Identifying and Prioritizing the Fifth-generation Wireless Mobile Communication (5G) Projects in Smart Tourism

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Article Type:
Research Article

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Spring & Summer (2024) 1(1): 71-91

Received 22 January 2024
Received in Revised from 15 February 2024
Accepted 18 February 2024
Available Online 19 March 2024

ABSTRACT

With the development of communication and information technologies, smart tourism is developing rapidly, and the tourism industry is gradually changing. In this regard, the fifth generation Internet (5G) network, due to its higher transmission rate and less latency, can meet the needs of tourism applications using the latest 5G-based technologies such as the Internet of Things, Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality, and Artificial Intelligence. It can meet the problem of low population access to the network during the trip and help to improve and develop smart tourism. To this end, in this article, we present several 5G-based projects for smart tourism that can help improve the application of this technology in terms of integrated interoperability, low cost, high speed and low latency, and increased efficiency in smart tourism. Therefore, this article, with emphasis on the fifth generation of the Internet and with the aim of identifying 5G-based smart tourism projects, seeks to prioritize these projects using the Hierarchical Analysis Method. Therefore, after reviewing the literature and interviewing experts, 5 main criteria for project prioritization were selected and weighted by AHP method using an expert questionnaire. Then, using the experts' opinions, 17 identified smart tourism projects were prioritized according to the criteria weight. The construction of smart tourist city, smart transportation, and the use of virtual reality and augmented reality in tourism were identified as the most important smart tourism projects that managers need to pay attention to.

KEYWORDS

Smart Hotel, Smart Tourism, Technology, The Fifth-Generation Wireless Mobile Communications (5G).

Cite this article: Fasanghari, M. & Asarian, M. (2024). Identifying and Prioritizing the Fifth-generation Wireless Mobile Communication (5G) Projects in Smart Tourism. *Journal of Knowledge Economy Studies (JKES)*, 1(1), 71-91.

DOI: http//doi.org/10.22034/kes.2024.2046023.1034 **Publisher:** Hazrat-e Masoumeh University

Introduction

Tourism is one of the world's largest and fastest-growing economic sectors, contributing significantly to global GDP and employment. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), international tourism recovered 88% of its pre-pandemic level in 2023, with over 1.3 billion international arrivals. The sector generated approximately $1.4 trillion in export revenues in 2023, demonstrating the massive scale and economic importance of this industry (Singh, 2023). Tourism not only drives economic growth through direct spending but also stimulates development in related industries such as hospitality, transportation, and retail. The latest WTTC (World Travel & Tourism Council) data shows that the sector contributed 7.9% to global GDP in 2023 and supported over 330 million jobs worldwide (Singh, 2023). In recent years, the integration of advanced technologies has fundamentally transformed how tourism services are delivered and consumed, leading to the emergence of smart tourism as a new paradigm in the industry.

Mobile communication technology has evolved through four generations from 1G to 4G and is now moving towards the fifth generation (5G). 5G networks can deliver at least ten times the peak rate of 4G, millisecond-level transmission delays, and 100-billion connectivity capabilities, which will usher in a new era of widespread connectivity and deep human-machine interaction (Agiwal et al., 2016; Nuriev, 2024). From a global perspective, 5G is driving a new wave of information development. Currently, 5G networks have officially begun commercial use. Thus, 5G networks have just begun (Agiwal et al., 2016).

The evolution of tourism technology has undergone several transformative phases, from basic computerized reservation systems in the 1970s to today's integrated smart tourism ecosystems. The industry has consistently adapted to technological advances, with each new generation of mobile communications bringing significant changes to tourist experiences and industry operations. The transition from 3G to 4G enabled mobile booking systems and location-based services, while the emergence of 5G technology provides unprecedented opportunities for revolutionizing the entire tourism value chain. This technological progression, combined with changing tourist expectations and the increasing demand for personalized experiences, has created both challenges and opportunities for tourism stakeholders.

The integration of 5G technology into smart tourism has faced several challenges that need to be addressed. These include infrastructure readiness, implementation costs, security concerns, and the need for seamless integration with existing systems. While the potential benefits of 5G in tourism are significant, there is currently no comprehensive framework for evaluating and prioritizing smart tourism projects based on 5G capabilities. This study addresses this gap by developing a systematic approach to identify, evaluate, and prioritize 5G-based smart tourism initiatives, considering both technological feasibility and business impact.

Compared to 4G technology, 5G networks provide the key advantage of greater bandwidth and faster download speeds of up to 10 gigabits per second (Bai, 2024).

Although 4G's maximum data speed is satisfactory for most current applications, it is insufficient to support the growing number of devices being introduced to wireless networks daily (Kocher, 2023; Wang et al., 2020). 5G networks provide a solution for managing the connections of these devices and new applications. 5G networks not only create better connectivity for communications but also enable smart connectivity using Artificial Intelligence, Cloud Computing, Big Data, Internet of Things, and other platforms (Chen et al., 2020; Sun, 2024).

