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TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND EMPATHY-ALTRUISM IN POST PANDEMIC SERVICE DELIVERY

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Abstract

Empathy-Altruism involves selfless concern for the rejuvenation of the tourism sector, devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic necessitating a global lockdown due to the frailties of our systems. We propose the need for augmented service delivery, using pro-social advertorials to communicate brand uniqueness to customers. The cyclical theory of tourism development was adapted, to explain the evolution of tourism product from cradle to acceptable brand. The structured systematic review was adopted with comprehensive research on previous studies. Also, future research direction is on; integrating pro-social messages in aviation service delivery. The findings revealed that Service quality has a significant effect on sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: *empathy-altruism, post covid-19 pandemic, pro-social advertising service delivery, sustainable tourism*

Introduction

Tourism is a key driver of development and interactivity amongst nationals of the global community, this sector is often at the 'receiving end'. Whenever there is a global downturn due to the pandemic (Gowreesunkar et al., 2021; & Spencer et al., 2021), it is often accompanied by increasing political and economic complications (UNCTAD, 2020). The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in 2020 estimated an \$12trillion loss, and (a 58 to 78) % decrease in tourist activities in the sector (UNWTO, 2020); when compared to US\$1.03 trillion in 2005 and with a steady growth of 3.8% from the year 2010, amounting to over 1billion global tourist in 2012 (UNWTO, 2013; & 2017).

Sustainable tourism development is one of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), in which tourism resources/proceeds (economic, environmental and resources within the ecosystem) must be effectively managed to achieve set goals and objectives, without jeopardizing the desires, aspirations and objectives of future generations (Inkson, 2012; World Commission on Environment and Development, 2002 & Towards Earth Summit, 2002). Throughout the period of the pandemic, social media has been one of the key media channels disseminating prosocial sentiment of prosocial messages (Silk & House, 2011), increasing the need to develop new tourism products for efficient performance (Eshiett & Eshiett, 2022). The pandemic resulted in the closure of lots of tourism resources, with replicated setbacks in job losses, loss of means of livelihood in tourism-prone communities, and a negative effect on the sector. As such, the integration of empathy in tourism service delivery.

The proposition of the empathy-altruism model (Baston et al., 2015) in tourism is an attempt to rejuvenate the tourism sector after the COVID-19 cataclysm, based on the need to integrate strategic measures towards empathic communication of brand peculiarity to customers (Laguna et al., 2022; Eshiett & Eshiett, 2021). The foregoing has shown diverse research work on prosocial concerns, but we discovered in-depth paucity in the literature on the integration of prosocial concerns in the tourism sector and, as such, the necessity to fill this gap.

Statement of the Problem

Tourism is one of the key drivers of global economies with value addition to Gross Development Products (GDP); there are lots of economies that solely depend on tourism as their only foreign exchange earner. Hence, when a pandemic of the COVID-19 magnitude resulted in shutting down most of these sites, it had a severe negative socio-economic impact that most nations are yet to fully recover from. Our proposition to integrate the empathy-altruistic model in prosocial advertising as a process for actualizing sustainable tourism development is not without outstanding issues that will be discussed, such as Standardized tourism resources, Digitization of tourism processes, and brand value co-creation.

The standardization of tourism resources lies solely in the hands of stakeholders (Government, site owners, host community, and donor agents), to develop tourism sites to optimal standards. Standardization includes but is not limited to the following facilities (standard infrastructural facilities from the Airport to the site, improvements on: transport/aviation facilities, telecommunication facilities with good interconnectivity, Guaranteed security network en-route and at the site, peaceful and interact-able host community), where these are lacking, integrating prosocial advertising becomes a task to marketing strategist.

A 21st-century tourism site must be fully digitized to allow tourists unhindered access to make necessary inquiries and reservations across the globe. Sites should be able to install technologically enabled resources such as Artificial Intelligence driven predictive analytics and forecasting CRM software that can predict with precision incoming tourist and their various needs that can allow management to plan on how to procure items needed by such customers. It is quite obvious that integrating prosocial advertising with an empathy-altruistic model could be difficult to operate where digitization is still a 'pipe dream'.

