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Smart Tourism and Work- life Balance: Investigating the Intersection between Technology-based Destinations and Employee Welfare

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Abstract

The adoption of digital technologies in tourism is going fast and places are becoming smart tourism ecosystems that are efficient, connected, and provide services in real time. The current literature on smart tourism focuses on what tourists go through, but very minimal studies ask how these transformations impact the employees. Collected data on 525 employees who are employed in smart tourism settings. The study to test the hypothesized relationships to determine whether employee well-being is a mediating factor. The findings reveal that smart tourism influenced by employee well-being. The mediation analysis supports the assumption that the employee well-being is one of the factors that explain the effectiveness of smart tourism practices in enhancing work-life balance. These results indicate that smart tourism projects assist the maintaining a life not only by making work more efficient and flexible but also enhancing mental and emotional well-being. The research indicates that leaders in the tourism industry ought to integrate technology with people-caring practices in order to attain sustainable results. It is a contribution to the increasing body of literature on smart tourism that is concerned with the employee dimension of sustainability and provides useful recommendations to managers and policymakers who are interested in developing balanced and inclusive smart tourism ecosystems.

Keywords: Smart Tourism, Employee Well-Being, Work-Life Balance, Structural Equation Modeling, Digital Transformation.

Introduction

The tourism business is evolving rapidly due to the emerging digital technologies, which introduce (Baggio et al., 2020). These destinations employ smart buildings to operate more effectively, enhance the quality of services, and provide tourists with personal experiences (Boxall & Macky, 2009). Although such developments have transformed the nature of destination management and tourist interaction, there is minimal information on the impact of such developments on the locals working in the destinations. Tourism is an occupation that requires numerous individuals who deal with tourists. Smart technology has transformed the way individuals

operate within tourism firms through enabling real time coordination, automatic service provision and workflow that is facilitated by technology (John, 2017). These changes may either benefit the workers, providing them with flexibility and reduced work or harm them, raising the intensity of work and unrelenting digital connection. Since the employees should continue to learn new systems, the role of smart tourism in their personal and professional life is becoming more significant (Lee et al., 2020).

The important employee satisfaction, productivity, and long-term health of the company (Srivastava, 2018). The workers in the technology-driven tourism environments are likely to work longer hours, have to be always online, and be monitored by smart systems. Simultaneously, intelligent devices could provide better scheduling and smarter tasks, as well as reduce physical stress. This combination demonstrates that smart tourism might impact negatively and positively on the capacity of workers to maintain work-life and personal separation (Garhwal, 2015). The employee well-being is necessary in this case as it depicts the mental, emotional and physical state of people in the workplace (Gretzel et al., 2015). Well-being influences the perceptions of job requirements, stress management, and work-life integration among employees. The most significant impact that technology has on work-life balance in smart tourism may be employee well-being. Nevertheless, the majority of studies on smart tourism concentrate on the competition of the destinations, tourist satisfaction, and technology, and little is addressed to the well-being of employees.

Due to this gap, the current research examines the relationship between smart tourism behaviours, employee welfare, and work-life balance in technology-based destinations. Based on the findings of employees in smart tourism environments, the research aims to find evidence on how smart tourism influences the results that are meaningful to individuals. The current literature on smart tourism has primarily investigated the technology infrastructure, competition of a destination, satisfaction among tourists, and service innovation. Although such studies contribute to the knowledge of smart tourism in a destination and consumer view, they have not been keen on the outcomes of tourism on workers.

Existing studies accept that work organization in tourism is evolving under the influence of digital transformation, yet it tends to focus on the employees as secondary and overlooks the psychological and social impact of work environments that are influenced by technology. Research on work-life balance on tourism typically addresses traditional tourist services, but not the special issues of constant connectivity, real-time monitoring, and automation in smart tourism systems. The other issue is that there are no full models that explain how smart tourism practices affect the work-life balance based on internal processes such as employee well-being. The current literature mainly looks at direct relationships without taking into consideration the mediating factor of well-being, which is essential in the existence of the relationship between technology adoption and sustainable employee outcomes. These gaps will be filled by focusing on the people-centred perspective to hypothesise the interaction of smart tourism practices, employee well-being, and work-life balance in this study. This shifts the smart tourism research out of a tourist-centered view. To offer viable evidence to tourism managers and policymakers to formulate staff-oriented smart tourism policies that address these conditions.

Review of Literature

Intelligent Tourism and Technological Change

Tools enable destinations to exchange data in real time, make smarter decisions and provide personalized services. This means that destinations are able to compete more and operate more efficiently (Lockwood, 2003). Previous literature demonstrates that smart tourism simplifies

coordination, utilizes resources, and creates new types of services. Nevertheless, the majority of studies are centered on the technology or the tourists, and the primary concern of the studies is the way the destinations are managed and what the visitors experience.

