest and intrigue me.					<b>2.18</b> (1.16)	27.3	45.4	18.2	0	9.1
15.0	75.0	5.0	5.0	0	<b>2.00</b> (0.65)	I prefer specific instructions to those which leave many details optional or up to me.					<b>1.82</b> (0.75)	36.4	45.4	18.2	0	0
10.0	50.0	25.0	15.0	0	<b>2.45</b> (0.88)	Know-what is more important than know-how.					<b>2.18</b> (0.98)	27.3	36.4	27.3	9.1	0

30.0	60.0	10.0	0	0	<b>1.80</b> (0.61)	Thorough planning and organisation of time are mandatory for solving difficult problems.	<b>1.36</b> (0.50)	63.6	36.4	0	0	0
25.0	55.0	20.0	0	0	<b>1.95</b> (0.68)	I can frequently anticipate the solutions to my problems.	<b>1.90</b> (0.54)	18.2	72.7	9.1	0	0
5.0	40.0	30.0	20.0	5.0	<b>2.80</b> (1.00)	I tend to reply more on my first impressions and feelings when making judgements than on a careful analysis of the solutions.	<b>2.27</b> (0.90)	18.2	45.4	27.3	9.1	0
20.0	20.0	45.0	10.0	5.0	<b>2.60</b> (1.09)	I feel that rules should be strictly enforced.	<b>2.18</b> (0.98)	27.3	36.4	27.3	9.1	0
10.5	21.1	26.3	21.1	21.1	<b>3.21</b> (1.31)	I prefer using online learning resources as opposed to attending physical classes.	<b>2.09</b> (0.83)	27.3	36.4	36.4	0	0
20.0	15.0	35.0	20.0	10.0	<b>2.85</b> (1.26)	Online classes and learning provide more opportunities for independent learning as opposed to traditional classroom learning.	<b>1.80</b> (0.63)	30.0	60.0	10.0	0	0
45.0	50.0	5.0	0	0	<b>1.60</b> (0.59)	I believe that learning opportunities should deal with real-life situations.	<b>1.36</b> (0.50)	63.6	36.4	0	0	0
5.0	15.0	35.0	30.0	15.0	<b>3.35</b> (1.09)	Online learning provides greater opportunities to collaborate and learn with class mates.	<b>2.18</b> (1.16)	36.4	27.3	18.2	18.2	0
60.0	35.0	5.0	0	0	<b>1.45</b> (0.60)	I believe that I am responsible for my own learning.	<b>1.36</b> (0.67)	72.7	18.2	9.1	0	0
35.0	65.0	0	0	0	<b>1.65</b> (0.49)	I strive to empower myself to learn more than what is expected.	<b>1.45</b> (0.68)	63.6	27.3	9.1	0	0
15.0	45.0	25.0	10.0	5.0	<b>2.45</b> (1.05)	I prefer to voice my own opinions as opposed to my lecturer/learning material in class and assignments.	<b>2.18</b> (0.60)	9.1	63.6	27.3	0	0
25.0	65.0	10.0	0	0	<b>1.85</b> (0.58)	I feel that my input would be valued in the development of the curriculum which I am involved in.	<b>2.00</b> (0.44)	9.1	81.8	9.1	0	0
35.0	40.0	15.0	10.0	0	<b>2.00</b> (0.97)	I am overall satisfied with the qualification that I am registered for.	<b>1.54</b> (0.94)	63.6	27.3	9.1	0	0
60.0	30.0	10.0	0	0	<b>1.50</b> (0.68)	I believe that my lecturers are professional in their practice.	<b>1.18</b> (0.40)	81.8	18.2	0	0	0
20.0	40.0	25.0	15.0	0	<b>2.35</b> (0.98)	My learning is strongly influenced by the availability of online technology.	<b>1.81</b> (0.98)	45.4	36.4	9.1	9.1	0
30.0	70.0	0	0	0	<b>1.70</b> (0.47)	I strive to actively use what I have learned in practice in order to make the world around me a better place for all.	<b>1.45</b> (0.52)	54.6	45.5	0	0	0

With a Likert scale positively skewed to strongly agree at 1, the lower mean scores reveal variables to which student respondents perceived a greater positive experience. Overall, the mean scores for the ADTM group were positive, with the lowest score being 3.35, which was associated with 'Online learning provides greater opportunities to collaborate and learn with classmates'. This indicates that there is generally a moderate agreement that online learning is not perceived as an effective collaborative learning tool by these students. The three variables that scored the most positive response from the ADTM group were as follows:

- I believe that I am responsible for my own learning (M=1.45);
- I feel that a step-by-step method is best for solving problems (M= 1.5);
- I believe that my lecturers are professional in their practice (M= 1.5).

When compared to the ADTM results, the PDTM student responses also had generally positive perceptions of the variables tested with the lowest perceived variable being 'I sometimes get a kick out of breaking the rules and doing things I am not supposed to do'. This implies a general moderate agreement that these students wish to adhere to rules. The four variables that received the most positive results were as follows:

- I believe that my lecturers are professional in their practice (M= 1.18);
- I feel that a step-by-step method is best for solving problems (M= 1.36);
- Thorough planning and organisation of time are mandatory for solving difficult problems (M= 1.36);
- I believe that learning opportunities should deal with real-life situations (M= 1.36);
- I believe that I am responsible for my own learning (M= 1.36).

## Discussion

From the results it is evident that both the ADTM and PDTM group had very similar perceptions of their learning landscape. Overall both groups indicated a preference to follow rules and for a greater need for structured learning opportunities, this included; step-by-step instructions to completing learning tasks and assessments, they prefer specific instructions as opposed to those which leave many details optional or up to them. They prefer to have things in their place as opposed to figuring out how and where to place info, for example in a learning task. Time management and planning was also deemed important to the students. These students prefer to be seen as reliable as opposed to imaginative. This indicative structured preference for learning, potentially serves as a hindrance for the effective development of graduate attributes such as critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving which are seen as vital for 21<sup>st</sup> century graduates (Hermann & Du Toit, 2024). Hence, curriculum developers and lecturers should take cognisance of potential challenges that deters creative thinking and develop a constructively aligned curriculum that allows for free thinking and empowers students to take ownership of their own unique learning journey as opposed to a lecturer-led static learning experience which may not contribute to a constructivist-aligned curriculum.

As indicated by Beckerson et al (2020) class composition and student personality are determining variables in the success of a curriculum that promotes active learning among students. In the results of this study a strong sense of independence among students was also revealed as both groups acknowledged their responsibility to take ownership of their own learning, which supports the notion of constructivism as proposed by Weimer (2013) and Brooman et al (2015). In support of this, students indicated that they deemed themselves more competitive individually as opposed to in a group. This also reflects in their perception of online learning, although seen as a useful learning tool, the students did not see online learning as a conducive medium for collaborative learning. Thus, the class composition (and learning environment) may be impacted by a student's personality which in this case tends to lean towards a more independent learning approach aligning potentially to a greater introverted personality type (Nittle, 2022).

The results also indicate that these students preferred learning environments that engaged with real world situations. To support this there was also a strong orientation towards a need to actively implement what has been learned. This alludes to the promotion of Whitehead's (2009) so called *living theory* which, when effectively incorporated in curriculum design, may allow for more active learning experiences. Students have greater opportunity in such cases to create their own meaning resulting in authentic learning, enhanced critical thinking and an improved ability to apply learning in practice.

## Conclusions and Implications

Browne and Foss (2023) emphasize that the Generation Z cohort of students is assertive in expressing their opinions, reflecting a strong sense of agency. This generation, characterised by its technological fluency, benefits from increased globalisation, particularly through advancements in information technology, communication technology and virtual reality. These developments have provided Generation Z with platforms to voice their opinions on a global scale. Furthermore, these platforms offer immediate access to information and the ability to engage in self-directed learning through a wide range of free, easily accessible resources. This ease of access may call into question the necessity of traditional higher education, as noted by Garcia-Morales, Garrido-Moreno and Martin-Rojas (2021), particularly if institutions fail to adapt to the evolving needs of stakeholders, with students at the forefront of change. Without such adaptation, higher education risks becoming obsolete.

The development of a collaborative (Lubicz-Nawrocka, 2018) and student-centred curriculum (Weimer, 2013) is critical not only for promoting authentic learning but also for ensuring the sustainability of higher education institutions. This approach may also generate a trickle-down effect, benefiting broader communities and industries, including tourism. One effective strategy for enhancing curriculum quality is actively soliciting student feedback through surveys and small group discussions. As Brooman et al (2015) suggest, the 'student voice' is a vital component of any curriculum. Engaging students as learning partners challenges them to experiment with new methods in the learning environment. When combined with active reflection (Weimer, 2002), this process promotes deeper, more authentic learning, while also offering lecturers opportunities for professional development.

There are numerous opportunities to increase student involvement in curriculum development, which may improve their engagement and disposition toward learning. Strategies such as the flipped classroom, blended learning, collaborative learning and active and interactive education, whether in-person or online, all contribute to creating a more dynamic and participatory learning environment. This paper presents findings from a specific sample of students at a selected university, offering insights into the Generation Z cohort, which now comprises the majority of students entering higher education. However, these results should not be viewed as a comprehensive solution for transforming tourism higher education curricula. It practically indicates one strategy to elicit student perceptions on learning and it is hoped that this may promote further discourse on the topic. It is important to recognise that students will eventually transition into the workforce, where their preferred learning styles may conflict with professional realities. For instance, while some students may prefer independent learning, the tourism industry is highly social and dynamic, requiring collaboration and adaptability. Curriculum developers and educators should take student perceptions into account to create more effective and authentic learning experiences. Nonetheless, where gaps exist between student preferences and industry requirements, curricula should be designed to equip students with the competencies and skills they lack, thereby enhancing their ability to contribute meaningfully to the tourism industry and society as a whole.

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# THE ROLE OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN TOURISM ACROSS INDIA, AUSTRALIA AND CANADA CONTINENTS: A CROSS-COUNTRY STUDY

Harpreet Singh<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Chitkara University, Punjab

## ABSTRACT

Climate change is becoming increasingly prevalent in tourism, and it determines travel patterns and tourist behavior at the destination. However, there has been inadequate enhancement in the comparison of the effects of climate change on tourism across continents. This study investigates the effects of climate change on the tourism industry in three countries (India, Australia, and Canada) by comparing the impacts of extreme weather on tourism, strategies adopted to adapt to climate change, and their implications in the tourism industry. This study is mainly cross-sectional in nature, using interview data from travelers and professionals and numerical data from climate change data and tourism trends. In India, climate change is changing the way people travel domestically, with increased temperatures and inconsistent monsoons discouraging travel to some areas while boosting interest in others, less affected ones. Australia's tourism industry faces dual challenges: coastal erosion due to increased sea levels, increased bush fires, and drought occurrences, which affect traditional beach tourism, wildlife, and natural tourism activities, respectively. Climate change has also affected winter tourism, particularly through shorter ski seasons in the northern regions of ski resorts in Canada, whereas summer tourism is threatened by fires, heatwaves, and floods at natural tourism destinations. For example, evidence indicates that although all three countries are affected by climate change-related disruptions, these manifestations are quite diverse because of climatic and infrastructural differences and tourists' preferences. These results show the importance of developing contextualized programs to safeguard speculation for future tourism in a constantly evolving climate.

**Keywords:** *Climate Change; Tourism Impact; India; Australia; Canada; Tourism Adaptation*

## Introduction

The tourism industry is a signatory to climate change because it is sensitive to climate change and experiences the effects of climate change in various sectors. It is important to note that weather patterns, seasons, and other related natural factors are central to tourism, although these factors are under pressure owing to climate change. This sector responds to climatological changes such as temperature changes, frequency of severe weather conditions, changes in sea level, and alterations in plant and animal populations, which greatly impact tourist attractions, tourism mobility, and tourist behavior (Gössling & Scott, 2024). Although the global impact of climate change on tourism is well established, there is often a research gap in terms of understanding the precise impacts of climate change on tourist destinations and various climatic zones of the world. This research endeavors to fill this knowledge gap by examining the impacts of climate change on tourism in three different countries—India, Australia, and Canada—which are vulnerable to climate change impacts in different ways, have different tourism resources and structures, and receive tourists from different demographics.

Importantly, the tourism sector is a significant driver for the economies of all three nations (India, Australia, and Canada). This industry is gradually increasing in India, providing large inputs to the economic development and employment of lakhs, especially in the field of hoteliers. This gives the country a natural beauty that continues to attract tourists from other parts of the region and the world. India is famous for its sightseeing and tourist attractions, and all travelers, including leisure, adventure, and cultural/religious travelers, visit India to explore historical monuments, sea beaches, high-altitude tourist spots, and sacred places. However, the frequency of severe climatic conditions, such as heat and frequent states of flooding and unexpected rain, started affecting the flow of tourists and the stability of tourism facilities (Shijin et al., 2022). Monsoons, which involve fluctuating

periods of consecutive days of rain and an increasing intensity of heat periods, can affect tourists' preferences, changing their place of interest from conventional areas to less vulnerable to climate influence. Notably, climate change is very sensitive, particularly to the pillars of tourism, such as tourism in mountainous and coastal regions.

The visible impacts of climate change within the context of tourism in Australia are best represented by the current degradation of recognized natural attractions, with great emphasis on coastal areas and the Great Barrier Reef. Australian natural attractions such as the marine biome, are at the cutting edge of impacts from rising sea levels, ocean acidification, and coral bleaching as key tourism selling points (Gössling et al., 2020). In addition, frequent wildfires, longer periods of drought, and intense heat have affected both ecosystems and tourism ventures. These climatic extremes present increasing threats to national parks as well as coastal and countryside tourist attractions. Many times, such an occurrence not only affects the structures physically, but also has a negative impact on tourists because of safety issues and environmental impacts. Owing to its overwhelming focus on nature-based products, Australian tourism is currently vulnerable to climate change, and needs to establish climate change adaptation policies to sustain itself (Scott et al., 2021).

Climate change has affected tourism in Canada, where the region is endowed with vast and diversified terrains and biomes. Climate conditions, particularly in the Northern Hemisphere's winter sports-related activities such as skiing and snowboarding, are under increasing pressure because of shortening winters. Annually visited areas, such as the Rockies of Canada, attract millions of winter tourists annually. However, current and future snow is insufficient, and seasons are becoming even shorter and wars that winter tourism is unsustainable in several areas, including Canada (Lemieux et al., 2020). However, summer tourism, especially in national parks, is threatened by frequent and severe forest fires. These fires not only avert the scintillae of natural sites, but also avert the safety of tourists. Ringing changes in climatic conditions, particularly heat and floods, have altered the dynamics and frequency of most tourism activities in various parts of the country. Regarding the subject of climate change and tourism, people learned about the unpredictable tendencies of climate change and the blurry perspectives of Canada as an eco-tourism country.

Existing research on the influence of climate change on tourism has grown over the past decade, but the majority of these studies have focused on particular geographic locales or single-country cases with limited cross-country or international comparisons. Thus, measures referring to the impact of climate change on each country's tourism are predisposed to climate conditions, infrastructural possibilities, and the degree of the country's involvement in tourism. This study attempts to analyze the ways in which climate change impacts threaten tourism in India, Australia, and, Canadian terms of both negative effects and counteractions. Within this context, this study aims to provide a comparative analysis of countries with different climatic, socioeconomic, and tourism characteristics to address the issues caused by climate change.

This study revealed that the impact of climate change on tourism has complex implications for policy and practice in terms of managing tourism and promoting sustainable tourism practices. By understanding how climate change affects tourism industries in different regions, policies and businesses can develop and design specific measures to fortify the future success of the global tourism industry when facing a more susceptible climate system.

### **Materials and Methods**

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the impact of climate change on tourism across India, Australia, and Canada. By utilizing statistical, mathematical, and computational methods, this approach enables detailed analysis of the data and facilitates an understanding of the relationships between climate change and tourism behavior. This study was exploratory in nature, aligning with Brown's (2016) assertion that exploratory research is crucial for examining current phenomena, understanding diverse perceptions, and identifying new trends. This research primarily aimed to explore the effects of climate change on tourist preferences, behaviors, and destination choices, as well as to understand how tourism stakeholders are adapting to these changes.

### **Sampling**

A total of 200 participants were selected for this study, with 100 tourists and 100 local tourism department employees from each of the three countries (India, Australia, and Canada) forming a balanced sample across regions. Tourists were selected based on their recent travel experiences to various destinations in the respective countries, while tourism department employees were chosen

based on their knowledge of industry trends and policy implications related to climate change and tourism. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that participants met specific criteria relevant to the research, while convenience sampling helped identify individuals who were readily accessible and willing to participate. This approach allows for a broad representation of both tourists and stakeholders.

### Data collection

Data were collected using a survey instrument developed for this study, consisting of original questions, as well as those adapted from previous studies on climate change and tourism. Specifically, questions were drawn from Bigano et al. (2006), Tol et al. (2012), and Guliyeva (2018), who examined the impact of climate change on tourism behavior, including perceptions of climate risks, destination preferences, and adaptation strategies. The survey included both closed-ended questions (to capture quantitative data) and Likert scale items (to gauge attitudes, perceptions, and levels of agreement).

The survey was distributed from June to November 2024, with respondents completing the questionnaires in person or online depending on accessibility. The questions aimed to assess tourists' awareness of climate change, how they perceived its effects on their travel decisions, and how tourism stakeholders responded to climate-related challenges.

### Data analysis

Once the data were collected, they were entered into the SPSS Version 25.0. The analysis involved multiple statistical techniques, starting with descriptive statistics to summarize the data, including means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions. These summary statistics provided an overview of the participants' responses and allowed for the identification of trends and patterns in climate-related tourism behavior.

This study employed Spearman's rank correlation to assess the relationships between key variables, such as tourists' awareness of climate change and their willingness to adapt to travel patterns. The Spearman correlation matrix was particularly useful, given the ordinal nature of many survey items, such as the Likert scale responses. The results of these correlations were assessed for statistical significance, with a p-value of less than 0.05 indicating a significant relationship.

Additionally, the reliability of the survey instrument was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, which is a measure of internal consistency. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.70 or higher was considered acceptable, ensuring that the survey items consistently measured the intended constructs related to climate change and tourism, was considered acceptable. This helped to confirm the validity of the instrument and the reliability of the responses.

### Results

Table 1 indicates that 64.5% of the participants were aged 18-30, with the 41-60 age group being the least represented at 3.0%. Australians comprised 40.0% of the respondents, while 30.0% were uncommitted between India and Canada. Educationally, 47.0% held a bachelor's degree (no education 10.0%, grade 12 27.5%, and postgraduate degree 15.5%). Table 2 provides descriptive statistics and the correlation matrix for questionnaire items: CW-Climate/Weather, PD-Popularity, QP-Price Quality Ratio of accommodations, LD-Neatness/Image, SS-Safety and Security, EA-Accessibility, and CO-Information Supply/Quality of Natural Environment Information. It also includes Spearman's correlation matrix and descriptive statistics summary (Mean and Standard Deviation). The mean analysis showed a score of 2.02 for climate/weather, indicating that it was perceived as least important, whereas online information/content was deemed most important by participants.

**Table 1** Analysis of demographic data of tourists

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
18–30	129	64.5
31–40	59	29.5
41–50	6	3.0
51–60	6	3.0
Education		
No education	20	10.0
Grade 12	55	27.5

Bachelor degree	94	47.0
Postgraduate degree	31	15.5
Nationality		
India	60	30.0
Australia	80	40.0
Canada	60	30.0

## Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the effects of climate change on the tourism sector in three countries with contrasting climatic conditions, economic structures, and tourism facilities: India, Australia, and Canada. The outcomes showed how climate change affects tourism by changing tourists' preferences, as well as their chosen destinations and the tourism industry of those nations. While climate change is a worldwide issue for mankind, this study focuses on how its effects vary depending on the location and, more specifically, the ecosystems, economic status, and culture at the locations examined.

### Climate change and tourism in India

Global and localized climate change and weather conditions adversely affect the image and revenue of India's tourism industry. Several changes have been observed in industrial cells because of the increase in overall temperatures, heat waves, and fluctuations in monsoon patterns, impacting domestic as well as international tourism. One study showed that visitors select places that are not vulnerable to climate change effects, such as northern hill stations or coastal areas with low flood factors. This trend has fueled less tourist traffic to historically popular places such as Rajasthan and Gujarat because of harsh summer conditions. Moreover, with an unpredictable season, which involves the monsoon period, the flow of tourists affects the timing and, therefore, cannot predict periods of high occupancy, which leads to low occupancy rates during the low seasons.

Although climate change has caused certain imbalances, tourism has opened up temperate and climatically robust zones in the northern part of the Himalaya region. They are emerging as recreational centers for visitors who flee from the summer heat in the southern and central states of India. However, such new trends in tourist preferences are challenging for regional actors in the tourism niche, who must adapt their advertising campaigns and infrastructure projects to these new trends.

Moreover, interviews with employees of local tourism departments in India revealed that many adaptation measures should be undertaken to stabilize precarious forms of tourism and enhance the climate resistance of infrastructure endangered by floods and heat. It is essential to argue that environmental concerns, such as rainwater harvesting, renewable energy use, and climate-proof tourist accommodation and attractions, should become the main priorities of the developmental strategy of India's tourism sector over the coming decades.

### Australia: The impact of extreme weather on coastal and nature-based tourism

Coastal and marine ecosystems and the famous Great Barrier Reef constitute major sources for the Australian tourism industry. Nonetheless, there are evident signs that show that climatic change impacts shores and naturals/s, which are tourist attraction sites of the nation. The Great Barrier Reef, which is considered one of the seven natural wonders of the world, is at risk of waterborne pollutants, sea level rise, increase in ocean acidification, and coral bleaching. This has considerably undermined the interest of international visitors. The findings of our study suggest that tourists have slowly become aware of the degradation of coastal environments, which has led to changes in their travel preferences. The general tourism experience of major coastal cities, such as Brisbane and Sydney, is becoming determinative based on vulnerability to climate change.

Continuously occurring bushfires and droughts pose a huge risk to the Australian public and tourism-related infrastructure. Australia's 2019/2020 fire season was rather destructive, and the impact of the latter on the tourism sector was extensive, as it significantly affected many outdoor-oriented businesses in the country. A tourism industry specialist stated that both fire losses and fewer tourists had long-standing effects on the sector. However, there are noticeable early signs of sustainability, with most operators undertaking fire management and sustainable tourism being adopted by several operators. However, the study insists that sustainability will not only entail disaster contingency but will also entail a massive paradigm shift towards climate-sensitive tourism models.

**Table 2** Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix

Variables	Sample size	Mean $\pm$ SD	CW	PD	QP	LD	SS	EA	CO	QS	CH	AS	PL	CC	EF	AC	VS	VC	DU
CW	200	2.02 $\pm$ 0.37	-	0.843	0.579	0.65	0.506	0.543	0.579	0.579	0.554	0.554	0.506	0.643	0.579	0.579	0.554	0.554	0.579
PD	200	2.22 $\pm$ 0.11	0.23	-	0.865	0.76	0.721	1	0.865	0.864	0.68	0.76	0.621	1	0.865	0.862	0.66	0.66	0.721
QP	200	2.34 $\pm$ 0.33	0.49	1	-	0.31	0.643	0.821	0.579	0.621	0.554	0.772	0.506	1	0.643	0.721	0.579	0.621	0.579
LD	200	2.22 $\pm$ 0.07	0.24	0.867	0.506	-	0.865	0.621	0.554	0.773	0.554	0.771	0.865	0.86	0.863	0.721	0.721	0.686	0.686
SS	200	2.08 $\pm$ 0.13	0.36	0.765	0.643	0.62	-	0.921	1	0.865	0.565	0.66	0.66	0.721	1	0.865	0.864	0.66	0.66
EA	200	2.22 $\pm$ 0.31	0.34	0.86	0.721	0.55	0.66	-	0.643	0.579	0.554	0.506	0.643	0.579	0.579	0.554	0.554	0.506	0.643
CO	200	2.35 $\pm$ 0.33	0.22	0.54	0.579	0.67	0.721	0.554	-	0.506	0.643	0.721	0.579	0.621	0.554	0.773	0.506	0.643	0.721
QS	200	0.34 $\pm$ 0.06	0.45	0.681	0.621	0.75	0.721	0.706	0.554	-	0.554	0.773	0.554	0.773	0.865	0.863	0.454	0.773	0.554
CH	200	2.24 $\pm$ 0.07	0.31	0.521	0.554	0.57	0.66	0.643	0.506	0.506	-	0.506	0.643	0.721	0.579	0.621	0.554	0.773	0.506
AS	200	2.24 $\pm$ 0.13	0.44	1	0.773	0.76	0.579	0.579	0.643	0.643	0.554	-	0.867	0.865	0.66	0.66	0.721	0.865	0.865
PL	200	2.08 $\pm$ 0.31	0.26	1	0.506	0.86	0.621	0.579	0.579	0.721	0.773	0.554	-	0.863	0.621	0.554	0.773	0.554	0.773
CC	200	2.22 $\pm$ 0.33	0.45	0.865	1	0.77	0.554	0.854	0.579	0.579	0.554	0.506	0.643	-	0.506	0.643	0.721	0.579	0.621
EF	200	2.32 $\pm$ 0.33	0.49	0.985	0.643	0.79	0.773	0.554	0.554	0.621	0.773	0.621	0.554	0.773	-	0.864	0.861	0.66	0.66
AC	200	2.31 $\pm$ 0.33	0.48	0.855	0.721	0.79	0.579	0.406	0.579	0.579	0.554	0.554	0.506	0.643	0.579	-	0.506	0.643	0.506
VS	200	2.32 $\pm$ 0.06	0.34	0.965	0.579	0.79	0.579	0.506	0.643	0.721	0.579	0.621	0.554	0.773	0.506	0.643	-	0.773	0.554
VC	200	2.24 $\pm$ 0.07	0.34	0.85	0.621	0.72	0.865	0.743	0.579	0.554	0.506	0.643	0.579	0.579	0.554	0.554	0.506	-	0.506
DU	200	2.24 $\pm$ 0.06	0.34	0.66	0.57	0.52	0.86	0.66	0.66	0.72	1	0.865	0.86	0.66	0.66	0.72	0.86	0.6	-



Analysis of the results of the questionnaire completed by Australian operators and key players in the field of tourism highlighted the importance of policies targeting climate adaptation. The measures consist of machine infrastructure within buildings and structures, including constructions that are flood-resistant, and technology within the operation transportation and accommodation sectors that have low-carbon emissions. Furthermore, the industry identifies that the expansion of eco-tourism as a separate category for tourists is evolving as the broad market shifts toward a focus on sustainability and conservation.

### **Canada: changing dynamics in winter and summer tourism**

Currently, there is some good news and bad news regarding the impact of climate change on Canada's tourism industry. There are some advantages of some regions and, on the other hand, some disadvantages. For instance, milder winters have tolled some of the most famous winter sports resorts, such as Banff and Whistler. The locations where key activities depend on steady snow cover for winter activities such as skiing and snowboarding experience a reduction in length and unpredictability. Therefore, people are going to other places with better conditions suitable for wintertime, which also creates fluctuations in funds in such areas. This change from the long-standing model of cold-climate tourists is becoming a source of concern, especially for numerous rural communities.

In the United States, warm-season tourism is under pressure, but for different reasons in Canada. Droughts, forest fires, and widespread flooding have diminished recreational opportunities and hazards in some parts of the world. This is especially true for the country's national parks, the gems of the tourism industry that are currently experiencing the most severe ecological transformation. Fire danger not only reduces the scenic amenity of these places but also threatens the lives of users and people living in those areas. However, submerging hiking paths and other important physical structures, such as site attractions, have limited accessibility to some areas; hence, a negative impact on local businesses, such as tour operations, has occurred.

Nonetheless, the Canadian tourism sector has adapted to climate change. Many measures are being taken by the authorities, from using ecologically friendly technologies to providing funds for other forms of winter tourism and extending tourism interest to include cultural and historical sites. Furthermore, indigenous tourism is becoming increasingly popular as people tend to choose real and safe tours with low carbon footprints in areas with mild climate change impacts.

This study establishes a complex relationship between climate change and tourist businesses in different geographical environments. While climate change effects are global, the effects that each part of the world receives and their corresponding adaptations are significantly different, mainly because of climate sensitivity, tourism industry organization, and regulatory norms. All tourism stakeholders and policymakers globally agree that urgent measures are needed across the three countries to mitigate and adapt to the existing climate conditions.

Thus, to maintain tourism as an important and relevant economy-making factor in regions that were impacted by it and likely to be impacted in the near future, key adaptation measures should be oriented towards sustainability and resilience. Such measures include the diversification of tourism products, improvement of physical facilities, and taking suitable actions to bear the appropriate impacts on nature. Furthermore, such exposition and integration of climate change issues are inseparable from the complexity of international cooperation and the sharing of experiences between countries. Indeed, the fact that such complex problems tend to cut across government agencies, businesses, and civil society organizations means that this collaborative approach has the potential to enhance the composite capacity to address such matters.

### **Limitations**

However, the research methodology used in this study has certain limitations. Bias may arise from the fact that participants were recruited using purposive and convenience sampling techniques, meaning that it was not a random sample. Moreover, since the investigation was conducted using cross-sectional research that accumulates information about subjects at a certain moment, there is a lack of possibilities to trace changes over time or determine causality.

### **Conclusions**

Proximity location is important to the study because the sun is at the center of the solar system, and many tourists visit great places, such as Hawaii, just for the view of natural habitats. This region is also under the threat of predictable changes in climatic conditions. Thus, analyzing how climate and



other tourist-related activities work could provide useful data for visitors' decision-making matrices. In conjunction with what the research proposes, further diversification of tourism offerings, as well as encouraging guest visits during off-peak seasons, is also recommended, since offerings may include cultural, business, adventure, sports, and related tourism types at any point in the year.

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### **Competing Interests**

The author declares that there are no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced the writing of this article.

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# THE ROLE OF CURIOSITY IN TRAVELLERS' TRANSFORMATION

Bahar Shafiei<sup>a</sup>, Char-lee McLennan<sup>b</sup> and Shane Mathews<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>School of Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations, QUT Business School, Queensland University of Technology, Australia, <sup>b</sup>School of Management, QUT Business School, Queensland University of Technology, Australia.

## ABSTRACT

This study investigates how travellers' curiosity, demographics, and reflection capacity are related to the transformative outcomes of their trips. The results show that there are relationships between curiosity and reflection, as well as to enhancing their cross-cultural understanding, broadening worldviews, making tourists more aware of their impact on the world and changing their everyday behaviours. That is more curious respondents tended to be younger, female or non-binary, those with dependents and those that are more educated. Future research should aim to undertake the development of a structural equation model to identify the relationships between the variables used in this paper.

**Keywords:** *curiosity; transformative tourism; reflection, demographics*

## Introduction

Tourism is experiencing a paradigm shift from a service to an experience economy, recognising travel experiences as powerful catalysts for personal and societal transformation (Kirillova et al., 2017a; Seeler & Schänzel, 2019). This emerging field, known as transformative tourism research (TTR), focuses on travel-based learning outcomes, considering travellers as active learners who are motivated to know more about different features of the destination and culture (Bueddefeld & Duerden, 2022; Milazzo & Soulard, 2024; Phillips, 2019). Underpinned by Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) (Mezirow, 1991), TTR views travel as a cognitive learning process that suggests significant behavioural shifts occur when people face new contextual and experiential stimuli, such as confronting untouched nature and wildlife (Kirillova et al., 2017b; Richardson & Insch, 2023) and novel and unfamiliar cultures (Morgan, 2010). These stimuli, which Morgan (2010) called "otherness" (p. 246) function as "disorienting dilemmas" (Mezirow, 1994, p. 223), instigate a mental state where individuals recognise a need for change before acquiring and applying new knowledge and skills (Coghlan & Gooch, 2011).

At the heart of this transformation process lies "intellectual curiosity" (Kottler, 1998, p. 26), a deep desire to learn and explore. Curiosity is "a trait frequently associated with explorative pursuits of ambiguous, challenging, or complex situations along with seeking and exploring behaviours that, in turn, generate certain actions and states" (Horstmeyer, 2020, p. 739). In the tourism context, curiosity is the intrinsic desire to seek out novel, complex and ambiguous experiences (Litman, 2005; Litman, 2008). Curiosity plays a crucial role in shaping travellers' engagement with new environments and cultures (Davari & Jang, 2024; Martenson, 2018). It acts as a cognitive and emotional bridge that connects the traveller's inner world with the external stimuli encountered during their travels (Totsune et al., 2021). Curious travellers are more likely to engage in proactive and effortful cognitive pursuits and seek out opportunities for learning and reflection that can catalyse transformative experiences (Martenson, 2018). Researchers argue that curiosity encourages individuals to engage in observation, exploration, manipulation, and questioning, which are all fundamental behaviours for experiencing transformation (Chen & Hsu, 2021). However, assessments of the role of curiosity in shaping the transformation process and outcomes are under-considered in the literature. Consequently, this study aims to explore how individuals' curiosity contributes to their transformative travel experiences by adopting a mixed methodology that comprises two studies of sequential QUAL → QUAN data collection and analysis.

## Literature

Transformative travel, grounded in transformative learning theory (TLT) (Mezirow, 1991), is gaining increasing attention for its potential to transform individuals and turn them into agents of change (Soulard & McGehee, 2023). The theory posits that transformative learning is curiosity-based and discovery-driven (Taylor, 2017, p. 8) and occurs when individuals shift their fixed assumptions and expectations by changing their habits of mind, meaning perspectives, and mindsets (Mezirow, 1991, 1994). Building on this theoretical foundation, Bruner (1991) and Kottler (1998) highlight the transformative power of travel experiences, particularly emphasising the impact of human encounters on the self. This conceptualisation led to a growing body of literature exploring various aspects of the transformation process in the tourism context from tourist motivations (An Nguyen & Hsu, 2023; Knollenberg et al., 2014), to triggers (Godovykh, 2024; Kirillova et al., 2017b; Pung & Del Chiappa, 2020), and learning models (Bueddefeld & Duerden, 2022).

Scholars conceptualise the transformative learning process in tourism as beginning at the point of stepping out of one's comfort zone and immersing in a novel environment, culture, and experiences that may involve challenges, liminality and introspection (Bueddefeld & Duerden, 2022; Milazzo & Soulard, 2024; Phillips, 2019). The potential for transformation, however, is not consistent across all travellers or destinations and not all travellers desire to experience transformation with an individual's readiness largely dependent on their desire to learn and explore (Morgan, 2010). Kottler (1998) emphasises that individuals' intellectual curiosity, an intense desire to explore new places and interact with different cultures, is a primary stimulus for transformation. This form of curiosity goes beyond passive observation; it focuses on the traveller's role as a co-creator of meanings and experiences (Falk et al., 2012).

Curiosity is considered a significant push factor that can drive exploratory behaviour in travel contexts (Litman, 2005; Martenson, 2018). Researchers believe that curiosity is deeply ingrained in human nature from birth (Buheji, 2019; Dewey, 1910), but it tends to decline with aging (Sakaki et al., 2018). This innate desire to understand and engage with surroundings plays a crucial role in individuals' cognitive development and knowledge acquisition. The influence of curiosity in learning and knowledge attainment is highly associated with individuals' cognitive ability and their proactive intentions (Kang et al., 2009; Litman, 2008; Martenson, 2018). This proactive approach to learning aligns with Litman's (2005, 2010) model of curiosity that proposes two primary facets for curiosity: 1) interest-based curiosity driven by the intrinsic desire for learning and seeking information; and, 2) deprivation-based curiosity stemming from the desire to resolve uncertainty and fill knowledge gaps. Therefore, Litman (2005, 2010) conceptualises curiosity as the response to unfamiliar, complex, uncertain, and contrasting information and taking action to fill knowledge gaps, rather than just looking for new experiences. Davari and Jang (2024) also argue that curiosity is more than an eagerness to know; it is an exploratory behaviour that drives one's desire to investigate and learn from the environment in a way that would lead to personal growth. Research shows that enjoyable exploratory behaviour and the successful resolution of curiosity are intrinsically rewarding and generate positive emotions and personal growth (Daume & Hüttl-Maack, 2020; Kashdan et al., 2004; Litman, 2005). Kashdan et al. (2004) suggest a link between curiosity and self-growth, conceptualising a self-reinforcing cycle: novel experiences stimulate curiosity, thereby driving continuous self-improvement. The authors indicate that unlike earlier models focused on curiosity (e.g., Loewenstein, 1994), their model emphasises curiosity's inherently rewarding nature.

Curiosity plays a crucial role in transformative learning (Bae, 2018; Charaniya, 2012). From the perspective of TLT (Mezirow, 1991), when travellers encounter knowledge gaps, curiosity can act as a catalyst for transforming new experiences into meaningful learning (Kang et al., 2009). These knowledge gaps when combined with curiosity can prompt action and motivate learners to seek out new information and reconcile it with their existing beliefs (Mezirow, 1991; Milazzo & Soulard, 2024). Indeed, curiosity acts as a driving force that encourages individuals to reflect and seek additional information while remaining open to doubt and questioning their beliefs. Research has shown that curiosity also functions as a fundamental ingredient in developing reflective thinking (see

Litman et al., 2017), which is the main trigger for personal growth and transformation (Bae, 2018; Mezirow, 2003). Richardson and Inch (2023) similarly find that tourists experience a “moment of vision” upon returning home, triggering a desire to gain more knowledge. When intellectual curiosity, being comfortable with ambiguity, and reflection are present in the travel context (Taylor & Cranton, 2012) they create an ideal environment for personal transformation.

Despite its significance in driving transformative experiences, curiosity has not been thoroughly explored or integrated into existing models of transformation in tourism research. This has been because TTR has been predominantly focused on in-situ experiences and external and contextual factors that influence transformation during travel itself (Zhao & Agyeiwaah, 2023). However, this narrow focus on in-situ contextual factors overlooks the critical role that curiosity plays in initiating and shaping transformative processes.

## Method

This study used a mixed methodology of QUAL → QUAN sequential studies to explore the role of curiosity in shaping transformative travel experiences. The first study employed an exploratory research approach to understand curiosity from the perspective of Australian participants who travelled more than three times, domestically or internationally, during the last five years. Data collection was conducted via semi-structured interviews. This study was part of a broader study, with the interview sessions covering several topics relating to transformative tourism. Twenty-five in-depth semi-structured interviews with adult Australian citizens were conducted. Participants were recruited through purposive snowball sampling via Facebook travel groups from December 2022 to March 2023. Using Facebook as a recruitment platform ensured a diverse sample across various geographical locations in Australia and various sociodemographic factors. Interviews lasting 45-60 minutes were conducted in person, online, and by phone, recorded, and transcribed using Zoom software. The research team verified transcriptions and edited them ‘intelligent’ verbatim. Interviews began with rapport-building questions before exploring participants’ experiences of personal and behavioural changes. Data analysis utilised thematic analysis with NVivo v.12 software. Two coders employed double-blind abductive coding, comparing results to ensure consistency and identify emergent themes. The analysis followed a three-stage coding procedure: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Themes were validated through resource and analyst triangulation methods.

The second study aimed to identify the relationship between curiosity, reflection and transformative outcomes, as well as the individual characteristics that shape curiosity. This study sampled Australians over the age of 18 years using Dynata’s online panel. The questionnaire began with simple demographic questions about the participants, followed by questions about their experience of transformation and ended with reflective questions about their memorable travel experiences and behaviour changes. Once the data collection phase was complete, the raw data was imported into STATA v.18 for an extensive cleaning process. This process involved addressing incomplete surveys, and missing data, and ensuring all variable names were clearly defined. This process led to a final sample size of 1,800 responses.

A ‘curious mindset’ was measured with a single item: “I have an intense curiosity to learn about other cultures that are unfamiliar to me”, adopted from the interest-based (I-type) curiosity scale developed by Litman (2008). This single item was selected to explore the curiosity aspect of mindset, as it shows both the desire to learn and the desire to overcome challenges. This item was measured using a 7-point Likert scale rated from 1 ‘Strongly agree’ to 7 ‘Strongly disagree’. For measuring the perceived transformative outcomes, questions were drawn on the works of Tasci and Godovykh (2021), Pung et al. (2020), and An Nguyen and Hsu (2023). These authors developed a series of questions aimed at measuring the perceived transformative outcomes of travel in changing self and behaviours. Eleven items were adapted from these studies and measured using a 7-point Likert scale rated from 1 ‘Strongly agree’ to 7 ‘Strongly disagree’. Descriptive statistics were conducted for key demographic variables alongside their respective curious mindset means and standard deviations. ANOVA, or the

analysis of variance (Kim, 2017), was used to identify differences in participants' levels of curiosity in travels across demographic variables. Finally, ordinal logistic multiple regression (Mehmetoglu & Jakobsen, 2022) was conducted to explore the relationship between the curiosity variable and the reflection and the travel impacts variables. Table 1 displays the key variables used in this study.

**Table 1. Key Variables Used in this Analysis**

Variable	Variable Name	Variable Description
Respondent Gender	<i>gender</i>	The gender of the respondent
Age Group	<i>age_group</i>	The age group of the respondent
Education Status	<i>education</i>	The education status of the respondent
Live at home	<i>live_home</i>	The respondent lives at home
Transformative Outcomes1	<i>TransfOut1</i>	Made me more outgoing and confident
Transformative Outcomes2	<i>TransfOut2</i>	Made me more independent
Transformative Outcomes3	<i>TransfOut3</i>	Made me more tolerant and patient
Transformative Outcomes4	<i>TransfOut4</i>	Enhanced my cross-cultural understanding
Transformative Outcomes5	<i>TransfOut5</i>	Enhanced my communication and interaction skills
Transformative Outcomes6	<i>TransfOut6</i>	Broadened my worldview
Transformative Outcomes7	<i>TransfOut7</i>	Made me more aware of our impact on the world
Transformative Outcomes8	<i>TransfOut8</i>	Made me more environmentally friendly
Transformative Outcomes9	<i>TransfOut9</i>	Heightened my awareness of my privileges
Transformative Outcomes10	<i>TransfOut10</i>	Changed my mindset and values
Transformative Outcomes11	<i>TransfOut11</i>	Changed my everyday behaviours
Reflection 1	<i>reflect1</i>	I reflect on the trip and my reasons for travelling
Reflection 2	<i>reflect2</i>	I reflect on my life and the meaning of life
Reflection 3	<i>reflect3</i>	I want to think deeply about cultural or environmental topics
Reflection 4	<i>reflect4</i>	I often pay close attention to my feelings

## Results

### *Qualitative Insights on Curiosity*

Curiosity emerged as a key theme within the interviews, manifesting as a driver of transformation from travel. The interview results suggest there is a dynamic, self-reinforcing relationship between curiosity and transformation that evolves across multiple travel experiences. This “transformation loop” begins with an initial curiosity about new places or cultures, leading travellers to engage more deeply with their environment, often resulting in transformative experiences. Participants who experienced transformation as a result of travel attributed it to an initial inherent curiosity, which could often be traced to their childhood: “...curiosity has been there from day one and it’s never diminished” (P6), “When I was a kid, my dad told interesting stories about what he saw in different cities and countries, and it triggered my curiosity...” (P9) and “I was a very curious child and liked to know a lot about the world... [that] shaped my mindset and helped me get the travel bug...” (P1).

Some participants see curiosity as an integral part of their personality, driving their travel motivations throughout their lives: “I’ve always been quite a curious person, and rather more interested in learning, and very curious about the world more than having fun or socialising” (P15) and “I’ve been very curious since my childhood... what you see and what you get told is very different... You need to ask 50,000 questions from your guide and the locals to understand the reality...”. Participants such as P17 reflected on their curiosity as a desire to explore novel and challenging experiences: “...I like to explore... For me, it means being very comfortable with ambiguity. I like to experience new things that



*I haven't done before, meet new people, and explore their language and culture.*" Some participants such as P25 and P20 described emotional rewards from being curious, for example: *"Seeing how my mind was itching by finding new knowledge or facing different challenges was very satisfactory for me and still it is"* (P25).

Actively seeking information about other cultures and embracing challenges in unfamiliar situations during travel creates a self-reinforcing cycle that stimulates greater curiosity and openness to new perspectives. As a result, travellers become motivated to pursue increasingly diverse and potentially transformative experiences in their future trips. As one participant (P15) stated, *"Travelling deepened my curiosity"*, indicating it manifests within a cyclical reinforcing process across multiple trips. The curious-motivated attitudes and behaviours that develop—such as increased willingness to engage with unfamiliar cultures, greater openness to challenging preconceptions, and deeper reflection on personal values—serve as key facilitators of personal transformation: *"Being curious about other cultures... changed my perspective and worldview"* (P9). Over time, curiosity changes from a desire for knowledge to a desire to be a positive influence on the world: *"I've been curious... in a more extractive way, like wanting knowledge for myself... now I travel in a way where I'm thinking about the places I'm visiting and the impact I'm going to have..."* (P24).

### *Quantitative Analysis of Curiosity*

An ANOVA determined that there was a significant difference between curiosity and gender ( $F(3, 1,761) = 5.55, p < .001$ ), with non-binary and females tending to be more curious. However, the small sample size for non-binary respondents requires careful interpretation. Similarly, there was a significant difference between age groups in terms of their curious mindset ( $F(6, 1,764) = 5.15, p < .001$ ), with those in the 30-39 age group having the greatest level of curiosity. Overall, younger people tended to be more curious, and this curiosity declined with age. However, with age, the standard errors also increased indicating greater variability in responses by those in the older age groups. Those with dependents were also more curious ( $t(1762) = -3.07, p = .002$ ). Moreover, those with lower levels of education were also significantly less curious than those with higher education levels ( $F(7, 1,760) = 5.45, p < .001$ ).

Ordinal logistic multiple regression analysis was undertaken to explore the relationships between curiosity and reflection (Table 2), as well as between curiosity and transformative outcomes (Table 3). The results show that curiosity is significantly related to *reflection1* 'I reflect on the trip and my reasons for travelling', *reflection3* 'I want to think deeply about cultural or environmental topics' and *reflection4* 'I often pay close attention to my feelings'. The results also show that curiosity is significantly related to certain Transformative Outcomes, specifically *TransfOut4* 'Enhanced my cross-cultural understanding', *TransfOut6* 'Broadened my worldview' and *TransfOut7* 'Made me more aware of our impact on the world'. To a lesser extent, curiosity is also related to *TransfOut1* 'Made me more outgoing and confident' and *TransfOut11* 'Changed my everyday behaviours'.

**Table 2. Ordinal Logistic Regression of Reflection on Curiosity**

Curiosity	Coefficient	Std. err.	z	P>z	[95% conf. interval]
<b>reflection1</b>	<b>0.302</b>	<b>0.055</b>	<b>5.50</b>	<b>0.000**</b>	<b>0.194 0.409</b>
reflection2	0.074	0.051	1.46	0.145	-0.026 0.174
<b>reflection3</b>	<b>0.522</b>	<b>0.050</b>	<b>10.50</b>	<b>0.000**</b>	<b>0.425 0.620</b>
<b>reflection4</b>	<b>0.133</b>	<b>0.049</b>	<b>2.75</b>	<b>0.006**</b>	<b>0.038 0.229</b>

obs = 1434, LR chi2(4) = 397.19, Prob > chi2 = 0.0000, Log-likelihood = -2141.299, Pseudo R2 = 0.0849

\*\* = Significant at the 1% level; \* = Significant at the 5% level



**Table 3. Ordinal Logistic Regression of Transformative Outcomes on Curiosity**

Variable	Coefficient	Std. err.	z	P>z	[95% conf.	interval]
<b>TransfOut1</b>	<b>0.121</b>	<b>0.049</b>	<b>2.47</b>	<b>0.014*</b>	<b>0.025</b>	<b>0.217</b>
TransfOut2	0.058	0.049	1.17	0.241	-0.039	0.155
TransfOut3	-0.046	0.049	-0.94	0.349	-0.142	0.050
<b>TransfOut4</b>	<b>0.466</b>	<b>0.054</b>	<b>8.69</b>	<b>0.000**</b>	<b>0.361</b>	<b>0.571</b>
TransfOut5	-0.028	0.050	-0.56	0.577	-0.126	0.070
<b>TransfOut6</b>	<b>0.250</b>	<b>0.052</b>	<b>4.78</b>	<b>0.000**</b>	<b>0.147</b>	<b>0.352</b>
<b>TransfOut7</b>	<b>0.205</b>	<b>0.049</b>	<b>4.16</b>	<b>0.000**</b>	<b>0.108</b>	<b>0.301</b>
TransfOut8	0.069	0.044	1.58	0.114	-0.017	0.154
TransfOut9	0.053	0.045	1.20	0.232	-0.034	0.141
TransfOut10	0.040	0.052	0.77	0.439	-0.061	0.141
<b>TransfOut11</b>	<b>0.108</b>	<b>0.048</b>	<b>2.24</b>	<b>0.025*</b>	<b>0.014</b>	<b>0.202</b>

obs = 1679, LR chi2(11) = 682.33, Prob > chi2 < 0.001, Log likelihood = -2506.2385, Pseudo R2 = 0.1198

\*\* = Significant at the 1% level; \* = Significant at the 5% level

## Discussion and Conclusion

This research contributes to the growing body of literature on transformative travel experiences (Nandasena et al., 2022; Sheldon, 2020; Tasci & Godovykh, 2021) by positioning curiosity as a crucial antecedent and ongoing catalyst for personal transformation. The results of the qualitative study suggest a dynamic and multi-stage process extending from pre-trip curiosity to post-trip reflection. The results indicate that the seeds of transformative travel experiences are often planted in childhood, aligning with Phillips' (2019) concept of "seed experiences" (p. 133). These experiences are moments in everyday life, often long before concrete travel plans are made, potentially starting as early as childhood (Lindholm, 2018; Phillips, 2019). Seed experiences stimulate an individual's curiosity about the world beyond their familiar surroundings and plant the idea that there is more to explore and understand outside one's comfort zone and cultural context. Furthermore, these experiences relate to learning and the joy of knowledge acquisition later in life. As findings suggest, curiosity can be triggered by a small often insignificant incidence or encounter that simply sparks an interest in travel. These early inspiring encounters, whether through stories, images, or actual travel, cultivate a lasting curiosity that primes individuals for transformative experiences later in life. This finding extends Lindholm's (2018) work on the relationship between childhood wonder and adult learning, situating it specifically within the context of travel. Therefore, importantly, we find that transformation is instigated by an internal revolution process driven by curiosity, rather than a change that occurs due to a sudden or extreme external event or catalyst.

Perhaps most significantly, the results of the qualitative research reveal a cyclical, self-reinforcing relationship between curiosity and transformation. This "curiosity-transformation loop" extends beyond single trip experiences, accumulating over time to reshape travellers' worldviews and self-perceptions. This finding challenges the notion of transformation as a discrete event (e.g., Folmer et al., 2019), instead framing it as an ongoing process fuelled by curiosity. It also suggests that the transformative potential of travel may be cumulative, with each travel building upon the curiosity and personal growth stimulated by previous experiences.

Demographic factors are found to significantly influence curiosity levels, with gender, age, and education playing key roles. These findings align with Kashdan et al. (2009) who found gender differences in curiosity domains and Sakaki et al. (2018) who noted age-related variations in curiosity focus. The findings also suggest that educational background correlates with curiosity, aligning with von Stumm et al. (2011) who demonstrated that higher education levels correlate with increased epistemic curiosity. The findings suggest that curiosity strongly correlates with reflective attitudes,

particularly regarding cultural and environmental topics. It also enhances mindfulness and introspection during and after experiences. These findings suggest curiosity involves both external novelty-seeking and internal exploration (Litman & Pezzo, 2007; Litman et al., 2017).

The results show a strong relationship between curiosity and positive personal growth. Curious travellers develop better cross-cultural understanding, broader worldviews, and greater awareness of global impact. These transformative outcomes suggest that curiosity can stimulate an internal revolution, transforming how people see themselves and the world around them. As travellers gain more experiences, their curiosity deepens and matures. This evolved form of curiosity becomes a powerful force, driving people to ask questions, make discoveries, and come up with new ideas (Kashdan & Silvia, 2009; Martenson, 2018; Noordewier & van Dijk, 2017). Importantly, as Ernst and Burcak (2019) suggest, this kind of purposeful curiosity is especially valuable for tackling sustainability challenges. It equips people with the mindset and skills needed to contribute meaningfully to creating a more sustainable world. The relationships between curiosity and increased confidence, as well as changes in everyday behaviours, further highlight its potential as a driver of personal development. These findings suggest that cultivating curiosity may have far-reaching implications for individual well-being and adaptive functioning in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

The results of this research show that curious travellers are more likely to seek transformative experiences, though profound change is typically gradual (Neuhofer & Dulbecco, 2024), driven by a small “priming dose” of curiosity (Kang et al., 2009, p. 963). Tourism providers can capitalise on this by implementing strategies that encourage gradual engagement, mindfulness, and reflection throughout the travel journey. Several approaches could be effective in this regard. For instance, marketing strategies that trigger curiosity about different cultures, environments, and ways of life could help prepare travellers for more enriching experiences. While this study offers valuable insights, its scope is limited by its single-national setting and cross-sectional design. Future research should use cross-national and longitudinal design approaches to better understand curiosity and its role in personal transformation. Also, future research should aim to undertake the development of a structural equation model to identify the relationships between the variables used in this paper.

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# TOURISM AS A LENS FOR CLIMATE CHANGE ENGAGEMENT: EXPLORING THE INTERACTION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTANCE AND ISSUE FRAMING

Rongjin Tian<sup>a</sup> and Leyan Huang<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (Guangzhou), Guangzhou, China

## ABSTRACT

Despite the growing recognition of tourism's potential to engage individuals in climate change discourse, research on leveraging this sector still needs to be completed. This gap motivates our investigation into how to build communication strategies that enable individual climate action through tourism. Thus, this study explores the interaction between psychological distance and issue framing within tourism, examining how these factors shape tourists' willingness to contribute financially to climate change mitigation efforts. Through two controlled experiments with 444 participants, we systematically manipulate psychological distance (social and spatial) and issue framing, measuring their joint effects on individuals' willingness to pay. Our findings reveal a significant interaction: when tourists perceive a closer psychological distance, economic framing resonates more powerfully, increasing their willingness to contribute. Conversely, at greater psychological distances, emotional framing evokes empathy and motivates financial contributions. These findings enhance our comprehension of psychological distance and issue framing dynamics within tourism, clarifying their boundary conditions. By incorporating the Dual Processing Model, we provide an alternative cognitive lens to interpret these interactions. Practically, our insights offer vital guidance to policymakers, marketers, and educators aiming to harness tourism's potential to advance climate action.

**Keywords:** *Psychological Distance, Issue Framing, Tourism, Climate Change Engagement, Willingness to Pay*

## 1 Introduction

The relationship between tourism and climate change has garnered significant attention in recent years (Scott, 2024), with a preponderance of research focusing on the macro-level impacts of climate change on the tourism industry and tourists' adaptive strategies (Kaján & Saarinen, 2013). However, less emphasis has been placed on utilizing tourism as a platform to engage individuals in climate change discourse and action. Despite the widely acknowledged importance of climate action, a major obstacle lies in the psychological distance individuals perceive between themselves and the consequences of climate change (Art, 2018). This perception of remoteness often undermines people's motivation to act as they struggle to connect personally with the issue (Van Lange & Huckelba, 2021).

As a multifaceted human activity, tourism offers a unique opportunity to bridge this psychological gap (Scott et al., 2012). By experiencing the tangible effects of climate change firsthand, tourists can better understand its implications. Extreme weather events, which are increasingly prevalent due to climate change, directly impact tourists' experiences, causing economic losses and emotional distress (Caldeira & Kastenholz, 2018). These dual effects provide a nuanced framing of climate change issues, which may differentially influence tourists' perceptions and behaviors.

Scholars have extensively examined the relationship between psychological distance and climate change engagement, yet findings still need to be conclusive (Keller et al., 2022). This inconsistency underscores the need for a more nuanced exploration of this relationship within specific contexts, such as tourism (Keller et al., 2022). Issue framing, which involves emphasizing different aspects of a



problem, has significantly influenced individual attitudes and behaviors (Bolsen & Shapiro, 2018). In tourism, framing climate change impacts as economic losses or emotional damage may differentially affect tourists' willingness to engage in climate action, mainly regarding financial contributions.

The present study aims to contribute to this growing body of literature by exploring the interaction between psychological distance and issue framing within a tourism context. Specifically, we examine how different framing strategies (economic loss versus emotional damage) influence tourists' willingness to pay for climate change mitigation efforts, contingent upon their perceived psychological distance from the issue. Drawing upon the Dual Processing Model (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974), when tourists perceive a closer psychological distance, an economic framing highlighting tangible losses may resonate more strongly and increase willingness to pay. Conversely, when psychological distance is perceived as more distant, an emotional framing that evokes empathy may be more effective in motivating financial contributions.

By investigating this complex interaction, our study not only sheds light on the mechanisms through which tourism can facilitate climate change engagement but also provides practical guidance for policymakers, marketers, and educators seeking to harness tourism's potential as a catalyst for climate action. Furthermore, our research enriches the literature on climate change communication and psychological distance by introducing a novel context and framing strategies that have yet to be explored.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Climate Change and Tourism

Climate change's impact on tourism is becoming increasingly evident, with the industry serving as a critical medium for individuals to engage with and understand these changes (Pang et al., 2013). It connects people to global climate issues, allowing firsthand experience of its tangible effects (Scott et al., 2012). Climate change has specific and significant impacts on the tourism industry, affecting various sectors. This has decreased destination attractiveness due to altered natural landscapes, such as glacial retreat and coastal erosion (Arabadzhyan et al., 2021) and infrastructure damage from extreme weather, increasing maintenance costs (Pathak et al., 2021). Additionally, visitor experiences are also negatively affected by severe weather conditions, potentially reducing satisfaction (Caldeira & Kastenholz, 2018).

Tourists' awareness and attitudes towards climate change can be influenced by direct exposure during travel, fostering a sense of environmental responsibility (Gössling et al., 2012). Attitude change is another significant outcome, as research indicates that travel experiences can lead individuals to reassess their views on climate change, fostering a greater sense of environmental responsibility (Han et al., 2016). Adaptation strategies, such as choosing low-carbon transport and supporting sustainable tourism, reflect tourists' responses to this challenge (Kaján & Saarinen, 2013). Meanwhile, tourism also offers unique opportunities for travelers to deepen their understanding of climate change and its effects on human behavior and psychology (Tanrisever et al., 2024), thus serving as a bridge for *engagement with climate issues*.

### 2.2 Climate Change & Psychological Distance

Psychological distance is often cited as a significant barrier to climate action (Van Lange & Huckelba, 2021). It arises when individuals perceive climate change as affecting people in distant locations or

far into the future, making it less of a priority in their decision-making. This distance can be categorized into four interrelated dimensions: spatial, social, temporal, and hypothetical (Keller et al., 2022). To address this, early advocates have called for strategies to make the impacts of climate change feel more immediate and personal, thus increasing engagement (Shome & Marx, 2009).

Despite its intuitive appeal, reducing the psychological distance to motivate climate action has faced criticism. A 2015 systematic review found that such strategies do not consistently lead to action (McDonald et al., 2015). The psychological distance of climate change is often overstated (Van Valkengoed et al., 2023), and the conclusions drawn from related experimental research are inconsistent and not robust (S. Wang et al., 2021). Construal Level Theory (CLT), proposed by Trope and Liberman (2010), suggests that a closer psychological distance makes climate change seem more concrete, potentially leading to greater engagement, while a distant perception may focus on abstract values (Loy & Spence, 2020). However, Brügger et al. (2015) argue that CLT might be misused, as proximate framing can shift attention to immediate costs and benefits rather than long-term values.

Nonetheless, most environmental psychology researchers still believe that interventions to reduce psychological distance can effectively stimulate climate action (Van Valkengoed et al., 2023). Given the complexity of climate change and psychological distance, scholars call for re-examining their specific relationship (Keller et al., 2022). Research should delve into the contexts of psychological distance, explore new concepts, and focus on concrete behaviors related to climate action.

### *2.3 Framing Effect on Climate Change*

Framing is essential in climate change communication due to the issue's complexity (Bolsen & Shapiro, 2018). The complexity of climate change risk makes effective communication framing crucial (Lorenzoni et al., 2005). Framing theory helps to understand how ideas are organized, presented, and debated in the public sphere, and it is increasingly applied to environmental issues (Miller, 2000). By simplifying complex issues and highlighting specific aspects, framing enables different audiences to quickly grasp the issue's relevance (Nisbet & Mooney, 2007).

Various types of frames can be used at different stages in the communication process (Guenther et al., 2024). In climate change communication, attribute and outcome framing have been widely discussed (Spence & Pidgeon, 2010). Attribute framing is often used in political debates, like emphasizing uncertainty by U.S. Republicans (Nisbet & Mooney, 2007). Academically, outcome framing, which focuses on gains or losses, has gained more attention (Homar & Cvelbar, 2021). Since climate change communication often emphasizes negative consequences, outcome frames typically focus on actions, such as reducing electricity use to achieve benefits or avoid losses. However, direct calls to action can backfire if companies do not show genuine environmental efforts (W. Wang et al., 2017). Building frames that connect individuals to climate change and motivate them to act spontaneously holds significant potential.

Scholars have explored the interactive effects of framing and psychological distance on climate action. For example, Chu and Yang (2018) found that familiar exemplars effectively reduce ideological polarization when spatial distance is close. In the hospitality sector, Tao et al. (2024) showed that reducing psychological distance enhances the alignment between goal framing and regulatory focus, leading to greater customer engagement with climate change.

Climate change communication frames are continuously evolving. In tourism, these frames can emphasize economic consequences to evoke a sense of loss (Guenther et al., 2024) or highlight emotional impacts such as ecological grief (Cunsolo & Ellis, 2018) and personal hedonic losses. Emphasizing economic versus emotional losses may have different effects, and few studies have compared these approaches. This new tourism perspective offers opportunities to better understand

how psychological distance influences climate action.

## *2.4 Willingness to Pay in Climate Actions*

Behaviors mitigating climate change can collectively be termed climate action or engagement (Corner et al., 2014). Unlike general pro-environmental behaviors, climate action is more globally focused and specific. Experimental studies often use pro-environmental behavior tendencies and policy support, heavily influenced by ideology, as proxies for climate action (Schuldt et al., 2018).

Trudel (2019) noted that most research on sustainable consumer behavior focuses on low-impact, frequent actions like turning off lights and recycling, rather than high-impact, infrequent decisions such as donations for climate change mitigation. Daily pro-environmental behaviors are often driven by habit, awareness, and convenience, with minimal overall environmental impact. In contrast, economic decisions, like willingness to pay, involve more complex cost-benefit analyses and can lead to more significant long-term environmental impacts (Futia, 1977),(Wyss et al., 2022). Meanwhile, WTP involves deeper cognitive processing and trade-offs, and can have a more significant environmental impact than daily behaviors. However, only a few studies focus on economic decision-related variables like willingness to pay (Shrum, 2021). Understanding the communication strategies that motivate people to pay for climate change mitigation is crucial for designing better incentives and campaigns to encourage broader participation.

## **3 Theory and Hypothesis**

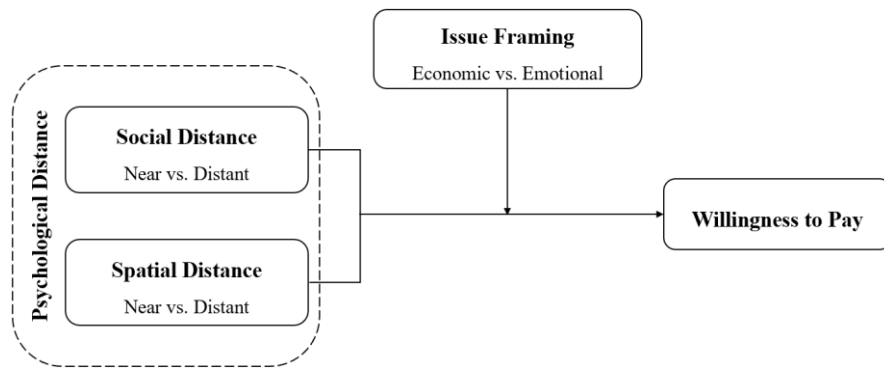
While psychological distance is often explained through Construal Level Theory (CLT; Trope & Liberman, 2010), which posits that closer psychological distances lead to more concrete and detailed representations, this study adopts the Dual Processing Model (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974) to account for the cognitive processes involved in economic decision-making, particularly regarding willingness to pay for climate change mitigation.

The Dual Processing Model distinguishes between two modes of thought: System 1, which is fast, automatic, and intuitive, and System 2, which is slower, deliberate, and more rational. According to this model, Maheswaran and Meyers-Levy (1990) developed it as the Heuristic-Systematic Model (HSM) for the consumption scenario. According to the HSM theory, when information is perceived as highly relevant and personally significant, individuals tend to engage in System 2 processing, allowing for more logical and analytical evaluations (Meyers-Levy & Maheswaran, 2004). Conversely, when information is perceived as less relevant or personally distant, individuals rely more on System 1 processing, driven by heuristics and emotions.

Building on this framework, we posit that tourists' willingness to pay for climate change mitigation is influenced by the interaction between their perceived psychological distance from the issue and the framing of the issue. Specifically, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis:** A significant interaction exists between psychological distance and issue framing on tourists' willingness to pay for climate change mitigation. When tourists perceive a closer psychological distance, economic framing will increase willingness to pay. Conversely, when tourists perceive a more distant psychological distance, emotional framing will increase willingness to pay.

### **Figure 1. Research Framework**



## 4 Methodology

### 4.1 Design

This study aims to verify hypotheses through a series of  $2 \times 2$  between-subject experiments, focusing on the effects of issue framing and psychological distance (P.D.) (Loy & Spence, 2020). To understand how the presentation of climate change issues affects individual cognition and psychological distance across different contexts, thereby influencing pro-environmental behavior, we designed and conducted two independent between-subject experiments from the perspectives of tourists and destinations. The participants for this experiment were recruited from Credamo, China's leading online survey platform. Researchers provided each participant with a compensation of 2 RMB. A total of 486 individuals responded to the survey. After excluding those with abnormal response times and those who failed attention-check questions, 444 valid responses were retained, resulting in an effective response rate of 91.36%. For Study 1, the sample was distributed across various provinces in mainland China, whereas the sample for Study 2 was exclusively drawn from Yunnan Province.

### 4.2 Study 1: Participants Perspective

The primary objective of the first experiment is to examine how issue framing and social distance affect participants' perceptions and behaviors by manipulating tourist and farmer perspectives. This aims to assess how the presentation of climate change issues influences cognition and social distance in different contexts.

The experimental materials included scenarios linking climate change to extreme rainy seasons, causing tourist flight delays and reduced harvests for farmers. These scenarios were framed from both economic and emotional loss perspectives.

Tourist Perspective:

- Economic Loss: Extreme rainy seasons lead to flight delays, disrupting travel plans and causing additional financial costs.
- Emotional Loss: Extreme weather causes disappointment and frustration, affecting the travel experience.

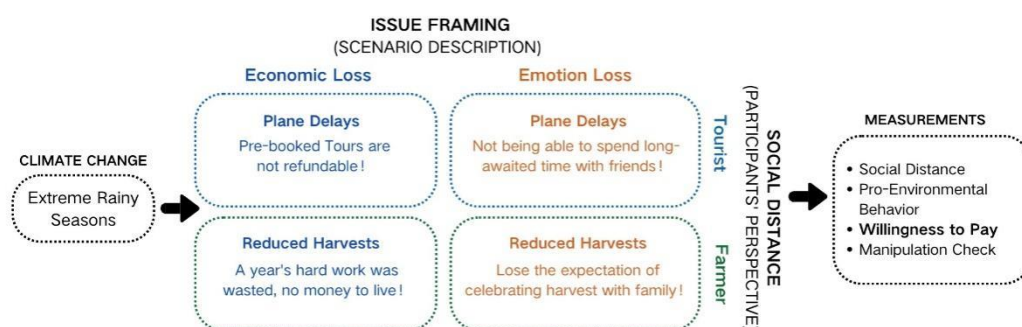
Farmer Perspective:

- Economic Loss: Due to extreme rainy seasons, farmers experience significant crop yield reductions, decreasing income.
- Emotional Loss: Bad weather may cause farmers to feel a diminished connection to the land and be concerned about their future livelihoods

The materials' textual structure, behavioral logic, and word count were strictly controlled to minimize other confounding factors. To enhance participants' understanding of the text, corresponding images were generated using GPT4-Vision.

**Procedure and Measurements.** In study1, 193 subjects were recruited (females accounted for 70.9%, and males accounted for 29.1%). Participants were randomly assigned to four groups using the Credamo platform's randomization module. After obtaining informed consent, they were required to read stimulus material and view a related image for at least 30 seconds. Following this, participants reported their perceived social distance, pro-environmental behavior (PEB) tendency, donation willingness, manipulation check results, and demographic information. The scales used included social distance, pro-environmental behavior, willingness to pay, manipulation check, and impact type. The complete scales are provided in the Appendix.

**Figure 2. Experiment Design of Study 1**



#### 4.3 Study2: Destination Perspective

The second experiment complements and extends the findings of the first by controlling for spatial distance, aiming to investigate how the presentation of climate change issues affects participants' perceptions and behaviors in different geographical contexts. Specifically, this study seeks to validate the hypotheses that economic impacts of climate change are more likely to elicit pro-environmental behavior compared to emotional impacts, that climate change issues presented in nearby destinations (e.g., Yunnan) are more likely to elicit pro-environmental behavior compared to those in distant destinations (e.g., Peru), and that psychological distance significantly influences pro-environmental behavior, with this effect varying between nearby and distant destinations. By manipulating spatial distance and issue framing, this experiment aims to provide a deeper understanding of how these factors interact to influence participants' pro-environmental behaviors and perceptions, particularly in the context of different geographical distances.

The materials depicted the negative impacts of climate change in two different tourism destinations: one nearby (Yunnan) and one distant (Peru). These scenarios were framed from both economic and emotional loss perspectives as well:



Nearby Destination (Yunnan):

- Economic Loss: Flooding caused by climate change damages local infrastructure, impacting tourism and local businesses.
- Emotional Loss: The destruction of cultural heritage sites and natural landscapes causes distress and loss among locals and visitors.

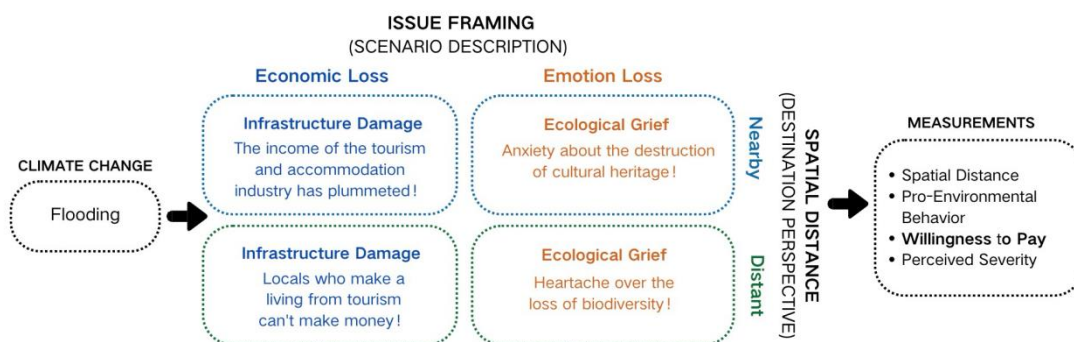
Distant Destination (Peru):

- Economic Loss: Climate-induced droughts and floods affect agricultural productivity and tourism revenue.
- Emotional Loss: The loss of biodiversity and traditional ways of life leads to feelings of despair and disconnection from the environment.

Case locations were set in two fictional ancient villages, and all participants had I.P. addresses in Yunnan to reduce the influence of local attachment. The emotional framing drew on the theme of ecological grief from "Natural Climate Change." World maps were placed in the experiments, marking the locations of China and Yunnan in the near context and China and Peru in the distant context.

**Procedure and Measurements.** In Study 2, 251 subjects were recruited. In the dataset, females accounted for 74.1%, males accounted for 25.9%. The experiment was precisely targeted at participants in Yunnan, following the same procedure as Study 1. Unlike Study 1, Study 2 included measures of perceived spatial distance and participants' perception of the realism of the experimental materials in the manipulation check, which is also provided in the Appendix.

**Figure 3. Experiment Design of Study 2**



## 5 Results

### 5.1 Study 1

**Manipulation and Control Checks.** When analyzing the reliability of scales, the social distance scale exhibited relatively low reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.650$ ). After removing item three, the reliability coefficient (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ) improved to an acceptable level (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.776$ ). Cronbach's alpha for the PEB intention scale was 0.740. Independent sample t-tests on the social distance for tourist and farmer groups found no significant differences. However, considering that almost all our participants were corporate employees, civil servants, or students, who would presumably feel socially more distant from farmers than tourists, this could indicate issues with measurement or manipulation in transferring psychological distance regarding identity onto climate



change. On the other hand, independent samples t-tests demonstrated that the manipulation of issue framing was successful ( $t(191) = -14.723$ ,  $Mecon = 2.25$ ,  $Memo = 5.70$ ).

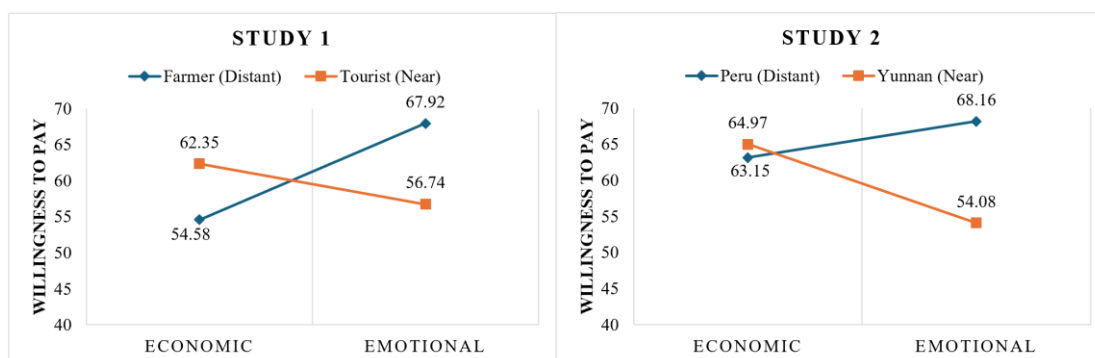
**Hypothesis Testing.** Before formally testing the hypotheses, we explored the correlations among variables. Pearson correlation analysis revealed that only the intention for pro-environmental behavior was significantly correlated with willingness to pay (WTP) ( $p < 0.001$ ), while social distance showed no significant correlation with either. A one-way ANOVA revealed a marginally significant interaction effect between psychological distance and issue framing on WTP ( $p = 0.08$ ). As predicted, the hypothesis was somewhat supported: when the psychological distance was closer, communicating about climate change using an economic frame more effectively stimulated willingness to donate ( $Mecon = 62.35$ ,  $Memo = 56.74$ ); when the psychological distance was further, an emotional frame was more effective ( $Mecon = 54.58$ ,  $Memo = 67.92$ ). Thus, in the perspective of social distance, the hypothesis can be regarded as accepted.

## 5.2 Study2

**Manipulation and Control Checks.** The reliability analysis of the scales indicated that both the spatial distance scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.756$ ) and the pro-environmental behavior (PEB) tendency scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.782$ ) demonstrated good reliability in this experiment. Independent samples t-tests confirmed successful manipulation of issue framing ( $t(249) = -9.183$ ,  $Mecon = 2.31$ ,  $Memo = 4.48$ ) and spatial distance ( $t(249) = -2.829$ ,  $Mproximal = 2.94$ ,  $Mdistal = 3.50$ ). Since the experimental materials were fictional, participants were also asked to report their perceptions of the materials' realism. A one-way ANOVA showed no significant differences among the four groups, with all means approaching 6.

**Hypothesis Testing.** Similarly, we examined the relationships among variables, yielding results consistent with Study 1. Pearson correlation analysis showed that only the intention for pro-environmental behavior was significantly correlated with willingness to pay (WTP) ( $p < 0.001$ ), while spatial distance was not significantly correlated with either. A one-way ANOVA revealed a marginally significant interaction effect between psychological distance and issue framing on WTP ( $p = 0.07$ ), thus reaffirming the hypothesis. When the psychological distance was closer, communicating about climate change using an economic frame more effectively stimulated willingness to donate ( $Mecon = 64.97$ ,  $Memo = 54.08$ ); when the psychological distance was further, an emotional frame was more effective ( $Mecon = 63.15$ ,  $Memo = 68.16$ ). Thus, in the perspective of spatial distance, the hypothesis can be regarded as accepted.

**Figure 4. Interaction Effect on Willingness to Pay**



## 6 Conclusion & Discussion

### 6.1 Summary

This study explored how psychological distance interacts with issue framing to influence individual climate change engagement, particularly regarding willingness to pay, within a tourism context. The results demonstrate a significant interaction between psychological distance and issue framing. Specifically, when individuals perceive a closer psychological distance to climate change, using an economic frame more effectively stimulates willingness to pay. Conversely, when individuals perceive a greater psychological distance, an emotional frame is more effective in stimulating willingness to pay. The Dual Processing Model also provided a theoretical basis for predicting and explaining this interaction, suggesting that closer socio-spatial distance prompts individuals to engage in more systematic and rational decision-making processes, aligning with the logic behind willingness to pay. On the other hand, when socio-spatial distance is perceived as more significant, decision-making tends to be more heuristic and emotional, with empathy evoked by emotional framing leading to an increased willingness to pay for climate change mitigation.

### 6.2 Theoretical implications

The theoretical implications of this study are threefold. Firstly, introducing issue framing within a tourism context enriches considering boundary conditions (Keller et al., 2022) for the relationship between psychological distance and climate change engagement. While some studies have integrated framing effects into psychological distance and climate change, few have done so from a tourism perspective, using economic and emotional loss frames. This enriches tourism research and provides context-specific boundaries for the broader literature.

Secondly, current literature on climate change engagement focuses mainly on daily or politically significant pro-environmental behaviors and policy support, with limited attention to willingness to pay and other economic decision-related variables (Shrum, 2021). This study highlights the differences and connections between willingness to pay and everyday pro-environmental behaviors. It primarily uses the Dual Processing Model to explain these mechanisms. While construal-level theory is commonly used to explain psychological distance, inconsistent empirical results have raised questions about its applicability (Brügger et al., 2015). The Dual Processing Theory provides an alternative cognitive perspective, showing significant potential in explaining related mechanisms.

However, the findings, based on reported intentions, should be interpreted with caution. While these intentions provide valuable insights, further research is needed to understand their translation into real-world behaviors. Despite this limitation, the study offers promising avenues for enhancing climate change engagement, especially in the tourism context.

### 6.3 Practical implications

**Targeted Destination Marketing Initiatives.** The tourism industry can enhance its marketing strategies by applying the study's findings on issue framing and psychological distance. For nearby or culturally familiar destinations, use economic framing to highlight the economic benefits of sustainable tourism, such as how reducing plastic waste supports local marine life and communities. For distant or exotic destinations, use emotional framing to resonate with tourists' desire to protect global heritage and biodiversity, such as promoting ecotourism in the Amazon to preserve the rainforest and its indigenous cultures.

**Policy and Educational Initiatives for Climate Engagement.** Policymakers can use these insights to craft policies that promote proactive climate change engagement. This could include incentives for tourism businesses to adopt sustainable practices and providing educational materials that effectively frame the issues, encouraging a deeper commitment to environmental stewardship.

**Educational and Training Programs.** Educational initiatives can reduce psychological distance and increase climate change engagement among tourists. Programs could include interactive modules that demonstrate local climate impacts, increasing personal relevance and urgency.

#### 6.4 Limitations and Future Directions

The study's sample primarily consisted of corporate employees, civil servants, and students, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to a broader tourist population. Hypothetical scenarios in an experimental setting may not fully capture real-world decision-making, leading to discrepancies between participants' responses and actual travel choices.

Future research should focus on expanding the demographic scope to include a more diverse range of tourists, enhancing the study's applicability. There were challenges with the reliability of the social distance scale, highlighting the need for improved measurement tools in future studies to ensure accurate assessments.

Exploring a more comprehensive array of scenarios and contexts in future studies will help determine the robustness and applicability of the findings across various tourism settings and environmental challenges. Employing real-world settings or longitudinal designs can also provide a more comprehensive understanding of travel decision-making processes, contributing to a more nuanced analysis of climate change engagement within the tourism sector.

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## Appendix

### A. Scenario Images

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#### Study 1



Near: Tourist



Distant: Farmer

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#### Study 2



Near: Yunnan



Distant: Peru

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Construct	Items	Type	Source
Psychological Social Distance	1. The serious consequences of climate change primarily impact other people. 2. Climate change mostly affects people I do not know. 3. Climate change is a significant problem mainly for others.	7-point Likert scale	(Loy & Spence, 2020)
Psychological Spatial Distance	1. The serious consequences of climate change primarily occur in places that are far away from here. 2. Climate change mostly affects other parts of the world. 3. Climate change is a significant problem mainly in distant locations.	7-point Likert scale	(Loy & Spence, 2020)
Pro-Environmental Behavior Intention	1. I intend to reduce the use of single-use plastic products in the future. 2. I intend to actively reduce my energy consumption in the future. 3. I intend to encourage my friends to take environmental protection measures together in the future. 4. I intend to join an environmental protection organization in the future actively.	7-point Likert scale	(Toomey & Domroese, 2013)
Willingness to Pay	We are considering giving a ¥100 green reward to 5% of survey respondents. If you are selected, how much money are you willing to donate to mitigate climate change?	Numeric fill-in (0-100)	(Shrum, 2021)
Manipulation Check	1. How realistic do you think the situation depicted in the image is? 2. How severe do you think the impact of climate change is on the people/places in the situation? Based on the graphic and textual information, do you think climate change has brought more severe economic or emotional impacts?	7-point Likert scale 7-point Likert scale 7-point semantic differential scale	N/A

# TOURISM-DRIVEN CHANGES IN TRADITIONAL PRACTICES: A PERSPECTIVE FROM PRACTITIONERS OF TRADITIONAL ARTS OF CHANOYU, IKEBANA, AND NOH

Kazuyo Marumoto<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Wakayama University

## ABSTRACT

This paper examines how tourism has affected the authenticity of traditional Japanese cultures such as chanoyu (tea ceremony), ikebana (flower arrangement), and noh. An increasing number of tourists, especially international visitors, became involved in these practices prior to COVID-19. In response, many cultural activities were run by amateurs without a deep understanding of traditional practices, leading to an excessive commodification that was perceived as inauthentic by experts. The study explores how traditional cultural practitioners navigate this tourism-driven commodification while striving to maintain both tradition and authenticity. To discuss authenticity and commodification in the context of these changes, the paper draws on Basho's concept of 'fueki-ryūkō,' which divides culture into fueki, the part that is continuous and whose principles do not change over time; and ryūkō, a dynamic part that gradually evolves to reflect the socio-cultural environment of each era. The paper presents the results of semi-structured interviews with traditional cultural practitioners, demonstrating that adherence to these principles helps maintain authenticity amid commodification. Creating changes in the context of fueki-ryūkō is an attempt to acknowledge tradition and original values of cultural practices, while leading to thriving, not deterioration of, traditional practices.

**Keywords:** *Authenticity, geidō, traditional culture, commodification, cultural experiences*

## Introduction

*Noh is not something to be consumed by the audience; it is important to perform without being aware of the audience, not to be influenced by trends, and not to consider the audience's reactions. If Noh is treated as a consumable product, it will eventually be discarded when people get tired of it. (A noh actor)*

The term geidō refers to the spirituality-oriented art forms of traditional Japanese culture, such as chanoyu, ikebana, and noh, which emphasize self-cultivation and personal growth. According to a Noh performer who provides experiences for foreign visitors, geidō, or traditional cultural practices such as chanoyu (tea ceremony), ikebana, and noh, have declined due to generational disillusionment and an ageing population (Agency for Cultural Affairs, 2016). However, the pre-pandemic (COVID-19) boom in inbound tourism encouraged practitioners to offer traditional cultural experiences to tourists. Although this paper focuses on geidō, it discusses these practices only in the context of traditional cultural arts.

Traditional cultural practitioners are defined as individuals who have been trained by a recognized 'ryūha' school or equivalent authority, and who have received a formal teaching qualification or license from that organization or leader. Historically only licensed practitioners conducted traditional cultural activities. However, the recent surge in inbound tourism has led to the rise of imitation activities where unlicensed or unqualified individuals offer traditional cultural experiences. While tourism has contributed to the promotion of traditional culture and provided economic benefits, it has also led to concerns about the commodification of these practices. The proliferation of these inauthentic experiences is seen as diminishing the quality of traditional arts. The purpose of this paper

is to examine how authorized practitioners view the commercialization of traditional culture and what elements they consider essential to maintaining the authenticity of these cultural experiences.

The concept of authenticity has been central to debates regarding the relationship between tourism and the commodification of culture. Authenticity serves as a key criterion for evaluating the impact of tourism on culture, encompassing overarching questions such as whether cultural practices are legitimate or authentic (Boorstin, 1961; MacCannell, 1976). The discourse has largely focused on the negative effects of tourism on culture. Three main frameworks for understanding authenticity in tourism research have emerged. The first is the essentialist perspective, which assumes an objective and unchanging core that defines traditional culture (Boorstin, 1961; MacCannell, 1976). The second is the constructivist view, which argues that authenticity is a socially constructed and negotiable concept, open to interpretation and often shaped by postcolonial critiques (Bruner, 2005). The third is the existentialist position, which emphasizes the subjective experience of the individual tourist in determining authenticity (Cary, 2004). However, much of this debate has been framed within a Western value system, resulting in a dualistic approach to authenticity where cultural practices are judged according to rigid definitions rather than more fluid and contextual interpretations.

This paper explores how traditional cultural practitioners perceive the commodification of their practices. Through interviews and fieldwork, the research sought to examine how they define authenticity, maintain quality, and view tradition as a product. A key feature of this study is its focus on the perspectives of traditional cultural practitioners in contrast to the tourist-centered approach of most tourism research. This research is part of a PhD dissertation examining authenticity of traditional cultural practices from the perspectives of established practitioners.

### **Cultural commodification and authenticity**

In cultural studies, the relationship between commodification and authenticity is a central topic of debate. The earliest authenticity research came from various fields; most notably, history (Boorstin, 1964), sociology (Cohen, 1988; MacCannell, 1976), and anthropology (Bruner, 2005; Zhu 2012).

Commodification is defined as the process through which goods, services, cultural practices, and rituals are assigned exchange value (Appadurai, 1986). This process involves producing, selling, and distributing cultural elements as marketable goods. Consequently, culture is transformed into a consumable resource for tourists, with various cultural aspects being priced and treated as tourism commodities. Boorstin (1961) described modern tourism as a “pseudo-event” (p.10) in which tourists prioritize manufactured images over authentic cultural experiences, arguing that the culture presented in tourist spaces is often inauthentic. MacCannell (1976) countered that while tourists encounter a staged ‘front stage,’ true authenticity lies ‘backstage,’ inaccessible to outsiders, and that tourists seek genuine experiences rather than pseudo-events. Both perspectives are rooted in essentialism.

Conversely, within anthropology, Yamashita (2007) argued that the commodification of culture can have a positive impact on local culture and authenticity. He criticized the idealization of culture as a static reality and emphasized the role of tourism in cultural creation. These discussions suggest that while tourism can commodify culture and negatively affect authenticity, it can also promote the survival and re-creation of cultural practices. In the book, *The Invention of Tradition*, Hobsbawm and Ranger (1992) illuminated the historical fabrication and construction of traditional cultures, particularly within the context of Western culture and capitalist exploitation. They framed these developments as instances of inauthenticity, highlighting that the search for authenticity is deeply rooted in Western values and cannot exist independently of the Western gaze. Zhu (2012) provided a new perspective on the Naxi ethnic group in China, focusing on individual inner experiences. He emphasized the priest’s pursuit of personal identity, achieved through performances in tourism contexts and interactions with social, political, and cultural factors. Zhu argued that examining authenticity without considering the external world is insufficient.

Determining authenticity requires consideration of the period and the relevant social and cultural contexts. Discussions of traditional Japanese culture must reflect Japan's unique circumstances to be fully understood. Next, it outlines the factors driving the popularity of traditional cultural experiences amidst the recent influx of inbound tourism and highlights the uniqueness of traditional Japanese culture.

### **The situation surrounding tourism and traditional cultural experiences in Japan**

In recent years, Japan has experienced significant growth in inbound tourism, particularly through 2019, when the number of foreign visitors increased annually before COVID-19. The Japanese government has been promoting tourism since 2003 with the launch of the “Visit Japan Campaign.” In 2013, the number of inbound visitors exceeded 10 million; and, in 2019, the number reached 31.8 million, an increase of 2.2% from the previous year and a record for the seventh consecutive year (Japan Tourism Agency, 2021).

As inbound tourism flourished, traditional cultural experiences such as tea ceremony became increasingly popular among foreign visitors. According to Trip Advisor (2019), kimono dressing and tea ceremony ranked among the top five experiences sought by foreign tourists. The Japan Tourism Agency (2019) report noted that traditional cultural experiences were among the top five preferences of inbound travelers.

Traditional culture is essential for promoting Japan's appeal abroad. The Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) highlights cultural experiences, such as the tea ceremony, to convey the essence of Japanese hospitality, or *omotenashi*. This concept emphasizes the unity of host and guest, serving as a model for explaining Japanese culture internationally. By connecting this idea with *omotenashi*, the tea ceremony is positioned as a key representation of Japanese culture for global communication. In this context, facilities for cultural activities have emerged, with traditional cultural practitioners also offering experiences to tourists.

In seeking to better understand the perspectives of traditional cultural practitioners, a closer examination of the uniqueness of Japanese traditional culture is warranted. This includes understanding the origins and concepts of traditional Japanese culture, especially in terms of *geidō*, *iemoto*, and training.

### **The uniqueness of traditional culture in Japan**

#### *Tradition and geidō*

The term ‘tradition’ in Japan first appears in historical documents in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, specifically in the *Opinions and Sealings Twelve Articles* by the aristocrat Miyoshi. This term was rarely used until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when it became a translation of the Western concept of tradition. In Western contexts, tradition emphasizes ideology; while in Japanese, it emphasizes customs (Nishiyama, 1984).

Cultural historian Nishiyama (1984) defined tradition as a social and historical phenomenon, noting that for tradition to be preserved, it must be re-experienced by contemporary consciousness. This perspective suggests that traditions are not merely handed down but are actively shaped by those who inherit them, adapting to historical and social changes. Regarding *geidō*, Nishiyama stated that it is fundamentally different from the classical arts in both Western and Oriental cultures. *Geidō* encompasses a path of arts that emphasizes spirituality, including martial arts, performing arts, and fine arts, with a focus on self-cultivation. The earliest use of the term is found in Zeami's *Hanagami*, dating back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Nishiyama, 1984). *Geidō* emphasizes the transmission of *kata* (acting form) from a master, with practice focusing on mastery rather than individual creation. The

development of geidō in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was influenced by Zen Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Shinto thought, reflecting the Japanese sense of aesthetics (Nishiyama, 1984). Thus, tradition, which was rarely used as a term before the modern era, was introduced into Japan as vague concepts with no clear meaning assigned. The term traditional culture for geidō was intended to authorize Japanese culture in order to compete with Western countries, giving the impression that geidō has been an unchanged aspect of Japanese culture since ancient times. However, to this day, geidō continues to be re-experienced and reinterpreted by modern practitioners, incorporating new elements in response to contemporary society. The authenticity of traditional culture can, therefore, be regarded as a concept that is historically and socially constructed.

Next, traditional culture will be examined as it is reconstructed, relying on Nishiyama's (1984) theory of tradition.

### *Fueki-ryūko and the recreation of traditional culture*

In Nishiyama's (1984) theory of tradition, he outlines key concepts by referring to Mutai's (1941) article "Tradition," which is influenced by T.S. Eliot's idea that artists are judged in comparison with their predecessors; suggesting that the past is both modified by and guides the present. This is consistent with the notion that traditions are continually re-evaluated by contemporary consciousness. Nishiyama also discussed Bashō's philosophy of tradition in haikai using the term fueki-ryūko, explaining that classical norms are represented by fueki (unchangeable), while the re-experienced aspects are ryūko (changeable). He emphasized the need to overcome current contradictions in order to develop new traditions through foreign and historical influences. For example, Teshigahara Sofu, founder of the Sōgetsu School of Ikebana, initially seemed to reject tradition, but did so with an understanding of the logic of art, preserving older cultural elements without destroying them unnecessarily. However, some aspects of Japanese culture have avoided confronting modern contradictions. In contrast, carefully selected and developed traditions can retain their authenticity. Hobsbawm (1992) distinguished between modern-created traditions and those of the past, claiming that the latter have authenticity.

An important consideration is that elements selected from traditional culture need to be re-experienced and reinterpreted by modern people, with careful consideration of historical and cultural contexts. In distinguishing between what is unchangeable and what is changeable, the selection must be carefully made to ensure that authenticity is maintained. Failure to do so may result in tourism being driven by economic interests and prioritizing elements that are attractive as commodities rather than preserving cultural authenticity. The criteria for selecting authentic cultural elements as tourist targets are, therefore, crucial, raising the question of who has the authority to make these decisions.

There has been controversy over the authority to judge authenticity. Cohen (2007), citing Leite and Graburn (2009), argued that this right has traditionally been held by experts such as curators, archaeologists and cultural anthropologists. This approach has been criticized for promoting intellectual hegemony (Cohen, 1988). From a constructivist perspective, culture is shaped by society, allowing both experts and tourists to apply their own criteria of authenticity. Given the uniqueness of traditional Japanese culture and geidō, this framework may not always apply, raising the question of who should judge authenticity and its legitimacy.

Next, the uniqueness of geidō, the iemoto system, and the concept of legitimacy are explored. Legitimacy, here, refers to the accepted validity of a political system, authority, or tradition within a society.

### *Iemoto and legitimacy*



Nishiyama's (1984) study of iemoto remains a foundational text for iemoto research and exploring the traditional system of arts organization. He defined the iemoto as the leading figure within various traditional performing arts schools and described the iemoto system as the social structure centered around this leader (Nishiyama, 1984). During the Middle Ages, samurai linked their family status to their noble lineage in order to legitimize their power. This lineage-based legitimacy became formalized, with the Tokugawa shogunate - which had no noble lineage - claiming descent from the Minamoto clan to assert its authority. This need for legitimacy spread throughout society and influenced the performing arts. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, each performing arts school had established a lineage of legitimacy for its head, and the hierarchical master-disciple structure gave the iemoto cultural authority and control over the transmission of knowledge. Nishiyama also noted that by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the term iemoto had become widespread.

In *Making Tea, Making Japan*, American sociologist Surak (2018) explored the relationship between the tea ceremony and the nation-state, drawing on 10 years of research into the tea ceremony in Japan. A central theme of the book is the discussion of the tea ceremony as a form of cultural nationalism. Surak highlighted how the etiquette of the tea ceremony embodies the growing authority of the iemoto. She argued that the iemoto strengthened their control over the tea ceremony by standardizing and formalizing it as a fixed body of knowledge. She noted that only the iemoto could claim such exclusive expertise, and the mystique surrounding esoteric knowledge enhanced the value of the iemoto, making esotericism the basis of its legitimacy (Surak, 2018). Thus, the iemoto consolidated its authority by monopolizing privileged expertise, and its authority continues to this day, with the charisma of secrets as the basis of its legitimacy.

### *Soshō and practice*

Japanese art forms, as noted, emphasize self-mastery and place significant importance on practice. Consequently, much of the time spent by traditional cultural practitioners is devoted to practice. The term soshō refers to a cultural leader within a Japanese artistic group. The emergence of soshō in Japan began around the 12<sup>th</sup> century, initially in the world of poetry, and later expanded to the realm of renga (linked-verse poetry) during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, gradually defining the role and function of soshō.

Over time, soshō appeared in other arts, such as the tea ceremony and incense ceremony, following the precedent set by renga masters. Bashō, for instance, became a master in the field of haikai. Since there were no official instructional texts to codify these art forms, such as renga, tea ceremony, and incense, learning required direct guidance from a master. Thus, mastery could only be achieved through practice, which granted the master immense authority over the transmission and preservation of culture. Disciples, in turn, underwent rigorous training known as practice under the supervision of the master.

Thus, practice is an integral part of the Japanese art form, characterized by a holistic pursuit of the way and a strong religious aspect. D. T. Suzuki wrote a preface to *Kado and the Japanese Spirit*, by Herrigel (1972), a German woman who studied flower arranging in Japan in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The preface says: "In Japan, the study of art is not just for the sake of art, but for the sake of spiritual proof (enlightenment). Art and religion are so closely linked in the history of Japanese culture" (Herrigel, 1972). This observation is significant; Japanese art is not merely a pursuit of beauty, as is often seen in the West, but is deeply intertwined with life itself and has a religious nature (Herrigel, 1972). By internalizing this religiosity, the iemoto/soshō, with their privileged expertise and extensive authority, were able to further enhance their legitimacy.

What do traditional cultural practitioners consider essential for maintaining quality in cultural experiences for tourists, and how do they define authenticity? The next section will explore these questions through interviews and fieldwork with practitioners, using the principle of fueki-ryūko, as a framework.



## Interviews and fieldwork research with traditional culture practitioners

### *Methodology*

This paper aims to clarify how traditional cultural practitioners perceive the commercialization of traditional culture as a tourism object, what they consider to be authentic experiences, and how quality should be maintained. This paper explores these issues through interviews and fieldwork with traditional cultural workers and commercial experience facilities.

Interviews were conducted using a face-to-face, semi-structured qualitative approach. The traditional cultural practitioners interviewed included: for tea ceremony, 2 heads of tea ceremony schools, 1 young master, 2 administrators, 6 practitioners, 4 temple priests, and 2 tea company managers; for Ikebana, 1 headmaster, 3 school administrators, and 5 flower arrangers; and for noh, 11 actors from Kanze, Hosho and Kongo schools. All tea ceremony, Ikebana, and noh practitioners have formal teaching qualifications. Temple priests included monks who practice the tea ceremony as part of their training or study at a tea school. Participants were asked a pre-defined set of questions focusing on the commercialization of traditional culture in tourism, aspects of tradition that can and cannot be changed, and methods of maintaining quality.

Fieldwork included attending tea ceremony, Ikebana, and noh classes, and participating in experiences for foreign visitors. Tea ceremony and Ikebana were chosen because of their popularity with tourists, while noh was included because of its active engagement with international audiences in Tokyo and Kyoto.

A survey was conducted between June and November 2020, following COVID-19. The cities surveyed were Tokyo, Kyoto, and Kanazawa. Tokyo and Kyoto have the highest rates of international visitors in Japan, resulting in relatively more commercial cultural activity programs than in other cities (TripAdvisor, 2019). These three cities are also home to various schools of traditional culture, with a high proportion of the population engaged in these practices. The survey was administered by the researcher in the Japanese language.

### *Survey results*

The respondents can be divided into two main groups: traditional cultural practitioners - including headmasters, school organizations and monks - who do not rely on cultural experiences as their primary source of income, and commercial cultural experience centers that seek to make a profit. Traditional cultural practitioners devote most of their time to practice, and their primary income comes from teaching and performing. Their top priorities include personal practice, training, stage performances and, for monks, temple work.

*The first priority for a noh actor is training for the stage, followed by teaching apprentices. Income comes from performances and teaching. Offering tourists a noh experience is valuable as it creates interest in noh and encourages visits to the theatre. (A noh actor)*

Noh, Japan's oldest classical performing art, was historically patronized by the shogunate and conglomerates, but is now facing a decline in both performers and audiences. A report by the Agency for Cultural Affairs (2016) identified common challenges for tea ceremony and Ikebana schools, including a shift away from traditional culture among young people, an ageing membership, and financial difficulties. As a result, schools are considering international expansion to attract new members.

Among ikebana schools with both domestic and international branches, notable institutions such as Iemoto Ikenobo and Sogetsu offer hands-on classes for overseas visitors.

*Inbound tourism is important for its economic impact. I hope more people will learn ikebana through experience. We have a mission to pass on our spirit of Ikebana. Traditional culture is fragile and may disappear, so we must do our best. (Headmaster of Ikebana)*

While traditional cultural practitioners are not heavily dependent on tourism for income, they face declining membership and audiences and hope for economic benefits from tourism. Conversely, commercial experience facilities seek to differentiate themselves from the competition by improving staff skills and customer satisfaction.

*The quality of the experience depends on the staff. To motivate them, we encourage internal feedback and hold regular study sessions on traditional culture. (Tea ceremony experience facility, Kyoto)*

All of the cultural experience facilities interviewed shared a mission to promote Japanese culture and, despite their commercial nature, emphasized quality. The staff providing the experiences have teaching qualifications. However, some offer low-quality experiences, often labelled as not being high-quality cultural experiences.

*An increasing number of tea ceremonies are run by people without proper training. It's unfortunate that lax standards are allowed. We need to show the true essence of the tea ceremony. (Tea master)*

While traditional cultural practitioners are generally supportive of sharing their practices through tourism, there is growing concern about the prevalence of low-quality experiences. The discussion explores how such experiences are identified and what criteria traditional cultural practitioners use to define authenticity, using the principle of fueki-ryūkō.

## Discussion

*What is fueki that must not change*

Nishiyama (1984) described traditional culture as something that is constantly being re-created and reconstituted:

*Tradition is often seen as formalised and fixed, but traditions are born anew with the times. However, no matter how much the world changes, there is one aspect that remains constant and immutable, transcending the boundaries of time. (p. 61)*

This perspective is consistent with Bashō's concept of fueki-ryūkō, which suggests that for traditions to endure they must incorporate the changeable while preserving the unchanging elements. Traditional culture that develops with a strong focus on this principle is thus endowed with authenticity. This idea was widely accepted by the practitioners of traditional culture interviewed.

What, then, do these practitioners identify as the changeable and unchangeable elements in the tourism experiences they offer?

*What must never change in the tea ceremony is the spirituality, the Iemoto, and the oral transmission of the profound secrets of the art. The tea ceremony is a discipline and a training of the mind. It allows you to reflect on yourself. The Iemoto is responsible for preserving and passing on what has been handed down from generation to generation. (Tea master)*

In the tea ceremony, the unchangeable elements are the iemoto, the spirit, and the oral tradition. Similarly, in ikebana, what must be preserved is the iemoto, the densho (a book containing the secrets of the school), the oral tradition and the spirituality. In noh, the unchanging aspects are the iemoto; the once-in-a-lifetime encounter on stage; and the sacredness, mystery, and solemnity of noh masks.

Common to the tea ceremony, ikebana, and noh is the presence of the iemoto, who embodies legitimacy; the transmission of secret knowledge through oral tradition; and the invisible spirituality inherent in the art forms. These elements serve as the foundation for the preservation of traditional culture. Spirituality is nourished by daily practice and requires continuous commitment. Each art school has its own oral tradition, which passes on its history and philosophy through kata (acting form) and techniques. Traditional cultural practitioners recognize these components as essential to the inheritance and continuation of traditional culture.

### *What is ryūkō? Changeable elements*

What are changeable elements? In the tea ceremony, all respondents said that it is the temae (tea making process). An example of this is the Ryurei style of tea ceremony developed by the 11<sup>th</sup> iemoto of Urasenke school during the Kyoto Exposition in 1872. This style was designed specifically for foreign visitors, with tables and chairs to suit their increasingly Westernized lifestyles.