Finally, the issue of value co-creation is a marketing concept that acknowledges that customers must be integrated into the process of production of goods/services. It is quite difficult to think about co-creating value where tourism sites are lacking in facilitating business processes and interactivity. Customers must have unhindered access to firms' database: service providers must exhibit some level of transparency in all transactions with the customer. If these are not practicable, pro-social advertising becomes very difficult to execute.

Literature Review

Concept of Tourism

Tourism, according to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), connotes a process of movement by individuals or groups from their residential location within a continuous period of less than one year for the purpose of leisure, business, and networking (Fennell & Cooper, 2020). While the United Nations (UN) modified it to cover travelling away from their environment for a period of six months on domestic tours, inbounds tours or outbound tours. (Theobald, 1998). The Tourism Society of England (TSE) defines Tourism as non-permanent travelling by individuals or groups for a short period to other locations different from their original places of residence, where they earn their livelihood and conduct their business activities (Beaver, 2002).

Historically, the concept of tourist and tourism precedes each other as dated back to 1772 and 1811 simultaneously (Griffiths & Griffiths, 1772). These developments have evolved in the process of identification and profiling of several tourism destinations across the world as heritage sites. A similar most popular destination is the British Royal Family, which has become a tourist centre attracting an economic value of about 550 million Pounds (Bitzan & Imlinger, 2011). In the Middle Ages, the growth of religion and religious activities (Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism) changed the erstwhile trend in tourism with the advent of annual pilgrimages by followers to these sacred places where this religion had their origin, to further strengthen their faith and commitment to its tenets and belief (Gannon, et. al, 2017; & Jafari & Scott, 2014).

The celebrated 'Grand Tour' of the mid-15th century and beyond marked the changing trend in modern tourism. All these are the rosy side of tourism, the other side of tourism which also exists is tagged by scholars and practitioners as the 'dark side', several research studies have also been conducted such as the interlink between terrorism and the dark side of tourism in developing countries (Apleni, et. al, 2020), the integration of typologies, theoretical basis, motivations, and future developments on the dark side of tourism (Mitchell, et. al, 2020), and the effort to mitigate mortality rates and violence against tourist (Stone, 2012). Based on the foregoing diverse literature on the concept of tourism, this study becomes quite important with the integration of empathy-altruism in tourism development to fill the literature gap.

Tourism Sustainability

Sustainable tourism entails a total tourism encounter that covers economic, social and environmental paradigms, Sustainable tourism is a composition of several SDGs (Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals (2017), such as Goal – 8; Decent work and economic growth; Goal - 12 Responsible consumption and production; Goal - 14 Life below water; and Goal – 15; Life on land (Fennell; & Cooper, 2020). This combined sustainability is integrated to create a sustainable economic system that could be beneficial to the tourist businesses (Seetana, 2011), the host community and the government (Sharpley, 2018; Woo et al., 2016), and integrating sustainable tourism as a global initiative (Bramwell; & Lane, 1993).

Other studies include the harmful effect of tourism on climate change, otherwise tagged 'doom tourism' (Lemelin, et. al, 2013; & Frew, 2008), examining the carbon footprint of global tourism (Lenzen, 2008), also considered include; future directions on the trend in educational tourism with (McGladdery & Lubbe, 2017; Cohen, 2011), on sustainable tourism in developing countries (Eshiett; & Eshiett, 2021), mitigating environmental hazards around tourism resources (Cooper & Nisbet, 2016), tourism role in data flight across national borders (Karanasios; & Burgess, 2008)., development and distribution of online tourism services (Lu & Lu, 2004; & Stone, 2007), to manage customer data effectively (Finlay, 2014), and on the role of tourism in the ecosystem (Pueyo-Ros, 2018); Sustainable tourism without adequate consideration for a post pandemic service delivery approach, in repositioning the sector to address customers touch points in service offering, will stagnate the sector. Hence, the integration of the empathy-altruistic model could easily address such a touch point.

Empathy Altruistic Concept

Altruism is the exact opposite of egoism which refers to a particular state of mind that anchors on the betterment of the welfare of other persons (Baston, 1987), while empathy is a social-psychological concept which refers to having a strong feeling for others (Hoffman, 1975). These motivational states could be influenced by a certain phenomenon such as; i) being

aware of what other persons think, ii) accepting other people's stance, iii) accepting to feel as other persons, iv) having the same feeling for others when they go through extreme pain, v) having a mental image about others feelings, vi) visualizing how others will feel, and vii) common nature of feeling for others (Batson, 2009a). Hence, altruistic empathy is said to occur when one is motivated to show specific interest in other persons in need. Empathy-Altruism is an assemblage of dispositions such as; solace, concern, humane, affection, despondency, misery, worry, troubled, distressed and sorrowful (Hornstein, 1991).