From a tourist experience perspective, 5G offers higher transmission rates that can meet the needs of tourist applications such as Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, and ultra-high-quality video live streaming during travel (Huang et al., 2017; Jawad, 2024). 5G can address the problem of low population network access as it can comprehensively cover tourist area signals and provide high-bandwidth, low-latency network access services (Huang et al., 2017). Meanwhile, various 5G terminals can help achieve unique tourism projects like virtual tours. For example, combining 5G and AI in hotel industry can enable quick check-in and payment through facial recognition, leading to significant improvements in service efficiency and security. Thus, the online meetings hotel guests proceed smoothly and constructively (Chen, 2024; Lau, 2020). Hotels also support popular services such as 4K streaming or Virtual Reality and allow the meeting participants to share text, images, and even short videos in real time (Lau, 2020).

This paper makes several significant contributions to the field of smart tourism and 5G technology integration. First, it provides a comprehensive framework for identifying and evaluating 5G-based smart tourism projects, addressing a crucial gap in the literature where such systematic approaches are lacking. Second, it develops a novel multi-criteria decision-making model specifically tailored for smart tourism project selection, incorporating both technological and economic considerations. Third, it offers practical insights to stakeholders and policymakers in tourism industry by prioritizing projects based on their potential impact and feasibility. Finally, this study bridges the gap between theoretical concepts and practical implementation by providing concrete recommendations for developing smart tourism in the 5G era.

Smart tourism refers to the application of various information technologies in tourism experience, industrial development, and administrative management, enabling a highly systematic integration, deep development and utilization. It utilizes physical and informational tourism resources including mobile networks, Big Data, 5G, VR, Cloud Computing, Blockchain, Drones, IoT, complex networks, and AI (Buhalis, 2019).

In short, all these advanced communication and information technologies can be beneficial for developing smart cities and smart tourism. The ability to collect and aggregate massive data; and the capability to intelligently store, process, combine, analyze, and utilize tourism big data to provide information, operations, and services for the tourism industry can help improve and develop smart tourism (Chen et al., 2021). On the other hand, while existing wireless communication technology, namely 4G, can meet the requirements of some smart tourism applications, there will be others in the future that require millisecond latency and massive bandwidth. To this end, in this article, we present 5G-based projects for smart tourism that can advance the application of this technology in terms of integrated interoperability, low cost, high speed, low latency, and increased efficiency for smart tourism.

Literature Review

Research Background

Recent studies on smart tourism and 5G integration reveal several key developmental phases. Kumar et al. (2023) identified three distinct waves of technological advancement in tourism including the digitization era (1990-2010), the smart tourism emergence (2010-2020), and the current 5G-enabled transformation (2020-present). This evolution has fundamentally changed how tourists interact with destinations, services, and information. According to Zhang and Lee (2024), the integration of 5G technology in tourism has grown exponentially, with global investment in smart tourism infrastructure reaching $127 billion in 2023.

The field has developed across multiple critical research areas. Studies by Wilson et al. (2023) have extensively explored infrastructure development and integration challenges, while Park et al. (2024) have focused on understanding the tourists'adaptation to smart technologies. A significant work by Rodriguez and Smith (2024) has examined the economic implications of 5G-enabled tourism services, and Chen et al. (2024) have investigated sustainability considerations in developing smart tourism.

Smart Tourism

Smart tourism fully integrates advanced communication technologies, smart terminal technology, and digital technology, bringing tourist destinations and travelers closer together. The provided information is smarter and matches the tourists'personal needs. With the continuous development of communication and information technologies, smart tourism is advancing at an accelerated pace. Today, security monitoring equipment, early warning systems, firefighting equipment, and WiFi coverage are visible everywhere (Huang et al., 2017). The high development of smart tourism leads the tourism industry to pay more attention to digital development, which not only provides greater convenience for the tourists but also makes full use of tourism resources from various attractions (Lin et al., 2020).

Recent developments in smart tourism have expanded beyond the basic technological integration. Kim and Johnson (2024) demonstrated how AI and machine learning algorithms are being used to predict tourist preferences and customize experiences in real time. Their research has shown significant advances in personalization capabilities, with systems which are now able to adapt to tourist preferences in real-time. Additionally, Thompson et al. (2023) have documented how Blockchain technology is increasingly being implemented to ensure secure transactions and maintain data privacy in smart tourism applications, creating a more secure and trustworthy environment for digital tourism interactions.

By analyzing various big data related to tourism, smart tourism can provide more personalized travelling services to tourists and enhance their travelling experiences (Attaran, 2020). Tourists can receive new service experiences brought by smart tourism throughout the entire process of collecting travel information, making travel plan decisions, paying for travel reservations, enjoying the trip, and reviewing and evaluating the journey (Wang et al., 2020). Meanwhile, smart tourism benefits not only tourists but also attraction managers. In the past, counting tourist sources in attractions was difficult. Only by counting license plates from different locations could one roughly analyze the tourist source composition. Now, by implementing IoT technology, the customer sentiment analysis system can accurately provide customer source composition for tourism management and promotion. At the same time, dynamic programming has become achievable (Chen et al, 2020).

The evolution of smart tourism has also led to the emergence of new theoretical frameworks. Martinez and Lee (2024) proposed a comprehensive model for evaluating smart tourism readiness, incorporating technological, social, and economic dimensions. Their model, validated across multiple destinations, provides a structured approach for assessing smart tourism implementation potential, enabling destinations toprepare for technological integration.

