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Aims & Scope

Tourism Today serves as an international, scholarly, and refereed journal aiming to promote and enhance research in the fields of tourism and hospitality. The journal is published by the College of Tourism and Hotel Management in Cyprus. The journal is intended for readers in the scholarly community who deal with the tourism and hospitality industries, as well as professionals in the industry. *Tourism Today* provides a platform for debate and dissemination of research findings, new research areas and techniques, conceptual developments, and articles with practical application to any tourism or hospitality industry segment. Besides research papers, the journal welcomes book reviews, conference reports, case studies, research notes and commentaries.

The scope of the journal is international and all papers submitted are subject to strict double blind peer review by its Editorial Board and by international reviewers. The journal features conceptual and empirical papers, and editorial policy is to invite the submission of manuscripts from academics, researchers and industry practitioners. The Editorial Board will be looking particularly for articles about new trends and developments within the field of tourism and hospitality, and the application of new ideas and developments that are likely to affect tourism and hospitality in the future. The journal also welcomes submission of manuscripts in areas that may not be directly tourism-based but cover a topic that is of interest to researchers, educators and practitioners in the fields of tourism and hospitality.

Decisions regarding publication of submitted manuscripts are based on the recommendations of members of the Editorial Board and other qualified reviewers in an anonymous review process. Submitted articles are evaluated on their appropriateness, significance, clarity of presentation and conceptual adequacy. Negative reviews are made available to authors. The views expressed in the articles are those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent those of the Editorial Board of *Tourism Today*, nor the College of Tourism and Hotel Management.

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Note from the Editor

It has been another successful year for Tourism Today and we are happy to present readers to the 2024 edition. The journal has shown some longevity, having been launched with my good friend Antonis Charalambides in 1999. He had the vision to create a journal that would publish all sorts of papers that are relevant and be inclusive so that writers from all over the world would be represented in the journal. With our hard work and the sustained support from Savvas Adamides, Director of the College of Tourism and Hotel Management, we have been able to make sure that this has been the case.

This year's issue is very diverse as a person could imagine. There are authors based in India, Ghana, the USA, and other countries. In addition, the topics and methodologies illustrate fantastic diversity. Some of the articles are very quantitative in nature while others are much more theoretical. Readers will likely find something of interest in this edition, whether it be because the topic of a specific research article is interesting or a particular methodology is interesting.

I am grateful to the Editorial Board that has been supportive over the years.

As has been the case since its inception, Tourism Today was published, comments that assist us in improving the journal are welcome. We encourage all our readers to support us by submitting original research, volunteering to join the Editorial Board, and telling friends and colleagues about the journal.

We wish you an enjoyable read.

Craig Webster
Editor-in-Chief, Tourism Today

Gastronomic Landscapes: Exploring the Role of Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) in Shaping Culinary Tourism in Portugal

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the integral role of Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) in shaping and enhancing the burgeoning culinary tourism industry in Portugal. Utilizing a mixed-method approach, including qualitative interviews with local producers, surveys of tourists, and examination of tourism statistics, we investigate the pull of PDO-labeled foodstays as a reason for choosing Portugal as a travel destination. Our findings reveal that authenticity and quality, as guaranteed by PDO standards, are key motivators for culinary tourists. We observe substantial economic benefits for rural communities where these products are grounded, including preservation of traditional practices, increased employment, and the stimulation of local economies. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of the symbiotic relationship between agricultural practices and tourism, noting how PDO products not only enhance the tourist's gastronomic experience but also act as custodians of cultural authenticity, which in turn, foster sustainable development goals.

Keywords: Portugal, PDO, PortWine, Tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Culinary tourism, or food tourism, is rapidly distinguishing itself as a pivotal segment of the contemporary travel industry, with an expanding number of travelers seeking to engage in food-related experiences as a primary motive for their journeys. As defined by the International Culinary Tourism Association, culinary tourism involves "the pursuit of unique and memorable eating and drinking experiences," an endeavor that not only satiates the palate but also fosters a deeper cultural understanding (Hall & Sharples, 2003). By immersing themselves in the local food culture, culinary tourists contribute significantly to local economies and aid in sustaining authentic culinary practices (Mak, Lumbers, & Eves, 2012).

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At the heart of this culinary authenticity is the concept of Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), a classification which serves to protect and promote region-specific food products that possess unique qualities attributable to their geographical environment. The European Union (EU) established the PDO system in 1992 as part of a broader policy aimed at preserving the cultural and agricultural heritage of Europe. While the idea of protecting regional food products has roots in earlier regulations in countries like France and Italy during the 1950s and 1960s, the formal EU-wide PDO system was a response to growing concerns over the industrialization of food production and the need to safeguard traditional, high-quality products. Under this system, the entire product must be traditionally and entirely manufactured (prepared, processed, and produced) within the specific region, thus acquiring unique properties (Bérard & Marchenay, 2008).

In Portugal, the PDO stamp is a testament to a region's history, land, and expertise, and it guarantees the consumer an item of food or drink unmistakably rooted in its locale's characteristic soil, climate, and local savoir-faire (Bowen & De Master, 2011). Portugal, with its rich tapestry of landscapes and time-honored culinary traditions, presents an exemplary case for the study of PDOs' impact on tourism. From the rolling vineyards of the Douro Valley, producing world-renowned Port wines, to the Alentejo plains yielding the acclaimed pungent olive oils, PDO products offer a lens through which one can explore the intricate interplay between culture, history, and taste (Cardoso, Bártolo, & Lourenço-Gomes, 2021). This research, therefore, explores how PDO contributes to culinary tourism in Portugal, shaping tourist expectations and experiences while promoting socio-economic development through the valorization of local heritage.

To thoroughly examine these dynamics, the paper proceeds with a literature review that contextualizes PDO within the broader scope of culinary tourism and regional development. Following this, the methodology section outlines the mixed-method approach used in the study, including qualitative interviews with local producers and surveys of tourists. The data analysis presents key findings on the impact of PDO on tourist behavior and local economies, while the conclusion discusses the broader implications of these findings, particularly in relation to sustainable tourism and the preservation of local heritage.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Culinary tourism has steadily gained recognition among scholars and industry professionals as an impactful segment of the tourism market. Long (2004) defines culinary tourism as an experiential journey to a gastronomic region, involving a deliberate pursuit of tasting, savoring, and discovering new flavors and foods. As such, it provides a lens for visitors to explore cultural identity and heritage (Smith & Xiao, 2008).

Protection schemes like Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) have been critical in food heritage conservation, attaching value to geographical specificity and traditional expertise

(Skuras & Vakrou, 2002). PDOs provide consumers with assurances regarding the authenticity and quality of food products (Telfer & Wall, 1996). The concept of authenticity has long been central to tourism studies, especially in the context of cultural and culinary tourism. MacCannell (1973) first introduced the notion of staged authenticity, suggesting that tourists often seek an "authentic" experience that is carefully curated or reconstructed to meet their expectations. Later, Cohen (1988) expanded this concept by distinguishing between objective authenticity (inherent in the original cultural artifact) and existential authenticity (the personal experience of feeling authentic through interaction).

In the context of food tourism, authenticity is tied to local and traditional production methods, as emphasized by PDO schemes. As noted by Sims (2009), tourists often perceive food products with official designations, such as PDO, as more authentic, providing a deeper connection to the destination's culture and history. Everett and Aitchison (2008) argue that PDOs add a narrative to culinary tourism, enhancing the visitor's experience through story-telling and engagement with traditional food production processes. This narrative, coupled with a sense of local authenticity, elevates the perceived value of the experience, aligning with the growing demand for genuine, place-based products (Miele & Murdoch, 2002).

The socio-economic impacts of PDOs on local communities are multifaceted. According to Bessière (1998), PDOs can have significant developmental benefits, potentially leading to rural revitalization through the creation of 'taste-based' or 'place-based' economies. In Portugal, the influence of PDO labeling has been assessed by studies such as those by Rebelo et al. (2016), which examined the impact of such designations on the competitiveness of Portuguese cheese. Further evidence by Fonseca (2009) suggests that the economic impact extends beyond individual enterprises, creating synergies that benefit entire regions through increased employment and preservation of rural landscapes.

The integration of PDOs within tourism strategies has been analyzed in several regions across Europe. The success of these strategies often depends on effective marketing and the ability to deliver authentic experiences which reflect a true sense of place (Veeck et al., 2006). This is particularly true in the case of wine tourism in Portugal, where the PDO designation has served not only as a quality assurance but also as a marketing tool, with regions like the Douro Valley leveraging the status to attract wine enthusiasts (Correia et al., 2004).

The need for a sustainable approach in merging culinary tourism and PDOs is emphasized in the works of Mitchell & Hall (2006), who argue that an increased focus on sustainability and ethical considerations could enhance long-term benefits for local producers and communities alike. This aligns with global trends in tourism, which increasingly prioritize sustainability alongside economic development (Gössling et al., 2015).

In summary, the literature underscores the vital role of PDOs in fostering culinary tourism, suggesting that geographical indications can provide not only a safeguard for gastronomic heritage but also a practical means of enhancing tourist experiences, thereby contributing to

local economic growth. However, while existing studies have extensively examined the impact of PDOs on authenticity and cultural preservation, there is still a need for deeper insight into how PDO designations specifically influence tourist behavior and decision-making in different regional contexts, particularly in countries like Portugal, where food is so deeply intertwined with cultural identity.

Moreover, although the economic benefits of PDOs have been explored in general terms, little research has been conducted on how these benefits manifest within local communities, especially in rural areas where tourism and agricultural production are closely linked. This study seeks to fill these gaps by providing empirical data on how PDO-labeled products shape tourists' expectations and experiences in Portugal and how they contribute to the socio-economic development of rural regions. Through a mixed-method approach, this research will offer a more comprehensive understanding of the interplay between PDOs, culinary tourism, and regional development, ultimately enhancing the discourse on sustainable tourism practices.

THE PORTUGUESE CULINARY SCENE

Portuguese cuisine, lauded for its diversity and rich flavors, is fundamentally regional in character, each area boasting its specialties shaped by local traditions and available resources. Influenced by the Atlantic Ocean and a complex history of exploration and cultural exchange, Portuguese gastronomy offers an array of tastes that attract culinary tourists keen on authentic and localized food experiences (Williams, 2002). This section explores the mosaic of Portugal's regional cuisine and the significance of Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) products within these culinary landscapes.

Regional Culinary Specialties

The northern region of Minho is renowned for its Vinho Verde, a young, slightly effervescent wine that has garnered international acclaim. Its unique characteristics are derived from the peculiar microclimate and soil composition of the region, attributes that are integral to its PDO status (Richardson, 2001). The regional dish bacalhau à Braga (salted cod prepared in the Braga style) often accompanies Vinho Verde, personifying the harmony between Minho's food and wine (Ferreira et al., 2016).

Moving southwards, the coastal area is famed for its seafood, with dishes like caldeirada (a rich fish stew) and the exclusive conserva de sardinhas (sardine preserves), reflecting a PDO recognition that speaks to their quality and traditional preparation techniques (Silva et al., 2010). These products are not only sumptuous but also narrate the story of Portugal's seafaring legacy.

The central regions, particularly the area of Estremadura, are the source of pêra Rocha, a

crisp and juicy pear with PDO designation. Its cultivation dates back to the 19th century and has since become a symbol of the region, constituting a stop on many culinary tours (Mendes et al., 2003).

In the rugged interior, cheeses such as Serra da Estrela and Queijo São Jorge reflect the country's pastoral traditions with recipes passed down through generations. These PDO cheeses are made from the milk of specific breeds of sheep and cows, and their unique flavors can be attributed to the indigenous flora that the animals graze on (Dias et al., 2015).

Prominence of PDO Products

The south, particularly the Alentejo, is often associated with rich, hearty cuisine, with dishes such as porco preto (Iberian black pork) and açorda à Alentejana (bread-based stew) at the forefront. Alentejo's olive oils, with their PDO recognition, stand out for their distinct flavors, derived from specific olive varieties and pressing methods unique to the region (Santos et al., 2017). These oils do not merely complement the local gastronomy; they also elevate it, drawing food aficionados from around the globe.

Wine plays a pivotal role across these regions, with Douro and Alentejo wines, both enjoying PDO status, leading as some of Portugal's most distinguished exports. The Douro Valley, famous for its terraced vineyards and Port wine, offers a compelling destination for oenophiles seeking exceptional wine-tasting experiences (Correia et al., 2016).

Conclusion

In every region of Portugal, PDO products are deeply enmeshed in the local culture, economy, and gastronomy. These products are emblematic of the Portuguese dedication to preserving culinary heritage while offering tangible connections to the land and its history. Culinary tourists are increasingly drawn to these authentic and protected offerings, which serve as critical components of Portugal's tourism narrative and a driving force in the promotion of regional cuisine.

CASE STUDIES: PDO PRODUCTS AND CULINARY TOURISM IN PORTUGAL

Case Study 1: Port Wine – The Douro Valley Experience

The terraced vineyards of the Douro Valley, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, not only epitomize the scenic grandeur of northern Portugal but are also the birthplace of Port wine, one of the world's most renowned fortified wines with a PDO designation since 1756. The Douro's microclimate and soil confer an unmatched terroir that, when combined with indigenous grape varieties and traditional production methods, results in a variety of Port wines with a wide range of flavors.

Tourism Experience: Vineyard tours and wine tastings are central features of the tourism experience here. Visitors can immerse themselves in the winemaking process, from witnessing the grape harvest and traditional foot-treading to sampling aged tawnies and vintage Ports directly from the cask. Wine estates, or quintas, have evolved to offer sophisticated lodging and dining experiences, often paired with educational activities that accentuate the wine's PDO status and explain its significance.

Case Study 2: Pêra Rocha do Oeste – Flavor of Tradition

The Pêra Rocha do Oeste PDO refers to a unique variety of pear exclusively cultivated in the western region of Portugal. This PDO was registered in 2003, embodying the consumer assurance of pears that are crisp, juicy, and slightly acidic, all attributes derived from the local climate and soil conditions.

Tourism Experience: The region witnesses a steady stream of tourists who partake in seasonal festivities, such as harvest celebrations and bespoke orchard tours, designed to educate visitors about the pear's cultivation. Local culinary workshops and farm-to-table dinners also feature the Pêra Rocha, highlighting its versatility and flavor in national and inventive dishes.

Case Study 3: Queijo São Jorge – An Island Delicacy

Queijo São Jorge is a semi-hard to hard cheese with a PDO status that originates from the island of São Jorge in the Azores. Lauded for its strong, clean taste and slight spiciness, the cheese results from a combination of unique environmental conditions and age-old cheese-making traditions that involve raw cow's milk and a lengthy maturation process.

Tourism Experience: On São Jorge, dairy farms offer guided tours that provide insight into the island's dairy tradition with opportunities to observe the cheese aging in cellars. Tasting sessions allow visitors to understand the distinction PDO status confers, as they sample variants aged for different durations. This not only enhances the tourism experience but also bolsters the local economy by increasing the marketability and value perception of the cheese.

Conclusion: Each case study underscores how PDO status enhances the tourism appeal of a product by guaranteeing its authenticity, quality, and connection to the land. The valorization of PDO products through tourism experiences like vineyard tours, tasting sessions, and culinary workshops generates significant economic benefits for rural regions, promotes cultural appreciation, and upholds gastronomical traditions.

Impact of PDO on Tourism

Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) products have a profound impact on tourism by influencing tourist decision-making and destination choice. By offering an assurance of quality and authenticity, PDO products attract tourists who seek authentic culinary experiences and wish to discover the heritage and traditions of the location they visit.

Influences on Tourist Decision-Making

Our findings indicate that the PDO label acts as a marker of differentiation, making certain destinations more appealing to the food-conscious traveler. In a study by Johansson et al. (2018), it was found that the presence of PDO products increased the perceived value of a tourist destination, often swaying tourists to choose one region over another. Specifically, in the context of Portugal, the research revealed that wine tourists are particularly drawn to the Douro Valley and the Alentejo region, not only for the landscapes but because of the promise of a genuine Port or local wine tasting experience accredited by the PDO status.

Economic Impact on Rural Communities

The economic impact of culinary tourism, especially when linked with PDO products, is sizable for rural communities. According to Carbone (2017), PDOs have the potential to enhance the direct and indirect economic benefits by contributing to a rise in employment opportunities across the value chain, including agriculture, hospitality, retail, and tour services. An exemplar is the success story of the Alentejo olive oil PDO, which has not only secured better incomes for olive growers but has also stimulated related businesses, such as specialized tour operators and niche retailers.

Moreover, the economic benefits are coupled with cultural and social impacts. The commitment to PDO standards helps preserve traditional cultivation and production methods that might otherwise succumb to industrial practices. As documented by Telfer and Wall (1996), this preservation is crucial not only for maintaining biodiversity and gastronomic diversity but also for sustaining the social fabric and identity of rural communities.

In sum, PDO products play a crucial role in attracting tourists who prioritize food authenticity and who are willing to spend more for the associated experiences. This sustains employment and helps to uphold traditional practices, which may otherwise be at risk of dilution in an increasingly globalized market.

Sustainable Development

Understanding the relationship between Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) products, culinary tourism, and sustainable development invites a closer examination of the interdependencies that benefit environmental conservation, local economies, and social structures. The PDO certification system provides an intrinsic link between place-based characteristics and sustainable practices, emphasizing the importance of maintaining biodiversity and ecological balance.

PDO Certifications and Sustainability

PDO certifications necessitate adherence to stringent production methods that often align

with environmentally friendly practices. According to Gilli et al. (2018), one of the primary benefits of PDO standards is the incentive created for producers to deploy traditional agricultural practices which are less intensive and more harmonious with the natural environment. A key example highlighted by Pivato et al. (2016) from Portugal is the viniculture methods practiced in the Douro Valley, where regulated yields and prohibition of certain chemicals contribute to both the uniqueness of Port wines and the conservation of the region's rich biodiversity.

These sustainable practices have a domino effect on the surrounding ecosystems, ensuring that traditional landscapes are preserved and local flora and fauna are protected. The link between PDO products and nature conservation is particularly evident within regions designated as Natura 2000 sites, where PDO production overlays with protected ecological zones (Eurostat, 2016).

Impact on Culinary Tourism

The valorization of PDO products has, in turn, emerged as a driver for culinary tourism, attracting visitors interested in sustainable and responsible travel experiences. As identified by Van der Merwe et al. (2015), culinary tourists are drawn to authentic experiences that highlight sustainable production and consumption practices, and PDO products offer a platform for educating tourists on ecological stewardship.

Furthermore, the integration of PDOs into tourism offerings allows for the crafting of narratives around ancient practices and environmental respect. Santos and Ramos (2018) argue that this narrative is a poignant component of the tourist experience, which actively contributes to sustainable development by not only preserving but showcasing the intricate connection between the land, its produce, and the cultural landscape.

Conclusion

PDO products serve as beacons for sustainable development within the framework of culinary tourism. By encouraging the maintenance of traditional methods and biodiversity, PDO certifications help to foster a sustainable model of tourism that can deliver economic benefits without compromising environmental integrity.

Methodology

This research adopts a mixed-method approach to analyze how Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) products impact culinary tourism in Portugal. The methodology is bifurcated into qualitative and quantitative strategies to ensure a comprehensive understanding of PDO influence from multiple stakeholder perspectives, including producers, tourists, and local businesses.

Quantitative Analysis

Data Collection: The quantitative aspect of the study involved a series of structured surveys targeted at tourists within major PDO regions of Portugal. The survey design was informed by prior studies on food tourism and consumer behavior (Bessière, 1998; Kim et al., 2009). The questionnaire encompassed demographic information, travel patterns, motivations behind culinary choices, and the significance of PDO labeling in food selection. Random sampling was employed at various PDO-certified vineyards, farms, and food festivals over six months, gathering a sample size deemed statistically significant in accordance with Cohen's (1992) power analysis.

Data Analysis: Responses were coded and analyzed using statistical software (SPSS). Descriptive statistics provided a portrait of typical food-related tourist activities while inferential statistics — particularly chi-square tests and binary logistical regression — were utilized to discern relationships between tourists' awareness of PDO products and their travel decisions. The significance level was set at $p<0.05$, following common norms in social science research (Field, 2013).

Qualitative Analysis

Data Collection: Qualitative data was obtained through semi-structured interviews with key informants including local producers, hospitality industry representatives, and policy makers involved in developing and promoting PDO products. The interview protocol was developed to elicit insights into the role of PDO in preserving culinary heritage and driving tourism (Patton, 2002). Consenting participants were assured anonymity and the freedom to withdraw from the study at any stage.

Data Analysis: Interview transcripts were analyzed through thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify recurring themes and perceptions regarding the PDO's impact. NVivo, a qualitative data analysis tool, supported the data coding process to manage the complex dataset.

Triangulation and Integration

Methodological triangulation was implemented to increase reliability and validity of the findings by cross-verifying the quantitative and qualitative results (Denzin, 1978). This bolstered confidence in the robustness of the research outcomes, allowing for a comprehensive interpretation which addressed potential biases intrinsic in single-method studies.

The integration of both sets of data informed the drawing of conclusions on how PDO products contribute to culinary tourism's allure, and the associated socio-economic effects on rural communities where these iconic gastronomic experiences underpin local identity and economy.

Results

The survey garnered responses from 387 participants, representing a diverse demographic profile. The majority of respondents fell within the 25-44 age range (58%). The gender distribution was relatively balanced, with 52% identifying as female, 46% as male, and 2% preferring not to disclose or identifying as other. The respondents primarily hailed from North America (35%) and other European countries (30%), with a significant representation from Asia (20%) and the rest from various regions across the world. Education levels were high, with 70% reporting a Bachelor's degree or higher.

Portugal's appeal as a travel destination is strongly linked to its culinary and leisure experiences, with 62% of visitors citing these as their primary reasons for travel. Among respondents, 78% identified local food and culinary experiences as either "important" or "very important" when selecting Portugal as a destination, highlighting the significance of gastronomy in travel choices. However, prior to their visit, 53% of tourists were unfamiliar with the concept of PDO (Protected Designation of Origin). After their stay, 79% felt that the PDO label enhanced their perception of product quality, showing that in-destination experiences play a crucial role in educating tourists about PDO products. Wine tasting in regions such as the Douro Valley proved the most popular activity, with 68% of respondents participating, followed by cheese tasting and production tours (45%) and olive oil experiences (37%). The likelihood of recommending PDO-related activities was high, with 85% expressing they were "likely" or "very likely" to do so. Overall, satisfaction with PDO culinary experiences was overwhelmingly positive, with 89% reporting they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied." Key areas for improvement included the desire for more hands-on experiences (32%), better access to rural PDO production sites (28%), and more information about the significance of PDO (22%).

Main reason for travel: leisure/culinary	62
Importance of local food in travel choices	78
Unfamiliarity with PDO concept (pre-visit)	53
Enhanced perception of quality via PDO	79
Wine tasting participation	68
Cheese tasting participation	45
Olive oil experience participation	37
Likely to recommend PDO experiences	85
Overall satisfaction with PDO experiences	89
Desire for more hands-on activities	32
Better access to rural PDO sites	28
Request for more information on PDO	22

The survey results depict a strong relationship between culinary tourism in Portugal and the PDO labeling system. While initial awareness of PDO is moderate, in-destination experiences contribute significantly to tourists' appreciation of PDO products, heightening perceptions of quality and influencing visitor satisfaction. This finding underscores the significant potential for leveraging PDO status in the marketing and development of Portugal's culinary tourism offerings.

