

Determinants of Religious Tourism Social Media Marketing for the Post Pandemic Growth of Domestic Travel and Tourism Industry -Case of Uttar Pradesh

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Abstract

The pandemic's multifaceted impact has been seen as it affected travel and tourist activities across the world. Because it is clear that the tourism sector has the potential to provide several job possibilities, but everyone in the chain, from visitors to service providers, has been negatively impacted. A lot has been discussed to formulate the strategies to recover from the pandemic situation. Closed borders, limited transit, and Covid procedures are just a few of the challenges that have shifted the thinking of major business actors, government stakeholders, policymakers, and tourist groups. Their focus on accelerating tourism growth has shifted from inbound tourism to strengthening and improving domestic tourism. On the similar thoughts Government of Uttar Pradesh has been giving due emphasis in this direction by implementing schemes and strengthening tourism infrastructure such as One district one product (ODOP), attractive holiday packages for tourists, developing religious circuits (Ramayana circuit, Buddhist circuit, Mahabharat circuit, Shaktipeeth circuit), Construction of Ram Mandir, Renovation of Kashi Vishvanath Corridor are some of the ongoing projects represent the holistic approach to enhance the experience of tourism. Better network and infrastructural facilities eventually help in near future to boost the inbound tourism to the state of Uttar Pradesh as well.

Research Objectives-

To determine the aspects that contribute to a religious tourist destination's psychological image in Uttar Pradesh.

Hypothesis - Image determinants of religious tourism in Uttar Pradesh have significant influence on the choice of destination.


Research Method-This study's research population is made up entirely of Indians. Because of their contribution to religious domestic tourism, India was picked as the preferred location for the study. It is home to a significant number of culturally diverse individuals from all over the country, as well as a range of tourist attractions.

Results- Projecting a location for its adventure, leisure, culture, or legacy may appeal to domestic visitors, as evidenced by the fact that the majority of domestic travellers visit destinations that portray a similar image, according to the poll. Thus, a thorough grasp of how to shape a destination's image, along with the appropriate marketing tactics, would aid Indian tourism managers and the government in efficiently managing destination sales.

Implications-The government, tourist agencies, and destination management should focus extensively on upgrading the destination image and current marketing efforts in the next years of tourism in India, particularly religious tourism.

Value- Indian tourism management and the government would benefit from a full understanding of how to construct a destination's image, as well as the necessary marketing methods.

Keywords: Covid-19, Domestic tourism, Religious Tourism, Destination Image factors, Social Media.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the pandemic has disrupted the activities of travel and tourism worldwide, its multidimensional impact has been observed. As it is evident that tourism industry is capable of generating employment opportunities multifold, all the people in the chain from tourists to service providers have been badly hit in terms of the transactional behaviour. Prior to the pandemic, Travel & Tourism (including its direct, indirect, and induced effects) accounted for 1 in every 4 new employment generated worldwide, accounting for 10.6% of all occupations (334 million) and 10.4% of global GDP (US\$9.2 trillion). Meanwhile, in 2019, overseas visitor expenditure was US\$1.7 trillion (6.8 percent of total exports, 27.4 percent of global services exports).

As per the global economic impact trends (2020) India has been on 10th position in terms of travel and tourism contribution to GDP in 2019 among top 15 countries in the world with US\$ bn 194 and this growth is above global T&T GDP growth of 3.5%.

Overview of Tourism Industry in Uttar Pradesh : According to the India Tourism Statistics (2020) report, domestic tourist visits (DTVs) increased by 25.3 percent in 2019 over 2018, with Uttar Pradesh receiving the most DTVs among the top 10 states/UTs. In 2019, domestic tourist arrivals in Uttar Pradesh surpassed 535.8 million, while foreign tourist arrivals surpassed 4.74 million. Uttar Pradesh ranked third among the top five states/UTs in terms of international tourist visits, after Tamil Nadu (6.9 million) and

Maharashtra (5.9 million) (5.5 million). As a result, it demonstrates more potential for religious tourism.