For a tradition to endure, it must adapt to contemporary trends. During the Muromachi period (1336-1573), when ikebana originated, the practice of arranging a hanging scroll in a niche, placing an incense burner, and decorating it with flowers emerged. Over time, this developed into a tradition. Many cultures did not survive and fell into disuse. New styles of floral patterns and social networking represent new ideas that need to be embraced.

*Following the outbreak of the COVID-19, many schools have attempted to conduct online demonstrations and practice through video streaming. However, the implementation of video streaming would not have been feasible before the pandemic. (Ikebana School, person in charge)*

The changeable includes visible aspects such as the tea-making process and the forms and styles of Ikebana. Traditional cultural practitioners of these art forms share a common understanding: they have survived the turning points of each era by adapting flexibly to contemporary needs and evolving lifestyles.

### *Principle and authenticity of fueki-ryūkō*

Nishiyama (1984) explained the principle of fueki-ryūkō as emphasizing the importance of transcending the present and developing the future while maintaining a firm focus on the classical norm of fueki and ryūkō that changes with the times. He asserted that traditional culture, influenced by foreign cultures and social conditions, can be elevated and developed to a higher level by overcoming modern contradictions while maintaining this principle (Nishiyama, 1984). However, if the approach is simply to reject the old in order to create something new, without addressing these contradictions, traditional culture risks destruction and decline.

A common recognition among the traditional cultural practitioners discussed in this paper is their responsibility to carefully examine and flexibly respond to the changing aspects, while firmly identifying and protecting its unchanging aspects. Decisions about these unchangeable and changeable elements are made by the iemoto, who embodies legitimacy, or by traditional cultural practitioners and school organizations with equivalent authority. Consequently, when traditional cultural experiences are offered to tourists, authenticity is present in those experiences that are

practiced with an understanding of the unchangeable. This understanding serves as the criterion for determining authenticity and delineates the boundary at which imitation becomes apparent.

## Conclusion

According to United Nations World Tourism Organization (2021), before the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism accounted for 10% of global GDP. Traditional cultural practitioners saw tourism as a way to preserve and revitalize declining cultures. However, the rise of cultural activities and economic prioritization has raised concerns about the deterioration of qualities and alteration of practices of traditional culture.

This article has described how the principles of Japanese cultural practices, namely chanoyu, ikebana, and noh, have been preserved and passed down through time, while constantly being re-constituted and re-created from the perspective of traditional cultural practitioners based on the principle of fueki-ryūkō and considering the uniqueness of geidō. The various schools of art have preserved an invisible spirituality, the iemoto, and oral traditions, forming the basis of these schools, which have survived to the present day while adapting their visible forms and styles to changing times. The iemoto, at the apex of the school organization, possesses privileged expertise and authority, serving as the foundation of legitimacy.

A common perception among the traditional cultural practitioners is their responsibility to carefully examine and respond to changing elements while protecting the unchangeable aspects. Decisions regarding these unchangeable and changeable elements are made by the heads of schools or traditional cultural practitioners and organizations with equivalent authority. When offering tourists traditional cultural experiences, those based on the principle of fueki-ryūkō allow for the identification of authenticity, and the tourism experiences may be acceptable to traditional cultural practitioners. This serves as a criterion for determining authenticity and delineating the boundary where imitation becomes evident.

While tourism can promote traditional culture and generate financial support for schools and activities, prioritizing economic benefits over authenticity risks deteriorating cultural quality. This conflict is captured in the sentiment that “noh must not be consumed.” Nevertheless, the economic advantages of tourism are vital for preserving and transmitting traditional cultures. Moreover, tourism plays a crucial role in promoting traditional culture globally while allowing for its re-configuration and re-creation. Thus, balancing tourism with the maintenance of quality traditional culture is essential.

Post-pandemic, in the wake of the resurgence of international tourism, traditional practitioners are in the process of creating changes by acknowledging the traditions and original values of cultural practices through tourism. This research will continue both in the surveyed cities and expand to other areas that offer traditional activities provided by these practitioners, exploring how tourism-driven changes may lead to these practices thriving, not deteriorating, in this changing context.

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# TWO WINGS OF THE SAME BIRD: LANDSCAPES CONSERVATION AND CULTURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF THE HISTORIC CENTRE OF MACAO

Ka Hou Kelvin Leong<sup>a,b</sup> and Haoyun Sophia Zhang<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Institute of Executive and Professional Development, Macao University of Tourism, Macao, China,

<sup>b</sup>PhD Candidate in History, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, The University of Saint Joseph, Macao, China,

<sup>c</sup>Faculty of Innovative Hospitality Management/Faculty of Creative Tourism and Intelligent Technologies, Macao University of Tourism, Macao, China

## ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between landscape protection and the development of cultural tourism in Macao, with particular emphasis on the Historic Centre. It examines two distinct types of landscapes: the enduring historic urban landscape and the ephemeral landscape that emerges at specific moments. This paper outlines three strategies employed by the Macao government to promote cultural tourism: thematic cultural routes, the integration of arts, heritage, and landscapes, and the use of cultural artifacts. Utilizing Bloom's taxonomy (1956) to assess these strategies, the study identifies "thematic tour routes" as the most effective method for communicating Macao's cultural heritage to visitors. Based on this analysis, the paper presents recommendations drawn from the "Heritage Stroll with Poetries" case study, which serves as a model for enhancing cultural landscape tourism. This initiative emphasizes a holistic five-senses experience, enabling travelers to immerse themselves in Macao's history while achieving a balance between tourism and heritage conservation.

**Keywords:** *Cultural tourism; Historic urban landscape; World Heritage; Macao*

## Introduction

Macao was renowned as "Eastern Las Vegas." Now, the Macao administration is planning to revamp the perception of Macao. As per the "Macao Special Administrative Region Economic and Social Development Second Five-Year Plan (2021-2025)" implemented by the Macao Government, one of the key policy objectives in Macao is to foster the growth of the cultural and sports sectors and propel Macao towards becoming a diverse, unique, and dynamic cultural and creative city (Government of Macao Special Administrative Region, 2021). Furthermore, the Chief Executive of Macao SAR emphasized that the 2024 Policy Address highlights the significance of establishing a "City of Performing Arts" as a crucial development goal. According to Li et al. (2024), to further improve the city's image and attract additional tourists, Macao gaming firms have augmented their investment in tourism and meticulously organized a range of large-scale performances. Macao is endeavoring to establish itself as a "City of Performing Arts" to inject new vigor into the prosperity and sustainable development of its economy and tourism. Hence, cultural tourism is a key area of emphasis in the growth of Macao. In recent years, the Historic Centre of Macao has been actively promoted and revitalized by incorporating cultural aspects. This phenomenon contributes to the growth of cultural landscape tourism, which encompasses the exploration of historic urban panoramas, transient landscapes, and cultural heritage.

According to Rickly-Boyd (2013, p. 287), tourism research has examined landscape from three distinct perspectives: as a tangible entity, as a representation, and as an experiential phenomenon. Building upon the aforementioned methodologies, this paper is structured into three sections: (1)



Object: to provide a comprehensive understanding of the fundamental elements, historical background, and evolution of the Historic Centre of Macao; (2) Representation: to examine the intangible emotions, values, and significance of the landscapes for the local community, as well as the strategies employed by the Macao government to interpret and promote the cultural context of The Historic Centre of Macao in relation to cultural tourism; (3) Experience: this section is the main focus of this article. The present study aims to assess the efficacy of governmental approaches in conveying the cultural setting of The Historic Centre of Macao to tourists. This evaluation will be based on the findings obtained from the interviews. Moreover, this paper will include numerous recommendations for enhancing cultural landscape tourism in Macao, including the organization of the “Heritage Stroll with Poetries” event in Macao.

## Method

Core resources for this paper include literature derived from books, journal papers, and online articles. In addition, this study included visits and participant observations at World Heritage Sites such as Mandarin House and its souvenir shop, Dom Pedro V Theatre (participating in Fado Nights Concert), and A-Ma Temple (participating in the preparation and celebration of A-Ma Festival). The purpose is to examine the construction of historic urban landscapes and ephemeral landscapes and document the approaches used by the government to interpret the cultural context of these landscapes.

The primary research question in this paper is whether cultural tourism can effectively communicate the cultural background of The Historic Centre of Macao to tourists using government-developed strategies. Such can be rationalized by Bloom’s taxonomy. Specifically, the taxonomy provides a framework for evaluating the cognitive processes involved in learning and understanding. By assessing the strategies—such as thematic cultural routes, the integration of arts and heritage, and the use of cultural artifacts—through the various levels of Bloom’s taxonomy, it can determine how well these approaches promote awareness, comprehension, and appreciation of Macao’s cultural heritage among tourists. For example, the thematic cultural routes engage tourists at higher cognitive levels by encouraging them to analyze and evaluate the significance of cultural sites, thereby fostering a deeper understanding of Macao’s history and cultural context. This analytical aspect aligns with the higher-order thinking skills outlined in Bloom’s framework, suggesting that these strategies are effective in not only conveying information but also in enriching the overall visitor experience.

The taxonomy categorizes cognitive thinking into six hierarchical levels: (1) Knowledge, the acquisition of factual information and definitions. (2) Comprehension: the mental process of grasping meaning and interpretation. (3) Application: the act of utilizing knowledge obtained in one situation to a distinct set of circumstances. (4) Analysis: the process of deconstructing concepts into constituent elements in order to comprehend their structures. (5) Synthesis: the construction of a structure or framework using a diverse range of components. (6) Evaluation: the act of appraising the worth of concepts or resources (Bloom, 1956). Individual interviews were conducted with 28 tourists from the mentioned World Heritage sites. The feedback can indicate varying degrees of cognitive acquisition. The surveys include the following questions (see table 1), which are formulated according to Bloom’s taxonomy approach. Assuming that 50% of the informants are capable of answering the questions, it implies that the art-led regeneration initiative can attain that benchmark.

A total of 28 visitors had been interviewed at three separate places in Macao. Individual interviews were conducted on-site at culturally significant locations: A-Ma Temple and Barra Square, Dom Pedro V Theatre, and Mandarin House Gift Shop. Specifically, eleven tourists were interviewed in A-Ma Temple and Barra Square, nine at Dom Pedro V Theatre, and eight at Mandarin House. The interviewees were randomly selected from the specified sites. Some tourists declined our invitations, primarily due to time constraints, unfamiliarity with the interview medium (English or Chinese), or a lack of interest in the research topic. The demographic information of the interviewees is from

Canada, Hong Kong SAR, Japan, Korea, Mainland China, Portugal, Singapore and United States. Besides tourists, two staff members at Mandarin House Gift Shop were interviewed, although their responses were not included in the total count of 28 interviews.

**Table 1: Interview questions established based Bloom's taxonomy.**

<b>Levels of Cognitive Learning</b>	<b>Questions</b>
Knowledge	Do you know this building/ site is a part of the Historic Centre of Macao?
Comparison	Do you know what is the relationship between this building and the culture of Macao? (If yes, where do you receive the information)
Application	What are the differences between Macao culture and the culture of your hometown?
Analysis	What can you learn from the cultural products (for the tourists from Gift Shop)/ show (for the tourists from the theatre)/ route (for the tourists from A-Ma Temple)
Synthesis	Is there any related building/ site in the Historic Centre of Macao?
Evaluation	What are the values of the Historic Centre of Macao?

## Results

This section is going to showcase the interview results. In the following analysis, some key insights will be summarized, exploring notable patterns that emerged during the discussions. Each subsection will break down the responses by location, providing a comprehensive overview of the participants' perspectives.

In the A-Ma Temple and Barra Square, all interviewees demonstrated proficiency in answering the questions pertaining to dimensions of knowledge, comparison, application, and analysis. One interviewee (IN1) stated that the routes are intentionally planned with informative leaflets that include history and relevant culture. Another participant (IN2), a visitor from Guangzhou, remarked that the guides at the site imparted information about Macao and A-Ma Temple, which proved to be more impactful than relying on printed materials. A couple can even articulate the visual disparities in architectural styles between Chinese and Portuguese buildings. Nevertheless, 54.5% of the interviewees were unable to attain the Evaluation level, and out of those, 45.5% were also unable to qualify for the Synthesis level. The third respondent (IN3) clarified that she had only traversed a single route, which does not encompass the entire terrain. Consequently, she was unable to identify any other location associated with A-Ma Temple.

With regards to the Dom Pedro V Theatre, within the six stages of cognitive learning, the respondents from Dom Pedro V Theatre have fully attained the levels of Knowledge and Comparison. According to one of the interviewees (IN4), the brochure contains a concise description of the theatre. This description indicates that Dom Pedro V Theatre is the inaugural western theatre in Macao. The wife of the respondent stated that the booklet provided comprehensive coverage of the history of Patua, therefore enabling viewers to grasp the significance of this performance.

Yet, the program brochure does not primarily emphasize Macao and its history and culture. As a result, only 1 interviewee (11.11%) can attain all levels, while 6 of them (66.66%) may obtain Application and Analysis levels. While one of the interviewees (IN5) expressed appreciation for the performance, she noted that the cultural background of Macao was not extensively incorporated into

the play. In agreement with the viewpoint, a friend of the interviewee (IN6) explains that while art-integration is a fashionable concept in landscape interpretation, it is crucial to emphasize the cultural context of the environment. Failure to do so would result in the site being just a performing venue.

For the Mandarin House Gift Shop's side, each of them may respond to the question regarding degrees of knowledge, comparison, and application. A respondent from Japan (IN7) explained that the gift shop is located within Mandarin House, which also houses didactic and exhibition spaces. They so can obtain cultural information of the house and Macao. However, of them, only 2 individuals (25%) are capable of attaining all the levels. Another interviewee (IN8) believes that cultural products serve as a means to transmit the cultural essence of Macao, enabling tourists to transport the "culture" back to their places of origin.

Significantly, out of the 6 tourists, 75% who were unable to attain all of the levels, 5 of them (62.5%) attempted to address the question, "What lessons may be derived from the cultural products?" Their response to the query, however, contains incorrect information. For example, one interviewee (IN9) claimed that the Mandarin House is the sole Chinese Mansion in The Historic Centre of Macao, despite the fact that there are two other Chinese Mansions in the area, one being Lou Kau Mansion. Another interviewee (IN8) said that this house was only suitable for affluent individuals, although it was actually inhabited by locals after the Zheng family relocated, the scenario resembling the movie "House of 72 Tenants". Remarkably, the staff members are capable of accurately presenting the cultural background associated with the cultural items.

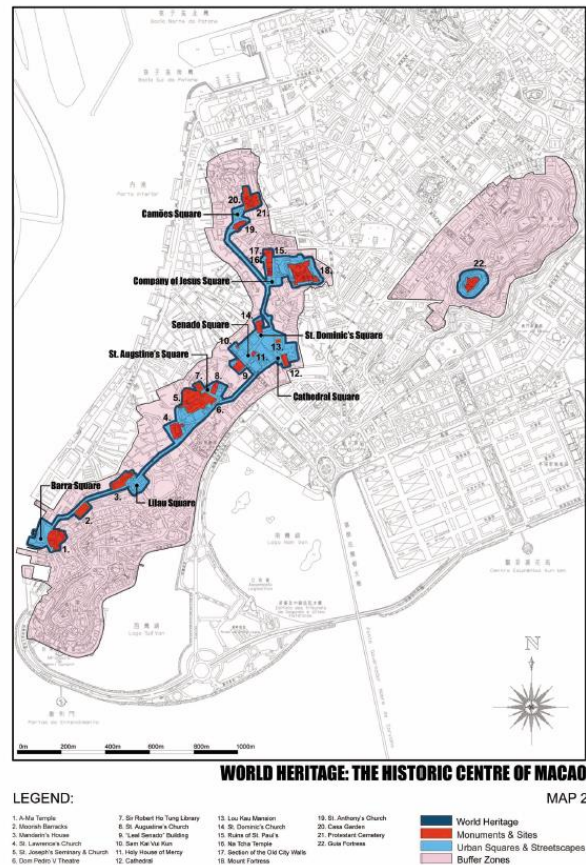
## Discussion

### *Object: The Material Context and Significance of The Historic Centre of Macao.*

According to the Cultural Affairs Bureau (2015), Macao emerged as a prominent international trade port during the 16th century. Its dynamic economic operations and international trade of goods have established Macao as a convergence point or amalgamation of eastern and western cultures. The predominant demographic consists of Chinese citizens and Portuguese immigrants. When engaging with each other, they exchange both their cultural practices and languages. Macao culture was shaped by the colonization of Portugal, resulting in the emergence of architectural manifestations that reflect a fusion of cultures. Hence, Macao is a location that harmoniously integrates and preserves traditional Chinese architectural structures, such as Chinese mansions (e.g. Lou Kau Mansion and Mandarin House) and temples (e.g. Na Cha Temple and A-Ma Temple), with Western architectural elements like churches (e.g. St. Anthony Church and St. Lawrence Church) and residences (e.g. Casa Garden and Sir Robert Ho Tung Library). These elements are all located in the "Catholic City" as it was formerly known, which now refers to "The Historic Centre of Macao". UNESCO officially designated The Historic Centre of Macao as a World Cultural Heritage site in 2005. The historic centre of Macau, a former Portuguese colony, contains a total of 22 sites and 8 squares that document the distinctive assimilation and coexistence of Chinese and Portuguese cultures.

The Historic Centre of Macao is formed by the arrangement of points (sites), lines (streets and squares) that connect these points, and ultimately produces the physical space (the historic centre and the landscape) (see fig. 1). The city's distinctive lifestyle and relationships are the result of natural, cultural, and socio-economic forces, since Chinese, Portuguese, and Macanese populations resided there. Their reflection remains visible in the centre. In addition, the institution also nurtures intangible traditions such as Patua theatre, beliefs, and rituals of A-Ma. According to the definition provided by Oers (2010, p. 14), The Historic Centre of Macao can be described as a historical urban landscape (HUL). This landscape is formed by natural, cultural, and socio-economic processes that shape it spatially, temporally, and experientially. It includes layers of symbolic importance, intangible heritage, perception of values, and interconnections among the integrated components of the (HUL) related to buildings, spaces, rituals, and values.

**Fig. 1 The Construction of The Historic Centre of Macao. The sites are linked by the streets and squares. (Cultural Affairs Bureau, n.d.: 20)**



In addition, ephemeral landscapes can also be observed inside the historical urban environment, as shown in The Historic Centre of Macao. Brassley (1998) defines ephemeral landscapes as landscapes that are transient as a result of environmental and/or cultural determinants. Based on the aforementioned criteria, Howard et al. (2019) categorise ephemeral landscapes into three temporal classifications: Cyclical ephemeral landscapes depict everyday social practices and cultural performances, such as the street market next to Kuan Tai Temple. Periodic ephemeral landscapes are landscapes specifically designed for religious ceremonies and festivals, such as the traditional Chinese flower scaffolding festivalscape (see fig. 2) and the mat-shed theatre ritual landscape (see fig. 3) at A-Ma Temple during the annual A-Ma Festival (Tin Hau Festival). Irruptive ephemeral landscapes are the geographical features that represent uprisings and social movements, such as the 12-3 incident that happened at Senado Square in 1966.

**Fig. 2 The Traditional Chinese Flower Scaffolding at the entrance of A-Ma Temple. (Photo taken by the author, 2024)**







**Fig. 3 The mat-shed theatre at Barra Square. Due to COVID-19, no mat-shed theatre was held from 2020 to 2023. (Photo taken by the author, 2018)**



It is noteworthy that temporary landscapes can be created within the historical urban landscapes, despite the presence of different cultural systems: Chinese and Portuguese. Notably, the Taoist Na Tcha Temple is located adjacent to the Catholic Ruins of St. Paul. Furthermore, a temporary mat-shed theatrical landscape is built in the square located in front of Na Tcha shrine and adjacent to the Ruins of St. Paul. The distinguishing feature of The Historic Centre of Macao is its distinctive arrangement of binaural-culture buildings and landscapes on the same site, allowing the congregations to coexist harmoniously.

The above material provides precise definitions and explains the importance of The Historic Centre of Macao in terms of its growth and characteristics of the historic urban landscape. Furthermore, it highlights the presence of three distinct categories of transient landscapes within the historic centre. The following section will analyze and elucidate how the landscapes symbolize the intangible emotions, values, and significance of Macao culture.

According to Taylor (2009, p. 12), landscape can also serve as a reflection of the cultural environment of a location, encompassing economic, socio-political, and religious dimensions within society. Conversely, Chau (2011) contends that the local intangible values and meanings of a location can be manifested through firsthand experience, practical application, and live performances. Regarding the Historic Centre of Macao, there exist 15 distinct categories of intangible cultural heritage in Macao, with 9 of them being particularly or yearly situated inside The Historic Centre of Macao (see table 2). The linkage demonstrates the relationships between objects (the landscapes) and representation (the cultural context).

**Table 2: The linkage between the intangible cultural heritage and the venues of the Historic Center of Macao (Information from Cultural Affairs Bureau (n.d.), table compiled by the author)**

<b>Intangible Cultural Heritage</b>	<b>Frequently and Time</b>	<b>Venues in The Historic Centre of Macao</b>
Yueju Opera (Cantonese Opera)	No specific frequency and timeframe; It will definitely happen at the birthdays of Chinese Gods (e.g. A-Ma, Na Tcha)	Barra Square, Na Tcha Temple, Kuan Tai Temple.
Festival of the Drunken Dragon	Annually; On the evening of the seventh day of the fourth month of the Chinese lunar calendar	Kuan Tai Temple and Senado Square.
Taoist Ritual Music	No specific frequency and timeframe; It will definitely happen on the birthdays of Chinese Gods (e.g. A-Ma, Na Tcha)	A-Ma Temple, Na Tcha Temple and Kuan Tai Temple.
Belief and Customs of A-Ma	Annually; At Tin-Hau Festival (which takes place on the 23rd day of the 3rd month of the lunar calendar)	A-Ma Temple and A-Ma Temple Square
Belief and Customs of Na Tcha	Annually; At Na Tcha Festival (which takes place on the 18th day of the 5th month of the lunar calendar)	Na Tcha Temple and Company of Jesus Square
Patuá Theatre	No specific frequency and timeframe; It will definitely happen at Macao Arts Festival	Dom Pedro V Theatre
Craft of Bamboo Scaffolding	No specific frequency and timeframe; This will definitely happen on the birthday of the Chinese God (e.g. A-Ma, Na Tcha, Earth God)	A-Ma Temple and Barra Square, Na Tcha Temple, Kuan Tai Temple.
Procession of the Passion of Our Lord, the God Jesus	Annually; On the first Saturday and Sunday of Lent	St. Augustine's Church, St. Augustine's Square, Cathedral Square, The Cathedral, St. Dominic's Square, Senado Square.

Procession of Our Lady of Fatima	Annually; On 13 May of each year	St. Dominic's Church, St. Dominic's Square, Senado Square.
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Thus, it can be demonstrated that The Historic Centre of Macao encompasses intangible elements and significances for the local population. Moreover, it is possible to uncover a threefold connection among landscapes (including transient landscapes and The Historic Centre of Macao), culture (intangible cultural heritage), and society: The intangible cultural heritages are either arranged or performed within the historical urban environment of The Historic Centre of Macao, or within a temporary landscape situated within the historical urban infrastructure. Thus, landscapes offer a means of safeguarding and exhibiting the intangible cultural heritage. Furthermore, the intangible cultural heritages represent several facets of significance within Macao culture. For instance, the Feast of Na Tcha and Na Tcha Temple are interconnected with the mythology and traditional stories of Macao.

The annual celebration of the Na Tcha festival at Na Tcha Temple. The event included rituals, a Cantonese opera specifically dedicated to Na Tcha, a race including the seizing of firecrackers, and the delivery of rice said to be “peaceful” (Cultural Affairs Bureau, 2015). In essence, intangible cultural heritage encompasses the distinctive culture of Macao, closely intertwined with the history, customs, and way of life of the local people. The aforementioned intangible cultural heritages encompass the involvement of local residents in various capacities, as they are all coordinated by civil organizations within the society. For instance, the Bishop of the Diocese of Macao arranges the Procession of the Passion of Our Lord, the God Jesus; the Associação do Templo Na Cha takes charge of the Na Tcha festival; and the Dóci Papiçám di Macau Drama Group organizes the Patua Theatre. Thus, the practices and performances of intangible cultural heritages are closely associated with Macanese civilizations.

Hence, the remarkable urban scenery of Macao Historic Centre encompasses not only the physical environment but also the cultural environment that aligns with the local communities. It can be demonstrated that there exists a strong correlation between landscapes, culture, and society in the case of The Historic Centre of Macao.

#### *Representation II: How Government Utilizes Cultural Tourism Promotion*

Given the presence of significant cultural richness in both the historical urban environment and the temporary landscape, which can be considered as a form of cultural capital, the methods of interpretation can influence the comprehension of the recipients. In cultural tourism, promotion and interpretation are crucial strategies for disseminating and communicating the cultural experience to tourists. The government serves as a cultural intermediary in tourism promotion, providing information to tourists that influences their decisions and understanding of the cultural context of Macao. Four representation approaches are employed by the Macao government to leverage the cultural environment for tourism promotion:

#### **Thematic Cultural Routes**

In 2015, the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) launched the “Step Out, Experience Macao’s Communities - Walking Tour Routes” program for tourists (see fig. 5). The office established four paths at The Historic Centre of Macao, namely “Footsteps into the Historic Centre,” “An Experiment of Creativity,” “Crossroads of China and Portugal,” and “The Marriage of East and West in St. Anthony’s Parish.” Furthermore, as stated on the MGTO official website (2018), the landscapes are classified into five distinct categories, including churches, temples, gardens, fortresses, and other prominent locations. These techniques can emphasize the distinctive features and cultural background of each location, making the cultural significance readily apparent to visitors based on the categorization. Moreover, these routes have the potential to appeal to travelers with diverse interests



and can thereby prevent the uneven allocation of passengers.

**Fig. 5 The Poster of “Step Out, Experience Macao’s Communities - Walking tour routes” (Macao Government Tourism Office, 2018)**



### **Integration arts, heritage and landscape**

Instead of cultural routes, The Historic Centre of Macao is typically preserved as part of a deliberate restoration strategy. The Macao Arts Festival transforms the entire environment via art-related uses and activities, therefore establishing the cultural and artistic identity of Macao. Landscapes in Macao serve as platforms and places for artists, which may inspire art enthusiasts to visit the city. It is necessary to note that the substance of the performance is crucial, as else the themes and cultural background may be overshadowed by the arts. Thankfully, the performances in Macao arts festivals are explicitly connected to the cultural and historical aspects of each respective location.

For instance, Dom Pedro V Theatre holds significant cultural importance for the people of Macanese. Historically, the theatre has functioned as both a performing ground and a social gathering place for

the Macanese population (Cultural Affairs Bureau, 2015). Following the revitalization, the theatre restored its role as a forum for Macanese culture. The Patua theatrical performance is an essential component of the Macao Arts Festival and is required to take place annually in the theatre facility. In the instance of Dom Pedro V Theatre, the restoration of correspondence arts may not only preserve the sites but also enhance the intangible emotions, values, and meanings for tourists, so bridging the gap between the present and the past, similar to the Macanese dialect, Patua, as one of the respondent states.

*“Yes, it (Putua) is significant because it reflects the blend of Portuguese and Chinese cultures and language. I learned that from the leaflet of this route. I think it will be a pity if this language disappear” (IN26).*

### **Cultural Products**

In accordance with the “Cultural Heritage Protection Law” enacted in 2015, the Macao government aims to expedite the process and enhance the quality of cultural artifacts. One of the developing trends is the integration of The Historic Centre of Macao with the creative industry. Chinese civilians and the government have concentrated on improving the city’s positive image, suggesting that cultural and creative industries (CCIs)—including design, visual arts, performing arts, fashion, pop music, film and video, animation, and publishing—are essential strategies to mitigate Macao’s enduring gambling reputation. In 2010, Macao founded the Cultural and Creative Industry Promotion Office and the Cultural Industries Committee, aiming to improve the casino image by leveraging these eight CCIs and local strengths. This initiative aims to guide the city toward varied and sustainable growth. The expansion of CCIs contributes to the diversification of Macao’s economic framework, fostering sustainable development (Lee et al., 2022). Creative products, as defined by The Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council (2012), are a fundamental component of the creative business, encompassing items or services that arise from creative processes. Specifically, Mandarin House was made accessible to the public in 2010 as a component of The Historic Centre of Macao. Concurrently, the revitalization plan includes the establishment of the Mandarin House Cultural Relics Info Center and Gift Shop. The gift shop aims to increase public interest and strategically leverage this prestigious cultural destination as a platform for showcasing local creativity and designs (The Cultural Affairs Bureau, 2013). Based on the observation made at the gift shop, the range of products available extends beyond the publications authored by or centered around the esteemed Chinese philosopher, Mr. Zheng Guanying, the original owner of the house, one respondent also agrees with this.

*“The souvenirs reflect local craftsmanship and cultural symbols, which I find fascinating” (IN22).*

*“The products (pointed at the books) here highlights owner of this heritage, though I cannot memorize his name, it helps me connect the dots about Macao’s and Chinese culture” (IN23).*

The gift shop also offers souvenirs inspired by Mandarin House, publications and design items from the Cultural Affairs Bureau, as well as products under consignment from Macao’s cultural and creative brands (The Cultural Affairs Bureau, 2013). Specifically, the coasters (see fig. 6) serve as indicators for the windows in the Mandarin House. In essence, the locations within the historical urban environment are utilized for the purpose of designing and developing cultural products. These products serve to convey the cultural meaning of the landscape to the visitors.

**Fig. 6 The coasters are shaped as the windows within the Mandarin House. (Photo retrieved from Macao Cultural and Creative Industries Website, 2018)**



*Experience: Can cultural tourism convey the cultural context of The Historic Centre of Macao to the tourist?*

After conducting an analysis of the cultural background of The Historic Centre of Macao and the ways in which the Macao government employs and interprets them. This section will assess if cultural tourism can effectively communicate the cultural landscape of The Historic Centre of Macao to tourists using the aforementioned government strategies. In order to address this question, interviews were undertaken. The interviews took place at three physical locations: Mandarin House, Dom Pedro V Theatre, A-Ma Temple, and Barra Square. Each site corresponds to a specific interpretation method: Mandarin House Cultural Relics Info Center and Gift Shop focus on cultural products, Dom Pedro V Theatre emphasizes the integration of arts, heritage, and landscape, and A-Ma Temple and Barra Square focus on thematic cultural routes.

According to the interview results, the thematic cultural route approach is successful in communicating the cultural background of Macao to tourists. This is because the routes are accompanied by brochures and even have docents at designated sites. Tourists can therefore obtain the information straight from authoritative sources, as one interviewee states,

*“It (the brochures) shows the importance of heritage in tourism, helping the visitors and support the local economy” (IN8).*

Additional information regarding the transient landscape can be incorporated into the brochure, even if the landscape is being built at a certain moment. Nevertheless, as the entire sceneries cannot be encompassed by a single route, tourists who only navigate one route are unable to get a comprehensive understanding of Macao culture.

The interview findings also suggest that integrating arts, heritage, and landscape is a fashionable concept to allow audiences and tourists to experience the past, since the performance setting becomes relevant to the historical context. This can provide a coherent link between the past and the present for the tourists. Therefore, it is widely accepted and valued by tourists. However, the cultural



environment is encompassed by the performing arts in the instance of Dom Pedro V Theatre, which could lead to a lack of comprehensive imagination and comprehension among tourists.

Nevertheless, the interviews indicate that cultural products are unable to accurately replicate the cultural essence of Macao, while half of the tourists managed to reach half of the desired levels, as one of the respondent mentions.

*“I wasn’t aware (the heritage values) until now; I just thought it looked interesting” (IN14).*

There is room for improvement in the integration of art, heritage, and landscapes, as the majority of the interviewees can only demonstrate proficiency in the first two levels. The efficacy of the cultural product method is proven to be contingent upon the presence of a mediator who can introduce the cultural context underlying the products to the tourists.

Therefore, tourists’ answers prove that the cultural products raise tourists’ curiosity, but without detailed information, tourists may understand the landscape and its cultural context wrongly through their imagination.

## Conclusions and Implications

### *Suggestions: Case Study of ‘Heritage Stroll with Poetries’*

Based on the analysis provided, it can be concluded that among the three representations used by the government to communicate Macao’s cultural context to tourists, the ‘thematic cultural route’ is the most efficient and accurate approach. The “integration with arts, heritage and landscapes” is appealing to tourists, but provides a superficial understanding of the cultural context. On the other hand, “cultural products” can externalize the cultural context of Macao, but they may not accurately convey the cultural context. Through the analysis of the governmental methods, several shortcomings have been identified that can be enhanced for each approach. Based on the example of “Heritage Stroll with Poetries,” the subsequent part will provide recommendations for the advancement of cultural-landscape tourism in Macao.

The Macao Heritage Ambassadors Association (2018) defines “Heritage Stroll with Poetries” as a cultural tourism experience led by heritage ambassadors in The Historic Centre of Macao. This integrates the cultural backdrop of Macao with various perspectives and issues in the arts. This exercise integrates the benefits of the aforementioned approaches and addresses the limitations. First and foremost, it inherits benefits from thematic tour routes. An annual selection and creation of thematic routes is undertaken. For instance, the theme chosen in 2014 was “Songs to Waterweels”. Docents provided guidance to tourists as they traversed almost half of The Historic Centre of Macao, which included A-Ma Temple and Lilau Square. The distribution of leaflets to tourists included the cultural background of The Historic Centre of Macao. Furthermore, the cultural products of the tour are meticulously crafted. The postcards (see fig. 7) contain detailed descriptions for each site involved in the tour, which can successfully prevent tourists from developing erroneous imaginations. Furthermore, the trip incorporated other artistic mediums to elucidate the cultural backdrop of the venues and Macao (see fig. 8 to 9). This has the potential to appeal to art enthusiasts, even if they lack interest in Macao culture.

Furthermore, as the heritage structures have transformed into natural performing venues, visitors are able to immerse themselves in the past. According to Chen et al. (2020), experiences are influenced by social and cultural variables, indicating that each participant in a group activity depends on their individual value system to inform their perceptions. Within cultural festivals, the notion of value co-creation emphasises the significance of interactivity, audience involvement, and collaboration among many stakeholders to establish performance venues. This collaborative method yields practices that

provide intense and exceptional experiences for tourists. The value derived from these relationships integrates cultural and practical elements. Hence, “Heritage Stroll with Poetries” successfully attains the “happy balance” as conceptualized by Howard et al. (2019), so meeting tourists’ anticipation for both thrill and creativity while also emphasizing the genuineness of heritage.

**Fig. 7 The cultural products of “Heritage Stroll with Poetries,” which includes a description of each site in the route. (Photo taken by author, 2024)**



**Fig. 8 Dancers were dancing in the Ruin’s of St. Paul, to illustrate the historic background of St. Paul Church, which was burnt for three times. (Photo taken by author, 2013)**



**Fig. 9 A narrator is concluding the whole tour during the mini concert held at Casa Garden. (Photo taken by author, 2014)**



Moreover, the “Heritage Stroll with Poetries” is a commendable leisure activity that can establish a connection between tourists and the natural environment, as well as the historical era. In his work, Crouch (2011, p. 14) argued that experiencing the environment through expressive poetics of spacing allows individuals to envision their position in the world, therefore facilitating a connection with and transformation into the landscape.

Howard et al. (2019) provide a contextual framework for Crouch’s (2011, p. 14) argument that responses to specific landscapes encompass not only sight but also smell, hearing, touch, and even taste. Within the framework of “Heritage Stroll with Poetries,” visitors perceive the landscape using five senses: In addition to sightseeing, participants have the opportunity to smell the aroma of incense (see fig. 10). Headphones were supplied to the participants, enabling them to listen to the sounds and music associated with Macao’s culture, such as vendors selling their products and the sound of the waves (hearing). Workshops were integrated into the tour, allowing tourists to create knots and lanterns (touch) (see fig. 11). Furthermore, traditional Chinese tea was distributed to the participants, which can enhance their gustatory experience (taste) (see fig. 12).

**Fig. 10 Participants were able to sniff the smell of incense at A-Ma Temple. (Photo taken by author, 2013)**



**Fig. 11 Participants were able to make their lanterns. (Photo taken by author, 2014)**





**Fig. 12** Participants were tasting Chinese tea at Lilau Square (Photo taken by author, 2013)



In summary, “Heritage Stroll with Poetries” integrates the advantages obtained from the three approaches implemented by the government to advance and elucidate the cultural environment of Macao. Moreover, it is also compliant with the standards established by Crouch (2011) and Howard et al. (2019), therefore functioning as a mechanism to connect travelers from various historical eras to the present time.

Conclusively, the integration of arts, heritage, and landscapes is a fashionable and innovative approach to appeal to tourists, therefore enriching their experience when visiting heritage sites. Nevertheless, it is crucial to emphasize the cultural backdrop of landscapes, since failure to do so will just result in the arts overshadowing the main subject. Consequently, this could result in tourists acquiring an inadequate comprehension. Lastly, “cultural products” have the potential to enhance

tourists' experience in their own native environment. However, as tourists may not have a comprehensive awareness of the cultural context, misleading interpretations may arise due to their imaginations.

Ultimately, landscapes encompass a wealth of cultural background and capital. An exceptional interpretation and advertising strategy are necessary to effectively use them in the context of cultural tourism. An ideal approach for communicating Macao's cultural environment to tourists should not only be precisely informative and appealing but also serve as a mediator between the past and present. The inclusion of a five-sense experience enables travelers to immerse themselves in the past, providing them with a comprehensive understanding. The Macao government should consider the example of the "Heritage Stroll with Poetries" to effectively utilize the abundant cultural heritage of the landscapes and optimize the long-term viability of cultural tourism in Macao. Hence, this presents a more promising outlook for cultural-landscape tourism in Macao.



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# UNLOCKING THE ROLE OF SENSESCAPE IN SHAPING TOURIST EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE

Zhaoyu Chen<sup>a</sup>, Irene Cheng Chu Chan<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Faculty of Creative Tourism and Intelligent Technologies/Faculty of Innovative Hospitality Management, Macao University of Tourism, Macao SAR, People's Republic of China

## ABSTRACT

Sensescape, as a critical component in constructing the experience environment, stresses the importance of the sensory stimuli that a tourist perceives during a trip, which significantly influences tourists' emotional experience. This study aims to explore both the roles of sense(s) in influencing tourist emotional experience. Using the case of cross-border travel experience from Macao to Zhuhai, China, this study employed a comprehensive design to examine the detailed elaborations of tourist experience based on their full record, while uncovering tourists' sensory experiences and the emotions they evoke. A total of 34 participants were recruited for in-depth interviews. The findings show that tourists' emotions vary across different sensescapes. Each sense – sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste – plays a critical role in determining the diverse emotions that arise in response to the various types of attractions encountered. The findings provide strategic implications for destination marketers and managers in designing the sensescape to create a more competitive destinationscape for tourists.

**Keywords:** *sensescape, sense, tourist experience, emotion, sensory experience, China*

## Introduction

Tourist sensory experience is increasingly important in influencing the overall quality of travel experience (Abd Rahman et al., 2015) and for effective destination marketing (Kah et al., 2023). Destinations actively manage the various sensory elements to evoke tourist emotions, enhance tourist satisfaction, and become more competitive in field (Saribaş & Demir, 2024). This is also known as sensory branding (Chan & Tung, 2019). The growing interest in multisensory impacts has given rise to the concept of sensescape – the interplay of multi-sensory inputs in shaping the overall destination experience (Chen et al., 2021). Sensescape includes such dimensions as smellscape (smell) (Wankhede et al., 2023), tastescape (taste) (Afaq et al., 2023), visualscape (sight), soundscape (hearing), and hapticscape (touch) (Buzova et al., 2021; Kah et al., 2023). These multidimensional sensory elements collectively construct the experience environment of a destination, further influencing the unique and memorable tourist experience (Agapito et al., 2013).

Given the influential role of sensory experience in people's decision-making process and behavioral intentions, sensescape has been examined in various contexts including urban transformation (Wankhede et al., 2023), language education (Prada, 2023), health care (Cavanagh et al., 2020) and automobile market (Kato, 2023). In tourism, sensescapes have been applied in tourism contexts with unique characteristics, including natural environments (Qiu et al., 2021), casinos (Lynch, 2024), food tourism (Babolian Hendijani & Boo, 2020), park tourism (Rice et al., 2020), wine tourism (Santos et al., 2023), camping tourism (Huang et al., 2024) that involve sensory design with mobile tourist activities. Recently, sensescape has been extended to virtual reality contexts that go beyond the offline experience, which stresses the benefits of senses in immersive experience (Santoso et al., 2022). Even though various contexts have been covered in

tourism, the performance of sensescape varies depending on the contexts, making it difficult to generalize the role of sensory dimensions in tourism research (Parker et al., 2024). It is unknown how the multi-sensory experience is perceived and interplayed in cross-border tourist leisure trip when tourists explore different attractions.

Sensescape or sensory experience has different sensory modalities which have been shown to play a mediating role in arousing emotions (Campo et al., 2021), especially positive emotions, given their significance in exploring satisfaction and behaviors (Kastenholz et al., 2020). However, in reality, sensescape does not necessarily trigger only positive emotions. During a trip, there is uncertainty in terms of the tourist encounters, making it hard to confirm whether positive or negative emotions will be perceived. Nevertheless, it is the sensescape which constantly influences tourist perceptions of their interactions with the environment and the attractions they visit or the activities they participate. It is unclear how the senses work in arousing different levels of sentiments. Drawing upon the appraisal theory which outlines the appraisal process on how the emotions as adaptive responses are revealed through one's processing on the environmental features (Arnold, 1960; Lazarus, 1991; Moors et al., 2013), therefore, this study aims to explore the impact of sense(s) on tourist emotions and various expressions of tourist emotions crossing attractions. Correspondingly, the research questions are: 1) which sense(s) play a key role in shaping tourist emotional experience; and 2) how does the emotion(s) expressed in different attractions?

The findings of this study will contribute to the understanding of how sensescape shapes tourist experience and the formation of specific sensescape dimensions for tourists. By exploring the impact of sensory experiences on emotions, this study can shed light on the integration of multidimensional sensory elements in the design of tourism experience. Destination and attraction managers can leverage this knowledge to enhance the overall quality of tourist experience.

## Methods

This study focuses on a cross-border travel destination, Zhuhai, Guangdong Province, China, which is a city adjacent to the Macao Special Administrative Region. There are nearly 4.1 million of passengers who travel across the border of Macao for same-day tours in Zhuhai (DSEC, 2024). A total of 34 participants were recruited from December 2023 to March 2024 based on the following criteria. 1) they must reside in Macao; 2) they must undertake a day-trip from Macao to Zhuhai covering at least two attractions; and 3) they must be willing to join the research based on given instructions.

There are two stages of data collection. In the first stage, participants were asked to record their full trip in Zhuhai using the *liangbulu* application, which includes both Global Positioning System (GPS) and recording functions, that allows users to document their entire trip in Zhuhai, including their locations, routes, and feelings through texts, pictures and videos (Figure 1). Participants could record their experiences at any moments they wish to share and rate these moments on a scale from -5 to 5, indicating their sentiments as either positive or negative. The purpose of this is to ensure that the emotions of the participants were accurately interpreted during the analysis of their shared information, as well as to prompt discussion and remind the participants of their reflections during the interview. These records were then shared with the researchers for use in subsequent interview. In the second stage, each participant was interviewed separately within 24 hours of completing their trip to ensure that their memories associated with the recordings remained vivid. During the interview, participants were encouraged to elaborate on their shared experiences and the reasons behind their ratings. In particular, they were asked to

identify whether specific senses played critical roles in shaping their immediate experiences and stimulating any emotions if.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. NVivo 12 was employed for data analysis. Thematic analysis was applied during the coding process, to identify the active senses involved in shaping emotional responses. The following section provides detailed information regarding the themes of sensescape and its associated emotions.

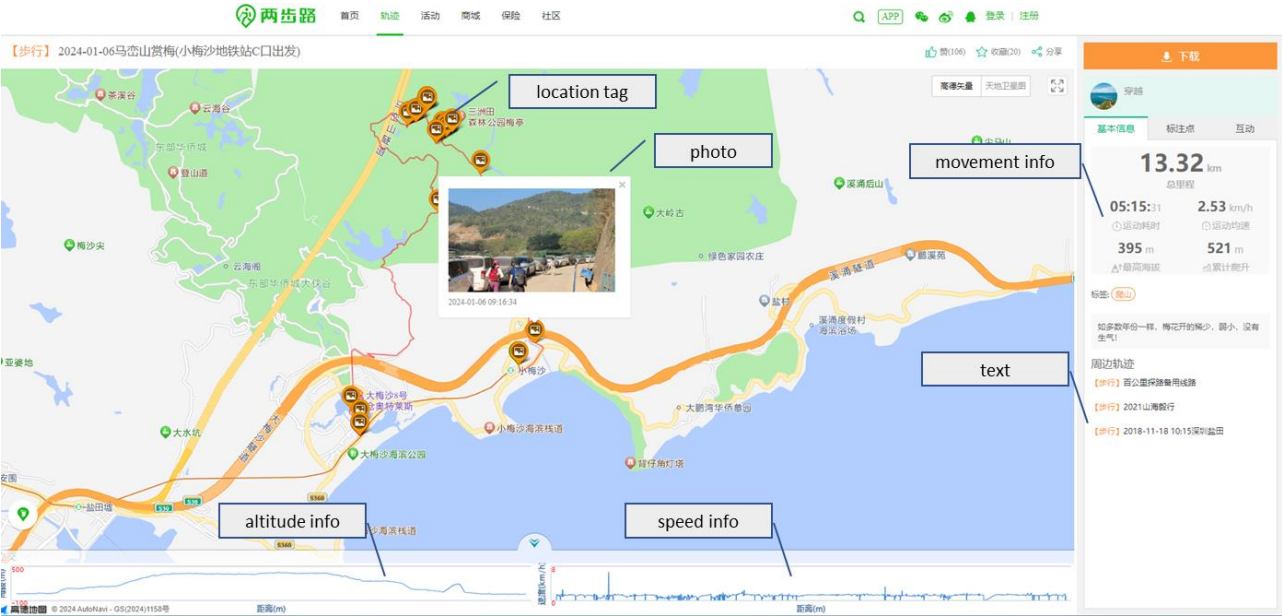


Figure 1. An example of the interface and functions of *liangbulu* application of trip recording

Findings and discussion

The following table provides an overview of the participants’ reflections on the senses and their associated emotions (Table 1). The numbers indicate how often each sense and its related emotions were mentioned. The reflections reveal a rich array of emotions, ranging from positive to negative ones. In total, 55 distinct emotions were identified mainly based on the reflections given by the participants, which is expected to reflect their true feelings. The participants are not forced to comment on any specific senses only when they have specific feelings to be reflected while involving senses.

**Table 1: Tourists' involved senses and their stimulated emotions**

Emotions	A : Hearing	B : Sight	C : Smell	D : Taste	E : Touch
1 : Admiring	0	3	0	0	0
2 : Annoying	22	16	7	0	2
3: Anxious	1	2	0	0	1
4 : Approved	0	1	0	0	0
5 : Attractive	1	3	1	0	0
6 : Awkward	2	8	0	1	0
7 : Baffling	0	0	0	1	0
8 : Boring	0	2	0	0	0
9 : Cheerful	8	26	4	3	4
10 : Comfortable	7	20	6	2	3
11 : Complicated	0	1	0	0	0
12 : Confusing	0	1	0	0	0
13 : Cool	0	1	0	0	0
14 : Criticizing	0	1	0	0	0
15 : Depress	0	2	0	0	0
16 : Desolate	0	1	0	0	0
17 : Disappointing	2	12	0	3	1
18 : Disgusted	3	6	6	1	0
19 : Dislike	3	4	3	2	0
20 : Dizzy	0	0	1	0	0
21 : Embarrassing	0	1	0	0	0
22 : Empty	0	1	0	0	0
23 : Energetic	0	2	0	0	0
24 : Exciting	1	3	0	0	0
25 : Expecting	2	10	0	1	0
26 : Familiar	0	1	0	0	0
27 : Frightened	0	1	0	0	0
28 : Funny	0	1	0	0	0
29 : Harmonious	1	1	0	0	0
30 : Helpless	0	2	0	0	0
31 : Hurry	1	4	0	0	0
32 : Imagining	0	4	0	0	0
33 : Impressive	4	17	2	0	0
34 : Inspiring	2	5	1	1	0
35 : Interesting	2	15	0	0	0
36 : Lively	4	7	0	0	0

37 : Nostalgic	0	1	1	0	0
38 : Peaceful	8	19	1	1	0
39 : Quiet	5	3	0	0	0
40 : Recalling	0	12	0	0	1
41 : Refresh	0	1	0	0	0
42 : Regret	0	3	0	2	1
43 : Relaxing	8	13	4	3	0
44 : Relief	0	3	0	0	1
45 : Respectful	0	1	0	0	0
46 : Romantic	0	1	0	0	0
47 : Sacred	1	6	0	0	0
48 : Satisfied	0	6	0	2	1
49 : Surprising	1	23	0	2	0
50 : Tired	0	9	0	0	2
51 : Touching	0	7	0	0	0
52 : Tricky	0	1	0	0	0
53 : Uncomfortable	4	6	5	1	1
54 : Unhappy	0	2	0	0	0
55 : Warm	0	4	0	0	0

#### *Dominant role of “sight”*

Sight plays a key role in provoking the emotions. Among all emotions, sight stimulates the most positive emotions of “cheerful” (N=26), “surprising” (N=23), “comfortable” (N=20), “peaceful” (N=19), “impressive” (N=17), “interesting” (N=15). *“I enjoy the colors white and red, which evoke a warm festive sense, similar to my gathering with friends. I am very delighted right now with such vivid colors.”* (Participant 1). (Figure 1)



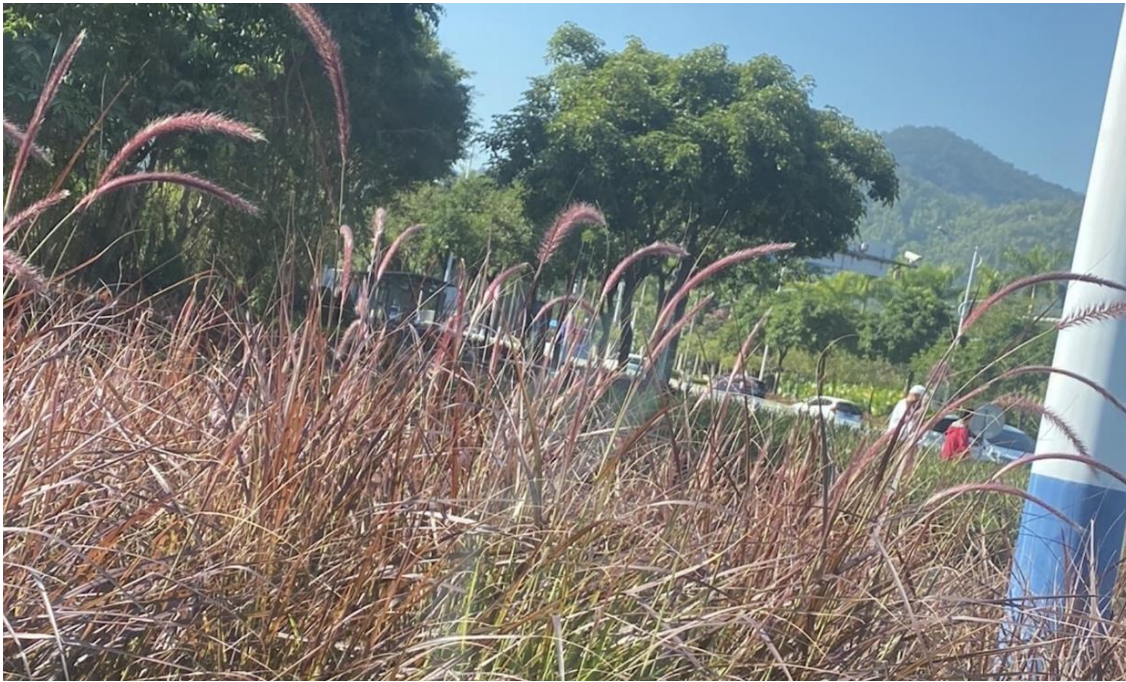


**Figure 1: Hotpot scene**

*“The sunset light is amazing and brightens my day journey.”* (Participant 18). (Figure 2). *“I had never seen this kind of red setaria viridis before, and I was pretty surprised.”* (Participant 13) (Figure 3). It is not surprising that sight is the most intuitive sense individuals perceived through their eyes, which was being reflected the most (Agapito et al., 2017; Rahman et al., 2017). Most of these emotions are positive as tourists tend to share their memorable experiences in travel recordings, especially when capturing beautiful moments in photos (Elvekrok & Gulbrandsøy, 2022).



**Figure 2: Sunset light observed in the square in front of Beishan Courtyard ancestor hall.**



**Figure 3: The red setaria viridis in Beishan Courtyard**

#### *Negative emotions toward “hearing”*

Sound is the second most important sensory stimulus during the trip, as tourists can easily be distracted by the noise in their surrounding environments (Liu et al., 2018). In this study, the focus on soundscape reveals predominantly negative emotions, such as “annoying” (N=22), even though a few participants also expressed positive emotions, like “cheerful” (N=8). In general, many of the emotions reported were less desirable, including terms like “anxious”, “disappointing”, “disgusted”.

*“[Due to the traffic jam] cars constantly honk their horns, which is very annoying.... [When I was on-site in that park] a salesperson used a trumpet horn to sell tickets for the pedal boats like “\$XX for half an hour”. It is noisy and annoyed me.” (Participant 14)*

*“It was a really bad experience for me on my way in the alley. Because there was noise from the delivery man who keep honking that horn. He wouldn't care about you, he would just drive so close to you. I think it was kind of dangerous.” (Participant 2)*

Most mentioned sources of noise are related to human activity, which can disturb one's enjoyment of the soundscape (Merchan et al., 2014). Delightful sound is primarily associated with natural environments or attractions. One participant described her experience on top of a hill, where the quiet surroundings allowed visitors to enjoy the peace while appreciating the city's night view (Participant 21). Another participant shared, “I like hearing the rain. The raindrops are soothing.” (Participant 27). “The bird cries are really loud, which helps me relax.” (Participant 7)

#### *“Smell” in outdoor environment*



Smell is mostly associated with outdoor environments, particularly when tourists pass by areas with strong odors, such as smoke or waste. Also, participants' sensitivity to these stimuli plays a role in their perceptions. As one participant noted, *"There seems to be a garbage disposal station nearby that stink.... I would rather take a detour."* (Participant 24). Similar to soundscapes, smellscape are closely related to natural environments as well (Rice et al., 2020), encompassing scents from plants, the good quality of fresh air, and the sea.

#### *Taste together with the dining experience*

Tastescape is relevant only when participants have encountered dining or tasting experiences (Santos et al., 2023). Even if there is a dining experience, it may not necessarily associate with strong emotions if the taste is just as usual. As one participant remarked, *"The taste is just fine as it is a free trial"* (Participant 16). However, when participants enjoy a delightful dining experience, such as afternoon tea, their emotion can be positively influenced, leading to relaxing feelings (Participant 2).

#### *Unaware touch*

Touch is not often perceived by participants unless it is associated with a significant event. Only a few participants shared their experiences related to touchscape. For instance, one participant stated that stroking a cat brought her relief (Participant 25). Another noted, *"I discovered that the sand on the beach is soft."* (Participant 32). Additionally, one participant described hiking and crawling on all fours up a slope. (Participant 31).

#### *Emotions varying from "-scape"*

Participants were not required to stick to a fixed itinerary; they could design their day trip according to their own preferences. In summary, participants showed a distribution pattern in the types of attractions they visited, which included cultural attractions (both indoor and outdoor), natural environments, restaurants, and shopping malls. Most participants visited shopping malls (N=25), followed by outdoor cultural attraction (N=16), natural attraction (N=16), indoor cultural attractions (N=9) and restaurants (N=3).

Table 2 shows the emotions associated with visiting different *"-scapes"* (or experiential environments). Similar to the patterns observed in attraction visits, the emotions expressed during the interviews were quite rich. Notably, shopping malls were associated with a wide range of emotions ranging from "cheerful", "peaceful", to "annoying", without showing a clear bias towards either positive or negative emotions. One participant noted, *"When I go shopping and can buy what I want, I feel so delighted."* (Participant 13). Another shared, *"It is comfy to linger around because there aren't many people that day."* (Participant 30). Conversely, when there are a lot of people, another participant felt annoyed. (Participant 3).

When tourists engage with outdoor environments, no matter they are cultural or natural attractions, they experience a rich array of emotions without a consistent pattern in the level of sentiments. This variability may stem from the outdoor setting's close relationship with a wide range of sensory stimuli and uncontrollable factors that may either enhance or detract from the human-environment interaction (Imamović et al., 2021). For instance, the irregular sounds of the surroundings (e.g., bird calls, wind, noise) cannot be manipulated for specific effects in the same

way that music can be in a coffee shop. As one participant described, *“There's this rustling sound when the wind blows through the trees, and then there are the birds, it is very relaxing.”* (Participant 28)

In contrast, indoor cultural attractions were associated with positive emotions, such as “cheerful”, “impressive”, “comfortable”, “interesting”, “peaceful”, and “surprising”. However, these emotions demonstrated a dispersed pattern, with no single dominant emotion emerging. One participant noted, *“This museum's display is pretty thorough, featuring the introduction of ceramics across various themes, which allows me to comprehend the growth of Zhuhai.”* (Participant 7).

**Table 2: Tourists' visiting attractions and their stimulated emotions**

Emotions	A : Cultural - indoor	B : Cultural - outdoor	C : Natural	D : Restaurant	E : Shopping mall
1 : Admiring	0	0	0	0	2
2 : Annoying	3	9	5	0	11
3 : Anxious	0	3	3	0	3
4 : Approved	0	0	0	0	2
5 : Attractive	0	0	2	0	3
6 : Awkward	0	5	3	0	2
7 : Baffling	0	0	0	0	2
8 : Boring	2	3	0	0	0
9 : Cheerful	5	12	11	2	19
10 : Comfortable	3	6	12	0	10
11 : Complicated	0	2	2	0	0
12 : Confusing	2	0	0	0	0
13 : Cool	0	2	2	0	0
14 : Criticizing	0	0	0	0	2
15 : Curious	0	5	3	0	2
16 : Depress	0	2	0	0	2
17 : Desolate	0	2	0	0	0
18 : Determined	0	0	2	0	0
19 : Disappointing	2	11	5	0	9
20 : Disgusted	0	7	2	0	8
21 : Dislike	2	4	2	0	5
22 : Dissatisfied	0	0	2	0	4
23 : Dizzy	0	0	0	0	2
24 : Embarrassing	2	0	0	0	2
25 : Empty	0	2	0	0	0
26 : Energetic	0	0	2	0	0
27 : Exciting	2	4	3	0	3
28 : Expecting	2	3	3	0	3
29 : Familiar	0	2	0	0	2
30 : Frightened	0	2	0	0	0
31 : Funny	0	2	0	0	0
32 : Harmonious	0	2	0	0	0
33 : Helpless	0	2	0	0	2
34 : Hurry	2	0	0	0	2
35 : Imagining	2	3	3	0	0
36 : Impressive	5	6	7	0	4

37 : Inspiring	2	2	4	0	5
38 : Interesting	3	6	6	0	6
39 : Lively	0	6	2	0	5
40 : Lonely	2	0	3	0	0
41 : Nostalgic	2	3	2	0	3
42 : Peaceful	3	4	10	0	12
43 : Poetic	0	2	0	0	0
44 : Quiet	0	3	4	0	0
45 : Recalling	3	5	5	0	4
46 : Refresh	0	2	3	0	0
47 : Regret	0	4	2	0	3
48 : Relaxing	2	8	8	2	9
49 : Relief	0	0	2	0	3
50 : Respectful	0	0	2	0	0
51 : Romantic	2	0	0	0	0
52 : Sacred	0	4	2	0	2
53 : Satisfied	0	6	4	0	5
54 : Surprising	3	8	9	2	10
55 : Tired	0	3	8	0	4
56 : Touching	2	4	2	0	2
57 : Tricky	0	2	0	0	0
58 : Uncomfortable	0	4	2	0	8
59 : Warm	0	6	0	0	4

## Conclusions and implications

This study concludes that sensescape play a significant role in shaping tourist experience, with visualscape being the most influential factor in emotional responses. Sight tends to evoke the most positive emotions, while hearing drives the negative ones. Comparatively, the other three senses do not perform as prominently in constructing the tourist experience; however, they become critical when tourists engage with specific *-scapes*. For instance, smell is important in outdoor environments, and taste links closely to dining experiences. This study also indicates that touch has a weak influence on tourist experience during human-environment interactions. This study contributes to the extension of appraisal theory in focusing on the specific senses derived from the environment cues, which has been overlooked in the previous research. In particular, the emotions evoked from the sensescape have been specified in various attractions.

The findings of this study offer useful implications for destination management, suggesting that efforts should be directed toward creating a multi-dimensional sensescape that mobilizes the less recognized senses in collectively enhancing tourists' experience. In addition, the mobilization of sensescape can be customized to different attractions, highlighting the role of certain functional senses. This serves an important indicator for those destinations which are dominated with certain



types of attractions (i.e. natural, cultural attractions) in customizing the marketing strategies for immersion. Improvements can also be made in ensuring the congruence of multiple senses (visual, auditory, tactile, and olfactory stimuli) to create a cohesive experience which goes beyond the focus of visualscape and soundscape.

### Limitations and future studies

This study only covers one study context of Zhuhai city, which hasn't explored the bordering city of Macao. It would be even more meaningful when the sensescape data covers a cross-border range of information which can be used in comparative studies on the impacts of sensescape environment in arousing the different reflections on tourist emotions. In addition, this study didn't restrict the participants in the visiting places and the duration of staying at each site when self-exploring, therefore, there is an imbalanced distribution the tourism attractions in the sensescape exploration. Future research can use experiments to explore the influences of different visited types of attractions in shaping the sensescape perceptions and the corresponding emotions.

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# EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

# 40 YEARS OF STAKEHOLDER THEORY – A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE FESTIVAL AND EVENTS SECTOR

Kevin Wallace<sup>a</sup> and Eleni Michopoulou<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Technology Sydney, <sup>b</sup>University of Derby

## ABSTRACT

A key consideration in leveraging opportunities to create a more diverse, inclusive, and sustainable future in tourism, hospitality and events is stakeholder management. In the event sector it has been acknowledged there has been a growing range of considerations and requirements from an expanding number of stakeholders in events (Crowther et al., 2015) with the importance, scope and range of stakeholders in events becoming an increasingly important concern in contemporary events management (Getz, 2017). As a result, the festivals and events sector has drawn upon the principles and models of stakeholder theory to assist in addressing these particular challenges.

The foundations of stakeholder theory were defined in the management sector by Ed Freeman in 1984 with the publication of his book ‘Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach’, defining stakeholders in terms of those who can affect or can be affected by a given activity. However, in the project management sector, the focus quickly shifted to those who shared a stake or interest in a project (Cleland, 1985, 1986), an outlook that has become the dominant approach. As a result, subsequent stakeholder models have been informed and developed from this interest-based perspective, framing stakeholders using key terms such as power, interest, legitimacy, urgency and salience – all of which have been found to be contentious and open to wide interpretation.

Adopting mainstream stakeholder theory in festivals and events has therefore been problematic. Whilst this has led to the development of proposed event stakeholder categorisations (Getz, 2007; Van Niekerk & Getz, 2016), all conventional and sector specific models for stakeholder mapping have been found to have limitations leaving an ongoing challenge for stakeholder management in festivals and events (Wallace & Michopoulou, 2019). Furthermore, such interest-based stakeholder management in events has become seen as instrumental in comparison to the normative affect-based approach (Wallace & Michopoulou, 2023), echoing Freeman’s calls for a ‘names-and-faces-approach’ to stakeholder management (McVea & Freeman, 2016).

In the context of events, the Olympic Games is perhaps the epitome of the ultimate challenges event management faces to not only deliver its primary objective of the sporting event itself but also the multitude of agendas and expectations as to what the Games represent and will achieve for the host city, in particular, the wicked problem of legacy. As Brisbane prepares for 2032, the transformational nature of the Games is already under intense scrutiny. Despite a year of community consultation with over 14,000 suggestions, the Queensland Government’s 20-year Legacy Strategy ‘Elevate 2042’ (*Games Legacy*, 2023) was soon overshadowed by a controversial Gabba redevelopment which sparked a powerful backlash from community stakeholders (Smee, 2023) leaving stadium plans unresolved as the State heads towards an election.

This is a prime example of an interest-based stakeholder approach which overlooked those who would be affected by the plans. Perhaps there could be no better time for the festival and events sector to move away from the limiting stakeholder perspective and models of conventional interest-based stakeholder theory, and this paper calls for the adoption of a fresh affect-based perspective. This will enable event practitioners to move towards a more comprehensive, engaging and inclusive approach to stakeholder management, and for the

festival and events sector to lead the way in the development of normative stakeholder management.

**Keywords:** *event management, stakeholder theory, stakeholder management*

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# A MULTI-FOCAL MODEL OF CHINESE TOURISTS' WELL-BEING

Chris Chun Keung Wong<sup>a,d</sup>, Sebastian Filep<sup>b</sup>, Lu Chang<sup>c</sup> and Brent Boyle<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Kaplan Business School, Brisbane Queensland, Australia, <sup>b</sup>Bond University, Gold Coast Queensland, Australia, <sup>c</sup>Griffith University, Brisbane Queensland, Australia, <sup>d</sup>School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong

## ABSTRACT

Despite the significant rise in research interest exploring the psychological benefits of tourism experiences, current concepts of well-being in tourism are largely shaped by Western perspectives. A new model, titled the multi-focal model of Chinese tourists' psychological well-being (Fig. 1), extends the Confucian psychological well-being perspective from one-dimensional to two-dimensional by acknowledging the influences of individualism and globalization toward modern Chinese tourists (Wong et al., 2024). It represents efforts toward revealing the pivotal dimensions of psychological well-being concerning tourism activities from a non-Western lens. As Chinese tourists are the largest outbound market in the world (Chen et al., 2023), this framework provides an alternative perspective to analyse their motivations and intentions in the tourism context. It extends the traditional one-dimensional Confucian perspective of well-being to include both eudaimonic and hedonic aspects, blending traditional and modern lenses. The model categorizes the Confucian dimensions identified from the literature review into two main groups: The traditional lens and the modern lens. The traditional lens contains the dimensions related to the Confucian virtues and collectivism that guide tourists to a virtuous life. The modern lens includes dimensions unrelated to Confucian teachings, influenced by individualism, globalization, mass media and social media (Hsu & Huang, 2016). An empirical study will be conducted to validate the multi-focal model and further explore the key factors contributing to Chinese tourists' psychological well-being, offering new insights into how traditional and modern influences shape their tourism experiences.

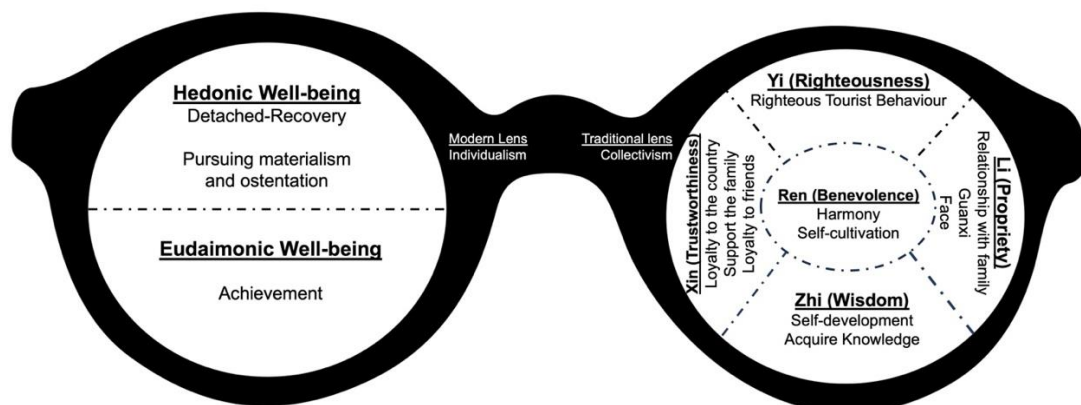


Figure 1: The multi-focal model of the Chinese tourists' psychological well-being

### *The Traditional Lens*

The traditional perspective on well-being emphasizes the core virtue of *Ren (Benevolence)*, which promotes collective well-being by extending love and kindness beyond human beings to every form of life in the world with deep respect (Chon & Hao, 2020). The first dimensions related to *Ren (Benevolence)* is **Harmony**, where Chinese tourists aim to maintain peaceful relations with fellow travelers and the environment through practicing *Li (Propriety)*, including respect for authority and social norms (Fu et al., 2015). The second is **Self-cultivation**, where tourism serves as a means for personal growth, health improvement, and spiritual enrichment, through aesthetic enjoyment of natural landscapes (Wen et al., 2019).

Three major aspects of *Li (Propriety)* influence Chinese tourists' well-being. **Relationship with Family** relates to Confucian values that emphasize the importance of familial ties and filial piety, viewing tourism as a way to strengthen family bonds and fulfill filial piety (Fu et al., 2017; Huang & Wen, 2021). **Guanxi (Relationships with Others)** extends the harmony of the ten relationships in *Li (Propriety)* to the broader community, emphasizing respect for authority and reciprocity in social interactions with friends and co-workers when travelling, which leads to one's flourishing (Kim, 2020; Kwek & Lee, 2010). **Face (*mien-tzu*)** concerns maintaining personal and collective dignity, often demonstrated through civilized behaviour that protect the national identity (Zhang et al., 2019).

*Yi (Righteousness)* emphasizes moral conduct over self-interest and material gains (Woods & Lamond, 2011). Studies suggest that Chinese tourists focus on **righteous tourist behaviours**, such as avoiding environmental harm and respecting local customs, which aligns with their self-cultivation of *Yi (Righteousness)* and maintain interpersonal relationships (Huang & Wen, 2021). *Zhi (Wisdom)* involves intellectual growth and self-development through travel. Chinese tourists, especially parents, see travel as an opportunity to their children to **acquire knowledge** and broaden their own perspectives (Fu et al., 2017). It also relates to young Chinese tourists who see travelling as **self-development** opportunities to gain wisdom and become an experienced person (Wen et al., 2019). *Xin (Trustworthiness)* relates to one's credibility and faithfulness, which can be demonstrated by keeping promises and maintaining loyalty to friends, family, and society (Chon & Hao, 2020). It emphasizes three dimensions. **Loyalty to the country** relates to Chinese tourists' patriotism which favours the promotion of domestic tourism. **Support for family** highlights married women who need to balance family duties and travelling. **Loyalty to friends** shows that camaraderie and dependability are essential, particularly in female-centered travel (Hao et al., 2021). These eleven dimensions, which are derived from five Confucian virtues, promote Chinese tourists' well-being.

#### *The Modern Lens*

However, under the influence of globalization and social media, Chinese tourists have also adopted foreign values, particularly individualism, in shaping their well-being (Hsu & Huang, 2016). Three key modern values have emerged in the literature that influence their well-being, categorized through hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. The first value is **Detachment-Recovery**, which refers to taking time off from work to relax and alleviate stress (Filep et al., 2022). This is particularly relevant for Chinese Gen Y males, who often bear financial burdens. Despite differing motivations, travel consistently brings positive emotions like joy and pleasure to Chinese tourists alleviating stress and aiding relaxation through detachment-recovery (Huang & Wen, 2021). The second value is **Materialism and Ostentation**. While Confucianism values *Ren (Benevolence)* over materialism, Chinese tourists, especially Gen Y, often flaunt their overseas travels and purchases on social media to enhance their social status (Chen et al., 2021). This desire for status contradicts traditional Confucian values but significantly impacts their well-being. The third value is **Achievement**, related to eudaimonic well-being, where perseverance and goal attainment bring pride via overseas travel. Modern Chinese tourists are motivated by being confident and competitive (Wen et al., 2019).

This multi-focal model of Chinese tourists' well-being reflects the dual influences of both traditional culture in China and modern culture from globalisation (Lin & Wang, 2010). An empirical research will gather empirical data to validate the findings of the multifocal model and further understand Chinese tourists' well-being. The research design will incorporate understanding the tourists' home culture and the cultural influences of globalisation. Tourism organisations can apply this alternative framework when planning, promoting, operating and evaluating the tailor-made tourism initiatives targeting Mainland Chinese tourists.

**Keywords:** *Chinese tourism, Confucianism, well-being, hedonic, eudaimonic*

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# A RECIPE FOR DISASTER: EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS FOR CHEFS IN THE NEW ZEALAND HOSPITALITY SECTOR

David Williamson<sup>a</sup> and Geoff Scott<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Auckland University of Technology

## ABSTRACT

### Introduction

Considerable research has discussed the working conditions of chefs, covering topics such as including wage theft (Robinson & Brenner, 2021), bullying and harassment (Dagsland et al., 2024; Lin et al., 2023; Taheri et al., 2024), occupational commitment (Robinson, 2014), gender and chef identity: (Albors-Garrigos et al., 2020) and mental health and wellbeing (Robinson et al., 2022, 2023). However, contemporary data that clearly shows the working conditions of chefs in the New Zealand hospitality sector is rare. This abstract presents recent data from two surveys that clearly highlight the problematic working conditions of chefs in a sector that is of significant economic importance to New Zealand.

### Research Design

The data for this extended abstract is taken from two anonymous online surveys. The first, run in 2023, captured 2,203 respondents, making this the largest survey of its kind in New Zealand. The second survey was run in 2024, which captured 1,032 respondents. The surveys contained a range of questions on issues including employment relations agreements, working conditions, decent work, psychological contracts, emotional labour, and wages. The surveys were created and hosted on the Qualtrics XM platform. The participants were chosen via voluntary response by inviting respondents to the survey link. The data was analysed with SPSS version 29 software and the results are presented as descriptive statistics. This paper will present data relating only to chefs and kitchenhands (402 from 2023 and 58 from 2024).

### Findings

#### Hours worked per week - 2023

Results from 15 job roles were returned in the survey. Chefs stated they were working the longest hours. 26% of chefs indicated they worked over 40 hours a week, with 18% of senior managers coming in as second highest group. 30% of chefs stated they were working more than 50 plus hours a week, with only senior managers matching this rate. Only 1% of food and beverage attendants, and functions/events attendants claimed to be working over 40 hours.

#### Receiving rest breaks (as required by law) - 2023

The largest group of workers who respond to 'never' getting their rest break were the chefs. 24% of chefs stated they never got their rest breaks, while trailing well behind were the Waiters at 16%, followed by Shift managers at 12%.

#### Working a split shift (have an unpaid break longer than an hour) - 2023

When looking at workers who 'always' and 'often' work split shifts, 25% of chefs responded that this was the case, again significantly the highest result out of the 15 job roles. Next closest was 14% of waiters, indicating they commonly worked split shifts.

#### Training - 2023

Chefs returned the highest results out of all the 15 job titles for 'strongly disagreed' and 'disagreed' to having received both formal and informal training in their roles (27% and 35%). By way of comparison, junior managers and fast-food managers only made up between 1-5% of those who strongly disagreed and disagreed with receiving training.

#### Bullying and Harassment – 2023

55% of chefs indicated they had experienced or witnessed bullying and harassment. Interestingly the lowest response for this question was kitchen hands at 43%. Shift managers, junior managers and fast-food managers all returned the highest responses for experiencing bullying and harassment (66%, 69% and 72%). The average for all hospitality workers surveyed was 56% experiencing bullying and

harassment.

### **Burnout and Turnover intention - 2024**

Based on a nine question MBI scale, chefs returned a burnout mean score of 21.5, second highest only to fast food workers (22.5). The lowest scores were for tour guides (12.5) and IT, finance and Marketing workers (14.4). The overall mean for 478 respondents was 18.6. Turnover intention: When asked if they intended to leave their current job in the next 12 months, 48% of chefs answered yes, the highest rate for this question. The average across all the responses was 37%.

### **Discussion**

New Zealand media often report on the shortage of chefs in the hospitality sector. With almost half of the chefs in the 2024 study suffering from elevated burnout scores, 55% of chefs from the 2023 study experiencing bully and harassment, and just under half of chefs from the 2024 survey indicating they will leave their jobs in the next 12 months; we can see some significant drivers of that shortage. The results above show chefs in these surveys are consistently reporting the worst conditions of all hospitality workers. Chefs report the highest rates of working split shifts, not getting correct breaks, and not getting sufficient training. Add in working the longest hours of any hospitality workers and the recipe for chef burnout and high turnover is complete.

**Keywords:** *Chefs, Kitchenhands, Employment, Bullying, Mental Health*

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# A RISK-BASED FRAMEWORK FOR AI IMPLEMENTATION IN MAJOR EVENTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR PARTNER ORGANISATIONS TO THE 2032 BRISBANE OLYMPIC GAMES

Nerada Stern<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Holmesglen Institute

## ABSTRACT

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in major sporting events like the Olympic and Paralympic Games (Games) and the Australian Open is reshaping how these events are managed, experienced, and regulated. The 2032 Brisbane Games are set to catalyse significant economic growth in Australia, creating opportunities for hospitality and tourism sectors. These businesses are rapidly developing and deploying AI tools to meet growing consumer demand for personalisation and round-the-clock service (Kim et al. 2024). However, in their haste to adopt AI, businesses may overlook critical privacy, data security, and ethical challenges. AI complexity poses significant risk assessment challenges.

In response to the evolving AI landscape, new governance frameworks are shaping regulations. This study critically analyses existing risk-based AI frameworks, focusing primarily on Australia's AI Safety Standard. It also considers the EU AI Act, the National Framework for the Assurance of Artificial Intelligence in Government (NFAAIG), and Queensland's Foundational AI risk assessment framework (FAIRA). While some of these frameworks are designed for government use, they offer valuable insights for hospitality and tourism businesses, providing best practices for AI implementation, risk management, and ethical considerations. The analysis reveals that these principles can help businesses align with government expectations, prepare for potential future regulations, and build public trust. The study concludes with specific recommendations for 2032 Brisbane Games partners to navigate AI adoption while ensuring compliance, safety, and ethical considerations.

The speed and scalable nature of AI deployment has exposed vulnerabilities in governing its responsible use. In sporting events AI tools are used in operations management, financial aspects, advanced performance analysis, and enhancing fan engagement via technologies like virtual assistant referees, automated content creation, and personalised experiences (Glebova, 2023). Although the literature has explored AI implementation in event management, there is limited research focusing on the associated risks.

In anticipation of federal legislation, the Australian Department of Industry, Science and Resources (2024) has released the first version of Australia's AI Safety Standard, consisting of 10 voluntary guardrails that apply to all organisations throughout the AI supply chain ("Guardrails").

This study adopts a risk-based approach to evaluate the impact of AI on operational efficiency, customer experience enhancement, data security, privacy, and ethical considerations based on the comprehensive framework for risk management, ISO 31000:2009. It draws insights from the current use of AI in major sporting events, including the 2024 Paris Games. The study is framed by the Guardrails alongside references to the landmark EU AI Act, NFAAIG and FAIRA, all adopted in 2024.

Specifically, this study will:

- Evaluate the extent to which AI being used in the delivery of major sporting events
- Examine how the Guardrails and international regulation ensure that Australian major sporting events remain protected and sustainable



- Analyse how existing risk-based AI frameworks inform directors' duties and corporate governance responsibilities for hospitality and tourism businesses involved in the 2032 Brisbane Games

The study is structured around four primary dimensions of ISO 31000:2009. Each dimension is further segmented into specific risk factors and mitigation strategies, providing a comprehensive guide for event organisers and managers:

### **Operational Efficiency**

The potential risks associated with AI-driven resource allocation, scheduling, and inventory management are reviewed. Strategies for integrating AI systems with existing event management software and training staff are proposed to work alongside AI tools effectively.

### **Customer Experience Enhancement**

Best practices are outlined for utilising AI for personalised services such as chatbots, virtual assistants, and recommendation systems. The tools need to inform consumers that they are interacting with AI and provide clear options for human intervention ensuring that AI interactions augment rather than substitute human touch points.

### **Data Security and Privacy**

The Paris 2024 Games set new standards for immersive AI experiences supported by its AI partner, Intel (Olympic International Committee [IOC], 2024). As emerging layers of legislation and governance unfurl, previously used AI implementations may no longer be legal. Risks associated with collecting and processing large volumes of personal data during major events are assessed according to national and international data protection regulations including General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Balancing the benefits of innovation and efficiencies with potential privacy concerns robust measures for secure data handling and storage are proposed.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Taking inspiration from the Guardrails, the ethical development, deployment and use of AI should navigate AI bias, transparency, and accountability. Guidelines are provided for ensuring fairness in AI-driven decision-making processes, such as ticket allocation or VIP upgrades, and emphasises the importance of maintaining human oversight in critical areas.

### **Conclusion & Implications**

This study will contribute to the existing literature at the intersection of AI, business law, and tourism and hospitality. It will offer practical recommendations for commercial and non-profit organisations in Australia, including those preparing for the 2032 Brisbane Games.

**Keywords:** *Major Events, Brisbane 2032, Artificial Intelligence, Risk Management, Directors' Duties, Customer Experience*

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# ADAPTIVE LEADERS: SHAPING THE FUTURE OF THE HOTEL SECTOR

Moises Vera<sup>a</sup>, Madalyn Scerri<sup>a</sup>, Rajka Presbury<sup>a</sup> and Simon Pawson<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Torrens University Australia

## ABSTRACT

Adaptive leadership has been examined as a leadership model, theory, and approach to change leadership since the early 1990s (Barnes & Gearin, 2022). It is a model developed by Ronald Heifetz, and emphasises the ability to navigate complex, changing environments by encouraging flexibility, creativity, and collaboration (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). Adaptive leaders encourage experimentation, empower teams, manage conflict, and focus on systems thinking to ensure organisational survival, and even seize opportunities for transformation and growth during times of crisis (Bernstein & Linsky, 2016).

The importance of adaptive leadership stems from the hotel sector's critical role in the tourism industry which is among the most economically significant and dynamic globally. The tourism industry contributes trillions of dollars to the global economy, accounting for 10% of the world's GDP, and supports millions of jobs (Hollander, 2024). However, the industry is highly vulnerable to external shocks and disruptions that can severely affect business operations, local communities, and even global destinations (Lombardi et al., 2021). Traditional leadership approaches often fail to address the complexities of these challenges which require novel solutions and adaptive thinking (Northouse, 2021). During such crises, adaptive leadership is essential to ensuring that hotel organisations survive, and eventually recover (DeRue, 2011). Adaptive leaders play a crucial role in crisis management, innovation, and transforming challenges into opportunities for growth (Heifetz et al., 2009; Northouse, 2021). Therefore, understanding how adaptive leaders can shape tourism's future, particularly the hotel sector, is vital for academia and industry professionals.

While adaptive leadership has been widely discussed as a theory, its specific application in the hotel sector remains underexplored (Cheer & Lew, 2017). Firstly, there is a lack of empirical research on the particular behaviours that adaptive leaders employ to navigate change in this sector. Additionally, the impact of adaptive leadership on organisational performance, innovation, empowerment, and systems thinking within the hotel sector has not been thoroughly studied (Dansereau et al., 2013). Gaps also exist in comprehending how adaptive leadership can be systematically developed and integrated into hotel management strategies, particularly in times of crisis or rapid change (D'Annunzio-Green, 2008; Gono & April, 2022).

Informed by this discussion, the following research question arises: How do lived experiences of hotel leaders, including the researcher's personal experiences in the hotel sector, inform an understanding of adaptive leadership and its application in navigating change and transformation within the hotel sector? Consequently, the primary aim of this study is to explore how adaptive leadership, as experienced by leaders within the hotel sector, shapes decision-making processes, fosters innovation and enhances organisational resilience in response to external disruptions. By utilising a multi-method approach, incorporating both constructivist grounded theory and autoethnography, this research aims to provide a rich, nuanced understanding of how adaptive leadership influences key factors like systems thinking and strategic adaptation within the hotel sector. The objective also extends to examining how adaptive leadership can be systematically integrated into hotel management strategies to navigate uncertainty and seize opportunities for growth and transformation.

Study 1 employed constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014) to analyse the leadership experiences of hotel sector leaders who have navigated change or transformation. Thirty in-depth interviews with these leaders were conducted, and the data were systematically analysed through grounded theory coding methods. This inductive approach generated a theory grounded in the data, offering insights into how hotel leaders respond to various situations and how these experiences shape organisational outcomes.

Study 2 used autoethnography to document and analyse the researcher's lived experiences as a leader within the hospitality industry. Reflexive journals, personal narratives, and reflective writing provided a rich, subjective account of the researcher's leadership journey and their navigation of change and transformation (Anderson & Austin, 2012; Berger, 2015). The researcher's personal experience through autoethnography illustrated and nuanced the theoretical categories from the constructivist grounded theory analysis, enriching and deepening the inductive findings. Both studies' findings were integrated, comparing individual leadership experiences with those of other leaders, and associated with broader theories of adaptive leadership in related sectors.

This multi-method approach provides a rich, nuanced understanding of adaptive leadership by integrating personal experiences with systematic research, bridging the gap between subjective experience and objective theory. This layered methodology offers a comprehensive perspective, ensuring both depth and breadth in the findings. Moreover, this study assists in filling the gap by providing firsthand accounts of adaptive leadership in a sector highly susceptible to external disruptions, offering new insights into its practical application

(Giustiniano et al., (2018). Also, findings can contribute to the development of adaptive leadership training programs for hotel sector managers and executives.

**Keywords:** *Adaptive Leadership; Hotels; Transformation*

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# AI PERCEPTIONS ACROSS ORGANIZATIONAL LEVELS: BARRIERS AND DRIVERS OF ADOPTION IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

Claudia Cozzio<sup>a</sup>, Francisco Javier Santos Arteaga<sup>b</sup> and Oswin Maurer<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Faculty of Economics and Management, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, <sup>b</sup>Departamento de Análisis Económico y Economía Cuantitativa, Universidad Complutense de Madrid

## ABSTRACT

### Introduction

In recent years, technological advancements have become integral to human life and the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a prevalent trend in this technological era (Özen and Özgül Katlav, 2023). AI adoption within the services sector, particularly in the labor-intensive hospitality industry, has witnessed rapid growth, marked by continuous advancements (Huang and Zheng, 2023). As scholarly attention has predominantly focused on evaluating the impacts of AI from the standpoint of customers (Rasheed et al., 2023), there is a justified need for additional exploration into its effects on employees (Rasheed et al., 2024; Li et al., 2022). Thus, it is imperative to explore the implications of AI technologies on hospitality employees, shedding light on emerging opportunities and threats in order to guide competency development aligned to evolving technology.

### Methods

To explore the most captivating challenges and opportunities toward AI adoption in the hotel industry, semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with n. 55 key information-rich stakeholders occupying diverse hierarchical positions in small-medium sized hotels located in northern Italy. Following the managerial pyramid developed by Robbins et al. (2020), respondents were classified as (i) n. 27 top managers, (ii) n. 15 first-line managers, (iii) n. 13 non-managerial employees. The interviews were conducted between September 2023 and March 2024.

From the literature review, five main themes relative to drivers (i.e., operational efficiency, competitive advantage, enhanced customer experience, service personalisation, cost saving as indicated by Rasheed et al., 2024; Wong et al., 2023; Zhu et al., 2023) and barriers (i.e., lack of awareness and understanding, privacy and security concerns, resistance to change, technological complexity, cost concerns as reported by Rasheed et al., 2023; Alam et al., 2023) emerged. Study participants were asked to prioritise the five categories related to those drivers and barriers by ranking them in order of importance, resulting in a personal ranking of factors that propel/inhibit AI adoption.

Responses were used to assess the degree of consensus within and between diverse hierarchical groups, applying Tarakci et al. (2014) consensus mapping.

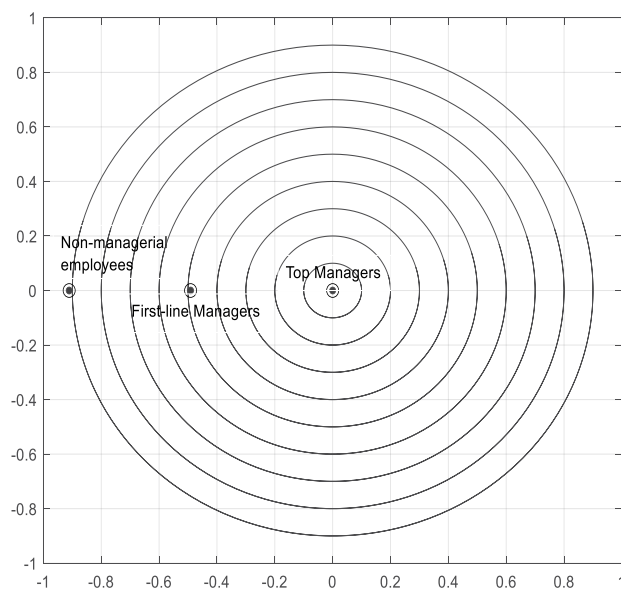
Consensus between groups is measured in terms of the correlation exhibited by ranking preferences of prototypical group members. More precisely, the measure proposed by Tarakci et al. (2014), denoted by  $r(A, B)$ , is determined by the correlation of the object scores of the categories on the first principal component for respondent groups  $A$  and  $B$ . The higher this value, bounded between zero and one, the higher the consensus between both groups.

The distance between the groups of respondents defining the symmetric matrix of correlations is computed using classical multidimensional scaling (MDS). The corresponding output obtained is represented in Figures 1 and 2 for drivers and barriers, respectively.

**Figure 1: Between-group consensus (drivers)**



**Figure 2: Between-group consensus (barriers)**



## Results

First-line managers and non-managerial employees display substantial differences compared to top managers when considering the drivers. Consensus between groups increases when taking into account the barriers, though the correlations between groups remain quite low (Table 1).

**Table 1: Between- group consensus across scenarios**

Classical multidimensional scaling	Drivers	Barriers
Top Managers	-0.0343	-0.0235
First-line Managers	-0.0092	-0.0063
Non-managerial Employees	-0.0011	-0.0086

This study reveals nuanced characteristics, providing profound insights into AI acceptance within distinct hierarchical strata. The findings highlight differences in orientation, with top managers focusing outwardly (i.e., competitive advantage), and non-managerial employees being oriented inwardly (i.e., cost saving).

## Conclusions and Implications

Tailored communication strategies need to be designed to address the specific needs and concerns of different hierarchical groups within an organisation. While emphasising operational efficiency and enhanced customer experience is essential, specific considerations are needed to enhance the effectiveness of these strategies. For instance, for non-managerial employees, highlighting the cost-saving implications can bolster their acceptance levels. However, it is essential to address common barriers to AI adoption, such as resistance to change and lack of awareness and understanding of AI's potential.

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# ANTECEDENTS AND OUTCOMES OF TOURISM LIVE-STREAMING EXPERIENCES: AN APPLICATION OF THE S-O-R FRAMEWORK

Liyong Wang<sup>a</sup>, Carolus L.C. Praet<sup>a</sup> and Qiumei Chen

<sup>a</sup>Otaru University of Commerce

## ABSTRACT

This study aims to empirically investigate the relationships between antecedents and outcomes of tourism live-streaming (TLS) experiences based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theoretical framework.

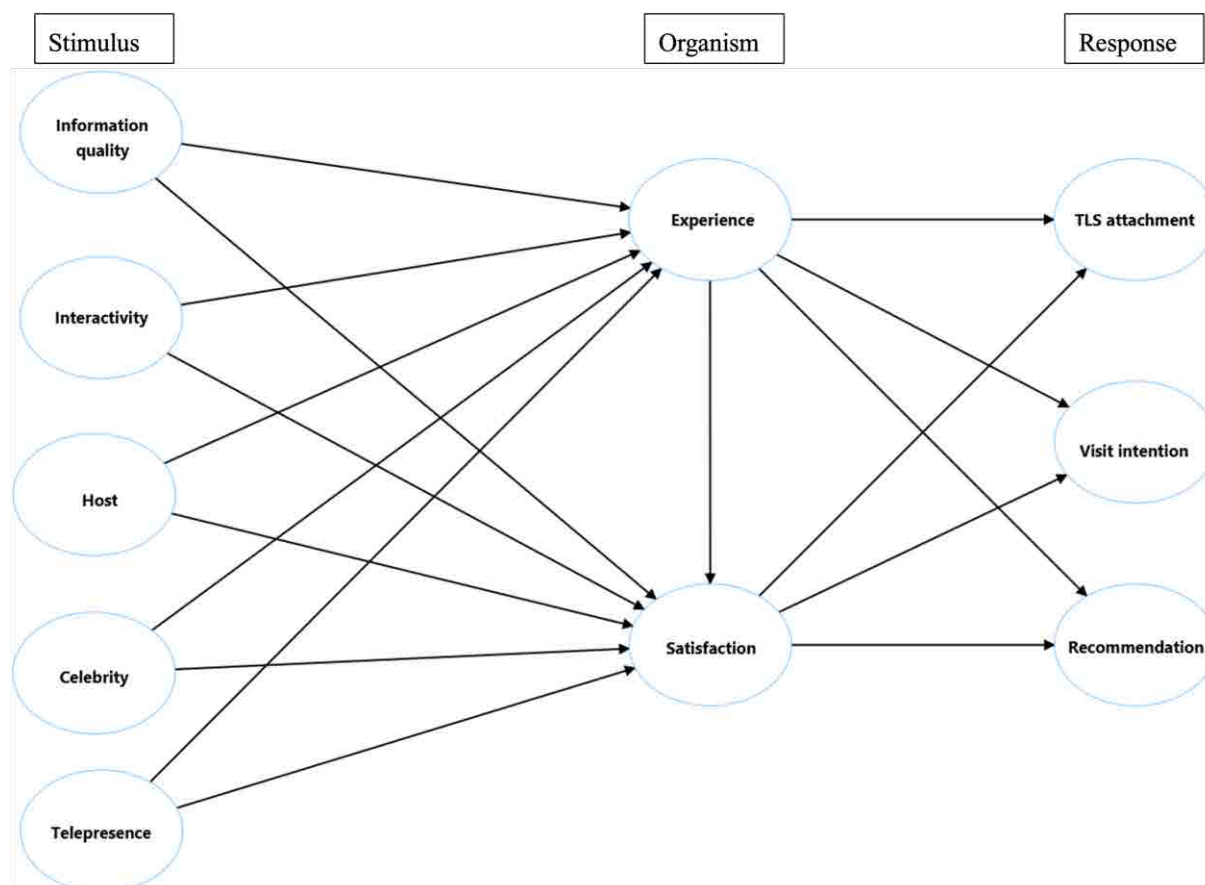
Stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) framework is one of the most important theoretical models in the fields of psychology and consumer behavior. First proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), the S-O-R framework posits that the environmental driving factors (stimulus) can trigger individuals' internal evaluation state (organism), which in turn generates positive or negative outcomes (response). In the context of tourism marketing, many studies have applied the classic S-O-R framework to investigate the antecedents (stimulus) and consequences (response) of the tourist experience (organism).

Based on a review of the relevant literature, we concluded that the S-O-R framework would be appropriate for explaining the mechanism of the virtual tourism experience. Following previous research (e.g., An et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2021; Xie et al., 2022; Zheng et al., 2023), this study develops and validates a structural equation model based on the S-O-R framework to investigate tourist behavior in virtual tourism. In the model, as shown in Figure 1, stimulus incorporates five external environmental attributes, i.e., information quality, interactivity, live streaming host, celebrity, and telepresence; organism is measured by TLS experience and satisfaction; response is operationalized as TLS attachment, recommendation, and visit intention.

We used previously validated measurement items relevant to our research context to develop the measurement instrument. We measured a total of 34 items on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree.

The questionnaire comprised three sections: basic information, including the introduction and purpose of the survey; demographic questions, including one screening question to confirm that respondents had experience with TLS; and the main measurement scales.

We collected survey data in August 2022 via the most popular online survey platform in China, WJX.cn. Respondents were Chinese who had had a TLS experience in the past six months. We collected a total of 309 questionnaires. After excluding respondents with invalid answers and missing values, we retained 296 valid questionnaires for analysis.



**Figure 1: Research framework**

We adopt PLS-SEM because it is appropriate for small sample sizes and non-normally distributed data (Hair et al., 2011) and conducted our data analysis with the SmartPLS 4.1 package. We conducted a bootstrap procedure with 10,000 resamples and a PLS predictive algorithm to assess the stability of the estimates and the predictive power, respectively. Analytical results are reported below.

First, we evaluated the reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the reflective measurement model based on the values of Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), outer loadings, AVE, cross-loadings, and Fornell-Larcker, and all values meet their respective criteria for the measurement model.

Second, we examined the structural model. Information quality, interactivity, and host positively and significantly influenced TLS experience ( $\beta=.158, p<.01$ ;  $\beta=.124, p<.05$ ;  $\beta=.250, p<.001$ ) and satisfaction ( $\beta=.271, p<.001$ ;  $\beta=.143, p<.01$ ;  $\beta=.262, p<.001$ ). Celebrity and telepresence had a positive and significant influence on TLS experience ( $\beta=.120, p<.05$ ;  $\beta=.361, p<.001$ ) but a non-significant influence on satisfaction ( $\beta=.025, p=.508$ ;  $\beta=-.055, p=.295$ ). In addition, the relationship between TLS experience and satisfaction was positive and significant ( $\beta=.324, p<.001$ ). Finally, TLS experience and satisfaction had a positive and significant influence on TLS attachment ( $\beta=.282, p<.001$ ;  $\beta=.505, p<.001$ ), visit intention towards the streamed destination ( $\beta=.232, p<.01$ ;  $\beta=.402, p<.001$ ), and recommendation ( $\beta=.324, p<.001$ ;  $\beta=.403, p<.001$ ).

Third, we evaluated the model's explanatory power by the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ).  $R^2$

values for TLS experience, satisfaction, TLS attachment, visit intention, and recommendation were .661, .679, .543, .353, and .459 respectively, exhibiting moderate to satisfactory levels of predictive power (Chin, 1998). In addition, we also calculated the out-of-sample predictive performance represented by  $Q^2$  based on the PLSpredict algorithm (Shmueli et al., 2019). The  $Q^2$  values ranged from .310 to .646, all above the threshold of 0, confirming the predictive relevance of the model (Shmueli et al., 2019).

In conclusion, this research examined the antecedents and outcomes of the TLS experience. Theoretically, our findings confirm that the S-O-R model is useful in comprehending TLS mechanisms and tourist behaviors. In addition, this research suggests practical implications for tourism providers and destination managers.

**Keywords:** *Tourism live-streaming, tourist experience, satisfaction, S-O-R framework*

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# ASSESSMENT DESIGN IN THE ERA OF GENERATIVE AI IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Elaine Yang<sup>a</sup>, Rawan Nimri<sup>a</sup> and Vishal Rana<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Griffith University, <sup>b</sup>University of Doha for Science and Technology

## ABSTRACT

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education has transformed how students learn, complete assignments, and interact with academic content and the critical skills that universities should impart to their graduates. This is especially relevant to tourism education, as the escalating adoption of AI in the sector is likely to transform future tourism workplaces, underlining the importance of equipping our students with AI proficiency (Dogru et al., 2023). This working paper presents a case study of the integration of AI in two tourism and event management courses in an Australian university from the perspectives of both educators and students.

Generative AI (GenAI) tools have attracted significant attention for their ability to generate coherent, human-like text. In particular, ChatGPT and similar GenAI tools generate text by analysing vast datasets to predict responses that resemble human writing. This functionality appeals to students and educators alike (Verhoeven & Rana, 2024). Students can quickly generate drafts, organise ideas, and receive writing suggestions, while educators benefit from AI-generated learning activities and improved feedback mechanisms (Ivanov & Soliman, 2023). However, while AI presents opportunities to enhance education, it also raises concerns about academic integrity, student engagement, and ethical considerations (Crawford et al., 2023; Ivanov & Soliman, 2023). There is concern that students may misuse AI, bypassing meaningful engagement with course materials (Nimri & Yang, 2024). This reliance on AI could result in plagiarism or surface-level responses that lack critical analysis (Crawford et al., 2023). Furthermore, AI-generated content can perpetuate biases and inaccuracies, and students may accept AI-generated content as authoritative, unaware of these underlying issues (Malik et al., 2023). Therefore, educators must guide students in responsible AI use, promoting critical AI literacy to complement critical thinking and independent research (Benuyenah, 2023).

Despite GenAI's growing presence in academia, research on its impact on deeper learning and academic integrity remains limited (Ivanov & Soliman, 2023; Verhoeven & Rana, 2024). While previous studies have explored AI's technical capabilities (Elbanna & Armstrong, 2024), there is a need to understand how AI influences student engagement, learning outcomes, and ethical behaviour (Nimri & Yang, 2024). This research seeks to explore how GenAI tools, specifically ChatGPT, are integrated into tourism higher education and how they affect learning outcomes. This research takes a pedagogical approach, examining the educational implications of AI-assisted learning from both educator and student perspectives. This research is grounded in the critical theory of technology (Feenberg, 2008), which specifically addresses the societal, ethical, and power-related challenges posed by technological tools. Using this theory, the study evaluates the ethical implications of using generative AI in educational settings, mainly concerns about privacy, and equity. The central research question guiding this study is: How does the use of ChatGPT in higher education affect students' learning outcomes, engagement with academic materials, and perceptions of academic integrity? The study adopts a two-stage approach. In the first stage, educators reflect on their experiences integrating ChatGPT into teaching and assessment. The second stage collects student feedback and reflections to explore their experiences using AI tools.

The first stage of this study focused on a classroom experiment where two educators in tourism and event management incorporated ChatGPT into their courses. Using a duoethnography approach, the educators engaged in reflective dialogue, exploring their experiences with ChatGPT and its impact on their teaching methods (Norris & Sawyer,

2012). In the experiment, students used ChatGPT to generate assignments and evaluated the AI-generated content against course rubrics.

Students initially expressed enthusiasm about using ChatGPT to speed up assignment completion. However, as they worked with AI-generated content, they identified its limitations. While ChatGPT produced well-structured and grammatically correct text, it lacked depth, originality, and critical engagement with course material. Students realised that while the tool could help structure ideas, it could not replace the independent research and critical thinking required for high-quality academic work.

The educators reflected that ChatGPT can be a useful tool to overcome initial writing challenges, but it cannot substitute deeper cognitive engagement. The experiment also helped clarify students' assessment expectations by allowing them to compare AI-generated content with academic criteria.

The second stage, currently in progress, involves gathering feedback from students on their use of ChatGPT. Students are being asked to complete surveys and submit *processfolios* documenting their use of AI in assessment and reflecting on their experiences with the tools. This stage will offer insights into students' perceptions of AI tools and their role in academic work, aiming to develop best practices for integrating AI responsibly in higher education while maintaining academic integrity.

Future research must intensively investigate the profound influence of AI ethics on learning outcomes within higher education. Educators must prioritise equipping students with robust digital literacy and skills to ensure they harness AI tools both effectively and ethically. As AI technology progresses, the formulation of clear guidelines for its ethical application in educational settings is imperative. These guidelines are crucial to guarantee that AI supports and enhances the educational experience, safeguarding against any potential detrimental effects.