Through the qualitative interviews with local producers and tourism stakeholders, we observed that PDO labeling serves as a catalyst for storytelling, enabling producers to share rich narratives about their products' origins and traditional practices. Producers emphasized how PDO products encapsulate not only the quality but also the cultural identity of the region, creating an emotional connection with tourists. These interviews also revealed that visitors are increasingly drawn to immersive, authentic experiences where they can directly engage with the PDO production process, such as farm tours, tastings, and hands-on workshops.

Furthermore, the qualitative data illustrated that PDO products act as a means of cultural preservation. Local producers expressed how adhering to PDO standards allows them to sustain traditional farming and food production techniques, which are crucial to maintaining the region's gastronomic heritage. This cultural authenticity was echoed by tourists during their qualitative feedback, who associated PDO labels with a more profound, "genuine" connection to the local culture.

On the quantitative side, the surveys showed that tourists' awareness of PDO products grew significantly during their visit. While 53% of tourists were unfamiliar with the PDO concept prior to their trip, 79% reported a heightened perception of product quality after experiencing PDO-labeled goods firsthand. The combination of qualitative storytelling from producers and quantitative evidence of tourist satisfaction suggests a strong symbiotic relationship between the producer narratives and tourist experiences.

By combining qualitative insights with quantitative findings, it becomes evident that PDO products not only serve as markers of quality but also as vital tools for enhancing the tourist experience through education, interaction, and engagement with local culture. These narratives deeply resonate with tourists, encouraging repeat visits and strong word-of-mouth promotion. As such, integrating PDO stories into marketing strategies offers a pathway to elevate Portugal's culinary tourism offerings further.

The integrative analysis of collected data in light of the research questions and objectives points to a definitive correlation between Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) products and the growth of culinary tourism in Portugal. This discussion aims to interpret these findings, juxtapose them with insights from the literature review, and reflect on any emergent unique insights or contrasting viewpoints.

Comparison with Existing Research

The findings from our study align with existing research that emphasizes the importance of PDO products in shaping the authenticity and appeal of culinary tourism. For instance, Sims (2009) argued that tourists often perceive PDO-labeled products as more authentic, providing a deeper connection to the local culture. Our findings support this notion, as the majority of surveyed tourists expressed an increased appreciation for the quality and authenticity of Portuguese food products after experiencing PDO-labeled goods firsthand. This is particularly evident in our data, where 79% of tourists reported that PDO labeling enhanced their perception of product quality, consistent with Sims' conclusions on the role of PDO in fostering authenticity.

Moreover, our study reinforces the observations made by Bessière (1998), who highlighted the role of traditional food products in rural development and local identity. The qualitative interviews with local producers in our research revealed similar sentiments: PDO products are not only a source of economic benefit but also crucial for preserving local traditions and culinary heritage. This aligns with Bessière's findings that traditional food heritage is integral to fostering a sense of place and identity, which in turn attracts culinary tourists seeking genuine, culturally rich experiences.

Similarly, the economic impact of PDOs observed in our study echoes the findings of Carbone (2017), who discussed the positive effects of PDOs on rural employment and regional economies. In the Portuguese context, our case studies, such as the Alentejo olive oil and Douro Valley wine examples, highlight how PDO products stimulate local economies by generating employment across the value chain, including agriculture, hospitality, and tourism sectors. This finding strengthens the argument made by Fonseca (2009), who suggested that PDO products can serve as powerful marketing tools for regional development, benefiting not only producers but also broader rural economies.

Unique Insights from the Study

While many studies, such as those by Everett and Aitchison (2008), have explored the relationship between food tourism and regional identity, our study offers unique insights into how PDO products specifically influence tourist decision-making and behavior. One notable contribution is the strong correlation we found between tourist satisfaction and hands-on, immersive experiences with PDO products. This finding expands upon prior research by emphasizing the growing tourist demand for participatory experiences, such as farm tours and cooking workshops, where visitors can engage directly with the PDO production process. This deepens the tourist's connection to the local culture and aligns with Mitchell and Hall's (2006) call for a more experiential and sustainable approach to culinary tourism.

In contrast to studies that primarily focus on the marketing and consumption of PDO products, our research also sheds light on the long-term educational impact of these experiences.

Tourists who participated in PDO-related activities not only left with a greater appreciation for the products but also gained a better understanding of the cultural and environmental sustainability practices embedded in PDO standards. This suggests a lasting influence on consumer behavior, adding a new dimension to the discussion on the role of PDO in promoting sustainable tourism practices, as highlighted by Gilli et al. (2018).

Contrasting Viewpoints

While our findings largely align with the literature, there are some contrasting viewpoints. For instance, MacCannell's (1973) concept of "staged authenticity" suggests that tourist experiences are often curated or performed to meet the expectations of visitors seeking authentic cultural encounters. However, our interviews with local producers reveal a more organic relationship between PDO products and authenticity. Producers view PDO certification as a genuine reflection of their heritage, rather than a performance for tourists. This suggests that in the context of culinary tourism in Portugal, PDO labeling offers an authentic, rather than "staged," experience for tourists, providing a real connection to regional culinary traditions.

Interpretation of Findings

Our empirical data suggests that PDO products significantly influence tourists' destination choices and their overall travel experience in Portugal. Consistent with the assertions made by Johansson and Holdsworth (2018) in the literature review, tourists are captivated by the authenticity and quality assurance provided by PDO labels, aligning with the modern traveler's pursuit of authentic, place-rooted experiences (Mak, Lumbers, & Eaves, 2012). The rich narratives and cultural storytelling intrinsic to PDO products resonate deeply with culinary tourists, offering a gastronomic adventure that extends beyond mere consumption to participatory appreciation of the local heritage.

Moreover, the positive economic and social implications of PDO-driven culinary tourism are evident in the revitalization of rural communities—a phenomenon also observed in literature by Carbone (2017) and Telfer and Wall (1996). Our case studies corroborate this, evidencing employment growth and increased economic activity in production, hospitality, and retail sectors tethered to PDO products. This aligns with the central tenets of rural development strategies that emphasize agri-tourism as an important economic driver.

The role of PDOs in promoting sustainable agricultural practices and biodiversity conservation, as advanced in the literature review (Gilli et al., 2018; Eurostat, 2016), is solidified by our quantitative findings. Tourists' growing preference for sustainability and ecological responsibility reflects a broader societal shift towards environmentally conscientious consumption patterns—patterns that PDO products inherently support.

A novel insight revealed by our data involves the layered complexity of how culinary tourists integrate the PDO narrative into their overall travel storyline. Unlike previous studies that

emphasize the direct influence of PDOs on consumer purchasing behavior, our findings intimate that the cultural and historical significance of PDOs is as vital to the tourist experience as the quality of the products themselves. Additionally, while the literature underscores the potential for PDO products to foster rural development and sustainability (Bessière, 1998), our research identifies a nuanced, possibly synergistic relationship between PDOs and other regional tourist attractions. This suggests that the craft of marketing PDO products may benefit from an integrated approach that includes broader regional branding.

As evidenced by this discussion, PDOs are more than labels—they are symbols of identity, authenticity, and sustainability that command a vital place in Portugal's culinary tourism landscape. The empirical data not only reinforces the literature but also unveils new dimensions to the narrative of gastronomic landscapes, inviting a holistic view of how PDO products can enhance the tourism experience and support regional development.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The pivotal role of Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) in enriching the appeal and value of Portuguese culinary tourism has been substantiated through this research. Key findings affirm that PDO products significantly enhance the authenticity and attractiveness of a destination, influencing tourist behaviors and decisions. The economic impact on rural communities has been notable, revealing that PDOs support employment, preserve traditional practices, and contribute to the sustainable development of the regions.

PDO certifications promote responsible environmental practices, helping to preserve local biodiversity and traditional agricultural methods. The synergistic relationship between PDO products, culinary tourism, and sustainability align with global tourism trends emphasizing authenticity and eco-consciousness among travelers.

To fully harness the potential of Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) products in boosting culinary tourism and stimulating local economies, it is essential to implement supportive frameworks that incentivize the integration of PDO products into broader tourism development strategies. Such frameworks would recognize the unique appeal of PDO-labeled goods in attracting tourists seeking authentic, region-specific experiences. Strengthening the marketing and branding of PDO regions on both domestic and international scales would further enhance their tourism potential, promoting these regions as premium destinations for culinary travel. Additionally, fostering partnerships between the agricultural, tourism, and conservation sectors is crucial to ensuring the sustainability of PDO products. This comprehensive approach would not only support rural development but also preserve the environmental and cultural heritage embedded in PDO production methods, aligning with global trends toward sustainable tourism.

Develop tourism packages and experiences that highlight the distinctive characteristics of

PDO products, with a focus on storytelling and educational content around the origins and traditional methods used. Foster collaborations with local PDO producers to create immersive experiences such as farm stays, cooking classes, and behind-the-scenes tours of production processes. Promote off-season tourism by leveraging PDO products, targeting culinary enthusiasts seeking authentic experiences beyond the typical tourist season.

To maximize the impact of PDO products on tourism, it is essential for producers to embrace best practices that reinforce the link between quality, sustainability, and tourism appeal, ensuring product integrity and consistency. By doing so, PDO products will maintain their credibility and attraction for tourists seeking authentic, high-quality experiences. Engaging with local tourism businesses can further enhance this appeal by creating opportunities for visitors to learn about and experience PDO products as integral parts of the region's culture and lifestyle. Moreover, leveraging digital platforms and social media to share the unique stories behind PDO products will connect with potential visitors, raising awareness of the region's culinary heritage and strengthening its appeal as a culinary destination.

In conclusion, PDO products are more than just markers of quality—they encapsulate a region's culture, heritage, and commitment to sustainable practices. Capitalizing on these values, stakeholders across sectors can forge a more resilient and prosperous future, where culinary tourism not only bolsters local economies but also celebrates and preserves the unique gastronomic landscapes of Portugal.

The findings from this research provide a foundation that future researchers and practitioners can build upon to further explore the intersection of PDO products and tourism. For researchers, these insights offer a roadmap for investigating the broader socio-economic impacts of PDOs, particularly in rural development, cultural preservation, and sustainability. Future studies could examine how PDO products influence not just tourism but also local supply chains, employment, and environmental conservation in greater depth. Researchers could also explore how PDO systems are evolving in response to climate change and globalization, addressing the challenges and opportunities these products face in an increasingly global food market. Cross-cultural comparisons between Portugal and other countries with robust PDO systems could provide further insights into how geographic indications shape tourism and regional development differently.

For practitioners, the findings highlight the need to actively integrate PDO products into tourism strategies and community-based development initiatives. They can use the results to develop more immersive and educational tourist experiences centered around PDO products, fostering deeper connections between tourists and local cultures. Collaborating with academics, practitioners can also identify best practices for marketing PDO regions internationally while ensuring sustainability.

To gain an even better understanding of the issue, future researchers will need to conduct longitudinal studies that track the long-term effects of PDO-driven tourism on local economies,

biodiversity, and cultural practices. Additionally, a multi-disciplinary approach involving experts in agriculture, tourism, sustainability, and economics would enrich the understanding of how PDO products can serve as catalysts for sustainable rural development. Finally, studies exploring tourist behavior, motivations, and preferences in greater detail would help both researchers and practitioners design more effective strategies for promoting PDO-based tourism and ensuring its growth in a sustainable manner.

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Appendix 1. Survey

Survey Title: Tourist Perspectives on PDO Products and Culinary Experiences in Portugal

Introduction:

Dear Participant,

We are conducting a study on the impact of Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) products on culinary tourism in Portugal. Your participation in this survey will contribute valuable insights into how PDO products shape tourism experiences. The survey is anonymous, and all information provided will be used solely for academic purposes.

Section 1: Demographic Information
Age:
Under 18
18-24
25-34
35-44
45-54
55-64
65 and over
Gender:
Male
Female
Prefer not to say
Other (please specify) _____
Country of Residence: _____
Level of Education:
High School or lower
Vocational Training/Associate's Degree
Bachelor's Degree
Master's Degree
Doctoral Degree or higher
Prefer not to say
Section 2: Travel and Culinary Preferences
What was the primary purpose of your visit to Portugal?

Business

Leisure/Culinary

Visiting friends or relatives

Other (please specify) _____

Have you specifically traveled to a destination in Portugal to experience a culinary event or activity?

Yes

No

How important are local food and culinary experiences in your choice of travel destination?

Not important

Somewhat important

Important

Very important

Section 3: Awareness and Perception of PDO Products

Before visiting Portugal, were you aware of the concept of Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) for food products?

Yes

No

How does knowing that a food product has PDO status influence your perception of its quality?

It significantly enhances my perception of quality

It somewhat enhances my perception of quality

It does not influence my perception of quality

I am not sure

During your stay, did you participate in any activities related to PDO products (e.g., wine tasting, cheese making workshops)?

Yes

No

Section 4: Experience with PDO Products

Which PDO product experiences have you participated in while in Portugal? (Select all that apply)

Wine tastings/tours

Cheese tastings/workshops

Olive oil tastings/tours

Other (please specify) _____

How likely are you to recommend a culinary experience centered around PDO products to friends or family?

Very unlikely

Unlikely

Neutral

Likely

Very likely

Section 5: Overall Satisfaction

Overall, how satisfied were you with your culinary experiences involving PDO products in Portugal?

Very dissatisfied

Dissatisfied

Neutral

Satisfied

Very satisfied

What improvements would you suggest for culinary tourism experiences involving PDO products in Portugal?

[Open-ended response]

Conclusion:

Thank you for participating in our survey. Your responses are invaluable to our research on culinary tourism in Portugal.

The workation megatrend: a promising opportunity for the hospitality sector?

Nicole Bünstorf [1] and Felix Lege[2]

ABSTRACT

The contemporary work landscape is undergoing significant transformation due to megatrends like digitalization, individualization, and events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, new work paradigms are emerging. Workation, blending work with vacation, is one such novel arrangement. Employees relocate their workplace to a holiday destination for a specified period, enjoying travel benefits while fulfilling work responsibilities. However, Workation's effectiveness is still under scrutiny. Empirical investigations show it as an appealing prospect, with many expressing interest. Yet, challenges persist. Apart from organizing the stay, factors like access to work equipment and employer supervision significantly impact the experience. For the hospitality industry, Workation presents an opportunity to extend the tourist season and boost less frequented destinations. Tailored package offerings can cater to both individual employees and companies, expanding the Workation services market.

Keywords: New Work, Workation, Tourism, Hospitality Industry

INTRODUCTION

"The purest form of madness is to leave everything as it is and hope that something will change." (Einstein n.d., cited in Gratz 2021, n.p.) After profound disruptions in global economic systems due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this quote by Albert Einstein aptly describes the need for advancements. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the shift in professional and societal values in western industrialized nations, making a return to the previous status quo no longer possible. (Froendhoff, Holzki, Kerkmann & Scheppe 2020; Augsbach 2020) New individual demands, expectations, and desires are placed on offerings and one's own life. (Jaeggi 2021; Future Institute 2024.; Suenderhauf 2022)

The tourism and hospitality industry must also embrace these challenges and explore new

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paths. Societal changes are particularly evident here. (Reinhardt 2020) Whether dealing with the consequences of climate change, labor shortages, or overtourism, the tourism and hospitality sector must rethink and chart new courses. (Neumann & Helms 2020; Kagermeier 2016; Wenzel & Dziemba 2016; Gardini 2022; Neumair & Schlesinger 2021)

One opportunity to capitalize on the shift in professional and societal values is the new form of work and vacation known as *Workation*. The merging of these two aspects of life (work and travel) offers new marketing opportunities, particularly in the hospitality industry. (Leder, Sündermann & Sudeikat-Gichtbrock 2020) This article will delve into the potential of Workation and how it can become a new market segment for the industry through targeted alignment with the needs of potential customers.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Currently, there is limited data and literature on the Workation work model. Therefore, this study will initially examine Workation within the context of the megatrend New Work. As a hybrid of work and vacation, Workation is also influenced by factors specific to tourism, which will be taken into account in the analysis of this work model.

Building on this theoretical foundation, a quantitative empirical study will seek to establish a comprehensive understanding of Workation and its influencing factors. The study will focus on exploring the motives behind choosing Workation, its potential benefits, and the possible barriers to its successful implementation.

Through this research, we aim to shed light on the viability and practicality of the Workation model in today's work environment. By examining both the advantages and challenges of the Workation model, valuable insights can be provided for employees and employers considering adopting this new work arrangement.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Travel is as old as humanity itself. While travel was once driven by survival needs, in today's affluent society, it aims to enhance personal quality of life through exploration. (Mundt 2013) The traveler has become a tourist. Temporary departure from one's familiar surroundings is now an essential part of leisure and is defined in the literature as a basic need. (Neumair & Schlesinger 2021; Eisenstein 2021a; Mundt 2013)

Consequently, both the demand and supply in tourism have become highly diversified. Numerous tourism service providers deliver individualized travel experiences for each person. A core element of this product is the hospitality industry, primarily composed of accommodation and gastronomy establishments. (Augsbach 2020; Eisenstein 2021b)

Societally, there is a shift in leisure behavior, which has intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic. (Augsbach 2020; Jaeggi 2021) Especially in the globalized west, expectations regarding leisure activities are rising steadily. This, in conjunction with increased individualization of society, leads to greater heterogeneity in travel motivations. Consumers seek destinations that align precisely with their individual lifestyles. This changed demand in tourism stimulates innovations on the supply side. (Shanahan 2010; Eisenstein 2021b)

The primary purpose of the hospitality industry – accommodation and catering – is no longer solely the focus of consumer decisions but also includes secondary services. Standard offerings are no longer sufficient. Clear positioning of companies in the competitive market, precise target group definition, and differentiated service offerings have become necessary. (Henschel 2004; Jaeggi 2021; Gatterer & Ruetzler 2012; Gardini 2022)

megatrend new work

"Nothing is as constant as change." (Heraclitus n.d., cited in Brackmann 2016, n.p.) Over 2,500 years ago, the Greek philosopher Heraclitus described the world's continuous transformation. From this perpetual change, trends can be derived that affect individuals, societies, and enterprises locally and globally.

The rapid rise of digitization is profoundly impacting the realm of work. Specifically, the combination of digitization, connectivity, and artificial intelligence is driving transformative shifts, causing significant disruptions in various aspects of work. Simultaneously, society is characterized by increasing awareness of diversity and individuality. (Deckert 2019; Horx 2001) Institutionalized values and norms are losing significance. Intangible aspects like quality of life and work atmosphere are becoming more important and supplanting material values such as large company cars or prestigious offices. (Vaeth 2016; Gatterer & Ruetzler 2012)

This transformation was already highlighted at the end of the 20th century by the social philosopher Frithjof Bergmann (1996), who coined the term *New Work* and asserted: "We should not serve work; work should serve us" (Bergman 1996, cited in Adelsberger, Muigg, Schrettl & Trenkwalder 2020, p. 37). However, the contemporary perception of New Work differs significantly from Bergmann's original theses, such as the abolition of wage labor. Instead, modern societies have a desire for a healthy work-life balance. (Vaeth 2016; Steigenberger 2018) Work is no longer just a means of livelihood; it increasingly focuses on the meaningfulness of professional activities. Individuals strive for personal development and self-realization. (Eisenstein 2021b; Horx. 2001; Future Institute 2024) This applies not only to the working day but also to leisure, which is becoming increasingly important.
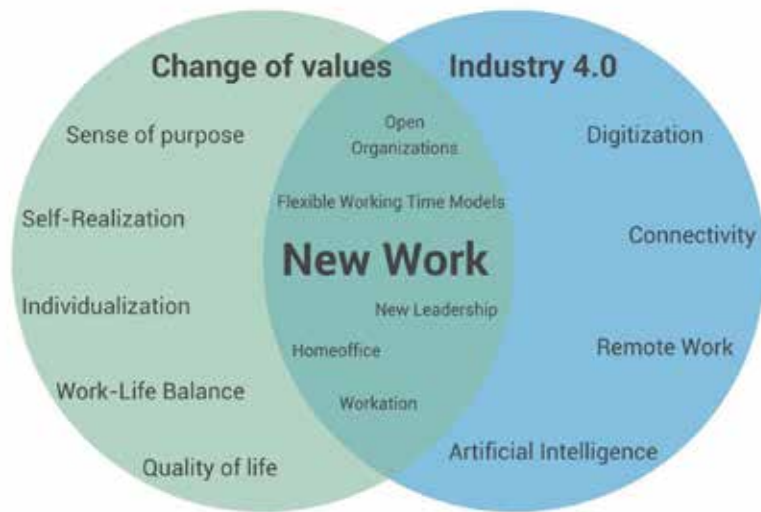
Figure 1: Influencing factors of the megatrend New Work and resulting work concepts (Source: own figure)

As shown in Figure 1, the concept of *New Work* in today's context can be understood as the interplay between a shift in values and Industry 4.0, which describes technological progress. New Work encompasses new concepts in the world of work. (Alewell & Matiaske 2019) A fundamental basis for these new concepts is Remote Work (mobile work). With the use of mobile devices, employees can work from home, cafes, or other locations independently of time and place. (Future Institute 2024.; Borell 2016) This allows work to be relocated to where leisure is spent, and working conditions can be tailored to individual life preferences. Workation builds on this foundation, combining work and vacation. (Imbacher 2020; Future Institute 2024; Leder, Suendermann & Sudeikat-Gichtbrock 2020)

New Work concepts and the transformation of work values have received an additional boost from the COVID-19 pandemic. "The coronavirus crisis has pushed the digitization of our collaboration forward by at least 15 years" (Rief 2020, cited in Froendhoff, Holzki, Kerkmann, & Scheppe 2020, n.p.).

However, not every employed person benefits equally from this development. In some industries, such as hairdressing, cleaning, or manufacturing, remote work or more flexible working arrangements are severely limited because the work cannot be performed independently of location. Beneficiaries of the changes in the world of work are professions in the field of knowledge work, which can be understood as knowledge-intensive and knowledge-generating activities. In the digitized and automated world, human tasks are increasingly being

replaced by machines (Kugler, Arnold & Meichsner 2020; Borell 2016). However, since knowledge work often involves an element of creativity, workers in this field are increasingly in demand in the job market. This leads to changed expectations and influencing factors on the professional daily routine.

the new everyday working life

The transformation of work forms and conditions continues to advance in the wake of digitization and shifting values. The traditional *standard employment relationship*, characterized by indefinite job security, social benefits, and collectively agreed compensation for full-time positions (Oschmiansky 2020), is diminishing in importance. The typical 9 to 5- job with a fixed workplace is giving way to a work routine that adapts to one's personal life and individual needs (Alewell & Matiaske 2019; Future Institute 2024).

