

FACTORS INFLUENCING CUSTOMER ACTIVITY IN THE CONTEMPORARY TOURISM INDUSTRY IN AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study aims to categorise the factors affecting customer activity in the tourism industry of Aotearoa/New Zealand post-Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and the 2022 reopening of borders. The significance of the study can be explained by the fact that tourism is a substantial part of Aotearoa/New Zealand's economy. Annual international tourism revenue before COVID-19 pandemic was \$17 billion, contributing 20.1 per cent to Aotearoa/New Zealand's total exports of goods and services. As the tourism industry recovers, it becomes increasingly important for the tourism and hospitality sector to identify factors influencing customer activity and new tools to attract tourists. A systematic literature review explored the theoretical frameworks of efficient management, examined effective global customer management practices, and analysed various management tools available for stimulating customer activity in tourism and hospitality. The study explored different aspects of the tourism industry from the perspectives of decision-makers in the travel companies, governmental agencies, local communities, and customers of tourism services. Critical evaluation of the literature highlighted the importance of systematic engagement of local communities in the development of tourism products and fostering meaningful integration of community networking with digital word-of-mouth networks informing the awareness and knowledge of customers. Authenticity of interaction at the intersection of local communities, service providers, customers, and government agencies may be particularly impactful for reviving and reinforcing tourism in Aotearoa/New Zealand in post the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: tourism industry, management in tourism, interaction in tourism, tourism stakeholders, management tools, Word-of-Mouth concept.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism adds value to the international economy by producing jobs and encouraging the creation of new enterprises (Femenia-Serra et al., 2019); therefore, conducting scientific research into tourism can, among other things, shed light on the economic and social aspects of our world (Scheyvens & Cheer, 2022). Tourism has a dual nature (Chepras, 2013): it has both a commercial and social aspect. Understanding it reveals the needs and resources of communities and individuals, their development, and, at the macro level, acts as a source and tool for the redistribution of national income within regions and countries (Kostina & Chepras, 2013). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the interest in enhancing tourism management was consistent, and the industry had stable growth in various location across the world. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (2023), According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (2023), antecedent to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism sector, encompassing its direct, indirect, and induced ramifications, constituted a pivotal source, contributing to one in every five newly generated employment opportunities on a global scale during the period spanning from 2014 to 2019. Furthermore, this sector played a substantial role, accounting for 10.3% of the overall workforce, equivalent to 334 million jobs, and contributing 10.4% of the worldwide gross domestic product (GDP), amounting to US\$ 10 trillion in 2019. Besides, international expenditure by tourists globally reached a substantial figure of US\$ 1.9 trillion in the same year (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2023).

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism industry played a significant role in Aotearoa/New Zealand's economy, contributing substantially to its financial growth. According to Stats New Zealand (2022b), annual spending by international tourists at that time were \$17.5 billion. This robust flow of revenue was a crucial pillar of Aotearoa/New Zealand's economic stability in the years preceding the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic brought about a shift in Aotearoa/New Zealand's tourism industry (Roberts, 2022). With the closure of its borders for 23 months, the tourism industry underwent drastic and unprecedented transformations (Anthony, 2021). According to Tourism Industry Aotearoa (2023) (TIA), the tourism workforce was reduced by more than 72,000 employees, or about a third, in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, one benefit was a slight increase in domestic tourism spending, which grew by 2.6% on pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels (Tourism Industry Aotearoa, 2023). Nevertheless, this did little to offset a 91.5% decline in international tourism spending to just \$1.5 billion, compared to the pre-COVID-19 pandemic annual spend of \$17.5 billion (Stats NZ, 2022b). In just one year, \$15.6 billion of the Aotearoa/New Zealand economy was lost, including a drop of \$1.7 billion in goods and services tax (GST) revenue from international tourists (Anthony, 2021). In addition, Aotearoa/New Zealand Stats NZ (2022a) states in 2021 the number of people crossing the border was the lowest in 50 years, underlining the magnitude of the COVID-19 pandemic impact.

The post-COVID-19 period was noted by a cautious yet progressive revival of the tourism industry, which commenced in measured stages as the borders were reopened in stages. On February 28, 2022, vaccinated tourists from Australia were allowed to cross the border; on March 13, 2022, they were reopened to tourists worldwide who did not require a visa to enter the country (Tourism Industry Aotearoa, 2023). A significant milestone was reached in August 2022 when Aotearoa/New Zealand recommenced visa processing, effectively opening its borders to international tourists again.

Tourism Industry Aotearoa Chief Executive Rebecca Ingram (2023) expressed an optimistic outlook for the tourism industry, affirming its readiness to contribute significantly once again to Aotearoa/New Zealand's economy. Pre-COVID-19 (year to March 31, 2020) tourism directly contributed 5.6% of GDP, falling to 3.0% through the COVID-19 pandemic (year to March 31, 2022) as the industry focused on domestic tourism alone. With international tourists returning, the tourism industry would start to recover some of the 2.6% of GDP lost during the COVID-19 pandemic (Tourism Industry Aotearoa, 2023).

The study explored articles researching the tourism industry before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic across different countries. The purpose is to leverage the knowledge to recommend ways Aotearoa/New Zealand could maintain its tourism industry in case of 'black swan' events like the COVID-19 pandemic. The study explored government regulations of the suppliers/customers relationship, determining the demand for tourism services. It also analysed relationships between actors in the field of tourism and identifies the features of their interactions in the tourism industry. This study may be of value to most tourism companies and government agencies because of the need to identify factors influencing customer activity and look for new tools to attract reemerging tourists.