**Keywords:** *Generative AI, ChatGPT, Higher Education, Academic Integrity, AI Literacy.*

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# ATTENDEES' PERCEPTIONS OF CONSENT FOR FACIAL RECOGNITION TECHNOLOGY AT EVENTS

Eunjung Kim<sup>a</sup> and Kijung Choi<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Edith Cowan University, <sup>b</sup>William Angliss Institute

## ABSTRACT

Facial Recognition Technology (FRT) recognizes individuals by examining facial features captured in videos or photos. In event management, its use is revolutionizing the attendee experience by enabling automated check-ins, improving security protocols, and offering customized services. Although it offers potential advantages, concerns regarding privacy, data security, and ethical issues have been a central focus in both academic and public discussions. This integration of technological innovation with ethical practices provides a comprehensive approach to improving the event experience. However, understanding attendees' perceptions and FRT adoption in this context remains underexplored. This research aims to explore event attendees' perceptions of consent for FRT at events. The data are collected through an online survey in Australia. Three open-ended questions and socio-demographic information are used and analyzed by Leximancer. This study identifies important themes related to attendees' perceptions of consent for FRT and evaluate perceived benefits and drawbacks from an attendee's perspective and provide recommendations for increasing acceptance and addressing concerns. This research contributes to a more secure and convenient event experience but also enhances overall attendee experience, making the case for the responsible and ethical implementation of FRT at events.

**Keywords:** *Facial Recognition Technology; Ethical Consent; Event; Perception*

## Introduction

Events are notable for drawing enormous numbers of attendees from around the world. Events play significant roles not only in entertainment but also in economic stimulation and international cultural exchange. However, they also pose substantial security and operational challenges due to the sheer volume of participants and the complexity of managing such large-scale gatherings (Chappelet & Lee, 2016). Traditional security measures, while effective to some extent, often fall short in terms of speed, accuracy, and overall efficiency, leading to increased interest in adopting advanced technologies such as facial recognition technology (FRT).

FRT recognizes individuals by examining facial features captured in videos or photos (Smith & Miller, 2022). In event management, its use is revolutionizing the attendee experience by enabling automated check-ins, improving security protocols, and offering customized services. Although it offers potential advantages, concerns regarding privacy, data security, and ethical issues have been a central focus in both academic and public discussions. This integration of technological innovation with ethical practices provides a comprehensive approach to improving the event experience. However, understanding attendees' perceptions and FRT adoption in this context remains underexplored. This research aims to explore event attendees' perceptions of consent for FRT at events.

More specifically, this study aims to 1) identify important themes related to attendees' perceptions of consent for FRT, 2) evaluate perceived benefits and drawbacks from an attendee's perspective, and 3) provide recommendations for increasing acceptance and addressing concerns. The research into event attendees' perceptions of FRT is poised to yield significant benefits in three main areas: operational efficiency, ethical considerations, and public trust.

## Literature Review

In many respects, the recent advances in AI-based intelligent systems designed to assist knowledge work are often regarded as new and innovative. Based on Theory of Technology Dominance (TTD) (Arnold & Sutton, 1998), firstly, this research seeks to understand the impact of technology on organizations and society. FRT involves automated decision-making, such as identifying individuals or flagging security risks. TTD suggests that as technology becomes more dominant, people may trust these automated processes over human oversight (Arnold & Sutton, 1998). In the case of events, attendees may give consent for facial recognition if they believe that the technology provides better accuracy and fairness in identifying and managing attendees compared to manual checks, although in the presence of potential ethical or privacy concerns.

Secondly, according to the Theory of Informed Consent, individuals can agree to participate after being fully informed about the relevant aspects of the process. It emphasizes the importance of respecting individuals by ensuring they have the necessary information to make a voluntary, informed decision (Faden & Beauchamp, 1986). In the context of FRT at events, for consent to be truly informed, it is necessary to understand how event attendees perceive being asked to provide explicit consent for the use of FRT at events, as well as the concerns or thoughts that arise for them. Further, it is critical to understand how event attendees suggest that event organizers can increase transparency regarding their use of FRT and the associated data policies.

Therefore, in this study, two theories are applied to understand the attendees' perceptions of consent for FRT.

## Methods

Three open-ended questions and socio-demographic information are collected through an online survey. Participants are recruited through a professional marketing listing company, such as Lightspeed, which sends an email invitation to potential participants (N=350) from their panel list in Australia. The target respondents must 1) be over 18 years of age and 2) be individuals who attended events or who have an interest in attending events. Data analysis is conducted using Leximancer.

## Results and Conclusions

The findings from this study are expected to offer several implications. First, this research will illuminate the intersection between technology and ethical practices in event contexts. Second, it will provide insights into how event attendees perceive the requirement of giving explicit consent for the use of FRT at events, highlighting their concerns and viewpoints. Third, the study will offer recommendations for increasing acceptance of FRT and addressing potential concerns. By exploring the attendees' perceptions of consent for FRT at events, the research will help build public trust, fostering a positive relationship between event organizers and participants. This not only contributes to a more secure and convenient event experience but also enhances overall attendee experience, making the case for the responsible and ethical implementation of FRT at events.

Collectively, the results of empirical study are expected to advance our theoretical understanding by showing how qualitative research can generate rich, nuanced data that help contextualize theories in event environments. In practical terms, the findings of this study provide strategic implications for event organizers and technology developers, enabling them to align FRT with ethical initiatives to better design and implement technologies.

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# BALANCE RISK AND ROMANCE: THE ROLE OF EMOTIONS IN FEMALE TOURISTS' ONLINE SELF-DISCLOSURE BEHAVIOUR

Luona Zhao<sup>a</sup>, Jie Wang<sup>a</sup> and Pierre Benckendorff<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> School of Business, The University of Queensland, Australia

## ABSTRACT

Social media has transformed the way tourists interact with fellow travellers and locals prior to and during their travels. Online dating platforms such as Tinder play a particularly important role in helping tourists to develop interpersonal relationships and establish social connections LeFebvre (2018). Unlike other social media platforms which increase self-presentation behaviour through controlling information among users for impression management, Tinder facilitates self-disclosure behaviour for users to disclose personal information for developing interpersonal relationships (Schlosser, 2020). Despite extensive research on self-presentation behaviours on platforms like Facebook, the dynamics of self-disclosure on Tinder—especially among tourists—remain underexplored. The proposed research aims to fill this gap by examining the factors influencing tourists' self-disclosure behaviours online, with a focus on the emotions of female tourists.

While social media platforms such as Tinder offer benefits such as connecting with others, sharing experiences, and enhancing travel experience in return for self-disclosure, they also come with risks. Privacy Calculus Theory proposes that individuals disclose personal information online when perceived benefits outweigh perceived risks (Dienlin & Metzger, 2016). However, this rationalist framework has faced criticism for its lack of consideration of emotional factors (Ostendorf et al., 2022). The role of emotional factors in influencing online self-disclosure behaviour has attracted recent attention, but research in this area remains limited. Moreover, gender differences are found in self-disclosure behaviour and perception of benefits and risks, with females disclose more private information than males (Zhang & Fu, 2020), care more about hedonic benefits (Sun et al., 2015) and perceive greater privacy risks (Lin et al., 2019; Midha, 2012), while males tend to prioritise utilitarian benefits (Sun et al., 2015). As a result, this study will investigate the effect of emotions on the self-disclosure behaviours of female tourists, thereby extending the scope of the Privacy Calculus Theory.

This study will employ an exploratory sequential design, which involves collecting qualitative data through semi-structured interviews followed by quantitative data collected through a questionnaire. In the first stage of the qualitative research, the study aims to understand online self-disclosure behaviour and its antecedents. The attitudes and perceptions towards online disclosure behaviour, and the associated emotions in making privacy decisions online will also be examined. Subsequently, the quantitative phase will investigate the role of emotion on self-disclosure, and will explore the interplay between emotions, privacy calculus and self-disclosure behaviour.

The theoretical contribution of this research lies in its extension of the Privacy Calculus Theory to incorporate emotional factors, thereby enriching the understanding of online self-disclosure from a risk perspective in the tourism field. On a practical level, the findings of this study are expected to empower female tourists by enhancing their decision-making capabilities regarding privacy. This research has important practical implications for both governments and social media companies. Effective legislation is essential for safeguarding individuals' safety and serves as a foundational protection. Governments should educate travellers about their privacy rights under the law and the precautions they can take to protect themselves. Furthermore, enforcing compliance among social media platforms through robust legislation is crucial to ensuring the security of users' privacy.



**Keywords:** *emotion, self-disclosure, Tinder, privacy calculus theory, female tourists, privacy risk*

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# BLOOMING BRILLIANT: INSIGHTS INTO WINE KNOWLEDGE AND MOTIVATION OF WINE FESTIVAL VISITORS

Martinette Kruger<sup>a</sup> and Adam Viljoen<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>North-West University, Tourism Research in Economics, Environs and Society, South Africa

## ABSTRACT

Wine festivals have become important motivators for tourists and are now integral to tourism offerings. Previous studies highlight wine festivals as platforms for consumer engagement, fostering satisfaction and loyalty. However, many festival organisers overlook the importance of segmenting visitors. It is essential to implement targeted marketing and event design strategies that elevate attendee experiences by effectively balancing elite visitors' socialisation needs with informal attendees' entertainment preferences. This approach ensures that the event caters to diverse visitor profiles, enhancing satisfaction and engagement across different audience segments.

Traditional wine festival segmentation has often relied on psychographic factors such as motivation, experience, and consumption behaviours. Demographics have also been used but fail to fully capture wine-related behaviours. This research proposes a comprehensive segmentation approach, incorporating psychographic factors like motivation, perceived contributions, and self-identified wine knowledge alongside behavioural criteria, such as future intentions. Wine knowledge has been shown to influence purchase behaviour, but there remains limited research on how self-identification impacts motivations and perceived contributions at wine festivals. This exploratory study addresses that gap, contributing to the understanding of South African wine festival consumers, which is particularly significant as South Africa ranks as the world's 7th largest wine producer.

The Blomme & Bubbles Festival, a coastal celebration of wine, art, and music held in the small fishing village of Paternoster along the West Coast of South Africa, was selected as the research site for the study. Figure 1 presents a schematic diagram of the research method.

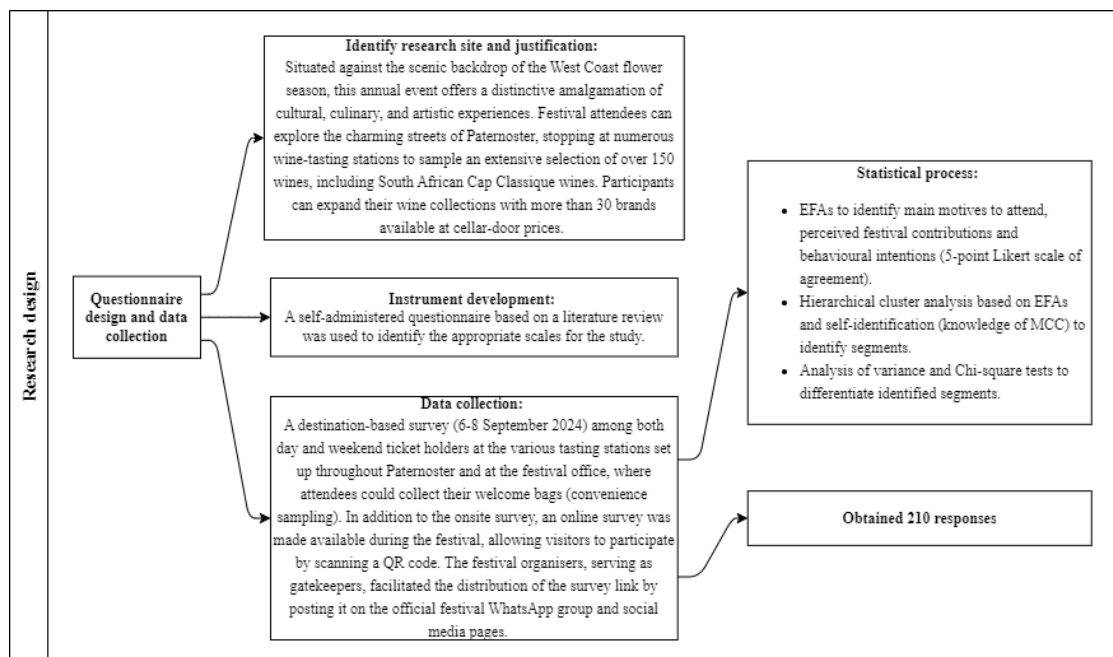


Figure 1: A visual representation of the research methodology

The EFAs revealed three primary motivational factors: *unique wine and regional discovery experience* ( $\bar{x} = 3.99$ ), *wine enthusiast engagement experience* ( $\bar{x} = 3.87$ ), and *social interaction and entertainment experience* ( $\bar{x} = 4.39$ ). A fourth motive, *relaxation and nature experience* ( $\bar{x} = 4.12$ ) was excluded from further analysis due to its low Cronbach alpha of 0.47, indicating poor reliability. Three perceived festival contribution factors were extracted: *cultural and regional wine promotion* ( $\bar{x} = 4.26$ ), *community development and heritage promotion* ( $\bar{x} = 4.06$ ) and *tourism and economic promotion* ( $\bar{x} = 4.49$ ), while two behavioural intentions were identified: *future engagement and purchase intentions* ( $\bar{x} = 4.29$ ) and *positive referral and revisit intentions* ( $\bar{x} = 4.70$ ). This study asked respondents to self-identify their knowledge of South African Cap Classique wines. The options ranged from beginner to expert, allowing participants to select the category that best reflected their knowledge and experience.

Four distinct visitor segments were identified by aligning respondents' self-assessed wine knowledge with the factors derived from the EFA. This enabled a deeper understanding of how different levels of wine expertise correspond to specific motivations, perceptions, and behaviours at the festival. Segment 1 (*Cultural experience seekers*), the largest segment (N=42), represents a balanced approach, with moderate spending and engagement, focusing on both wine and cultural festival offerings. Segment 2 (*Wine expertise seekers*), the smallest segment (N = 30), stands out as the most engaged with wine knowledge and the highest spenders seeking premium festival experiences. Segment 3 (*Casual leisure seekers*, N = 32) takes a more casual, relaxed approach to the festival, focusing less on advanced wine knowledge or premium experiences. Finally, Segment 4 (*Social entertainment seekers*, N = 40) is the most budget-conscious, prioritising social interaction over wine expertise while spending the least.

This study highlights social interaction and entertainment as primary motivations for wine festival attendance while also revealing the significance of regional discovery and cultural experiences. Identifying *Social entertainment seekers* and *Casual leisure seekers* brings a more nuanced approach to visitor segmentation, extending the traditional winescape framework to emphasise social engagement. Furthermore, the segmentation of *Wine expertise seekers* inclined toward premium experiences provides fresh insights into how different levels of wine knowledge shape motivations and behaviours. Identifying *Cultural experience seekers* underscores the role of festivals in promoting local culture. Additionally, knowledgeable consumers' strong future engagement and purchase intentions underscore the lasting appeal and loyalty that wine festivals generate.

This research offers significant theoretical contributions by expanding the understanding of social interaction in wine festivals, highlighting the role of wine knowledge in visitor segmentation, and reinforcing the importance of festivals in cultural and community development.

**Keywords:** *Wine tourism; wine festival; visitor segmentation; festival motivation; wine knowledge; social interaction.*

# BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE INDIGENOUS TOURISM SECTOR: UNDERSTANDING VISITOR DEMAND THROUGH PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGICAL METHODS

Gabby Walters<sup>a</sup>, Lisa Ruhanen<sup>a</sup>, Thomas Magor<sup>a</sup> and Guanrong Liu<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>The University of Queensland

## ABSTRACT

This paper presents initial findings of our study that employed psycho-physiological measures to understand tourists' subconscious attitudes and emotional responses towards Indigenous tourism experiences. EEG, eye-movement and facial expression data were collected from a sample of participants who viewed Indigenous tourism experience in the form of a promotional video. The objective of the study was two-fold. Firstly, to understand how tourists subconsciously process marketing stimuli used to promote Indigenous tourism experiences in Australia including identifying the features of Indigenous tourism experiences that are likely to appeal to potential visitor markets and understanding which aspects of an Indigenous experience capture attention. These findings are important for businesses to develop sustainable and viable enterprises given the importance of tourism to many Indigenous peoples and communities around Australia. Secondly, the study makes methodological contributions by exploring the use of psychophysiological data to address acknowledged social desirability bias in studies of Indigenous tourism demand.

**Keywords:** *First Nations, Indigenous, tourism, psychophysiological methods, socio-cultural aversions*

Tourism is an important economic sector for Australia's Indigenous (First Nations) peoples. Tourism provides a unique opportunity for Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to live and work on Country, sharing culture, traditions, and way of life. This opportunity is particularly important for the significant proportion of Australia's Indigenous population that live in remote and regional parts of the country where there are few other economic and employment opportunities. As such, an increasing number of Indigenous people have looked to develop sustainable tourism enterprises for the international and domestic visitor markets ranging from arts, crafts, and cultural displays, through to tours, performances, food experiences and accommodation.

Visitor demand for Indigenous experiences, however, has remained low when compared to other tourism products and experiences in Australia and this impacts on the ability of the sector to be a sustainable economic opportunity. Studies have also shown that despite concerted marketing efforts, particularly for international visitors, the market size for Indigenous tourism remains small at around 2%. Given that so many First Nations communities around Australia rely on tourism, or could benefit considerably from the social, cultural and economic opportunities tourism could bring, growing and sustaining market demand is a key objective for the sector.

Holder et al (2023) note that while Indigenous tourism can bridge cultural gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, in countries such as Australia, there has been relatively low uptake of Indigenous tourism experiences. One reason for this disparity between reported demand and participation could be that these largely questionnaire-based surveys or face-to-face interviews have been impacted by social desirability bias where respondents attempt to present themselves in a socially favourable manner by disguising their true feelings (Chang et al., 2005). As such, this study applies innovative methods in an attempt to overcome any potential for social desirability bias by employing an experimental design using psycho-physiological measures including eye tracking,

electroencephalogram (EEG) and facial recognition technologies.

To understand how tourists subconsciously process marketing stimuli used to promote Indigenous tourism experiences in Australia and identify the features of Indigenous tourism experiences that are likely to appeal to potential visitor markets, this study employed a pre-post experimental design that applied multi-modal psychophysiological measures. The study, comprising a sample of 20 participants, collected data via the iMotionsTM software platform to reveal participant's attentiveness and emotional responses to a variety of Indigenous tourism experiences presented via a 3-minute Indigenous tourism promotional video.

Throughout the experimental procedure, eye-tracking data were utilized to identify the key visual Areas of Interest (AOIs) in the promotional video that most strongly captured the participants' attention. The fixation count, dwell time, and first fixation duration (Li et al., 2023) were specifically analyzed to measure the intensity and focus of the viewers' gaze on different elements within the stimuli. This approach allowed us to precisely gauge which aspects of the video (or Indigenous tourism experiences) were most engaging or visually striking to the participants.

Heatmaps were generated to illustrate the distribution of viewer fixations across selected AOIs and were categorized into two primary groups to reflect the nature of the visual stimuli: "Static Indigenous Item" (i.e., Indigenous artefacts) and "Dynamic Indigenous Activity" (i.e., particular experiences and activities). For "Static Indigenous Item", this category is characterized by items that are visually stationary but culturally rich, capturing sustained attention as shown by the concentrated warm colors in the heatmap. The fixations on these items are relatively dense and localized, indicating that viewers spent significant time absorbing the details embedded within these static displays. In terms of "Dynamic Indigenous Activity", this category encompasses elements that involve motion with the heatmap for this category exhibiting more spread and dynamic fixation patterns, with trails of fixations following the movement within the activities. This suggests that these dynamic displays not only capture attention rapidly but also encourage viewers to engage with the content over time as they follow the unfolding actions.

Guided by the eye-tracking data, key events were identified and marked for EEG data analysis. EEG data were recorded to monitor the neurological responses corresponding to these visual engagements. Three critical electrode sites were recorded: Fp7, Fp8, and Fpz. These sites are strategically chosen for their roles in capturing frontal brain activity, crucial for assessing cognitive and emotional processing in response to the stimuli presented in the advertisement (Gilboa et al., 2009).

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# CAN HOTELS PROVIDE A SOLUTION TO HOMELESSNESS?

Stephen Pratt<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Central Florida

## ABSTRACT

Homelessness serves as a stark reminder of a community's failure to provide basic security for its residents. According to national reports, approximately two percent of the global population may experience homelessness at some point, while an additional 20 percent lack adequate housing (Chamie, 2020). In the United States, a significant portion of the population perceives homelessness as a problem within their communities.

The factors contributing to homelessness are complex and multifaceted. While some researchers argue that homelessness is primarily a housing issue (Colburn & Aldern, 2022), others point to economic disparities, lack of support for mental illness or addiction, and societal factors such as poverty and family breakdowns (Farrugia & Gerrard, 2016). Even individuals who are employed may struggle to secure stable housing. The debate surrounding effective methods for measuring and addressing homelessness raises questions about the feasibility of resolving the issue entirely (Giano, Williams, Hankey, Merrill, Lisnic, & Herring, 2020).

The intersection between tourism and homelessness has become increasingly apparent. The presence of homeless individuals can adversely affect destination image and influence tourists' intentions to visit certain areas (Seo, Choi, & Shin, 2021). With rising costs of living and an oversupply of hotel rooms post-pandemic, policymakers are considering how hotels can serve as temporary housing solutions for those experiencing homelessness. This approach offers a multifaceted solution: it can accommodate homeless individuals, expand available housing supply, alleviate pressure on the rental market, and increase hotel occupancy rates.

Despite growing interest in utilizing hotels for this purpose, significant research gaps remain. There is a need for more studies exploring the perspectives of various stakeholders involved in these initiatives. Additionally, empirical studies assessing the long-term outcomes of hotel-based interventions are necessary to understand their effectiveness fully. Much remains unknown about potential unintended consequences on local housing markets and community dynamics. Research has highlighted the experiences of individuals staying in hotels during the COVID-19 pandemic as a potential model for addressing homelessness (Robinson, Schlesinger, & Keene, 2022). Studies have shown that transitioning homeless individuals into hotel accommodations can lead to improved stability, privacy, and access to resources compared to traditional shelters or living on the streets (Savino, Prince, Simon, Herman, Susser, & Padgett, 2024). However, challenges such as limited cooking facilities and stigmatization remain significant concerns.

Structural theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding homelessness as rooted in systemic inequalities rather than individual failings (Rukmana, 2020). This theory posits that economic disparities, lack of affordable housing, inadequate social safety nets, and discriminatory practices contribute significantly to homelessness (Lee, Price-Spratlen, & Kanan, 2003). By addressing these underlying structural factors, advocates can work toward more effective solutions.

To explore these issues further, the study employed qualitative research methods involving purposive snowball sampling to conduct interviews with key stakeholders engaged in



addressing homelessness in Orlando. The thematic analysis revealed two primary strategies through which hotels can contribute: providing short-term housing solutions and adaptive reuse into affordable housing.

Participants expressed that hotels could offer immediate shelter for vulnerable individuals experiencing homelessness by utilizing available empty hotel rooms temporarily. This arrangement allows previously homeless individuals to stay in hotel rooms like any other guest while being supported by non-profit service providers covering costs for a limited duration. However, while participants recognized the benefits of short-term accommodations—such as immediate assistance—they also highlighted several challenges associated with this approach. High costs associated with market-rate room rates paid by non-profits pose significant funding issues post-COVID-19. Additionally, operational complexities arise from billing complications and community perceptions regarding accepting guests with histories of homelessness.

Conversely, participants were more optimistic about converting old or run-down hotels into affordable housing units as a long-term solution. This adaptive reuse approach involves making modifications to existing hotel properties—such as adding kitchenettes—and providing wrap-around services like case management and job assistance to help residents transition effectively into stable living situations. While adaptive reuse presents promising opportunities for addressing homelessness sustainably, it is not without its challenges. Financial constraints and significant investment requirements often hinder these projects' feasibility. Community concerns regarding concentrating previously homeless individuals in specific areas also present obstacles that need addressing through transparent communication and engagement strategies.

In conclusion, while leveraging hotels presents opportunities for addressing homelessness through both short-term accommodations and adaptive reuse strategies, several challenges must be navigated effectively. Initiatives focusing on adaptive reuse could play a significant role in providing sustainable housing options for individuals experiencing homelessness if supported by strong partnerships among government agencies, non-profit organizations, community groups, and the hospitality industry. Future research can examine hotel guests' acceptance to sharing a hotel with homeless people.

**Keywords:** *homelessness; adaptive reuse; hotel repurpose*

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# CHALLENGES AND TRENDS IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

Ajay Khatter<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>William Angliss Institute

## ABSTRACT

A critical part of the worldwide tourism industry, the hotel sector, is changing dramatically as a result of several internal and external factors. This research investigates the challenges Australian hoteliers are currently facing and the rise of significant trends that will influence their direction. In the middle of these challenges, the sector is also seeing the emergence of revolutionary trends that provide fresh opportunities for expansion and creativity. This paper discusses these developments and offers perspectives on how they will impact the hotel sector in the future. In an ever more competitive market, hoteliers can better negotiate the changing terrain and guarantee long-term success by recognising and addressing both the opportunities and the challenges. Utilising a survey, this research investigated these challenges and future trends, which are essential to comprehending and meeting the demands of the sector both now and in the future. Through the resolution of these challenges, the hotel sector can improve its sustainability and resilience, establishing itself for long-term success in a fast-paced and competitive industry. The information in this paper can help hoteliers navigate the present environment and get ready for upcoming challenges.

**Key Words:** *Challenges, Hotels, Innovation, Strategic, Trends.*

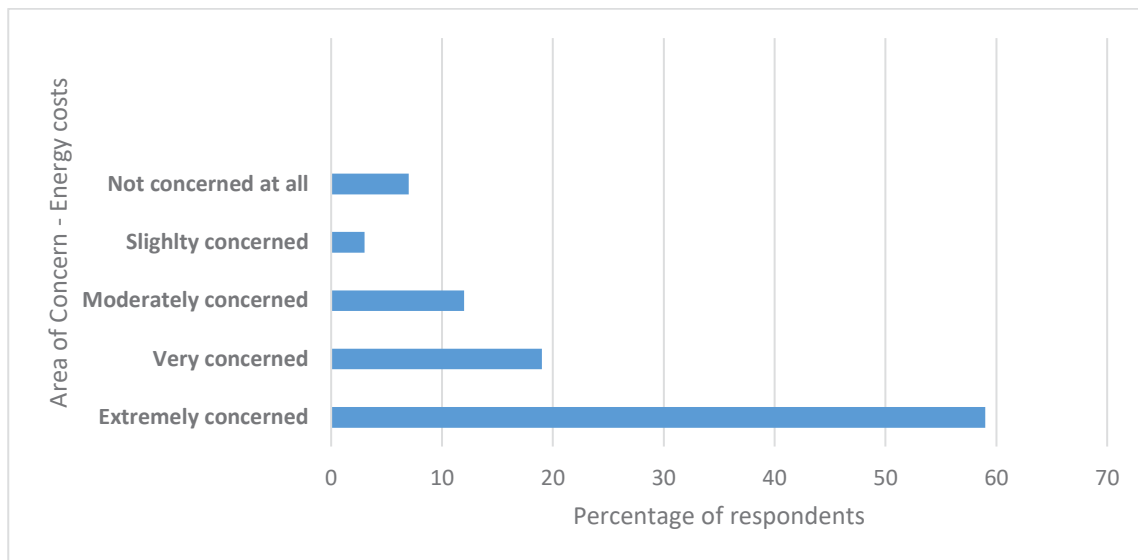
## Methodology

A survey was sent out to 312 Australian hoteliers, asking them to highlight the challenges that are currently being faced in the hotel industry and to write about the trends that are expected to emerge in the future. The 5-point Likert scale rating system allowed respondents to express a range of opinions on the challenges facing the hotel industry with five response options – from extremely concerned to not concerned at all, enabling nuanced feedback from the surveyors. One hundred three hotels responded to the questionnaire, and their responses provided valuable insights into the primary challenges and trends that the hotel industry is currently facing. A total of 33 per cent of hoteliers responded to the survey for this study.

## Findings and discussion

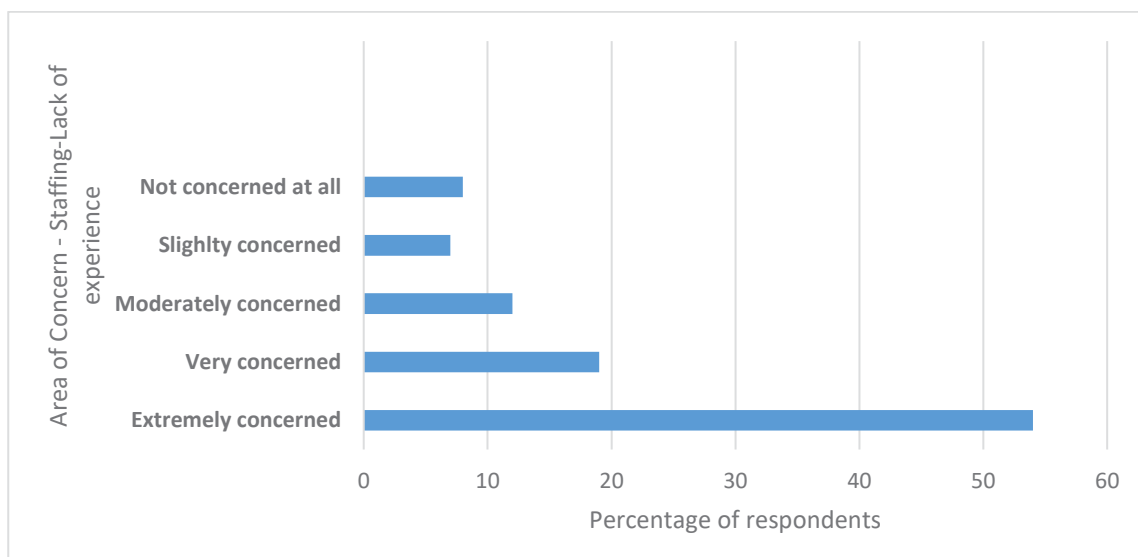
The figures below highlight the major concerns faced by the hotel industry.

## FIGURE 1 – Energy costs

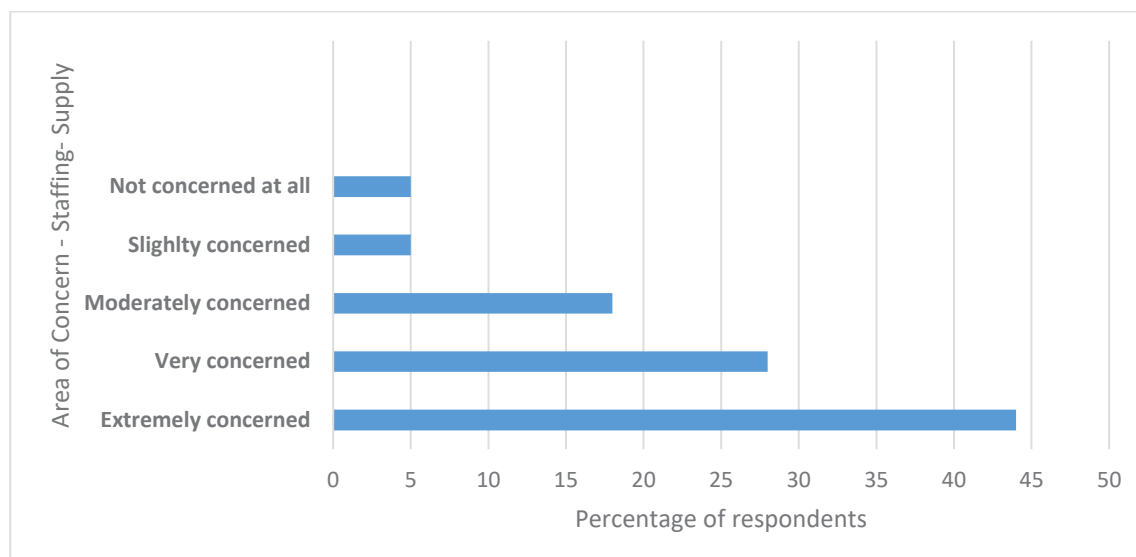


According to the poll, 59% of respondents said they were extremely concerned about high energy costs. Putting money into energy management systems and renewable energy sources can help to reduce these expenses and increase sustainability (Al-Rawashdeh et al., 2023). This method offers two benefits: it solves cost concerns and also fits in with more general ESG objectives. Gössling and Lund-Durlacher (2021) claim that lighting, cooling, and heating are the main energy consumers in the very energy-intensive hospitality sector.

**FIGURE 2 – Staffing –Lack of Experience**

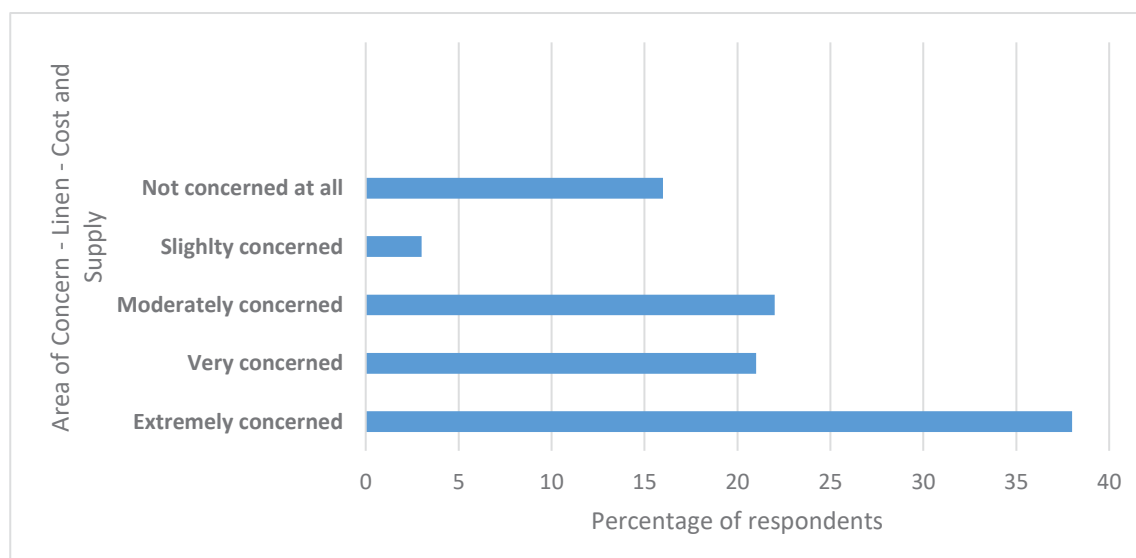


**FIGURE 3 – Staffing –Lack of Supply**



According to the poll, 44% of respondents were extremely concerned about the general supply of employees, and 54% about the dearth of experienced employees. The difficulty in drawing in and keeping qualified workers—a problem made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic—is reflected in the high degree of concern (Choi et al., 2022). The statistics indicate that the hotel business is having trouble reassembling its workforce, which affects both operational effectiveness and service quality. Better hiring procedures, competitive pay packages, and substantial training and development programmes are among the creative human resource strategies that are needed to draw and keep talent (Mooney et al., 2022; Pahuja et al., 2024). Because it depends so much on labour with varying degrees of skill, the hospitality industry has found it difficult to draw in and keep workers after the pandemic.

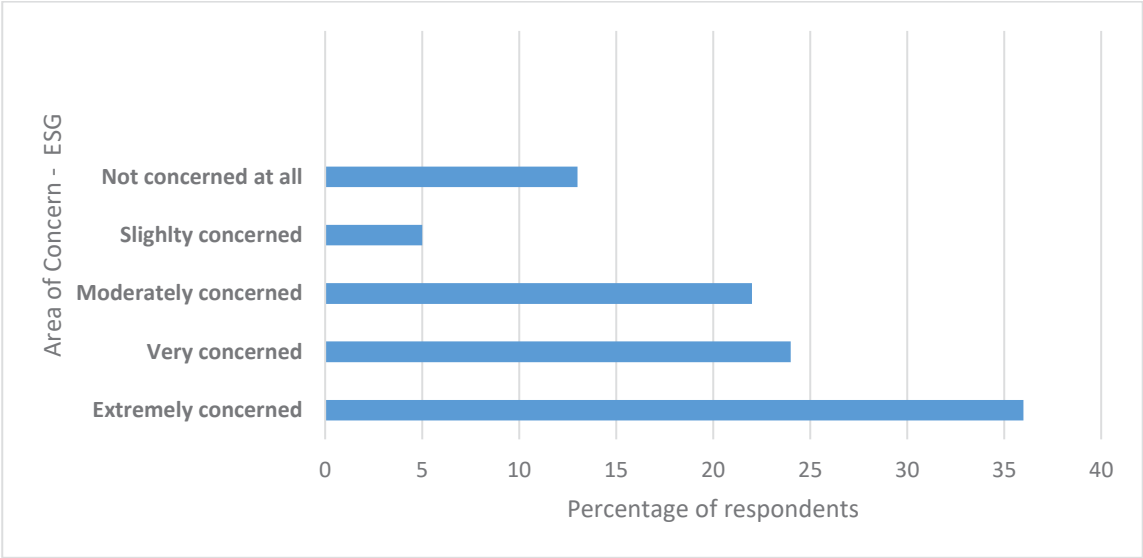
**FIGURE 4 – Linen**



38% of respondents are extremely concerned about linen supply, which suggests serious supply chain or cost problems. Supply chain interruptions, perhaps brought on by shortages of raw materials and

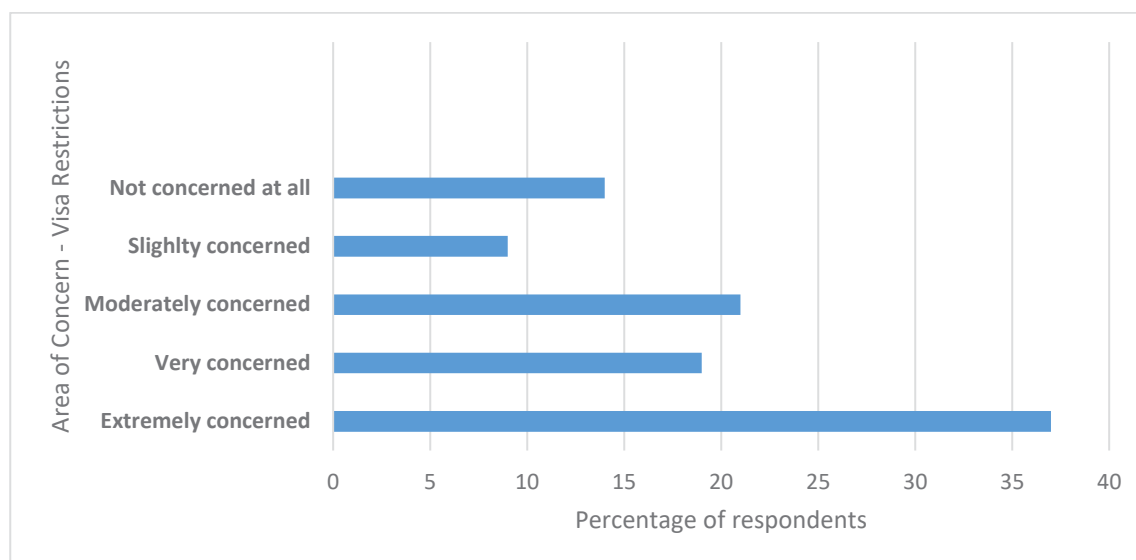
logistical difficulties, have impacted the price and availability of linen supplies (Sodhi et al., 2023). To guarantee a consistent supply of necessary materials, hotels might need to improve inventory control, make investments in local sourcing, and diversify their suppliers. These tactics, when put into practice, can help to reduce interruptions and preserve service standards (Gubhaju et al., 2024).

**FIGURE 4 – ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance)**



Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues are receiving increasing attention among hoteliers. The industry's move towards sustainability and ethical business practices is reflected in this increasing consciousness. Hoteliers are realising how crucial ESG frameworks are to determining how their businesses run and how their brand is perceived. The focus on ESG issues suggests that thorough plans, including social responsibility, governance norms, and sustainable practices, are required (Khamisu et al., 2024).

**FIGURE 4 – Visa Restrictions**



For 37 % of respondents, visa restrictions are extremely concerning, suggesting a high reliance on foreign talent and tourists. Restriction on work visas can lower the availability of qualified personnel, which will immediately impact hotel operations (Wright et al., 2022).

Some key emerging issues mentioned by the hoteliers are discussed below.

#### ***Sustainability:***

The hotel sector is seeing the growing importance of ESG issues as stakeholders call for more sustainability and openness. Environmentally friendly operations improve customer loyalty and brand reputation (Karim & Rabiul, 2024).

#### ***Artificial intelligence:***

AI integration is changing the hotel industry's operational effectiveness and guest experiences. By better anticipating and satisfying guest needs, AI can simplify operations, cut expenses, and enhance customer service (Gursoy & Cai, 2024).

#### ***Technology enhancements:***

Digital transformation is necessary to preserve competitiveness, and this implies that hotels must constantly develop new ideas to satisfy changing customer demands (Yang et al., 2024).

#### ***Changing design trends:***

Modern hotel design is evolving towards producing immersive and adaptable spaces that combine comfort, usefulness, and aesthetic appeal (Suess et al., 2024). Hotels must remain aware of design advancements and the influence of design on the experience and satisfaction of guests (Zhang et al., 2024).

#### ***Accessibility and accessible travel:***

The increasing need for accessible travel implies that hotels that make accessibility investments will gain from increased client loyalty and good word-of-mouth (Martin-Fuentes et al., 2021).



## Contribution to practice

Hotel managers and operators can improve employee stability and service quality by knowing the effects of staffing shortages and creating creative recruitment and retention plans. By implementing energy-efficient technologies and procedures, hotels can lower growing energy costs and support sustainability objectives.

Efficient linen supply management which includes local sourcing and better inventory control—can guarantee operational continuity and service excellence. Addressing visa restrictions through advocacy for more flexible policies can improve the supply of skilled hotel staff. Including thorough ESG strategies not only satisfies legal requirements but also attracts environmentally concerned tourists, enhancing the standing of the company and increasing client loyalty.

Taking up new developments in technology, artificial intelligence, sustainability, and accessible design can give hotels a competitive advantage. While sustainable and inclusive practices can draw in a more extensive and more varied clientele, innovative technology and AI can simplify operations and customise guest experiences.

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# CHALLENGING THE NOTION THAT NATURE CONNECTEDNESS TRIGGERS ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOUR – A FIELD EXPERIMENT

Qingqing Chen<sup>a</sup>, Danyelle Greene<sup>a</sup>, Anna K. Zinn<sup>a</sup> and Sara Dolnicar<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>UQ Business School, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

## ABSTRACT

Nature connectedness is positively associated with wellbeing and pro-environmental behaviours, yet direct nature exposure is often limited by cost and time constraints, necessitating alternatives. This study examines the potential of leveraging self-efficacy to enhance nature connectedness and tests whether such manipulations can trigger actual pro-environmental behaviour. We conducted a survey experiment ( $N = 600$ ) using images of nature and messages to activate nature connectedness and self-efficacy. The most promising intervention, featuring lush green images of a landscape and a conservation message, was tested in a quasi-experimental field study at an airport hotel. The results show that nature connectedness could be exogenously manipulated by integrating self-efficacy messages with natural images. However, while the intervention increased self-reported pro-environmental intentions, it did not lead to actual behaviour change in a field study. This finding suggests that although existing (trait) levels of nature connectedness may lead to pro-environmental behaviour, the relationship between experimentally manipulated nature connectedness and actual pro-environmental behaviour is far less established.

Nature connectedness is a central concept in pro-environmentalism. While it typically arises from direct nature exposure, barriers such as cost and time constraints have highlighted the need for alternatives that can simulate nature experiences without direct exposure (Macaulay et al., 2022). Indirect nature exposure, however, often falls short in successfully enhancing nature connectedness, as individuals struggle to form a meaningful connection with isolated depictions of nature (Mackay & Schmitt, 2019). Thus, a recent meta-analysis highlights the critical need for more experimental studies with higher-quality manipulations of nature connectedness (Mackay & Schmitt, 2019). Fostering a psychological connection and empowering individuals to positively impact the environment may strengthen this connection (Cheng & Monroe, 2012). However, there is limited empirical evidence to support this approach. While nature connectedness is a known predictor of pro-environmental behaviour, much of the existing research treats it as a static human trait. Consequently, it remains largely unexplored whether interventions that successfully manipulate nature connectedness as a state can also encourage pro-environmental behaviour in real-world contexts. This study aims to fill these gaps by: (1) Examining the potential of leveraging self-efficacy to enhance nature connectedness; (2) Empirically testing whether manipulated nature connectedness interventions can effectively trigger pro-environmental behaviour. We manipulated nature connectedness to influence hotel guests' water consumption during showers.

The research consists of two separate studies. Study 1 is a survey experiment and serves as our manipulation check. We recruited 600 participants through Prolific Academic. This study employed a 2 (message vs no message) x 5 (four different images vs no image) between-subjects design. We selected lush green landscape images and drought images to vary valence (positive versus negative perception natural image). Lush green landscape images symbolise the healthy natural environment, evoking perceptions of vitality, growth, and abundance (Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2010). Conversely, drought images depict arid, barren environments, often triggering feelings of guilt, depression, and anxiety (Chen et al., 2020). Both positive and negative natural scenes increased participants' reported nature connectedness compared to control conditions without nature exposure (Zelenski et al., 2015). This study aims to further test the specific role of natural image valence (positive or negative) in influencing pro-environmental behaviour. We manipulated self-efficacy by adding a verbal message ("*Every drop of water your save makes a difference*" vs no message). To

align the images with the message content, we collaborated with a designer to modify the original lush green landscape and drought images by adding visuals, specifically, a showerhead and droplets containing sprouts. This resulted in two new images (see Figure 1), which more directly correspond to the verbal message's content.



**Figure 1.** Lush green and drought picture with self-efficacy visual elements.

Following the online experiment, we selected the most promising condition—lush green images with water droplets and a message emphasizing water conservation (“*Every drop of water you save makes a difference.*”)—for further testing in a quasi-experimental field study. This is due to two main reasons. Firstly, this intervention effectively activated the targeted theoretical constructs of nature connectedness and self-efficacy. Secondly, participants in this condition reported significantly higher water-saving intentions compared to the control condition. The field study was conducted at the Best Western Airport 85 Motel in Brisbane, Australia. We employed a control condition and an experimental condition with a defined intervention period. The control condition (no signs) was from December 12, 2023, to February 14, 2024, involving 3,274 guests. The experimental condition ran from February 22, 2024, to April 21, 2024, with 2,880 guests. A brief interval between the conditions ensured that guests were not exposed to both conditions during their stay. The intervention did not significantly decrease water use per guest.

The results indicate that self-efficacy can be effectively leveraged to enhance the activation of nature connectedness, which serves as the study’s methodological contribution by demonstrating that nature connectedness can be exogenously manipulated within a controlled experimental setting. Additionally, while successfully manipulated nature connectedness interventions can increase self-reported water-saving intentions, they might not translate into actual water-saving behaviour. This suggests that while trait-level nature connectedness predicts pro-environmental behaviour, a manipulation of nature connectedness as a state may not achieve the same results.

**Keywords:** *water saving; nature connectedness; natural images; self-efficacy; pro-environmental behaviour; field experiment*

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# CLIMATE CRISIS AND VISITOR ATTRACTIONS: THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN LOWER AUSTRIA

Claudia Bauer-Krösbacher<sup>a</sup> and Giancarlo Fedeli<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a, b</sup> Department of Business, IMC University of Applied Sciences, Krems an der Donau, Austria

## ABSTRACT

Visitor attractions play a vital role in Lower Austria's tourism industry. However, their appeal and the overall visitor experience are being impacted by climate change, which brings rising temperatures, prolonged dry periods, and an increase in extreme weather events (Pröbstl-Haider et al., 2020). To assess the potential risks, impacts, and opportunities posed by climate change, 110 responses to an online survey were collected from managers of a variety of attractions, from historic castles to national parks, across Lower Austria. The results indicate that the effects vary depending on factors like location, type of attraction, and individual characteristics but also the critical position of attractions. Given the complexity of the attraction sector, the study identified numerous adaptation and mitigation strategies, demonstrating that attractions are aware of the need for action at various levels and are committed to taking responsibility.

**Keywords:** *climate change, tourism, adaptation, visitor attractions, mitigation*

## Introduction

In recent years, significant efforts have been made to diversify Lower Austria's tourist offerings, enhancing both cultural and natural attractions to make them more accessible and enjoyable for both international and local visitors. Existing sites have been upgraded, new ones have been developed, and numerous events have been introduced (Fritz et al., 2019; OECD, 2020). However, climate change has begun to impact these attractions in various ways (Becken & Hay, 2012). These climatic shifts are affecting both cultural and natural heritage, including everything from cultural traditions to world heritage sites (Daly, Downes, & Megarry, 2018). While the severity of these impacts varies, some attractions face the threat of being lost forever. Thus, it is increasingly appropriate to refer to this as a climate crisis rather than merely climate change. Although the global effects of climate change are widely recognized, there remains a lack of systematic research on its relevance and influence on tourist attractions. This study seeks to explore the current and anticipated consequences, threats, challenges, and opportunities faced by attractions. Examining how the needs and expectations of both attractions and visitors are evolving in response to these changes is crucial. The findings aim to help attraction managers in Lower Austria adapt their offerings to the changing climate, contribute to climate protection, and maintain their attractiveness, competitiveness, and resilience for the future. The study focuses on the supply side, covering Lower Austria's cultural and natural attractions.

## Research questions:

- In what ways and to what extent does the climate crisis impact tourist attractions in Lower Austria?
- What are the consequences, risks, challenges, and opportunities that attractions in Lower Austria face due to the climate crisis?
- What actions have already been implemented, and what plans are in place for individual attractions in Lower Austria to preserve their appeal and contribute to climate protection?



## Methods and Preliminary Results

An online survey was distributed to visitor attraction managers in Lower Austria in the period June-August 2023. A convenience sampling was used and 110 responses were achieved with a response rate of 24%, providing a suitable representation of the geographical area. Descriptive and inferential analysis was conducted via SPSS software.

The findings show that attractions are affected by the climate crisis in varying degrees and ways, largely depending on their location and type (cultural, natural, or mixed), and whether they are weather-dependent. First, we wanted to find out if most climate change effects have an impact on their attraction. More than 80 % found that heavy rainfalls have impacted their attraction, followed by heatwaves and storms. Also, the increase in average temperature and drought was evaluated by more than 70 % to affect the attraction. Floods have an impact of only 50 % and debris, as well as snow shortage does not seem to have so much of an impact on the attractions (30 % each).

To further examine potential differences more in detail, we categorised visitor attractions into; outdoor, indoor and mixed attractions and examined differences using a Kruskal-Wallis test. Notably, nearly all climate change-related impacts primarily affect outdoor attractions, except for flooding effects. Some attractions suffered from issues such as drought, heat, heavy rain, and storms, leading to increased costs for repairs, maintenance, and adaptation. Among the efforts taken by operators; key initiatives include shading, air conditioning, irrigation, climate-resistant planting, as well as adjusting working hours, visitor management, and communication strategies. The need for intervention by regional and governmental bodies was also highlighted by respondents. Others, conversely, benefit from climate change, with cooler regions attracting more visitors during hot summers, extended seasons, and weather-independent offers. Finally, visitor attraction managers evaluate climate change as not having yet a dramatic impact on their attractions but in the longer term they see it as rather representing a threat.

## Conclusions

The expected climate changes demand a high level of adaptability from attractions. Overall, the variety of adaptation and climate protection measures highlights the proactive efforts of this key sector of the visitor economy. The need for long-term government intervention is crucial, and public bodies must acknowledge this to protect the future of the visitor attraction sector, particularly in regions more vulnerable to climate change impacts.

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# COMMUNITY PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE OF TOURISM IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

Johanna Loehr<sup>a</sup>, Susanne Becken<sup>a</sup>, Ross Westoby<sup>b</sup> and Christopher Fleming<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of Tourism, Sport and Hotel Management, Griffith University, <sup>b</sup>Griffith Institute for Tourism, Griffith University, <sup>c</sup>Griffith Business School, Griffith University

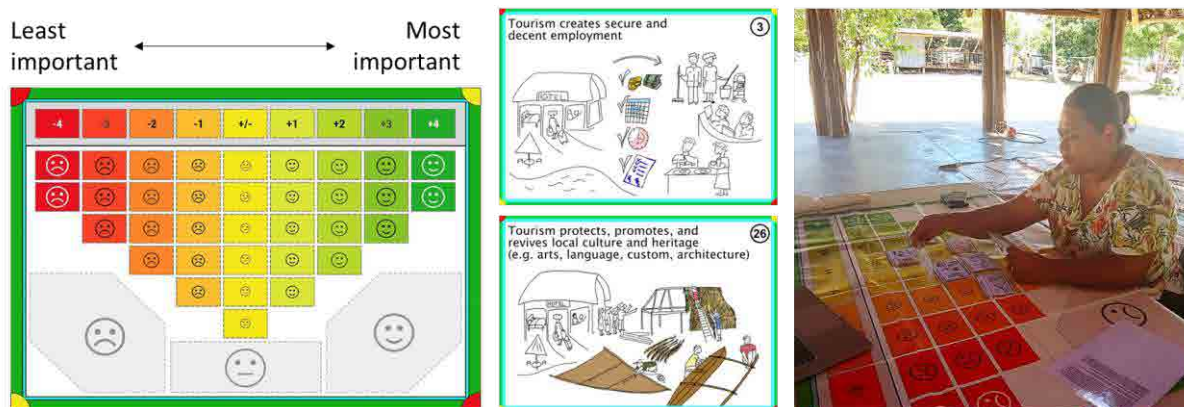
## ABSTRACT

Tourism has been a pivotal contributor to the economies of South Pacific nations, and key industry bodies promote it for its potential to help deliver sustainable development goals (UNWTO, 2018). While some positive development outcomes are undeniable, questions have been raised, mainly about whether tourism delivers long-term livelihood and wellbeing benefits to communities (Cheer et al., 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic made many tourism stakeholders reflect more critically on the sector's vulnerability and how to manage tourism best to serve their interests and needs and manage trade-offs (Movono et al., 2022). However, improving community wellbeing outcomes from tourism remains a challenge, as it involves a significant rethink of how the tourism system is governed and managed (Becken & Loehr, 2022).

The concept of leverage points suggests that fundamental changes may be achieved by asking what outcomes a system should produce and then critically reflecting on how this aligns with the system's goals. How success is measured is a political, social and cultural endeavor (Meadows, 1999). As destinations face compounding environmental and social pressures, viewpoints on normative questions about system goals for tourism (e.g. "What do we want tourism for?") may become more polarized. Agreeing on systems goals for a destination means that "more work is needed to understand all stakeholders' views regarding those fundamental questions" (Loehr & Becken, 2023, p.14). Despite the large body of literature on community engagement in tourism planning and the importance of defining the system's success, there remains a lack of research exploring the underlying goals of residents for tourism.

Drawing on system goals and applying a novel approach to community engagement, Q methodology ("Q" hereafter), this study explored community perspectives on the future of tourism for five island destinations in Fiji and the Cook Islands. Q combines a qualitative and quantitative approach focused on gaining a holistic understanding of the viewpoints of people. Different to group discussions or focus groups, Q is conducted through individual interviews (Sy et al., 2018). As shown in Figure 1, these involve asking participants to rank statements on an issue in order of importance. People with similar viewpoints are then grouped through factor analysis to identify dominant discourses within the sample (Stephenson, 1935). Q was applied in two phases. First, Q was used to identify the shared discourses around the outcomes tourism should deliver, sampling a total of 192 participants representing the host communities of each of the islands. 16 destination specific discourses were identified. These provided input into phase two, where a second-order factor analysis was conducted to assess whether 'super discourses' exist across all destinations. Several key findings were identified:

Island specific discourses reveal that the outcome of tourism to deliver economic benefits/livelihoods was deemed important in all islands and across all discourses. Other outcomes, for example those related to environmental protection and conservation were only prominent in some discourses. Interestingly, the two destinations with the lowest level of tourism development, rated environmental outcomes as low priority.



**Figure 1: Q sorting mat, statement cards and participants sorting cards.**

The secondary factor analysis reveals three Pacific super-discourses: 1) Economic benefit with cultural integrity, 2) Equitable tourism in harmony with nature, and 3) Local livelihoods, health and resilience. These indicate the existence of coherent Pacific voices regardless of destination and its degree of development. These common super-perspectives are shared by people across destinations and countries.

This study confirms that one main reason to engage in tourism is to catalyse economic activity. Host communities connect this to tangible benefits in the form of decent employment, opportunities for entrepreneurship (also seen as pathways towards self-determination) or more indirectly through higher standards of living evident in infrastructure. Overall, the results show that community preferences are not determined by the degree of development or number of visitors, even though people's priorities are influenced by their experience with tourism (e.g. where tourism activity is low and no environmental impacts are observed, these did not feature amongst priority goals). Groups with varying preferences exist in each destination, which increases the need to a) understand these groups and their preferences, and b) develop holistic planning and management approaches that can balance the various tourism outcomes. The three super-discourses could provide high-level guidance to tourism managers on key system goals. Recognising the intricate links between goals, as well as connections between those actors who work together towards achieving them (human and non-human) may help formulate strategies that explicitly build on relationships, networks, and dynamics of human-environment interactions at all scales. Based on the evident shift in goal from growing visitor numbers for the sake of economic growth (per se) to serving the community, we recommend management strategies that conceive the destination as the resource/input to sustain and enhance local residents' livelihoods and wellbeing, rather than a product to be sold at maximum return.

**Keywords:** *host-communities, wellbeing, systems thinking, destination development, South Pacific, Q-methodology*

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# CONFESSIONS OF A GEN X TIK TOK TRAVELLER

Allison Anderson<sup>a,b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Episteme Consulting, <sup>b</sup>University of Tasmania

## ABSTRACT

It has been well documented that TikTok and the short form video production it enables is changing the face of travel, both in terms of influence and destination management and traveller behaviour. With over 1 billion users accumulated since its global launch in 2018 (TikTok 2024), the platform is increasing in influence at an exponential rate. Skift reports that in 2022, around 34% of travellers were influenced by TikTok (Borko 2023). More recently, in Europe 78% of users indicated that TikTok played a role in travel discovery and inspiration, a figure reflected in the Americas and Asia Pacific audiences (TikTok 2024).

Academia has kept pace with this growth. A Google Scholar search for 'TikTok travel' yields over 15,000 results since 2023, with a flood of articles considering its influence on consumer behaviour (eg. Melati, Fathorrahman et al. 2022, Wang, Yu et al. 2022, Zhu, Hoc Nang Fong et al. 2022, Zhou, Sotiriadis et al. 2023), destination management and development (Wengel, Ma et al. 2022), and the visitor experience (Du, Liechty et al. 2022).

Notwithstanding this volume of work, Wei, Li et al. (2023) identify that there is a lack of discussion on how tourists interact with TikTok. Further, there is a dearth of discussion on TikTok beyond Generation Z (born since 1995), where the platform's influence is most powerful (Howarth 2024). This is understandable, Generation X (born 1965-79) are often discounted in marketing as their purchasing power will soon be eclipsed by the larger and more influential generations that have been born since. However more than 60% of Gen Xers are booking vacations, a higher percentage than any other generation (Maglione 2024), and this is likely to increase as they move to retirement age.

Although Gen Xers are not intuitively drawn to the TikTok platform, preferring Pinterest or Facebook, recent articles are suggesting that Gen X is the fastest growing demographic on TikTok, representing around 28% of all users (Wavemaker 2023). These trends indicate that there is a need for academia to consider more carefully the influence of TikTok on Gen X behaviour. This study makes a humble start to that journey by documenting my own travels as a 'Gen Xer' attempting to share my experiences on the TikTok platform over a period of five weeks during a trip from Australia to the United Kingdom, Türkiye and Greece with a range of different travel purposes throughout the duration.

Ultimately an editing and sharing tool, TikTok enables the user to compile a short form video production with still shots and video shorts that can be cut down, sped up, slowed down to a sound track, typically of up to 1 minute in length. This made it an ideal tool to create compilations of holiday views that were easily digestible by friends and family at home online. I tried documenting the trip solely on TikTok but soon realised few of my friends were viewing it. Posting the TikTok link on Facebook and Instagram still did not yield many views, as some were reluctant to download a new platform, so I eventually started downloading the video of the TikTok to share on Facebook and Instagram, with a link to the TikTok if people were interested. Eventually, after a number of these posts, some of my friends went to TikTok to view them, as the quality was superior in the native platform. Below are links to some of the TikToks from the trip:

- [Newport Pagnell](#)
- [Edinburgh](#)
- [London](#)
- [Kas, Türkiye I](#)

- [Kas, Türkiye II](#)
- [Istanbul](#)
- [Athens](#)

In creating these TikToks, I made a number of observations about my own behaviour and how it impacted my travelling companion and friends at home. These are my preliminary observations:

- **It was an enjoyable creative outlet.** The platform enabled me to edit visuals and set them to music in a way that I experienced as intense self-expression, where there was no wrong or right way to do it, but rather a freedom of expression, in direct contrast to my professional life at home.
- **I was building a persona.** In examining my own motives for the trip and sharing it through TikTok, I wanted to be seen as an expeditionary adventurer and early adopter amongst my friends. Considering how people would consume my experiences influenced decisions about what I did and how I captured it.
- **I enjoyed the positive real-time feedback.** Friends and family provided instant positive feedback, and a number of people indicated that they would consider travelling to these places they had not previously known about.
- **Time impost on the holiday.** It took about an hour to produce each 1 minute-long TikTok, however a shorter capture of one moment without production or music received more views.
- **I thought differently about how I viewed a place** – In seeing a magnificent view, I would instantly think about how I could pan/zoom most effectively to capture the mood, the intricacy or the beauty of the place.
- **I generated a lot more video content.** Recognising it was good to give myself some options, I started creating far more content than I would have otherwise. I sequenced events to look like a day, but usually over a few days, to capture a more idealistic, but more consumable and (I thought) interesting.
- **I learnt to let go of perfection.** As I went on, I learnt more and more to trust my instincts and make quick decisions based on an instant feeling.
- **I annoyed and delighted my partner.** My partner grew tired of stopping for a quick video capture, but also expressed delight each time a TikTok was produced of the journey.

On balance, the TikTok Travel experience was a positive one for me, and I plan to produce more, although at some stage I may tire of it. The TikTok became my visual journal for the trip, and I value the record it made and the creative process of journalling in a platform that provides real-time feedback. A full analysis in line with the literature of these observations is the next step in this study.

**Keywords:** *TikTok travel, Generation X and TikTok, Generation X and Social Media.*

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# CONSIDERING ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT IN CRUISE DESTINATIONS

Julia Olsen<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Nord University, Bodø, Norway

## ABSTRACT

This presentation will address the environmental impacts of increasing cruise activity in the European Arctic region, particularly in the Lofoten Archipelago and Svalbard waters, and the sustainable dilemmas in small Arctic communities. Arctic cruising is expected to continue increasing in many parts of the Arctic region, bringing new environmental concerns. Such concerns include pollution to the air and water, disturbance of wildlife, garbage generation on land and wear and tear of local environment (Hoarau-Heemstra et al. 2023; Huntington et al. 2023). These environmental changes are coupled with ongoing climatic changes that pose adaptation challenges for tour operators at the destination. Recent studies indicate that the Arctic region is warming three to four times faster than the rest of the globe (Rantanen M. et al. 2022). The Central Arctic Ocean is forecasted to be nearly ice-free before mid-century, enabling the seasonal opening of the Transpolar Sea Route, while cruise operators offer the North Pole as an attractive tourist destination.

The cruise development is already influenced by environmental protection, infrastructure development, new advances in shipping technology, and the need to address climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. Drawing on research results from the Lofoten Archipelago and Svalbard area, the presentation will first elaborate on social perspectives on environmental changes and the socio-environmental impacts (Wigger and Olsen, 2024). Second, it will present current environmental responses to increasing traffic at the destination. This includes environmental regulations, expedition industry guidelines, and local codes of conduct and/or community guidelines.

To conclude, the presentation will outline sustainable practices and dilemmas, suggesting that a better understanding of historical engagement with the marine environment provides a basis for developing adaptive responses to a navigable Arctic Ocean (Olsen et al. 2019). The presentation addresses the problems associated with shipping and cruise tourism development in the European Arctic, which can also be relevant for other destinations, including those in the Antarctic region.

**Keywords:** *Cruise tourism, environment, Arctic, destinations, sustainability*

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# CONSUMER HYPOCRISY IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: AN INVESTIGATION OF DOUBLE STANDARDS IN JUDGING CORPORATE SOCIAL IRRESPONSIBILITY

Madiha Habib<sup>a</sup>, Michael Volgger<sup>a</sup>, Ross Taplin<sup>a</sup> and Aneeshta Gunness<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Curtin University

## ABSTRACT

Current literature on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) puts, by definition, the onus of responsibility on businesses. However, it is important to understand the role of consumers in the context of phenomena such as corporate social irresponsibility (CSI), “business hypocrisy” and greenwashing. This study will complement the main focus of existing research with an analysis of “consumer hypocrisy” and, more specifically, “double standards” in consumers’ judgement of business CSR transgressions. The study employed an experimental design with hypocrisy operationalised as the difference in the consumer assessment of pairs of materially identical scenarios of business transgressions. The findings suggest that tourists can be biased in their judgments of business transgressions depending on whether they culturally identify with the business or not. Additionally, surprisingly, the presence or absence of a CSR claim did not significantly influence the consumers’ judgment of a business transgression.

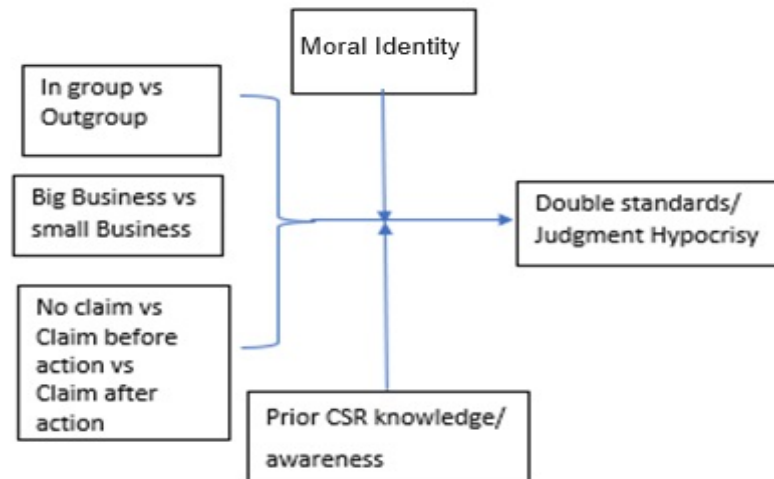
**Keywords:** *Tourism, corporate social responsibility, sustainability, hypocrisy, consumer hypocrisy, double standards*

## Background

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability have received increased concern and attention in the tourism literature. It is the businesses that are mainly being scrutinised and accused of being hypocrites when they illegitimately use the eco-prefix for their advantage. In contrast, the potential hypocrisy of other actors particularly those of so-called “eco-tourists” is less often addressed (Stanford, 2008). Additionally, research on CSR primarily emphasises best practices and desired behaviour, whereas studies on its counterpart, i.e., irresponsibility, are relatively scarce (Volgger and Huang, 2019; Riera and Iborra, 2017).

This study addresses these gaps by inquiring about consumers’ hypocrisy in the context of tourism businesses’ acts of corporate social irresponsibility. Consumer hypocrisy in tourism is not limited to the notion of moral duplicity/attitude-behaviour gap but also extends to the dimension of ‘double standards of judgment’. Double standard means “employing a separate set of norms according to the actor's and observer's identity” (Endevelt et al., 2021). This study tested whether consumers judge the ‘same’ tourism business transgressions ‘differently’ depending on who the ‘transgressing business’ is. A treatment variable of interest was ingroup vs outgroup identity (i.e., whether a business was similar to the respondent based on religion, cultural affiliation or gender of the business owner) (Fiedler, Semin, Finkenauer, and Berkel, 1995). Other treatment variables included big vs small business (Lepoutre, 2006), a business that made ‘no CSR claim’ before committing a transgression vs a business that made a ‘CSR claim’ before committing the transgression and a business that made a ‘CSR claim before the transgression’ vs a business that made a ‘CSR claim after the transgression’ (Braden, Rucker, and Petty, 2005).

The variables of CSR awareness and self-assessed importance of moral identity were tested as moderators (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Conceptual framework to study consumer hypocrisy in tourism**

### Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study was to identify the drivers of consumers' moral double standards (desired and undesired) in judging irresponsible business behaviour in the tourism industry.

### Methodology

An experimental design was employed in the study where a pair of identical scenarios were created for each treatment variable. Each scenario pair stated a business transgression related to either a social or environmental aspect of CSR. Both the scenarios within a pair were exactly alike except for the transgressing business' characteristics (for example if the business was Chinese or English-owned).

Each scenario was followed by two questions used to calculate the dependent variable (Hypocrisy). The difference in rating within a pair of scenarios (with the only difference being the independent variable related to the business transgressor) for the same respondent provided the estimate for the dependent variable (hypocrisy). For example, a respondent rated a transgression by a Chinese business as less severe (4) compared to his/her rating of the same transgression committed by an English business (7), then the associated hypocrisy score would be 3(7-4).

A total of 24 scenarios (12 pairs) were presented to each respondent followed by CSR awareness level, moral identity and demographic questions. A scheme for scenario randomisation was devised to ensure no two scenarios from the same pair appeared too close together and to nullify/cancel out any order effects.

The target population for the study was people living in Australia (18 years or above). A sample of 760 participants was recruited through an online consumer panel ("Researchify"). The participants were directed to an online questionnaire (set up on Qualtrics). After initial screening for age and attention check questions, data from 680 respondents was analysed.

### Results and discussion

A total of four differences (hypocrisy scores) were calculated for each treatment variable; two differences in ratings for two dependent variable questions for the environmental dimension of CSR,

and two for the social dimension of CSR. However, to enhance clarity and ease in data analysis and interpretation, the four hypocrisy scores for each treatment variable were consolidated into one hypocrisy score for each treatment variable.

One-sample t-tests were run on the hypocrisy score for every treatment (Table 1). The analysis investigated for each treatment variable whether the respondents rated the same transgression differently based on who the transgressor was.

**Table 1: One sample t-tests with one hypocrisy score (DV) and consolidated CSR dimensions**

Variable	Two-Sided p	Mean Difference
Outgroup religion penalty	0.569	0.014
Outgroup culture penalty	<b>0.002***</b>	0.076
Outgroup gender penalty	0.519	0.014
Big business penalty	0.440	0.016
CSR Claim penalty	0.833	0.004
Early CSR Claim penalty	<b>0.000***</b>	0.166

The first significant result ( $p=0.002$ ) indicates that respondents judged the transgression by tourism businesses who are in a cultural outgroup more harshly than the same transgression by tourism businesses in the cultural ingroup. The second significant value ( $p=0.000$ ) suggests a transgression where a CSR claim was made *before* the transgression was judged more harshly compared to the same transgression where the CSR claim was made *after* the transgression. Beyond that, it is remarkable that the mere presence or absence of a CSR claim did not seem to make any difference in the judgement of transgressions.

In an ideal world, we may wish that consumers judge the presence or absence of CSR efforts of businesses equally regardless of ingroup vs outgroup identity (absence of ‘bad’ double standards); at the same time, we may hope consumers judge businesses more severely and punish them if the businesses behave in contrast to the CSR claims they make (presence of ‘good’ double standards). In other words, for the transformation of tourism towards greater sustainability, it would be helpful, if business hypocrisy would not be tolerated and consumers would hold business to account for what they claim. Unfortunately, this research finds signs of the presence of instances of ‘bad’ double standards among consumers in tourism and the absence of some ‘good’ double standards.

Presence of bad double standards: the results suggest a need to pay attention to tourists’ cultural biases that may be present in their judgment of business behaviour. There seems to be a tendency for consumers to be more lenient with businesses that belong to their cultural in-group.

Absence of good double standards: more research is necessary to better understand the mixed results obtained for CSR claims, but these results underscore the need to critically consider the accountability (or lack thereof) that consumers expect with respect to CSR claims in tourism. The research paints a picture of surprisingly high levels of consumer tolerance of business hypocrisy and consumer forgiveness.

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# CRAFTING CONNECTIONS: HOW HOSPITALITY ORGANISATIONS FOSTER SOCIAL BONDS THROUGH STRATEGIC PRACTICES

Asha Worsteling<sup>a</sup>, David Solnet<sup>a</sup>, Maria Golubovskaya<sup>b</sup> and Tyler Okimoto<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Queensland, <sup>b</sup>Griffith University

## ABSTRACT

This paper aims to explore how organisational practices within the hospitality industry can enhance social connections, thereby improving customer well-being and driving business success. The study focuses on three key organisational practices—servicescape design, employee appearance and behaviour, and organisational culture—and their role in influencing both the quantity and quality of social interactions in hospitality settings. Through a systematic review, the paper provides a theoretical framework for understanding how hospitality businesses can act as "third places" to foster social connection, differentiate their services, and create stronger emotional bonds with customers.

Third places, such as cafes, pubs, and restaurants, are recognised for their positive effects on social support and well-being. These informal, neutral spaces serve as social hubs, where individuals engage in regular, voluntary interactions that foster a sense of belonging and community. Third places are particularly beneficial for vulnerable groups, such as the elderly or socially isolated individuals, providing crucial opportunities for social engagement that help mitigate loneliness and promote mental and emotional well-being. By facilitating these connections, hospitality businesses play an essential role in enhancing individual well-being and strengthening the social cohesion of communities.

Given the growing recognition of a loneliness epidemic, where social disconnection is on the rise, hospitality organisations have a unique opportunity to differentiate their service offerings by fostering social connections. By creating environments that support community building and meaningful social interactions, businesses can tap into customers' fundamental need for belongingness. This focus on social connection not only addresses a critical societal issue but also serves as a strategic advantage for hospitality venues. Organisations that invest in social connection within their service offerings can enhance customer satisfaction, loyalty, and emotional attachment, ultimately driving business success.

This study utilised a systematic review methodology, guided by PRISMA, to explore how organisational practices impact social connections in hospitality settings. Constructs such as social connection, belongingness, rapport, and social capital were examined. The search was conducted across the Scopus and Web of Science databases, focusing on keywords related to hospitality contexts (e.g., "restaurants," "cafes," "hotels") and social constructs (e.g., "social interaction," "third places," "social cohesion"). From an initial pool of 1672 articles, 1308 unique studies were screened, leading to 74 full-text reviews. Ultimately, 21 studies were retained that met the criteria of examining how servicescape design, employee behaviour, and organisational culture influence both the quantity and quality of social interactions within hospitality environments.

Three key organisational practices were identified as critical in influencing social connections in hospitality settings: servicescape design, employee appearance and behaviour, and organisational culture and values.

Servicescape design—the physical environment in which services are delivered—was found to impact both the quantity and quality of social interactions. For example, venues with communal seating and strategic lighting were shown to encourage more frequent social engagement between customers and employees. Additionally, ambient factors like music and scents influenced emotional states, enhancing social connection. Hospitality businesses that effectively design servicescapes to promote interaction foster a sense of belonging and encourage repeat visits, improving customer experiences.

Employee appearance and behaviour were also critical in facilitating social interactions. Customers were more likely to engage with employees who exhibited approachability and friendliness. Organisational practices that emphasise rapport-building techniques, such as training employees in empathetic communication, were particularly effective in enhancing customer-employee interactions. The authenticity of employee behaviours, including genuine emotional displays, was crucial in building trust and rapport, strengthening customer relationships, and fostering brand loyalty.

Finally, organisational culture and values significantly influenced the quality of social connections, particularly between customers and employees. A culture that prioritised customer orientation and relational values fostered stronger, higher-quality relationships. When employees were empowered to engage in meaningful interactions rather than purely transactional exchanges, customers developed lasting emotional bonds with the business, improving satisfaction and loyalty.

The findings suggest that hospitality businesses should adopt a holistic approach to service delivery that focuses on both transactional and social value. By creating environments that promote meaningful social interactions, hospitality venues can enhance customer well-being while improving their own performance. Hospitality managers are encouraged to design servicescapes that promote interaction, train employees in rapport-building, and cultivate a culture that prioritises customer well-being and social engagement. These strategies will help differentiate hospitality businesses, attract loyal customers, and contribute to community well-being.

This research extends hospitality theory by offering a framework that conceptualises social connection in terms of both quantity and quality. While previous studies have often focused on isolated aspects of social interaction, this review integrates multiple organisational practices to foster meaningful connections. The review also highlights the dual role of hospitality businesses as both commercial entities and social institutions that contribute to the strengthening of community ties.

Future research should explore the mechanisms through which hospitality businesses foster social connection, especially given the rapid technological changes altering traditional social dynamics. More empirical work is needed to validate the theoretical framework proposed in this review, particularly regarding how organisational practices influence the quality and quantity of social connections. As the hospitality industry continues to evolve, understanding its social functions will be crucial for maintaining relevance in an increasingly connected yet isolated world.

**Key words:** *third places, social connection, hospitality management, servicescape design, frontline employees, organisational culture.*

# CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN HOSPITALITY: ADOPTING DESIGN THINKING AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TOOLS TO ENHANCE EDUCATOR DIGITAL COMPETENCIES

Fahri Benli<sup>a</sup> and Ngoc Diep Su<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Holmesglen Institute

## ABSTRACT

### Research background and purpose

Digital transformation is driving educators to adopt innovative methods for digital teaching to facilitate student learning. Due to transformation, upskilling has become a top priority for educators in key competencies such as creative thinking and digital competencies to develop innovative curriculum (Redecker, 2017). Educators must enhance their creative thinking, adaptability, and artificial intelligence (GenAI) proficiency to develop teaching strategies that foster students' critical thinking and interpersonal skills while advancing their own 21st-century competencies to effectively convey these skills through enhancing digital capabilities (Lidolf & Pasco, 2020). The European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu) (Redecker, 2017), outlines a set of areas and digital competencies that educators should possess to enhance their teaching methods, foster digital literacy among students, and improve the overall teaching and learning experience (Caena & Redecker, 2019). DigCompEdu lacks the details in using digital technologies such as learning management systems, digital content creation tools and GenAI. This highlights the necessity for creative thinking, agility and flexibility in modifying teaching approaches to align with innovative curricula. These competencies are crucial for transforming educators' mindsets towards a focus on ongoing professional development in digital teaching and learning.

Curriculum development involves planning, implementation, and evaluation which has a broad scope (Ornstein Hunkins 2017). However, curriculum design is aligning learning strategies, materials, and experiences to defined outcomes (Taba, 1962; Tyler, 1949). Whereas curriculum models focus on the outcomes of a curriculum which involves managing, designing, and organizing learning objectives, competencies, and standards within a curriculum. This seems to be the common approach across higher education curriculum. The process of designing curriculum with the end in mind is commonly referred to as “backward design” (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). Backward design starts with the outcomes and then works backwards to address the content, topics, strategies, and materials. One of the key tools important to backward design is the use of learning objectives taxonomies. One of the most widely used of these taxonomies is Bloom’s Taxonomy (Bloom et al., 1956). Bloom’s Taxonomy organizes learning objectives based on a level of learning. Digital transformation in higher education is driving the need for educators to enhance digital capabilities for teaching and learning. This includes exploring innovative curriculum design, and the impact of technology on curriculum delivery (Tight, 2024).

The extant literature on curriculum development and educator digital competencies in hospitality higher education is scarce and fragmented. To effectively integrate competencies for utilising educator pedagogical competencies which includes digital resources, teaching and learning, assessment, and empowering learners does not align with contemporary curriculum development models. This absence highlights a significant opportunity for a study to expand on the literature regarding a design thinking approach (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017) to curriculum development and digital competencies in hospitality higher education. Reflecting on these gaps, the objectives of this study are twofold: (1) To explore the stages of curriculum development practices and how design

thinking can be incorporated into the curriculum development process in hospitality higher education, and (2) To examine GenAI tools' integration with Design Thinking and explore curriculum design alternatives.

### **Methodology**

To effectively address the objectives, this study utilises a mixed method approach that combines qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. The process unfolds through two multi-step stages, described as follows:

#### **Stage 1: Qualitative research**

This stage is structured into three following steps:

Step 1: Identification of curriculum development processes across hospitality management programs offered by universities and other higher education providers across Australia. This initial stage involves a comprehensive search to catalogue curriculum.

Step 2: Analysis and comparison of the curriculum development components across the identified programs. This includes core courses, digital resources, teaching strategies, authentic assessments, and empowering learners.

Step 3: In-depth content analysis to extract digital competencies within the curricula. This stage focuses on: Examining the objectives, content, and pedagogical approaches utilized in core, specialized, and elective courses.

#### **Stage 2: Quantitative research**

In this phase of the research, an empirical analysis will be undertaken to develop and validate a conceptual framework that explores the impact of curriculum development process. These hypotheses will be empirically tested using data gathered through a questionnaire survey administered to educators in higher education in hospitality higher education programs at Australian institutions. The study employs a Partial Least Squares-based Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) approach, encompassing both measurement model evaluation and structural model evaluation, to rigorously test the hypotheses and validate the proposed conceptual framework.

### **Originality/Value**

Building on the long-standing tradition of curriculum development approaches, and the design thinking concepts, the proposed study represents the first attempt to explore and validate the conceptualisation of curriculum on the formation digital competencies within the literature of hospitality curriculum development. Additionally, it seeks to extend the extant literature on curriculum development formation by validating the influence of design thinking and perceptions of digital competencies within higher education.

**Keywords:** *curriculum development, digital transformation, experiential learning; authentic assessment; generative artificial intelligence; educational innovation.*

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# DEBATING THE FUTURE OF LUXURY HOSPITALITY: AI OR HUMAN TOUCH?

Tracy Harkison<sup>a</sup> and Andrew Emery<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand

## ABSTRACT

As advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) for example offering unprecedented efficiency, personalisation, and convenience challenge the traditional, human-centric model of service, the future of luxury hospitality is being redefined. This abstract will debate the potential benefits and drawbacks of AI integration in luxury hospitality and considering how the balance between technology and human interaction might evolve.

The adoption of AI in luxury hospitality has been driven by several factors, including the desire to enhance guest experiences, streamline operations, and address labour shortages. AI technologies, such as chatbots, virtual concierges, and predictive analytics, have already been introduced into the industry. Analysing guests' preferences to tailor recommendations for dining, activities, and amenities creates a highly customised experience (Kim & Han, 2022). This level of personalisation, combined with the efficiency of AI systems that operate around the clock, presents a strong case for the widespread adoption of AI in luxury hospitality.

Advocates of AI integration argue that it can enhance efficiency by automating routine tasks, such as check-ins, room service, and billing, allowing staff to focus on more complex and personalised interactions with guests. This not only improves the guest experience but also reduces operational costs, allowing for more effective resource allocation. AI-driven systems can process vast amounts of data, enabling establishments to make informed decisions and quickly adapt to changing guest preferences and market trends (Padma & Ahn, 2020). This agility is particularly valuable in the competitive luxury market, where staying ahead of trends is crucial to maintaining a brand's reputation and appeal.

AI delivers consistent, high-quality service across all touchpoints, unlike human service, which can be inconsistent due to employee turnover, training variations, and differing personal interactions. This consistency is crucial in the luxury sector, where guests expect perfection. AI systems continually learn and improve, ensuring high service quality as guest preferences evolve (Al-Hyari et al., 2023).

However, there is an argument to keep the human element in luxury hospitality. The essence of luxury is often defined by the warmth, empathy, and personal connection that only human interactions can provide. Luxury hospitality has long been characterised by its attention to detail, the ability to anticipate and fulfil unspoken wishes, and the creation of memorable experiences through meaningful human connections (Okoye, 2022). These qualities are difficult, if not impossible, for AI to replicate, as they require emotional intelligence, intuition, and a deep understanding of human nature.

Critics of AI argue that an overreliance on technology could lead to a loss of the personalised, human-centric service that distinguishes luxury brands from their competitors. While AI can efficiently handle many aspects of service, it may struggle with situations that require empathy, creativity, and nuanced judgment—qualities that are crucial in resolving complex guest issues, creating unique experiences, and growing loyalty. Additionally, there is a concern that the increasing use of AI could erode the personal touch that many guests value, leading to a more transactional and less emotionally satisfying experience.

The integration of AI also raises ethical and privacy concerns. Collecting and analysing guest data, while valuable for personalisation, also poses risks related to data security and the potential for intrusive surveillance. Guests may feel uncomfortable with the level of data collection required to power AI-driven experiences, leading to a loss of trust (Akhilesh, 2020). There is also a risk that AI could replace human jobs, particularly in roles that involve routine tasks, negatively impacting the overall quality of service.

A hybrid approach combining the best of both worlds—leveraging AI to enhance efficiency and personalisation while preserving the human touch that defines luxury hospitality—could be the way forward. This approach uses AI to handle routine and data-driven tasks, freeing up human staff to focus on creating personalised, memorable experiences for guests. AI could manage the logistics of a guest's stay, such as booking reservations and coordinating transportation, while human staff focus on building relationships with guests, anticipating their needs, and delivering bespoke services that reflect their unique preferences.

Ultimately, the future of luxury hospitality may depend on how well the industry can integrate AI without losing the human touch that has long been its capstone. This will require a careful balance between technology and human interaction, with an emphasis on using AI to enhance, rather than replace, the personal connections that make luxury hospitality truly special. By adopting a thoughtful, guest-centric approach to AI integration, luxury establishments can create experiences that are not only efficient and personalised but also warm, authentic, and deeply satisfying.

In conclusion, debating AI versus the human touch in luxury hospitality reflects broader questions about the role of technology in enhancing or detracting from the guest experience. While AI offers significant advantages in terms of efficiency, personalisation, and consistency, it is essential that the industry does not lose sight of the importance of human connection in delivering truly memorable and luxurious experiences. The future of luxury hospitality will likely involve a delicate balance between AI and human service, with the most successful brands being those that can integrate technology in a way that complements and enhances the human touch, rather than replacing it.

**Keywords:** *Artificial Intelligence (AI), Luxury, hospitality, human touch*

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# DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE SUSTAINABILITY INDEX FOR THE HOTEL SECTOR

Kourosh Esfandiar<sup>a</sup> and S. Mostafa Rasoolimanesh<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>School of Business and Law, Edith Cowan University, Australia

## ABSTRACT

This study intends to develop a set of sustainability indicators tailored to hotel businesses in the Australian context. The research addresses the challenge of creating a standardised framework for consistent measurement and benchmarking of sustainability performance across hotels. Using a qualitative methodology, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including hotel managers, this study intends to explore current sustainability practices, challenges, and opportunities. The expected outcome is to propose new or refined indicators to enhance sustainability reporting, reduce environmental impact, and foster social and economic benefits.

**Keywords:** *Sustainability index, sustainability reporting, hotel sector, Australia*

## Introduction

Over recent decades, sustainable development has increasingly been advocated for integration into business operations, including hotels, due to criticism regarding their unsustainable practices, such as excessive water and energy consumption and other environmental impacts associated with their activities (Chua & Han, 2022; Saulick et al., 2023).

To assess whether hotels are adopting sustainable practices, a sustainability performance assessment is essential. Numerous approaches and tools have been developed for this purpose. One widely recognised approach is sustainability reporting, using sustainability indicators that govern the sustainable practices of the hotel industry. The main approach used for developing sustainability indicators is the triple bottom line—covering environmental, social, and economic dimensions—to encourage the tourism sector, including hotels, to implement meaningful change (Akhtar, 2023; Schianetz et al., 2007).

This method provides a structured framework for measuring and enhancing sustainability efforts within the industry, helping hotel managers identify sustainability practices that can be adopted for hotel operations to reduce water and energy consumption, as well as to achieve better economic and social outcomes. However, existing sustainability indices face several shortcomings. Many current indices fail to adequately measure the environmental and social impacts generated by hotel guests, which play a significant role in a hotel's overall sustainability performance (Balas & Abson, 2022; Campos et al., 2024). Additionally, most indices lack subjective indicators, such as guest satisfaction or staff well-being, which are vital for a more comprehensive understanding of sustainability. The assessment methodologies employed in these frameworks are often vague, limiting their practical utility for hotels striving to implement consistent sustainability measures (Akhtar, 2023). Furthermore, many of these global indices are not fully aligned with the specific environmental conditions and regulatory landscape of Australia (Khatter et al., 2021), thereby necessitating the development of a tailored set of sustainability indicators.

The literature review highlights an extensive range of publications and international frameworks on sustainability indicators (European Commission, 2016; Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), 2016). Numerous systems and mechanisms have been developed to address sustainability across various sectors. However, while many studies focus broadly on the tourism industry, only a limited number specifically examine the hotel sector in detail

(Kristjánsdóttir et al., 2018; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2020). Thus, addressing these gaps is crucial for creating a more localised and actionable sustainability framework for hotels in Australia.

## Methods

This research will employ a qualitative methodology, drawing on concepts from sustainability, governance, and performance analysis. Data collection will involve semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including hotel managers and representatives from hotel associations in Australia. Additionally, the Delphi method will be utilised to gain expert consensus on the most relevant and effective sustainability indicators. This iterative process will involve multiple rounds of consultation with a panel of experts, allowing for the refinement of the indicators through structured feedback and discussion.

## Conclusions and Implications

This empirical qualitative study aims to identify key indicators currently used to measure sustainability performance in hotels across Australia. The research will address existing sustainability practices and initiatives implemented by these hotels, the challenges encountered in the adoption and maintenance of sustainability measures, and stakeholders' perceptions regarding the significance and impact of sustainability practices. The anticipated outcome for this study will be a standardised and validated set of indicators designed to promote more effective and widespread adoption of sustainable practices within the hotel industry.

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# DEVELOPING VOCATIONAL IDENTITY AND BELONGING IN THE HOSPITALITY WORKFORCE OF TOMORROW – ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A CURRICULUM-DRIVEN APPROACH

Mark Fielding<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Holmesglen Institute

## ABSTRACT

Generational transformation is required in the way that the hospitality workforce is attracted, developed and retained if a sustainable future for the industry is to be realised. The hospitality industry has a history of struggling to retain staff, a problem that has been exacerbated and become more visible in the post-covid years. In addition, early career attrition reflects the challenges that hospitality graduates face. In response to these challenges, the design of a hospitality management course in a Victorian tertiary institution was motivated by a desire to develop a sense of vocational identity and belonging in the graduate cohort. Vocational identity, which refers to a sense of self derived from one's work or occupation (Chan, 2020), has been identified by researchers as benefitting both employers and employees in a number of ways. These include increased employee job satisfaction and motivation; higher productivity and enhanced job performance; and clarity in job role and responsibility. Research has also shown that vocational identity guides workers' practices and influences their performance, or competence (Klotz, et al. 2014). As a result, identifying strategies in tertiary education that effectively develop a sense of vocational identity are expected to positively contribute to both employee performance and long-term career commitment.

Beginning in 2024, a unique opportunity presented itself to undertake longitudinal research to assess the influence of this course design on vocational identity formation and belonging in the student cohort as they pathway through the degree. As the new course structure was informed by the building blocks of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994), so this research is also framed by the dimensions of this theory. The SCCT framework was utilised from conceptualising the course ethos, the sequencing of the curriculum for skill and knowledge development, to the structure and timing of industry experiences and professional practice. SCCT contends that a variety of person, environmental, and behavioural variables influence the career choice process. These are represented by self-efficacy, outcome expectations and goal setting. Further, there are also contextual variables including perceived barriers that impede, as well as supports that enhance, the pursuit of a career path (Rogers & Creed, 2011). The longitudinal research utilizes a mixed methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. This research will be conducted in November 2024, with the findings analysed and presented at the CAUTHE conference. It is intended to continue this research across a three year period within the degree program, and also follow alumni into the early years of their hospitality career. This builds on an abstract presented at the 2024 CAUTHE Conference which provided an overview of the SCCT-informed methodology implemented in the degree curriculum design.

The three research questions include to what order and magnitude of impact do the five components in the SCCT framework, as reflected in the degree course design, have in establishing vocational identity? Secondly, to what extent does the new course design positively impact the formation of vocational identity and belonging in students compared to those that pathway through the previous course structure? Thirdly, to what extent does the formation of vocational identity positively impact graduate commitment to pursuing and sustaining a career in the hospitality industry? Each of the five dimensions of the SCCT framework will be assessed using a mix of quantitative and qualitative data. Students will be surveyed at the point of entry into the course (either stage 1 or 3 depending on whether they are Diploma pathway students), and also at the end of their last semester before



graduation. This is intended to capture the extent of vocational identity formation, testing each SCCT dimension and the matched curriculum elements designed to positively influence. Phase one will utilise an online questionnaire, using existing Likert-based scales and inventories previously adapted from other industry contexts by hospitality researchers. These include the Career Aspirations Scale (Gray & O'Brien, 2007 in Raque-Bogdan & Lucas, 2016), with contextual factors such as perceived barriers being assessed using Perceptions of Barriers Scale (POB) and Coping with Barriers Scale (CWB) (Luzzo & McWhirter, 2001 in Raque-Bogdan & Lucas, 2016). Phase two will utilise the qualitative method of semi-structured interview questions, but undertaking an approach often used in participative community development practice. This involves modified card sorts that include an interest and skill inventory (Brown and Lent, 1996 in Gibbons & Shoffner, 2004) for students at the point of degree entry, plus self-efficacy and outcome expectation card sorts that allow the student to rank their preferences from a range of options. In this way it is expected that students will reveal their own journey in developing a vocational identity, and through card sorts that order preferences, will reveal those aspects of curriculum design that have had the greatest impact.

It is expected that research findings will provide insight into what elements of the curriculum design have the greatest impact on vocational identity formation, encouraging their expansion and iterative enhancement. Further, the research should highlight actions that can be taken to better prepare students for higher education study, focussing on the contextual variables including ameliorating perceived barriers to success, and identifying ways to enhance student supports. Gathering data across the student lifecycle should provide understanding at what point these barriers appear, and at what stage supports should be implemented and sustained. It is hoped that through identifying and activating a passion for hospitality in students, they will be more resilient and intrinsically motivated, improving the likelihood of course retention and completion, whilst forming a strong foundation for career commitment and success.

**Keywords:** *vocational identity; belonging; curriculum development, social cognitive career theory (SCCT).*

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# EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS, DESTINATION LOYALTY, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN TOURISM: A CONCEPTUAL RESEARCH AGENDA

Nina Katrine Prebensen<sup>a</sup> and Yaozhi Zhang<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>USN School of Business, University of South-Eastern Norway

## ABSTRACT

The tourism industry is under increasing pressure to balance economic growth with environmental sustainability. Destination loyalty and environmental sustainability have become central concerns for destination managers (Streimikiene, 2021). On one hand, tourism is often a one-time experience, making it challenging to build loyalty as tourists seek novelty and may not return to the same destination in the short term. On the other hand, sustainability is critical in addressing environmental degradation, local opposition, overtourism, and uncivil tourist behavior.

While numerous theories in environmental research have explored these concerns, the emotional connection between tourists and destinations is often overlooked. Tourists frequently form emotional bonds with the places they visit, which can influence their loyalty, satisfaction, and willingness to engage in sustainable practices. By promoting various emotional ties between tourists and destinations, tourism providers can enhance both visitor well-being and foster long-term economic and environmental sustainability. This research argues that different emotional connections formed during tourism experiences may lead to distinct outcomes in terms of destination loyalty and engagement in sustainable practices.

This study is grounded in theories of consumer behavior, well-being, and sustainability. Emotional well-being, as defined by Diener (1984) and others, contributes to overall life satisfaction and plays a key role in decision-making processes, particularly in experiential contexts like tourism. Similarly, Cognitive Appraisal Theory (Lazarus, 1991) highlights the influence of emotions in consumer decision-making. However, the application of these theories to sustainable tourism remains underexplored. This research seeks to fill that gap by investigating how emotional connections impact tourists' sustainable behaviors and destination loyalty.

A mixed-methods approach will be used to test three core propositions. Quantitative data will be gathered through surveys conducted at various destinations, focusing on tourists' emotional experiences, loyalty behaviors, and participation in sustainable practices. To complement this, qualitative data will be collected via in-depth interviews to explore the decisive factors influencing the formation of different emotional connections with destinations. These interviews will delve into tourists' subjective experiences, particularly their emotions toward the destination and how these emotions shape their behaviors. This combination of methods will provide a comprehensive understanding of the role emotional connections play in promoting sustainability and loyalty in tourism.

Initial desk research and literature reviews have led to the development of a framework that classifies emotional connections with destinations into ten categories, ranging from "Muse" to "Enemy," based on tourists' well-being levels. Table 1 summarizes these connections.

**Table 1. Emotional connection with the destination**

Emotional Connection	Description
Muse	Inspires creativity, reflection, and personal growth.

Lover	A deep, passionate attachment; tourists feel a strong emotional bond.
Friend	Comfortable, familiar, and reliable; a steady, dependable connection.
Escaper	A sanctuary offering relief from everyday stresses.
Healer	Provides emotional or physical restoration, helping tourists feel renewed.
Stranger	Feels distant or unfamiliar, lacking emotional connection.
Taker	Perceived as emotionally draining, taking more than it gives.
Foe	Feels antagonistic, creating discomfort or frustration.
Deceiver	Creates a sense of betrayal or disappointment; tourists feel misled.
Enemy	Actively hostile or unsafe, generating fear or resentment.

Based on these classifications, we propose three central propositions about the impact of emotional connections on sustainability and loyalty in tourism:

Proposition 1: Tourists with higher emotional well-being are more likely to engage in sustainable behaviors. These behaviors include participation in eco-friendly activities, supporting local conservation initiatives, and reducing their environmental impact. This proposition suggests that emotional attachment fosters a sense of responsibility toward the destination, motivating tourists to preserve it.

Proposition 2: Emotional connections between tourists and destinations significantly influence destination loyalty. Positive emotional experiences lead to a stronger commitment to revisiting the destination and recommending it to others. This builds on the Cognitive Appraisal Theory, emphasizing that emotions shape tourists' loyalty, with positive bonds resulting in increased return visits.

Proposition 3: Tourists who engage in immersive, sustainable experiences—such as ecotours or cultural exchanges—are more likely to form strong emotional attachments to the destination. These bonds drive higher levels of stewardship and responsibility, encouraging sustainable behaviors and repeat visits. This proposition integrates theories of well-being and sustainability, proposing that both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being contribute to sustainable tourism practices.

This research agenda aims to explore the complex interplay between emotional connections, destination loyalty, and sustainable tourism practices. It builds on established theories in consumer behavior and well-being, offering new insights into how emotions drive both loyalty and sustainability in tourism. The findings are expected to provide significant theoretical and practical contributions to the tourism literature. Theoretically, this study extends consumer behavior and well-being theories into the realm of sustainable tourism. Practically, the results will offer actionable strategies for tourism managers to foster emotional bonds between tourists and destinations, thereby enhancing destination loyalty and promoting sustainable practices.

**Keywords:** *Emotional connection, Destination loyalty, Sustainable tourism, Well-being*

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# EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENT LEADERS AND HOW TO NURTURE THEM: A DESIGN THINKING-BASED PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Bernardo Manuel do Carmo Mateus<sup>a</sup>, Rajka Presbury<sup>a</sup> and Anita Manfreda<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Torrens University Australia

## ABSTRACT

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is interpreted as the ability to perceive and express emotion, assimilate emotion in thought, understand and reason with emotion, and regulate emotion in the self and others (Mayer et al., 2007, p. 269). EI has been proven to be a core skill for hospitality and tourism leaders (Nhung & Giang, 2023), enhancing their ability to significantly improve employee's attitudinal outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, employee engagement, and employee retention) as well as behavioural outcomes (e.g., job performance, creativity, and service-oriented behaviours) (Zhu et al., 2022).

The need for EI competent leaders is more urgent than ever with the tourism and hospitality (T&H) industry both in Australia and worldwide facing persistent labour retention challenges related to the nature of the hospitality work and, often, poor leadership (Davidson et al., 2010). Despite efforts to introduce EI concepts and develop emotional competencies through T&H education (Gibbs & Slevitch, 2019; Nyanjom & Wilkins, 2021), there is a notable gap in developing these competencies within the workplace, especially in the hospitality sector (Fraser, 2020).

Existing research in other industries such as healthcare and education has presented successful attempts at implementing EI development programs in the workplace (Clarke, 2006; Dolev & Leshem, 2017). Despite the positive outcomes, the findings from these studies point to limitations regarding their general application across sectors, study environments and demographic profiles which do not translate effectively to other settings. This has led to calls for further investigations into the adaptability and effectiveness of these programs across varied industries, with hospitality being a significantly understudied context despite the significance of EI competencies for their leaders (Stoyanova-Bozhkova et al., 2022). Furthermore, existing literature focuses only on the implementation and results of the EI nurturing programs, and does not detail their development process, creating a gap in replicability in other industries.

In an effort to address these gaps, this research aims to incite change in current industry leadership training practices to nurture hospitality management into emotional intelligent leaders. This will be achieved by designing a tailored EI development program through Participatory Action Research (PAR), within a Design Thinking (DT) framework, ensuring the program is tailored to the specific challenges of hospitality leaders. This approach, where participants are not seen only as subjects but as co-researchers promotes a collaborative environment where knowledge is co-created and mutually benefits researchers and participants (Bergold & Thomas, 2012).

A design thinking framework will be adopted to structure the data collection and analysis phase. Described as a method where design principles are applied to harmonise human needs with viable business strategies (Dorst, 2011), DT is fundamentally human-centered, focusing on enhancing problem-solving capabilities and fostering innovation and creativity within individuals and organisations (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2012). Through the use of multi-methods, including interview, focus groups, and participants observations, enhanced with DT-specific techniques, the framework involves iterative cycles of data collection and

analysis, initiating with an in-depth understanding of the user's needs, which evolves through cycles of analysis, prototyping, testing concepts, and collecting feedback on the results (Dorst, 2011).

The aim is to engage one hotel group/chain operating in Australia to conduct this study in multiple full-service properties (in various cities), considering all classifications (luxury, mid-scale and budget), providing they present an organisational structure that supports middle-management positions on its hierarchy and will allow for the inclusion of participants of both positional and non-positional leadership status.

This research aims to contribute to the existing knowledge in the areas of hospitality pedagogy, workforce development, and hospitality leadership research by proposing a new model, and its design process, that centralises EI development into the core of leadership training programs in hospitality industry. An expected contribution will also be made in the application of PAR and DT methodologies in the study of hospitality workforce/employment and leadership topics. From a practical standpoint, this proposed study will serve as a blueprint for hospitality operators and educational institutions on how to develop and implement EI training programs within their organisations. The proposed results of this research will assist in ensuring that EI training programs are adaptable and evolve to respond to feedback and growing industry and workforce needs, promoting continuous improvement and relevance.

**Keywords:** *Emotional Intelligence; Hotel Leader; Hospitality Management; Soft Skill Development; Training Program.*

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# EMPLOYEE-ROBOT RELATIONSHIP: SCALE DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION

John Habib<sup>a</sup>, Catherine Prentice<sup>a</sup>, Park Thaichon<sup>a</sup>, and Raj Gururajan<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Southern Queensland, QLD, Australia

## ABSTRACT

The rise of service robot adoption in organizations and the need to work in human-robot teams attracted academics' and service industry practitioners' attention. This study aims to explore the employee-robot relationship and to develop and validate a scale through two stages: firstly, qualitative research using a focus group and semi-structured interviews aligning with the grounded theory until data saturation to explore the construct and generate scale items, and secondly, quantitative questionnaire surveys in various service industry sectors to refine the scale. This study contributes to human-robot interaction, collaboration, and employee engagement, providing knowledge to organizations and managers on the management and employment of Cobotic (Collaborative employee-robot) teams. The paper targets publication in high-quality relevant journals from the ABDC list.