Conceptually, empathy-altruism can be best evaluated as extrinsically- instrumental assessment, which is based on the perceived value addition obtained in being empathic, or intrinsically- terminal assessment, which is not based on what may be obtained from being empathic (Rokeach, 1973). However, research has shown that allocating value to another person's welfare is a natural human character that is formed between the ages of (1-3) years of age (Hoffman, 1975, 2000; Zahn-Waxler et al., 1979; & Zahn-Waxler et al., 1992). From the foregoing, we integrated empathy-altruism, which is intrinsically motivated, as an acceptable concept that comprehensively explains how sustainable tourism in a post-COVID era should be conducted. We propose that every advertorial should have an emotional undertone that shows care for the other party, specifically tourists in need of care, protection, security, and any guidance.

Theory of Tourism Development

The tourism industry in the 21st century has experienced dynamic changes globally, these rapid changes have not been sequential, and hence, the inability of tourism experts to outline their developmental stages (Jafari 1989). Various authors have made a frantic effort to outline the developmental theory process that could be adapted to tourism (Harrison, 2014; Mowforth & Munt, 2009; & Telfer, 2015). The modernization of tourism expeditions in the 21st century is outlined as having positive value added to both developed and developing countries through improvements in local tradition, arts, crafts, culture, technology, and commerce (Telfer, 2015; Harrison, 2001). This global interaction through tourism has resulted in increased enlightenment about the tourism value chain, provision of jobs to locals, increase in foreign direct investments to destinations, improved communication infrastructures and increased economic growth as well as development due to tourism (Mowforth & Ian, 2015; & Telfer 2015). Tourism development, according to (Butler, 1980), has seven cycles, which range from exploration to the stagnation phase, hence the adoption of Butler's Cyclical Theory of Tourism Development for the study.

Cyclical Theory of Tourism Development

The cyclical theory of tourism development is established on the attractiveness of a tourism destination from cradle to maturity based on the concept of the cyclical theory, the income derivable from such tourism facility could enhance the development of other infrastructures until the destination becomes a brand. This theory has become popular amongst developing nations based on its evolution process. The theory, as posited by R. Butler (Butler, 1980), includes; 1) Exploration, ii) inclusion, iii) enlargement, iv) exacerbation, v) renewal, vi) stagnation, and vii) downturn.

Research has suggested that sustainable tourism could only be imagined, but far from reality, since local communities residing in most tourism sites are poor; and, as such, will need foreign capital investments to develop their tourism facilities (Sharpley. 2009). Based on this study, and in filling the theoretical gap, we propose that integrating intrinsically motivated empathy-altruistic concerns in prosocial advertorials that relate to sustainable tourism development could add positive value to the lives of the needy, where tourism resources are located.

Theoretical Framework

Figure 1
Theoretical Proposition for Tourism Sustainability

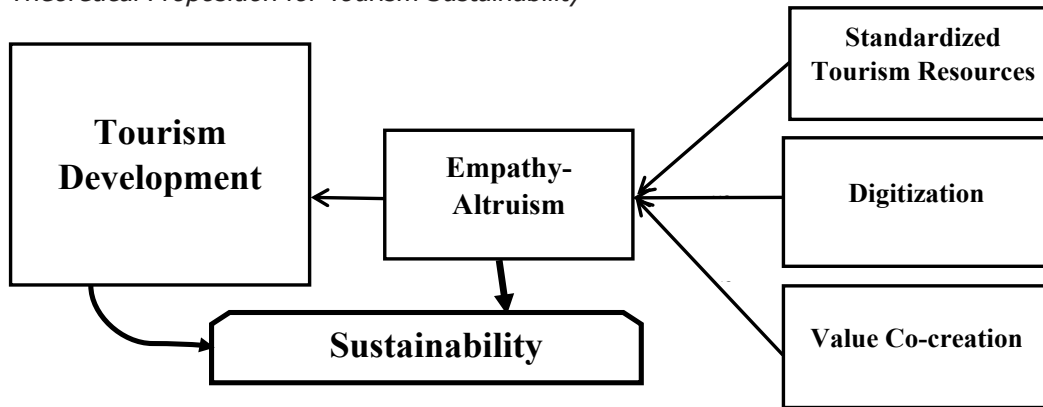


Figure 1 shows the proposed framework for sustainable tourism development, enhanced by Empathy-Altruism through enabling factors such as; i) Standardized tourism resources, ii) Digitization of tourism processes, and iii) Value co-creation, as a sustainable platform for service delivery in a post-COVID-19 tourism environment