LITERATURE SELECTION

Three key actors are involved in managing the tourism industry: public authorities and local governments, service customers, and service providers. The management system in the tourism industry can be analysed through the interactions between these three actors, the result of which is the functioning of the tourism industry, which should, in principle, ensure sustainability, flexibility, and high-quality services for customers (Chepras, 2013).

The management of the tourism industry aims to streamline the interaction between these actors to find the optimal state, in which the interests and needs of all actors are maximally satisfied (Kostina & Chepras, 2013). A necessary condition for achieving such a state is communication which allows the exchange of information and coordination of actions between the groups of actors (Scheyvens & Cheer, 2022). During this study, the selected articles were grouped to highlight the features of these interactions and their influencing factors.

Twenty-one articles were selected based on keywords: "tourism industry," "management in tourism," "interaction in tourism," "tourism stakeholders," various regions, source, and date of publication. The selection was limited to peer-reviewed articles published between 2013 and 2023. These articles represented a variety of research methods, the complementarity of which has made the analysis more multifaceted and complete. Since the use of specific methods of data collecting and analysis affects the results (Olya, 2023), the choice was made in favour of articles that were diverse in methodology and allowed for more comprehensive coverage of the question posed. The articles chosen for this literature review use qualitative, quantitative, and mixed research methods to justify and address different aspects of the topic.

Since the articles investigated the mechanisms for effective interaction between external and internal stakeholders of the tourism industry, the first basis for classification was different interaction groups. Due to the wide range of stakeholders, the articles chosen informed different sides of the travel process – actors of the travel businesses, governmental structures, residents of the territory developing tourism, and tourism services customers, which also made it possible to evaluate the features of cooperation between the actors of the tourism industry.

The approaches and views of tourism underwent a significant change during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ionescu et al., 2022). Therefore, the articles were differentiated according to publication time relative to the COVID-19 pandemic. Pre-COVID-19 pandemic articles could only be considered somewhat relevant, yet the theoretical analysis of social networks and word-of-mouth theory retained their relevance (Huo et al., 2021; Litvin et al., 2018). The number of articles depending on the type of interaction between actor groups and time interval is presented in Table 1.

The third basis for classifying the articles was the geographical region of the countries where the research was conducted. Since some articles examined the actions undertaken by countries with earlier border reopenings, this provided insights into factors influencing customer activity in the tourism industry, evaluating, and implementing these experiences in Aotearoa/New Zealand was possible.

Table 1: Number of Articles According to Their Actor Groups

INTERACTION TYPE	PRE-COVID-19 PANDEMIC	DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC	POST-COVID-19 PANDEMIC
Suppliers and customers	4	1	9
Government agencies and the tourism companies	1	1	4
Companies and residents	1	0	1

Interaction Between Actor Groups

The management tools presented in the chosen articles were based on theoretical frameworks, models, and practical observations of tourism industry actors.

Due to the complexity of the tourism industry, the following vectors of interaction between key actor groups were analysed:

- the interaction between suppliers and customers of tourism services;
- the interaction between government agencies and the tourism industry;
- the interaction between companies and residents of the territory developing tourism.

The vectors-of-interaction classification is founded on activity-based and systemic sociological approaches (Chepras, 2013). The first concept evaluated the managerial functions performed by each of the three interacting actors. The crucial idea of the approach was that the effectiveness of the tourism industry management system is the product of the integrated implementation of various actor-specific activities by suppliers, customers, and government agencies (Chepras, 2013). A systemic approach, the second of the two used to identify interactional vectors, emphasises the interdependence of the key actor groups (Bertalanffy, 1968). Only the coordination of their activities ensures the effective functioning of the tourism industry, its stability, and its adaptability to changing environmental conditions (Kostin, 2003). These two approaches formed the basis for identifying the vectors of interaction between actors in the tourism industry. Applying these concepts to the chosen articles emphasised the importance of finding a harmonious balance among actors within Aotearoa/New Zealand's tourism industry. This balance is a potential solution for overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic challenges and the recovery of the tourism industry. Achieving this balance involves collaboration and addressing the needs, concerns, and interests of all the actors involved, including government agencies, residents of the territory developing tourism, tourism suppliers, and customers.

Significantly, the interaction between customers of services and agencies regulating the tourism industry was not explicitly explored in the chosen articles. The reason for this was that this interaction is primarily concerned with the legal framework of tourism. An article by Yoopetch et al. (2022) provided an example of government interest in Thai service customers to develop programmes to support the tourism industry. Noticeably, only international tourists were the focus of that study, and information about their needs was collected using the Delphi method from industry experts (Yoopetch et al., 2022), allowing us to see the unidirectionality and limited communication of that interactional vector.

Fourteen articles were devoted to analysing effective interactions between customers and service providers and offered tools for the improvement of these interactions. Other interactions of the tourism industry received much less attention, which indicated high interest in this type of relationship. This study focus aligned well with the dominant neoliberal perspective of the market economy and policy development across multiple developed and developing countries in the last few decades since the inflation crisis of the 1970s (Barry et al., 1996) and with the approach to policy formation in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011). This also reinforced the role of the government's managerial role, focusing on monitoring and accountability functions, therefore making the interactional vector between the government and customers less meaningful as the government would try to remove itself from direct involvement in the market interactions in line with the New Public Management paradigm (Hood, 1991). Whether or not the merits of such an approach outweigh its associated issues is beyond this scope of this study. However, this conceptual framework helped understand the significant imbalance of research into various interactional vectors in the tourism industry.