**Keywords:** *Employee-Robot Relationship; Scale Development; Artificial Intelligence*

## INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH AIM

Service robots are employed in service industries such as the hospitality industry, which has witnessed a rapid increase in the deployment of AI-powered robots (Gnambs & Appel, 2019). Employees are aware of the robots' potential threats; employees with higher robot risk awareness engage in more withdrawal behaviors at work and report lower intentions to work in the hospitality industry (Pan et al., 2025). The basic psychological needs of employees have a crucial impact on shaping their well-being in co-creation with service robots at work (Yang & Gao, 2023); employees are more comfortable with robots replacing cognition-based jobs than emotion-required jobs unless robots can convey emotions (Waytz & Norton, 2014). Since robots impact employees and their co-creation levels, there is a rise in their adoption in workplaces, and there is limited literature on employee-robot relationships; a scale is required to define the construct. This study aims to explore the employee-robot relationship and to develop and validate a scale of the employee-robot relationship.

## THEORETICAL FOUNDATION - INTERDEPENDENCE THEORY

The interdependence relationship theory posits that humans are interdependent in all parts of their social lives, and social interactions are characterized by some interdependence, which is seen when an individual behavior affects their own and another's outcome (Gerpott et al., 2018). The interdependence theory has been used in human-robot relationships and collaboration, such as by (Khoa et al., 2022; Le et al., 2022). According to (Khoa et al., 2022), the interdependence theory is relevant to laying the theoretical foundation for human-robot collaboration at work, which posits that when the outcome of a person is decided not only by their performance but also by their partner's action (Le et al., 2022).

## METHODOLOGY

Following a study by Prentice et al. (2016), This study will go through the process of item generation, initial purification, scale refinement, and validation using a combination of mixed methods to generate items and explore their dimensionality, starting with qualitative studies using grounded theory to explore the employee-robot relationship through a focus group followed by semi-structured interviews and workplace observations focusing on service context, particularly within the hospitality sector, given its relevance to the researcher's professional background and the wide use of service robots in this sector, This step will generate maximum number of scale items, which will be used in the next part of the study through deductive quantitative method where we will reduce and finalize the

scale items through survey questionnaires conducted in different service industries.

## DISCUSSION AND CONTRIBUTIONS

The establishment of an employee-robot relationship scale enriches the existing literature. Given the increasing use of robots in organizations and the fact that managers need to oversee robotic teams adeptly (Khoa et al., 2022), it is crucial to understand the employee-robot relationship. For instance, in the hospitality industry, a manager's understanding of Cobot team dynamics can lead to better resource management and a more conducive work environment, enlightening the field of organizational management. Furthermore, this study will add to the interdependence relationship theory.

Since service robot-driven technological unemployment has become a significant concern for service researchers (Do et al., 2022) besides labor shortages, this study offers a ray of hope by introducing the concept of the employee-robot relationship. This enriches the literature on human-robot interaction, collaboration, and employee engagement. More importantly, it paves the way for developing future employees' skills and creating collaborative employee-robot teams, potentially mitigating the impact of technological unemployment, skill shortages, and retention challenges.

In conclusion, this research uses a mixed-methods approach to explore the employee-robot relationship in the service industry. It consequently develops and validates a scale for construct measurement.

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# ENSURING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR MARINE MAMMAL TOURISM IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

Joanna Fountain<sup>a</sup> and Michael Lück<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Te Whare Wānanga o Aoraki | Lincoln University, Christchurch, New Zealand, <sup>b</sup>Te Wānanga Aronui o Tāmaki Makau Rau | Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand

## ABSTRACT

All tourism is reliant on healthy environments and communities, and this is particularly the case for tourism experiences that rely on natural resources (PCE, 2021; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). Coastal and marine tourism is a prominent sector in Aotearoa New Zealand's tourism system. While this form of tourism may offer benefits to the environment and communities where it occurs, it is not without its detrimental impacts if not managed sustainably. This paper explores the extent to which marine mammal tourism operating in Akaroa Harbour (NZ) is meeting sustainable tourism objectives. Drawing on community engagement and semi-structured interviews with key marine tourism stakeholders – including tourism operators and Department of Conservation (DOC) officers – coupled with the researchers' decades of engagement in the community, this case study explores the practical implications of calls for a more sustainable tourism in the context of marine mammal tourism, and critically discusses the barriers and enablers to achieving this outcome.

Akaroa Harbour, on Banks Peninsula (Te Pātaka o Rakaihautū/Horomaka) attracts thousands of international and domestic visitors every year. The marine environment has been a playground for visitors for more than a century, but today a particular drawcard is the rare and endangered Hector's dolphins (*Cephalorhynchus hectori*). Visitors can engage one of many DOC-permitted tourism operators to view, swim with, and kayak alongside these marine mammals. In large part due to the plight of the Hector's dolphins, marine protection measures have been implemented in Akaroa Harbour; the local community and mana whenua significantly involved in their establishment and management. These measures include a Marine Mammal Sanctuary (established 1988), two marine reserves (1999 and 2014) and a taiāpure (a community-based fishery management model that regulates fisheries through co-management with local Māori; 2006). In 2016, and in response to considerable scientific research (Martinez et al, 2010), DOC and local marine tourism operators agreed to place a moratorium on the issuing of new permits for marine mammal activities while further research was conducted into the impact of marine mammal tourism on the dolphins. This research was funded through a levy on ticket sales by permitted tour operators. Regular meetings are held between DOC, mana moana, permitted operators and the scientists involved in the research to present research results, report operator observations, and to discuss future management options in light of emerging scientific findings. Strengthened relationships between tourism and DOC stakeholders and mana moana in recent years has resulted in greater recognition of the importance of indigenous values and Mātauranga Māori in planning, management and operation of marine mammal tourism on the harbour.

In many ways, the operation of marine mammal tourism in Akaroa Harbour appears to be a case study of best practice, showing evidence of substantial collaboration between stakeholders, and science-led decision making. There is no doubt that marine mammal operators - and the community as a whole – place a high value on the ecological health of the moana [sea], with Akaroa Harbour viewed as 'the jewel in the crown' for the destination. A shared concern for all stakeholders is the need to manage pressures from tourism on the marine ecosystem and the whole community. The marine tourism operators – whether permitted or not permitted – saw their role as educators and protectors of the marine environment as critically important; many operators measured success in terms of the extent

to which they could achieve this. The DOC informants agreed that the marine mammal tourism operators in the harbour had the best interests of the dolphins at heart and worked together to gather and interpret the science and to ensure environmental protection.

However, there remain concerns and tensions, and unity is not always evident. The ever-present economic imperative for tourism operators means there is pressure to expand and compete with other operators, which at times undermines collaborative efforts and runs contrary to the scientific evidence to reduce marine mammal permit levels. Another critical tension is that some operators do not accept the latest scientific research, which is fundamental to the future of marine mammal tourism in the vicinity. The local DOC officer acknowledges the importance of a strong evidential base for any decision to be made about permit levels in Akaroa Harbour at the conclusion of the current moratorium, as the livelihoods of many people are dependent on the outcome.

There is widespread agreement that the current regulatory framework is no longer fit for purpose. Tourism operators complain about the bureaucracy within DOC, which they acknowledge is exacerbated by a lack of funds. There was also a belief amongst permitted operators that DOC has no 'teeth' when it comes to enforcing regulations, particularly as they relate to non-permitted tour operators and recreational boaties. DOC informants acknowledge financial constraints are limiting their capacity and scope for action, and concur that enforcing existing regulations is difficult, time-consuming, and often unsuccessful at bringing prosecutions against operators; an issue highlighted elsewhere (e.g., Fumagalli et al. 2021).

These, and other observations from this case study, are synthesised in a moana-centred Measurement Framework for MCET Operations. Using this framework and the questions it raises, the paper concludes by considering some of the options for the future of marine mammal tourism in Akaroa Harbour, with implications for other places around the country.

**Keywords:** *marine mammal tourism, sustainable tourism, ecosystem-based management, New Zealand*

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# ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND OUTCOMES FOR WOMEN IN RURAL AND REMOTE NEPAL

Wendy Hillman<sup>a</sup> and Kylie Radel<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Central Queensland University

## ABSTRACT

Educational workshops around aspects of entrepreneurship were presented to Nepali women in rural and remote far north-western Nepal. The authors attended two research sites where the training was implemented over a full day at each site. A total of twelve women at one site and ten women at the second site (n=22) gave the authors access to examine further notions around entrepreneurship for the women through conducting interviews with some of the workshop participants, after the workshop training. The training workshops included sessions on entrepreneurship, leadership, and basic processes for establishing a business. The workshops were developed based on a deep understanding of the current social, economic and environmental contexts for women in rural and remote Nepal. We found that the participants were lacking in knowledge to pursue the initiation of business operations. We also found that the women had experienced little or no education. As the number of women entrepreneurs becomes higher, their prominence will improve through equal participation and leadership in the entrepreneurial sector. Most importantly, successful businesswomen will empower other less visible females and become the next educators for those who cannot inform themselves.

**Keywords:** *Entrepreneurship education; social outcomes; women, poor; indigenous; rural and remote; Nepal*

## Introduction

Entrepreneurship serves as a pivotal platform for the empowerment of women, enhancing their social standing, and challenging prevailing biases related to gender, ethnicity, Indigenous identity, and patriarchal structures. It plays a significant role in the societal betterment (Hani, 2015). As the significance of women's entrepreneurial endeavors in the advancement of regional and global economies, such as in Nepal, grows, there is a heightened focus on these women (Hillman & Radel, 2023). Trivedi and Gaur (2015) delved into the demographic similarities and differences between male and female entrepreneurs, highlighting the distinct motivations and challenges faced by each. This research underscores the necessity of examining women's entrepreneurship as a separate entity from that of men's entrepreneurship. Governments adopt and implement various policies and strategies to support women entrepreneurs, in contrast to those available for male entrepreneurs. Given the profound impact of women's entrepreneurship on both economic and social development, it is crucial to concentrate on the factors that drive women's entrepreneurial spirit, to foster and encourage women's entrepreneurship, and to address issues of gender, caste, and Indigenous inequality (Bhatta et al., 2023).

## Literature Review

The concept of entrepreneurship education was initially introduced in Japan in 1938 at Kobe University by Fijii Shigeru, subsequently garnering broader acknowledgment across the globe (Honig, 2004). Entrepreneurship education can be characterised as the cultivation of behaviours, attitudes, and skills. According to Fayolle and Gailly (2008), the fostering of entrepreneurial attitudes, skills, and mindsets is pivotal in fostering entrepreneurship and the generation of innovative ideas. In essence, entrepreneurship education represents a practical approach undertaken by managers and educators to address the challenges encountered in the international business landscape. Chinnoye and Akinlabi (2014) assert that the enhancement of entrepreneurship education can be achieved through regular program evaluations and the delivery of entrepreneurship education as a structured instructional program. Conversely, despite its prominence as a subject within higher education, discussions have

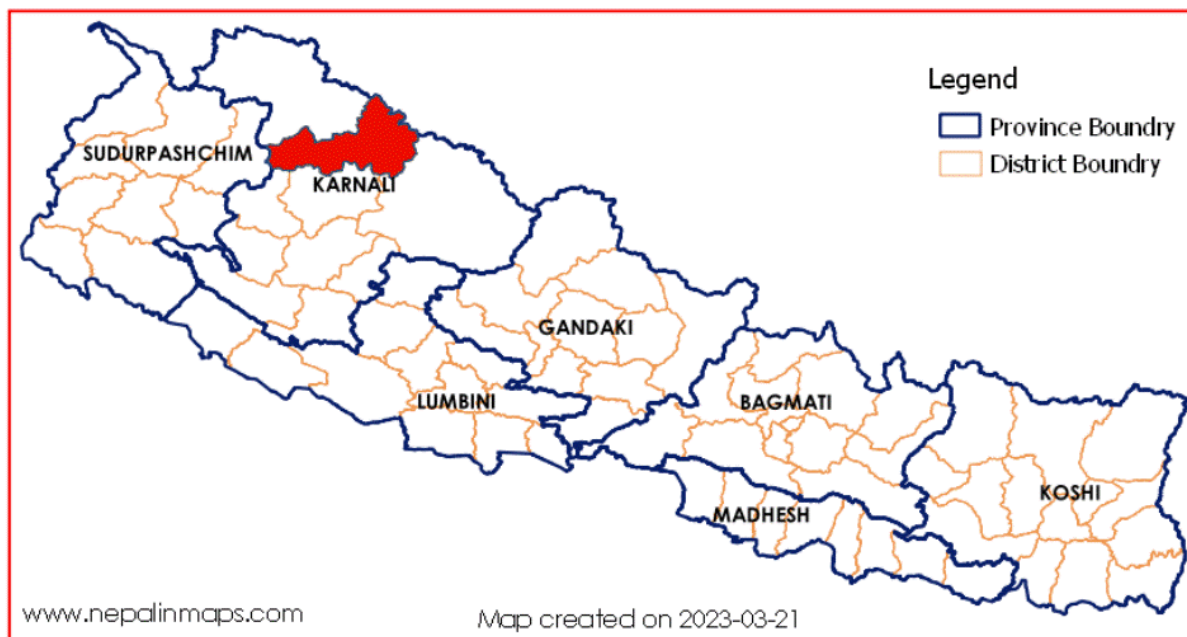


emerged regarding the nature of entrepreneurship, whether it is an innate quality or can be cultivated, and whether it merits study at any educational level (Samuel & Rahman, 2018).

### Methodology

Training workshops were held at two distinct field sites by the authors, as depicted in Figure 1. These workshops were designed to be conducted both with and for women, offering sessions at each of the two locations. As part of the data collection process, interviews were carried out following the conclusion of the training workshops with the women who consented to participate. Consequently, the authors were able to construct a grounded theory concerning entrepreneurship education and its correlation with the success of women entrepreneurs. A bilingual Nepali woman served as the interpreter throughout this process. Subsequently, thematic analysis, coding, and categorisation of the collected data were performed continuously throughout the duration of the data collection and interviewing phases (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2019) in line with grounded theory methodology.

**Figure 1: Map of far north-western Nepal – showing the field sites**



**Note:** <https://nepalinmaps.com/mugu/>

### Findings and Discussion

Entrepreneurship is influenced by various socio-cultural factors such as educational background and training as well as the entrepreneur's family background, including gender, culture, ethnicity and indigenous origin. Furthermore, entrepreneurship education and training had a positive impact on the participants in this research project, motivating them to become entrepreneurs. This study has provided insight into the impact of entrepreneurship training on poor and indigenous women living in remote areas of Nepal. The progressive development of Nepali society will allow for further research to determine the important role that education and training play in the rise of entrepreneurship. We hope this will inspire others to educate themselves and become entrepreneurs (Pant, 2019).

### Implications and Conclusions

The findings of this study have far-reaching implications in terms of entrepreneurship education as we have developed a platform that will lead to a transformation in the awareness, knowledge and understanding of women entrepreneurs in developing countries. This will be a significant contribution and impact that can shape policy and practical implications for poor and indigenous women



entrepreneurs across Nepal and, ultimately, the world.

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# ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING IN TOURISM: HOW PERCEIVED ETHICAL IMAGE INFLUENCES TRAVELER BEHAVIOR

Salman Majeed<sup>a,b,c,d</sup>, Woo Gon Kim<sup>b</sup> and Rawan Nimri<sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup>SILC Business School, Shanghai University, Shanghai, China, <sup>b</sup>International Center for Hospitality Research & Development, Dedman College of Hospitality, Florida State University, USA, <sup>c</sup>Dean's unit, UTS Business School, University of Technology Sydney, Australia, <sup>d</sup>International UTS-learning Center, University of Technology Sydney, Australia, <sup>e</sup>Department of Tourism, Sport and Hotel Management, Griffith Business School, Griffith University, Australia

## ABSTRACT

The travel and tourism industry plays a significant role in stimulating economic growth by creating jobs and generating substantial revenue. As travelers increasingly seek socially responsible business practices, such as fair pricing, safe accommodations, and environmentally friendly options, these preferences foster positive cognitive reactions and ethical behavior during trips (Majeed et al., 2023). However, travelers may also encounter destination's unethical activities (DUAs), including corruption, fraudulent online reviews, forced consumption, and crimes like terrorism or theft, which can damage a destination's moral image (Akhtar et al., 2019; Lugosi, 2019). These DUAs manifest in various forms and have significant consequences for a destination's reputation and tourism and hospitality sectors. For instance, environmental degradation due to unsustainable practices and greenwashing can negatively impact travelers' perceptions of a destination's ecological responsibility (Majeed & Kim, 2023). Similarly, exploitation of local communities can damage a destination's moral standing in the eyes of conscientious travelers (Liu et al., 2021). Unethical business practices, such as price gouging during peak seasons or misleading marketing tactics, can further damage trust, fuel negative ethical judgement, undermine ethical intent to visit a destination (Escadas et al., 2024; Ma et al., 2020).

This study explores how these DUAs influence the perceived ethical image of a destination (EID), which reflects travelers' moral awareness of a destination's activities, and its subsequent impact on ethical decision-making. The concept of EID is particularly relevant as travelers become more conscious of their impact and seek authentic, responsible experiences that align with their personal values and ethical standards (Escadas et al., 2020). Instances of DUAs, such as those at China's Snow Town National Forest Park, where DUAs led to widespread tourist backlash, illustrate the significant effect of perceived EID on travel behavior (Liu et al., 2021). A positive perceived EID fosters ethical behavior, such as supporting sustainable practices, while a negative perceived EID may result in unethical behavior, such as theft or defrauding service providers (Escadas et al., 2024; Ma et al., 2020). Understanding how perceived EID influences travelers' ethical decision-making is crucial for destination marketers seeking to promote ethical consumption and enhance a destination's appeal.

Previous research emphasizes the role of emotions in ethical decision-making, particularly in response to moral awareness, suggesting that anticipated emotions (positive or negative) significantly influence judgments and behavior (Greene et al., 2004; Pratt & Zeng, 2020). This paper integrates the cognitive appraisal theory of emotions and the dual process theory of moral judgement, which suggest that ethical judgment stems from both cognitive and emotional responses, to explore how anticipated emotions shape travelers' ethical decision making (Warner et al., 2024). Despite increasing interest in the role of emotions in ethical decision-making, research connecting these concepts with perceived moral image of a destination in the tourism context remains limited (for example, see Escadas et al., 2024, 2020). This study aims to bridge that gap by examining how DUAs affect perceived EID, anticipated emotions, and ethical decision-making among travelers.

To address these gaps, this paper develops a conceptual framework that examines: (1) the integrated phenomenon of DUAs, perceived EID, anticipated emotions, and ethical decision making, and (2) the relationship between perceived EID and emotions-induced ethical decision making. A scoping-funnel approach was adopted to review the literature, identifying 4759 literature items on Web of Science, which were filtered down to 285 literature items based on different filters on the web

of science. Of these, 285 literature items, we retained 76 high-quality through the scoping review approach (Majeed & Kim, 2023) for the final analysis. This rigorous selection process ensures a comprehensive yet focused review of the most relevant and impactful research in the field.

This paper advances understanding of how DUAs shape perceived EID and, in turn, influence travelers' ethical decision-making. This study extends Rest's (1986) ethical decision-making model by incorporating anticipated emotions, representing a significant theoretical contribution to research in travel, tourism, and hospitality. The study's findings offer a novel framework for understanding the ethical dimensions of DUAs, which can inform policy-making and destination management strategies. This paper highlights the importance of emotional factors in traveler behavior and opens up new avenues for research in tourism psychology. Additionally, these findings can guide the development of ethical marketing campaigns and ethical tourism initiatives, contributing to the long-term viability and responsible growth of the tourism industry.

**Keywords:** *Ethical Tourism, Ethical Destination Marketing, Ethical Decision Making, Emotions, Traveler Behavior*

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# EXAMINING ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES FOR FESTIVAL DELIVERY AND LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

Andrew Sivijs<sup>a</sup>, Michelle Thompson<sup>a</sup> and Bruce Prideaux<sup>a,b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>CQ University, <sup>b</sup>Prince of Songkla University

## ABSTRACT

### Introduction

Destinations have become increasingly aware of the role of festivals and events as a mechanism for destination promotion, boosting regional employment and supporting regional regeneration (Wilson et al., 2017). The COVID-19 pandemic impacted many festivals and events, causing extensive disruptions, including cancellations and modifications, exposing the fragility of festivals and events and their ongoing delivery (Dragin-Jensen et al., 2022). In their investigation of the recovery of community events in Scotland post-COVID-19, Davies et al. (2023) found that support from local authorities was fragmented and event organisers were met with barriers such as audience attraction, fundraising and rising costs, permissions, licenses, resources, administration, risk management and a need for greater regional collaboration. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Australian festivals and events landscape was crowded with an abundance of mostly affordable and diverse entertainment choices.

This paper aims to identify strategies and tactics that may be adopted by not-for-profit (NFP) festivals and events and considers these findings within the context of the longer-term sustainability of festivals and events following a significant disruption, such as COVID-19. The findings focus on how the annual Queenscliff Music Festival (QMF) responded to the post-COVID operational environment and the delivery of the festival. QMF has grown over the last 27 years with upwards of 10,000 attendees, several dozen artists and up to 500 volunteers contributing to its successful delivery. The research adopted a qualitative research strategy using semi-structured interviews and researcher observations. Questions were asked on topics including: sustainability; strategic planning; knowledge management; community; and governance and management. Saturation was achieved after the tenth interview, consistent with grounded theory (Gioia et al., 2013). Thematic analysis was used to identify key themes from the verbal, written and visual assessments.

### Key findings

Nine key themes emerged from the analysis of the interviews: future audience composition; staff attraction and retention; management model; community inclusion/partnerships; funding model and cost increases; programming and format; risk management and regulatory demands; sustainability; and strategic planning. Several challenges were identified based on these themes. There was a lingering impact from the unexpected crisis event (COVID-19) that interrupted the linear rhythm of the festival and the 'normal' delivery model historically applied. For example, there were challenges and barriers around attracting adequate audience support and attendance in the post-COVID period. This was compounded by greater competition for artists in an increasingly cluttered market and the trend towards last-minute ticket purchases.

The shifting nature of the overall 'product mix' of the festival was another challenge that forced the festival organisers to redefine QMF's unique market position. A key feature of this challenge was the need for trade-offs between local performers and international headline acts. Issues of this type reflect a shift in the market as it undergoes a period of change in relation to the physical offering and logistics in terms of duration and length. One outcome of this shift has been a move to a shorter format, such as one or two days, rather than three. Changes in customer preferences experienced by QMF are directly linked to

current economic pressures and rising costs in the post-COVID Australian events and festivals market. Another factor affecting events and festivals is the rapid rise in overheads including public liability insurance costs for both venues and festivals. This a reflection of disruptions such as COVID-19 amplifying the need for risk assessment and more effective cost management. Finally, new issues have arisen with the identification and retention of suitable human resources, including traditional volunteer cohorts and permanent staff, following a significant disruption such as COVID-19.

### Contribution of the research

This research builds on recent studies (Davies et al., 2023; Dragin-Jensen et al., 2022) by examining key issues, including audience retention and future growth prospects, impacting the sustainability of NFP community festivals and events following a major disruption, as exemplified by COVID-19. The research also supports Rentscher and Lee's (2022) view of major event transformations including increased 'localism', a move from competition to collaboration, and increased digital transformation. The research also highlighted the importance of flexibility in the delivery and design of music festivals to retain audience engagement and participation and promote longer-term delivery.

The findings extend Ali-Knight et al. (2023) research into the concept of 'the new normal', which includes the need for a "new approach" to festivals and events. The results of this research into the Queenscliff Music Festival (QMF) highlight several concerns that NFP event organisers need to consider as they strive to develop a sustainable future for festivals and events. Key concerns include the length of events, the mix of artists, retention of key human resources, and cost management including public liability insurance. The results will assist in identifying relevant and workable strategies that may be adopted by NFP festivals and events after major disruptions have increased the uncertainty, and therefore sustainability, of their delivery.

**Keywords:** *festivals, events, sustainability, disruptions, COVID-19, adaptive strategies*

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# EXAMINING STAKEHOLDER COOPERATION AND COORDINATION FOR EVENT LEVERAGING IN A COLLEGE TOWN

Heather Gibson<sup>a</sup>, Dahye Jung<sup>a</sup> and Brianna Blassneck<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Florida

## ABSTRACT

The increased use of events for economic development has elicited calls to strategically manage event hosting (e.g., Getz, 1997) and several frameworks have emerged such as Chalip's (2004) General Model for Event Leverage. Leveraging involves intentionally maximizing desired outcomes through strategic management. Getz (1997) proposed communities consider their events as a portfolio of different event types. In turn, Chalip (2004) suggested that an event portfolio is a leverageable resource. Despite researchers showing that some communities have adopted a portfolio approach (e.g., Kelly & Fairley, 2018), Ziakas and Getz (2021) argue that our knowledge about how event portfolios are implemented is at an "embryonic stage" (p. 104233). Ziakas (2010) explained that event leverage necessitates relationships among different event stakeholders. However, as Chalip and Fairley (2019) note "a core challenge for leveraging is to build the necessary partnerships and alliances" (p. 156) with Kelly and Fairley (2018) finding that "collaboration is crucial" among the event community; yet our understanding of the intricacies of such relationships is "poorly understood" (Chalip & Fairley, 2019, p. 156). The study context is a medium-sized US college town with a long history of event hosting and recent public investment in infrastructure to host more events. The size and type of events hosted range from 18 university sports dominated by fall football attracting over 100,000 fans. The sports commission hosts over 70 events annually, drawing 60,000 attendees. The university's three graduation weekends serve 17,600 students annually along with their families. In addition, the city hosts various conferences and other events. Another large annual event is motor-car racing with 135,000 fans each spring and a three-day music festival in the fall drawing 8,000 people. The purpose of the study was to investigate the state of the relationships and level of coordination and cooperation among different event stakeholders. Specifically, do the different event stakeholders interact and generate synergies? Twenty-three event stakeholders were interviewed using a semi-structured approach. Initially a list of event stakeholders was developed including officials from the DMO, sports commission, university conventions, hoteliers, and the arts. Adopting a Straussian Grounded Theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) using constant comparison, later stakeholders were identified using theoretical sampling. Interviews ranged from 30 to 90 minutes and discussed the current state of event hosting, coordination among stakeholders, positive and negative event impacts, and more. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, and analysis was guided by the Event Portfolio, Planning and Leveraging Model, with a focus on Social Relations (Ziakas, 2010, 2013) using open and axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Three themes were identified: *Ad-hoc Interaction*, *Intentional Collaboration*, and *Coordination Challenges*. Stakeholders often engage in *Ad-hoc Interaction*, adjusting their schedules without direct collaboration. For example, event organizers avoid scheduling during university events. As one sport event organizer noted, "There are about 14, 15 weekends that we have to block out of our schedule because we know there are no hotel rooms available." Another stakeholder added, "Everybody knows the University football games, they're going to plan their event on a different weekend" (Tourism Manager, DMO). At the same time, *Intentional Collaboration* exists, where stakeholders actively work together. For example, the sports commissioner explained "The summertime is so low for the hotels, so we always try to schedule our large-scale events or use bed tax money during that low period." Therefore, on the one hand, event stakeholders are aware of the seasons generated by the university's calendar and plan around it, but on the other hospitality is reliant on the work of the sports commission to fill their hotels and restaurants during the low season. Despite the hub of cooperation around the sports



commission, *Coordination Challenges* were evident in communication and resource management, particularly between different event sectors. A sports commissioner highlighted this stating, "...sometimes I don't know that University Law is holding a big conference at one of the hotels I typically use." Another stakeholder echoed these concerns, noting, "The Performing Arts Center now struggles with coordinating with baseball..." (Director, University Facility). Recently, the number and range of events have grown rapidly, yet the data show little evidence of widespread coordination and cooperation among the event stakeholders beyond the hub around the sports commission and awareness about scheduling around university events. Funded by the local tourist tax, the sports commission has an inherently symbiotic relationship with the hoteliers and there is a close working relationship between them. The new multipurpose events center also works with the sports commission. However, beyond these small pockets as Ziakas (2013) suggests any semblance of an event portfolio is organically developed. With a lack of formal cooperation and awareness of others' roles and events, this reaffirms Chalip and Fairley's (2019) observation that building alliances remains a core challenge. As new events are added each year the enduring task becomes how do you build these relationships what stakeholder(s) should be tasked with managing the event portfolio?

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**Keywords:** *Event Leveraging, Event Portfolio, Cooperation, Event Stakeholder Relationships University Community*

# EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF NOSTALGIA ON BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS IN WINTER SPORTS TOURISM: A STUDY OF SEASONAL DEMAND VARIATIONS

Shubin Yu<sup>a</sup>, Yi Xuan Ong<sup>a</sup> and Juhyeok Jang<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Hokkaido University, Japan

## ABSTRACT

### Introduction

Sports tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries worldwide, with the market valued at over \$587.81 billion (World Sports Tourism Congress, 2023). As early as 2001, the first World Tourism Organization conference highlighted the importance of sport-related tourism and established sports tourism as an essential research topic for academics (Schlemmer et al., 2020). Sports tourism refers to (1) active sports tourism (AST), involving tourists who actively participate in sports activities – participant; and (2) passive sports tourism (PST), involving tourists who watch sports-related games or events and visit sports attractions – spectator (Gammon & Robinson, 2003). There is an increased concern for health and well-being in the post-COVID era which has attracted much attention to AST, such as hiking, mountaineering, cycling, and skiing (Mishra et al., 2022). However, existing studies in sports tourism have tended to focus on PST rather than AST (Fairley et al., 2018). Moreover, there is limited research on winter sports tourism (WST) (e.g., skiing) in the AST literature. International statistics show that WST is present in more than 100 countries and attracts more than 400 million tourists annually (Vanat, 2022), but little is researched about their decision-making determinants. Therefore, this study aims to develop and investigate a conceptually comprehensive model of the decision-making behavior of winter sports tourists (WSTs).

### Literature review

**Nostalgia.** Nostalgia is an emotional state in which individuals recall positive experiences from the past as it compares more favorably to the present (Wilson, 2005). Sports nostalgia is deeply connected to both past experiences and future behavioral intentions (Cho et al., 2017). It has been identified as a vital factor in understanding the decision-making behavior of sports tourists (Chen et al., 2022). Previous studies have generally focused on the motivations that influence the decision-making behavior of WSTs (Alexandris et al., 2009; Wang et al., 2020), with few exploring the role of nostalgia in this process. Therefore, in this study, we will use the Nostalgia Scale for Sports Tourism scale (sports team, environment, socialization, personal identity, and group identity) developed by Cho et al. (2017) to gain an understanding of nostalgia in WST. As our research focuses on recreational winter sports tourists—who are influenced by past skiing or snowboarding experiences and social interactions and who do not belong to any sports teams—we will consider only the four dimensions of environment, socialization, personal identity, and group identity as proposed in previous studies.

**Seasonality & Region.** Global warming poses a serious challenge to WST (Steiger et al., 2023) and impacts the demand for WST differently across hemispheres. According to Steiger et al. (2023), the economic and management impacts of climate change will differ between seasons due to the seasonality of snow availability and tourism demand. Additionally, since seasonality varies between different hemispheres, region should also be considered. For example, a prolonged period of extremely hot summers could boost Australian demand for skiing in Japan, which saw a 127.8% increase in Australian visitors in January 2024 compared to January 2019 (JNTO, 2024). Therefore, in the context of global warming, seasonality and region also play crucial roles in WST.

With the above context, this study develops the following conceptual framework (Figure 1).

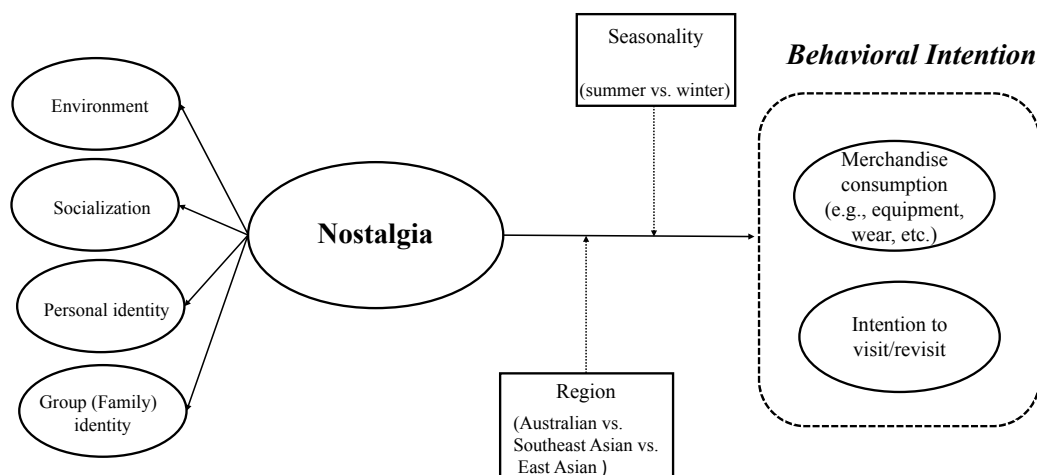


Figure1. Conceptual framework

### Methodology

The research will be conducted at the Niseko ski resorts in Hokkaido, Japan, this coming winter season. The statistical population for this study comprises all tourists who have experienced WST at least three times. SmartPLS will be used to analyze and determine the relationship between nostalgia and behavioral intention. Additionally, multi-group analyses will examine the moderating effect of seasonality and region.

### Implications

First, gaining a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of nostalgia among WSTs could help identify the determinants of their decision-making behavior, potentially filling a gap in the existing literature. The results will also help in destination management and planning, particularly in developing effective marketing strategies for WSTs from different regions. Second, understanding how global warming affects WST demand differently in each hemisphere is crucial for stakeholders to adjust approaches and plan for future industry changes.

**Keywords:** *nostalgia, seasonality, region, winter sports tourism*

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# EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN LEARNING STYLES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Song Ee Hahn<sup>a</sup>, Marlene Pratt<sup>b</sup> and Andrew Le<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Southern Cross Institute, <sup>b</sup>Just Cabins Australia Pty Ltd t/a Dwellr, <sup>c</sup>Canterbury Institute of Management

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to determine the influence of culture and student learning styles on their learning experience associated with learning outcomes. This research focuses on experiential learning and cultural differences in learning style and learning outcomes. As a result, this research includes a cross-culture study to investigate the differences in the relationships among the major constructs. This study employed a quantitative research methodology using a paper-based and online survey and 234 completed and usable responses were collected. The study results showed that learning style associated with teamwork has a positive effect on students' satisfaction and learning outcomes.

**Keywords:** *Experiential Learning, Cultural Differences, Learning Style and Learning Outcomes*

## Introduction

Over the decades, tourism and hospitality educators have made various attempts to increase the practicality of students' learning experiences. Among them, experiential learning has been proven through various studies to be an effective learning approach that provides opportunities for students to apply their knowledge acquired in class to the real-world situation (Kim & Jeong, 2018). Although scholars agree that experiential learning plays an important role on students' learning outcomes in tourism and hospitality education (Goh & King, 2020), there is a lack of research on other factors that can affect students' experiences and outcomes such as individual learning style and their culture.

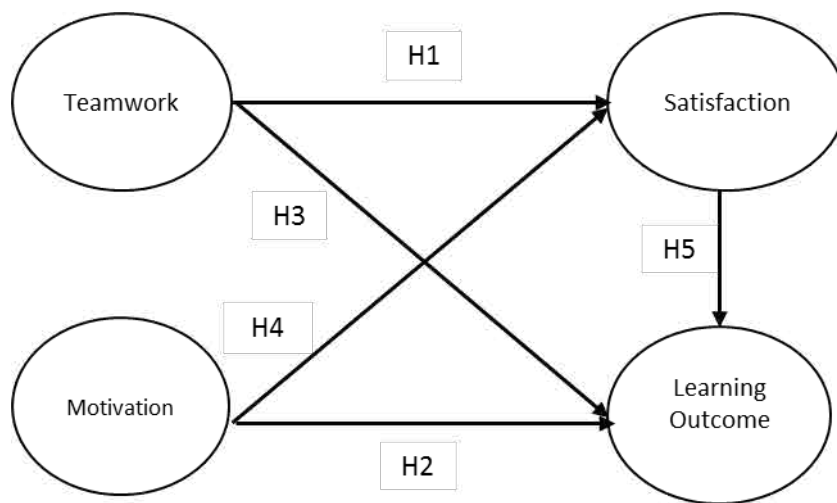
## Literature Review

Learning is defined as “an enduring change in behaviour or capacity to behave in a given fashion resulting from practice or experience” (Schunk, 2008). Theories include action learning, cognitivist, and social constructivist theories, which emphasise interaction with the environment (Bandura, 1977; Pritchard, 2014). Learning styles, such as Kolb's LSI and Honey and Mumford's model, and strategies like Biggs's deep, surface, and achieving approaches, reflect individual preferences and task handling (Biggs et al., 2001; Kolb, 1984). Cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1986) and social factors impact learning styles and problem-solving (Barmeyer, 2004). Experiential learning, particularly simulations, enhances engagement and collaborative skills (Drake et al., 2006; Kolb, 1984). This study explores learning styles and outcomes among hospitality students in Australia, Macau, and Hong Kong, considering cultural influences.

## Research Methods and Results

This study employed a quantitative research methodology using paper-based and online surveys. Purposive sampling was used to distribute a questionnaire to students enrolled in Hotel Service Operations Management. The questionnaire included three sections: demographic information, students' learning experiences and perceived outcomes with HOTS using a 7-point Likert scale, and the learning process using the Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ) with 5-point Likert scales for learning motivation and styles. The data analysis involved exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for identifying constructs, reliability tests, confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) using AMOS 25.0 for model fit, and structural equation modelling (SEM) for hypothesis testing. See Figure 1 for the revised research model and Table 1 for the structural model results.

**Figure 1: Revised research model**



**Table 1: Structural model results**

Dependent variables	Independent variables	Hypotheses	Beta weight	t-value	Significance
Teamwork	Satisfaction	H1	.79	16.10	Sig.***
Motivation	Satisfaction	H2	.14	3.11	Sig.**
Teamwork	Learning Outcomes	H3	.02	0.33	N/S
Motivation	Learning Outcomes	H4	.10	2.32	Sig.*
Satisfaction	Learning Outcomes	H5	.79	9.85	Sig.***

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ,  $\chi^2 = 343.80$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $df = 165$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.08$ , GFI = .88 CFI = .96, NFI = .93, TLI = .96 and RMSEA = .07.

In addition to hypothesis testing, further analysis examined structural path differences among Western students in Australia (Group 1, N=31), Asian students in Australia (Group 2, N=105), and Asian



students in Macao (Group 3, N=91). Excluded groups were Western students in Macao, a Middle Eastern student, and dual-nationality respondents due to insufficient numbers. The chi-square difference test between models was significant ( $\Delta\text{chi-square}=123.423$ ,  $\Delta\text{df}=42$ ,  $p<.01$ ), indicating differences in structural paths. Teamwork significantly affected Satisfaction across all groups. Motivation significantly affected Satisfaction in Groups 2 ( $t=3.49$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and 3 ( $t=2.35$ ,  $p<.05$ ) only. Motivation did not significantly influence Learning Outcomes in any group, while Teamwork's influence on Learning Outcomes was significant only in Group 3 ( $t=2.91$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Satisfaction significantly impacted Learning Outcomes for all groups.

## Conclusion and implications

This study highlights the impact of teamwork and motivation on students' satisfaction with simulation programs, revealing cultural differences in these influences. For Asian students, motivation significantly boosts satisfaction, while Western students show no such effect. Teamwork directly enhances perceived learning outcomes for Asian students in Macao but not in Australia, suggesting cultural adaptation impacts. Practical implications include the need for university educators to emphasize teamwork and motivation, particularly for Asian students. Educators can enhance teamwork by explaining its importance and sharing success stories. Additionally, motivating students by linking simulation experiences to real-life hotel operations can increase satisfaction, especially for Asian students studying abroad.

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# EXPLORING CAREER EXPECTATIONS AND BARRIERS FOR WOMEN IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY IN NEW ZEALAND

Xinye Qian<sup>a</sup>, **Claire Liu<sup>a</sup>** and Shelagh Mooney<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Auckland University of Technology

## ABSTRACT

Career expectations vary between men and women and are influenced by multiple factors. Previous studies have examined factors that influence career expectations from individual perspectives and have found that career expectations are influenced by personal interests, family background (Schoon & Parsons, 2002), educational level, and race/ethnicity (Metz et al., 2009).). However, gender differences in career expectations appear to have rarely been investigated. The research by Liu et al. (2020) indicates that career expectations positively influence career progression in the hospitality industry. Therefore, different career progression rates for people could be influenced by their expectations. This research aimed to explore the career expectations and barriers of women in the New Zealand hotel industry and to identify whether gender influences women's career expectations and their career progression. To achieve the research goal, two research questions were addressed: Q1: What are the career conditions and expectations of hotel employees in New Zealand? Q2: To what extent do gender barriers influence women's career expectations and progression in the New Zealand hotel industry?

The results show that 54.7% of the participants were women. Most worked in five-star hotels (89.1%). Half of the participants worked as attendants (entry-level employees) (53.1%), followed by operating managers at 15.6% and supervisors at 12.5%. The results showed that there were more women attendants than men, with only half of them being women managers. The largest age group was 18-24 years (37.5%), followed by 25-34 years (35.9%). More than half of the participants had work experience of 2-5 years, and a quarter had 6-10 years. Most were Asian in ethnicity (56.3%), followed by European New Zealanders (25.0%). Most participants had permanent contracts (74.6%) and 60.3% were paid hourly. Casual employees constituted 17.7%.

The answers to the twelve questions about career expectations revealed insights into employee aspirations and expectations within the hotel industry. Women showed higher aspirations for top leadership positions and short-term department leadership roles compared to men at the entry-level. With career progression, the proportion of men's and women's expectations of becoming a top manager showed different trends. Fewer women had this expectation, while more men did. The most critical factors in career development were salary/wage and benefits, followed by work-life balance and career growth opportunities. Positive attitudes towards training were prominent in 93.1% of men and 65.7% of women.

Gender differences emerged, with more than half of women believing in recognition, as do most men. Men showed more positive responses to learning opportunities than women. A higher proportion of men were open to global relocation to achieve progression than of women. Regarding barriers, the results showed insight into gender differences and support for equality within the hotel industry. Women (40.0%) felt that their department was more suitable for women, highlighting women's qualities, such as care and patience. The results indicated that hotel employees were a young and ethnically diverse workforce, with a notable gender imbalance in the departmental and hierarchical distribution. Horizontal segregation in occupational roles and vertical segregation in management positions underscored deeply embedded gender stereotypes and traditional norms that hinder women's progress.

With respect to working conditions, the results showed common barriers for all sexes. However, the women were more negative about them. Low job satisfaction, unequal recognition, and lack of career support and gender equality policies emerged as critical issues that created a challenging work environment for both women and men. However, the results related to career expectations diverged significantly between men and women. Women exhibited great ambitions in the initial stages of their careers. However, as career progression, the long-term ambitions of women declined from mid-career to late-career stages. Sexual harassment, work-life conflicts, and mobility challenges were the main barriers women faced in this study, which influenced their career expectations. In the absence of effective policies, sexual harassment from both guests and managers hindered career progressions and expectations of women. Work-life conflicts reduced the enthusiasm and expectations of women to pursue progress. Furthermore, mobility challenges, such as the reluctance to relocate globally, presented barriers for women seeking career advancement opportunities.

The study indicated a novel finding: contrary to increasingly positive career expectations of men, women's career expectations showed a downward trend throughout their careers. This provides valuable information on how career expectations for people change over time. The results show that women face more barriers even to the same issues. These barriers made women less confident and more negative than men regarding career development and expectations. The results of this study have important practical implications for the New Zealand hotel industry. First, the results showed that hotel workers do not receive enough career support to continue their careers. The study indicates an urgent need for hotels to reassess and strengthen their gender equality policies. Meanwhile, compelling evidence that women still face sexual harassment confirms the need for strong sexual harassment policies. Dedicated organizational support is also required for women. These policies can reduce gender barriers for women and create a work environment that is more conducive to career development.

**Keywords:** *Career expectations, women in the hotel industry, gender differences, New Zealand.*

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# EXPLORING PRO-ENVIRONMENTAL BEHAVIOURS IN TOURISM: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sadaf Rabiee Mary<sup>a</sup>, Seyed Mostafa Rasoolimanesh<sup>a</sup>, Hana Hadinejad<sup>a</sup> and Joanna Pearce<sup>a</sup>

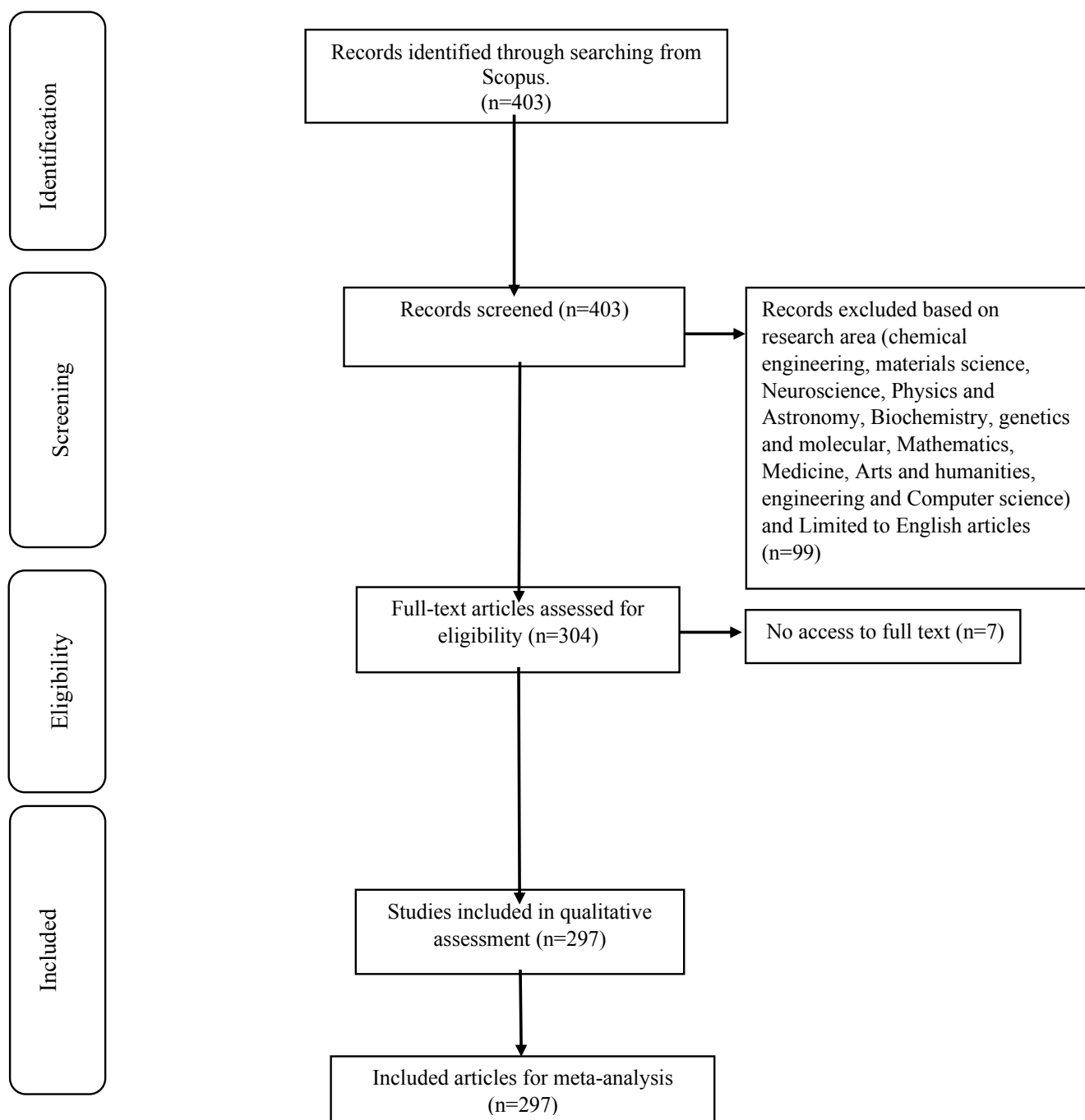
<sup>a</sup> School of Business and Law, Edith Cowan University (ECU), Perth, Australia

## ABSTRACT

The tourism and hospitality sectors, primarily oriented towards providing leisure and entertainment, often lead tourists to prioritise personal enjoyment over environmental responsibility (Lin et al., 2022). Tourists generally exhibit fewer environmentally friendly behaviours during vacations compared to their routine practices at home (Dolnicar et al., 2017). Promoting engagement in various pro-environmental behaviours (PEBs), such as recycling, litter collection, adherence to designated trails, and charitable donations, plays a crucial role in advancing sustainability within this industry, contribute to positive environmental outcomes, and help mitigate global environmental threats (Esfandiar et al., 2022). While the adoption of pro-environmental behaviours (PEBs) in the tourism context is crucial, a comprehensive analysis of prior scholarship that assesses the status of knowledge on actual behaviour remains scarce. To bridge this gap, the present study conducts a systematic literature review, to compare previous studies on actual behaviour and behavioural intentions about the theories, methodologies, and antecedents.

Data collection followed the PRISMA framework, with Scopus selected as the primary database for a systematic search. The search was confined to the titles, abstracts, and keywords of articles, as suggested by Pahlevan-Sharif et al. (2019). Eight keywords were employed: "Pro-environmental behaviour," or "Environmentally responsible behaviour," and "tourism," or "hospitality," or "travel," and "customer," or "consumer," or "tourists." These terms were carefully chosen to encompass multiple facets of the subject and ensure comprehensive coverage. The literature review was not limited to any specific temporal range.

The initial search, conducted in May 2024, identified 403 articles within the Scopus database. This was subsequently narrowed down to 304 articles after filtering for English-language, peer-reviewed publications in the fields of business and management. There were no geographical limitations, allowing for a global scope in the examination of pro-environmental behaviour (PEB) within the tourism sector. These articles were catalogued in an Excel sheet, capturing key bibliometric details such as journal title, publication year, author names, article title, methodology, type of behaviour/intention studied, context, findings, and limitations. Following a full-text review, 7 articles were excluded due to accessibility issues, leaving 297 articles for further analysis. These remaining articles were rigorously evaluated based on their theoretical contributions, methodological rigor, and focus on actual behaviour or behavioural intention.



**Figure 1.** Illustration of every inclusion and exclusion at every stage. (PRISMA framework)

## Results and Interpretation

Through a comprehensive systematic literature review spanning 26 years (1998–2024), key trends and insights into publication patterns related to tourists' pro-environmental behaviours (PEBs) in tourism have been identified. Among the 297 studies reviewed, 111 articles (36.5%) were atheoretical, while 193 articles (63.4%) applied theoretical frameworks. The most frequently utilized theories were the Norm Activation Theory and the Theory of Planned Behaviour ( $n = 19$ ), followed by the Stimulus-Organism-Response theory ( $n = 15$ ), then Value-Belief-Norm theory with 13 studies. These theories, which are widely recognized within the field of environmental sustainability, have been consistently employed and validated for their effectiveness in explaining consumer PEBs (Han, 2021).

The majority of the reviewed articles focused on behavioural intentions, with only 12 studies examining actual PEBs. Of the studies addressing actual behaviours, three employed intervention-based approaches to predict the behaviour. Most studies have examined general behaviour ( $n = 285$ ). Among those studies which are focused on specific behaviour, most frequent unsustainable behaviours were littering ( $n = 17$ ), recycling ( $n = 11$ ), energy consumption ( $n = 9$ ), disturbing the wildlife and destroying the natural habitat as well as towel reuse ( $n = 8$ ). The most common antecedents of actual behaviour and behavioural intention has been summarised below. (Table 1)

**Table 1:** *The antecedents of actual behaviour and most common antecedents of behavioural intention*

<b>Antecedents of actual behaviour</b>	<b>Antecedents of behavioural intention</b>
Pro-environmental behaviour at home	Egoistic values, Altruistic values, biospheric values
	Environmental awareness
	Knowledge
Behavioural beliefs, normative beliefs, control beliefs	Behavioural beliefs, normative beliefs, control beliefs
	Recreation experience
Attitude	Cognitive image
Subjective norm	Awareness of consequences
Perceived behavioural control	Environmental beliefs
	Attitude
Pro-environmental contextual force	Subjective norm, Perceived behavioural control

Regarding the methodological approaches, most of the reviewed studies on behavioural intention employed quantitative (survey) methods ( $n = 230$ ). Mixed methods were used in 22 instances, while experimental methodologies were applied in 14 studies. The least utilized approach was qualitative methodology ( $n = 18$ ). Despite this distribution, most of the studies on actual behaviour have used



experimental methodology (n=9) and the rest of them have used mixed method (n=3). Many current studies have suggested that experimental methods offer significant potential for future in-depth research (Rao et al., 2022). The results of this systematic literature review reveal a substantial gap in the application of experimental methodologies to assess actual behaviour. This gap should be addressed, as most studies currently rely on theoretical frameworks from related disciplines.

**Keywords:** *Pro-environmental behaviour; Actual behaviour; Behavioural intention; Tourists behaviour; Systematic Literature Review*

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# EXPLORING RESIDENTS' VIEWS ON FESTIVAL IMPACTS IN BAGUIO: INSIGHTS FROM A PILOT STUDY

Jenny H. Panchal<sup>a</sup>, Farima Fehrest<sup>a</sup>, Ma. Araceli Tambol<sup>b,c</sup> and Eliza Joyce Palaroan<sup>b,d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>James Cook University, Townsville, Australia, <sup>b</sup>Saint Louis University, Baguio City, Philippines

<sup>c</sup>University of Baguio, Baguio City, Philippines, <sup>d</sup>Philippine Women's University, Manila, Philippines

## ABSTRACT

The annual Flower Festival, known locally as Panagbenga, in Baguio City, Philippines, has blossomed over 29 years into a significant cultural event. Since its humble beginnings, the festival has evolved from a weekend affair to a month-long celebration, drawing in millions of visitors eager to experience its vibrant activities. While the economic boost from tourism is undeniable, concerns about sociocultural and environmental impacts have surfaced (Palangchao, 2016). Despite its significance, there is a surprising lack of research on the festival's broader impacts and limited information archives.

Public opinions on social media and in newspapers are abundant but often lack cohesion, making it difficult for governments to develop effective policies, especially regarding the festival's socio-economic and commercial aspects. To address this gap, the authors are conducting a study to examine how residents and visitors perceive Panagbenga's economic, social, and environmental impacts. The study uses an online survey to measure residents' perceptions of the festival's benefits and impacts and their expectations for the city's sustainable future. Lastly, the study aims to provide empirical-based recommendations to organisers, local government, and destination marketing organisations on managing residents' perceptions and expectations.

Delamere's (2001) Residents' Perceptions of and Expectations from Festival Impacts Scales was adapted for this study. Based on earlier work by Delamere et al. (2001), the instrument identifies two main factors—social benefits and social costs—using the Expectancy-Value Model of attitude formation. A five-week pilot study assessed recruitment methods, question logic and language appropriateness, yielding 237 responses, with 115 usable. Recruitment via Baguio-based social media, text messaging, and university posters resulted in predominantly female (67%) and full-time student (60.5%) respondents, reflecting the university setting. Among these students, 39% have lived in Baguio most of their lives, while 52.1% have been residents for three years or less.

Initial analysis shows that residents have varied perceptions of the festival's economic, socio-cultural, environmental, and personal impacts. While insights on the festival's future are mostly positive, 80.8% suggest it should be held every other year. Preferences on duration vary: 46% prefer the current month-long format, while 40.8% favour a shorter event over 1–2 weekends. Some insights on the residents' views are briefly discussed below.

### Economic Impacts

While the Panagbenga Festival boosts Baguio's economy, residents are concerned about rising living costs ( $\bar{x}=4.53$ ). They recognise benefits like increased business opportunities ( $\bar{x}=4.26$ ) and infrastructure improvements (overbar  $x$  equals 4.4), but affordability pressures and strained public services like transport ( $\bar{x}=3.26$ ) offset these. Employment opportunities have risen ( $\bar{x}=3.98$ ), but less than expected, indicating uneven benefit distribution. Strategies are needed to ensure equitable economic benefits and reduce cost pressures on residents.

### Socio-cultural Impacts

The festival has an overall positive socio-cultural impact, with substantial benefits in

entertainment ( $\bar{x}$  =4.28), city image enhancement ( $\bar{x}$  =4.09), and community identity ( $\bar{x}$  =3.96). However, significant challenges like overcrowding ( $\bar{x}$  =4.63) and disruption to daily life ( $\bar{x}$  =4.19) persist. Residents value the festival's cultural contributions but note areas needing attention.

### **Environmental Impacts**

The Panagbenga Festival significantly affects the environment, with major concerns over traffic congestion ( $\bar{x}$  =4.45), increased litter ( $\bar{x}$  =4.5), and perceived environmental damage ( $\bar{x}$  =3.91). While public facility maintenance has improved, waste management may not keep pace with the festival's impact.

### **Personal Impacts**

Residents experience mixed personal impacts from the festival. Positives include new experiences ( $\bar{x}$  =3.89), ideas ( $\bar{x}$  =3.90), cultural pride ( $\bar{x}$  =3.90) and skills development ( $\bar{x}$  =3.85), with social interactions are moderately enhanced ( $\bar{x}$  =3.43). However, it disrupts daily routines ( $\bar{x}$  =3.83), and many prefer to leave the city during the event ( $\bar{x}$  =3.63). Safety concerns are moderate ( $\bar{x}$  =3.17), highlighting the complex relationship between the festival and Baguio residents.

### **Future Prospects**

There is strong support for its annual continuation ( $\bar{x}$  =4.10) and prioritising locals during the event ( $\bar{x}$  =4.00). The positive economic impact is recognised ( $\bar{x}$  =4.10), with slightly lower but still positive views on environmental impact ( $\bar{x}$  =3.98). Safety and security are top priorities for future festivals ( $\bar{x}$  =4.19). Sustainability is key, with support for waste reduction and recycling ( $\bar{x}$  =4.31) and enhancing public transport while discouraging private vehicle use ( $\bar{x}$  =4.26).

### **Conclusion**

The pilot study highlights Baguio City's residents' complex relationship with the Panagbenga Festival. While the festival brings notable economic and socio-cultural benefits, residents express significant concerns. The uneven distribution of economic benefits indicates that not all residents equally share in the festival's prosperity. Environmental impacts, particularly traffic congestion and litter, underscore the need for improved waste management and sustainability practices.

These initial findings suggest the need to refine the survey and broaden data collection to include a more diverse cross-section of residents. The study gains a robust framework for assessing resident perceptions by using Delamere's validated scales, allowing for more accurate and actionable insights. The implications of adopting Delamere's work are significant, as it facilitates a deeper understanding of both the social benefits and costs associated with the festival.

Future survey iterations will address the pilot study limitations and enhance recruitment methods to achieve a more representative sample. Continuing this research is essential for providing empirical-based recommendations to organisers, local government, and destination marketing organisations. Emphasising sustainability, equitable economic benefits, and well-being is crucial in shaping policies that align with residents' expectations and support Baguio City's sustainable future.

**Keywords:** *festival impacts, Panagbenga Festival, Baguio City, residents' perceptions*

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# EXPLORING SUSTAINABLE FOOD WASTE MANAGEMENT IN THE AUSTRALIAN TOURISM SECTOR

Stacey Tabert<sup>a</sup>, Tracey Dodd<sup>a,b,c</sup> and Duygu Yengin<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Adelaide, <sup>b</sup>Governance Institute of Australia, <sup>c</sup>University of Exeter

## ABSTRACT

Tourism businesses are increasingly expected to adhere to and advance sustainability standards whilst confronting complex challenges in their daily operations. This research focuses on the sustainability management of tourism businesses, using stakeholder theory as the framework to explore factors influencing the implementation of food waste reduction initiatives in the hotel industry. The hotel industry is recognised as one of the most energy-intensive within the tourism sector (Mak & Change, 2019), generating a disproportionate amount of food waste (Sharpley, 2021). Between 20-60% of all food purchased in the tourism sector ends up as food waste (Antonschmidt & Lund-Durlacher, 2021); however, 80% could be avoided through the implementation of sustainable food waste management (Filimonau & De Coteau, 2019). Despite proven cost savings (Berardo et al., 2020; Hanson & Mitchell, 2017), many hotels have yet to implement food waste reduction initiatives. This is a real-world problem of both practical and theoretical interest. This project, therefore, seeks to enhance our comprehension of the management and implementation of food waste reduction strategies in tourism businesses. It accomplishes this aim through three key tasks: (1) clarifying the concept of tourism food waste through a literature analysis, (2) demonstrating a link between stakeholder theory and sustainability transformation management, and (3) conducting an empirical investigation of the topic through a qualitative case study of hotel food waste management. How tourism can shape and transform our consumption habits and food production systems by balancing the needs of society and the environment with the economic aspects of business activities is a question of critical importance, which will be discussed in this presentation.

Several international hotel chains have set food waste reduction targets in-line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 12.3 to halve their food waste by 2030 (e.g. Accor, Marriott, Hilton); however, the drivers and constraints associated with the management and implementation of food waste initiatives at the individual property level remains unclear. This research aims to shed light on this dimension. To address this gap, further research is required to understand the macro-, meso-, and micro-level factors influencing the adoption of food waste management practices in hotels. The purpose of this project is to consolidate what is known, and to provide industry-informed, evidence-based policy solutions to reduce food waste in the Australian tourism sector. Qualitative case study research can serve as a vital bridge between the conceptual analysis of corporate sustainability strategy formulation and the practical implementation that managers are eager to achieve (Engert & Baumgartner, 2016). Using an abductive approach to case research (Dubois & Gadde, 2002, 2014) enables a deeper understanding of tourism's management of food waste reduction, which will be useful for guiding better practice as well as theory development. In doing so, the following research question will be considered: *Under what conditions do tourism businesses implement food waste reduction strategies?*

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with industry professionals managing and implementing hotel food waste reduction strategies in top-tourist destinations across Australia, and this industry-informed data will be analysed using qualitative content analysis. As concern about food waste and the sustainability of tourism increases, so does the need for empirical research to help guide practitioners, educators, and policymakers to better understand and embrace the concept of sustainable tourism development through sustainability transformation management (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019; Schaltegger et al.,

2023). This project seeks to enrich the existing body of literature by employing a stakeholder theory perspective to investigate the uptake of sustainability management strategies, particularly in instances where implementation lags behind corporate sustainability targets. This research involves collaborating with tourism stakeholders to share experiences and find solutions to industry-specific food waste management challenges to help businesses address the changing food waste landscape within Australia. Ultimately, it seeks to help tourism businesses align sustainability management with more than just financial interests, encouraging widespread implementation of socially and environmentally responsible practices, benefiting management theory, business operations, and the commons.

**Keywords:** *food waste, hotels, sustainable tourism, sustainability management, stakeholder theory*



# EXPLORING THE COMPLEXITIES OF CHILD-FOCUSED TOURISM: MANAGERIAL PERSPECTIVES

Farima Fehrest<sup>a</sup>, Jenny Panchal<sup>a</sup>, Anja Pabel<sup>b</sup> and Laurie Murphy<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>James Cook University, <sup>b</sup>Central Queensland University

## ABSTRACT

Incorporating child-friendly tourism concepts can contribute to creating sustainable tourism environments that protect natural resources, and preserve local culture, while offering enriching experiences for both children and families (Suryawijaya, 2023). Operating child-focused tours in Iran requires navigating a unique cultural and historical landscape, understanding market potential, and addressing regulatory challenges specific to this context. In Iran, there have been serious recent efforts by both public and private sectors to develop the tourism industry (Mohammadi & Pearce, 2020). However, despite these efforts, challenges persist in engaging children in the decision-making process and enhancing community involvement to improve tourism settings for younger visitors (Suryawijaya, 2023). Identifying and addressing these challenges is crucial to unlocking the full potential of child-oriented tourism in the region. The aim of this study is to explore managers' perspectives on providing child-focused tours within the context of Iran.

Tour operators are pivotal to the tourism industry, serving as essential intermediaries that connect tourists with destinations. They facilitate travel experiences and ensure seamless coordination between various services (Bricker & Black, 2016). They play a crucial role in the planning, development, promotion, and execution of ecotourism products, aiding in conservation efforts while also generating revenue (Pasape, 2022). Additionally, as catalysts for innovation, they can support small-scale businesses and entrepreneurs, helping to improve their skills and expand their distribution networks (Rønningen, 2010). Their role is particularly associated with sustainability practices in the tourism literature (Bricker & Black, 2016; Khairat & Maher, 2010). While their strategies may vary based on target markets, tour operators must adapt their approaches to cater to different segments, including the design and operation of child-focused tours, which requires specialised attention.

This study employed a snowball sampling method to conduct semi-structured online interviews with 10 tour managers in Iran as an initial research phase. Using a qualitative approach, thematic content analysis was conducted on the collected data using NVIVO software. The analysis followed Strauss (1987) three stages of coding: open, axial, and selective coding, to systematically organise data.

As Table 1 illustrates, the motivations to choose this market for operating tours focus on children themselves. The first two reasons that encouraged managers were their interest in the work itself followed by their passion for educating children as the next generation. Regarding the barriers to operating child-focused tours, all managers recognised children as a sensitive group of audience to work with, which requires great knowledge in tourism and child and behavioural psychology. For instance, a tour manager said: “To effectively engage with children, we must possess comprehensive knowledge, particularly in child psychology. Additionally, those working in this field must have a natural affinity for children and a personality well-suited to engaging with young minds.” Additionally, another participant, with 14 years of managerial experience, highlighted: “Unlike working with adults, there is little room for error when working with children. While adults can logically analyse information and make informed decisions about what to accept or reject, children process information differently.” Other barriers acknowledged by managers included the risks to children in nature and the responsibility managers felt toward the little ones especially when parents were not accompanying them on the tour.

These themes represent that tour managers have a good understanding of children as a market segment, their concerns, and the impact their actions can have on this market.

Table 1. Managers' perspective on providing child-focused tours for children in the context of Iran.

Motivations to plan child-focused tours	No. of reference coded	Barriers to operating child-focused tours	No. of reference coded
Educating next generation	5	Lack of facilities	2
Innovation/making a change	3	Parents as main decision-makers	2
Personal interests	7	Risks to children in nature	6
Recognising children as a market	2	Children as sensitive group to deal with	10

Based on the findings, the motivation to educate the next generation reflects managers' commitment to social responsibility, which often prioritises long-term societal benefits over immediate financial gain. This aligns with sustainability-focused values, emphasising the future-oriented planning necessary for tourism's sustainable development. Managers targeting the children's market seem driven more by long-term sustainability goals than financial interests. However, the recognition of children as a market and parents as decision-makers highlights the power imbalance between adults and children. This dynamic can directly impact the success or failure of child-oriented tourism initiatives. To address this, inclusive decision-making processes should actively involve children in the planning and design of tourism experiences. Active tourist participation of tourists could foster the co-creation of tour itineraries (Campos et al., 2018). This approach not only empowers children but also enhances the appeal of child-focused tours. Future research can focus on exploring cultural and economic sustainability in child-focused tourism, further expanding knowledge in this underrepresented field.

**Keywords:** *children tourism, Iran, tour operators, managers' perspective*

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# EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN AUSTRALIAN HOSPITALITY: A PILOT STUDY USING COLOUR-CODED EXPERIENCE SHARING

Hazreel Hasmi<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Le Cordon Bleu Australia

## ABSTRACT

Australian hospitality work-integrated learning (WIL) programs aim to prepare students with the skills and knowledge necessary to transition effectively into the workforce (Jackson & Wilton, 2017; Scott, 2016; Hasmi, et al., 2020). International students, however, face unique challenges in this transition, particularly regarding acculturative stress, which encompasses the psychological and social difficulties, encountered when adjusting to a new culture (Berry, 2006; Walker et al., 2011; Barton & Hartwig, 2017; Potts, 2018). This paper explores whether WIL can mitigate acculturative stress and improve employment outcomes for international students in the hospitality sector. To enhance the depth of data collection in this exploration, a novel method known as colour-coded experience sharing was piloted to assess its effectiveness in capturing students' emotional and psychological experiences during interviews.

The study draws on two key theoretical frameworks: conservation of resources theory (COR) and job embeddedness theory (JET). According to COR (Hobfoll, 1989), individuals strive to acquire, retain, and protect their valued resources, including social networks and emotional stability, during stressful times (Hobfoll et al., 2018). JET, however, focuses on how individuals become attached to their jobs through fit, links, and sacrifice (Mitchell et al., 2001; Hasmi et al., 2014). By participating in WIL programs, international students may develop crucial resources, such as workplace fit and professional connections (Treuren & Halvorsen, 2016; Barton & Hartwig, 2017), which can reduce the impact of acculturative stress and enhance job embeddedness.

Colour-coded experience sharing involves participants using colours to express their feelings, experiences, and perceptions during interviews, leveraging the psychological associations between colours and emotions—such as blue for calmness and red for excitement. This non-verbal communication method has been explored in previous research by scholars like Fivush and Buckner (2003) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2002) as a semiotic resource in storytelling.

The current study conducted a pilot with five international students—two from Asian countries, two Europeans, and one from Latin America—who had recently completed their work-integrated learning (WIL) placements in Australian hospitality organisations. This pilot aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of colour-coded experience sharing in enhancing the exploration of students' adaptation processes prior to a full-scale study. It comprised two phases: traditional semi-structured interviews reflecting on their WIL experiences, followed by participants selecting colours to represent specific emotions and explaining their choices to provide deeper context to their narratives.

The pilot study's initial findings revealed key themes (Figure 1) from the use of colour-coded experience sharing. One major theme was the **emotional rollercoaster** participants faced during their placements, illustrated by participants' choice of red to signify early stress and lighter blue to denote growing comfort and confidence as they adapted. Another theme was **cultural adaptation and growth**, with colours like yellow and green representing optimism and personal development as participants learned workplace norms and built networks, easing their cultural adjustment. Lastly, the theme of **support networks**

highlighted the significance of social connections in alleviating acculturative stress; colours such as purple and pink conveyed the warmth and support from colleagues and mentors, enhancing participants' sense of integration and job embeddedness during WIL experiences.

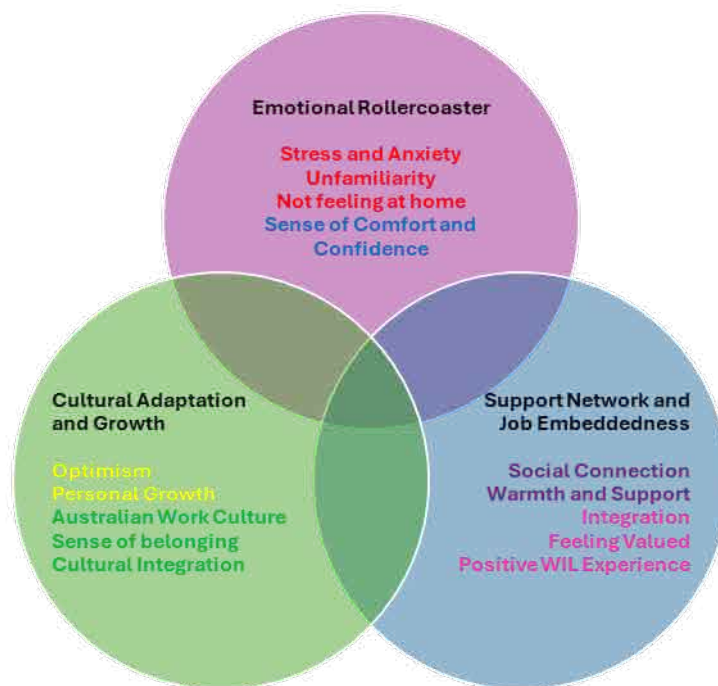


Figure 1: Emerging Themes

The pilot study demonstrates that colour-coded experience sharing enhances qualitative data by enabling participants to express emotions and experiences often overlooked in traditional interviews. This method adds emotional depth and provides insights into the psychological impact of WIL placements on international students, particularly regarding acculturation and workplace integration. The findings indicate that this approach effectively facilitates the exploration of experiences, allowing participants to convey complex emotions and deepening the understanding of their WIL experiences. Additionally, the study supports the idea that WIL can alleviate acculturative stress by fostering workplace fit and social support, critical components of job embeddedness. Future research with a larger sample will further validate this method and expand on the identified themes.

**Keywords:** *WIL, Acculturative Stress, Job Embeddedness, Conservation of Resources, International Students, Colour-Coded Experience Sharing*

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# EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DESTINATION IMAGE AND YOUNG TOURISTS' RISK-TAKING: USING SELF-REPORT AND PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGICAL MEASURES

Yufan Liu<sup>a</sup>, Jie Wang<sup>a</sup>, Gabby Walters<sup>a</sup> and Laura Ferris<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> School of Business, The University of Queensland

## ABSTRACT

The destination image, perceived as a combination of beliefs, ideas, and impressions individuals have about a place, significantly influences tourists' decision-making processes. Previous studies suggest that images portraying safe and positive environments attract tourists, while those associated with risk or danger tend to deter them. However, recent counterarguments propose that destination images linked to risk can be appealing to specific groups, particularly younger travellers. This research conducts a lab-based experiment to explore the relationship between destination image and risk-taking behaviour among young tourists, focusing specifically on understanding affective destination images using both self-reports and psychophysiological measures. The results indicate that young tourists who view travel destination images that evoke greater emotional arousal and strong affective impressions are more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviours.

**Keywords:** *Destination image, risk-taking behaviours, young traveller group, psychophysiological measures, lab-based experiment*

## Introduction

The destination image is perceived as an amalgamation of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that individuals hold about a destination (Crompton, 1979). Numerous studies have demonstrated the influence of destination image on people's travel choices and decision-making processes (e.g., Hadinejad et al., 2022). When examining destination images associated with risks, prior studies have primarily focused on the relationship between destination image and risk perception. Specifically, they have suggested two key points:

1. Risk Perceptions and Destination Image: Previous argued that heightened risk perceptions among tourists contribute to the formation of an unfavourable destination image research (e.g., Becken et al., 2017; Lepp et al., 2011).
2. Destination Image as a Mediator: Destination image can mediate the relationship between risk perceptions and travel intentions. For example, Assaker and O'Connor (2021) demonstrated that destination image mediates tourists' perceptions of political instability and terrorism risk and their subsequent travel intentions.

Despite these advancements, two key shortcomings remain in the literature on destination image and risk. First, there is a significant gap in investigating the relationship between destination image and individuals' risk-taking behaviour, as opposed to merely their risk perception. Second, prior research has largely focused on how a risk-related destination image negatively affects travel decision-making, considering it mainly as a deterrent. However, no studies have explored the possibility that a risk-related destination image could be attractive to tourists.

Additionally, most previous studies analysing destination images rely on self-reported measurements of both cognitive and affective destination images, with few investigations into more objective measures. Scholars have suggested that using psychophysiological measures could provide deeper insight into which aspects of tourists' emotional experiences are stronger determinants of their travel decisions (Li et al., 2018). Thus, this study aims to explore how destination image can drive young tourists' risk-taking behaviour, with a particular focus on participants' emotional arousal while viewing travel videos.



## Conclusion and Implications

Theoretically, this study extends current knowledge of the relationship between destination image and risk-taking behaviours. It proposes a paradigm shift by highlighting the multifaceted nature of destination image and emphasising its active role in shaping tourists' in-destination risk-taking behaviours. Additionally, this study represents an attempt to examine visitors' real-time emotional responses while viewing travel videos, investigating which types of content and which emotional aspects are better determinants of individuals' risk-taking behaviours.

Practically, this research offers valuable insights to destination marketing organisations, suggesting ways to appeal to the adventure-seeking spirit of young tourists while also reassuring them (and potentially their guardians) of their safety and well-being in the destination.

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# EXPLORING THE ROLE OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN DESTINATION SELECTION

Michelle Thompson<sup>a</sup>, Anja Pabel<sup>a</sup>, Leonie Cassidy<sup>b</sup> and Bruce Prideaux<sup>ca</sup>

<sup>a</sup>CQ University, <sup>b</sup>James Cook University, <sup>c</sup>Prince of Songkla University

## ABSTRACT

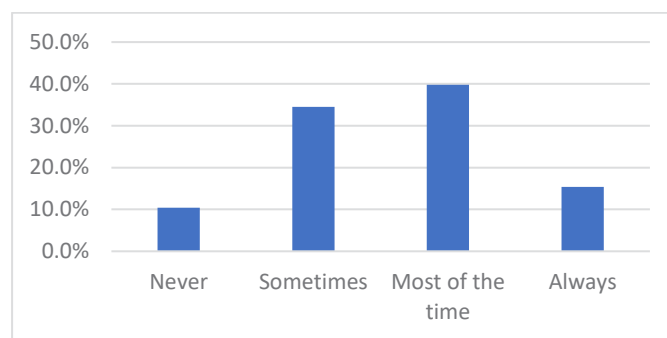
Dann's (1977) seminal push-pull model provides a simplistic but useful explanation of how tourists view destination pull factors through the lens of their own push motives during destination selection. However, individual travel motives and the quality of key pull factors may change over time (Smith et al., 2022). It is therefore important for destinations to continually refresh research into the key travel motives behind their destination selection considering the vast global set of destination alternatives. Not doing so risks destinations being locked into a destination image that may become outdated (Carson & Carson, 2016) leading to either a decline or plateauing of visitors. Many scholars have observed that there has been a shift in recent decades to tourists becoming more environmentally aware and that this awareness is beginning to be demonstrated in the role they ascribe to destination sustainability in their destination choice (Linnes et al., 2022). Others have found evidence to the contrary (Mkono et al., 2022). It is not inconceivable that both views apply but in different destination locations.

The research reported in this paper was undertaken in Cairns, Australia. The destination serves as a gateway to two World Heritage Areas (WHAs), the Great Barrier Reef and the Wet Tropics Rainforest. Both WHAs are recognised as key pull factors by the local tourism industry, and as important push factors for visitors. However, these WHAs are threatened by climate change.

We first explored visitors' views on the importance of the environment and how it is protected as a key visitor push factor. We then investigated respondents' views on how well they perceived the destination was caring for its environment. To understand respondents' views on the threats to the environment, we asked visitors to rank their level of concern about key environmental threats. We then further explored respondents' views about the Wet Tropics WHA.

Results are based on a survey of 403 visitors to the Wet Tropics WHA undertaken in Cairns in 2022. Survey items were based on previous research in the area (Prideaux et al., 2012) and modified where appropriate. Closed and open-ended questions enquired about socio-demographic characteristics, motivation for visiting the destination, concerns about Wet Tropics Rainforest and views on how well the destination is protecting the environment. A screening question was used to filter out local residents.

We first posed a question that asked respondents if they look for destinations that appear to be actively protecting their environment. As illustrated in Figure 1, only 10% of respondents said they *Never* look for a destination that is actively protecting its environment, while at the other end of the spectrum, 15% of respondents *Always* look for destinations that actively protect their environment. About 40% said they consider the environment *Most of the time*.



**Figure 1: Tourists looking for destinations actively protecting their environment**

In a follow-up question, respondents were asked if Cairns was protecting its environment. The majority responded *Yes* (59%), 37% were *Not sure* and 4% said *No*.

Having established respondents' views on the role of destination protection in destination selection, we then asked about the key concerns respondents had about the Wet Tropics WHA. In order of significance, the top five concerns were species extinction, climate change, continuing rise in temperatures, introduced insect pests and pollution. Interestingly, the first and third concerns related to climate change outcomes with climate change ranking as the second largest concern. When comparing views on the threats to the Wet Tropics Rainforest and the role of environmental protection in destination selection (see Table 1), it is apparent that climate change concerns are very important for visitors in destination selection, particularly concerns about species extinction and increasing temperatures.

**Table 1. Holiday destination protecting its environment & threats to the WTR (mean rank).**

Do you look for a holiday destination protecting its environment?	Species extinction	Climate Change	Continuing rising temperatures	Introduced insect pests	Pollution
Never	3.56	3.19	3.44	3.60	3.38
Sometimes	4.20	4.08	3.94	3.87	3.93
Most of the time	4.25	4.23	4.04	3.98	3.90
Always	4.55	4.60	4.47	4.40	4.39

\*Mean rank: 1 = non-threatening, 5 = severely threatening

Based on the data, it is apparent that the environment plays a significant part in destination selection, at least in the case of Cairns. A similar emphasis may not apply to other destinations that don't feature the environment as a key pull factor or where the local environment is not seen as a major push factor in some market segments. It is also apparent that climate change-related factors are key concerns for visitors who either *Always* or *Sometimes* look for destinations that protect their environment. From a destination perspective, these findings reinforce the need to actively demonstrate how the destination is protecting its environment. It also highlights the need for destinations to be mindful that in the future they may need to develop new pull factors if the current quality of the destination's environment is observed to be in decline due to climate change.

**Key words:** *environmental protection; destination selection; push-pull, climate change, Cairns*

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# EXPLORING THE ROLES OF COMMUNITY-BASED GUIDED TOURS IN INDIGENOUS TOURISM: A STUDY OF THE PAIWAN MALIJEVEQ FESTIVAL IN TAIWAN

**Chin-Kuang Chen<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>a</sup>Faculty of Intercultural Communication, Department of Intercultural Communication, Komatsu University, Japan

## ABSTRACT

This study investigates community-based guided tours as a means of ensuring that tourism development reflects the values and needs of the Indigenous Paiwan community in South Taiwan. Employing participant observation, netnography, and archival research, this study analyses the Malijeveq Festival tours and their impact on cultural preservation and community empowerment. Findings reveal that these tours foster respect for tribal culture, stimulate language and cultural revitalization, and enhance tribe members' right and authority to interpret their culture and customs, highlighting the significance of guided tours in promoting sustainable Indigenous tourism and enriching tourist experiences.

**Keywords:** *Community-based tourism, tourism product development, empowerment, Taiwan*

## Background and Research Purposes

Tourism can empower Indigenous communities, preserving both tangible and intangible aspects of cultural heritage, and fostering economic benefits (Ruhanen & Whitford, 2019; Butler, 2021). In promoting socio-economic opportunities, tourism products are expected to align the needs and concerns of Indigenous communities with those of tourists; however, when non-Indigenous and non-local tour operators are involved, ensuring the values of Indigenous communities are upheld can be challenging (Hillmer-Pegram, 2016).

This study thus aims to explore the roles of community-based guided tours in ensuring community-led tourism development that aligns with Indigenous values and needs. The research context lies within the Paiwan Malijeveq Festival hosted by Indigenous Paiwan communities in Tjuabal Village in South Taiwan. Also known as the Five-Year Festival, this quinquennial ancestor-worshipping ritual features archaic taboos and shaman ceremonies performed alongside Indigenous songs and dances. The festival reaches its climax on the fifth day when around 40 tribe members form a ceremonial circle and compete to spear a shaman-blessed rattan ball with ceremonial bamboo poles. Its game-like nature and the sheer number of decorated bamboo poles make the ball-spearling ritual a visually captivating and culturally unique event to attract tourism.

## Methods

This study used multiple sources of data collected through participant observations, netnography, and archival research. Observations took place during a half-day guided tour of the Festival, in which the researcher participated as a tourist with an indigenous guide who interpreted the cultural meanings of the rituals. The netnography aspect, intended to understand how actors perceived and communicated their festival experience, focused on social media postings (Facebook and Instagram) by tourists and local stakeholders of the Festival. Archival data included programs and itineraries of previous Paiwan Malijeveq Festival guided tours, revealing the characteristics of each tour and the variations in their duration, price, and focus. Multiple sources of data were triangulated and qualitatively analysed using a thematic approach.

## Results

**Table 1: Characteristics of the Paiwan Malijeveq Festival guided tours**

Main organizers	Community stakeholders	Dates and duration	Main itinerary items
Township government	-Community development association -Guides (local, trained)	-October 21 & 25 -1.5-hour	-Briefings on taboos and ritual meanings -Village walk-through
	-Community development association -Guides (local key figures) -Community businesses	-October 20–25 -Two-day	-Briefings on taboos and ritual meanings -Themed activity choices
External tour operator	-Guides (Indigenous, from one of the major chief families) -Community businesses	-October 21–25 -One-day or half-day	-Briefings on taboos and ritual meanings -Crafts workshop -Blessing ceremony

Note: The 2023 Malijeveq Festival lasted from October 21st to 25th. The main ball-spearing ritual took place on the 25th. A minor one was held on the 21st.

### 1. Characteristics of the tours

Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of each guided tour. Though they vary in scope, all involve close collaboration with the local community. For the first two, the township government, employing many Indigenous staff, collaborates with the community development association. The 1.5-hour tour targets casual guests and aims to prevent ignorant tourist behaviour, while the two-day version offers a deeper cultural experience, encouraging participants to become cultural observers or advocates of the Paiwan tribe. For the third, an external tourism operator specializing in cultural tourism works closely with the Indigenous community to meet both tourist and local needs. Collectively, these tourism products form a portfolio of guided tours that offers a diverse range of options for tourists.

### 2. Value to the Indigenous community

The thematic analysis produced three layers of value. (1) Respect for the tribe's culture: Briefings on taboos and ritual meanings were a common element among all tours and essential for preventing visitors from violating taboos and making misleading descriptions about the ritual. (2) Language and cultural revitalization: Local youths, many of whom were unfamiliar with the ritual, were encouraged to sign up as guides, giving them the opportunity to develop their knowledge of Indigenous language and culture through the training program and interactions with tourists. (3) Right and authority to interpret the tribe's culture and customs: The Indigenous Paiwan community's control and interpretation of cultural resources have been challenged by religious (Catholic missionaries) and governmental (Japanese colonialism and Nationalist Chinese) influences (Hunter, 2020). Due to the power struggle and ambiguity in interpreting historical and cultural aspects transmitted orally in the Indigenous language, each major chief family in Tjuabal has a slightly different understanding of them. During an immersive one- to two-day trip, guides can engage in dedicated dialogues with tribe members and tourists, through which they shape the discourse and the authority to interpret the tribe's culture and customs.

## Conclusion

The Paiwan Malijeveq Festival guided tours exemplify how community-based tourism products can empower Indigenous communities. The unique dynamics of the tour portfolio observed in this study provides a best practice exemplar of product development. The findings also underscore the importance of community involvement to ensure tourism outcomes align with Indigenous values.



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# FROM AMBITION TO ACTION: EMERGING TRENDS AND CHALLENGES IN REVENUE MANAGEMENT, BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE, AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR

Nuno Gustavo<sup>a</sup> and Miguel Belo<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>CITUR | Estoril Higher Institute for Tourism and Hotel Studies

## ABSTRACT

In recent years, the expansion of internet-related technologies has significantly transformed various industries, including hospitality (Raguseo et al., 2017). One of the most notable developments in the hotel industry has been in revenue management (RM), considering that, in a buyer's market environment, it plays an increasingly important contribution to the business performance (Altin et al., 2017). Technology and big data now enable organizations to sell on a one-to-one price personalization basis approach (Open Pricing) offering, dynamically, the right room to the right customer at the right time and price, through the right distribution channel (Talon-Ballesterio et al., 2022; Kimes, 1989). The effective use of such technologies not only increases revenue but also provides a competitive edge (Wang et al., 2015; Kimes, 2008).

Despite the widespread recognition of the importance of Business Intelligence (BI) and Artificial Intelligence (AI), organizations are still far from achieving a desirable level of implementation. Big data technologies have revolutionized information processing systems, offering significant opportunities for dynamic pricing and revenue optimization (Noone et al., 2019; Erdem & Jiang, 2016). Yet, even with these advancements, there is limited practical application of these tools (Ivanov et al., 2021). Hospitality firms struggle with cultural resistance and processing large and unstructured data, integrating it into BI and AI models, and ensuring high data quality (Zahidi et al., 2024).

RM systems are increasingly designed to align with user decision-making processes and provide advanced tools for monitoring and price optimization (Guillet & Shi, 2019; Peco-Torres et al., 2021). Optimal use of big data enhances RM performance, particularly in dynamic pricing strategies (Buhalis & Leung, 2018). Yet, organizations face significant challenges in fully harnessing BI, and AI is even further from practical, scalable use. AI's applicability is easier in hotels with simpler room typologies and segmentation models but becomes more complex when applied to businesses with multiple room types and customer segments (Kimes, 2008; TalonBallesterio et al., 2022).

The quality of data plays a critical role in AI's success. Poor data quality can lead to inaccurate outputs, high costs for corrections, and reduced user trust. Ensuring data quality, readiness, and integration into AI models remains a challenge, with a need for safeguarding data throughout its use (Wang et al., 2015). Improving these areas can contribute to building better AI solutions, such as creating a 360-degree customer view, but these remain areas of underdevelopment in the hospitality sector (Raguseo et al., 2017).

The aim of this paper is to examine the current trends, challenges, and implementation gaps in RM, BI, and AI within the hospitality sector.

To examine the trends, challenges, and implementation gaps in RM, BI, and AI within the hospitality sector, this study employed a quantitative study (survey) from May to July 2024, collecting 456 answers from hotel firms located in Portugal. The questionnaire was distributed by the Associação da Hotelaria, Restauração e Similares de Portugal (AHRESP), the association responsible for representing the accommodation sector in Portugal. It was sent to hotel firms via email and promoted in online groups specialized in revenue management.

Our findings reveal that 75.7% of hotels currently use some form of revenue management system, while the average use of other tools, including those related to BI and AI, stands at 50.2%. Although AI is recognized for its potential, its implementation is mostly limited to basic applications like data

analysis (59.0%) and chatbots (46.2%). The more sophisticated uses, such as price definition (17.0%) and customization (4.0%), are rarely employed.

The findings indicate that despite hotel companies are still mainly focused on a simple room revenue approach, organizations recognize the value of BI and AI in improving RM, like digital transformation in general (Hu et al., 2024).

Despite hotels having access to several RM data sources and information tools, they are far from developing a global integrated RM ecosystem supported in BI and AI systems. This step is critical to reach a total RM approach, as well as a one-to-one (automatic) pricing approach. However, hotel companies are conscious of the relevance and return of it. Hospitality firms face substantial barriers, particularly in integrating BI and AI into complex environments with multiple room types and customer segments. AI has the potential to optimize pricing and enhance decision-making, but its applicability is largely restricted to hotels with simpler operational structures. To fully leverage BI and AI capabilities in RM, businesses need to address data quality and readiness challenges, introduce qualified human resources and project managers in their teams, ensuring that all tools and operational frameworks function effectively as a global, integrated and automated ecosystem.

This study also highlights the need for further research into overcoming technical and organizational barriers to AI implementation, with practical implications for improving RM performance through advanced data processing technologies. Despite the valuable insights into the current state of BI and AI adoption in RM hospitality sector, future research directions must be considered, namely, involving other tourism destinations and hotels specific categories in order to provide in depth need information.

**Keywords:** *Revenue management; Artificial Intelligence; Business performance; Hospitality firms.*

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# FROM CLASSROOM TO CRUISE: REFLECTIONS ON EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING DESIGN IN TOURISM STUDIES

Johnnel Smith<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Griffith University

## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Experiential learning in academia is critical as the opportunity to apply theory to practice provides innumerable benefits to student development (Croft & Wang, 2023). This paper provides an instructor's reflection on the design and value of an experiential course on cruise tourism for undergraduate and postgraduate students in higher education. Through classroom learning, followed by a field trip on a cruise ship for 10 days to the South Pacific in 2024, this paper highlights the key learning opportunities generated through this experience for students and documents best practices for instructors who are interested in experiential learning design.

**Aim/Purpose:** The paper illuminates the value of experiential learning to student self-development (professional and personal), the facilitation of peer group development, improved marketing and industry engagement for tertiary educational institutions. The implications of this study are useful for educators who are interested in providing experiential learning opportunities for students and for cruise industry practitioners who will eventually employ these students. This paper makes a significant contribution to discussions about the value of field trips as a tool for authentic assessments in the era of generative artificial intelligence. The implication of this paper fosters discussions on the pedagogical opportunities and offering of field trips as vital experiences for student development.

**Methodology:** Through an autoethnographic reflection from the instructor's perspective, this article highlights the process in designing the learning process of an experiential learning course. The paper also shares the results/feedback from the students' experience of the course and their perceptions of the value of such learning experiences for their knowledge and understanding of cruise industry and career readiness.

**Findings and Implications:** Coming out of the pandemic, this course was reintroduced to the Bachelors and Masters of International Tourism Degree programs after a 4-year hiatus. The course was initially among the first of its kind for an Australian university which delivered lectures and seminars on board a cruise ship from Australia to the South Pacific. As students took to the high seas, learning while on a cruise was perceived by other instructors as a distraction or even a holiday opportunity (McClellan & Hyle, 2012), but the perspective of the instructor and the testimonies of students were different, in that the experience provided an exceptional learning experience for the students (Lohmann, 2014). From the pedagogical perspective, several goals were achieved with this field trip. It was unanimous among the students that this was an unforgettable experience filled with valuable learning about the cruise industry and that the course helped them to foster a deeper understanding about careers in cruise tourism. The course also provided students with the opportunity to network and learn from cruise employees about their background and lifestyles. Other informal activities, particularly mealtime and entertainment provided opportunities to engage with fellow classmates, and other passengers and to learn more about travel motivations among cruise passengers. Students were able to gain insight on the demographics of passengers and learn from engaging with passengers about their motivations to cruise.

This innovative course allowed for an exciting learning experience where students experienced the cruise industry directly as a passenger (consumer), and vital exposure to the production of the contemporary cruise product/experience. The course provided real-time exposure and insight into industry structure and trends, as well as supply chains, ship operations, revenue generation strategies, marketing, the passenger experience, risk management and sustainability. Lectures held during the days at sea examined cruise ship operations and onshore excursions at each port of call examined the first-hand impact of cruise tourism on local communities.

In many aspects, the findings from this learning opportunity are similar to those identified by Lee (2008) in their research on industry-based experiential learning which complements the classroom environment of hospitality management students, as the blended learning experience proved beneficial to students by providing the immersion of students in an authentic tourism and hospitality experience. The era of generative artificial intelligence has further given rise to the need for more authentic learning experiences and assessments. This study has implications to business school directors, instructors, students, and employers. Directors of Tourism Management schools are further encouraged to facilitate industry learning opportunities for students and connect with industry partners to identify other potential experiential learning opportunities (Askren & James, 2021). Instructors will gain insight into designing more engaging courses with an inclusion of experiential learning components. Offering a course with such unique experiences and firsthand industry exposure created an invaluable opportunity for students to develop personally and professionally and amplify the impact of tourism studies. Therefore, this study has shown that offering more experiences and interactions can help students not only comprehend course concepts but also increase their passion for their field of study, while gaining authentic interaction with the industry and local community (Rong-Da Liang, 2021). “It is critical for today’s hospitality and tourism academia to not only instruct students but prepare them to enter the industry with real-world experiences. An excellent way to provide students with such experiences is through experiential learning (Croft & Wang, 2023, p.1)”.

**Keywords:** *experiential learning, cruise tourism, field trips, hospitality and tourism education*

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# **FUTURE-PROOF EMPLOYABILITY AND CAREER SUSTAINABILITY FOR GEN Z HOSPITALITY GRADUATES**

**Georges El Hajal<sup>a</sup>**, Edwin Tarus<sup>a</sup> and Hanneke Assen<sup>a</sup>

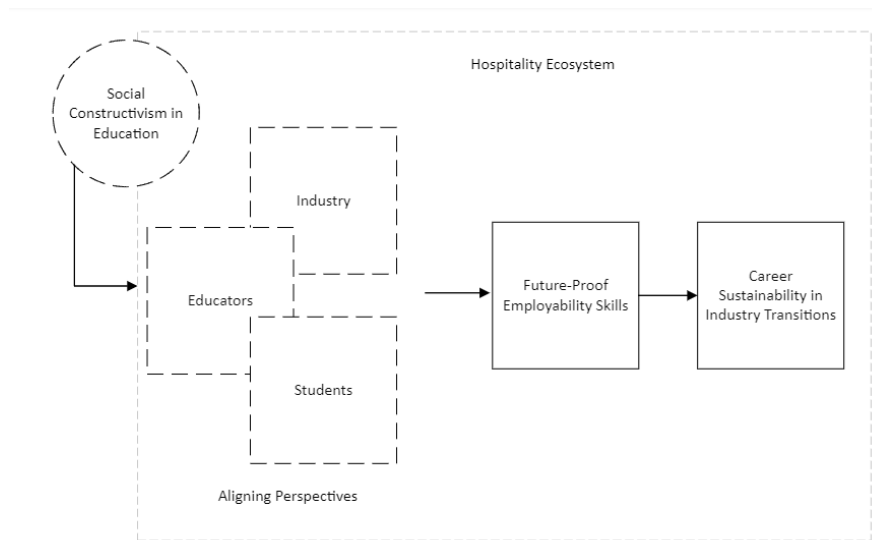
<sup>a</sup>University Of Groningen

## **ABSTRACT**

In what researchers describe as a transformative shift, employee experience is being redefined by rapid Artificial Intelligence (AI) advancement and other factors such as pandemics, political and social change, and changing customer demands, causing disruptions and creating an environment of rapid transformation (Goel et al., 2022; Gong & Schroeder, 2022; Nam et al., 2021; Ruel & Njoku, 2021). Four generations work in the hospitality industry today: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials and Generation Z (born between 1995 and 2009). With many Baby Boomers and Generation X workers approaching retirement age, Generation Z (Gen Z) will mostly take their place (Goh & Lee, 2018). Higher education in hospitality management remains crucial in preparing students for success in the industry (Lugosi & Jameson, 2017); but with many jobs being replaced by AI, automation, and robotics (Morosan & Bowen, 2022), it is thus crucial to prepare Gen Z for the jobs of tomorrow thus the need for relevant, industry aligned education becomes increasingly important (Nadkarni & Morris, 2019). Social constructivism

Several research gaps remain as rapid technological progress outpaces the capacity of society, organizations, and academics to adjust adequately and keep up with the pace of development (Kilian et al., 2023). Current research on employability and career sustainability remains fragmented, hindering the ability to learn from research findings and highlighting the need for more cohesive research efforts, consistent methodologies and a more nuanced understanding of employability that incorporates both its evolution over time and its embeddedness in various contexts (Akkermans et al., 2024; van Harten et al., 2022). In the face of such transitions, the hospitality industry may find it needs to set aside its traditional competitive instincts to unite and cultivate a climate of cooperation and collaboration by aligning the perspectives of key stakeholders in the hospitality ecosystem – educators, students, and professionals (Canhoto & Wei, 2021). Understanding these perspectives is vital to modernizing TM strategies, bridging the employability skills gap and ensuring future hospitality graduates' career sustainability (Hussain et al., 2023). The authors explore these perspectives through the lens of social constructivism in education where knowledge is actively constructed through social interaction and collaboration rather than passively received, with focus on dialogue and the shared understanding of experiences within a social context (Almulla, 2023). Social constructivism in education enables collaborative learning, enhances critical thinking and connects theoretical knowledge with real world applications, creating more engaging and practical learning experiences (Assen et al., 2021).

**Figure 1: A Social Constructivist Approach to Developing Future-Proof Employability Skills (Authors' Own)**



The model in Figure 1 shows how aligning perspectives between educators, students and industry professionals through a social constructivist approach in education promotes future proof employability skills, that ensures career sustainability for hospitality graduates during industry transitions.

The study aims to explore the perspectives of hospitality educators, students and professionals, focusing on improving Gen Z career sustainability in the hospitality industry. The specific research objectives are as follows: (1) To explore the different perceptions regarding the employability skills needed for future graduates; (2) Investigate the concerns and challenges related to career sustainability in the context of industry transitions. This paper also proposes a comprehensive framework to ensure the readiness of future hospitality graduates for future hospitality jobs. Through this study, the authors aim to identify critical insights in the alignment, or gaps, between industry expectation and educational preparation to guide the development of targeted strategies that ensure that future hospitality graduates are well-equipped for the industry's evolving demands. The authors adopted an explanatory sequential mixed-method approach comprising quantitative surveys and in-depth interviews with hospitality students, educators, and industry professionals.

**Keywords:** *Employability, Career Sustainability, Generation Z, Talent Management, Hospitality Industry, Hospitality Education*

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# GENERATIVE AI IN TRAVEL PLANNING: THE EFFECT OF AI INGRATIATION ON CARBON DISCLOSURE

Tingting Liu<sup>a</sup>, Lisa Gao<sup>b</sup> and Yanzhen Tuo<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, China, <sup>b</sup>The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, HK, <sup>c</sup>College of Tourism and Service Management, Nankai University, Tianjian, China.

## ABSTRACT

Generative AI (GAI) has emerged as a transformative technology in the tourism industry. A particular advancement is the integration of GAI into the customization of travel itineraries. Some pioneer enterprises have started exploring ways to incorporate environmental transparency into AI-driven recommendations, specifically through offering information on the environmental impact of travel choices. This initiative opens new avenues for promoting GAI carbon disclosure to aid in the incremental improvement of tourists' environmental awareness. Tourists' decisions to purchase tourism products, such as flights, tour packages, and hotels, are typically not influenced by environmental disclosures. Instead, factors such as price, time, and location play a more significant role in their booking decisions. However, the inclusion of environmental disclosures provided by GAI can potentially enhance the perception of enterprise ESG practices and contribute positively to the uptake of environmentally friendly bookings. The above process can be explained by concepts of AI nudging and self-affirmation. Therefore, this article will introduce AI ingratiation into the framework.

The method section includes interviews and experiments. To understand the relevance of carbon disclosure in GAI-facilitated travel planning from practitioners' perspectives. Based on the interview insights, this study will conduct three online experiments to address the research questions respectively from consumers' perspectives. Finally, the results will be available at CAUTHE 2025.

**Keywords:** *Generative AI, AI ingratiation, Carbon disclosure, ESG perceptions*

# GLOBAL TOURISM DEMAND DYNAMICS TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Wanru Zhou<sup>a</sup>, Futu Faturay<sup>a</sup>, Sally Driml<sup>a</sup> and Ya-Yen Sun<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>UQ Business School, The University of Queensland, Australia

## ABSTRACT

The climate crisis, represented by extreme temperatures and complex hydrological changes, is reshaping global tourism. The majority of the attention pertaining to climate effects on tourism has been focused on individual case studies. Global syntheses are noticeably deficient and contain critical knowledge gaps. These deficiencies comprise the lack of research on global domestic tourism markets, the under-representation of regional differences in a single standard model, and the unknown supply-chain economic and social costs associated with demand variations. This study, which conducted a global longitudinal analysis from 1995 to 2022, was the first to bridge these gaps. Our findings are expected to provide a holistic map of demand dynamics under changing climate that will contribute to identifying destination vulnerabilities, quantifying climate injustice magnitudes, and informing future climate policy and actions in the tourism industry.

**Keywords:** *climate change, tourism demand, domestic tourism, Input-output analysis, climate justice*

## Introduction

2023 is the warmest year in the 174-year observational record, with hundreds of climate records broken, including ocean heat, sea level rise, glacier retreat and etc (WMO, 2024). The extraordinary succession of extreme events around the world had major socio-economic impacts on all inhabited continents (WMO, 2024). As a vulnerable and sensitive industry to weather and climate change, tourism has been long regarded to change dramatically in the future and will need to adapt to increasing risks (Gössling & Hall, 2006; WTO, 2008; WTTC, 2021). Much of our current understanding in terms of how climate change shape the tourism industry comes from econometric modelling of visitors' demand-side responses to changing weather conditions. While it remains incomplete due to the lack of research on global domestic tourism markets, the under-representation of regional differences in a single standard model, and the unknown supply-chain economic and social costs associated with demand variations.