The development of a sustainable tourism environment, Standardized tourism resources, Digitization of tourism processes, and brand value co-creation. We propose the integration of an empathy-altruistic model, using extrinsically evaluated assessment, as a measure of perceived value addition to the industry (Rokeach, 1973), by being concerned, humane, affectionate, worried, distressed, and sorrowful about assisting the other party through selfless value addition to the relationship (Berscheid, 1983; & Kelley, 1979). Based on the challenge experienced in the tourism sector, we propose a sustainable framework that could rejuvenate the sector using the following factors:

Sustainable Tourism Resource Development: According to UNSDG criteria, tourism resources must be developed within the framework of sustainability (UNWTO, 2013; & 2017). Previous studies have shown the need for ensuring sustainability in tourism development as follows; actualizing SDG goals in tourism by 2030 (Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals, 2017); & Towards Earth Summit 2002), and tourism sustainability as an emerging global concept (Eshiett; & Eshiett, 2021); Projecting into the future of advertising based on historical antecedents (Bearden, et. al, 1996), using structural equation to determine internet usage and advertising gratification (Ko, et. al, 2005). From the foregoing, and based on our proposition, tourism resources must also integrate the empathy-altruistic approach in its IMC to ensure the dissemination of prosocial advertorials from different communication channels.

Digitization of Tourism Processes: The proliferation of innovative ideas in the 21st century have permeated almost all areas of human endeavours with tourism inclusive. The process of digitization in Integrated Marketing Communication – IMC (Arens & Michael, 2021), has augmented the advertising process towards bringing the right information to consumers using different platforms of communication effectively to; profit, non-profit, religious/socio-cultural organizations, and the government. (Belch; & Michael, 2014).

Prosocial advertorials must express deep concern about issues with societal benefits by appealing for self/societal protection, such as self-distancing, such as was experienced during the pandemic (Kelly & Hornik, 2016). For sustainability in tourism, emotional appeals should be integrated into advertising campaign messages, to psychologically attract the attention of the audience (Nabi et al., 2018; & Witte & Allen, 2000), creating customer-friendly digital content

that showcases tourism resources effectively (Eshiett, et. al, 2022), a stratagem that enhances the integration of intrinsically motivated emphatic-altruistic model approach (Berscheid, 1983; & Kelley, 1979), by ensuring that all tourism advertorial expresses deep concern, humane, and affection, to showcase some level of empathy on what the audience may expect in the relationship.

Co-creating Value: The typology for co-creating value has been proposed as a measure for affirming the steps required in the co-creation process, including co-inventing, teamwork, mending, and co-designing (O'Hern & Rindfleisch, 2010). This process has been widely used in InfoTech with great results in software creation through 'open-source software' and could be integrated into the service sector (Grönroos & Ravald, 2009) through prosocial advertising in order to achieve tourism sustainability ((Ross & Kapitan, 2018).

Previous studies have increasingly shown the associated benefits of co-creating value in the service sector, using Service Oriented Architecture - SOA (Opata et al., 2019, and reciprocating value co-creation through a mutually beneficial relationship (Vargo et al., 2008). Sustainable tourism development could be achieved when service providers create opportunities for customers to make their inputs. This could be achieved by engaging customers using their profile, to ascertain areas of customers' core competence that could be of added value to the firm.

Research Methodology

This methodology adopted the structured systematic review (Fink, 2019, Thorpe et al., 2005), on sustainable Tourism development by integrating the empathy-altruistic model to comprehensively review previous studies (Baston, 1987), systematic literature review is used for comprehensive literature review in previous research within the field of study, for the purpose of integrating it with this research (Thorpe et al., 2005; Tranfield et al., 2003). We adopted the exploratory research technique, which explicitly analyses the benefits of standardization of tourism resources, digitization of tourism processes and the engagement of tourists in value co-creation. This process enhances the sequential presentation of facts for ease of understanding the methodological approach (Thorpe et al., 2005). The choice of exploratory technique was based on the ease of procedural analysis and elucidation of the problem statement (Kothari, 2019).

