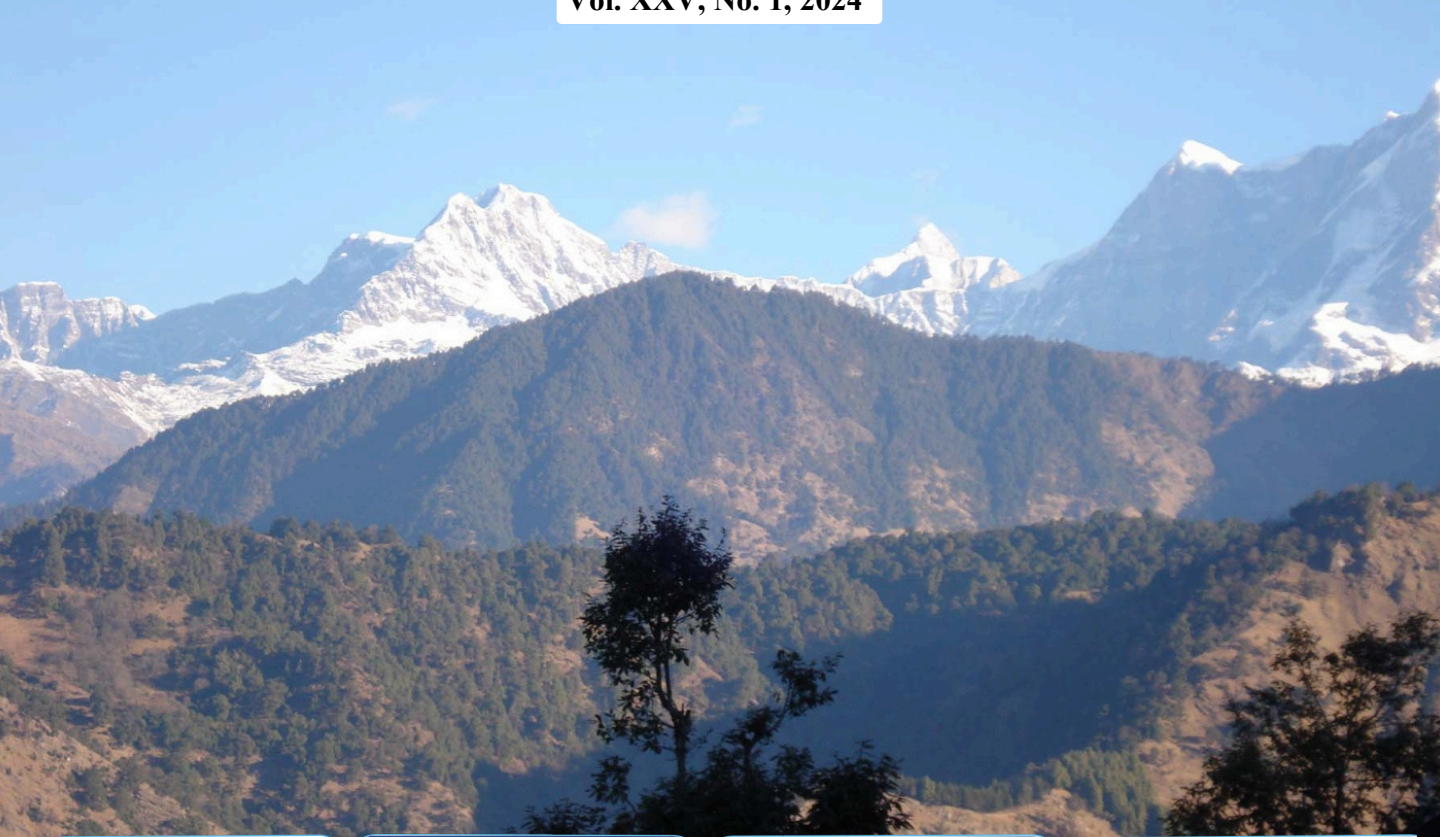


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From the Desk of Editors

Dear Readers,

It gives us immense pleasure to present the **Journal of Tourism, June 2024 issue**. The Journal of Tourism (JOT) is an international journal in the area of travel and tourism, published by the Centre for Mountain Tourism & Hospitality Studies (CMTHS), School of Management, Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna Garhwal University (HNBGU), Uttarakhand, India. The journal is **bi-annual, peer reviewed** and publishes quality and innovative research spanning the broader dimensions of the tourism and hospitality sector.

The tourism industry continues to evolve rapidly, shaped by digital transformation, sustainability imperatives, evolving consumer behaviour, and the increasing integration of technology into tourism systems. As the sector navigates new challenges related to environmental responsibility, market dynamics, community participation, and technological advancements, it also opens new avenues for research, policy design, and industry applications. The current issue of JOT, June 2024, aims to foster academic discourse and provide insights into emerging trends, empirical investigations, and conceptual frameworks that contribute to a deeper understanding of tourism and hospitality research. The journal received significant interest from academicians, researchers, and industry professionals across diverse areas of travel, tourism, and hospitality. After a rigorous screening and peer-blind review process, the editorial team selected the following papers for publication in this issue.

The first paper titled **“Sustainable Tourism Development: Through the Lens of Digital Transformation”** explores how digital transformation tools and technologies are reshaping sustainable tourism practices, influencing resource efficiency, destination management, and visitor engagement.

The second paper, **“Tourism Statistics of India: Analytical Insights”**, provides an analytical overview of India’s tourism statistics and highlights key trends, growth patterns, and performance indicators influencing the current tourism scenario.

The third paper titled **“Delineating Research on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Tourism: A Bibliometric Analysis”** conducts a bibliometric mapping of SDG-related tourism research, identifying influential themes, publication trends, and collaborative networks.

The fourth paper, **“Tourism Expansion and Economic Growth in India: Assessing Their Short-Term and Long-Term Associations”**, examines the linkage between tourism expansion and India’s economic growth, assessing temporal interactions using advanced econometric methods.

The fifth paper titled **“Empowering Women of Hills Through Homestay Tourism”** presents insights into how homestay tourism in the Eastern Himalayan regions contributes to women’s empowerment and socio-economic upliftment.

The sixth paper, **“Drivers of Tourist Value on Their Retention: An Exploratory Analysis of European Tourists”**, investigates the key drivers influencing value perception and retention behaviour among tourists, offering implications for destination managers.

The seventh paper titled **“Anthropological Approaches in Tourism Research: Methods, Scope, and Challenges in Understanding Tourism Spaces”** discusses the relevance of anthropological methods in tourism studies, elaborating on their scope and challenges in understanding tourism spaces.

The eighth research paper, **“Navigating the Digital Horizon: A Bibliometric Expedition into Tourism Digitalization Studies”**, maps the growing body of literature on tourism digitalization, analysing research progression, influential works, and future trajectories.

The ninth paper titled **“User Motives and Continuance Intention in Uttarakhand’s Airbnb Landscape: A Self-Determination Theory Approach”** examines user motivation and behavioural intention within the Airbnb ecosystem using the lens of self-determination theory.

The tenth and final paper, **“Learner Experiences and Outcomes of Tourism and Hospitality Education and Training in India”**, explores learner perceptions, educational challenges, and training outcomes in the context of tourism and hospitality education in India.

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to all contributors whose scholarly efforts made this issue possible. We also express our sincere gratitude to the reviewers for their valuable time and critical evaluation of the submitted manuscripts. We acknowledge the continuous support of the advisory board for guiding the journal’s academic direction.

We hope this issue enriches understanding and stimulates further research in the fields of tourism and hospitality. We look forward to continued collaboration and scholarly engagement in the forthcoming issues.

Editor-in-Chief
Prof. R.K. Dhodi

Guest Editors (s)
Prof. Sandeep Kulshreshtha
Prof. Saurabh Kumar Dixit

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Sustainable Tourism Development: Through the Lens of Digital Transformation

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Sustainable development,
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ABSTRACT

Sustainable tourism has gained significant attention in the tourist industry, particularly in the later half of the 20th century. This phenomenon can be attributed to the global expansion and digital transformation that has had profound impact on the global economy and led to changes in institutions. Currently, sustainable development is a crucial element of tourism strategies and goals, especially when considering complex interrelationships between tourism and its impacts on sustainable development. The COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges to the global tourism and hospitality sector, resulting in significant disruptions. These challenges included travel restrictions, border closures, the emergence of digital tourism and hospitality, a slow rebuilding process, and unclear future. Various emerging technologies played role in aiding tourists in navigating through situations like the COVID-19 pandemic. The present study focuses on investigating the impact of digital transformation on the sustainable tourism industry.

INTRODUCTION

In the late 1980s, the concept of sustainable tourism was first introduced, and since then, it has become firmly established in tourism research as well as tourist policies and strategies (Hall, 2011). After a span of more than twenty-five years of attention, it is now the right time to take a look at the current level of investigation and implementation in the field of sustainable tourism. According to the World Tourism Organization, sustainable tourism is "an industry which takes consideration of its present as well as prospective economic, social, and ecological implications, serving the necessities of tourists, the industry, ecosystems, and host communities". The travel and tourism business are among the world's most significant industries, accounting for 10.3% of global GDP, and is expected to surpass \$500 billion by 2029. The growth of tourism continues to be positioned as one of the government's economic planning initiatives. In a growing nation like India, the tourist industry is built on the natural ecosystems, forests, and waterways, as well as its extensive historical and cultural heritage, such business serves as the backbone for increasing the delight globally. In the fiscal year 2023, international visitor expenditure and Domestic expenditure accounted for 11.6% & 88.4 % of the nation's travel and tourism GDP. However, there are a variety of social, economic, and ecological concerns that come along with the fast expansion of tourism. These include over-tourism, the destruction of natural resources, and the detrimental effects on local populations. Considering these difficulties, A significant emerging model in the tourist industry is sustainable tourism, which prioritizes the harmony of economic, social, and environmental concerns in all aspects of the industry's strategic planning and execution. The environmentally friendly development of tourist sites is a Major approach in the sector of tourism, as it not only helps the economic prosperity of the location but also assures the safeguarding of its heritage and natural assets for the next generation. The worldwide relevance of sustainable tourism has grown dramatically since it provides equal opportunity for every stakeholder to contribute towards the growth of both society as a whole and the environment.

Digital Transformation and Sustainable Tourism

The Digital Revolution and the Idea of Industry 4.0 In the past few years has reshaped the tourist sector and has emerged as a major factor in the productivity, development, and long-term viability of tourism enterprises. The advent of digitalization and innovations in technology are altering people's lives, practices, employment, behavior, opinions, and choice-making, offering new chances for travel companies to compete in a global marketplace. Establishing robust strategies for digital transformation is critical for effective navigation and ensuring sustained operations post-transformation. Projections indicate substantial potential benefits for the tourism industry through digital transformation, estimating a value of up to \$305 billion between 2016 and 2025 (WEF, 2016). Technologies continue to have a significant impact on mankind (Jiang et al., 2022). The expansion of advancements such as AI, big data, cloud computing, virtual and augmented reality, and many more have resulted in a technological shift that has dramatically altered the framework of organizations. (Ndou, V et al., 2022). Many firms throughout the globe rely on technological innovations to increase their expertise (Zheng et al., 2022; Yeung and Galindo, 2019). According to the study of Suder et al. (2022), digitalization is a beneficial mediator for company growth and innovation in market performance. The tourism industry shines out amid these businesses as a vital source of revenue with fast expansion (Hateftabar, 2022), an employment spinner that drives regional growth and the enhancement of these areas' economies in the 21st century. The sector is adjusting to evolving digitalization trends (Baltescu, 2021) and focusing on the emerging digital economy typified by enterprises' efforts to be adaptable and productive (Alford and Jones, 2020).

However, specific circumstances have certainly had an immediate influence on this opportunity, as highlighted by Park et al. (2022) and Lebrun et al. (2022), especially the COVID-19 pandemic, which has seriously impacted the whole international tourist value system. Due to this subject matter, tourism is a collaborative endeavour with public authorities, having a substantial amount of players active in place development (Acevedo-Duque et al., 2022; Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2022). The Pandemic has significantly affected the worldwide tourist and hotel business. The effects include travel prohibitions, border closures, the boom of virtual tourism and hospitality, a sluggish recovery, and a

volatile future. This circumstance emphasizes the necessity for adapting to a dynamically structured existence and fostering the development of technological advances (Oncioiu and Priescu, 2022) which may help tourist operations and add value to the tourist experience. Ito et al. (2022); Ahn and Back (2019). At present, technological advances in diversifying the tourism industry have proven critical to advancing the revival of something after the COVID time frame by (1) transforming locations and abilities, (2) revamping tourist attractions, (3) utilizing novel norms and codes of conduct as well as (4) inventive methods of conducting tasks and interacting in locations (Ndou et al., 2022). According to several studies, by Ndou et al. (2022) and Melian-Alzola et al. (2020), this is an ideal opportunity to revamp the visitor experience and use emerging technologies along with developments.

In an era of market revolutions, the pairing of technology and tourism is critical because it supports and improves the intrinsic worth of this industry (Okafor et al., 2022). Tourist locations intend to use technological advances to optimize customer experiences (Baltescu, 2021) throughout their products globally. This novel approach creates opportunities for selling tailored virtual keepsakes or digitised presents across all modes or tourism sites (Zhao et al., 2022a). This may additionally assist creative professionals, artists, tourist intermediaries, computer programmers, and travellers build a customized virtual presence during their stay (Mantas et al., 2021). Therefore, the advancement of the latest technology and data intelligence has the potential to save the tourist sector (Camilleri and Kozak, 2022). Considering the application of augmented reality as a medium in virtual trips is a possibility as technological developments occur, facilitate, and enhance the visitor's experience of discovering locations (Akhtar et al., 2021; Busulwa et al., 2022). Further, the latest advances including blockchain technology and fintech, as well as knowledge management systems, offer an opportunity to significantly help the tourist and hospitality industry. Blockchain and digital methods of payment may streamline booking, check-in, and payment procedures, decreasing complexity and increasing pleasure for travellers (Dadkhah et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2022). Blockchain and financial systems offerings provide encrypted and safe interactions (Dadkhah et al., 2022; Wu et al., 2021), whereas fintech solutions may boost

mechanisms for payment, streamline operations, strengthen the user experience, and encourage financial inclusion (Bulut, 2022; Tham and Sigala, 2020). While these innovations have prospective advantages, a thorough examination of their use within the tourist and hospitality business is necessary.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Digital Transformation

Digital transformation represents a dynamic and strategic organizational process centered around the deliberate integration of digital technologies. This involves a comprehensive overhaul of business models, operational processes, and customer experiences with the overarching goal of creating significant value. Gurumurthy, Schatsky & Camhi's (2020) research underscores the positive impact of digital transformation on various facets of corporate performance, including digital maturity, operational efficiency, sales, product and service quality, customer satisfaction, work commitment, and fostering innovation. Gal et al. (2019) further contribute by empirically demonstrating the tangible effects of digital technology on corporate productivity. Vial's (2019) meticulous analysis, drawing from a pool of 282 works, reveals consistent themes. Notably, digital technology emerges as the primary catalyst for transformation, strategically steering business improvements such as process automation, enhanced performance, and the innovation of new business models. This multifaceted process ultimately converges towards the creation of value, emphasizing a holistic approach to organizational evolution in response to the disruptive forces of the digital landscape. In essence, digital transformation is a nuanced and strategic endeavor that seeks to navigate structural changes and overcome organizational barriers, making it essential for adapting to the demands of a rapidly evolving business environment.

Digital Transformation in the Tourism Sector

The onset of the 2020 pandemic abruptly halted the thriving tourism sector, resulting in an unparalleled decline in an industry that formerly had strong expansion and worldwide importance. Before the epidemic, tourism had been a flourishing economic catalyst, experiencing significant growth both globally and domestically in numerous countries. The growing enthusiasm for domestic tourism has attracted the notice of numerous governments, leading to deliberate efforts to optimize the sector's capacity within

their respective countries. Significantly, talks on tourism frequently encompassed continental factors, as tourist sites were classified and advertised according to their geographical positions within continents. The increase in tourism not only stimulated economic growth but also diversified sources of income and offered social and economic benefits to many countries.

Nevertheless, the onset of the pandemic brought about a grim reality, compelling nations to promptly enforce rigorous measures, such as extensive lockdowns, in response to the rapid spread of the virus across many continents (Traskevich & Fontanari, 2021). To mitigate the spread of the virus, strict preventive measures were implemented, resulting in the suspension of international flights and the enforcement of travel restrictions between states. The sudden interruption had a profound effect on global tourism, causing countries to experience an unparalleled decrease of almost 90% in travel for a period exceeding six months. This had a devastating impact on the earnings of the tourism industry. Amidst the decline of international tourism, regional and rural areas demonstrated a degree of resilience, as they benefited from the early easing of local lockdown measures. However, the whole tourism industry was severely impacted by the widespread consequences of the pandemic. With the cautious reopening of global borders in late 2020, there emerged a ray of hope for the industry's revival, fueled by the expectation of significant advancements in vaccines. Nevertheless, the emergence of successive waves of the coronavirus shattered these optimistic expectations, causing the tourism industry to face even more unpredictability (Baum & Hai, 2020).

The industry's path towards recovery faced various hurdles, including the intricate work of permitting extensive vaccination distribution and ensuring the safety of both locals and visitors. Authorities moved to alleviate the economic consequences of the pandemic, enacting measures to reduce unemployment and offer financial aid to suffering enterprises. However, achieving the full recovery of the tourism industry requires a thorough and synchronized strategy. The primary objectives should be to restore trust among travelers, support tourism businesses, promote domestic tourism, provide accurate information to travelers and businesses, enhance cooperation between nations, and develop a more resilient and sustainable tourism industry (Sharma et al., 2021).

During the epidemic, technology became a source of hope by providing creative ways to overcome the problems caused by the catastrophe. During lockdowns, technology was crucial in allowing people to operate remotely, supporting online education, and creating many innovative business solutions (Brouder et al., 2020). However, the tourism business, which is highly dependent on physical movement and immersive encounters, encountered unprecedented challenges in adjusting to the technological revolution. The sudden halt of travel arrangements, cancellations of outings, and extensive job cuts deeply unsettled the business. While many industries smoothly shifted to remote work arrangements, the tourism sector faced challenges due to travel restrictions. These constraints limited travel to necessary domestic visits and reduced the opportunity for tourism as a means of escape during difficult times. The industry's failure to quickly adapt to technological solutions during the pandemic highlighted its lack of preparedness for such a disruptive force, exposing a significant absence of technological infrastructure to properly handle the crisis. As the industry works towards recovering from the difficult situation, the task of regaining lost progress is significant, necessitating a systematic and comprehensive approach to revitalize and reconstruct.

Impact of Digitalisation on Sustainability

The advent of digital technologies has had a profound impact on the field of sustainable tourism, offering a wide range of possibilities for both preserving the environment and engaging visitors. Technological advancements have enabled more effective management of resources in tourism sites. Smart energy systems, Internet of Things (IoT) devices, and data analytics are now recognised as crucial instruments for optimising energy use, water usage, and waste management strategies (Erol et al., 2022). By efficiently allocating resources, both the environmental impact and operating expenses for tourism businesses are minimised. Furthermore, digital platforms and smartphone applications have fundamentally transformed the manner in which tourists engage with places, offering tailored and environmentally conscious travel advice. According to Erol et al. (2022), technology, such as VR-based immersive experiences and mobile apps, improves the visitor experience by creating a greater understanding and respect for local cultures and ecologically friendly behaviours. Considerable research has delved into the impact

of digital technology on the advancement of sustainable tourism, discerning a distinct classification of sustainability based on economic, social, and environmental facets. Numerous studies consistently establish a positive correlation between digital technology and economic sustainability, as evidenced by works from Witkowski (2017), Cricelli & Strazzullo (2021), Helbing, Bishop & Lukowicz (2012), George et al. (2021), underscore the role of new technology in fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, contributing to increased market share. Similarly, Sparviero and Ragnedda (2021) accentuate the significance of digital technology in enhancing productivity, particularly in developing economies.

However, diverse perspectives exist on the impact of digital technology on social sustainability. Advocates such as George et al. (2021), and Müller et al. (2018) emphasize its positive influence, citing improvements in work environments, enhanced quality of life, and facilitation of knowledge dissemination. On the contrary, skeptics, including Ragnedda (2020) and Bai et al. (2020), express concerns about potential digital disparities, reduced job opportunities, and information security.

Similarly, differing perspectives arise concerning the influence of digital technology on environmental sustainability. Advocates such as Melville (2010), Cricelli et al. (2021), and George et al. (2021) contend that digital technology holds the potential to alleviate climate change through measures such as decreased energy consumption, enhanced resource recycling, and effective pollution management. Conversely, critics like Sattiraju (2020) highlight significant water consumption associated with data centers used for digital processing. A wide array of academic viewpoints reveals the diverse effects of digital technology on sustainability in terms of economic, social, and environmental aspects. Witkowski (2017) and Dalenogare et al. (2018) emphasise the significant impact of digital innovations in enhancing economic sustainability. Their conversations emphasise the practicality of digital solutions such as IoT, Big Data, and Industry 4.0. These innovations not only help satisfy changing customer needs but also demonstrate possible industrial advantages, indicating a favourable economic path. Agreeing with this viewpoint, Cricelli et al. (2021) and Helbing et al. (2012) emphasise the interdependent connection between digitization and the preservation of economic and social

Table 1. Impact of Digital Technologies on Sustainability

Author & Year	Key Arguments	Economic Impact	Social Impact	Environmental Impact
Witkowski (2017)	Focus on creating customer value by leveraging IoT, Big Data, and Industry 4.0 technologies.	Significant	Insignificant	Insignificant
Dalenogare et al. (2018)	Identifies a significant association between certain technologies and expected industrial benefits.	Significant	Insignificant	Insignificant
Cricelli & Strazzullo (2021)	Highlights the enhanced connection of products and factories, fostering innovation, and reducing energy waste.	Significant	Significant	Insignificant
Helbing, Bishop & Lukowicz (2012)	Emphasizes FuturICT creating a new public resource and integrating information for innovation.	Significant	Significant	Significant
George et al. (2021)	Discusses how young ventures create socioecological value and play a pivotal role in responding to global challenges.	Significant	Significant	Significant
Rosario & Dias (2022)	Illustrates the possible impacts of digital transformation on environmental, economic, and social sustainability.	Significant	Mixed	Significant
Sparviero & Ragnedda (2021)	Reinforces the significant role of digital sustainability in productivity and development but acknowledges potential inequalities.	Significant	Mixed	Mixed
Bai et al., 2020)	Outlines challenges of Industry 4.0, including reduced employment, information security issues, and electronic waste.	Insignificant	Insignificant	Insignificant
Robinson et al. (2020)	Examines how digital and social inequalities render certain subgroups more vulnerable, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.	Insignificant	Insignificant	Insignificant
Melville (2010)	Advocates for Information Systems (IS) scholars leading environmental sustainability into the digital age.	Insignificant	Insignificant	Significant
Hampton et al. (2013)	Emphasizes the capacity of ecology to play a crucial role in addressing significant environmental challenges within the context of the big-data landscape.	Insignificant	Insignificant	Significant
Shrouf et al. (2014)	Investigates advancements in energy efficiency achieved through the collection and analysis of energy consumption data within the realm of production management.	Insignificant	Insignificant	Significant
Sattiraju (2020)	Analyzes the environmental issues stemming from the considerable water usage in Google's data centers.	Insignificant	Insignificant	Insignificant
Schönherr, S., et. al., (2023)	The objective is to explore how digital transformation facilitates organizational learning in order to contribute to the sustainability of the tourism sector.	Significant	Mixed	Mixed

sustainability. Their accounts emphasise the role of technical advancement in promoting both economic development and societal advantages, including the promotion of innovation, entrepreneurship, and beneficial society changes. Nevertheless, the discussion goes beyond straightforward optimism, exploring nuanced viewpoints. These studies also recognise the potential positive impact of the digital transition on environmental sustainability. However, they also raise concerns about the potential for the digital divide to worsen inequalities. They emphasise the need for comprehensive policy approaches that consider multiple dimensions to address the social sustainability aspect of the digital divide. In addition, Müller, Kiel & Voigt (2018) highlight the favourable ecological and societal effects, specifically emphasising the decrease in waste and energy usage facilitated by Industry 4.0. In contrast, Ragnedda (2020) and other authors emphasise the adverse effects of digital inequality, warning about societal issues such as decreased job opportunities and the complications brought about by developing technology. This collection of work emphasises the complex relationship between digital technology and sustainability, highlighting both potential opportunities and necessary caution in economic, social, and environmental aspects.

The table 1 presents a comprehensive overview of key studies exploring the impact of digital technologies on sustainability across economic, social, and environmental dimensions. The studies, conducted by various authors, offer insights into the complex relationship between digital technology adoption and sustainable practices. The 'Impact on Economic Sustainability' column highlights positive outcomes, emphasizing innovation, enhanced market share, and contributions to a more sustainable production cycle. In the 'Impact on Social Sustainability' column, diverse viewpoints emerge, ranging from optimistic perspectives on productivity enhancement to concerns about exacerbating inequalities. Environmental sustainability considerations, detailed in the 'Impact on Environmental Sustainability' column, showcase a mix of positive contributions and challenges, such as advancements in waste management alongside concerns about data center water consumption. This table serves as a valuable synthesis of the nuanced findings from these studies, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of the digital transformation's impact on sustainability.

DISCUSSION

This section serves as a nuanced exploration of the practical applications of blockchain and FinTech in sustainable tourism, building upon the research findings. It delves into the transformative potential of emerging technologies, emphasizing their role in streamlining operational processes within the tourism sector. Scholars like Bulut (2022) and Tham and Sigala (2020) have aptly highlighted the pivotal role of blockchain and FinTech in fostering financial inclusion and enhancing the overall efficiency of tourism operations.

A key emphasis in the discussion is the need for comprehensive policies and ethical considerations. This echoes the cautionary notes from Sparviero & Ragnedda (2021) and Rosario & Dias (2022), acknowledging the potential benefits of digitalization while calling for a balanced approach that considers potential inequalities and environmental concerns. The importance of standardized implementations is underlined, ensuring a secure and seamless experience for all stakeholders involved in the tourism ecosystem.

Regulatory frameworks take center stage in the discussion, recognizing their critical role in guiding the responsible integration of digital technologies into sustainable tourism practices. The collaborative efforts of governments, industry leaders, and local communities are highlighted as essential components in fostering an environment conducive to the sustainable integration of digital technologies. The global nature of the tourism industry necessitates a harmonious balance between leveraging the benefits of digitalization and mitigating adverse effects on social equity and environmental sustainability.

The study's exploration of the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic adds urgency to the discussion. It underscores the accelerated adoption of digital technologies in response to the crisis and highlights their potential not only to revive the industry but also to enhance the overall visitor experience. This adaptive response to unforeseen challenges emphasizes the dynamic nature of the tourism sector and its capacity to leverage digital technologies for resilience.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

The implications of this research extend beyond immediate findings, providing valuable insights for key stakeholders in the industry, policymakers, and researchers engaged in sustainable tourism development and digital transformation. The impact of digital transformation on various stakeholders can be summarized as follows:

(i) **Industry Stakeholders:** The study suggests that industry stakeholders, including travel agencies, hospitality providers, and technology companies, should strategically invest in and embrace blockchain and FinTech solutions. These technologies not only enhance operational efficiency but also contribute significantly to overall sustainability goals in the industry. The findings advocate for a proactive approach in adopting digital innovations to maintain competitiveness in the evolving tourism landscape.

(ii) **Policymakers:** Policymakers at both national and international levels are urged to acknowledge the potential of digital technologies in fostering sustainable tourism. The research recommends designing regulatory frameworks that support the responsible and equitable adoption of blockchain and FinTech. Policymakers play a crucial role in creating an environment conducive to innovation while addressing challenges related to privacy, security, and environmental impact.

(iii) **Researchers:** The research implications offer avenues for further exploration, encouraging researchers to delve deeper into the specific applications of blockchain and FinTech in various aspects of sustainable tourism. Additionally, ongoing research is needed to monitor the long-term impacts and adaptations of the tourism industry, especially in the post-COVID era. Collaborative interdisciplinary research can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the evolving dynamics.

(iv) **Sustainability Advocates:** Advocates for sustainable tourism can leverage insights from this research to promote the integration of digital technologies as key enablers for achieving environmental and social sustainability goals. By engaging with industry stakeholders and policymakers, sustainability advocates can play a pivotal role in driving the narrative towards responsible and inclusive digital transformation in the tourism sector.

CONCLUSION

The research paper highlights the crucial significance of digital technologies, including blockchain and FinTech, in transforming the framework of sustainable tourist development. A various studies Dadkhah et al. (2022) and Zhou et al. (2022) do confirm that the technologies offer practical solutions for optimizing operations in the tourism industry. These studies established a clear and direct relationship between the use of blockchain technology and financial technology (Fin Tech), and its positive impact on the

sustainable development of the tourism industry. The utilization of safe and encrypted transactions not only increases convenience for travelers but also enhances the overall resilience and adaptability of the industry.

Furthermore, the rapid implementation of digital technology in response to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic is an essential component of the conclusion. According to Ndou et al. (2022) and Melian-Alzola et al. (2020), the pandemic accelerated the use of new approaches such as virtual tourism and contactless operations. The result underscores the importance of strategically and effectively integrating digital technology into the tourism industry to achieve a sustainable and fair recovery from the pandemic's effects.

The amalgamation of theoretical frameworks and practical facts indicates a forthcoming era in which the seamless integration of digital technology and sustainable tourism is not only possible but also imperative. The findings establish a basis for business leaders, politicians, and scholars to collectively manage the intricacies of the tourist sector after the epidemic.

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Tourism Statistics of India: Analytical Insights

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KEYWORDS

UNWTO, Sustainability, Tourism openness, Cultural Heritage, Public Policy, Tourism statistics

ABSTRACT

This article analyses the tourist aggregates of India to derive specific insights and policy implications supported by empirical evidence. The study utilises secondary data sourced from UNWTO, spanning the years 1995 to 2022. The approach employed in the research encompasses fundamental descriptive statistics, straightforward correlation and regression analysis, together with basic graphical representations. The study seeks to provide a quantifiable metric for India's openness to tourism, analogous to the methods employed for economic openness. The study's results provide a comprehensive overview of India's tourism dynamics and can significantly inform policymaking. The comprehensive findings of the study suggest that India possesses significant potential to attract global visitors and has a substantial share to capitalise on the chances and advantages that tourism presents. The data indicates that India has had a favourable trend in tourist spending within the country compared to expenditures outside, and this disparity is increasing over time. Nonetheless, the data indicates that departures outnumber arrivals, and the disparity is increasing. The geographic composition of incoming arrivals, with Europe predominating, might be interpreted as a positive sign of India's tourism potential. Europe's status as an economically developed continent indicates that their desire in visiting India is advantageous for the country. It may be deduced that the predominant influx of tourists to India originates from developed regions, indicating that the primary incentive for these visitors is the country's various cultural attractions. In this context, the primary policy implication is that India should enhance the preservation of its cultural legacy while simultaneously enhancing its visibility and accessibility.

INTRODUCTION

India has experienced a general upward trend in international tourist arrivals since the early 2000s. The country has been a popular destination for both leisure and business travellers. The number of international visitors increased significantly during this period, driven by factors such as improved infrastructure, promotion of tourism, and increased connectivity. India boasts a variety of tourist attractions, including historical monuments like the Taj Mahal, cultural sites, religious places, natural wonders, and diverse cuisine. India's rich cultural heritage, historical monuments, diverse landscapes, and vibrant festivals attract tourists from around the world. India attracts a diverse range of tourists, including those interested in cultural heritage, spirituality, adventure tourism, medical tourism, and nature-based tourism. Major attractions include historical monuments, religious sites, wildlife sanctuaries, and scenic landscapes. Different regions of India have witnessed varying levels of tourism. Popular destinations include the Golden Triangle (Delhi, Agra, and Jaipur), Goa's beaches, Kerala's backwaters, Rajasthan's forts, and various Himalayan regions. The Indian government and various tourism boards have actively promoted the country as a tourist destination through marketing campaigns and participation in international travel fairs.

The Indian government has implemented initiatives to promote tourism, such as the "Incredible India" campaign. E-visa facilities and improvements in infrastructure have been introduced to facilitate easier travel for international visitors. Traditional source markets for international tourists to India include countries from Europe, North America, and Southeast Asia. In recent years, there has been a growing interest from emerging markets, such as China and the Middle East. Major events, such as the Commonwealth Games in 2010 and cultural festivals, have contributed to the promotion of India as a tourist destination.

Despite the growth, the tourism industry in India faced challenges such as issues with infrastructure, cleanliness, and safety concerns in some areas. The industry faced challenges due to global events like economic downturns, natural disasters, and health crises. The COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, had a significant impact on international travel worldwide, including to India. Travel restrictions and safety concerns led to a decline in tourist arrivals in 2020 and early 2021. Below the study provides an introduction of various facets of India Tourism landscape.

Government Initiatives

The importance of tourism is acknowledged world around and thereby governments in all countries tend to implement policies to enhance tourism activities in their respective countries. Accordingly, the Indian government has implemented various initiatives to promote tourism, such as the "Incredible India" campaign. Efforts have been made to improve infrastructure, enhance services, and ease visa processes for foreign visitors. Here are some key government initiatives related to tourism in India:

Incredible India Campaign: Launched by the Ministry of Tourism, this campaign aims to promote India as a global tourist destination. It showcases the country's diverse attractions, including cultural heritage, historical sites, natural beauty, and vibrant traditions.

Swadesh Darshan Scheme: This scheme focuses on developing theme-based tourist circuits in the country to encourage regional tourism. Circuits include cultural, religious, and eco-tourism themes, among others.

Prasad Scheme: Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD) is a scheme to develop and beautify pilgrimage destinations. It aims to enhance the visitor experience and create better infrastructure.

Adopt a Heritage Scheme: This initiative encourages public and private sector companies to adopt heritage sites, ensuring their maintenance, conservation, and development.

UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik): UDAN is a regional connectivity scheme that aims to make air travel affordable and accessible for citizens. It includes the development of underserved and unserved airports to promote tourism.

E-Visa Scheme: The E-Visa scheme simplifies the visa application process for international tourists. It allows them to apply for visas online, streamlining entry procedures and promoting ease of travel to India.

Clean India Campaign (Swachh Bharat Abhiyan): While not exclusively for tourism, the cleanliness drive contributes to a positive tourist experience. Efforts are made to maintain cleanliness at tourist sites and improve sanitation facilities.

Skill Development Initiatives: Various skill development programs are launched to enhance the quality of services in the tourism sector. This includes training programs for tour guides, hospitality staff, and other related professionals.

National Tourism Policy: The government periodically reviews and updates the National Tourism Policy to align with changing trends and promote sustainable tourism practices.

Inbound Tourism

International tourism has emerged as a crucial sector for many countries, contributing significantly to economic growth, employment generation, and cultural exchange. India has emerged as a prominent player in the global tourism landscape, attracting a diverse range of international visitors. The growth of international tourism in India has been a subject of considerable academic interest.

Tourism Trends in India: India has witnessed a remarkable growth in international tourism over the past decade. According to Gupta and Sharma (2018), the number of international tourist arrivals in India has consistently increased, reflecting the country's appeal as a multifaceted destination. Factors contributing to this growth include improved infrastructure, government initiatives, and a diverse range of tourist attractions (Singh et al., 2019). International tourism plays a pivotal role in the economic development of nations, contributing significantly to GDP, employment, and foreign exchange earnings (Song et al., 2012; UNWTO, 2020). India, with its rich resources has emerged as a prominent player in the global tourism industry (Sharma & Sharma, 2017).

Tourist Arrivals and Economic impact: India has witnessed a steady growth in international tourist arrivals over the past decade (Singh & Singh, 2019). The Ministry of Tourism reported a record-breaking number of arrivals in recent years, with a substantial increase in revenue from foreign tourists (MoT, 2022). This growth can be attributed to various factors, including government initiatives, improved infrastructure, and strategic marketing campaigns. Studies indicate that international tourism contributes substantially to foreign exchange earnings, creating a positive impact on the balance of payments (Chakraborty et al., 2020). The economic benefits extend to various industries, including hospitality, transportation, and local businesses (Mukherjee & Das, 2018). International tourism plays a vital role in India's economic development. Studies by Kumar and Gupta (2020) highlight the positive correlation between international tourist arrivals and economic indicators such as GDP growth and employment rates. The tourism industry in India has become a significant contributor to foreign exchange earnings and job creation (Mishra & Mohanty, 2017).

Digital Transformation in Tourism: The advent of technology and the rise of digital platforms have significantly influenced the tourism landscape in India (Gupta & Dogra, 2021). Online travel agencies, social media, and mobile applications play a crucial role in shaping tourists' experiences and influencing their travel decisions (Mehrotra et al., 2018).