Uttar Pradesh as a Religious Tourist Hub: Uttar Pradesh, located in the country's northern area, is home to more than 200 million people, making it the most populous state. The state is a cultural and religious melting pot where people of all religions and beliefs coexist together. Religion is a specific point of reference in the state, and it features religious destinations, shrines, and locations that are highly regarded by people of many religions. A number of cities around the state are deemed holy owing to the presence of places of prayer, meditation, and spiritualism. Some of the most important sites include Mathura-Vrindavan, Varanasi, Ayodhya, and Sarnath.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

"Host and visitor," "coming together," "physical and intangible," and "offering security, psychological, and physiological comfort" are all aspects of hospitality (King, 1995). The epidemic of COVID-19 has wreaked havoc on the hotel industry (Gursoy and Chi, 2020). With proper management methods, the potential negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the hotel business might be reduced. By identifying locations with a high travel relationship owing to tourism, the detrimental impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the hotel business can be avoided.

Scope of Domestic Tourism in Uttar Pradesh:

A model proposed by Shinde (2006) highlights the dynamics of pilgrimage tourism. The model explains how pilgrimage tourists interact with the locals and the impacts arising out of such interactions for all the concerned parties. This leads to a favourable scenario for all stakeholders. The model plays out the immediate impact which such expeditions have on the environment (Lawrence, 1992). Not only this, such interactions also have a far-reaching indirect influence on the societal setting and economic aspects. The most telling influence results from the actual visit which the pilgrimage tourist carries out to the said destination thereby coming in direct contact with the various religious establishments. Evans (1976) opines that the religious institutions are well and truly the most compelling reason for visiting such pilgrim destinations, there are other reasons too which a pilgrimage tourist looks forward to. The impact on the economy, thanks to religious tourism, could be on similar lines as that created by leisure tourism for the reason that religious tourism too leads to creation of jobs, boost in the local populace and development of infrastructure.

Strategies of Promotion of Domestic Tourism: The process of a mental construct on the basis of impressions picked from a large amount of data has been termed as image formation (Reynolds, n.d., 1965). This 'flood of information' has several paths in the case of destination image, including

promotional literature (travel brochures, posters), other people's opinions (family/friends, travel agents), and the general media (newspapers, magazines, television, books, movies). Hence The STC should focus on this organic image and induced image through different channels such as social media (facebook, instagram, youtube etc).As a result, all stakeholders must create a comprehensive tourism recovery plan for the smooth conduct of tourist activity in the region's proximity in order to support the tourism sector at the local level (Ghosh, D 2020). The scope of these regional tourism initiatives has expanded to include greater situational engagement and stakeholder involvement (Trauer, 2006).

This research for the most part centres on domestic tourism as the anticipated speediest survivor, or the projection that 'domestic travel will recover first' (Meir, 2020:1). In like manner, Brouder (2020:2) has underscored that 'tourism with regards to COVID-19 uncovers how the nearby local is a locus of progress.' Domestic tourism is the foundation of Indian tourism, and surprisingly 60% of domestic visits are by implication or straightforwardly connected to religious tourism and pilgrimage (Shinde, 2014). Subsequently, at this point, religious tourism can be an essential instrument for India's post-COVID-19 recovery as well as for Uttar Pradesh too.

Development of Hypotheses

In the tourist literature, a variety of econometric models had been created earlier (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Eymann and Ronning, 1997). According to Koppelman (1980), existing models are unresponsive to methods that may be developed to influence or drive travel behaviour, and they also disregard tourist attitudes such as personal sentiments about a service or place. As Papatheodorou (2001) pointed out, there was a gap in tourist research. Every tourist has the choice of selecting a place based on the diverse variety of products and services available to entice visitors (Crompton, 1992). Personal (push) and destination (pull) variables are among the norms that impact the process (Hsu et al., 2009). A variety of factors, such as age, destination marketing and image, climate, and so on, may affect destination choice.

We, therefore hypothesise that image determinants at a destination influences the choice of a destination for religious tourism in UP.

H1-Must-be Infrastructure Conditions have a positive and significant impact on destination choice

H2-Attractive Religious conditions have a positive and significant impact on destination choice

H3-Appealing entertainment Activities have a positive and significant impact on destination choice.