To the best of our knowledge, the several global studies focus only on international travel demand, while the dynamics of domestic markets remain obscured (Cho, 2010; Hamilton et al., 2005; Lise & Tol, 2002). This is certainly a critical oversight due to the sizable domestic expenditure volume (71.7% of total tourism expenditures in 2019) (ILO, 2022) and distinct responses of local and foreign visitors to climate changes (Zhou et al., 2024). In addition, almost all studies under this theme have the criticized drawback of trying to represent the various responses of tourists to climatic conditions (e.g., temperature, precipitation, etc.) with a standard global model (Gössling et al., 2012). In fact, it is unrealistic because not only do tourist destinations naturally inherit different climatic conditions and face non-uniform climate change, but also the adaptive behaviour of tourists is intricate (Zhou et al., 2024). The single global model therefore cannot capture the destination substitutions and tourism demand redistribution patterns. Finally, changes in a country's tourism numbers are not linked to changes in the economic and social costs of the supply chain. Its value chain is a series of inter-sector and inter-region transactions that enable the provision of tourism goods/services (Sun et al., 2022). Therefore, any rise or fall in tourism flows is not limited to affecting income and employment in the local tourism sector but can have ripple effects across regions and sectors. Without tracking these direct and indirect economic and social costs, we have no idea of the net benefits/costs to a country of climate change.

This study, which conducted a global longitudinal analysis from 1995 to 2022, was the first to bridge these gaps by thoroughly examining the sensitivities of both domestic and foreign tourists under six

climate types and, accordingly, projected country-specific variations in the number of visitors under business-as-usual emission pathways by 2030. Input-output analysis (Leontief et al., 2008; Miller, 2009) was further employed to translate such demand changes into cascading employment and income gains/loss along the tourism value chain. By doing so, this study contributes to i) providing a holistic picture of how the changing climate shape travel demand distribution globally, and ii) quantifying national differences in income and employment changes induced by the tourism demand variations. This is expected to facilitate supportive international dialogues on climate action among tourism stakeholders at the national level.

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# HEAR OUR VOICES: TELLING STORIES OF COUNTRY

Shea Calvin<sup>a</sup>, Tamara Young<sup>a</sup> and Margurite Hook<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>The University of Newcastle, Australia

## ABSTRACT

Indigenous peoples and their cultures have long been the focus of tourism promotion globally (Waite, 1997; Young, 2009), while traditionally having limited influence on tourism decision making (Ruhanen et al., 2015; Whitford & Ruhanen, 2010, 2016). This is true for Muloobinba (also known as Newcastle, New South Wales), a place long cared for by Awabakal and Worimi peoples, with its rich cultural landscape identified as a competitive advantage within local tourism planning. However, recent tourism initiatives evidence little consultation with Aboriginal stakeholders. This study explores Aboriginal community members' connections to Muloobinba, and collaborates with community members to critique the colonial narratives of Country that permeate destination promotion.

The study was led by a Birpai and Worimi Aboriginal doctoral candidate, supervised by two non-Indigenous tourism and marketing scholars; all of which are passionate about amplifying the voices of Aboriginal peoples within tourism. In approaching the study, it was important to the lead researcher that the study adopt a more collaborative and community-oriented approach to research: an Indigenist approach; that which remains rarely adopted in tourism studies (Calvin et al., 2024).

The study engages eight community members as peer-researchers using photovoice and yarning to tell their *stories of Country*. Through photovoice, peer-researchers reflect upon their connections to Country, and take 5-10 photographs of places of significance, guided by several photograph prompts, as well as write a brief photolog explaining the significance of places. Yarning, an Indigenous form of conversation (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010), followed the photovoice data collection. The yarns employed techniques of photo-elicitation and photo mapping, and evoked deep insights into peer-researcher connections to Country, as well as their perspectives on current destination promotion imagery.

Synthesising the photographs, photologs and yarns, the study employed thematic analysis, expanding upon the themes identified by peer-researchers during the yarns. In an exploration of several emerging themes, this working paper shares the peer-researchers' insights into place-identity and destination promotion.

This study answers longstanding calls for more inclusive and collaborative Indigenous research in tourism studies (see, Calvin et al., 2024; Nielsen & Wilson, 2012). It showcases the potential of Indigenist research approaches and creative, participatory methodologies in generating rich, nuanced data that respects and privileges Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. It also demonstrates the value of these methods in amplifying Indigenous voices and fostering meaningful engagement with Aboriginal communities. In this, this study models an effective method of community consultation for future tourism decision-making. The study also delivers benefits to the participating communities, a crucial aspect of Indigenist research. By empowering Aboriginal community members to tell their stories and use their voices to effect change, the research process itself becomes a tool for strengthening connections to Country and reinforcing place-identity.

In conclusion, this study represents a significant step towards decolonising tourism research

and practice. By centering Aboriginal voices and perspectives, this study challenges traditional approaches to destination development and offers a model for more equitable, culturally sensitive engagement with Aboriginal communities in tourism contexts. The research not only contributes to academic knowledge but also has the potential to inform more inclusive and respectful tourism policies and practices in Muloobinba and beyond.

**Keywords:** *Destination Promotion, Indigenist Research, Place-Identity, Photovoice, Yarning, Storytelling*

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# HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM EDUCATION: A DYNAMIC LENS

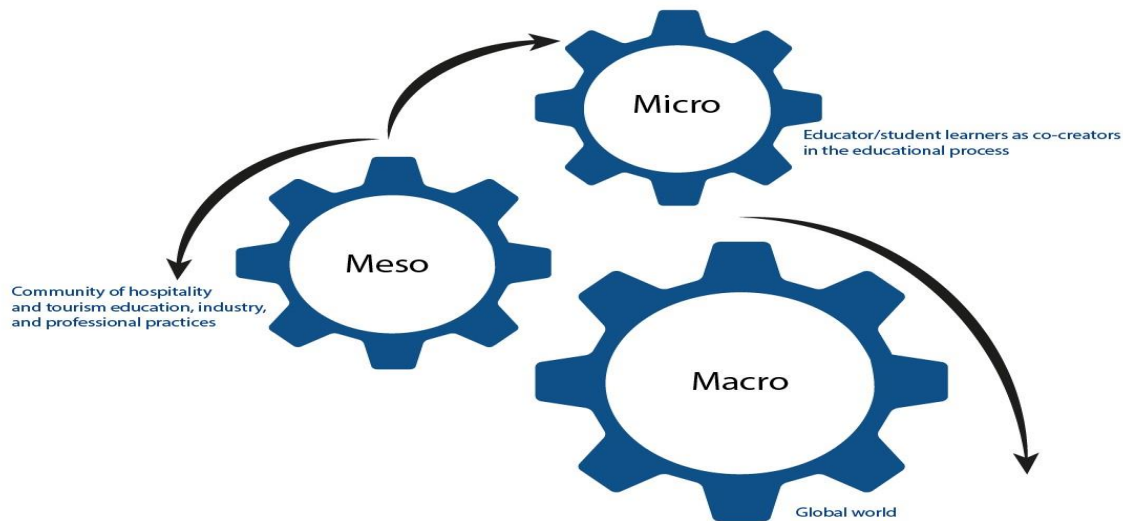
Alison Morrison<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>William Angliss Institute

## ABSTRACT

Commenting on the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Beeton and Morrison (2019) note that they had been characterised by rapidity in terms of turbulence, creative destruction, and renewal that confront, blur boundaries, and impact local, national and global environments. More recently, of note is the extremity and speed of change, disruptions across global landscapes (Sharma et al., 2021), and consequential transformations (Chapman *et al.*, 2021). These are in perpetual motion, shaping new and unknowable futures (Shi & Wolfe., 2022). These disruptions continue to interrupt and transform economy, society, industry sectors, institutions, workforce, curricula, pedagogic practices, and students as learner (Chapman *et al.*, 2021). Thus, the context conditions within which Hospitality and Tourism Education (HTE) 'lives' can be described as having been shocked, impacting and unsettling 'normal' ways of operating and practising (Bichler et al., 2020). This combines to extenuate the imperative for HTE to be reimagined, to develop novel educational opportunities, and to uncover innovative curriculum design and delivery (Shi et al., 2022). It also suggests that, as a consequence, while some educational aspects remain constant, others may be challenged and become redundant (Chapman et al., 2021). Further, there is acknowledgement that conventional linear modes and traditional narratives of learning and teaching are outdated (Lugosi & Jamieson, 2017).

Within this HTE context, the benefits of applying an integrative frame of reference to aid understanding of the contemporary challenges are explored. The objective is to provide a lens through which to reflect on curriculum design and content, and pedagogic practice therein, towards developing relevant and future focused learning, and with the learner at its' heart. As depicted in Figure 1, it adopts an approach which incorporates the relationship of interconnections at macro-, meso-, and micro-levels (Giannopoulos et al., 2020). These general analytic levels are shown as three interconnected and interactive cogs. It emphasises how each micro-level interaction is nested within the broader settings of macro, and meso. Macro-level does not exist without micro, and meso, and vice versa; all three levels are interdependent (Giannopoulos et al., 2020). Thus, HTE is embedded, interacts, and intersects, in the broader context of the: global world at the macro-environment level; meso-level community of HTE, industry, and professional practices; and the nexus of educator/student learners as co-creators in the educational process at micro-level (Diaz & Halkias, 2022). It represents a complex systems, with accelerated disruption, transformation, and perpetual change as the new norm, and emphasises how small changes in any one can have a ripple effect across all three levels (Sedarati et al., 2021). It is proposed that such a configuration may assist understanding of the range of multi-level conditions of relevance that determine and shape HTE, and is justifiable given the inherent complexity, and unpredictability confronting the lived world of today and tomorrow (Shi & Wolfe, 2022). Furthermore, it offers a holistic perspective that embraces interconnectivity (Hillebrand, 2022); and incorporates a set of external influencers relative to the social, economic, technological, political, and socio-psychological factors that serve to determine the performance of an education system (Diaz & Halkias, 2021).



**Figure 1:** Three Level Interactive Context Conditions: a dynamic lens

The purpose of Figure 1 is to represent the relationships of a complex system in a straightforward, yet dynamic way. While there may have limitations in terms of what is represented, and what is de-emphasised, Hillebrand (2022: 523) asserts that: ‘when the context is complex, a perspective that acknowledges this is likely to provide more insight than alternatives that ignore this’. The aim then is to provide insight, to engender a better understanding of the influences on, and of, HTE, and alignment of conditions therein. The objective is to develop relevant and future-focused learning, and resultant graduate skills and capabilities. It provides a lens, through which hospitality and tourism educators can view the world awaiting graduates, and inspire and engage student learners through ever evolving pedagogic practices ‘in the flow’ of emerging phenomena. Importantly, such a holistic approach provides for the eventuality that graduates, as future global citizens, will be positive forces in a turbulent world. These conclusions are tentatively offered in the spirit of what is known today, while leaving the door open for the unknowable of tomorrow.

**Keywords:** *hospitality, tourism, education, dynamic, lens*

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# HOTEL EMPLOYEE'S PERSPECTIVES ON 'GOING GREEN': SYNTHESIS AND FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA

Rawan Nimri<sup>a</sup>, Simone Bianco<sup>b</sup>, Brent Moyle<sup>a</sup> and Salman Majeed<sup>c,d,e</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Griffith University, <sup>b</sup>The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, <sup>c</sup>Shanghai University, <sup>d</sup>Florida State University, <sup>e</sup>University of Technology Sydney

## ABSTRACT

The global hospitality industry faces increasing challenges from the environmental consequences of climate change (Zeng et al., 2024). As major contributors to carbon emissions, resource consumption, and waste production, hotels are under pressure to adopt sustainable practices to reduce their environmental footprint (Bianco et al., 2023). Recognising their environmental responsibility, hotels have increasingly adopted sustainability initiatives which address environmental goals and offer strategic benefits (Majeed & Kim, 2023). These initiatives provide a competitive edge by reducing costs, mitigating regulatory risks, and attracting eco-conscious consumers (Zeng et al., 2024). Compounding this, sustainability simply must be a key priority for hospitality and tourism firms, seeking to adapt to an increasingly complex global policy landscape of increased environmental and social governance.

Employee perspectives on green hotel practices are becoming crucially important, given their centrality in firms' operations, as well as the commitment these sustainability initiatives require from staff. Despite this, employees' perspectives on green hotel practices remain underexplored and conceptually underdeveloped (Osolase et al., 2023). Instead, previous studies predominantly focus on external stakeholders such as customers and investors. Emerging discourse is shifting the focus to how green practices affect internal dynamics, especially employees' perceptions and involvement. Consequently, this working paper reviews existing academic literature on sustainability in hotels from the perspective of employees, highlighting their understanding of green initiatives and the impact of those initiatives on their performance.

Insights on this phenomenon were devised drawing on a systematic quantitative literature review (SQLR) of existing studies. Following the recommendations of Yang et al. (2017), scopus was selected as the primary database due to its comprehensive coverage of tourism and hospitality literature. The search terms included combinations of "hotel" and "hospitality" with terms such as "green," "sustainability," "eco-friendly," and "environmental practices," along with employee-related keywords. The search was limited to peer-reviewed articles published between 2019 and 2023, yielding an initial set of 173 studies. After a screening process, 67 peer-reviewed articles were selected for full-text analysis.

Descriptive analysis revealed 54 manuscripts employed theoretical frameworks, while 13 were atheoretical. 57 manuscripts applied quantitative approaches, while four employed mixed methods, and five utilised qualitative methods. This methodological imbalance reveals a notable lack of qualitative research on employee engagement with green practices (Farrukh et al., 2022). Such a predominance of quantitative approaches may hinder a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the phenomena, failing to capture the complexities of employees' individual perceptions and behaviours.

Preliminary findings indicate employees have a limited understanding of what constitutes a green hotel, with the concept often approached superficially, which may negatively impact employee engagement. Over 42% of the articles relied on outdated references (2012-2017), underscoring the need for more current and rigorous definitions in tourism management, especially in light of industry changes and emerging concepts (Majeed & Kim, 2023).



Additionally, studies on green practices lacked clarity, with 47% failing to specify concrete practices and relying instead on various certifications and eco-label schemes.

A key finding of the review is the recognition of the critical role that employees play in the success of green initiatives within hotels. While management designs and promotes sustainability strategies, employees implement these practices on a daily basis (Osolase et al., 2023). Recognising the fundamental role employees play in the implementation of sustainability initiatives, comprehensive research is essential to elucidate the dynamics of these processes at the individual level. Such scholarly inquiry could yield critical insights, facilitating the optimisation of sustainability strategies within diverse organisational settings (Zhang & Huang, 2023).

This working paper highlights several challenges that employees encounter when implementing green initiatives. Research suggests that a lack of understanding of green practices, especially when sustainability is perceived as symbolic rather than a genuine commitment, can lead to employee cynicism and diminished motivation to participate (Kim & Lee, 2022). Inadequate training and resources can impede employees' ability to effectively engage with sustainability practices. Without proper support from management, employees may feel overwhelmed by the additional responsibilities, leading to frustration and disengagement (Abualigah et al., 2023). Recognising these complexities, future studies should explore the adoption of qualitative methodologies to advance our conceptual understanding of employee engagement with sustainability initiatives. Such approaches would enable a deeper exploration of the emotional and cognitive processes that underpin employee perceptions and reactions to these efforts, particularly in areas where current understanding is limited.

While this study highlights the growing body of research on employee engagement in sustainability within hotels, it also identifies significant gaps in the literature. A critical examination of how green practices are conceptualised from both managerial and employee perspectives could provide valuable insights. For instance, comparing how managers and employees perceive sustainability goals may reveal practical recommendations or policy implications to address misalignments in expectations and approaches (Moyle et al., 2020). Addressing these gaps is essential for developing more effective sustainability strategies that align organisational goals with employee needs and motivations, ultimately ensuring a more holistic approach to green initiatives within the hospitality sector.

**Keywords:** *Green hotels; Sustainability; Environment; Workforce; Employee; Engagement.*

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# HOTEL GUEST EXPERIENCE FOR PEOPLE WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT: TOWARDS A ‘MEANINGFUL’ CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Zangi Dinh<sup>a</sup>, Anita Manfreda<sup>a</sup> and Catheryn Khoo<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Torrens University Australia

## ABSTRACT

The social model of disability recognises that impairments are an integral part of our society. It emphasises the critical importance of service inclusion in service design, advocating for services that are accessible to the broadest spectrum of human beings (Fisk et al., 2018). Despite these calls, the hotel industry tends to prioritise visual aesthetics and visual marketing tools in designing and managing hotel experiences (Saribas & Demier, 2024). This unintentionally leaves out a significant group – people with visual impairments (PwVI) – who receive minimal stimuli and/or subsequent value from the sense of sight. Although PwVI constitutes a relatively small demographic in terms of numbers, the aging population, which may face challenges such as visual impairments is showing an increased desire to travel (Qiao et al., 2023), expanding PwVI into a much larger demographic that needs to be catered for.

Despite the opportunity for hotel operators to plan and design experiences to enhance the sense of place, social interactions, and foster participation in meaningful activities (Kuokkanen & Kirillova, 2024), little is known about what a meaningful hotel guest experience is like for PwVI (Tutuncu & Lieberman, 2016) and how hotels can adapt to their needs and meet their expectations to provide an extraordinary experience rather than an ordinary one (Duerden et al., 2018). Providing all customers with fair access to services and fair treatment promotes inclusivity and creates accessible spaces, challenging the current service thinking (Fisk et al., 2018).

Numerous studies have identified the barriers, challenges, and travel motivations of PwVI in tourism, arguing that the hotel guest experience for people with disabilities is primarily about removing physical barriers and providing them with accessible spaces (e.g., Sintakova & Lasisi, 2020; Tutuncu & Lieberman, 2016). Although physical barriers can be removed, interpersonal and intrapersonal constraints remain influential factors that impact PwVI's decision-making processes regarding accommodation providers and travel experiences (Deville & Kastenholz, 2018; Qiao et al., 2023). This oversight limits PwVI's ability to engage with hotel environments fully, reducing opportunities for meaningful experiences that offer emotional resonance, significant discovery, and the potential for personal transformation, well-being, and a sense of purpose (Duerden et al., 2018).

This study aims to understand what constitutes a meaningful hotel guest experience for PwVI and propose a theoretical framework for designing and managing meaningful hotel experiences for PwVIs. Informed by an interpretivist paradigm, the research utilises phenomenology to gain insights and understanding into the meaning of the lived experience of PwVIs as hotel guests. Through the use of semi-structured interviews with PwVIs, the study adopts projective techniques designed to evoke in-depth, subjective episodes of PwVI's hotel experiences. By unlocking the subconscious experiences of PwVI, new insights are generated which can reveal PwVIs worldview and hidden aspects of their experiences which makes ordinary extraordinary (Westwood, 2007, pp. 293 - 296). Furthermore, the projective technique is to be used to elicit information on hotel operator's knowledge of PwVIs and its associated impact on PwVI's hotel experience.

The study contributes to hospitality and tourism experience literature by generating new insights into meaningful experiences for PwVI in the hospitality industry, and potentially in other service sectors where inclusivity remains a luxury rather than a requirement. This research serves as a foundation for future studies on inclusive tourism, thereby enhancing well-being and social belonging of vulnerable guests and their hotel experiences. The

findings can offer the development of new hotel experiential offerings and improvements that can significantly benefit not just people with disabilities but also the ageing population.

**Keywords:** *People with visual impairment; Hotel experience; Meaningful experience; Inclusive tourism; Experience design; Hospitality industry*

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# HOW TOURISM SOCIAL (EXPAT)PRENEURS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH LEVERAGE PARTNERSHIPS TO ENHANCE SOCIAL IMPACT

Simone Grabowski<sup>a</sup> and Najmeh Hassanli<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>UTS Business School, University of Technology Sydney

## ABSTRACT

This study examines the emerging phenomenon of social (expat)preneurs in Cambodia's tourism industry, focusing on their unique role in fostering sustainable practices amidst rapid industry growth. Drawing on embeddedness theory, we explore how these individuals leverage their dual position as expatriates and local business owners/managers to navigate complex socio-economic landscapes and create positive change. This research contributes to the discourse on tourism social entrepreneurship in developing economies and offers insights into the potential of hybrid business models in driving sustainable development.

**Keywords:** *Cambodia, expatriates, Global South, partnerships, tourism social entrepreneurship*

## Introduction and Methods

In the decade preceding the COVID-19 pandemic, Cambodia experienced a rapid surge in tourism, particularly in Siem Reap, the gateway to the World Heritage-listed Angkor complex. While economically beneficial, this growth led to concerns about overtourism and unsustainable development practices (Asian Development Bank, 2022). The influx of mass tourism conflicted with emerging national priorities for resilience and sustainability (Kingdom of Cambodia, 2021), while the unearthing of child exploitation within the industry further highlighted the need for ethical alternatives (Guiney & Mostafanezhad, 2015; Guiney, 2018).

Concurrently, a significant influx of expatriates to Cambodia and other countries in the Global South occurred. These individuals are considered to have privileged mobilities (Kunz, 2016) and are driven by a desire to contribute meaningfully to local communities while seeking personal growth. This phenomenon, sometimes referred to as 'lifestyle migration', has given rise to a unique cohort of entrepreneurs who have established more permanent roots in their host countries. We refer to these individuals as social (expat)preneurs (Vance & Bergin, 2023); expatriates committed to social impact, who establish businesses in developing countries and leverage their unique position to create positive change. This construct merges the two phenomena of social entrepreneurship (Klarin & Suseno, 2023) and expat-preneurship (Selmer et al., 2018; Vance et al., 2016).

Drawing on embeddedness theory, we examine how social (expat)preneurs leverage both their expatriate connections and local networks to overcome barriers, access resources, and amplify their social impact (Dabić et al., 2020). This research contributes to our understanding of how these individuals create meaningful social impact while balancing the complexities of cross-cultural business practices and post-colonial sensitivities within the tourism industry in the Global South.

We conducted 11 online, semi-structured interviews with owners/operators or managers of tourism and hospitality enterprises that self-identify as an 'ethical business' – one with specific social objectives. The majority of interviewees were expatriates (from Europe, North America, and Oceania) who had established businesses in their host countries. However, it is important to note that in all of these organisations, expatriates worked alongside local staff and partners, often in leadership positions.

We employed a qualitative approach, using broad thematic analysis conducted both manually and with the assistance of NVivo software. Our analysis focused on identifying key themes related to how these businesses leverage partnerships, navigate local business environments, and create social impact through their ventures.

In this paper, we present our preliminary findings on one key aspect of the results: how social (expat)preneurs utilise their unique position as expatriates to foster partnerships, overcome challenges, and enhance their social impact within the tourism and hospitality sectors in Cambodia.

## Preliminary findings

Our respondents had varying experiences and motivations for their social (expat)preneurship journey but generally these were serendipitous. For example, one respondent, originally from Norway, explained: "I'm a social worker with special focus on international social work. So for me it was really interesting to see that to run a guest house you can also give back, you can – it's kind of being a social worker in the hotel industry and it's really interesting." Two core themes emerged from our analysis and are briefly addressed below.

### *Balancing Ethical Considerations with Business Operations in a Developing Economy*

Frequently, social (expat)preneurs are needing to navigate complex socio-economic landscapes in their host country to create positive change. Their pursuit for positive social good and maintaining ethical standards was juxtaposed with their need to ensure there was economic viability in their operations: "I think if you're a Westerner and you're here running a business, you have an obligation to do the right thing in the country that you're in... Doesn't matter how many people you're employing, if you're not actually employing them with a wage that they need to survive... to me, the award wage isn't enough and you can't live on it, so how is that ethical?" (Australian respondent)

### *Networking, Collaborating and Learning from Like-Minded Businesses*

We found that social (expat)preneurs rely on like-minded businesses to address local challenges in order to promote responsible tourism. These businesses may be suppliers, partners or competitors but in many cases, they are also run by expatriates:

"For me it was a huge learning process, what I did here, learning first the Asian culture, Cambodia and you can live in a different way than my Western path I know. I learned so much in [our collective] working with all these business owners, it was a great time."  
(German respondent)

## Conclusion

This study sheds light on the unique role of social (expat)preneurs in fostering ethical tourism practices in Cambodia. Our findings demonstrate how these individuals leverage their dual embeddedness – as outsiders with insider knowledge – to create innovative solutions to pressing social and environmental issues in the tourism industry. A collective of like-minded organisations can facilitate ethical travel such that community and the environment benefit.

The research contributes to the growing body of literature on social entrepreneurship in the Global South (Klarin & Suseno, 2023) and expands our understanding of the intersection between expatriate entrepreneurship and social enterprise (Vance & Bergin, 2023). Future research could explore the long-term impacts of social (expat)preneur initiatives on local communities and investigate how these models can be scaled or replicated in other contexts. Additionally, further examination of the power dynamics and potential neo-colonial implications of these ventures (Mostafanezhad, 2016) would contribute to a more nuanced understanding of their role in sustainable development.



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# I AM BEING GOOD: PLEASE FORGIVE MY SERVICE FAILURE

Chia Yen Yang<sup>a</sup>, **Fandy Tjiptono**<sup>b</sup>, Christina Kwai Choi Lee<sup>c</sup> and Jasmine May Yee Loo<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Xiamen University Malaysia, <sup>b</sup>Victoria University of Wellington, <sup>c</sup>Federation University of Australia,

<sup>d</sup>The Salvation Army Australia

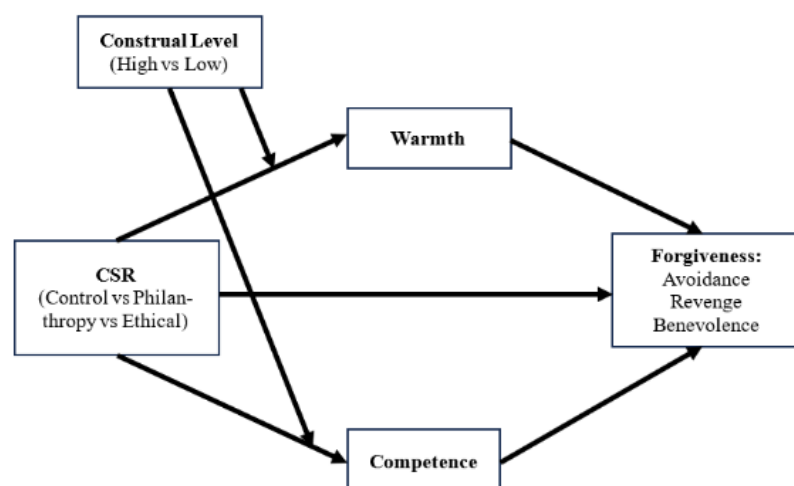
## ABSTRACT

Service failure is inevitable in business operations. In the past three decades, service recovery strategy (e.g., compensation and apology) has been suggested as an effective solution to mitigate customer dissatisfaction, revenge, and avoidance following a service failure (Liu et al., 2024). However, studies examining how and when consumers will forgive a transgressing company in the absence of adequate service recovery strategies are relatively limited (Rasouli et al., 2022). There has been a call for more research focusing on the role of activities in the pre-recovery phase (e.g., engagement in prosocial initiatives, such as Corporate Social Responsibility) in handling service failures (Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2019).

This study aims to integrate CSR and forgiveness theories in investigating how CSR leads to consumer forgiveness when service recovery following a service failure is not feasible. The focus is on philanthropic and ethical CSR that emphasizes on society-oriented responsibilities. Drawing insights from social psychology (Aaker et al., 2010), warmth and competence may be useful in linking a transgressing company's CSR initiatives and consumer forgiveness in a situation where service recovery is not possible. Furthermore, construal level theory is also used to examine the boundary conditions of different individual mind-sets (abstract vs concrete) when interpreting information about a firm's CSR initiatives and their effects on consumer forgiveness. Specifically, the study investigates whether perceived warmth and perceived competence mediate the interaction effect of CSR and construal level on consumer forgiveness in the event of a service failure.

Based on Figure 1, this study hypothesizes that in the event of a service failure:

- H<sub>1</sub>:** Construal level moderates the effect of (philanthropy and ethical) CSR on consumer forgiveness (reduced avoidance, reduced revenge, and increased benevolence toward the company) via perceived warmth.
- H<sub>2</sub>:** Construal level moderates the effect of (philanthropy and ethical) CSR on consumer forgiveness (reduced avoidance, reduced revenge, and increased benevolence toward the company) via perceived competence.



**Figure 1. Conceptual Model**

This study employed a 3 (CSR: philanthropic vs ethical vs none) x 2 (construal level: high

vs low) between-subjects factorial design. A total of 239 participants (52.7% females, Median age = 30-39 years old) who resided in the UK were recruited from Prolific online panel. Participants who had visited a retailer in the past 6 months were randomly assigned to the experimental conditions and were paid £0.70 for their participation. Six advertisements for each condition were created, including a barbecue cooking class for the no-CSR condition, a hospitalised children charity program for the philanthropic CSR, and purchase of a personal tumbler for the ethical CSR. A fictitious “Lasso Department Store” was used. Construal level was operationalized using “why” and “how” messages (White et al., 2011). Well-established measures were adopted using 7-point Likert-type scale (forgiveness: McCullough et al., 1997; perceived warmth and competence: Aaker et al., 2010). All participants read a written service scenario to imagine themselves in that specific scenario, describing stock unavailability and inattentive service personnel.

Philanthropic CSR has a positive effect on perceived warmth, perceived competence, and benevolence, and a negative impact on avoidance and revenge. The index of moderated mediation (PROCESS Macro Model 7) was only significant for the effect of philanthropic CSR on avoidance via warmth and moderated by construal level ( $B = 0.173$ , 95%CI: 0.009 to 0.467). However, the indirect effect of philanthropic CSR on revenge ( $B = 0.093$ , 95%CI: -0.043 to 0.344) and benevolence ( $B = -0.159$ , 95%CI: -0.473 to 0.009) via warmth moderated by construal level was not significant. Similarly, none of the moderated mediation indices for the effect of ethical CSR on consumer forgiveness via warmth moderated by construal level is significant. Therefore,  $H_1$  was only partially supported. Furthermore, non-significant results were found for the moderated mediation effects of both philanthropic and ethical CSR on consumer forgiveness via competence moderated by construal level. Thus,  $H_2$  was not supported.

Perceived warmth, but not competence, mediates the interaction effect of philanthropic CSR and construal level, by reducing avoidance. It suggests that consumers perceive firms that engage in philanthropy as warmer, thus reducing their avoidance. Construal level moderates this indirect effect, where the effect is stronger among those with high-level construal (i.e., prefer abstract/intangible features such as a company's CSR activities). In short, CSR is most effective in influencing consumer forgiveness when consumers have an abstract mind-set due to their warmth judgment toward the transgressing company.

Previous studies suggest that consumer forgiveness depends heavily on service recovery (Pacheco et al., 2018). Our findings contribute to the service recovery literature that socially responsible programmes, particularly philanthropic CSR, may help the transgressing company in motivating consumers to forgive moderate service failures without service recovery. Companies should consider investing in prosocial activities (e.g., charitable donations to marginalised groups, such as disability centres, orphanages, and disaster relief) since such initiatives may act as an insurance against potential unforgiveness when service recovery is not feasible. Cultivating consumers' perceived warmth and instilling abstract mind-sets are useful to decrease avoidance toward the firm following a service failure.

**Keywords:** *Corporate Social Responsibility, consumer forgiveness, warmth, competence, construal level.*

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# IMAGE REPAIR STRATEGIES DURING TOURISM CRISES: THE CASE OF MEXICO

Eli Avraham<sup>a</sup> and Nicolas Kervyn<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Haifa, Israel, <sup>b</sup>Louvain-la-Neuve University, Belgium

## ABSTRACT

Mexico is one of the most important tourism brands in the world. Nevertheless, over the years, many crises have occurred that threatened the country's attractiveness to tourists. Using the image repair theory, the purpose of the research is to analyze which image repair strategies the Mexican decision makers used to combat negative events such as: economic crisis, crime waves, epidemics, pandemics, and earthquakes. The strategies chosen for repairing the country's image were located with the help of an analysis of social media posts, videos/ads and news articles that were published during the years 2000-2023.

Image Repair Theory (Beniot, 2015) describes how companies and organizations try to combat negative public perception of themselves during a crisis (Beirman & Van Walbeek, 2011). The model that was adopted is "the multi-step model for altering place image" (Avraham and Ketter 2016), which includes twenty strategies, divided into three broad categories: source strategies (developing media relations, blocking media access), audience strategies (concentrating on a resilient audience, use of patriotism, appealing to the audience's values) and message strategies (acknowledging the negative image, addressing it, mitigating the crisis, initiating events).

To analyze which strategies were used by Mexican officials, we applied qualitative content analysis of news reports taken from five types of sources published between the years 2000-2023: (1) Ten newspapers that are published in the five countries that constitute the main markets for tourism in Mexico: US, Canada, UK, Argentina and Colombia; (2) A tourism news website, *eTurbonews*; (3) Official Mexican tourism sites: *Visit-Mexico* and *visitmexico* websites, a Facebook page and Twitter account; (4) A local Mexican newspaper, *Reforma*, consider to be the main national newspaper in Mexico; (5) YouTube site where we searched for *Mexican* tourism campaigns.

The findings show how marketers and state representatives, at all levels and throughout the years, worked to promote a narrative that separates the 'Ideal Mexico' from the 'Dark Mexico' (Cazzamatta, & Garcia, 2022; Cruz-Milán, 2022) using three types of strategies: source, message, and audience-focused strategies.

Source strategies used to Promote Ideal Mexico (Media Cooperation; Familiarization trips; Using new media as an alternative source) and to Eliminating Dark Mexico (Failure to protect local journalists covering crime and corruption). Message strategies used to Promote Ideal Mexico (Expanding the image; Organizing events ) and to Eliminating Dark Mexico (Acknowledging the crisis while suggesting a solution; Reducing the scale/severity of the crisis; Dissociating the incidents from tourism; Criminals are known to the authorities; Claim for rare and isolated incidents that could happen anywhere; Geographically distancing the crisis from tourism; Psychologically distancing the crisis from tourism). Audience strategies used to Promote Ideal Mexico (Creating affinity with specific audiences; Association to the target audience's familiar brands; Partnering with Cities in the USA; Niche tourism such as

EcoTourism, Wellness and New Age, Gay/Queer tourism, and Events/Conferences tourism) and to Eliminating Dark Mexico (Finding alternative markets; Domestic tourism).

We believe that Mexico's success in increasing the number of tourists despite the escalation of violence over the years stems in part from the coordination that exists between various marketers and the authorities when responding to what is happening and the use of strategies that strengthen the perception that there is a barrier or buffer between Ideal Mexico and Dark Mexico. Unlike other countries that have experienced a prolonged image crisis (Avraham, & Ketter, 2016), here the stakeholders of Mexican tourism are speaking with one voice, marketers and officials at the local and national level, over a long time period, convey uniform messages, using strategies that aim to create and maintain the perception of two different countries, which do not meet. Every time there were travel warnings to Mexico, it was interesting to see that local decision makers seem to be surprised. In their perception there is no connection between Dark Mexico which is responsible for the travel warning, and Ideal Mexico to which the tourists travel to.

**Key words:** *tourism crisis; image repair; Mexico tourism; Destination Marketing*

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# INDIAN DIASPORA, VFR AND IMPLICATIONS FOR INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Madelene Blaer<sup>a</sup> and Colin Drake<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Victoria University

## ABSTRACT

Australia is a country of migrants, with 8.2M people born overseas as at 2023 (ABS, 2024), and since 2013, the Indian diaspora in Australia has overtaken China as the most significant migration segment (ABS, 2021). In Melbourne's West, the number of Indian-born residents has grown rapidly in recent years with an estimated increase in the region of 80% since 2016 and more than 81,000 Indian-born residents in 2021 (8.3% of local population); this is significantly higher than in Greater Melbourne (4.9%) (i.d Informed Decisions, 2024).

Dwyer *et al.* (2014) indicated that research into Australian migration induced tourism by Smith and Toms (1978) and Hollander (1982) found that all forms of inbound tourism, whether business, leisure or visiting friends and relatives (VFR), are positively affected by migration. As both state and federal government agencies responsible for the promotion of tourism are aware of the power of the diaspora in driving tourism demand in Australia, this study sought to gain insights into current patterns, preferences and perceptions of Indian travellers (i.e., overseas VFR tourists and local Indian diaspora) based in Melbourne's West.

A mixed-methods approach was deemed best suited to achieve the aims of the research (Khoo-Lattimore *et al.*, 2019). Firstly, in-depth interviews were held with nine stakeholders, including representatives from international student associations, peak bodies and community and government organisations. These conversations enabled researchers to gain an overarching perspective of the key issues for Indian-born residents planning visitor experiences in Melbourne and Victoria on behalf of their VFR guests. Thereafter, three 90-minute focus groups were conducted with Indians residing in the West to delve deeper into host and guest needs, behaviours and preferences. Lastly, analysis of the qualitative data informed the design of a 15-minute online survey, which was distributed to Indians residing in the West. Of the 102 usable survey responses the quantitative analysis of the data collected helped to validate and measure the qualitative findings. This paper focusses on the research findings related to destination choice and discusses the critical implications and potential strategies for sustainable tourism development and inclusive practices.

The analysis found that Melbourne's West has become recognised as a cultural hub for Indian migrants; the increasingly established Indian communities have contributed to the region's growing cultural-specific religious facilities, shopping options, local events, as well as restaurant and cuisine options. Other key attractors to the region include relatively affordable housing, employment opportunities, and quality education. While Indian residents feel a deep sense of community and see the West as a 'home away from home', this does not necessarily translate into being viewed as a 'good place to travel' nor a destination to show their guests. Among the local diaspora, particularly students and individuals/couples without children, Melbourne city is perceived as more vibrant, leading them to spend the bulk of their leisure time there. Consequently, the West is predominantly recognised as a home/community hub rather than a leisure destination of choice. Among the Indian diaspora and their VFRs, travelling most often occurs within Melbourne. It is perceived to have less barriers to access than regional areas, with a great range of food options as well as a variety of attractions/activities to suit diverse ages and traveller expectations (e.g., Melbourne Cricket Ground, St Kilda Beach, Albert Park, Formula One Racetrack, Australian Open).

Whilst Indians are visiting areas within regional Victoria, this is predominately concentrated to major tourist 'hotspots' (i.e., Philip Island Penguin Parade, Great Ocean Road) that have infrastructure to

support larger groups. A preference to travel in friend groups or family units (most often with three generations) is strongly linked to a deep cultural sense of collectiveness and the importance of shared experiences. Many hosts and their VFR guests are not necessarily seeking to visit regional Victoria, rather it is the pull of the ‘must see’ attractions drawing them there and the surrounding region is coincidental. A sentiment exists that regional Victoria is not quite ready to welcome tourists, with many reporting challenges with limited food options and language support, as well as difficulties with navigation and transportation. Despite this, a number of regional locations were considered highly that offer a distinct proposition (e.g., Puffing Billy in the Dandenong Ranges) or a scenic landscape (e.g., Victorian Snowfields). In terms of travelling interstate, visiting the main capital cities (i.e., Sydney, Brisbane) are seen as ‘must do’ tourist destinations. Whilst visiting, many are inclined to visit and tick-off the key cities and their world-renowned tourist attractions.

This research highlights the significance of the Indian diaspora and VFR market for Australia. For most of the participants in this study, however, visitation is currently concentrated to key tourist attractions. To encourage both local and regional travel and dispersion beyond established hotspots, two key strategies may help: (1) increasing awareness of local and regional destination offerings, and (2) supporting the visitor economy to better meet the needs of Indian diaspora and their VFR guests (e.g., provision of increased food options and support with interpretation, navigation and transportation). More education and support schemes for tourism and small businesses in particular may enable the industry to better cater to and attract this increasingly important market.

**Keywords:** *Indian diaspora, VFR travel, Sustainable tourism, Inclusion, Community, Culture*

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# INVESTIGATION ON ORIENTATION OF EMOTIONAL DISPLAY RULES TOWARDS EMOTIONAL LABOUR PERFORMANCE AMONG NATURE-BASED GUIDES

Sabal Sahoo<sup>a</sup> and Margarida Abreu Novais<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Griffith University

## ABSTRACT

The process of exhibiting socially, culturally and professionally-appropriate emotions i.e. emotional labour (Hillman, 2006; Morris & Feldman, 1996) is ubiquitous in hospitality and tourism. This phenomenon eventuates through vital utilization of societal, occupational and organizational norms called emotional display rules (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989), which lead to customer gratification, elevated sense of accomplishment and self-worth among employees and long-term growth in business for organizations (Anderson et al., 2002; Pabel et al., 2022). Facetiously, the dynamics defining relationship of emotional labour with its causal attributes like display rules have not been sufficiently researched in comparison to its links with outcomes (Shapoval, 2019). The three theoretical frameworks informing their linkages – Conservation-Of-Resources (COR), Affective Events Theory (AET) and Control Theory do not offer sufficient understanding on the utilization of display rules in terms of everchanging frontline situations and service environment. The more recent endeavours specific to display rules merely convey their combined deployment based on suppression-expression mechanisms (Hopp et al., 2012) and their focus is restricted to emotional labour performance in challenging frontline interactions (Domagalski & Steelman, 2007; Westaby et al., 2020).

This scholarly initiative surpasses those limitations and addresses this overarching dearth in emotional labour literature by incorporating a wider spectrum of frontline tourism interactions where emotional display rules are utilized. In view of the highly contextual nature of the phenomenon under enquiry and exploratory predisposition of this topic, a qualitative methodology supporting the multifarious features of display rules was adopted. Henceforth, 18 open-ended interviews were performed on tour guides operating in national parks across Australia and its transcribed data representing high emotional content in guides were extracted and assigned codes implying emotional display rules. Through the simultaneous utilization of domain analysis and semantic analysis of these codes, 130 links between display rules were found, that were supported by seven themes - conservation interpretations and recreational goals (Wijeratne et al., 2014), a high degree of deep acting, generating a sense of community, experience and storytelling as sources of display rules for guides, risk management and generation of fun (Sharpe, 2005).

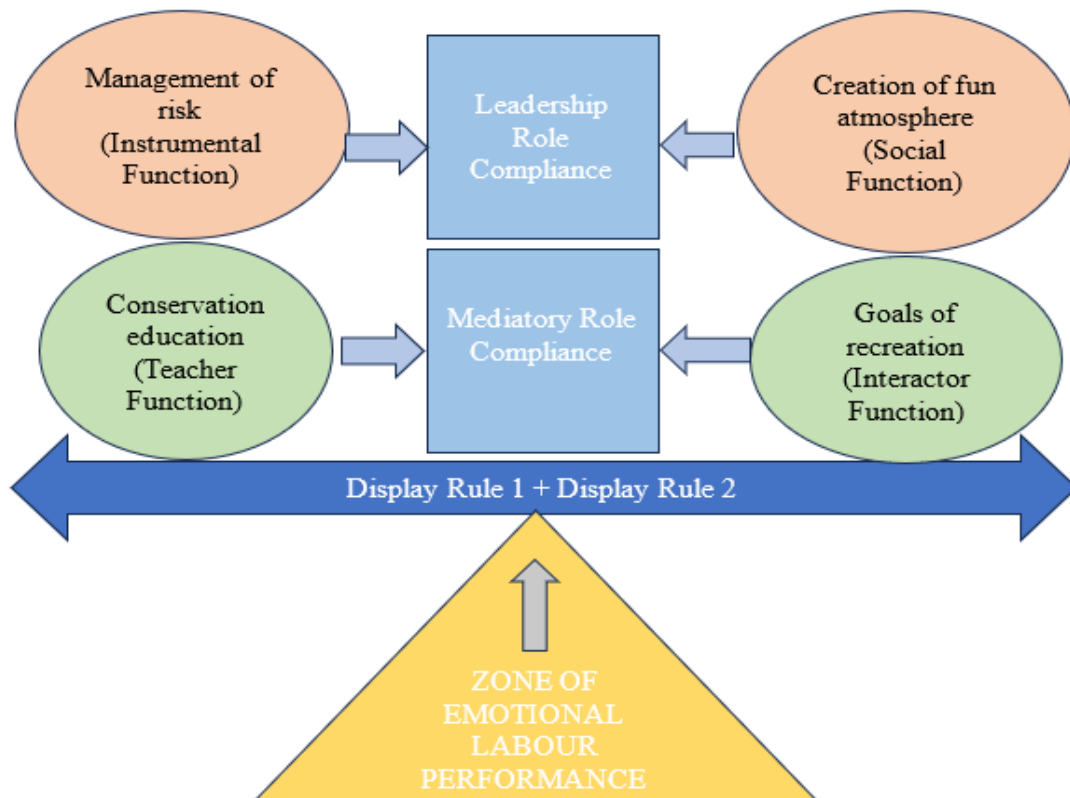
During the analysis, it was discovered that guides harness emotional display rules in a wide assortment of harmonious combinations to balance between certain professional goals. These goals encompass recreational interests and conservation interpretations, alongside risk management and generation of fun that are distinct but not conflicting when juxtaposed. Further as shown in Figure 1, these joint utilizations of emotional display rules result in attainment of functions within their leadership roles (social and instrumental functions) (Cohen, 1985; Weiler & Ham, 2001) and mediatory roles (teacher and interactor functions) (Rabotić, 2010; Weiler & Davis, 1993), between which the process of emotional labour is embedded. Intra-disciplinary, this theoretical model partially addresses and diminishes the knowledge gaps between literature on guides and emotional labour highlighted in recent studies (Hillman, 2023). Inter-disciplinary, this proposed theory makes a significant contribution to emotional labour knowledge by holistically identifying and accurately outlining the process in which the implementation of display rules and performance of emotional labour take place. These visually-suggested outcomes also lay the groundwork for understanding how service climate and frontline interactions shape the emotional demands on tour guides and the resultant customization of emotional display rules among them to

optimize emotional labour. However, withstanding the contextual nature of the concepts under study, these results are specific to guiding sector of tourism and may not be applicable other sub-industries, Further, these findings may be confirmed in other guiding services aside from nature-based setups by the use of quantitative methods to test these linkages conveyed between implementation of display rules and emotional labour process.

**Keywords:** *Emotional labour, emotional display rules, conservation interpretations, recreational goals, risk management, generation of fun*

## Tables and figures

**Figure 1: Proposed Model for Implementation of Emotional Display Rules towards Emotional Labor through attainment of Guide's Functions**



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# IS THERE ANYTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN? TOURISM WORKFORCE POLICIES IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC

Tom Baum<sup>a,b</sup>, and Richard Robinson<sup>c,d</sup>

University of Strathclyde, Glasgow<sup>a</sup>, The University of Johannesburg<sup>b</sup>, Northumbria University, Newcastle<sup>c</sup>, The University of Queensland<sup>d</sup>

## ABSTRACT

Tourism and hospitality workforce issues have risen to unprecedented prominence in academic discourse, in the media and in government and strategic thinking. Part of this interest (but by no means all) can be linked to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic (Baum et al, 2020). This level of heightened interest was clearly evident in the unprecedented extent of media coverage of workforce issues in tourism during and in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic (Solnet et al, 2022). Baum et al's (2020) argument is that the issues which came to dominate discussion across all stakeholder groups were, in fact, not new and were the same concerns over, *interalia*, job insecurity, low pay, difficult employment conditions, health and safety and an over-representation of disadvantaged groups in the workforce which were well documented and had bedevilled the sector well before COVID-19.

The employment crisis that has challenged tourism and hospitality in many countries has provided an opportunity for a complete reset for governments, associated agencies and the industry itself, a potential reset that touches the domains of both policy and practice. Our purpose in this paper is to ask whether countries, through their arms of government and industry organisations, have taken this opportunity and advocated innovative approaches and directions to overcome tourism and hospitality's workforce challenges.

We have done this through analysis of two key sources. Firstly, we analysed strategic and operational responses by national tourism ministries and agencies to a survey on responses to the workforce crisis in tourism and hospitality conducted by the OECD as part of a study of resilience within the sector (OECD, 2024). We complement this by consideration of actions initiated and the routemaps proposed in a range of national workforce strategies for tourism and hospitality in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic and the intervening timeframe.

Our analysis of both sources of information about the strategies adopted at national and regional level across a wide range of, primarily, Global North countries, highlight approaches that have been tried and tested on multiple occasions in the past with little evidence of new thinking and innovative solutions to the workforce crisis (see also Solnet et al., 2014). We conclude our analysis by questioning the assumptions which underpin the development of workforce strategies for tourism, suggesting that searching for solutions that focus downward on the sector's interiority is misguided and cannot affect meaningful change. We argue that there is a need to take a holistic view that locates tourism, hospitality and work through a wider societal and economic lens.

**Keywords:** *Tourism Employment; Workforce; Policy and Practice; Pandemic*



# LEADING WITHIN CRISIS: BUSINESS WAR VOLUNTEER TOURISM

Chelsea Gill<sup>a</sup> and Amy L. Kenworthy<sup>a</sup>

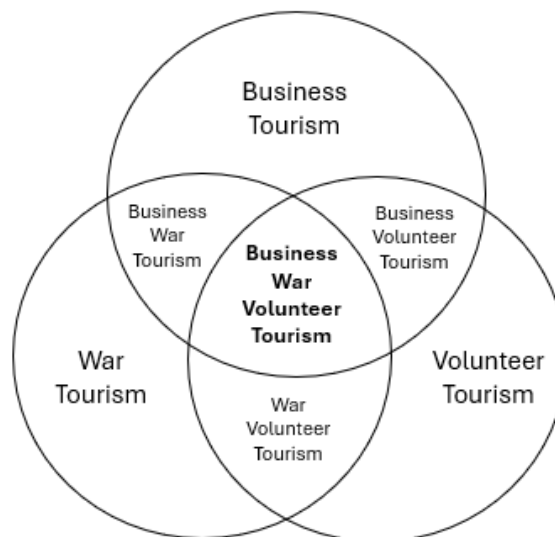
<sup>a</sup>Bond University

## ABSTRACT

War volunteer tourism is a recently conceptualized category of tourism encompassing both combat and non-combat volunteers who travel with the aim of visiting active war zones (Simpson & Schuler Scott, 2023). The catalyst for this emerging research stream is the tens of thousands of people who travelled to Ukraine from around the world following Russia's missile and artillery attacks starting on February 24, 2022. The estimates, for war volunteer tourism, within this war alone, are that approximately 20,000 people from over 50 countries around the world travelled to Ukraine to volunteer within the first months of the war (Stein, 2023).

We extend this research one step further by exploring the intersections between war volunteer tourism and business tourism. As such, we introduce a new tourism category called "business war volunteer tourism" encompassing tourism activities within which business leaders who live outside of active combat regions draw upon their business resources and acumen to mobilize needed humanitarian aid and services for front line and active combat areas and then travel to those areas to deliver it (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Business War Volunteer Tourism**



Within this new category, the other two tourism domains intersecting with war tourism are volunteer and business tourism. Volunteer tourism encompasses activities in which individuals utilize "discretionary time and income to travel out of the sphere of regular activity to assist others in need" (McGehee & Santos, 2005, p. 760). The other domain, business tourism, is defined as "a type of tourism activity in which visitors travel for a specific professional and/or business purpose to a place outside of their workplace and residence with the aim of attending a meeting, an activity or an event" (UNWTO, 2024). As such, it also includes "aid charities working on projects away from their main base" (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2012, p. 4). Theoretical implications to test include the proposition that *higher levels of solidarity and altruism will be associated with non-combat active business war volunteer tourism*.

As a subset of the intersecting war, volunteer, and business tourism research domains, our conceptualization of business war volunteer tourism extends current research and scholarship in the following ways. The first is its focus on active (not passive) engagement through targeted aid-driven business activities. Second, although we recognize there are similar motivations driving both types of tourism (i.e., solidarity, altruism), we differentiate business war volunteer tourism through its ties to the theory of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977). In examining those who lead war volunteer initiatives within their organizations, we draw upon the relationally-oriented tenets of servant leadership, thus shifting the tourist's focus from a concern for self to a concern for others.

Third, our conceptualization draws upon identity theory (Caprar & Walker, 2024) incorporating both in-group and out-group perspectives. One subset of individuals engaged in business war volunteer tourism will be in-situ within the war-torn country, living in regions that are not under immediate threat of attack. These individuals are part of the "in-group" of within-country citizen tourists, as are those who are citizens of the country under attack but who live abroad as expatriates. Others will come from out-of-country locations, with no citizenship or standing connection to the country under attack, engaging in business war volunteer tourism as "out-group" tourists. Regardless of which category the business war volunteers originate from, we argue they will all be "out group" members when they arrive in the affected communities delivering humanitarian aid.

Fourth, we highlight the importance of individuals leading organizations which have an existing culture focused on sustainability and community engagement, arguing that individuals within those cultures will be more likely to engage in business war volunteer tourism than those working for organizations in which there is no focus on sustainability. Finally, we highlight differences across those who utilize existing business resources as aid versus those who lead in the creation of new businesses aimed specifically at providing support for front lines and combat affected communities. As an example of the latter, within Ukraine the first known "business within a charity" was formally registered in 2023. This paper product (e.g., toilet paper, paper towels) manufacturing business, Mylanka, was created within an existing charity foundation, The Volunteering Help Centre. As such, 100% of the profits from good sold are used to provide humanitarian aid and restore communities in Ukraine that have been affected by the war.

Given the tragic ubiquity of war, with over 110 armed conflicts recorded this year alone (Geneva Academy, 2024), our conceptualization of business war volunteer tourism is positioned as a critical theoretical response to "understand the relationship between volunteering and travel to war zones" (Williams et al., 2023, p. 930). We posit that servant leaders living within nations oppressed by war will draw upon their existing business resources and capabilities to travel to other parts of their country providing critically needed humanitarian aid and volunteer service. Further, these leaders will inspire and attract followers who have similar servant-hearted characteristics, many of whom have self-selected to work in organizations with sustainable and responsible cultures. We argue that embedding this nuanced and intersecting new category into the tourism literature is a necessary step toward understanding the complexities of business war volunteer tourism in today's volatile and uncertain global environment.

**Keywords:** *Business tourism, War tourism, Volunteer tourism*

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# LEARNING TRAJECTORY REFLECTIONS: AN AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT FOR TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

Jenny H. Panchal<sup>a</sup>, Harold John Culala<sup>b</sup> and Vizak Gagrut<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>James Cook University, Townsville, <sup>b</sup>Australian Catholic University, <sup>c</sup>James Cook University, Brisbane

## ABSTRACT

As Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) gains influence, authentic assessments are becoming increasingly vital in higher education. These assessments apply their knowledge to real-life situations, fostering skills like communication and empathy (Baum, 2002). Unlike traditional assessments, authentic assessments offer more meaningful learning by challenging students to solve real-world problems and enhancing critical skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and adaptability, which are crucial for success in industries like tourism and hospitality (Mueller, 2005). Authentic assessments help develop key soft skills like creativity, communication, and cultural awareness, which are highly valued (Baum, 2002). This ongoing study, grounded in transformative learning theory (TLT), explores how authentic assessments, particularly 'Learning Trajectory' reflections, enhance learning in a third-year subject on visitor and crowd behaviour management for tourism, hospitality, and sports and events management students.

## Learning Trajectories and Transformative Learning Theory (TLT)

Introduced in 2020 to replace traditional examinations during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Learning Trajectory assessment has undergone several iterations to enhance its effectiveness in measuring students' understanding of visitor and crowd behaviour management concepts. The current assessment has two parts: a written reflective piece and a presentation, allowing students to reflect on their learning by integrating personal photographs, travel anecdotes, and relevant websites connected with the course content into their writing task. The presentation component enables students to articulate their reflections and insights verbally. By merging personal experience with academic theory, the assessment promotes critical thinking, creativity, and self-awareness (Moon, 2004; Ryan, 2013).

This type of assessment can be linked to various learning theories. This study used the transformative learning theory (TLT) to understand how students undergo profound changes in perspective through education. Introduced by Mezirow (1991), this framework is especially relevant in tourism and hospitality education, where personal experiences can significantly influence cognitive and emotional development. The TLT encourages critical reflection, prompting students to question their assumptions and beliefs, leading to transformative changes in how they view the world.

Since the inception of the Learning Trajectory assessment, 553 JCU students across multiple campuses have been guided through a reflective process that challenged them to rethink their preconceptions. This reflection process aligns with the core stages of TLT, i.e. experiencing a disorienting dilemma, engaging in critical reflection, and ultimately shifting one's perspective (Mezirow, 2000).

The assessment encourages students to reflect on their experiences and relate them to the subject content, promoting deeper engagement, critical thinking, and creativity. The study also addresses challenges such as student readiness, required resources, standardisation

issues, and ensuring alignment with learning outcomes. Despite these hurdles, authentic assessments greatly enhance students' learning and prepare them for dynamic, fast-evolving industries like tourism and hospitality.

### Benefits, Challenges and Considerations

The assessment offers numerous benefits by connecting theory and practice and encouraging knowledge transfer (Ashford-Rowe et al., 2013). Encouraging students to link academic content with personal experiences makes learning more engaging and relevant (Wiggins, 1990), an approach that allows students to apply theoretical concepts to real-world scenarios, enhancing their understanding. From a TLT perspective, this integration fosters shifts in students' thinking, helping them reassess critical concepts through personal experience.

Another significant benefit is increased student engagement through personalised learning, which promotes motivation and involvement with course material (Herrington & Herrington, 2006). The TLT suggests that deeper engagement occurs when students actively question their assumptions, promoting transformative learning (Taylor, 2007). The assessment also fosters critical thinking, which enables students to critically evaluate their learning and relate it to broader industry issues. This reflection leads to a more profound and lasting transformation in their perspectives (Mezirow, 1991).

However, the Learning Trajectory presents challenges. Students, especially international students, may find the open-ended nature of reflective tasks difficult, especially if they are accustomed to traditional assessments (Brown & Glasner, 2003). Educators also face increased demands, as authentic assessments can be resource-intensive, requiring more guidance and feedback (Gulikers et al., 2008). Standardising and fairly assessing personalised tasks is challenging, but transparent rubrics can help maintain objectivity (Andrade, 2005). Lastly, ensuring alignment with learning outcomes maximises the assessment's effectiveness.

### Conclusion

The Learning Trajectory assessment represents a meaningful shift towards more authentic tourism and hospitality education assessment forms. This assessment fosters deeper engagement, critical thinking, and real-world problem-solving skills by allowing students to reflect on their experiences and integrate them with academic content. Grounded in the TLT, the learning trajectory assessment helps students develop the tools they need to succeed in their future careers. Although it presents challenges, such as student preparedness and grading consistency, its benefits make it a valuable educational approach. Future research should explore the long-term impact of such assessments on student learning and career readiness.

**Keywords:** *authentic assessments, transformative learning, critical thinking, tourism education, learning outcomes*

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# LEVERAGING AI TO FOSTER CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY: AN INTELLIGENT KNOWLEDGE-BASED MODEL FOR PREDICTING HOTELIERS' SUSTAINABILITY ACTIONS

Li He<sup>a</sup>, Wenjie Ye<sup>a</sup>, Geoffrey Lipman<sup>ab</sup>, Maya Newell<sup>c</sup> and Leslie Vella<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Victoria University, <sup>b</sup>SUNx Institute, <sup>c</sup>Climate Friendly Travel Services, <sup>d</sup>Malta Tourism Observatory

## ABSTRACT

The hotel industry is increasingly vulnerable to climate change due to its reliance on physical assets and location-based operations. Despite growing awareness of sustainability, many hoteliers remain hesitant to adopt climate-friendly practices due to high costs, slow returns, and concerns about guest inconvenience. This research explores how an AI-powered chatbot can facilitate sustainability efforts in hotels by engaging hoteliers in guided interactions about climate risks and relevant sustainability practices. Data will be collected through an AI chatbot that provides tailored assessments of climate, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and nature-positive issues, adapted to the hotel's operational context. A monitoring plan will follow to track climate actions. A Large Language Model (LLM) and knowledge base predictive model will be developed using data from 20-30 hotels to forecast hoteliers' likelihood of taking action, considering factors such as initial perceptions and the type of climate-related information provided. The study will provide valuable insights into motivators and barriers for climate action, offering an innovative tool to promote climate resilience in the hospitality industry.

**Keywords:** *Climate Change, Hotel Sustainability, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Climate Friendly Travel*

## Introduction

The hospitality industry faces significant climate-related risks due to its reliance on physical assets and location-based services. Hotels, in particular, are vulnerable to rising temperatures and extreme weather events, which threaten infrastructure, supply chains, and operational continuity (Adams, Kageyama, & Barreda, 2022). A 2023 stocktake by the Tourism Panel on Climate Change revealed that the hospitality industry has failed to achieve meaningful reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, with hotels contributing the most to accommodation-related emissions.

Despite growing awareness of sustainability and pressures from governments, industry leaders, and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) trends, hotels remain resistant to change due to concerns over high costs, uncertain returns on investment, and potential impacts on guest satisfaction (Grant, 2020; Han, Hsu, & Sheu, 2009). Dick-Forde, Oftedal, and Bertella (2020) found that while hotel leaders in the Caribbean were aware of the need for climate resilience, many were unprepared for the impending climate crisis, stressing the urgency of immediate action.

Given the pressing need for hotels to enhance their climate resilience and reduce emissions, this research aims to explore how AI-powered tools can raise climate awareness and facilitate climate-friendly actions in hotels.

## Research Objectives

This study aims to address the following research questions:

1. What is the baseline knowledge and perception of climate change among hoteliers, and how do they understand the potential impacts on their hotel operations?
2. How does the provision of climate, SDG, and nature-positive information relevant to the hotel's location influence hoteliers' perceptions of climate risks, sustainability, and the barriers to climate action?
3. What factors—including the type of information (global, national, state, or local)—most

effectively influence hoteliers' intentions to adopt climate actions, and how can these intentions be predicted using data from AI chatbot interactions?

## Methodology

This research will adopt a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative analysis of data from an AI chatbot interactions and machine learning and quantitative analysis to develop a predictive model. Sen, Sen, and Sahin (2023) explored the use of AI-powered tools like ChatGPT in qualitative research and found that AI can analyse large datasets, create codes, and interpret meaning from textual data. In this study, we will explore the support of AI in data collection and data analysis.

The study will involve three phases:

**AI Model Development:** An Intelligent Knowledge-Based Model (IKBM) will be created using insights from previous work with hotels and a literature review of climate, SDG, and nature-positive policies. To ensure the integration of the latest advancements in climate policies, an advisory committee comprising experts in climate-related policymaking at regional, state, and local levels will be established. The IKBM will engage hoteliers in structured dialogues about climate resilience, addressing knowledge gaps, and provide tailored quick scans of climate-related information relevant to their region.

### Data Collection:

Stage 1: Hotels will be recruited through the SUNx Malta's Climate Friendly Travel Registry, facilitated by Climate Friendly Travel Services, a UK-based social enterprise. 20-30 hotels will participate, providing data on their knowledge, attitudes, concerns, and willingness to take action. Each hotel representative will engage in a structured dialogue with the AI chatbot, which will assess their knowledge of climate challenges and provide a quick scan of tailored information. The chatbot will then engage the hoteliers in a reflection conversation to gauge changes in their perceptions.

Stage 2: Hotels' climate actions will be monitored at 1, 3, and 6 months following the initial interactions. This will help determine whether hoteliers have taken action based on the enhanced knowledge provided by the AI model, offering insights into the long-term impact of AI-driven interventions.

**Predictive Model Development:** Data from the chatbot interactions will be structured into relevant themes, reflecting key behavioral aspects. A Large Language Model (LLM) and knowledge base predictive model will be trained to assess the likelihood of hoteliers taking climate action. The model will consider variables such as initial climate knowledge, perceptions identified during interactions, and follow-up behaviors, allowing for the identification of key drivers of climate action.

## Expected Outcomes

This research will contribute to the growing body of knowledge on climate resilience and sustainability in the hotel industry. By leveraging AI-powered tools to facilitate hoteliers' engagement with climate data, the study will provide insights into the motivators and barriers that drive sustainability actions in hotels. The predictive model developed through this research will offer a practical tool for the industry to promote greater adoption of climate-friendly practices, as it has the potential to be implemented at scales, speeding up the process to improve hoteliers' climate awareness and more effective in motivating them to take actions by providing most useful information tailored for the hotels.

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# LOCATING 'COOLCATION' IN NORWEGIAN MEDIA NARRATIVES: A GENERATIONAL TRANSFORMATION AND A DOUGHNUT ECONOMICS PERSPECTIVE

Young-Sook Lee<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>UiT The Arctic University of Norway

## ABSTRACT

'Coolcation' refers to a trend that tourists in summer season decide to move away from the destinations with hot temperatures and travel to cooler destinations, such as Northern Europe or Scandinavia. Nordic counties have been quick to adopt this new trend and in 2024, Visit Norway (2024) took up Coolcation as its main marketing theme: "Enjoy a coolcation – cool and refreshing travel ideas for summer in Norway". This was along with the record high temperatures experienced across Europe and the renewed protests against overtourism in parts of Europe after the severe downturn of tourism due to Covid.

When we consider the first identified visitors to North Cape (Northern most land point of Europe) - Franciscan minister Francesco Negri in 1664 (NordNorsk Reiseliv, 2024) and Roland Bonnaparte (a grandnephew of Napoleon Bonaparte) in 1795 (Guissard & Lee, 2017), the cool destinations in the Northern Scandinavia seemingly have transformed into a new destination open-to-the-world. The difficult conditions of the journeys that must have been experienced by the earlier visitors might be nearly incomprehensible compared to the touring experiences of today's coolcationers.

This colocation trend casts an interesting question to consider: how can we explain this trend in a holistic view? By holistic, I refer to the approaches to understand the tourism as ecological, social, economic and increasingly political dimensions. The attempt for a holistic understanding of the trend in this paper adopts Norwegian media narratives (Olsen & Grønning, 2019) and doughnut economics. Highlighting social foundation and ecological ceiling Raworth (2017) suggests a viable way to contextualise the resources usage for the basic level of human life with dignity. The notion of Doughnut economics proved useful in better understanding urban tourism transition in the Netherlands (Nieuwland, 2024).

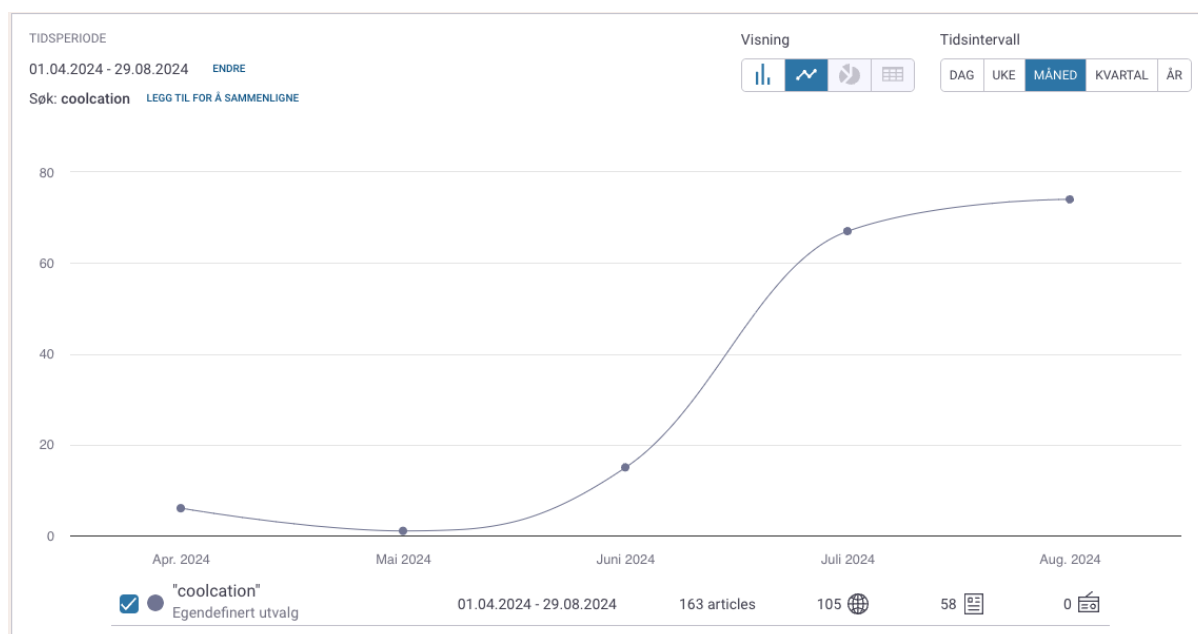
This paper has two aims:

- 1) to present early emerging themes in the Norwegian media narratives on Coolcation
- 2) to reflect the themes in the doughnut economics to contextualise the Coolcation within the tourism sector of Norway

### **Data source**

A database for Norwegian media, including printed newspapers, online news and TV and radio news has been searched with the keyword Coolcation. The period was refined from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 29<sup>th</sup> August 2024. April 2024 was the first month that Coolcation was found. A total of 163 articles were identified from all sources in Norwegian language. Sami language source was excluded from the search. An overview of total articles is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of Norwegian newspaper articles on Coolcation



For the current abstract, 58 printed newspaper articles are collected and studied. Table 2 illustrates selected examples of the studied articles. Only selected examples are presented to be within the words limit of the conference proceeding.

Table 2. Selected examples of the studied Norwegian newspaper articles on Coolcation

Date	Title of the article	Source
16.06.2024	The queue gets longer for climate tourism	The Bergen Newspaper (Bergensavisen)
17.06.2024	Choosing a cold holiday in Norway	VG
20.06.2024	This is how you survive European-football-championship living room	VG
28.06.2024	Now we are finally returned	Business Daily (Dagens Næringsliv)
29.06.2024	This is the weather experts' choice for holiday	VG
09.07.2024	Coolcation can stimulate demand for seafood	In Tromsø (iTromsø)
11.07.2024	Lazy summer days	Hemnes Paper (Avisa Hemnes)
11.07.2024	Why does no one fly here?	The Summer Post (Sunnmørsposten)
13.07.2024	Downturn for seafood in the first six months	The Summer Post (Sunnmørsposten)
18.07.2024	Is it strange that «coolcation» sells?	The Blade (Bladet)
08.08.2024	Who should decide how many tourists Norway tolerates?	Sogn Newspaper
08.08.2024	Coolcation tourists give Widerøe extra traffic	Future in the North

### ***Early emerging themes of the narratives and the Doughnut Economics***

Exploratory content analysis is currently in process to identify the Norwegian media narratives. The early emerging themes are reflected on both social foundation and ecological ceiling rings in the Doughnut economics (Raworth, 2017). Figure 1 presents the Doughnut economics. Twelve spheres within social foundation represents the essential elements to be present for the existence of a society of individuals living with human dignity. Nine outer spheres of ecological ceiling are the ecological bases that enable the dignified social foundation.

Figure 1. The Doughnut Economics of social and planetary boundaries by Kate Raworth

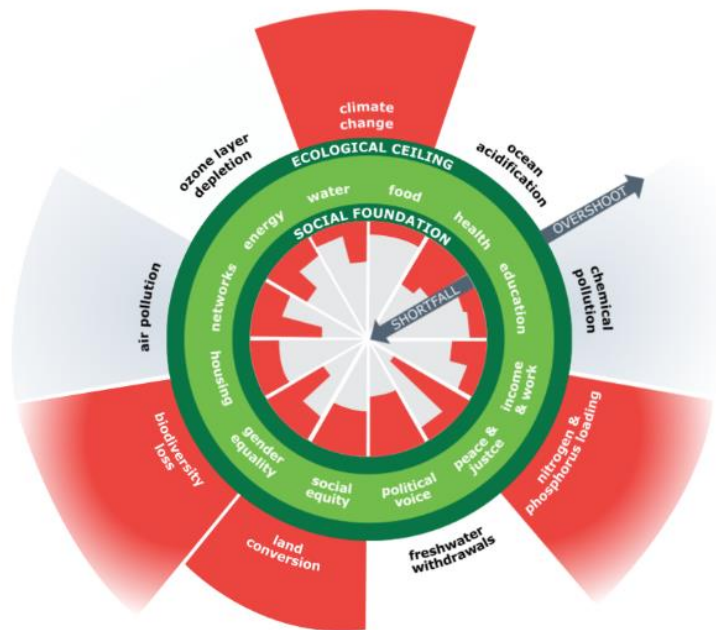


Image from Kateraworth.com/doughnut

The emerging themes are related to Climate change (overshoot in ecological ceiling), Biodiversity loss (overshoot in ecological ceiling), income & work (shortfall in social foundation). Direction for continuing analysis and identified narratives that are beyond the Doughnut economics framework will be discussed at the conference.

**Keywords:** *Coolcation, Norwegian newspaper narrative, Arctic tourism*

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# LONG-TERM VISIONING: INTEGRATING INDIGENOUS PHILOSOPHIES AND SEVEN GENERATION THEORY IN POST-MINING TOURISM STRATEGIES

Alexandra Connors<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>The University of Queensland

## ABSTRACT

Australia has an estimated 60,000 abandoned mines, many located on or near Aboriginal land (Boulot & Collins, 2023). In the Australian context '[m]ine closure, complete rehabilitation and relinquishment of the former mine site is almost unknown' (Campbell et al., 2017, p. 2). Instead, mines often enter a 'care and maintenance' phase, deferring rehabilitation with minimal investment (Campbell et al., 2017). Further, the legal and regulatory landscape does not specify which stakeholder is responsible for the care and ongoing remediation on the land post mining (Vivoda et al., 2019). Consequently, Indigenous ways of knowing and being become 'obscured' by settler values, leaving traditional knowledges, and cultural systems rendered at once pervasive and invisible (Grimwood, et al., 2017). In the wake of mine closures, Indigenous communities on or near mining towns face the dual challenge of mitigating environmental degradation while also reimagining their economic trajectories (Rodriguez-Bahamonde et al., 2024). Tourism has long been identified as an economic development panacea for Indigenous communities (Buultjens et al., 2009) and has been successful in post-mining areas globally (Armis & Kanegae, 2020), however, establishing Indigenous tourism on Country requires strategic, long-term planning (Tourism NT, 2020).

In Western societies, future planning beyond the current lifetime is uncommon, which can be reflected in many circumstances like governmental systems (often 4 to 5 years), business plans (often quarterly or annual), and destination management plans (often 5 to 10 years). Yet, the extraction phase of mining typically spans five to thirty years, though many sites remain operational for over a century and in some cases take three hundred years of rehabilitation (Leyton-Flor & Sangha, 2024). This exemplifies the lack of accountability for mining impacts and reinforces Indigenous peoples' uncertainties around mine rehabilitation. Given that Aboriginal people have stewarded their lands for over 60,000 years, they are arguably best suited for post-mining land use decisions (Akbar & Sharpe, 2022).

Strategic Indigenous planning frameworks, like Seven Generation theory, offer a model for sustainable, long-term decision-making that emphasises intergenerational responsibility. Rooted in Haudenosaunee tradition, Seven Generation theory is a decision-making approach that considers the impacts on seven future generations, integrating sustainability into community structures and governance (Clarkson et al., 1992). Seven Generation theory is often used by Indigenous peoples in countries like the United States (seven generations), Canada (seven generations) and New Zealand (te ao Māori 500-year plan) to make decisions that result in a more sustainable world many generations into the future (Clarkson et al., 1992; Indigenous Corporation Training Inc, 2020; Walker et al., 2021). While we cannot know what future generations will value, we can know whether a particular non-renewable resource is near to being entirely consumed or destroyed (Carmody, 2012). Leaders using this framework foster transparency and regenerative long-term thinking (Allen, 2023; Akers, n.d).

## Methodology and Research Question

In establishing the methodology, the research begins with Calvin et al's. (2024) suggested direction for Indigenous tourism research using a collaborative approach based on the inclusion of Indigenous voices. By 'giving voice to Indigenous collaborators' it creates a 'more inclusive and empowering'

research design and analysis (Calvin et al., 2024, p. 83). By amplifying Indigenous voices to explore how Indigenous long-term planning (like the Seven Generation theory) could apply to three Australian mining communities anticipating closures. Semi-structured interviews with ten participants from each region will be conducted including Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members, government officials, and Traditional Owners to gather the perspectives on tourism development as an economic strategy. Selected communities in Australia are Weipa, East Arnhem Land, and Koolan Island, spanning Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia. Interviews will be thematically analysed aiming to provide a rich, contextual understanding of the key themes in intergenerational planning within a real-world setting. Although studies on transitioning from mining to tourism exist (Armis & Kanegae, 2020), none focus on Indigenous communities using frameworks like Seven Generation theory. Therefore, central to the rationale for this study is the recognition of the century long life span of mine sites on or near Aboriginal land and the role of long-term strategic planning like Seven Generation theory. This Indigenist approach to planning can contribute to a more inclusive and equitable vision of post-mining futures that honours the aspirations and agency of Aboriginal communities seeking to develop a sustainable tourism industry and sustainable livelihoods overall.

**Keywords:** *Seven Generation Theory, Indigenous Tourism, Post-Mining Land Use, Long-Term Planning*

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# MAKING ROOM FOR THE OLYMPIC BOOM: A SUPPLY AND DEMAND ANALYSIS OF LUXURY ACCOMMODATION IN QUEENSLAND AUSTRALIA

Johnnel Smith<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Griffith University

## ABSTRACT

As the state of Queensland in Australia prepares to host the Olympics in 2032, there has been a marked increase in the hotel accommodation capacity in the region, notably the inclusion of more luxury hotels and services. This paper aims to analyse the luxury accommodation offerings (physical environment) and guest experiences (human interaction dimensions) in Australia. The research findings illuminate the factors that play a role in creating luxury experiences and provide specific implications for hotel executives seeking to differentiate themselves from their competitors through experiential marketing. Employing a content analysis process of newspaper articles and press releases from 2023-2025, this paper also demonstrates how luxury tourism is being used as a catalyst for regional development and economic growth in Australia. The theoretical and practical implications of this paper seek to enhance the knowledge base and contribute to the overall understanding of consumer experiences within the luxury hotel segment.

**Keywords:** *Hotels, luxury accommodation, luxury tourism, hospitality, tourism, Olympics*

## INTRODUCTION

According to Hall (1995) regarded accommodation as one of the more critical components on the demand side of a destination as accommodation plays a key role in the type of visitors who come to a destination. Middleton and Clarke (2001) also added that the accommodation sector provides the necessary infrastructure to enable convenient and comfortable travel. As information flows and guests become more exposed, the accommodation sector must meet and exceed the needs of the modern-day traveller, who may be seeking a range of experiences from basic amenities to an all-time luxury experience (Smith, 2022). The luxury accommodation market is an expanding niche market that is rapidly changing due to global income structures and competitiveness within the hospitality sector. To remain competitive in an ever-changing marketplace, many accommodation managers are constantly upgrading their portfolio of service offerings for guests (Smith, 2022). One of the noted areas of improvement and inclusion is with luxury or 'luxe' services. The luxury tourist clientele comprises quality-seeking, prestige-striving, and high-spending customers (Tomašević, 2018). As Queensland Australia prepares for this global event, it is also positioning itself for the demands of luxury tourists who will be attending the event. The paper analyses the demand side of the luxury accommodation market as the findings from this research suggests that the supply of luxury accommodation is in relation to the projected demand. It further highlights the service needs of luxury tourists and the methods which can be used to stimulate the demand with effective marketing strategies (Novotná & Kunc, 2019).

## FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

*As a critical element in tourism services, the accommodation sector in tourism and hospitality is always on the leading edge of groundbreaking innovations. Evident, is the evolution of accommodations through the years-offering five, six and even seven-star service-catering to every need of the guest (Smith, 2024).*

In examining accommodation supply, the key outcomes of the study highlight that the Gold Coast is poised for a hotel boom as it prepares for the 2032 Olympic Games, with an estimate of 5,500 new rooms expected to be added. These include, the Aniko Group is set to introduce the region's first-ever luxury hotel-branded residences. The landmark project caters to luxury consumers in one of Australia's most desirable cities. This project is said to merge the high-end hotel experience with the comfort of home ownership, elevating the real estate landscape across the Gold Coast. Furthermore, another example is Azzura, which is on track for the grand opening of TRYP by Wyndham Southport Gold Coast, within stage one of Roberto Badalotti's Imperial Square project, Regal Residences.

Jameson (2024) also shares that Queensland is set for a busy year of hotel openings in 2024. In Brisbane alone, a mix of hotels is due to open on the Queen's Wharf development. Another example is The Star Brisbane comprising of 340 rooms and four opulent penthouses with panoramas across the Brisbane River, and west to Mount Coot-tha. More examples include the 4.5-star Dorsett Brisbane, the 6-star Rosewood Brisbane, the Hilton Garden Inn and the Garden Inn sub-brand worldwide. Also in Brisbane, after a \$30-million refurbishment, the former Novotel Brisbane on Creek Street in the CBD opens December 2023 as the 296-room Amora Brisbane, with a Cottee Parker design aimed at positioning the Thai family owned, Amora Hotels and Resorts property as a five-star. Also on the Queensland coast, Peppers Gladstone opens mid-year in the eponymous city, 550 kilometres north of Brisbane. Touted as Central Queensland's first five-star, the 32-room hotel shares its address with the 60-room Mantra Gladstone – all up, the first new hotel construction in the region in more than a decade. Moreover, in the south of Brisbane, Mondrian Gold Coast will finally swing open its doors, bringing Ennismore's lively, creative style of stay to Burleigh Heads.

Schlesinger (2024) also adds that developers are banking on the tourism boom driving up demand for hotel accommodation over the long term, after signing deals with hotel giants Accor, IHG and Hilton to operate almost 500 new rooms in Brisbane, Townsville and Launceston before the end of the decade. These projects come as construction activity in the sector starts resumes following a development boom over the past two decades, which delivered a quarter of the country's entire hotel room inventory. Queensland's first Kimpton Hotel will grace the Brisbane River in Teneriffe, offering a signature restaurant, spa, fitness centre, absolute waterfront access, an open-air terrace bar, and a breathtaking infinity pool. Kimpton will house about 155 rooms, including a marquee suite for celebrities and VIPs.

The supply forecast looks promising, however, what about demand? Tourism Research Australia released findings in March 2024 indicating that international visitors were up 8 per cent to \$8.3million in the quarter to March 2018, with nights spent in Australia up by 3 per cent. China was responsible for driving the growth, accounting for 52 per cent of total international visitor growth, with an increase of 13 per cent in both visitors and spend. Tourism Research Australia also reported that international tourist spending had increased by 6 per cent to \$42.3billion. The United States, Japan and Hong Kong also contributed to the growth. Other contributing factors are a weaker dollar and easier visa application process, both of which could have encouraged more international visitors and forecasts increased spending on luxury hospitality products.

In conclusion, it is also critical to note the evolution of luxury accommodation management, through invention and innovation, catering to the evolving need of the more exposed traveller (Smith, 2022).

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# MULTI-YEAR SEGMENTATION TO SMALL CITY ARTS FESTIVALS: (SCAF)FOLDING TO GREATER HEIGHTS

Adam Viljoen<sup>a</sup> and Martinette Kruger<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>North-West University, Tourism Research in Economics, Environs and Society

## ABSTRACT

Arts festivals are not only culturally significant but also critical drivers of economic development, providing platforms for artistic expression in music, dance, theatre, and visual arts. These events contribute to the growth of creative industries and generate employment for planners and technicians, highlighting their economic value. Additionally, festivals foster community cohesion by offering opportunities for socialisation and entertainment, facilitating social networks. However, globalisation has introduced challenges such as cultural commodification and festivalisation, potentially diluting local traditions. South Africa's Afrikaans-language festivals navigate the tension between cultural preservation and commercialisation while serving as a central space for cultural identity and leisure.

This research demonstrates the value of multi-year data in enhancing market segmentation for festival studies, unlike cross-sectional approaches that offer only a snapshot of visitor behaviour. Focusing on a small city arts festival (SCAF) in South Africa, this study addresses a gap in the literature by exploring how festivals in small cities can enhance their appeal and economic impact through segmentation strategies.

The case study is the Aardklop ("Earthbeat") National Arts Festival, a prominent Afrikaans festival established in 1998 in Potchefstroom, North-West Province. After a hiatus in 2016, the festival was revived in 2019 and adopted a multi-region format post-pandemic, returning to Potchefstroom in 2023 with a diverse programme. This research utilises multi-year data from the 2018, 2019, 2022, and 2023 iterations of Aardklop. The festival did not take place in 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions. A destination-based survey was conducted each September during the festival period using a self-administered questionnaire. Through convenience sampling, 1,623 questionnaires were completed over the four years.

Data were captured and merged in Microsoft Excel© and analysed using IBM SPSS. Due to annual variations in the questionnaire, only overlapping sections were merged for analysis. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed on ten motivational statements, and a two-step cluster analysis incorporated the identified motivational factors and socio-demographic and behavioural variables. The validity of the cluster solution was assessed through chi-square tests for categorical data and ANOVA for continuous variables. The EFA identified two primary motivations for attending the festival: *cultural and artistic engagement* ( $\bar{x} = 4.32$ ) and *social and leisure engagement* ( $\bar{x} = 4.07$ ). A two-step cluster analysis revealed audience heterogeneity, with accommodation, gender, spending, income, and *social and leisure engagement* emerging as key differentiators. Four distinct segments were identified.

The four identified festival attendee segments demonstrate distinct socio-demographic and behavioural characteristics. *Affluent cultural enthusiasts* (N=200) were predominantly older female attendees with higher incomes, primarily from Gauteng, who spend significantly on cultural experiences and social interaction. *High-spending festival patrons* (144) represented the wealthiest group, primarily male, with the highest spending and a preference for extended stays and premium accommodations. *Family-oriented cultural seekers* (N= 127) were middle-aged, travelling in family groups, with moderate spending and a balanced interest in cultural and social activities, often staying with friends or family. *Budget-conscious socialisers* (N= 149) were the youngest group, with lower incomes, larger groups, shorter stays, and less focus on cultural engagement, attending primarily for socialisation and leisure.

Practical recommendations include tailoring marketing to each segment: offering premium cultural experiences for *Affluent cultural enthusiasts*, luxury services for *High-spending patrons*, family-friendly events for *Family-oriented seekers*, and affordable entry and social activities for *Budget-conscious socialisers*. Enhancing accessibility through tiered pricing, loyalty programmes, and partnerships with local businesses will boost engagement and community integration.

The theoretical findings from this research align with and extend existing literature on festival market segmentation. The study highlights the value of multi-year data in revealing more profound insights into visitor motivations, spending, and engagement, particularly for small city arts festivals—a context often overlooked in favour of more significant international events. Literature underscores the importance of longitudinal data, which this research employed to track attendees over time to understand behavioural trends better.

The four identified segments demonstrate apparent socio-demographic and behavioural differences, reflecting how motivations such as cultural enrichment, social interaction, and escapism shape festival experiences, which is supported in the literature. Building on the theory of sociopsychological and cultural motivations, this research further validates the push-pull theory in a festival context. Consistent with other South African findings, the study demonstrates that pull factors, such as festival content and experiences, are more significant for most visitors than push factors like socialisation. This is particularly evident among *Affluent cultural enthusiasts* and *High-spending festival patrons*, whose high spending and engagement reflect strong pull motivations. On the other hand, *budget-conscious socialisers* rely more on push factors, with socialisation and leisure being their primary motivators.

This study highlights the value of longitudinal data in event tourism. It enables festival organisers to tailor marketing strategies, improve visitor satisfaction, and foster loyalty, enhancing the festival's economic and cultural impact on the host destination, particularly small cities.

**Keywords:** *festival tourism, market segmentation, cultural enrichment, festival motives, small city festivals, longitudinal data analysis*

# NATIONAL LANDSCAPES AND TOURISM: OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE IN LOCAL DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Andris Klepers<sup>a</sup>, Agita Līviņa<sup>a</sup>, Pēteris Lakovskis<sup>b</sup> and Linda Ieviņa<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Institute of Social, Economic and Humanities Research, Valmiera, Latvia, <sup>b</sup>Institute of Agricultural Resources and Economics, Riga, Latvia

## ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of national landscapes in enhancing tourism competitiveness and improving local destination management practices. National landscapes embody unique natural and cultural heritage and attract international tourists seeking authenticity and distinctive experiences. However, effective management of these landscapes is needed to prevent degradation of their unique attributes. Local destination management organizations (DMOs) play a crucial role in managing these landscapes, yet they often need a deeper understanding of landscape quality objectives, leading to unsustainable practices. Using GIS analysis and focus group consultations, this study identified nationally important landscapes in Latvia and analysed DMO strategies for their effective use. Results show that DMOs are adept at using landscapes for promotion and marketing but need help with long-term destination branding and strategic planning. The study highlights the need for DMOs to incorporate landscape quality objectives into their management practices and engage communities in landscape maintenance. This change will enhance tourism destinations' competitiveness and sustainability, making landscapes a strategic resource in tourism development.

**Keywords:** *national landscapes, destination management, competitiveness, GIS*

## Introduction

A country may need to designate nationally important landscape areas (further national landscapes) for several reasons, each contributing to the protection, sustainable use and appreciation of its natural and cultural heritage. National landscapes are attractive for international tourists (see Fig. 1), seeking authenticity and specific genius loci of each new place visited, providing transforming experiences and recreational opportunities that can boost a place's economy. By identifying and promoting these areas, a country can sustainably develop tourism while preserving the natural beauty and appeal that attracts visitors. However, the process of identifying such landscapes is complex and challenging. Local destination management organisations use landscapes extensively in destination marketing to entice tourists to visit. Still, there is rarely a deep understanding of landscape quality objectives and the opportunities for improving them, and there is a risk of degradation of these values contributing to the destination's competitive advantages.

This study aims to expand knowledge and improve understanding of the role of the national landscape in managing local tourism destinations after identifying the national landscapes.



**Figure 1. Julius Feder's painting "The Gauja River Valley" (1891) has become one of the symbols of the Latvian landscape (from the collection of the Latvian National Museum of Art).**

Landscape is 'an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors' (Council of Europe, 2000). The definition in the tourism context could be extended with Urry's (1992; 2011) theory about the tourist gaze that the gaze is socially organised and tourists need to participate actively; that the sense of sight organises the other senses; and that in a predominantly visual culture, humans are constantly, if tacitly, making aesthetic judgements about the visual quality of places whether we are actively doing tourism or simply strolling around our places of residence. Antrop and van Eetvelde use historical landscape narratives that closely link the real world to the viewer's experience (Antrop, & Van Eetvelde, 2017). Landscape and tourism intersect on issues of national identity, as both sides ('us' as a community and 'them' as travellers) are interested in discovering and highlighting a place's uniqueness and regional distinctiveness (Knudsen, Metro-Roland & Soper, 2008). The role of landscape in the variety of tourist experiences sought or discovered in a visited destination is argued and considered paramount (e.g. Cartier and Lew, 2005; Terkenli, 2014). Researchers Stobeldard and Pedrolí (2011) defined landscape identity as people's 'perceived uniqueness of place'; similarly, Egoz (2013), in describing 'landscape and identity', highlighted it as the relationship between landscape and people, emphasising the fundamental need to belong. Belonging is manifested in the symbolic meanings given to the surroundings. Still, it practically takes place through people's engagement and concrete activities in the landscape, which becomes a key aspect of how the relationship with the landscape develops (Ingold, 2011). As Terkenli (2021) emphasises, from 'sight-seeing' practices — at the basis of all tourism activities — landscape figures prominently in the overall spatial planning and management of a destination for tourism development, and it is recognised as a key to the development, marketing and branding, and consumption of tourism destinations. This statement links with the DMO's responsibility in managing tourism destinations, pointing to the need to plan and manage the landscape as one of the strategic resources of a place. Ritchie and Crouch (2003), by incorporating the interaction of comparative advantage and competitive advantage with destination strategy, governance, key resources involved and the ability to attract additional resources for development, developed a comprehensive model of tourism destination competitiveness and sustainability and explored that competitiveness comes from comparative advantage, mainly the fact that a place is endowed with certain resources, while competitive advantage comes from how effectively these resources are used (Crouch, Ritchie 2011). In this context, the national landscape is one of the comparative advantage resources for tourism destinations, but the sustainable competitive advantage will be ensured by its effective management by DMO.

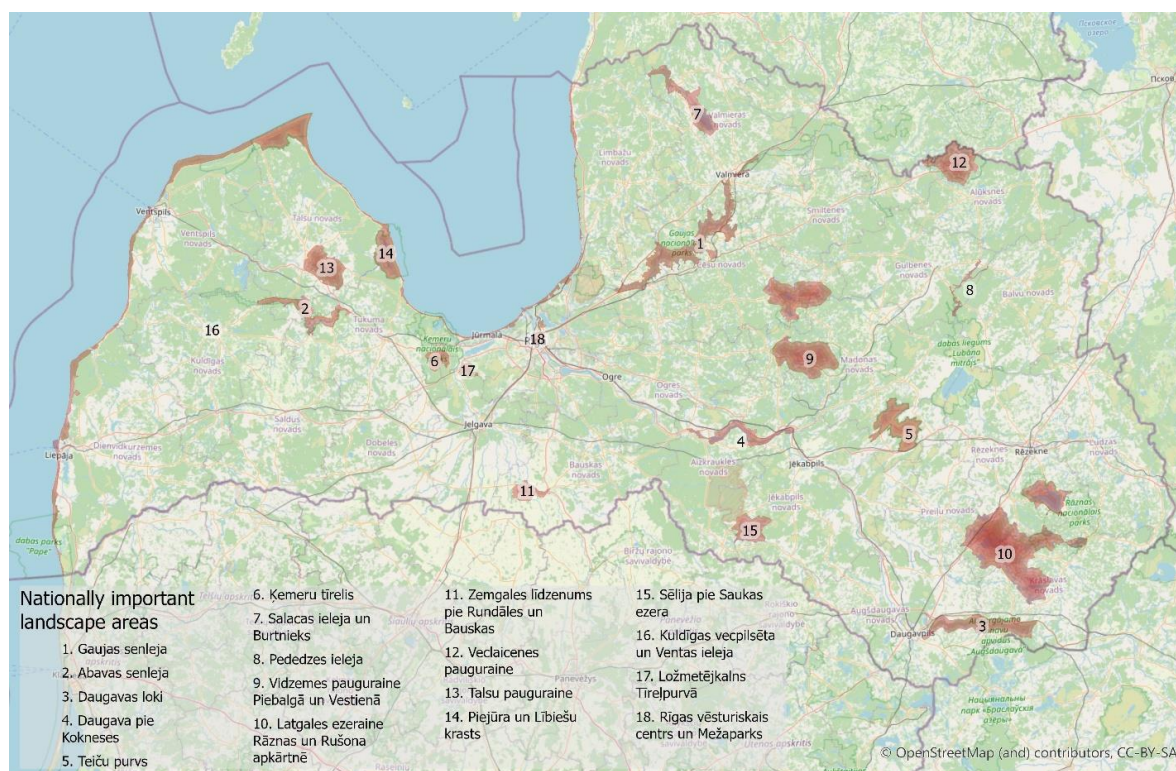


## Methods

The research design involved extensive integrated and sequential work by authors, using GIS analysis tools to map landscape features and landscapes at three sub-scales. Secondary data and mapping of previously conducted landscape studies were systematically collected. After developing the criteria and analysing the quantitative data, the results were disseminated through a focus group discussion with key stakeholders and expert consultation. The criteria analysed included:

- 1) Natural heritage concentration, natural diversity and ecological value;
- 2) Concentration of cultural heritage (with landscape significance) and heritage value;
- 3) Public appreciation (popularity of the site, including international tourism);
- 4) Unique in some way (the only or best-preserved landscape of its kind at the national level);
- 5) Strong aspects of identity, symbolism, and vivid representation of a nationally significant cultural and historical land;
- 6) Visually high-quality views and landscaped viewpoints.

After visiting these sites and conducting a visual and aesthetic assessment, the researchers refined the boundaries of national landscapes and produced a final list of them (see Fig. 2). In establishing guidelines for the sustainable management of national landscapes, the functions of local DMOs were analysed, in line with UNWTO guidelines (2021) for institutional strengthening of destination management organisations. For this part of the study, an analysis of local DMO level websites in Latvia including national landscapes and an evaluation of local DMO strategies were used.



**Figure 2. Designate 18 nationally important landscape areas of Latvia in 23 different local tourism destinations.**

## Results

As a result of 10 fundamental DMO's functions, where the landscape is represented at its most, "promotion, marketing and branding" stands out. DMOs in local destinations are doing well in this sense, understanding the importance of landscape in attracting tourists and using it extensively in marketing and promotion. The more difficult issue is destination branding, as the image promoted needs to be sustained over the long term with credibility, and here, the use of regenerative tourism assets can be helpful. DMO 'strategic planning' should include a critical analysis of landscape influencing factors (both internal and external) to be able to formulate and implement a destination's tourism policy. The objective of landscape quality should be known and understood by DMO and

stakeholders and tourism development is directed towards enhancing the quality of the landscape as a whole. Sometimes this would mean that the DMO acts as a tourism policeman, reprimanding its entrepreneurs for unsustainable practices that are too depletive of landscape value. A good DMO tourism strategy includes key principles for achieving landscape quality objectives () and allows DMOs to react in a situational and responsive manner, both in representing their destination's tourism policy interests at different levels of local or regional policy (on land use planning, development projects in various other sectors, etc.). DMO should advise, support, educate and train tourism service providers in the development of transformative experiences and integration of landscape assets into the tourism products. Key performance indicators should include monitoring of landscape quality, but market intelligence should help to link deserved tourist markets with content of the landscape experiences designed. Crisis management is a new area for all local DMOs, especially dealing with the first cases of over-tourism and community protests against the loss of landscape quality. Community involvement in fostering investments for sustainable maintenance of the landscape is critical. Digitalisation and innovation could lead to a better interpretation of lost landscapes and better visualise landscape narratives.

## Discussion

Overall, the findings of the study are generalisable and the relationship between sustainable management of the national landscape and the promotion of tourism competitiveness will be similar for other nations. The DMO functions of tourism destinations, as defined in the UNWTO (2021) guidelines, are comprehensive and balanced for optimal destination management. However, the study showed that some DMOs at the local level of tourism destinations need to deal with several of these functions in practice. Capacity building of DMOs, in general, to incorporate strategic concern for landscape quality in the destination into their daily work becomes important.

## Conclusions and Implications

The theoretical implication of this study lies in the inclusion of the need for effective management of the national landscape as a competitive resource in the daily functions of the local DMO destination, making it a strategic stakeholder for landscape planning. The practical relevance arises from linking specific DMO functions to practical tasks in the sustainable use of landscapes to enhance the competitiveness of a tourism destination.

## Acknowledgements

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# NAVIGATING JAPAN'S SMART TOURISM: IS CASHLESS PAYMENT CREATING A NEW DIGITAL DIVIDE?

Jie Yang<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Graduate School of International Media, Communication, and Tourism Studies, Hokkaido University, Sapporo, Japan

## ABSTRACT

### Introduction

Japan, ranked as the top country in the Asia-Pacific region in the 2024 Travel & Tourism Development Index (World Economic Forum, 2024), is increasingly leveraging tourism as a key driver of economic growth. Recent efforts to promote smart tourism have been fueled by advances in digital technologies and a nationwide push to expand cashless payment systems. However, Japan's cashless payment adoption rate stood at only 39.3% in 2023, trailing behind other developed nations (METI, 2024). To address this, the government is investing in infrastructure to improve accessibility and convenience for both domestic and inbound tourists (Japan Tourism Agency, 2023). Yet, Japan faces challenges from its cash-based culture, particularly among older generations and in rural areas, who are often unfamiliar with or resistant to mobile wallets, QR codes, and credit cards.

Despite the growing adoption of these technologies in Japan's tourism industry, concerns are emerging about a potential digital divide, particularly among domestic tourists. While cash reliance is more common among disadvantaged groups, Alejandro et al. (2024) found that in Europe, not all cash users or those without digital payment tools are disadvantaged. Thus, this study posits that in Japan, where the adoption of cashless payments has been slow, users who do not use cashless payments are influenced by factors beyond age and regional limitations. Through quantitative research, this study will explore whether the widespread implementation of cashless payments in Japan's tourism industry is creating a digital divide and whether this divide has adversely affected tourism satisfaction, particularly among domestic tourists.

### *Digital Divide in Smart Tourism*

Smart tourism leverages information technology to enhance tourist experiences and improve tourism management (Gretzel et al., 2015). However, not all participants benefit equally from these innovations, as the digital divide influences access and usage of digital tools (Cohen & Cohen, 2019). The digital divide refers to disparities in access to and proficiency with information and communication technologies, leading to unequal tourism experiences and varying service quality (Minghetti & Buhalis, 2010).

In Japan, this divide is often attributed to generational differences, with older individuals generally less inclined to adopt new technologies (Japan Tourism Agency, 2023). As cashless payment systems grow within the tourism industry, this generational gap is increasingly concerning. However, resistance to cashless payments cannot be entirely explained by age, as younger people also exhibit reluctance due to various reasons (METI, 2024). Therefore, in this research, the "digital divide" refers to the gap between those with access to cashless payment methods and those without, affecting their ability to fully engage in a cashless society.

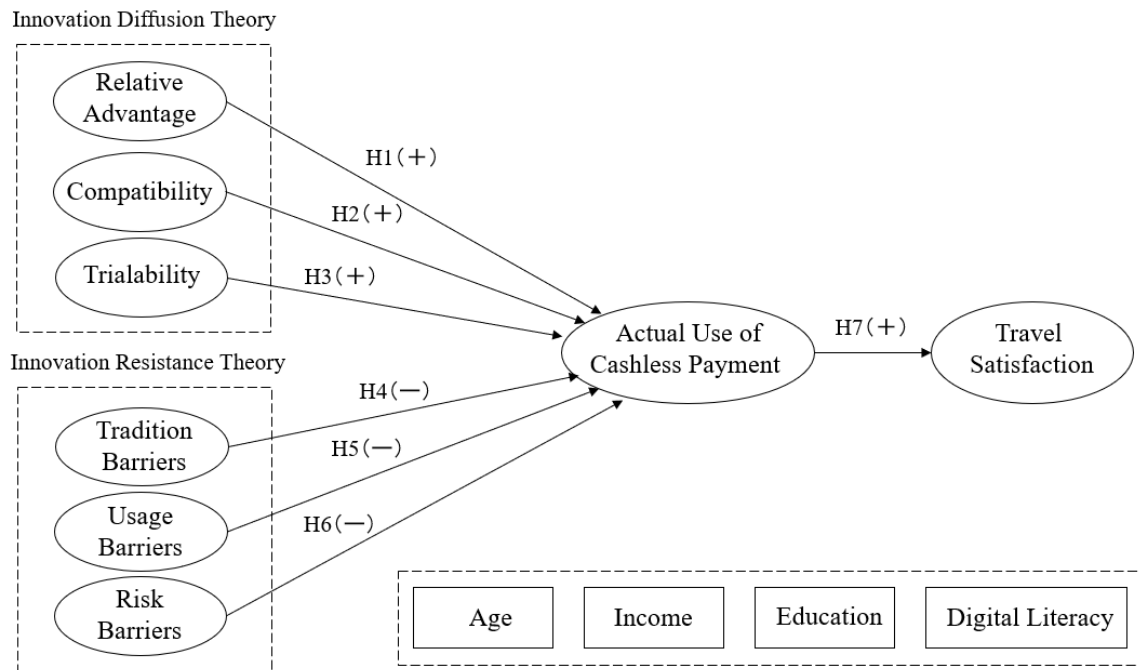
### *Innovation Diffusion and Resistance*

Innovation Diffusion Theory explains how new ideas, technologies, or products spread, focusing on factors like relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability, which influence adoption rates (Rogers, 2003). Innovation Resistance Theory explores why people resist innovations, highlighting barriers like tradition, usage, value, and risk (Ram & Sheth, 1989). Both theories help verify the digital divide: Innovation Diffusion Theory shows how varying adoption rates contribute to the divide, while Innovation Resistance Theory reveals how barriers prevent certain

groups from adopting technology, reinforcing the gap.

This study will examine how factors of innovation adoption and resistance factors influence the use of cashless payments during travel among groups with different ages, income, education, and digital literacy, to determine whether the digital divide impacts travel satisfaction.