Cultural Tourism in India: Cultural tourism remains a significant driver of International visits to India. Scholars like Singh and Verma (2020) emphasize the role of India's diverse cultural tapestry in attracting tourists. They argue that India's festivals, art, music, and historical sites contribute to its unique cultural appeal, making it a compelling destination for international travellers.

Cultural Implications: The influx of international tourists has raised questions about the preservation of India's cultural heritage. Researchers argue that while tourism promotes cultural exchange, there is a need for sustainable practices to protect historical sites and traditions (Verma & Goyal, 2017). The delicate balance between promoting tourism and preserving cultural integrity remains a central theme in the literature. The influx of international tourists has profound implications for India's cultural and social fabric.

Chatterjee and Dey (2016) argue that while tourism can contribute to cultural exchange and understanding, it also poses challenges such as cultural commodification and the potential erosion of traditional practices. Sustainable tourism practices are crucial for preserving India's rich cultural heritage (Goswami & Das, 2018).

Challenges in International Tourism Development: Despite the positive trends, scholars have highlighted several challenges facing international tourism in India. Mishra et al. (2018) discuss issues such as infrastructure limitations, environmental concerns, and bureaucratic hurdles that can hinder the sustainable development of tourism in the country. On the flip side, these challenges present opportunities for policymakers to address and improve, thereby fostering sustainable tourism development (Sarkar & Nath, 2020). Addressing these challenges is crucial for ensuring the long-term success of India's tourism industry. Several studies highlight the challenges faced by India in managing international tourism. Infrastructure deficiencies, environmental concerns, and issues of safety and security are recurring themes (Sharma & Mohan, 2021). However, scholars also identify opportunities for growth through strategic marketing, infrastructure development, and policy interventions (Dwivedi et al., 2019). Despite the growth, international tourism in India faces various challenges. Infrastructure bottlenecks, safety concerns, and environmental sustainability issues are areas that need attention (Raj & Rathi, 2018). However, these challenges also present opportunities for innovative solutions and collaborations between the public and private sectors (Gupta, 2021).

Impact on Local Communities: The impact of international tourism on local communities is another area of research. Ahmed and Choudhary (2017) delve into the socio-economic implications of tourism, examining how it can contribute to local development while also posing challenges such as cultural commodification and displacement of traditional livelihoods. Research underscores the need for responsible and sustainable tourism practices to mitigate adverse impacts on local communities and the environment (Das & Choudhury, 2018). Community-based tourism initiatives have gained traction as a means to promote inclusivity and ensure that the economic benefits of tourism are distributed equitably (Datta & Mishra, 2019).

Sustainability in Tourism: The concept of sustainable tourism has gained prominence in recent literature. Scholars such as Rana and Bhatia (2019) explore the importance of incorporating sustainable practices in the tourism industry to ensure environmental conservation and community well-being.

Outbound Tourism

Tourism from India refers to the travel activities of Indian residents to other countries. Indian outbound tourism has seen significant growth over the years, driven by factors such as increasing disposable income, a growing middle class, and a desire for international travel experiences. Here are some key aspects of tourism out of India and factors and trends related to it:

Popular Destinations: Indians travel to a diverse range of destinations globally. Common choices include countries in Southeast Asia, Europe, North America, the Middle East, and Australia. Popular destinations often offer cultural experiences, shopping opportunities and scenic attractions.

Purpose of Travel: Indian travellers engage in various types of tourism, including leisure tourism, business travel, adventure tourism, and pilgrimage tourism. Each category has its own set of preferences and motivations.

Business Travel: Business travel plays a significant role in outbound tourism from India. Many Indian professionals and entrepreneurs travel internationally for business meetings, conferences, and collaborations.

Family Travel: Family-oriented travel is a significant trend in Indian outbound tourism. Many Indian families prefer traveling together, exploring destinations that offer a mix of cultural experiences, shopping, and entertainment.

Education and Medical Tourism: Education and medical tourism are growing segments. Indian students travel abroad for higher education, and medical tourists seek healthcare services in countries known for advanced medical facilities. Students from India pursue higher education abroad, leading to a considerable number of Indian tourists traveling for educational purposes. Countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia are popular choices for international education.

Visa Policies and Air Connectivity: Changes in visa policies, such as the introduction of e-visas and visa-on-arrival facilities in some countries, have made international travel more accessible for Indian tourists. The expansion of international

flight routes and increased air connectivity has also contributed to the growth of outbound tourism from India.

Luxury Travel, Shopping and Entertainment: There is a noticeable increase in luxury travel, with Indian tourists seeking high-end experiences, luxury accommodations, and personalized services in international destinations. Shopping is often a significant part of Indian tourists' itineraries. Destinations with vibrant shopping scenes and entertainment options are particularly appealing.

Currency Exchange Rates: Fluctuations in currency exchange rates can influence outbound tourism trends. Favourable exchange rates may encourage more Indians to travel abroad.

Cultural and Historical Attractions: Indian tourists often show interest in destinations with rich cultural and historical heritage. Visiting museums, historical sites, and iconic landmarks is a common part of their travel experiences.

Social Media Influence: Social media plays a crucial role in influencing travel decisions. Recommendations from friends, family, and influencers on platforms like Instagram and Facebook impact destination choices. Travel agencies and online travel platforms play a crucial role in promoting and organizing outbound tours for Indian travellers. These entities offer a wide range of services, including package tours, flight bookings, and accommodation.

It's important to note that the landscape of international tourism is dynamic, and preferences and trends can change. The Covid-19 pandemic has also had a significant impact on global travel patterns, with new considerations related to health and safety influencing travel decisions. The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly affected international travel, with restrictions on movement, quarantine measures, and changing regulations impacting outbound tourism.

After the detailed introduction in present section, Section II details the Data Analysis and Research Methodology employed in the study. Section III provides the results and analysis, while section IV lists the policy implications from the study. Finally, in section V conclusion of the study are provide followed by references in section VI

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data used in the study is obtained from UNWTO on a range of variables viz: Inbound Tourist arrivals in thousands, Outbound Departure, Domestic Tourists and Region Wise Inbound Tourist arrivals (all in Unit Thousands). We also obtained data on Tourist expenditure into India, Tourist expenditure out of India from year 1995 to 2022 in terms of US \$ millions

Missing data for few years (2017, 2018 and 2022) in the Departures data was interpolated from the corresponding Total departure data by subtracting the average of the difference between Total Departures and Total Overnight departures for the years on which data on both variables was available as the difference between the two isn't much.

The data spans from year 1995 to 2022. The data on GDP and Import exports is obtained from RBI database Handbook of Statistics for Indian Economy. We construct the Economic Openness index as sum of Exports and Imports to GDP multiplied by 100 to arrive at Trade as a percentage of GDP.

$$\text{Economic Openness} = \frac{(\text{Imports} + \text{Exports})}{\text{Gross Domestic Product}} \times 100$$

Since the data on GDP was available on Rupees Crore units, we used the Rupees/ US-\$ Exchange rate data to convert it into US \$ terms and then multiplied it by factor 10 to arrive at GDP in terms of US \$ millions. The Tourism openness index is then calculated as:

$$\text{Tourism Openness} = \frac{(\text{Tourist Expenditure into India} + \text{Tourist Expenditure out of India})}{\text{Gross Domestic Product}} \times 100$$

The study also uses Correlation coefficient to see the movements in tourism aggregates together with other macro aggregates of India.

Correlation coefficient and multiple regression were chosen to analyze trends due to their effectiveness in identifying relationships and predicting outcomes among variables, the researcher has also employed a multiple regression model to confirm the causal factors explaining tourist arrival into India. Correlation coefficient and multiple regression were chosen to analyze trends because they effectively assess relationships and predict the influence of independent variables on a dependent variable (Hair et al., 2019).

The dependent variable is Tourist arrivals into India and the Explanatory variables are Exchange rate, GDP growth, Domestic Tourism, Economic Openness and a trend component. Exchange rate

fluctuations can influence decision to travel internationally with depreciation making foreign travel expensive and vice versa. GDP growth is included to capture the effect of Infrastructural and other facilities that accompany Growth of an economy on Tourist arrivals. Economic openness is included for the reason that the factors responsible for movement of Goods may also ease movement of people. Similarly domestic Tourism is included to capture the impact of better tourist facilities and destinations. They Model is specified as:

$$\text{Tourist arrivals} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Economic Openness} + \beta_2 \text{Exchange rate} + \beta_3 \text{GDP Growth} + \beta_4 \text{Domestic Tourists} + @Trend$$

Where α is the Intercept, β 's are coefficients on explanatory Variables and @trend measures the trend coefficient.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this section we present the analysis of tourist aggregates and discuss the implications for the Indian tourism sector and also the Indian economy.

In the figure 1 the plot of tourist expenditure into India and out of India from 1995 to 2022 in terms of US \$ millions. From the graph plot it is clear that there has been a substantial rise in the tourism expenditures into and out of the country. The analysis also reveals that India has seen a positive trend in the tourist expenditures into the country relative to expenditure out of the country and the gap is widening over time. The severe disruption due to Covid-19 is evident and the later sharp recovery as well.

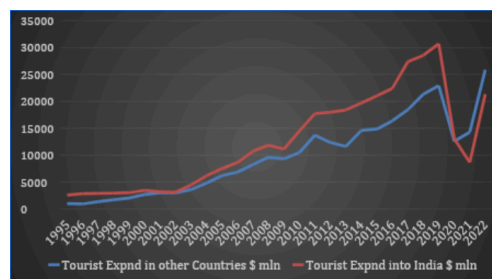


Figure 1 Tourism expenditure into India (Red) and Out of India (Blue)

In the figure 2, the plot of inbound tourist arrivals into India and departures are displayed. The plot reveals a large rise in the tourist departures out of India while the arrivals have seen a relatively modest rise and also that gap is widening over time. A major inference here is that if tourist departures can rise to the extent they have it possible for the arrivals also to rise similarly.

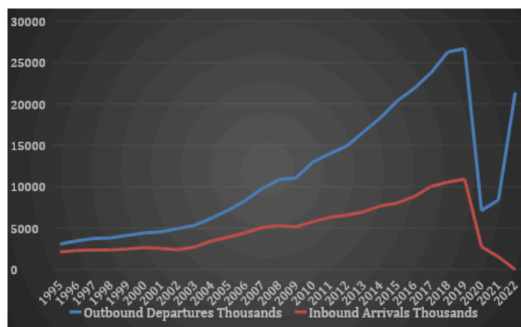


Figure 2 Inbound and Outbound Tourists (unit Thousands)

The broad result from this is that India has a large potential to attract tourists from around the world and has a large share to claim from opportunities and benefits tourism has to offer. Further the fact that India has one of the largest diaspora abroad which is only increasing by the day, it can significantly contribute to tourist arrivals and the popularisation of India as a tourist destination. The fact that the Indian diaspora abroad is expanding by the day tapping them through incentives will expand the feedback loop into attracting higher tourist arrivals into the country. The next plot of tourist arrivals with regional composition is displayed in figure 3. Arrivals from different regions are stacked vertically displayed in different colours and the volume of arrivals in thousands is shown by the vertical height in the stack.

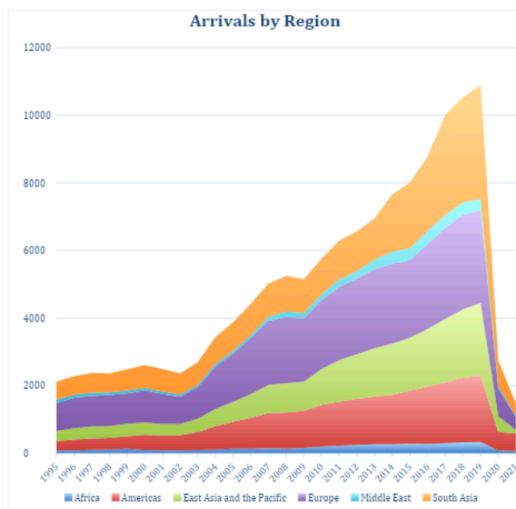


Figure 3 Total tourist arrivals with regional Composition (unit Thousands).

From the regional mix of inbound arrivals since Europe dominates the scene which can be interpreted as a good indicator of India's tourist's potential. This is because Europe being the economically developed region, their interest in

visiting India bodes well for the country (UNWTO, 2023). It can also be inferred from this that since the majority of the tourist arrivals into India is from developed regions of the world, the prima facie motivation of the tourists is the diverse cultural attractions India has to offer. In this context the major policy inference can be that India should increasingly preserve its cultural heritage and at the same time make this heritage more visible and accessible.

Figure 4 below displays the ratio of International tourists to Domestic tourists as a proxy for Internationalisation of India's Tourist Sector. From the graph it is evident that there was some modest increase in the internationalisation of India's Tourism sector during the period from 2002 to 2012 and has otherwise remained stagnant at around 2.5 %.

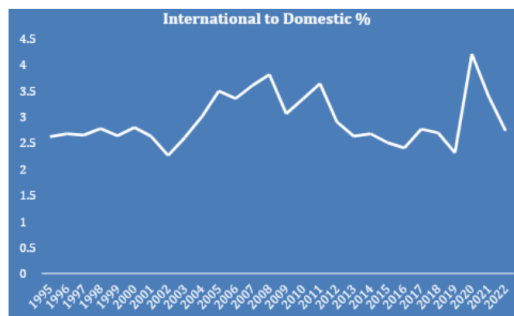


Figure 4 Ratio of International to Domestic Tourists as percentage.

One of the interesting factors in this context can be argued that during the period from 2002 to 2012, India recorded high growth rate of GDP and witnessed exchange rate stability as can be seen from figure 5 below. The exchange rate stability is curiously counterintuitive for routine depreciation of rupee should make India a cheaper place to visit but when exchange rate is stable internationalisation is much more than under depreciating conditions. This can imply that depreciating currency makes it more difficult for people to travel abroad thereby substituting domestic travel for International travel. Therefore under the conditions of robust economic growth and stable exchange rate people tend to prefer international travel relatively more.

Next the plot of Economic Openness and Tourism Openness is presented in figure 6. The blue line corresponds to Economic Openness-measured on the vertical axis on the left side and yellow line represents Tourism Openness-measured on the secondary axis on the left. While over the years

both Economic Openness and Tourism Openness has increased. However, it is evident that relative to Economic Openness, Tourism Openness has remained low though the change is positive over time. The calculated correlation coefficient between Economic Openness and Tourism Openness is positive (60%) implying that Economic Openness of India has correspondingly witnessed Tourism Openness to increase as well. In this respect pending due attention there remains large potential for India to improve its tourist profile.

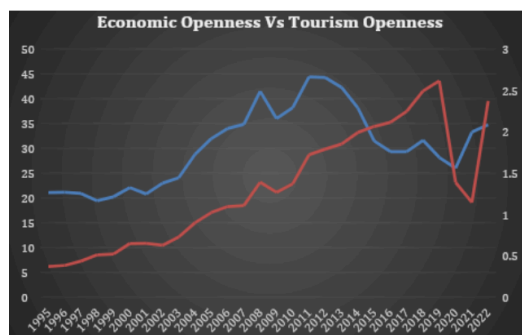


Figure 6 Economic Openness and Tourism Openness of India.

The results from the specified regression model are presented in the *table 1* below. Researchers have analysed the data from 1995 to 2019 to avoid the influence from severe disruption of Covid-19. The model specified is a multiple regression model estimated using the Ordinary Least squares method. The model aims at confirmation of the causal factors as inferred from preceding graphical analysis.

From the results it can be seen that except for GDP growth and Economic Openness all other coefficients are significant at 5% level of significance. R-square is above 90% and Durbin-Watson Statistics is close to 2 thereby implying appropriateness of Specified model. The results also indicate a significant and positive Trend-coefficient in the tourist arrivals for India implying general tendency for Tourist flows to increase with increased connectivity and increased income of people. From the results it is seen that Economic Openness doesn't affect tourist arrivals significantly. Similarly Economic growth also has no significant impact on Tourist arrivals. The coefficient on exchange rate is negative and significant which seems counterintuitive, but can arguably be explained by the fact that small changes in prices as a result of exchange rate depreciation doesn't affect foreign tourists for tourism activity has little to do with saving money. The exchange rate can't help attract foreign tourists as evidenced from the regression results of negative coefficient on Exchange rate increases (depreciation). The coefficient on domestic tourism is positive and significant (though small) implying that the factors responsible for increase in domestic tourism also increases foreign tourist arrivals.

POLICY IMPLICATION

It can also be inferred from this that since the majority of the tourist arrivals into India is from developed regions of the world, the *prima facie* motivation of the tourists is the diverse cultural attractions India has to offer. In this context the major policy inference can be that India should increasingly preserve its cultural heritage and at the same time make this heritage more visible and accessible.

Dependent Variable: Tourist Arrivals			Sample: 1995 to 2019	
Method: Least Squares			Included observations: 25	
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
Exchange rate	-59.844	25.933	-2.307	0.03
GDP Growth	7.950	50.250	0.158	0.87
Domestic Tourists	0.0036	0.000	6.934	0.00
Economic Openness	-5.365	23.118	-0.232	0.81
@Trend	164.442	69.227	2.375	0.02
C	3646.496	1376.235	2.649	0.01
R-squared	0.987	Mean dependent var		5237.416
Adjusted R-squared	0.983	Akaike info criterion		14.832
F-statistic	288.9426	Durbin-Watson stat		1.574

Table 1 Results of Regression model

Since India has one of the largest diaspora abroad which is only increasing by the day, it can significantly contribute to tourist arrivals and the popularisation of India as a tourist destination. The fact that Indian Diaspora abroad is expanding by the day tapping them through incentives will expand the feedback loop into attracting higher tourist arrivals into the country.

Depreciating currency makes it more difficult for people to travel abroad thereby substituting domestic travel for International travel. Therefore under the conditions of robust economic growth and stable exchange rate people tend to prefer international travel relatively more. Hence devaluation can be a tool to reduce Balance of Payment deficits by reducing tourist outflow in extreme Balance of Payment difficulties but can't help attract foreign Visitors as evidenced from the regression results of negative coefficient on Exchange rate increases (depreciation).

Since the coefficient on domestic tourism is positive and significant (though small) implying that the factors responsible for increase in domestic tourism also increase foreign tourist arrivals. Hence policy makers should encourage domestic tourism to attract more foreign tourists.

CONCLUSION

This research article analysis the tourism aggregates of India, in order to draw certain insights and policy inferences with empirical backing. The data used in the study is secondary in nature, ranging from 1995 to 2022 and has been obtained from UNWTO. The methodology adopted in the paper includes basic graph plots describing trends and patterns in the tourism aggregates. The study also uses simple correlation and regression analysis to explain the dynamics of international tourism in India. The research article attempts to arrive at a quantitative measure of India's openness to tourism similar to the measures used for economic openness. The results from the study offer a holistic macro-view of the tourist dynamics of India and can inform policy making substantially. The results from regression analysis indicate a significant and positive *Trend* coefficient in the tourist arrivals for India implying general tendency for tourist flows to increase with increased connectivity and increased income of people. From the results it is seen that Economic Openness doesn't affect tourist arrivals significantly. Similarly, economic growth also has no significant impact on tourist arrivals. The coefficient on exchange rate is negative and significant which seems counterintuitive, but can

arguably be explained by the fact that small changes in prices as a result of exchange rate depreciation doesn't affect foreign tourists for tourism activity has little to do with saving money. The exchange rate can't help attract foreign Visitors as evidenced from the regression results of negative coefficient on Exchange rate increases (depreciation). The coefficient on domestic tourism is positive and significant (though small) implying that the factors responsible for increase in domestic tourism also increases foreign tourist arrivals.

The broad results from the study indicate that India has a large potential to attract tourists from around the world and has a large share to claim from opportunities and benefits tourism has to offer. The analysis also reveals that India has seen a positive trend in the tourist expenditures into the country relative to expenditure out of the country and the gap is widening over time. However, in terms of number the data reveals that there are more departures than arrivals and the gap is widening. From the regional mix of inbound arrivals since Europe dominates the scene which can be interpreted as a good indicator of India's tourists potential. This is because Europe being the economically developed region, their interest in visiting India bodes well for the country. It can also be inferred from this that since the majority of the tourist arrivals into India is from developed regions of the world, the *prima facie* motivation of the tourists is the diverse cultural attractions India has to offer. In this context the major policy inference can be that India should increasingly preserve its cultural heritage and at the same time make this heritage more visible and accessible.

In conclusion, international tourism in India has experienced notable growth, contributing substantially to the country's economic development. While challenges persist, there is a growing recognition of the need for sustainable and responsible tourism practices. The sector's future trajectory will depend on the ability of stakeholders to address existing challenges and capitalize on emerging opportunities.

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Delineating Research On Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) In Tourism: A Bibliometric Analysis

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KEYWORDS

Bibliometric analysis,
RStudio, Scopus,
Sustainable Development
Goals, VOSviewer

ABSTRACT

Tourism is acknowledged as a pivotal force in national socioeconomic development, playing a role in poverty reduction. This industry, marked by intricate interrelations and multidisciplinary aspects, boasts diverse supply chain connections. Given its profound implications for the environment and socioeconomic progress, researchers worldwide have shown a keen interest in this field. In 2015, underscoring the momentousness of sustainable development, the United Nations established the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the overarching sight of “ending poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring prosperity for all” by 2030. Thereafter, research on SDGs has gained unprecedented significance, as result of their censorious contributions to the economy, society, and the environment. This study conducts a bibliometric examination of 474 research papers published in the Scopus database on Sustainable Development Goals in the tourism sector until November 2023. The article encompasses a bibliometric analysis, delving into various charts, including top-performing authors, affiliations, countries, institutions, and the most productive journals in Tourism. The insights derived from this analysis will prove invaluable for emerging researchers, professionals, and stakeholders.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is widely recognized as a pivotal driver of national socioeconomic development, playing a crucial role in poverty reduction (Scheyvens & Hughes, 2019; Siakwah et al., 2020). Positioned within an intricate and multidisciplinary landscape with diverse supply chain connections, the tourism industry holds significant importance. Scholars have underscored the impact of this field on the environment, leading to the identification of a specialized subfield known as sustainable tourism (Butler, 1999). In 2015, emphasizing the paramount significance of sustainable tourism, the United Nations established the “Sustainable Development Goals” (SDGs) as part of its 2030 agenda, aiming “to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all” by 2030. Thereafter its inception, research on SDGs has gained unprecedented relevance, with studies intensifying their censorious contributions to the economic, societal and environmental benefits (Hall, 2019). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the replacement for the Millennium Development Goals, which were introduced at the 70th UN General Assembly in September 2015 (Fukuda-Parr, 2016). Acknowledged as a groundbreaking approach to global governance in goal-setting, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are characterized by their non-binding nature (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2020). Addressing the imperative of fostering a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable industry, the inaugural research conference on tourism and the SDGs took place at Massey University (New Zealand) in year 2019 (Scheyvens & Cheer, 2021). The conference provided a network to assess the progress of the 193 countries that committed to the SDGs and facilitated the exchange of emerging ideas concerning the interconnection betwixt tourism and the SDGs. Recognizing the pivotal role of tourism sector in sustainable development of destinations and the ongoing endeavours in this regard, there is a call for additional research to explore the specific contributions of SDGs (Hall, 2019; Boluk et al., 2019, 2021).

Numerous investigations have unveiled specific insights into the correlation between tourism sector and SDGs. Bramwell et al. (2017) highlighted that tourism's impact is primarily observed in SDG thirteen (Climate Action), SDG fourteen (Life Below Water), and SDG fifteen (Life on Land), while other SDGs receive comparatively less focus. Recognizing the importance of bolstering tourism efforts to align with SDGs, collaboration is endorsed (Adie et al., 2022; Scheyvens & Cheer, 2021), along with embracing digital technology in travel sector as a means to attain SDGs (Gossling et al., 2019; Hysa et al., 2021). Given the sector's potential in SDG achievement, there is a collective call from researchers, practitioners, and industry stakeholders to further enhance industry potential through SDGs accomplishment (Siakwah et al., 2020).

The impetus behind this bibliometric study stems from the observation that there has been a scarcity of bibliometric analyses bridging the topics of tourism and SDGs. While researches on sustainable tourism from the SDGs outlook exist (e.g., Rasoolimanesh et al., 2020), they do not furnish a comprehensive knowledge structure derived from a quantitative analysis of influential publications within the field. Despite the dearth of bibliometric studies on the topic, two noteworthy investigations merit attention in the context of this research. Fauzi et al. (2023) utilised a bibliometric technique based on publications obtained from the Web of Science database to reexamine the relationship between Sustainable Tourism and SDGs. In a more extensive undertaking, Moyle et al. (2021) scrutinized 839 papers related to sustainable tourism, conducting a content bibliometric analysis focused on the interplay between sustainable tourism and the SDGs. The constraint of both researches underscores the necessity for a fresh perspective on the SDGs within the context of tourism, given that the SDGs encompass specific goals that align with the tourism sector. Building upon the works of Fauzi et al. (2023) and Moyle et al. (2021), this research aims to contribute to the exploration of research streams that hold relevance for future researchers and practitioners.

BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

The term “bibliometrics” originates from the combo of two Greek words. “Biblio” translates to “book”, and “metrics” signifies “measurement” (Sengupta, 1992). Bibliometric analysis is stated as the scientific quantitative examination of papers by statistical methods (Sengupta, 1992).

Over the recent years, there has been a significant surge in the quantity of bibliometric studies, escalating from 437 in year 2010 to 1701 in year 2019 (Donthu et al., 2021). The objectives of bibliometric analysis are manifold, encompassing the summarization of key features in pertinent literature, identification of recent research trends and domains, and shedding focus on the prospective growth of the research area (Atsız et al., 2022).

The main objective of this analysis is to pinpoint the top performing authors, most influential nations, country, prolific journals and “top-performing research articles”, and conduct a “keyword analysis”. Additionally, the analysis provides recommendations for future research topics to scholars and decision-makers, along with proposed solutions for current challenges. Utilizing the web-based biblioshiny interface of the “R-package and VOSviewer”, this study employs a bibliometric analysis method that purports to enhance the quality of reviews by eliminating subjective bias.

The current research directed the following research objectives to delve into the vital of prior research pertaining to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the context of tourism sector:

1. What are the predominant facets of SDGs literature within the domains of hospitality and tourism?
2. What are the noteworthy trends and fundamental thematic areas in SDGs literature within the realms of hospitality and tourism?
3. What insights can be derived from the study of previous literature, and what agendas can be formulated for future exploration?

METHODS (DATA SOURCE & RETRIEVAL)

“To conduct a bibliometric analysis in a research sector, it is crucial to choose an appropriate database housing a comprehensive combo of relevant researches” (S'ancheza et al., 2017). “Scopus and Web of Science stand out as the most reputable online databases for bibliometric research” (Baas et al., 2020; Pranckute, 2021). Because of its large collection and comprehensive literature coverage, Scopus was selected for this study's data retrieval (Elsevier, 2020). Moreover, Scopus is seen to be more appropriate for this study because tourism is a subject covered by the social sciences and humanities.

The data examination was executed on November 30th, 2023. In the initial query procedure for the term (“Sustainable Development Goals” OR “SDGs” OR “UNSDGs” AND “Tourism”) in

“Title, Abstract, and Keywords”, a sum of 1170 papers were identified concerning SDGs literature in Tourism. Further refinement of the query by subject area (Business, Management, and Accounting) resulted in 483 documents. Editorials, notes, and retracted works were not included in the final examination; only comprehensive publications, including book chapters, conference papers, articles, reviews, and books, were chosen. As a result, 474 documents were acquired for the bibliometric analysis in this study.



Figure. 1: Method adopted for refining documents for the research

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The descriptive analysis of 474 research publications that were taken from the Scopus database and focused on the Sustainable Development Goals in the tourism industry is presented in Figure -2.



Fig. 2: Descriptive Features of SDGs works in the area of Tourism

In the comprehensive analysis of SDGs in the field of tourism, valuable insights were extracted from the Scopus database spanning the years 2007 to

2024. The dataset comprises information from a diverse array of sources, including journals, books, totalling 189 in number. Within this corpus, a total of 474 documents were identified, reflecting a dynamic and growing body of literature. The data reveals a robust annual growth rate of 12.13%, indicative of the increasing scholarly attention to the intersection of sustainable development and tourism. Notably, each document garners an average of 14.41 citations, underscoring the impact and influence of the research output within the academic community.

Examining the document contents, the dataset encompasses a rich tapestry of keywords, with 548 Keywords Plus (ID) and 1407 Author's Keywords (DE). This extensive range of keywords reflects the multifaceted nature of Sustainable Development Goals in the context of tourism, capturing the diverse perspectives and focal points within the literature. The analysis also sheds light on the collaborative nature of research in this field, with a total of 1086 authors contributing to the documents. Among these, 83 authors have authored single-authored documents, highlighting both individual contributions and collaborative efforts. The collaboration extends to an average of 2.71 co-authors per document, and a notable 35.02% of these collaborations are international, emphasizing the global reach and collaborative spirit in advancing research on SDGs in tourism.

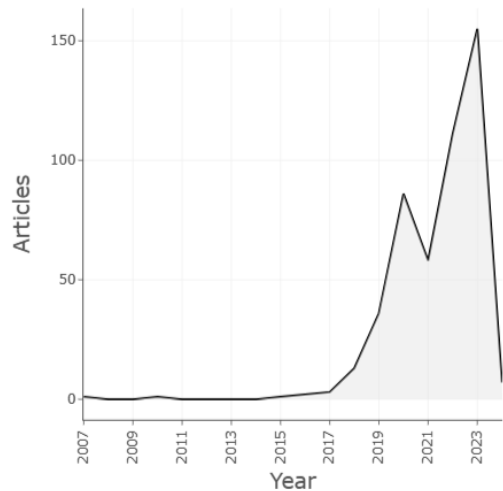


Fig. 3: Annual scientific production of articles on Sustainable Development Goals

The Fig. 3 provides a chronological overview of the number of publications on "sustainable development goals" in the field of tourism

research, spanning the years 2007 to 2024. In the initial years, there was limited engagement with the topic, with only sporadic publications. However, starting from 2015, there is a noticeable upswing in the number of articles, indicating a growing interest and recognition of the importance of sustainable development goals within the context of tourism. The year 2016 witnessed a notable increase with 2 publications, and this trend continued to gain momentum in the subsequent years. The most significant surge occurred in 2018, where the number of articles sharply increased to 13, signifying a substantial spike in research activity. The numbers skyrocketed, with 36 articles in 2019, 86 in 2020, 58 in 2021, and a substantial peak of 111 in 2022. The year 2023 saw a further increase, with 155 publications, underscoring the sustained momentum and sustained interest in the field.

Prominent features of Sustainable Development Goals research in the area of Tourism

a) Top Performing Authors

Table 1 provides a detailed overview of the top-performing authors in the domain of SDGs literature within tourism research, with the left side highlighting authors based on their citation metrics, and the right-side featuring authors based on the number of documents. At the forefront of citation impact is Hall CM, who secures the top position with an impressive total of 16 documents. Hall CM's substantial h-index of 10, g-index of 16, and m-index of 1.667 reflect not only the volume of their work but also its significant influence. The total citation count (870) underscores the widespread recognition and impact of Hall CM's contributions in the academic community. Gössling S and Scheyvens R also feature prominently in terms of citations, securing the

Table 1: Top Performing Author in terms of No. of Citations & No. of Documents									
Rank	Author	NP	h-inde x	g-inde x	m-index	TC	Rank	Author	Documents
1	Hall CM	16	10	16	1.667	870	1	Hall CM	16
2	Gössling S	6	6	6	1	568	2	Scheyvens R	8
3	Scheyvens R	7	7	7	0.778	485	3	Gössling S	7
4	Dube K	8	5	8	1	390	4	Dube K	7
5	Nhamo G	6	5	6	1	390	5	Higgins-Des biolles F	6
6	Chikodzi D	5	4	5	0.8	349	6	Nhamo G	6
7	Higgins D F	5	5	5	0.625	337	7	Seyfi S	6
8	Cavaliere CT	5	4	5	0.5	284	8	Cavaliere CT	6
9	Boluk KA	6	3	6	0.5	246	9	Chikodzi D	6
10	Seyfi S	7	5	7	1.667	229	10	Hughes E	6

second and third positions, respectively. Shifting focus to the right side of the table, we explore the authors who have made substantial contributions through the sheer volume of their published documents. Scheyvens R takes the lead in this category, contributing a total of 8 documents. Gössling S follows closely with 7 documents, demonstrating a commitment to the breadth of research output. The combination of both citation metrics and document count provides a comprehensive understanding of author performance within the SDGs literature in tourism research. This dual perspective ensures that not only the influence of an author's work is considered but also the breadth and depth of their contributions to the scholarly discourse. The insights derived from this table contribute to a nuanced evaluation of the landscape of SDGs literature in tourism research and identify key authors shaping the narrative in this important field.

Table 2: Most Influential Countries in terms of Publications

Rank	Country	Frequency
1	United Kingdom	119
2	Australia	105
3	Spain	76
4	India	69
5	South Africa	67
6	USA	67
7	China	64
8	Malaysia	48
9	Portugal	42
10	New Zealand	41

The Table 2 reflects the research output of each country in the field, providing insights into the global distribution of scholarly contributions. Leading the list is the United Kingdom (UK), which has demonstrated a significant research presence with a total of 119 publications.

Following closely is Australia, with 105 publications, showcasing a robust engagement in the academic discourse related to our research theme. Spain, with 76 publications, holds the third position, indicating its noteworthy contribution to the scholarly output in this field. India and South Africa exhibit substantial research activities, securing the fourth and fifth positions, respectively, with 69 and 67 publications each. The United States (USA) also shares the fifth position with 67 publications, underlining the global nature of contributions to the research topic. China, Malaysia, Portugal, and New Zealand complete the top ten list, highlighting their active involvement in generating scholarly content. This table not only underscores the global reach of research efforts in our field but also offers valuable insights into the diverse geographical distribution of scholarly contributions. The data presented in this table contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the international landscape of research within our chosen domain, aiding in the identification of key contributors and potential areas for collaboration and knowledge exchange.

In examining the Fig.4 detailing the top 10 affiliations with the highest number of publications, it is evident that these institutions play a significant role in contributing to the field of tourism management. The University of Surrey in England stands out as the most prolific, with a remarkable total of 19 published articles. Following closely, Griffith University in Australia has made a substantial impact with 15 articles, showcasing the global reach of research in the domain. “The University of Oulu in Finland”, Massey University in New Zealand, Rey Juan Carlos University in Spain, and the “University of Canterbury in New Zealand” each have 13 publications, reflecting a considerable commitment to advancing knowledge in the field. Notably, New Zealand features prominently in this list, with the University of Otago and Leeds Beckett University also making noteworthy contributions, adding 11 and 9 publications, respectively. This comprehensive overview underscores the global nature of research in tourism management, with institutions from various countries actively engaging in scholarly endeavours. The frequency of publications from these top affiliations attests to their dedication and impact in shaping the discourse surrounding tourism and its management on an international scale.

Fig. 5 presents a comprehensive overview of the

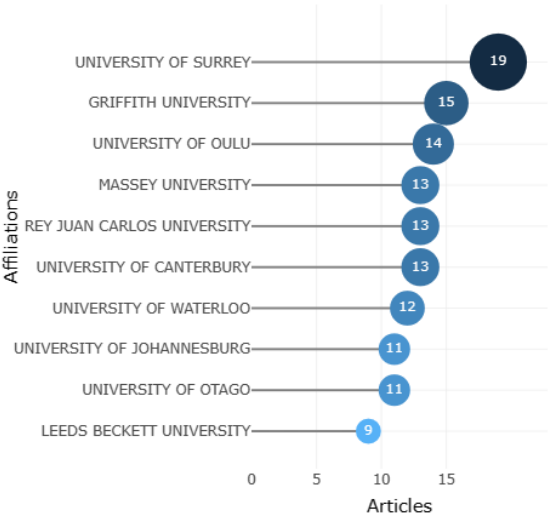


Fig. 4: Top Productive Institution on Sustainable Development Goals

most prolific and influential sources based on the number of documents published. The *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* emerges as the frontrunner, contributing significantly with 68 articles across 12 issues per year, boasting a remarkable cite score of 22.3. Published by Taylor & Francis, this journal stands out not only in quantity but also in impact, as evidenced by its inclusion in the Scopus database. Following closely is *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*, which has produced 33 articles distributed over six issues annually, yielding a cite score of 4.4. Published by Emerald, this journal exemplifies a consistent commitment to the exploration of sustainable development goals within the tourism sector. *Tourism Review*, another publication from Emerald, has made a noteworthy contribution with 23 articles distributed across six issues annually, earning a commendable cite score of 14.6. Additionally, the fig. includes contributions in book form, with “*Women's Empowerment Within the Tourism Industry*” serving as a valuable resource. “*Asia-Pacific Journal of Innovation in Hospitality and Tourism*” published by Taylor's University, and “*Geographies of Tourism and Global Change*” a book from Springer, each provide a unique perspective on the intersection of tourism and sustainable development goals. Finally, the *Journal of Tourism Futures*, published by Elsevier, rounds out the list with six articles distributed across three issues annually, garnering a commendable cite score of 8.7. This journal adds depth and diversity to the scholarly discourse surrounding sustainable development goals in tourism literature.