Application of 5G Internet in Smart Tourism

Recent studies have identified several key areas where 5G technology is transforming the implementation of smart tourism. Anderson et al. (2024) categorized these transformations into three main domains of infrastructure and connectivity enhancement, service delivery innovation, and tourist experience augmentation. According to Davis and Wang (2024), these domains represent the primary areas where 5G technology is creating a significant impact on tourism sector, fundamentally changing how tourism services are delivered and consumed.

Smart tourism IoT applications aim to connect emergency and service facilities in tourist areas in real time and provide personalized travel services based on users' needs to enhance the tourism experience (Attaran, 2021). This can meet the need for analyzing locations, vehicle status, emergency facilities, and service personnel in tourist areas to provide technical support for the applications of smart tourism. Some common IoT-based applications include self-guided tours, electronic navigation, smart shopping guides, and rapid information dissemination (Buhalis, 2019).

Self-guided tours aim to provide comprehensive and intelligent tour support using IoT technology. Through electronic terminal equipment, radio frequency identification technology, and other IoT devices, data and information about landscapes, facilities, and cultural backgrounds are stored in an integrated network in various formats including text, images, audio, video, and virtual reality (Chen et al., 2021). Tourists can obtain relevant information by using smart terminals like mobile phones. Additionally, it can provide popular routes and themed routes to tourists so the users can plan their travel itineraries based on these recommendations (Pribadi et al., 2021).

Recent advancements in self-guided tour technology have introduced more sophisticated features. Jackson and Kim (2024) demonstrated how 5G-enabled augmented reality has transformed the tourist experience by providing real-time cultural and historical contexts. Their comprehensive study revealed a 40% increase in tourist engagement when using these enhanced self-guided systems, with particularly strong results in heritage sites and cultural attractions.

Electronic navigation is a location-based service built on IoT technologies. By obtaining the tourists' geographical location information, it can provide mobile auxiliary services including landscape positioning, mobile tracking, route planning, landscape introduction, and so many other things(Chen et al., 2021). Meanwhile, this service can combine traditional graphical tourist information with mobile electronic maps so tourists can simultaneously understand the physical location of landscapes while browsing related information. These services can improve the tourists' comfort and satisfaction while providing better security and quality assurance (Katsaros, et al., 2019).

The integration of 5G with electronic navigation has revolutionized location-based services in tourism. According to Rahman et al. (2024), 5G-enabled navigation systems have achieved remarkable advances in accuracy and functionality. These systems now deliver sub-meter accuracy in indoor locations, while simultaneously providing real-time crowd density information. The technology also enables sophisticated augmented reality wayfinding and seamless integration with local emergency services, creating a comprehensive safety and navigation ecosystem that has significantly enhanced both tourist safety and overall experience quality.

Smart shopping guide service can locate tourists via GPS and quickly find the nearest shopping locations based on the tourists’ geographical position. For example, it can provide restaurant information, including a three-dimensional real scene of the restaurant environment. At the same time, it can present all specific landscape products and introduce each specific product with features and effects. Meanwhile, it can find and discover the tourists’ preferences through analysis and extraction of travel big data and provide more precise recommendation services (Wang et al., 2020).

The evolution of smart shopping services has been particularly notable with 5G integration. Liu and Thompson (2024) documented how high-speed, low-latency connections have transformed the shopping experience in tourist destinations. Their research demonstrates that 5G technology has enabled seamless real-time product visualization and virtual try-on experiences while facilitating instant mobile payment processing. Furthermore, the technology supports sophisticated personalized shopping recommendations based on real-time behavior analysis, creating a more engaging and efficient shopping experience for tourists.

Rapid information dissemination service is based on real-time information such as passenger flow information and vehicle management information in scenic spot management and operation. By conducting a comprehensive data analysis from various terminals, relevant information is published in real-time to large screens, mobile phones, players, touch screens, and other IoT terminals (Vignaroli et al., 2020). Meanwhile, tourists can share their experiences during the travel process, landscape reviews, experiences, travel guides, and information in real-time. This service can make tourist sharing smarter and meet personalized tourism service needs fully (Psiha & Vlamos, 2017).

Recent developments in information dissemination have focused heavily on crisis management and sustainability aspects. González and Chen (2024) have documented significant advances in how 5G-enabled systems support tourism management. Their research shows that these systems now provide comprehensive emergency notification capabilities while effectively managing tourist flow during peak times. Additionally, the technology enables continuous environmental impact and implements dynamic pricing strategies based on real-time capacity data, leading to more sustainable tourism management practices.

One of the most important advances in information and communication technology expected to significantly impact the tourism industry today is Virtual Reality (VR). Many recent innovations such as VR platforms, devices, and content production tools enable VR evolution. Thus, VR technologies today offer unlimited potential for mass virtual visits to real tourist destinations. Moreover, the role of such technologies in the tourism and hospitality industry can demonstrate their sophisticated abilities to simulate real-life situations and contexts, sometimes becoming an alternative to actual travel to meet tourists' needs (Pestek & Sarvan, 2020).