Based on the above, this study proposes the following conceptual model.



**Figure 1: Conceptual model**

The study will employ an online questionnaire administered by the Japanese research company Freeasy. The survey will target Japanese tourists who have traveled domestically within the past year, asking whether they used cashless payment methods during their trips. Responses will be measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). SmartPLS4 will be used for data analysis, as it is appropriate for predictive research models, providing robust results for both small and large sample sizes.

## Conclusion and implications

In conclusion, while cashless payments are integral to Japan's smart tourism strategy, there is a risk of exacerbating a digital divide among domestic tourists. Policymakers and tourism stakeholders should consider diverse tourist needs and preferences to avoid alienating certain groups through technological advancements.

This study underscores the importance of balancing digital innovation with inclusivity to ensure Japan's smart tourism benefits all tourists and supports the industry's sustainability amidst uneven digitalization.

**Keywords:** *smart tourism; digital divide; cashless payment*

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# NEGOTIATING QUEER IDENTITIES IN ANTARCTICA: THE CASE OF EXPEDITION SHIP GUIDES

Oscar Vorobjovas-Pinta<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Tasmania

## ABSTRACT

The data collected by the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) a record 124,262 individuals visited Antarctica during the 2023-24 Austral season (IAATO, 2024), this is a nearly 15% increase to the previous seasons. Whether traveling aboard cruise or expedition ships, visitors are attended to by hundreds, if not thousands, of workers who spend the Austral season navigating between Antarctica, South America, and other destinations. These workers often live on the ships for extended periods, typically four to five months, which blurs the boundaries between their personal and professional lives (Vorobjovas-Pinta, 2021). For Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer/Questioning (LGBTQ+) staff, this dynamic creates a "disclosure dilemma" (Griffith & Hebl, 2002), forcing them to navigate whether, and to whom, they should disclose their sexual or gender identities—both to colleagues and visitors on board.

This ongoing exploratory study examines how LGBTQ+ workers on Antarctic-bound cruise and expedition ships manage their sexual and gender identities using the frameworks of organisational socialisation and sensemaking. Additionally, the study contextualises these processes within the broader concept of labour geographies, where the ambiguous nature of these remote, transitory environments may not only have a transformative effect on individuals but also on the collective dynamics within the workplace (Ioannides & Zampoukos, 2018; Rumens, 2017; Underthun & Jordhus-Lier, 2018). This approach allows for an in-depth investigation into how LGBTQ+ workers negotiate the intersection of their private and professional lives, specifically considering queer intimacies, relationships with colleagues, and interactions with passengers.

This research adopted an exploratory approach situated within a qualitative framework. A snowball sampling technique was employed to recruit participants, with key informants initially contacted through personal networks. Snowball sampling, a non-probability method, involved identifying participants who met specific inclusion criteria and then asking them to refer others with similar characteristics or experiences (Parker et al., 2019). This iterative process aimed to build a network of self-identifying LGBTQ+ participants. At the time of writing five in-depth interviews were conducted with additional five planned. The snowballing approach was particularly suitable given the relatively small and hidden nature of the target population.

The study identified four preliminary themes: 1) Framing queer identity in Antarctica; 2) Balancing professional and personal identity; 3) Navigating social life and relationships; and, 4) Resilience and support in remote environments.

The participants reflect on the challenges of expressing their sexualities in predominantly heteronormative environments. The participants particularly express discomfort in being outed and actively subdue their queerness. They further discuss common assumptions made about their sexual orientations and the limited opportunities for forming relationships while working aboard ships. The participants emphasise the importance of resilience and the need for robust support systems, sharing personal accounts of homophobic incidents and the constrained options for intimacy in these isolated settings. Additionally, they highlight the contrasts between working on land and at sea, particularly

noting the tight-knit dynamics of ship crews and the heightened potential for social and emotional isolation.

This study contributes to the growing discourse on labour geographies in remote environments, particularly regarding LGBTQ+ tourism workers. It highlights the unique intersection of identity, place, and work, demonstrating how queer individuals navigate both personal and professional landscapes in isolated settings like expedition voyages to Antarctica. Importantly, the preliminary findings indicate the need for more inclusive policies and practices that address the specific challenges faced by LGBTQ+ workers in remote tourism settings, where support structures and social networks are often limited.

**Keywords:** *Antarctica, LGBTQ+, labour geographies, organisational socialisation, sensemaking, guides*

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# NETWORK DYNAMICS AND CAREER TRAJECTORIES IN THE FESTIVAL INDUSTRY: AN ANALYSIS OF THREE FRINGE FESTIVALS

Kirsten Holmes<sup>a</sup>, Lizette Olivier<sup>b</sup>, David Jarman<sup>c</sup> and Jane Ali-Knight<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Curtin University, <sup>b</sup>University of Newcastle, <sup>c</sup>Napier University

## ABSTRACT

The temporal nature of festivals results in pulsating and dynamic staffing models with a small permanent team and many temporary and contract workers (Lockstone-Binney, Hanlon & Jago, 2020). This creates a reliance on networks to gain access to employment and leads to festival staff pursuing itinerant careers with regular travel between similar festivals locally and internationally for employment, often for several years. The COVID-19 travel restrictions temporarily paused this itinerant work circuit and its impact on festival staffing models and individual careers is unknown. Using the lens of Social Network Theory (Borgatti & Ofem, 2010), this paper employs Social Network Analysis (Jarman et al., 2014; Jarman, 2022; Mackellar, 2006; Ziakas & Costa, 2010) to investigate the intricate web of professional relationships within the festival industry, and how COVID-19 impacted on these focusing on the Adelaide Fringe Festival, FRINGEWORLD Perth and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. These festivals were selected because anecdotally we knew that they shared staff and while they all continued in either face to face or hybrid form during the COVID-19 restrictions; various travel restrictions prevented travel during the height of the pandemic. All three festivals have now returned to their pre-pandemic levels.

We used an online survey to examine the interpersonal and organisational networks of 34 core staff members from the Adelaide Fringe Festival and, separately, 12 core staff members from FRINGEWORLD Perth including new and more experienced staff (data collection is in progress for the Edinburgh Festival Fringe). The survey data from these organisations captured relational data between the participants, the presence and absence of social ties, and the nature of those ties (such as the sharing of information and career opportunities). Attribute data about the participants were also captured, allowing us to consider shared characteristics as a possible factor in the creation and maintenance of social bonds. We explore the career trajectories and professional career networks, including their quality and the outcomes of these interactions. Additionally, we deployed open-ended qualitative questions to capture participants' personal interactions and career journeys.

This combination of data, based on social relationships, personal attributes and lived experiences, has allowed us to develop a rich picture of professional life within Fringe festival networks. SNA has allowed us to consider the presence and influence of homophily, for example, whereby social actors have a tendency to associate with others like themselves, or to become more like those they associate with (Crossley et al., 2015). The network data allows us to examine this between employees (turning to those of a similar age, nationality or other characteristic), while their first-hand accounts help to reveal the inter-personal processes at work.

Our findings reveal the significance of networks in providing both career opportunities and ongoing support, and our participants emphasised the importance of freelancers in the festival workforce. At each festival there was a high level of centrality (Borgatti, 2005), with a small number of key individuals revealed in each network. The potential importance of this network structure, and the role of such individuals, can be significant in any social grouping. In the context of festivals, they could be crucial, providing a reference point for new and temporary staff, helping to control the flow of information through an organisation, and affecting the nature and success of implementing decisions from senior management

(Scott, 2017). The respondents reported that the weak ties created by these networks (Granovetter, 1973) were essential in pursuing festival careers from their first steps as a volunteer or part-time employee through to more experienced roles both locally and internationally. The network creates a safe space within challenging event working environments. Staff continually emphasised the challenge of festival work, where it is hard to maintain a work-life balance, and staff are often underpaid. While many participants had travelled internationally for work, there is more reticence post-COVID, in part due to increased costs. This appears to be particularly impacting travel between Edinburgh and Australia, noting that our participants reported regularly working at both festivals in order to create a full workload. Finally, the existence of these safe 'cliques' could lead to small world networks (Jarman et al., 2014), where there is a strong team culture but new innovations may be discouraged. These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between professional networks and career outcomes, offering valuable implications for festival management practices and policy formulation aimed at fostering sustainable career development in this field.

**Keywords:** *Fringe Festivals, Social Network Analysis, Careers, Event workforce*

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# NETWORK OF A DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ORGANISATION IN THE TOURIST AREA LIFE CYCLE: THE CASE OF NISEKO TOWN, JAPAN

Yasuyuki Kanagawa<sup>a</sup> and Yusuke Ishiguro<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Graduate School of International Media, Communication, and Tourism Studies, Hokkaido University

## ABSTRACT

This paper aims to empirically analyse the characteristics of a network of a Destination Management Organisation (DMO) according to the Tourist Area Life Cycle (TALC) (Butler, 1980), describing the development process of a destination in five phases: exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, and stagnation. Several studies (i.e. Gajdošík, 2015; Scott et al., 2007) examine the organisational relationship of DMOs from a network approach during a limited duration. Zehrer and Raich (2010) hypothesise certain characteristics of a network formed in the TALC, but DMO's network is not considered. Therefore, how a DMO's network changes in the TALC is still unknown. This paper provides a case study of Niseko Town, Hokkaido, Japan, a well-known ski destination. The Niseko Resort Tourism Association (NRTA) is responsible for marketing and management. It introduced a membership system; until 2003, members paid a membership fee, and after 2003, it was converted to a stock company. Since organisations network to acquire resources, this paper examines the NRTA network in the TALC based on its members and shareholders. Methods include the collection of primary and secondary data and interviews with individuals within local government and accommodation businesses. Figure 1 presents the number of overnight guests in Niseko Town, the members, and the shareholders of the NRTA. Overnight guests increased from 142,626 to 382,303 between 1980 and 1993, and the opening of the largest hotel in the town led to a sharp increase to 694,602 in 1994. Since then, the overall number has remained between 300,000 and 700,000, although there was a significant decline in some years. The number of members increased from 96 to 159 between 1985 and 1997, and then it remained between 151 and 154 from 1998 to 2003. Since the NRTA became a stock company in 2003, the shareholders have remained between 121 and 123.

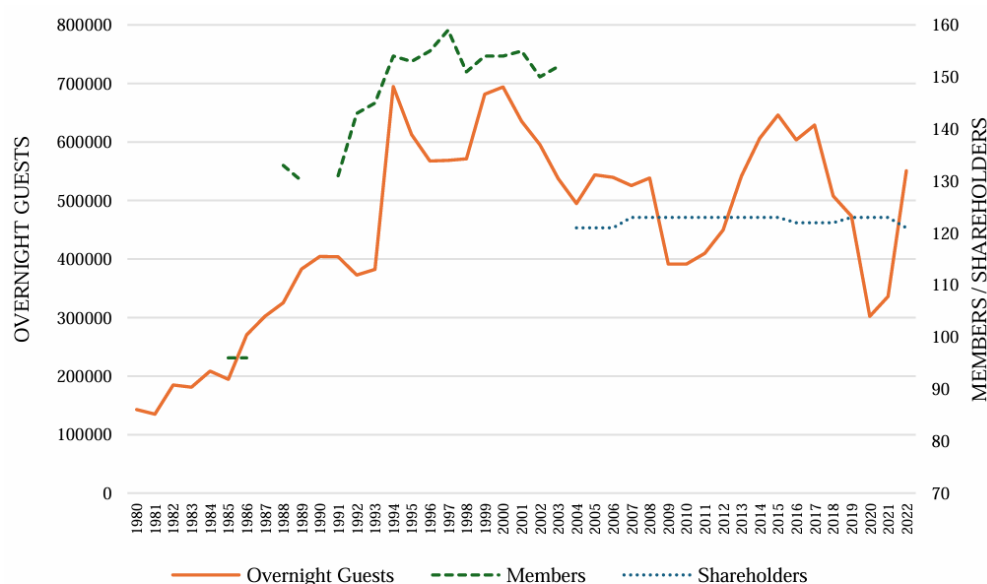


Figure 1: Number of Overnight Guests, NRTA Members, and NRTA Shareholders

We attempt to identify the characteristics of the NRTA network in identified phases of the TALC. The 1980–1993 period is identified as the involvement phase. The number of tourists begins to increase and residents start to earn a living from accommodation businesses during this phase (Butler, 2006). Similarly, the number of overnight guests increased steadily and many pensions were established in Niseko Town during this period. The number of members significantly increased between 1985 and 1993, and NRTA's network with local businesses was strengthened. 49 out of 130 in 1989 and 61 out of 145 in 1993 were in accommodation businesses, the highest proportion. Many hotel businesses join tourism associations during the involvement phase (Zehrer and Raich, 2010). Likewise, accommodation businesses joined the NRTA during this period. The 1994–2000 period is the consolidation phase. Projects are taken up to extend the tourist season as growth comes to a halt (Butler, 1980). In Niseko Town, growth came to a halt in 1994, and the local government initiated a tourist attraction during this period to expand the tourist season from winter to summer (Niseko Town, 2023). Since the members ranged between 152 and 159 during this phase, participation in the NRTA has settled down, indicating that its network has become stable. The period after 2000 has been the stagnation phase as the overnight guests completely ceased with a slight downward trend. The members from 2001 and 2003 remain similar to the consolidation phase, and after the NRTA became incorporated in 2003, its shareholders remained between 121 and 123. Therefore, the network is also stable during this phase. A stable network results in cognitive lock-in, in which everyone's worldview becomes the same, and it cannot recognise changes in the external environment (Grabher, 1993). Therefore, the stable network of the NRTA in the consolidation and stagnation phase might be in cognitive lock-in, making it difficult to break out of the stagnation phase. In conclusion, we revealed the characteristics of DMO's network in identified phases of the TALC. The network is strengthened in the involvement phase by the participation of accommodation businesses. In contrast, participation stagnates and the network is stable in the consolidation and stagnation phase, suggesting that the stable network is in the cognitive lock-in noted in the industrial agglomeration study (Grabher, 1993). Concerning limitations, there was no data on the overnight guests prior to 1980 and the NRTA members before 1985. In addition, the number of overnight guests increased rapidly from 1993 to 1994, but the period was too short to identify the development phase. Therefore, the exploration phase, the development phase, and the NRTA's network in these phases were not analysed.

**Keywords:** DMO, tourism association, network, tourism area life cycle, cognitive lock-in, Niseko Town

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# NUDGING TOURISTS TOWARDS ECO-FRIENDLY MOBILITY: THE ROLE OF MESSAGE FRAMES

Richard Hrankai<sup>a</sup> and Lorenzo Masiero<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Hong Kong Metropolitan University, <sup>b</sup>University of Bologna

## ABSTRACT

Urban transportation plays a crucial role in facilitating the economic activities of cities and supporting the mobility needs of tourists (Masiero et al., 2022). However, the transportation sector also contributes significantly to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, making it a key sector for addressing climate change. Road transport accounts for approximately 40% of all GHG emissions in urban areas (Ardila-Gomez et al., 2021), with private cars and taxis being high carbon contributors. Thus, encouraging a shift toward more environmentally friendly transport modes, such as public transport, is essential for reducing emissions and achieving sustainable urban development.

While policies and information campaigns have been widely used to promote alternatives to private car use, the way information is presented is crucial for its effectiveness (Aravind et al., 2024). Recent research has shown that message framing can significantly influence transport mode choice behaviour (Daziano et al., 2021). However, most studies have focused on vehicle purchase decisions, and limited research exists on how message framing can encourage tourists to switch from high-emission modes, like taxis, to public transport (Greene et al., 2024). Thus, this study aims to investigate how message framing nudge tourists to make more sustainable transport choices while visiting local attractions.

Tourist mobility within destinations has attracted attention in tourism research. Mobility within a destination involves traveling between various tourist attractions and public amenities (Park et al., 2020) that in turn contributes to the overall tourist experience. However, recent studies highlight the challenges of influencing tourists to opt for sustainable transport, especially given tourists' personal attitudes and lack of information about public transport options (Masiero & Hrankai, 2022). Understanding tourists' behaviour is crucial for planning transport infrastructures that align with the patterns of tourist visits within a destination, thereby facilitating sustainable destination development.

Providing individuals with GHG emissions information has been shown to influence mobility decisions (Wang et al., 2021). However, the effectiveness of this information varies based on how it is framed. Studies show that presenting GHG information alongside additional context, such as societal goals or individual benefits, can lead to better decision-making outcomes (Daziano et al., 2021). Nonetheless, little research has explored how such information influences tourist transport decisions within a destination (Greene et al., 2024).

The concept of changing choice architecture, also known as nudging (Sunstein & Thaler, 2008), has gained significant attention among public policymakers in recent years. Since most human behaviours involve selecting among options, altering the way alternatives are presented can be an effective approach to influence decisions (Dolnicar, 2020).

This study investigates the role of message framing on intra-destination tourist mobility choices through a stated choice experiment. The experiment aims to understand how gain-framed gamified messages, influence tourists' preferences for sustainable urban mobility options. Choice tasks present alternatives characterised by travel time, travel cost, type of transport mode combinations and their respective environmental impact expressed as CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Individuals are asked to indicate the most preferred route involving combinations of transport modes with varying levels of environmental impact. Data is collected from tourists visiting Hong Kong through computer assisted interviews facilitated by a trained research assistant at key tourist areas. A pilot study is conducted in November–December 2024 to gather initial information about tourist preferences, thereby testing the survey



instrument before the main data collection in 2025.

Data collected from the choice experiment is analysed with the discrete choice modelling approach. In particular, mixed multinomial logit model is estimated to capture heterogeneity in tourist preferences. In addition, the estimated models allow exploring how priming with gain-framed gamified messages influences tourists' transport mode choices. Furthermore, measures of willingness-to-pay and value-of-travel time saving are estimated as key measures reflecting trade-offs tourists are willing to make between cost, travel time, and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. These measures provide insights into the effectiveness of message framing in shifting preferences toward more sustainable mobility choices.

This research aims to address the gap in the literature by exploring the role of message framing in influencing transport mode switching among tourists (Greene et al., 2024). By applying the concept of choice architecture to understand tourist mobility decisions, this study seeks to uncover how nudging messages can encourage tourists to choose more sustainable transport options. Results of this study offer practical insights for promoting pro-environmental behaviour in urban destinations.

**Keywords:** *Tourist behaviour, Intra-destination tourist mobility, Transport and tourism, Message framing, Nudging, Choice modelling*

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# OPEN CULTURE AND INDIGENOUS HERITAGE: PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT

Maria Della Lucia<sup>a</sup> and Giulia Dore<sup>a</sup>

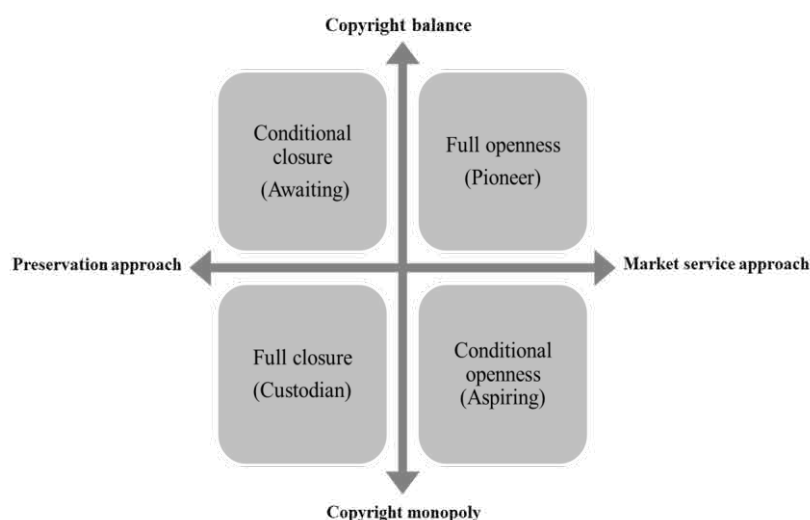
<sup>a</sup>University of Trento, Department of Economics and Management

## ABSTRACT

The paper explores the application of Open Culture Management (OCM) to Indigenous culture, especially focusing on the “open culture dilemma”, i.e. the tension between the endeavor to allow unrestricted access and reuse of cultural resources and the wish to secure intellectual property rights or other rights in such resources. Such tension notably increases the challenging efforts of museums in seeking sustainable stewardship of heritage. It can lead museums to open only a limited part of their collections, fearing copyright and other regulatory restrictions (Booth et al., 2021) or still fear openness because of their managerial reluctance to change and lack of skills (Bertacchini et al., 2018).

The study builds on a preliminary systematic literature review of management and legal studies (Della Lucia et al., 2024) that developed an exploratory matrix of approaches to OCM in museums in relation to copyright (Figure 1), denoting areas of convergence (the degree to which managerial and legal fields are aligned to promote openness or closure), divergence (where the managerial field supports open culture while the legal field restricts it, and vice versa), but also ambivalence concerning openness/closure.

**Figure 1:** Matrix of Open Culture Management



*Source: Authors' elaboration*

The matrix reflects four main approaches to OCM. In a “full openness approach” museums allow the broadest access and reuse of cultural resources with the least possible restrictions. Instead, a “full closure approach” features strict limitations often imposed by copyright restriction: museums control access, use and sharing of cultural resources. In the two-hybrid approaches of “conditional openness” and “conditional closure”, museums, on the one hand, limit access due to copyright constraints despite a market service orientation and, on the other, prioritize preservation even when they operate in a better copyright environment that would favor openness.

In relation to Indigenous culture, the literature increasingly discusses the protection of heritage from its unregulated use (Adewumi, 2022; Nwabueze, 2017; Scher, 2002). Key issues are the

empowerment of individuals and communities that are often legally invisible or misrepresented (Macmillan, 2015) and the safeguard of non-economic rights, such as preserving the authenticity and integrity of their heritage (Karol, 2019; Jagielska-Burduk, 2020). Scholars also illustrate the competing rights and interests in fairly representing diverse perspectives and backgrounds, especially related to colonial legacies and marginalized groups (Sherman, 2008). At the same time, the role of specific forms of protection is also explored, like Indigenous intellectual property rights (IPRs), including copyright. While being historically based on Western-centric concepts (Kennedy & Laczniak, 2014; Macmillan, 2021; Valley, 2014), non-Western communities can perceive these regulatory frameworks as tools for equitable sharing of benefits (Hansen, 2011; Purwandoko et al., 2020; Wanda George, 2010). However, as their effectiveness remains vague (Nwabueze, 2013; Oruç, 2022; Singh et al., 2013), the open culture dilemma remains a critical issue.

Our meta-analysis addresses the above dynamics by highlighting the challenges associated with the rights and expectations of Indigenous communities. The extension of the OCM matrix to Indigenous culture offers new and specific insights on the different positioning of museums in the matrix and allows to identify possible strategies for museum sustainable management. In so doing, the paper contributes to the growing academic discussion on OCM from a pluralistic and interdisciplinary perspective, adjusting and refining the original conceptual model.

**Keywords:** *Museums; Indigenous culture; open culture; matrix; sustainable management.*

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# OUTDOOR PATHWAYS TO SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND BELONGING: A STUDY OF IRANIAN IMMIGRANTS IN NEW ZEALAND

Mercede Shavanddasht<sup>a</sup>, Anna Carr<sup>a</sup> and Pooneh Torabian<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University Of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand

## ABSTRACT

Immigrants face multifaceted challenges as they navigate life in a new country, adapting to unfamiliar places, social norms, cultural practices, and community structures. New Zealand's natural landscapes and outdoor culture provide a unique perspective on how outdoor activities facilitate social integration and belonging. This study investigates how Iranian immigrants' engagement in outdoor pursuits and leisure contributes to their social integration and sense of belonging in New Zealand.

This study used a qualitative approach and Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) as its method. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 20 Iranian immigrants who had lived in New Zealand for over two years, recruited via purposive and snowball sampling. Interviews were conducted in Farsi and lasted 60-75 minutes. Participants also submitted five photographs of their outdoor leisure activities in New Zealand to enrich discussions.



**Figure 1: Sunset farewell by the lake (Source: Rudabeh)**

Interview data analysis followed CGT principles, involving initial and focused coding, constant comparative analysis, and memo writing. The analysis process was iterative, with data collection and analysis occurring simultaneously until theoretical saturation was reached. The researcher's background as an Iranian immigrant was critically examined through reflective practice, enhancing the study's credibility.

In this research, the concept of social integration refers to Bosswick's (2006, p. 2) definition: "the inclusion of individuals in a system, the creation of relationships among individuals and their attitudes towards the society. It is the result of the conscious and motivated interaction and cooperation of individuals and groups." Though not specific to the New Zealand or Iranian context, this definition serves as a useful framework, encompassing inclusion, relationship formation, attitude development, and active participation - elements explored through the outdoor activities of Iranian immigrants in New Zealand.

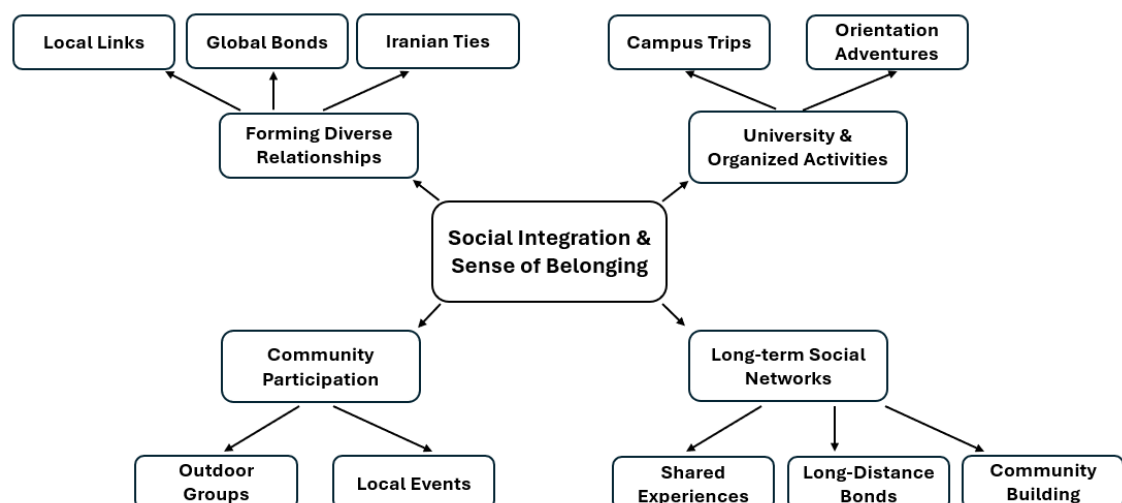
The analysis identified four key themes showing how outdoor activities promote social integration among Iranian immigrants in New Zealand: relationship formation, community participation, university and organized activities, and long-term social networks. These themes also highlight how immigrants develop a sense of belonging in their new environment.

Outdoor activities emerge as a powerful catalyst for social interaction, relationship building and forming emotional connections to immigrants' new home. As Azadeh noted, "With my colleagues at work, it's more about work and such. But when we go outdoors, we talk more about each other's homes and lives and get to know each other." This aligns with Berasategi Sancho et al. (2023) findings on leisure activities strengthening social networks.

Joining local outdoor groups and attending community events plays a crucial role in immigrants' integration and sense of place. As Guiv shared, "I was a member of a group called Wellness Workers Trust... They organized good programs every two weeks, and it was very nice going around with them." This experience echoes Setoodegan and Pettersson's (2021, p. 13) observation that "events can foster social integration". Such involvement not only facilitates cultural exchange but also helps immigrants to feel as part of the local community, contributing to their sense of belonging.

Structured outdoor activities, particularly those organized by universities, play a significant role in early integration efforts and creating a sense of community. Sindokht recalled, "The programs that the university organized, like going hiking with university students, I remember I went more to meet people and see what their activities were like". This aligns with Acevedo and Stodolska's (2019) study on positive integration through campus involvement. These organized events provide a safe entry point for newcomers to engage with the local community and outdoor culture, helping them to foster a sense of belonging.

Shared outdoor interests often lead to enduring friendships and a deep sense of community. Keykhosrow explained, "Almost all my close friends and deep relationships have come through these activities". This observation supports Horolets' (2012) argument that leisure activities play a crucial role in maintaining social groups. The lasting nature of these relationships, exemplified by Keykhosrow's statement: "Two of my friends... they left Christchurch 3 years ago but they're still our best friends in New Zealand", which demonstrates how outdoor activities foster long-term social capital and rootedness in New Zealand.



**Figure 2: Pathways to Social Integration and Belonging through Outdoor Activities (Source: Author)**



Immigrants build relationships with local New Zealanders, other internationals, and fellow Iranians. This diverse network provides a balanced support system for cross-cultural adaptation. As Zhao and Liu (2024) argue, increased leisure participation correlates with higher levels of integration. This multi-layered integration allows immigrants to develop a nuanced sense of belonging that bridges their Iranian identity with their new New Zealand home. As Homai noted: "...I really feel a sense of belonging. I mean, I really miss here, for example, when I go somewhere else."

In conclusion, our findings highlight the crucial role of outdoor leisure activities in promoting both social integration and a sense of belonging among Iranian immigrants in New Zealand. This process extends beyond mere social connections; it encompasses experiencing New Zealand's outdoor culture, fostering meaningful relationships and long-term social networks. As immigrants participate in these activities, they transform New Zealand from a foreign land into a place where they feel they belong.

**Keywords:** *Immigrant social integration, Sense of belonging, Outdoor leisure activities, Social Networks, Iranian Immigrants, New Zealand*

# PERCEIVED SERVICE ROBOT SUPPORT: SCALE DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION

Yitong Yu<sup>a</sup>, Xinyi Zhang<sup>a</sup> and Xiaoying (Eden) Jiao<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, <sup>b</sup>University of Surrey

## ABSTRACT

The increasing use of service robots is attracting the attention of researchers (Shin, 2022). Organisations need to ensure that human employees successfully adapt to their robotic counterparts to achieve the expected level of efficiency when implementing robotic technology (Khasawneh, 2018). Since robotics cannot completely replace human service employees at the current stage (Larivière et al., 2017), it is valuable to investigate how human employees can be supported by service robots. Therefore, this study intends to investigate how service robot adoption in the workplace affects human workers from a human resources perspective by developing and validating a Perceived Service Robot Support (PSRS) scale to quantify the impact of service robot adoption in the workplace. The findings can contribute to a deeper understanding and a systematic measurement of how service robots affect human employees, which will shed light on future research on the relationship between service robots and human employees theoretically, and facilitate a more collaborative and smooth working environment with the two parties practically.

Existing research has generally defined different aspects of support perceived by workers from a resource exchange perspective, including social support, organizational support, supervisor support and co-worker support etc. (e.g., Eisenberger et al., 1986; Shumaker & Brownell, 1984). These supports are also further identified into several sub-dimensions (Barrera, 1986). However, due to the differences between humans and robots, the construct and theory can only partially explain service robot support (Meissner et al., 2021). Therefore, a tailored measure for the PSRS should be developed.

Following established scale development guidelines (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006), this study used a mixed method design to develop and validate the employee PSRS scale in hospitality and tourism. The initial item pool was generated through the literature review and indepth interviews, then transformed into questionnaires distributed to hotel employees with collaborating experience with service robots. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and nomological validity were sequentially assessed. The related data was collected from hotel employees who work with service robots in China.

This study firstly generates the initial item pool (24 items) for PSRS by reviewing extensive literature related to human-robot interaction and employees' perceived support in the workplace, and in-depth semi-structured interviews. After that, we conduct expert judgement survey questionnaires (23 items) and a pilot study to purify the initial items (11 items). Next, we further perform EFA and CFA to verify the factor structure and further refine the items in the PSRS scale (11 items, 3 dimensions). Finally, we assessed the nomological validity of the developed scale by examining the relationships between PSRS and its antecedents and consequences via the partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) method. The nomological validity test is qualified.

This study makes theoretical contributions from different aspects. First, this study first conceptualizes perceived service robot support. With the identification of perceived service robot support, the finding can broaden the current range of perceived support and employee robot interactions in the workplace. Second, this study first develops a validated measurement of perceived service robot support. It contributes to the research in the field of human resources devoted to employee-robot interactions. This measurement scale complements both current service robotics research and human resources research. Finally, this scale can be considered as a foundation for future studies related to employee-robot interactions in the workplace. In the future, the scale can be further used in different aspects of employee-robotic interaction research.

Apart from the above theoretical contributions, this study provides important practical implications as well. First, the organization can decide how and when to adopt service robots in their daily operation from the HR perspective based on our findings. Second, as more and more service organizations employ service robots in the frontline positions, our findings can distinguish the different types of support humans and robotics can offer, which can help human employees work decently without being replaced by robotics and facilitate efficient and smooth collaboration between the two parties.

**Keywords:** *Perceived service robot support; Employee-robot interaction; Service robot; Scale development*

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# POST-COVID CULTURAL TOURISM RECOVERY NEEDS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Denis Tolkach<sup>a</sup>, **Jenny Panchal<sup>a</sup>**, Awangku Hassanah Bahar Bin Pengiran Bagul<sup>b</sup> and Hera Oktadiana<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>James Cook University, Cairns, <sup>b</sup>Universiti Malaysia Sabah

## ABSTRACT

This paper presents the outcomes of the "Cultural Tourism Recovery: Sharing Best Practices" project, funded by the Australia-ASEAN Council of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). The project facilitated knowledge exchange between cultural tourism initiatives and academic communities across Australia, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines through six hybrid seminars. The seminars focused on sharing experiences of adapting and responding to COVID-19, and exploring strategies for revitalising cultural tourism in the post-pandemic context.

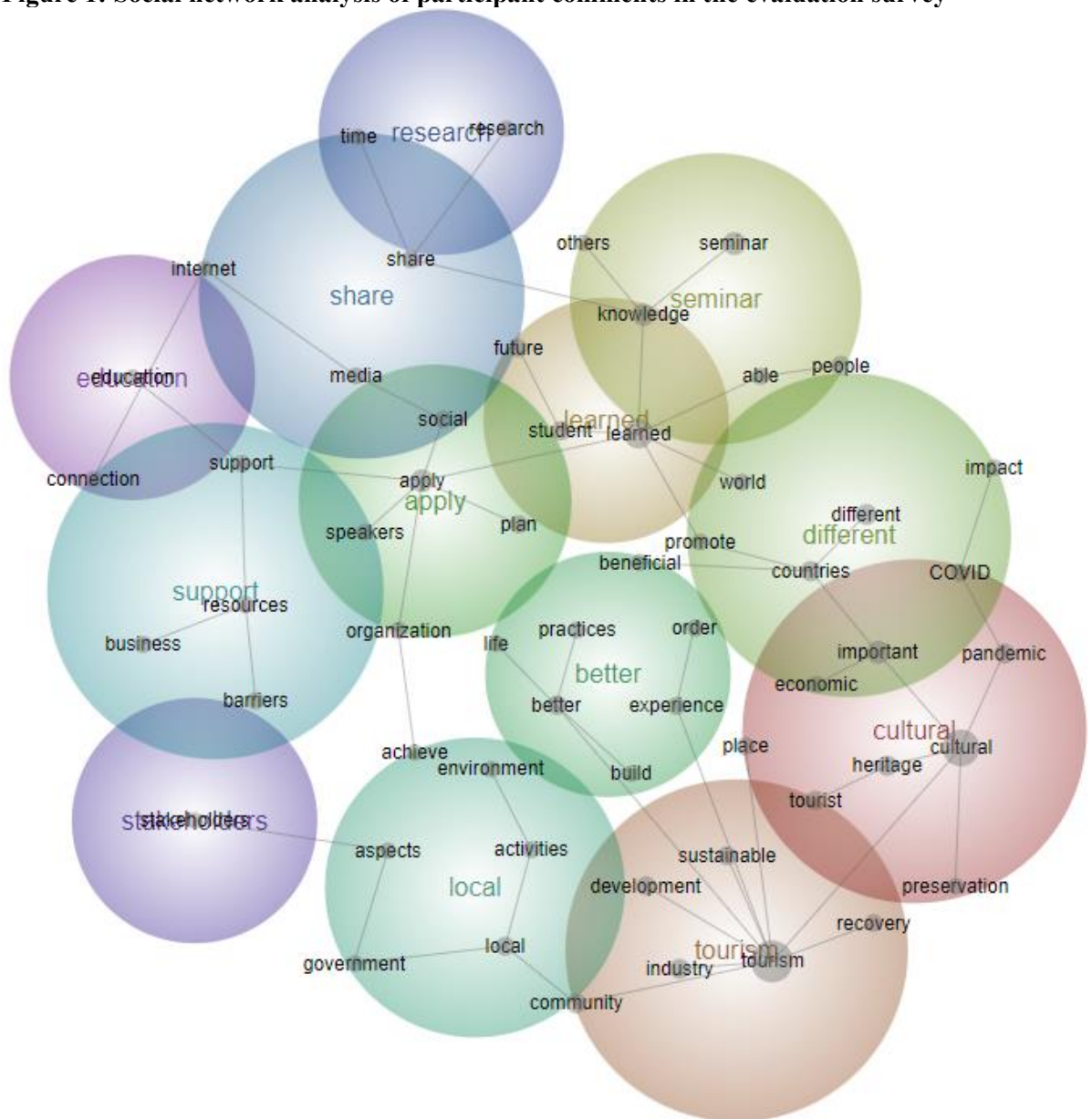
The seminar series attracted over 1,200 registrations from more than 700 participants, two-thirds of the participants were women. Participant demographics were diverse, with representation from sectors such as education, government, private, and non-profit organisations. Notably, the majority of attendees were from the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia with fewer participants from Australia and other nations. A post-seminar survey revealed 72% overall satisfaction with the seminar series.

The six seminars, hosted both online and in hybrid formats, covered a range of themes:

1. Introduction and Peer-Sharing (Online)
2. Women & Youth in Cultural Tourism (Yogyakarta, Indonesia)
3. Designing Regenerative Tourism Offerings Post-Pandemic (Cairns, Australia)
4. Marketing Cultural Tourism (Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia)
5. Adaptation & Economic Diversification (Baguio, Philippines)
6. Report Dissemination & Sharing (Online)

Thematic content analysis and an evaluation survey identified recurring themes across all seminars, reflecting shared challenges and approaches to overcome them. Figure 1 presents the content analysis of open-ended questions conducted using Leximancer. Below is a summary of the major themes discussed by the seminar participants.

**Figure 1: Social network analysis of participant comments in the evaluation survey**



Below is the summary of major themes discussed by seminar participants.

### **COVID-19 impacts**

The seminar offered insights into the profound effects of COVID-19 on cultural tourism in ASEAN countries. The participants gained a deeper understanding of COVID-19 recovery challenges and appreciated the different governmental responses. For instance, in Indonesia, government support through the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy was evident, while in Malaysia and the Philippines, tourism recovery support for cultural tourism was typically provided by regional governments.

### **Cultural heritage and tourism**

Participants emphasised the importance of protecting both tangible and intangible cultural heritage in the post-pandemic tourism recovery in the ASEAN region. Balancing authenticity with delivering outstanding experiences for tourists was a critical issue. One proposed solution was to target niche markets with greater appreciation for traditional cultures. Additionally, leveraging tourism in funding cultural heritage preservation was highlighted.

### **Domestic tourism**

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted a significant shift in Southeast Asia's cultural tourism marketing. Traditionally, many cultural tourism attractions targeted international markets. However, closed borders necessitated a pivot to domestic markets. Some participants noted that this shift has not been easy, as they perceive a lack of appreciation for own local culture among domestic tourists. Furthermore, there is a lack of awareness about the rich and diverse cultural tourism attractions available within their own countries.

### **Women and youth in cultural tourism**

The critical role of women in preserving intangible cultural heritage was highlighted in the seminars, and several gender issues in cultural tourism emerged. Cultural tourism in the region is often community-based and oriented towards intangible cultural heritage. Women's role in preserving crafts, traditions, cuisines, and other skills and knowledge, and in tying communities together is paramount. The participants recognised cultural tourism as a means for empowerment for women, as it adds economic value to their roles, skills, and knowledge within their communities. Similarly, the role of young people in preserving cultural heritage and retaining traditional knowledge was emphasised. Cultural tourism is a powerful tool for youth engagement as it helps attract young people to learn traditional skills and knowledge, learn more about their communities, stay in their communities rather than migrate to large cities, and thus preserve heritage for future generations. The emphasis on keeping young people connected to their communities and traditions was notable across all seminars.

### **Social media marketing**

Post-COVID-19 tourism recovery efforts require significant marketing and promotion efforts. Participants acknowledged this issue to be very challenging for regional cultural tourism promotions, especially for small, remote initiatives with limited financial resources and a lack of access to markets. The ability to reach source markets is attributed to geographical remoteness and difficulties in distributing promotional information. Social media was identified as the most essential tool for promotion; the platforms provide good value for money. However barriers such as poor internet access, language differences and limited knowledge of social media content creation were identified. Government support and education and training are required to overcome these barriers.

### **Government support**

Participants suggested ongoing government support for cultural tourism is required. Suggestions included prioritising cultural tourism as a policy focus. Others suggested governments should assist regional communities in bridging knowledge and resources gap regarding cultural tourism. Some participants also acknowledged the constraints that local or regional governments can do for cultural tourism, as government resources are also stretched due to the economic strains of COVID-19.

### **Education and training**

Participants noted the relative inexperience of many cultural tourism initiatives and emphasised the need for continued education, training, and knowledge sharing for their success. The seminar series was appreciated for providing a rare platform for cross-border learning. In a number of seminars, a call for government-supported training programs and university-community partnerships through systematic knowledge transfer was also acknowledged. Further, it was suggested that sustainability should underpin the provided training.

### **Conclusion**

The "Cultural Tourism Recovery: Sharing Best Practices" seminar series served as a valuable forum for regional community-oriented tourism initiatives in Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines to exchange knowledge and explore solutions to shared challenges.

The insights from the seminar series offer a roadmap for sustainable recovering, emphasising the need for targeted education, strategic marketing and robust government backing. Ultimately, this project has not only facilitated immediate recovery efforts but has also strengthened the foundation for a more



resilient and inclusive future for cultural tourism across the ASEAN region.

**Keywords:** *cultural tourism, Southeast Asia, COVID-19, tourism recovery, knowledge sharing*

# REIMAGINING MULTICULTURAL FESTIVALS: THE INFLUENCE BY STAKEHOLDERS

Effie Steriopoulos<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>William Angliss Institute, Melbourne

## ABSTRACT

### Introduction

Festivals have become places for people to undergo a social experience and feel a sense of belonging (Kitchen & Filep, 2019). Different stakeholders get involved in the design of event experiences based on their specific interests. For example, Destination Management Organisations develop events as experiences to attract not only the local community but also tourists from other cities or countries in order to reach positive economic outcomes (Mair, 2019). Stakeholder interests may vary, and their engagement may depend on the type of consultation required (Robertson et al. 2018). As the event industry has reset since the Covid-19 global pandemic it is important to explore how stakeholder interests and motivational factors have also changed and how they may influence the attendee experience.

Authors have discussed how festivals contribute to identity and a sense of belonging (Ong et al. 2025). In multicultural festivals where ethnicity is celebrated, key concepts that arise in the experience are family togetherness, escape, cultural exploration, socialisation and curiosity (Sunny et al. 2012). In a cultural festival in Thailand, it was found that the key elements that contributed towards a memorable experience were a) activities b) uniqueness c) distinctiveness and d) authenticity (Meeprom & Talawanich, 2024). Additional factors that contribute to rejuvenating cultural festivals are authenticity and storytelling elements (Wyatt & Rossetti, 2024). It is important to identify the key elements that affect the experience as an immersive cultural experience can influence word of mouth recommendation and further promote and develop the festival brand (Mair, 2019). As organisations have attempted to innovate, it is just as important for festivals to innovate (Strickland et al. 2024). A model developed by Ali-Knight et al. (2023) highlights the need for festivals to innovate based on a three R model: Respond; Resilience and Reimagine with communication and support being highlighted as key contributors for festival rejuvenation. However, there is limited research on how festivals have undertaken new approaches for rejuvenation (Ali-Knight et al., 2023). These different priorities can potentially influence how multicultural festivals rejuvenate in transformative times (Steriopoulos & Wrathall, 2021). This research plans to uncover the type of co-created experience sought by stakeholders and will highlight elements that contribute to festival rejuvenation.

### Methods

The study employs a mixed methods autoethnography to synthesise a unified understanding, analysis, and interpretation of the subject matter (Crede & Borrego, 2013; Hitchcock & Onwuegbuzie, 2020) throughout three phases: Phase 1: Autoethnographic approaches exploring our own experience during a festival. Phase 2: Quantitative research – survey instrument - predominantly focusing on attendee and host community perspectives. The survey will focus on multiple perspectives but predominantly it will explore views from three key stakeholders: 1. Event attendees 2. Host community 3. Businesses. Phase 3: Follow up interviews will be conducted to delve deeper in the stakeholder experience specifically targeting views in relation to exhibitor or business engagement. The context of the study is a multicultural festival, Antipodes festival, which is organised by the Greek Orthodox community and held at the last weekend in February in Melbourne (Australia).

## Conclusion

Various stakeholders contribute towards the development of the festival experience in different ways. Different interests such as an economic boost in the community and local/international tourism development can influence stakeholder engagement. COVID changes have led to change in human behaviours, industry re-setting and this may also include changes on how cultural festivals are offered as experiences. Since these forced adaptations, the re-design of cultural festivals has been on the forefront of event manager's discussion. Preliminary insights into re-imagining multicultural festivals include a mixture of traditional and modern program elements; an expansion of food stalls featuring traditional Greek food and performances by high profile Greek artists. Reimagining the multicultural festival with a combination of traditional and modern elements demonstrates authenticity as key element in the festival rejuvenation. Further, the paper highlights that multicultural festivals may need to adapt their marketing techniques towards targeted generational approaches. The authors will present the Reimagine phase as part of preliminary insights of phase one. Feedback will be sought for the next phase of the research.

**Keywords:** *Festival rejuvenation, multicultural festivals, stakeholder engagement, immersive authentic experience.*

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# RESEARCHING THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF EVENT PRACTITIONERS THROUGH HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGY

Kevin Wallace<sup>a</sup>, Carmel Foley<sup>a</sup> and Deb Edwards<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Technology Sydney

## ABSTRACT

In the context of festivals and events, experience could be considered their ultimate *raison d'être*. Academic research in the sector pays a great deal of attention to the visitor experience, the role, purpose and motivation for events in society, but there has been little in regard to the experiences of the practitioners involved in making events happen and the methods they may use (Brown, 2014). From the perspective of a practitioner-researcher, knowing what an event is, what it does and how successful it may be is by no means the whole story. The experiential nature of events may be considered a central and foremost feature of event management (Getz, 2008), but predominantly focusing on the front-end event pitch and back-end feelgood factors misses out a significant section in between – the core event management process and project planning cycle.

Even though there are a variety of working procedures and protocols for logistics and regulatory requirements, and an assortment of checklists and manuals to support event practitioners, research on critical areas such as risk, emergency planning and crisis management (Ziakas, 2021) can only provide something of a patchwork of event management knowledge with somewhat narrow or limited insights of the overall experience. Event documentation captures particular logistical and operational aspects of an event but does not reflect all the various challenges practitioners may face in working them through.

Furthermore, this compilation does not include all event stakeholders or cover the full range of stakeholder needs, demands, requirements and expectations. Some of these will be known and expected, others unknown and unexpected, resulting in dynamic and complex event stakeholder management challenges, experiences and processes (Michopoulou et al., 2023; Wallace & Michopoulou, 2023).

Whilst there is an acknowledged lack of suitable stakeholder mapping and management models for the sector with which to address such complex challenges (Davis, 2017; Pernecky, 2023), the ultimate success or failure of an event for all stakeholders concerned depends upon the abilities of event practitioners to effectively navigate, negotiate and address them. The fact that practitioners have been doing just that for some considerable time indicates that a tacit body of knowledge has been developed through lived experience within the event practitioner body (Wallace & Michopoulou, 2023). Since there is little understanding of this, interrogating such knowledge has the potential to contribute to the development of new theoretical frameworks or models and best practice tools or processes applied to stakeholder management in the sector.

Given a number of qualitative methodologies can be used to research such lived experience, the most suitable for the phenomena of complex stakeholder management needed careful consideration. An exploratory approach would be required to establish the prevalence of the phenomena and identify candidates for participation. Once engaged, eliciting participant experiences would be an inductive process. Making sense of these would then be a challenge. Event practitioners are a disparate grouping - they work alone or in small teams and deliver events of different types in different contexts. This range of potential variables and subjectivity indicates interpretivism to understand the phenomena through patterns of meaning rather than social constructivism to develop grounded theory (Leavy, 2017). Viewing lived experience as an interpretive process leads to the philosophy of hermeneutic

phenomenology (Dowling, 2007) where meanings and ‘truth’ of experiences are personally and situationally driven. This limits the generalisability of any research findings or conclusions, and prevents the development of universal theories (Ziakas & Boukas, 2014). This confirms the interpretivist approach and contrasts with the theory-building approach of social constructivism. The research design has then been developed by embedding generic qualitative methods with hermeneutic phenomenological concepts. For example, the participant screening survey is used to identify the phenomena and its prevalence. In-depth interviews explore the notions of ‘being-in-the-world’ (situatedness) – the social, cultural and historical backgrounds of the participants, the ‘3-part present’ of assessing a given situation, the ‘hermeneutic circle’ of understanding the phenomena at hand, and the ‘fusion of horizons’ as interviewer and interviewee reach an understanding of each other. Focus group sessions are to be conducted on the basis of ‘solidarity’ – an understanding of the commonality of shared enterprise combined with an acknowledgement of difference and distinctiveness, and a spirit of ‘applied hermeneutics’ where the practical dimensions of the collective experience can be used to modify attitudes and practices.

This phenomenological research of practitioner lived experience of complex stakeholder management contributes to knowledge in festival and events by adding to the limited research of practitioner experiences and their practice in events. With a mere 0.7% of event management literature found to use phenomenology (Draper et al., 2018), it also contributes to the scant usage of phenomenology in event management research and responds to calls for researchers to embrace phenomenological approaches to event experience research (Ziakas & Boukas, 2014). This research may also provide a catalyst and stimulus for further use of phenomenology as a research philosophy and methodology in event management research in the future.

**Keywords:** *lived experience, event practitioners, hermeneutic phenomenology, interpretivism*

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# RESIDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES SURF COMPETITION: AN EX-ANTE STUDY OF TEAHUPO'O

Marie Delaplace<sup>a</sup>, Vincent Dropsy<sup>b</sup>, Maleke Fourati<sup>b</sup>, Sylvain Petit<sup>b,c,e</sup> and **Mondher Sahli**<sup>b,d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Université Gustave Eiffel, Lab'Urba, ORME, France, <sup>b</sup>Université de Polynésie Française, CETOP, French Polynesia, <sup>c</sup>Université Polytechnique des Hauts de France, LARSH, France, <sup>d</sup>Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, <sup>e</sup>Université de Perpignan Via Domitia, CRESEM, France

## ABSTRACT

The literature on residential support for mega sports events (MSEs) highlights its importance for successful event execution, particularly during the pre-event phase (Deccio & Baloglu, 2002; Hiller & Wanner, 2011; Ritchie et al., 2009). Resident perceptions are key, as their support has a significant impact on the event's success and legacy (Chen & Tian, 2015; Preuss & Solberg, 2006). Olympic-related studies emphasize early community involvement to prevent conflicts and foster ownership (Prayag et al., 2013; Pappas, 2014). However, MSEs such as the Olympics bring both positive and negative impacts to host communities (Gursoy et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2013). Positive impacts include infrastructure improvements and tourism growth, while negative ones involve disruptions, pollution, and dissatisfaction over high public costs (Gursoy & Kendall, 2006; Müller, 2015; Parra-Camacho et al., 2023).

Social exchange theory (SET) often explains resident support, suggesting that support arises when perceived benefits outweigh the costs. When perceived costs exceed benefits, negative attitudes prevail. Research comparing pre- and post-event resident perceptions reveals varied impacts. For instance, during the 2010 FIFA World Cup, social capital declined, but psychic income rose among residents (Gibson et al., 2014). Similarly, while the Tour de France did not significantly boost economic or cultural interest, it decreased disorder and conflict after the event (Baldock et al., 2011). In Japan's 2019 Rugby World Cup, positive impact perceptions remained stable, while negative ones dropped post-event (Oshimi et al., 2021).

The spatial aspect of resident support for events, specifically how proximity to event areas influences support, has been under-explored, with existing research showing mixed results (Ahlfeldt & Maennig, 2011; Coates & Wicker, 2015). Some findings suggest that proximity reduces support due to negative externalities like noise, while others indicate that nearby residents perceive higher benefits. Additionally, involvement in sports can positively affect community attitudes toward MSEs. For example, in the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics, local involvement in sports was linked to positive perceptions of the event (Kim & Kaplanidou, 2019).

The Paris 2024 Olympic surf competition in Teahupo'o, Tahiti, located 16,000 km from the Olympic Village in Paris, has stirred debate about its potential impacts on the local community. Protests have arisen, particularly concerning the construction of a new judges' tower. Early findings show mixed responses: some are enthusiastic about potential benefits, while others express skepticism, partly due to limited local consultation (Delaplace et al., 2024). This study examines Tahiti residents' ex-ante perceptions of the Olympic surf competition, scheduled from July 27 to August 5, 2024, comparing perceptions between residents of the host area in Tahiti Iti and those from non-host areas in Tahiti Nui. Given the cultural significance of surfing in French Polynesia, the study also investigates how geographical location and surfing involvement shape perceived event impacts.



## Methodology

This research is the first phase of a longitudinal study tracking Tahiti residents' perceptions of the Olympic surf competition in Teahupo'o. Conducted in early 2024 with a sample of 987 participants, the initial survey took place 3 to 6 months before the event. Respondents assessed expected economic, social, and environmental impacts and their general attitudes toward hosting the competition in Teahupo'o. Control variables included socio-demographic profiles, areas of residence, awareness of infrastructure projects, and sports involvement, especially in surfing. Additionally, the survey explored residents' engagement in the event, including entrepreneurial activities or volunteer roles. Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, capturing residents' attitudes.

Data analysis involved multiple regression models, with the primary dependent variable aggregating positive perceptions of the Olympics at Teahupo'o, covering impacts on community pride, international recognition, sports infrastructure, local activities, employment, and tourism growth. Key independent variables included residential proximity to the event and involvement in surfing. Sociodemographic factors (e.g., age, gender, education) and region-fixed effects were included to ensure robustness.

## Primary Findings

**Area of Residence:** Residents in Tahiti Iti (the peninsula) had lower expectations regarding positive impacts, such as tourism growth, compared to those in other regions, suggesting a "proximity effect." Peninsula residents, who are closer to the event, appear more conscious of potential disruptions, leading to tempered expectations. In contrast, residents from farther areas may view the event as an economic opportunity without the direct inconveniences.

**Involvement in the Event:** Across all Tahiti regions, involvement in Olympic-related activities was significantly correlated with positive perceptions. Residents engaged in the event—whether through employment, volunteering, or tourism services—viewed impacts more favorably. Among peninsula residents, involvement seems to mitigate negative perceptions, suggesting that active engagement can reduce proximity-related skepticism. This highlights the value of community participation, particularly for those close to the event site.

**Interaction between Residence and Involvement:** The interaction analysis revealed a compound effect: peninsula residents involved in the event held more positive perceptions than uninvolved residents. While proximity may initially dampen positive expectations, involvement can shift perceptions favorably, underscoring the role of participation in building local support.

**Demographic Differences:** Controlling for demographic variables, age emerged as notable. Older residents generally had more favorable views of the event, potentially valuing long-term benefits like community cohesion, while younger residents focused more on immediate disruptions. Education level and native status did not significantly impact perceptions, indicating that spatial and participatory factors, rather than background characteristics, primarily influence attitudes.

## Conclusions and Implications

This study underscores the importance of geographically sensitive strategies to manage expectations in culturally significant or remote areas like Teahupo'o. Proactive community involvement, especially for residents near the event, is essential to gain local support and reduce skepticism. For instance, peninsula residents could benefit from targeted employment opportunities or revenue-sharing initiatives, fostering a sense of inclusion in the event's success.

Balancing immediate economic gains with sustainable tourism development in host regions is critical. Event planners should collaborate with local governments and stakeholders to ensure sustainable management of environmental, cultural, and social impacts, contributing to the event's long-term legacy. Tailored communication strategies are also necessary to address different age groups' expectations. Younger residents, for example, may benefit from educational initiatives on long-term benefits and efforts to minimize disruptions.

This study provides insights into the spatial, demographic, and participatory factors influencing local perceptions of the Paris 2024 Olympic surf competition in Teahupo'o. These findings offer valuable considerations for planning future global events in remote or culturally unique locations, ensuring that local communities are actively engaged and positioned to benefit from the event's legacy.

**Keywords:** *residents' perceptions and support, mega-event, Olympic Games, Paris 2024 Olympic Games surf competition, spatial diversity*

# RETHINKING TOURISM DEVELOPMENT TO IMPROVE LOCAL YOUNG PEOPLE AND CHILDREN'S KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURAL CAPITAL

Md Azmain Muhtasim Mir<sup>a</sup>, Can-Seng Ooi<sup>a</sup> and Becky Shelley<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Tasmania

## ABSTRACT

Growing perspectives and practices in tourism scholarship advocate aligning tourism's socio-economic impact to support communities in achieving sustainable development goals (Kronenberg & Fuchs, 2021). These approaches have considerably contributed to shaping tourism development frameworks that are more sustainable and supportive for host communities in regional destinations. However, there are drawbacks to understanding community-specific needs and situating tourism development within specific cultural and social aspects (Ooi, 2023). The regional tourism industry and tourism management organisations tend to support local communities' educational and social goals but indirectly and ad-hoc basis (Mir et al., 2024a). For instance, on the West Coast of Tasmania where this study was conducted, there is a lack of interdependence between the tourism industry and the community regarding the utilisation of common pool resources in a robust way (Mir et al., 2024b). The current tourism and community relationship is also missing informed engagement and participation of local marginalised stakeholders, including young people and children (Seraphin, 2022; Ooi & Shelley, 2023). Restoring rights and benefits for young people and children (YPC) has remained an unfinished task in tourism collaborations (Canosa & Graham, 2023). Thus, it is necessary to frame new tourism developments that would enhance their cultural capital through designing and participating in respective tourism activities.

Based on the literature review, our study outlines a dearth of tourism scholarship regarding the mobilisation of tourism and shared resources for YPC and local families. Subsequently, there is little discussion on engaging local families and YPC in regional tourism planning and development. To address these issues, the study employed ethnographic research in selected townships on the West Coast of Tasmania. Throughout 2022, participants including local community members, young adults and families, tourism industry representatives, community workers and volunteers were interviewed. The first author also conducted participant observations during his stay in the studied townships, Queenstown, Strahan and Zeehan, respectively.

The tourism industry and community relationship on the West Coast of Tasmania is shaped by diverse cultural and social factors as well as priorities for economic and business outcomes. Therefore, locating the level of priorities and considerations provided for local YPCs engagement in current tourism planning and development was the first objective of the study. The following one explored how common pool resources are utilised for tourism businesses and who controls and manages tourism and shared resources in the studied area. Our findings show that the current tourism development frameworks on the West Coast of Tasmania are not adequate in accounting for its social responsibility to enhance local YPC's knowledge and cultural capital. However, there is no straight way to rethinking and reframing tourism planning and development. An informed engagement of local YPC in tourism planning and development needs specific and defined collaborations between the local communities and the regional tourism industry.

This paper elaborates on the main findings based on literature review and empirical research and provides a subsequent analysis with theoretical and practical implications. The first findings based on the literature review indicate that industry-led, community-focused and integrated tourism approaches advocate for sustainable and sensitive tourism development. Nevertheless, most of these

approaches have not prioritised maintaining interdependency between the tourism industry and community in a way that acknowledges the marginalised YPCs' rights to participate in tourism planning and development. The second and third significant findings are based on the fieldwork conducted on the uses of tourism and shared resources in the dispersed communities of the West Coast of Tasmania. The empirical data collected from participant observations and interviews portray a substantial gap among the stakeholders in the conceptualisation and ownership of tourism and shared resources, also known as common pool resources available in the community. Analysis of the empirical findings shows that YPC is rarely considered part of the tourism development process.

We suggest that rethinking tourism development for sustainable tourism and community relationships must incorporate the rights and participation of YPC in tourism development discussions. Conceptually, it is pertinent to make tourism more accessible, inclusive, and sustainable in the context of marginalised communities. The rights and ownership of YPC will be more secure in this way, just like any other stakeholder. In practice, it will connect tourism to address marginalised communities' educational and social inequalities by providing specific support to enhance local YPC's knowledge and cultural capital through designing and participating in tourism activities in the neighbourhood.

**Keywords:** *Regional Tourism Development; Local Knowledge and Cultural Capital; Young People and Children; Tourism and Community Relationship; Tourism and Shared Resources; Rights and Participation in Tourism.*

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# REVISTING PROFESSIONALISM IN HOSPITALITY: CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES FROM STAKEHOLDERS IN HOSPITALITY HIGHER EDUCATION

Ngoc Diep (Lily) Su<sup>a</sup> and Andrew Carruthers<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Bachelor of Hospitality, Holmesglen Institute, Melbourne, Australia

## ABSTRACT

### Research background and purpose

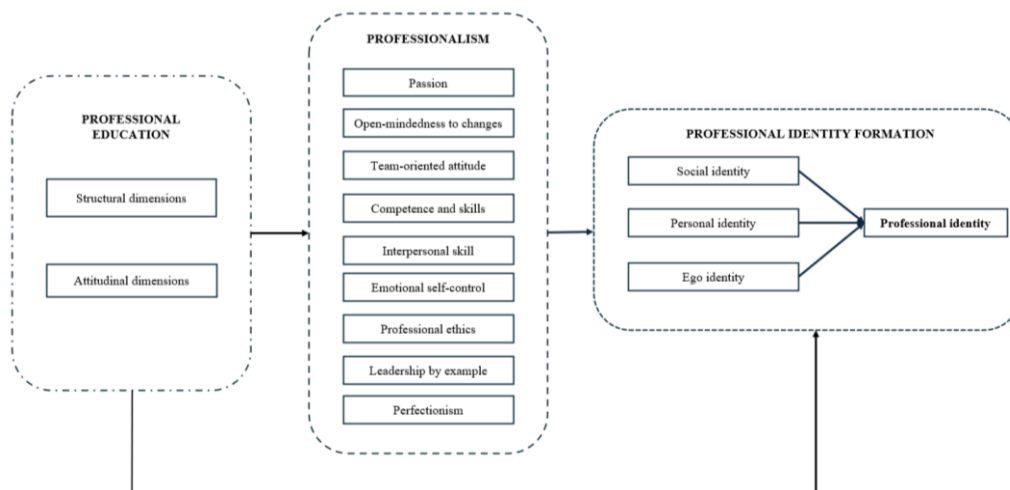
Following the COVID-19 years, the global tourism industry has experienced remarkable growth, with the UNWTO (2024) reporting a return to 97% of pre-pandemic levels in the first quarter of 2024 – reflecting year-on-year growth of 20%. The myriad of opportunities that this rapid growth has offered hospitality graduates, has also created challenges for both education providers and students, who must continually enhance their skills to stay competitive and market-ready. Professionalism, one of the most essential competencies for a high-quality hospitality workforce, has only been thoroughly explored within the past decade (Cheng & Wong, 2015; Lee, 2014).

Professionalism has traditionally been associated with fields including law, architecture, medicine, science, or engineering. However, Cheng and Wong (2015) were among the first to interpret professionalism within the context of the hospitality industry through an exploratory study that included focus-group interviews with junior staff, middle managers, and senior managers across local and international hotel brands. Drawing on the perspective of hospitality practitioners, professionalism was conceptualized across nine attitudinal dimensions: passion, openness to change, a team-oriented attitude, competence and skills, interpersonal skills, emotional self-control, professional ethics, leadership by example, and perfectionism (Cheng and Wong, 2015). Hospitality educators need to be cognisant of these elements of professionalism to ensure that their students graduate with the skills and competencies that the industry requires (Fraser, 2020). Students should also reflect on these dimensions as they form their professional identity, a crucial element of graduate employability (Jackson, 2016).

Despite these insights, a literature search focused exclusively on peer-reviewed, full-text articles published since 2015 and conducted across four databases—ProQuest, Scopus, ScienceDirect, and Web of Science—revealed a noticeable gap: there has been no exploration of professionalism from the viewpoints of either hospitality education providers nor learners. This absence highlights a significant opportunity for a study to expand upon the existing literature concerning professionalism in the hospitality industry. Reflecting these gaps, the objectives of this study are twofold: (1) to examine how professionalism has been incorporated into the curriculum of hospitality higher education programs to meet the industry's needs, and (2) to investigate the role of professional education in forming students' attitudinal professionalism and professional identity.

### Theoretical foundations

Despite existing literature on professionalism and professional identity within higher education and hospitality education being limited, professionalism can be conceptualized through two primary mechanisms: structural and attitudinal concepts (Hammer, 2000). The current study adopts these two approaches as the foundation for exploring professionalism in the context of hospitality higher education. Building upon professional identity formation theory by Goldie (2012) and an interpretation of professionalism within the hospitality industry by Cheng and Wong (2015), this study proposes a theoretical framework as presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Proposed theoretical framework**

### **Design/ methodology/ approach**

To effectively address the objectives, this study utilizes a mixed-methods approach that combines both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. The process unfolds through two multi-step stages, described as follows:

#### **Stage 1: Qualitative research**

This stage involves content analysis of the curricula from hospitality higher education programs offered by various institutions across Australia, with the aim of identifying and evaluating the integration of attitudinal dimensions of professionalism. This stage is structured into three following steps:

- **Step 1:** Identification of hospitality management programs offered by universities and other higher education providers across Australia. This initial stage involves a comprehensive search to catalog available programs.
- **Step 2:** Analysis and comparison of the curricular components across the identified programs. This includes core courses, specialized courses, elective courses, as well as practical and experiential learning activities, and research and capstone projects. The aim is to filter and highlight those elements that are common across the selected programs.
- **Step 3:** In-depth content analysis to extract attitudinal dimensions of professionalism within the curricula. This stage focuses on:
  - ✓ Examining the objectives, content, and pedagogical approaches utilized in core, specialized, and elective courses.
  - ✓ Investigating the objectives, industry relevance, and skill development opportunities presented through practical and experiential learning activities, alongside research and capstone projects.

#### **Stage 2: Quantitative research**

In this phase of the research, an empirical analysis will be undertaken to develop and validate a conceptual framework that explores the impact of attitudinal dimensions of professionalism on the formation of professional identity. The study theoretically posits hypotheses concerning both direct and indirect causal relationships between variables of professionalism and the development of professional identity. These hypotheses will be empirically tested using data gathered through a questionnaire survey administered to undergraduate students enrolled in hospitality higher education programs at Australian institutions. The study employs a Partial Least Squares-based Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) approach, encompassing both measurement model evaluation and structural model evaluation, to rigorously test the hypotheses and validate the proposed conceptual



framework.

Building on the long-standing tradition of professionalism approaches—namely, the structural and attitudinal concepts—the proposed study represents the first attempt to explore and validate the conceptualization of professionalism within the literature of hospitality higher education. Additionally, it seeks to extend the existing body of research on professional identity formation by validating the influence of professional education and perceptions of professionalism within this specific educational context.

**Keywords:** *Professionalism, Hospitality, Higher Education, Professional Identity*

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# REVPASH: A LIFELINE FOR STRUGGLING SOCIAL ENTERPRISE RESTAURANTS IN NEW ZEALAND

Pola Q. Wang<sup>a</sup> and Andrew Emery<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>School of Hospitality and Tourism, Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand

## ABSTRACT

Social enterprises in Aotearoa's restaurant industry occupy a distinctive space within the broader hospitality sector, striving to marry financial sustainability with social impact. This sector is part of a growing global movement where businesses aim to tackle pressing societal challenges through innovative approaches, blending profit-driven operations with a commitment to social and environmental causes. These enterprises often focus on addressing key issues such as unemployment among marginalised groups, particularly youth and Māori communities, who face disproportionate barriers to employment (Kartikasari, Gan, & Kerr, 2020). Additionally, they work towards promoting environmental sustainability by incorporating zero-waste principles, local sourcing, and eco-friendly practices.

While their missions are inspiring, social enterprises in the hospitality and restaurant industry face a number of challenges, including limited access to investment capital, difficulty in balancing social and commercial goals, and a lack of robust government support tailored to their hybrid model. Such initiatives underline the need for a supportive ecosystem, including tailored government policies and investment frameworks, to foster their growth and sustainability (Grant, 2017). Furthermore, the integration of Māori cultural values and community-focused approaches provides unique opportunities for these enterprises to innovate and thrive, reflecting the rich socio-cultural heritage of Aotearoa (Wang, 2024).

Eat My Lunch, a social enterprise in New Zealand, aimed to combat child hunger by providing free lunches to children in need for every meal purchased but closed due to financial struggles exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, Crave Café in Auckland, run by the Crave Collective, reinvests profits into community projects but faces financial pressures from rising costs and shifting consumer behaviours. These examples highlight the challenges social enterprises face in balancing financial sustainability with social missions. Advanced tools like Revenue Per Available Seat Hour (RevPASH) could help optimise financial performance while maintaining their social objectives. RevPASH, an established metric in the hospitality industry, measures the revenue generated per available seat hour and serves as a critical tool for assessing the efficiency of capacity utilisation in restaurants (Kimes, 1999). By calculating the revenue earned per seat during operational hours, RevPASH offers insights into how effectively a restaurant is using its seating capacity to generate income. This metric is particularly valuable in environments where space and time are finite resources, such as in restaurants, where optimising table turnover and aligning service delivery with customer demand are essential for maximising revenue. However, while RevPASH has been widely adopted in traditional restaurant settings, its application in social enterprises, particularly within New Zealand restaurant industry, remains largely unexplored. Given the dual goals of social enterprises—achieving financial sustainability while fulfilling a social mission—RevPASH offers a promising avenue for enhancing their operational efficiency and profitability.

Figure 1 presents a conceptual framework for applying RevPASH in social enterprise restaurants. Social Objectives, such as employment opportunities and environmental sustainability, are balanced with RevPASH's financial metrics. Strategies like dynamic pricing, menu optimisation, and resource allocation aim to improve financial performance while supporting social goals. The framework also

addresses Challenges, including managing costs, fair wages, and ensuring financial strategies align with the social mission.

### Conceptual Framework for RevPASH in Social Enterprises

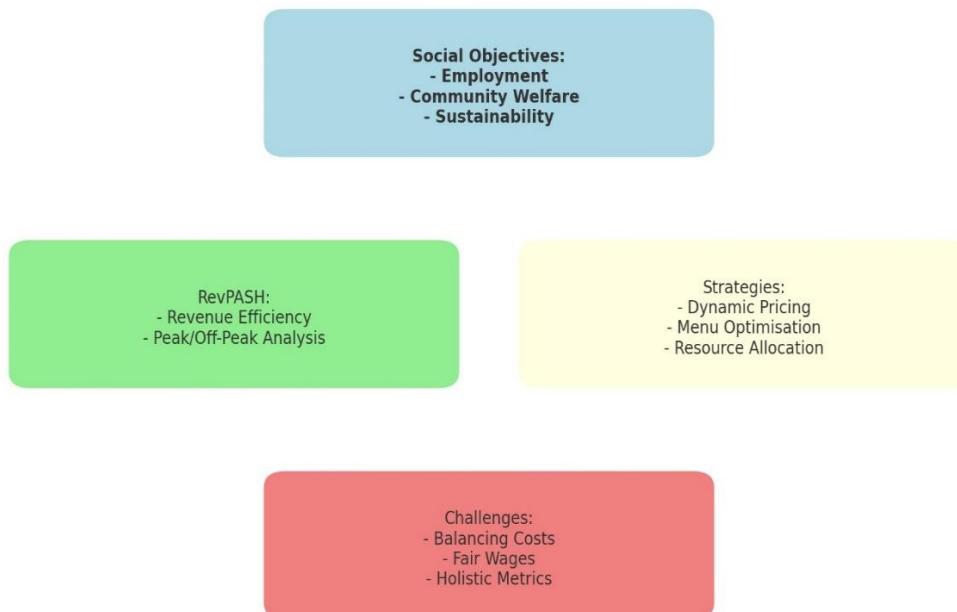


Figure 1. Conceptual framework for RevPash in Social Enterprises

The application of RevPASH in social enterprises within the restaurant industry offers considerable advantages. Firstly, RevPASH serves as a precise and measurable tool that aids these enterprises in gaining a deeper understanding of their revenue flows. By pinpointing peak and off-peak hours, social enterprise restaurants can optimise staffing, refine menu offerings, and apply dynamic pricing strategies to boost revenue during busy periods and attract customers during slower times (National Restaurant Association, 2023). For example, a social enterprise café employing individuals with disabilities, such as Flourish Café in Takapuna, could utilise RevPASH to identify the most profitable times, allowing for more effective resource allocation and ensuring that its social mission is underpinned by a solid financial foundation. Another example is a social enterprise restaurant providing meals to low-income families. By using RevPASH, the restaurant can identify peak hours to optimise pricing for regular-paying customers, ensuring higher revenue generation. During off-peak times, they could offer subsidised meals to low-income families, fulfilling their social mission while avoiding significant financial losses. This strategic approach allows the restaurant to maintain profitability during busy periods while supporting its mission during quieter hours, creating a sustainable balance between social impact and financial viability.

The application of RevPASH in New Zealand's social enterprise restaurant industry holds significant potential for enhancing both financial sustainability and social impact. By providing clear, quantifiable insights into revenue streams, RevPASH enables these enterprises to optimise staffing, menu offerings, and pricing strategies, thereby improving operational efficiency and strengthening their financial foundation to support social missions (Grant, 2017; Kartikasari et al., 2020). However, social enterprises

face unique challenges, such as higher costs from fair wages and employee support, requiring RevPASH to be carefully tailored to balance profitability with social goals. Since RevPASH focuses solely on revenue, combining it with metrics like Profit Per Available Seat Hour (ProPASH), which accounts for both revenue and costs, offers a more comprehensive understanding of financial performance and ensures long-term sustainability (Kimes, 1999; National Restaurant Association, 2023).

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# SATISFACTION WITH SERVICE RECOVERY, UNFORGIVENESS, AND AIRLINE AVOIDANCE

Fandy Tjiptono<sup>a</sup>, Lin Yang<sup>b</sup> and Andhy Setyawan<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Victoria University of Wellington, <sup>b</sup>University of Tasmania, <sup>c</sup>Universitas Surabaya

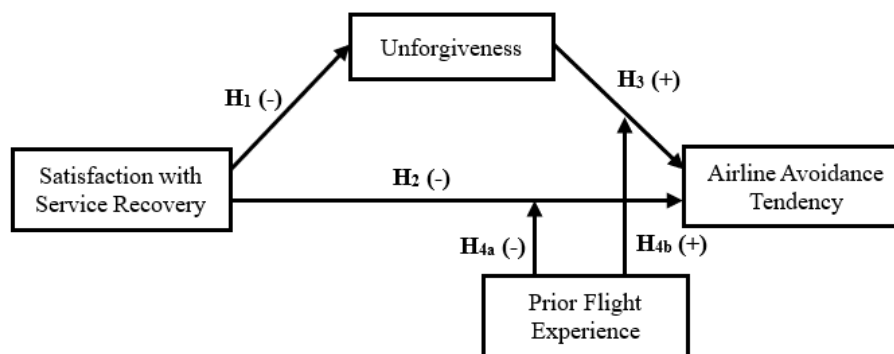
## ABSTRACT

Service recovery involves resolving service-related issues faced by consumers and aims to amend negative service experiences. In the aviation context, it occurs when airlines make efforts to address and resolve problems faced by dissatisfied passengers, aiming to reconcile their negative experiences and ultimately to maximise retention (Migacz, Zou & Petrick, 2018). The present research examines the direct effect of satisfaction with service recovery and its indirect effect (via unforgiveness) on airline avoidance tendency and investigates how prior flight experience moderates these relationships. The role of unforgiveness, a related but distinct construct from forgiveness (Stackhouse et al., 2018), is relatively unexplored in the tourism marketing literature.

A variety of airlines' recovery programs (e.g. apology, refund) are designed to reduce experienced negative emotions and prevent the formation of the belief that the failure is unforgivable and reshape perceptions of the airline. If the recovery is deemed unsatisfactory or insufficient, customers may judge the failure as unforgivable, view the airline as underserving of forgiveness, and/or reconstruct their perception of the airline in a negative light (Wenzel & Okimoto, 2010). The emotional response triggered by service failures can be strong and enduring, influencing future consumer decisions (Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2006), such as avoiding engaging with the services offered by the airline again. This avoidance is a coping mechanism for customers to express disappointment and protect against future disappointments.

With increasing flight experience, consumers become more knowledgeable and understanding of the frequent occurrences of service failures in the airline industry. While they may not be entirely satisfied with the recovery program, their knowledge and experience may make them less likely to avoid the airline in the future. However, for consumers with limited flight experience, when they are dissatisfied with recovery activities offered, they may feel more inclined to avoid the airline. Frequent flyers, having used the services multiple times, may be more unforgiving for repeat failures and recoveries than new or less frequent passengers. Consequently, it is expected that the link between unforgiveness and avoidance would be stronger among frequent flyers than inexperienced ones.

Based on the above discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed (see Figure 1): satisfaction with service recovery (SSR) is negatively related to unforgiveness ( $H_1$ ) and airline avoidance tendency ( $H_2$ ), while unforgiveness is positively related to airline avoidance ( $H_3$ ). As the flight experience increases, the relationship between SSR and airline avoidance will be weaker ( $H_{4a}$ ), but the link between unforgiveness and airline avoidance will be stronger ( $H_{4b}$ ).



**Figure 1: Conceptual model**

A self-administered online survey was completed with 403 respondents (54% females, 43.4% aged 18-25) in Indonesia, the second-fastest-growing aviation market in the world after China (Romero, 2024). Established scales were adopted using 7-point Likert scale (Rio-Lanza et al., 2009; Stackhouse et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2018) and demonstrate good reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha$  between 0.88 and 0.92).

The moderated mediation model (Figure 1) was tested using PROCESS Model 15 (Hayes, 2022). The results show that satisfaction with service recovery (SSR) has a negative effect on both unforgiveness ( $\beta = -0.160$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and airline avoidance ( $\beta = -0.522$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Thus,  $H_1$  and  $H_2$  are supported. However,  $H_3$  is not supported because the effect of unforgiveness on airline avoidance is not significant ( $\beta = 0.163$ ,  $p = 0.103$ ). The conditional effects of SSR on airline avoidance are significant for both high ( $\beta = -0.321$ , 95%CI: -0.460 to -0.182) and low ( $\beta = -0.522$ , 95%CI: -0.668 to -0.377) flight experiences with the airline, providing an empirical support for  $H_{4a}$ . Nevertheless, the conditional effect of unforgiveness on airline avoidance is only significant among passengers with high flight experiences ( $\beta = 0.427$ , 95%CI: 0.238 to 0.615). Hence,  $H_{4b}$  is partially supported. The results also suggest that unforgiveness plays a limited role in mediating the effect of SSR on airline avoidance (only significant among high experienced customers ( $\beta = -0.068$ , 95%CI: -0.129 to -0.022)).

The present research contributes to the tourism marketing literature by examining the negative effect of SSR on unforgiveness. Furthermore, the service recovery paradox literature has highlighted the importance of service recovery (e.g., apologies and compensation) in effectively handling service failures (Edström et al., 2022). Our findings suggest that when customers are satisfied with service recovery efforts in mitigating service failures, their unforgiveness and avoidance tendency will be reduced significantly. However, the effectiveness of these strategies may vary depending on the customer's prior flight experiences with the airline. While service recovery can be highly effective for less experienced customers, its impact may be weakened among frequent flyers. This indicates that a one-size-fits-all approach to service recovery may not be sufficient. Service providers, including airline operators, should explore additional or more innovative strategies to better serve the unique needs and expectations of different market segments.

**Keywords:** *satisfaction with service recovery, unforgiveness, airline avoidance, prior flight experience.*



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# SEARCHING FOR DIGNITY WITHIN HOSPITALITY WORK: INSIGHTS FROM HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT UNDERGRADUATES IN JAPAN

Kate Inyoung Yoo<sup>a</sup> and Tom Baum<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>College of Foreign Studies, Kansai Gaidai University, Osaka, Japan, <sup>b</sup>Department of Work, Employment and Organisation, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, UK

## ABSTRACT

Japan's tourism and hospitality industry, a key pillar of the nation's economy, is currently grappling with severe workforce shortages. Negative perceptions of tourism and hospitality jobs among the younger generations, compounded by societal issues such as an ageing population and rapid population decline, deter potential entrants to the industry. While the government has opened avenues for foreign workers to address the labour shortfall, this short-term solution does not tackle the core issues of workplace dignity and the associated challenges that deter new entrants. Despite ongoing discussions about employment practices, workplace discrimination, and a lack of inclusion and diversity, the concept of “workplace dignity” has not been addressed enough in the context of hospitality internships. The internship phase is a crucial period when students form their career perceptions, and a lack of dignity during these experiences can deter them from pursuing careers in the hospitality sector. Therefore, this research wants to explore hospitality internship experience within the frame of “workplace dignity” by asking: *What aspects of the hospitality work experience lead to feelings of exploitation and a lack of dignity among interns?*

**Keywords:** *Workplace dignity, hospitality internships, career development, workforce challenges, decent work*

## Workplace dignity in hospitality

Employees across all levels seek workplaces that respect their dignity and rights (Hodson, 2002). A lack of workplace dignity reduces job satisfaction, motivation, and efficiency, leading to increased absenteeism, turnover, and poor customer service (Hsieh et al., 2016). While research on workplace dignity is growing, the hospitality sector remains underexplored, especially regarding young workers (Wang and Cheung, 2023). Job insecurity, precarity, and demanding duties contribute to stress and exploitation among hospitality employees (Baum et al., 2016; Robinson et al., 2019). These issues were further exacerbated during COVID-19 due to job losses, reduced hours, and health risks, leading many to exit the industry (Baum et al., 2020; Jones and Comfort, 2020). Despite efforts to address employment challenges, discussions on sustainable employment and workplace dignity have been limited (Bianchi and De Man, 2021). The concept of “decent work,” introduced by Belau (1999), has evolved to include concerns such as poor working conditions and a lack of diversity. Addressing these issues is critical to attracting and retaining younger generations like Generation Z, who hold negative views of hospitality careers (Goh and Lee, 2018). The persistent lack of workplace dignity, particularly for vulnerable groups like interns, remains a significant challenge (Mooney, 2016).

## Methodology

This research employs a qualitative approach, utilising thematic analysis to interpret data from internship evaluation reports and in-depth interviews. The sample comprises 103 internship reports submitted by hospitality management students between 2019 and 2024 and seven in-depth interviews with post-internship students. These data sources provide a comprehensive understanding of interns' experiences, highlighting both the explicit and implicit challenges to workplace dignity.

## Preliminary findings

The thematic analysis identifies five major challenges to workplace dignity:

1. **Lack of development opportunities and recognition:** Interns often reported feeling like regular staff members rather than trainees, with limited opportunities for skill development and minimal recognition from supervisors.
2. **Unfair workload and expectations:** Many interns felt burdened by responsibilities equivalent to those of full-time employees without corresponding guidance or support.
3. **Unfair working conditions, including financial hardship:** Students frequently highlighted unpaid internships and long commutes, which exacerbated their perception of exploitation.
4. **Desperate need for “an experienced employee” rather than “an intern”:** Interns expressed frustration at being treated as short-term workers rather than students, often being asked to extend their internships to fill labour shortages.
5. **Sacrificing dignity for career advancement:** Many interns concluded that the hospitality sector was not aligned with their career aspirations due to poor working conditions and a lack of work-life balance.

### Implications

The findings underscore the need for hospitality organizations and educational institutions to rethink the internship landscape. Clearer distinctions between intern and staff roles, improved mentoring and support, and financial compensation are recommended to enhance the internship experience. Universities should work closely with industry partners to ensure that internships serve as meaningful learning experiences, not just as a source of temporary labour.

### Conclusion

This research sheds light on the critical challenges of workplace dignity faced by hospitality management students during their internships in Japan. By addressing these issues, the industry can create a more supportive and sustainable work environment that attracts and retains the next generation of hospitality professionals. Addressing workplace dignity is not only essential for individual well-being but also for the long-term health of the hospitality workforce.

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# SQUARE PEG, ROUND HOLE? RESHAPING THE MOULD OF HOSPITALITY HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING THROUGH INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY

Given Marcial<sup>a</sup>, Madalyn Scerri<sup>a</sup> and Anita Manfreda<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Torrens University Australia

## ABSTRACT

There is a growing recognition of the importance of inclusivity and accessibility in higher education (HE) (UNESCO, 2023). While significant progress has been made in developing inclusive education principles, challenges remain in creating diverse, accessible, and engaging teaching and learning experiences for all learners (Dalton et al., 2019). Inclusive pedagogy (IP) enables educators to accommodate individual learner differences while avoiding marginalisation (Florian & Spratt, 2013). However, while key considerations and principles of IP are well-established, exploring how they specifically translate into the hospitality HE classroom and industry training contexts is essential.

Research suggests learners with disability (LwD) are implicitly discouraged from completing hospitality degrees (Russell & Hellenschmidt, 2020). Further, the hospitality industry lacks coordinated policies and practices for training LwD and awareness remains low (McIntosh & Harris, 2018). These challenges are significant as hospitality training and HE can significantly improve employability for LwD, equipping them with transferable skills that enable them to thrive across various industries (Martins et al., 2020). Instead of attempting to integrate diverse learners into existing moulds, transforming educational systems and practices to become systemically more inclusive should be prioritised (UNESCO, 2023).

HE and training in hospitality mainstream contexts might require more considered strategies, behaviours, and tools to address specific needs of LwD (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2020). One key issue is that hospitality curricula and training methods may lack the flexibility required to cater to the learning styles, pace, and support needs of LwD. Traditional hospitality training emphasises technical skills and industry standards, but often overlook the need for tailored approaches that could make learning more accessible (Manfreda et al., 2024). Further, research has shown that educators' training and experience are linked to their effectiveness in supporting students with diverse educational needs (Pit-ten Cate et al., 2018). Educators may lack sufficient training in inclusive practices, leaving them unprepared to accommodate LwD in mainstream settings and contributing to missed opportunities for student development (Kamran et al., 2023). While some research in hospitality education has explored the impact of sector policies and practices on inclusivity (e.g., Russell & Hellenschmidt, 2020), there is a notable gap in targeted research addressing specific strategies on practical approaches for supporting LwD.

This study develops a framework of IP practice for LwD, specifically intellectual and cognitive disability, for hospitality HE and training. The study seeks to specifically illuminate how facilitators and institutions/organisations can create inclusive, equitable learning environments in hospitality, ensuring that LwD are supported in their academic and professional development. We aim to address critical inclusivity issues in hospitality HE and industry contexts, acknowledging the importance and challenges of designing and implementing IP that recognises and meets learners' diverse needs.

We adopt a participatory case study methodology, combining academic literature on inclusive education, online industry development and training material, and empirical data from Hotel Etico, Australia's first not-for-profit social enterprise hotel. Hotel Etico offers tourism and hospitality work, education and applied training, and workforce transition programs for young adults with a disability (aged 18 to 35). The case study approach enabled an in-depth exploration of real-world experiences related to training and education strategies in Hotel Etico's program. Empirical data was collected through participative shadowing and 31 semi-structured interviews with 33 Hotel Etico trainees, trainers, leaders, support workers, families, and industry leaders, totaling 2,078 minutes of data. The study integrated elicitation techniques during interviews, allowing participants to reflect on their experiences through visual storytelling and participant-led drawings, obtaining 35 visual documents (photos and drawings). Thematic analysis was conducted through inductive coding of qualitative data and identifying patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The study's empirical findings were supplemented by a thematic literature review of 69 papers on inclusive education and a desk review of 12 inclusive industry training programs in tourism and hospitality, further communicating insights of best practice in industry-led approaches.

The main anticipated contribution of this study lies in its development of a framework for inclusive pedagogical practice in hospitality training and HE, specifically designed to support learners with intellectual and cognitive disability. The framework consolidates actionable strategies and tools to guide educators, administrators, and industry in fostering an inclusive learning experience. The study addresses critical knowledge gaps related to inclusive education (Kamran et al., 2023) and training (McIntosh & Harris, 2018) in hospitality HE. Practically, a key emphasis is on identifying innovative teaching methods, curricula, and learning environments that promote skill development and empower LwD to succeed in hospitality careers.

**Keywords:** *People with disability; Inclusive education; Hospitality education; Social enterprise; Pedagogy*

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# STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPING A COMPLEX SUSTAINABLE SCUBA DIVING ATTRACTION

David Coffey<sup>a</sup>, Alexandra Coghlan<sup>a</sup> and Sarah Gardiner<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Griffith University

## ABSTRACT

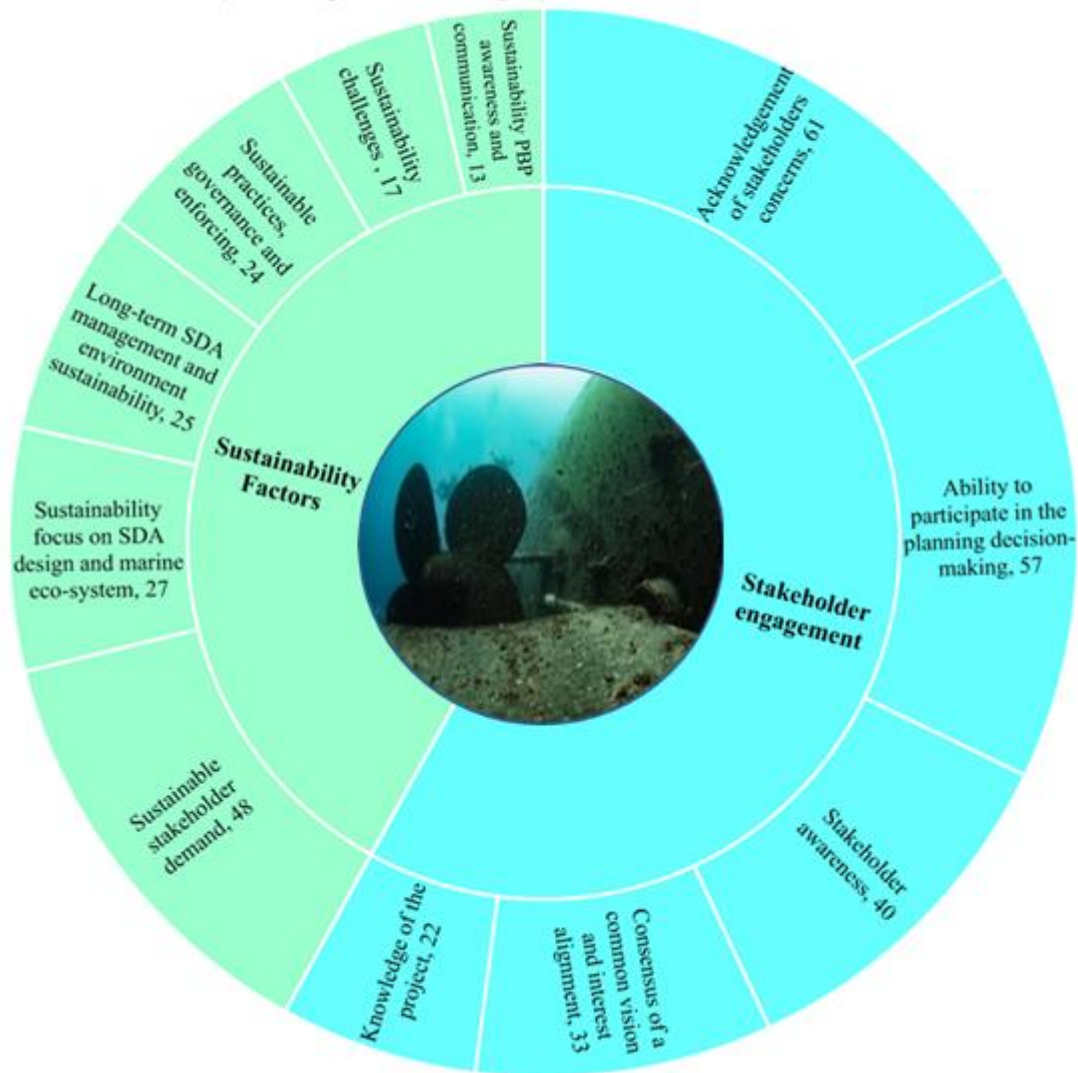
This study explores the complexities of Stakeholder Engagement in developing a **SCUBA diving attraction (SDA)**. The research emphasises that stakeholder engagement challenges can be addressed by improving a complex **research and analysis phase (RAP)**. Most notably, this study found that areas of collaboration, acceptance, and perceptions for developing SDA RAP are critical. The research findings categorises stakeholder engagement challenges into SDA project components, sustainability factors, and stakeholder engagement and their influence on how stakeholders engage in developing the SDA RAP.

Queensland SDAs such as Wonder Reef, the Museum of Underwater Arts and the Ex-HMAS Brisbane highlight the complexity of delivering SDAs. These projects have become increasingly complex as they balance environmental sustainability, stringent project components, and stakeholder engagement management. As a result, the traditional project management approach, which relies on accurate estimation of time, cost, and resources through extensive preplanning and control, is no longer sufficient (Cristobal et al, 2018).

The research focuses on the development of a new artificial reef tourist attraction, the Wonder Reef, on the Gold Coast, Australia. It examines stakeholder engagement and the complexity of SDA project development using a mixed-method approach. The first phase of this study involves comparing secondary data (government SDA expression of interest briefs and organisational SDA site selection reports) with tourism and stakeholder engagement literature (current disciplines of business and tourism and their academic literature and grey literature) to identify challenges affecting stakeholder engagement in developing an SDA. The second research phase draws on a case study and ten semi-structured interviews with stakeholders from tourism organisations, local government development departments, destination tourism operators, local scuba diving operators and divers. The interview transcripts are analysed using open, axial, and selected coding to identify emerging themes.

From the research's second phase, the stakeholder interviews responses categorises sustainability and stakeholder engagement indicating recurring themes, such as sustainable stakeholder demand, sustainable SDA design and ecosystems, acknowledgment of stakeholder concerns, and the ability to participate in decision-making (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Stakeholder interview response frequencies relating to stakeholder engagement and sustainability challenges of an SDA project.**



(Image courtesy of Olive, 2019)

### ***Complex sustainability requirements***

Sustainability encompasses meeting present needs and supporting the host community's economic well-being while safeguarding environmental resources for future generations (Chong & Chi, 2020). The three pillars of marine sustainability - social, economic, and environmental - are interconnected but often have conflicting interests. The excessive demand for economic marine tourism activities can have adverse impacts, reducing and degrading host marine ecosystems (Arcos-Aguilar et al, 2021). Considering this, the introduction of artificial reefs and the careful balance of environmental, social, and economic sustainability factors further advocates the implementation of the SDA.

### ***Complex Stakeholder Engagement***

Managing stakeholders' interrelationships with stakeholder engagement is critical in delivering SDAs which contributes to the project's complexity, further influencing underlying uncertainty and risk factors (Nguyen et al, 2018). Various stakeholder engagement contributing factors include stakeholder's ability to participate in complex planning decision-making, acknowledgement of concerns, awareness, capabilities of common vision, project knowledge, planners' behaviour adaptability for stakeholder needs, project goals clarification, complex administration, communication asymmetry and abilities to complete objectives. Furthermore, stakeholder engagement between groups is complex and challenging due to factors of stakeholder's ambiguous expectations, competing priorities, demand, accountability, agendas, power ratios, project attractiveness, control, community acceptance and contracts (Pyke et al, 2018). Trust development, incorporating specialist judgment and knowledge, fostering collaboration and ensuring stakeholders empowerment are also key aspects of stakeholder management. Furthermore, SDA rulings and direction should be clearly and transparently communicated, and relationships between critical stakeholders should be formed (Hipólito et al, 2024).

### ***SDA project's complexity***

The complexity of SDA projects can range from low to moderate to high, depending on project size, scope, end user impacts, technologies, stakeholder involvement, structure, clarity, requirements stability, management practices, political sensitivity, unproven technologies, and organisational change. Additionally, time, cost, quality, and safety can further impact SDA project complexity, influencing planning and decision-making and complicating goals, objectives, and stakeholder selection (Cristobal et al, 2018). The interrelation of complex SDA project components contributes to project management challenges by overlapping tasks, coinciding and conflicting deadlines, timeframes, prerequisites, and supporting government applications.

### ***Complex research and analysis phase***

The complex RAP sets the foundation of the SDA project. Interrelated components include concept development, preliminary research, feasibility studies, potential site analysis, regulatory approvals, market demand assessment, financial analysis, tender documents, implementation plan, and risks and contingency management. Ineffectively addressing these RAP requirements can significantly increase later project challenges and potentially lead to project failure. Consequently, the complex relationships between these components, sustainability and stakeholder engagement factors highlight the challenges in managing and balancing the diverse project requirements.

SDA projects play a crucial role in marine sustainability management. However, for these projects to be successful, they must be sustainable in the long term. Balancing the conflicting social, economic, and environmental sustainability requirements creates a complex foundation for SDA projects. Managing stakeholder involvement through stakeholder engagement practices adds further complexity to the already challenging SDA matrix. The RAP addresses and analyses these stakeholder engagement practices, sustainability requirements, and SDA planning, making this phase critical for delivering an effective SDA project plan but also highlights the levels of complexity.

**Key words:** *Stakeholder Engagement, complexity, SCUBA diving attraction*

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# STAKEHOLDER EXPERIENCES IN HOSPITALITY WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING: A CASE STUDY OF 'BHM ALIVE @ NOVOTEL'

Andrew Carruthers<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Holmesglen Institute

## ABSTRACT

Hospitality Management is not a discipline that can just be learned in the classroom (Sonnenschein et al., 2019; Spowart, 2006). Despite the need for academic studies, graduates of hospitality management degrees are expected to 'hit the ground running' as they commence their careers in industry (Ngoepe & Wakelin-Theron, 2023). Hospitality businesses are dynamic service environments with a focus on experience provision, that require students to have a strong combination of theoretical knowledge, practical skills and industry experience (Ren & McKercher, 2021). While for some students in some educational institutions, the skills and experience will be developed through institutional facilities like training restaurants or through part-time industry jobs, many others are reliant upon the relationships that are formed between their educational institution and industry partners.

Work-integrated learning (WIL) "is an approach to education that allows students to obtain work experiences related to what they are learning in a classroom setting" (Jackson, 2016), and usually involves three stakeholders – the student, their institution and the industry partner. Each stakeholder benefits from WIL events, and each stakeholder faces challenges. Well-structured WIL programs have been shown to be well-received and beneficial to students (Sonnenschein et al., 2019; Spowart, 2006) and to have positive impacts on employment outcomes (Jackson & Rowe, 2023). However, issues such as stress, isolation and study/life imbalances have been noted as detracting from the students' WIL experiences (Gillet-Swan & Grant-Smith, 2018). For the industry partner there is the potential benefits of increased productivity, new knowledge and skills, fresh ideas (Fleming & Pretti, 2019), and "the opportunity to identify and recruit talented students" (Atkinson et al, 2015). Those benefits however can be moderated by the attitudes, expectations and communication skills of individual students.

This study aims to investigate the experiences of each stakeholder group, focusing on 'BHM Alive @ Novotel' (BHM Alive) – a week-long immersive WIL experience for students studying in Holmesglen's Bachelor of Hospitality Management (BHM) during September 2024. BHM Alive, a planned collaboration between Holmesglen's BHM and long-standing hotel partner Novotel Melbourne Glen Waverley, will place students in a real world hotel environment. Some students will rotate through various departments, learning new skills and gaining experience by engaging with experienced hospitality professionals and managers. Others will participate in onsite tours and presentations from hotel department managers. BHM final year students, completing professional practice placements will assist in coordinating the program and in coaching first year students, hence providing an opportunity to not only develop their hard hospitality skills but also to put their leadership and management knowledge into practice. In conjunction with this initiative, subject assessments across the BHM program will be adapted to focus on BHM Alive activities and experiences, further aligning academic goals with practical experience. This innovative approach will provide students with a comprehensive and industry-relevant educational experience, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application in the hospitality industry.

The primary objective of the proposed research is to evaluate the impacts on, and benefits provided to the stakeholders in this collaboration between BHM and Novotel. Specifically, this study will:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the "BHM Alive @ Novotel" program in enhancing student engagement and overcoming some of the issues faced by WIL students
- Assess the impact of the program on developing students' practical skills and industry knowledge



- Analyze the benefits and challenges for Novotel management and employees
- Examine the role of adapted subject assessments in reinforcing the learning from BHM Alive

### Methodology

A mixed-methods approach will be employed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the program's impact.

#### Quantitative:

- Surveys: Surveys will be distributed to students at the conclusion of the program, asking them to rate the impact of BHM Alive on their confidence, industry knowledge, and practical skill development. Likert-scale questions will capture student perceptions across various learning outcomes.

#### Qualitative:

- Interviews with students: In-depth interviews will explore students' reflections on their experiences during BHM Alive, focusing on the specific skills and knowledge gained, and how the integration of assessments helped to solidify their learning.
- Interviews with hotel management and staff: Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with the Novotel Melbourne Glen Waverley team to gain insights into how students performed within the hotel environment and the overall impact of the program on hotel operations.
- Interviews with BHM lecturers: Teachers involved in BHM Alive will be interviewed to assess how the integration of practical experiences into subject assessments contributed to student learning.

### Conclusion & Implications

'BHM Alive@ Novotel' represents a unique approach to work-integrated learning. Being able to stage this hopefully valuable learning experience is also reliant on a very close and trusting relationship with an industry partner. The evaluation of its success or otherwise will hopefully assist others in developing innovative and collaborative WIL programs.

**Keywords:** *Work-integrated learning, hospitality management education, stakeholder perspectives, experiential learning*

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# STAKEHOLDER SALIENCE IN DESTINATION MANAGEMENT: EVIDENCE FROM DUNEDIN, NEW ZEALAND

Meysam Ramyar<sup>a</sup>, Julia N. Albrecht<sup>a</sup> and Willem Coetzee<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand, <sup>b</sup>Western Sydney University, Sydney, Australia

## ABSTRACT

While the related fields of destination management and stakeholders have been usefully informed by research in recent years, efforts to integrate these fields are yet to be systematically advanced. This investigation seeks to contribute to this convergence of these research fields. By identifying which stakeholders and factors hold the greatest importance, influence, and urgency, destination managers can effectively allocate resources, tailor engagement strategies, and make informed decisions. This focus ensures that critical needs and opportunities are addressed promptly, fostering stronger partnerships and enhancing the destination's appeal. Salience-driven management enables a more strategic approach to planning and problem-solving, ultimately contributing to the destination's success and sustainability (Perkins et al., 2022).

Stakeholder salience guided the review by prioritizing and examining theoretical perspectives that address the most influential and relevant stakeholders in destination management (Korkalainen, 2023). The focus on stakeholder salience ensured that the review considered various stakeholders' power, legitimacy, and urgency, thereby highlighting their importance in shaping destination management experiences. This approach also facilitated the exploration of interconnections between stakeholders, revealing how their relationships and interactions impact the overall management and experience of the destination (Tiew et al., 2022). By using stakeholder salience as a guiding framework, the review targeted the most critical aspects of stakeholder influence, leading to a more comprehensive and insightful understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of destination management. Stakeholder mapping functioned as a factor for stakeholder salience by providing a clear visual representation of the various stakeholders' power, legitimacy, and urgency concerning a project or organization. By categorizing stakeholders based on these attributes, stakeholder mapping ensures that those with the most significant influence and interest are appropriately addressed.