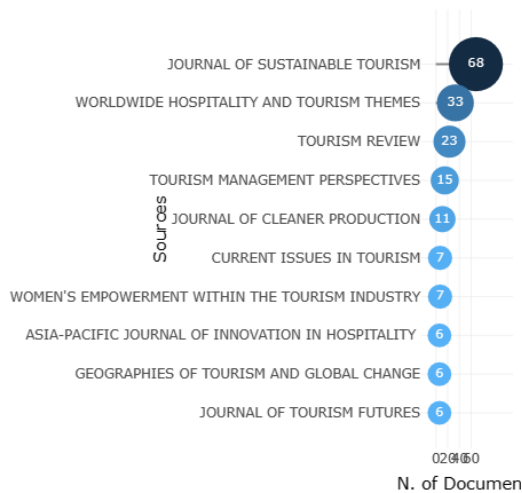


Fig. 5: Most relevant sources based on number of documents

b) Most Influential Research Papers

The table 3 reveals the *crème de la crème* in the field of tourism, as evidenced by the number of citations garnered by each publication. Leading the pack is the groundbreaking paper titled "Constructing sustainable tourism development: The 2030 agenda and the managerial ecology of sustainable tourism" authored by CM Hall in 2018, published in the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, with an impressive 361 citations. This research delves into the alignment between sustainable tourism development and the 2030 Agenda, shedding light on the managerial ecology essential for fostering sustainability. Following closely is the collaborative effort of D Scott, CM

Hall, and S Gossling in the 2019 *Annals of Tourism Research* publication, "Global tourism vulnerability to climate change," earning 214 citations. The third-ranking article, "A critical framework for interrogating the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030 Agenda in tourism," penned by Karla A. Boluk, Christina T. Cavaliere, and Freya Higgins-Desbiolles in 2019, accrues 204 citations in the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*. Further down the list, R Robinson, Antje Martins, David Solnet, and Tom Baum's 2018 article, "Sustaining precarity: critically examining tourism and employment," published in the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, earns the sixth spot with 158 citations, highlighting the critical examination of the relationship between tourism and employment precarity. The seventh-ranking paper, "Sharing versus collaborative economy: how to align ICT developments and the SDGs in tourism?" by CM Hall and S Gossling in the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* (2018), accumulates 154 citations, exploring the alignment of information and communication technology developments with sustainable development goals.

The subsequent articles in the top ten, including "A systematic scoping review of sustainable tourism indicators in relation to the sustainable development goals," "No sustainability for tourism without gender equality," and "A post COVID-19 future - tourism re-imagined and re-enabled," contribute significantly to the scholarly landscape. Each of these articles, with citation counts ranging from 129 to 151, reflects the diverse and evolving facets of research in tourism, providing valuable insights into sustainable development, climate

Table 3: Top Performing Research Articles

Rank	Title of the Paper	Authors	Year	Journal	No of Citations
1	Constructing sustainable tourism development: The 2030 agenda and the managerial ecology of sustainable tourism	CM Hall	2018	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	361
2	Global tourism vulnerability to climate change	D Scott, CM Hall & S Gossling	2019	Annals of Tourism Research	214
3	A critical framework for interrogating the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030 Agenda in tourism	Karla A. Boluk, Christina T. Cavaliere & Freya Higgins-Desbiolles	2019	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	204
4	Inclusive tourism development	Regina Scheyvens & Robin Biddulph	2017	Tourism Geographies	192
5	COVID-19 pandemic and prospects for recovery of the global aviation industry	K Dube, Godwell Nhamo & David Chikodzi	2021	Journal of Air Transport Management	178
6	Sustaining precarity: critically examining tourism and employment	R Robinson, Antje Martins, David Solnet & Tom Baum	2018	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	158
7	Sharing versus collaborative economy: how to align ICT developments and the SDGs in tourism?	CM Hall & S Gossling	2018	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	154
8	A systematic scoping review of sustainable tourism indicators in relation to the sustainable development goals	SM Rasoolimanesh, Sundari R, CM Hall, K Esfandiari & Siamak Seyfi	2020	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	151
9	No sustainability for tourism without gender equality	Daniela Moreno Alarcon & Stroma Cole	2019	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	140
10	A post COVID-19 future - tourism re-imagined and re-enabled	K. Michael Haywood	2020	Tourism Geographies	129

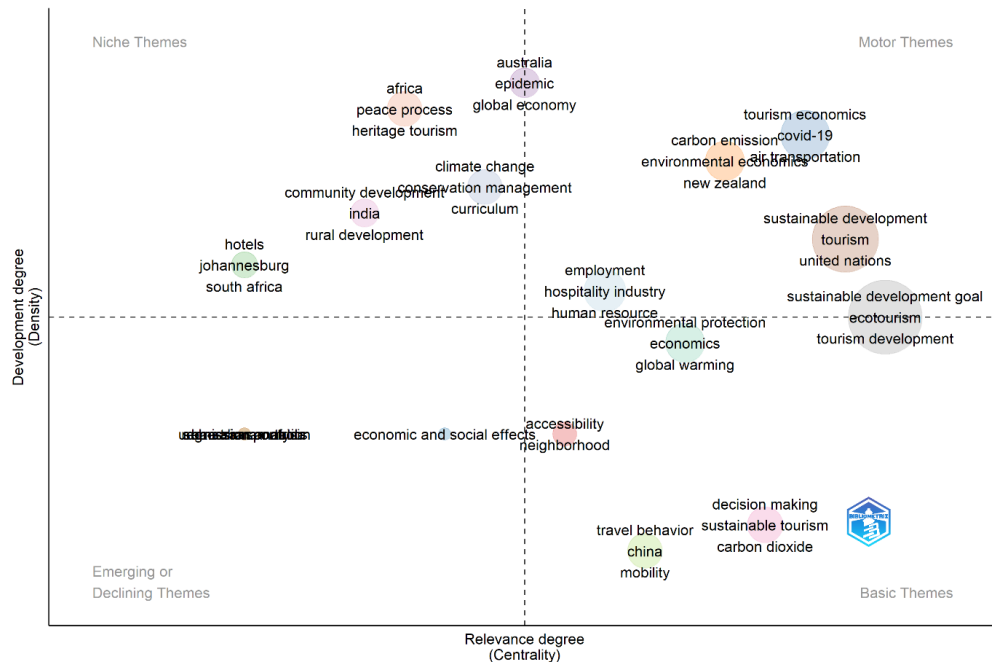


Figure 8 – Thematic Map

Significant Trends and Core Thematic Areas of SDGs in Tourism

In order to gain a deeper grasp of the fundamental themes and patterns of the literature on SDGs literature in the domains of tourism research, keyword plus is utilised to find the many connections between words.

The thematic map presented in Figure 8, depicted above, delineates the correlation between centrality (on the x-axis) and density (on the y-axis). The significance of research themes is evaluated based on their centrality, while their evolution is assessed by density. The visual representation is segmented into four quadrants: upper left, upper right, lower left, and lower right. In the upper left quadrant, themes exhibit high centrality but low density, indicating their isolation despite being highly developed. Conversely, the upper right quadrant portrays themes with both high density and centrality, indicating their importance and robust development. The lower left section of the illustration encompasses emerging or declining themes within the research area. In the lower right quadrant of the thematic map, fundamental or cross-cutting themes are depicted, showcasing low density but high centrality. This arrangement offers a comprehensive overview of the diverse developmental stages and importance levels of various research themes in the field.

The figure 8 provides a thematic map in the context of inclusive tourism, showcasing various clusters of related terms and their centrality measures within each cluster. In the first cluster, the term “accessibility” is central. The second cluster revolves around “tourism economics” and

includes terms such as “covid-19” and “air transportation”. The third cluster focuses on “hotels” featuring key terms like “south Africa”. The fourth cluster centres around “Australia” and includes terms like “epidemic” and “global economy”. The sixth cluster pertains to “sustainable development” and encompasses terms like “united nations”, “empowerment” and “social inclusion”. The seventh cluster discusses “sustainable tourism”. The eighth cluster is the largest one with 37 words revolves around “ecotourism”, “tourism development”, “sustainability”, “tourism management”, and “stakeholder”. Others major cluster label includes “climate change”, “community development”, “employment” and “urban transportation”. Each cluster represents a thematic focus within inclusive tourism research, capturing the diversity and complexity of the field.

CONCLUSION

This study's bibliometric analysis of SDGs in the context of tourism has revealed essential insights and identified significant future research directions. Our analysis underscores the increasing integration of sustainability into tourism, highlighted by the focus on sustainable and ecotourism, environmental protection, and climate

change. These findings align with the broader SDG agenda of inclusive growth, showcasing the tourism industry's growing commitment to environmental and social responsibilities. The frequent mention of global frameworks, especially the United Nations, points to the crucial role of international policy in shaping sustainable tourism practices. This interplay of environmental, economic, and social themes signifies an evolving research landscape where sustainability is becoming central to tourism studies. Looking ahead, the study suggests several key areas for future research. There is a need for innovative sustainable tourism models that balance economic, environmental, and social aspects, particularly considering emerging technologies and changing consumer behaviours. Assessing the effectiveness of policies on sustainable tourism practices is another critical area. Research into the sustainability challenges in air travel is essential, given its significance in the tourism sector. Moreover, future studies should focus on making tourism more accessible and inclusive, ensuring equitable distribution of sustainable tourism benefits. These research directions promise not only academic enrichment but also practical insights for policy and industry, guiding the tourism sector towards a more sustainable and inclusive future.

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Tourism Expansion and Economic Growth in India: Assessing Their Short-Term and Long-Term Associations

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KEYWORDS

Causality, Economic growth, Employment, India, Tourism expansion

ABSTRACT

This study analyses the short-run and long-term associations between tourism and economic growth in India. In addition to trends, dynamic time series analysis techniques were employed to assess the relationship between the variables. The study's findings revealed a long-term co-integration between tourist inflow and employment growth, as well as tourism expansion and economic growth. Aside from their long-run cointegration between tourism expansion and economic growth, a short-run unidirectional causal relationship –running from tourism to economic growth– is also established. A 1% growth in the tourism sector translates to a 0.8% rise in income. Nonetheless, the growth and share of foreign tourist inflows, which are expected to generate greater foreign exchange earnings, are significantly lower than those of domestic tourists. Therefore, for the country's future tourism development, a well-thought-out policy to attract more international tourists through the expansion of tourism environments and infrastructures may be established.

BACKGROUND

The World Tourism Organisation (WTO) defines tourists as individuals who travel to and stay in locations outside their usual place of residence for a period not exceeding one consecutive year, whether for leisure, business, or other purposes. Therefore, tourism activity can be connected to travel for recreational, leisure, business and other purposes such as education, health, religion, and so on. Because of its volume and nature of interconnectedness, the tourism industry/sector plays an important role in the development of a region/country in several dimensions. It contributes to income and employment, infrastructural development, socio-cultural expansion and political upliftment (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). The tourism industry is considered to be instrumental in eliminating the unemployment problem and generating income as it links to a range of industries, including the hospitality, services, and transportation sectors, which allows for the employment of both skilled and unskilled workers. In addition, it raises people's standards of living and contributes to the economic development of a nation by generating foreign exchange earnings (Aynalem et al., 2016). A study by Rasool et al. (2021) discovered, using panel data from 1995 to 2015 for five BRICS nations, that international tourism growth and financial development positively affect economic growth in both the long and short run. With a one per cent increase in tourism receipts per capita, the GDP per capita of the BRICS economies will rise by 0.31 per cent in the long run. According to the United States Peace Institute's special report, "Tourism in the Developing World 2009," relative peace and a degree of economic development are prerequisites for a successful tourism sector in India, Kenya, and Nigeria (Honey & Gilpin, 2009). However, drawing on data from ten European transition countries spanning the period from 1988 to 2011, Chou (2013) reported mixed findings in his analysis of the causal relationships between tourism and economic growth. It explored that several factors may affect the direction of causality between tourism development and economic growth. The study further hypothesised the implications of the size of

the economy, the country's level of openness, and the level of travel restrictions as potential factors in the disparities (mixed results) between these ten European countries. In another robust assessment, using a cross-section of 109 countries, Du et al. (2014) found that investment in the tourism sector appears to be insufficient for economic growth. Instead, tourism's contribution to an economy's long-term growth comes from its function as an integral part of a broader development strategy that is more broadly focused on standard income factors.

In contrast to the literature and discussion presented above, Zhang (2020) discovered, using time series data from 1996 to 2015 in a Chinese city, that there is a long-term relationship between the growth of residents' income and the expansion of the tourism sector as an economic growth-led tourism development model. The increase in residents' disposable income has promoted tourism consumption expenditure, and tourism consumption expenditure will increase by 1.13 per cent for every 1 per cent increase in residents' disposable income. This is because when a country's economy grows, so does its residents' income, and when there is more money in people's pockets, they are more likely to travel for recreational and leisure purposes. Conversely, the growth of tourism is responsible for increasing income and employment because it is directly and indirectly tied to diverse service sector industries. In this manner, as economic growth attains a certain threshold level and living standards improve, sectors related to tourism will inevitably flourish, subsequently reinforcing the growth of the economy.

Although there has been agreement in previous studies on the relationships between tourism sector expansion and economic growth across nations and economies, there is still room for verification/analysis if there is any causal direction between tourism activity and economic growth in developing countries like India. In India, the tourism sector is evolving into a crucial economic sector since it has the potential for a substantial contribution towards national income and the generation of employment opportunities. In addition, the tourism sector has a lot of room for growth and diversification, and it is, today, one of India's fastest-growing service industries (Dayananda, 2016). The World Travel and Tourism Council's impact assessment report 2018 has also predicted that India will be the third biggest travel and tourism economy by 2028. As per their estimates, India will be able to provide up

to 10 million people a direct employment in the tourism sector by 2028 (WTTC, 2018). When it comes to the theoretical underpinnings for policymakers' benefits, there is no clarity that the expansion of the tourism sector leads to economic growth or the other way around in India. to 10 million people a direct employment in the tourism sector by 2028 (WTTC, 2018). When it comes to the theoretical underpinnings for policymakers' benefits, there is no clarity that the expansion of the tourism sector leads to economic growth or the other way around in India.

Given this backdrop, it is critical to re-examine the long-term relationship between tourism expansion and the resulting employment generation and/or economic growth in India. To enable us to quantify and assess, the three specific research objectives are listed below:

1. To examine the growth and trend of the tourism sector, as well as its contribution to GDP in India.
2. To examine whether there is any long-run association between tourism growth and employment generation in India.
3. To identify the causal direction and determine the degree of elasticity between tourism expansion and economic growth in India.

DATA AND METHOD

The analysis is based on secondary data collected from a variety of sources, including the Economic and Political Weekly Research Foundation (EPWRF), the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), and the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

Simple descriptive statistics were used to fulfil the first objective, which included trend analysis as well as graphical and tabular representations. The data used for this purpose included three tourism indicators: 1) Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEE) and their associated percentage of GDP, 2) local tourist inflow, and 3) foreign tourist inflow from 1991 to 2021. Using these parameters for the periods from 1991 to 2021, the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) was also estimated.

For the 2nd objective, a time series analysis was done, primarily to assess a long-run association between tourism expansion and employment generation in India. For this purpose, by employing time series data from 2008 to 2021, the Johansen cointegration test was conducted. Due to the limitations of the employment data, the period from 2008 to 2021 was considered. In the first step, a unit root test was conducted for the variables to

identify their stationarity, using the Augmented Dickey-Fuller (Dickey and Fuller 1981) and Phillips-Perron (Phillips and Perron 1988) unit root tests. The procedure of testing the unit root consists of running a regression of the univariate time series of the form:

$$\Delta Y_t = \beta_1 + \beta_2 t + \delta Y_{t-1} + \sum_{i=1}^p \alpha_i \Delta Y_{t-i} + \varepsilon_t \quad \dots (1)$$

Where ΔY_t is the 1st difference of series Y_t , Y_{t-i} is the lagged difference term for the series up to p th lags, Y_{t-1} is the lagged value of Y_t , and t is a pure white noise error term.

The unit root test was followed by the Johansen Co-integration test. At the initial step of the Johansen co-integration test, we have to consider the collection of g ($g \geq 2$) variables that are integrated of order 1, $I(1)$, and we believe them to be cointegrated. In this analysis, two variables (time series), namely total tourist inflow (TTI), both domestic and international, and employment (EMP), engaged directly or indirectly in the tourism sector, were considered. A vector autoregression (VAR) with k lags containing these variables can be set up as:

$$y_t = \beta_1 y_{t-1} + \beta_2 y_{t-2} + \dots + \beta_k y_{t-k} + u_t \quad \dots (2)$$

Where, y_t and u_t are $(n \times 1)$ vectors.

To apply the Johansen co-integration test, the VAR mentioned above must be transformed into the form:

$$\Delta y_t = \Pi y_{t-k} + \Gamma_1 \Delta y_{t-1} + \Gamma_2 \Delta y_{t-2} + \dots + \Gamma_{k-1} \Delta y_{t-(k-1)} + u_t \quad \dots (3)$$

$$\text{Where, } \Pi = \left(\sum_{j=1}^k \beta_j \right) - I_g \text{ and } \Gamma_i = \left(\sum_{j=1}^i \beta_j \right) - I_g$$

Π is an $n \times n$ parameter matrix. To arrive at a conclusion on co-integration among variables, the rank (r) of the matrix Π needs to be examined. Here, the null hypothesis with r cointegrating vectors is tested against alternative $r+1$ co-integrating vectors. To test for the co-integration and decide the number of cointegrating equations, Johansen's methodology uses two likelihood ratio (LR) tests, a trace test and a maximum eigenvalue test. The trace and max-eigenvalue statistics can be formulated as:

$$LR_{\text{trace}}(r) = -T \sum_{i=r+1}^g \ln(1 - \hat{\lambda}_i) \quad \dots (4)$$

$$LR_{\text{max}}(r, r+1) = -T \ln(1 - \hat{\lambda}_{r+1}) \quad \dots (5)$$

Where λ_i = estimated i th ordered eigenvalues from the matrix, T = number of observations; r = co-integrating vectors.

To examine the 3rd objective, a time series analysis was done using a dataset for the period from 1991 to 2021. In the first step, a unit root test was conducted to identify the stationarity for the variables, namely GDP per capita (GDPPC), as a proxy for income, and total tourist inflow (TTI), both domestic and international tourists, as a proxy for tourism expansion. The unit root test was followed by the Johansen Co-integration test to find a long-run association between tourism expansion and economic growth in India. This requires the estimation of equation (3), taking two variables, GDP per capita (GDPPC) and total tourist inflow (TTI), while equations (4) and (5) are estimated to decide the number of cointegrating equations.

After confirmation of the co-integration, we explored a causal link between the variables. In the third step, the Granger causality test was employed to explore a causal link between the expansion of tourism and economic growth. The following equations were estimated to perform the Granger causality test:

$$GDPPC_t = \beta_0 + \sum_{i=1}^n \beta_{1i} GDPPC_{t-i} + \sum_{i=1}^n \beta_{2i} TTI_{t-i} + u_t \quad \dots (6)$$

$$TTI_t = \alpha_0 + \sum_{i=1}^n \alpha_{1i} TTI_{t-i} + \sum_{i=1}^n \alpha_{2i} GDPPC_{t-i} + v_t \quad \dots (7)$$

Where GDPPC = Gross domestic product per capita, TTI = Total tourist inflow, u_t and v_t are error terms (white noise) and are uncorrelated. The following criteria were applied to the aforementioned two regression models to determine the causality between GDP per capita (in short, GDPPC) and Total tourist inflow (in short, TTI).

1. There exists a one-way causality from TTI to GDPPC if the estimated coefficients on the lagged TTI, $i.e., \sum_{i=1}^n \beta_{2i} \neq 0$ and the estimated coefficient on lagged GDPPC, $i.e., \sum_{i=1}^n \alpha_{2i} = 0$.
2. Alternately, one-way causality from GDPPC to TTI exists if the coefficient of lagged TTI, $i.e., \sum_{i=1}^n \beta_{2i} = 0$ and the coefficient of lagged GDPPC, $i.e., \sum_{i=1}^n \alpha_{2i} \neq 0$.
3. There exists bilateral causality if the coefficients on the lagged TTI, $i.e., \sum_{i=1}^n \beta_{2i} \neq 0$ and also the coefficient on the lagged GDPPC, $i.e., \sum_{i=1}^n \alpha_{2i} \neq 0$.
4. Eventually, there is independence or no causality between TTI and GDPPC if the estimated coefficients on the lagged GDPPC, $i.e., \sum_{i=1}^n \alpha_{2i} = 0$ and also the estimated coefficients on the lagged TTI, $i.e., \sum_{i=1}^n \beta_{2i} = 0$.

After identifying a causal link, whether tourism growth causes economic growth or vice versa, we estimate an elasticity between the variables using a log-transformed bivariate regression model. The model specification is given as:

$$\Delta LGDPPC = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \Delta LTTI + \mu \dots (8)$$

Where GDPPC = Gross domestic product per capita, TTI = Total tourist inflow, β_0 = intercept, β_1 = estimated coefficient, and μ = error term and Δ = first difference.

TOURIST INFLOWS AND FEES IN INDIA

Following rapid development and as a country with rich cultural diversity, India has had exceptional success in tourism development. It has been further expanded by several government programs and subsidies. In recent years, the Indian government's programs, such as "Incredible India" (an international tourism campaign), have been extremely effective in attracting millions of foreign tourists to India. Nonetheless, it is worthwhile to examine key tourism statistics such as domestic tourist inflows, foreign visitor inflows, and FEEs from tourism activities, which are linked to the country's long-term growth.

The statistical information on the inflow of domestic tourists and foreign tourists from 1991 to 2021 is shown in Table 1. The domestic tourist inflows have been rising steadily to the tune of 11.01 per cent CAGR from 1991 to 2021. At the same time, the number of inbound foreign tourists has also been rising over time, recorded at a CAGR of 5.68 per cent from 1991 to 2021.

Year	Domestic tourist inflow	Foreign tourist inflow	Total
1991	66.67	3.15	69.82
1992	81.46	3.10	84.56
1993	105.81	3.54	109.35
1994	127.12	4.03	131.15
1995	136.64	4.64	141.28
1996	140.12	5.03	145.15
1997	159.88	5.50	165.38
1998	168.20	5.54	173.74
1999	190.67	5.83	196.50
2000	220.11	5.89	226.00
2001	236.47	5.44	241.91
2002	269.60	5.16	274.76
2003	309.04	6.71	315.75
2004	366.27	8.36	374.63
2005	392.01	9.95	401.96
2006	462.32	11.75	474.07
2007	526.56	13.27	539.83

2008	563.03	14.38	577.41
2009	668.80	14.37	683.17
2010	747.70	17.91	765.61
2011	864.53	19.50	884.03
2012	1045.05	18.26	1063.31
2013	1142.53	19.95	1162.48
2014	1282.80	22.33	1305.13
2015	1431.97	23.33	1455.30
2016	1615.39	24.71	1640.10
2017	1657.55	26.89	1684.44
2018	1853.79	28.85	1882.64
2019	2321.98	31.41	2353.39
2020	610.22	7.17	617.39
2021	677.63	1.05	678.68
CAGR	11.01	5.68	10.91

Sources: India Tourism Statistics, Ministry of Tourism, GOI (2021, 2022).

Though there was a modest dip, predictably owing to COVID-19, in the tourism sector in 2020 and 2021, a sigh of relief was visible thereafter. Domestic tourism increased from 66.67 million in 1991 to 2321.98 million in 2019. However, there was a small increase in domestic tourist inflows after the COVID-19 peak, totalling 677.63 million in 2021. It is clear that the tourism industry contributes significantly to the nation's Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEEs). Understandably, the tourism industry generates FEEs, which in turn help to fund imports. Furthermore, the FEEs generated by the tourism sector can also be invested in purchasing productive capital goods that promote economic growth (McKinnon, 1964).

Table 2: FEE from the tourism sector and its share of GDP (Constant Prices 2011-12)

Year	GDP of India (Rs '000 Crore)	FEE from the Tourism Sector (Rs '000 Crore)	FEE share to GDP (in %)
1991	2541.12	4.32	0.17
1992	2680.44	5.95	0.22
1993	2807.78	6.61	0.24
1994	2994.75	7.13	0.24
1995	3221.58	8.43	0.26
1996	3464.80	10.05	0.29
1997	3605.12	10.51	0.29
1998	3828.07	12.15	0.32
1999	4166.69	12.95	0.31
2000	4326.74	15.63	0.36
2001	4535.46	15.08	0.33
2002	4707.98	15.06	0.32
2003	5078.05	20.73	0.41
2004	5480.38	27.94	0.51

2005	5914.61	33.12	0.56
2006	6391.38	39.03	0.61
2007	6881.01	44.36	0.64
2008	7093.40	51.29	0.72
2009	7651.08	53.75	0.70
2010	8301.23	66.17	0.80
2011	8736.33	83.04	0.95
2012	9213.02	95.61	1.04
2013	9801.37	107.56	1.10
2014	10527.67	120.37	1.14
2015	11369.49	134.84	1.19
2016	12308.19	154.15	1.25
2017	13144.58	177.87	1.35
2018	13992.91	194.88	1.39
2019	14515.96	211.66	1.46
2020	13558.47	50.14	0.37
2021	14735.52	65.07	0.44
CAGR	6.38	12.95	6.16

Sources: EPWRF and Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India (2021, 2022).

Table 2 shows India's GDP (at constant prices in 2011-12), tourism revenue in terms of FEEs, and its corresponding share of GDP. Between 1991 and 2021, India's GDP increased at a CAGR of 6.38 per cent, while the tourism-related sector increased at a CAGR of 12.95 per cent. India's GDP increased from 2541.12 thousand crores in 1991 to 14735.52 thousand crores in 2021. It is worth noting that between 1991 and 2019, FEEs increased consistently, rising from 4.32 thousand crores in 1991 to 211.66 thousand crores in 2019. However, GDP declined from 14515.96 thousand crore in 2019 to 13558.47 thousand crore in 2020 as a consequence of COVID-19. Consequently, the FEEs also declined from 211.66 thousand crore to 50.14 thousand crore in 2020. Notably, the year 2021 witnessed an incremental change in GDP share at around 0.44 per cent.

Table 3: Tourist inflow and total contribution to employment (direct + indirect)				
Year	Tourist Inflow (in Million)			Contribution to Employment (in Million)
	Domestic	Foreign	Total	
2008	563.03	14.38	577.41	36.71
2009	668.80	14.37	683.17	34.67
2010	747.70	17.91	765.61	33.93
2011	864.53	19.50	884.03	34.85
2012	1045.05	18.26	1063.31	37.57
2013	1142.53	19.95	1162.48	38.08
2014	1282.80	22.33	1305.14	39.02
2015	1431.97	23.33	1455.30	39.63
2016	1615.39	24.71	1640.10	40.54
2017	1657.55	26.89	1684.43	41.62
2018	1853.79	28.85	1882.64	42.90
2019	2321.98	31.41	2353.39	40.10
2020	610.22	7.17	617.39	29.14
2021	677.63	1.05	678.69	32.10
CAGR	4.58	-6.64	4.45	0.00

A snapshot of domestic, foreign and total tourist inflows in India, along with the direct and indirect employment generated by the tourism sector for the periods from 2008 to 2021, is portrayed in Table 3. Domestic tourist inflows increased from 563.03 million in 2008 to 2321.98 million in 2019. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic's negative impact in 2020, which saw a 74 per cent drop in total tourist inflow (both domestic and foreign) in 2020 compared to the previous year, it improved marginally in 2021. As per the Ministry of Tourism, the Government of India estimates, it climbed to 678.69 million in 2021 from 617.39 million in 2020, which is a 10 per cent increase in percentage terms. Domestic tourist inflows increased by 4.58 per cent between 2008 and 2021. Notably, foreign visitor inflows had a negative CAGR of 6.64 per cent overall. Understandably, a large decrease in international tourist inflows was caused by COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021.

Table 4 shows the per capita GDP and total tourist inflows from 1991 to 2021. During the study period, GDP per capita expanded at a CAGR of 4.72 per cent, while total tourist inflow (domestic + international) increased at a CAGR of 10.91 per cent. India's per capita GDP increased consistently from ₹29.69 thousand in 1991 to ₹108.25 thousand in 2021, while the total tourist inflow increased from 69.82 million in 1991 to 678.68 million in 2021. It is worth noting that between 1991 and 2019, total tourist inflow increased significantly, rising from 69.82 million in 1991 to 2353.39 million in 2019. At the same time, the GDP per capita also increased consistently from ₹29.69 thousand in 1991 to ₹108.25 thousand in 2019. However, the year 2020 witnessed a substantial decline in per capita GDP, from ₹108.25 thousand in 2019 to ₹100.03 thousand in 2020, as a consequence of COVID-19.

Table 4: GDP per capita and tourist inflow (1991-2021)		
Year	GDP per capita at constant prices (2011-12) (in Rs '000)	Total tourist inflow (No. in Million)
1991	29.69	69.82
1992	30.74	84.56
1993	31.48	109.35
1994	32.91	131.15
1995	34.72	141.28
1996	36.63	145.15
1997	37.40	165.38
1998	38.94	173.74
1999	41.63	196.50
2000	42.46	226.00

2001	43.61	241.91
2002	44.58	274.76
2003	47.37	315.75
2004	50.32	374.63
2005	53.48	401.96
2006	56.96	474.07
2007	60.47	539.83
2008	61.47	577.41
2009	65.39	683.17
2010	69.99	765.61
2011	71.61	884.03
2012	74.60	1063.31
2013	78.35	1162.48
2014	83.09	1305.13
2015	88.62	1455.30
2016	94.75	1640.10
2017	100.03	1684.44
2018	105.45	1882.64
2019	108.25	2353.39
2020	100.03	617.39
2021	107.67	678.68
CAGR	4.72	10.91

Sources: Authors' compilation from EPWRF; India Tourism Statistics, Ministry of Tourism.

Meanwhile, the total tourist inflow declined significantly from 2353.39 million to 617.39 million in 2020. Despite the substantial contraction due to COVID-19, the year 2021 nevertheless recorded a recovery. The level of GDP per capita almost came back to the pre-COVID level (₹107.67 thousand) in 2021, while total tourist inflow (678.68 million) managed to recover at a slow and steady rate.

TOURISM, EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH IN INDIA

As stated in equation (2), a unit root test is used to proceed with investigating long-run associations between tourism and employment in India. The findings for ADF and PP tests (Appendix 1) indicate that the variables EMP and TTI are non-stationary at the level, but after first differencing, the p-values are lower than 0.05, which means the null-hypothesis of unit root or non-stationarity is rejected at the 5 per cent level. Hence, EMP and TTI are stationary at the 1st difference and I (1) variable.

Further, for testing co-integration among the variables, optimal lag-order selection is necessary to decide a functional lag length. Among various criteria, the Schwarz Information Criteria (SIC) is chosen to select the lag length because of its unbiasedness and accuracy of forecasting for a small sample size than any other criteria (Lütkepohl, 1985). Based on SIC, the optimal lag obtained in this case is 3. Since the variables are I (1), the Johansen co-integration approach

(equation 3) is applied to identify the long-run link between tourism expansion/growth and employment generation. Max-Eigenvalue along with trace test depicted by the equations (4) and (5) are estimated here to investigate the number of cointegrating vectors under the Johansen co-integration test (Johansen, 1988), and the findings are demonstrated in Table 5.

Table 5: Johansen co-integration test (tourist inflow and employment generation)				
	Null hypothesis	Alternative hypothesis	Test statistic	Critical value at 5%
Trace of the stochastic matrix	$r=0$	$r=1$	23.3646*	15.41
	$r \leq 1$	$r=2$	7.3863*	3.76
Maximum eigenvalue of the stochastic matrix	$r=0$	$r=1$	15.9783*	14.07
	$r \leq 1$	$r=2$	7.3863*	3.76

Source: Authors' estimation

Notes: r denotes the number of co-integrating equations; *denotes rejection of the null-hypothesis, Optimal lag =3 based on SIC. The trace test & Max test indicate 2 co-integrating equations at 5% significance level.

When trace and max-eigenvalue statistics are more than 5 per cent critical levels, the rejection of the null hypothesis is feasible. Here, two null hypotheses are possible to reject at a 5 per cent level, indicating the existence of two cointegrating equations. Hence, the Johansen co-integration test supported the alternative hypothesis (H1), tourism expansion has long-run relations with employment generation in India. Therefore, the existence of a stable long-run equilibrium relation between the two variables is confirmed. Thus, tourism sector expansion and employment generation in India move together in the long run, but this does not indicate causal direction.

In order to study the short-run causal direction, the causality test, the Granger causality test, was conducted. Before proceeding with the testing of the short-run causal direction between tourism and income, the same procedure is followed as was done above in testing their long-run associations between tourist inflow and employment generation. Appendix 2 contains the unit root test results for the variables income and tourism using the ADF and PP tests. It clearly shows that the variables GDPPC (income) and TTI (tourism) are non-stationary at the level. However, after first differencing, the p-values are less than 0.05, indicating that the null-hypothesis of having a unit root or non-stationarity is rejected at the 5 per cent level. As a result, both GDPPC and TTI are stationary at the first difference and integrated of

order 1, as shown by I (1) in Appendix 2.

For testing co-integration among the variables, optimal lag-order selection is necessary to decide a functional lag length. Based on the lag length chosen by a majority of criteria such as AIC, SIC and HQIC, the optimal lag length obtained here is 4. Since the variables are I (1), the Johansen co-integration approach (equation 3) is conducted to estimate the long-run association of the specified variables, namely tourism growth (TTI) and economic growth (GDPPC). Max-Eigenvalue and trace statistic test (equations 4 and 5) have been employed here under the Johansen co-integration test (Table 6).

	Null hypothesis	Alternative hypothesis	Test statistic	Critical value 5%
(1) Trace of the stochastic matrix	$r = 0$	$r = 1$	19.5761*	15.41
	$r \leq 1$	$r = 2$	0.6766	3.76
(2) Maximum eigenvalue of the stochastic matrix	$r = 0$	$r = 1$	18.8995*	14.07
	$r \leq 1$	$r = 2$	0.6766	3.76

Source: Authors' computation.

Notes: r denotes co-integrating equations, *denotes rejection of the null hypothesis.

Optimal lag =4 based on AIC, SIC & HQIC.

Both the Trace test and Max test indicate 1 co-integrating equation at 5% significance level.

When trace and max-eigenvalue statistics are more than 5 per cent critical levels, the rejection of the null hypothesis is feasible. Here, one null hypothesis is possible to reject at a 5 per cent level, indicating the existence of one cointegrating equation. Hence, the Johansen co-integration test supported the alternative hypothesis (H1) in this study. Therefore, the long-run equilibrium relationship between tourism expansion and economic growth is established. Studies by Granger (1988) and Engle & Granger (1987) identified that the co-integration between variables underpins the feasibility of at least one-directional causality. Economic growth and tourism expansion are found to have a co-integrating relationship in this analysis, indicating that the two variables are causally related in at least one way in the short run. The Granger causality is tested (equations 6 and 7) to address the causal direction between the two variables, income and tourism. The Granger causality test is performed using the Vector Error Correction (VEC) model framework to investigate the two variables' short-run causal relationship. Since the Granger causality is sensitive to lags, it is tested at different lags to get a robust and reliable result (Table 7).

Lag structure	Null: Δ GDPPC does not Cause Δ TTI		Null: Δ TTI does not Cause Δ GDPPC	
	Chi-square	p-value	Chi-square	p-value
1	1.58	0.2092	9.55	0.0020
2	2.23	0.3274	11.49	0.0032
3	4.59	0.2045	21.26	0.0001
4	7.39	0.1168	29.70	0.0000
5	4.67	0.4572	37.92	0.0000

Source: Authors' computation

Notes: GDPPC: Gross domestic product per capita, TTI: Total tourist inflow.

Variables are in Δ log, Δ is 1st difference, L is lag.