The increasing importance of employees is further amplified by the skilled labor shortage in Germany. Currently, there are 701,000 job vacancies that cannot be filled due to a shortage of workers (Federal Employment Agency 2024). This labor market situation has turned into a job seekers' market, where candidates, depending on their qualifications, have the freedom to choose from available jobs. Employers, on the other hand, must actively court employees. The question of job benefits has become a decisive criterion for attracting skilled professionals. In line with societal value changes, factors such as salary and vacation days are no longer the sole determinants; instead, the focus has shifted to where and how a healthy work-life balance can be achieved (Suenderhauf 2022; Gutmann 2021).

Companies are trying to build an attractive image through New Work models to distinguish themselves from competitors in the job market. This development can be summarized under the term *Employer Branding*, which has become a fundamental component of talent acquisition under the perspective of the *War for Talents*. Through the employer's offerings and measures, the goal is to strengthen happiness factors in professional life and minimize stress factors. Satisfaction serves as the foundation for one's sense of happiness, which is perceived as the sum of one's professional and personal situations. Stressful situations at work affect happiness in one's personal life, and vice versa. Happiness is the balance between the spheres of work and personal life, intending to create a stable private life and secure professional prospects (Suenderhauf 2022; Kriegler 2021; Rehwaldt 2017).

The flexible working world takes into account individuals' personal needs and well-being, thereby enhancing the feeling of contentment. Self-directed and independent work also provides intrinsic motivation for employees to set and achieve their goals (Alewell & Matiaske 2019; Gatterer & Ruetzler 2012; Frey 2010).

Furthermore, the value of intangible aspects such as honesty, trust, and reliability in the professional realm is growing. These qualities must be promoted to increase emotional attach-

ment to the employer and boost productivity. Motivation and happiness factors are no longer solely determined by salary; instead, they hinge on personal freedom for self-organization, taking responsibility, and cooperation on equal terms (Stroh 2021; Borell 2016).

Leaders play a significant role in influencing happiness in professional life. As change moderators and coaches, they ensure that appropriate equipment (e.g., laptops and remote access) is provided for implementing New Work concepts (Stelzmann & Reinige 2020). Actively promoting new communication techniques is crucial for fostering collaboration within increasingly flexible teams. Creating an appropriate corporate culture positively influences employee motivation and innovation capacity. This not only serves as a competitive advantage in the job market but also increases job satisfaction (Kugler, Arnold & Meichsner 2020; Vaeth 2016).

In addition to the positive aspects, the new work world can also create stress factors. These lead to dissatisfaction and negatively impact both professional and personal life. A high level of stress can result in burnout and other mental health issues (Bergner 2010).

New work concepts not only bring increased flexibility in the work routine but also the associated requirements. Employees must continuously upskill, remain constantly accessible, and stay up-to-date, potentially leading to feelings of overwhelm. Professional tasks are sometimes completed outside of working hours based on remote work, even though there is no legal obligation to do so. As a result, leisure time loses its role as a counterbalance to work (Deckert 2016; Neuner 2016; Schubert 2020; Wilke 2020).

While working in a private setting may reduce potential disruptions such as a long commute and distractions from colleagues, it can introduce new challenges. Inadequate support, for instance, in resolving technical issues, can hinder productivity during remote work (Bruhn 2020; Arndt, Cieplik, Reithmeier & Werner 2020).

Clear conditions and structures must be in place, both for traditional home office setups and other mobile work formats like Workation. The ability to separate one's private and professional space is a critical influencing factor. Moreover, in the context of New Work models, the human need for direct, interpersonal contact with colleagues may be lacking. External validation, external exchange, mutual inspiration, and motivation are essential factors in many work processes and often indirectly increase productivity, particularly in knowledge work (Britz-Averkamp & Eich-Fangmeier 2020; Backovic, Demling & Obmann 2021; Landes, Utz, Steiner & Wittmann 2021).
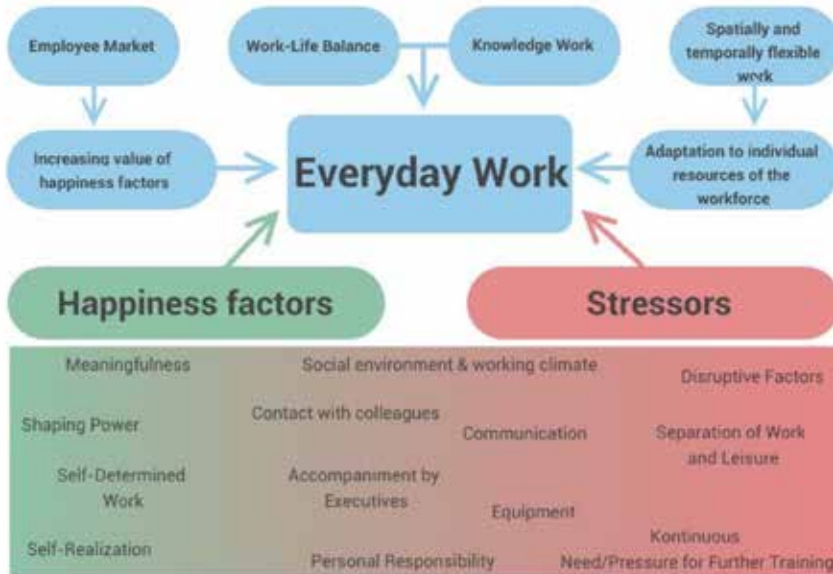
Figure 2: Influencing factors on the workday (Source: own figure)

Figure 2 summarizes the described factors influencing the work routine graphically. It becomes evident that New Work models have the potential to enhance an individual's sense of happiness in their professional life, as factors like purposefulness and self-determined work can increase satisfaction. However, these factors only have their intended effect if elements such as targeted guidance by supervisors, suitable equipment, and communication are in place. If not, stressors such as continuous training pressure can lead to negative perceptions of the work routine and the new work models.

WORKATION: A NOVEL WORK PARADIGM

The term *Workation* is derived from the combination of *Work* and *Vacation* and describes the combination of daily work and travel (Leder, Suendermann & Sudeikat-Gichtbrock 2020). Other new forms of tourism such as *Bizcation* or *Bleisure Travel* are clearly distinct from Workation, as they refer to a combination of business trips with private activities at the travel destination. During a Workation, regular work is carried out at the holiday destination. Depending on company requirements, fixed working hours must be adhered to, and digital meetings attended. Of course, during a Workation, the stay at the travel destination can also be extended or initiated by a pure vacation (Eisenstein, Reif, Schmuecker, Krueger & Weis 2019).

The foundations of workation

A fundamental prerequisite for Workation is the possibility of remote work. Only if work can be done outside the regular workplace using mobile devices is it possible in a location other than the usual workplace. Consequently, knowledge workers, in particular, can use this work model (Leder, Suendermann & Sudeikat-Gichtbrock 2020; Mundt 2013).

The influencing factors of mobile work can be applied to Workation. The stress-inducing and happiness-promoting aspects illustrated in Figure 2 are also the basis for a successful Workation experience. However, individuals attribute different values to the individual components depending on their life situation and value system. There are also various obstacles and requirements depending on the situation (Uhtenwoldt 2022; Arndt, Cieplik, Reithmeier & Werner 2020; Leder, Suendermann & Sudeikat-Gichtbrock 2020).

Until now, Workation has been scarcely studied scientifically. In early 2020 (before the COVID-19 pandemic), the Institute for Interdisciplinary Work Science at Leibniz University Hannover conducted expert interviews to determine whether German DAX companies offer Workation and what experiences exist. It was found that "with regard to the Workation model, all results are based on assumptions because the respondents [...] do not offer these models and [...] (have not) examined them in more depth" (Leder, Suendermann & Sudeikat-Gichtbrock 2020, p. 174). None of the companies examined explicitly offered Workation; only the possibility of remote work was available. Three years later, the situation is different. Remote work, where possible, has become almost commonplace, and Workation is an increasingly attractive option (Leder, Suendermann & Sudeikat-Gichtbrock 2020; Pankoke 2022). However, since the data basis has not consolidated since then, cross-references to related New Work models must be used in the following.

The success of a new work concept depends significantly on the organization and potential obstacles. In addition, legal and infrastructural barriers are crucial. If employees have to take care of the entire booking themselves, this can lead to increased stress and uncertainty, similar to traditional business trips. Knowledgeable guidance by experts or managers is therefore the basis for a successful Workation. Due to the absence of the personal or professional environment and structures, a trustful and goal-oriented communication with colleagues and superiors must create a clear framework. This includes setting work goals, clear task distribution, and monitoring current work progress (Uhtenwoldt 2022; Arndt, Cieplik, Reithmeier & Werner 2020; Leder, Suendermann & Sudeikat-Gichtbrock 2020).

Even with sufficient structuring communication, differentiating between working time and leisure time is challenging for the employee. It requires a higher degree of self-organization. This is further complicated by the unfamiliar working environment, different climatic conditions on-site, possible time differences in far-off travel destinations, and the general connection between leisure and work at the holiday destination (Leder, Suendermann & Sudeikat-Gichtbrock 2020).

If the employee fails to develop a suitable separation strategy, this can quickly lead to overload. The equipment on-site has a crucial influence on the individual's self-organizational abilities. Since Workation is based on remote work, a laptop and a secure and stable internet connection are basic requirements. In addition, a sufficiently large work table, suitable lighting, an ergonomic desk chair, an additional screen, and an external keyboard with a mouse are helpful (Arndt, Cieplik, Reithmeier & Werner 2020; Eisenstein, Reif, Schmuecker, Krueger & Weis 2019; Britz-Averkamp & Eich-Fangmeier 2020).

Creating a suitable working atmosphere helps to avoid stress and has a positive impact on self-motivation. The use of co-working spaces, where you work with like-minded people, can be helpful in distinguishing between work and vacation (Hilti & Rupietta 2022). In addition, frequent breaks, relaxation exercises, or walks during the working day can also contribute to a balance between work and leisure.

The influencing factors on Workation are summarized in Figure 3. It should be noted that Workation may not be a suitable model for every employee. In addition to the basic requirement of being able to work remotely, personal preferences or commitments (family, pets, etc.) can be obstacles to Workation (Eisenstein, Reif, Schmuecker, Krueger & Weis 2019).

Motives for Workation

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, remote work has become a permanent part of the working world, and employees are taking advantage of the opportunity to work from home (Statista 2022). Based on this, a temporary shift of the workplace to a vacation destination has become an alternative. An increasing number of companies like Bosch, Merck, Otto, SAP, and Continental now allow their employees to use Workation for a certain period (Koenen 2022; Sueddeutsche Zeitung 2022). This has led to a rise in booking numbers for so-called Long-Stay stays. For example, 20 % of Airbnb customers book accommodations for more than 28 days. The hospitality industry attributes this increase, in part, to the new Workation work model, which is being used more and more (Zeit Online 2022).

The motives for using Workation are multifaceted. In addition to societal changes and growing individualization, changes in the world of work (New Work) are crucial. Especially Generation Z seeks a balanced work-life balance. A representative study by the personnel service provider Randstad found that over 40 % of the younger generation would change their job if it is not compatible with their personal life. Results like these show that employees no longer seek fulfillment solely in their professional lives; the pursuit of personal happiness takes center stage, and time becomes a crucial factor (Pankoke 2022; Horx 2001; Stroh 2021).

Employers must provide solutions for this need in the competition for the scarce resource of labor. Only in this way can they maintain their attractiveness to existing and potential employees. By enabling Workation, companies can convey values such as trust, appreciation, consideration of needs, and individual responsibility. This can be motivating and

productivity-enhancing for employees (Bruhn 2020; Eisenstein, Reif, Schmuecker, Krueger & Weis 2019; Leder, Suendermann & Sudeikat-Gichtbrock 2020). The happiness factors illustrated in Figure 3 are thus addressed.

Figure 3: Influencing Factors on Workation (Source: own figure)

Workation is, therefore, a suitable concept for both employees and companies to meet the new desires and requirements in the world of work. If the company also covers part or all of the costs of Workation, the positive effects can be further enhanced (Eisenstein, Reif, Schmuecker, Krueger & Weis 2019).

Workation services in the hospitality sector

The tourism industry, and consequently the hospitality sector, is characterized by increasing competition and the need for adaptation and specialization. The new form of travel, Workation, is now part of the range of offerings in the hospitality industry. Small specialists like The Hearts Hotel in the Harz region, as well as large tourism corporations like TUI, are tailoring their offerings to meet the growing demand for Workation (Koenen 2022; Fischer 2022).

For a successful Workation, suitable equipment is essential. Providers need to integrate a reliable internet connection and a work-supportive environment into their accommodation infrastructure. Hotels under the TuiBlue brand, for example, advertise "comfortable furniture and technical equipment [...]. Available upon request (subject to availability): mousepad, mouse, writing materials, extra monitor" (TUI BLUE 2022, n.p.). The Hearts Hotel, while offering no or only small desks depending on the room category, has event rooms that can be used as co-working spaces, subject to availability (THE HEARTS HOTEL 2022a; THE HEARTS HOTEL 2022b).

Workation relies on functional technology, which often remains a weak point. A positive example is the offering of the AMA Stay hotel. Opened in winter 2022, it specifically targets the

Workation niche. The hotel combines rooms with fully equipped co-working options (AMA Stay 2022a). The company's stated mission on its website is: "We break with traditional work routines and pave the way for a new Workation consciousness that allows everyone to focus on what they love in an inspiring environment" (AMA Stay 2022b, n.p.). They offer 'STAY & ENJOY WORKATION' packages that include clean rooms, free use of co-working spaces, and access to the spa. Additionally, customers can customize their Workation stay according to their needs under the categories *Relax* and *Adventure* (AMA Stay 2022c). However, there is still room for improvement in the AMA Stay hotel's offering. Workspaces should be visually presented to give an impression of the working atmosphere. Furthermore, the option to book additional work equipment, such as an additional monitor, should be available.

From the perspective of the hospitality industry, Workation is an interesting form of travel because it is not dependent on seasons, and travelers may have lower price sensitivity, provided that the trip is tax-deductible or subsidized by the employer. There is also potential from the so-called *returners* who discover a new destination through a business trip and then revisit it for a vacation or Workation (Eisenstein, Reif, Schmuecker, Krueger & Weis 2019). Especially less-visited travel destinations can strategically position themselves in the market and acquire new customers.

From a sustainability perspective, Workation also offers advantages. When work and vacation are combined, there are fewer trips, reducing the environmental impact. Additionally, longer Workation stays reduce the frequency of consumer travel, contributing to a better environmental balance.

In summary, on the supply side, Workation options are increasingly being designed and promoted, thus meeting the growing demand (Koenen 2022).

EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

The results of secondary research are intended to be verified through a quantitative empirical study that places the new work format, Workation, in the context of societal value and workplace changes. Additionally, work structures that may hinder Workation are to be identified. The survey was conducted using a standardized online questionnaire. There was no demographic restriction on the target audience, as an overall societal opinion on the topic of Workation was sought. In addition to structural peculiarities, the emotional perception of Workation is to be highlighted to derive possible obstacles and the importance of certain influencing factors, providing recommendations for the hospitality industry.

The survey was conducted in Germany in December 2022 and completed by n=135 participants. The analysis of the demographic characteristics of the respondents revealed that women are significantly overrepresented at approximately 73% compared to men at approximately 26%. The average age is just under 34 years, with the age group of 21-25 being the

most represented, followed by those aged 55-60. The majority of respondents reported a high level of education, with 38.5 % having a bachelor's degree, followed by a master's or diploma at 22.2 %, and a high school diploma or equivalent at 20 %. In terms of current employment status, nearly 38 % of respondents indicated full-time employment, while part-time employees (21.5 %) and student workers (17 %) were also well-represented. Nevertheless, the sample must be described as non-representative.

When assessing the influence of various factors on employment choices, the work atmosphere was considered the most important, followed by flexible working hours and corporate culture. Social aspects were most important for the work environment. However, factors such as a sense of purpose, autonomy in work, and work-life balance also played important roles for the respondents.

Regarding the specifics of Workation, the ability for self-motivation and self-organization was specifically queried. Overall, nearly 75 % of respondents found self-motivation very easy or easy. Respondents with Workation experience most commonly reported finding self-motivation difficult, while the group with remote work experience found it the easiest.

The ability for self-organization is more pronounced than self-motivation. Surprisingly, respondents without Workation or remote work experience rated self-organization as easy or very easy. The other two groups found self-organization more challenging.

Out of 135 respondents, nearly two-thirds can use remote work. Additionally, 23 % would work remotely if possible. Based on this, expectations (for participants who cannot work remotely) and experiences (for participants who can already work remotely) regarding mobile work were examined. Overall, respondents with remote work experience rated these aspects more positively than those without remote work experience. Experienced remote workers particularly appreciated the time gained and perceived remote work as liberating, whereas supervision by supervisors and the attribute of being *productivity-enhancing* were considered weakly applicable. Adequate contact with colleagues was generally perceived as *not applicable*. Respondents without remote work experience evaluated all aspects more negatively.

Respondents with Workation experience rated aspects such as relaxation and motivation very positively. However, the aspect of contact with colleagues was sometimes rated negatively. The experiences and expectations regarding the organizational effort of Workation was rate das extensive or very extensive by a majority of 56 %. Respondents without Workation experience rated the effort as high by about 66 %. In contrast, more than 74 % of respondents with Workation experience considered the organization as simple or very simple.

Afinal question summarizes the reasons for a positive attitude towards Workation. This open-ended question was not mandatory, so the number of participants is smaller. Multiple answers were possible. Variety was frequently cited as a reason for choosing Workation. Leisure aspects (feeling like a vacation, leaving everyday life behind, etc.) were also commonly

mentioned. Value change and work-related aspects (creativity, motivation) were mentioned less frequently.

After analyzing the data, the results are now being placed in the context of Workation. The sample used for the analysis had more female respondents and included mostly people aged 21 to 30 years old. When looking at the data by age groups, it was found that mainly individuals from Generation Y (born between 1980 and 1994) and Generation Z (born between 1995 and 2010) participated in the survey. However, when analyzing the data based on gender, significant differences in distribution were not found, unlike when looking at age groups.

Generations X and Y have grown up in an increasingly digitalized, multipolar, and globalized world. As previously shown, they are characterized by a changed view of people, seeing the individual as responsible and motivated. The societal shift in values regarding the professional world is clearly reflected in this age group. They have a stronger desire for more individual responsibility, creative input, and participation in their work compared to previous generations, and they place more importance on achieving a balanced work-life. Overall, the survey mostly included young, highly educated individuals or those still in education.

For respondents, the work atmosphere was of utmost importance in their choice of employment, followed by the possibility of flexible working hours. These results demonstrate the increasing importance of intangible factors. Material factors, such as the equipment of the workplace, were not considered particularly important. Even salary was considered of secondary importance. The examined happiness factors (meaningfulness, self-realization, autonomous work) for the professional everyday life were mainly considered very important or important – aligning with the pursuit of personal happiness.

Based on these results, it can be concluded that the general societal shift in values is reflected in the motives and motivation for Workation. The extent to which the expected relationship between new demands on the professional world on one hand and the desire for Workation on the other hand holds true needs to be further verified in the subsequent interpretation.

To answer the research questions, fundamental influencing factors of work will be examined in more detail. These factors concern the abilities for self-motivation and self-organization as well as the stress levels of the respondents. As already described, nearly 75 % of respondents rate their self-motivation as good or even very good. However, Workation-experienced respondents find self-motivation most challenging. They also find self-organization the most difficult, while respondents without remote work experience can self-organize well, with over 90 % rating themselves as good or very good.

Considering the differentiated stress levels of the groups, Workation-experienced respondents often reported low or very low stress levels, despite difficulties with self-motivation and self-organization. Remote-experienced respondents without Workation experience, on the other hand, find it easier to motivate themselves and most of them have the ability to

self-organize well. However, nearly 60 % of this group reported a high stress level, with almost 24 % having a very high stress level.

Based on the empirical study, neither the ability for self-organization nor self-motivation seems to be a prerequisite for a low stress level and does not necessarily determine a successful Workation experience. Further factors such as supervision (by supervisors) or equipment may compensate for lacking motivation and organizational skills during Workation.

Also, remote work as the basis for Workation needs further examination. As described, almost 70 % of respondents can work remotely, with only 7% not wanting or not preferring it. These numbers suggest that the respondents mostly consist of knowledge workers, as they can work remotely.

An increase in productivity through mobile work could not be proven in the study. As previously described, the lack of social interaction could potentially reduce productivity. Positive factors such as time gain and the liberating feeling are offset by the absence of contact and supervision. Respondents without remote work experience evaluated all aspects more negatively.

The empirical investigation revealed that almost 80% of respondents would like to take advantage of Workation offers, with about 40% preferring it immediately. This verifies a significant interest in the work model and establishes a connection between the changing values in the professional world and Workation. Particularly, respondents with Workation experience hold a very positive view of the concept and mostly rate contact with colleagues positively, in contrast to remote-experienced respondents. Productivity is also perceived much more positively in Workation compared to traditional forms of mobile work. The on-site equipment was rated as satisfactory by a majority of those with Workation experience.

In summary, Workation experts have mostly had very positive experiences: supervision by supervisors and colleagues was satisfactory, as was the equipment at the travel destination. The feeling of relaxation and motivation, along with the ease of organization, were experienced, and even the organizational effort was considered manageable. Overall, Workation appears to have a very positive impact on the employee, with the primary obstacle being the organization of the trip itself. Reducing these organizational issues on the employer side, but especially on the supply side (hospitality industry), should be promoted. Then, Workation can have a very positive impact on the well-being and individual happiness of the employee and can be increasingly used as a market for the hospitality industry. Employers also benefit from increased motivation, productivity, and creativity, as well as increased employee loyalty and attractiveness.

CONCLUSION

Societal shifts in values, digitalization, individualized leisure behavior, increasingly diverse travel motivations, and high market transparency are shaping the tourism industry. Workation, within the context of the New Work megatrend, presents an opportunity, particularly for the hospitality sector, to differentiate itself from competitors and create tailored offerings for this target audience.

The examination of New Work realities and the resulting changes in influencing factors on daily work served to establish connections to Workation and classify this new work format within the megatrend. With the rise of knowledge work, the pronounced employee market, and the pursuit of individually defined happiness, a shift in values in the professional world has been activated. In the context of work, intangible values such as honesty, trust, and self-realization have gained importance, and a Work-Life-Balance is sought, with a flexible work model mix aiming to satisfy individual needs. Workation can be an extension of this mix.

On the employer's side, important attributes such as appreciation, greater flexibility, and active involvement can be conveyed through a Workation offering. Workation thus serves the interests of both employers and employees and can have a motivating, productivity-enhancing, and relaxing effect. It was also evident that a wide range of motives and needs, such as learning new soft skills, health prevention, improving the work atmosphere, and enhancing creativity, can be satisfied through Workation.

While the tourism industry has shown some resilience to crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, long-term developments such as climate change or overtourism pose high risks. Sustainable design of offerings will form the basis of societal acceptance. More efficient resource utilization, especially by reducing travel frequency and redirecting tourism flows to less frequented destinations, are points of focus.