Smart Tourism and the Changing Nature of Work

Online systems make booking, task scheduling, performance tracking, and real-time communication automatic. Researchers conclude that such systems save time and lessen the amount of manual work (Gatrell & Cooper, 2008). Simultaneously, the constant digital connectivity may elevate the workload, erase and put a strain on workers. Therefore, the technology of smart tourism may assist or harm employees, depending on its application and management (Meenakshi & V, 2013).

Well-Being of Employees in Technologically-driven Workplaces

There is an increased focus on employee well-being as it has been associated with job satisfaction, productivity, and retention. Well-being encompasses physical health, mental health and emotions like stress, independence, and happiness in workplace. In technology- intensive occupations, digital technologies can enhance well-being by providing employees with increased flexibility and control (Crompton et al., 2005). Conversely, digitalization can negatively affect mental health due to poor training, continuous attention, and overworking. In smart tourism, there is minimal research on well-being, and most of the research considers general hospitality or service work (Palit et al., 2025).

The Work-Life Balance in the Tourism Industry

The problem of work-life balance is large in tourism due to the non-regularity of working hours, seasonality, and contact with customers. Past studies indicate that tourism employees tend to experience the conflict between work and family and time pressure, which results in stress and burnout (Guest & Guest, 2002). This balance has been altered by smart technologies. Technology can be used to balance life through the flexibility it provides such as online scheduling and telecommuting. However, the accessibility 24/7 may damage personal life. The majority of research continues to examine the conventional tourism environments and thus we require additional understanding.

Correlation of Smart Tourism, Employee Well-Being, and Work-Life Balance

The recent studies emphasize the necessity to relate employee well-being to the research on work-life balance, particularly in digital workplaces. Well being is usually a prime mediator by which organizational practices moderated the work-life balance outcomes (SaThierbach et al., 2015). Well-being, and balance are very few in smart tourism. The majority of the research available considers the direct associations and fails to investigate the mediating role of well- being in the connection with powerful statistical tools (Houston, 2004).

Variables and Conceptual Framework

It is founded on the theory of technology-organization-human interaction that states that technology influences the outcome of employees by means of organizational activity and perceptions of people.

Independent Variable: Smart Tourism Practices

Smart tourism practices imply applying sophisticated digital devices in the destinations and businesses to enhance efficiency and service. In this research, smart tourism is perceived to be composed of four components:

- Smart Digital Infrastructure - existence of digital systems, intelligent devices and integrated platforms.
- Technology-Enhanced Work Processes - automation, AI-based and real-time data can be used to perform tasks.
- Smart Communication Systems- digital channels, which enable coordination and flow of information.
- Flexible Technology Support- technology which allows workers to work flexibly and to control tasks.

Mediator Variable: Employee Well-Being

The well-being of employees is the general physical, mental and emotional condition of employees in smart tourism environments. It demonstrates the level of satisfaction among workers, the level of stress, the degree of autonomy at work, and the emotional state of workers. Well-being is viewed as a mediator since it describes how smart tourism practices result in either higher or lower work-life balance. The important areas of well-being are:

- Job satisfaction
- Psychological health
- Perceived work autonomy.
- Stress coping

Dependent Variable: Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance refers to the ability of the workers to balance between work and family life. Balance in smart tourism is determined by digital work arrangements, work distribution, and organizational support. Work-life balance is characterized by the following aspects:

- Work-family conflict
- Time flexibility
- Balancing work and personal life
- Overall life satisfaction

Moderating Variable

The relationship between smart tourism practices and employee well-being can be enhanced or undermined by organizational support such as digital training, supportive leaders, and HR policies. Accordingly, the support of organizations is considered a moderating factor.

Conceptual Framework

According to the proposed framework, the smart tourism practices directly affect work-life balance and indirectly through the well-being of employees. Being smart in technology will make employees feel better, and this will enhance their balance. The negative impact of smart tourism initiatives can be minimized by poor organizational support.



Source: Computed

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of the Study

Hypotheses Development

Smart Tourism and Employee Well-Being

Smart tourism technologies will reduce the amount of manual work, accelerate the work process, and allow employees to manage the way they complete their tasks. These tools can help workers feel more comfortable and happier at work when applied in the appropriate way.

H₁: There is a strong positive impact of smart tourism on employee well-being

Intelligent Tourism and Work-Life Balance

Technology based tourism employment allows employees to work at their own convenience and manage workloads more effectively and hence they can balance work and family.