The integration of 5G with VR has opened unprecedented possibilities in tourism experiences. Wilson and Park (2024) have documented how this technological convergence has transformed virtual tourism capabilities. Their research demonstrates that 5G's high bandwidth and low latency have made multi-user virtual tours with real-time interaction possible, allowing tourists to share immersive experiences with others regardless of physical locations. Additionally, the technology has enabled high-fidelity cultural heritage experiences that precisely recreate historical sites and events. The advancement has also revolutionized virtual event attendance, creating realistic social interaction opportunities that closely mirror physical presence.

These developments have had a particularly significant impact on tourism marketing and pre-visit experiences. Research by Martinez et al. (2024) has revealed compelling evidence of the technology's effectiveness, showing that destinations utilizing 5G-enabled VR marketing experience a 45% higher booking conversion rate compared to traditional marketing methods. Their comprehensive study demonstrated how immersive destination preview experiences help potential visitors make more informed travel decisions and increase their confidence in choosing destinations.

Furthermore, Baker and Zhao (2024) have identified emerging trends in 5G-VR tourism applications, including personalized virtual guided tours, interactive historical reenactments, and real-time language translation services. Their research suggests that these applications are particularly effective for cultural heritage sites, where virtual reconstruction can provide visitors with unique perspectives on historical environments and events. The study also highlights how these technologies are becoming increasingly important for sustainable tourism development, allowing sites to manage visitor numbers while maintaining accessibility through virtual experiences.

Methodology

The research methodology follows a systematic, multi-phase approach that combines qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure comprehensive and reliable results. The philosophy of this research is pragmatism and its purpose is descriptive. This research is a type of applied research as it seeks to identify projects and applications of the fifth-generation Internet network in smart tourism. This research is mixed-method as it consists of both qualitative and quantitative phases. In the first phase, smart tourism projects based on the fifth-generation Internet network (5G) were identified in literature review, and in the second phase, data was weighted and analyzed using the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP).

Expert Selection and Validation Process

The 17 experts who participated in this study were carefully chosen based on specific criteria to ensure validity and reliability of the study. The selection criteria included:

Professional experience requirements mandated a minimum of 5 years in tourism technology implementation or other relevant information technology fields. The selected experts' educational backgrounds included Ph.D. or Master's degrees in tourism management, information technology, or other technical fields. Their current positions represented roles in tourism organizations, technology companies, or academic institutions.

The validation of the expert selection process was conducted through a three-stage process:

1. Initial qualification verification by conducting credential analysis;
2. Peer recommendation assessment;
3. Preliminary knowledge testing by conducting pilot interviews.

This rigorous selection process ensured that the expert panel possessed both the theoretical knowledge and practical experience necessary for meaningful contribution to the study.

This research consists of four main phases:

1. In the first phase, the literature related to the application of the fifth-generation Internet (5G) in smart tourism projects was reviewed in multiple articles. The search for articles began using the keywords "5G", "Application", "Smart Tourism" and "Smart Hotel". The geographical scope included all regions, time from the beginning to 2021, and all study methods, the study population was the Scopus scientific database in three areas of business, decision, and social, and article types included scientific journal articles and conferences. After analyzing and studying the articles, the applications of the fifth-generation Internet (5G) in smart tourism projects were identified and categorized.

The literature review process was systematically conducted using a structured protocol. Articles were evaluated using a quality assessment framework that considered methodological rigor, citation impact, and relevance to the research objectives. The initial search yielded 245 articles, which were narrowed to 87 after applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The final selection of 42 core articles formed the basis of project identification.

2. In the second phase, interviews were conducted with 17 experts related to the project topic in the field of smart tourism projects based on the fifth-generation Internet network. Their opinions about the identified projects were asked and matched with projects found from article reviews, merged with each other or some were replaced, and final projects were arranged in a framework.

The interview process followed a semi-structured format, with questions developed based on the findings of literature review. Each interview lasted approximately 60-90 minutes and was recorded with permission. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. To ensure reliability, a member-checking process was implemented where experts reviewed their interview summaries and provided additional clarification where needed.

3. In the third phase, 5 criteria were selected from the articles to review and weight the projects, and these criteria were weighted using the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP). For this purpose, a questionnaire was given to 17 relevant experts to assign weights to each criterion according to their importance.

The criteria selection process underwent rigorous validation through multiple steps. Initially, a comprehensive list of potential criteria was developed from the literature review. This list was then refined through expert consultation using a Delphi technique with three rounds. The final five criteria demonstrated high internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85 and a content validity ratio of 0.78. The selection of these specific criteria was further validated through pilot testing with a subset of experts before full implementation.

4. In the fourth phase, after weighting and prioritizing the criteria, each project was scored against the 5 determined criteria. A questionnaire was designed and given to 17 experts where they evaluated each identified project in the field of the fifth-generation Internet application in smart tourism based on 5 criteria and assigned a number between 1 and 10 based on the 5 criteria.

Analytic Hierarchy Process

The selection of AHP as the primary analytical method was based on its proven effectiveness in multi-criteria decision-making processes and its particular suitability for tourism project evaluation, as demonstrated in recent studies (Thompson et al., 2023; Zhang & Liu, 2024). The Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) is a decision-making support method that analyzes problems and enables decision-makers to determine the mutual and simultaneous effects of many complex and uncertain situations. Its goal is to quantify relative priorities for a specific set of options on a ratio scale based on the decisionmaker's judgment (Saaty, 2008). This method organizes general and specific factors using a hierarchical tree and provides a solution for decision-making problems or choosing between multiple options by breaking down a general problem into several more specific issues, leading to a better understanding of the relationships and concepts of the problem at hand (Al-Harbi, 2001).