Interaction Between Service Customers and Suppliers

According to Muniz (2021), tourism experience and customer knowledge should further improve and develop tourism products. The tourism industry can implement specific data-based modifications, primarily because of the development of communication technologies and the access to customer knowledge they provide (Gretzel et al., 2016). Ivars-Baidal et al.

(2019), Jovicic (2019), and Gretzel et al. (2016) confirm that the development of the Internet, social media, and websites are the principal factors responsible for these transformations. Various other personal social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and tourism-specific platforms like Booking.com and TripAdvisor, have altered how tourism experiences are constructed and consumed (Muniz et al., 2021). In the tourism industry, technologies facilitated a change in the sales and communication channels, which reduces third-party participation and enhances competition (Yin et al., 2022). Gretzel (2016) believed that we had witnessed the dawn of an age of smart tourism. Cloud computing, big data, mobile apps, location-based services, geo-tag services, virtual reality, augmented reality, and social networking services are all cutting-edge examples of smart technologies enhancing tourism experiences and services (Wang et al., 2012). Moreover, Yin et al. (2022) offers to intelligently support international tourists using the Tourism Cloud Management System (TCMS) can enhance and improve their tourism experience. The authors considered a mobile app that could be used to sell tickets for the transport of tourists, using a quick-response (QR) code as an identifier for validation and gives tourists access to the digital form of their travel reservations and makes it easy for them to find destinations (Yin et al., 2022). As a result, without using digital technologies to enable adequate public-private-customer collaboration, achieving a thriving market is almost impossible nowadays (Jovicic, 2019). These factors have led to a transformation in the external environment of the tourism industry, influencing the adoption of technological solutions for creating and delivering tourist services (Gretzel et al., 2016). Additionally, they have reshaped the dynamics of engagement among the tourism industry actors, resulting in a shift towards greater customer autonomy and reduced reliance on suppliers.

One of the mechanisms for increasing trust in interaction between service customers and suppliers is the word-of-mouth (WOM) concept, which was considered by Litvin et al. (2018) and Huo et al. (2021). Word-of-mouth is based on the hypothesis that proximity to customers emphasises the perceived value of service, while the perceived cost of services and company image determine customer loyalty (Huo et al., 2021). Based on the conducted in China and Pakistan research, Huo et al. (2021) identified that brand image and destinations' uniqueness enhance customer loyalty as perceived benefits are closely correlated with customer satisfaction and thus enhance the effects of WOM and the commitment of customers to engage with digital and analogue communication channels acting as image ambassadors to the service providers. Moreover, service providers can improve the tourism experience by offering personalised products and services to users (Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2014), facilitating the transition from regular customers to brand ambassadors discussed by Huo et al. (2021).

According to Litvin et al. (2018), WOM is defined as an assortment of forms typical individuals use to interact online via blogs, websites, product reviews, and other channels. Therefore, the researchers highlight the importance of interaction with tourists' online reviews for service providers (Litvin et al., 2018). They view social media as a tool for segmenting potential customers and stress that interpersonal or social contacts are the most meaningful and practical source of customer data (Litvin et al., 2018). The general transformation of the tourism industry to incorporate information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Gretzel et al., 2016) is significantly more topical following the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, post the COVID-19 pandemic, it is crucial to pay particular attention to the quality of interaction between customers and suppliers of tourist services and the ability to maintain communication channels.

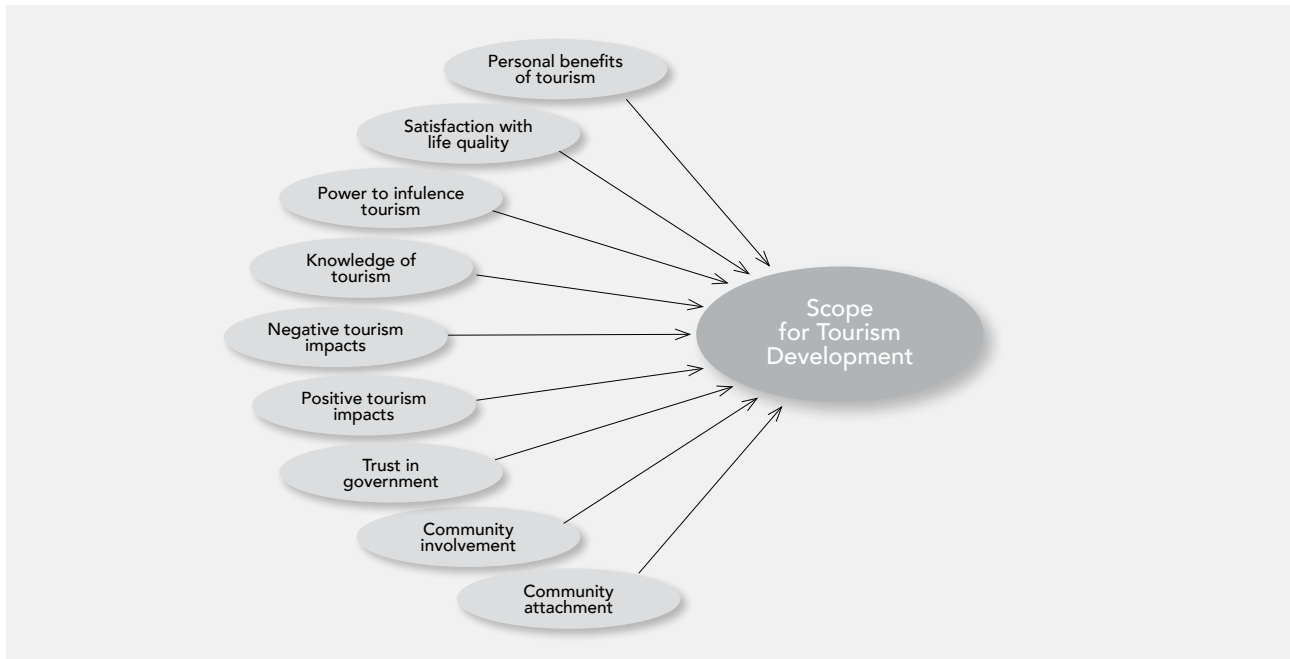
Word-of-mouth has significantly altered the interaction dynamics between suppliers and customers in the tourism industry (Litvin et al., 2018). The advent of social media and online platforms has made customers co-creators of tourism services and increased the requirements for these services (Litvin et al., 2018). This shift has led to a more customer-centric approach in the tourism industry and has forced suppliers to prioritise customer satisfaction (Dodda, 2023). Moreover, WOM has transformed the tourism industry's interaction between suppliers and customers from a one-way communication model to an interactive system (Huo et al., 2021).