Here, the null hypothesis, lagged economic growth (GDPPC) does not cause lagged tourism growth (TTI). It cannot be rejected since the p-values up to lag 5 are greater than 0.05. Hence, we accept that economic growth does not Granger-cause tourism growth. Again, the null hypothesis, lagged tourism growth (TTI) does not Granger-cause lagged economic growth (GDPPC), can be rejected as the p-values are lower than 0.05 up to lag 5. This means, in the short run, tourism growth in India does cause economic growth. Granger causality test, thus, supported the presence of one-way causality, running from the tourism expansion to economic growth in India.

Once the causal direction has been determined, it is possible to evaluate the degree of influence of tourism on economic growth by using a log-transformed bivariate regression model in first difference, taking (GDPPC) as the dependent variable and tourism growth (TTI) as an independent variable. Table 8 demonstrates how much economic growth is affected by a one per cent increase in the tourism sector. The log-transformed variables in the first difference provide the annual growth rates.

Dependent variable: Δ LGDPCC				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
Cons	.0368769	.0036817	10.02	0.000
Δ TTI	.0800063	.0132244	6.05	0.000
F-statistic 36.60				
Prob (F-statistic) 0.000				
R-squared 0.5666				

Source: Authors' Computation

Notes: GDPPC: Gross domestic product per capita, TTI: Total tourist inflow.

Variables are in Δ log, L is the log, and Δ is the 1st difference. $p < 0.05$ is significant.

In this analysis, the p-value is lower than 0.05. It indicates that in India, annual tourism growth is contributing positively and significantly to

economic growth. The β coefficient is .08, which means that if tourism growth increases by one per cent, the economic growth will increase by approximately 0.08 per cent in India.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The present study attempted to analyze the growth trends of the tourism sector of India using some key tourism indicators such as tourist inflow (both domestic and foreign tourists), tourism foreign exchange earnings (FEEs) and its contribution to GDP, tourism sector's contribution to direct employment, GDP per capita income of the country. The study results revealed that the Indian tourism sector is expanding consistently and significantly. When compared to the domestic counterpart (11.01%), the CAGR for foreign tourist inflow for the period from 1991 to 2021 appears to be considerably lower (5.68%). Although the absolute number was small, the per capita contribution of foreign tourists to the country's income was greater than that of domestic tourists. As a result, tourism policies should be devised in such a way that they attract a significant number of international tourists, which will aid in raising FEEs. This study also aimed to determine whether there is a link between tourism expansion, employment generation, and economic growth. The findings demonstrated the presence of a long-run link between tourism expansion and employment generation, and hence with economic growth in the country. In addition, the analysis using the Johansen co-integration and Granger causality tests demonstrated that there is both long-run cointegrating and short-run causal influence, running from tourism expansion to economic growth in India.

Identifying and realising from these findings, tourism should be promoted by implementing a long-term strategic plan that will not only help to create employment opportunities but will also propel India's economic growth in the long run. Creating a better environment for international tourists, including proper public policies and tourism infrastructure, is also critical for attracting foreign tourists.

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Empowering Women of Hills Through Homestay Tourism: A Study Unlocking Women's Potentials in Eastern Himalayan Regions of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Sikkim, India

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KEYWORDS

Entropy-weighting,
Fuzzy, Homestay
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ABSTRACT

This research investigates whether homestays, being a form of sustainable community-based tourism where tourists stay with local families in their homes, can empower women in Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and Sikkim, culturally rich regions of India's Eastern Himalayas. It compares these areas to see how social, economic, and cultural factors affect women's involvement in homestays, their decision-making power, and overall well-being. This helps identify what influences women's empowerment within homestay tourism across these regions. The study uses a mix of methods. Surveys with Likert scales assess seventeen aspects of empowerment, including economic independence, decision-making control, skill development, and social influence. Additionally, interviews are conducted with homestay owners and important figures. By comparing the regions, the research aims to find the best practices, challenges, and opportunities for using homestays to empower women. It uses fuzzified-rating, statistical analysis and women's empowerment indexes to provide a complete picture of the situation. The findings show that Sikkim currently leads in terms of women's socio-economic empowerment, with the least variation in perceived empowerment among homestay owners. Darjeeling appears to be struggling the most, as shown by the highest score on a specific measure (Harrington-desirability score).

INTRODUCTION

The Eastern Himalayan regions of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and Sikkim in India nestled amidst the majestic peaks of the Himalayas are known for their stunning scenery, rich cultures, and welcoming communities. Homestay tourism, where visitors stay with local families, is a growing trend in these hilly areas and a key part of sustainable tourism. This type of tourism offers opportunities for women to gain economic independence, develop new skills, and participate more in society. However, the impact can vary depending on the social and economic situation. In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the potential of homestay tourism ventures to empower women by providing them with opportunities for economic independence, skill development, and social inclusion. However, the extent to which homestay tourism contributes to women's empowerment varies across different socio-economic contexts. The hilly regions of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and Sikkim boast rich cultural heritage and scenic beauty, attracting a considerable influx of tourists seeking authentic experiences. Homestay tourism, with its emphasis on local hospitality and cultural immersion, has gained popularity as an alternative to conventional accommodation options, contributing significantly to the local economy (Duflo, 2012) since unlike traditional tourism models, homestays don't require extensive infrastructure changes and can help preserve culture and a potent tool for women's empowerment where women participate as active agents within their own homes and communities.

Within this context, women play a crucial role as hosts and entrepreneurs in homestay ventures, thereby challenging traditional gender roles and norms (Peeters & Ateljevic, 2017). Despite significant strides, gender disparity continues to cast a long shadow on India, particularly in rural and remote areas. Traditional societal norms often confine women to limited educational opportunities, restrict their access to employment and financial resources, and curtail their decision-making power. Tourism, with its inherent potential for inclusivity and economic opportunity, emerges as a beacon of hope. Studies have documented its ability to enhance women's income, equip them with valuable skills, and bolster their confidence. Women homestay owners challenge traditional gender roles by taking on leadership positions within their homes and communities.

This study explores how homestay tourism empowers women in Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and Sikkim by comparing these regions to identify variations, desirability and assessment of current status of homestay driven women empowerment through an indexed scoring approach. The research uses a multi-dimensional approach, examining economic opportunities, decision-making control, skill development and social participation in relation to homestay tourism. It combines surveys with a Likert scale and interviews with women involved in homestays to gain a comprehensive understanding of their experiences and perspectives. By employing a Likert-based survey methodology, supplemented by qualitative insights from interviews and application of fuzzy tools for addressing subjective ambiguity of Likert responses, this study endeavours to capture the nuanced experiences and perspectives of women involved in homestay tourism ventures (Rai, 2022).

DATA AND METHOD

Tourism creates opportunities for women's economic participation, skill development, and social empowerment. Homestays, a sustainable form of tourism, promote cultural exchange and community development. Studies show women play a key role as homestay hosts, gaining economic independence and empowerment through management responsibilities (Ireland, 1993). Women's involvement in homestays contributes to household income and financial stability (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012). It enhances their socio-economic status, improves financial well-being, and grants them more control over resources (Das & Roy, 2024).

Homestays empower women through increased decision-making autonomy, improved access to education and healthcare for themselves and their families, and greater social recognition within their communities (Arunkumar et al., 2016). Interaction with tourists equips women with better communication, business, and hospitality skills, boosting their confidence, self-, and pride in their cultural heritage. Homestays provide women with opportunities for skill development and capacity building, enhancing their employability and entrepreneurial prospects (Chakraborty, 2019). Women in homestays broaden their skill sets and improve their marketability (Doepke & Tertilt, 2019). Women's involvement in homestay decision-making can challenge traditional gender roles and promote greater gender equality (Osman et al., 2009). The unique landscapes and cultural experiences of Darjeeling, Sikkim, and Kalimpong attract tourists seeking local interactions. Homestay tourism is flourishing here, with local families offering accommodation, meals, and cultural immersion. Women play a central role in contributing to the socio-economic development of their communities (Mukhia, 2016).

Each region has unique socio-cultural and economic characteristics that influence women's participation and empowerment in homestays. Studies suggest in Darjeeling, homestay involvement has improved women's income and decision-making power (Kannegieser, 2015). However, challenges like lack of training and cultural barriers persist (Datta & Banerji, 2015). For Sikkim, homestays empower women, but capacity building and marketing support are needed (Chakraborty & Chakma, 2016). Homestay tourism is rising in Kalimpong region with diverse ethnicities. While research is limited, preliminary studies suggest positive impacts on women's social status and income generation. Women homestay hosts in these regions earn supplementary income, alleviating household poverty and enhancing financial resilience. Their involvement allows them to invest in education and healthcare, improving their overall quality of life. This study aims to fill this gap by comparing women's empowerment in homestay tourism across Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and Sikkim with a view to provide an overview of women's involvement in homestay-tourism and its effectiveness as a women's-empowerment and economic influencers of women's participation and assess the current level of women's empowerment achieved through homestay ventures based on weighted index assessment in each region.

METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

RESEARCH DESIGN AND SAMPLING

To gain a well-rounded understanding of women's empowerment in homestay tourism across Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and Sikkim, the study used a hybrid approach. This approach combines quantitative data (numbers) with qualitative data (experiences). The study focused on the current situation (cross-sectional) and involved surveying homestay owners, managers, and employees (women actively involved in homestays). A total of 240 participants were surveyed based on convenience sampling (Bryman, 2016) with 80 from each of three regions. This sample size was chosen based on the idea of 'saturation,' meaning they surveyed enough people in each region until no new information emerged (Guest et al., 2006).

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The study used a structured questionnaire with Likert-scale items to collect data on 17 women's empowerment factors (WEFs) across four dimensions (Table 1). Face-to-face interviews were conducted during the peak festive-season of October in 2023 with informed consent from participants. Confidentiality and anonymity of responses were maintained. Quantitative data analysis involved descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and various multivariate and non-parametric tests (Tabachnick, Fidell & Ullman, 2007) depending on data normality using SPSS v.20 and Excel-RealStat.

Empowering Dimension	Code	Description
Economic (Schott, 2021)	WEF1	Local women in hills get economically independent
	WEF2	Handsome income for host family to lead a decent life
	WEF3	Employment opportunity for the housewives and other female members of family
	WEF4	Financial inclusion through Ownership of bank accounts and other financial instruments
	WEF5	Helps in skill-building in the realm of entrepreneurial/managerial and technological acumen

Skill building and Decision making	WEF6	Freedom of decision making on homestay management and household affairs
	WEF7	Facilitate the ability to possess and exercise authority over income generating economic resources
	WEF8	Opportunities to gain professional skills and hands-on expertise
Social/Community involvement	WEF9	Ensures participative decision-making on tourism and overall community development
	WEF10	Provides platform for enhanced social interaction and advocating against the societal injustices
	WEF11	A platform for challenging male domination and preventing all sorts of domestic abuse and violence
Personal grooming and mental wellness (Al-Hamad et al., 2024; Attri, 2024)	WEF12	Boosts female literacy rate through enhanced educational attainment
	WEF13	Helps women and their families to elevate their nutritional well-being and mental health
	WEF14	A dynamic platform for bringing hitherto undiscovered skills and talents into the limelight
	WEF15	Provides a feeling of belonging, recognition within a social group and enables unrestricted movement.
	WEF16	A stronger sense of self-worth and confidence
	WEF17	Women get more informed about their legal entitlements and mechanisms for reporting grievances and getting assistance

USE OF FUZZY

The study acknowledges the subjectivity of Likert-scale data and uses fuzzy logic to account for uncertainty in participants' responses (Bodur et al., 2024; Sheykhizadeh et al., 2024). Triangular fuzzy numbers (TFNs) are assigned to each 5-point Likert-scale option for the 17 women-empowerment factors (Table 2). Finally, the centroid method is used to convert these fuzzy values into single, clear values for further analysis (Vonglao, 2017).

Table 2: TFN for Likert based Linguistic Variables			
Likert Rating	Linguist Variables of Likert Scale	TFN	Centroid of TFN
1	Very Low	(1, 1, 2)	1.25
2	Low	(1, 2, 3)	2
3	Medium	(2, 3, 4)	3
4	High	(3, 4, 5)	4.
5	Very High	(4, 5, 5)	4.75

WEIGHTING OF FACTORS - A HYBRID APPROACH

This section discusses the potential benefits of combining weighting methods like 'Entropy Weighting Method' (EWM) and 'Coefficient of Variation' (CV) for multi-criteria decision-making in tourism research to potentially enhance the robustness and comprehensiveness of weight assignment. It highlights the advantages of EWM as an objective approach that utilizes data information to assign weights to various evaluation criteria in tourism research areas such as homestay-destination selection preferences, destination competitiveness; tourist satisfaction and sustainability assessment.

ENTROPY - WEIGHTING METHOD

The Entropy Weighting Method (EWM), advocated by Shannon (1948), is a popular tool used in multi-criteria decision-making (MCDM) to objectively assign weights to different evaluation criteria to ensure a balanced decision-making process (Garg, Agarwal & Tripathi, 2015; Zhu, Tian & Yan, 2020). After necessary data preparation, these get normalized then entropy weights are calculated through equations given below -

$$\text{Entropy: } E_i = -k [\sum p_j. \ln(p_j)] \dots \dots \text{Eqn (1)}$$

where: k is a constant $[=1/\ln(m)]$ and $\ln$: natural logarithm, m: no. of criteria

p_j is the proportion of the j-th value in the normalised column for criterion i

Entropy Weight Determination (Liu et al., 2018):

$$W_i = (1 - E_i) / \sum (1 - E_j) \text{ for all } j \text{ criteria } \dots \dots \text{Eqn (2)}$$

Weight Normalisation: $W_i' = W_i / \sum (w_i)$ for all i criteriaEqn (3)

COEFFICIENT OF VARIATION - WEIGHTING METHOD

Coefficient of Variation (CoV) weighting method acts as an alternative tool for assigning weights in complex decision-making scenarios (MCDM) in tourism research. Unlike EWM, which focuses on information content, CV weighting prioritizes criteria with higher variability to better distinguish between different options. The text highlights the applicability of CoV weighting in various areas of tourism research, such as destination competitiveness, tourist satisfaction, tourist preference evaluation and sustainability assessment (Sørensen & Bærenholdt, 2020). Here also after the data preparation is over, the following calculations are made.

Coefficient of Variation: $CV_j = \text{Standard Deviation (C}_j) / \text{Mean (C}_j) \dots \dots \dots \text{Eqn (4)}$

$$\text{CoV Weight: } W_i = 1 / CV_j \dots \dots \dots \text{Eqn (5)}$$

CoV Weight Normalisation: $W_i' = w_i / \sum (w_i)$ for all i criteriaEquation (6)

To determine the relative importance of the 17 factors impacting women's empowerment in homestay tourism, the study employed a combined weighting approach to safeguard against outlier-influence. This method incorporated both EWM and CV weighting methods, giving equal weight to the results from each to minimize outlier-influence and data-inconsistencies (Sahin, 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). The following equation calculates the combined weight for each factor.

$$W_{j\text{combined}} = 0.5 (W_{j\text{Entropy}} + W_{j\text{CoV}}) \dots \dots \dots \text{Eqn (7)}$$

HARRINGTON DESIRABILITY FUNCTION

The Harrington desirability function, introduced by Harrington in 1965, is a mathematical tool used in decision-making scenarios involving multiple quality characteristics (Harrington, 1965). It simplifies complex situations by converting various quality measures into a single desirability score, allowing for better optimization (Ibragimov & Imomov, 2023; Terskaya & Slesarchuk, 2020). The Harrington Desirability function can be applied in various fields of tourism research - destination-attractiveness, desirability of tourism-offerings,

tourist-satisfaction, destinations-sustainability, comparing homestay-options, homestay-improvement) etc. With little modification in original Harrington desirability formula the Desirability:

$$D = (d_1.W_1 + d_2.W_2 + d_3.W_3 + \dots + d_n.W_n) / (1/n) \dots \text{Eqn (8)}$$

Where: D is the overall desirability score (between 0 and 1).

Wi is the combined weight assigned to i-th homestay evaluation parameter

di is the normalised value of i-th homestay evaluation parameter; n is no. of factors

This study utilizes the Harrington desirability function to examine the "Desirability Index" across the three regions under investigation: Sikkim, Darjeeling, and Kalimpong based on the mean scores and individual desirability indices of 17 relevant factors.

INDEX BASED ASSESSMENT OF PRESENT WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The current status of women empowerment was evaluated in this study with the help of socio-economic empowerment score/index (ES) for women by following the mathematical methodology adopted in the past studies (Alkire et al., 2013; Roy, Chatterjee & Dutta Gupta, 2018) for the 3 study regions of eastern Himalaya hills separately using 17 empowering factors (Table 1) under 4 dimensions as compiled from literature-survey and field-visits. The measurement carried out at both individual respondent level and for entire area level with the following equations At Respondent level,

$$ES = \sum (\text{Relative Weight of } i\text{th attribute} \times \text{Value given for each } i\text{th attributes}) \dots \text{Eqn. (9)}$$

Where, value for each of the ith attribute was presented as +1 for agreement, 0 for no response and -1 for disagreement with a given question.

For Study Area (Darjeeling/Kalimpong/Sikkim)

$$ES = ES_a + ES_{ina} \times \Omega \dots \text{Eqn. (10)}$$

Where, ES_a = Proportion of Women of Hills of a study region with adequate empowerment in all factors; and ES_{ina} = Proportion of Women without sufficient empowerment in factors considered.

Ω = Proportion of factors where inadequately empowered Women have adequate empowerment (i.e. No of Cases scored 1 in more than 9 out of 17 criteria).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Demographic analysis revealed differences in gender distribution, age groups, occupations, education levels, and homestay experience across the three regions. These variations may be linked to regional development and necessitate targeted approaches to empower women in homestay tourism. Darjeeling had a higher proportion of female participants (n= 49, 61.25%) compared to Kalimpong and Sikkim (both 47.50%). Kalimpong had more respondents between 30-50 years, while Darjeeling had a younger population (under 30-40 years). These differences suggest variations in regional development. Agriculture and homemaking were prominent across all regions, highlighting the role of women in both sectors. All regions had a significant number of graduates, but Darjeeling and Sikkim had a higher proportion with advanced degrees, suggesting potential educational disparities. Darjeeling and Sikkim had a higher concentration of participants involved in homestays for over 3 years, indicating a more established homestay industry in these regions.

STUDY REGION-WISE

IMPORTANCE/WEIGHTAGES OF WOMEN EMPOWERING FACTORS

The study used a mixed weighting approach (Equations 1-7) to determine the relative importance of 17 factors influencing women's empowerment in homestays across the three regions (Table 3). Statistical tests confirmed that the data on assigned weights followed a normal distribution as per Shapiro-Wilk and D'Agostino-Pearson tests [(WDarjeeling = 0.964, p > 0.05 (0.714); WKalimpong = 0.962, p > 0.05 (0.665); WSikkim = 0.961, p > 0.05 (0.655) and DADarjeeling = 1.276, p > 0.05 (0.528); DAKalimpong = 1.032, p > 0.05 (0.558); DASikkim = 1.565, p > 0.05 (0.457)]. Interestingly, pairwise t-tests [tDarjeeling-Kalimpong(32, 2-tailed) = 0.000941, p > 0.05, tSikkim-Kalimpong(32, 2-tailed) = 0.000943, p > 0.05, tDarjeeling-Sikkim(32, 2-tailed) = 0.000952, p > 0.05] revealed no significant differences in how important homestay owners from the three regions (Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Sikkim) perceive these factors. This suggests a shared regional perspective. Freedom of decision making (WEF6) and Economic Independence for local women (WEF1) factors emerged as the top priority across all regions. In Sikkim, women's ownership or control over property and assets (WEF7) was seen as the third most important factor whereas for Kalimpong and Darjeeling, homestays were

viewed as promoting self-worth and confidence (WEF16) and feeling of belonging, recognition within a social group and enables unrestricted movement (WEF15) as additional key empowering factors for women.

Table 3: Importance/Weightages of Homestay-venture driven Women-empowering Factors

Women Empowering Factor Code	Darjeeling	Kalimpong	Sikkim
WEF1	0.06308	0.06058	0.06314
WEF2	0.05770	0.05993	0.05958
WEF3	0.05887	0.05968	0.05927
WEF4	0.05645	0.05887	0.05646
WEF5	0.05928	0.05571	0.05885
WEF6	0.05866	0.06307	0.06054
WEF7	0.05848	0.05954	0.06068
WEF8	0.05571	0.05882	0.05848
WEF9	0.05688	0.05643	0.05865
WEF10	0.05958	0.05770	0.05771
WEF11	0.05994	0.05886	0.05993
WEF12	0.05966	0.06067	0.05574
WEF13	0.05678	0.05678	0.05886
WEF14	0.05883	0.05672	0.05883
WEF15	0.06069	0.05948	0.05678
WEF16	0.06055	0.05866	0.05688
WEF17	0.05885	0.05848	0.05960

CORRELATION OF OVERALL WOMEN EMPOWERMENT STATUS WITH EMPOWERING PARAMETERS

A correlation analysis using Kendall's Tau (Kendall, 1938) was conducted to examine the relationships between the 17 women's empowerment factors across the three study regions. This test is suitable for Likert scale data (subjective opinions) and non-normal distributions, making it more robust for this analysis (Welker, 1938).

The analysis revealed significant positive correlations (moderate to strong) ranging from 0.226 to 0.972 between the factors within each region (Table 4). Most factors showed moderate to strong correlations (Darjeeling: 0.589, Kalimpong: 0.575, Sikkim: 0.865). However, the strength of correlations varied, suggesting the influence of local contexts on the importance of specific factors. Sikkim exhibited the strongest positive correlations, with 15 out of 17 factors exceeding 0.8. Notably, economic Independence ($\tau = 0.972$) and counteracting male domination and domestic abuse ($\tau = 0.944$) showed the strongest correlations in Sikkim. Darjeeling had a more balanced distribution, with 9 coefficients above 0.7 and 8 between 0.4 and 0.7. Kalimpong displayed the weakest correlations, with only 4 coefficients above 0.7 and several below 0.5. Factors WEF1, WEF6, WEF7, WEF11, WEF15, WEF16 and WEF17 consistently showed strong positive correlations across all regions, suggesting their universal importance for women's empowerment in homestay tourism.

Table 4: Correlation Study of Homestay-venture driven Women-empowering Factors

Women Empowering Factor Code	Kendall's Tau with p-value		
	Darjeeling	Kalimpong	Sikkim
WEC1	0.792	0.742	0.972
WEC2	0.578	0.708	0.922
WEC3	0.646	0.680	0.917
WEC4	0.480	0.603	0.773
WEC5	0.647	0.226	0.894
WEC6	0.615	0.844	0.955
WEC7	0.585	0.631	0.961
WEC8	0.335	0.553	0.865
WEC9	0.528	0.277	0.872
WEC10	0.664	0.519	0.841
WEC11	0.725	0.572	0.944
WEC12	0.710	0.791	0.672
WEC13	0.497	0.397	0.915
WEC14	0.623	0.461	0.892
WEC15	0.756	0.627	0.822
WEC16	0.735	0.547	0.823
WEC17	0.630	0.544	0.934

ASSESSING DEMOGRAPHIC EFFECT OF HOMESTAY-OWNERS UPON WOMEN-EMPOWERMENT

A Chi-square test investigated the connection between homestay host demographics and their overall women's empowerment status across the three regions, considering the 17 identified factors (Table 5). Significant relationships were found in all regions, but with varying strengths. In Darjeeling, only gender ($\chi^2 = 29.034$, $p < 0.001$, $V = 0.602$) and occupation ($\chi^2 = 29.834$, $p < 0.001$, $V = 0.611$) showed significant associations, suggesting their influence on women's empowerment within this region. For Kalimpong, all demographic factors displayed significant associations with women's empowerment status with Gender ($\chi^2 = 48.16$, $p < 0.001$, $V = 0.78$) having the strongest association. Similar to Darjeeling, only gender ($\chi^2 = 80$, $p < 0.001$, $V = 0.99$) and occupation ($\chi^2 = 57.66$, $p < 0.001$, $V = 0.60$) demonstrated significant relationships for Sikkim. These findings highlight regional disparities in the relationship between demographic characteristics and women's empowerment. However, gender and occupation consistently emerged as significant predictors across all regions, suggesting their crucial role in determining women's empowerment within homestay settings.

Study Region/ Test Parameters	Gender			Age			Occupation			Education			Tenure		
	D	K	S	D	K	S	D	K	S	D	K	S	D	K	S
	j	l	k	j	l	k	j	l	k	j	l	k	j	l	k
Pearson's chi-square	2	4	8	4	2	8	2	6	5	0	2	1	3	1	8
	9	8	0	4	4	8	9	4	7	5	3	3	3	3	2
	0	1	0	9	3	8	8	7	6	4	7	4	3	0	4
	3	6	0	8	8	6	3	8	6	1	2	6	6	2	4
d.o.f	1	3	2	3	9	6	4	12	8	4	12	8	5	15	8
Critical Value	3	7	5	7	1	1	9	2	1	9	2	1	1	2	1
	8	8	9	8	9	5	4	5	9	4	0	5	0	0	5
	4	2	9	2	2	9	9	3	1	3	1	7	0	1	
p value	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	9	0	0	6	6	4
	0	0	0	7	0	8	0	0	0	8	1	9	4	0	1
	0	0	0	3	4	1	0	0	0	1	2	7	4	1	1
Significant	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N
	e	e	e	o	e	o	e	e	e	o	e	o	o	o	o
	s	s	s	s	s	s	s	s	s	s	s	s	s	s	s
Cramer's V	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	6	7	0	2	3	2	6	5	6	0	3	2	2	2	2
	0	8	0	5	2	4	1	2	0	7	3	9	1	3	3

ASSESSMENT OF INDEX BASED WOMEN EMPOWERMENT STATUS

The Empowerment Score (ES) serves as a quantitative measure of women's empowerment, with higher scores indicating greater control and agency (Alkire et al., 2018). This study calculated the ES for homestay owners in the three regions using specific equations (Equations 9 & 10). This analysis reveals regional disparities in women's empowerment, with Sikkim demonstrating the highest level and Darjeeling the lowest. While homestays contribute to women's empowerment in all regions, the extent of this impact varies. The results (Table 6) reveal variations in ES scores across the regions where Darjeeling showed the lowest proportion ($\alpha = 0.415$) of adequately empowered women and the highest prevalence of inadequately empowered women compared to the other regions. This suggests a lower overall level of women's empowerment in Darjeeling. However, Darjeeling also had a higher value (0.188) for adequacy of homestay-led socio-economic empowerment, suggesting some positive effects of homestays on women's empowerment in this region. But Kalimpong registered a slightly higher ES score (0.575) than Darjeeling, indicating a moderate level of women's empowerment. Additionally, Kalimpong exhibited a value of 0.325 for adequacy of homestay-led socio-economic empowerment, suggesting a role for homestays in improving women's empowerment here as well. Finally, Sikkim Had the highest ES score (0.613), indicating the greatest level of women's empowerment among homestay owners. Sikkim also had the highest value (0.475) for adequacy of homestay-led socio-economic empowerment, suggesting that homestays play a significant role in empowering women in this region. The similar index-based assessment of women's empowerment status for Darjeeling only was made earlier for summer season of 2023 in social entrepreneurial context.

Particulars	Darjeeling	Kalimpong	Sikkim
No of Cases having weighted scored > 0.8	15	26	38
No of Cases having weighted scored < 0.8	65	54	42
No of Cases (Respondent Homestay-host) scored 1 (Agreement) in more than 9 of 17 factors out of cases with weighted score < 0.8	27	20	11
a) Proportion of Cases bearing inadequately empowered women have adequate socio-economic empowerment,	(27/65) = 0.415	(20/54) = 0.370	(11/42) = 0.262
ES ₁	0.188	0.325	0.475
ES ₂	0.813	0.675	0.525
ES = ES ₁ + ES ₂ x α	0.525	0.575	0.613

The summarised descriptive statistics (Table 7) for women empowerment scores in study regions reveals that, Sikkim exhibits the highest average empowerment score ($M = 4.072$) followed by Kalimpong ($M = 3.602$) and Darjeeling ($M = 3.222$). This suggests Sikkim has the highest overall level of women's empowerment. Variability-wise standard deviations (SD) indicate moderate variability within each region (Kalimpong: $SD = 0.800$, Sikkim: $SD = 0.581$, Darjeeling: $SD = 1.038$). Sikkim shows the least variability, implying a more consistent level of women's empowerment compared to the other regions. Kalimpong and Darjeeling have negative skewness, suggesting a slight tendency for scores to be lower than the mean (leftward skew). Sikkim has positive skewness, indicating a slight tendency for scores to be higher than the mean (rightward skew). All regions exhibit negative kurtosis, meaning the distributions are flatter compared to a normal distribution, with most scores concentrated around the mean. The mode varies across regions: Sikkim (4.826) > Darjeeling (4.118) > Kalimpong (4.48). Median scores are slightly lower than the mean in all regions, further supporting the observed rightward skew in some distributions.

Descriptive Statistics Parameters for Overall Women Empowerment	Kalimpong	Sikkim	Darjeeling
Mean	3.602	4.072	3.222
Standard Error	0.089	0.065	0.116
Median	3.945	3.845	3.739
Mode	4.48	4.826	4.118
Standard Deviation	0.8	0.581	1.038
Sample Variance	0.64	0.337	1.077
Kurtosis	-1.62	-1.626	-1.355
Skewness	-0.25	0.056	-0.384

ANALYTICAL COMPARISONS ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN 3 STUDY REGIONS

Before comparing regions, the normality of women's empowerment scores was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test (Royston, 1982). The results (Table 8) indicated that the scores in all three regions (Kalimpong, Sikkim, Darjeeling) deviated significantly from a normal distribution (Kalimpong: $W = 0.842$, $p < .001$; Sikkim: $W = 0.869$, $p < .001$; Darjeeling: $W = 0.886$, $p < .001$). Therefore, the Mann-Whitney U test (2-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$) was employed for pairwise comparisons between regions.

The Mann-Whitney test results (Table 9) revealed statistically significant differences in women's empowerment through homestays for all region pairs.

Shapiro-Wilk's Parameters	Kalimpong	Sikkim	Darjeeling
W	0.842	0.869	0.886
p-value	0.000	0.000	0.000
alpha	0.05	0.05	0.05
normal	No	No	No

The Mann-Whitney test outcome (Table 9) yielded the existence of a statistically significant difference in terms of Homestay-led Women Empowerment in Socio-economic context for all pairs. Kalimpong had a higher median score (3.945) compared to Sikkim (3.845), indicating a slightly greater perceived level of empowerment (moderate association, $r = 0.270$). Darjeeling had a significantly lower median score (3.739) compared to Sikkim (3.845), suggesting a lower level of perceived empowerment (moderate to large association, $r = 0.370$). Darjeeling demonstrated a significantly lower median score (3.739) compared to Kalimpong (3.945), indicating a lower level of perceived empowerment (small to moderate association, $r = 0.222$).

	Kalimpong	Sikkim		Darjeeling	Sikkim		Darjeeling	Kalimpong
Median	3.945	3.845	Median	3.739	3.845	Median	3.739	3.945
Rank sum	5438	7442	Rank sum	5061	7819	Rank sum	5618	7262
U	4202	2198	U	4579	1821	U	4022	2378
U-crit	2625.17		U-crit	2625.17		U-crit	2625.17	
p-value	0.001		p-value	0.000		p-value	0.005	
Sig	Yes		Sig	Yes		Sig	Yes	
Effect r	0.270		Effect r	0.372		Effect r	0.222	

The pairwise comparisons reveal distinct patterns like, women in Kalimpong perceive a higher level of empowerment compared to Darjeeling whereas Sikkim's women perceive a higher level of empowerment compared to Darjeeling. The difference between Kalimpong and Sikkim is less substantial than the differences between Darjeeling and the other two regions. These results suggest that regional factors play a role in shaping women's experiences of empowerment within homestay tourism.

EVALUATION OF DESIRABILITY WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH HOMESTAY-VENTURE

This section explores how homestays contribute to women's empowerment across Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and Sikkim using the Harrington's Desirability Index (HDI) (Table 10a & 10b). In terms of regional strengths and challenges, Sikkim scores well in factors related to participation, indicating a supportive environment for women in homestays. Darjeeling offers alternative income options for women and fosters entrepreneurship, aligning with previous research (Subba, Mandal & Tamang, 2024). Its lower overall scores compared to Sikkim suggest room for improvement especially in access to resources. Interestingly Kalimpong scores well in factors related to skill development, social mobility, and legal rights while ownership-rights, social-issues and access to resources need attention for improvement. Darjeeling (HDI: 0.606) holding highest potential for empowerment, but needs focus on healthcare and education while Kalimpong (HDI: 0.581) reflects strength in legal awareness and participation, but social issues and resources require improvement and finally Sikkim (HDI: 0.598) performs best in decision-making and social mobility, but challenges remain in domestic violence, resources, and skill development.

Women Empowering Factor Code	Mean Score			Linguistic Category		
	Darjeeling	Kalimpong	Sikkim	Darjeeling	Kalimpong	Sikkim
WEF 1	3.438	3.825	3.913	Medium	High	High
WEF 2	3.088	3.750	4.363	Medium	High	High
WEF 3	3.238	4.138	4.400	Medium	High	High
WEF 4	2.925	3.325	3.525	Medium	Medium	Medium
WEF 5	3.200	3.850	4.550	Medium	High	High
WEF 6	3.213	3.350	3.788	Medium	Medium	High
WEF 7	3.088	2.950	3.725	Medium	Medium	High
WEF 8	3.375	3.350	3.763	Medium	Medium	High
WEF 9	2.938	3.225	3.938	Medium	Medium	High
WEF 10	3.275	4.275	4.450	Medium	High	High
WEF 11	3.363	3.250	3.250	Medium	Medium	Medium
WEF 12	3.100	3.850	3.763	Medium	High	High
WEF 13	3.313	3.675	4.350	Medium	Medium	High
WEF 14	3.263	4.288	4.850	Medium	High	High
WEF 15	3.363	3.500	4.513	Medium	Medium	High
WEF 16	3.463	4.113	4.838	Medium	High	High
WEF 17	3.125	2.563	3.313	Medium	Low	Medium

Women Empowering Factor Code	Applicable TFN			Harrington DI for i-th Criteria		
	Darjeeling	Kalimpong	Sikkim	Darjeeling	Kalimpong	Sikkim
WEF 1	(2, 3, 4)	(3, 4, 5)	(3, 4, 5)	0.719	0.413	0.456
WEF 2	(2, 3, 4)	(3, 4, 5)	(3, 4, 5)	0.544	0.375	0.681
WEF 3	(2, 3, 4)	(3, 4, 5)	(3, 4, 5)	0.619	0.569	0.700
WEF 4	(2, 3, 4)	(2, 3, 4)	(2, 3, 4)	0.463	0.663	0.763
WEF 5	(2, 3, 4)	(3, 4, 5)	(3, 4, 5)	0.600	0.425	0.775
WEF 6	(2, 3, 4)	(2, 3, 4)	(3, 4, 5)	0.606	0.675	0.394
WEF 7	(2, 3, 4)	(2, 3, 4)	(3, 4, 5)	0.544	0.475	0.363
WEF 8	(2, 3, 4)	(2, 3, 4)	(3, 4, 5)	0.688	0.675	0.381
WEF 9	(2, 3, 4)	(2, 3, 4)	(3, 4, 5)	0.469	0.613	0.469
WEF10	(2, 3, 4)	(3, 4, 5)	(3, 4, 5)	0.638	0.638	0.725
WEF11	(2, 3, 4)	(2, 3, 4)	(2, 3, 4)	0.681	0.625	0.625
WEF12	(2, 3, 4)	(3, 4, 5)	(3, 4, 5)	0.550	0.425	0.381
WEF13	(2, 3, 4)	(2, 3, 4)	(3, 4, 5)	0.656	0.838	0.675
WEF14	(2, 3, 4)	(3, 4, 5)	(3, 4, 5)	0.631	0.644	0.925
WEF15	(2, 3, 4)	(2, 3, 4)	(3, 4, 5)	0.681	0.750	0.756
WEF16	(2, 3, 4)	(3, 4, 5)	(3, 4, 5)	0.731	0.556	0.919
WEF17	(2, 3, 4)	(1, 2, 3)	(2, 3, 4)	0.563	0.781	0.656
Overall HDI				Darjeeling	Kalimpong	Sikkim
				0.606	0.581	0.598

DISCUSSION

This research reinforces the importance of education and socio-economic factors for women's empowerment. It highlights the need for diverse empowerment initiatives in Darjeeling and Sikkim to improve women's status and opportunities (Kutlu & Ngoasong, 2024; Kimbu, Ngoasong & De Jong, 2024). Demographic factors significantly

influence women's empowerment in Kalimpong belt, aligning with past findings (Das, 2024; Panta & Thapa, 2018) whereas for Darjeeling and Sikkim, only gender and occupation are significant predictors, similar to previous research (Kumar & Devi, 2010). The regional disparity in women's empowerment among homestay hosts aligns with past research. Regions with more women in decision-making roles and with greater resource access tend to have higher empowerment scores. Similar to past studies (Sapkota, 2020; Sen & Walter, 2020), factors influencing homestay-based women's empowerment include economic opportunities, resource access, and gender norms (Scheyvens, 2003; Swain & Swain, 2004). Policies promoting education and economic opportunities contribute to higher women's empowerment in Sikkim, as seen in previous research (Aayog, 2018; Chakrabarty, Nepal & Pariyar, 2004; Sharma, 2003). However, Darjeeling and Kalimpong require interventions to improve the situation.