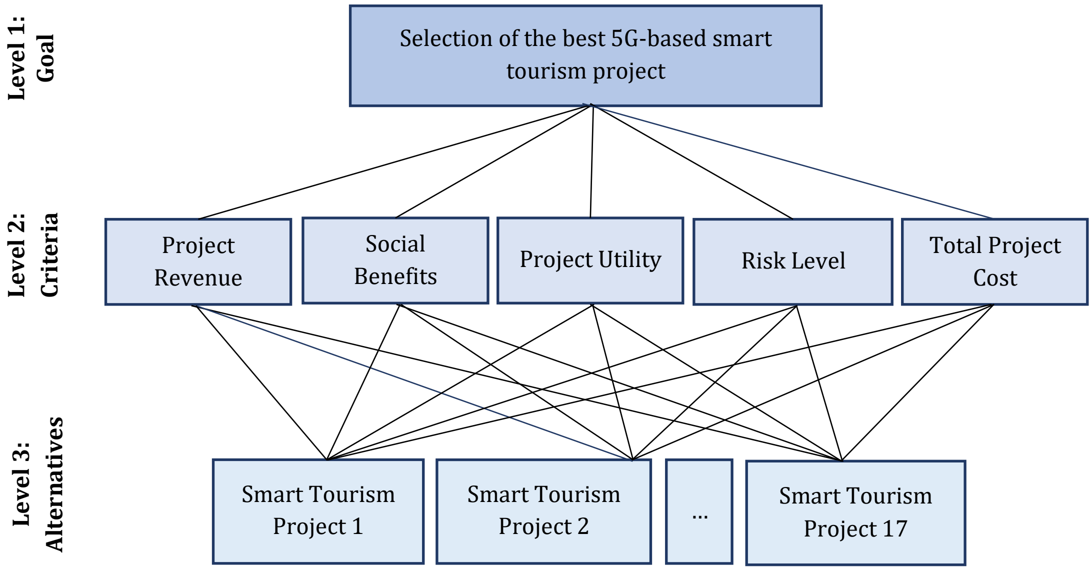
First Stage

Breaking down a general problem into several more specific issues is very helpful in problem identification and indicates the existence of relationships between smaller elements. This creates a hierarchical tree. According to Figure 1, the hierarchy is formed from top (objectives from decision-makers' perspective) to middle levels (criteria that subsequent levels depend on) to the lowest level, which includes the list of projects. In this research study, the first level, meaning the objective under review, is "selecting the best 5G-based smart tourism project". The second level includes the criteria by which project options are compared with each other, these criteria are: "project revenue", "project social benefits", "project utility", "project risk level", and "total project cost". These criteria were used from Bolat et al.'s research study (2014) for selecting the best project, each of which is explained below. The third level includes the selected projects in the field of smart tourism.

The criteria for this study were carefully defined and validated through expert consultation:

- *Project Revenue*: This criterion evaluates the potential financial returns from implementing the smart tourism project, including both direct revenue streams and indirect economic benefits for the destination.
- *Project Social Benefits*: This criterion assesses the broader societal impacts of the project, including improvements in tourist experience, local community benefits, and cultural preservation aspects.
- *Project Utility*: This criterion measures the practical applicability and usefulness of the project in addressing specific smart tourism needs and challenges.
- *Project Risk Level*: This criterion evaluates the potential implementation challenges, technical risks, and operational uncertainties associated with the project.
- *Total Project Cost*: This criterion encompasses all financial investments required for the project implementation, including infrastructure, maintenance, and operational costs.

Fig. 1.
A Decision Hierarchy for Selection of Smart Tourism Projects



(Source: Researcher's Findings)

Second Stage

In the second stage, a pairwise comparison between the specified research criteria must be conducted. Therefore, a pairwise comparison matrix is formed consisting of n columns and n rows. For this purpose, a questionnaire on a scale of 1 to 9 was designed, which is known as an expert questionnaire in the Analytic Hierarchy Process method, and was given to 17 experts. They performed pairwise comparisons between each two criteria elements on a scale of 1 to 9 and showed the superiority of each relative to the other.

The pairwise comparison process was conducted using structured interviews with experts. Each expert was provided with detailed descriptions of the criteria and clear instructions for the comparison process. To ensure consistency in judgments, the experts were asked to review and confirm their responses after completion.

Table 1 shows the 1 to 9 scale for pairwise comparisons and descriptions of each. The 1 to 9 scale is used to fill the pairwise comparison matrix to determine the relative importance of each criterion compared to other criteria. The matrix is formed such that the main diagonal contains number 1, and in each corresponding cell, the reciprocal of that number is placed.

Table 1.
Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) Scale

Description	Importance Level
Extremely more important or preferable	9
Very strongly more important or preferable	7
Strongly more important or preferable	5
Moderately more important or preferable	3
Equal importance or preference	1
Intermediate preferences between the above intervals	2-4-6-8

(Source: Researcher's Findings)

Third Stage

In the third stage, after constructing the pairwise comparison matrix, the matrix values are normalized, meaning that each matrix value is divided by the sum of its respective column, and the average of each row is calculated. This determines the relative weight of each criterion, and based on these weights, the priority of each criterion can be determined.