The industry-inclined theory 'cyclical theory of tourism development' was thoroughly evaluated with studies on assisting local communities through the injection of foreign direct investments to develop tourism facilities (Sharpley. 2009), mitigating the process of polluting the ecosystem, and jeopardizing future developmental efforts (Butler, 1999). Data for the study was obtained through secondary sources such as Google Scholar searches on; pro-social advertising on sustainable tourism development and empathy-altruism approach.

Research Results

The role of empathy-altruism in creating sustainable tourism development cannot be overemphasized; a sector that lost an estimated (60-80%) of patronage to a pandemic in 2020 (UNWTO, 2020) needs an effective recovery stratagem. The development of tourism resources is the sine qua non to accelerated growth in the development of the sector, a significant element in attracting tourists to sites is the affirmation by tourists of the availability of standardized facilities (accommodation, catering services, healthcare, transportation – air, rail, road and water, shopping, socio-cultural/religious, facilitating agencies- banks, insurance, travel agencies) that could leave memorable experience during their business/leisure trips (Fennell & Cooper, 2020; & Lew, 2008).

This study proposes the re-establishment of standardized tourism resources, digitization of the sector, and customer-service owners' value co-creation as necessary steps towards the revival of the tourism sector. The discussion will be based on the objective of the study, with specific attention to the theoretical basis and the suggested framework for sustainable tourism development.

Theoretically

The cyclical theory of tourism development shows trends that could affect tourism development (Butler, 1999). The injection of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) suggests the local community having a greater percentage of ownership could guarantee sustainability (Sharpley 2015, Mitchell 1989 and Harrison, 2001, Harrison 2014). It also suggests the adoption of 'Eco-tourism' Tourism with some consideration for sustainable ecosystem balance and conservation (Fennell 1999, Cater 1994 Butler 1999).

Standard Tourism Resources

The development of sustainable tourism resources in a period when the downturn is in line with the aspirations of international organizations such as; A comparative analysis between 2005 and 2020, in 2005, the sector recorded an estimated US\$1.03 trillion in global earnings, and with a steady annual rise of 3.8% (UNWTO, 2013; & 2017). In 2020, UNWTO, estimated a total loss to the industry of about \$12trillion in 2020, with an estimated (58 to 78) % reduction in global tourism activities (UNWTO, 2020). Hence, the re-establishment of sustainable tourism resources, with prosocial advertisements portrays an emotional appeal that guarantees sustainable development.

Digitization

Digitization of the tourism process is a necessary tool in the 21st century, this has resulted in advertising going beyond the traditional communication media (Senn, 20000), Digitization of the tourism sector could address core socio-cultural issues such as; social status gaps in the society (McFall, 2004), and the use of digital platforms for advertorials that are prosocial inclined such as; messages that are intrinsically empathic, and conveying appeals, instead of threats, such as appealing messages used during the COVID-19 pandemic to the public (Hefnera, et. al, 2021; & Jordan, et, al, 2021), digitization could aid, early warnings to communities as step towards ensuring self-distancing. Finally, digitization could be used to appeal to peasants in host communities to participate in developmental programs that could improve their status (Nabiet al., 2018; Ojala, 2012).

Value Co-creation

Tourism Value co-creation is a production process in the service sectors in which customer input is integrated into every step of the process. Value co-creation examines the psychological impact of integrating customers as partakers in the production process (Bendapudi; & Leone, 2003). Tourists are people with diverse areas of skill and expertise; service owners could use tourist profiles to engage them in their areas of need, and such customers could be of great assistance. This could be achieved by using appeals, which is supported by the empathy-altruistic model.

Uniqueness of the study

Tourism development and customer relationship are essential aspects of hospitality marketing; operating this essential industry during global pandemic outbreaks could result in immeasurable risks to stakeholders (Wo et. al, 2016). The unquantifiable damage occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic is ongoing (Gowreesunkar et al., 2021; Spencer et al., 2021; & Eshiett, 2021), as most nations are still grappling with the recovery process (Gowreesunkar et al., 2021). In essence, the tourism sector which made an estimated (60-80%) loss due to the pandemic in 2020, needs a dynamic strategy, to reposition the sector (UNWTO, 2020), hence, empathy altruism becomes a holistic approach that focuses on the welfare, and the common good of community members (Batson, 2009a).