CONCLUSION

This study provides insights on economic independence for local women and autonomy in decision-making emerged as top priorities for homestay owners across all three hilly regions of eastern Himalayas. This study investigated women's empowerment in homestay businesses across three Eastern Himalayan regions: Sikkim, Darjeeling, and Kalimpong. Economic independence and decision-making autonomy are top priorities for women homestay-owners while gender and occupation are consistently significant predictors of women's empowerment across all regions. Sikkim emphasizes property-ownership/control for women and desirability for homestay initiatives is slightly lower despite higher HDI. Darjeeling being focused on self-esteem, confidence and ownership, shows a balanced distribution in empowerment factor correlations and substantial desirability for homestay initiatives. Kalimpong having similar thrust areas like Darjeeling manifests weaker correlations among women-empowerment factors and desirability for homestay initiatives is close behind Darjeeling. To summarise, the study ventilates the significance of homestay tourism ventures in empowering women in the Eastern Himalayan regions. Understanding these nuances of common priorities and acknowledging notable regional disparities for homestay-led women empowerment are crucial for designing and implementing targeted interventions, stakeholders can maximize homestay initiatives as a tool for more enhanced

women's empowerment, inclusive and sustainable community development in the region for dismantling traditional gender roles and foster supportive environments for women in all aspects of homestay management.

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Drivers of Tourist Value on their Retention: An Exploratory Analysis of European Tourists

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KEYWORDS

Emotional value; Social value; Novel value; Tourist retention; Adventure tourism

ABSTRACT

This study attempts to investigate the significance of emotional, social and novel values among European tourists. To explore the complexity of European tourists' value driver and their influence on re-business intentions after experiencing the adventure package offered by New-Delhi based adventure tour operators. To achieve the objectives of the study, exploratory research design and purposive sampling technique were adopted. The study found that, explored values have a crucial role in enhancing the European tourists revisit intentions. It is recommended that the tour operators should represent their tour packages in such a manner that highlights the multi-dimensionality of the value factor besides economic.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has emerged as highly dynamic experiential economic sector that contributes 9.1% to the India's GDP and provide 8% of total employment (Bhattacharya et al., 2023). Tourism has also been subject to enormous and constant changes over time that brought importance of strategic improvement and reorganisation of business conducts. The experiential aspect of the tourism package and its role in the tourist decision making process (Milan et al., 2015; Sung et al., 2021) has brought the in-depth understanding of their value perception towards behavioural intentions. In particular, previous studies have revealed that value generation from a tourism experience is related to revisit intention (El-Adly, 2019; Leal-Rodriguez, 2020). However, to assess the relative impact of tourist retention on the multidimensional value framework has been under-researched on revisit intention. An adventure activity is defined as "a recreational or a sporting pursuit that takes place in the outdoor and requires expenditure of physical energy" (Tapar et al., 2017). Adventure activities are divided into two main categories of hard adventure and soft adventure. Other studies have divided adventure activities into three types based on the space in which they are performed land based, water based, and air-based activities (Amatulli et al., 2021). Since adventure activities have different and unique characteristics, therefore each activity needs to be examined in detail in order to explore and understand the tourism experience from the perspective of the participants and values attached (Amatulli et al., 2021; Tapar et al., 2017). All adventure tourists generally seek some degree of physical activity challenge, nobility, escapism, emotional, and social experiences. In adventure tourism, tourist attitudes are complicated by intangibility dynamism and subjectivity which are often compounded when tourist is travelling away from their home. The present study examined European adventure tourists in terms of their novel value driver, emotional value driver and social value driver. The study aims to explore the complexity of European tourists' value driver and their influence on re-business intentions after experiencing the adventure package offered by New-Delhi based adventure tour operators. Previous studies of tourist value have been unidimensional and utilitarian value measure and few of them used multi-dimensional value framework (Suhartanto et al., 2020; Williams, 2016). However, less such study has been conducted in north-Indian adventure tourism context.

European tourist perceived quality relative to price paid fail to capture the diversity and richness of the tour package value perception. The emotional value, novel value and social value represent additional important factor in the value proposition of adventure service providers upon which the research is a scare. In adventure tourism context, this study aimed to see if the European tourists had different value drivers of the same activity which could have important implications when marketing adventure tourism products to these groups.

There are two schools of thoughts which derive value creation in international markets. One view argues that a product and services should be substantially standardised as global tourists are becoming more homogeneous in their needs and expectations. However, another school argue that global markets are becoming more dynamic and changing rapidly, thus demands a strong need for adaptation as per the tourists' socio-cultural dynamics, to offer a novel experience or emotional connection or may be socially familiar environment. Constant adaptation and innovation through the dynamic capabilities are necessary to achieve a global competitive advantage at a strategic level. It is thus argued that dynamic adaptation and innovation in terms of social, novel and emotional may be necessary to satisfy diverse tourist needs then standard follow-ups.

Considering the mentioned context, this study conducted an exploratory work aimed to analyse the value drivers of European tourist visited for adventure tourism in Delhi-NCR and their significance on tourist retention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Adventure tourism is growing and earning a solid position in general tourism market. Many projections estimated that the global adventure tourism market to reach \$1626.7 billion in 2025 (Amatulli et al., 2021). This growth has been also witnessing a shift in tourist profiles. The Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA 2017) showed that the motivations for adventure travellers have changed from quality services to value specific services. In recent years more than any other motivating factor adventure travellers are seeking transformative experiences and factors such as emotional connection, authentic social behavior, adventure uniqueness and involved special services are more in demand.

Consumer ideologies as action-oriented ideas shared by individuals with certain values beliefs and identities.

Tourist value is regarded as strategic concept for successful delivery of the tourism package. The built perception of the benefits gained by the tourist via comparisons of quality and pricing are insufficient and requires further indulgence of multidimensional approach. The aspect of values drivers for tourist retention in respect to packages offered in adventure tourism are recognized to have enormous development potential and in tourism marketing plays a richer and more complete measure of service perception. This study recognizes the significance of using a multi-dimensional value framework to assess the relative impact the tourist value drivers have on retention in adventure tourism context (Tran & Vu, 2021; Williams, 2016) encompassing emotional value, social value, and novelty value. Some studies have shown value directly affects retention without satisfaction playing a significant role and others found support for mediation role of satisfaction between value and tourist retention this study adopted the former perspective that value has direct impact on retentions as this seems to have minority of empirical support.

EMOTIONAL VALUE

Tourism consumption is an act of emotional attachment (Shavanddasht & Allan, 2019). Emotional value refers to different emotional states or sentiments associated with experiences gained. Emotional values defined as the utility offered by the potential to elicit a feeling or emotional state and it is frequently measured against the tourists' emotional "profile" in relation to the destination. Many studies show that tour operators who are perceived as providing high emotional value by their customers, are able to reduce customer anxiety unlike those which do not focus on providing this type of value. Perceived emotional value is considered as the utility derived from the feelings or affective states that relationship encounters yield for tourists. When providing high emotional value, operators are more likely to generate adequate satisfaction and revisit intentions. So far studies show that sales people with a developed mechanism of emotional regulation are able to make their relationship more effective, in that they can utilise emotional insights to better understand customer concerns, fears and pleasure. From a tourist's standpoint higher emotional value provides a safeguard that the operators activities are in the best interest of their relationship. Many studies show that tour operators who are perceived as providing high emotional value by their tourist are able to reduce

tourist anxiety or instil relief in them. A sense of attachment increases tourist satisfaction and the intention to return. Thus, the emotional value is an essential part of value drivers and has significant impact on tourist retention. The authors have adopted and modified the theory of C. Plutchik Poists that there are eight base emotions, and used in the interviews to extract natural responses.

NOVELTY VALUE

The perception of tourists to experience something new and different contrasting with previous experience can be used as generation of novelty value. Within the tourism literature, novelty is a multiple meaning, that may comprise thrill, surprise, scariness, or boredom avoidance (Blomstervik & Olsen, 2022). Tourist has become more sophisticated seeking renovation and changes. Despite the different perception, the search for novelty is regarded as one of the main reasons for adventure travel. Novelty value is highly connected to an individual personal emotion, where a particular form of novelty can act as both positive and negative (Blomstervik & Olsen, 2022)on tourist's perception. Many research has encouraged to evaluate the impact of the novelty value perception among tourists as value driver.

SOCIAL VALUE

Social value is the experience of a services that is intended to gain social recognition. It includes prestige, status, brand and not merely an economic measure. Social value is directly associated with social status and self-esteem of service experiences. In tourism famous places and destinations create a higher image and are respected by people (Leonardelli et al., 2010). Many previous studies have confirmed that social value has a significant impact on tourist retention. The more the tourists' perception of social value the greater the retention obtained.

Based upon the above literature this study examines the following significance:

- There is a strong relationship between the emotional value and tourist retention.
- There is a strong relationship between the novelty value and tourist retention.
- There is a strong relationship between the social value and tourist retention.

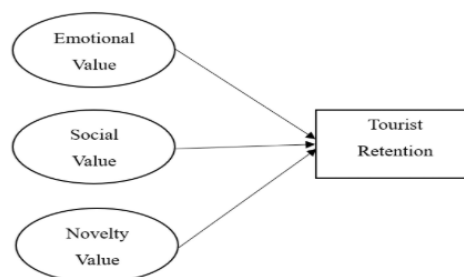


Fig 1. Source: Developed by Authors

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted exploratory approach to understand and gather practical experiences of the tourist in their natural context. The approach often used when the researchers aim to gain an in depth understanding of the underlying reasons, motivations, and perspectives of individuals or groups. An exploratory research approach also used to investigate a research question or phenomena where there is limited existing information or prior knowledge. Primary purpose of exploratory study is to gain insights and provide a foundation for more in depth research in future.

The researchers interviewed twenty-one respondents, purposively drawn from adventure destinations. Prior to participation, the voluntary nature of data collection was notified, and individual choice in providing data were taken. This non-probability technique was employed with the aim of attaining an in- depth comprehension of a certain phenomenon or a targeted population. The study is not interested in large numbers and in generalization of result. After speaking with twenty-one respondents the researchers ceased the collection of data as it became saturated. Therefore, a sample size of twenty-one individuals was deemed appropriate for conducting this quality study.

Data from the field work was analyzed manually after they were sorted and grouped into themes. Table 1 below shows a breakdown of a total number of people interviewed for the study.

Table 1. Sample information in collection chronology							
Respondents	Age	Gender	Country	Travel Purpose	No. of Visits	Marital Status	Income Source
1	25	Female	France	Adventure	1	Single	Service
2	28	Male	Germany	Adventure	1	Single	Service
3	32	Male	Germany	Adventure	3	Single	Business
4	31	Male	Germany	Adventure	2	Single	Service
5	26	Female	Spain	Adventure	1	Single	Service
6	31	Male	Bulgaria	Adventure	1	Single	Service
7	29	Male	Italy	Adventure	2	Married	Service
8	26	Female	Italy	Adventure	3	Married	Service
9	28	Male	Germany	Adventure	2	Single	Service
10	31	Male	France	Adventure	2	Single	Service
11	33	Male	Belgium	Adventure	2	Single	Service
12	28	Male	Denmark	Adventure	2	Single	Service
13	30	Female	Netherlands	Adventure	3	Single	Service
14	27	Female	Netherlands	Adventure	4	Single	Business
15	33	Male	France	Adventure	2	Married	Service
16	24	Female	France	Adventure	1	Married	Service
17	28	Male	Denmark	Adventure	1	Single	Service
18	28	Male	UK	Adventure	4	Single	Business
19	32	Male	Germany	Adventure	4	Single	Service
20	29	Male	Spain	Adventure	2	Single	Business
21	26	Female	Portugal	Adventure	1	Single	Service

Source: Field Survey by Authors

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

All the 21 respondents interviewed for the study highlighted the significance of tourist value in relation to revisit intention. The value factors are widely recognised as a fundamental element of adventure tourism services. Some respondents indicated that *“value perception undoubtedly plays a significant role in the generation of tourist re-experience intention, as it serve as a positive perception about destination as well as of services offered at the destination. Some of as visited for emotional and novel values that Indian adventure possesses”*.

Agreeing with the previous opinion that novelty value and emotional value play a particular important role in adventure tourism, one respondent remarked that, *“specifically when adventure tourism services meet our desire for adventure curiosity and love of experiences, we feel satisfied and committee to experience again or refer to our fallow nationals”*.

According to a respondent, *“tour operators who develop a range of services as per our personal characteristics and understand the level of involved emotional value are perceived to be a trustworthy. Furthermore, develop a positive narrative that downplay the emotional costs”*.

In this regard it would be interesting to explore the role of perceived emotional value and its connection to the functional value of an offer and

how interrelationship between these two can be exploited by the tour marketers. For a smooth and enjoyable experience, emotional value must be maintained well.

Another respondent who is a business professional, *“provided that in the present time of information overload and intensified contacts through professional service encounters emotional value is important as it has great potential with regard to reducing perceived uncertainty and risk of tour operators’ selection.”*

Therefore, it can be said that perceived emotional value can act as an auxiliary mechanism in generation of re-business with the supplier. Infrastructure (including vehicles and healthy meals/drinks) friendliness and hospitality, helpfulness, welcoming culture, providing personal space and appreciation in grace are particularly relevant to enhancing emotional value. Emotional value allows tourists to recognise the emotional benefits and appreciate the intrinsic value it adds to the tour operators.

From the above, it is evident that some tourists visit India because of its exceptional emotional connection, creating a true sense of adventure that has not been deliberately promoted in the tourism services marketing. Tour operators should pursue emotional connections as a strategy to build a better gauge of tourists’ future value.

This study has provided that all respondents admit a strong influence for novel value as they presume more risk, surprises and seek out novelty aspects of their experience to drive revisit intention. This may be a reflection of the younger generation of European tourists but this phenomenon has also been acknowledged as a draw for clientele in adventure destinations, serving as a means of generating more enthusiastic tourists and generation of opportunities and innovation for marketers. In adventure tourism, novel value remains an integral element of tourism experiences and a matter of significance for several travellers (Blomstervik & Olsen, 2022).

To build on our novelty findings, the marketing materials should creatively identify unique aspects of the tourist activity that would enhance novelty. In this way tourist prior acceptations could be more accurately met.

Tourists visiting adventure destinations engage in social exchange by interacting with the local people, learning about their traditions, fostering mutual appreciation, transmitting social behavior, and strengthening social bonds. These interactions exemplify the principles of social exchange theory and contribute to a deeper understanding. For example, various instances showcased, including adventure variety and related risks, adventure events, and adventure entertainments, effectively emphasise the significance of adventure tourism in providing visitors with immersive experiences. These foster a more profound connection to the socials of India.

According to a respondent, *“Bir-Billing in India, have played a major role in making it a popular destination for paragliding and we are fond of experiences offered and of high-quality standard maintenance”*.

Another respondent emphasized, *“myself and some few colleagues were contacted to engage in local/traditional adventure event called Kullu Dussehra. Trust me, it was a marvellous event. The people present especially foreigners were impressed with the hospitality and friendliness experienced”*.

Social congruence influences tourists' attitude and the easy involvement in the services delivery. This finding is relevant to the social-exchange theory which posits that interactions between individuals from different cultural backgrounds lead to the transmission of cultures across borders and foster mutual understanding and appreciation of diversity.

In this context, European tourists visiting the region for its adventure offerings engage in a form of social-exchange. They interact with the locals, goes into training with locals, share meals and trust. (Line & Runyan, 2014) found that knowledge and skills are the major source of competitive advantage in tourism industry. The repeated emphasis on authenticity social connection and adherence to social standards is particularly noteworthy within the remarks. A respondent stated that 'locals at adventure destination and our tour operator have been instrumental in making our experience more appealing through their dedication to social-authenticity. Therefore, tourism operators should understand the social sensitivity, soft gestures and familiarity with European socio-cultures and intent to increase tourist social involvement in the activity through customization and more involvement at destination, increasing social value and retention capacity of the offered services.

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATION

Adhering to multi-dimensionality value factors and effectively addressing in adventure tourism packages involve frequent challenges. The importance of the current study findings lies in the continuous requirement for support and progress within the sector. According to a tour operator, it is crucially important that the generated value perception should match the attached value in the packages which is sometimes a hard thing to do. Tourists have diverse preferences, and opt services above their set standards which can be tackled with multi-dimensionality of value factors. Some tourists might be hesitant to try new and unfamiliar adventure packages and attachment of values like social can bring confidence and preference. This can help to improve the new experience for European tourists and make it easier for operators to operate in a compliant manner.

Although this study offers distinct insights, some limitations should be taken into consideration as avenues for further research. The focus on indicators of established status and self-esteem limits the articles from our sample, and other studies also dedicated to sociocultural indicators are not included. Due to the limited nature, it was impossible to ascertain the weight dimension of sociocultural indicators and their variation according to different geographical settings and institutional contexts which can further included in future research.

By ensuring that adventure packages experiences are novel and enjoyable this study focuses on the construct of novelty's perception among European tourists. The possible antecedents and consequences that could help to explore the similarity and differences in tourists' evaluation of novelty, especially the interaction between novelty as a belief and the emotional outcomes of stimulating different consequences could foster the experience generating revisit behaviors. Furthermore, combining elements from possible antecedents, core evaluation, and consequences are encouraged to nurture novelty in tourism packages, supporting the economic environmental and cultural sustainability of the local adventure destinations.

Although this study offers novel insights, some limitations should be taken into consideration as avenues for further research. If, when and how cognitive novelty interacts with emotional reactions are in our opinion one of the most fundamental research issues for progress on novelty in tourism which is missing in the current study. Several other antecedents to novelty have been suggested (personality traits; personal values; self-constructs) for further research. Individual differences in sensation, arousal, and variety-seeking can be extended and integrated with neuroticism, openness, and conservation as antecedents to novel tourism objects. Self-constructs might also be given more attention in future studies, particularly self-image, self-identity and self-efficacy can influence individual's perception of novel tourism objects. This study in particular recommends future research to examine novelty from an attitude perspective and measure novel tourism objects.

This study analyses the impact of emotional marketing on tourists' behaviour, demonstrating how emotions drive purchasing decisions and retention intentions. It examines the theoretical foundations of emotional consumption and presents trust and confidence factors to illustrate how emotional value becomes a central pillar of packaging strategy. Additionally, it explores the limitations of emotional value in marketing practice and suggests future directions for its application. The study emphasises to pursue emotional value in their marketing strategies, as a means of consistently satisfying tourists' emotional needs. In order to maintain competitiveness in the market, it is essential for tour operators to continuously innovate and optimise their products, deepening emotional value to meet the diverse emotional needs of tourists.

We also acknowledge that our decision to measure emotional value with the theory of C. Plutchik Poists can be considered as a shortcoming, as emotional value is enhanced by maximising the positive as well as minimising the negative feelings that are outcomes of emotional processes in service relationship in this regard future studies should approach emotional value more comprehensively by capturing the broader scope of emotional value manifestations in its operationalization. To sum up an obvious limitation of this study is its cross-sectional design which reflects on a single point in time that limits the ability to test for casual effects.

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Anthropological Approaches in Tourism Research; Methods, Scope, and Challenges in Understanding Tourism Spaces

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Tourism anthropology, ethnography, tourism research, host-guest interaction, reflexivity, cultural authenticity, research ethics

ABSTRACT

Tourism is not only an economic activity but also a complex social and cultural process that shapes human interactions and meanings across different spaces. Understanding tourism through an anthropological perspective provides a deeper insight into how people experience, interpret, and transform destinations and cultures. Anthropology, with its focus on human behavior, cultural diversity, and lived experience, contributes significantly to tourism research by uncovering the symbolic and relational dimensions of travel and hospitality. This paper explores the scope, methodological possibilities, and challenges of employing anthropological approaches in tourism research. Drawing on a review of scholarly literature and the author's field experiences, the paper examines key ethnographic methods, including participant observation, autoethnography, multi-sited ethnography, and visual ethnography and their applications to tourism contexts. These methodological approaches reveal the complexities of cultural performances, the negotiation of authenticity, and the power relations that shape tourism encounters. The discussion also highlights ethical dilemmas and issues of researcher positionality that arise while navigating diverse and multi-layered tourist spaces. The findings call for a reflexive and critical stance that acknowledges the researcher's influence on knowledge production and interpretation within the tourism spaces.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a key player in the global economy, driving job creation, fostering local development, and encouraging cross-cultural interactions. But it's not just about the money; tourism is a rich social and cultural experience that connects people, places, and practices in intricate ways. To really understand these dynamics, we need to look beyond just the economic and managerial aspects and dive into the real-life experiences, meanings, and emotions that shape how tourists engage with their surroundings. Anthropology, with its focus on ethnography and cultural insights, offers a fantastic perspective for exploring these layers. The UN Tourism (formerly known as the United Nations World Tourism Organisation) describes tourism as "the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes" (UNWTO, n.d.). This definition highlights the temporary and mobile essence of tourism, primarily viewing it as an act of travel and consumption. Scholars have pointed out that tourism is not just about moving from one place to another; it's also about creating and enjoying services and experiences (Williams & Hall, 2000). Hospitality plays a crucial role here, representing the relationship between hosts and guests through services like accommodation, food, and cultural experiences. This relationship is often characterized by generosity, care, and respect (Heard, 2010). Over the years, tourism and hospitality have transformed from exclusive activities for the wealthy into a global industry that's accessible to a wider audience, influenced by technological

advancements, economic growth, and changing consumer preferences. While these definitions and trends are significant, they don't capture the social negotiations, cultural identities, and emotional landscapes that are woven into tourism spaces.

Anthropology, especially through socio-cultural approaches, allows researchers to examine tourism as a place of meaning-making, negotiation, and performance. Methods like participant observation, autoethnography, multi-sited ethnography, and visual ethnography shed light on the intricate interactions and power dynamics that shape tourism experiences. These techniques allow us to grasp how authenticity is both created and challenged, how cultural identities are expressed, and how hosts and guests navigate the complexities of exchange, intimacy, and inequality. For example, during fieldwork in the cultural tourism circuits of Rudraprayag (Uttarakhand state, India), it was noted how local guides skillfully balanced tourists' expectations of history with community narratives that often remained hidden from outsiders. This selective storytelling underscores the politics of representation and the nuanced performances that define heritage tourism. Experiences like these highlight the importance of anthropological perspectives in capturing the rich complexity of tourism spaces. In this context, the goals of this study are to explore the methodological possibilities of anthropological approaches in tourism research and to investigate the challenges, ethical dilemmas, and issues of positionality that come into play when applying these methods in tourism settings. This article draws on a review of existing scholarly literature as well as the author's field experiences.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

The intersection of anthropology and tourism, often referred to as tourism anthropology, is a dynamic and evolving field that examines the cultural, social, and economic impacts of tourism on societies. The anthropology of tourism emerged as a significant academic concern in the 1970s, with Valene Smith's "Hosts and Guests" marking a pivotal moment in the field's development. This subfield has grown to encompass various academic traditions, contributing to the establishment of tourism studies as a distinct area of inquiry. Anthropologists have historically been ambivalent about studying tourism, initially focusing on its negative impacts on local communities, particularly in rural areas (Chambers, 2009). The anthropology of tourism provides a holistic

framework for understanding the complex interactions between tourists and host communities, emphasising the cross-cultural interconnections of economic, environmental, and social domains. This approach not only enriches the study of tourism but also offers valuable insights into the broader implications of tourism on global cultures and economies.

Anthropology plays a vital role in understanding the human factors of tourism studies for several reasons like it provides in-depth insights into the cultural practices, beliefs, and values of both hosts and guests. By studying these cultural dimensions, anthropologists can reveal how cultural exchanges occur in tourism spaces and how they influence the interactions between tourists and local communities. Anthropological methods, including participant observation, allow for a nuanced understanding of human behaviour in tourism contexts. This includes examining how tourists' cultural backgrounds affect their expectations, interactions, and experiences, as well as how locals respond to and engage with tourists. Anthropology explores the social structures and relationships within communities that are impacted by tourism. Understanding the dynamics between different stakeholders, such as local residents, tour operators, and government entities, can help identify power imbalances and foster more equitable tourism practices. Anthropologists study how tourism affects cultural heritage and community identity. They investigate how local traditions and practices are presented to tourists and how this representation can either preserve or commodify cultural heritage. This understanding is crucial for developing sustainable tourism practices that respect and promote local cultures.

Anthropology examines the economic implications of tourism on local communities. By understanding the complexities of economic interactions, anthropologists can assess how tourism can empower or exploit local populations, helping to develop strategies that maximize benefits while minimizing negative impacts. Anthropological research emphasizes the importance of involving local communities in tourism development. By understanding local perspectives and values, anthropologists can advocate for community-based tourism initiatives that prioritize sustainability and cultural preservation. Anthropology provides tools for analyzing communication between different cultures.

Understanding how cultural misunderstandings can arise in tourism contexts can lead to improved interactions and experiences for both tourists and hosts. An example of promoting and educating local culture can be traced in the field, youtube channels created by tourism villagers such as 'Madhyamaheshwar Ghati' and 'Priyanka Yogi Tiwari' from Triyuginarayan Village share their culture and lifestyle with the outside world.

In tourism spaces, the interactions between hosts and guests are fundamental, as they shape the overall experience and cultural exchange. Hosts often display hospitality through warm welcomes, personalised services, and a genuine interest in sharing their culture, which can significantly enhance the guest's experience. Conversely, guests are encouraged to engage respectfully with local customs and traditions, fostering a mutual understanding that enriches both parties. The behaviour of locals can vary widely, influenced by factors such as cultural norms, economic conditions, and the impact of tourism on their daily lives. In some cases, locals may embrace tourism as an opportunity for economic growth, showcasing their heritage and traditions with pride. However, there can also be instances of resentment or frustration, particularly if tourists exhibit disrespectful behaviour or fail to engage with the local culture meaningfully. Tourists, on the other hand, bring their own behaviours and expectations into tourism spaces, which can affect the dynamics of interaction. Tourists are motivated by a variety of factors, including the desire for relaxation, cultural exploration, and adventure. Their behaviour is influenced by personal preferences, cultural background, and external factors such as economic conditions and social trends (Caldito et al., 2015, Cohen, 2014). Some tourists may approach their travels with a desire for authentic experiences, actively seeking to connect with local communities and learn from their perspectives. Others may prioritise convenience and comfort, often leading to a more transactional relationship with their surroundings. Moreover, the interactions within tourism spaces are also influenced by the presence of other stakeholders, such as tour operators, local businesses, and government entities. These players contribute to shaping the tourism experience by providing services, creating attractions, and implementing policies that impact both guests and hosts. Ultimately, the quality of interactions in tourism spaces is crucial for fostering sustainable tourism practices that benefit all parties involved.

Cultural differences play a pivotal role in shaping tourism experiences, influencing both tourist behaviour and the perceptions of local communities. Research indicates that cultural background significantly affects tourists' preferences and evaluations of activities at destinations (Seddighi et al., 2001). For instance, national culture relates to tourists' preferences for participatory activities and their evaluations of sightseeing, participatory, and ancillary activities. Power distance, individualism, and masculinity positively relate to tourist evaluations, while uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence are negatively related (Manrai & Manrai, 2011).

In the context of cultural tourism, socio-cultural influence can foster global peace by enhancing intercultural understanding. However, the effectiveness of this process depends on factors such as tourists' intentions, mindfulness during experiences, and the quality of interactions. These elements highlight the complex interplay between cultural differences and tourism experiences. There are some major theories or concepts supporting this. Tourist behaviour and decision-making are influenced by a combination of personal, cultural, and contextual factors. The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) is a useful framework for understanding these dynamics, with cultural differences and destination scale moderating its predictive power (Wynn, 2021). For example, the predictive power of TPB for tourists' destination visits varies across Eastern and Western cultures, as well as between large and small destinations (Hassan, 2016).

Tourism can have both positive and negative impacts on local communities and cultural heritage. On the positive side, community-based tourism (CBT) can empower local communities, conserve natural environments, and promote cultural preservation. For example, the Gaundar village offers a way to engage with the outside world while preserving their ecocentric worldview. However, challenges such as lack of trained human resources, infrastructure, and financial support can hinder the success of CBT initiatives. Integrating intangible cultural heritage into tourism can provide unique opportunities for tourism development. However, residents' perspectives are often overlooked in this process. Field insight from Makkumath, shows that residents' positive perceptions of tourism impacts significantly affect their supportive behaviors,

while place attachment indirectly influences their behaviors. This underscores the importance of considering residents' perceptions in cultural heritage tourism development.

Tourism development strategies must account for human behavior and cultural factors to ensure sustainability and effectiveness. Local community involvement is crucial for sustainable tourism development. For example, members of the Eco Development Committee (EDC) initiative in Makkumath village, attitudes and perceptions of benefits significantly influence active participation in sustainable tourism practices. Conversely, social norms and knowledge have a limited impact, suggesting the need for more effective approaches to strengthen social norms and provide relevant education to the community. Cultural tourism experiences also play a significant role in predicting future tourist behavior. Relaxation and learning about local culture are key components of cultural tourism experiences that generate electronic word-of-mouth (e-WoM) behavior and shape destination image. This highlights the importance of creating enriching and educational experiences for tourists.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACHES

Anthropology is a multifaceted discipline that encompasses various subfields, each focusing on different aspects of human life, such as cultural, social, biological, and linguistic dimensions. This comprehensive approach allows anthropologists to understand the complexities of human existence and the diverse ways in which societies function and evolve. The discipline's holistic nature and its emphasis on comparative studies make it a vital field for understanding human diversity and the factors that shape human behaviour and societal structures. Tourism anthropology employs a comparative framework, integrating various scales of analysis to understand the cross-cultural impacts of tourism (Harkin, 1995). The field has evolved to include constructivist approaches that highlight the creative appropriations and cultural reinventions facilitated by tourism (Ross et al., 2017). Methodological innovations in tourism anthropology have led to the exploration of new cultural forms arising from interactions between tourists and locals (Cole, 2005). Anthropologists contribute to the tourism industry by offering insights into heritage conservation, economic development, and conflict resolution, particularly among indigenous/rural cultures (Low, 2002).

Anthropological methodologies are crucial in tourism studies as they provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex interactions between hosts and guests within diverse cultural contexts. By employing qualitative research techniques such as participant observation and in-depth interviews, anthropologists can capture the nuanced behaviours, beliefs, and values that shape the tourism experience. This holistic approach not only enhances our understanding of cultural exchanges but also informs sustainable tourism practices by highlighting the perspectives of local communities. Ultimately, anthropological methodologies enrich tourism research by emphasising the importance of cultural sensitivity and the social dynamics that influence tourism development and interactions. Throughout the field studies in 5 tourism village communities in Rudraprayag district, the authors have utilised anthropological methods.

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Participant observation has been a cornerstone of anthropological research since Bronisław Malinowski's pioneering work in the early 20th century. His approach emphasised the importance of the researcher as an "objective outsider" who could provide unbiased accounts of native life. Malinowski introduced participant observation as a method to achieve objective insights into native cultures by immersing oneself in the community while maintaining a degree of detachment. This approach was seen as a way to produce reliable and scientific accounts of cultural practices (Zahle, 2013). His method was foundational in establishing the scientific credibility of anthropology, as it allowed for detailed, systematic recording of cultural behaviours and practices (Cooley, 2003). In tourism research/spaces, participant observation has proven particularly valuable because tourism itself is characterised by performance, interaction, and fluid identities. By inhabiting the role of both observer and participant, whether as a guest in a homestay, a visitor at a ritual performance, or a fellow traveller on a pilgrimage circuit, researchers can uncover the micro-level negotiations that shape tourist spaces (McMorran, 2010). For instance, observing the subtle cues of hospitality, the rehearsed narratives of tour guides, or the unspoken discomfort of hosts in moments of cultural commodification reveals the complex interplay between authenticity, performance, and

expectation. Participant observation allows scholars to grasp how cultural identities are staged and contested in real time, and how emotional and embodied experiences influence both hosts and tourists (the field work in the villages highlighted these reflections).

The method's evolution has also made it compatible with diverse theoretical frameworks, from performance theory and symbolic interactionism to critical heritage studies and affect theory. This flexibility enables tourism researchers to tailor their approach to the particularities of the field site, whether examining staged authenticity at heritage sites, everyday negotiations in homestays, or rituals recontextualised for tourist consumption. While participant observation remains a contested method, its adaptability and depth make it indispensable in anthropological studies of tourism (it is observed during the field work that, the adaptability of method is much required depending up on the field setting, ex: activities in rural village tourism space, tribal tourism space, protected area tourism space etc). The ongoing debates highlight the need for balancing objectivity and reflexivity, ensuring that the method continues to evolve in line with the ethical and methodological challenges of studying tourism in an increasingly globalised and multi-layered world (Elliot, 2015).

During the fieldwork, spent several evenings with a local homestay family who regularly hosted domestic tourists. As an observer, it is noted how the host family narrated regional history and spiritual significance to guests with warmth and pride. However, through deeper engagement and informally conversing, realised that certain narratives were deliberately omitted in front of tourists, particularly stories involving local disputes and ecological concerns.

This selective storytelling reflected both the family's hospitality ethics and their awareness of tourist expectations. The dual performance, public for guests and private within the community became visible only through extended participation. Such experiences illustrate the strength of participant observation in tourism research: it reveals not only what is performed but also what is concealed, highlighting the politics of representation and authenticity embedded in host–guest relationships. These immersions gave insights beyond basic surveys.

AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY

Auto-ethnography serves as a powerful methodological innovation in tourism research, allowing researchers to embed personal experiences into their analyses. This approach not only enhances reflexivity but also deepens the understanding of the emotional and sensory dimensions of tourism. By integrating personal narratives with socio-cultural contexts, auto-ethnography reveals insights that traditional methods may overlook, thus enriching the research landscape (Noy, 2008). Auto-ethnography encourages researchers to reflect on their own experiences and biases, fostering a deeper connection with the subject matter (Hayano, 1979). It allows for the exploration of personal narratives, which can illuminate broader cultural and social dynamics within tourism. This approach can be combined with other qualitative methods, such as interviews and participant observations, to create a comprehensive research toolkit (Roth, 2005). It is particularly effective in capturing unique experiences that may be ineffable or specific to certain demographics, enhancing the richness of data collected. Auto-ethnography emphasises the embodied and emotional aspects of tourism, facilitating a more nuanced understanding of tourist experiences. By engaging with the haptic and performative nature of tourism, researchers can uncover hidden dimensions of the tourist experience (through vlogging the residents of these tourist villages are also making an archive of local cultural events and programs, an insiders view, kind of Use deep self-reflection and considerable model of auto-ethnography). While auto-ethnography offers significant advantages, it is essential to recognise its limitations, such as potential biases stemming from the researcher's personal experiences, especially in tourism spaces.

MULTI-SITED ETHNOGRAPHY

Multi-sited ethnography is increasingly relevant for understanding the fluid dynamics of tourist spaces, particularly among backpackers, digital nomads, and pilgrim circuits. This approach allows researchers to follow diverse groups across various locations, capturing the complexities of their interactions and experiences in a globalised context (Falzon, 2016). The following sections outline key aspects of this methodology as applied to these fluid tourist spaces. The rise of youth travel has led to the emergence of different travel styles, including backpackers, flash packers, and global nomads, each with unique characteristics

and social dynamics (Richards, 2015). The Multi-Sited Ethnography method allows researchers to navigate the interconnections of global travel patterns, emphasising the importance of following individuals across multiple sites to grasp the full scope of their experiences (Van De Berg, 2000). Researchers must negotiate access and maintain critical distance, which can complicate the process of gathering comprehensive data across diverse environments. Such examples were noted in the pilgrim circuits of villages throughout Rudraprayag district. While multi-sited ethnography offers valuable insights into the behaviours and interactions of fluid tourist groups, it also presents challenges in terms of data coherence and the potential for overwhelming complexity. Balancing these aspects is crucial for effective research in this dynamic field.