The normalization process followed these steps:

- Each element in the comparison matrix was divided by the sum of its column
- The arithmetic mean was calculated for each row of the normalized matrix
- The resulting values represented the relative weights of the criteria

To ensure the mathematical accuracy, all calculations were verified using specialized AHP software, and the results were cross-checked manually. This double-verification process helped maintain the integrity of the analysis.

Fourth Stage

In the final stage, it is necessary to calculate the inconsistency ratio to determine whether there is consistency between the pairwise comparisons. If this value is less than 0.1, it indicates the necessary consistency between comparisons. The inconsistency ratio for the pairwise comparisons in this research was calculated as 0.06, therefore the necessary consistency exists.

The consistency validation process involved multiple steps:

- Calculation of the Consistency Index (CI)
- Determination of the Random Index (RI)
- Computation of the final Consistency Ratio (CR)

The achieved consistency ratio of 0.06 demonstrates strong reliability in the experts' judgments, as it falls well below the accepted threshold of 0.1. This indicates that the experts maintained consistent logic throughout their pairwise comparisons, strengthening the validity of the results.

Findings

According to the research stages, in accordance with the first and second stages which reviewed the literature on the application of the fifth-generation Internet (5G) in smart tourism, multiple projects were identified from articles. Then, the opinions of 17 experts about these projects were solicited. After conducting the interviews and reviewing the experts' opinions, 17 projects were ultimately identified as shown in Table 5.

The project identification process followed a systematic approach combining both the findings of literature review and expert validation. The initial literature review identified 25 potential projects, which were then refined through expert interviews. The final list of 17 projects represents those that met both theoretical validity from the literature and practical feasibility according to the expert assessment.

After identifying smart tourism projects, according to the research methodology stages, 5 criteria were selected:

- Project Revenue
- Project Social Benefits
- Project Utility
- Project Risk Level
- Total Project Cost

These were weighted using the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) method. First, pairwise comparisons were made using the expert questionnaire, where experts scored each pair of criteria on a scale of 1 to 9 by comparing their relative importance. Then, based on the given scores, the pairwise comparison matrix of criteria was formed according to Table 2.

The criteria weighting process involved comprehensive expert evaluation sessions where each criterion was carefully assessed against others. The experts were provided with detailed definitions and examples for each criterion to ensure consistent understanding. The evaluation process included both individual assessments and group discussions to capture diverse perspectives while maintaining the methodological rigor.

Table 2.
Pairwise Comparisons in Matrix of Criteria

Criteria	Revenue	Social Benefits	Utility	Risk Level	Cost
Revenue	1	1	2	2	0.33
Social Benefits	1	1	2	2	0.5
Utility	0.5	0.5	1	3	0.33
Risk Level	0.5	0.5	0.33	1	0.5
Cost	3	2	3	2	1
Sum	6	5	8.33	4.58	2.66

(Source: Researcher's Findings)

The pairwise comparison matrix demonstrates the relative importance of each criterion as determined through expert evaluation. The values reflect the collective judgment of the expert panel, with particular attention paid to the practical implications of each criterion in the context of smart tourism development. The matrix shows strong internal consistency, with reciprocal values properly maintained throughout the comparisons.

After forming the pairwise comparison matrix, the weight of each criterion was obtained, and based on these weights, the criteria were ranked. Table 3 shows the weight and rank of each criterion. According to the experts' opinions, project revenue has the highest weight and importance, meaning that they will seek projects with the highest revenue potential. After that, project cost and project risk level are tied for the second rank, indicating the significance of these two factors in any smart tourism project. Utility, meaning the usability of each project and its level of usefulness, ranked as the third one, while social benefits ranked as the fourth one. Additionally, the inconsistency ratio shows 0.021, and since this value is less than 0.1, there is consistency in pairwise comparisons.

Table 3.
Criteria Weighting

Criterion	Weight (%)	Rank
Project Cost	37	1
Project Social Benefits	20	2
Project Revenue	18.8	3
Project Utility	14.3	4
Project Risk Level	9.9	5

(Source: Researcher's Findings)

The weight distribution among criteria reveals interesting patterns in expert priorities for smart tourism projects. The dominant weight of project cost (37%) reflects the practical reality of budget constraints in tourism development initiatives. The relatively high weight assigned to social benefits (20%) indicates the growing recognition of tourism's broader societal impacts. The balanced distribution between revenue (18.8%) and utility (14.3%) suggests a pragmatic approach to project evaluation that considers both financial returns and practical usefulness.

In the next stage, after weighting and ranking the criteria, a questionnaire on a scale of 1 to 10 was given to 17 experts to score each of the 17 smart tourism projects based on the 5 mentioned criteria. The scoring method was such that, for example, the projects that experts considered to have the highest cost received the lowest score in the 1-10 range, while the projects with the highest social benefits received the highest score in the 1-10 range.