To date, the literature has remained largely silent on how stakeholder salience connects to decision-making because existing studies have not established a link between these constructs. Recognizing this gap is crucial, as understanding the influence of stakeholder salience on decision-making processes can provide valuable insights into effective management practices. The overarching aim of the present study is to address this gap by examining the role of stakeholder salience in decision-making within the context of destination management. By exploring how stakeholder salience influences decisions, the study seeks to uncover best practices and strategies that contribute to successful and sustainable destination management. In this study, the researcher has employed qualitative methods and document analysis to elucidate their significance in research endeavours. The investigation is exploratory in nature and qualitative in approach. Data were collected via 21 semi-structured in-depth interviews from a wide range of key stakeholders' experiences in Dunedin, New Zealand. The empirical data were interpreted by applying a data-driven thematic content analysis approach. In terms of stakeholders' salience measurement, this study employs stakeholder mapping, which is a crucial step in stakeholder analysis, especially when it aims to assess the effectiveness of engagement efforts, gather feedback, or evaluate the impact of the projects or initiatives on various stakeholder groups. Secondary data is also used to provide triangulation, increasing the credibility of research findings using primary. Secondary data has been employed as a

data triangulation method to comprehend the ecological, social, cultural, and governance context better than achievable by conducting semi-structured interviews.

In the analysis of stakeholder interviews, the stakeholder mapping process for Dunedin destination management begins by compiling a list of stakeholders. In the subsequent step, stakeholders are categorized into three sections management and decision-making, core, direct, and indirect stakeholders. This classification helps prioritize engagement efforts and address the specific needs and decision-making of each stakeholder group effectively. I employed spreadsheets, which are versatile and comprehensive tools ideal for stakeholder mapping, particularly for analysing stakeholder interest and power. The categorization supports this research by clarifying stakeholders' influence and interest in decision-making within Dunedin destination management. In addition, this study utilised document analysis to support data about stakeholders' salience in destination management in Dunedin. Data has been collected and analysed from online and digital sources, archival materials, government publications, media and news sources, marketing and advertising materials, and educational materials about stakeholders' salience in Dunedin. The main purpose of document analysis in research is to reveal concepts and relations, which could help to interpret the collected data.

The research finds that stakeholder salience can be usefully linked to decision-making in Dunedin destination management. High-salience stakeholders are prioritized because they are perceived as crucial, urgent, or powerful, prompting decision-makers to address them more promptly and effectively. These help which factors are considered most significant in shaping decisions. Stakeholders' salience in destination management lies in its ability to guide decision-making by prioritizing the most influential and relevant stakeholders and issues. By focusing on these high-salience elements, destination managers can strategically allocate resources, tailor marketing efforts, and address critical issues more effectively. This targeted approach enhances overall destination attractiveness, ensures stakeholder needs are met, and contributes to the sustainable success of the destination. Concurrently, robust stakeholder engagement fosters collaborative decision-making characterized by transparency, communication, and shared responsibility. Clear plans and assigned responsibilities ensure active stakeholder involvement and accountability, reinforced by regular meetings and updates that facilitate ongoing dialogue and mutual understanding. Increased communication among stakeholders promotes a deeper exchange of insights, enriching decision-making discussions, while their participation in advisory groups amplifies their input and commitment. Workshops that cultivate strong networks enable stakeholders to innovate collectively, fostering sustainable destination management practices. By implementing a consultative strategy that values stakeholders' voices, Dunedin's destination management enhances salience, collaboration, and shared responsibility, advancing its effectiveness and sustainability in the tourism sector.

**Keywords:** *Stakeholders, salience, destination management, decision-making*

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# SUCCESS FACTORS OF COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM- THE PERCEPTION OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY IN NUEVA ESPERANZA, EL SALVADOR

Dirk Reiser<sup>a</sup>, Volker Rundshagen<sup>b</sup>, Julia Robertz<sup>a</sup> and Lety Mendez Castro<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences, <sup>b</sup>Stralsund University of Applied Sciences

## ABSTRACT

Since the 1950s tourism as a socio-economic activity has gained global importance (Ghosh, 2021), yet the study of tourism and its consequences remains under-developed for a number of countries in Latin America such as El Salvador. This article will reduce those limitations by reporting about community-based tourism (CBT) in Nueva Esperanza, El Salvador.

In 2022, El Salvador received 2,5 million visitors, which is 96% of the pre-pandemic tourism numbers in 2019 (Latam, 2024), rising to nearly 3,4 million in 2023 (tourism analytics, 2024). Around 2,5 million of those were stopover-visitors (overnight visitors) and approximately 900.000 thousands excursionists (tourism analytics, 2024). The Salvadoran Tourism Cooperation (2023) attributes the success to a number of factors that have to do 'with the change of image in the perception of the country, investment in public infrastructure, surf tournaments' and a longer stay of the international visitors. Additionally, there are plans to increase international tourism to El Salvador in the coming years.

In particular, 'a wealth of natural resources' (Duffy and Zablah, 2014, p. 293) could provide a strong basis for this tourism growth. Those resources include rainforests, national parks, cloud forests, volcanoes and mountains as well as a tropical climate with an average temperature of 25°C in the rainy season (May to October) and the dry season (November to April) (CIA, 2023). Tourism activities, especially community-based tourism activities, have the potential to help the protection of heritage (e.g. archaeological sites, museums), coastal tourism (e.g. beach and surf areas) and the environment such as the remaining forests.

Community-based tourism (CBT) is a rural tourism type that takes place in (often poor) rural communities (Ohe, 2020), commonly practised in developing countries of Africa, Latin America and Asia' (Nova, 2021) as a 'bottom-up approach to tourism planning and development' (Robinson, 2012, p. 29). Since the 1990s, CBT has become an integral part of the study and practice of tourism centred around the involvement of local rural communities in sustainable tourism development (Robinson, 2012) and has gained much popularity in the last three decades (Ishiara, 2021). Its core elements are local participation (Yanes et al, 2019), community ownership/management and community benefit (Goodwin and Santilli, 2009). Its benefits should therefore largely go to local communities that are involved in the tourism offer (Zivrali, 2022). Apart from empowering local communities, it also intends to conserve biodiversity, to bring economic development (Nova, 2021), especially poverty reduction and a higher standard of living and to facilitate the respect for local culture amongst local and international visitors (Telfer and Sharpley, 2008). Those are all important elements of the Salvadorian tourism industry.

Currently, community-based tourism (CBT) in El Salvador provides a contrast to some planned mass tourism developments (e.g. Cancun II) and highlights the additional socio-political interest in sustainable tourism. However, it is unclear what the local community perceives as success factors to optimise the positive and minimise the negative impacts of CBT in El Salvador.

The following case study relied on a qualitative research approach (inductive) (Gläser and Laudel, 2010), because at the core of this research are human beings and their experiences, feelings and everyday experience (Misoch, 2019). In particular in areas in which there is a lack of research, like CBT in El Salvador, that approach is appropriate. For this case study semi-structured interviews were applied to answer the main research question: What does the local community in Nueva Esperanza perceive as success factors for CBT?

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# “SUNLUST” OR HEATWAVE? IMPACTS OF FUTURE HEAT EXPOSURE IN CITY DESTINATIONS

Susanne Becken<sup>a</sup>, Daniel Scott<sup>b</sup>, Raymond Rastegar<sup>a</sup> and Johanna Nalau<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Griffith University, <sup>b</sup>University of Waterloo

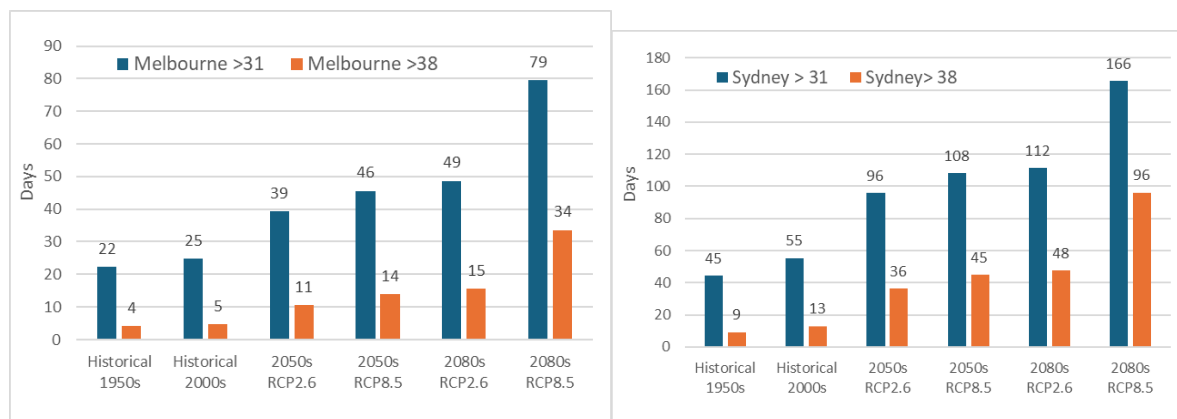
## ABSTRACT

In the early days of global mass tourism, Gray (1970) suggested that tourist motivations are either driven by “wanderlust” or “sunlust”. The search for warmer climates underpins both and a significant body of work established tourists’ preferences for higher temperatures, sunshine, and less rain (e.g. Falk, 2014; Scott et al., 2016). Theoretical research is validated by most destinations’ tourism statistics that show visitation peaks in summer. However, the increased occurrence of extreme heatwaves is affecting traditional travel patterns, including increasing changes for winter tourism. Prominent examples of heat-related attraction closures (e.g. Acropolis, Athens), event cancellations (e.g. Pitch Music and Arts Festival or Melbourne Open, Australia), and deaths (e.g. Hajj, Mecca) have made headlines around the world.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s Sixth Assessment Report (IPCC, 2022) concluded that human-caused climate change has increased both the frequency and intensity of heatwaves with future warming exacerbating this hazard. Urban environments are particularly exposed due to the heat island effect (Yadav et al., 2023); yet they are heavily frequented by tourists during the hottest months of the year. Tourists are particularly at risk of heat-related illness (HRI) and mortality because they are less familiar with the local conditions, frequently not acclimatized, are physically active during the hottest time of day and may be more difficult to reach with heat warnings (TPCC, 2023). Similarly, tourism workers are affected by extreme heat conditions, raising important questions about how to support vulnerable groups (Rastegar & Becken, 2024). Extreme heat exacerbates justice challenges, as the intersection of vulnerability and climate risks disproportionately burdens those with fewer resources and less capacity to adapt (Parsons et al., 2024). Hence, identifying the types of climate adaptation strategies that can assist in combating extreme heat in just ways is paramount.

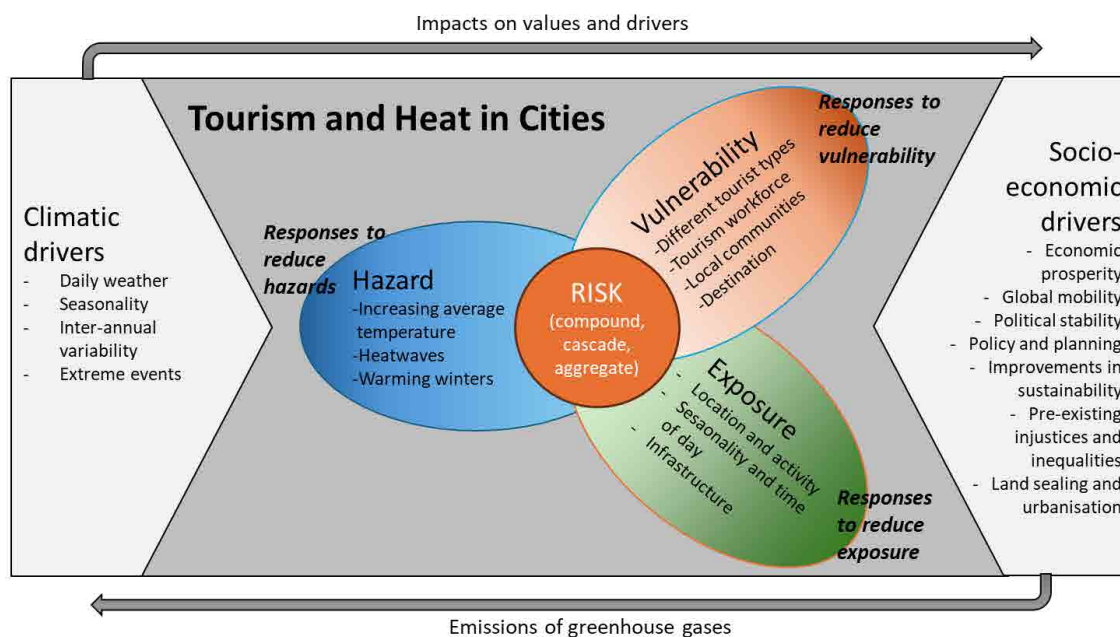
This research focuses on changing heat exposure of city tourism. It provides an assessment of future heat risk days and heat exposure for three cities, namely Sydney, Melbourne and Jakarta. Two climate scenarios are examined, including a low emission pathway consistent with achieving the Paris Climate Agreement targets (RCP 2.6) and a high emission pathway representative of where countries fail to achieve current emission reduction policy targets (RCP 8.5). Two critical heat risk thresholds are examined (both using humidex that incorporates daily temperature and relative humidity). The first is the tourist discomfort threshold ( $>31^{\circ}\text{C}$ ), which the majority of international tourists surveyed perceived as unacceptably hot for city tourism (Scott et al., 2016). The second is a dangerous physiological threshold for HRI ( $>38^{\circ}\text{C}$ ), a point between deadly and non-deadly conditions (Mora et al., 2017) and worker productivity is negatively affected (Levi et al., 2018).

The findings show that HRI exposure for tourists and tourism workers is increasing in Sydney and Melbourne and is already at dangerous levels all year in Jakarta. The number of annual heat discomfort days (humidex exceeding  $31^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) increases from 22 to 25 days in Melbourne and from 45 to 55 days in Sydney between the 1950s and the present (2015–2025) (Figure 1). By the 2050s, heat discomfort days are projected to further increase to 46 in Melbourne and 108 in Sydney in a high emissions scenario (RCP 8.5). The number of days over  $38^{\circ}\text{C}$  could reach 14 and 45 in Melbourne and Sydney, respectively. For Jakarta, the number of days beyond the HRI threshold in 2050 is 365; it is already at 364 days.



**Figure 1** Evolving destination heat risk in Melbourne and Sydney.

The findings reveal significant risks from heat; yet very little research has considered differentiated exposures and vulnerabilities by those involved in city tourism, and the wider socio-economic systems they are embedded in (Figure 2). Risk awareness and adaptive capacity to reduce vulnerability are not equally advanced amongst different tourist and worker populations. With a focus on sports events, research highlighted significant health impacts related to heat exposure, although the focus is typically on athletes and not spectators (Mason et al., 2024). As city destinations plan for the future, they will have to consider carefully what adaptation measures need to be put in place to reduce heat-related risks.



**Keywords:** Heatwave, climate change, city tourism, justice, adaptation

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# SUSTAINABLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IN THE OUTDOOR INDUSTRY: IMPLEMENTING THE ACTION PLAN

Madelene Blaer<sup>a</sup>, **Alexandra Law<sup>a</sup>**, Ancy Gamage<sup>a</sup>, Becky Knight<sup>a</sup> and Matthew Cox<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Victoria University

## ABSTRACT

This paper presents the findings from the final research report and proposed action plan for the project ‘Re-Imagining Workforce Development in the Outdoor Industry for a Sustainable Future’, funded by the Victoria Government to support the recovery, transformation and sustainability of the outdoor industry through an industry-led, student-centred, and future-focussed professional development framework. The project created an Outdoor Industry Innovation Hub (OEIH) and the OEIH Working Group was convened by the Outdoor Education Group (OEG) in partnership with Box Hill Institute and Victoria University (VU). The OEIH Industry Partner Group was comprised of outdoor education companies, volunteer organisations, industry associations, and education institutions. VU’s School for the Visitor Economy (SVE) was contracted to deliver the research and evaluation objectives of the project, which were delivered in May 2024.

For the purpose of this research, inclusive definitions were used that position the outdoor education and camps sectors as part of the wider outdoor industry within the visitor economy. As such, the outdoor industry is inclusive of any provision of outdoor experiences facilitated by an outdoor leader, including outdoor education, outdoor recreation, nature-based tourism, adventure and therapeutic experiences (Cox, 2022). Pre-pandemic reports estimated that the outdoor industry employed approximately 16,000-30,000 people and accounted for \$11 billion in GDP (Marsden Jacob Associates, 2018). More recently, stakeholders reported a change from seasonal peaks to a sustained year-round increase in demand, and that rapid growth, together with the impacts of COVID-19 and the loss of short-term workers from overseas, has resulted in significant labour and skills shortages (Outdoor Education Australia, 2022).

The theoretical underpinnings for studying labour and skills shortages can be found in the literature on employer branding, which is a multidisciplinary concept at the intersect of the human resource management and brand marketing literature (Theurer *et al.*, 2018). One particularly useful model for this research is the ‘Instrumental-Symbolic Framework’ (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003) as it includes dimensions such as pay, advancement opportunities and job security. Coupled with insights from the ‘Mutual Gains Perspective’ (Ogbonnaya & Messersmith, 2019), which aligns employees’ interests and wellbeing with organisational goals to create mutual benefits for both employers and employees, this framework provides the lens for this research.

To support and inform the larger OEIH project, SVE was tasked with the following research objectives:

1. Determine the needs, preferences and priorities of prospective and aspiring employees
2. Investigate the ongoing professional development requirements of future talent to meet the medium and longer term needs of the evolving outdoor business environment

A participatory action research approach was utilised, seeking to situate power with those who are most affected by the research (Bergold & Thomas, 2012), and involved participants in the research design, validation and strategy development. Table 1 outlines the co-designed research and data collection and analysis methods.

**Table 1: Overview of research methods**

Data source	Focus group 1 (one-hour)	Surveys (n=297)	Focus group 2 (two-hours)	Individual one-hour interviews (n=40)	Focus group 3 (two-hours)
<b>Timing</b>	10 Nov 2022	Mar and Nov 2023	1 Aug 2023	Oct 2023 to Jan 2024	14 Dec 2023
<b>Scope</b>	Confirming the research design; sourcing contextual information	Three separate questionnaires contained a series of closed and open-ended questions; disseminated online using Qualtrics	Validating preliminary research findings; identifying priority knowledge gaps to be investigated in the qualitative research phase	Undertaking in-depth, semi-structured interviews	Undertaking 'member reflections' (Smith & McGannon, 2018); Validating research findings to inform action plan
<b>Sample</b>	10 industry experts/ employers	41 employers 128 employees 128 aspiring employees	10 industry experts/ employers	6 employers 7 industry experts 13 employees 14 aspiring employees	6 employers 5 industry experts 10 employees 4 aspiring employees
<b>Analysis</b>	Thematic analysis	Descriptive statistics	Thematic analysis	Template analysis (King & Brooks, 2017)	Thematic analysis

Analysis of the data revealed four key critical areas presenting opportunities and challenges for the outdoor industry, namely:

- Poor working conditions leading to staff attraction and retention issues
- An unclear industry identity and public image linked to a lack of exposure, data and strategy
- Barriers to diversity, inclusion and accessibility in the workforce and workplaces
- Increasing industry structures, professionalisation, professional development, education/training and pathways

An action plan with immediate and longer-term strategy recommendations was proposed to address the relative vulnerabilities identified by the research. It is recognised that many of these concerns are outcomes of systemic issues that will require structural reform and extensive collaboration to resolve. The final report and research findings underscore the need for outdoor industry stakeholders, including industry associations and peak bodies, employers, operators and all levels of government to collaborate productively to implement the proposed action plan. This includes opportunities for cross-sector partnerships and collaboration (i.e., outdoor education and tourism) exploring mutual benefits. A systems thinking approach will be needed to reimagine the outdoor industry to leverage its future potential and support sustainable workforce development, stakeholder wellbeing and industry resilience.

**Keywords:** *workforce development, professional development, outdoor industry, outdoor education, labour shortages, skills shortages*

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# SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW AND FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA ON THE GOVERNANCE OF SUSTAINABLE DESTINATIONS

Sochea Nhem<sup>a</sup>, S. Mostafa Rasoolimanesh<sup>a</sup>, Kourosh Esfandiar<sup>a</sup> and Gabriel Eweje<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>School of Business and Law, Edith Cowan University

## ABSTRACT

The systematic literature review is conducted to analyse and synthesize the studies on governance for sustainable destinations by examining empirical mapping of the concepts, identifying and discussing the key research themes as well as drawing future research recommendations. The review is based on 217 articles from Scopus database. The review indicates that governance is multidimensional and contested concepts, and therefore, studies were approached by various methodologies and diverse theoretical frameworks. Previous studies focused on broader issues of governance processes and models, policy making and implications and development, stakeholder engagement and collaboration. The review also suggests several promising areas of further investigations including conceptualization and operationalization, synthesizing the studies, developing cohesion and comprehensive theoretical framework. More efforts should also cover replicability and prototyping and examining governance ecosystem using applied or action research.

**Keywords:** *Systematic literature review, research agenda, governance, sustainable destinations*

## Introduction

According to Bramwell and Lane (2011), governance is considered as fundamental aspect of sustainable tourism development because it helps facilitate of access to decision-making processes among all key stakeholders, which in turn enhances democratic practices, processes, and ownership at the destination. The critical role of governance in integrating and implementing the three traditional pillars of sustainable development—social, economic, and environmental—underscores the necessity of treating governance as a distinct pillar of sustainability (Jitmaneeroj, 2016). In a review of sustainable tourism indicators in relation to the sustainable development goals, Rasoolomanesh et al. (2023) suggested that effective governance is key to achieve sustainable tourism goals. More importantly, at broader level, both the UN agencies and the scholar community have acknowledged that the multi-stakeholder partnerships and multi-level frameworks of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) require coherent governance to function effectively (Bernstein et al., 2014; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2024).

Despite a growing importance and interest in governance, research on governance has recently received considerable attention among scholars in various domains for the last three decades. Many researchers argues that governance is contested concept. Thus, it attributes to issues such as thorny, complex, diversified, diffuse and sometimes contradictory (Hall, 2008; Rhodes, 1996). Although tourism governance is a less explored topic within the sustainable tourism literature (Jenkins et al., 2014), it has recently received attention among tourism scholars, particularly in developed countries such as those in Europe and Australia. According to Borges et al (2014), research on governance is fragmented and diverse. Therefore, the purpose of this systematic literature reviews is to analyse and synthesize the governance literature within sustainable tourism destination context. Considering this, the review will develop empirical mapping analysis of governance with sustainable tourism destination, identify and discuss key research areas and draw avenue for future research.

## Methods

This systematic review adopts Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) due to it appropriateness (Pahlevan-Sharif et al, 2019) and it helps increase and maintain the accuracy of review studies. Scopus database is used to extract the articles because it is the world's largest abstract and citation database for the peer-reviewed literature. The code scheme

that brings together the three key words ‘governance’ and ‘sustainable tourism’ and ‘tourism destination’ was developed and extracted using title, abstract and key-words.

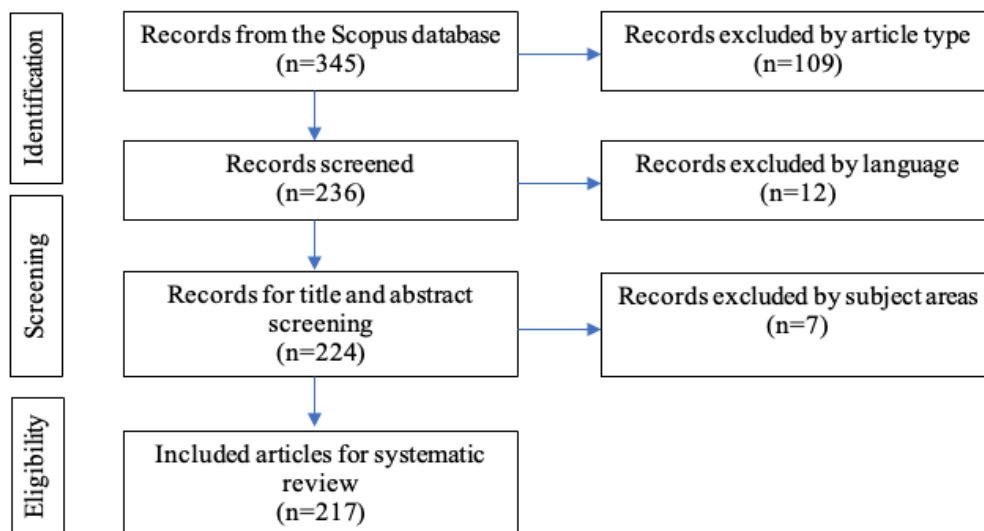


Figure 1. PRISMA flowchart

The search resulted in 328 articles which were extracted into the main dataset in MS Excel spreadsheet containing the bibliometric details. The articles are limited to certain inclusion and exclusion criterion such as peer-review article, English language, subject areas (social sciences, business management and accounting and environmental science). Therefore, the total selected articles are 217 for the analysis.

## Conclusion and implications

The review indicates that studies on sustainable tourism governance have guided by diverse theoretical frameworks and methodologies. This is mainly because governance is multidimensional and contested concept. From the outset, studies on governance, are fragmented and diverse. Although it has received considerable attention among scholars, conceptualization, operationalization and what constitute governance, guiding framework as well as more synthesis studies are indeed useful for in-depth and rigorous literature.

Regarding thematic areas, the review also reveals that previous studies have focused on several broad issues such as governance process, policy making and development, stakeholder collaboration and engagement, governance models and policy implications.

Many studies have previously stuck to specific cases (i.e. case study) and/or contexts. Thus, replicating and prototyping of the applications are almost impossible. Thus, advances on both managerial philosophy and practical applications (i.e. applied research) should be made on the topic considering wider replicability, particularly for arrangement, process, policy and management of the tourism destinations. In this regards, governance contribution to sustainable tourism destination can be claimed and impacts can be measured subsequently.

Within more complex tourism system, critically examining governance ecosystem for sustainable tourism destination is genuinely needed and useful. On other words, from this thematic area, more investigation should be done on governance for sustainable tourism that attribute social inclusion (i.e. inclusive tourism), that promote justice and ethical tourism from consumption and production sides (i.e. SDG12).

In terms of solutions to (wicked) problems, advances on governance using applied or action research approach is appropriate to excel the pragmatic endeavour, especially at the destination level with wider stakeholder participation including local residents and communities through meaningful co-creation process.

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# THE CHALLENGE WITH SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: WHAT TO SUSTAIN?

**Prof Bob McKercher<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>a</sup>University of Queensland

## ABSTRACT

During the early 1980s, it became apparent that major global environmental changes were occurring suddenly and silently and were only beginning to be recognized as an emerging threat by the global scientific community. The magnitude of the task of transitioning to a global tourism industry that is truly sustainable is enormous. It is enormous because first, the range of sustainability issues is almost unlimited, and, second, then there is climate change, which is a game changer.

Can tourism ever become truly sustainable? It is a huge challenge. In reality, the path to sustainable tourism will involve many small steps over a prolonged period of time. It will not happen overnight. But, it needs to happen and there are many ways the sector can move forward.

The overarching challenge, though, is that sustainable tourism is such a broad concept and so vague that it is almost impossible to know where to start. Tourism faces so many challenges that almost anything can be brought under the sustainability umbrella. In fact, we are faced with so many possible paths, actions, sets of indicators and options that the sector is beset by a classic case of choice overload.

Choice overload occurs when the number of alternatives or choice options is greater than the person's ability to make effective and efficient decisions. It is especially challenging when the choices are non-exclusive. For example, does a business focus on poverty alleviation or CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduction. Likewise the challenge of where and how to act is difficult when no one action is clearly defined as being the best way forward. Choice overload is more likely to happen when the person charged with making the choice is not an expert and therefore, cannot make the most informed choice. The end choice is often poor decisions, the wrong choice or the option that too many choices are available that people end up simply doing nothing.

It is a huge issue in tourism. The UNWTO published a manual titled *Indicators of sustainable development for tourism destination: A guide book* about 20 years ago. This manual is over 500 pages long and lists 13 core dimensions to be addressed: More than 700 indicators of what constitutes sustainable tourism have been identified. For example, under the heading of sustainable treatment of solid waste, 15 indicators are identified, ranging from how much waste is collected, to whether businesses compost their waste and to the percent of employees who know how to handle hazardous products.

More recently, the UNWTO has tried to align sustainable tourism development goals with the 17 broader United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. This UN document identified 17 goals, 169 targets and more than 230 global indicators. The UNWTO responded with the creation of its own manual titled *Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals Through Tourism: Toolkit of indicators for projects (TIPS)*. But again, over 100 sustainability sub themes have been identified with too many indicators. Eleven (11) separate indicators have been identified under the subtheme of renewable energy.

The end result is that there are so many possible courses of action that almost anything or nothing could be considered as 'sustainable'. What does it mean? Four possible unsustainable results will occur.

First, businesses and government will be so overwhelmed by choice that they feel the challenge is too great and will not act.

Second, they will pick and choose what indicators are easiest and cheapest to achieve. They will pick what is commonly called low hanging fruit, often actions they are already doing and say “see we are a sustainable business.”

Third, they can adopt no cost measures like asking people if they want their linen changed and cleaned every day, or use smaller plates at buffets to reduce food waste. Again, a number of boxes can be ticked, even though little real action on pressing issues has been achieved.

Fourth, they may invest in infrastructure that will reduce operating costs, by, for example, installing solar. This action may be more sustainable, but one has to question the motive. Is it made primarily for economic reasons with a sustainable benefit or is it made out of genuine concern for the environment? Then, the question has to be asked whether the same investment has been made in the sewage system which represents a cost and does not generate income?

Do these actions make the business more sustainable? Not really, for nothing really has been done. But they may represent a form of greenwashing that can be seen to be acting, without doing much.

The challenge for the sector is what to sustain and where to start.

**Keywords:** *Sustainable tourism; choice overload; Ongoing challenge*

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# THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF FOOD AND BEVERAGE OPERATIONS IN LUXURY HOTELS

George Skell<sup>a</sup>, **Antoine Bisson**<sup>a</sup> and Francisco Navarrete Garces<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Torrens University Australia, <sup>b</sup>Kaplan Business School

## ABSTRACT

Hotels' food and beverage (F&B) sector has traditionally been a revenue driver, accounting for a significant portion of hotels' income (CBRE, 2023). In luxury properties, F&B outlets serve as key differentiators, offering unique experiences that enhance brand identity and guest loyalty, generally through integrating the local culture in the cuisine, allowing to offer authentic and immersive experiences (Mathur & Choudhary, 2024). Major developments and shifting customer expectations are redefining the hotel F&B scene in Australia's luxury hotels. The industry is still adjusting to the post-pandemic recovery by prioritising sustainability, procurement from local suppliers, and customised guest experiences (Xin & Wang, 2023).

Previous studies on the future of F&B in hotels have highlighted several trends, including the importance of technology and automation, and the shift towards experiential dining (Panchapakesan et al., 2022). Research by McCrindle and Renton (2021) also highlights the increasing demand for personalised and sustainable experiences in Australian luxury hotels, focusing on F&B trends that emphasise bespoke, eco-friendly offerings to cater to evolving guest expectations. Moreover, integrating technology in F&B operations assists with transforming the guest experience: while utilising digital menus or AI-driven personalisation, technology improves efficiency and allows operators to offer more tailored experiences (Pillai et al., 2021).

Sustainability practices are numerous, including environmentally friendly processes, plant-based diets, and lowering wastage. Innovative technologies for preparing and dispensing foods, ranging from automation and AI to health-sensitive eating, are extremely popular (Kent et al., 2022). Other trends highlighted include cultural fusion and experiential dining, which emphasises immersive and culinary-diverse dining experiences (Panchapakesan et al., 2022). The pandemic further highlighted the critical need to reduce food wastage (Kent et al., 2022). It also led to the adoption of more sustainable food procurement, preparation, and service practices (Xin & Wang, 2023).

The evolution of hotel F&B operations has been significantly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated substantial adjustments to traditional business models. One of the most immediate changes involved alterations to guest behaviour, as many moved away from dining out and towards dining in, experiencing restaurant-quality food from the comfort and safety of their homes or hotel room (Tiwari, 2021). Thus, technological integration became an important part of this transition where electronic menus were introduced that would enable guests to place orders through their phones or tablets (Tiwari, 2021). This shift towards digital solutions, such as contactless payment and ordering platforms, is in line with a larger industry trend that seeks to improve operational effectiveness and visitor experience (Pillai et al., 2021).

Focusing on the future of F&B operations, Mohanty et al. (2022) observe a lack of research on the challenges of the F&B industry, including on how to remain profitable and relevant,



how to overcome human resources challenges, and how to achieve staff retention. The hotel industry in Australia faces significant workforce challenges, particularly in F&B (Queensland Hotels Association, 2024). Labour shortages, driven by both demographic changes and the impacts of migration laws, are forcing hotels to rethink their staffing models and invest in training and retention strategies. Some hotels' F&B departments can no longer remain profitable and are seen as an amenity rather than a revenue stream (Aksoy et al., 2022).

The aim of this research is to investigate future trends in Australian luxury hotels' F&B operations. The study focuses on the experiences, perceptions, and decisions of F&B managers. To accomplish this, a qualitative inductive approach is used to delve into the experiences of F&B managers in Australian luxury hotels. Qualitative research allows those directly involved in the activity (i.e. F&B decision-making) to share their experiences in their own words, providing a valuable lens to understand the phenomenon being investigated (Veal, 2011). The targeted participants for this study are F&B managers actively involved in strategic decision-making in luxury hotels in Australia. Respondents will be recruited through a combination of convenience and snowball sampling, using STR's participation list of luxury properties as a starting point. Data will be collected using semi-structured interviews, allowing additional probing questions to elicit further explanation to statements and produce in-depth data (Veal, 2011). Questions will centre around the current identified trends and probe for future trends. Interviews will be conducted until data saturation is reached and no new or additional findings are drawn. The data will then be analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes within the set of interviews (Veal, 2011), first independently by each researcher and then triangulated to ensure findings reliability.

**Keywords:** *food and beverage management; luxury hotels; hospitality sustainability; hospitality technology; hospitality workforce*

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# THE COST OF COMFORT: PREVENTING MODERN SLAVERY IN HOSPITALITY'S BUSINESS MODEL

Mireia Guix<sup>a</sup> and Maryam Lotfi<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Business School, University of Queensland, <sup>b</sup> Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University, UK.

## ABSTRACT

Hotel groups increasingly adopt an asset-light business model, divesting their real estate properties to concentrate on growing in scale through managing and franchising contracts. Consequences of such shift for social sustainability remain unclear. Through an exploratory case study and an agency theory lens, we explore how this business model challenges the prevention of modern slavery risk, a specific human rights issue, among hotel groups. We discuss strategies to enhance the scale of current responses for the long term social sustainability of hotel brands.

**Keywords:** *Hospitality, Sustainability, Human rights, Modern slavery, Labor rights, Business model.*

## Introduction

Asset-light business model, growing by franchising, predominates among international hotel brands (Seo et al., 2021). However, critical appraisal is lacking and mostly relates to financial performance (Blal & Bianchi, 2019). Separating ownership and operation limits sustainable development (Melissen et al., 2016), pursuing “weak” sustainability (Jones et al., 2014) in a limited portfolio (UNEP & Surrey, 2022).

We explore how the asset-light business model challenges the prevention of modern slavery risk among hotel groups and identify strategies for long-term social sustainability. Hotels are vulnerable to modern slavery in their operations (human trafficking, child sexual exploitation, poor treatment of migrant workers) and supply chains (child, forced, bonded, unethical labor). Emerging research explores drivers (Bullock et al., 2024) and industry responses (Paraskevas & Brookes, 2018).

This business model embodies the principal-agent relationship (Eisenhardt, 1989). Goal misalignment and information asymmetry leads to two agency problems. Ex-ante the principal does not know the agent’s type (adverse selection). Ex-post the principal cannot observe the agents’ actions (moral hazard). Four strategies and multiple governance mechanisms based on outcome- or behavior- approaches address these.

## Methods

We adopted a single, exploratory, theory-testing case study design. A case study fits the broad and highly complex topic where “context” is critical (Dul & Hak, 2008). The topic’s sensitivity challenges collecting primary data (Crane et al., 2022). The case focused on one company out of the top 20 hotels by total number of rooms as of December 31, 2022 (Hotels Magazine, 2023) in English-speaking countries. We conducted twelve one-hour semi-structured interviews with senior executives (VP, corporate office) in sustainability, procurement, compliance and legal departments and human resources and human rights consultants. Data included the case organization’s published policies and annual/sustainability reports for triangulation. Two authors simultaneously analyzed data using MAXQDA, iteratively moving between data, interpretation, and theory in a sequential abductive approach, with agency-locus moral disengagement emerging (Bandura, 2002).

## Results

Adverse selection and moral hazard emerge in the double-principle-agent relationship; the brand (principal) relates to the franchisee/managed (agent) and the corporate suppliers (agent), and the franchisee/managed (principal) relates to suppliers (agents). Limited mechanisms are used. The brand relies on information transfer to address adverse selection. Through screening, it provides an optimal choice of corporate suppliers for branded items and managed hotels. Through selection, it engages in owners' pre-contract due diligence on working practices. Increasing visibility in Tier 1 suppliers, the brand employs a self-reported questionnaire and minimal due diligence for high-risk items and regions.

The brand addresses moral hazard broadly. It deploys the information strategy of monitoring based on less than a social audit with pilots. Integration strategies include support (training, guidance, resources and policies) and relation contract (soft persuasion with franchisees and corporate suppliers when issues emerge). Interviewee mention, but do not use, credible threats (psychological influence) based on social grounds whereby agents could breach the adverse reputation clause in the franchisee contract.

Displacement of responsibility occurs on legal grounds with the responsibility falling at the franchised or individual supplier. Multiple departments at multiple levels prevent modern slavery in operations, recruitment or procurement and interviewee redirect us to each other suggesting diffusion of responsibility.

## Discussion/conclusions

The evidence contests the asset-light business model for advancing social sustainability, reiterating environmental sustainability concerns (Melissen et al., 2016), and extending the drivers and responses in hospitality (Bullock et al., 2024).

We propose a legislative-driven and a voluntary-based response. Mandated human rights due diligence (European Parliament & Council, 2024) can address adverse selection (pre-contract selection) and moral hazard (post-contract monitoring). Industry-wide coordination can enhance relational contracts (integration) and enforce credible threats (psychological influence).

Including managed and franchised hotels, recruitment agencies, and suppliers in future research can provide further understanding for advancing human rights in hospitality.

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# THE EVOLUTIONARY PATH OF TOURISM CARBON EMISSIONS

Ya-Yen Sun<sup>a</sup> and Futu Faturay<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> University of Queensland

## ABSTRACT

Traditional resource economic theories assume homogeneity across service sectors with respect to income and carbon emissions dynamics. This suggests that as countries shift toward a service-based economy, including a tourism-driven society, their environmental burden will decrease. This argument is frequently used to justify pro-growth tourism policies. However, whether tourism development actually contributes to national emissions reduction remains a contentious issue in empirical studies.

This study introduces a new theoretical framework, the Tourism Emission Curve (TEC), which seeks to explain and predict the fluctuations in a country's tourism-related carbon emissions in relation to its economic development. The theory traces the evolution of tourism carbon emissions through four key effects: scale, composition, technological, and economic structure. Based on anticipated shifts in these factors with rising affluence, the Tourism Emission Curve is expected to follow an inverted U-shaped trajectory—where tourism carbon emissions per capita is low but continues to rise in low-income countries, peak at the middle-income stage, and decline as nations attain high-income status. To test the validity of the Tourism Emission Curve, a panel dataset of national tourism carbon emissions from 160 countries between 2009 and 2019 will be analyzed.

**Keywords:** *Tourism, Carbon Emissions, Scale effect, Technical effect, Evolution path*



# THE HIDDEN COST OF RETAILING VET PRODUCTS AND CHURN ON HOSPITALITY RTO'S: THE INTERSECTION OF REGULATION, INVISIBILITY AND INEFFICIENCY

Warren Guest<sup>a</sup> and Don Zoellner<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Le Cordon Bleu Holmesglen Institute, <sup>b</sup>Charles Darwin University

## ABSTRACT

This research investigates the financial and operational impacts of 'churn' on Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) in Australia's VET sector. Churn refers to the constant changes in VET qualification products (Australian Industry and Skills Committee 2022, 12). Through case studies from three states and territories, the project quantifies the costs RTOs incur while converting wholesale VET products into qualifications for students. It also highlights the challenges churn imposes on public institutions, the VET workforce, and student learning. The research has developed a ubiquitous tool that RTOs can use to measure the cost of shifting products from markets to retail and the impacts of ongoing churn on their viability. The research provides insight for comparing Hospitality RTO financial practices in a year of difficult financial viability.

In the early 1990s Australia transitioned to a national Vocational Education and Training (VET) marketplace of consumer driven demand. It was argued that the existing Technical And Further Education (TAFE) system of vocational training had become over reliant on Commonwealth government funding, and as the primary beneficiaries of future changes, industry and individuals should bear the cost of any increased expenditure attached to the new systemic changes (Dawkins, 1988; Smith & Keating, 2003). This shift in Commonwealth policy thinking would herald significant structural changes to the Australian system of Vocational Education and Training (VET). Many in vocational research saw the policy changes as primarily focused on reducing Commonwealth government expenditure rather than learning focused educational reform (Billett, 2011; Hodge, 2016). As stated succinctly by vocational researcher Lisa Wheelahan, "*The question that policy asked was 'how can we create a market?', and not 'how can we create a system of high- quality, trusted qualifications?'*" (Wheelahan, 2016. p.190).

Since the policy's introduction, a surfeit of evidence has emerged which identifies the widespread abuse of public funding (Marginson, 2013; Toner, 2018a). The nascent evidence demonstrates a VET system based on a poorly regulated training market and widespread financial rorting (DET, 2016; Senate Standing Committees on Education & Employment [SSCEE], 2015). Since that time, State and Commonwealth governments have been focused on eradicating 'dodgy' RTOs from the training market system. The introduction of 'Standards' by which RTOs must operate and the increased specification in the Assessment Requirements of Units of Competency (UoC) are examples of Commonwealth intervention to restrict unethical practices and provide quality assurance to the national qualification training market. However, while the rorting has reduced, this research identifies areas where Commonwealth and State government funding is arguably still wasteful with significant impacts on RTO viability.

This research examines the process of 'churn' and the money extracted to facilitate a system of unaccountable change. Anonymised case studies are drawn from TAFEs in three state and

territory jurisdictions using their policy and process documents. These specify compliance-driven activities providers undertake to convert three ubiquitous wholesale products into standards conforming, teachable and assessable retail qualifications. The expenditure incurred for each step is calculated. This specifies the RTO's outlay to place a qualification on the national register and prepare it for delivery to students. Differential expenses are incurred every time the training product is changed depending on the type of alteration and churn's expenses can be calculated at the unit of competence level. The results are seldom observed at the system's highest levels – a characteristic of loose coupling and differential costs experienced when all providers are expected to meet the same standards. Requiring multiple RTOs to repeat the same processes for every qualification alteration suggests systemic inefficiency. Specifying providers' costs of churn has major implications for funding policy and practice. Arguing that contemporary regulated VET markets represent successful public policy implementation, characterised by a simplistic wholesale/retail structure, the theoretical perspectives concerning loosely coupled systems (Orton & Weick, 1988) and the impacts of standards (Fischhoff, 1984) can describe responses of registered training organisations (RTOs) to policy and funding imperatives. These dual theoretical frameworks are used to examine the logic that perpetuates a system of waste and inefficiency.

The findings demonstrate significance in two important ways. Firstly, a tool has been developed for quantifying churn that can be applied to the operations of public and private RTOs that will allow them to benchmark and better understand their comparative costs within a competitive education market. Secondly, systemic inefficiency and wastage is quantified and demonstrated at a national level, with impacts on the VET workforce retention and the student learning experience.

**Keywords:** *VET marketisation; VET workforce; student experience.*

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# THE IMPACT OF PATRIARCHY ON THE TRAVEL BEHAVIOUR OF MILLENNIAL CHINESE WOMEN

Bohan Liu<sup>a</sup>, Daisy Fan<sup>a</sup> and Hanaa Osman<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Bournemouth University, Bournemouth, Dorset, United Kingdom

## ABSTRACT

The influence of patriarchy on Chinese women's travel behaviour has become a critical area of research in understanding the broader social constraints that shape tourist participation and decision-making. Patriarchal norms, deeply rooted in Confucianism, continue to shape societal expectations and influence women's autonomy in various aspects of life, including travel (Yifei, 2011). Despite advancements in gender equality, studies by Fang and Walker (2015) show that traditional gender roles continue to dictate women's travel choices and decisions, particularly in the context of family obligations. Attané (2012) emphasises the lasting impact of filial piety, which restricts women's freedom in travel-related decision-making, as many are expected to prioritise family over personal travel desires. Studies like Gui (2020) further show that while many Chinese women aspire to explore new destinations and engage in tourism activities, they face societal pressures to conform to traditional roles as caretakers, which limits their travel opportunities. To (2015) notes that Chinese women are increasingly delaying family responsibilities, including marriage and childbearing, to pursue personal goals such as travel and career development, but these decisions often come with social stigma or familial disapproval. However, the gaps remain in exploring how millennial Chinese women overcome these constraints while pursuing their travel aspirations. Much of the existing research on patriarchy and travel focusses on family expectations and societal norms. However, there is limited attention to intrapersonal constraints, such as internalised beliefs, guilt, or anxiety about violating traditional gender roles.

Hu and Scott (2016) highlight the growing trend of Chinese women challenging traditional roles due to exposure to global feminist ideals, but Liu (2014) argues that many still find themselves balancing family expectations with personal desires, especially when it comes to independent travel. This research focuses on how younger Chinese women, especially millennials, navigate the conflicts between patriarchal expectations and their own aspirations for travel. The aim of this study is to examine what shaped millennial Chinese women's travel behaviour under the residual influence of patriarchy. Specifically, this research seeks to first analyse how patriarchal norms continue to influence the travel behaviour of millennial Chinese women. Secondly, investigate how millennial Chinese women are redefining their travel aspirations considering traditional family expectations and modern influences. Third, identify the strategies millennial Chinese women employ to overcome societal constraints and pursue their travel goals.

This study conducts feminist pragmatism as a methodological framework, providing a thorough exploration of gender complexities (Wickramasinghe, 2009). Using a qualitative research methodology, this study conducts in-depth, semi-structured online interviews with 20 Chinese women to gain rich insights into their personal travel experiences. The findings reveal that patriarchal and Confucian cultural influences continue to shape women's travel choices, with parental intervention playing a significant role in limiting their mobility. Even as millennial Chinese women strive for greater independence in travel, they often find themselves negotiating family expectations rooted in the Confucian value of filial piety, which still governs many aspects of their life decisions, including travel.

The findings clearly indicate that patriarchal and Confucian cultural values continue to influence women's travel decisions, with parental involvement playing a significant role in their decision-making process. Parental influence, often driven by concerns about cultural expectations and maintaining social norms, continues to limit opportunities for women to engage in non-traditional or independent travel activities. Despite millennial Chinese women's growing desire for independence in travel, they frequently find themselves having to negotiate family expectations, particularly those rooted in the Confucian principle of filial piety, which remains a key factor in shaping many of their life choices, including travel decisions. The study also highlights the broader societal pressures related to safety, propriety, and filial duties, which further curtail women's freedom to travel. These constraints underscore the need for societal shifts that promote gender equality in travel, allowing women to balance their family obligations with personal aspirations.

This study extends the travel constraints and negotiation theory by highlighting the role of internalised patriarchal and Confucian values as intrapersonal constraints, even in the absence of external pressures. It also introduces the concept of collective negotiation within family structures in a collectivist society, emphasising the cultural context of decision-making. Additionally, the research incorporates Confucian values as structural constraints, showing how deeply embedded cultural ideologies continue to influence travel behaviour. The practical implication of this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how patriarchal influences continue to limit the travel behaviours of modern Chinese women. It lays a foundation for further research into how societal expectations shape women's participation in tourism and highlights the need for continued advocacy in promoting equal opportunities for women in travel. Additionally, the study outlines potential areas for future research, particularly in examining the evolving role of Chinese women in the tourism industry as shifting cultural and societal norms continue to reshape the travel landscape for women in China. Limitations of the study include its focus on a relatively small sample size, indicating the need for broader quantitative research in future studies.

**Keywords:** *leisure constraints, female tourists, filial piety, travel negotiation*

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# THE OLYMPIC GAMES NEED A NEW MODEL: LET'S KETSO IT!

Sandra Goh<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Auckland University of Technology

## ABSTRACT

The Olympic Games, traditionally centered in major global cities, have faced declining bids and escalating costs. This paper challenges the conventional wisdom that large cities are the sole viable hosts for such mega-events. By reviewing the limitations of the current model in existing literature and research agendas on the Olympic Games, this study reveals a gap that requires an innovative paradigm shift towards a more sustainable and inclusive Olympics hosted by multiple but smaller cities. Using action research, Ketso, a collaborative tool designed to facilitate open dialogue, the feasibility of this research project would be briefly explored at the CAUTHE 2025 conference. This research aims to contribute to a broader discussion on the future sustainability of the Olympic Games and how these iconic hallmark events can adapt to the evolving global landscape while maintaining their core values of unity, excellence, and friendship.

**Keywords:** *Olympic Games, Mega Events, Small Cities/Countries, Bidding, Budget, Sustainability, Ketso*

## Introduction

The Olympic economy is on the edge (Zimabalist, Solberg, & Storm, 2024) and a reform to its traditional method of competitive bidding and awarding to globally ranked cities is due.

Previously, many cities competed intensely to host the Summer and Winter Olympic Games, promising lavish offers. However, the escalating demands of the Olympic organizers and the negative consequences of past Games, such as financial deficits (Müller et al., 2022), environmental damage (Zimbalist, 2020), social disruption (Gaffney, 2019), rampant corruption (Zimbalist, 2016), have led to a decline in bids. Study has shown that the cost of the Olympics has escalated by 172 percent as early as 1960 (Flvberg, Budzier, & Lunn, 2012) and up to 252 percent since 1976. London's Olympics reported a budget overrun by triple the initial estimate of more than \$10 billion (Zimabalist, Solberg, & Storm, 2024).

The IOC is considered an unregulated monopoly (Humphreys & van Egteren, 2012) that favours the bids by the most globalised “alpha” ranked cities (Faure & Lauermann, 2023; Sassen, 2005). Faure and Laurmann in their study ‘Are Mega-Events Only for Global Cities? Analyzing Host Cities Through the Global and World Cities Framework, 1990-2020 suggest that mega-events like the Olympic Games and FIFA World Cup, are not for smaller players from less globalised cities. Chappelet (2014) advocates downsizing the Summer Olympic Games to encourage more bidders from smaller cities and countries, even though the problems related to size was already discussed at the 1972 Olympics in Munich along with its limit to growth. To date Greece remains the smallest economy to have hosted the Games. This paper aims to shake-up what is familiar to us about the Olympic economy and big cities to propose a future sustainable model involving smaller cities and countries.

Meanwhile, some positive changes have been observed in existing literature pertaining to the Olympic Agenda 2020. The agenda is a reform process making the Olympic Games more attractive for potential hosts. A recent study by Nicolliello (2021) presents the plan on reducing the time of the host city's commitment to the Games. The sign of decreasing financial burden also appears to have gained more positive referendum from the residents of the host city/country (Elisabeth et al., 2024). The



2026 Winter Olympic Games host plan further reveals a promising future for the Olympic heritage – one that has lesser emphasis on iconic buildings but rather focusing on long-term strategies for success. This study to include smaller cities and countries as hosts is timely to add to future agendas.

## Methodology

Ketso is a collaborative tool ideal for participatory action research and it is designed to facilitate open dialogue, idea generation, and decision making among groups of people (Tippett, 2013). A Ketso workshop would typically takes up to two hours to facilitate. Each stage of the Ketso workshop would require 10-15mins. In engaging conference participants in this topic about the Olympic model, the first stage of a Ketso would be integrated in the presentation. This include a 3-min thesis style presentation, and one Ketso question on ‘What needs to be changed?’ or ‘what needs to go into the next agenda?’

## Conclusion

The development of the Olympic Games is an ongoing process. The IOC is creating a new framework that replaces competitive bidding by negotiating a deal with an individual city or country behind closed curtains (Zimabalist, Solberg, & Storm, 2024) -- One could only look forward to more exciting changes.

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# THE ROAD TO NET ZERO: LEARNINGS FROM TWO CASE STUDIES

Susanne Becken<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Griffith University

## ABSTRACT

There is wide recognition that urgent action is needed to address climate change. Scientific and political processes have aligned to set ambitious greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction targets. The global target is to decrease GHG emissions by 43% by 2030 and to reach 'net zero' by 2050 (UNFCCC, 2023). Most countries have committed to these targets, and increasingly, tourist destinations see the need and opportunity to contribute to these efforts (Guix et al., 2024). However, the Tourism and Climate Change Stocktake showed that tourism is failing to deliver meaningful and demonstrable progress (Becken & Scott, 2024). It is timely to collaborate with tourist destinations that are committed to tackling this existential challenge.

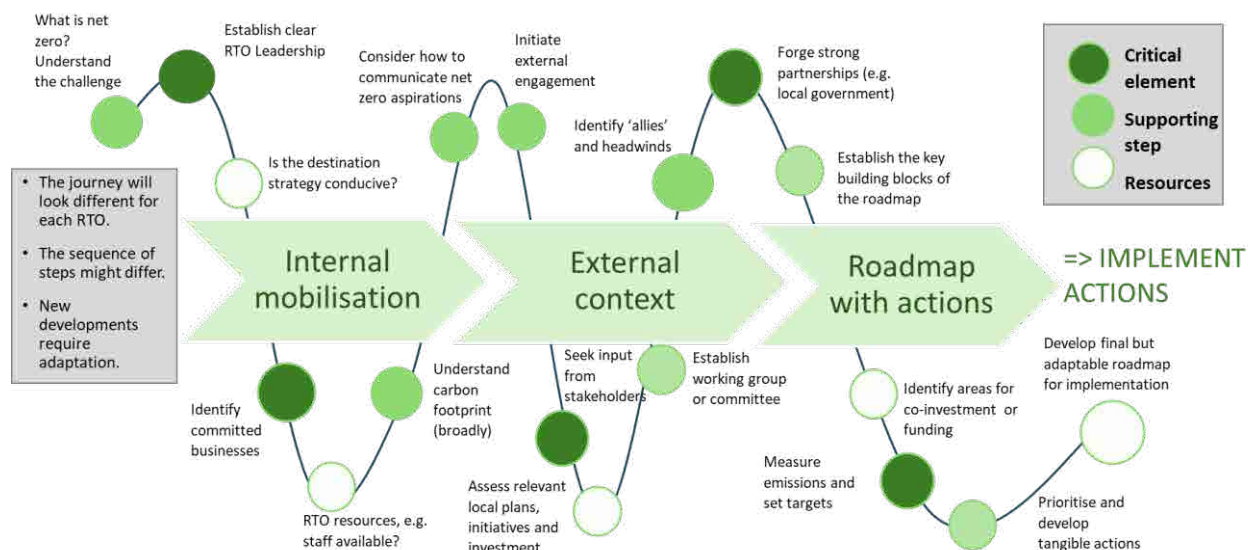
This research draws on the science behind 'net zero' (Becken et al., 2024) and Stakeholder Theory to advance *Net Zero Roadmaps* for two Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) and their respective destinations in Queensland, namely Tropical Tourism North Queensland (TTNQ) and Tourism Bundaberg (TB). This work formed part of a Queensland Regional Tourism Network project (2022-2023), in partnership with EarthCheck, aimed at reducing tourism's carbon footprint. Phase 1 estimated Queensland's tourism emissions at 10.03 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>-e (2019), with 81% from transport, 17% from accommodation, and 2% from attractions across the State's 13 RTOs. Phase 2 involved co-developing roadmaps with stakeholders at two case study destinations, addressing the challenges of measuring and reducing emissions whilst also contributing to restoring natural carbon sinks. Phase 1 showed that more progress is needed to monitor carbon; however, this working paper focuses on Phase 2.

The research involved mixed methods, including quantifying the carbon footprints for each destination, analysis of context, two stakeholder workshops and follow-up online meetings, and individual interviews (N= 7 in TTNQ; N=6 in TB). The methods are reflective of the stakeholder journey that requires securing buy-in, determining critical steps/elements, and identifying resources (Figure 1). Several findings emerged:

1. Roadmaps: The roadmap for TTNQ builds on two main activities, namely engagement with the tourism industry, and development of a carbon data monitoring platform. These two building blocks then support three key outcomes, namely Regeneration, Circular Economy and Decarbonisation. Each pathway is underpinned by specific actions and a set of indicators that help track progress. The TB roadmap also included the engagement and carbon monitoring building blocks, whilst the pathways were aligned with Bundaberg Regional Council's five 'Towards Net Zero Bundaberg' themes, namely: Circular Economy, Transport, Energy, ESG and Built Environment.
2. Engagement versus impact: The stakeholder journey highlighted particular interest in two topics; waste management and biodiversity. Whilst both are relevant to net zero progress, neither of these are highly material in reducing tourism's carbon footprint. The RTO leadership was cognisant of this challenge but deemed it important to build up support from tourism businesses around issues that matter to them, in the hope of stepping up action later (i.e. taking an inclusive approach, Bailie et al., 2023). Whether measures can be 'stepped up later' requires ongoing scrutiny.
3. Influence of RTO: As Sainaghi (2006) established, the influence of destination marketing/management organisations depends on the extent to which they can control resources

and/or processes. The RTO systemically depends on how businesses and local governments negotiate and drive processes and resource allocation. In both cases, RTO budgets are limited and large-scale decarbonisation investments depend on external resources, including from State or Federal Governments. For some decisions, private sector resources are integral, for example, the electrification of tourist vessels. In the case of TTNQ, the RTO was seen as ‘the leader’, shaping the process of developing the roadmap and other climate actions in the region as a whole. In Bundaberg, it was agreed early on that Council drives the process but with more purposeful engagement of the RTO to ensure integration of tourism needs.

4. Blind spots: The stakeholder journey is a necessary step towards climate action, but it does not come without challenges. The data presented to all stakeholders clearly showed that the main contributor to tourism emissions is transport, and within that the journey of visitors to travel to the destination. For TTNQ there was a significant international air travel component. Despite the obvious prime target of reducing emissions, this component was not included in the roadmaps. Several reasons were put forward, including the lack of alternatives (mainly for aviation), the commitment to tourism recovery and growth, the political sensitivity, and the inability to influence market segments.



**Figure 1: Stakeholder process for developing a tourism net zero roadmap.**

The project highlights that Queensland’s Tourism Network recognise the climate challenge and examples of best practices exist. However, creating and committing to net zero roadmaps presents several challenges that need to be overcome before destinations will align with international decarbonisation targets and contribute to net-zero. These should be factored in by RTOs when announcing ambitious decarbonisation targets. Mobilising financial support for the transition is crucial. The notion of co-benefits (e.g. to build tourism resilience) might increase chances of securing wider government support.

**Keywords:** Decarbonisation, stakeholder engagement, Net zero roadmap, aviation, Regional Tourism Organisation

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# THE ROLE OF AI-POWERED VIRTUAL ASSISTANTS IN THE NORMATIVE FEEDBACK INTERVENTION-BASED HOTEL GUESTS' ENERGY-SAVING STRATEGIES: A CONCEPTUAL PAPER

Xiwen (Sivin) Xiao<sup>a</sup>, Xin Jin<sup>a</sup> and Leonie Lockstone-Binney<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of Tourism, Sport & Hotel Management, Griffith Business School, Griffith University, QLD, Australia

## ABSTRACT

Despite a surge of scholarly interest in leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) to promote environmental sustainability in the hotel industry, research examining how it can be better integrated into interventions to promote guests' pro-environmental behavior (PEB) is still limited. Drawing on the watching-eyes effect and gender stereotypes effect, this paper proposes a conceptual framework to explain the hypothesized role of AI-powered virtual assistants in influencing NFI on hotel guests' energy-saving intentions. This study also presents the future research steps and the expected theoretical and practical contributions regarding the use of AI in NFI-based hotel guests' energy-saving strategies.

**Keywords:** *artificial intelligence (AI), normative feedback intervention (NFI), energy-saving intention, the watching-eyes effect, the gender stereotypes effect, scenario-based experiment*

## Introduction

With the rapid development of the hotel industry worldwide, the hotel accommodation sector has been considered to consume the most resources, generating great impacts on greenhouse gas emissions in the tourism industry (Tussyadiah & Miller, 2019). It suggests that behavioral change of tourists and guests undoubtedly plays a significant role in promoting environmental sustainability.

Drawing on behavioral science and social psychology, the normative feedback intervention (NFI), i.e., comparing individuals' behavioral performances with relevant social norms (what *most others* do and what is *socially desirable* to do) to motivate individuals' behavioral change in a given situation (Abrahamse & Steg, 2013), has emerged as one of the most powerful behavioral approaches in pro-environmental behavior (PEB) areas such as energy-saving, water conservation, recycling, etc. (Abrahamse & Steg, 2013).

Furthermore, with the rapid technological development of artificial intelligence (AI), internet-of-things (IoT), and sensors, integrating intelligent technology into PEB interventions has become a popular approach to promoting sustainable tourism (Tussyadiah & Miller, 2019). Considering the above, this study proposes a conceptual framework to explain the hypothesized effect of AI in influencing NFI on hotel guests' energy-saving intention. This study will advance the understanding of how AI can better promote the NFI-based guests' energy-saving strategies.

## Literature review and hypotheses

### *NFI and hotel guests' energy-saving intention*

NFI is a specific feedback intervention that provides individuals with information on their behavioral performances and the comparison with relevant social norms (what *most others* do and what is *socially desirable* to do), aiming to stimulate individuals' behavioral change in a particular circumstance (Abrahamse & Steg, 2013).

Based on social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) and social norms theory (Cialdini et al., 1990), humans by nature are social animals and instinctively tend to conform to social norms. They can accurately assess their behavioral status in a group context by comparing it with social norms (Festinger, 1954). Therefore, when people find their behavior deviates from the social norms, especially negatively, they might experience social pressures and thus be more likely to adjust their future behavior to be consistent with social norms (Cialdini et al., 1990; Festinger, 1954). Previous studies have shown that NFI can promote individuals' energy-saving behaviors and intentions (Abrahamse & Steg, 2013).



The hypothesis is therefore postulated as below:

**H1:** NFI positively influences hotel guests' energy-saving intentions.

***AI, NFI, and hotel guests' energy-saving intention***

AI is an umbrella term that includes various technologies that enable computers and machines to simulate human intelligence, decision-making, and social-interacting capabilities such as machine learning, deep learning, etc. In behavioral persuasion, AI agents can be programmed to provide social cues (e.g., voice, facial expressions, gestures, etc.) to interact with humans (e.g., conversations, etc.) (referring to Siri, Apple's voice-activated virtual assistant) (Dar & Bernardet, 2020).

Informed by the media equation theory and computer as social actors (CASA) studies (Liew & Tan, 2021), simulated social cues provided by AI-powered agents demonstrate strong social agency, i.e., the automated social presence, triggering people's sense of being "watched". Based on the watching-eyes effect in surveillance psychology, people tend to act more pro-socially when feeling watched even by artificial surveillance cues (e.g., watching eye images, humanoid robots, etc.) (Tussyadiah & Miller, 2019). PEB such as energy-saving is a special kind of prosocial behavior, therefore, when provided NFI information by a voice-activated virtual assistant, individuals tend to generate a sense of being watched and are more likely to save energy (Tussyadiah & Miller, 2019).

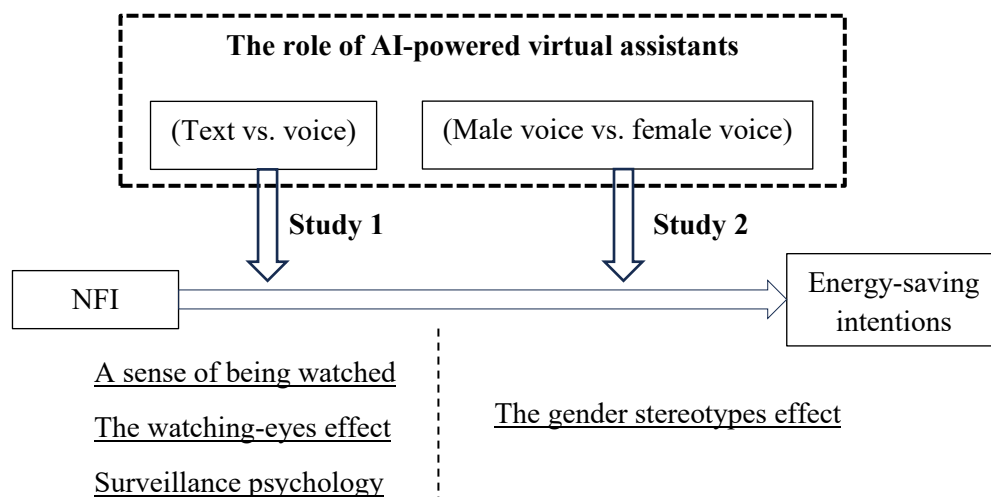
Hence, the following hypothesis is suggested:

**H2:** Compared to the non-presence of voice-activated virtual assistants (NFI information in text form only), the influence of NFI on hotel guests' energy-saving intentions will be stronger when the NFI information is provided by voice-activated virtual assistants.

Based on the gender stereotypes effect (Eagly & Wood, 1982), social power differences exist between males and females (Nass et al., 1997). The perception of men is associated with authority and perceived to be more dominant, while the perception of women is more connected with conformity and women are assumed to be more easily influenced by men (Eagly & Wood, 1982). As research on beliefs and attitudes about the roles of different genders suggested (Eagly & Wood, 1982), evaluative comments that convey social approval and disapproval from men are perceived to be more valid than those from women, and especially women are prone to this stereotype (Nass et al., 1997). As NFI involves social approval and disapproval of a given behavior, the same reasoning above can also be applied to explain the gender effects of voice-activated virtual assistants in the NFI's application on hotel guests' energy-saving intentions.

Hence, the hypothesis is proposed as below:

**H3:** When NFI information is provided by male voice-activated virtual assistants, hotel guests' energy-saving intentions will be stronger among female guests, but there will be no significant difference among male guests.



**Figure 1: The conceptual framework**

**Conclusion**

We plan to conduct two studies to test the proposed conceptual framework through scenario-based experimental design.

First, Study 1 (NFI information in text only vs. NFI information in voice) will examine whether the presence of voice-activated virtual assistants can improve the influence of NFI on hotel guests' energy-saving intentions. Second, considering voice selection (e.g., gender) is highly crucial in voice-embedded computer interfaces (Nass et al., 1997), Study 2 will further investigate whether different genders of voice-activated virtual assistants play a significant role in the NFI-hotel guests' energy-saving intention. Approximately 400 valid samples will be collected in total. All the measurement scales will be adopted from previous studies. The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) method will be used for data analysis. This conceptual paper is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions regarding advancing the understanding of how AI can better promote the NFI-based guests' energy-saving strategies through the lens of surveillance psychology (i.e., the watching-eyes effect) and gender stereotype effects.

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# THE ROLE OF PLEASURE AND COMFORT APPEALS IN HOSPITALITY: A TRIANGULATION APPROACH TO FOOD WASTE BEHAVIOURAL INTENTIONS AND THE MODERATING EFFECT OF GREEN SCEPTICISM

Safina Naz<sup>a</sup>, Xavier Font<sup>a</sup>, Pablo Pereira-Doel<sup>a</sup>, and Marion Karl<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Surrey Business School, University of Surrey, Guildford, United Kingdom

## ABSTRACT

As the third largest contributor to food waste (Dhir et al., 2020; Filimonau & De Coteau, 2019), the hospitality industry is looking at ways to change the food waste behaviour of its customers. Hospitality consumers seek enjoyment and comfort to find positive emotional experiences. Hence, a positive emotional experience can play a major role in changing food waste behaviour and creating brand trust with pleasure and comfort appeals (Ramirex & Cabanac, 2006; Goupil & Aucouturier, 2019). Regarding positive emotions, hedonia in positive psychology suggests that individuals are drawn towards comfort and pleasure for short-term or immediate positive emotional experiences (Pearce et al., 2021; Huta, 2022). So, this study considers how hospitality customers who are seeking pleasure and comfort feel positive emotions before deciding to change their food waste behaviour. Also, the pre-testing protocol on behaviour change interventions recommends the testing of behaviour change interventions for their impact on emotions, target constructs and behavioural intention before the field study (Zinn et al., 2023). Following this, our research investigates the direct impact of pleasure and comfort appeals on behavioural intention to reduce food waste and brand trust, as well as the mediated effects through positive emotions. Furthermore, the moderating role of green scepticism is investigated between the two appeals and positive emotions to account for how green scepticism can shape the impact differently.

## Methods

This research employs methodological triangulation through mixed-method research to study the impact of comfort and pleasure appeals on positive emotions, behavioural intentions for reduced food waste and brand trust. The study is conducted in four phases using different research methods: manipulation check, pre-survey with lab experiment, interviews and an online experiment.

Firstly, an online manipulation check was conducted to ensure that the manipulated stimuli accurately represent the intended variables. Secondly, 60 participants were recruited using snowball sampling for a pre-experiment survey, lab experiment, and follow-up interviews. Data on demographics, control variables, and green scepticism were collected through a pre-experiment survey, while the post-stimuli exposure survey measured behavioural intention and brand trust. Eye-tracking, Galvanic Skin Response, and Facial recognition were used in the experiment to collect data on positive emotions. Thirdly, post-experiment interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data on the subjective emotions of the same participants. Projective techniques were used to account for the subjective emotions of the participants and a wheel of emotions was shown to them for identifying emotions against each stimulus. By the end of the interviews, their comments on trusting the brand and their potential scepticism towards the hotel brand were recorded. Fourthly, an online experiment was designed using the same stimuli and survey instruments to investigate the same phenomena. However, a self-reporting scale for positive emotions was added to the survey to replace

it with eye-tracking, GSR, and facial recognition data. Different perspectives from these methods will be applied to ensure a robust, valid and reliable understanding of the problem.

#### *Stimuli Design and Manipulation Check*

The existing message-containing belief-based approach in a hotel was chosen as a control message, while pleasure and comfort appeals-based similar messages were considered as two treatment messages. Using actual hotel messages ensures the realism of stimuli and experiments (Nieto-García et al., 2024). A manipulation check was performed before the design of the lab experiment to ensure the manipulation of treatment conditions.

#### *Experiment Design for Lab Study*

Data on demographics, control variables and moderating variables was collected through pre-experiment surveys. A within-subject experiment was designed such that each participant saw the three stimuli in a random order. Filler images of hotel's interior were shown before each stimuli. After each experimental and control condition, questions about the behavioural intention to reduce food and brand trust were asked before the next set of stimuli and fillers appeared on the screen.

#### *Post-experiment interviews*

Projective techniques were used to collect interview responses on how customers felt about the manipulated and controlled conditions. The content and thematic analysis of these interviews will provide subjective emotional experiences to complement the objective data from the quantitative data sources. At the end of the interview, participants were asked to assign emotions to each message from the Geneva Wheel of Emotions (Rabbone et al., 2022; Verroca et al., 2022).

#### *Experiment Design for Online Study*

For the online experiment, we will recruit 300 participants from the United Kingdom, Asia and the United States. A pre-survey will collect data on demographics, environmental awareness, environmental attitude, brand awareness and social desirability bias from all participants. A between-subject experiment will be designed with similar stimuli from the lab study and the three stimuli will be randomly assigned to three different groups of participants for their response to positive emotions, behavioural intention and brand trust. At the end of the experiment, the wheel of emotions will be shown to them to assign emotions to the message (Rabbone et al., 2022; Verroca et al., 2022).

### **Conclusions and Implications**

Quantitative data analysis of the online and lab experiments provides a comparison of pleasure and comfort appeals in terms of their moderated impact, alongside green scepticism, on pro-environmental behaviour and green trust through positive emotions. Post-experiment interviews with projective techniques capture participants' subjective emotional experiences, complementing the quantitative data from objective measures. Content and thematic analysis of the qualitative data will offer insights into participants' subjective experiences and emotions.

Our research makes four theoretical and practical contributions. Firstly, the distinction between pleasure and comfort appeals in generating positive emotions before influencing behavioural intention and brand trust is a novel theoretical contribution to hedonia in positive psychology. For hospitality brands, brand trust is a highly sought-after outcome, ensuring that behavioural interventions do not compromise the customer experience (Chen et al., 2022; Han et al., 2015; Lien et al., 2015) and leveraging positive emotions can help with it (Cohen et al., 2014; Bigné et al., 2023; Sung et al., 2023). Secondly, consumer scepticism is a major challenge that can influence the

effectiveness of hedonic and pleasure appeals (Fenko et al., 2016; Lunardo, 2012). This study addresses the often-overlooked moderating role of consumer scepticism and offers useful insights for industry. Thirdly, the research provides practical recommendations for improving customer experience with pleasure and comfort through their subjective insights of customers. Fourthly, the research provides a major methodological contribution by combining lab experiments (using eye-tracking, GSR, Facial Recognition), online experiments, interviews and surveys to measure the same phenomena. It will help researchers understand the strengths and limitations of different research methods to study customer behaviour in hospitality.

**Keywords:** *Hospitality, Food waste, Pro-environmental behaviour change, Emotions, Customer behaviour, Positive psychology*

**Fundings:** The research is funded by an industry partner and the recommendations from this study will be used by a major hotel group to improve their sustainability communication.

# THE ROLE OF SPIRITUAL RESOURCES IN BUILDING LIVELIHOOD RESILIENCE IN TRADITIONAL TOURISM VILLAGES

Yalu Liu<sup>a</sup>, Xin Jin<sup>a</sup>, Ying Wang<sup>b</sup> and Karine Dupre<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of Tourism, Sport and Hotel Management, Griffith University, Gold Coast, Australia,

<sup>b</sup>School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong

SAR, <sup>c</sup>College of Architecture, Arts and Design, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, United States

## ABSTRACT

Although livelihood resilience has gained importance in tourism research, the role of spiritual resources in building it remains unclear. To fill this gap, this study aims to examine how spiritual resources contribute to the development of livelihood resilience in traditional tourism villages. The data was collected from semi-structured interviews with tourism stakeholders in Fujian *tulou* villages of China. Preliminary findings reveal that people draw on spiritual resources, including beliefs, rituals, and customs, to gain a sense of security to alleviate anxiety and enhance the courage to overcome difficulties in tourism livelihoods. Moreover, while the sense of destiny people derive can ease the pain of failure, it can also foster powerlessness and reduce the motivation for change.

**Keywords:** *Rural tourism, livelihood resilience, spiritual resources, China*

## Introduction

Resilience thinking provides valuable insights into developing livelihood systems in tourism destinations characterised by uncertainty and vulnerability, such as natural disasters and off-season travel (Amadu et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2020). The concept of livelihood resilience bridges resilience thinking and the livelihood approach, defined as the capacity of livelihoods to sustain or enhance their functions amid shocks (Speranza et al., 2014). Many studies have focused on enhancing material buffer capacities to absorb shocks, utilising the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (DFID, 1999) to examine how resources—such as physical, financial, and natural capital—support economic production (King et al., 2021; Wei et al., 2024). However, emerging research criticises this material-based resilience approach for being shaped by capitalist thinking prevalent in Western contexts (Amadu et al., 2021). Spiritual elements, such as cultural values and traditional beliefs that shape livelihoods and guide adaptation to shocks, are underrepresented in current livelihood resilience research (Sina et al., 2019). Consequently, this study seeks to investigate how spiritual resources contribute to developing livelihood resilience in traditional tourism villages. Spiritual resources are typically understood to encompass elements such as beliefs and values that transcend the individual or sensory experience, along with a sense of being part of a larger whole, such as the cosmic or divine (Guest, 2016; Vasconcelos 2021). Traditional villages have a long history and inherit a rich array of spiritual resources from their ancestors, including beliefs, rituals, and customs (Xu et al., 2021).

## Methodology

Two Fujian *tulou* villages with centuries of history in southeastern China were selected for this study. Their communal housing, known as *tulou* (earthen building), was designated a World Cultural Heritage site in 2008, prompting the transformation of these villages into tourism destinations. This study employs a qualitative research design, with data collected through semi-structured interviews during a 2022 field trip. Thirty-three participants were recruited using purposive and snowball sampling, including ordinary residents, *tulou* chiefs, village leaders, government officials, and tourism



enterprise managers. Data analysis follows the open, axial, and selective coding process, as suggested by Corbin and Strauss (2015).

### **Preliminary findings**

The analysis identifies two ways spiritual resources can contribute to resilience building. A sense of security arises from interviewees' feelings that their livelihoods are secure and protected from danger, which they mainly attributed to traditional beliefs emphasising a subjective connection between people and the land. In *tulou* villages, the land is regarded as a deity that protects the local village, transcending its objective materiality. Visiting the 'land temple' during traditional festivals to burn incense and offer prayers is a local custom, expressing respect for the land and protecting their livelihood from threat. The sense of security gained from the land spirits helps reduce people's anxiety in tourism operations. Interviewee-4 explained: *"Communicating with the land spirit provided me with supernatural strength that would protect my inn business from harm, giving me a sense of security to ease my anxiety"*. Moreover, land is considered a sacred area closely connected to ancestors. The sense of security derived from ancestor worship strengthens the courage to overcome challenges in tourism. Ancestral worship is a traditional ritual, including food offerings, conducted at ancestral burial land to express respect and gratitude and seek blessings. Interviewee-18 explained: *"Participating in ancestor worship gives me a sense of security. I believe our ancestors support and protect our tourism activities, which gives me more courage when facing difficulties"*. Land worship and the ancestral connection to land, deeply rooted in Chinese rural culture, provide a sense of security, and enhance resilience in the face of challenges.

A sense of destiny emerged from the interviewees' feelings that livelihood outcomes are guided or predetermined by external forces and are beyond their control. In *tulou* village beliefs, fatalism is closely associated with the supreme authority that governs all aspects of the world, including human destiny. Interviewee-13 explained: *"Fate includes the conditions and forces of the universe. The success of our tourism activities relies on their alignment, which remains entirely beyond our control"*. The sense of destiny helps people reduce inner pain even after their tourism livelihood faces failure. One running restaurant interviewee-11 explained:

*We stocked ample ingredients for the Spring Festival tourist season, but the sudden pandemic caused scenic spots to close. With no tourists, we faced heavy losses. Yet, we believe difficulties are tests of fate, and we will overcome them.*

However, a sense of destiny fosters feelings of powerlessness and diminishes people's willingness to pursue change. interviewee-4 claimed: *"Due to the current epidemic, few people travel here, and we have few opportunities to make a living. We can't change anything; what we can do is leave it to fate"*. In general, fatalism embedded in local traditional culture can positively or negatively influence how people accept reality in times of adversity.

### **Conclusion**

This research broadens the scope of existing livelihood resilience research, which predominantly emphasises the economic and material dimensions of livelihood resources. Preliminary findings indicate that in traditional village tourism destinations, spiritual resources - such as beliefs, rituals, and customs - play a crucial role in providing a sense of security, reducing anxiety and bolstering courage when facing challenges in tourism livelihoods. While the sense of destiny contributes to accepting hardship in a challenging time, it can also foster a feeling of powerlessness and weaken the desire to change. Thus, caveats need to be borne in mind when spiritual resources are engaged in tourism livelihoods. Practically, the research offers guidance to tourism managers, suggesting that enhancing resilience may involve preserving traditional culture, promoting collective rituals, and providing mental and spiritual support to community members and tourism practitioners.

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# THE ROLE OF TRUST IN CUSTOMER ATTITUDE AND ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS TOWARD USING CHATGPT IN TOURISM: EVIDENCE FROM VIETNAM

Tien Bich Ma<sup>a</sup> and Van Khanh Nguyen<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Van Lang University, <sup>b</sup>Melbourne Polytechnic, Australia

## ABSTRACT

### Introduction

The adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) in the travel and tourism industry has been gaining popularity in recent years (Sigala et al., 2024), largely due to its ability to reduce labour costs and enhance service efficiency (Hwang et al., 2022). Of the emerging AI technologies, ChatGPT (Generative Pre-trained Transformer), introduced in November 2022, has drawn attention to its diverse applications in the industry (Demir & Demir, 2023). Xu et al. (2024) demonstrate that ChatGPT can transform the tourist experience by offering personalised recommendations in a timely manner, increasing the efficiency of trip planning and facilitating better decision-making. However, research on ChatGPT in tourism is still in its embryonic stage (Gursoy et al., 2023). Scholars suggest a need for empirical evidence on its emergence and customers' intentions to accept and use AI technologies such as ChatGPT in the tourism context (Gursoy et al., 2023). While previous studies, such as Xu et al. (2024), have proposed a conceptual framework to examine customer attitudes and behaviour toward using the ChatGPT in travel services, they have not comprehensively addressed the factors that impact customer trust in Chat GPT. Della Corte et al. (2023) found social influence, hedonic motivation, anthropomorphism, perceived risk and technology dependence to influence trust in AI service robots. However, limited attention has been given to how trust in ChatGPT affects customer satisfaction and acceptance behaviours (Duong et al., 2024). Further, most available studies were conducted in developed countries (Della Corte et al., 2023), little evidence is found in developing countries. Adapting the Artificially Intelligent Device Use Acceptance (AIDUA) theory proposed by Gursoy et al. (2019), this study proposes a model to explore the role of trust in shaping customer attitudes and acceptance behaviours when using ChatGPT in the Vietnamese tourism context.

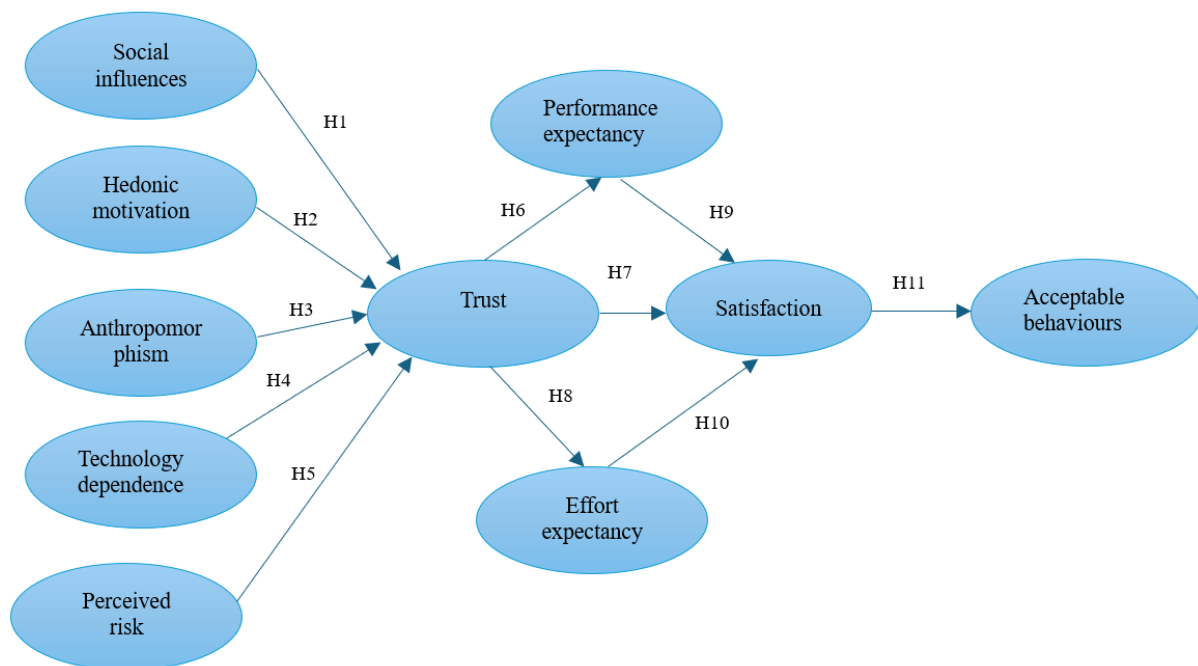


Figure 1: Proposed research model

## Results

Data were gathered from 475 respondents in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The majority of respondents (54%) were female. The largest age group represented was 18–25 years (57%), followed by those aged 26–35 years (21%). 68% of respondents have bachelor's degrees. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS and AMOS V.29. Outliers and normality were assessed through univariate data screening, with Z scores. Multivariate outliers were identified using Mahalanobis distance (D2). Skewness and kurtosis values were found to be within the acceptable range, confirming data normality for Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) analysis. The results of the model are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Structural model results from hypothesis testing**

Hypothesis	$\beta$	t	Supported/Not Supported
H1: Social Influence→ Trust	0.15	3.460***	Supported
H2: Hedonic motivation→ Trust	0.11	2.639***	Supported
H3: Anthropomorphism→ Trust	-0.05	-1.332	Not Supported
H4: Technology dependence→ Trust	0.80	14.411***	Supported
H5: Perceived risk→ Trust	0.03	0.086	Not Supported
H6: Trust→ Performance expectancy	0.73	14.820***	Supported
H7: Trust→ Satisfaction	0.80	17.274***	Supported
H8: Trust→ Effort expectancy	0.12	2.303**	Supported
H9: Performance expectancy→ Satisfaction	-0.21	-4.820***	Supported
H10: Effort expectancy→ Satisfaction	-0.04	-1.617	Not Supported
H11: Satisfaction→ Acceptance behaviours	0.71	14.161***	Supported

**Note:**  $\chi^2$  (681) = 1702.160,  $P < 0.001$ , RMSEA = 0.058, SRMR = .0774, IFI = 0.932, TLI = 0.926, CFI = 0.932

\*\*\* $P < 0.001$ ; \*\* $P < 0.05$

The results indicated that acceptance behaviours toward using ChatGPT in tourism is determined by complex multistage process. Consumers form their trust perceptions based on several factors, including social influence, hedonic motivation, and technology dependence that impact trust in ChatGPT. Trust significantly influences consumers' assessment of performance expectations, the effort and their satisfaction required to use ChatGPT. In the final stage, consumer determined their acceptance behaviours based on their satisfaction. The findings provide theoretical contributions and practical applications. This study extends AIDUA theory by developing and examining a model that explores several factors influencing customer attitudes and behaviours toward ChatGPT in the tourism context and the underlying mechanisms driving these effects. The findings also offer valuable insights for stakeholders such as destination managers, AI developers, and policymakers, guiding them in adopting AI models like ChatGPT to improve the tourist experience.

**Keywords:** *chatGPT, trust, satisfaction, acceptance behaviour, tourism*

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# TIK TOKKING ANTARCTICA: WHEN VIRAL VIDEOS CHALLENGE VALUES

Anne Hardy<sup>a</sup>, Yue Ma<sup>a</sup> and Can Seng Ooi<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Tasmania

## ABSTRACT

During the summer of 2022/2023, Antarctic tourism ‘trended’ on Tik Tok, the world’s fastest growing social media platform. #Antarctica, #Drakepassage and #Antarcticatok were popular terms, resulting in more than 200 million views. For the Antarctic tourism industry and stakeholders, this situation was both a blessing and a curse. Over the past five years the Antarctic tourism industry has experienced very rapid growth, and the attention given to the region through these videos may have been welcomed by many industry marketers. However, at the same, the frivolous, humorous and highly mediated content stood in stark contrast to the values of Antarctica, as enshrined in the Antarctic Treaty system.

This presentation will explore this phenomenon and in doing so, will explore how events such as these can signify the way in which places are perceived. It will reveal how high-ranking content creators can challenge the traditional imagery of places; in this case it challenged the image of Antarctica as a remote, pristine location where science and heroic exploration has occurred. Furthermore, this presentation will highlight how, for some content creators, destinations (in this case Antarctica) can serve merely as backdrops for them, as they promote their travelling accolades and experiences. Ultimately, the presentation will posit that representations of Antarctica may have become decoupled from its traditional values.

To date, there are very few, if any, examples of studies that analyse the content of tourists’ TikTok posts. For our analysis we examined the content of 31 of the most watched TikTok posts (over 200 million ‘views’ combined) that emerged over the Austral summer of 2022/2023. We designed a novel, qualitative, multimodal analysis of the TikTok videos and assessed visuals, sound, text, and the reactions that emerged from the posts. Our methodology is an extension of that used by Zhu et al. (2020) with additional dimensions: positioning, emotions and comments. Arguably this approach is one of the first of its type to assess how tourists record and reflect upon their experiences, and how places are presented via Tik Tok.

Conceptually, this article adds an additional voice to the exploration of digital place making- tourists. This approach was employed as Antarctica has no permanent population. Ultimately, we further understandings of place-making in Antarctica and specifically the concept of *Antarctification*, by including the tourists’ voice to the process. Varnojot et al. (2024, p. 62) argued that *Antarctification* is a practice whereby Antarctica is portrayed as remote and wild. Significantly our findings stand in stark contrast with this and previous research that has suggested Antarctic tourism is a more ethical and non-mass form of tourism (Merchant, 2003).

Practically, this presentation will illustrate the challenges that the tourism industry and destination managers face when allowing visitation to an environmentally sensitive region. In particular it emphasises the dissonance that may occur between policy makers and the experiences of tourists.



**Keywords:** *Antarctic tourism, Tik Tok, tourism methodologies, video analysis*

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# TOTAL HOTEL REVENUE MANAGEMENT IMPLEMENTATION IN AUSTRALIA – ARE WE THERE YET?

Antoine Bisson<sup>a</sup> and Samuel Vivas Imparato<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Torrens University Australia

## ABSTRACT

Revenue management (RM) was first implemented in the hotel industry in the 1980's and its approach was focused on maximising rooms occupancy, which switched to pricing and optimising rooms revenue in the 2000's (Cross et al., 2009). Total Hotel Revenue Management (THRM) represents an evolution from that traditional RM approach, focusing on the optimisation of total revenue by expanding RM practices to non-rooms revenue streams, adding focus to customer value, and shifting performance metrics to profit-focused that consider acquisition and variable costs (Helmold, 2020; Fenyves, 2019; Noone et al., 2017). Even though these principles that break from traditional RM were introduced to the literature over two decades ago (Forte, 2000), the rate of publications on THRM has remained relatively low over this time. Acknowledging that there has been adjacent literature on specific parts of THRM, such as distribution channel management or non-rooms revenue management, the subject of THRM including all its aspects has been underexplored (Denizci Guillet, 2020). In practice, scholars predict its role in RM strategy will continue to expand (Helmold, 2020).

A review of the THRM limited literature leads to a diverse range of discussions, with some findings suggesting THRM is a major concern for leaders of industry (Kimes, 2017). Furthermore, the literature identifies a shift in practice from traditional rooms-only RM to an integrative approach that requires the implementation of big data analyses, forecast tools and organisational changes (Helmold, 2020). These requirements necessitate a deliberate strategy pertaining to technology infrastructure, channel performance, optimal channel mix and profit indicators (Sharma, 2022). Though many companies still apply metrics like RevPAR, there is knowledge and infrastructure to support the tracking of other metrics, like NRevPAR or GOPPAR (Remy et al., 2023). This supports the findings suggesting that the shift to THRM has not been significant (Kimes, 2017), and that many managers, especially outside large chain hotels, have not broken with traditional RM practices yet (Ivanov et al., 2021). The irregularities observed in implementation are related to strategic challenges such as lack of talent, employee education and technological deficiencies (Zheng & Forgacs, 2017), all which are limitedly accessible to smaller operators. Additionally, managers who have shifted to a THRM approach might not be applying all principles found in the literature (Denizci Guillet, 2020).

THRM strategy implementation is highly dependent on market variables such as talent pool, competitive forces and technology availability (Zheng & Forgacs, 2017); thus, any study discussing the adoption of THRM practices must be bounded by a market (e.g., Ivanov et al., 2021; Kocourek et al., 2023). This study aims to explore THRM in the Australian hotel industry. Using an exploratory lens, this research will be conducted through a qualitative inductive approach to investigate the perceptions and attitudes of hotel managers towards THRM and examine current practices. The objectives are to assess the practical realities of THRM in this context and identify the gaps between academic knowledge and industry practice. The selected method allows participants to share their experiences in their own words (Veal, 2011), providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being

studied (Jennings, 2001). The study will involve Australian hotel managers who are actively involved in revenue decision-making.

Respondents will be screened using convenience sampling methods, to only focus on hotels applying THRM. Data will then be collected through online semi-structured interviews, allowing for probing questions to be asked to gather detailed information (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2017). Conducting interviews online will also enable the participation of individuals across different geographical regions. The interviews will continue until data saturation is reached, indicating that no new or additional findings are emerging (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2017). The collected data will then be analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes across the interviews.

**Keywords:** *total hotel revenue management; revenue management; non-room revenue streams; performance metrics; Australian hotels*

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# TOURISM EMPLOYMENT GLOBAL VALUE CHAINS: A STEPPED, MULTI- DIRECTIONAL AND CONFIGURATIONAL CONCEPTUALISATION

Richard N.S. Robinson<sup>a</sup>, Tom Baum<sup>b</sup> and Adele Ladkin<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Northumbria University, <sup>b</sup>University of Strathclyde, <sup>c</sup>Bournemouth University

## ABSTRACT

Complexity is inherent to tourism services and further amplified in its supply chain (Alkier, Milojica & Roblek, 2023). Tourism supply chains are currently being increasingly scrutinised in the context of effecting transparent auditing guidelines especially in relation to environmental and social governance (ESG) agendas, yet the prevailing focus remains firmly on (more objectively measurable) environmental sustainability dimensions (Miller, 2023). The social aspect, particularly related to a) the distribution, and b) the highly mobile nature, of human labour across the tourism supply chain, is neglected. Global value chains have gained currency as an advancement on supply chains, with the focus of the former increasingly concerned with delivering value to the apex stakeholder, or lead firm. International agencies have for some time been interested in labour and value chains (Pegler & Knorringer, 2007) but this has not permeated into tourism studies. This paper seeks to critically problematise human employment, and labour flows, within and along the global tourism supply, or value, chain. We identify three dimensions worth considering, each grounded in a labour mobilities paradigm (Duncan, Scott & Baum, 2013).

First, tourists have stepped touchpoints with the tourism labour supply chain: from their point of origin, along the chain and in destination, and crucially may not be co-located with the labour creating value, for instance with an online travel agent (OTA) (Huang et al., 2012). Second, in terms of mobile labour, a presumptuous underpinning in supply, and hence global value, chain research is that labour moves in a straight line from a cheaper and more plentiful origin towards, at least for the benefit of, apex organisations. This normally articulates as workers in the geographic South moving towards, if not to, the North (e.g., Terry, 2016). Nonetheless, tourism labour is as inherently mobile as the industry itself. Labour flows, and hence the value chain, also moves from North to South, for instance in the case of ex-patriates, from North to North, and South to South (e.g., from rural to urban destinations, see Robinson et al. 2014). North and South also operates metaphorically, for instance capturing micro-mobilities, say from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to more affluent ones that function as tourism destinations. Moreover, and thirdly, the configuration of value chains differs substantially. At one end of the spectrum a value chain might be comprised of numerous free market actors whereby price setting and other controls are flexibly set at various points, positively impacting labour relations. At the other end of the spectrum, characterized by high power asymmetries, are integrated value chains (Hernández & Pedersen, 2017), often controlling labour conditions (e.g., McDonalds re 'propertied labour, see Tsing, 2009).

We further invoke the concept of motilities (Kaufmann, Bergman, Joye, 2004), that is the potential capacities of working and moving within and along the global supply chain, as opposed to mobility actualities. This accounts for the stepped nature of tourism employment within the supply chain, the multi-directionality of tourism labour along the supply chain and the constraints and enablers that various configurations along the supply chain collectively determine where 'value' is assigned. Theoretically, motilities provide a frame to conceptualise the complexities and dynamics of tourism labour mobilities when sat alongside global value chain narratives. Generating more granular and nuanced definitions and understandings can inform ESG policy and practice, as nascent motilities theorising is achieving (see Lin et al., 2024). Considering the stepped, multi-directional and

configurational dimensions of tourism labour can facilitate more transparency and accountability across the intransigent ‘stuckiness’ of ‘immobile’ tourism employment knowledge, policy and practice structures.

**Keywords:** *Global value chain, tourism & hospitality labour, mobilities, motility*

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# TRADITIONAL YOUTH MOBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY IN TRAVEL

Christian Schott<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand

## ABSTRACT

Rapid technological advancement and concurrent societal changes are impacting virtually all aspects of life including leisure and work mobility (Sheldon et al., 2008). Not surprisingly most tourism research is concerned with the related changes and how to best adapt both supply and demand to a rapidly evolving world. In contrast, comparably little attention is paid to the mobility practices that are resilient to the seismic changes experienced over the last decades and continue to celebrate values and practices which have changed little over the last century. Although non-leisure driven youth mobility traditions used to exist in many Western countries such as the United States, the UK, and Australia (Adler, 1985; Webb & Webb, 1920; West, 2001) few have survived to the present day. One notable exception is the Central European tradition of Wanderschaft, also known as Walz, a form of mobility for crafts people that is organized and supported by guilds. Because the Walz is for young people during the important transitional life stage between adolescents and adulthood it is closely related to van Gennep's (1960) Rites of Passage. The tradition is driven by the notion that contact with both nature and other people is core to people's development and that travel broadens not only the mind and the soul. Many of the rules and practices that underlie this tradition date back to medieval times and have changed little over the last two hundred years. Specifically, the Wandergesellens' motivations for choosing such an unconventional and tradition-laden approach to 'work and travel' will be examined with a view to developing an understanding of the tradition's appeal to today's young people and for learnings to be crystalised for tourism researchers and practitioners particularly in the context of sustainable and regenerative tourism.

There are a number of contemporary mobilities traditions that are mostly practiced by young people and although they provide some parallels to the Walz tradition they are all inherently different in that the motivations and practices are firmly anchored in the culture of the origin countries; these include the New Zealand youth ritual of living and travelling around Europe and beyond for several years (Bell, 2002; Schott, 2013), the Israeli practice of the long trip after military service (Maoz, 2007; Noy, 2005), as well as some considerably shorter youth travel experiences such as the visa-enabled practice of work and travel (Brennan, 2014)

To provide a better understanding of this tradition it is important to illuminate the distinctive features of this centuries-old tradition. Unlike in the case of the Kiwi Big OE (Bell, 2002), the Israeli long trip (Maoz, 2007), or contemporary work and travel practices (Brennan, 2014) the practice is upheld and supported by guilds, associations of crafts people dating back to the middle ages, which celebrate the tradition through changing times, provide awareness about the tradition, and enforce the 'statutes' of the Wanderschaft. These statutes that all Wandergesellen are bound by vary slightly between the guilds, but generally include the key rule that they can't return to within 50km of their home for three years and a day; thus encouraging travelling and learning about different places and peoples. Additionally, walzing youth are required to wear a century-old outfit that celebrates their craft and guild, to possess only a minimalist bundle of belongings, and not to own a mobile phone or a car as these items are seen as disconnecting and isolating. Although these young people are very resourceful when needed, the tradition is founded on traditional societal values of supporting those that have less as well as the generosity of strangers for food, transport, and accommodation. As such there are several linkages to sustainable tourism. As such, prominent contemporary trends and debates in tourism, such as slow travel

(Dickinson et al., 2011) and slow tourism (Schott & Schänzel, 2024), couch surfing (Molz, 2013), and the sharing or collaborative economy (Dredge & Gyimóthy, 2015) are all connected to the Wanderschaft tradition. Wandergesellen walk significant parts of their Wander-schaft to connect with and learn from nature and local people. While the statutes allow them to, and they commonly ‘hitch’ a ride in a car, truck or even a boat, the use of public transport in contrast is frowned upon.

Informed by semi-structured interviews with the guilds that uphold the traditions, as well as young men and women who have completed their Wanderschaft, this study examines the links between the tradition and the contemporary concepts of sustainable and regenerative tourism.

**Keywords:** *Wanderschaft, Youth travel, youth mobility, rites of passage, sustainability*

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# TRAVEL STORY-MAKING: A NOVEL APPROACH FOR ENGAGING CHILDREN IN TOURISM RESEARCH

Zhuxian (Zoey) Li<sup>a</sup>, Elaine Chiao Ling Yang<sup>a</sup>, Truc H. Le<sup>a</sup> and Charles Arcodia<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of Tourism, Sport and Hotel Management, Griffith University

## ABSTRACT

Existing research on child tourists remains limited, with most studies concentrating on two main areas: the roles and influence of children in family travel decision-making (e.g., Li et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2020) and the tourism experiences of children themselves (e.g., Melvin et al., 2020; Pomfret & Varley, 2019). While these studies have offered valuable insights, many still focus more on adult perspectives rather than fully considering and respecting children's views and feelings (Canosa et al., 2018). Therefore, there has been a recent shift towards involving children directly as active participants in tourism experience research, recognizing them as capable of providing valuable insights into their own experiences (e.g., Sojasi et al., 2021; Tong et al., 2020). Despite this progress, current research still faces two main gaps. First, in terms of research methodology, it lacks innovative methodologies specifically designed to accommodate children's developmental stages and effectively elicit their perspectives (Khoo-Lattimore, 2015; Poria & Timothy, 2014). Second, from an ethical standpoint, most studies have focused primarily on minimizing the physical and psychosocial risks to child participants rather than proactively offering benefits during the research process (Canosa et al., 2017; Graham et al., 2013). These gaps limit the ability to capture children's authentic experiences and viewpoints and hinder efforts to ensure that their involvement in research is advantageous to them.

Accordingly, this research aims to establish a framework for creating a meaningful research participation experience for children involved in tourism experience studies. We draw on our empirical study of children's family tourism experience to illustrate how a travel journal, which is a type of visual journal incorporating various expressive mediums such as drawing, scribbling, and painting (Bieg, 2011), can facilitate children's self-expression while providing comprehensive benefits for them. We reframed the study as a 'travel story-making' process, allowing children to illustrate their expectations before the trip (story beginning), record experiences in real-time during the trip (main storyline), and share reflections after the trip (story conclusion). In contrast to traditional storytelling, which primarily relies on participants recalling past travel experiences through oral or written expression (Mei et al., 2020), travel story-making not only offers children greater autonomy in their methods of expression but also captures experiences in real-time. This approach helps avoid the loss of specific details and nuances that often occurs with the recollection of past experiences (Snelgrove & Havitz, 2010).

Furthermore, child participants benefit greatly from the story-making process. Physically, the hands-on tasks involved in creating travel journals, like drawing, cutting, doodling, and making collages, enhanced children's fine motor skills. Cognitively, the process stimulated children's creativity by encouraging them to use their imagination and observations to create unique travel stories through different forms of expression. It also helped develop their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities as they navigated the challenges of story-making. Psychosocially, the children experienced growth in social skills through group collaboration with parents and researchers, learning to communicate, share, negotiate, and cooperate effectively. Additionally, the successful completion of their stories bolstered their self-esteem, reinforced their confidence, and some even chose to share their stories with friends and family, further enhancing their sense of achievement.

The value of this research lies in its innovative approach to addressing two significant gaps in existing tourism experience research involving children. First, it introduces travel journals as part of a 'travel story-making' process, incorporating various expressive mediums tailored to children's developmental stages. This approach effectively captures children's genuine perspectives and actively engages them as competent informants, offering a more accurate and rich understanding of their tourism experiences. It is not limited by specific travel locations and can be widely applied in studies of children's tourism experiences. Second, this research ensures more comprehensive and profound ethical conduct by not only focusing on harm reduction but also providing physical, cognitive, and psychosocial benefits to child participants throughout the research process. This emphasis on ethical and inclusive practices ensures the integrity of the research and contributes to more effective research in the field of children's tourism experiences.