Certain prerequisites must be met for a successful Workation stay. The absence of social contacts can cause stress, making appropriate legal frameworks and a structurally supportive environment of high importance. Value-oriented guidance from supervisors, professional equipment (e.g., a second screen, a spacious desk, etc.), and the option for spatial separation between the workplace and the holiday destination continue to play important roles. The empirical investigation revealed that self-motivation and self-organization are not crucial factors for a satisfying Workation experience. Instead, one's motivation abilities seem to be reinforced by the work format itself.

The examination of existing Workation offerings revealed room for development. Either additional suitable office equipment is entirely lacking, or information about equipment options is missing. Furthermore, there are hardly any offerings for suitable workplaces at the Workation destination that provide spatial separation or sufficient space.

Empirically, the organizational effort, which was expected to be particularly high, was identified as a possible hindrance for Workation. Here, the hospitality sector should step in and offer packages that include workplace equipment and leisure activities. Alongside this, more information about Workation in general, legal regulations, and on-site equipment should be provided.

The lack of social contact during Workation can be countered by digital leadership. Additionally, the use of co-working spaces at the Workation destination can help in having social contact with like-minded individuals. It also offers the opportunity to meet new people and gain new perspectives, thereby enhancing creativity.

Overall, Workation holds great potential as a new market for the hospitality industry. The positive results for both employees and employers suggest that demand for this new work model will continue to rise. Workation can help balance seasonality in the hospitality sector. Furthermore, with clear work-supporting concepts, companies may also have an interest in securing fixed bed and workspace contingents for their own employees. This would enable better planning and higher value creation for Workation offerings. Especially from a sustainability perspective, diverting travel flows from overcrowded destinations, Workation offers additional advantages by exploring and marketing new, unknown travel destinations.

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Undergraduate Students' Perceptions of Career Choices in Tourism during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Suosheng Wang [1]

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted while Covid-19 was transitioning to endemicity, and tourism became one of the most affected industry sectors. For tourism employers and educators alike, understanding college students' industry career perceptions and expectations is central to attracting and recruiting future employees, even during a pandemic. A case study was conducted at a mid-west university in the U.S. This study examined college students' perceptions of career choice based on Kusluvan and Kusluvan's (2000) conceptual model and the Social Cognitive Career Theory. Several factors and their relations were investigated. These factors include students' self-interest in tourism careers, perceived nature of work, social status, others' support, career choice, and negative emotions associated with Covid-19. The results indicate that, overall, the students' perceptions are positive even amid a pandemic, unlike the results reported in previous studies. Furthermore, students' self-interest in careers emerges as the most critical factor in shaping their career choices.

Keywords: tourism students, career choice, self-interest, Covid-19, perceptions

INTRODUCTION

Due to globalization and the drive for efficiency, society has seen a shift in career development and perception paradigms. The recession induced by the recent pandemic resulted in steep job losses and caused many people to leave the labor force. In addition, the pandemic caused many companies to pivot to remote work options. While many tourism program recruiters are witnessing the number of students enrolled in tourism decreasing, one should not deny the importance of understanding students' perceptions and attitudes toward the work and careers in the tourism industry. For administrators of education and training programs, understanding these perceptions and attitudes is central for tourism and or hospitality schools to attract and recruit students. For instance, it may enable educators to design more realistic

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and practical courses for students and, to some extent, prevent their future job dissatisfaction. Also, employers may apply this awareness to locate and attract students most likely to succeed and remain in the tourism and hospitality industry.

Career development was once seen as a responsibility of both employer and employee (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). However, the task is now primarily in the hands of the employee and is used by employers in determining the potential for hire and advancement among peers. Murphy, Blustein, Bohlig, and Platt (2010) suggest that teaching and counseling undergraduate students on these responsibilities and expectations before they enter the job market may be integral to career success. The industry is made up of many interlinked and competitive sectors such as packaged travel, accommodations, food and drink, transportation and recreation, culture, and sporting events; the need for tourism students entering the job force to have positive, flexible, and proactive perceptions of careers and their development becomes increasingly important (Theobald, 2005).

Research on career perception in the literature has mainly been descriptive of students' perceptions and attitudes toward the tourism and hospitality industry (e.g., Kusluvan and Kusluvan, 2000; Sibson, 2011). Few studies have discussed the interrelations among career-related factors. This study examines the factors considered important in influencing students' career choices and their interrelations as perceived by undergraduate students amid Covid-19. More specifically, this study is designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. Identify and examine the critical career-related factors perceived by tourism college students.
2. Investigate the relationships among the factors considered important in college students' perceptions.
3. Measure the college students' negative emotions associated with Covid-19 and the relations with the career-related factors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous Studies on Tourism Students' Career Perceptions
Previous studies on students' career perceptions in the 1990s surveyed high school or secondary school students (Ross, 1991; Ross, 1992a; Ross, 1992b; Ross, 1994; Getz, 1994; Airey & Frontistis, 1997). For instance, Ross's (1991) early research focused on Australian secondary school students' attitudes and perceptions toward employment and careers within the tourism and hospitality industry. Getz (1994) surveyed high school students in the Spey Valley in Scotland. His longitudinal study showed that perceptions towards a potential career in tourism had become much more negative over 14 years. Airey and Frontistis (1997) compared secondary school students' attitudes toward tourism careers in Greece and the United Kingdom. Results showed that UK students were less favorable towards tourism than their Greek counterparts.

Other studies examined undergraduate tourism and hospitality students' career perceptions at the beginning of the 21st century (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Jenkins, 2001; Brien, 2004; Harkison, 2004; Akis Roney & Öztin, 2007; Barron et al., 2007; Richardson, 2009; Sibson, 2011; King & Hang, 2011). For example, a study by Kusluvan and Kusluvan (2000) on four-year tourism and hotel management students in Turkey reported negative perceptions towards different dimensions of working in tourism. Kozak and Kizilirmak (2001), cited in Akis, Roney, and Öztin (2007), did a similar survey among undergraduate tourism students in Turkey. Their research indicated that work experience as a trainee in the industry negatively affected their perceptions. Jenkins (2001) compared hospitality students' future perceptions at two different universities in the UK and the Netherlands and found that students' perceptions of the industry tended to deteriorate as they progressed in their studies. Wang and Huang (2014) examined tourism college students' career perceptions in China using a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). The results showed that most perceptual measurement items had mean scores below four except one with a mean score of 4.01, indicating students' moderate perceptions concerning career choice. Many such studies have been conducted in Europe and Asia, and relatively few have been conducted in the U.S. This case study is designed to fill the gap and expand the knowledge about tourism students' career perceptions, especially amid Covid-19.

Factors Considered Important in Tourism Students' Career Perceptions

The scales used by Kusluvan and Kusluvan (2000) in their study of Turkish tourism students have been widely adopted by other researchers when exploring college students' tourism career perceptions. Kusluvan and Kusluvan (2000) employed a multi-dimensional attitude scale in their study that address factors such as the nature of work, social status, physical working conditions, pay/fringe benefits, commitment to the industry, etc.

Over the past several years, many other researchers have adopted the multi-dimensional scale. For example, Richardson (2010a) tested and applied Kusluvan and Kusluvan's multi-dimensional attitude scale in an Australian context. The computation of Cronbach's alpha was used to test for internal consistency and reliability, which revealed that some of the scales did not meet the adequate level of 0.70 that Nunnally (1978) suggested. In addition, some researchers tried to introduce scales originally used in studying career perceptions in other disciplines into tourism studies. For instance, Richardson (2010b) applied a questionnaire adapted from a survey instrument developed by Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000). Richardson (2010b, p. 3) argued that while the instrument was primarily designed to investigate the teaching profession, it was considered an ideal instrument to investigate important career factors in the tourism and hospitality industry. In studying the event and sport tourism students' career perceptions, Sibson (2011) also borrowed the career perception measurement scales from the disciplines of nursing and teaching to examine career perceptions in the event, sport, and recreation industries. A literature review of these studies revealed that the following factors are important in measuring college students' career perceptions and commitments.

Career Choice: Past research has defined career choices "as choosing one profession over

another" (Orndorff & Herr, 1996). According to Blustein, Ellis, and Devenis (1989), commitment to career choices can be explained as the ability of an individual to determine their job preferences and have a strong affiliation with specific occupational goals.

Self-interest: A large body of research using the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) found that self-interest greatly impacted career choices (Bandura, 1986; Lent et al., 1994). Previous studies reported that students' interests, motivations, and beliefs about themselves had a far-reaching impact on their commitment to career choice. Therefore, it was highly likely that career choice was impacted by changes and development in self-interest.

Nature of Work: An individual's career prospects often depend on one's perceptions of the job and the industry (Richardson, 2008). The nature of tourism jobs, with their typically low pay and unsociable working hours, seasonality, low skill requirements, and poor physical working environment, often led to meager job prospects and a poor image of the tourism industries (Roney & Öztin, 2007).

Social Status: Social status could be evaluated by whether an individual had pride in their career, if their family members were proud of the job, and if the job was perceived as a respected and essential occupation in society (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000).

Others' Support: Parents, friends, classmates, and teachers influence students' perceptions, interest, and attitudes toward a profession and career choice. The significant others in students' lives have had a non-negligible influence on how the student saw themselves concerning career choices, social recognition of the career, and the subsequent decision to pursue the career. For instance, previous studies found that parents' perceptions and expectations regarding their children's abilities in an academic major influenced the children's self-perceptions and expectations (e.g., Bleeker & Jacobs, 2004). Jacobs, Finken, Griffin, and Wright (1998) found that friends' support was also a significant predictor of wanting to pursue a profession. In addition, the relationship between students and teachers is also found to be influential in students' persistence (e.g., Speering and Rennie, 1996). A review of the literature indicates that earlier research work measured the scale and role of each measurement item directly, and the later studies focused on the latent variables representing these items and their relationships. Applying the Social Cognitive Career Theory, Wang (2016) developed a research framework to investigate students' career commitments by encapsulating the major latent factors considered necessary, including the nature of work, others' support, perceived social status of tourism jobs, and self-interest.

Negative Emotions: Negative emotions, including anxiety, apprehension, nervousness, and fear, are salient effective reactions to adverse events and crises. Anxiety is a state of tension and worry about the future (Banerjee, 2020). The recent global pandemic has halted public life and is grinding the global economy hard (Bakker & Wagner, 2020), thus becoming a significant concern for the current and future workforce. In this uncertain situation, the fear of economic and social anxiety is in people's minds, resulting in many psychological and

physiological illnesses (Yetgin & Benligiray, 2019). Furthermore, fear about getting jobs and keeping existing jobs cause career-related anxiety to many (Mahmud et al., 2021). This study examines the impacts of the negative emotions associated with Covid-19 while investigating the career-related factors perceived by tourism college students.

RESEARCH METHODS

The United States is among the countries most hit by the pandemic. By February 2022, there were over 78 million coronavirus cases and over 930,000 deaths in the U.S., with all the states being affected. The state of Indiana alone had over 1.6 million cases and over 21,000 deaths placing it among the states with the highest rates of cases and deaths (Worldometers, 2022). This study focuses on college students pursuing tourism majors at a university in Indiana.

A questionnaire was developed consisting of demographic questions and career-related perceptual items. The demographic questions ask about students' gender, grade, and major; the perceptual part contains 21 measurement items that were gleaned from the previously published studies on tourism students' career perceptions (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Akin Roney & Öztin, 2007; Richardson, 2010a; Richardson, 2010b; Sibson, 2011). Specifically, each of the perceptual constructs (i.e., 'self-interest,' 'nature of tourism jobs,' 'others' support,' 'social status,' and 'negative emotions') contains four items, except for the variable of 'career choice' which is a one-item factor. Responses to all the 21 items are measured on a 5-point Likert scale, where '1 = strongly disagree', '3 = neutral', and '5 = strongly agree'.

A convenience sampling technique was used for data collection by student assistants, who are mainly senior and junior tourism undergraduate students. The self-administered survey was conducted online via Qualtrics during the spring and fall semesters of 2022. The snowball sampling technique was used to contact tourism majors at other universities in Indiana. All surveys were completed online. After the data collection was completed, the data were input into SPSS for quantitative data analyses to explore data frequency and central tendency, and to conduct independent-sample t-tests and multiple regression analysis. The results of the data analyses are reported in the next session.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Profile of Respondents
The respondents' characteristics are summarized in Table 1. As shown in Table 1, there are more female students (87.9%) than male students who are tourism, hospitality, and event majors participating in the survey. This is not surprising, as the majority of students in the department are female. The percentages of students in each one of the four years of study are 9.8%, 12.5%, 28.8%, and 48.9%. Respondents were permitted to select multiple majors, which caused the total number of chosen majors to exceed the overall sample size. Still, most

respondents are from the university where this research project was conducted. The final tally included 166 tourism majors, 106 hospitality majors, and 240 event majors.

Table 1. Demographics of the Survey Respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	42	12.1
	Female	304	87.9
Year of study	Year 1	34	9.8
	Year 2	43	12.5
	Year 3	100	28.8
	Year 4	169	48.9
Major*	Tourism	166	-
	Hotel/Hospitality	106	-
	Event Management	240	-
Note: N=346			

Note: for the question of 'Major', students are permitted to select all relevant majors.

Mean Ratings of Students' Career Perception-Related Attributes
The mean ratings of students' career perception attributes are displayed in Table 2. Of the 21 attributes, the mean ratings range from 3.15 to 4.77. The summated mean scores of 'self-interest,' 'social status,' 'others' support,' 'nature of work,' and 'negative emotions from Covid-19' are, in turn, 4.26, 3.70, 4.45, 4.18, and 3.56, and the mean score of the one-item factor 'career intention' is 4.39.

The factor of 'others' support' was found to have the highest mean score (4.45). The four items constituting 'others' support' received mean scores above 4.0. Among the types of supporters, it shows that students' advisors and teachers are most supportive (4.77), followed by students' parents (4.51), friends/relatives (4.48), and acquaintances (4.04). The second positively perceived factor is 'self-interest' (4.26), indicating that the students are highly interested in working in the tourism industry. The other factor with a summated mean score above 4.0 is the 'nature of work' (4.18). Of its four composing items, the highest mean score is "I think I will be competent for tourism jobs or positions" (4.53), showing the students feel highly competent and confident in the tourism jobs. The two factors with the moderate summated mean scores are 'social status of tourism' (3.70) and 'negative emotions from Covid-19' (3.56). The average score of the 'social status' factor indicates that tourism careers are at least not highly valued or respected by society. The moderate score of the 'negative emotion' indicates that, overall, the students seem to have been slightly affected and concerned by the impact of Covid-19 on tourism-related businesses and careers.

Noticeably, the summated mean scores of the assessment items and dimensions are above the mid-point (items ranging from 3.15-4.77 and dimensions from 3.70-4.45), indicating that many tourism students hold positive perceptions about their career choice and the related concerns. In contrast, it is noted that in similar studies on tourism students in other countries or regions, negative and moderate perceptions of this item were often reported (e.g., Wang, 2016; Wang & Huang, 2014; Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000). This result reveals a significant contrast in tourism career perceptions between American college students and those being reported in other parts of the world, especially given that this study was conducted amid the Covid-19 pandemic. One reason for the difference could be that, compared with the college students in the other reported countries, the tourism undergraduate students in the U. S. tend to be more pragmatic with the career output prospects, as many students have already started to work in the tourism and hospitality industry when or after being enrolled in the tourism programs. In contrast, students in other regions may have less work experience but a high expectation of output prospects with the after-graduation career (Wang, 2016).

Students with negative perceptions of tourism career-related factors might have had high expectations of tourism programs and careers. The positive perceptions held by American students are a good sign for American tourism educators and recruiters, which indicates that the students have retained an interest in the major compared to the students in the other re-ported countries. Educators and recruiters should continue to highlight and strengthen the attractiveness and advantages of tourism majors to their students and give more attention to those with less positive perceptions. If students lose interest in tourism and hospitality educa-tion, education providers will find it challenging to recruit competent students and lose vigor in designing high-quality programs. Ultimately, tourism and hospitality employers would find it difficult to hire qualified employees to meet customers' expectations of service and satisfaction.

Table 2. Mean Ratings of the Career Related Perceptual Items

	Min	Max	Mean	Std Dev	Cronbach Alpha
Self-interest (mean):			(4.26)		.876
I think it'll be enjoyable to work in tourism.	1	5	4.44	.795	
I am very interested in working in tourism.	1	5	4.39	.925	
I feel excited about starting my first job in tourism.	1	5	4.39	.893	
To work in tourism has always been my dream.	1	5	3.83	1.089	
Social Status of Tourism (mean):			(3.70)		.749
I always feel proud when introducing my tourism major to my relatives or friends.	2	5	4.18	1.018	
My family seems to be very proud of me choosing the tourism major.	2	5	4.16	.874	

The importance of tourism jobs are highly valued by the society.	1	5	3.29	1.225	
People working in the tourism industry are highly respected by the others.	1	5	3.15	1.173	
Others' Support (mean):			(4.45)		*.733*
My advisors or teachers encourage me to work in the tourism industry after graduation.	3	5	4.77	.532	
My parents are supportive to my major or career choice in tourism.	1	5	4.51	.776	
My friends and/or relatives are supportive to my major or career choice in tourism.	1	5	4.48	.713	
All the people I know seem to like my tourism major.	1	5	4.04	.962	
Nature of tourism jobs (mean):			(4.18)		*.695*
I think I'll be competent for tourism jobs or positions.	3	5	4.53	.616	
To my understanding, tourism working environment is my favorite.	1	5	4.17	.850	
I am confident that it'll be easy for me to find a job in tourism.	2	5	4.10	.943	
To my understanding, tourism working conditions are acceptable to me.	1	5	3.90	.906	
Negative Emotion (mean):			(3.56)		*.881*
I think the pandemic has greatly changed people's attitudes toward tourism, hospitality or event businesses.	1	5	3.90	1.191	
I think the pandemic has made people rethink of the worthiness of working in the tourism industry.	1	5	3.53	1.263	
I am afraid the pandemic has greatly affected the tourism business.	1	5	3.45	1.196	
The pandemic has made me feel a high level of anxiety and uncertainty about my future career in tourism.	1	5	3.37	1.301	
Career Choice:					
After graduation, how likely will you look for a job in the tourism industry?	1	5	4.39	1.054	

Note: Rating scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree")

Determinant of Tourism Students' Career Choices

The literature on tourism students' career choices explores the relations between career intentions and intrinsic and extrinsic factors. To empirically test the relations in the context of American college students, multiple regression analysis was conducted, to examine the effects of 'self-interest,' 'social status,' 'others' support,' and 'nature of work' on students' 'career choices'. The items' internal consistency within each factor is examined before conducting regression analysis. All the four factors' scores (Cronbach Alpha) are above .070, except one factor which score is smaller than 0.70 (see Table 1). As illustrated in Table 3, the regression equation model indicates an adjusted R square of 0.293, meaning 29.3% of the total variance in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables in the model. Furthermore, the F-ratio of 67.66 is significant (Prob. < 0.001), indicating the result of the equation model could hardly occur by chance.

The t value for the partial correlations between the dependent variable 'career choice' and the independent variable 'self-interest' is statistically significant at 0.001. As a result, this variable is significant in predicting the students' career choices. Interestingly, none of the other three factors, 'nature of work,' 'social status,' and 'others' support,' are significant in predicting the students' career intentions. These factors were, however, found significant in the previous studies (e.g., Wan, Wong, and Kong, 2014; Wang, 2016). The previous studies indicate that these factors may not have direct impacts on the variable of career commitment but may have indirect impacts through other mediating variables.

Multiple regression analysis of the four underlying dimensions in predicting students' overall career perception shows "self-interest" to be the sole significant variable in the predicting model in this study, while 'social status of tourism,' 'others' support' and 'nature of tourism jobs' are excluded from the model. Analyzing these dimensions reveals that 'self-interest' is more about individuals' 'affective image' of the career, and the dimensions of 'the other three dimensions are essentially more about one's 'cognitive image.' The cognitive image is derived from facts and may be viewed as the sum of the object's beliefs and attitudes, leading to some internally accepted picture of its attributes. The affective component of image relates to motives because it is how a person values the object under consideration (Gartner, 1996). In other words, cognitive attributes are more related to functional aspects while affective attributes are more associated with psychological aspects. A notable discussion in the literature revolves around which is more influential in shaping individuals' overall perceptions: cognitive attributes or affective attributes. An intriguing question in tourism and hospitality education is whether students' overall career perceptions are shaped more by personal factors or by the realities of the job. This study indicates that tourism undergraduate students' overall career perceptions are more reflected and predicted by students' intrinsic attributes (i.e., the dimension of 'self-interest') rather than extrinsic attributes (e.g., 'social status, 'others' support,' and 'nature of tourism jobs').

Table 3. Determinants to Students' Career Choice

R Square = 0.300, Adjusted R Square = 0.295, F= 67.66, Sig. level= 0.001					
Model	B	Std. error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)					
Self-interest	1.214	.396		3.06	.003
	.747	.091	.543	8.22	001
Excluded variables:					
Nature of tourism jobs				1.194	.234
Social status				-1.129	.260
Others' support				.007	.994

Furthermore, correlation analyses between the intrinsic variable 'self-interest' and the extrinsic variables, as mentioned above, were conducted. All these variables are found to be significantly related to 'self-interest' (see Table 4). The correlation coefficients between 'self-interest' and 'nature of work,' 'social status' and 'other's support' are .535, .308, and .510, respectively, indicating positive relationships among these variables. The significance of the relations indicates that these extrinsic variables may tend to have indirect effects on 'career choice' through the intrinsic variable of 'self-interest,' as also reported in the previous studies (e.g., Kusluvan and Kusluvan, 2000; Wang & Huang, 2016). Kusluvan and Kusluvan (2000) reported a significant correlation between students' status in the tourism industry and their career prospects. They found that students who had positive perceptions of job status in the industry had a positive perception of career prospects. Wang and Huang (2014) stressed that measurement of tourism and hospitality students' career perceptions should include the dimensions of the nature of work and the social status of work, as both the intrinsic and the extrinsic variables may influence students' career choices, either directly or indirectly. One implication for tourism educators and recruiters is that retaining tourism students necessitates demonstrating that tourism programs are both exciting and valuable. Additionally, efforts should focus on enhancing the image of tourism jobs, their social status, and the level of social support associated with them.

Table 4. Correlation Analysis

		Nature of tourism jobs	Social Status	Other's Support
Self-interest	Pearson Corr.	.535	.308	.510
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**.001**	**.001**	**.001**
	N	344	344	332

Students' Perceptions of Negative Emotions Associated with Covid-19

Independent-samples t-tests were employed to examine how the career-related factors (i.e., nature of work, self-interest, social status, others' support, and career choice) are perceived differently between the students with different levels of negative emotions impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. As shown in Table 5, those whose negative emotions were more affected are the ones who have higher self-interest (t=-1.825, p=.035) in tourism careers and who tend to work in the industry after graduation (t=-4.220, p=.001). In comparison, no significant differences among the other factors (nature of work, social status, and others' support) are noticed. Notably, the students who are more interested in tourism and have more career commitments in tourism are more concerned with the Covid-19 impacts and tend to be more negatively affected by the pandemic. One approach is for tourism programs to offer essential resources to help students manage the stress and challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, it is important to provide timely updates on the pandemic's effects on the industry, such as how COVID-19 has impacted tourism businesses and the anticipated timeline for their full recovery.