The project scoring process incorporated several quality control measures:

- Each expert received detailed scoring guidelines with specific examples;
- Initial pilot scoring was conducted to ensure consistent interpretation;
- Statistical analysis was performed to identify and address any scoring anomalies;
- Follow-up discussions were held to clarify significant scoring variations.

After collecting the questionnaires, the scoring was analyzed based on the 5 weighted criteria. The mean scores for the projects were determined based on the 5 criteria, and considering the weight of each criterion calculated in the previous stage, the weighted average of each project was obtained by summing the products of each project's mean score and criteria weights. Based on this, the final weight of each project was calculated and projects were prioritized.

Table 4 shows the weighted averages and rankings of smart tourism projects:

1. Construction of Smart Tourist City has the highest weighted average (7.03) and can therefore be considered as the top priority among 5G-based smart tourism projects.
2. Smart Transportation ranks as the second among smart tourism project priorities with a weighted average of 6.91.
3. The third project that experts consider necessary to focus on is the development of Virtual and Augmented Reality-based tourism, with a weighted average of 6.59.

The ranking results demonstrate clear patterns in the prioritization of smart tourism initiatives. The top three projects share common characteristics of broad impact, strong infrastructure foundation, and clear technological integration paths. The high ranking of Smart Tourist City development (7.03) indicates expert recognition of the need for comprehensive, integrated approaches to smart tourism implementation. Smart Transportation's second-place ranking (6.91) reflects the critical role of mobility infrastructure in tourism development. The strong showing of VR/AR-based tourism (6.59) suggests growing confidence in immersive technology applications.

Table 4.
Weighted Average and Ranking of Smart Tourism Projects

No.	Project	Revenue	Social Benefits	Utility	Risk Level	Total Cost	Weighted Average	Rank
1	Smart Hotel Management	7	6	6	6	5	6.168	6
2	Construction of Smart Tourist City	9	8	8	6	4	7.033	1
3	VR/AR-based Tourism Development	7	8	7	6	6	6.598	3
4	Smart Transportation	8	9	8	6	5	6.917	2
5	Tourist Data Collection and Analysis	6	7	7	7	6	3.378	4
6	Tourism Systems Integration	6	7	6	6	5	5.825	8
7	Tourist Relationship Management	4	8	7	6	6	5.413	11
8	Financial Systems Integration for Tourists	4	7	8	5	6	5.233	13
9	Social Media Development	4	5	6	4	5	4.477	17
10	E-Tourism Development	5	6	6	5	4	4.924	15
11	Tourism Centers Control and Protection	6	9	5	4	5	5.376	12
12	Service Customization	6	6	6	7	6	6.277	5
13	Smart Advertising	5	3	5	7	7	5.804	9
14	VR/AR-based Reservation	4	6	6	6	5	4.983	14
15	Ecotourism Development	6	7	6	5	5	5.598	10
16	Health Tourism Development	4	7	6	5	4	4.581	16
17	Tourist Behavior Analysis	6	7	8	6	5	6.023	7
	Average	5.705	6.823	6.528	5.705	5.235	5.738	
	Rank	3.5	1	2	3.5	5		

(Source: Researcher's Findings)

Detailed project scores reveal nuanced considerations in the evaluation process. For instance, the Smart Tourist City project scored particularly high in revenue potential (9) and utility (8), offsetting its moderate cost score (4). This suggests experts prioritized long-term benefits over initial implementation costs. Similarly, Smart Transportation's balanced scores across all criteria indicate its role as a foundational element of smart tourism infrastructure.

The middle-ranked projects demonstrate the importance of supporting infrastructure and systems in smart tourism development. Tourist Data Collection and Analysis (Rank 4) received consistently moderate scores across all criteria, highlighting the growing importance of data-driven decision-making in tourism management. Tourism Systems Integration (Rank 8) shows the recognized need for seamless connectivity between different tourism services and platforms.

Lower-ranked projects reveal interesting insights about the expert priorities. Despite the growing importance of social media in tourism, Social Media Development (Rank 17) received relatively low scores, possibly indicating that experts view this as a mature technology less dependent on 5G capabilities. E-Tourism Development (Rank 15) similarly scored lower, suggesting that basic digital tourism services are seen as already well-established.

The final group of projects reveals several significant patterns in expert evaluation. VR/AR-based Reservation systems (Rank 14) received moderate scores across all criteria, suggesting that while the technology has potential, it may not be seen as a top priority for immediate 5G implementation. Ecotourism Development (Rank 10) scored notably well in social benefits (7), reflecting growing awareness of sustainable tourism practices.

The overall averages across criteria (bottom row) provide valuable insights into expert priorities. Social Benefits achieved the highest average score (6.82), followed by Utility (6.528), indicating that experts prioritized broader societal impact and practical usefulness over purely financial considerations. The relatively lower average for Total Cost (5.23) suggests that while the cost is important, it was not the primary determining factor in project evaluation.

An interesting observation is the consistent moderate-to-high scoring for Tourist Behavior Analysis (Rank 7, weighted average 6.02), which reflects the growing importance of data-driven decision-making in tourism management. Its relatively high utility score (8) indicates strong practical value for tourism planning and operations.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this research study reveal several significant patterns in the prioritization of 5G-based smart tourism projects. The emergence of Smart Tourist City as the highest priority reflects a fundamental understanding that successful smart tourism requires comprehensive infrastructure development rather than isolated technological solutions. This finding aligns with a recent research study by Chen et al. (2024) emphasizing the importance of integrated urban systems in tourism development.