Existing studies have suggested the adoption of empathy-altruism as an extrinsically evaluated measurement of added value to the industry (Rokeach, 1973), a more humane, affectionate, and selfless way of assisting community members through information dissemination (Berscheid, 1983). This study suggests a comprehensive approach that could be adopted in the tourism service delivery sector in the event of a future outbreak of a pandemic, including i) early detection/publicity, ii) collaboration, iii) modelling, iv) Vaccine production/administration, and Supplies management.

The main cause of the greater percentage of casualties during a pandemic is often, the inability to quickly detect such outbreaks, a significant effort in this direction is made by the World Health Organization (WHO), by launching the International Pathogen Surveillance Network (IPSN), with the mandate to detect and respond to threat by such diseases, before they graduate to pandemic through constant surveillance (WHO, 2023). Empathy-altruism could be effective in this case, where medical experts are driven by 'feeling for one another' to ensure that such detections are widely communicated, with transparency globally (Bellantoni et al., 2020). Secondly, the availability of social networks enhanced by Information Systems (IS), could assist in collaborative efforts towards mitigating the effect of the pandemic on service delivery, the establishment of a COVID-19 pandemic hub by WHO, enhances collaborations between WHO and academic institutions on monitoring, improving health facilities/infrastructures, and mitigating health threats globally (Morgan & Pebody, 2022).

Thirdly, making informed policy decisions based on projections on possible pandemic spread (Heymann et al., 2022; Holmes, 2022 Wang; & Wu, 2018). Fourthly, one of the root causes of death during the Covid-19 pandemic was the slow pace of vaccine production and global supply chain challenges (Eshiett et al., 2022; McKenna, 2020). This has resulted in the creation of the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness and Innovation (CEPI) globally, and in the United States, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), to combat the spread of future pandemics through effective service delivery in; vaccination production and effective supply chain management of vaccines (CEPI, 2022; Eshiett, et al., 2022; & NIAID, 2023). Finally, the stockpiling of medical equipment/accessories, with the capacity to detect, prevent and control future pandemics (Campbell, 2022; & Lovelace Jr, et al., 2022). The foregoing shows that this study became necessary to fill the existing literature gap on how to mitigate the future occurrences of pandemics in the process of service delivery, using empathy-altruism theory as a yardstick towards mitigating future occurrences through effective service delivery.

Conclusions and Future Directions

In tourism, the need for sustainability is very important since tourists on leisure and business trips had a very tough time during the COVID-19 pandemic; some tourists contacted diseases while on tour, with a high mortality rate. This resulted in great losses estimated at about \$12 trillion globally; most of the sites were closed or un-operational, and communities

that depended on these resources as a means of livelihood became frustrated, with little or no income to the government for continuous development of tourism resources. We integrated the cyclical theory of tourism development to acknowledge the trends in the tourism cycle and the resultant effect of the pandemic on tourism resources; we suggest that emotional appeal should be incorporated into all service delivery processes to customers, prospects, and the host community.

Also, efforts should be made by stakeholders (government, investors, and host community) towards re-establishing a standardized tourism resource environment, digitization of the process, and creating opportunities for customers and prospects to be a part of value creation in the industry.

This proposition in the study creates an opportunity for the rejuvenation of tourism activities through prosocial advertorials as a sustainable measure; these messages should be directed towards attracting customers to the sites, as well as attracting investors, both local and foreign, to invest in developing these resources. The government should create a sustainable environment by providing adequate infrastructural facilities that aid tourism and providing effective security to tourism facilities and tourists. These measures could guarantee sustainable growth and development in the sector and increased earnings for all stakeholders.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study is a review of sustainable tourism and the empathy altruistic model as a measure towards reviving the sector after the devastating effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, the study is an appraisal of the impact of integrating this model in pro-social advertising. The study advises that future research should be done in the aviation sector, which is a direct affiliate of the sustainable tourism sector.

Declaration of Interest

The authors declare no competing interest.

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