Table 5. Perceptual Differences of Non-negative-emotion and Negative-emotion Students

Grouping variable: Negative emotions caused by Covid-19

Factors	Grouping V.	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t	Sig.
Nature of tourism jobs	Non-negative	76	4.14	.481	-.870	.193
	Negative	220	4.23	.547		
Self-interest	Non-negative	76	4.09	.903	-1.825	.035
	Negative	222	4.36	.728		
Social status	Non-negative	76	3.49	1.022	-1.233	.110
	Negative	220	3.68	.741		
Others' support	Non-negative	76	4.48	.621	.616	.269
	Negative	212	4.41	.563		
Career choice	Non-negative	76	3.79	1.359	-4.220	.001
	Negative	222	4.60	.887		

CONCLUSION

This study assessed students' perceptions of career-related variables during the COVID-19 pandemic, examining both intrinsic and extrinsic factors related to college students' career choices and the influence of negative emotions tied to the pandemic. Notably, the study finds that, despite the effects of COVID-19, American students majoring in tourism have relatively

more positive career perceptions compared to students from other countries reported in the literature. Additionally, students with a stronger interest in and commitment to tourism careers are found to be more adversely affected by the pandemic and therefore require greater attention and support.

This case study has several implications for both tourism researchers and educators. First, theoretically, the result empirically verifies that the intrinsic variable ('self-interest' in this study) plays a significant role in determining students' career choices. In contrast, the extrinsic variables (i.e., 'nature of tourism jobs', 'social status,' and 'others' support') are not as contributing as the intrinsic variable to students' perceptions of career choices but may play an indirect role in the process through the mediator of 'self-interest.' In other words, students' interests and attitudes play a crucial role in their career commitment after graduation.
Students who choose their majors willingly have much more positive perceptions and attitudes than those who choose the tourism majors reluctantly. Students choose the major willingly because they find the career interesting. Conversely, students who choose their majors reluctantly may have fewer preconceived notions about the career path. The point is that, from the standpoint of education providers, it is important to identify students who choose their major reluctantly and then develop strategies to increase their interest. This should be done by assessing how their lack of choice has impacted their perceptions of tourism careers. One specific recommendation for education providers is to introduce an orientation session at the beginning of students' academic programs. This session should offer practical information about careers in the industry (Richardson, 2010b) to help bridge the gap between students' expectations and their perceptions.

From an industry perspective, this study underscores the importance of providing tourism college students with timely information about the social status of the tourism sector. Such information should help raise awareness among students and the broader society about the nature of tourism jobs, thereby garnering more support for the students. For the industry, investing in high-quality professional human resources can enhance work experience and improve the industry's image (Roney & Öztin, 2007). Additionally, tourism students should be given access to well-structured internships and job placements that align with their education level and expectations, thereby boosting their chances of personal, institutional, and organizational success.

Most respondents are juniors or seniors and predominantly female, which makes it challenging to assess potential moderating effects based on demographic factors. The literature indicates that moderating variables (year of study, age, gender, etc.) significantly affect students' career decisions and commitment (Chuang, Walker, & Caine-Bish, 2009). In a study by Chuang, Goh, Stout, and Dellmann-Jenins (2007), 'gender' is a strong indicator of hospitality graduates' retention in the tourism industries. Students' career perceptions and attitudes may change over time. It is recommended that future studies measure moderating effects to capture perceptual differences among students with varying demographic characteristics.

Future empirical studies should enhance the research framework by including additional variables, such as students' self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and prospects, as suggested in the literature. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of American students' career perceptions. The sample was drawn from students attending a single university in Indiana, which means the findings may not fully represent all tourism students across the country. Future research should employ a more comprehensive data collection approach to ensure broader representation.

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Business Tourism in Ljubljana: Trends, Perceptions, and Economic Impact

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the burgeoning segment of business tourism in Ljubljana, the capital city of Slovenia, by examining recent trends, stakeholder perceptions, and the economic impact on the local economy. Through a robust methodology, the research employs a structured survey distributed to a representative sample of business tourists and local industry stakeholders. The survey design captures quantitative data on visitor profiles, expenditure, preferences, and expectations, alongside qualitative insights into their experiences and perceived value of the city's business tourism offerings. Results showcase that Ljubljana's unique blend of historic charm and modern amenities has positioned it as an emerging hub for conferences, incentive travel, and corporate events. Business tourists report high levels of satisfaction with the city's infrastructure and services but also provide constructive feedback on areas for improvement. Economic analysis indicates a positive and growing influence of business tourism on Ljubljana's economy, particularly in the hospitality sector. The study offers targeted recommendations that could serve policymakers, business leaders, and tourism operators in cultivating a sustainable growth model for this segment of the industry.

Keywords: Business Tourism, Ljubljana, Tourism Trends, Destination Marketing, Economic Impact

INTRODUCTION

Business tourism, an indispensable part of the global tourism market, caters to individuals traveling for activities related to their work, notably conferences, exhibitions, meetings, and incentive trips (Davidson & Cope, 2003). This sector is well recognized for contributing to economic diversification, creating employment opportunities, and generating significant tourist flows that extend into the off-peak seasons (Rogers, 2013). Unlike leisure travel, business tourism is characterized by shorter booking lead times, higher daily spending, and a less elastic demand with respect to economic fluctuations (Deery, Jago, & Fredline, 2004).

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Ljubljana, the capital city of Slovenia, has seen a burgeoning rise in its business tourism sector. Known for its picturesque landscapes, historical architecture, and strategic geographical location, the city has been increasingly featured on the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, Exhibitions) industry map. The tourism industry significantly contributes to Ljubljana's GDP and provides an array of direct and indirect economic benefits, from employment to infrastructure development (Ivanov & Webster, 2007). In recent years, with the support of the Slovenian Tourist Board's strategic marketing efforts, Ljubljana has been making impactful strides in developing its business tourism credentials (Bojnec, 2011).

However, despite Ljubljana's emerging prominence in this sector, scholarly attention to its evolving business tourism landscape and economic contribution remains insufficient. Studies often neglect the distinct dynamics and potential of business tourism in smaller European capitals (Cudny, 2018). There arises a need to assess and understand the specific trends, perceptions, and economic impacts in such unique contexts.

The objective of this study is twofold: to present a contemporary overview of business tourism in Ljubljana, and to identify its downstream effects on the local economy. This research is situated to provide empirical evidence to both academic fields and destination management organizations, informing strategic decision-making and policy formulation.

The scope of the study is confined to business tourism activities within Ljubljana and focuses on the evaluation of the period before the global disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, serving as a baseline for post-pandemic recovery strategies. Both primary and secondary data are harnessed, with particular emphasis on visitor perceptions and behaviors, quantifying economic impacts, and understanding stakeholder perspectives.

Given this backdrop, the following research questions guide the investigation:

- What are the profile and behavioral patterns of business travelers visiting Ljubljana for MICE activities?
- How do business travelers and local industry stakeholders perceive Ljubljana as a MICE destination?
- What is the economic impact of business tourism on Ljubljana's economy, particularly within the hospitality sector?

Understanding answers to these questions is imperative for Ljubljana to bolster its market share in the highly competitive European business tourism industry. The subsequent sections will examine existing literature, describe the chosen methodology, and analyze collected data, paving the way for informed recommendations and future research directions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Business tourism, frequently interchangeably used with the term MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions), is recognized as a lucrative segment within the broader tourism industry due to its higher expenditure levels and resilience to economic turndown (Davidson, R. & Cope, B., 2003). Studies exploring business tourism have underscored the socio-economic advantages, revealing industry-specific requirements and behavioral patterns of business tourists (Rogers, T., 2013). Business tourists are often found to contribute significantly to the hospitality and transportation sectors (Dwyer, L. & Forsyth, P., 1997), primarily due to their higher-than-average spend on accommodation, dining, and ancillary services (Weber, K. & Ladkin, A., 2016).

Ljubljana, while a relatively small capital by European standards, has shown potential in the business tourism sector. Studies by Ivanov, S., and Webster, C. (2007) indicated that emerging European capitals such as Ljubljana offer unique historical and cultural richness crucial for business tourism development. More recent research has highlighted Slovenia's strategic initiatives in positioning Ljubljana as a business-tourism-friendly destination, with innovative sustainability practices distinctively integrated into its value proposition (Bojnec, Š., 2011).

Comparative analysis with similar-sized cities in Central and Eastern Europe, such as Bratislava and Tallinn, reveal a competitive regional marketplace, where differentiation and unique selling propositions are key to attracting business tourism (Cudny, W., 2018). However, a gap exists in the empirical evaluation of how Ljubljana's attributes are perceived by the visiting business professionals and the measurable economic impacts exacted on the local economy by this segment.

Despite previous literature acknowledging the importance and potential of business tourism, the quantification of economic impacts has often been generalized, without a deep dive into the specific contexts of smaller European capitals (Marques, J., & Santos, N. R., 2015). Moreover, the existing literature on Ljubljana's business tourism focused largely on descriptive analysis and policy implications without extensive empirical evidence (Burgess, C., & Steenkamp, E. ,2010). Additionally, the perception and satisfaction levels of business tourists in relation to Ljubljana's MICE infrastructure and services have not been rigorously examined (Heely, J., 2005).

The present study aims to fill these gaps by conducting a primary survey that maps perceptions, satisfaction levels, and spending behaviors to quantitative economic impacts. The lack of a nuanced understanding of these key aspects of business tourism in Ljubljana presents an opportunity for this research to generate insights that could refine strategic planning and marketing efforts (Xiang, Z., Magnini, V. P., & Fesenmaier, D. R., 2015). Furthermore, by juxtaposing stakeholder perspectives alongside economic data, we aim to contribute to a more holistic understanding of the state of business tourism in Ljubljana

METHODOLOGY

The research design of this study combines qualitative and quantitative methodologies to comprehensively analyze trends, perceptions, and economic impacts of business tourism in Ljubljana. Given this aim, the study adopted a cross-sectional survey approach to gather data from a representative cohort of business tourism stakeholders over a period of three months.

Survey Design and Rationale

The structured survey instrument was subdivided into four sections:

- Demographic information;
- Trip characteristics;
- Perceptions and attitudes;
- Economic impact.

The aim was to extrapolate the profile of business tourists, understand their consumption patterns, gauge satisfaction and perceived value, and assess the overall economic contribution to the local economy.

Questions were developed based on a review of the literature in the field, which indicated the need for comparative multi-item scales to assess satisfaction and expectations (Bryman, A., 2015). Questions measuring economic impact were grounded in established tourism economic impact frameworks (Frechtling, D. C., 1994). Prior to launch, the survey underwent a pilot test on a small scale to ensure its reliability and validity (Creswell, J. W., 2013).

Target Population and Sampling Method

The target population encompassed business tourists attending conferences, trade fairs, and corporate meetings in Ljubljana, and the local stakeholders from the hospitality and events management industry. The convenience sampling method was employed for business tourists, who were approached at various event venues. On the other hand, stakeholders were selectively chosen via purposive sampling to ensure representation across different roles and experience levels within the industry.

Administration of the Survey

Survey administration was a blend of online and in-person strategies to maximize response rates. Business tourists completed the surveys in-person post-event, facilitated by onsite coordinators to ensure a higher completion rate. The stakeholders received an online version of the survey via email, with reminders sent bi-weekly to encourage participation. Due to the discrepancy in administration strategies, the survey's preambles tailored instructions accordingly to ensure accurate completion (Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., & Christian, L. M., 2014).

Data Analysis Methods

The collected data was subsequently analyzed using a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data was input into statistical software SPSS, where it was cleaned and prepared for analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to present demographic data, travel behavior, and aggregated economic impact figures. Cross-tabulations and Chi-square tests were performed to identify associations between demographic variables and perceptions or satisfaction rates (Field, A., 2013). A one-way ANOVA tested differences between groups where applicable.

For open-ended qualitative responses, thematic analysis was conducted following the six-phase process described by Braun and Clarke (2006). This included familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. NVivo software assisted in managing qualitative data for this process.

All data were treated anonymously and in accordance with ethical guidelines set by the local university's research standards committee, ensuring compliance with GDPR and other applicable regulations. The survey's findings were subjected to triangulation with secondary data sourced from local tourism boards and economic activity records to enhance the reliability and validity of the conclusions drawn (Yin, R.K., 2014).

RESULTS

The survey targeting business tourists and local industry stakeholders exemplified a satisfactory response rate. Specifically, out of 450 distributed questionnaires to business tourists, a total of 310 completed responses were received, yielding a response rate of 68.9%. The stakeholder survey was issued to 120 individuals, with 82 completed surveys returned, constituting a response rate of 68.3%. The respondents comprised a diverse demographic spectrum, with 57% male and 43% female, predominantly falling within the age range of 30-49 years old (64%). Geographically, the business tourists originated from various regions, with the majority hailing from European Union countries (48%), followed by North America (21%), and non-EU European countries (16%).

Table1. Demographics

Survey Data	Business Tourists	Industry Stakeholders
Total Questionnaires Distributed	450	120
Total Completed Responses Received	310	82
Response Rate	68.9%	68.3%

Respondent Demographics		
Gender (Male)	57%	N/A
Gender (Female)	43%	N/A
Age Range (30-49 years old)	64%	N/A
Geographic Origin of Business Tourists	**Percentage**	
European Union Countries	48%	N/A
North America	21%	N/A
Non-EU European Countries	16%	N/A
Other Regions	15%	N/A

Source: Own elaboration based on survey data.

Visitor Profiles

The surveyed business tourists predominantly represented the service (24%), IT (19%), and pharmaceutical industries (14%). The data suggested that the average duration of their stay in Ljubljana was 3.5 days, intimating extended potential for ancillary leisure activities. The spending patterns indicated a daily average expenditure of €250, primarily allocated to accommodation (40%), dining (25%), and local transport (15%).

Table 2: Industry Representation and Average Duration of Stay

Characteristic	Percentage	Average / Details
Industry Representation		
Service Industry	24%	
IT Industry	19%	
Pharmaceutical Industry	14%	
Average Duration of Stay		3.5 days
Daily Expenditure		€250 average per day
Accommodation	40%	
Dining	25%	
Local Transport	15%	

Source: Own Elaboration based on survey results.

Note: The percentages for industry representation are based on the number of respondents from each industry and do not add to 100%.

Perceptions of Ljubljana as a business tourism destination

Ljubljana was perceived favorably as an amiable and efficiently accessible city with ample cultural and culinary experiences enhancing the business trip. Approximately 83% of respondents rated the city's safety and cleanliness as either 'excellent' or 'very good'. However, only 61% provided similar endorsements for the city's MICE facilities, suggesting room for improvement. The qualitative remarks detailed appreciations for Ljubljana's compact urban layout, which permits easy maneuvering between venues and the city's attractions.

Table 3: Perceptions of Ljubljana as a business tourism destination

Perceived Attribute of Ljubljana	Positive Rating ('Excellent' or 'Very Good')
Safety and Cleanliness	83%
MICE Facilities	61%
Qualitative Feedback Highlights	Remarks
City's Accessibility	Amiable and efficiently accessible
Cultural and Culinary Experiences	Enhance business travel experience
Urban Layout	Compact layout enables easy maneuvering

Source: Own Elaboration based on survey results.

Note: The table summarizes the quantitative and qualitative feedback received from survey respondents regarding their perceptions of Ljubljana as a business tourism destination.

Satisfaction Levels with Facilities

Satisfaction pertaining to accommodations was high, with 78% of respondents expressing contentment with the quality and service of their hotels. The conference centers were well-regarded for their aesthetic appeal, with 69% satisfaction—yet, comments drew attention to the need for technological enhancements. Public transport and taxi services received a satisfaction rating of 72%. Although regarded as reliable, the need for expansion of schedules and routes during large-scale events was consistently voiced.

Here's a table presenting satisfaction levels with various aspects of the business tourist experience in Ljubljana:

Table 4: Satisfaction Levels with Facilities

Satisfaction Category	Satisfaction Level	Areas for Improvement Noted by Respondents
Accommodations (Quality & Service)	78% contentment	— (No significant areas noted for improvement)
Conference Centers (Aesthetic)	69% satisfaction	Need for technological enhancements
Public Transport & Taxis	72% satisfaction	Expansion of schedules and routes

Source: Own Elaboration based on results from survey.

Note: The '—' symbol in the 'Areas for Improvement' column represents that there were no significant areas for improvement noted by respondents for the accommodations category. The satisfaction levels are summarized as percentage values, indicating the proportion of respondents who were satisfied with each aspect

Key challenges identified included limited direct international flight connections, constraining the city's ease of access in some instances. The respondents observed that despite the quality of services, there was a limited volume of large-capacity venues that could inhibit hosting more sizable international events. On an opportunistic note, respondents indicated that Ljubljana's potential lies in its unspoiled natural environment and heritage sights, which can be leveraged to create unique MICE experiences. The local cuisine and burgeoning gastronomy scene were noted as pivotal elements enhancing the city's attractiveness as a business tourism destination.

Table 5: Challenges and Opportunities Identified by Respondents

Challenges and Opportunities	Details
Challenges	
Limited Direct International Flight Connections	Constrain ease of access
Limited Volume of Large-Capacity Venues	Inhibit hosting larger international events
Opportunities	
Natural Environment and Heritage Sights	Can create unique MICE experiences
Local Cuisine and Gastronomy Scene	Enhance the city's attractiveness

Source: Own elaboration based on survey data.

Note: The table is divided into sections that summarize the challenges affecting Ljubljana's business tourism and the identified opportunities that can be capitalized upon to improve the city's appeal for MICE activities

Supplementary Data Analysis

The economic impact assessment indicated that the direct spending attributed to business tourism generated significant revenue for the city, specifically within the hospitality industry. The local economic multiplier effect, as calculated by the IMPLAN model, suggested that for every euro spent by a business tourist, an additional €0.73 was added to the economy. Cross-referencing with local tourism board statistics confirmed the upward trend in business tourist arrivals over the past five years, reinforcing the survey results.

Additionally, the thematic analysis of open-ended survey questions illuminated the core themes that complimented the quantitative findings. These revolve around desires for strategic development of transport infrastructure, innovative event offerings, and integrated city branding efforts that highlight the fusion of Ljubljana's cultural heritage and modern facilities endowments.

Discussion

The survey results indicate that Ljubljana is affirming its place on the business tourism map with its safety, cleanliness, and compact urban layout being particularly appreciated by business tourists. The satisfactory satisfaction ratings for accommodations and transit systems reflect positively on existing tourism infrastructure. However, the moderate satisfaction with MICE facilities implies potential areas for enhancement, mainly technological upgrades which could elevate the appeal of Ljubljana for business events.

Regarding visitor profiles, the high representation from various industries and international origins ties back to the objectives, underscoring the city's broad appeal. The sustained duration of stays and the significant daily expenditure underscore the potential of business tourism to bolster the city's economy through sectors like hospitality and local transport.

The positive perceptions align with literature highlighting the city's proactive steps towards marketing itself as a safe, accessible, and culturally rich destination (Ivanov & Webster, 2007). However, existing literature also noted a lack of large-capacity venues (Cudny, 2018), which is corroborated by the survey's findings. Consequently, the study substantiates the literature's call for infrastructure development in the face of growing demand for business tourism amenities.

For stakeholders, the insights into the high levels of spending and satisfaction among business tourists should be encouraging, signaling both the success of current strategies and an opportunity for growth. However, the challenges, such as limited direct flight connections, demand prompt action to avoid impeding the seamless flow of business tourists.

Finally, the study's findings suggest several policy recommendations. Firstly, enhancing technological installations within conference facilities could elevate Ljubljana's appeal for

technologically intensive industries. Secondly, strategies to augment transport connectivity including the expansion of direct flights and more versatile local transport options during events are critical. Lastly, capitalizing on Ljubljana's unspoiled natural environment and unique gastronomic experiences by integrating these elements into MICE offerings could effectively differentiate Ljubljana in the competitive business tourism market.

The survey results substantiate Ljubljana's strengths as a business tourist destination, emphasizing safety, cleanliness, and accessibility as key attractors. This positive feedback reflects the city's commitment to high standards, resonating with the literature's depiction of the European Union's typical business tourist-centric cities (Ivanov & Webster, 2007).

Significantly, the findings about satisfaction with accommodation and transport services partly affirm the assertion by Bojnec (2011) that targeted enhancements in urban infrastructure have improved tourists' experiences. Our findings exhibit contentment with the quality of services, but demand for advanced technological capabilities, especially in conference centers, points to an area needing immediate attention.

The study unveils critical insights with implications for stakeholders. While the service and IT sectors' strong representation aligns with the perceptions of Ljubljana's industry-focused appeal, the need for larger venues exposes constraints adverse to this image and align with Cudny's (2018) concerns. Furthermore, tourists' noted spending patterns signal robust opportunities for local businesses but simultaneously highlight the need for a strategic approach to foster the relationship between business tourists' needs and the city's tourism offerings.

Policy implications pivoting on this research are manifold. The technological shortcomings observed suggest a directed investment into state-of-the-art facilities should become a priority. To this end, policy support can stimulate public-private partnerships, harnessing both government backing and industry innovation. Enhancing direct flight connectivity is another policy imperative. This requires coordination with airline operators and perhaps incentivization strategies to open new routes. Considering the voiced desire for more significant venues, policies could be designed to incentivize development in this area or reevaluating zoning regulations to support larger construction projects.

The potential unveiled through natural and cultural appeal suggests an untapped vein of MICE tourism that Ljubljana could further mine. Incorporating elements of the city's rich heritage into MICE frameworks can bolster Ljubljana's unique selling proposition. For the gastronomy sector, the development of curated culinary experiences for business tourists could be a powerful differentiator, potentially partnered with local culinary institutes and restaurants.

In conclusion, Ljubljana has laid a solid groundwork evidenced by the high satisfaction levels of its business tourists. However, to sustain and nurture this burgeoning tourist segment, a concerted and strategic approach leveraging both the city's inherent appeal and addressing its

infrastructural requirements is essential. Stakeholders and policymakers must collaboratively chart a way forward, building on the city's existing strengths, and addressing the challenges to position Ljubljana as not only a current, but a future leader in the MICE tourism industry.

CONCLUSION

The investigation into Ljubljana's positioning within the business tourism industry has yielded notable insights. Business tourists demonstrated affirmative perceptions of the city, particularly valuing its safety, cleanliness, and seamless navigability. The city's myriad of cultural and dining experiences further enhanced their business travels, suggesting that Ljubljana's current strategies are aligned with industry expectations. Predominantly, business travelers from across varied sectors such as services, IT, and pharmaceuticals indicated substantial daily spending, reinforcing the economic significance of this segment to the local economy.