**Keywords:** *tourism experience; child engagement in research; innovative methodology; child research ethics*

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# UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONAL LABOUR OF NEURODIVERGENT HOSPITALITY EMPLOYEES: PHENOMENOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

Kritty Ghosh<sup>a</sup>, Madalyn Scerri<sup>a</sup> and Anita Manfreda<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Torrens University Australia

## ABSTRACT

Hospitality employees work in a dynamic and fast-paced environment with the necessity of delivering high levels of customer service (Bhattacharya & Dasgupta, 2021). The conditions of their employment vary depending on the establishment and their role, however, there are several common elements that they experience. Employees often work long hours and irregular shifts, undertake physically strenuous tasks and experience mistreatment from guests whilst still presenting a pleasant demeanour around them (Jung & Yoon, 2016). This engages them in emotional labour, adding a further layer of complexity to their work (Jung & Yoon, 2016).

Introduced by Hochschild (1983), emotional labour refers to suppressing an individual's authentic emotions to portray organisation-set display rules. While emotional labour is inevitable in the hospitality industry and significantly impacts the well-being of employees (Bhattacharya & Dasgupta, 2021), very little is known about how it affects neurodiverse employees. In Australia, an estimated 30-40% of the population is neurodivergent (ABS, 2022), suggesting a significant presence of neurodiverse individuals in the hospitality workforce. Furthermore, neurodiverse employees face particular challenges in masking and managing emotional labour, creating a conflicting and potentially exhausting burden (Pryke-Hobbes et al., 2023). The hospitality industry's reliance on emotional labour highlights the need for neurodivergent-inclusive practices that recognise diverse approaches (Meacham et al., 2017). With over 320 million individuals employed globally, the hospitality industry possesses the innate capability to support transformative social change through employment (Fisk et al., 2018).

In this context, humanistic human resources (HR) practices are essential to reconceptualise the organisational climate, fostering inclusivity and improving the work experience for neurodiverse employees. Despite the growing recognition of the importance of including neurodivergent employees in the workforce (Austin & Pisano, 2017) and the significance of emotional labour in service-oriented industries (Bhattacharya & Dasgupta, 2021), there remains a dearth of understanding of the lived emotional labour experiences of neurodiverse employees and how HR practitioners can effectively support neurodivergent individuals in managing emotional demands, in order to enhance their well-being, job satisfaction, and overall performance in a demanding industry.

Employing a phenomenological approach, this study's aim is threefold: first, to elucidate the lived experiences of emotional labour for neurodivergent individuals, gaining insight into their perceptions and challenges; second, to examine the perspectives of both neurodivergent employees and HR practitioners regarding existing HR-led practices designed to support emotional labour; third, to identify potential gaps between current HR practices and the needs of neurodivergent employees in managing emotional labour. Informed by an interpretivist paradigm, this study delves deep into the rich subjective experiences of neurodiverse hospitality workers and HR practitioners (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). A qualitative approach, through in-depth semi-structured interviews, will explore the



experiences, perspectives, and meanings associated with the phenomenon under investigation. Further, applying a high-engagement research methodology, which involves subject-oriented and context-specific techniques that use a blend of creative and traditional methods, will facilitate engagement with hard-to-access and vulnerable participant groups (Manfreda et al., 2023). For this, a toolkit of inclusive data collection practices will be adopted to cater for the needs of neurodivergent hospitality workers including communication practices, sensory grounding tools, inclusive interview protocols, and study documentation.

This study is expected to bridge a crucial gap in the literature by exploring the intersection of neurodiversity and emotional labour. This contribution will address an under-researched area, with new insights into how neurodivergent individuals in the hospitality industry experience and manage emotional labour in the workplace. By applying a HER method, the study is expected to provide rich, in-depth phenomenological insights, offering a holistic and realistic view of workplace challenges and strategies. Moreover, the study is expected to contribute to the theoretical understanding of inclusive workplace behaviour by accounting for a wider range of neurocognitive variations, leading to more comprehensive models of workplace inclusion that reflect the diversity of human cognition. The insights from this study are anticipated to inform curated training programs that could contribute towards professional development and enhance workplace experiences of neurodivergent employees.

**Keywords:** *Emotional Labour; Hospitality Workforce; Humanistic HR; Phenomenology; Disability; Inclusion*

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# UNDERSTANDING FAMILIES TOURISTS' EXPERIENCE OF VISITING WAR HERITAGE SITE

Chang (Cherise) Li<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Qingdao University

## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the visiting experiences of family tourists at the Opium War Museum in China. Through 24 on-site in-depth interviews of family tourists', the study found that under the premise of family education as the driving force, the educational experience is the main experience component of family tourists. Meanwhile, Chinese parents' strong sense of responsibility for family education is identified in their travel motivations. In this circumstance, dark tourism is used as an educational tool to cultivate children's cognitive abilities, personal qualities, patriotic emotions, and national identity. The study results not only provide valuable implications for the destination management of dark tourism but also make up for the lack of family tourism research in current tourism research.

**Keywords:** *Family tourism; Dark tourism; Family education; Confucian culture; War heritage site*

## Introduction

Associated with death, war, and sad memories, dark tourism drives people's commemoration of death and mortality without involving terror or fear (Seaton, 2018; Stone, 2012). For tourists, motivations for visiting dark sites can range from serious personal pilgrimage or learning from death, to casual curiosity. Such richness and complexity can also be discerned in the multifaceted experience of visitors concurrently (Light, 2017). Distinguishing between types of tourists helps in understanding their motivations and experiences for visiting dark sites. In this regard, destination managers are required to be clear about the tourism niche sector they can fit into and to understand what kind of tourism products should be provided to meet tourists' expectations in this sector. Similar to the problems faced by other types of tourism, dark tourism research mainly focuses on individual travelers as the research subjects and occupies a dominant position in the tourism narrative (Light, 2017). This has led to the marginalization of family tourists' dynamics in tourism research and has left destinations with limited research bases for targeting relevant groups and providing corresponding services in tourism products.

In today's world, the family is one of the most basic and important consumption units. In the tourism market, family tourism is the fastest-growing sector accounting for about 30% of the leisure and tourism market and this growth is particularly evident in Asian countries (Chen et al., 2022; Miyakawa & Oguchi, 2022). At the same time, family tourism plays a positive role in strengthening family ties, promoting internal communication within the family unit, and improving happiness, which has led to this type of tourism attracting widespread attention from society, industry, and academia in recent years. Although some early studies focused on the visiting experience of dark sites from students' or children's perspective (Dresler, 2024; Jang et al., 2021), there is a relative lack of research investigating tourists as a family unit. To fill this research gap, this study aims to explore tourists' motivation and experience of family tourists. The study findings unpack the intergenerational transmission of family education in dark tourism from a generativity perspective.

## Research method and preliminary findings

The Opium War Museum, China is selected as the study site, which includes two museums and one war relics site. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted from September 2022 to May 2023 through the purposive sampling technic to recruit parents visiting with children (Etikan et al., 2016). By conducting a thematic analysis following Clarke et al. (2015)'s six analytical steps, some initial insights can be drawn from the interview data collected from the 24 respondents.

First, parent-led visiting motivated by educational purpose is the main reason for families to visit

the Opium War Museum. The educational experience is also largely identified in the tourists' experience. This is consistent with the identified tourists' experiences of dark tourism research in general (Iliev, 2021), cognitive experience, especially educational experience, is prominent in destinations involving the War of national aggression (Meng & Xu, 2021; Weaver et al., 2018). Regardless of the age of their children, whether they are preschoolers or teenagers, parents visit dark tourism sites and museums with the intention of letting their children "learn something". Interestingly, in the eyes of parents, children can gain not only historical knowledge, but also the cultivation of personal qualities through on-site visiting. For instance, they expressed that children can learn about the harm of opium through historical lessons of Opium War, so their children will have the awareness to stay away from drugs. Second, the patriotic sentiments and national identity are passed on from parents to the next generation through education and intergenerational transmission at the Opium War Museum. This is achieved invisibly through on-site visiting and learning. For example, parents' on-site explanations and interpretations help children understand the background knowledge of the Opium War from a historical and cultural perspective; Children learn the spirit of national heroes and cultivate their patriotic emotions. Third, the characteristics of China's family tourists emerged through their motivations and experiences of visiting the Opium War Museum. This is mainly reflected in Chinese parents' sense of responsibility and China's Confucian values that emphasize parent-child education.

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# UNDERSTANDING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS' APPROACHES TO PLACEMAKING AND EVENTS

Insun Sunny Son<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of South Australia

## ABSTRACT

Public spaces are more than just a geographic location; they are a unique combination of physical form, the activities that occur there, and a sense of attachment people have to the space (Phillips, 2009). Research indicates that quality public spaces encourage liveable and healthy neighbourhoods by promoting healthy, happy, and resilient communities, and generate positive social, economic, cultural, and environmental outcomes (Brownnett & Evans, 2020; Phillips, 2009; Son, Krolikowski, Rentschler, & Huang, 2022). With the advent of the pandemic, the importance of public spaces, particularly local ones, has become more widely recognised as they served as meeting places, and spaces for exercise for local communities. As such, the delivery and management of quality public spaces have become a renewed focus for many local governments that own and manage these spaces. While this underscores the importance of placemaking, understanding the practice of local governments, a key driver of placemaking, remains limited. This paper aims to understand local governments' perspectives on placemaking, particularly the challenges associated with the placemaking process and its implementation, as well as the importance of events in placemaking.

This study consisted of three mix-method stages of data collection using a modified Delphi technique to understand the challenges associated with the local governments' placemaking process and implementation and to establish key indicators important to local governments' placemaking. Stage 1: Interviews with individuals responsible for placemaking from 19 councils (11 from South Australia, 6 from Victoria, and 2 from New South Wales) aimed to build a deeper understanding of their practice and inform the development of specific placemaking indicators that are important to local governments. Stage 2: An online survey assessed the relevance of the indicators identified in Stage 1. Participants from Stage 1 were asked to review and rate the appropriateness of each developed indicator using a four-point scale. Stage 3: A follow-up survey validated the updated placemaking indicator based on the Stage 2 results and evaluated the importance of each placemaking indicator. Ten respondents participated in both Stage 2 and Stage 3. Thematic analysis was employed for the interviews, and the Content Validity Ratio (CVR) was calculated in Stages 2 and 3 to eliminate items below the cut-off point, while mean scores ranked the importance of each indicator in Stage 3.

The indicators that are important to local governments' placemaking were identified and ranked (Table 1). The two most important placemaking indicators are resource-related, while the third is governance-related, including the existence of a council-endorsed placemaking strategy, regular community consultations, and the use of information intelligence for evaluation. Events were identified as the fourth most important indicator for placemaking from the local government perspective, highlighting their crucial role in achieving placemaking goals. Various approaches to adopting events for placemaking purposes were explored. For example, some councils do not organise their own events but instead sponsor or provide grants for community-initiated/led events. In contrast, some councils primarily allocate their festival and event budgets to organising their own events, leaving only a small amount available for grants. Generally, regional councils operate with significantly smaller funding allocations for festivals and events which explains the smaller number of festivals and events organised by regional councils, compared to metro councils. Regional councils also tend to outsource event delivery. Achieving a well-balanced

combination of top-down and bottom-up placemaking was found to be essential.

Table 1. The ranking of indicators that are important to local government's placemaking

Rank	Indicator
1	Human Resources
2	Operational Budget
3	Placemaking Governance
4	Place Activation: Events
5	Place Character / Accessibility
6	Place Activation: Public Arts
7	Environmental Sustainability
8	Facilities

The key challenges identified for local councils in placemaking were found to generally apply across all placemaking efforts, including events. 1) Managing community expectations and needs. The dynamic and often conflicting nature of community groups' expectations renders the task of finding a balance or meeting these demands particularly challenging. 2) the insufficient allocation of resources, including open spaces, financial support, and human resources. For some councils, placemaking are not deemed a priority, leading to a lack of funding and long-term financial forecasting. Councils with high-density areas face a distinct challenge. The limited available land and open space pose a significant hurdle, imposing constraints on the realisation of placemaking plans. 3) The collaborative nature of placemaking demands coordination with various units, teams and departments within the council. However, this collaborative approach can be challenging in the presence of ambiguity, a lack of recognition for placemaking within the broader council, and conflicting priorities among different teams, hindering a holistic approach to placemaking. 4) While councils generally understand community wants and needs, a noteworthy challenge arises in capturing the impact of placemaking projects. Effectively assessing and measuring outcomes during the post-project evaluation phase presents considerable difficulties, particularly when it comes to intangible and long-term effects, such as changes in sense of place, community well-being, and place image and identity.

This study contributes to the existing literature on placemaking by providing an understanding of local governments' perspectives on the challenges and processes associated with effective placemaking. Additionally, the findings underscore the importance of events as integral components of placemaking, challenging traditional views that often overlook the role of community-driven activities or soft placemaking initiatives in enhancing public spaces. The practical implications of this study are significant for local governments. By identifying key challenges and indicators related to placemaking, the findings can inform policy development and strategic planning efforts aimed at enhancing public spaces.

**Keywords:** *Placemaking, Place activation, Events, Festivals, Local Governments*

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# WAYS OF BEING WELL: THE ROLE OF SAVORING IN TOURIST'S WELLBEING

Christian Schott<sup>a</sup>, Erika Miyakawa<sup>b</sup> and Johannes Karl<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Victoria University of Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand, <sup>b</sup>International Christian University, Japan,

<sup>c</sup>Stanford University, USA

## ABSTRACT

While conceptually addressing similar questions, intellectual relationships between tourism research and positive psychology are still tentative. A recent review of the emerging transdisciplinary field (Vada et al., 2020) identified savoring as central antecedent to understanding touristic experience and tourists' well-being. Essential to understanding touristic experiences is to examine individual approaches and subjective experiences of lived experiences. Until recently touristic research adopted mostly qualitative approaches to understanding savoring (Filep et al., 2013) and only recently quantitative approaches have been introduced from the field of positive psychology (Vada et al., 2020). In our study we aim to utilize psychological approaches to savoring and wellbeing to provide insight into individuals ways of experiencing touristic experiences and the potential effects of these approaches on wellbeing.

Savoring from a positive psychology perspective captures individuals' strategies to interact with their feelings in reaction to positive experiences (Bryant, 1989, 2003). These strategies include sharing the experience with others (seeking out people with whom to enjoy an event or telling others how much you value the moment), being absorbed in the moment (not thinking about the moment, but rather existing in the moment), counting blessings (creating gratitude), selfcongratulation (creating pride), memory building (purposefully trying to remember the positive event), behavior expression (expressing physical joy), and sensory-perceptual sharpening (focusing on the physical sensations of a pleasant experience) (for an overview see: Bryant, 2006). Individuals do not only employ these amplifying strategies when faced with positive experiences to enhance positive affect, but they can also employ dampening responses reducing positive emotions (Jose et al., 2012). These strategies include killjoy thinking (negative evaluations about enjoyment), comparing (comparison with prior experiences), and temporal awareness (perceiving time as fleeting).

Previous tourism research has investigated emotions expressed as result of savoring (Filep et al., 2013), savoring of different stages of touristic experience (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004), and targets of savoring (Farber & Hall, 2007). Conceptually, savoring strategies are thought to shape the reaction to touristic experiences, modifying the relationship between the experience and the subsequent outcomes such as well-being. In their conceptual paper Yan and Halpenny (2019) proposed that individuals might employ the different savoring (especially sharing) strategies identified by Bryant and Veroff (2006) to enhance the outcome of the touristic experience and in turn feel greater positive affect. While it is currently unclear how cognizant individuals are of their strategies, previous work shows substantial variability of the strategies (e.g., kill-joy, or behavioral expression) employed by individuals (Bryant, 1989, 2003) which can be expected to influence the outcome of touristic experiences. Indeed, initially empirical studies have found that memory building, counting blessings are positively related to vacation enjoyment, whereas killjoy thinking is negatively related, supporting the notion that savoring might modulate individuals touristic experience (Smith & Bryant, 2013). Differences in savoring might not only alter individuals vacation experience, but also potentially help to prolong wellbeing obtained during this experience (de Bloom et al., 2013). Understanding individual differences in savoring strategies in relation to touristic experiences is essential as it provides a potential avenue to understand the mechanism through which touristic experiences might produce wellbeing for individuals (Filep & Laing, 2018). Importantly, savoring might produce a range of wellbeing effects which have not been differentiated in previous research on touristic experience and savoring.

The current study aims to fill the gap between savoring touristic experiences and wellbeing identified in recent reviews (see for example Filep & Laing, 2018). We aim to address this gap in two ways:

First, we aim to provide a quantitative description of the ways of savoring employed in relation to a touristic experience. This provides an initial quantitative description of the ways of savoring utilized when engaging with touristic experiences. Second, we aim to identify the relationship between the approaches to savoring touristic experiences and eudaimonic/hedonic wellbeing. Using a sample of 347 participants we found that participants primarily employed strategies which focused on building meaningful memories, sharing the experience, as well as being absorbed and grateful. When we examined the relationship between these strategies and their psychological well-being in relation to the experience using a structural equation model, we found that sharing, absorption, and gratitude strategies were related to significantly greater wellbeing. This approach provides insight into what savoring strategies are employed by individuals and opens up avenues to mechanistic research on the link between wellbeing and touristic experiences.

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# WHAT DO CHRISTMAS ISLANDERS WANT FROM TOURISM? A CHOICE EXPERIMENT OF RESIDENT PREFERENCES REGARDING THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR DESTINATION

Noreen Breakey<sup>a</sup>, Le Diem Quynh Pham<sup>a</sup>, Thomas Magor<sup>a</sup>, Karen Hughes<sup>a</sup> and Faith Ong<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>The University of Queensland

## ABSTRACT

Among the various types of protected areas, national parks and marine parks play a particularly important role as they not only protect natural biodiversity but also contribute economic, cultural and social values to society. A priority concern for park management is to meet the outdoor recreation needs of visitors and livelihood needs of local communities without compromising its core function of environmental conservation (Stone et al., 2022). One possible way to achieve this is through sustainable tourism development, which necessitates the participation and collaboration of various stakeholders in both public and private sectors. However, the planning frameworks of destinations tend to focus on enhancing benefits for tourists and tourism businesses rather than for destination residents (Moscardo, 2011). Extant literature suggests that the local communities near protected areas comprise several resident groups (Gu et al., 2021) who have varying attitudes and preferences towards tourism development (Ojijo & Steiger, 2024; Sarr et al., 2020), but are often excluded from tourism planning and governance (Bello et al., 2017; Moscardo, 2011). The practice of community engagement in planning and management of national parks as tourism destinations is often questioned as tokenistic, disingenuous and inequitable (Hewlett & Edwards, 2013). This raises the crucial need for more research on resident attitudes and preferences to direct tourism development, especially in the early stages of tourism and for protected area-based destinations.

The current study is part of the activities under the Indian Ocean Territories (IOT) Marine Parks Grant sponsored by the Australian Commonwealth Government. Tourism in the IOT is at an early stage of destination development; therefore, there is a rare opportunity to place the region on a sustainable growth trajectory. Once unplanned, unsustainable, and even unwanted tourism growth is established, it is often impossible to reverse damages. This timely research aimed to elicit the IOT stakeholders' vision for tourism activities through a novel survey incorporating a choice experiment.

In light of the IOT's Christmas Island planned phasing out of mining over the coming decade, tourism has emerged as a development priority due to its potential employment and economic impacts (IOT Regional Development Organisation, 2022). To ensure such development is informed by the needs, wants, and expectations of the local people, this research surveyed residents who lived permanently or temporarily on the island, with varying degrees of involvement in tourism activities, and from different demographic groups and cultural backgrounds. While Christmas Island is an Australian territory, more than half of the households on the island reported that a non-English language was spoken at home, with 17% speaking Chinese and a further 17% speaking Malay (Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, 2016). Significant efforts, including translation of the survey and engagement with local community groups, were made to capture the diversity within this island population. As part of the choice experiment, participants were shown a series of hypothetical configurations of options which described different possible visions of the future of tourism on Christmas Island. The reason for selecting this methodology was that the choice tasks required participants to make trade-offs and deliberations between each of the presented configurations, revealing their true preferences (Hensher et al., 2005). In addition to the choice experiment, additional questions were included to investigate residents' general attitudes and opinions towards tourism.

This research contributes to the body of tourism literature concerning community engagement and destination planning, particularly in the context of protected areas, early tourism stages, and small island destination development. The significance and uniqueness of the IOT region make it a valuable case study for investigation. Furthermore, while choice experiment methodology has been used to understand what tourists want, it has not previously been used to determine residents' views regarding the future of tourism in their destination. The practical implications, as part of the grant activities, are the research findings informing the recommendations developed to support IOT stakeholders in planning and realising a sustainable tourism future.

**Keywords:** *Sustainable tourism, destination development, protected areas, community engagement, resident attitude, choice experiment*

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# WHAT INFLUENCES EMPLOYEES TO REMAIN IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY? THE CASE OF AUSTRALIA

Van K. Nguyen<sup>a</sup>, Ancy Gamage<sup>b</sup>, Esha Thukral<sup>a</sup>, Riccardo Natoli<sup>c</sup> and Joanne Pyke<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Melbourne Polytechnic, <sup>b</sup>RMIT University, <sup>c</sup>Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia

## ABSTRACT

The global tourism industry was severely impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic (World Tourism Organization, 2023). As the industry emerges from the crisis, labour shortages remain an ongoing challenge significantly affecting the continuity and operations of tourism businesses in the post-COVID era (Tourism Research Australia [TRA], 2023). In the context of Australia, tourism businesses of all sizes reported considerable difficulties in attracting and retaining staff (Bruno et al., 2022; Gamage et al., 2022). Different from prior crises, the extended lockdowns and mass layoffs resulted in a significant number of employees who were not just leaving their employer, but exiting the tourism industry (TRA, 2023; World Travel and Tourism Council, 2022). This has worsened the ongoing skills and staff shortages, presenting an important labour force matter not only to the recovery, but also the sustainable growth of the tourism industry (Liu-Lastres et al., 2023).

The contemporary literature has investigated workforce retention to tourism businesses. However, there is limited research focusing on how global crises, like the COVID-19 pandemic, affected the retention of employees to the tourism industry, rather than just a tourism organisation (Popa et al., 2023). The limited research on industry-wide retention is problematic especially given that the ongoing difficulties encountered by tourism organisations in retaining skilled staff tend to "... reside at the industry level and not solely at the organisational level where most research is focused" (King et al., 2021, p. 252). Informed by this background, this study aims to explore the factors influencing employee decision to remain in the tourism industry. Survey data were gathered in two phases: the first in 2021, during a period of lockdowns and restrictions in Victoria, Australia, and the second in 2022, as businesses began to recover following the end of all major lockdowns and restrictions. Logistic regression models were employed to analyse data from 498 tourism employees.

The results show that employee retention is influenced by various factors such as well-being which significantly impacts employees' decision to either remain or exit the industry. Further, human resource management (HRM) practices, including safety, empowerment, training, rewards, morale and motivation, significantly contribute to employee retention. Higher wage is positively associated with employee retention, yet this is only significant for those whose hourly wage is 40 AUD or higher in comparison to those who received less than 25 AUD. Age also has a significant impact employee retention. Specifically, employees aged 50 and above are more likely to remain in the tourism industry compared to those aged 18 to 29 years old. This study brings together two key theoretical approaches – Conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 2001) and Signaling theory (Spence, 2002) to explore the influencers of this ongoing issue of employee retention, while contributing to the literature by broadening theoretical discussions on employee retention at the industry level. This is important since the scholarly literature lacked a theoretical account of why employment and HRM conditions at the organisational level affect workforce retention at the industry level. We further address a knowledge gap regarding a lack of empirical research examining the impact of mega-sized crises on workforce retention. Using the unique context of the Covid-19 pandemic, this study provides empirical evidence on various factors affecting employees' decision to remain or exit the tourism industry. The research offers practical implications for government, industry bodies as well as tourism enterprises. It showcases a need for tailored approaches in well-being



strategies to foster a more resilient workforce while also reinforcing the importance of competitive wages in retaining employees, considering the ongoing low wages and unappealing financial compensation prevalent in the tourism industry. To address this, efforts should be made by the authorities to guarantee fair wage and job security for tourism employees. Finally, effective HRM practices are imperative to ensure a positive working environment that not only attracts top talent but also retains workers and fosters their long-term tourism careers.

**Keywords:** *Employee retention, the tourism industry, well-being, COVID-19, Australia.*

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# WHY AND WHY NOT TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY? THE CASE OF TASMANIAN SKILLED IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEURS' MARKET CHOICES

Wei Wally Zhang<sup>a</sup>, Can-Seng Ooi<sup>a</sup>, Heidi Dahles<sup>a</sup> and Anne Hardy<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Tasmania

## ABSTRACT

Many immigrants on student, graduate, and working holiday visas have established lives in Australia and are concerned about the reintegration process into their home societies. To secure an alternative settlement choice, many seek permanent residency in Australia. In this pursuit, many prioritise making themselves eligible for visa applications over their career goals or other personal aspirations. To achieve this, a significant number of immigrants quit their jobs, even established lives in major Australian cities, and move to Tasmania to meet the requirements of the Regional Skilled Migration Scheme (RSMS), which offers more accessible selection criteria (Coates et al., 2024). This shift creates a group of visa-driven immigrants.

For these immigrants, one way to strengthen their RSMS application is by demonstrating more than AUD98,218 annual taxable income, including profits from a business they own. The RSMS also offers provisional visas for business owners, providing a pathway to permanent residency but with strict annual turnover requirements (Tasmanian Government, 2023). Considering these alternative choices, some visa-driven immigrants opt to become business owners to secure their lives in Australia, forming a category of visa-driven immigrant entrepreneurs.

Many studies categorise immigrant entrepreneurs as either opportunity-driven or necessity-driven. Opportunity-driven immigrant entrepreneurs focus on aligning resources and matching their skills with available opportunities to create ventures (Chrysostome, 2010). In contrast, necessity-driven immigrant entrepreneurs turn to self-employment because they could not find a job (Chrysostome, 2010; Ricci, 2019). However, RSMS requirements assess applicants' age, health, English proficiency, and qualifications (Tasmanian Government, 2023), aiming to ensure that they do not face such integration barriers in the Australian labour market (Hawthorne, 2005). Despite these safeguards, visa-driven immigration choices in Tasmania have given rise to visa-driven entrepreneurs, who do not fully align with their skills but are not significantly disadvantaged by unemployment.

Since the introduction of RSMS, Tasmania has become an increasingly popular destination for immigrants (Coates et al., 2024), leading to growth in ethnic niche markets. Additionally, the strong recovery and growth in international tourism create significant opportunities in the tourism and hospitality industry (Tourism Tasmania, 2024). These opportunities may attract immigrant entrepreneurs with skills such as language proficiency other than English, ethnic cuisine expertise, and transnational social networks, which facilitate entry into this sector (Aitken & Hall, 2000; Hall & Rath, 2007). However, research data shows that some immigrants with relevant skills and experience do not necessarily start businesses in familiar areas. In contrast, others with less experience in tourism and hospitality venture into this industry. This raises the key question: Why do Tasmanian RSMS immigrants venture into the tourism and hospitality industry – or refrain from doing so?

Ram and associates (2017) argue that previous research has largely focused on major cities and overlooked the influence of immigration policies. To address these gaps, they propose employing the concept of Mixed Embeddedness (ME), which links individuals, the market, and policies in a meaningful way. ME suggests that while policies guide individual economic activities, individuals also learn and adapt to the market demands (Hall & Rath, 2007; Ram et

al., 2017). This research, conducted in Tasmania, a regional setting, rather than a major Australian city, aims to explore these dynamics through the lens of the ME framework.

The researcher conducted informal, conversational interviews from July 2023 to August 2024, employing a business-life-history approach to explore the lived experiences of immigrant entrepreneurs (Dahles, 2007). Participants were recruited via social media and face-to-face interactions. Given that a major criterion for the RSMS is English proficiency, and that the researcher is a native Mandarin Chinese speaker, participants had the option to be interviewed in either English or Mandarin Chinese. In total, 38 immigrants from 15 different countries or regions were interviewed, either via Zoom or in person, across various areas of Tasmania.

From the ME perspective, while the RSMS does not directly regulate the market, it both facilitates and constrains immigrants' entrepreneurial choices. First, the RSMS may indirectly delay immigrants' venture creation. Some participants with certified cooking skills chose to work as wage-earning chefs, fearing their businesses might not meet the annual turnover requirements for visa applications. Once they secured permanent residency, they began pursuing their business aspiration. Second, immigration policies may limit immigrants' ability to enter their preferred industries. RSMS criteria include industry exclusions (e.g. Tasmanian Government, 2023), disqualifying lower-skilled businesses such as tour guides and travel consultants, as well as subcontractor self-employment. Consequently, two participants with tourism expertise and business plans shifted to skilled wage employment in construction. Third, RSMS may indirectly encourage temporary enterprising. Two individuals with prior business experience ventured into Tasmania's tourism and hospitality sector – one was able to count profits from other Australian businesses toward meeting RSMS requirements, while the other purchased a financially stable café but left the business after meeting visa conditions to focus on other life goals.

These findings suggest that while Tasmanian RSMS visa holders are not disadvantaged by their credentials, skills, or language abilities to join the host labour market, the uncertainties surrounding settlement often push them toward necessity entrepreneurship or employment. This research highlights the need of a ME framework to consider broader economic and policy contexts to better understand the factors influencing immigrants' entrepreneurial and employment choices within the tourism and hospitality sector. Additionally, it highlights the need for policymakers to recognise the lag effects of immigration policy, which go beyond labour market integration influence immigrants' willingness to stay and contribute to local development (Ricci, 2019).

**Keywords:** *Immigrant Entrepreneurs; Visa; Tourism and Hospitality; Tasmania*

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# WHY THE USE OF TOURISM INDICATORS IS IMPERFECT BUT WHY WE SHOULD DO IT ANYWAY

Sarah Gardiner<sup>a</sup>, Susanne Becken<sup>a</sup> and Grant Ferres<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Griffith University, <sup>b</sup>Australian Trade and Investment Commission (Austrade)

## ABSTRACT

Around the world, tourism destinations are searching for indicators to improve the measurement of the economic, social and environmental benefits and impacts of tourism on host destinations (Font et al., 2023). The Australian Government - as part of the implementation of its long-term strategy for the visitor economy, *THRIVE 2030* (Austrade, 2022) - embarked on this journey to establish a new consolidated indicator framework. An industry working group was established to review and prioritise the indicators. Beginning with 70 indicators based on an international review, they short-listed 21 indicators across economic, social and environmental pillars. The co-authors of this paper were involved throughout the consultation. From this experience, they identified five key considerations that can inform the selection and measurement of visitor economy indicators, more generally. Key considerations include:

1. **Scale:** The appropriateness of the scale of measurement is important. That is, is the data and resulting indicator suitable to be measured at the national, state, regional or local level? And, if data is available and measurement is possible, where is the impact of the indicator actionable? For example, measuring community sentiment at a national level derives little value in terms of actionable activities that could “shift the dial”, thus, the validity of such an indicator would be low. Maintaining data standards (e.g., the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023) Data Quality Framework) when disaggregating data can also be problematic. This is particularly important when the data is being used to justify government policy or budget allocation (Font et al., 2023), where confidence in the data quality is vital.
2. **Economic, quantity bias:** In Australia, *as elsewhere*, the evaluation of tourism has previously mostly relied on measuring economic impact. This has resulted in well-developed tourism statistics and economic indicators and under-investment and lack of sophistication in measuring social and environmental indicators and a reliance on quantity rather than quality indicators. Establishing internal validity (i.e., a cause-effect relationship) and external validity (i.e., the generalisability of the qualitative indicators) will be key challenges for qualitative indicators. The focus on easily identifiable economic benefits led to a broad omission of external costs imposed by tourism, including economic (opportunity) costs.
3. **Lagging and leading:** Most existing indicators are lagging, that is, they are backward-looking, rather than leading, that is, forward-looking. Future-oriented data, such as investment pipelines, are more difficult to obtain. Furthermore, indicators rely on robust time series to track trends. The availability and continuity of the data to measure an indicator over time and the purpose of the indicator are key considerations in determining whether a lagging or leading indicator is appropriate.
4. **Access and transparency:** Access to data sources and analysis model transparency are key considerations. Data and model intellectual property can have commercial value. For example, the commercial ReviewPro reputation index provides a general description of the data sources, yet the algorithm that derives the index is not publicly available. The lack of peer review of such models is also problematic. Transparency on what the data represents, particularly to minimise the risk of misinterpretation, and validating the legitimacy of the data is also important. For example, an accessibility indicator might rely on business self-report

data. As a result, it may over-represent the number of accessible tourism experiences because this self-report data lacks validation. The scale of accessibility could range from having gluten-free options on the restaurant menu to a hotel room that is completely designed for wheelchair access.

5. **Practicality and resources:** Consideration of the illegality and ethics of data is also vital. For instance, indicators relying on Big Data (e.g., Booking.com data on hotel attributes) are often scraped from public websites. However, in many cases, the terms of use of the site do not permit this practice raising illegality issues and the users who book and post on these sites are not often aware of how the information they provide will be used for research purposes raising ethical issues. The sovereignty and attribution of Indigenous data is another consideration. Having the technical skills and cost considerations in indicator selection and design are key considerations. Trade-offs between the ideal indicator and practicality are, therefore, at the forefront of this discussion.

Indicators must be aspirational and move destinations towards a more sustainable future (Gasparini & Mariotti, 2023), however, Australia's experience highlights the need for a compromise between aspirations and the ideal indicators with pragmatism and practicality. At their core, indicators must be useful and relevant to the end users, that is, the government policymakers and business decision-makers. Aligning indicators to government priorities and strategy also affect the choice of the indicator. This paper seeks to advance the discourse on the broadening of indicators towards a triple-bottom-line approach. In doing so, it highlights key areas for practical consideration and future research.

**Keywords:** *tourism indicator, visitor economy, economic impact, sustainable tourism, tourism strategy, Australia tourism.*

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# WILL POST-COVID TOURISM BE COLLABORATIVE AND REGENERATIVE IN SIJORI REGION?

Denis Tolkach<sup>a</sup>, Zilmiyah Kamble<sup>b</sup> and K Thirumaran<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>James Cook University, Cairns, <sup>b</sup>James Cook University, Singapore

## ABSTRACT

COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on tourism across the world, including Southeast Asia. Some of the highly affected areas are those reliant on cross-border travel, such as Singapore-Johor-Riau islands region, also known as SIJORI Growth Triangle. Since the 1980s, the region utilised their resources across the national borders collaboratively to ensure economic growth (Grundy-Warr, Peachey & Perry, 1999). While it was first predominantly oriented towards manufacturing industries, it also led to growth in cross-border tourism (Chang, 2004). While Singaporeans are the main source market for both Johor (Malaysia) and Riau Islands (Indonesia), cross-border tourism from Johor and Riau Islands is also significant (Fadli, 2020; STB, 2020; Tourism Malaysia, 2020). COVID-19 put a halt to such travel for nearly two years. At the time of borders reopening, questions were raised regarding the reestablishment of cross-border tourism, broader collaboration in SIJORI region and whether the post-COVID tourism might become regenerative. Regenerative tourism has often been simplified to making a positive impact on the local community and environment (Reymond, 2022). However, regenerative tourism requires a mindset shift towards a holistic approach to tourism as a system which is based on collaboration and compassion. It needs to be adaptive, place-based, community-centred and environment-focused (Dredge, 2022). It was expected that post-COVID tourism might embrace regeneration, sustainability and other frameworks that emphasise making a positive contribution to society and environment (Lew, et al., 2020).

Thus, this paper investigates the perspectives of 24 managers from different industries representing the tourism sector in SIJORI region. The data was collected via a semi-structured in-depth interview that took place in November 2021 – March 2022. 12 participants were from Riau Islands, 8 from Singapore and 4 from Johor. 16 interviews worked in accommodation sector, 5 in tours or at attractions and 3 represent destination marketing organisations. The interviews focused on the impact of COVID-19 on participants' businesses, their thoughts on regenerative tourism in the region, and post-COVID cross-border collaboration in SIJORI Growth Triangle. The following summarises the findings from the study.

Firstly, participants acknowledged that before the pandemic, the tourism industry in Singapore and the Riau Islands was reporting record high and growing arrivals. The clientele was also diverse across the markets. In addition to cross-border travel, key markets included Australia, China, Europe and India. However, in Johor, some issues emerged prior to pandemic associated with an oversupply of hotels and poor performance from some attractions. The reliance on Singaporean tourists made the region vulnerable. Nevertheless, Johor's tourism industry placed high hopes on new developments such as Puteri Harbour and Desaru.

Participants agreed that the pandemic had a devastating effect on the tourism industry across the SIJORI region. International travel restrictions and border closures led to severe drops in visitor numbers, forcing temporary closures and reductions in staff. Singapore's tourism sector faced significant disruptions, with international arrivals plummeting. Tourism destinations and individual businesses adopted creative survival strategies. The Singapore Tourism Board (STB) launched domestic initiatives like "SingaporeRediscoveries" to help sustain the industry. Some hotels adjusted pricing and offerings to attract local travelers. Others implemented cost-saving measures, shifted to contract-based employment, and invested in enhanced hygiene protocols. Government support, such as salary offsets and certification schemes like the Clean, Health, Safety, and Environment (CHSE) certification in Indonesia, also played a crucial role.

Subsequently, participants were asked about their perspective on regenerative tourism and its applicability to the region post-COVID. Participants generally equated regenerative tourism with sustainability issues and focused on local community or environmental project their organisations participate in, such as beach cleanups and mangrove replanting. In Singapore, becoming carbon-neutral was also planned by some organisations. The need for a systemic shift in how tourism operates was not acknowledged by the participants. Regenerative tourism appears to be perceived as add-on projects instead of being central to how an organisation operates. Main challenges for regenerative tourism were perceived to be high cost, lack of government directives and the need for stakeholder collaboration.

The SIJORI collaboration has long been seen as an opportunity for cross-border tourism growth. However, participants noted that the SIJORI collaboration has lost momentum. The potential benefits of the SIJORI partnership remain, particularly in terms of economic integration and joint marketing efforts. Nevertheless, issues such as differing government priorities, political instability, and cultural differences have impeded more effective cooperation.

In the post-Covid19 era, the concept of SIJORI is in a different *modus operandi*. Previously, the agenda was co-driven by all three national governments and the private sector. The Senai International Airport (Johor, Malaysia) and the Hang Nadim International Airport (Batam, Indonesia) emerged out of this positive outlook of the 1990s onwards. Hence, our findings suggest that the current agenda of regenerative tourism is primarily driven by the private sector within existing travel and immigration frameworks. Despite the challenges, there is cautious optimism about the recovery of tourism in the SIJORI region. Participants emphasise the importance of continued innovation, sustainability, and regional cooperation to ensure long-term recovery and resilience in the face of future disruptions. Nonetheless, a transformation of tourism towards a regenerative paradigm will require ongoing efforts starting from awareness raising.

**Keywords:** *regenerative tourism, Southeast Asia, COVID-19, cross-border tourism*

# **ABSTRACT ONLY PAPERS**

## AI-POWERED TRANSFORMATION: REVOLUTIONISING NEW ZEALAND'S F&B INDUSTRY

Carolin Santoso<sup>a</sup> and Pola Q. Wang<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>School of Hospitality and Tourism, Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand

### ABSTRACT

This paper examines the current application of artificial intelligence in New Zealand's food and beverage sector, highlighting both its transformative benefits and significant challenges. AI technologies are utilised to improve production efficiency, personalise customer interactions, and optimise inventory and pricing. Yet, the sector faces issues such as data security, cultural resistance to AI, high implementation costs, and a rapidly evolving regulatory landscape. These challenges are particularly pertinent in New Zealand, where consumer trust and personalised service are highly valued. The paper explores opportunities for future research, including AI adaptations for local supply chain transparency and sustainable practices, as well as potential cross-sectoral applications to create a more integrated AI ecosystem. Strategic investment and thoughtful implementation are essential to maximise AI's potential and ensure sustainable growth within New Zealand's dynamic food and beverage industry.

**Keywords:** *Artificial Intelligence (AI), F&B Industry, Technological Adoption, Operational Efficiency, Customer Experience*

## **“A CREATURE OF HABIT OR A WHOLE DIFFERENT ANIMAL?” - ON THE HABIT-BREAKING AND MAINTAINING POTENTIAL OF VACATIONS**

**Anna Kristina Zinn<sup>a</sup>**, Danyelle Greene<sup>a</sup> and Sara Dolnicar<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>The University of Queensland

### **ABSTRACT**

Building good habits and breaking bad habits can foster positive behavioral changes, such as healthier or more sustainable behaviours. Vacations, offering a break from daily routines, present a unique opportunity for habit change. However, research on this topic is limited. We propose a new conceptual model to understand habit change and maintenance during vacations. In two studies, we surveyed participants about their positive (N = 100) and negative (N = 101) home habits, covering behaviors like sustainability and general health. We then assessed their likelihood of maintaining or breaking these habits on vacation. Our analysis, based on the new model, identified habits that are particularly prone to be maintained, broken, or initiated during vacations. The potential for habit change during vacations varies with the type of behavior. These findings provide valuable insights into the role of vacations in habit change and can guide future interventions. Specifically, we found that certain health and sustainability habits are more likely to be maintained, while others are more susceptible to change. Understanding these patterns can help design more effective habit change strategies that leverage the unique context of vacations.

**Keywords:** *habit change; vacations; behavioural interventions; pro-environmental; health habits*

## **A GIFT OR CHALLENGE: LOCAL WORLD HERITAGE SITES AND DETERMINANTS OF SUSTAINABILITY PARTICIPATION BEHAVIOUR**

**Geetha Raani Krishnapillai<sup>a</sup>, Filzah Md Isa<sup>a</sup> and Joann P.S. Lim<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>a</sup>Taylor's University, Subang Jaya Selangor, Malaysia

### **ABSTRACT**

Participation behaviour in heritage sustainability is crucial for strengthening the connection and affiliation of locals toward heritage sites. To truly understand and enhance this participation, however, examining the key factors driving individuals' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations is essential, which is part of understanding consumer behaviour. World Heritage Sites (WHS) are cultural and natural treasures and significant economic drivers globally, fueling the heritage tourism industry. Individuals are drawn to destinations rich in history, culture, and natural beauty, seeking immersive experiences that allow them to appreciate these remarkable places. These sites embody outstanding universal values significant to humanity. However, their long-term sustainability remains challenging, demanding ongoing research and action. This study aims to bridge the gap in understanding the participation behaviour of locals as they are both the primary stakeholders and stewards of WHS. Their active participation, through a vital bottom-up approach, is not merely beneficial but essential for ensuring the longevity of these heritage sites for future generations.

**Keywords:** *participation behaviour, heritage, attitude, norms, personality, policies and programmes*



## AN INTEGRATED CONCEPTUALIZATION OF ‘RETRO’ PRODUCTS: THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY

Zuhui(Mathilda) Liao<sup>a</sup>, Vincent Tung<sup>a</sup> and Hailey Shin<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong SAR, China

### ABSTRACT

Retro products, which are gaining popularity across various industries, are not only a cultural phenomenon worldwide but also carry important economic implications. For example, retro products in the automotive industry, like BMW’s “New Class” from Germany, aim to comprise 15% of the brand’s total global sales in the coming years. Meanwhile, the retro console market in Russia has experienced remarkable growth, with sales increasing by 75% in units and 40% in value in recent years. This paper defines retro by contrasting it with vintage, heritage, and nostalgia: unlike vintage, retro is new and re-designed; unlike heritage, retro is not actual historical objects from past cultural heritage; unlike nostalgia, retro can offer a fresh and contemporary appeal. By exploring these intersections and retro’s unique attributes, six critical components of retro are identified: romanticism, authenticity, bygone, innovation, groundedness, and timelessness. Additionally, three categories of retro products— Retro-revamped, Retro-extended, and Retro-themed—are developed to explore their characteristics in the tourism context, using tourism examples to demonstrate how these components shape retro across categories. Theoretically, this paper contributes to the tourism literature by introducing an integrated conceptualizing of retro products and combining multi-disciplinary insights such as insights from marketing and fashion. Practically, this paper provides destination management organizations (DMOs) with suggestions on tourism product development and destination marketing.

**Keywords:** *retro, vintage, heritage, nostalgia, conceptualization*

## AUSTRALIAN AND CHINESE PREFERENCES FOR BEHAVIOURAL RESTRICTIONS TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE MARINE TOURISM: A DISCRETE CHOICE EXPERIMENT IN FIJI

Yanyan Dong<sup>a</sup>, Michael Burton<sup>a</sup> and Abbie Rogers<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Western Australia

### ABSTRACT

This study explores Australian and Chinese tourists' preferences for restrictions on marine-based activities in Fiji. A discrete choice experiment (DCE) approach is used to quantify how much Australian and Chinese tourists would be impacted by different restrictions on the characteristics of a marine tourism trip (snorkelling). Overall, we identify that Australian and Chinese tourists have different preferences for behavioural restrictions. For example, Chinese tourists are more likely to oppose restrictions on the use of underwater cameras, whereas Australian tourists are not. Our results indicate that some restrictions that would improve the condition of the marine environment in Fiji are likely to be feasible. The broader applicability of the results to other Pacific islands needs further investigation.

**Keywords:** *tourist preference, discrete choice experiment, behavioural restriction, pro-environmental behaviour, sustainable tourism*

## **BUILDING RESILIENCE IN SMALL TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY BUSINESS: NAVIGATING UNCERTAINTY**

**Yudha Eka Nugraha<sup>ab</sup>**, Sacha Reid<sup>a</sup>, Aaron Hsiao<sup>a</sup> and Yawei Jiang<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Griffith University, <sup>b</sup>Politeknik Negeri Kupang

### **ABSTRACT**

Over the past decades, global disruptions have severely impacted numerous small tourism and hospitality businesses, which constitute around 80% of all business types. To address these challenges, developing organisational resilience for smaller businesses is essential. This study conceptualised the dynamic capability view as an extension of the resource-based view and the evolutionary theory of the firm to build organisational resilience. As a result, the study introduces a new conceptual framework of resilience for small tourism and hospitality organisation contexts through a dynamic capability view to optimise resource utilisation and improve operations management. This study extends the resilience literature, providing insights into how resource-constraint organisations can survive and thrive in uncertain times. Practical insights from this study are also provided.

**Keywords:** *small tourism and hospitality business, dynamic capability, resilience, uncertainty*

## CHALLENGING THE NOTION THAT NATURE CONNECTEDNESS TRIGGERS ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOUR – A FIELD EXPERIMENT

Qingqing Chen<sup>a</sup>, Danyelle Greene<sup>a</sup>, Anna K. Zinn<sup>a</sup> and Sara Dolnicar<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>UQ Business School, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

### ABSTRACT

Nature connectedness is positively associated with wellbeing and pro-environmental behaviours, yet direct nature exposure is often limited by cost and time constraints, necessitating alternatives. This study examines the potential of leveraging self-efficacy to enhance nature connectedness and tests whether such manipulations can trigger actual pro-environmental behaviour. We conducted a survey experiment ( $N = 600$ ) using images of nature and messages to activate nature connectedness and self-efficacy. The most promising intervention, featuring lush green images of a landscape and a conservation message, was tested in a quasi-experimental field study at an airport hotel. The results show that nature connectedness could be exogenously manipulated by integrating self-efficacy messages with natural images. However, while the intervention increased self-reported pro-environmental intentions, it did not lead to actual behaviour change in a field study. This finding suggests that although existing (trait) levels of nature connectedness may lead to pro-environmental behaviour, the relationship between experimentally manipulated nature connectedness and actual pro-environmental behaviour is far less established.

**Keywords:** water saving; nature connectedness; natural images; self-efficacy; pro-environmental behaviour; field experiment

## CONTINGENCY AND COPING STRATEGIES IN TOURISM UNDER WEATHER ADVERSITY IN A NATURE-BASED DESTINATION

Valério Souza-Neto<sup>a</sup>, Mona Afshardoost<sup>a</sup> and Gui Lohmann<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Griffith University, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, <sup>b</sup> Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology

### ABSTRACT

Adverse weather conditions pose significant challenges to tourists and businesses, yet they often underestimate the negative impacts of weather adversity. Despite its relevance, the effects of weather disruptions on tourism remain underexplored. This paper critically examines the coping mechanisms and adaptive strategies to adverse weather conditions utilised by both tourism providers and tourists. Drawing from 19 interviews with industry professionals and 98 tourists' online personal narratives. Focusing on the Great Barrier Reef—a destination prone to frequent weather disturbances—this study develops a theory-driven framework that identifies 21 contingency strategies, organised into four key categories (i. Customer-centric adaptation, communication, and storytelling; ii. Risk management and financial strategies; iii. Enhanced safety protocols and service optimisation; and iv. Tourist subjective well-being), alongside eight coping mechanisms (four directed to solve the cause of the stressors and four self-regulation coping strategies). The findings offer valuable insights into the contingency-coping dynamics that influence tourism's resilience to weather adversity, providing practical guidance for future empirically-grounded decision-making in weather-sensitive destinations.

**Keywords:** *Coping theory; Contingency theory; Adverse weather. Social Constructivism; Great Barrier Reef.*

## COULD THE GOLD COAST BECOME A GLOBAL HUB FOR YACHT TOURISM BY LEVERAGING OPPORTUNITIES?

Aziz Muslu<sup>a</sup>, Charles Lemckert<sup>a</sup> and Anja Scheffers<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Southern Cross University & Samsun University

### ABSTRACT

The Gold Coast, a major tourism destination in Queensland, Australia, has strong potential to emerge as a global hub for yacht tourism. This article evaluates the region's opportunities and challenges by comparing it with established yacht tourism destinations. By assessing global trends, local infrastructure, and economic potential, the study explores the Gold Coast's capability to leverage its strengths and address obstacles to becoming a prominent yacht tourism center. The analysis highlights the region's advantages, such as its long coastline, pleasant climate, and well-developed infrastructure, which make it attractive for yachting enthusiasts. Additionally, global trends like the rising demand for luxury yacht experiences and the growth of superyacht markets present strategic opportunities for the Gold Coast. A comparison with established yacht tourism hubs in the Mediterranean and the Caribbean reveals the Gold Coast's competitive edge in accessibility and its marina facilities, though challenges remain. The study points to competition with these established destinations and the need for sustained investment in infrastructure and services to support growth. In conclusion, while the Gold Coast holds substantial potential as a leading yacht tourism destination, achieving this vision requires a strategic focus on enhancing marina facilities, aligning with global trends, and promoting its unique appeal. By doing so, the Gold Coast could solidify its position in the global yacht tourism market.

**Keywords:** *Gold Coast, Yachting Tourism, Marina, Nautical Tourism, Global Yachting Hub*



## **CRIKEY! LET’S KEEP IT COZY LIKE A JOEY IN A POUCH– NOT TOO HOT OR COLD! CAN HUMOUR OR COMPASSION ENCOURAGE SUSTAINABLE HEATER USE AT HOTELS?**

**Danyelle Greene<sup>a</sup>, Anna Zinn<sup>a</sup>, Qingqing Chen<sup>a</sup>, Reza Seratu<sup>a</sup>, Marius Portmann<sup>a</sup> and Sara Dolnicar<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>a</sup>The University of Queensland, Australia

### **ABSTRACT**

Hotels significantly contribute to emissions through the overuse of air conditioning, with rooms often overheated in winter and overcooled in summer. This behaviour increases energy consumption and negatively impacts climate change. However, small changes, such as reducing heating by 1°C, can save around 6% of electricity. Few studies have tested interventions to prompt sustainable air conditioner use among hotel guests. Considering pro-environmental tourist behaviour broadly, most interventions have focused on negative emotional and environmental appeals, which have yielded mixed results. Positive emotions, such as self-transcendent emotions (compassion) and amusement (humour), have the potential to encourage pro-environmental behaviour. The current study assesses the effectiveness of messages based on environmental appeals, compassion, and humour on air conditioner (heating) use in hotels. In Study 1, we developed and tested four alternative messages for each construct in survey experiments. The message that best represented its construct (e.g., the humour message rated most amusing) was taken forward into Studies 2 and 3. Study 2 (survey experiment) served as a manipulation check, and Study 3 tested the interventions in a field experiment measuring real behaviour. The survey experiment showed that each message triggered its intended theoretical construct (e.g., compassion). Initial analyses of the field data are promising, showing that all three messages significantly triggered sustainable air conditioner use.

**Keywords:** *air-conditioner; hotel; intervention; humour; compassion; environment.*

## DECODING THE MIGRATION OF BUSINESS OWNERS IN RURAL TOURISM: SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Minkun Liu<sup>a</sup> and Lili Ren<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>School of Business, Guangxi University

### ABSTRACT

Social integration and corporate social responsibility (CSR) of rural tourism entrepreneurial migrants are the focus of tourism migration research. However, the study of the relationship between the two is still at a blank stage, and there is a lack of demystification of the relationship between the two. Therefore, we take Weizhou Island in Beihai, Guangxi Province as the case site, take rural tourism business owner migrants as the research object, focus on their social integration and corporate social responsibility two latent variables to construct a structural equation model, and adopt a mixed research method to systematically study the complex causal relationship between social integration and corporate social responsibility of rural tourism business owner migrants. The study shows that the social integration dimension of tourism business owner immigrants consists of four dimensions: economic integration, cultural integration, social adaptation and identity integration, and their social integration degrees are social adaptation, economic integration, identity integration and cultural integration in descending order. Both social adaptation and identity integration of tourism business owner immigrants have significant positive impacts on CSR, while economic integration of tourism business owner immigrants has a non-significant impact on CSR. Interestingly, our study found that cultural integration had a significant negative impact on CSR, which is contrary to the more recognized findings in the academic community. This study also proposes to promote the degree of social integration of Weizhou Island tourism business owner-migrants in the local area, to enhance their CSR, to create a harmonious tourism environment, and to promote the sustainable development of the rural tourism destination.

**Keywords:** *tourism business owner migrants; social integration; corporate social responsibility; rural tourism*

## DECARBONIZING TOURISM: A CASE STUDY OF INDONESIA'S PATHWAY

Futu Faturay<sup>a</sup>, Ya-Yen Sun<sup>a</sup>, and Lintje Sie<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>UQ Business School, The University of Queensland, Australia

### ABSTRACT

Tourism has emerged as a key driver of global economic development. While it contributes positively to economic growth and social benefits, it also carries undesirable consequences. Tourism is among the most polluting sectors globally, contributing substantially to carbon emissions. This study examines the trajectory of tourism-related carbon emissions in the context of achieving net-zero emissions by 2060, focusing on the identification of key emissions drivers and their implications for climate policy. Indonesia serves as a case study, given its status as one of the fastest-growing tourism markets in the past decade and its high vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. Using an input-output analysis approach, this study integrates factors influencing carbon emissions changes, such as visitor volumes or tourism expenditure (demand factors), national energy structures (supply factors), and capital investment in tourism (destination factors). The findings are expected to offer critical insights into the major challenges facing Indonesia's tourism decarbonization efforts and provide policy recommendations that support the country's commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by 2060. Additionally, the study will serve as a model for other countries conducting similar analyses to track their tourism-related carbon emissions and decarbonization pathways.

**Keywords:** *sustainable tourism, tourism carbon footprint, net-zero emissions, input-output analysis*

## DECONSTRUCTING JOB DEMANDS AND RESOURCES: A SYSTEMATIC INTEGRATIVE REVIEW OF JOB CRAFTING IN HOSPITALITY

Samuel Vivas Imparato<sup>a</sup>, Anita Manfreda<sup>a</sup> and Rajka Presbury<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Torrens University, Australia

### ABSTRACT

The hospitality workforce faces significant challenges, including high stress, unstructured roles, and precarious working conditions, which contribute to employee burnout and turnover. Job Crafting (JC) offers a potential solution for employees as a strategy to cope with the demands of their job. However, despite growing interest in JC research in hospitality, the literature remains fragmented and lacks a comprehensive framework. This systematic integrative review addresses these gaps by synthesising 49 peer-reviewed articles to develop a contextualised conceptual framework of JC in hospitality. The framework expands the understanding of job demands and resources beyond cognitive, behavioural, and task dimensions, offering a more nuanced perspective on JC. It also makes a novel theoretical contribution by integrating individual and collaborative JC, with the latter being significantly underexplored in hospitality literature. Additionally, the review identifies critical gaps in avoidance crafting, which limit theoretical development. It also emphasises the need for further research at macro and meso levels to deepen the theoretical foundations of JC and support its application in addressing workforce sustainability challenges.

**Keywords:** *Job Crafting; Hospitality workforce; Hospitality industry; Sustainable work; Employee well-being*

## DECODING TOURISTS' DIGITAL DECISIONS: EYE-TRACKING AND THINK-ALOUD INSIGHTS INTO ONLINE HOTEL DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

Jiarui Chang<sup>a</sup> and Dan Wang<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

### ABSTRACT

This study investigates tourists' online information search behavior in hotel selection through Online Travel Agency (OTA) platforms by examining the intersection of visual attention patterns and cognitive processing modes. Using a mixed-methods approach combining eye-tracking technology, retrospective think-aloud protocols, and semi-structured interviews with 41 participants, we analyzed how tourists navigate and process information during hotel decision-making. Our findings reveal four distinct segments of online hotel searchers based on their visual attention patterns (goal-directed vs. exploratory) and cognitive processing modes (information-sensitive vs. context-sensitive): Quick Decision Makers, In-depth Analyzers, Inspiration Seekers, and Comprehensive Evaluators. Each segment demonstrates unique characteristics in visual attention distribution, information processing depth, and decision-making strategies, as evidenced by varied FSR and heat map patterns. This typology provides a framework for understanding the complex interplay between visual attention and cognitive processing in online hotel selection, while also considering the dynamic nature of digital decision-making environments. The study contributes to the literature on digital consumer behavior and offers practical implications for OTA platform design and marketing strategies, with a focus on creating more personalized and effective user experiences in online travel planning.

**Keywords:** *Online Travel Agencies, Visual Attention Patterns, Cognitive Processing, Eye-tracking, Typology*

## DIVERSITY WITHIN? THE PARADOX OF SOCIAL DOMINANCE AND LGBT+ EVENTS

Clifford Lewis<sup>a</sup>, Faith Ong<sup>b</sup> and Girish Prayag<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Charles Sturt University, <sup>b</sup>University of Queensland, <sup>c</sup>University of Canterbury

### ABSTRACT

LGBTQ+ events are often seen as efforts to challenge existing social hierarchies and promote equality, with attendance viewed as a sign of solidarity. However, this research, using mixed methods, questions that assumption. By applying Social Dominance Theory, the study reveals that attendees' social dominance orientation (SDO) influences their reasons for attending, which in turn has implications for the design of these events.

**Keywords:** *LGBTQ+ Events, Social Dominance, Social Hierarchies*



## EMPOWERING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN TOURISM INDUSTRY: ENABLERS, BARRIERS, AND GENDER DYNAMICS

Nozomi Saito<sup>a</sup>, Kaede Sano<sup>b</sup>, Lisa Ruhanen<sup>c</sup> and Seiko Shirasaka<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Keio University, <sup>b</sup>Wakayama University, <sup>c</sup>The University of Queensland

### ABSTRACT

As one of the fastest-growing economic sectors in many developing countries, the tourism industry offers significant opportunities for women entrepreneurs to tap into new markets, generate income, and drive social change. By enhancing their economic independence, women entrepreneurs in tourism can empower themselves and improve their social standing. Previous studies have mainly focused on women entrepreneurship in developed countries, while far fewer studies have explored this phenomenon in the tourism sector in developing countries, especially in Central Asia. To address this research gap, the purpose of this study is to explore the attributes and unique characteristics of enablers and success factors and identify the underpinning and inherent barriers and challenges associated with women entrepreneurs in the tourism industry in Uzbekistan. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were undertaken with 20 female entrepreneurs in the tourism industry from three key tourism cities in Uzbekistan. This paper discusses enablers and success factors, as well as barriers and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. This study provides insights into the experiences of women tourism entrepreneurs in developing countries and discusses strategies to enhance the empowerment of women entrepreneurs and business success factors.

**Keywords:** *Women, Entrepreneurs, Developing Countries, Uzbekistan*

## EXPERIENCING THE AGES OF THE THREE CROWNS PUBLIC HOUSE: CHANGING STABILITIES IN A TRADITIONAL UK PUB

Peter Sandiford<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Adelaide Business School

### ABSTRACT

This paper takes a novel approach to the analysis of commercial hospitality, such as that provided by UK public houses (pubs). Pubs represent a diverse and dynamic sector that has long been associated with community relations influenced by social, political and business trends. This paper follows a series of sonnets that consider and critique both the evolution of a pub in rural England and the necessarily flawed nature by which this was/can be experienced by an interested participant. This approach to scholarly dissemination follows a long tradition of creative writing (although somewhat limited in Hospitality and Tourism and business more generally) that highlights the subjectivities of change in organisations and wider social institutions. The hospitality lens raises the paradox of pubs as both inclusive and exclusive nostalgic arenas. Personalising experience invites the audience to both share and question the author's perspective, as an additional and critical level of interpretation that implicitly questions the pretence of objectivity present in much business-oriented literature, with a gentle critique of the application of market segmentation. A cautionary doubt is raised in the final sonnet where such criticisms may seem overly nostalgic stressing the need for care in analysis, conclusion and judgement when researching hospitality operations.

**Keywords:** *change; creative writing; hospitality; nostalgia; subjectivist analysis*

## EXPLORING THE APPLICATION OF REVENUE MANAGEMENT APPROACH TO ADDRESS OVERTOURISM: INSIGHTS FROM PLACE ATTACHMENT THEORY

Cindy Heo<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>EHL Hospitality Business School, HES-SO

### ABSTRACT

This study examines the application of revenue management (RM) strategies, such as timed entry slots and dynamic pricing models, to mitigate overtourism, utilizing place attachment theory as a framework. Data were collected from 29,138 valid responses of customers at one of Italy's largest ski resorts, which experiences significant demand fluctuations throughout the ski season. The findings indicate that customers with strong place attachment perceive RM strategies as more fair compared to those with weaker attachments, suggesting that fostering place attachment among customers could lead to greater acceptance of new RM approaches, ultimately benefiting tourism destinations. The study also underscores the critical role of communication in implementing RM strategies. Framing RM approaches to highlight positive outcomes—such as maintaining optimal visitor numbers to prevent overcrowding and enhance personalized experiences—can shift customer perceptions from bearing additional costs to receiving added value. Effective communication of these benefits is essential for the successful adoption of RM strategies in tourism management.

**Keywords:** *Overtourism, Place Attachment Theory, Revenue Management, Dynamic Pricing, Fairness Perception*

## FAIRYTALE OR TRAGEDY? YOUNG WOMEN'S CAREER EXPERIENCES IN HOSPITALITY

Shelagh Mooney<sup>a</sup>, Meichi Pan<sup>b</sup>, Xinye Qian<sup>b</sup>, Tirzahmary Solomon Vincent<sup>a</sup>, Catherine Watkins<sup>b</sup>, Linxi Wu<sup>b</sup>, Lutong Zhang<sup>b</sup> and Claire Liu<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>School of Hospitality & Tourism, Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand, <sup>b</sup>Independent Scholar

### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explore whether a woman's career in hospitality is a fairytale or a tragedy. Hospitality environments, especially luxury ones, are sometimes compared to an otherworld dimension, of magical experiences. This paper is based on a case study of gendered aspects of employment in the New Zealand hospitality industry. In many ways, many women's careers in hospitality resemble a maiden's tragedy. There was evidence of pervasive gender stereotyping, sexual harassment and inequality in workplace attitudes, career outcomes and rewards. As the study revealed few gender equality policies, a first step towards transformation could be for hospitality employers to take gender discrimination seriously. More mixed methods studies are required to gather data on the enablers of gender-based violence across the industry. Equally urgent is the need for action oriented researchers to work with a critical mass of industry employers to implement effective employee protection policies within two years in New Zealand and Australian workplaces.

**Keywords:** *Gender, hospitality & tourism workplaces, women; female careers; Aotearoa New Zealand*

## FROM HOME TO VACATION, CAN A CHANGE IN PLACE IDENTITY ALTER ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY?

Dorine von Briel<sup>a</sup>, Anna Zinn<sup>a</sup> and Sara Dolnicar<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Queensland

### ABSTRACT

This study explores whether tourists change their place identity while on vacation and examines how this distinction affects intention towards environmentally significant behaviour. Through two studies, we assess differences in place identity, demonstrating that tourists' home and vacation identities differ substantially, including in self-reported environmental responsibility. Our findings suggest that home place identity has the potential to be used for behavioural interventions either during pre-vacation planning or while on holiday to encourage more sustainable behaviours. These insights have broad implications not only for the tourism industry but also for shaping behavioural interventions promoting sustainability across diverse sectors.

**Keywords:** *sustainable tourism; place identity; vacations; behavioural change; environmental responsibility; home identity*

## GAZE AND GENDER: FEMALE TOURISTS IN COMMERCIAL TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHY

Canxi Wu<sup>a</sup>, Michael S. Lin<sup>a</sup> and Jigang Bao<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, <sup>b</sup>School of Tourism Management, Sun Yat-sen University

### ABSTRACT

Commercial travel photography represents a burgeoning trend within tourism photography practices, establishing a significant presence in numerous tourist destinations. Despite its prevalence, academic inquiry into this phenomenon remains in its preliminary exploration stage. Current research primarily focusing on the phenomenon and its process, while lacking exploration of the relationships between subjects involved, particularly from the gender perspective. This study employs a gender perspective and tourist gaze theory, utilizing qualitative research methods such as observation and semi-structured in-depth interviews to unwarp the commercial tourism photography from the gender perspective. It further explores the behaviors and interactive dynamics of female tourists engaged in their travel photography experiences. The research findings are as follows: (1) Although women are predominant participants in travel photography, they often become objects of the male gaze within the gendered societal framework. (2) Female tourists, within the context of commercial travel photography, are actively resisting conventional aesthetic norms through practices of gaze and anti-gaze, thereby constructing a discourse of subjectivity and self-awareness. This study offers a novel analytical framework for understanding emerging tourism photography phenomena, such as travel photography, and underscores its theoretical and practical significance.

**Keywords:** *commercial travel photography; tourist gaze; gender; female tourist*



## HOW DOES IMMERSIVE DINING EXPERIENCE AFFECT FOOD CONSUMPTION VALUE? EVIDENCE FROM THEME RESTAURANTS

Zhenzhen Wang<sup>a</sup> and Lianping Ren<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Macao University of Tourism

### ABSTRACT

Consumers are increasingly looking for in-depth experiences in hospitality consumption settings such as high-class restaurants, yet little research has been conducted on how immersive experiences at theme restaurants influence customers' food consumption value and other important outcomes such as well-being. This study established a theoretical framework to bridge this gap, encompassing immersive eating experience, food consumption value, subjective well-being, and behavioral intention, grounded in Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) theory. The model was tested via a questionnaire survey (N = 445). The results show that immersive experience in theme restaurants leads to better consumption value, which in turn promotes patrons' subjective well-being and favorable behavioral intentions. The study taps into how themed restaurant settings provide opportunities for immersive experience, and it provides practical implications for restaurant managers to further capitalize on theme management in attracting and retaining customers.

**Keywords:** *Theme restaurant; Immersive experience; Subjective well-being; SOR theory; consumption value; behavioral intention*

## I DON'T WANT TO SEE 5-STAR REVIEWS ANYMORE: CUSTOMER PERCEIVED HELPFULNESS ON ONLINE REVIEW

Eunbi Jo <sup>ab</sup>, Yawei Jiang <sup>ab</sup>, Aaron Hsiao <sup>ab</sup>, Sacha Reid <sup>ab</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of Tourism, Sport and Hotel Management, Business School, Griffith University,

<sup>b</sup>Griffith Institute for Tourism, Griffith University

### ABSTRACT

Online customer review plays an essential role in shaping the decision-making processes of potential customers, particularly within peer-to-peer (P2P) service environments. These online reviews provide an opportunity for customers to evaluate attributes and services in advance, identifying key factors by drawing on the experiences from other peer customers. They tend to view information as credible when it is perceived as authentic. This credibility, in turn, makes the review more helpful in guiding their choice of purchase. Thus, this study examines how potential customers perceive the usefulness of online reviews in their decision-making process, through the theoretical lens of Signalling Theory. Interviews were conducted in South Korea to explore the types of reviews that are perceived as helpful, with findings validated through member-checking. The study categorises six types of online reviews based on the level of costliness embedded in the signals and the perceived sentiment by receivers. This approach aims to understand how peer customers engage with and interpret reviews connecting to the strength of the signals. This study extends the theoretical understanding of online review helpfulness and contributes to signalling theory by highlighting the complexity of signals in peer-to-peer services. Strategic insights are also provided for online platforms and P2P service providers to better manage customer's purchase decision-making.

**Keywords:** *Peer Online Review; Perceived Helpfulness; Signalling Theory; Peer-to-Peer (P2P) Service; Consumer Behaviour; Sharing Economy*

## "I'M A MOTHER; I CAN'T STAY OUT THAT LATE" - STRUGGLES OF MOTHERHOOD IDENTITY IN THE TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY WORKPLACE

Elizabeth Agyeiwaah<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>The University of Queensland

### ABSTRACT

Motherhood plays a significant role in shaping a woman's social identity. Human resource managers in the hospitality and tourism industries need to understand the challenges faced by mothers so that they can create policies to support them in the workplace. Amid the growing research on motherhood experiences, limited research addresses the struggles of mothers in negotiating their motherhood and worker identities. Based on identity theory, this study explores the experiences of 22 working mothers in hotels, travel, and tour companies in Ghana, West Africa through in-depth qualitative interviews. Sexual harassment, stressful work, late-night work, stigmatization, and prostitution, pose key struggles for mothers in the workplace pushing them to seek work opportunities in other sectors. The study also found that how mothers navigate their identities as mothers and workers differs between skilled and unskilled labor. These findings provide valuable insights into the factors that drive mothers to leave their jobs.

**Keywords:** *Motherhood, identity, hospitality and tourism, struggles*

## INCREASING TOURISTS' ACCEPTANCE OF GAMIFIED TECHNOLOGIES TO INCREASE SUSTAINABILITY

Giuzel Safiullova<sup>a</sup>, Anna Zinn<sup>a</sup>, Danyelle Greene<sup>a</sup> and Sara Dolnicar<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> The University of Queensland

### ABSTRACT

Gamification is a widely used strategy for increasing engagement and promoting behaviour change across various fields, including tourism. It can influence both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, as well as encourage multiple behavioural changes. However, the reasons why individuals engage with gamified sustainable tourism remain underexplored. This study applied the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) 2 model to explore factors affecting the acceptance of a gamified sustainable tourism app, focusing on performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation, and price value. In a 2x7 online experiment, participants were shown different messages promoting a new "Travel Bingo" app. Their willingness to download, use, and keep the app was assessed. The study also examined the impact of sustainable values, gamification habits, and rewards on adoption. Results showed that sustainable values and gamification habits positively influenced adoption, while rewards had no significant effect. The most important technology acceptance factors were price value, hedonic motivation, and ease of use.

**Keywords:** *gamification; UTAUT2; technology acceptance; sustainable tourism.*

## INVESTIGATING THE INSTITUTIONAL LOGICS OF HOTEL MARKETS: IMPLICATIONS FOR STRATEGIC GROUPS RESEARCH

Yu (Jack) Qin<sup>a</sup>, Zhipeng Li<sup>b</sup> and Bin Li<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>The Hotel School, Southern Cross University, Sydney, Australia, <sup>b</sup>School of Tourism Sciences, Beijing International Studies University, Beijing, China

### ABSTRACT

Despite the prominence of strategic groups in the hospitality and tourism industry, the processes underpinning their formation and evolution remain unclear. This study addresses this gap by investigating the institutional logics that drive the strategic differentiation between star-rated (full-service) hotels and budget (limited-service) chain hotels in China over the past four decades. By applying institutional logics theory (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999), this research elucidates how distinct institutional frameworks influence the strategic decisions and operational practices of these two hotel segments, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of strategic groups within the hotel industry.

**Keywords:** *Institutional Logics, Hotel Markets, Strategic Groups, Management Logic, Market Logic, Hotel Segmentation*

## IS ALL WORK SKILLED WORK? CAPTURING THE SKILLS OF PLATFORM WORK

Tyler Riordan<sup>a</sup>, Richard N.S. Robinson<sup>b</sup> and Gerhard Hoffstaedter<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>The University of Queensland, <sup>b</sup>Northumbria University

### ABSTRACT

Existing descriptions of work skills insufficiently consider the heterogeneous nature of modern work – characterised by human-technological interaction. To investigate this nexus, we sought to document the skills of platform workers - concurrently probing if current conceptualisations adequately capture the skills of hybridised service work. This involved a 12-month ethnography – including shadowing, digital and face-to-face participant observation, and semi-structured interviews - with food delivery workers and stakeholders. Our analysis revealed examples of workers underappreciated technical abilities, tacit knowledge, and interpersonal skills. We highlight how migrant workers bring a transferable portfolio of skills with them, while learning others heuristically. Thus, we argue that platform work is skilled work – which is often dependent on pre-existing skills of workers. This paper contributes to the literature by illustrating how platform workers acquire, develop, and deploy skills. By exhibiting and understanding the skills required for platform work, we demonstrate that designations of “unskilled” work negatively impact workers while consequently benefiting others (e.g. digital platforms, businesses, and customers). We question the value of these skills from multiple perspectives by arguing that existing conceptualisations insufficiently recognise the actual skills required in platform work. Finally, we extend the literature with a new and more inclusive approach to capture the skills required for modern work – including in the hospitality and tourism industries.

**Keywords:** *service work, migrant workers, platform economy, skilled work, future of work*



## IS COMMUNITY WELLBEING COMPATIBLE WITH DESTINATION MANAGEMENT? AN ANALYSIS OF REGIONAL TOURISM MANAGEMENT PLANNING ACROSS AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

Susan Houge Mackenzie<sup>a</sup>, Brent Lovelock<sup>a</sup> and Hannah McKeeman<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Otago, Department of Tourism

### ABSTRACT

The New Zealand Government recently supported all regional tourism organisations to develop ‘regenerative’ destination management plans. Specifically, the Government asked destinations to consider how they would manage tourism over the long-term to ensure it benefitted local environments and communities. The current study investigated how tourism destinations across Aotearoa New Zealand subsequently sought to foster community wellbeing via destination planning and management. Specifically, the study analysed community wellbeing aspirations, strategies, and indicators across all 29 of New Zealand’s recently released regional tourism destination management plans.

**Keywords:** *Community wellbeing; Regenerative tourism; Destination management, Tourism indicators; Tourism impacts*

## LEVERAGING IOT-NUDGES TO REDUCE IN-ROOM HEATER ELECTRICITY CONSUMPTION

Sara Dolnicar<sup>a</sup>, Angus Gray<sup>a</sup>, Bettina Grün<sup>a</sup>, Sarah MacInnes<sup>a</sup>, Marius Portmann<sup>a</sup> and **Oscar Yuheng Zhu<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>a</sup>The University of Queensland

### ABSTRACT

To achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Agenda by 2030, it is urgent to develop behavioural change interventions that encourage people behave in more environmentally sustainable ways. This study proposes a novel mechanism that combines IoT technology with nudging to reduce heater usage. The IoT system we developed measure precise room-level electricity consumption of heaters and includes an optional timed switch that automatically turns off the heater after 2 hours, aims to prevent excessive use. We deployed our system in 51 rooms at a university residential college, with 38 rooms using a conventional on-off switch and 13 rooms using the timed on-off switch. We aim to compare the power consumption patterns between the two groups to test the effectiveness of the IoT-nudge mechanism. We will report the results at the CAUTHE conference in February

**Keywords:** *Internet of Things (IoT); nudging; energy efficiency; behavioural change; residential sustainability; smart technology*

## MAPPING SUSTAINABLE TRANSITIONS IN TOURISM

Claire Beach<sup>a</sup>, Mike SW Lee<sup>a</sup>, Michelle Sitong Chen<sup>b</sup> and Richard Starr Jr<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>The University of Auckland, <sup>b</sup>Auckland University of Technology

### ABSTRACT

Extant research on sustainable transitions in tourism has provided in-depth case studies and industry overviews, but the implementation of sustainable transitions remains highly abstract. To address this, we conducted semi-structured interviews with a transitions mapping exercise to deconstruct sustainable transitions in tourism firms. Transition mapping creates visual representations of the various pathways tourism firms have followed in their efforts to achieve sustainability. Transitions mapping offers rich insights into tourism firms' subjective understanding of the causal mechanisms, events, and experiences shaping their sustainable transition. As a result, this paper presents a conceptual model that identifies three stages of sustainable transitions: consideration and implementation, integration and alignment, collaboration and advocacy. While this paper presents the stages as a cycle, firms do not necessarily progress sequentially. Instead, tourism firms progress, regress, and often revisit earlier stages of the cycle due to the iterative nature of sustainable transitions. Furthermore, events like regulatory changes or hiring new employees can disrupt a cycle, spurring firms forward or backward in their sustainable transition. In many cases, tourism firms manage multiple sustainability initiatives concurrently, leading them to experience multiple stages of the cycle simultaneously. This paper concludes by offering concrete insights to managers, industry bodies, and policymakers to help facilitate sustainable transitions in tourism firms. Managers can help prevent regression by codifying sustainability initiatives into their standard operating procedures and fostering an environment that reinforces sustainable values. Industry bodies can foster collaboration by promoting coordination, auditing sustainable practices, and disseminating best practices. Lastly, policymakers can accelerate sustainable transitions in tourism firms through targeted interventions, such as pilot programmes, helping firms jump ahead in their sustainable transition.

**Keywords:** *Sustainable Transitions, Transitions Mapping, Tourism*

## MISLEADING GREEN CLAIMS INFLUENCE TOURISTS' DONATION TO WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Manomay Chaskar<sup>a</sup>, Gabby Walters<sup>a</sup>, Mireia Guix<sup>a</sup> and Nicole Cocolas<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Business School, The University of Queensland Brisbane, Australia, <sup>b</sup>Surrey Business School, University of Surrey, UK.

### ABSTRACT

Greenwashing can slow down the transition toward sustainable consumption choices. This research explores how tourists perceive wildlife greenwashing and how it affects their donation behaviour when they come across various wildlife donation websites. We adapted the seven sins of greenwashing to the wildlife conservation context, defining the characteristics of misleading messages and tested the two major sins of greenwashing, i.e., fibbing and vagueness. We combined eye-tracking with survey research to gain insight into people's visual attention to fundraising websites. Results indicate misleading information captures more attention than genuine content and positively influences donation behaviour. There is a need for enhanced compliance with legislation on green claims and awareness-raising campaigns among tourists and consumers alike.

**Keywords:** *greenwashing, wildlife, conservation, donation behaviour, misleading, tourism*

## NURTURING THE PERFECT FIT FOR MY JOB AND CAREER: MENTORING IN THE HOSPITALITY CONTEXT

Yijing Lyu<sup>a</sup>, Long-Zeng Wu<sup>a</sup>, Yijiao Ye<sup>b</sup>, Yurong Fan<sup>a</sup> and Luanyu Liu<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Xiamen University, <sup>b</sup>Shenzhen University

### ABSTRACT

Applying person-environment fit theory, we established a framework of mentoring, service performance, and career advancement prospects. Based on a time-lagged design, we found that mentoring exerted positive effects on hospitality employees' service performance by inducing their person-job fit, and nurtures their career advancement prospects by enhancing person-career fit. In addition, job ambiguity intensified the link between mentoring and person-job fit, and career ambiguity strengthened the relationship between mentoring and career advancement prospects. A moderated mediation model was developed and validated. We thus provided significant implications to the academia and practitioners.

**Keywords:** *Mentoring; Person-environment fit; Job ambiguity; Career ambiguity; Service performance; Career advancement prospects*

## PERSONALISATION IN HOSPITALITY CUSTOMER-ROBOT INTERACTIONS

Gus Guanrong Liu<sup>a</sup>, Pierre Benckendorff<sup>a</sup> and Gabby Walters<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>The University of Queensland

### ABSTRACT

In response to the criticism that technology-driven services are often overly standardised and easily imitated, personalisation offers a promising solution to uphold the essence of hospitality. Employing an AI-supported video-elicitation interview approach, this study explores how service robots convey personalisation in hotel settings through visual, verbal, and behavioural cues. By conceptualising service robots as a means of delivering ‘human touch,’ this paper contributes to the personalisation literature by demonstrating how personalisation is manifested through robot-driven interactions.

**Keywords:** *Personalisation, Human-robot interactions, Hospitality, Video-elicitation Interview*



## PLAYING FOR THE PLANET: USING GAMES TO INSPIRE ECO-FRIENDLY CHOICES ON FAMILY VACATION

Sarah Macinnes<sup>a</sup>, Sabina Albrecht<sup>a</sup> and Sara Dolnicar<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Queensland

### ABSTRACT

Many behaviours with environmental consequences occur without conscious deliberation. Hedonic psychology suggests that particularly on family vacations – a pleasure-focused context – people will only display the collectively beneficial behaviour if they perceive it as enjoyable. If the behaviour is not enjoyable, people will avoid it and ultimately undermine the collective goal of planetary health. Reusing towels on vacation is one example of a behaviour which requires guests to sacrifice enjoyment (i.e. a fresh, fluffy towel) to preserve the environment. We investigate whether linking towel reuse in a holiday context with a simple puzzle game can increase intentions to display pro-environmental behaviour among families. In an online experiment, we compare whether offering environmental or unrelated information by itself, environmental or unrelated information plus a puzzle game, or the puzzle game alone can increase participant's estimation of their own and their children's fun, knowledge, and intention to reuse their towel on vacation.

**Keywords:** *hedonic psychology; tourist behaviour; sustainable behaviour*

## PERCEIVED CROWDING, RISK PERCEPTIONS, AND COPING STRATEGIES<sup>\*</sup>

Chetan Shah<sup>a</sup>, Karen Fernandez<sup>a</sup> and Sandra Smith<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Auckland

### ABSTRACT

The current research explores how perceived crowding influences risk perception and shapes tourists lived experiences at destinations. Our two-phase naturalistic inquiry employing visual stimuli found that participants perceive crowding as a permanent feature of popular tourist destinations and generally associate it with negative effects. The study also distinguishes between two perceptions of crowding: 1) awareness-based and 2) ongoing experience-based aspects. Crowding awareness (CA) accepts and acknowledges the presence of conflicting elements and risks. It focuses on pre-trip risk reduction and allows for setting expectational standards. In contrast, when experiencing crowding, tourists utilise their CA-based standard as an implicit and subjective comparative tool for evaluating perceived crowding, which helps formulate an attitudinal response to the experienced conflict. It is temporal and used for risk reduction and mitigation. Tourists perceive seven dimensions of situational risks exacerbated by crowding. CA assists tourists in opting for emotional and problem-oriented risk-reduction strategies, which involve displacement, confrontation, clarification, and simplification. While most of these strategies are utilised pre-trip, the dynamic nature of tourism requires engaging on-site risk-mitigation strategies based on experienced crowding and the situational importance of a particular risk dimension to an individual.

**Keywords:** *Risks, risk-reduction, crowding, coping, prior knowledge, awareness*

## REFLEXIVITY ON RESEARCH WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY: A CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Siqi Emily Lu<sup>a,b</sup>, Elaine Yang<sup>a,b</sup>, Brent Moyle<sup>a,b</sup> and Sacha Reid<sup>a,b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Griffith University, <sup>b</sup>Griffith Institute for Tourism (GIFT)

### ABSTRACT

This paper challenges the prevailing self-reflexivity, which perpetuates the hegemonic positionality of researchers, by employing a three-step selfless epistemology as an alternative reflexive methodological practice. Using the case of researching with people with disability, the reflexivity, which applies three steps of learning, unlearning, and 'double eyes', is involved in depth, fostering a transformative positioning of researchers from an outsider, inquirer, to the ally for people with disability during the research process. The findings reveal that the temporary self-detachment of researchers' positionality not only reduces the hegemonic power differentials but also empowers the authentic voices of people with disability to share what they have to say. This paper proposes a conceptual model of reflexivity, which contributes to decolonial theories on how tourism scholars from privileged positions should engage in research involving socially disadvantaged populations and critical tourism scholarship advocating for an equalised research relationship between researchers and the researched.

**Keywords:** *Reflexivity; Selfless; Unlearning; Disability; Decolonial thinking; Self-detachment*

## REGENERATIVE TOURISM AND INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES: APPRECIATION, APPROPRIATION AND ALLYSHIP

Freya Higgins-Desbiolles<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> University of South Australia

### ABSTRACT

The regenerative tourism movement has had an impressive impact on the development of tourism thinking and practice. One feature is the engagement with Indigenous knowledges as inspiration for principles and practices, recognising that Indigenous peoples have developed sophisticated relationships of care and custodianship over millennia. Regenerative tourism leaders view Indigenous knowledges as key assets in creating the kinds of transformations they see as vital to developing more socially and ecologically sound futures.

This paper offers a critical analysis of this engagement, addressing the questions of if, when and how Indigenous knowledges might inform regenerative tourism planning and development. It does this through the development of a conceptual typology that distinguishes appreciation, appropriation and allyship. It is argued here that these engagements should be understood in terms of power differentials and structural injustices, particularly in settler colonial contexts. Turning to Indigenous critical analyses of allyship, this paper suggests that alliance building and alliance making are essential processes for the regenerative tourism movement to undertake if engagement with Indigenous knowledges is to occur on just terms. Finally, this analysis also offers a framework taxonomy for equitable and just inclusion of Indigenous knowledges in regenerative tourism developments. These findings hold implications for policymaking, collaborations and funding for regenerative tourism initiatives in the future.

**Keywords:** *Regenerative tourism; appropriation; allyship; Indigenous knowledges; Indigenous sovereignty; decolonising*

## SCENARIOS OF EVIDENCE-INFORMED AND EVIDENCE-DEFICIENT POLICYMAKING IN TOURISM

Carolina Ines Garcia<sup>a</sup>, Christof Pforr<sup>a</sup> and Michael Volgger<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> School of Management and Marketing (Tourism Research Cluster), Faculty of Business and Law, Curtin University

### ABSTRACT

As sustainable tourism development became a priority, focus increasingly turned to Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) and their ability to manage destinations effectively. An area of growing interest in both tourism academia and practice is how DMOs use evidence to enhance this capability. This paper explores how evidence is used in the tourism policymaking process following interviews with policy actors (politicians, public servants and industry leaders) in Western Australia (Australia) and Buenos Aires (Argentina). Our findings provide empirical support for the notion that politics dominates policy goal setting, while evidence takes centre stage when designing a policy. While this is the most typical scenario observed, we find other dynamics of the politics-evidence interface in tourism policymaking with diverse roles for policy actors and various purposes for evidence use as the policy process evolves. These findings provide rich insights to help untangle the complexities of evidence use in tourism policymaking, addressing a critical gap in the existing literature.

**Keywords:** *evidence, politics, policymaking, tourism policy, evidence-informed policymaking, policy actors.*

## SENSE OF SELF IN METAVERSE TOURISM

Li Miao<sup>a</sup>, **Qiao Zhang<sup>a</sup>**, Juan Du<sup>a</sup> and Fiona Xi Yang<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Macau

### ABSTRACT

Sense of self, reflecting an individual's understanding and recognition of themselves as a unique entity, has become one of the central concepts in tourism research. The metaverse, integrating various advanced technologies, is challenging and expanding established notions of self in tourism contexts, enabling the emergence of what we conceive as the “synthetic” self. Drawing upon self studies from social psychology and the concept of the authentic self in existentialism, this research tends to explore how people perceive their synthetic self and synthetic existential authenticity in metaverse tourism. Data will be collected from players of “Black Myth: Wukong,” an action role-playing game based on Chinese mythology and culture, where participants operate virtual characters traversing various tourism scenes to fulfill in-game missions. The study aims to examine players' perceptions of consistency, extensibility, and expandability between their real-life selves and virtual characters, as well as their sense of authentic self in virtual tourism scenarios. Potential theoretical and managerial implications will be presented.

**Keywords:** *Sense of self, Metaverse tourism, Synthetic self, Synthetic existential authenticity*



## SERVING UP A PINT FOR PETE: EVERYDAY HOSPITALITY EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES

Candice Harris<sup>a</sup> and David Williamson<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand

### ABSTRACT

Everyday hospitality can be found in everyday spaces; the ordinary and familiar spaces in which humans interact. Examining the experiences of those working in everyday hospitality is important. This paper aims to address the dearth of knowledge regarding wages in New Zealand catering, events, cinema and sport and social club (CECSS) organisations to determine the how this sub-sector is addressing issues around wages from the perspective of employees, who are often young, and part-time or casual workers. In both practitioner and academic hospitality literature, the importance of wages is underplayed, with wages often 'referred to' in hospitality research yet is rarely the actual subject of any studies. This study presents data on the CECSS workers' wages and conditions from the largest hospitality employee survey ever undertaken in 2023 in New Zealand. We explore not just remuneration for those working in everyday hospitality, including if wages align (or not) with a Living Wage, but also how 'microbreaches' can erode pay conditions faced today and can impact the longer-term allure of everyday hospitality work.

**Keywords:** *Everyday hospitality, employment, wages, employees*

## SKILL-DISCOUNTED MIGRANTS EMPLOYMENT JOURNEY IN AUSTRALIAN HOSPITALITY SECTOR

Vidya Vishnu<sup>a</sup>, Ashokkumar Manoharan<sup>b</sup> and Danny Soetanto<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of South Australia, <sup>b</sup>Flinders University

### ABSTRACT

Although migrant employees are essential to address the skill shortages in the workforce, their skills are often undervalued or underutilized, a phenomenon known as skill discounting. Despite its prevalence, this issue has not been adequately examined in the literature. To overcome this gap, this paper explores how skill-discounted migrants navigate their employment journey in the Australian hospitality sector. Data was collected from nineteen migrants, and Gioia analysis was used to analyze the data. Findings show that skill-discounted migrants within the hospitality sector, despite experiencing initial skill discounting, had a growth perspective and positive evaluation of their employment consequence such that they were in the desired employment outcome. By identifying the employment pathway for skill-discounted migrants, this study advances the hospitality diversity, equity and inclusion literature. The study also provides strong policy implications.

**Keywords:** *Skill-discounting, migrants, hospitality employment, Australian hospitality sector*

## SOLIDARITY IN INFORMALITY: CONCEPTUALISING A PRACTICE-BASED MEANING OF WORK

Kyrie Eleison Muñoz<sup>a</sup>, Richard N. S. Robinson<sup>ab</sup> and Greg Marston<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>The University of Queensland, <sup>b</sup>Northumbria University

### ABSTRACT

In this study, we extend the ‘meaning of work’ by exploring the meanings informal hospitality workers ascribe to their work through social-relational practices. We engaged with 49 informal hospitality workers in Palawan, Philippines, through a six-month cross-indigenous approach to ethnography using Filipino practice-based methods. The findings revealed that informal hospitality workers associate collective self-determination, struggle, and strength with the meaning and purpose of their work. These meanings were manifested through their normative, discursive, and embodied practices, which were shaped by the Filipino social relations virtue and practice of pakikipagkapwa (fellowship). In the absence of formalised structures, informal hospitality workers employ these social-relational practices to foster solidarity and collective meaning-making within the broader informal economies and society. Thus, we conceptualise a practice-based meaning of work, which challenges the dominant self-oriented conception of work.

**Keywords:** *meaning of work, informal employment, collective meaning-making, interdependence, practice-based methods, sikolohiyang pilipino*

## **SOCIO - CULTURAL IMPACTS AND STAKEHOLDERS INTERACTION IN JATILUWIH UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE**

**Made Handijaya Dewantara<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>a</sup>Griffith University

### **ABSTRACT**

Jatiluwi has held the status of a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2012. Despite this designation, no comprehensive study has yet examined the socio-cultural impacts that this recognition has had on the local community and its cultural practices. Paradoxically, Jatiluwi's nomination as a heritage site was grounded in the socio-cultural values embedded within the agricultural traditions and lifestyle of the surrounding community. This study seeks to address this gap by investigating the socio-cultural impacts of Jatiluwi's UNESCO designation. Additionally, it aims to elucidate the interactions among stakeholders in preserving the area's cultural heritage. Data collection involved focus group discussions conducted in August 2024, followed by in-depth interviews with 20 stakeholders. These methods yielded insights into the socio-cultural impacts, including an annual economic valuation of nearly AUD 5,800,000. The research also uncovered a distinctive pattern of stakeholder collaboration in ensuring the sustainable management of Jatiluwi's cultural assets.

**Keywords:** *Jatiluwi, UNESCO world heritage, agriculture, stakeholder, socio-cultural*

## STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION AND DESTINATION BRANDING IN LONG-DISTANCE TRAIL TOURISM

Jane Johnstone<sup>a</sup> and Samantha Murdy<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Strathclyde, <sup>b</sup>Australian Catholic University

### ABSTRACT

Trail tourism has gained significant international popularity, with long-distance trails becoming key attractions for tourists and local residents. This growth reflects a shift towards experiential travel; that promotes health and well-being, and a deeper connection with nature. However, the increasing demands present challenges for stakeholders in the tourism, hospitality and events sectors, particularly in promoting diversity, inclusivity, and sustainability. This study explores the complexities of stakeholder collaboration and destination branding in the context of long-distance trails, where diverse stakeholder perspectives and the involvement of multiple regions create significant challenges. Using a qualitative, social constructionist approach, data was collected through Ketso workshops and interviews with stakeholders, including local businesses, tourism operators, government representatives, and trail managers. Preliminary findings indicate concerns about unequal representation in branding efforts, inconsistencies in messaging, and the importance of sustainable practices. The research highlights the need for inclusive and participatory branding strategies that align stakeholder interests, enhance collaboration, and create a unified trail identity. The findings suggest that effective stakeholder collaboration is essential for ensuring the long-term viability of trails, supporting economic development, and promoting conservation, ultimately enhancing the visitor experience across generations.

**Keywords:** *trail tourism; destination branding; stakeholder collaboration; long-distance trails; sustainability; rural tourism*

## THE EFFECTS OF SITUATIONAL FACTORS ON COUPON REDEMPTION IN HOSPITALITY

Yong Chen<sup>a</sup> and Giuliano Bianchi<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>EHL Hospitality Business School, HES-SO, <sup>b</sup>University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland

### ABSTRACT

This study adopted discrete choice modeling to examine the effects of a set of situational factors on consumers' redemption of coupons in five types of food and beverage businesses. We tested the model using a large data set on consumers' stated preference for coupon redemption in the U.S. while they are put in certain in-vehicle scenarios. Controlling for the socio-demographics of respondents and coupon attributes, we found that almost all situational factors that characterized the in-vehicle scenarios, including weather, temperature, time of driving, and driving companion, have significant effects on the likelihood of coupon redemption. The situational effects were found to be evident and conditional on coupon types. In addition, consumers make reference to the difference between food and beverage when deciding to redeem coupons, suggesting that they also take into account the functionality of consumption in coupon redemption besides coupon types.

**Keywords:** *context effect, situational factor, coupon redemption, hospitality, discrete choice modeling*



## THE IMPACT OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ON SPAS' COMPETITIVENESS: A CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Chi-Tam Ngo<sup>a</sup>, Thu-Huong Nguyen<sup>a</sup> and Anona Armstrong<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Victoria University

### ABSTRACT

In recent decades, tourism researchers have given more attention to the development of the spa tourism sector. However, research on the supply side of spa tourism services has not received adequate attention due to the difficulty of collecting data from an enterprise perspective. In addition, there is a lack of a comprehensive framework to evaluate the influences of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on innovation and resilience that, in turn, impact firm performance and competitiveness. This research, therefore, aims to develop a conceptual framework that examines the relationship between these factors in the context of spa tourism. This approach would allow for a thorough assessment of the impact of various factors on spas' business and enable an analysis of how these factors interact with each other in the conceptual model. The research will contribute to advanced tourism and marketing knowledge and theory. Moreover, the expected outcomes will provide valuable insights for government officials and spa facility administrators in crafting impactful policies and strategic initiatives.

**Keywords:** *Spa Tourism, Corporate Social Responsibility, Competitiveness, Performance, Innovation, Resilience*

## THE IMPACT OF LECTURERS' CHARISMA ON STUDENTS' PRO-SUSTAINABLE TOURISM BEHAVIORS: MEDIATING ROLES OF PERCEIVED ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY DEMAND AND SELF-EFFICACY

Thu Tran Ngoc Minh<sup>a</sup> and Vu Thanh Tam Nguyen<sup>b,c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Faculty of Commerce, Van Lang University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, <sup>b</sup> Faculty of Education, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, <sup>c</sup>Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

### ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of lecturers' charisma on the pro-sustainable tourism behaviors of students in Vietnam, with a focus on the mediating effects of students' perceived environmental sustainability demand and self-efficacy. With growing acknowledgment of educators' roles in fostering sustainability awareness among future tourism professionals, this research explores how charismatic teaching can encourage students to adopt sustainable tourism practices. Data were collected from 325 tourism students across Vietnamese universities and analyzed using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that lecturers' charisma has a significant positive influence on students' sustainable behaviors, mediated by enhanced self-efficacy and perceived environmental demand. These findings highlight the potential for charisma-based teaching to strengthen sustainable tourism education by fostering environmental responsibility in students. This research contributes both to academic understanding and to practical educational strategies, emphasizing the role of charismatic teaching in developing sustainable behaviors in tourism education contexts.

**Keywords:** *Lecturers' charisma in sustainable tourism, Pro-Sustainable Tourism Behaviors, Environmental Sustainability Demand, Self-Efficacy, Tourism Education*

## THEORY IN TOURISM: MAKING A THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION TO TOURISM

Scott McCabe<sup>a,b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Birmingham Business School, Birmingham. UK, <sup>b</sup>Professor of Tourism Management/Marketing, University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu, Finland.

### ABSTRACT

Much research has addressed the conceptual status of tourism, but mostly from a standpoint of its status in disciplinary terms. In the context of theory, and theory development as a process, there has been less of an emphasis since we have become accustomed to thinking of tourism's 'theoretical inadequacies' and have relied instead on the importation of theory from other disciplines in social sciences to examine tourism as a personal, social, geographical and political context in which the phenomena occur. This has meant that we have not as an academy advanced theory in and of tourism, based on its defining qualities. We have failed as an academy to look inwardly to theorise tourism. This has led to a proliferation of theories, but which are fragmented, which has hampered coherence and theoretical advancement. The paper critically assesses the state of theory development in tourism and proposes a model of theorising.

**Keywords:** *Theory, disciplinary knowledge, theorising.*

## TRAVEL, IRONMAN-STYLE: A HUMAN-LLM HYBRID APPROACH TO THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE MOBILE EXPERIENCE IN TRAVEL

Qiao Zhang<sup>a</sup> and Li Miao<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Macau

### ABSTRACT

Tourism, as a quintessential mobile experience, allows individuals to engage with diverse rhythms and spaces beyond their everyday lives. This study explores the emerging phenomenon of ironman-style travel among young Chinese tourists, characterized by intense, time-compressed itineraries. Utilizing a rhythmanalysis perspective and practice theory, the research investigates how this travel style shapes tourists' perceptions of physical and mental rhythms. A novel human-LLM collaborative thematic analysis was employed to investigate user-generated content on social media platforms. Seven core themes were identified, revealing the unique characteristics of ironman-style travel experiences. Findings provide insights for tourism practitioners to develop tailored experiences catering to this market segment. This research also demonstrates the potential of human-LLM collaborative qualitative analysis in tourism studies.

**Keywords:** *Ironman-style travel, Mobile experience, Rhythmanalysis, Human-LLM collective thematic analysis*

## **TRAVEL EXPERIENCE OF TRANSGENDER WOMEN: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY**

**Bongkosh Rittichainuwat<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>a</sup>Siam University

### **ABSTRACT**

This research was inspired by my personal connection with a transwoman who motivated me to carry out research to voice out the existence of transwomen. Understanding these tourists is important for destinations to respond to the UN Sustainable Development Goal on gender equity treatment. Meanwhile, it enables hospitality and tourism stakeholders in designing appropriate services for transgenders. Regarding the methodology, semi-structured interviews and purposive sampling were conducted. It was found that the tolerance and friendliness of Thai people toward international transwomen are important unique selling points of Thailand. Yet, there is room for improvement to promote Thailand as a friendly transgender destination.

## THE SILENCE OF THE SANDS: ABSENCES WITHIN COLLECTIVE PLACE NARRATIVES IN A COASTAL DESTINATION COMMUNITY

Tamara Young<sup>a</sup>, Kate Senior<sup>a</sup> and Julia Cook<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>College of Human and Social Futures, University of Newcastle, Australia

### ABSTRACT

This paper reports on research being conducted in a small-town coastal destination. Our study focuses on the complexities of community place narratives. In this paper, we examine how the community engages in the deliberate silencing of collective trauma to protect its identity and heritage. We also explore the role of media representations and how portrayals of a localised event influence external perceptions of the destination. By reviewing key themes, this paper reflects on the tension between internal community memory and external place narratives, contributing to broader discussions in heritage and tourism studies.

**Keywords:** *community memory, destination identity, dark heritage, media representation*



## UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP LABELS AS A DRIVER OF SUSTAINABILITY IMPLEMENTATION IN HOTELS

Peter Lewin<sup>a</sup>, Danyelle Greene<sup>a</sup>, Anna Zinn<sup>a</sup> and Sara Dolnicar<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>The University of Queensland

### ABSTRACT

Hotel sustainability, guest behavioural change and hotel industry-academic collaborations have been explored in previous research, but university partnerships that drive sustainability initiatives remain largely underexplored. This research addresses this gap by examining how affiliations with high-status universities can serve as credible signals of hotels' commitment to sustainability. Grounded in signalling theory and social identity theory, the study explores how university partnership labels influence hotel behaviour and tourist perceptions. The study comprises a tourist survey, a hotel manager survey, and a potential field experiment. Findings aim to demonstrate the value of university partnerships in fostering long-term sustainability measures in hotels by leveraging their perceived status. This research contributes to understanding how collaborations with prestigious universities can enhance both sustainability efforts and tourist booking behaviours, offering theoretical understanding of the mechanism by which labels work as signals and practical insights for improved hotel sustainability.

**Keywords:** *Hotel sustainability partnership; academia industry partnership; sustainability label*

## YOU'VE GOT THE POWER! HOW TOURISM EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION EMPOWERS WOMEN AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY IN TOURISM VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT

Hera Oktadiana<sup>a,b,c</sup>, Novita W. Sugeng<sup>a</sup>, Nurbaeti<sup>a</sup> and Fetty Asmaniaty<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Trisakti Institute of Tourism Indonesia, <sup>b</sup>James Cook University Australia, <sup>c</sup>Griffith Institute for Tourism Australia

### ABSTRACT

This study aims to document the community-based tourism (CBT) trajectory and development process led by a tourism higher education institution in Indonesia, focusing on empowering women and indigenous people. It examines three marginalised villages in Sumatera over two to three years, using a case study approach to explore real-time phenomena in the context. Data collection included field observations, interviews, feedback surveys, and documentation, analysed through narrative methods. Findings highlight the need for long-term commitment and collaboration among stakeholders, with educational institutions facilitating community-driven change. Additionally, clear strategies for CBT development are essential for effective resource allocation, stakeholder coordination, and progress monitoring. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on how educational institutions empower women and indigenous communities in CBT.

**Keywords:** *Women, Indigenous, Empowerment, Community-based tourism, CBT, Tourism village*