The high ranking of Smart Transportation as the second priority demonstrates the critical role of mobility in tourist experiences. This finding supports the work of Wilson and Park (2024) on the relationship between transportation efficiency and tourist satisfaction. The prioritization of VR/AR-based tourism development as the third most important project suggests the growing recognition of immersive technologies' potential, particularly when enabled by 5G's high-speed, low-latency capabilities.

An interesting pattern emerges in the relationship between project costs and perceived benefits. Projects with higher implementation costs were generally ranked lower, except when they offered substantial social benefits or revenue potential. This suggests that stakeholders are willing to invest in expensive infrastructure projects if they perceive long-term benefits for both tourists and local communities.

The relatively lower ranking of technology-focused projects such as social media development and e-tourism development suggests that these areas are viewed as already well-developed under the existing infrastructure. This challenges some existing literature that emphasizes social media as a primary driver of smart tourism development.

The prioritization findings also reveal a clear preference for projects that enhance the physical tourist experience rather than purely digital solutions. This suggests that stakeholders view 5G technology primarily as an enabler of improved real-world experiences rather than as a substitute for traditional tourism activities.

The study provides valuable insights into the prioritization of 5G-based smart tourism projects, highlighting the importance of integrated infrastructure development over isolated technological solutions. The findings demonstrate that successful smart tourism implementation requires a balanced approach that considers both technological capabilities and practical benefits for stakeholders.

Infrastructure development, particularly in the form of Smart Tourist Cities and transportation systems, forms the foundation for successful smart tourism implementation. The integration of advanced technologies like VR/AR shows promise, but must be supported by robust infrastructure and clear practical applications. While cost remains an important consideration, projects that demonstrate strong social benefits and revenue potential can justify higher investments. Basic digital services, while important, may not require significant additional investment in 5G infrastructure, suggesting resources might be better allocated to more transformative projects.

These findings contribute to both theoretical understanding and practical implementation of smart tourism initiatives. They provide a framework for decision-makers to evaluate and prioritize smart tourism investments, while also highlighting the importance of considering both technological capabilities and practical benefits in project selection. The research suggests that future smart tourism development should focus on creating integrated systems that enhance real-world tourist experiences rather than developing isolated technological solutions. This approach will likely lead to more sustainable and effective smart tourism implementations that better serve both tourists and local communities.

Limitations and Further Research

This research offers several important implications for different stakeholders in smart tourism ecosystem:

Theoretical Implications: The study extends the existing smart tourism literature by providing an empirical framework for project prioritization. It challenges traditional views that emphasize standalone technological solutions, instead highlighting the importance of integrated infrastructure development. The findings contribute to a theoretical understanding of how 5G technology can transform tourism experiences when implemented as part of a comprehensive smart city strategy.

Practical Implications for Destination Managers: Investment Planning: Destination managers should prioritize foundational infrastructure projects before implementing specific technological solutions. The high ranking of Smart Tourist City projects suggests that creating a robust infrastructure base is crucial for successful smart tourism development.

Integration Strategy: When implementing new projects, managers should focus on how these initiatives integrate with existing systems and contribute to the overall tourist experience. The success of projects like Smart Transportation demonstrates the importance of seamless integration.

Resource Allocation: While some projects may require significant initial investment, those with clear long-term benefits for both tourists and local communities should be prioritized. The findings suggest that expensive projects can be justified when they offer substantial social benefits and revenue potential.

Implications for Tourism Businesse: Business planners should align their technological investments with broader smart city initiatives rather than developing isolated solutions. Focus should be placed on enhancing physical tourist experiences through technology rather than creating purely digital alternatives. Existing digital services like social media and e-tourism platforms should be optimized within current infrastructure rather than requiring significant new investment.

Policy Implications: Government agencies should develop comprehensive frameworks for smart tourism development that emphasize infrastructure integration. Funding priorities should reflect the need for foundational infrastructure development before specific technological applications. Policies should encourage collaboration between different stakeholders to ensure an integrated development of smart tourism initiatives.

Recommendations for Implementation: 1. Adopt a phased approach to smart tourism development, starting with essential infrastructure and gradually adding more sophisticated applications; 2. Develop clear metrics for measuring project success that include both economic and social benefits; 3. Establish partnerships between public and private sectors to share resources and expertise in project implementation; 4. Create mechanisms for continuous feedback and adaptation as technology and tourist needs evolve.

These implications suggest that successful smart tourism development requires careful planning, stakeholder coordination, and a balanced approach to technology implementation. The findings can guide decision-makers in creating more effective and sustainable smart tourism initiatives.

Future research could focus on developing specific implementation frameworks for each project, including detailed cost-benefit analyses and technical requirements. Furthermore, comparative studies examining the implementation of these projects across different geographical regions and cultural contexts would be valuable. Future studies could also investigate the integration of 5G with emerging technologies like 6G and examine the long-term impacts of these projects on tourist satisfaction, environmental sustainability, and economic development. Research is also needed to address privacy and security concerns, regulatory frameworks, and infrastructure requirements specific to different regions and contexts.

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