Survey data flagged the city's accommodation and transportation services as commendable. However, MICE facilities, while appreciated for their aesthetic value, beckoned for advancements, especially concerning technological integration. The identified challenge of limited large-capacity venues and direct flight connections highlight areas of infrastructural improvement that, if addressed, could substantially elevate the city's MICE profile. Simultaneously, the results illuminated Ljubljana's opportunities to further exploit its natural beauty and distinctive culinary landscape.

Limitations of the Study

The study was not without limitations. The use of convenience and purposive sampling, while practical, may have introduced biases, potentially limiting the generalizability of the results. Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported data may carry inherent subjectivity that could affect the accuracy of the findings. Finally, the pre-pandemic timeframe of the data curtails its applicability to current and future scenarios, where shifts in the business tourism landscape are likely due to changing travel behaviors and industry adaptations.

Future research on Ljubljana's business tourism should aim to include a broader demographic to enhance the study's representativeness. Longitudinal studies observing evolving trends over time would provide richer data, capturing the dynamic nature of the industry. Moreover, post-pandemic insights are crucial, as the MICE industry experiences transformative shifts, with virtual and hybrid events becoming more prevalent.

Investigating the direct and indirect economic impacts with a comprehensive input-output analysis could offer more granularity to economic contributions. Given the identified development areas, exploring potential strategies for technological modernization and infrastructural expansion would be valuable. The notion of incorporating the natural environment and unique cuisine into MICE offerings warrants further exploration, examining how these elements might be seamlessly integrated into Ljubljana's business tourism packages.

In summary, Ljubljana's journey in refining its business tourism industry appears promising, with clear paths laid out for development, bolstered by its existing attributes. Addressing the outlined challenges and seizing the opportunities recognized in this study could accelerate the city's ascent as a premier MICE destination. The collective effort of policymakers, industry stakeholders, and academia is called upon to navigate this trajectory, ensuring that the potential uncovered is realized to its fullest extent.

In the context of producing an actual full-length article, this conclusion would wrap up the study's major points concisely. The recognition of limitations should demonstrate the research scope's mindfulness and inform consequent studies. Lastly, the call for future research should provide a logical stepping stone from the current study's findings and propose clear, investigative directions that build upon the groundwork established here.

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Appendix 1: Survey
Business Tourism in Ljubljana Survey
Demographics:
Gender:
Male
Female
Prefer not to say
Other (please specify)
Age Group:
Under 25
25 - 29
30 - 39
40 - 49
50 - 59
60 and over
Country of Residence:
(Provide a drop-down list of countries)
Industry (please specify):
Service
IT
Pharmaceutical
(Other options based on prevalent industries)

Trip Characteristics: 5. Purpose of Visit to Ljubljana:
Conference
Seminar/Workshop
Exhibition/Trade Show
Corporate Meeting
Incentive Travel
Other (please specify)
Duration of Stay in Ljubljana:
Less than 2 days
2-3 days
4-5 days
More than 5 days
Average Daily Expenditure (Approximate in EUR):
Accommodation
Dining
Local Transport
Other (please specify)
Perceptions and Satisfaction: 8. How would you rate the following aspects of Ljubljana regarding your business travel needs?
On a scale of 1 (Very Poor) to 5 (Excellent):
Safety and Cleanliness
MICE Facilities
Accommodation
Local Transport
Dining Options
Have you faced any challenges or identified needed improvements related to business tourism in Ljubljana?
Yes
No
If yes, please specify:
What did you enjoy most about your business travel experience in Ljubljana?
Overall Experience: 11. Based on your experience, how likely are you to recommend Ljubljana as a business travel destination to others?
Very Unlikely
Unlikely
Neutral
Likely
Very Likely
Any additional comments or suggestions for improving business tourism in Ljubljana?

Survey Instructions: Please complete this survey based on your most recent visit to Ljubljana for business purposes. Your responses are confidential and will be used for research purposes to help improve business tourism in the city.

Modelling The Effects of Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction on Service Delivery of Hotel Industry: Empirical Evidence from Oyo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of employee engagement and job satisfaction on service delivery of hotel industry in Oyo State. The study adopted a structured questionnaires to collect data from 787 employees of 38 hotels in the 10 LGAs of Oyo State. Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling. It arisen from the study that the relationship between employee engagement and service delivery are statistically significant. In addition, the relationship between job satisfaction and service delivery are statistically significant. Relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement are statistically significant. The discoveries offer noteworthy inferences for managers of hotels in Oyo State to give more attention to staff promotion, training and development matters for enhanced service delivery. To the best of my knowledge, the study presents the first major study that proposed and validated employee engagement and job satisfaction on service delivery model for hotels in Oyo State. The new model offers valuable insights for hotel business operators, government, policy makers and academics by elucidating the relationship between employee engagement, job satisfaction on service delivery within the context of an emerging economy. This model serves as a practical framework for developing strategies to improve employee satisfaction and engagement, ultimately driving better performance and growth in the hospitality sector.

Key words: Employee engagement, job satisfaction, hotel industry, service delivery, Oyo state

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INTRODUCTION

The hotel industry is a critical component of the tourism sector, contributing significantly to the economic development of many countries, including Nigeria (Jidda, 2024). In recent years, the Nigerian hotel industry has experienced rapid growth, driven by increasing demand for hospitality services (Jimoh & Rotimi, 2024). However, the industry faces intense competition, and hotels must deliver exceptional service to attract retain customers (Siddiqi *et al*., 2024). In a service-driven sector, employees are the backbone of delivering exceptional customer experiences (Abdullahi *et al*., 2024). In any organization employees are the real assets because the achievement or failure of any organization relies on its employee as well (Paais and Pattiruhu, 2020). Employee engagement and job satisfaction are essential factors that influence service delivery in the hotel industry (Milliman *et al*., 2018). Job satisfaction is considered to be the most important element in the hotel industry (Ghaderi, *et al*., 2023). Service delivery has the potential of enhancing organization's well-being and competitive performance which may further enhance service quality (Huang and Lin, 2020). Engaged and satisfied employees are more likely to provide excellent service, leading to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty (Rane *et al*., 2023). Despite global advancements in employee engagement and satisfaction practices, local hotels often struggle to address contextual challenges, including leadership inefficiencies, inadequate training, and limited employee recognition (Kim & Lee, 2013; Talaja et al., 2023). The pressing issue centers on unresolved job satisfaction concerns that hamper employee performance in Oyo State's hospitality industry. While existing research provides insights into engagement practices globally, the Nigerian context remains underexplored, particularly concerning factors limiting service delivery. This study seeks to bridge this gap by examining how employee engagement and job satisfaction affect service delivery, proposing a localized model for intervention and improvement. The findings of this research will provide evidence-based insights that can guide hotel managers in creating policies and strategies that enhance employee well-being and service performance, thereby boosting customer satisfaction and hotel success in Oyo State, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

Study Area

Oyo State was created in February 3, 1976 out of the old Western State, located in South West Nigeria, Oyo State covers 28,454 square kilometers. It is bounded in the south by Ogun State and in the north by Kwara State, in the west by the Republic of Benin while in the east it is bounded by Osun State. The study was carried out in Oyo state Nigeria. The study area lies between latitude 7° 3' and 9°12' North of the equator and longitude 2°47' east of the meridian, characterized by two climatic seasons. The state is made up of thirty- three (33) local government areas in four (4) agricultural zones (Ogbomosho zone, Ibadan/Ibarapa zone, Oyo zone and Oke-Ogun zone) and with three (3) senatorial districts (Oyo North, Oyo Central and Oyo South senatorial district) with a population of 7,010,864 people (National Population

Commission, 2016) and fifth (5th) largest listing of Nigeria's 36 states ranked in order of their total population. The third most populous city in the country and formerly the second most populous city in Africa (Nenge, 2019). Oyo state is bordered in the North by Kwara state, in the South by Ogun state, in the East by Kwara and Osun states and in the West by Republic of Benin. The favourable climate of the area encouraged about 70 % of the inhabitants to engage in farming activities. The state has some tropical rain forest in the south around Ibadan, the state capital, but is covered mostly by a "derived" savanna that is largely the result of clearing and burning the former forest cover to provide land for cultivation.

Figure 1: Map of Oyo showing the study areas
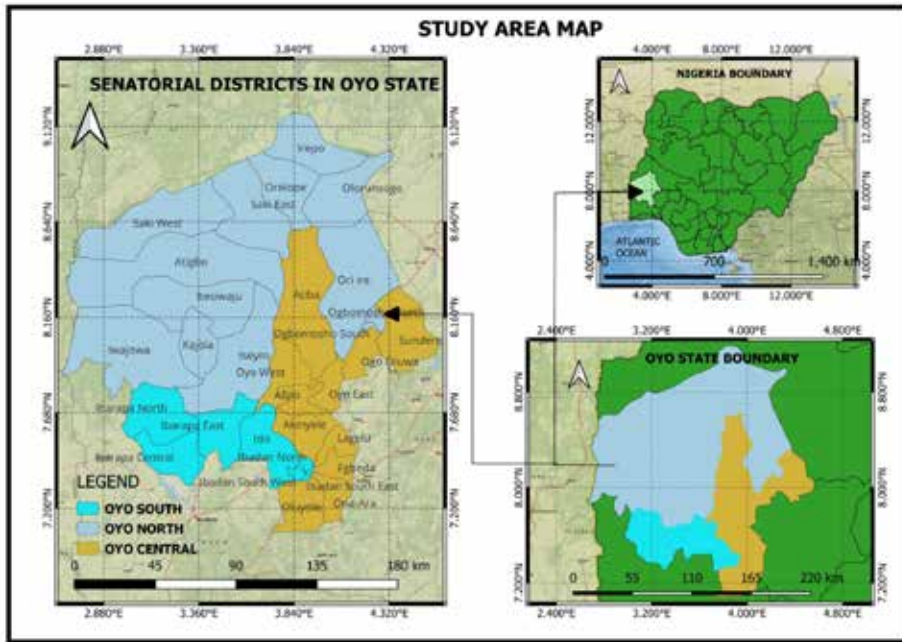
Source: Field Survey, 2024

DATA COLLECTION

This study adopts a survey research design. The research population used in the study are seven hundred and eighty-seven (787) employees of 38 registered hotels in the 10 LGAs in Oyo State Nigeria. The employees were selected based on their willingness to participate in the study. The sample size was determined using the Yamane (1967) formula of sample size determination for a known population.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2} \, Eqn.3.1$$

where n = Sample size
N = Target population
e = Percentage of error 5% or 0.05 (95% Confidence Interval)
1= Constant value

Convenience sampling techniques were adopted to administer the questionnaires in each of the 38 selected hotels until the sample size of 787 were met. The questionnaire used in this study has four sections; section 1 contains the respondent's bio data such as age, marital status, gender, religion etc. Section 2 contains ten dimensions of employee engagement (ie., motivation, involvement, leadership styles, employee-employer relationship and working conditions, career development, training and development, recognition and rewards, compensation and benefits and growth opportunities) and section 3 contains measures of job satisfaction (ie., payment system, promotion, relationship, nature of work, recognition and appreciation, safety at the workplace, training and development, communication, job stress, supervisor support, supportive coworkers and work environment) and section 4 contains measures of service delivery (ie., customer service standards, feedback and complaints, quality of product and services, customer expectation, customer loyalty, employee turnover, customer retention strategies, employee rewards and recognition), all structured on a five (5) point likert scale with weights assigned as follows: 5 -strongly agree, 4 - agree, 3 – neutral, 2- disagree, and 1 – strongly disagree. Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling were adopted for the analysis of data collected in this study. This was done with the aid of Smart PLS v3 Software.

RESULTS

Measurement model estimation

The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) diagram visualizes the relationships among three key constructs (Figure 1). In Employee engagement (EPE), factors measured are: Motivation (EPE1), Involvement (EPE2), Leadership styles (EPE3), Employee-employer relationship (EPE4), Working environment (EPE5), Career development (EPE6), Training and development (EPE7), Recognition and rewards (EPE8), Compensation and benefits (EPE9), Growth opportunities (EPE10). The indicators (EPE1 to EPE10) have moderate-to-strong factor loadings (ranging from 0.35 to 0.54), indicating a good contribution to explaining Employee Engagement. Employee Engagement is positively linked to Service Delivery (SVD) with a path coefficient of 0.380. This indicates that higher Employee Engagement is associated with improved Service Delivery. In Job satisfaction (JBS), factors measured include: Compensation/Pay (JBS1), Promotion (JBS2), Relationship (JBS3), Nature of work (JBS4), Recognition and appreciation (JBS5), Safety at the workplace (JBS6), Training and development (JBS7), Communication (JBS8), Job stress (JBS9), Supervisor support (JBS10), Supportive

Coworkers (JBS11), Work environment (JBS12). The indicators (JBS1 to JBS12) also show moderate-to-strong factor loadings (ranging from 0.26 to 0.58), indicating reliable contributions to explaining Job Satisfaction. Job Satisfaction is positively linked to both SVD with a path coefficient of 0.234, meaning higher Job Satisfaction contributes to better Service Delivery, and EPE with a small path coefficient of 0.036, indicating a minor but positive relationship. In Service Delivery (SVD), factors measured include: Customer service standards (SVD 1), Feedback and complaints (SVD 2), Quality of product and services (SVD 3), Customer expectation (SVD 4), Customer loyalty (SVD 5), Employee turnover (SVD 6), Customer retention strategies (SVD 7), Employee rewards and recognition (SVD 8). The indicators (SVD1 to SVD8) show strong factor loadings (ranging from 0.96 to 1.52), indicating that these elements are crucial for defining Service Delivery. SVD is positioned as the dependent variable, influenced by Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction. Therefore, EPE has a stronger direct effect on Service Delivery (SVD) (0.380) compared to Job Satisfaction (JBS) (0.234). Job Satisfaction (JBS) contributes indirectly to Service Delivery through its small positive influence on Employee Engagement (0.036). For SVD, key contributors include employee rewards and recognition, customer loyalty, and retention strategies. For JBS, important factors include recognition, supportive coworkers, and training and development. For EPE, key drivers are career development, working environment, and compensation and benefits.
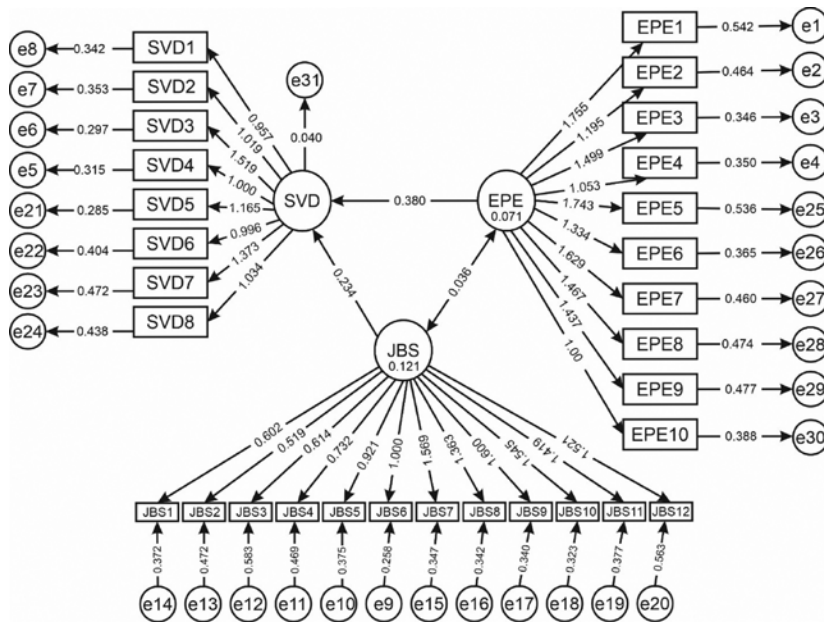

Figure 1: The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) diagram visualizes the relationships among three key constructs

Table 1 below illustrates presents the measurement model results for employee engagement, job satisfaction, and service delivery.

Table 1: Results for employee engagement, job satisfaction, and service delivery

Latent Variables	Items	Loadings	Cranach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	(AVE)
	EPE1	0.832			
	EPE2	0.856			
	EPE3	0.817			
	EPE4	0.798			
	EPE5	0.822			
	EPE6	0.801			
	EPE7	0.788			
	EPE8	0.732			
	EPE9	0.827			
	EPE10	0.800			
Employee engagement (EPE)			0.849	0.883	0.712
	JBS1	0.822			
	JBS2	0.784			
	JBS3	0.795			
	JBS4	0.721			
	JBS5	0.814			
	JBS6	0.819			
	JBS7	0.782			
	JBS8	0.799			
	JBS9	0.800			
	JBS10	0.781			
	JBS11	0.771			
	JBS12	0.790			
Job satisfaction (JBS)			0.879	0.913	0.649
	SVD1	0.891			
	SVD2	0.837			
	SVD3	0.866			
	SVD4	0.785			
	SVD5	0.840			
	SVD6	0.780			
	SVD7	0.871			
	SVD8	0.801			
Service Delivery (SVD)			0.875	0.901	0.657

The measurement model results for Employee Engagement (EPE), Job Satisfaction (JBS), and Service Delivery (SVD) are presented in Table 1. These constructs were assessed based on item loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which are essential for validating the internal consistency and convergent validity of the constructs. The Employee Engagement (EPE) construct consists of 10 items (EPE1 to EPE10) that assess various aspects of employee engagement. The item loadings range from 0.732 to 0.856, all exceeding the commonly recommended threshold of 0.7 for adequate item reliability. This indicates that each item contributes significantly to the measurement of the latent construct, suggesting good internal consistency and convergent validity for the EPE scale. The Cronbach's Alpha (0.849) value is well above the acceptable threshold of 0.7, indicating high internal consistency among the items in the EPE construct. Likewise, the Composite Reliability (0.883) value is also well above the recommended threshold of 0.7, further supporting the reliability of the EPE construct. With an AVE (0.712) value greater than the threshold of 0.5, the construct demonstrates good convergent validity, implying that the items explain a substantial portion of the variance in the latent construct. Overall, the Employee Engagement construct is reliable, with strong item loadings and excellent internal consistency and convergent validity. The Job Satisfaction (JBS) construct is measured by 12 items (JBS1 to JBS12). The item loadings range from 0.721 to 0.822, with most items exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.7. This indicates that the items effectively measure the latent construct of job satisfaction. The Cronbach's Alpha (0.879) for the JBS construct also exhibits excellent internal consistency, as it is well above the acceptable threshold of 0.7. The Composite Reliability (0.913) value further supports the reliability of the JBS scale, indicating that the items are consistently measuring the construct. The AVE (0.649) value exceeds the threshold of 0.5, demonstrating adequate convergent validity and suggesting that the items are capturing the intended dimensions of job satisfaction. The Job Satisfaction construct is highly reliable and valid, with strong item loadings and excellent internal consistency and convergent validity. The Service Delivery (SVD) construct consists of 8 items (SVD1 to SVD8), with item loadings ranging from 0.780 to 0.891.

All loadings exceed the threshold of 0.7, indicating that the items are appropriate and contribute effectively to the measurement of service delivery. The Cronbach's Alpha (0.875) for the SVD construct shows high internal consistency, as it is well above 0.7. The Composite Reliability (0.901) value is higher than the threshold of 0.7, further confirming the reliability of the construct. The AVE (0.657) AVE value exceeds the threshold of 0.5, indicating that the construct demonstrates good convergent validity. The Service Delivery construct is reliable and valid, with high internal consistency and good convergent validity. The results of the measurement model indicate that the constructs of Employee Engagement (EPE), Job Satisfaction (JBS), and Service Delivery (SVD) are all reliable and valid measures in this study. All items in each construct have acceptable loadings, demonstrating that the items adequately represent the latent variables. Additionally, all the Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values confirm the internal consistency and convergent validity of each construct, making them suitable for further analysis in the structural model. Further, the Employee Engagement (EPE) demonstrates a high degree

of internal consistency and convergent validity, indicating that the items effectively capture the various aspects of employee engagement in the organization. The relatively high loadings across all items suggest that the construct is robust and well-defined. While the Job Satisfaction (JBS) also shows strong internal consistency and convergent validity, with items reflecting key aspects of job satisfaction, such as compensation, promotion opportunities, and work relationships. The high reliability values suggest that this construct is well-defined and can be reliably used to assess job satisfaction in the context of this study. The Service Delivery (SVD), as expected, also shows good reliability and validity, with items that assess various aspects of service quality, customer feedback, and loyalty. The construct's ability to capture the broad scope of service delivery makes it a comprehensive measure for evaluating service outcomes. The high values for Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) indicate that the measurement model is internally consistent, while the AVE values suggest that the constructs are well-defined and represent the intended underlying dimensions. This model is therefore well-suited for subsequent structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the hypothesized relationships between employee engagement, job satisfaction, and service delivery. Table 2 below presents the discriminant validity of the variables.

Table 2: Discriminant Validity of the Variables

Construct	SVD	EPE	JBS
SVD	1		
EPE	0.721	1	
JBS	0.638	0.385	1

Table 2 presents the results of the discriminant validity assessment for the constructs of Service Delivery (SVD), Employee Engagement (EPE), and Job Satisfaction (JBS). Discriminant validity tests the extent to which each construct is distinct and not highly correlated with other constructs in the model. This ensures that each construct measures a unique aspect of the research and is not redundant with others. In this case, discriminant validity is assessed by evaluating the correlation coefficients between the constructs. To determine good discriminant validity, the correlation values should be relatively low to moderate. Typically, a correlation value above 0.85 may suggest that the constructs are not sufficiently distinct and may indicate a lack of discriminant validity.

According to the Table, the correlation between Service Delivery (SVD) and Employee Engagement (EPE) is 0.721. This suggests a moderately strong positive relationship between these two constructs. This value is not overly high (i.e., not above 0.85), so it indicates that while SVD and EPE are related, they are not so highly correlated that they are measuring the same concept. The relationship between employee engagement and service delivery is likely meaningful but distinct. Also, the correlation between Service Delivery (SVD) and Job Satisfaction (JBS) is 0.638. This represents a moderate positive correlation between job satisfaction and service delivery. It indicates that organizations with higher levels of job satisfaction may also experience better service delivery outcomes. However, this is not a perfect correla-

tion, suggesting that each construct still captures different aspects of the work environment and organizational performance.

The correlation between Employee Engagement (EPE) and Job Satisfaction (JBS) is 0.385. This is a relatively low correlation, indicating that while these two constructs are related, they are measuring different dimensions. Employee engagement may reflect an emotional and cognitive commitment to the organization, while job satisfaction might be more about an employee's contentment with specific aspects of their job, such as compensation or work relationships. The low to moderate correlation suggests that these two constructs are distinct, confirming that EPE and JBS do not overlap excessively in terms of their conceptualization. The results of the correlation matrix indicate that the constructs SVD, EPE, and JBS have adequate discriminant validity. Specifically, the correlation values between constructs are below 0.85, which suggests that each construct is measuring a unique aspect of organizational dynamics. The correlations between EPE and SVD (0.721) and SVD and JBS (0.638) are moderate, implying that while these constructs are related, they are not overly similar. Also, the lower correlation between EPE and JBS (0.385) further supports the idea that Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction are distinct, capturing different facets of the employee experience. Thus, the constructs in the model can be considered sufficiently distinct, and the findings support their discriminant validity. This is a critical finding, as it indicates that the constructs are unique and that the measurements used in the model accurately reflecting different dimensions of the work environment, employee attitudes, and organizational outcomes. This is important because it provides confidence that each construct is independently contributing to the understanding of organizational behaviour and outcomes.