Valeri & Baggio (2021) considered a similar question but in the context of a different methodology - social networks and tools for improving the information flow along the customer/supplier interaction vector. The authors conducted a quantitative study to measure the networks' distribution and reach of targeted marketing activities when applied to tourism-oriented communities in digitally facilitated networks. To assess tourism networks, they offered such measurements as density and cohesion of group and degree of centrality between customers since it has been found that the main participants were usually located in the centre of the network. This means that the overall control of a tourism destination is governed by a restricted number of actors, confirming once more the need for a cooperative tourism network (Valeri & Baggio, 2021) and, therefore, these groups of customers with intensive connections had more effective connections for WOM brand representation. Social network analysis identifies patterns and provides managers with a wealth of information about company's qualitative and quantitative connections and organisational dynamics (Valeri & Baggio, 2021). Consequently, companies can use these information channels to receive customer feedback, rank the factors influencing tourists' activity, and form an attractive image of the proposed service (Dodda, 2023), improving the effectiveness of interaction with the customers and significantly increasing their competitiveness (Muniz et al., 2021). This study emphasises the role of digital networks and social tools in shaping the interaction between tourism suppliers and customers. The study by Valeri & Baggio (2021) highlights how companies can leverage social network analysis to enhance their interaction with customers and strengthen their position in the competitive tourism market.

Interaction Between Companies and Residents

According to Olya (2023), the sustainability of tourism growth relies on the aid of local communities and residents. Consequently, the perceived favourable and unfavourable influences, individual benefits of tourism, community attachment, and trust in the government are all predictors of residents' approval for tourism expansion. At the same time, this study identified residents' complex behaviours toward tourism development and identified necessary predictors to achieve the residential support of tourism development which are presented in Figure 1. The results of this research are essential for prioritising and ranking the factors influencing residential behaviour. Olya and Gavilyan (2017) have found that residents who have experienced negative impacts from tourism still express their support for tourism development. Therefore, this study conducted a multiple factor analyses to provide deeper insight into the analytical approaches used for modelling residents' support for tourism development (Olya, 2023).

Figure 1: Predictors of Residents' Support for Tourism Development (Olya, 2023)



Olya (2023) emphasised that personal benefit, the positive impact of tourism, and community involvement significantly and positively affect residents' support for tourism development. It is crucial to underline that a community attachment mainly raises residents' approval for tourism growth (Lee, 2013; Olya, 2023). Community attachment is explained as "people's strong positive feelings, rootedness, and sense of belonging toward the community" (Eslami et al., 2019, p.1063).

Boes et al. (2016) explored the core components of smart technologies concerning the tourism industry through a case study analysis of well-established smart cities and their residents' characteristics. They concluded that the smart components within a service-logic ecosystem hold the potential for sustained competitive advantage and enhance residents' and tourists' quality of life in smart tourism destinations. Consequently, residents' closeness to the local community and the level of adoption of smart technologies in the destination positively influence the aptitude and likelihood of developing local tourism (Boes et al., 2016).

These articles highlight the importance of local communities and residents in sustaining tourism growth because residents' approval and support are crucial for expanding the tourism industry. These insights can be leveraged to recommend ways for Aotearoa/New Zealand to maintain and grow its travel industry, since understanding and addressing the concerns and preferences of local communities could be a key strategy (Olya & Gavilyan, 2017). Encouraging community involvement in tourism development and building trust between the travel companies and the residents can contribute to residents' approval, which supports the industry's growth and sustainability (Olya, 2023). Government regulations can be designed to ensure a balance between economic benefits and minimising negative impacts of the tourism industry, taking into consideration residents' concerns and preferences (Eslami et al., 2019).

Interaction Between Tourism Services Suppliers and Government Agencies

The crucial part of the tourism industry is the government since it might stimulate tourist activity, ensure the tourism system achieves pre-determined objectives, and control all the parties of the travel process (Chepras, 2013). Besides, as an actor in the tourism system, the government can participate in the market directly through its auditing functions or through investments in infrastructure and providing information or process support to the national tourism community (Roberts, 2022).