VISUAL AND SENSORY ETHNOGRAPHY

Visual and sensory ethnography employs methods like photo elicitation, soundscapes, and videography to capture the rich atmospheres of tourist experiences (Pink, 2014). These approaches allow researchers to explore the multisensory dimensions of tourism, revealing how visual and auditory stimuli shape emotional responses and behaviors. Sensory ethnography emphasises the aesthetic-sensual and multisensory-experiential aspects of tourism, as highlighted by Nakamura (2013). It captures the "bright and noisy" experiences of tourists, which are often inadequately represented through traditional written methods (Decrop et al., 2020). The integration of sensory elements, such as local sounds and visuals, captures emotional engagement and experience depthness of tourists. Photo elicitation allows tourists to express their experiences visually, providing insights into their perceptions and emotions (Pink, 2014). Soundscapes contribute to understanding the auditory environment's impact on tourist satisfaction and emotional responses. Videography serves as a powerful tool for documenting and disseminating the complexities of tourist experiences, offering a dynamic representation of their interactions with environments (Belk & Kozinets, 2016). At times, field researchers document moments from the field, such as events, cultural practices, or social interactions and later review these recordings or photographs to identify specific patterns, details, or contextual elements that may have been overlooked during on-site observation. While these methods significantly

enhance the understanding of tourist atmospheres, they also present challenges, such as ethical considerations (taking permissions and consents) and the need for careful interpretation of sensory data. Balancing these aspects is crucial for effective visual and sensory ethnography in tourism research.

CONCLUSION

The discussion highlighted the major role of anthropological approaches in enriching tourism research by moving beyond purely economic or managerial perspectives. The discussion highlighted how these methods provide a nuanced understanding of host-guest interactions, the negotiation of authenticity, and the performance of cultural identities. Participant observation, for instance, reveals both overt performances and concealed narratives, offering a deeper look into the politics of representation. Autoethnography allows for reflexive self-exploration, connecting personal experiences with broader socio-cultural phenomena, while multi-sited ethnography is crucial for tracking the fluid movements and interactions of diverse tourist groups across various locations. Visual and sensory ethnography further enriches this understanding by capturing the multisensory dimensions of tourist experiences and their emotional impact. However, the application of these methods is not without its challenges. The researchers have to address ethical dilemmas, such as obtaining informed consent in dynamic environments and navigating the complexities of researcher positionality and emotional labor. Discerning staged authenticity from genuine cultural practices, maintaining a balance between participation and observation, and managing the emotional toll of fieldwork are all critical considerations for researchers. Anthropology offers an indispensable framework for a holistic understanding of tourism. By embracing these diverse methodologies and critically engaging with their inherent challenges, tourism research can move towards more sustainable, equitable, and culturally sensitive practices that genuinely benefit both hosts and guests. The conceptual contribution presented in the discussion advocates for an anthropologically informed research agenda that prioritizes lived experiences and cultural meanings in the study of global tourism.

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Navigating the Digital Horizon: A Bibliometric Expedition into Tourism Digitalization Studies

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Digital transformation, Tourism, Bibliometric analysis, SPAR-4 protocol

ABSTRACT

The digitalization of tourism has become a powerful catalyst, fundamentally altering the global travel industry and reshaping the entire travel experience, from planning to booking and actualizing journeys. This study focuses on the transformative period from 2013 to December 2023, utilizing the Scopus database to meticulously investigate and analyze 251 scholarly documents centered around the digitalization of tourism. The pivotal keywords "digitalization" and "tourism" serve as the entry point for this research, employing the rigorous SPAR-4 protocol for systematic filtering and categorization, ensuring a thorough examination of the chosen documents. At the core of this study are two robust analytical approaches: network analysis, facilitated by VOSviewer, and thematic analysis, conducted using R software. Together, these methodologies constitute the foundation of the research, revealing emerging trends, predominant themes, and key contributors in the dynamic field of digital tourism. The analysis unfolds in a nuanced manner, encompassing various dimensions, including a year-by-year publication overview, the identification of influential authors shaping the discourse, exploration of highly cited papers that have significantly impacted the field, a scrutiny of institutional engagement in digital tourism research, a mapping of publication distribution across academic journals, and an evaluation of the geographic origins of research output. Additionally, the study employs a keywords occurrence analysis and thematic exploration, unveiling recurring motifs and the interconnectedness of themes. This provides valuable insights for researchers, policymakers, and industry practitioners involved in or intrigued by the ongoing digital transformation within the tourism sector. The analytical framework extends beyond merely quantifying scholarly output; it critically assesses the qualitative dimensions of research, offering a holistic understanding of the multifaceted landscape of digital tourism. In doing so, it contributes significantly to the collective knowledge base and informs future research directions in this rapidly evolving and dynamic domain.

INTRODUCTION

At the present time diversification in the tourism industry has far-reaching effects on various facets, aligning with the demands of the technologically advanced and digitally oriented world. Currently, digitalization stands out as a strategic priority for development in numerous countries. Emerging economies play a pivotal role in the progress of tourism, as heightened tourism expenditure reflects improved connectivity and contributes to the global upswing (Ziyadin et al. 2019). In the current era, attracting the attention of tourists to various territories has become increasingly challenging. With traditional marketing tools losing effectiveness over time, cities, regions, and countries are compelled to devise new concepts that align with the preferences of the modern target audience.

Consequently, the utilization of diversification marketing in tourism has been a long-standing practice in many countries. This evolution has brought about a significant transformation in the global tourism industry, presenting new avenues for development, particularly in enhancing organizational competitiveness (Maingi 2019). The hospitality sector, in particular, benefits greatly from the Internet, playing a vital role in maximizing the dissemination of information about the products and services it offers (Fennell 2021). Technological innovations, especially in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), have fundamentally transformed the tourism industry (Ali et al. 2014). The magnitude of these transformations is evident not just in their ability to disrupt established economic models but also stands out for the unprecedented speed with which they drive a surge of innovations in the tourism and hospitality sectors. This wave of change profoundly shapes consumer cultures, preferences, choices, and identities (Gössling 2020; Floros et al. 2021). The global Travel and Tourism sector experienced its most severe crisis in modern times due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Lockdowns, travel restrictions, consumer anxieties, and economic downturns resulted in a staggering loss of \$4.5 trillion in GDP for Travel and Tourism, along with a significant decline of 62 million jobs in the year 2020 alone (Global Economic Impact and Trends 2021). Despite the boost from rising vaccination rates, the easing of travel restrictions, and economic growth, the recovery in the travel and tourism sector remains sluggish, uneven, and delicate. For example, although international tourist arrivals showed an increase of 18 million in January 2022 compared to January 2021, matching the total increase in 2021, they still lagged significantly at 67% below the levels seen in 2019 (UNWTO World Tourism Barometer: March 2022). As per a recent forecast from the Panel of Experts at the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), most respondents anticipate that total international arrivals will not recover to pre-pandemic levels until at least 2024 (Tourism Grows 4% In 2021 But Remains Far Below Pre-Pandemic Levels).

The global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has undeniably led to widespread organizational changes, necessitating a reevaluation of economic strategies and serving as a catalyst for digital transformation across various sectors such as the economy, healthcare, and education. Consequently, it becomes essential to examine

whether COVID-19 has expedited digital transformation, reshaped the economy through digitization or digitalization, and to formulate research questions aimed at identifying the diverse themes that have emerged in digital transformation during the pandemic. This involves categorizing and developing a conceptual framework for these themes. To address these questions and concerns, an investigation is planned, employing a bibliometric thematic analysis of the literature on Tourism Digitalization. Through this analysis, various thematic categories in this research area will be explored, aiding in the identification of potential areas for further research (Sanu et al. 2022).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employs advanced bibliometric techniques and utilizes the vast body of literature to explore research articles in the field of Tourism Digitalization. These articles are meticulously selected from the Scopus index, a highly esteemed database known for its rigorous indexing standards and comprehensive citation coverage. The use of bibliometric analysis, as employed in this research, constitutes a robust analytical methodology based on empirical and quantitative data (Nerur et al. 2008; Merigó et al. 2015; Lim et al. 2021). This approach is employed to reveal intricate distribution patterns of research papers in the specific field of Tourism Digitalization over a defined time period. The research initiates with a thorough examination of research paper titles and abstracts, aiming to identify and select noteworthy publications in Tourism Digitalization. The decision to focus exclusively on research papers listed in Scopus-indexed journals is based on the database's unparalleled reputation for providing an extensive and reliable repository of scholarly works, known for meticulous indexing practices and a wealth of citations (Mukherjee et al. 2021; Albert and Thomson 2018; Fetscherin and Heinrich 2015). The study's temporal scope spans from 2013 to 2023 (20 December, 2023), capturing a substantial timeframe for the analysis of Tourism Digitalization-related research. The keyword "Tourism Digitalization" is a crucial criterion during the meticulous screening process of the Scopus database, with a specific focus on primary research fields, including article titles, abstracts, and keywords (Baker et al. 2020). Initially, a comprehensive dataset of 263 documents emerges, which then undergoes judicious filters to enhance relevance and reliability.

These filters include subject area categorization, document type classification, source type designation, and language specification. The dataset is streamlined, resulting in a refined selection of 251 articles that form the core dataset for further in-depth bibliometric analysis. The research progresses with the implementation of the SPAR-4 protocol, a comprehensive methodological framework for assembling, organizing, and evaluating selected articles (Paul et al. 2021). The analytical focus shifts towards a comprehensive examination of publication trends over time, author-specific publication patterns, the geographic distribution of publications by country of origin, publication outlets (journals), affiliations of authors or institutions, and thorough citation analysis (Bergman 2012). To enhance the analysis visually, a network map is generated using VOSviewer software (van Eck and Waltman 2010), offering a dynamic representation of keyword occurrence patterns among different countries. This visualization tool enriches the analysis by providing a vivid depiction of the structural dynamics within the Tourism Digitalization research landscape. Finally, the research concludes with a thematic analysis of the selected subset of articles, executed using R software. This thematic analysis further elucidates the prominent themes and trends within the corpus of Tourism Digitalization research, offering valuable insights into the evolving landscape of this vital field of study (Laengle et al. 2018).

In the initial stage of the SPAR-4 Protocol, focused on Assembling and Identification, the study concentrates on the domain of Tourism Digitalization, addressing two primary research questions: the exploration of trends (RQ1) and the analysis of network maps (RQ2). The chosen source type for this investigation is conceptual and empirical articles obtained from reputable journals, with the renowned Scopus platform selected for its high-quality sources. During the Acquisition phase, a systematic search is conducted using Scopus, covering the period from 2013 to December 20, 2023. The search is narrowed down using the keywords "Tourism Digitalization" in article titles, abstracts, or keywords, resulting in the retrieval of a total of 251 articles. Moving on to the second stage, Arranging, the study undertakes Purification and Organization. In the Purification step, no articles are excluded from the initial selection made during the Assembling phase, ensuring that all 251 conceptual and empirical articles identified are retained for further analysis.

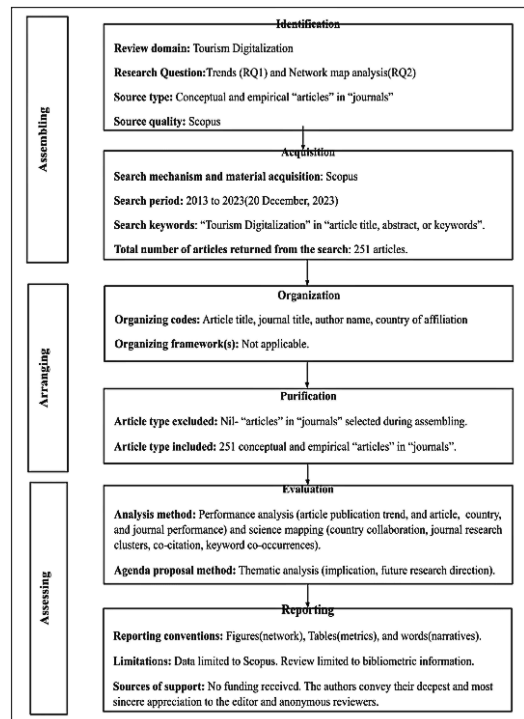


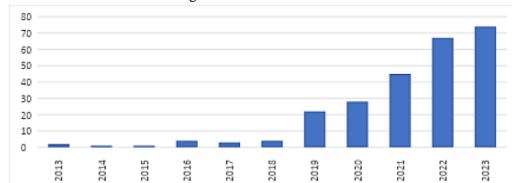
Figure 1. SPAR-4 PROTOCOL

In terms of Organization, the study employs specific codes for arranging information, including article title, journal title, author name, and country of affiliation. However, no specific organizing framework is applied in this stage. The third and final stage, Assessing, encompasses the Evaluation and Reporting of the gathered data. In the Evaluation phase, two distinct analysis methods are employed: Performance analysis, examining article publication trends, country-specific contributions, and journal performance, and Science mapping, exploring aspects such as country collaboration, journal research clusters, co-citation, and keyword co-occurrences. The Agenda Proposal Method involves Thematic Analysis to uncover implications and propose future research directions. For Reporting, the study adheres to specific conventions, utilizing figures for network representations, tables for metrics, and words for comprehensive narratives. The study transparently acknowledges its limitations, including the reliance on Scopus data and the focus on bibliometric information. Additionally, it highlights that the research was conducted without external funding, expressing sincere appreciation to the editor and anonymous reviewers for their valuable contributions to the study.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis section of a bibliometric study on Tourism Digitalization includes examining publication trends over time, identifying prolific authors and highly cited articles, pinpointing active institutions and preferred journals, and assessing the geographic distribution of research.

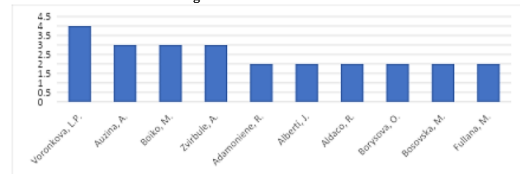
Figure 2 Year Wise Publications



The analysis of the year-wise publications on the digitalization of tourism from 2013 to 2023 reveals a significant evolution in the research landscape (Figure 2). In the initial years, spanning 2013 to 2015, there is a relatively limited interest in the subject, indicating that scholarly exploration into the implications of digitalization for the tourism industry was at an early stage. This period might have seen a gradual awakening to the potential impacts of digital technologies on the tourism sector. Moving into the subsequent years, from 2016 to 2018, there is a discernible uptick in the number of publications. This suggests a growing acknowledgment within the academic community of the pivotal role played by digital technologies in influencing various facets of the tourism industry. The increasing trend during this period reflects an emerging awareness of the transformative capabilities of digital tools and their relevance to the evolving dynamics of the tourism landscape. The most noteworthy shift occurs from 2019 onward, as indicated by a substantial surge in the number of publications. This surge likely mirrors a widespread realization within the industry regarding the profound transformative potential of digital tools. Advancements in technology and shifts in consumer behaviors may have acted as catalysts, propelling the tourism sector into a more intensive exploration and implementation of digital solutions. The heightened research focus during these years underscores a strategic response to the imperative of adapting to a rapidly changing digital landscape and staying relevant in a competitive environment. The pinnacle of this trend is observed in 2023, with 34 publications, suggesting an unprecedented level of interest and engagement with the digitalization of tourism. This peak signifies an intensified commitment to understanding, embracing, and implementing digital solutions within the tourism domain.

The industry's proactive stance in navigating the complexities of digital transformation reflects a collective effort to ensure resilience and relevance amidst the ever-evolving technological landscape.

Fig. 3 Author Wise Publications



The Figure 3 presenting author-wise publications on tourism digitalization spanning the years 2013 to 2023 offers valuable insights into the diverse contributions within the academic realm. Voronkova, L.P., emerges as a standout figure in this analysis, with an impressive tally of four publications. This indicates not only prolific output but also a sustained and profound engagement with the subject matter over the entire decade. Following Voronkova closely, Auzina, Boiko, and Zvirbulis each contribute three publications. This consistent output over the years suggests a dedicated and persistent interest in advancing research related to tourism digitalization. Their collective body of work implies a substantial impact on the academic discourse, contributing to the understanding of the dynamic relationship between technology and the tourism industry. In essence, the collaborative efforts of these authors, each making unique contributions, contribute to a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the evolving relationship between tourism and digitalization. The collective body of work showcased in the table underscores the richness of perspectives within the academic domain, highlighting the multidimensional nature of research on tourism in the digital era.

Fig. 4 Country Wise Publications

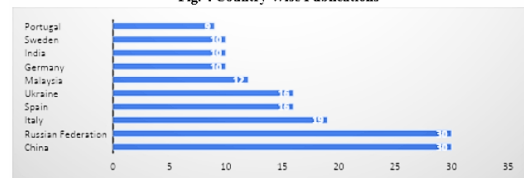
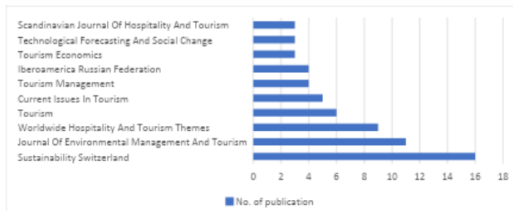


Figure 4 depicting country-wise publications on tourism digitalization between 2013 and 2023 provides a comprehensive overview of research contributions from various nations. China and the Russian Federation emerge as notable leaders, each contributing 30 publications, suggesting a sustained and significant interest in exploring the convergence of tourism and digital technologies.

Fig. 5 Journal Wise Publications



within these countries. Italy closely follows with 19 publications, showcasing a substantial commitment to researching the digital transformation of its tourism industry and adapting to the evolving technological landscape. Spain and Ukraine both contribute 16 publications, reflecting a commendable engagement with the subject of tourism digitalization. This demonstrates a shared commitment to investigating the implications of digital technologies on their respective tourism sectors. Malaysia, with 12 publications, illustrates a substantial interest and active involvement in researching and adapting to the digital trends influencing its tourism industry. Germany, India, and Sweden each contribute 10 publications, indicating a comparable level of interest and engagement in understanding and navigating the digital transformation within their respective tourism landscapes. Portugal, with 9 publications, showcases a slightly lower but still meaningful level of engagement, contributing significantly to scholarly discussions on tourism digitalization within the Portuguese context. In summary, the table underscores a global and diverse interest in the digitalization of tourism. While China and the Russian Federation lead in terms of publication volume, other countries, including Italy, Spain, Ukraine, Malaysia, Germany, India, Sweden, and Portugal, also contribute significantly, reflecting varying degrees of emphasis on research priorities, industry practices, and technological adoption rates within their respective tourism domains.

Figure 5 outlines the distribution of publications on tourism digitalization across different journals from 2013 to 2023. Notably, the journal "Sustainability Switzerland" stands out with 16 publications, signifying its significance as a key platform for research on the intersection of sustainability and digital advancements within the tourism industry. The "Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism" closely follows with 11 publications, suggesting a particular focus on the environmental aspects of tourism digitalization. "Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes," with 9 publications, emerges as another substantial

Table 1: List of Top Most Cited Papers

Authors	Title	Year	Cited by
Akhtar N. & et. al.	Post-covid 19 tourism: Will digital tourism replace mass tourism?	2021	91
Gyódi K.	Airbnb in European cities: Business as usual or true sharing economy?	2019	80
Toubes D.R.; Vila N.A.; Fraiz Brea J.A.	Changes in consumption patterns and tourist promotion after the covid-19 pandemic	2021	64
Wei L.; Ullah S.	International tourism, digital infrastructure, and CO2 emissions: fresh evidence from panel quantile regression approach	2022	62
Gössling S.	Technology, ICT and tourism: from big data to the big picture	2020	57
Talwar S.; Kaur P.; Nunkoo R.; Dhir A.	Digitalization and sustainability: virtual reality tourism in a post pandemic world	2023	54
Pappas N. & et. al.	The complexity of decision-making processes and IoT adoption in accommodation SMEs	2021	48
Alrawadieh Z.; Cetin G.	Digital transformation and revenue management: Evidence from the hotel industry	2021	43
Hadjielias E. & et. al.	Digitalization, agility, and customer value in tourism	2022	41
Altinay Z. & et. al.	The role of social media tools: Accessible tourism for disabled citizens	2016	33
Ivars-Baidal J.A.; Rebollo J.F.V.	Tourism planning in Spain. From traditional paradigms to new approaches: Smart tourism planning	2019	32

contributor, likely addressing a range of themes related to hospitality and tourism within the digital context. The journal simply titled "Tourism" contributes six publications, reflecting a comprehensive engagement with digitalization across the broader tourism field. "Current Issues in Tourism," with five publications, likely serves as a platform for discussing contemporary challenges and developments in tourism, especially those related to digitalization. "Tourism Management," a well-established journal in the field, provides four publications, indicating a sustained interest in exploring management strategies, challenges, and opportunities arising from digital transformation. "Iberoamerica Russian Federation," with four publications, offers insights into the digitalization trends specific to Iberoamerica and the Russian Federation. "Tourism Economics" contributes three publications, focusing on economic aspects and implications of digitalization in the tourism industry. "Technological Forecasting and Social Change" and the "Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism," each with three publications, explore technological trends, social consequences, and regional perspectives on the intersection of hospitality, tourism, and digitalization. In summary, the table underscores the diverse array of journals contributing to the academic discourse on tourism digitalization. Each journal appears to have its own thematic or regional focus, collectively enhancing our

understanding of how digital technologies shape and influence various aspects of the global tourism landscape.

The table 1 features a selection of scholarly articles in the domain of tourism, each accompanied by its title, authors, publication year, and citation count. Notably, "Post-covid 19 tourism: Will digital tourism replace mass tourism?" by Akhtar N. et al. (2021) stands out with 91 citations, suggesting a widespread interest in understanding the potential implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry and the role of digitalization. Gyódi K.'s article "Airbnb in European cities: Business as usual or true sharing economy?" (2019) follows closely with 80 citations, indicating substantial attention to the study of Airbnb's impact on urban tourism. The table includes a diverse set of topics, such as changes in consumption patterns post-COVID-19, the relationship between international tourism, digital infrastructure, and CO2 emissions, and the intersection of technology, ICT, and tourism. Noteworthy is the recent article "Digitalization and sustainability: virtual reality tourism in a post-pandemic world" by Talwar S. et al. (2023), which explores the nexus between digitalization and sustainability, receiving 54 citations. Altogether, these articles contribute to the academic discourse on tourism by addressing contemporary challenges and advancements, with a particular focus on the evolving landscape shaped by digital technologies and the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

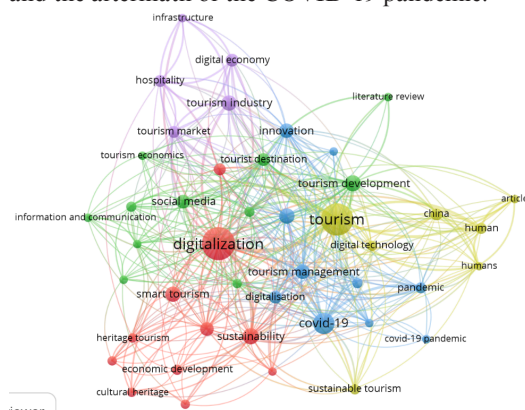
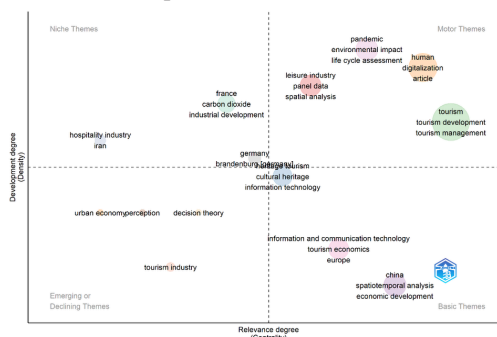


Fig. 6 Network Analysis of Keywords

The analysis focuses on the frequency of keywords in published papers on mobile banking over a 10-year period. The goal is to identify recurring themes and topics explored by researchers. Further investigation involves analysing keyword occurrence networks using the VOS viewer application. The generated text mining map

assesses the strength of links between keywords based on their distance. A narrower gap signifies a stronger connection. The resulting network diagram in Figure 6 illustrates keyword co-occurrences. According to this diagram, a total of 1307 keywords were used, with a combined total of 1504 occurrences revealed 05 major clusters/themes. Cluster/ Theme 1 reveals varying research activity and impact levels across topics. Digitalization stands out with substantial research (70 publications) and impact (139 citations). Cultural heritage, tourism, and sustainability also show moderate engagement and recognition, while spatiotemporal analysis indicates impactful but niche research. Cluster/ Theme 2 highlights diverse research domains. Tourism development stands out with significant research (17 publications) and impact (72 citations). Social media and tourist destination research show substantial engagement and recognition, while literature review and e-tourism demonstrate moderate interest in the academic community. Cluster/ Theme 3 reflects varied research during the COVID-19 era. Notably, COVID-19 research itself is substantial (29 publications, 70 citations), while tourism-related topics, such as tourism management, travel behavior, and digital technologies, demonstrate significant academic engagement and impact in understanding the pandemic's effects on these domains. Cluster/ Theme 4 indicates a broad focus, with tourism being the predominant theme (67 publications, 152 citations). China and human-related topics (human, humans) show moderate research activity. Digital technology and sustainable tourism also receive attention, suggesting diverse interests in the academic exploration of these subjects. Cluster/ Theme 4 suggests a focus on various aspects of the economy and tourism industry. Tourism-related topics, including tourism industry and tourism market, demonstrate moderate research activity and impact. Digital economy and hospitality also receive attention, while infrastructure research has a more limited presence.



The Motor Themes segment of the thematic map unveils the intricate interplay of factors shaping the leisure and tourism domain. It delves into the dynamic landscape through spatial analysis and panel data, spotlighting the pivotal role of human elements in tourism management. The profound impact of digitalization on the industry is evident, accentuated by the seismic disruptions caused by the pandemic. The map intricately explores the environmental repercussions, employing life cycle assessment techniques. Articles within this context likely scrutinize the evolving tourism paradigm, navigating through digital transformations, pandemic-induced challenges, and the imperative to assess and mitigate environmental impacts for sustainable tourism development. The Niche Themes on the thematic map pinpoint distinctive aspects of selected regions. Germany and Brandenburg emphasize industrial development, while France's focus may be on carbon dioxide dynamics, particularly within the context of the hospitality industry. Iran's niche likely involves unique features in industrial and economic domains. The map provides a nuanced understanding of region-specific factors, contributing to a comprehensive overview of their individual characteristics and challenges. The Emerging or Declining Themes on the thematic map illuminate trends within the tourism industry and urban economies. Perception dynamics play a crucial role, reflecting evolving preferences and attitudes. Decision theory may be employed to analyze and anticipate shifts in tourism-related choices. This section of the map provides valuable insights into emerging opportunities or challenges, guiding strategic decisions for sustainable development in the tourism and urban economic sectors. The Basic Themes section of the thematic map centers on the fundamental elements influencing heritage tourism and economic development. It delves into the symbiotic relationship between cultural heritage and information technology in China, Europe, and beyond. Spatiotemporal analysis and information and communication technology play pivotal roles, contributing to the understanding of tourism economics and shaping strategies for sustainable economic development in these regions.

CONCLUSION

The presented bibliometric analysis offers a comprehensive overview of the research landscape on the digitalization of tourism spanning from 2013 to 2023. The study systematically examines various aspects, including year-wise publications,

author contributions, country perspectives, journal distributions, highly cited papers, keyword co-occurrences, and thematic analyses. The exploration reveals significant patterns and implications, shedding light on the transformative journey of the tourism industry into the digital era. The analysis of year-wise publications showcases a remarkable evolution in scholarly interest, with limited exploration in the early years and a noticeable surge from 2016 onward. The peak in 2023, marked by 74 publications, signifies an unprecedented level of engagement, reflecting the industry's proactive stance in embracing digital transformation. The author-wise publications highlight prolific researchers such as Voronkova, Auzina, Boiko, and Zvirbule, indicating a sustained and dedicated output that contributes to a nuanced understanding of the relationship between tourism and digitalization. The global perspective on tourism digitalization, revealed through country-wise publications, shows notable leadership from China and the Russian Federation, with diverse contributions from other countries. The distribution of publications across journals emphasizes thematic and regional focuses. Journals like "Sustainability Switzerland," "Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism," and "Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes" stand out, contributing significantly to specific themes within tourism digitalization. Highly cited papers address a dynamic range of topics, including post-COVID-19 tourism, the role of digital technologies in sustainability, and the impacts of digital transformation on decision-making processes. These papers contribute significantly to the academic discourse, addressing contemporary challenges in the digital era of tourism. The keyword co-occurrence analysis and thematic map provide a nuanced understanding of recurring themes, including digitalization, cultural heritage, tourism development, COVID-19 research, and economic aspects. The thematic analysis delves into motor themes, niche themes, emerging or declining themes, and basic themes, revealing intricate interplays and evolving trends in tourism and urban economies. In conclusion, this bibliometric analysis unveils the multidimensional nature of research on the digitalization of tourism, offering valuable perspectives for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. The findings underscore the urgency of embracing digital solutions for resilience and relevance in an ever-changing technological environment within the global tourism landscape.

LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While our study has its merits, it is imperative to acknowledge and explore its limitations, which can serve as catalysts for valuable avenues in future investigations. Firstly, our research delved into the digitalization of tourism papers specifically indexed in the Scopus database. As a consequence, any papers not encompassed by Scopus were deliberately omitted from our analysis. In subsequent research endeavours, scholars may choose to broaden their horizons by incorporating additional databases such as Web of Science and Google Scholar. This expansion would not only enrich the scope of their analysis but also contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the digitalization landscape in tourism. Secondly, despite the breadth of factors considered in our bibliometric analysis, certain crucial aspects, such as the disciplinary background and funding sources associated with the researched papers, were left unexplored. Future inquiries could delve into these facets, shedding light on the broader contextual landscape of digitalization in tourism research. Furthermore, upcoming studies might choose to present more intricate network diagrams, aiming to provide a nuanced understanding of the intricate relationships within the field. Another notable limitation of our study is its primary emphasis on quantitative aspects, prioritizing numerical metrics and the exploration of connections among authors, affiliations, and ideas. Future research endeavours may choose to venture into qualitative methodologies, such as meta-analysis and systematic literature reviews. Such an approach could offer a more profound understanding of methodologies and their practical application within the study area. It is crucial to underscore that despite the considerable volume of research on the digitalization of tourism, numerous unexplored avenues remain. The ongoing evolution of the tourism sector, coupled with its growth trajectory indicating a distance from saturation, suggests continuous opportunities for research. Additionally, the sector's development continually unveils new prospects, fostering innovation and exploration in this dynamic field. These prospects encompass investigating temporal trends in the digitalization of tourism research, exploring the distinctive challenges and opportunities faced by the tourism sector in various geographical contexts, and delving deeper into the roles of innovation and entrepreneurship in shaping the landscape.

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User Motives and Continuance Intention in Uttarakhand's Airbnb Landscape: A Self-Determination Theory Approach

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KEYWORDS

Airbnb, platform economy, Self-Determination Theory, user motivation, continuance intention, digital tourism, Uttarakhand

ABSTRACT

The rapid rise of the platform economy has reshaped the tourism sector, enabling peer-to-peer (P2P) exchanges that redefine accommodation experiences. Within India, Airbnb and similar platforms have gained traction across emerging destinations such as Uttarakhand, offering travellers authentic, affordable, and digitally enabled alternatives to traditional hotels. This study investigates the determinants of user satisfaction and continuance intention toward accommodation-sharing platforms in Uttarakhand through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Using a quantitative, cross-sectional design, data were collected from 200 active platform users across both urban and rural destinations in Uttarakhand, including Dehradun, Nainital, and Rishikesh. A structured online questionnaire measured six key constructs: economic motives, sustainability, social motives, digital literacy, trust, and satisfaction using validated Likert-scale items. Data analysis was performed using SmartPLS 3, following the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) approach. The findings reveal that economic motives, social motives, and digital literacy significantly influence users' continuance intention, whereas sustainability, trust, and satisfaction do not exhibit significant effects. Satisfaction was also found not to mediate the relationships between antecedent motives and continuance intention. These results underscore that in emerging markets like Uttarakhand, functional and pragmatic factors outweigh abstract motivations such as sustainability or affective trust. Theoretically, the study extends SDT to a regional digital tourism context, emphasising contextual variations in motivational processes. Practically, it offers actionable insights for platform operators and policymakers to enhance user engagement through affordability, technological competence, and social connection, thereby fostering inclusive and sustainable tourism development in India's platform economy.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of the platform economy has fundamentally redefined global consumption and service delivery patterns. Platforms such as Airbnb, Uber, and OYO have catalysed a shift from ownership-based to access-based consumption, unlocking underutilised assets and fostering peer-to-peer (P2P) exchange systems (Garg et al., 2022). This transformation aligns with the post-pandemic resurgence in experience-driven tourism, where travellers increasingly seek authenticity, affordability, and personalisation (Srivastava, Rathore, & Vyas, 2024). Globally, Airbnb has become a leading emblem of this shift, bridging social connection and digital interactivity to deliver immersive local experiences (Tumer Kabadayi & Cavdar Aksoy, 2022).

The digital revolution has transformed how people travel and connect with destinations, marking a decisive movement toward sharing and collaborative consumption. In tourism, this shift emphasises the co-creation of experiences and sustainability, driven by both hosts and guests seeking value beyond traditional lodging (Lang et al., 2022). Within India, Airbnb has expanded its reach to emerging destinations such as Himachal Pradesh, Goa, and notably, Uttarakhand, empowering local entrepreneurs and rural communities to monetise their assets while offering visitors culturally embedded stays (Kaushal & Prashar, 2022). This transition represents not only an economic opportunity but also a social innovation that democratizes tourism participation and aligns with sustainability-oriented travel practices (Gupta, Mahajan, & Dogra, 2022).

As a Himalayan state renowned for its ecological diversity and spiritual heritage, Uttarakhand has emerged as a focal point for alternative tourism models emphasising environmental stewardship and community engagement. Platforms like Airbnb are playing an instrumental role in promoting eco-conscious travel and local host participation in regions such as Rishikesh, Nainital, and Almora.

Yet, despite the region's tourism potential, academic investigations into the motivations, satisfaction, and participation intentions of users in Uttarakhand's platform economy remain scarce. Understanding these dynamics is vital, as they inform regional development strategies, policy framing, and platform governance in India's expanding digital economy (Khan, Baddar, & Bashir, 2025).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), proposed by Deci and Ryan, offers a robust framework to understand human motivation based on the fulfilment of three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Lee, Utermohlen, & Choi, 2020). In the context of the sharing economy, autonomy reflects users' sense of control over economic decisions, competence represents digital efficacy and confidence in platform interactions, and relatedness encompasses trust and social connection between hosts and guests (Garg et al., 2022). SDT thus serves as a valuable lens to examine why and how users continue participating in P2P platforms, linking intrinsic motivation with behavioural intentions (Lang et al., 2022).

Although substantial research has been conducted globally on sharing economy participation, regional-level studies in India, particularly within Uttarakhand's socio-cultural milieu, remain limited. Prior works have focused on urban or pan-Indian samples (Kaushal & Prashar, 2022) or generalised emerging market contexts (Garg et al., 2022). Consequently, this study seeks to:

1. Identify determinants influencing user satisfaction and continuance intentions within Airbnb and similar platforms in Uttarakhand.
2. Explore motivational antecedents: economic, social, technological and sustainability-driven that shape user participation.
3. Examine the mediating role of satisfaction through the lens of Self-Determination Theory, thereby linking psychological need fulfilment with behavioural outcomes.

By contextualising SDT within Uttarakhand's platform economy, the study aims to contribute to both theoretical enrichment and practical strategies for enhancing user engagement and sustainable tourism participation in India's growing digital landscape.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Platform Economy and Tourism

The platform economy refers to a digital marketplace where peer-to-peer (P2P) interactions are mediated by online platforms, enabling individuals to share underutilised resources, services, and experiences. This economic model has redefined traditional industries by decentralising consumption and creating new forms of value co-creation (Wang, Asaad, & Filieri, 2020). Foundational works by Botsman and Rogers (2010) and Guttentag (2015) emphasised how sharing economy platforms like Airbnb facilitate trust-based exchanges and consumer empowerment, challenging conventional tourism supply chains. Cheng (2016) further elaborated that Airbnb's growth symbolises a paradigm shift from standardised hotel stays to community-embedded, authentic experiences.

Within the tourism sector, this transformation represents a move toward decentralised, experience-driven, and technology-enabled travel. Airbnb, in particular, exemplifies this shift, as it enables travellers to access unique, local accommodations that align with experiential and sustainable tourism ideals (Kaushal & Prashar, 2022). As participation in such platforms relies heavily on digital trust and social reputation systems, the success of P2P tourism models hinges on fostering transparency, mutual reliability, and

perceived platform integrity (Wang et al., 2020).