H₂: The impact of smart tourism on the work-life balance of employees is significantly positive.

Work Life Balance and Well-Being of the employees

Employees who feel healthier have reduced stress, emotional stability, and are able to handle personal and professional responsibilities with ease.

H₃: Work-life balance is positively influenced by employee well-being significantly.

Mediating Role of Employee Well-Being

Smart tourism in itself might not enhance work life balance unless it enhances the well being of employees. Therefore, well-being is the key that allows smart tourism to impact work-life balance.

H₄: The mediating variable between smart tourism practices and work-life balance is employee well-being.

Moderating Role of Organizational Support

When the organization supports smart tourism practices, the relationship between smart tourism practices and employee well-being becomes more significant, and the higher the support, the greater the effect.

H₅: The association between smart tourism practices and employee well-being is moderated by organizational support, where the relationship is stronger in the case of high organizational support.

Demographic Variables Analysis

The research provides elementary data concerning the individuals working in smart tourism destinations. We looked at 525 employees. We verified such characteristics as age, sex, education, and working experience to characterize the group. The details are presented in the below table 1.

The age, the gender, education and work experience of the employees are listed in Table 1. The majority of the employees (37.7) are aged between 31 and 40 years and this indicates that smart tourism jobs are predominantly undertaken by the mid-career workers. The majority of employees are male (59.4%) as opposed to a female (40.6%). Regarding education level, a significant number of employees have bachelor (45.9) and few have master (35.8) degrees, which indicates that the employees are qualified to work in the tech-based tourism. The majority (40.8) have 5-10 years of work experience, which implies that they have sufficient exposure to both the old and smart tourism ways.

Table 1 Personal Details

Resondents Demographic Details	Particulars	No.of Respondents	Percentage
Age (Years)	Below 30	142	27
	31-40	198	37.7
	41-50	123	23.4
	Above 50	62	11.9
	Total	525	100
Gender	Male	312	59.4
	Female	213	40.6
	Total	525	100
Educational Qualification	Diploma	96	18.3
	Undergraduate	241	45.9
	Postgraduate	188	35.8
	Total	525	100
Work Experience	Below 5 years	167	31.8
	5-10 years	214	40.8
	Above 10 years	144	27.4
	Total	525	100

Source: Primary Data

Results and Analysis Hypothesis-Wise

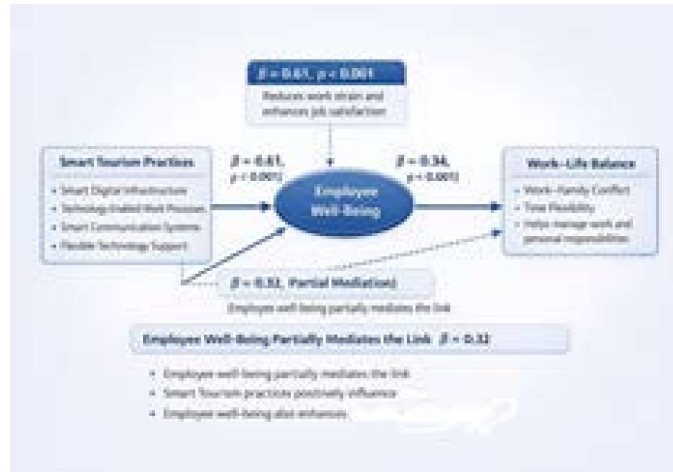
The results are provided under each hypothesis in the form of numbers indicating the strength of each connection.

Table 2 Direct Effects – Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	Standardized Beta	t-Value	p-Value	Result
H ₁	Smart Tourism Practices - Employee Well-Being	0.61	12.48	<0.001	Supported

H ₂	Smart Tourism Practices - Work-Life Balance	0.34	6.92	<0.001	Supported
H ₃	Employee Well-Being - Work-Life Balance	0.53	10.36	<0.001	Supported

Source: Primary Data



Source: Primary Data

Figure 2 Hypothesis Result

Table 2 indicates the direct correlations between the study variables. H1 is supported by the fact that smart tourism practices have a strong positive impact on the well-being of employees (0.61, $p < 0.001$). H2 is supported by the fact that digital tools and flexible work systems allow employees to balance work and personal life. H3 is also supported by the fact that employee well-being has a significant impact on work-life balance ($\beta = 0.53, p = 0.001$). The healthier employees are, the more they will be able to balance work and personal life, which proves the value of mental and emotional health in technology-driven workplaces.

Mediation Analysis

To find out whether the relationship between smart tourism practices and the work-life balance can be explained by employee well-being, we examined the indirect impacts.