Table 3: Summary of Direct Hypothesis Testing

Path	Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	P-value	Hypothesis Supported?
EPE → SVD	0.380	0.042	< 0.001	Yes
JBS → SVD	0.234	0.056	<0.05	Yes
JBS → EPE	0.036	0.015	< 0.05	Yes

Table 3 presents the results of the structural model testing the relationships between Employee Engagement (EPE), Job Satisfaction (JBS), and Service Delivery (SVD). The path coefficients (β), standard errors, and p-values are provided for each hypothesized relationship in the model. These results help assess the strength, direction, and significance of the relationships between the constructs. The p-values indicate the statistical significance of each path, and the coefficients (β) represent the strength and direction of these relationships. In general, a p-value below 0.05 indicates that the path is statistically significant, while the path coefficient β reflects the magnitude and direction of the effect (positive or negative). A positive β suggests a positive relationship, while a negative β would suggest an inverse relationship. The path coefficient from Employee Engagement (EPE) to Service Delivery (SVD) is 0.380, which indicates a moderate positive relationship between employee engagement and service

delivery. This suggests that higher employee engagement is associated with better service delivery outcomes. The p-value of less than 0.001 indicates that this relationship is highly significant, supporting the hypothesis that EPE positively influences SVD. This finding aligns with the theory that engaged employees are more likely to provide high-quality service, possibly due to their emotional commitment and motivation to contribute to the organization. The path coefficient from Job Satisfaction (JBS) to Service Delivery (SVD) is 0.234, indicating a moderate positive relationship. This means that higher job satisfaction is also linked to better service delivery outcomes, though the effect is smaller compared to the relationship between EPE and SVD. The p-value of < 0.05 confirms that this relationship is statistically significant, supporting the hypothesis that JBS influences SVD. This finding suggests that satisfied employees are more likely to deliver better customer service, likely due to their positive attitudes and contentment with their work environment. The path coefficient from Job Satisfaction (JBS) to Employee Engagement (EPE) is 0.036, indicating a very small positive relationship between these two constructs. Despite the small magnitude of the coefficient, the p-value of < 0.05 suggests that this relationship is statistically significant, supporting the hypothesis that JBS has a small but positive effect on EPE. This suggests that employees who are satisfied with their job may also feel more engaged with their work, although the strength of this relationship is weaker compared to the others in the model. Therefore, the results in Table 3 offer important insights into the relationships between Employee Engagement (EPE), Job Satisfaction (JBS), and Service Delivery (SVD). All three hypothesized relationships were supported, but the strength of the relationships varied across the paths. The implication is that Employee Engagement should be a priority for organizations seeking to improve Service Delivery. Strategies that enhance engagement, such as recognition, career development opportunities, and fostering a positive work environment, may lead to better customer service and organizational performance. Job Satisfaction also plays a role in improving Service Delivery, though the effect is weaker than engagement. Organizations should focus on ensuring that employees are satisfied with critical aspects of their job, such as compensation, work-life balance, and organizational culture, to indirectly enhance service quality. While Job Satisfaction has a small positive effect on Employee Engagement, organizations should consider other factors that more directly influence engagement. These might include leadership styles, opportunities for skill development, and work autonomy.

Table 4 below illustrates the predictive relevance of the model.

Table 4: Results of the Predictive Relevance of the Model

Total	SSO	SSE	Q² (1-SSE/SSO)
SVD	1294.000	483.021	0.626
EPE	989.000	989.00	
JBS	1231.000	1231.000	

Note: SSE: Sum of Squares of Errors
SSO: Sum of Squares of Observed values
Q²: Predictive Relevance

This study used the blindfolding procedure to test the predictive relevance of the model. Predictive relevance (Q^2) is used to assess the parameter estimates, and how values are built around the model including, explanations of the quality of the model. The rule of thumb for determining the predictive relevance of the endogenous variables is that the structural models with Q^2 greater than zero are considered to have predictive relevance. As it applied to this study, the results were retrieved from the blindfolding output of PLS through the variable score out of which cross-validated redundancy was extracted as shown in Table 4. The Q^2 value for SVD is 0.626, meaning the model explains approximately 62.6% of the variance in this construct, indicating moderate predictive relevance. Thus, the results for SVD indicate that the model demonstrates adequate predictive relevance for explaining variation in Service Delivery. It is an indication that the relationships between the constructs in the model are predictive of the outcomes related to service delivery.

DISCUSSION

Concerning the association between employee engagement and service delivery of hotel industry in Oyo State, the study found a highly significant relationship. This result is in line with the findings of Xiaoming *et al*. (2022) who reported that employee engagement had a significant influence on individual performance. The result of the study also agrees with the findings of Adepoju et al. (2024) who found that employee engagement had a significant effect on service quality. Also, the outcome of the study conforms to the findings of Elizabeth *et al*. (2024) who reported that employee engagement had a significant relationship on organizational productivity within the hospitality sector. Regarding the connection between job satisfaction and service delivery of hotel industry in Oyo State, the study establishes a significant relationship. This result is in line with the findings of Ato and Franklin (2018) who reported that satisfied employees have high or improved morale which can bring about amazing improvement in quality-of-service delivery and hence productivity. The result of their study shows a significant relationship. Furthermore, relating the relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement of hotel industry in Oyo State, the study found a significant relationship. This result is in line with the findings of Abdulwahab (2016) who shows a significant relationship between job satisfaction, job performance and employee engagement.

CONCLUSION

One of the conclusions that could be drawn from this study is that there is a positive and significant relationship between employee engagement and service delivery of hotel industry in Oyo State. The managerial implication of this is that hotel managers and policymakers in Oyo State, highlighting the need to invest in employee engagement initiatives to enhance service delivery and competitiveness in the industry. This underscores the critical role that engaged employees play in enhancing customer satisfaction and overall service performance.

Consequently, hotel management should prioritize strategies that foster employee engagement to sustain and improve service excellence, thereby strengthening their competitive advantage in the hospitality sector. In addition, the study also concludes that there is a positive and significant relationship between job satisfaction and service delivery of hotel industry in Oyo State. The managerial implication of this is creating a work environment that promotes employee satisfaction as a key driver of improved service delivery of hotel industry in Oyo State. Finally, it is concluded from the study that there is a positive and significant relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement of hotel industry in Oyo State. This finding highlights the critical role job satisfaction plays in fostering higher levels of employee engagement. To achieve optimal performance and service delivery, hotel management should prioritize initiatives that enhance job satisfaction, as engaged employees are more likely to contribute to the organization's success and customer satisfaction.

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The Future of Travel: A Review of Chatbot Recommender Systems in E-Tourism and Smart Tourism

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ABSTRACT

This systematic review covers how AI-powered chatbots are implemented in travel, tourism, and hospitality, with a special emphasis on the role of chatbots in upscaling e-tourism and smart tourism strategies. A systematic literature search was conducted by combining effective screening to identify and synthesize appropriate studies discussing conversational and automatic systems within this domain. It underpins the identified key scholarly literature upon the juncture of chatbots with tourism and hospitality industries, machine learning, and customer services while simultaneously picking out and explaining the risks and challenges found from these types of interactive technological innovations. The review also explores how various machine learning approaches, such as natural language processing, sentiment analysis, and recommendation systems, drive the functionalities of chatbots for learning and understanding to respond profusely to consumer inquiries. Even if it promotes potential contribution to enhancing efficiency and responsiveness within online customer service, the use of chatbots underlines problems that already exist in managing complex queries or complaints. In any case, continuous advancements of algorithms supporting machine learning-including natural language analysis, sentiment, or personalized recommendations keep the prospects of applying chatbots to more further and customized customer experiences relevant to the e-tourism marketplace. The review concludes that the chatbots may not completely replace human agents in every service contact; nonetheless, the introduction of chatbots into

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the tourism industry has great potential for improving processes in e-tourism and increasing customer satisfaction.

Keywords: Chatbots, Tourism, Machine Learning, E-tourism, Customer Service.

INTRODUCTION

The travel industry is at the cusp of a sea change driven by the fact that customers are increasingly taking to digital platforms from the stage of researching to booking and managing itineraries for their travel needs. This, in turn, further increases their need for efficient and personalized customer service, thus motivated AI-powered chatbot implementation in the travel and hospitality domains. These AI-driven conversational systems, driven by algorithms of NLP and ML, are architected to simulate human interaction, which means letting the travellers have 24/7 access and support.

After all, some major trends in tourism have integrated chatbots into the industry. According to this article, they are: first, tourists look for travel recommendations based on strange interests, preferences, and budgets for personalized experiences; secondly, the tourism industry looks for where it can enhance operation efficiency levels and reduce costs; and this is where chatbots function to support a high volume of queries and requests, leaving humans more time to concentrate on complex activities. Finally, travellers expect round-the-clock support, and chatbots can provide this continuous service, ensuring that travellers can access assistance whenever they need it.The benefits of chatbot recommenders will be many, whether for tourists or for companies in tourism. Firstly, chatbots will be able to answer lots of questions fast and without mistakes, further smoothing their experience and reducing waiting time for an answer, thus enhancing the quality of customer service. Also, chatbots could study user preferences, past traveling history, etc., and offer personalized travel recommendations, thus better travel discovery and booking for tourists [26]. Moreover, these systems provide millions of volumes of customer data to the company for a better understanding of what exactly the travellers want and need, benefiting the marketing and product development activities. The integration of chatbots into the travel industry is all about opportunities and challenges. While they promise enhanced efficiency and personalization, there are concerns about their ability to deal with complex queries and complaints. Second, recommendations may be biased, considering that chatbots in themselves extract data that will also carry forward any biases in the tourism industry. Apprehension of data privacy also arises since all users' data must be collected by chatbots, which raises apprehensions regarding ensuring its use is ethical and responsible.

This review, therefore, seeks to rise to these challenges and it discusses the role of chatbots in shaping the future of travel by systematically reviewing the literature on chatbot recommender systems in e-tourism and smart tourism. The key trends, development in NLP and machine learning algorithms, along with future paths for further studies under the present

research scenario, will be observed and analysed. Consequently, the aims of our study are threefold: to summarize the key questions posed, methodologies employed, and findings reported by current studies on the adoption of chatbots in travels, tourism, and hospitality contexts; and to assess advantages and costs related to the implementation of chatbot systems to extend online customer service in the tourism industry. The aim of the review is to determine the potential of chatbots in shaping the future of the travel industry by mapping the current research landscape and outlining an agenda for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Methodology

This systematic review employed a rigorous methodology to identify, evaluate, and synthesize relevant research on chatbot recommender systems in the travel, tourism, and hospitality industries. A comprehensive search strategy was developed using a combination of relevant keywords related to chatbots, tourism, e-tourism, smart tourism, machine learning, and customer service. The following databases were searched: Scopus, Web of Science, Springer, ACM Digital Library, and Google Scholar. The search terms used were: ("Chatbot" OR "Conversational AI" OR "Dialogue System") AND ("Tourism" OR "Travel" OR "Hospitality" OR "E-tourism" OR "Smart Tourism"), ("Chatbot" OR "Conversational AI" OR "Dialogue System") AND ("Recommendation System" OR "Recommender System"), and ("Chatbot" OR "Conversa-tional AI" OR "Dialogue System") AND ("Machine Learning" OR "AI").

These findings were then reviewed to find those that matched pre-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. A review was needed on articles about research into chatbot recommender systems in the travel, tourism, and hospitality domains published in English in a peer-reviewed journal or conference proceeding using empirical research methods such as surveys, experiments, and case studies. Studies focusing solely on theoretical frameworks or general AI applications, without a clear context of tourism; not written in the English language; presented in non-peer-reviewed publications; or specifically targeted only chatbots in other industries (like healthcare or finance) were out of scope.

Relevant articles were then selected for further analysis, and data was extracted from these articles using a standardized data extraction form. This form captured information on the study objectives and research questions, methodology employed (data collection techniques, analysis methods), key findings and conclusions, and limitations of the study. Extracted data was organized and synthesized, identifying key themes and patterns across the reviewed studies. Thematic analysis was conducted to explore the benefits, challenges, and future research directions associated with chatbot recommender systems in tourism. This review may be limited by the availability of published research in English and the focus on empirical research may exclude relevant theoretical studies.

Key Findings

This section synthesizes the core findings extracted from the reviewed literature on chatbot recommender systems within the e-tourism landscape. We analysed the types of chatbot systems employed, their applications within the tourism sector, assessments of their effectiveness, and the emerging trends shaping the future of chatbot integration. The aim is to provide a comprehensive overview of how artificial intelligence (AI), and more specifically, machine learning (ML), are influencing the development and deployment of chatbots within the evolving e-tourism ecosystem.

The literature reveals a shift in the architectural design of chatbots implemented in the tourism sector. Initially, rule-based systems were dominant, relying on pre-defined rules and decision trees to generate responses. However, the integration of AI, particularly ML algorithms, has led to a growing adoption of more sophisticated chatbot architectures [27]. ML-powered chatbots leverage large datasets of user interactions and travel information to refine their responses, personalize recommendations, and enhance their ability to understand and respond to diverse user queries. For instance, a study by [1] highlighted the effectiveness of ML-driven chatbot systems in providing personalized travel itineraries based on individual user preferences and historical data, a crucial feature for optimizing e-tourism experiences.

Fig. 1.Percentage of studies that focused on each specific application of chatbots.

The integration of chatbots within the e-tourism ecosystem is evident across several applications:

- Customer Service Automation: Chatbots are increasingly being used to automate routine customer service interactions, handling FAQs, providing information on travel policies, and resolving simple issues 24/7. [2] showed that chatbot-powered customer service platforms can significantly reduce customer wait times and improve overall satisfaction levels, especially within online travel agencies.

- Personalized Travel Recommendation Engines: Personalization of travel recommendations has lately become one of the most decisive factors in the adoption of chatbots in the e-tourism domain. AI-driven chatbots can present recommended travel destinations, accommodations, activities, and packages tailored to each user by using data on previous travel history, user preferences, and browsing behaviour. This enhances user experiences and leads to higher conversion rates. [3] found that AI-powered personalized suggestions have a positive influence on increasing user engagement and intention to book.
- Streamlining Booking Processes: Chatbots are effectively simplifying the online booking process, offering automated booking assistance for flights, hotels, and other travel services. [4] found that chatbots can significantly accelerate booking times and improve the overall booking experience, particularly for users seeking quick and efficient solutions.
- Providing Contextualized Travel Information: Context-aware travel information delivery: chatbots serve as an intelligent travel assistant for providing destination or location-related knowledge, on tourist attractions, and events in the area, as well as available local transportation choices; it delivers real-time, context-aware information, thus supporting decision-making for the traveller's journey. [5] Showcased the promise of chatbots to provide timely access to destination-specific relevant in-formation thus promotes pre-trip planning and overall satisfaction of travellers.

Research assessing the performance and effectiveness of chatbots within e-tourism reveals a mix of successes and challenges:

- Enhanced User Engagement and Satisfaction: Several studies indicate that users generally have a positive experience with chatbot interactions, particularly when chatbots can promptly address their inquiries and provide helpful information. [6] found that user satisfaction with chatbot-mediated interactions was higher when users perceived the chatbot as being helpful, efficient, and easy to use.
- Addressing Limitations in Natural Language Understanding: One of the major challenges encountered with chatbots is their ability to understand and respond appropriately to complex or ambiguous user queries. Emphasized the need for continued research and development in Natural language Understanding (NLU) to enhance chatbot capabilities and minimize errors in interpreting user requests [7].
- Mitigation of Biases and Ensuring Fairness: The training data used to develop chatbots can introduce biases into the system, potentially resulting in unfair or discriminatory recommendations. Highlights the importance of ensuring that the data used to train chatbots is diverse and representative to minimize the risk of algorithmic bias in travel recommendations [8].

The field of chatbot development for e-tourism is rapidly evolving, with advancements in AI and ML continuously shaping the future of these technologies:

- Enhancing NLU and Conversational AI: Ongoing research focuses on improving the ability of chatbots to understand and respond to complex, nuanced language, leading to

more natural and human-like conversations. This focus on developing more sophisticated conversational AI technologies is critical for enabling chatbots to address a broader range of user needs and enhance the overall e-tourism experience [9].

• Personalization Through Advanced ML Techniques: The use of advanced ML techniques, such as deep learning and reinforcement learning, is enabling more personalized and context-aware chatbot interactions within e-tourism platforms. Researchers are exploring how to leverage these techniques to deliver more tailored travel recommendations, dynamic pricing, and customized travel itineraries. [10].

• Integration with Emerging Technologies: Chatbots are increasingly being integrated with other emerging technologies within the e-tourism landscape, such as VR/AR, to create more immersive and interactive travel experiences. [11] investi-gated how VR/AR experiences enhanced by chatbot interactions can improve trav-eller engagement and satisfaction, leading to a shift in how travel services are consumed and delivered.
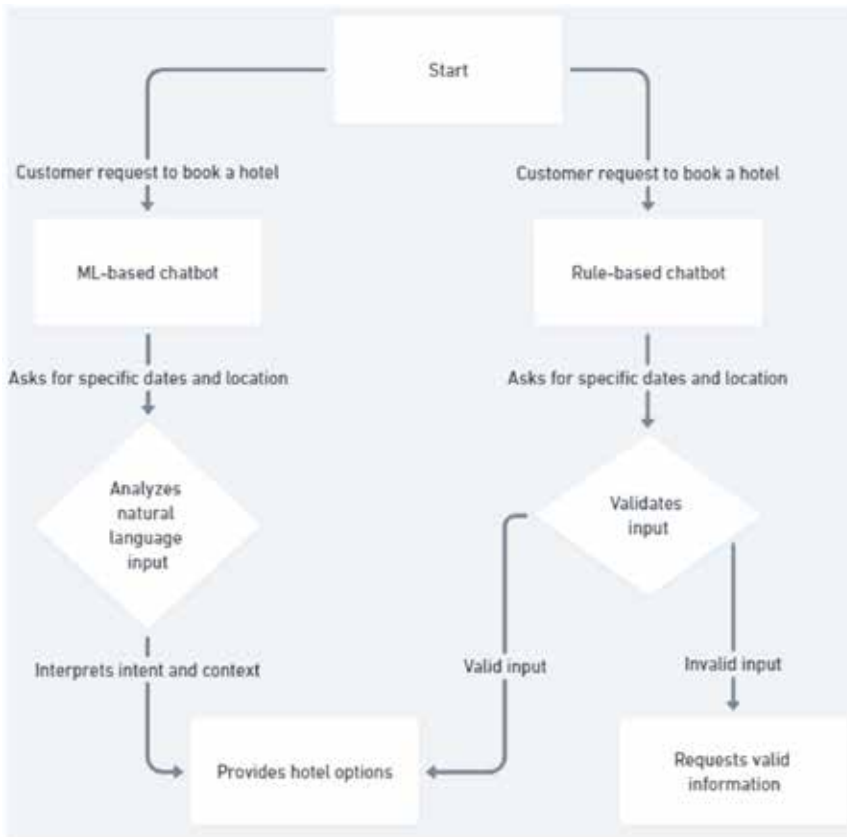

Fig. 2.The process of a customer interaction with a rule-based chatbot versus an ML-based chatbot for booking a hotel.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Despite the promise of AI-powered chatbots to enhance the e-tourism landscape, several challenges and limitations hinder their widespread adoption and full potential realization. One critical hurdle stem from the limitations of Natural Language Understanding (NLU) within current chatbot architectures. While advancements in NLP have improved chatbot capabilities, complex or nuanced user queries often prove challenging to interpret accurately. This can lead to misinterpretations, irrelevant responses, and ultimately, user frustration. [12] emphasizes that current chatbots often struggle to process intricate user requests, particularly those involving ambiguous language or multiple intents, resulting in a decline in user satisfaction. Furthermore, the lack of robust contextual awareness in many chatbot systems presents a barrier to providing truly personalized and relevant assistance.

Another significant concern is the potential for algorithmic bias within chatbot recommender systems. Chatbots are trained on large datasets, which, if not carefully curated and diversified, may reflect existing biases present in the tourism industry. This can lead to discriminatory or unfair recommendations, impacting the equity of travel experiences. [13] highlighted how biases embedded within training data can lead to skewed recommendations, disproportionately favouring certain demographics or travel preferences, raising concerns about ethical considerations in AI-driven travel services. Additionally, the continuous development and deployment of chatbot sys-tems require careful consideration of data privacy and security. Chatbots often collect and process sensitive personal information about users, raising crucial concerns about data protection, particularly within the context of regulations like GDPR. Implementing robust security measures and ensuring transparency regarding data usage are essen-tial to maintaining user trust and mitigating risks associated with data breaches. [14] explores the legal and ethical implications of data collection by chatbots in the con-text of travel and tourism, emphasizing the need for user consent and data anonymization.

Finally, the integration of chatbots within existing tourism infrastructure can be a complex and resource-intensive process. Achieving seamless interoperability between chatbot systems and legacy booking platforms, customer relationship management (CRM) systems, and payment gateways poses a significant technical challenge. [15] highlights the complexity of integrating chatbot systems into existing enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems, especially within large-scale tourism organizations. Furthermore, ensuring the effective human-in-the-loop approach, where human agents seamlessly intervene when chatbots encounter limitations, remains a key challenge. Developing robust handover procedures and ensuring that human agents are equipped to address unresolved issues effectively is crucial for minimizing user dissatisfaction and maintaining a positive customer experience.

DISCUSSION

Benefits and Costs of Chatbot Adoption

In this paper, some of the benefits that the integration has brought forth are AI-powered conversational agents popularly known as chatbots within the tourism industry. Overall, benefits accruing from their core functionalities include NLP, ML, and dialogue management. The aspect of the ability to address customer inquiries on anything, for example-"Can you suggest a family-friendly hotel near the Eiffel Tower?"-in the most natural and intuitive way, increases the customer experience. Precisely, chatbots allow supporting customers 24/7, thus enabling tourism companies to support travellers at any time, from anywhere in the world. For example, a tourist in Tokyo changes flight plans because of changed plans.

A chatbot would swing into action right at that moment with little friction to satisfaction compared to calling customer service and sending emails. Advanced chatbots would make recommendations personalized as they learn about user preference and travel history. For instance, if a client usually inquiries about budget-friendly accommodations in resort zones, he will keep receiving further recommendations on the same for any other query that might arise later. Such chatbots use machine learning algorithms to intelligently compose responses to identify and cater to unique tastes and preferences of end-users in real-time, thereby driving up conversions and loyalty. That means chatbots make the automation of routine time-consuming actions performed by human agents quicker, reduce work, and thereby enhance efficiency in business operations, along with financial efficiency among tourism-related companies. In other words, if a human worker is answering basic questions like "What is the check-in time?" or "Where is a restaurant nearby?", chatbots release the human resources to deal with more complex problems and useful contacts.