Self-Determination Theory in Consumer Behaviour

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan (1985, 2000), posits that human motivation is driven by the satisfaction of three innate psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When applied to digital consumption, SDT provides a lens to understand how intrinsic and extrinsic motivations shape user participation, satisfaction, and continuance behaviour. In tourism, Tussyadiah (2015) and Hamari et al. (2016) demonstrated that intrinsic motivations-such as enjoyment, learning, and social connection-drive engagement with sharing economy platforms.

Recent studies reaffirm the applicability of SDT in explaining Airbnb participation and continuance intention. For instance, Lang et al. (2022) found that autonomy in hosting and competence in managing digital transactions significantly enhance motivation and satisfaction. Li, Kim, and So (2024) expanded on this framework by linking psychological ownership and access-based consumption, showing that SDT mechanisms underpin user attachment to platforms like Airbnb. Similarly, Zang (2022) confirmed that extrinsic motivators (e.g., rewards and recognition) complement intrinsic satisfaction, influencing continuance intention. Collectively, these findings indicate that SDT effectively bridges the gap between user motivation and behavioural outcomes in tourism-based digital platforms.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT), this framework examines how users' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations influence satisfaction and continuance intention in the context of Airbnb and similar sharing platforms. SDT posits that behaviour is guided by the fulfilment of three psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which translate in digital sharing contexts into economic control, digital capability, and social connectedness (Shulga, 2017). The following sub-sections discuss the theoretical and empirical bases for each hypothesised relationship.

Economic Motives and Satisfaction

Economic motives represent extrinsic drivers that influence user satisfaction by providing tangible benefits such as cost savings, additional income, and efficient use of resources. According to Kaushal and Prashar (2022), economic value is a strong determinant of consumer satisfaction

within the sharing economy in emerging markets. Similarly, Lang et al. (2022) found that Airbnb users experience satisfaction when financial outcomes align with their autonomy-driven goals of self-employment and flexibility. Oliveira, Barbeitos, and Calado (2022) emphasise that financial motivations, when internalised as self-endorsed goals, reinforce long-term satisfaction through perceived competence. *Hence:*

H1a: *Economic motives are positively correlated with satisfaction.*

Sustainability and Satisfaction

Sustainability motives embody intrinsic values such as environmental consciousness and ethical consumption. Garg et al. (2022) highlight that sustainable motives are becoming central to users' participation in collaborative consumption, as they fulfil intrinsic needs for purpose and responsibility. Pilvinen (2023) observed that travellers prefer Airbnb due to its lower environmental impact and authentic local integration, aligning satisfaction with ecological values. This finding resonates with SDT's relatedness dimension, where a sense of contribution to environmental well-being fosters internal satisfaction (Kaushal & Prashar, 2022).

H1b: *Sustainability is positively correlated with satisfaction.*

Social Motives and Satisfaction

Social motives relate to users' need for connection, belonging, and cultural exchange, core components of relatedness in SDT. Tussyadiah (2015) demonstrated that Airbnb guests often seek authentic interpersonal interactions beyond transactional exchanges. Lang et al. (2022) reported that individuals derive satisfaction from the sense of community and social reciprocity facilitated by hosting. Similarly, Garg et al. (2022) found that social and hedonic motives positively affect satisfaction and long-term engagement in sharing economy platforms.

H1c: *Social motives are positively correlated with satisfaction.*

Digital Literacy and Satisfaction

Digital literacy reflects users' competence, a critical SDT component that drives satisfaction through mastery of technological systems. Guo (2021) established that users proficient in digital navigation exhibit higher satisfaction and trust in tourism apps. Likewise, Kaushal and Prashar (2022) showed that digital skillfulness enables autonomy in decision-making and control, directly

influencing satisfaction levels in sharing platforms. As Airbnb's usability and interface efficiency are linked to digital fluency, competence fulfilment enhances satisfaction (Oliveira et al., 2022).

H1d: Digital literacy is positively correlated with satisfaction.

Trust and Satisfaction

Trust represents a psychological enabler that reinforces both competence and relatedness within digital platforms. Wang, Asaad, and Filieri (2020) demonstrated that trust in Airbnb mediates satisfaction and continuance intention, as users rely on reputation systems, host credibility, and platform transparency. Jiang, Feng, and Li (2021) similarly found that perceived trust enhances satisfaction through reduced uncertainty and increased confidence in peer interactions.

H1e: Trust is positively correlated with satisfaction.

ANTECEDENTS AND CONTINUANCE INTENTION

Economic Motives and Continuance Intention

Economic benefits not only drive satisfaction but also foster continuance intention, as users remain engaged to sustain financial advantages. Lang et al. (2022) found that extrinsic motives, such as income generation, transition into intrinsic satisfaction when aligned with self-determined values. Kaushal and Prashar (2022) further assert that perceived financial rewards promote user loyalty in India's sharing economy.

H2a: Economic motives are positively correlated with continuance intention.

Sustainability and Continuance Intention

Sustainability-driven users demonstrate stronger commitment and continuance intention, viewing participation as part of a broader ecological identity. Pilvinen (2023) and Garg et al. (2022) confirm that intrinsic sustainable motives predict continued platform use, aligning with autonomous motivation in SDT.

H2b: Sustainability is positively correlated with continuance intention.

Social Motives and Continuance Intention

Social connection acts as a retention driver, as users remain on platforms that foster community engagement. Lang et al. (2022) revealed that hosts' emotional satisfaction derived from guest relationships motivates long-term participation. Similarly, Shulga (2017) found that trust-based social bonds directly predict continuance intention through relational satisfaction.

H2c: Social motives are positively correlated with continuance intention.

Digital Literacy and Continuance Intention

Users with higher digital literacy exhibit stronger continuance intentions due to ease of navigation and perceived self-efficacy. Guo (2021) and Oliveira et al. (2022) found that digital competence enhances engagement by reducing cognitive friction and strengthening autonomy, a core SDT dimension.

H2d: Digital literacy is positively correlated with continuance intention.

Trust and Continuance Intention

Trust ensures repeat platform use by mitigating risks and reinforcing platform reliability. Wang et al. (2020) and Jiang et al. (2021) confirmed that perceived trustworthiness fosters loyalty and repeat intention among Airbnb users. Castro (2024) further supported that in post-adoption settings, sustained trust predicts performance and long-term engagement.

H2e: Trust is positively correlated with continuance intention.

Satisfaction and Continuance Intention

Satisfaction is a key mediating construct in technology acceptance and tourism research. It represents users' overall emotional evaluation of prior experiences, directly predicting continuance intention (Oliver, 1999). Kaushal and Prashar (2022) and Oliveira et al. (2022) demonstrated that satisfaction mediates between motivation and loyalty in sharing platforms. Likewise, Garg et al. (2022) argue that sustained satisfaction transforms extrinsic motives into intrinsic engagement, reinforcing reuse intention.

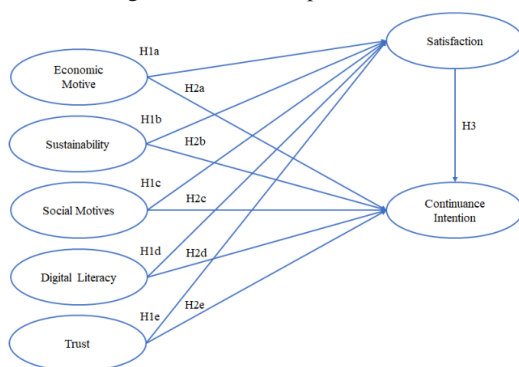
H3: Satisfaction is positively correlated with continuance intention.

Satisfaction as a Mediator

Satisfaction serves as the psychological bridge linking antecedent motives to behavioural outcomes. Studies by Lang et al. (2022) and Shulga (2017) emphasise that satisfaction internalises extrinsic motives such as economic benefits into intrinsic continuance motivation. Kaushal and Prashar (2022) and Jiang et al. (2021) further confirm that satisfaction mediates the relationship between sustainability, trust, and continuance intention, aligning with SDT's mechanism of motivation internalisation.

- *H4a: Satisfaction mediates the relationship between economic motives and continuance intention.*
- *H4b: Satisfaction mediates the relationship between sustainability and continuance intention.*
- *H4c: Satisfaction mediates the relationship between social motives and continuance intention.*
- *H4d: Satisfaction mediates the relationship between digital literacy and continuance intention.*
- *H4e: Satisfaction mediates the relationship between trust and continuance intention.*

Figure 1: The conceptual model



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to investigate the determinants of user satisfaction and continuance intention within Uttarakhand's Airbnb platform economy. Grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the study examined how intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors, namely economic motives, sustainability, social motives, digital literacy, and trust, shape satisfaction and behavioural outcomes in a peer-to-peer accommodation context.

A structured, self-administered questionnaire served as the primary data collection instrument. The questionnaire items were adapted from previously validated scales in tourism and technology literature (see Table 2 for detailed sources). Each construct was measured using multiple indicators, ensuring comprehensive representation of the conceptual framework.

Respondents indicated their agreement with each statement using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). The quantitative approach enabled statistical testing of hypothesized relationships among constructs through Partial Least Squares

Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), allowing simultaneous evaluation of measurement and structural models (Hair et al., 2011).

The research approach was designed to ensure objectivity, replicability, and theoretical rigor, enabling the findings to contribute both academically and practically to the discourse on digital tourism behavior and platform economy engagement in emerging regions such as Uttarakhand.

PROCEDURE AND PARTICIPANTS

Population and Sampling Frame

The target population consisted of individuals who had used Airbnb accommodation platforms within Uttarakhand, India. The state was selected as the research site due to its rapidly evolving platform tourism sector, diverse geographic landscape (including both urban hubs like Dehradun and Haridwar and rural-hill destinations like Rishikesh, Almora, and Nainital), and its growing focus on sustainable and community-based tourism (Gupta, Mahajan, & Dogra, 2022).

To ensure relevant participation, respondents were required to have booked at least one stay via an accommodation-sharing platform in the preceding 12 months. This criterion aligns with previous research that emphasises recent user experiences to improve recall accuracy and contextual validity (Kaushal & Prashar, 2022; Lang et al., 2022).

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

A purposive sampling method was adopted, targeting digitally active users familiar with online booking systems. Participants were approached through online travel communities, university networks, local tourism boards, and social media platforms (Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram). Out of 230 distributed questionnaires, 200 valid responses were retained after data screening, representing an effective response rate of 87%. This sample size meets the statistical requirements for PLS-SEM, as suggested by Hair et al. (2011), which recommends at least 10 cases per indicator or 150 responses for complex structural models.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected over a six-week period (May–June 2025), coinciding with the summer travel season when domestic tourism activity in Uttarakhand peaks. The questionnaire was administered online via Google Forms for accessibility across multiple locations.

Participants were provided with an informed consent form detailing the purpose, anonymity,

and voluntary nature of the study. No personally identifiable information was collected, ensuring compliance with ethical research standards. The data were analysed anonymously and stored securely for academic purposes.

Rationale for Site Selection

The rationale for selecting Uttarakhand lies in its dual role as a spiritual–ecological destination and a digital tourism frontier. Post-pandemic, the state has witnessed a surge in Airbnb and homestay listings, reflecting a structural shift toward local entrepreneurship, digital tourism adoption, and sustainability-oriented travel (Khan, Baddar, & Bashir, 2025). Studying this region provides valuable insights into how digital platforms empower hosts and influence consumer motives in semi-urban and rural contexts—an area underexplored in Indian tourism research.

Participant Profile

The demographic profile of respondents (N = 200) reflects a diverse and representative cross-section of Airbnb users in Uttarakhand. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for gender, age, education, occupation, income, travel purpose, usage frequency, and geographic origin.

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	109	54.5
	Female	91	45.5
Age Group (years)	18–25	66	33.0
	26–35	82	41.0
	36–45	32	16.0
	Above 45	20	10.0
Education Level	Secondary/ Diploma	24	12.0
	Graduate	82	41.0
	Postgraduate and above	94	47.0
Occupation	Student	44	22.0
	Private Sector Employee	76	38.0
	Self-employed/Entrepreneur	36	18.0
	Public Sector Employee	24	12.0
	Freelancer/Other	20	10.0

Monthly Income (INR)	Below 30,000	68	34.0
	30,001–50,000	58	29.0
	50,001–70,000	46	23.0
	Above 70,000	28	14.0
Purpose of Travel	Leisure	104	52.0
	Religious/Spiritual	52	26.0
	Business/Work	28	14.0
	Educational/Research	16	8.0
Frequency of Platform Use/year	1–2 times	96	48.0
	3–5 times	64	32.0
	More than 5 times	40	20.0
Geographic Origin	Within Uttarakhand/Northern India	136	68.0
	Out-of-state or International	64	32.0

The final sample reveals that Airbnb users in Uttarakhand are predominantly young (18–35 years), educated, and digitally literate, reflecting India’s growing base of tech-savvy travellers. The balanced gender ratio underscores inclusivity, while the diversity in income and occupational backgrounds highlights Airbnb’s broad socioeconomic appeal.

Most participants were domestic leisure travellers, aligning with Uttarakhand’s positioning as a nature- and spirituality-based destination. The moderate-to-high usage frequency indicates a strong engagement pattern with platform-based accommodation. These characteristics collectively enhance the study’s reliability and contextual validity, offering a nuanced understanding of user motives and behavioural intentions in Uttarakhand’s evolving platform tourism economy.

Statistical procedure

In our study, diverse statistical tools were employed to address various aspects of our research. Specifically, SPSS 26 was utilised for the analysis of personal demographic attributes and common method bias. To conduct psychometric analysis and employ path modelling, we opted for SmartPLS 3. This software is particularly well-suited for Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and path analysis, offering robust capabilities for exploring relationships among variables and testing intricate models.

Common Method Bias

We used Harman's single-factor test in SPSS 26.0 to assess common method variance in our study. This test forced all data to be explained by a single factor, and since that factor only accounted for 36.04% of the variance (well below the 50% threshold for concern), we can confidently conclude that common method variance wasn't a significant issue, leaving our results reliable.

Measurement Model

The initial step in conducting a partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis involves evaluating the measurement model. This evaluation focuses on assessing the relationships between the questions or indicators and the constructs they intend to measure. Several aspects are considered, including indicator reliability, construct validity, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, as outlined by Chin (2010) and Hair et al. (2011).

Indicator reliability is determined by examining the extent to which the variance of an indicator is explained by its corresponding latent variable. A preferred criterion is an outer loading value of 0.70 or higher (Hair et al., 2011; Kock, 2011). If an indicator falls within the range of 0.40 to 0.70, it may be removed from the model if doing so improves the composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE). For our study, any indicator with a factor loading below 0.700 was excluded. Convergent validity is evaluated to

measure the correlation among multiple indicators that measure the same construct. Composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, and average variance extracted (AVE) are assessed to establish convergent validity. A minimum threshold of 0.7 is typically set for both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability and 0.5 for AVE (Hair et al., 2011). In our analysis, all constructs in the measurement model met these requirements, as indicated in Table 2. By conducting these evaluations and ensuring indicator reliability, construct validity, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, researchers can establish the soundness and validity of the measurement model in PLS-SEM analysis.

Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which different constructs are empirically distinct and exhibit differences when compared to overlapping constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In our study, we evaluated discriminant validity using the criterion proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981). This criterion compares the correlation between latent constructs with the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE). For discriminant validity to be established, a construct should explain more variance in its indicators than the variance shared with other constructs. Thus, the square root of the AVE for each construct should be higher than its correlations with other latent constructs.

Table 2: Assessment Results Of The Measurement Model

Factors	Items		Loading	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
Economic Motives	EM1	Given the price, the offer is good.	0.888	0.846	0.896	0.684
	EM2	For the given quality the price is good.	0.764			
	EM3	It is a good substitute for the conventional hotel experience.	0.821			
	EM4	It is financially beneficial.	0.831			
Sustainability	S1	To engage in environmentally friendly consumption behaviour.	0.883	0.857	0.931	0.777
	S2	To reduce the negative impacts of travel on the environment.	0.900			
	S3	To follow sustainable tourism practices.	0.861			
Digital Literacy	DL1	I can make online payments easily.	0.850	0.936	0.947	0.691
	DL2	The Internet has made it convenient to use the platform.	0.853			
	DL3	Smartphones have made it easy to use the platforms.	0.866			
	DL4	The design of the website/app of the platform is appealing.	0.740			
	DL5	The website/app of the platform is easy to access.	0.835			
	DL6	The offers of the platform are appealing.	0.800			
	DL7	It is easy to carry out transactions on the platform.	0.860			
	DL8	The platform caters to my needs.	0.840			

Social Motives	SM1	It allows me to be part of a group of like-minded people.	0.726	0.928	0.940	0.663
	SM2	It allows me to keep up with travel trends.	0.765			
	SM3	It allows me to visit newer places.	0.850			
	SM4	It can give me a contact in a different city or country.	0.806			
	SM5	It is a fun and interesting way to make new friends.	0.790			
	SM6	It allows for an authentic local experience.	0.836			
	SM7	It enables me to experience new cultures and cuisines.	0.885			
	SM8	It contributes to the development of the local community.	0.846			
Trust	T1	I trust that the property will be the same as expected	0.836	0.900	0.926	0.715
	T2	I believe the reviews are truthful	0.785			
	T3	I feel that the host of properties will not take advantage of me	0.836			
	T4	The platform provides enough safeguards to me as a user	0.900			
	T5	The platform provides a robust and safe environment to use its service	0.866			
Satisfaction	SAT1	When considering the time and effort, how satisfied are you with your use of the platform?	0.890	0.733	0.882	0.789
	SAT2	When compared with your expectation how satisfied are you with your use of the platform?	0.887			
Continuance Intention	CI1	If I need accommodation in the future, I would prefer a platform like Airbnb to a conventional hotel.	0.931	0.889	0.931	0.819
	CI2	If circumstance allows, I will use the platform in future	0.852			
	CI3	In future, I will keep using platforms like Airbnb for accommodation	0.930			

Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which different constructs are empirically distinct and exhibit differences when compared to overlapping constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In our study, we evaluated discriminant validity using the criterion proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981). This criterion compares the correlation between latent constructs with the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE). For discriminant validity to be established, a construct should explain more variance in its indicators than the variance shared with other constructs. Thus, the square root of the AVE for each construct should be higher than its correlations with other latent constructs. To further assess discriminant validity, we employed the Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlation. This ratio compares correlations between different constructs to assess their discriminant validity. A value above a certain threshold, typically suggested as 0.85 by some authors such as Kline (2011), indicates a lack of discriminant validity. The results of both the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion and the

HTMT ratio are presented in Table 3, allowing us to evaluate the discriminant validity of our measurement model.

Assessment of structural model

The next step in our analysis was to assess the hypothesised relationships. The findings in Table 4 present the results of hypothesis testing for various predictor variables and their relationships with the outcome variables. Economic Motives (H1a) showed a significant positive relationship with Satisfaction, supporting the hypothesis ($\beta = 0.272$, $t = 1.932$, $p = 0.054$). However, Sustainability (H2a), Social Motives (H3a), Digital Literacy (H4a), and Trust (H5a) did not show significant relationships with Satisfaction. Moving to Continuance Intention, Economic Motives (H1b) ($\beta = 0.331$, $t = 3.355$, $p = 0.001$), Social Motives (H3b) ($\beta = 0.274$, $t = 2.608$, $p = 0.009$) and Digital Literacy (H4b) ($\beta = 0.237$, $t = 2.247$, $p = 0.025$) displayed significant positive relationships, supporting their respective hypotheses. Conversely, Sustainability (H2b), Trust (H5b), and Satisfaction (H3) did not exhibit significant relationships with Continuance Intention.

Table 3: Discriminant validity of measurement model							
	Continuance Intention	Digital Literacy	Economic Motives	Satisfaction	Social Motives	Sustainability	Trust
Continuance Intention	0.905	0.744	0.798	0.487	0.670	0.548	0.710
Digital Literacy	0.683	0.831	0.774	0.352	0.705	0.614	0.774
Economic Motives	0.694	0.697	0.827	0.494	0.653	0.690	0.823
Satisfaction	0.392	0.293	0.395	0.888	0.348	0.357	0.461
Social Motives	0.624	0.674	0.587	0.296	0.815	0.822	0.693
Sustainability	0.48	0.553	0.592	0.285	0.73	0.882	0.705
Trust	0.643	0.71	0.719	0.375	0.634	0.622	0.845

Note: Diagonal elements are the square roots of the AVE (average variance extracted). Below the diagonal, elements are the correlations between the constructs. Above the diagonal, elements in italics are the HTMT values.

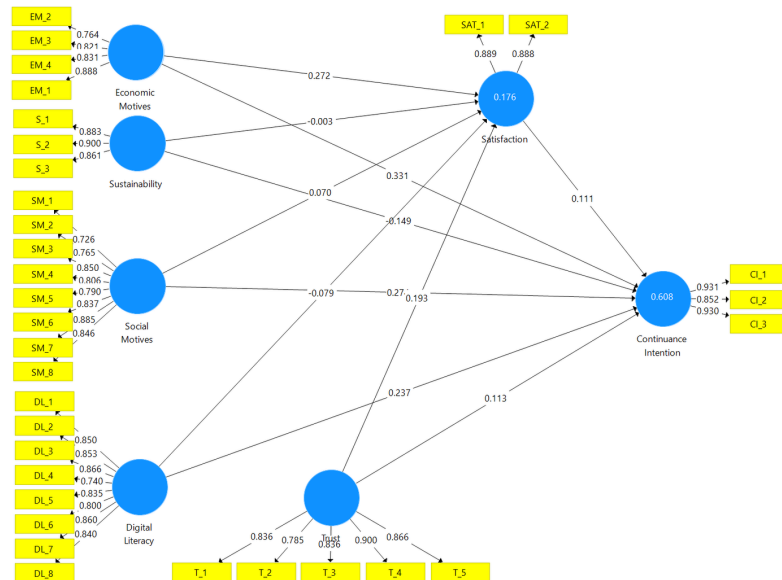


Figure 2: SmartPLS 3 output

Table 4: Result of Hypothesis testing						
Hypothesis		(β) Beta Value	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Result
H1a	Economic Motives $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction	0.272	0.141	1.932	0.054	Supported
H2a	Sustainability $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction	-0.003	0.160	0.021	0.983	Not Supported
H3a	Social Motives $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction	0.070	0.142	0.496	0.620	Not Supported
H4a	Digital Literacy $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction	-0.080	0.174	0.457	0.648	Not Supported
H5a	Trust $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction	0.193	0.140	1.377	0.169	Not Supported
H1b	Economic Motives $\rightarrow$ Continuance Intention	0.331	0.099	3.355	0.001	Supported
H2b	Sustainability $\rightarrow$ Continuance Intention	-0.150	0.108	1.388	0.165	Not Supported
H3b	Social Motives $\rightarrow$ Continuance Intention	0.274	0.105	2.608	0.009	Supported
H4b	Digital Literacy $\rightarrow$ Continuance Intention	0.237	0.106	2.247	0.025	Supported
H5b	Trust $\rightarrow$ Continuance Intention	0.114	0.085	1.338	0.181	Not Supported
H3	Satisfaction $\rightarrow$ Continuance Intention	0.111	0.068	1.630	0.103	Not Supported

Mediating Effect of Satisfaction

Table 5 presents the results of testing the mediating effect of Satisfaction on the relationship between various predictor variables and Continuance Intention. The hypothesized mediating paths, denoted by H4a, H4b, H4c, H4d, and H4e, were examined for their significance. The analysis reveals that none of the mediating paths demonstrated a significant effect. Specifically, Economic Motives (H4a), Sustainability (H4b), Social Motives (H4c), Digital Literacy (H4d), and Trust (H4e) did not show significant indirect effects through Satisfaction on Continuance Intention. The beta coefficients and associated statistics suggest that the mediating effect of Satisfaction in these relationships is not statistically supported. These results suggest that, in the context of the studied variables, Satisfaction may not play a significant mediating role in the relationship between the predictor variables and Continuance Intention.

Table 5: Result of Mediating Effect of Satisfaction						
Hypothesis		Beta value	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Results
H4a	Economic Motives → Satisfaction → Continuance Intention	0.03	0.028	1.097	0.273	Not Supported
H4b	Sustainability → Satisfaction → Continuance Intention	0.000	0.021	0.018	0.986	Not Supported
H4c	Social Motives → Satisfaction → Continuance Intention	0.008	0.019	0.419	0.675	Not Supported
H4d	Digital Literacy → Satisfaction → Continuance Intention	-0.009	0.023	0.384	0.701	Not Supported
H4e	Trust → Satisfaction → Continuance Intention	0.021	0.022	0.953	0.341	Not Supported

and cost efficiency drive users' adoption and sustained participation in Airbnb-like platforms (Kaushal & Prashar, 2022; Lang et al., 2022). In the Uttarakhand context, where tourism is both a livelihood and leisure domain, economic value appears to be a primary determinant of engagement, reflecting users' pragmatic orientation toward affordability and convenience. These findings substantiate SDT's notion that extrinsic motives can internalize into self-endorsed goals when they align with autonomy and perceived control (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Social Motives

The positive association between social motives and continuance intention supports the relatedness component of SDT. Users who perceive Airbnb as a means for social interaction and cultural exchange are more likely to sustain participation (Tussyadiah, 2015; Shulga, 2017).

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to explore user motives, satisfaction, and continuance intention within Uttarakhand's Airbnb landscape through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (SDT). The findings reveal that economic motives, social motives, and digital literacy significantly influence continuance intention, while sustainability, trust, and satisfaction did not exhibit significant relationships. These results carry theoretical and contextual implications for understanding user behavior within India's platform economy.

INTERPRETATION OF KEY FINDINGS

Economic Motives

The significant positive influence of economic motives on both satisfaction and continuance intention reinforces the role of extrinsic motivations in the sharing economy. This aligns with prior studies indicating that financial benefits

In Uttarakhand's culturally rich environment, the social fabric of host-guest relationships strengthens emotional engagement and loyalty. This finding resonates with Lang et al. (2022), who emphasized that authentic interpersonal connections enhance user commitment within sharing platforms.

Digital Literacy

Digital literacy emerged as another significant driver of continuance intention, highlighting the importance of technological competence, the SDT component of competence, in enhancing user experience. Proficiency in navigating platforms reduces cognitive barriers, leading to perceived control and ease of use (Oliveira et al., 2022; Guo, 2021). The implication for Uttarakhand's tourism ecosystem is that technological readiness not only supports user autonomy but also bridges urban-rural divides in digital participation.

Non-significant Constructs: Sustainability, Trust, and Satisfaction

Contrary to expectations, sustainability, trust, and satisfaction did not significantly predict continuance intention. This deviation may be contextually rooted in India's emerging digital tourism landscape, where economic pragmatism outweighs ecological or moral considerations (Garg et al., 2022). Users may perceive sustainability as a secondary benefit rather than a core decision-making criterion. Similarly, while trust is foundational in P2P exchanges, the study's results imply that institutional trust in Airbnb's brand and digital safeguards may already be assumed, thus reducing its explanatory variance (Wang et al., 2020).

The non-significance of satisfaction as a mediator suggests that the relationship between motives and continuance may be more direct in this context. Unlike mature economies, where emotional fulfillment mediates behavioral outcomes, Indian users may rely more heavily on functional and instrumental gratifications (Kaushal & Prashar, 2022).

IMPLICATIONS

Theoretical Implications

The study advances Self-Determination Theory by validating its relevance in a developing economy context, specifically in rural and semi-urban tourism economies like Uttarakhand. The results reaffirm that autonomy (economic control), competence (digital literacy), and relatedness (social connection) continue to shape user motivation in platform economies (Lang et al., 2022; Shulga, 2017). However, the diminished role of sustainability and satisfaction suggests that socio-economic priorities in emerging markets may moderate SDT's intrinsic motivation pathways. This highlights the need to contextualise motivational theories when applying them across diverse cultural and developmental settings.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study carry several practical implications for platform operators, policymakers, and tourism practitioners in Uttarakhand and similar emerging destinations. First, the significance of economic motives suggests that users primarily engage with Airbnb for cost-effective and value-driven experiences. Hence, platforms should emphasise transparent pricing structures, loyalty benefits, and localised promotions that appeal to price-sensitive travellers and local hosts. Second, since digital literacy

emerged as a strong predictor of continuance intention, platform companies and local tourism boards should collaborate to improve digital training and technological adoption, especially among rural hosts. This could include initiatives such as digital onboarding workshops, mobile app training, and simplified interfaces tailored for low-connectivity areas. Third, the influence of social motives underscores the importance of fostering community-based tourism ecosystems. Encouraging storytelling, cultural immersion programs, and host-guest networking opportunities can enhance relational engagement and emotional connection, aligning with the relatedness component of Self-Determination Theory (Lang et al., 2022; Shulga, 2017). Moreover, while sustainability did not emerge as a significant factor, it remains a latent opportunity. Platforms should integrate eco-friendly practices with economic benefits, for example, rewarding hosts who adopt green measures or promoting "eco-value" accommodations that combine affordability with environmental responsibility. From a policy perspective, government bodies such as Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDB) can leverage these insights to support digital entrepreneurship among local communities, ensuring inclusive and sustainable tourism growth.

CONCLUSION

This research enriches the understanding of user motives and participation intentions in Uttarakhand's Airbnb landscape through the lens of Self-Determination Theory. The findings reveal that while economic, social, and digital competence factors significantly predict continuance intention, sustainability, trust, and satisfaction play more peripheral roles. These results underscore the contextual complexity of motivation in emerging economies, where practical benefits outweigh abstract ideals like sustainability or trust formation. Theoretically, the study extends SDT into a regional tourism framework, showing that motivation internalisation mechanisms vary by cultural and economic context. Practically, it provides a roadmap for policymakers and digital platform managers to align economic opportunities with user empowerment and community-driven tourism. Future research could expand this framework by integrating moderating variables such as cultural orientation, income level, or technological infrastructure to capture the multidimensional dynamics of user participation in India's platform economy.

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Learner Experiences and Outcomes of Tourism and Hospitality Education and Training in India

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KEYWORDS

Tourism education, Hospitality training, Learner experiences, Industry-academia collaboration, Internship quality, Skill development, Faculty development; Indian Hospitality

ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of the global tourism and hospitality (T&H) sector has intensified the need for a skilled and adaptable workforce, a demand particularly evident in India as the sector continues to grow. This literature review examines learner experiences and graduate outcomes in Indian T&H education, focusing on curriculum quality, pedagogical approaches, industry engagement, and policy influences. Findings reveal persistent misalignments between academic instruction and industry expectations, especially in practical operational skills, technological proficiency, communication abilities, and overall professional readiness. Learner experiences vary widely across institutions due to differences in infrastructure, faculty expertise, internship quality, and institutional support. Limited industry exposure, inadequate hands-on training, inconsistent quality assurance mechanisms, and weak faculty development remain major challenges affecting graduate preparedness. At the same time, emerging reforms such as outcome-based education, strengthened industry partnerships, and technology-enhanced learning show potential for improving both learning experiences and employability. The review concludes by recommending flexible and regularly updated curricula, higher standards for practical training, deeper industry-academia collaboration, and stronger quality assurance frameworks to ensure that Indian T&H education produces graduates equipped for a dynamic and competitive global sector.

INTRODUCTION

India's tourism and hospitality sector has witnessed remarkable growth over the past two decades, establishing itself as one of the country's most dynamic engines of employment generation and economic development. This upward trajectory has fuelled a rapid expansion of tourism and hospitality education (T&H), resulting in a diverse institutional landscape comprising government-run premier institutes, university departments, private colleges, and vocational training centers. As a labour-intensive industry, the sector's growing demand for skilled, service-oriented professionals has encouraged higher education institutions to introduce varied programs and specializations to cater to emerging workforce requirements (Rajkamal et al., 2023). Tourism education is increasingly acknowledged not only for its role in skill development but also for its potential to reduce regional unemployment and support inclusive development, particularly in tourism-dependent and emerging destinations (Dighliya & Dahiya, 2023).

Despite this expansion, significant concerns persist regarding the quality, consistency, and relevance of T&H education in India. The rapid growth of institutions has produced considerable variation in academic standards, teaching quality, and infrastructure across the country. Persistent systemic challenges such as misalignment between academic curricula and industry expectations, inadequate practical training opportunities, limited faculty industry exposure, and resource constraints continue to affect graduates' workplace readiness (Gangotia & Bhatt, 2022; Sharma et al., 2024). These issues are compounded by high attrition rates within the hospitality workforce, seasonal employment patterns, and prevailing societal perceptions that often undervalue hospitality careers, shaping both student expectations and long-term career commitment (Shah et al., 2021). Research consistently indicates that skill gaps, particularly in operational competencies, soft skills, and technological proficiency, are central reasons for employer dissatisfaction with new graduates and highlight weaknesses in program design and delivery.

In response to these challenges, national reforms such as the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and various skill development initiatives have sought to strengthen the interface between higher education and industry. NEP 2020 emphasizes multidisciplinary learning, academic flexibility, technology-enabled education, and outcome-based frameworks all of which hold strong relevance for tourism and hospitality programs (Diddi & Pandya, 2024). The policy encourages institutions to update curricula, integrate hands-on learning, strengthen internship structures, and build pathways between vocational and higher education. However, translating policy directives into effective practice remains uneven across institutions due to constraints related to faculty capability, administrative readiness, financial resources, and infrastructural disparities. As a result, while policy frameworks provide strategic direction, significant work remains in achieving meaningful implementation on the ground.

India's geographical, economic, and cultural diversity further shapes the tourism education landscape, resulting in wide regional variations in program focus, quality, and student experiences. Tourism education in hill states such as Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand often emphasizes adventure tourism, eco-tourism, and mountain

hospitality operations, while coastal regions like Goa and Kerala prioritize resort management, beach tourism, and marine activities. Metropolitan centers such as Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, and Chennai host premier institutes with strong industry linkages, modern infrastructure, and international collaborations, whereas smaller towns and rural regions often struggle with limited facilities and weaker industry connections (Jauhari, 2013). This contextual diversity underscores the need for region-specific strategies. This study follows a systematic literature review to analyse learner experiences and outcomes in tourism and hospitality education in India. Relevant scholarly articles, book chapters, reports, and policy documents were identified through academic databases using keywords related to tourism education, hospitality training, internships, employability, pedagogy, and industry-academia collaboration. Inclusion criteria focused on works examining curriculum design, teaching methods, practical training, student experiences, quality assurance, and institutional challenges within the Indian context. Irrelevant, non-empirical, or non-Indian studies were excluded. A thematic analysis approach was used to identify recurring patterns and synthesise core themes such as curriculum relevance, pedagogical practices, internship effectiveness, faculty competence, technological adoption, and policy impacts. This method ensures a comprehensive and structured understanding of key issues shaping tourism and hospitality education in India.

DISCUSSION

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES AND TEACHING METHODS

The pedagogical landscape of tourism and hospitality education in India is gradually shifting from predominantly lecture-based instruction toward more experiential, technology-supported, and outcome-oriented approaches. Although this transition is evident across several institutions, the pace and quality of implementation remain uneven. Internships continue to be one of the most influential pedagogical components, functioning as a bridge between academic learning and the operational realities of the industry. They contribute to improvements in employability, technical competencies, and essential personal attributes such as adaptability, leadership, problem-solving, and time management (Joshi & Tyagi, 2019; Sarkar & George, 2019; Kumar &

Chansoria, 2021). Laboratory-based learning further strengthens experiential training by enabling students to practice operational skills in controlled settings. Mitra (2024) found that the use of laboratories such as those for ticketing systems, reservations, and operational simulations enhances student engagement and improves practical readiness. However, the quality, relevance, and technological currency of laboratory infrastructure differ substantially across institutions, affecting the depth of student learning (Yang et al., 2014). Recognising the centrality of culture and heritage to Indian tourism, innovative pedagogical approaches are increasingly being explored to strengthen learners' cultural understanding. One such method is digital storytelling, which has shown significant promise in supporting critical reflection, creativity, and cross-cultural awareness. Kulshrestha, Pandey, and Sharma (2023) demonstrated that digital storytelling allows students to research, document, and present heritage tourism resources in multimedia formats, thereby developing digital literacy while deepening their appreciation of India's cultural diversity. This approach is particularly relevant in a curriculum where cultural and heritage tourism constitute core learning areas.

Entrepreneurship education is another evolving dimension within tourism and hospitality pedagogy. The sector offers diverse entrepreneurial opportunities from homestays and tour operations to specialised tourism ventures which necessitates pedagogical models that cultivate creativity, innovation, and business acumen. Sharma et al. (2024) found that Indian entrepreneurs advocate for experiential, action-based entrepreneurship modules embedded within tourism programs. Activities such as developing real tourism products, drafting business plans, and interacting with practicing entrepreneurs provide authentic learning experiences that move beyond theoretical instruction. Despite this need, many institutions still lack structured entrepreneurship modules or opportunities for practical entrepreneurial engagement. Outcome-Based Education (OBE) has also gained momentum as a pedagogical framework aimed at improving curriculum clarity, assessment alignment, and accountability. OBE emphasises clearly articulated learning outcomes and competency-based evaluation, guiding students toward demonstrable professional abilities rather than content memorisation. Bathla et al. (2023) highlight the potential of OBE to enhance curriculum coherence

and transparency in hospitality education. However, its successful implementation requires substantial faculty training, time investment for outcome mapping, and institutional commitment to pedagogical reform factors that remain inconsistent across Indian tourism programs.