Zhou et al. (2022) consider the issue of government involvement in regulating the tourism industry, noting that government guidelines and the "trust" in them are essential for developing the post-COVID-19 tourism industry. Another aspect of state regulation in tourism is forecasting the development of the tourism industry to ensure maximum market competitiveness, which connects back to the government function of infrastructure planning and development (Yoopetch et al., 2022). Tourism forecasting is vital for private service providers, allowing companies to analyse and plan for market developments (Yoopetch et al., 2022). On the other hand, tourism forecasting also supplies necessary data for the government to plan (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 1989, p. 6) and develop ongoing international tourism information strategies (Zhertovskaya & Saak, 2011). An example of how this data could be gathered and utilized is the research of Yoopetch et al. (2022), who conducted tourism forecasting using the Delphi technique to accumulate information from experts in hospitality, supplying government agencies with data about the trends in Thailand's tourism.

These articles emphasise that government guidelines, trust in them, and their involvement in regulating the industry are crucial in post-COVID times. In the context of Aotearoa/New Zealand, the government's active involvement in providing guidelines and regulations for tourism post the COVID-19 pandemic can stimulate customer activity, influence suppliers' expectations, and change travel market dynamics (Roberts, 2022). The insights from the articles highlighted the importance of collaboration, strategic planning, and alignment between tourism companies and government agencies to ensure the recovery of the tourism industry.

Theoretical Frameworks and Models

According to The World Tourism Organization (1989, p.1), it is in the interest of all countries to facilitate both individual and group tourist travel. Tourists "contribute to economic, social, and cultural development, foster the creation of a climate of confidence and mutual understanding between the members of the international community, and the development of international cooperation"

This definition emphasises the role of tourism and such crucial industry features as complexity and the necessity of partnerships (Scheyvens & Cheer, 2022). As an integrated activity, tourism includes the activity of actors at different levels and can be aimed at achieving different results (Chepras, 2013). The issues of organising effective interaction between them should be the focus of the tourism management process in coordinating the actions and implementing joint programmes for the development of the tourism industry, which is reflected in the topics of the selected articles (Muniz et al., 2021; Valeri & Baggio, 2021; Zhou et al., 2022).

It is worth noting the importance of the synergy effect in tourism since the results of the joint activities of the tourism industry actors are more than the sum of individual results (Valeri & Baggio, 2021). The existence of the sphere of tourism services is impossible without the organised performance of certain functions by various actors since, in essence, the provision of tourism services is a complex activity, and the formation of a tour package involves the combination of a whole range of services (Chepras, 2013). Therefore, it would be reasonable to consider the tourism industry, among other things, as a system of tourism services, all elements of which are functionally interconnected, and their activities are ordered in a certain way (Chepras, 2013).

International experience testifies to the diversity of management models, in which the government's role and power structures can take a lot of different forms (Yoopetch et al., 2022; Zhertovskaya & Saak, 2011). Today, we can distinguish three models of interactions (Chepras, 2013) within the framework of the provision of tourist services:

1. A unilaterally directed model that explores the influence of one of the actors of the tourism industry (customers, suppliers, and government agencies) on others to satisfy their interests (Chepras, 2013). This model was not directly represented in the selected articles. However, the work of Yeoman et al. (2022) has some references to this model. It focused exclusively on the behaviour of tourists and the changes in their tourist activity during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. A bilaterally directed asymmetrical model that explores "the interaction of two actors to achieve common goals, taking into account the interests of each other in the absence of coordination of interests on the part of the third" (Chepras, 2013, p. 79). Such a model is shown in the articles of Huo et al. (2021), Muniz et al. (2021), and Litvin et al. (2018), where the relationship between customers and providers of tourism services is displayed, but government structures are not represented. Also in Yoopetch et al. (2022) the relationship between travel companies and government agencies were explored but customer are completely omitted.
3. A bilaterally directed symmetrical model that characterises the interaction of the actors in the process of achieving common goals and considering each other's interests (Chepras, 2013). This model describes the relationships presented in the articles by Valeri and Baggio (2021), Roberts (2022), Zhou et al. (2022), and Ionescu et al. (2022).

The social partnership model implies an equal interaction between all tourism industry actors (Scheyvens & Cheer, 2022). At the same time, it is essential to remember that tourism is directed by the needs of customers, who determine the activities of suppliers (Muniz et al., 2021). This interaction aspect is expressed in the presence of feedback as a partnership model implies that all actors in the management process (customers, suppliers, and government agencies) build relationships with each other on the principles of cooperation and consistency (Kostin, 2003; Muniz et al., 2021; Yoopetch et al., 2022).

This kind of communication makes sense in the tourism industry (Ghanem et al., 2022; Scheyvens & Cheer, 2022; Tourism New Zealand, 2023), where all activity actors interact to create and implement a tourist product, each performing various functions (booking hotels, performing air transportation, providing insurance, and issuing visas to the country of arrival) (Ghanem et al., 2022). As a result of their interactions and the exchange of results of activities, a package of services can be implemented in the tourism market.