However, the implementation of chatbot systems within the tourism industry also comes with a set of associated costs. The development of sophisticated chatbot systems necessitates significant investment in software development and AI model training. Building a chatbot that can understand travel-related language and answer nuanced questions requires extensive training data and development resources [16]. Furthermore, the ongoing maintenance and updates of chatbot systems require continuous investment in natural language processing (NLP) model refinement, machine learning model retraining, and dialogue management optimization. For example, a chatbot designed to provide information about local attractions would need continuous updates to reflect any changes in operating hours, ticket prices, or event schedules. The potential impact on human workforce requirements is another key cost factor. While chatbots can automate certain tasks, they may lead to a reduction in the need for human agents in certain roles, potentially impacting the roles of travel agents or customer service representatives.

Future Research Directions

Modern chatbot technologies very often face significant problems in answering complex questions and subtle requests. Subsequent research should aim to work on more complex frameworks of NLU, able to grasp an extended scope of the linguistic appearance and intentions of users. The development of chatbots capable of perceiving idiomatic phrases, sarcasm, or emotional sentoid would exponentially enhance the quality of contacts with the user. Further, high relevance comes in the studies of contextual awareness while interacting with chatbots. This will help the chatbots retain knowledge about the past interactions of users or their personal preferences, making the responses more personalized and relevant. Visualize a scenario where a chatbot remembers that a given user prefers accommodation options that are ecologically friendly and goes ahead to proactively suggest similar options when other travel requests come up. Further research in dialogue management systems could fine-tune dialog dynamics into more engaging and user-friendly interactions [17].

The use of AI-driven chatbots in the tourism industry raises some key ethical concerns and data privacy issues. Future research should focus on ways of ensuring equity and minimizing biases in chatbot recommendation systems. For example, researchers might explore a model of determining and rectifying potential biases in the training data so that chatbots' recommendations are fair and do not create undue harm for a certain demographic or travel preference. Second, research must be done to come up with mechanisms to protect user data with evolving privacy regulations, such as the GDPR [18]. For example, some federated learning techniques are being developed that could one day help a chatbot learn from user data without collecting sensitive information from users in one central store, hence improving privacy and security. The research of explainable methodologies in artificial intelligence (XAI) will further improve the transparency of the decision-making mechanism behind chatbots [19]; hence, users understand how recommendations have been made, thereby engendering trust.

Incorporating chatbots with other new technologies shows great potential for transforming the tourism experience. Future studies should investigate how chatbots can be smoothly incorporated with virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies to offer immersive travel experiences [20]. For instance, picture a virtual reality tour of a historic location led by a chatbot offering background details and responding to inquiries instantly. Investigating the combination of chatbots and blockchain technology may lead to more secure travel booking platforms, decreasing the chance of fraud and improving trust between travelers and tourism providers. Additionally, examining how sentiment analysis can be incorporated into chatbot interactions can offer valuable information about user feelings and choices, helping tourism companies customize their services and products with greater efficiency.

Implications for Tourism Businesses

Tourism businesses considering chatbot adoption should prioritize a strategic approach that

aligns with their specific operational goals and target audience. Firstly, selecting the appropriate chatbot platform is crucial. Businesses need to carefully evaluate the capabilities of different platforms, considering factors like NLP capabilities, ML-based learning, and integration with existing systems [21]. For instance, a small boutique hotel might benefit from a simpler, rule-based chatbot focused on answering basic FAQs, while a large international travel agency might require a more sophisticated platform with advanced ML capabilities for personalized recommendations and complex booking assistance. Secondly, the training data used to develop and refine the chatbot is of paramount importance. Chatbots should be trained on a comprehensive dataset that reflects the specific language, queries, and information needs of the target audience [22]. For instance, a chatbot designed for a luxury travel agency would require training data that includes vocabulary related to high-end accommodations, specialized travel services, and the preferences of affluent travelers. The process of knowledge engineering plays a crucial role in defining the knowledge base of the chatbot, ensuring it can accurately respond to a wide range of user inquiries.

Tourism businesses can also leverage emerging technologies to enhance the capabilities of their chatbot systems:

- **Integrating Conversational AI with VR/AR Experiences:** VR and AR technologies can provide immersive and interactive travel experiences and integrating them with chatbots can enhance the overall user experience [23]. Imagine a chatbot guiding a user through a VR tour of a historical site, providing contextual information about the location, and answering questions in real-time.
- **Utilizing Blockchain for Secure Transactions:** Blockchain technology can provide a secure and transparent platform for booking travel services [24], enhancing trust, and reducing the risk of fraudulent activities. Chatbots can be integrated into blockchain-based booking systems to provide secure and efficient booking experiences.
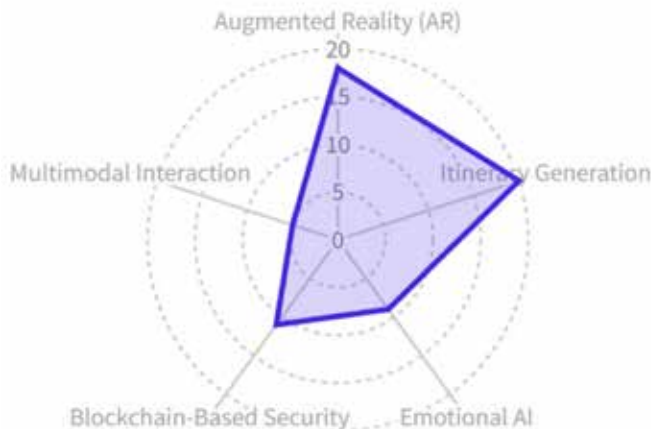

Fig. 3.Future Trends in Chatbot Recommender Systems for Smart Tourism

- **Utilizing Sentiment Analysis to Improve Personalization:** Enhancing chatbot interactions through the integration of sentiment analysis [25]. This enables chatbots to assess the emotional tone of user interactions and adjust their replies, resulting in a more customized and empathetic user experience. If a chatbot senses that a user is upset in their question, it can transfer the conversation to a human representative.

CONCLUSION

This analysis has investigated the growing area of chatbot recommendation systems in the travel and tourism sector, emphasizing the possibility of AI-driven conversational agents to revolutionize customer interactions and improve business efficiency. Our examination shows big chances to improve customer service by offering around-the-clock support and automated task management, along with personalized travel experiences driven by machine learning (ML) algorithms. Nevertheless, we also recognized significant obstacles, such as constraints in comprehending natural language (NLU), the risk of algorithmic prejudice in suggestions, worries regarding data confidentiality and protection, and the difficulties of merging chatbots into current tourism systems.

The advancement of chatbot technology in the travel industry depends on ongoing research and development work. Overcoming restrictions in NLU, reducing prejudice in recommendations, and protecting data privacy are crucial for establishing trust and promoting ethical AI practices in the field. Moreover, combining chatbots with emerging technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) offers thrilling chances to improve the travel journey. Tourism businesses need to take a strategic approach when implementing chatbots, which involves choosing platforms wisely, creating thorough training data, and giving priority to data security. By adopting new ideas and considering moral concerns, the tourism sector can utilize AI-driven chatbots to offer more immersive, effective, and customized travel experiences for people around the globe.

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How Sports Tourism is Adapting to the Labor Shortage[1]

Bernard Massiera[2], Imed Ben Mahmoud[3], Qing Xu[4] and Eric Perrera[5]

ABSTRACT

Our work highlights how sports tourism professionals have adapted to relaunch their activities in the wake of the health crisis, and whether any corollaries persist in our current situation. Indeed, a question arises. If travel is returning to normal, why doesn't the sports tourism sector seem to be returning to previous levels? The survey tells us that, after the period of confinement, sports tourism players reoriented themselves towards more stable, less seasonal occupations. When the sector took off again, and to cope with the influx of customers, sports tourism professionals found themselves obliged to adjust their offer by rationalizing the supply and its management, but without these adaptations being able to fully remedy the scarcity of qualified manpower.

Keywords: Post Covid19, Tourism, Physical Activity

INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the 1970s, we have witnessed the sportivization of our modern societies, where free time is transformed into time for maintaining the body (Perera and Valet, 2021). These new physical practices are integrated and organize logics of "self-governance" (Foucault, 1983). Maintaining the body through physical activity meets health expectations. Leisure time becomes an opportunity to take care of oneself, valued by the consumer culture (Featherstone et al., 1991). The demand for physical exercise has grown considerably, not

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only in leisure activities but also in vacations (Novelli et al., 2006). The tourism sector has seized upon these logics of self-maintenance through physical activity (Perera and Le Roux, 2021) through the travel experience (Pigeassou, 2002, 2004). Sport tourism refers to a trip lasting at least 24 hours outside the region of origin (Nogawa, 1996). The purpose of these trips is to take part in physical, recreational and cultural activities (Pigeassou, 2002, 2004; Gibson, 2003). This type of tourism is a way of recharging one's batteries through sporting leisure activities (Ceriani et al., 2005). They are an opportunity to cut away from everyday life and foster an experience of well-being (Tan et al., 2014).

ISSUE

The health crisis linked to Covid-19 and its successive confinements hit this sector hard between 2020 and 2021. Tourism fell by 87% (UNWTO Report, June 2021), and it will take until 2023 to return to a level of activity similar to 2019 (UNWTO Report, January 2023). Our questioning is focused on the fact that the recovery of sports tourism seems to be slow in France (Olbia Conseil et Média Filière report, February 2024). This sector, like that of traditional tourism, is experiencing difficulties in recruiting qualified personnel. Every year, the entire tourism sector in France requires 600,000 seasonal workers (UMIH report, July 2022). Sports instructors, lifeguards, vacation leaders... are all in short supply. In this particular context of shortage of qualified human resources, our work looks at how players in the sports tourism sector have adapted.

Logics of action in a context of scarcity: We draw on the concept of "logics of action" (Amblard et al., 2005) to study and model how professionals have adapted the overall sports tourism offer in the face of scarcity. The concept of "logics of action" refers to individual reasoning and situations that induce actions in a particular context. The concept aims to explore how reasoning arises when making decisions to act in an "action situation" (Amblard et al., 2005). Epistemologically, the concept derives from "bounded rationality", developed by Herbert Simon, and rethought in relation to work organizations (Crozier & Friedberg, 2014). This notion refers to the idea that when sports tourism players implement actions within their organization, their logics are governed both by a "strategic" dimension (Crozier & Friedberg, 2014) but also by a cultural dimension linked to the priorities and values cultivated in their professional environment (Sainsaulieu, 2019).

In France, there is a wide range of structures offering sports tourism activities. These include both large tourism operators and small structures with varying statuses (associations, micro-enterprises, companies, institutions, etc.). The training of those involved in sports tourism is marked by different aspects, ranging from the teaching of physical activity to research into sports performance and tourism entertainment (Dubois, 2009). The training and career paths of those working in the field are diverse (teachers with university degrees, educators with sports diplomas, certified popular education instructors, etc.). As a result, the objectives of these structures and the values of these professionals can be varied, marked to varying

degrees by educational, sporting, commercial or associative logics (Barbusse, 2002; Byers et al., 2022; Pierre et al., 2010; Perrin, 2016; Perrin et al., 2021; Roux-Perez, 2006).

The tourism sector and its sports tourism sub-sector have redeployed themselves in the wake of the health crisis. Various reports highlight the fact that the sector is struggling to recruit qualified staff, but without studying the adaptations that enable them to cope with this labor shortage. An approach aimed at understanding the logics of adaptation, and their potential links with the various professional characteristics and cultures of the sector's players, could prove useful in understanding and predicting organizational evolutions in times of crisis. This article explores the organizational adaptations of sports tourism offerings in the wake of a health crisis, by analyzing the logics of action that govern the decisions and actions adopted by its players, and by attempting to link them to the professional cultures of its players.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research work is an exploratory phase of the organization of the sports tourism offer in the wake of the health crisis in France. The survey took place in south-eastern France, in the Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur (PACA) region, where the tourism offer is rich and varied. We are interested in understanding and analyzing how sports tourism professionals have redefined their offers and practices, in the face of a shortage of manpower. We conducted interviews with sports tourism managers (director, president, administrator...) and meetings with physical activity professionals working in leisure and sports tourism (table n°1).

To gather our data, we proceeded with "natural" data collection (Silverman, 2014), during opportunities to meet with these sports tourism players. We relied on note-taking during interviews and meetings, as well as more spontaneous exchanges of words gathered according to the opportunities of the moment. Our information came from tourism administrators (n=5) and sports entertainment professionals (n=7). These meetings took place between spring 2022 and autumn 2022. The interviews were analyzed according to the principles of content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004). The data collected was transposed into written form. The exchanges were analyzed in two stages. A coding phase was undertaken (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). This involved identifying and labelling relevant segments of text in relation to the themes addressed in the interview guide, such as current events in sports tourism and adaptations to the supply of sports practices in the face of a shortage of professionals. We then sought to model the links between the themes, by reorganizing all the comments according to the adaptations to the sports activities on offer. We devised a two-axis organization model, ranging from the discontinuation of sports services in the tourism offer to various forms of adaptation. The vertical axis concerns the place of sporting activities in the tourism offer, while the horizontal axis reflects the adaptations that make it possible to cope with the constraints of supervising activities.

RESULTS

Observation highlights the organizational adaptations that enable sports tourism operators to provide services to their customers. Organized by profile type according to the adaptation methods used to deal with the shortage of manpower, we identify for each profile: the methods used by service providers to reduce their activities (sometimes abandoning them) or to adapt the organization of their services, and the underlying rationales that seem to explain their decisions (table 2).

Profile 1
Maintaining a reduced range of sporting activities at the heart of the offer: A first profile concerns service providers who have chosen to refuse to welcome too many clients to their physical activity sessions. In particular, these providers emphasized the importance of the educational dimension, highlighting the concerns of supervisors and safety constraints. They also mentioned other material obstacles, such as the capacity of venues or practice sites. For these service providers, the quality of their service is the most important factor, even if we can see their frustration when they have to reduce their capacity in order to welcome the majority of their customers in the best possible way. Overall, the decision to adapt services by limiting the number of participants was justified by the strategic position occupied by sports coaching for customers. And this, despite the decline in the profitability of sessions when we consider the time and energy invested in prioritizing the quality of sports activities.

Profile 2
Pooling sporting activities between several partners: A second profile concerns service providers who have worked to maintain quality sporting activities within their tourism structures by simplifying the services on offer and joining forces with external partners. These choices underline the economic importance of sports in the tourism offering for these professionals. The challenge is to maintain sports services as part of the tourism offering, with each service provider responding minimally and partially to customer demand for activities. For this category of players, satisfying their customers is at the heart of their business. For them, it was a question of maintaining the attractiveness of the offer that their customers are used to. We note the work overload and fatigue caused by the organizational difficulties of pooling activities between several service providers, each of whom provides part of the overall offering.

Profile 3
Standardizing activities to keep them in the offer: While these providers are similar to other profiles in the efforts they have made to emerge from confinement, the strategic place of sport within the offer has weighed heavily on organizational adaptations. These players have relaunched their activities by adapting to the constraints of shortages through rationalization of the activities on offer (group practices, reduced supervision, standardization of sessions, etc.). This logic of action is characterized by the transformation of sessions designed to accommodate the greatest number of customers. In this way, a wide range of sporting activities is offered to customers, even if the consumerist logic leads to a loss of relevance due to a lack of social ties.

Profile 4

Outsourcing sports activities to subcontractors: A final profile concerns service providers who have chosen to outsource their sports activities entirely. These operators put forward the profitability rationale, underlining the concerns and financial constraints of maintaining an unmanageable offer due to lack of personnel. The operators concerned are structures of varying size and nature, where sporting activities are not central to the offer, the core business being accommodation and travel.

DISCUSSION

In creating a typology of organizational adaptations of the sports offer within tourism services, we have considered similarities and divergences in the logics of action. We seek to weave links with the professional characteristics of service providers. The modelled adaptations (Figure 2) suggest that the action strategies - inscribed in their singular professional contexts - are the fruit of logics that emanate in part from the values and cultural codes of the actors, but also from the material resources mobilized by the service providers in their "action situation". Indeed, even if the common action situation concerned an environment of labor shortage, each group of providers composed with the resources of their structure, but in accordance with the cultural dimensions of their trade (Sainsaulieu, 2019). Thus, two main aspects seem to emerge from these adaptations.

Profiles 1 and 2

These players stress the importance of continuing to provide quality sports activities. These logics call for the implementation of strict organizational procedures: reduction in the number of participants, waiting lists, pooling of activities between different sports tourism players, each of whom provides a particular practice. At the top end of the scale, it's important to keep sports managers close to their customers. This logic seems to be linked to contexts where sporting activity is at the heart of the sporting offer (hiking, aquatic, nautical tourism...) Physical activity is at the heart of the profession, and the professional culture values close relations with customers. We hypothesize that these decisions to adapt in a crisis context have been shaped by the values and priorities of personal sports support and service, which seem particularly reinforced during academic and professional socialization in university environments (Perrin, 2016; Perrin et al., 2021; Roux-Perez, 2006).

Profiles 3 and 4

The emphasis is on profitability, and customers are presented with a commercial relationship. In times of confinement, these service providers have found themselves immersed in a spiral of constraints, and have rationalized their modes of intervention. As a result, the sports on offer are more akin to consumerist practices, where the commitment of participants has sometimes been weakened through easier, less engaging practices. In these structures, sporting activities appear to have a lower priority or to be less profitable among the range of services on offer (large resorts, club hotels, holiday villages, tourist residences, etc.). The

professional cultures of the people who work there appear to be focused on service provision and less on support. Proximity with participants was presented more from the perspective of service provision, rather than that of accompanying users during their stay. As sports tourism evolves in a competitive context, they have given priority to management, communication and marketing to ensure the structure's long-term survival. It's worth pointing out that these players are more likely to come from tourism-related professions, with additional diplomas and qualifications relating to physical and sports activities.

However, there are limits to these results. It concerns a single region of France and a non-exhaustive sample of structures. What's more, the profiles are an imperfect tool, based on modelled interpretations of the data. Finally, it is difficult to compare the results with any pre-existing literature, as the situation of emergence from an epidemic crisis and containment remains unprecedented.

CONCLUSION

The end of the epidemic episode thrust sports tourism operators into the midst of a labor shortage environment, which weighed heavily on their business recovery. These service providers had to adapt their practices according to their priorities and resources. Our analyses have identified four player profiles based on the adaptations they have made in response to this context. By situating these on two axes represented by continuums of adaptation type (between internal and external supervision) and form (between sport at the heart of or ancillary to the tourism offering), this analytical model offers a visualization of the characteristics that help condition and explain the logics of adaptation in sport tourism in a context of manpower shortages.

A reflection based on professional cultures (Sainsaulieu, 2019), combined with the analysis of logics of action at work (Amblard et al., 2005), brought out of the analytical model the hypothesis of a place for professional cultures concerning the place of accompaniment and the social link with customers. Overall, the modeling of these complex processes, which govern the logic of adaptation to the crisis, has enabled us to understand, and perhaps better predict and support, the decisions and strategies adopted by service providers in this sector of activity.
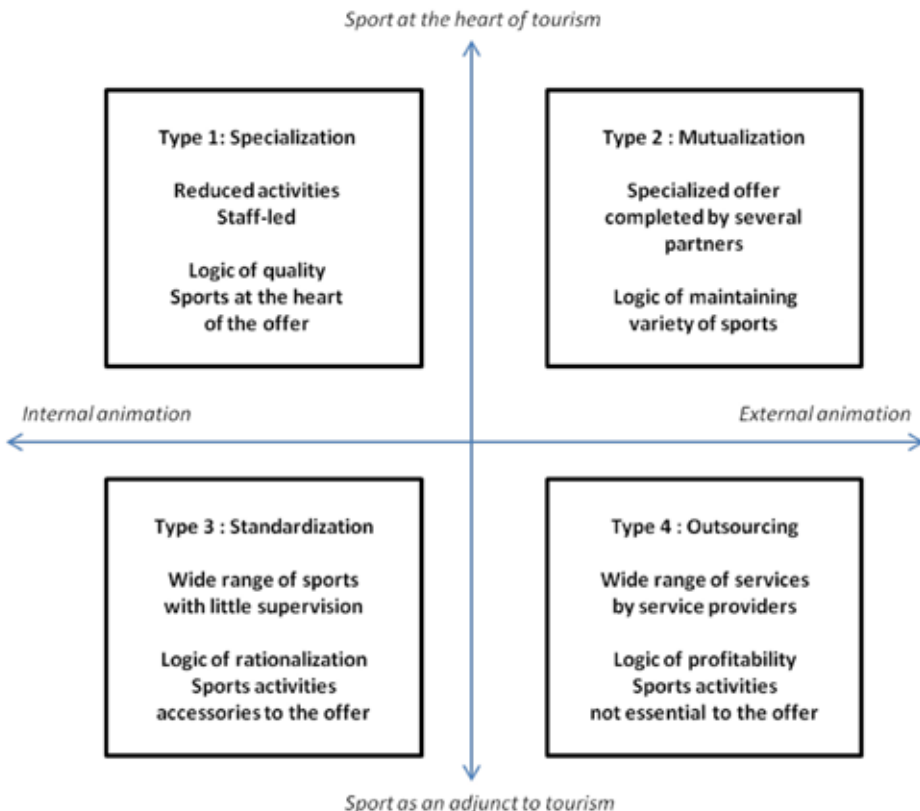
On the one hand, the post-covid sports tourism recovery is evolving in a consumer context that has increased and trivialized the sports offer to a simple service provision. Physical activity sessions now follow one another at a steady pace, with plenty of demonstrations, and the public mostly participate by mimicry. On the other hand, sports instructors have turned to less seasonal occupations that enable them to make a living all year round (Dubois, 2009), creating a shortage of skilled labor that is likely to continue in the years to come. If the sports tourism sector is to solve its labor shortage and reduce staff turnover, it seems essential that its professionals invest in the issue of quality of working life, working conditions and wages in the sector.

Table 1 : Table of interviews

Code & Characteristics of interview organizations

- "A", association upgraded as a simplified joint-stock company (n=1).
- "B", association integrating a structured promotional service (n=3).
- "C", association with centralized management at national level (n=1).
- "D", travel company for disabled people (n=1).
- "E", association that groups together several vacation villages around the world (n=1)
- "F", company that facilitates travel for specific target groups (n=1).
- "G", association offering outdoor sports tourism (n=3) .
- "H", federation representing the sport tourism sector at regional level (n=1).

Table 2: Logic of action of sports tourism providers, located according to the strategic importance of sport in the tourism offer

Sport at the heart of tourism

Type 1: Specialization Reduced activities Staff-led Logic of quality Sports at the heart of the offer	**Type 2 : Mutualization** Specialized offer completed by several partners Logic of maintaining variety of sports
Type 3 : Standardization Wide range of sports with little supervision Logic of rationalization Sports activities accessories to the offer	**Type 4 : Outsourcing** Wide range of services by service providers Logic of profitability Sports activities not essential to the offer

Internal animation — External animation

Sport as an adjunct to tourism

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