As sustainability becomes increasingly central to global tourism, embedding sustainability principles into pedagogy has emerged as a key priority. Yet, evidence suggests that sustainability is often treated as a standalone topic rather than being holistically integrated into course design and experiential learning. Gavinolla et al. (2023) observed that while sustainability appears in many Indian tourism syllabi, its coverage is fragmented and lacks depth. Chawla and Manhas (2015) similarly report that sustainability education in hospitality remains dominated by environmental management topics, with limited emphasis on social, economic, or ethical dimensions. Effective sustainability pedagogy requires active engagement strategies such as case studies, field projects, and reflective exercises that build critical thinking and foster responsible attitudes toward tourism development. Despite increasing advocacy for pedagogical innovation, several structural and institutional constraints continue to impede widespread adoption. Large class sizes, limited faculty training in active learning strategies, inadequate infrastructure, and assessment systems that prioritise rote learning present persistent barriers (Yang et al., 2014). Variations in student preparedness and language proficiency further complicate the implementation of interactive and student-centred pedagogies, requiring differentiated instruction that many institutions lack the resources to provide. These challenges highlight the need for sustained investment in faculty development, infrastructure improvement, and curricular reform to ensure that pedagogical innovations translate into meaningful learning outcomes.

CURRICULUM DESIGN AND INDUSTRY ALIGNMENT

Curriculum design in Indian tourism and hospitality education is shaped by ongoing tensions between standardisation and flexibility, theoretical foundations and practical requirements, and academic autonomy and industry influence. Many tourism programs continue to face a longstanding "discipline dilemma," reflecting the absence of a clearly defined core body of knowledge and limited

research on occupational competencies required for success in the sector (Gupta & Bhatt, 2018; Nagarjuna, 2016). The degree of curricular alignment with industry needs varies widely across institutions. The National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology (NCHMCT) provides a nationally standardised curriculum for affiliated institutes, establishing uniformity and consistency in program delivery. While this framework ensures a strong baseline of academic and operational content, it also restricts institutional flexibility, as faculty and industry stakeholders often question the relevance of certain prescribed subjects and call for more dynamic, region-specific updates. Balancing national standards with institutional freedom to innovate remains an ongoing challenge within the Indian tourism education ecosystem.

Evidence from multiple studies highlights persistent mismatches between academic deliverables and industry expectations. Scholars, employers, and educators repeatedly emphasise the need for continuous review and collaborative curriculum development to keep pace with shifting industry competencies (Suneeth et al., 2021). Gangotia and Bhatt (2022) found significant disconnects in technical skills, soft skills, and practical readiness among vocational tourism graduates in Himachal Pradesh, underscoring structural weaknesses in program design. Yang et al. (2014) similarly reported divergence between educators' emphasis on managerial concepts and employers' preference for operational competencies, innovation capabilities, and hands-on proficiency. Skill gaps remain particularly visible in technology adoption, revenue management, financial analysis, service recovery, customer relationship management, and cross-cultural communication areas that are increasingly central to modern hospitality operations. Limited awareness and adoption of sustainable tourism practices further point to gaps in curricular content and pedagogical focus. These challenges are compounded by teaching methods that often prioritise content recall over critical thinking and experiential learning (Mishra, 2014; Sharma, 2022). Most tourism and hospitality curricula in India integrate a mix of core hospitality subjects (food production, service, front office, housekeeping), management-oriented courses (marketing, human resources, finance), and general education components (communication, languages, computing). Institutions have also introduced innovations such as specialisation

tracks spa management, cruise management, event management and integrated degree programs that reflect emerging industry niches (Dighliya & Dahiya, 2023). Despite such developments, concerns persist regarding outdated content in certain areas, insufficient emphasis on technological advancements, and limited incorporation of research, analytical skills, and higher-order competencies. Employers increasingly expect graduates who can think critically, solve problems creatively, and adapt quickly, yet these dimensions remain underrepresented in many curricula. India's national skill development initiatives, including the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) and Sector Skill Councils, have expanded vocational pathways in tourism education. These programs focus on short-term, practical skill development and provide industry-relevant training for learners who may not pursue formal higher education. While vocational initiatives contribute significantly to meeting workforce quantity needs, concerns remain about the consistency of training quality, sufficiency of infrastructure for hands-on learning, and limited mobility for vocational graduates to progress into higher education or supervisory roles.

A major structural limitation in curriculum design is the slow pace at which programs adapt to industry evolution. Curriculum revisions often require approvals across multiple institutional and regulatory layers, resulting in delays that hinder responsiveness to emerging trends such as digital transformation, new tourism products, and evolving guest expectations (Gangotia & Bhatt, 2022). Institutions that demonstrate strong industry engagement through advisory boards, frequent curriculum reviews, elective flexibility, and faculty industry immersion are better positioned to keep curricula current (Jauhari, 2013). However, such practices remain unevenly adopted across the country, contributing to significant variability in curriculum relevance and graduate preparedness.

STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCES, SATISFACTION, AND CHALLENGES

Student learning experiences in Indian tourism and hospitality education are shaped by a complex interplay of institutional quality, pedagogical practices, practical learning opportunities, faculty competence, and socio-cultural influences. Research consistently shows substantial variation

in student satisfaction across institutions, reflecting disparities in infrastructure, teaching approaches, and industry exposure. Rajkamal et al. (2023) found that while students in some institutions expressed satisfaction with course content and teaching methods, concerns persisted regarding limited practical exposure, weak industry linkages, and inadequate career guidance. Premier institutes tended to score higher on satisfaction indicators compared to smaller private colleges, highlighting inequities within the sector. Furthermore, studies indicate that many students enter hospitality programs without a clear understanding of the industry's demands, leading to career uncertainty and reduced long-term commitment (Peshave & Gujarathi, 2012). This awareness gap raises important questions about recruitment practices, pre-admission counseling, and the need for realistic job previews early in the academic journey.

A recurring theme across Indian studies is the mismatch between student expectations and industry realities. Many students underestimate the physical demands, long working hours, and hierarchical structure of hospitality work, which contributes to disappointment, stress during internships, and, in some cases, early attrition from the sector (Shah et al., 2021). Socio-cultural factors further influence learning experiences and career intentions. Family expectations, cultural perceptions about hospitality work, concerns about working conditions, and preference for more conventional career paths often contribute to hesitation or ambivalence toward tourism careers (Peshave & Gujarathi, 2012; Kautish et al., 2021). Institutions that proactively engage families, provide transparent information about career pathways, and highlight successful alumni may better support student motivation and persistence.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly reshaped student learning experiences by disrupting academic routines, restricting practical learning, and intensifying anxiety about career prospects. The sudden shift to online delivery posed major challenges for practically oriented subjects such as food production and service, which do not translate effectively to virtual formats (Joshi & Gupta, 2021). Both students and educators acknowledged the usefulness of online teaching for theoretical components but agreed that it could not replace hands-on laboratory work, on-site training, or interpersonal skill development central to hospitality education (Chandra et al., 2022).

The pandemic also exposed deep digital divides, with many students particularly those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds facing connectivity issues, lack of devices, and unsuitable home learning environments. Studies from Mumbai and other regions reported growing demand for hybrid learning models, enhanced digital skills, and stronger institutional support for student well-being in post-pandemic contexts (Chandra et al., 2022). Pandemic-induced uncertainties also altered students' career perceptions, increasing anxiety about job stability and long-term prospects in the tourism and hospitality industry (Shah et al., 2021). Research by Kautish, Walia, and Kour (2021) demonstrates that social support from family, peers, and mentors plays a crucial role in moderating career anxiety and influencing students' commitment to the sector, reinforcing the importance of mentorship, counseling, and supportive learning communities. Another major determinant of student experience is the quality of institutional infrastructure. Premier institutes typically offer modern laboratories, industry-standard equipment, simulation facilities, and well-resourced libraries that facilitate experiential learning. In contrast, many smaller institutions operate with outdated equipment, limited practical training infrastructure, and constrained learning environments (Rajkamal et al., 2023). Such disparities directly affect the depth and quality of skill development. Students in well-resourced institutions benefit from exposure to contemporary technologies, operational systems, and realistic training environments, whereas those in resource-constrained settings often rely heavily on theoretical instruction with minimal hands-on practice (Yang et al., 2014). This infrastructure divide not only influences learning experiences but also contributes to unequal employability outcomes, as practical proficiency is a key determinant of industry readiness in hospitality fields.

LEARNING OUTCOMES, EMPLOYABILITY, AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

The effectiveness of tourism and hospitality education is ultimately reflected in graduates' preparedness for professional roles and their long-term career success. Indian research on learning outcomes and employability reveals a complex picture while some institutions successfully cultivate essential competencies, persistent gaps continue to affect graduate readiness.

Tourism and hospitality programs typically seek to develop technical abilities, managerial competencies, and soft skills. Yang et al. (2014) identified communication, leadership, problem-solving, teamwork, customer service orientation, operational knowledge, and cultural awareness as key competencies required in the Indian hospitality sector. However, the degree to which institutions achieve these learning outcomes varies considerably. Industry feedback frequently highlights inadequate practical readiness, underdeveloped problem-solving capability, and limited service orientation among new graduates (Gangotia & Bhatt, 2022). Students themselves recognise that the quality of teaching and academic support significantly influences training outcomes, while graduates serve as valuable sources of feedback on evolving industry expectations (Rajkamal et al., 2023; Singh, Sharma & Kannaujiya, 2020). These findings suggest that although curriculum frameworks outline comprehensive learning objectives, competency development remains uneven across institutions. Employability remains a central concern in Indian tourism and hospitality education, where industry expectations extend beyond technical knowledge to include professional behavior, interpersonal skills, and adaptability. High-quality practical training is among the strongest predictors of employability, as students with structured, well-supervised industry exposure demonstrate greater operational competence and confidence (Lingadkar & Sankaranarayanan, 2023). Communication skills particularly English proficiency are critical in a guest-facing, globally oriented sector. Employers consistently emphasise positive attitude, service orientation, and willingness to learn as key attributes influencing hiring decisions (Gangotia & Bhatt, 2022). Institutional reputation also plays a significant role in shaping employment outcomes, with graduates from premier institutes benefiting from stronger placement networks and industry recognition (Rajkamal et al., 2023; Jauhari, 2013). International collaborations, as demonstrated in the IIMT Gurgaon–Oxford Brookes University partnership, show that sustained industry engagement, aligned learning outcomes, and supervised work experiences can significantly enhance employability and curriculum relevance (Jauhari, 2013).

Despite curricular intentions, notable skill gaps persist among tourism and hospitality graduates. Employers frequently report deficiencies in basic

operational skills, even among students who possess theoretical knowledge (Yang et al., 2014). Critical thinking and problem-solving abilities are also commonly underdeveloped, limiting graduates' capacity to handle non-routine situations or make independent decisions. Communication and interpersonal skills continue to be areas of concern, with language barriers and low confidence affecting guest interaction and teamwork. Gaps in technology literacy particularly in the use of property management systems, digital tools, and automated operations reflect limited exposure to industry-standard technologies during training.

Issues related to work ethic, including punctuality, professionalism, and workplace conduct, also hinder smooth integration into industry roles. Many of these shortcomings stem from weaknesses in curriculum delivery, inconsistent quality of practical training, limited opportunities to apply classroom learning, and student selection processes that do not adequately assess motivation or aptitude for hospitality careers (Sarkar & George, 2019; Kumar, 2017).

Internships represent a crucial platform for applying skills, gaining industry exposure, and developing professional identity, yet their effectiveness varies widely across institutions. Lingadkar and Sankaranarayanan (2023) found that students' expectations often exceed their actual experiences, with significant negative gaps in learning opportunities, supervisory support, and alignment with academic preparation. Many interns are assigned routine or repetitive tasks that offer minimal educational value, limiting exposure to core operational functions. Inadequate mentoring further restricts opportunities for learning, while the disconnect between academic training and workplace expectations makes it difficult for students to apply theoretical concepts effectively. The lack of structured reflection activities also weakens the integration of internship experiences with academic outcomes. Reports of extended working hours, unpaid or underpaid internships, and exploitative practices further discourage student engagement and reduce the developmental value of internships. Improving internship quality requires stronger institutional oversight, clearly defined learning objectives, trained industry supervisors, reflective assessments, and systems for addressing student concerns.

While graduates from reputed institutions may experience smooth entry into the workforce, retention remains a persistent challenge in the hospitality sector. High attrition rates during the initial years of employment suggest that either graduates are inadequately prepared for workplace realities or industry conditions fail to meet their expectations (Peshave & Gujarathi, 2012). Limited longitudinal research on graduate career trajectories restricts understanding of long-term career development, sector retention, and the effectiveness of academic preparation. Expanding such research would provide valuable insights for curriculum refinement and policy formulation (Kautish et al., 2021).

INDUSTRY-ACADEMIA COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Effective industry-academia collaboration is widely recognised as a cornerstone of curriculum relevance, practical learning quality, and graduate employability in tourism and hospitality education. In India, such collaboration takes multiple forms, ranging from internship partnerships and guest lectures to advisory boards and joint research initiatives. While successful models demonstrate the transformative potential of sustained engagement, significant barriers continue to limit the depth and consistency of such collaboration across institutions. Industry engagement commonly begins with internship and placement partnerships, which provide students with essential exposure to real-world operational environments. These collaborations not only support graduate recruitment but also help students contextualise classroom learning through supervised practical experience (Lingadkar & Sankaranarayanan, 2023). Guest lectures, industry seminars, and expert interactions further enhance academic programs by introducing students to current industry trends, technological advancements, and practical insights (Yang et al., 2014). Many institutions have established industry advisory boards that contribute to curriculum review, course design, and strategic planning, helping ensure alignment with industry expectations (Jauhari, 2013). Collaborative research initiatives enable academia and industry to jointly address sector-specific challenges, while faculty industry exposure programs help educators stay updated with operational standards and technological innovations. In some cases, institutions also pursue international collaborations, which introduce global best

practices and broaden students' understanding of international hospitality norms. Industry-academia collaboration yields benefits for all stakeholders. For academic institutions, partnerships ensure curriculum currency, strengthen hands-on learning, and provide access to industry expertise and resources. Students gain realistic exposure to workplace expectations, improved practical competence, and enhanced job readiness. For the industry, engagement with academia supports workforce development, facilitates access to trained recruits, and helps bridge skill gaps (Jauhari, 2013; Yang et al., 2014). Faculty members also benefit from updated knowledge, enriched teaching materials, and opportunities to integrate applied research into academic practice.

Despite these advantages, several challenges hinder robust collaboration in the Indian context. Many industry partners face time constraints, limited incentives, or insufficient institutional recognition for participating in academic activities. Misaligned priorities, differing operational timelines, and unrealistic expectations on both sides can hinder sustained engagement. Geographic distance from major hospitality hubs restricts opportunities for regular collaboration in remote or rural institutions (Gangotia & Bhatt, 2022). Concerns about student exploitation during internships and unresolved issues related to intellectual property rights in joint research projects further complicate collaborative efforts (Lingadkar & Sankaranarayanan, 2023). These challenges underscore the need for more structured, mutually beneficial, and transparent collaboration frameworks. Internship partnerships remain the most widespread form of industry engagement, yet their quality varies significantly. Lingadkar and Sankaranarayanan (2023) reported that although internship opportunities are widely available, students often experience gaps in supervision, learning opportunities, and alignment with academic preparation.

Effective internship partnerships require clearly articulated learning objectives, careful placement selection, and trained industry supervisors capable of mentoring, evaluating, and supporting students. Continuous communication between institutions and industry partners helps address challenges, while structured reflection activities such as journals, reports, or debriefing sessions enhance integration of experiential learning with academic outcomes. Safeguards related to workplace safety,

ethical treatment, and fair evaluation must also be established to ensure meaningful and equitable learning experiences. Collaboration levels differ considerably across Indian regions, shaped by variations in tourism industry concentration, institutional resources, and local economic conditions. Institutions in major tourism destinations such as Goa, Kerala, Rajasthan, and Himachal Pradesh benefit from proximity to diverse tourism operations, facilitating richer partnership opportunities. By contrast, institutions in less-developed or remote regions often struggle to secure consistent engagement with industry stakeholders (Rajkamal et al., 2023).

International partnerships represent another dimension of industry-academia collaboration, offering opportunities for benchmarking, student exchanges, and faculty development. Collaborations with institutions in countries known for mature tourism education systems such as the UK, Switzerland, Australia, and the USA introduce global perspectives and enhance academic quality. However, Diekmann, Vincent, and Patwardhan (2019) note that such initiatives also present logistical and pedagogical challenges and are more accessible to well-resourced institutions. As a result, international partnerships may inadvertently widen the quality gap between elite and resource-constrained institutions (Jauhari, 2013).

TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION AND DIGITAL LEARNING

Technology integration in Indian tourism and hospitality education has accelerated significantly in recent years, driven by wider digitalisation trends, pandemic-related disruptions, and the growing importance of technology in contemporary tourism operations. Despite this momentum, adoption remains uneven due to institutional disparities in infrastructure, financial capacity, and pedagogical readiness. Emerging educational technologies such as virtual and augmented reality (AR/VR), knowledge co-creation platforms, and robot-assisted teaching are gradually influencing teaching methods, prompting educators to reassess how technology can meaningfully support learning (Bagri et al., 2010). Blended learning is increasingly recognised as a viable long-term model for hospitality education, in which online delivery supports theoretical learning while face-to-face instruction remains essential for hands-on skill development (Sharma, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift toward online learning, exposing both opportunities and critical constraints in technology-enabled education. Studies by Chandra, Ranjan, and Chowdhary (2022) and Joshi and Gupta (2021) reveal that while online platforms can effectively deliver theoretical content, they fall short in replicating practical, experiential components that are central to hospitality training. Educators and students widely acknowledged that online teaching should complement rather than replace practical, lab-based, and interactive learning experiences. The sudden transition also exposed systemic challenges, including limited faculty preparedness for online pedagogy, inadequate institutional Learning Management Systems (LMS), and insufficient technical support for large-scale digital delivery.

Online learning effectiveness is further constrained by the digital divide, which remains a significant barrier in India. Students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds often lack reliable internet access, personal devices, or conducive study environments (Joshi & Gupta, 2021). Institutions with limited resources struggle to invest in quality LMS platforms, relying instead on basic tools such as email, WhatsApp, and videoconferencing (Chandra et al., 2022). These disparities contribute to inconsistent learning experiences and have widened educational inequities during and after the pandemic. Assessing practical competencies in virtual environments poses an additional challenge, given the hands-on nature of hospitality skills that require real-time supervision, demonstration, and immediate feedback.

Simulation technologies and virtual learning environments offer promising alternatives, especially when access to physical laboratories or industry sites is limited. Virtual hotel management simulations enable students to engage in operational decision-making, reflecting real-world challenges related to revenue management, staffing, and service delivery. VR-based applications provide immersive destination experiences and cultural familiarisation, while cooking and restaurant service simulations allow practice of technical skills in controlled digital formats. Virtual tours of heritage and tourism sites similarly enhance destination knowledge and cultural understanding (Kulshrestha et al., 2023).

However, the adoption of these advanced tools is limited by cost, technical expertise requirements, and lack of awareness regarding their pedagogical value. Mitra (2024) notes that even basic laboratory infrastructure remains uneven across institutions, suggesting that widespread implementation of sophisticated simulations is still aspirational for many Indian colleges.

Digital storytelling has emerged as a particularly relevant pedagogical innovation in the Indian context, especially for teaching cultural and heritage tourism. Kulshrestha et al. (2023) highlight that digital storytelling enhances student engagement by combining research, multimedia production, and creative interpretation of tourism resources. This method strengthens both digital literacy and cultural competence, enabling students to produce educational and promotional content while deepening their understanding of tourism destinations.

Addressing the digital divide is crucial for equitable technology adoption in tourism and hospitality education. Socioeconomic disparities influence students' access to devices, digital infrastructure, and technology-supported learning opportunities. The pandemic highlighted the urgency of institutional strategies that provide device loans, internet support, training in digital literacy, and flexible learning pathways for students facing technological barriers (Joshi & Gupta, 2021). Ensuring inclusive, technology-enhanced learning will require coordinated investments in infrastructure, faculty development, and policies that promote equitable access across diverse institutional contexts.

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION

Quality assurance in Indian tourism and hospitality education is shaped by a complex regulatory environment involving multiple oversight bodies, accreditation mechanisms, and institutional practices. Despite these structures, maintaining consistent quality across a diverse educational landscape remains a significant challenge. Tourism and hospitality programs in India operate within a multi-layered governance framework. The National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology (NCHMCT) regulates Institutes of Hotel Management (IHMs) and affiliated colleges, prescribing standardised curricula, overseeing entrance examinations, and ensuring uniformity in

hotel management education. At the broader academic level, the University Grants Commission (UGC) oversees tourism and hospitality programs within universities, while the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) supervises technical and professional institutions delivering vocational or applied degrees (Diddi & Pandya, 2024). State governments also manage regional hospitality institutes and vocational training centers, contributing to local skill development. In addition, Sector Skill Councils under the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) establish competency-based standards for vocational training. While this extensive regulatory ecosystem is intended to ensure accountability and quality, overlapping jurisdictions, inconsistent standards, and limited coordination often result in fragmentation. Scholars have noted that tourism education still lacks a cohesive or unified national framework, and debates regarding curriculum coherence remain unresolved (Bagri, 2011; George, 2013).

Accreditation plays a central role in ensuring program quality and institutional accountability. Institutions may pursue accreditation from the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), which evaluates overall academic governance, infrastructure, and teaching-learning processes (Diddi & Pandya, 2024). Programs with a professional or technical orientation may opt for accreditation from the National Board of Accreditation (NBA), which evaluates program-level learning outcomes, curriculum implementation, industry alignment, and graduate employability. A small number of leading Indian institutions also seek international accreditations such as UNWTO.TedQual or THE-ICE to establish global recognition and benchmark against international standards. However, accreditation coverage remains uneven. Many vocational centers and smaller private colleges operate without formal accreditation, largely due to resource constraints, the voluntary nature of most accreditation systems, and the substantial administrative effort required for self-study reports and external evaluations (Diddi & Pandya, 2024). Consequently, the assurance of quality varies significantly across the sector. Faculty quality remains one of the most critical determinants of educational effectiveness in tourism and hospitality programs. Although many faculty members possess strong academic qualifications, substantial gaps persist in industry experience, pedagogical training, and exposure to

contemporary operational practices (Yang et al., 2014). Limited familiarity with instructional design, assessment methods, and technology-enhanced teaching can hinder effective delivery of both theoretical and practical content. Increasing pressure on faculty to produce research outputs may also conflict with the applied, practice-oriented nature of hospitality education, reducing time available for industry engagement or teaching innovation. Opportunities for continuous professional development such as short-term industry training, conferences, and teaching workshops remain limited, while compensation and working conditions in many institutions are insufficient to attract or retain experienced industry professionals. Addressing faculty quality requires structured recruitment policies, ongoing pedagogical and industry training, and career pathways that recognise the value of both academic scholarship and professional expertise.

Infrastructure quality is another crucial determinant of educational outcomes. Effective tourism and hospitality training requires well-equipped laboratories, training kitchens, mock hotel rooms, restaurants, front-office simulations, and industry-standard technology systems. While NCHMCT prescribes infrastructure norms for affiliated institutes, enforcement is inconsistent, and many institutions particularly smaller or rural colleges struggle to maintain adequate facilities due to financial limitations (Rajkamal et al., 2023). Infrastructure disparities result in unequal practical training experiences, contributing to variability in graduate skill levels and employability.

Systematic assessment of learning outcomes and program effectiveness remains underdeveloped in Indian tourism education. While traditional examinations and grading systems are widely used, comprehensive evaluation of competency development, workplace readiness, and long-term career progression is limited. Bathla et al. (2023) advocate for the adoption of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) frameworks to enhance accountability and curricular coherence, emphasising that clear articulation of learning outcomes, aligned assessments, and regular feedback mechanisms improve program quality. However, successful implementation of OBE requires sustained institutional commitment, faculty training in assessment design, and adequate administrative support conditions that many institutions have yet to achieve.

REGIONAL VARIATIONS AND INSTITUTIONAL DIVERSITY

India's geographic, economic, and cultural diversity shapes a highly heterogeneous tourism and hospitality education landscape, with significant regional variations in program focus, institutional capacity, student demographics, and industry linkages. Educational programs often mirror dominant regional tourism forms: mountain tourism in the Himalayas, backwater and coastal tourism along the western and southern coasts, and heritage tourism in culturally rich states. Yet disparities in infrastructure, faculty expertise, and industry engagement create uneven learning experiences across the country.

In northern hill states such as Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Jammu & Kashmir, tourism education emphasises adventure tourism, eco-tourism, trekking, skiing, and mountain hospitality operations. Programs attempt to align with regional strengths by incorporating modules on environmental management, adventure operations, and sustainable mountain tourism. Gangotia and Bhatt (2022) found that although vocational programs in Himachal Pradesh strive to tailor curricula to local tourism needs, constraints in practical training infrastructure and limited year-round industry activity hinder meaningful industry partnerships. Seasonal fluctuations in tourism demand and challenging terrain restrict internship availability, making it difficult to provide continuous experiential learning.

In contrast, coastal states like Goa, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu derive strong educational support from their vibrant beach tourism and resort sectors. Institutions in these regions commonly focus on resort management, coastal hospitality, water-based recreation, and wellness tourism. Goa, in particular, hosts multiple hospitality institutes that benefit from steady industry demand and diverse accommodation and restaurant operations. Proximity to thriving tourism businesses enables easier access to internships, guest lectures, and industry collaboration. However, competition for quality placements especially during peak season and the influence of seasonal employment patterns pose notable challenges. Regions rich in cultural and heritage attractions, including Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh (Agra, Varanasi), Madhya Pradesh, and Delhi, emphasise heritage tourism, cultural interpretation, and heritage hotel management. Programs in these areas frequently integrate topics

such as heritage conservation, cultural sensitivity, interpretation skills, and sustainable destination management (Kulshrestha et al., 2023; Gavinolla et al., 2023). The incorporation of sustainability is particularly relevant, given the need to balance heritage protection with expanding tourism flows. However, Gavinolla et al. (2023) found that sustainability components in many curricula lack depth and practical application, limiting their effectiveness in preparing graduates for responsible tourism development.

Major metropolitan centers Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai, and Hyderabad host premier tourism and hospitality institutions characterised by modern infrastructure, advanced laboratories, international collaborations, and strong linkages with global hospitality brands. These institutions attract students from across India and increasingly from abroad due to their reputation, faculty expertise, and placement networks (Jauhari, 2013). State-of-the-art training kitchens, simulation labs, and access to industry-standard technologies enable students to engage in high-quality practical training. Premier institutes also benefit from experienced faculty with industry or international exposure, robust research activity, and opportunities for student exchange programs. Strong placement records reinforce their status as preferred destinations for aspiring hospitality professionals. However, the concentration of high-quality institutions in metropolitan areas contributes to geographic inequality, making it difficult for students from rural or economically weaker regions to access premium educational opportunities (Rajkamal et al., 2023).

Rural areas and emerging tourism destinations remain underserved despite their potential for tourism development. Limited institutional presence, inadequate infrastructure, shortages of qualified faculty, and fewer industry linkages constrain educational provision in these regions. While vocational training programs and distance learning modes offer opportunities to expand access, ensuring practical training quality and consistent supervision remains challenging. Localised training programs tailored to community-based tourism, homestays, and rural tourism initiatives are still limited, despite their relevance for inclusive tourism development. Strengthening tourism education in rural regions could support local capacity building, enhance entrepreneurship, and promote more equitable regional growth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The synthesis of research on tourism and hospitality education in India highlights several priority areas for strengthening educational quality, relevance, and student outcomes. These recommendations span curriculum reform, industry collaboration, pedagogical innovation, infrastructural development, faculty enhancement, technology integration, sustainability, entrepreneurship education, and policy implementation.

1. Strengthening Industry–Academia Collaboration

A structured and sustainable model of industry engagement is essential for ensuring curriculum relevance and enhancing graduate employability. Institutions must move beyond transactional activities such as internships and guest lectures toward deeper, long-term partnerships that integrate joint curriculum design, faculty industry exposure, collaborative research, and shared governance structures (Jauhari, 2013; Yang et al., 2014).

- Establishing formal industry advisory boards with defined roles and regular participation in academic planning.
- Creating faculty-industry exchange programs to ensure educators remain updated with operational practices and emerging technologies.
- Enhancing internship quality through structured learning objectives, supervision standards, and monitoring mechanisms to prevent exploitative or non-educational placements.
- Building regional industry–academia clusters anchored around major tourism destinations to facilitate sustained engagement, local knowledge sharing, and context-specific curriculum development.

2. Advancing Outcome-Based Education (OBE)

The shift toward Outcome-Based Education is critical for producing graduates who meet industry expectations. OBE requires clear articulation of competencies, integrated curriculum structures, and robust assessment systems (Bathla et al., 2023).

- Comprehensive competency mapping involving educators, employers, alumni, and professional bodies to define relevant learning outcomes.
- Reorganising curricula around competency clusters rather than isolated subjects to support holistic skill development.

- Developing assessment tools and rubrics that evaluate complex skills problem-solving, teamwork, communication, and operational proficiency.
- Training faculty in OBE principles, instructional design, and assessment practices.
- Implementing continuous feedback mechanisms to monitor effectiveness and inform iterative curriculum improvement.

3. *Enhancing Practical Learning Infrastructure*

High-quality practical training is essential for hospitality and tourism education, yet access to adequate infrastructure varies widely.

- Institutions should invest in well-equipped laboratories, including training kitchens, housekeeping labs, front office modules, and simulation platforms (Yang et al., 2014).
- Minimum infrastructure standards must be enforced across institutions with mechanisms for periodic quality audits.
- Shared regional training centers can reduce costs and expand access for smaller or resource-constrained institutions.
- Public-private partnerships should be encouraged for infrastructure development and technology upgrades.
- Virtual simulations and VR tools can complement physical labs where space or financial constraints exist.

4. *Strengthening Internship Structures*

Internships must evolve from variable, task-oriented placements to structured learning experiences aligned with academic objectives (Lingadkar & Sankaranarayanan, 2023).

- Clear learning objectives tied to course outcomes.
- Training industry supervisors in mentorship, evaluation, and student support.
- Structured reflection activities such as journals, presentations, and debriefings to integrate workplace learning with theory.
- Strong monitoring systems to ensure meaningful learning, safeguard student welfare, and address concerns promptly.
- International student exchange programs should be expanded to broaden cultural exposure and deepen understanding of global hospitality practices (Dhanoa, 2014; Kumar & Khan, 2021).

5. *Embedding Sustainability Across the Curriculum*
Sustainability must move from isolated elective content to an integrated, program-wide framework.

- Mapping sustainability outcomes across all courses (Gavinolla et al., 2023; Chawla & Manhas, 2015).
- Using case studies, field projects, and experiential learning to deepen student engagement with real-world sustainability challenges.
- Training faculty in sustainability pedagogy and connecting programs with responsible tourism enterprises.
- Assessing both cognitive and affective outcomes to shape ethical, value-driven graduates committed to responsible tourism development.

6. *Expanding Entrepreneurship Education*

Tourism and hospitality students require entrepreneurial mindsets and practical business skills to capitalise on emerging tourism opportunities.

- Embedding action-based entrepreneurship modules throughout the curriculum.
- Developing live tourism product or service prototypes, supported by feasibility studies and business plan development.
- Connecting students with practicing entrepreneurs for mentorship and real-world insights.
- Establishing incubation support systems offering workspace, seed funding, and expert coaching.
- Focusing on both entrepreneurial mindset and technical business competencies, including financial planning, innovation, and risk assessment.

7. *Ensuring Equitable Access to Technology-Enhanced Learning*

Technology must complement hands-on learning while ensuring equal access for all students (Joshi & Gupta, 2021; Chandra et al., 2022).

- Providing devices and connectivity support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Strengthening blended learning models that combine online theory with face-to-face practical training. Training faculty in digital pedagogy, LMS use, and technology-enhanced teaching.
- Adopting digital tools simulations, virtual tours, digital storytelling based on clear learning outcomes.

8. Leveraging NEP 2020 for Systemic Reform

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 provides a transformative framework, but its success hinges on effective institutional implementation (Diddi & Pandya, 2024).

- Building institutional capacity through administrative restructuring, faculty training, and technology infrastructure.
- Developing flexible, multidisciplinary pathways aligned with student interests and industry needs.
- Strengthening student mobility and credit transfer systems to enhance flexibility.
- Embedding skill development into mainstream coursework.
- Establishing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track reform outcomes and ensure continual improvement.

9. Enhancing Faculty Quality and Professional Development

Faculty expertise is central to educational quality.

- Balanced recruitment standards valuing both academic qualifications and industry experience (Yang et al., 2014).
- Mandatory training in pedagogy, assessment, and educational technology.
- Regular industry exposure opportunities, such as sabbaticals, field immersions, and short-term placements.
- Support for applied research to inform curriculum innovation and policy development.
- Competitive compensation and supportive working environments to attract and retain skilled faculty.

10. Expanding Research on Tourism and Hospitality Education

A robust evidence base is essential for guiding policy, curriculum development, and institutional improvement.

- Longitudinal studies tracking graduate careers and retention (Kautish et al., 2021).
- Evaluations of pedagogical approaches, such as experiential learning, and blended learning.
- Impact assessments of international collaborations and exchange programs.
- Regional studies on resource gaps and access inequities.
- Research on digital learning effectiveness, particularly in low-resource contexts.
- Studies exploring employer perceptions of graduate readiness and emerging competency needs.

CONCLUSION

Tourism and hospitality education in India has expanded significantly in parallel with the sector's rapid growth, leading to a diverse institutional ecosystem that serves thousands of students each year. This expansion reflects the industry's growing economic significance and its capacity to generate employment, particularly for young people in tourism-oriented and developing regions. Despite this progress, the review reveals persistent challenges that continue to affect educational quality and graduate preparedness.

A consistent finding across the literature is the gap between academic curricula and industry requirements. Employers frequently identify shortcomings in practical skills, problem-solving abilities, communication, and workplace readiness among graduates. Student learning experiences also vary widely across institutions. While premier institutes offer strong infrastructure, qualified faculty, international collaborations, and robust industry links, many smaller or resource-constrained institutions struggle with inadequate facilities, limited faculty industry exposure, and weak practical training opportunities. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these disparities, disrupting hands-on learning, accelerating the shift to online education, and exposing significant digital divides. These disruptions highlighted the need for flexible and resilient educational models that preserve the essential experiential components of hospitality training. At the same time, several promising developments are evident. Outcome-based education (OBE) is gaining momentum, offering a more structured approach to competency development. Innovative pedagogies such as digital storytelling, simulation-based learning, and action-oriented entrepreneurship training have begun to enrich classroom experiences. The integration of sustainability concepts and the emphasis on responsible tourism practices reflect global and domestic priorities for more equitable and environmentally conscious tourism development. Policy reforms introduced through the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 provide an enabling framework for multidisciplinary learning, academic flexibility, and stronger industry alignment. Looking ahead, strengthening the tourism and hospitality education ecosystem requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach. Key priorities include enhancing industry partnerships, adopting

competency-based and flexible curricula, investing in modern practical training infrastructure, improving internship quality, embedding sustainability across courses, expanding entrepreneurship education, and ensuring equitable access to technology-enabled learning. Effective implementation of NEP 2020 reforms, along with sustained faculty development and strengthened quality assurance mechanisms, is essential for raising overall educational standards. Additionally, regional diversity across India calls for context-sensitive educational models tailored to local tourism strengths, industry structures, and student needs. Ensuring that high-quality tourism education extends beyond major metropolitan areas to rural and emerging destinations is critical for balanced and inclusive development.

Ultimately, the future of India's tourism and hospitality sector hinges on the quality of its human resource development. By addressing existing gaps and adopting evidence-based improvements, tourism education can better equip graduates with the skills, mindset, and ethical foundation required to contribute meaningfully to a dynamic, globally competitive, and sustainable tourism industry. Through strengthened educational systems, India can fully leverage its extraordinary cultural, natural, and heritage assets to promote responsible tourism growth that benefits communities, industry stakeholders, and the nation as a whole.

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