Since Aotearoa/New Zealand's existing model of interaction is stated to be symmetrical (Tourism New Zealand, 2023) and is intended to be based on the concept of partnership, it is crucial to identify two main issues that are relevant to this model in the current realities and can be distinguished in the articles:

1. Cooperation in the tourism industry. The issues of organising effective interactions between actors at different levels should be the focus for all tourism management companies interested in coordinating their actions and implementing joint programmes for the development of the tourism industry (Valeri & Baggio, 2021). During the analysis of the management systems in the selected articles, it was noted the need to organise interactions between all actors in the tourism industry (Roberts, 2022). This was based on the interests of each of them and built on reciprocal partnerships in an industry that is a pathway to sustainable development (Movono & Hughes, 2022). It is important to remember that the actors' equality in practice is illusory, if at all attainable (Kostina & Chepras, 2013). However, the mechanisms to express their opinion on the development of the tourism industry, the weight and importance in the market, and many other factors influencing the possibilities of cooperation can vary significantly (Movono & Hughes, 2022; Scheyvens & Cheer, 2022). The relative influence of the main actors involved in the interactions - authorities, customers, suppliers and government agencies – is vastly different (Yoopetch et al., 2022).
2. Customer knowledge. This topic is quite logically explained by the need to obtain the most accurate and relevant (especially post the COVID-19-pandemic) knowledge about customers (Ionescu et al., 2022) to design a popular tourist product effectively. Firstly, the non-primary nature of tourism services means they have a very high price elasticity of demand (Chepras, 2013). Therefore, the change in the population's purchasing power affects tourism services, and timely customer information allows for adjusting the volumes and price levels and the overall territory industry goals in view of the local market and as part of the broader international market (Muniz et al., 2021; Yoopetch et al., 2022). Secondly, marketing is vital for the tourism industry (Dodda, 2023). The seller of tourism services, intangible and delayed by consumption, must find arguments in favour of their product, which can only be done with well-established marketing (Chepras, 2013; Litvin et al., 2018). Due to the variability of the quality of services, the same tourism experience can be perceived very differently by different customers (Litvin et al., 2018). In this regard, tourism management should be focused on creating a system for collecting, processing, and disseminating customer knowledge (Muniz et al., 2021). Consequently, the alignment of regular two-way communications and coordinated cooperation between the tourism industry's actors make it possible to respond to changing conditions of the external environment (Litvin et al., 2018). This is especially important because partnerships allow for performing tourism's social function and reducing tourism industry risks (Ionescu et al., 2022).

Since these two topics are the focus of attention in almost all articles, it is worth dwelling on them in more detail.

Frameworks and Models of Cooperation

The first group of articles considers the tourism industry as a complex system that operates using management models based on cooperation and aims to analyse the factors for building effective interactions between industry actors. The significance of the cooperation framework is due to the complexity of the tourism product itself and the current external conditions for providing tourism services, including the uncertainty and risks of travel (Ionescu et al., 2022; Litvin et al., 2018; Zhou et al., 2022). The nature of the tourism industry implies the need for trust, strengthened through the systematic interaction and exchange of information between providers and customers of tourism services (Zhou et al., 2022). The necessity of considering and improving organisational processes in tourism was highlighted by Baggio et al. (2020), who emphasised that through the availability of information, perceived transparency and analysis of customer knowledge increases the trust.

One of the conceptual frameworks and strategic tools that seek to make use of tourist knowledge and enhance destination management through understanding is SMARTUR (Baggio et al., 2020; Boes et al., 2016; Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2014; Gretzel et al., 2016; Hunter et al., 2015; Muniz et al., 2021). This framework states that smart tourism requires an ecosystem where actors must collaborate in developing smart goals that satisfy the current tourism industry needs (Muniz et al., 2021). Notably, electronic social media now plays a crucial role in developing smart tourism destinations, and influencing customer activity and supplier behaviour (Jovicic, 2019). Consequently, one can see the significance of striving for collaborative action in tourism governance (Muniz et al., 2021). The term "smart" has been added to a whole lot of different constructs, including cities, to describe efforts aimed at using technologies innovatively to achieve resource optimisation, effective and fair governance, sustainability, quality of life, and, importantly, integrated and efficient infrastructure for tourism (Gretzel et al., 2016; Shafiee et al., 2019). In business, smart tourism allows for new ways of managing tourist flows, better tourist services, new advertising models, and new collaborative ventures that build on Cloud services and open data to innovate beyond traditional tourism industry boundaries (Gretzel et al., 2016).

This idea is supported by the hypothesis of commitment, according to which trust and connection marketing one ought to concentrate on brand impression, perceived services, client loyalty, and favourable WOM because these are the fundamental drivers of customer attitudes (Huo et al., 2021).

In addition, Hunter et al. (2015) proposed the constructivist framework based on the belief that through smart tourism ecosystems, experience and image formation are increasingly self-perpetuating, autonomous, and organic social constructions.

After the COVID-19 pandemic, Ionescu et al. (2022) presented a decision-support model to specify and execute quick actions for European tourism industry recovery. Since the tourism decision-makers needed a new approach, the authors developed a smart management model that assessed the effectiveness of the suggested steps on the tourism economy in response to the health crisis. They critically analysed the health crisis effects on tourism customer activity using Eurostat and European Commission data to establish a causal relationship and develop a causal matrix. Demonstrating the causal relationship between the model factors allowed for the analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to evaluate the tourism industry management, which quantified the value of these for each Member State of the European Union (Ionescu et al., 2022).

Since a traditional “non-smart” managing concept which does not examine the collaborative connection between multiple actors, is no longer appropriate for contemporary requirements, Zhou et al. (2022) developed a model that contains multiple decision-makers as actors of its enquiry established on a standard four-dimensional evaluation strategy. This study examined the expansion of the decision-makers and the inclusion of public companies and residents in the decision-making process linked to tourism projects. A novel large-scale group decision-making (LSGDM) algorithm was proposed to incorporate the trust–distrust asymmetric connections between decision-makers (Zhou et al., 2022). The data presented showed that the trust–distrust value between decision-makers differed and influenced the clustering result (Zhou et al., 2022). The authors believed that the decision-maker first assigns trust and distrust values to other decision-makers. Then, the trust relationship network is constructed based on the trust values, and the clustering algorithm is applied. The key elements of this methodology are to apply a scientific clustering algorithm, reasonably decompose the decision-making actors into small groups, integrate the most information for each small group, and then summarise the information. As a result, the authors posit that collaboration among interested actors, including the government, companies, and the public, might be crucial in creating a multiagent cooperative governance model (Zhou et al., 2022).