Table 3: Mediation Results – Role of Employee Well-Being

Path	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	Mediation Type
Smart Tourism Practices- Work-Life Balance (via Employee Well-Being)	0.34	0.32	0.66	Partial Mediation

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H ₁	Smart tourism practices positively influence employee well-being	Supported
H ₂	Smart tourism practices positively influence work-life balance	Supported
H ₃	Employee well-being positively influences work-life balance	Supported
H ₄	Employee well-being mediates the relationship between smart tourism practices and work-life balance	Supported

Source: Primary Data

Table 3 demonstrates that smart tourism has a direct and indirect impact on the work-life balance and indirectly through employee well-being. The indirect relationship is significant, which indicates that the relationship can be explained in part by employee well-being. Since both of these links remain significant, H4 is accepted, with partial mediation. It implies that smart tourism assists work-life balance through flexing schedules, as well as through enhancing the welfare of employees.

Results and Discussion

This section describes the actual findings and the implications of the same on smart tourism and work-life balance. With 525 employees, we employed SEM to test the anticipated associations between smart tourism practices. This confirms H1 and implies that automation and smart communication with the use of digital tools increase the mental comfort and job satisfaction of employees. Works that are tech-enabled reduce monotonous tasks and enhance productivity, reducing stress and enhancing emotional well-being. This is in line with previous research that has emphasized the digital change to enhance the working conditions and job satisfaction among service workers. The result indicates that smart tourism with a humanistic focus is beneficial to the overall well-being of employees.

Impact of Smart Tourism Practices on Work-life Balance

The research discovered that there exists a positive and significant correlation between smart tourism practices and work-life balance (0.34, $p < 0.001$), which supports hypothesis 2. This implies that intelligent scheduling solutions, real time coordination applications, and adaptable technology can assist employees to manage work responsibilities and at the same time manage their personal lives. In a pragmatic sense, smart tourism technologies enable businesses to plan workloads and schedule time in a more flexible way, which reduces work-family conflict. However, the impact is moderate, and therefore technology alone might not ensure a good work-life balance, unless the organization supports it with favourable policies.

Impact of Worker Well-being on Work-life balance

The happier, more emotionally stable, and in control of their jobs, the more employees can meet the demands of their jobs without damaging their personal life (0.53, $p < 0.001$). This demonstrates that employee well being is a major determinant of work life balance in technology-driven tourism. It supports the notion that organizations ought to concentrate on the mental and emotional wellbeing of employees to ensure that they have a healthy workforce.

Mediating Role of Employee Well-Being

According to mediation analysis, the relationship between smart tourism practices and work-life balance is partly explained by employee well-being (indirect effect 0.32), which supports hypothesis 4. Smart tourism decreases work-life imbalance in part due to the fact that it improves

the mental and emotional state of the employees, yet such aspects as company culture and leadership also play an important role.

Overall Discussion

The synthesis of the data indicated that smart tourism assists the well-being of employees and work-life balance in the case of technology utilization and employee-oriented management. Although smart tourism simplifies operations and allows them to be more flexible, the long-term success will depend on how companies manage the digital work and enable the employees to adjust. The research contributes to the literature on smart tourism by placing the emphasis on employees rather than the tourists. To maintain a healthy and balanced workforce, policymakers and tourism managers ought to incorporate human-resource approaches with smart tourism strategies.

Conclusion

This paper examined the relationship between smart tourism practice, employee welfare, and work life balance in tech-oriented tourism destinations. SEM was used to analyse the data of 525 employees to demonstrate the way in which smart tourism modifies the outcomes of employees beyond service efficiency and competitiveness. The results indicate that smart tourism enhances the well-being of employees by reducing work pressure, enhancing efficiency of tasks, and providing them with increased autonomy. It also assists in work-life balance, which means that the work systems that are tech-enabled assist individuals to balance work and personal responsibilities. The well-being of employees is a partial overlap of smart tourism and the work-life balance, which demonstrates that numerous advantages are provided by improved mental and emotional health. The paper reveals that technology is not sufficient to establish a sustainable work environment. Even though smart tourism offers flexibility and efficiency, its ability to promote the work-life balance depends on the well-established organisational practices including digital training, clear work

adopt people-centered approach to smart tourism to retain their employees in the long run.

In a broader perspective, the study broadens the smart tourism researches to the wellbeing of employees and work-life integration, which is not commonly investigated. These insights can help managers and policymakers develop intelligent tourism policies that would strike a balance between technological advancement and the well-being of employees. Smart tourism not only can create smart destinations, but also healthier, more balanced working environments, just as long as technological advancement is accompanied by the wellbeing of the employees and organisational assistance.

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