Another fundamental feature of tourism cooperation is its systemic nature (Kostina & Chepras, 2013; Valeri & Baggio, 2021). According to Valeri & Baggio (2021), tourism is a complex system and can be comprehended only by examining it as a whole. The components of a complex system interact in a non-linear way. There are seldom straightforward cause-and-effect connections between segments, and a little impulse may generate significant or no influence. On the other hand, tourism can demonstrate a fast recovery since the system is moderately insensitive and can return to a balanced state without external inputs (Valeri & Baggio, 2021), which explains the tourism industry recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the systemic nature of the tourism industry, it makes sense for interacting actors to pay special attention to building high-quality connections and cooperation.

The concepts of cooperation between actors in the tourism industry highlighted in the considered articles have clearly shown that the recovery post the COVID-19 pandemic and development of the tourism industry in Aotearoa/New Zealand are possible only with the active participation and systemic interaction of suppliers and customers using tourism services, government agencies and residents of the territory developing tourism.

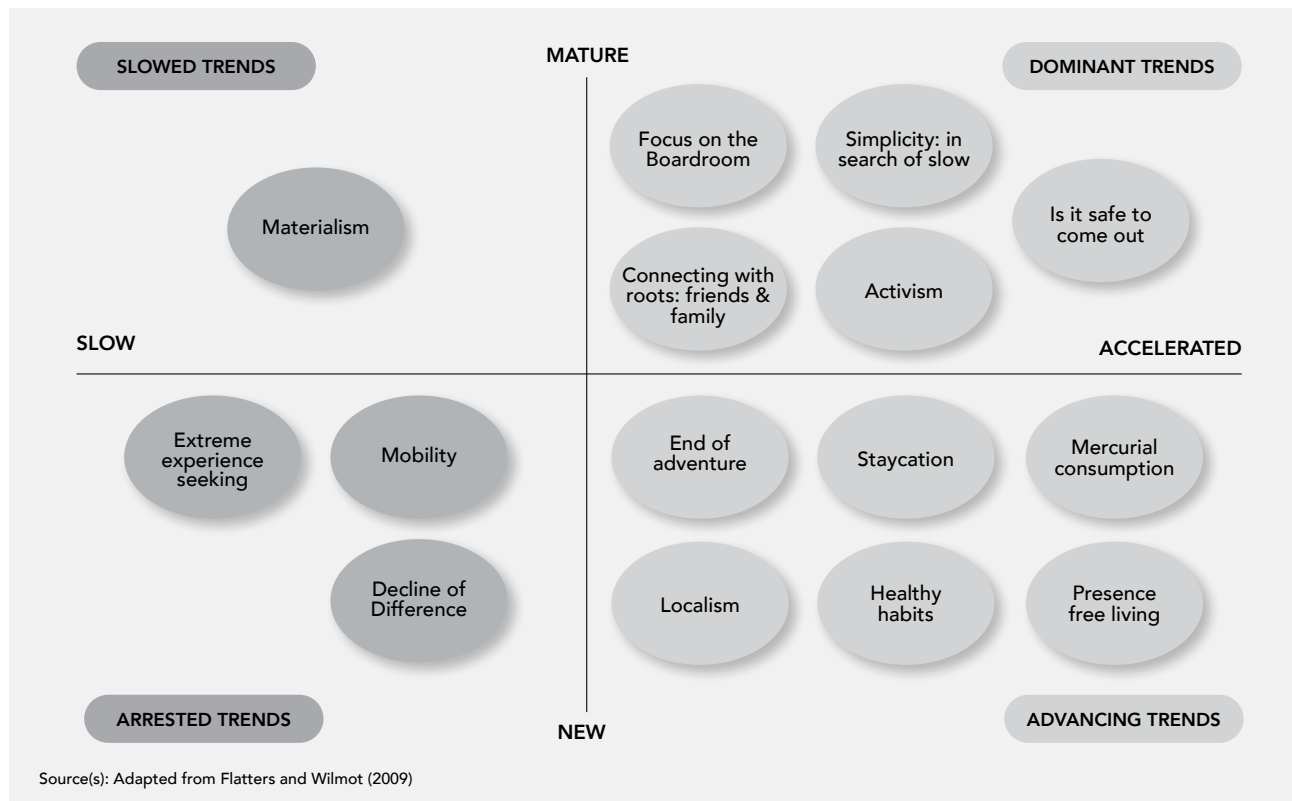
Customer Knowledge Frameworks

The second block of articles was devoted to the knowledge about current customers. It is valuable to examine the Muniz et al. (2021) article, which presents the customer knowledge management (CKM) model of the tourism industry. Since information technologies have transformed the pattern of how tourism knowledge is produced and transmitted, actors in the tourism industry have to use various individual media. Therefore, the authors highlighted that CKM is a key approach for tourism services and defined it as: “a continuous and bilateral process that consists of processes and activities for acquisition (capture, collection, creation), storage (conversion, coding, classification), sharing (dissemination, distribution, transfer) and use (utilisation, application, implementation, verification, validation, testing) of customer knowledge”, categorised into ‘for,’ ‘about,’ ‘from’ and ‘with,’ which aims to generate value, innovation and other benefits for customers and organisations” (Muniz et al., 2021, pp. 1337–1338).

Since the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected not only the economy of the tourism industry but also changed the portrait of a typical customer of tourism services, special attention should be paid to information about current changes in the customer activity of tourists (Ionescu et al., 2022). In this regard, the article by Ionescu et al. (2022) highlighted that rather than viewing tourists as reasonable risk evaluators, tourism actors should identify the customers’ fears exerted after the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, this study revealed another factor influencing tourist’s activity in post COVID-19 pandemic and analysed conditions for the tourism industry’s recovery. The proposed smart management model in tourism (SMMT) is innovative because it quantifies the effect of endogenous and exogenous factors that have altered tourists’ activity and influenced the market post the COVID-19 pandemic.

Yeoman et al. (2022) provided a matrix evaluation framework that helped to capture the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Aotearoa/New Zealand tourism industry. In May 2020, using the trend matrix (Figure 2), the authors showed the anticipated customer behavior trends. The matrix identified 15 tendencies based on customer activity shifts and clustered them into four groups: dominant, slowed, advanced, or arrested (Figure 2). The trends identified were based on a combination of official government statistics, consumer panel surveys, media reports, expert interviews, and academic publications (Yeoman et al., 2022).

Figure 2: Trends Matrix (Yeoman et al., 2022)



This matrix allows users to assess changes and tendencies in the tourism industry and clarify the factors influencing the customers (Yeoman et al., 2022). The authors predicted that tourists would seek the comfort and security of what was familiar during a crisis. However, they did not foresee in May 2020 a trend of “the desire for new experiences” (Yeoman et al., 2022, p. 167). New experiences are about sampling new and aspirational experiences that allow tourists to develop new skills, acquire knowledge, and do something unusual or something they have always wanted to do (Yeoman et al., 2022).

Contemporary research demonstrates that the mix of sentiment analysis and geo-location knowledge might allow for more precise planning of travel destinations (Paolanti et al., 2021) and the method was used to analyse a dataset of travel-related tweets. Paolanti et al. (2021) demonstrated and tested an approach to data analysis at the intersection of sentiment analysis and geo-location to describe spatial, material, and demographic tourist segments. Social media content analysis allowed companies to understand the trends in tourist perceptions better and obtain a more nuanced semantic analysis. Thus, Paolanti et al. (2021) considered that mapping tourist sentiment could permit service providers to receive beneficial knowledge about the online reputation of the destination designed as a brand. In addition, Solazzo et al. (2022) gathered data from two sources, Flickr and Twitter, in textual and visual ranges to complete analytics on tourist activity and the affective characteristics of the destination image. These demonstrate how the data collected from tourists can underline factors influencing customer activity and enhance the process of creating value for a tourism destination.

It is valuable to present the point of view of tourism companies’ representatives as they are vital to communication in the travel industry (Yoopetch et al., 2022). Roberts (2022), a Chief Executive of the Tourism Industry Aotearoa, suggested that the Aotearoa/New Zealand tourism industry needs to diversify services to attract tourists. He believes that the best method to provide the long-term financial sustainability of the tourism industry is to support an invariably high customer perception of the significance they have provided. Although it is typically assumed that the Aotearoa/New Zealand tourism product is so stimulating that attracting tourists back is not a problem, however the Aotearoa/New Zealand tourism industry certainly needs a balanced scorecard approach (Roberts, 2022). Better integration of actual customer knowledge becomes critical in the attempts to revitalise the tourism industry undermined by the COVID-19 pandemic.

CONCLUSION

This literature review contributes to understanding efficient management and the interactions between the actors in the tourism industry, offering various tools to stimulate customer activity. Introducing the systemic approach signifies a considerable change in understanding the tourism industry driven by the dynamic evolution of tourism practices and advancements in tourism management theory (Jovicic, 2019). In the analysis of selected articles, the authors consistently referred to the effectiveness of a system based on constant interaction between all actors in the tourism industry, fulfilling the interest of each as part of a stable and sustainable development of the tourism industry built on reciprocal partnerships (Zhou et al., 2022). Therefore, in tourism, the two-sided symmetrical model seems to be consistently recognised as more effective as it emphasises the importance of compensatory ties due to the interdependence of the actors.

The uniqueness of the tourism industry is displayed in the fact that customers with their needs, value systems, and mentality, appears at the core of this entire system (Chepras, 2013). The theoretical model of interaction based on social partnership shows that a bilateral symmetrical model makes sense in the tourism industry since the network of mutual communications between all market entities allows us to track the state of the industry, stimulate the development of priority elements, implement a set of anti-crisis measures and preventative actions to reduce risks (Ionescu et al., 2022).

Due to the increasing levels of risk associated with tourism in modern society and the openness of tourism to the impact of external factors of an economic, political, environmental, and technogenic nature, the actors in tourism activity are interested in the sustainable development of the industry and the search for mutually beneficial cooperation options to ensure the stability of their functioning in the tourism services market by strengthening partnerships and increasing the degree of trust in each other (Olya, 2023; Zhou et al., 2022).

Since the tools and theoretical frameworks presented from the chosen articles can help minimise risks and enhance interactions in New Zealand tourism industry, they provide valuable insights for managers seeking to leverage interactions with external and internal stakeholders. Considering the disruption caused by COVID-19, it is critical to ensure that future policies, strategies, and operational decisions take into account the findings of academic research and analysis of empirical evidence to reduce the perceived and real risks in the industry and ensure its sustainable development.

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