H4-Natural Climate & Environment have a positive and significant impact on destination choice

Research Design

We utilised a questionnaire and a quantitative research approach. Because of their contribution to religious domestic tourism, India was picked as the preferred location for the study (Indian Tourism Statistics, 2015). It is home to a significant number of culturally diverse individuals from all over the country, as well as a range of tourist attractions (Eswarappa, 2007). (Salter, 2012; Sharma, 2007). Men and women above the age of 18 who make or have previously earned an income were targeted. We utilised a seven-point Likert scale that ranged from totally disagree (1 point) to totally agree (7 points). The data was collected using a snowball sampling method. Participants were invited to come from all socioeconomic classes. The method for creating and structuring a questionnaire contributes to the data's reliability and validity (Saunders et al., 2003).

Table-1	Cronbach's Alpha (Standardized Items)	N
	.819	34

A total of 458 questionnaires were collected from respondents & 281 questionnaires were unfinished and therefore had to be discarded. Finally, 177 responses available sorted, cleaned and analysed. Because the sample size is large, items that loaded on factors with a value of 0.45 and higher were kept (Cua et al., 2001). Items that loaded below 0.45 were deemed bad, while everything over that number was rated acceptable, according to Comrey and Lee (1992), (Krank et al., 2011). Finally, the model consisted of 23 elements. Correlation tests were positive, and concerns with intercorrelations were addressed. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO), Bartlett's test of sphericity measurements, and eigenvalues determination tests were all done, and all three found that doing a factor analysis was appropriate.

Table – 2, Factor Loadings

Component	1	2	Component	3	4
Availability		.875	Good Infrastructure		.559
Daily Routine		.885	Shopping Opportunities		.519
Appealing Cuisine		.855	Variety of Plants And Animals	.660	
Safe Travel		.839	Tourism Information	.736	
Easily Accessible		.860	Night Life And Entertainment	.730	
Value For Money		.819			

Hygiene & Cleanliness	.632			
Political Stability	.736			
Reputation Of Destination	.760			
Cultural Attractions	.757			
Monuments and Events	.638			
Climate	.725			
Great Weather	.843			
Landscape	.837			
Natural Environment	.829			
Policies	.842			
Customer Care Professionals	.736			
Local Tourism	.693			
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.				
a. 4 components extracted.				

Analysis & Interpretation

The paper's main purpose is to investigate the various determinants of religious tourism in UP and to analyse which are the major contributing variables. Factor analysis was initially conducted to reduce the data spread in several variables. This primarily aided in data reduction. Further, multiple linear regression analysis was used to draw inference on data.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.807
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3715.257
	Df	253
	Sig.	0.000

Regression Analysis

It is important to test for normality, homoscedasticity of residuals, independence of residuals, multi-collinearity, and linearity in order to guarantee an accuracy of the regression model. To proceed with regression analysis, all of the tests were assessed and passed. According to the statistical model, there is just one equation that is created (where X denotes the predictor):

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4$$

Where:

X1-Must-be Infrastructure Conditions, X2-Attractive Religious conditions, X3-Appealing entertainment Activities, X4-Natural Climate & Environment

Y is the dependent variable of choice of destination for religious tourism in UP

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.651 ^a	.424	.410	1.29934	.424	31.621	4	172	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), 4th order determinants, 3rd order determinants, 2nd order determinants, 1st order determinants

Results of Table-5 provide an overview of the model. The adjusted R2, which shows how much of the variation in destination choice is explained by determinants, is 0.424. This means that determinants account for 42.4 percent of the variation in destination choice of the customers.

The value of the F-test, which assesses if the model is a

good fit for the data, is shown in Table-5. In other words, ANOVA evaluates the regression model's overall significance. The value of the F-test (31.621, p<0.05) can be seen in the table. As a result, the model is substantial and demonstrates that destination choice is strongly associated to determinant factors.

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	213.539	4	53.385	31.621	.000 ^b
	Residual	290.386	172	1.688		
	Total	503.925	176			

a. Dependent Variable: Destination Choice

b. Predictors: (Constant), 4th order determinants, 3rd order determinants, 2nd order determinants, 1st order determinants
c.

Table-6 shows the contribution of the determinants to destination choice in Uttar Pradesh.

When any remaining free components are maintained

constant, the unstandardized regression coefficients, B, tests the strength of the degree of influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable in a regression model.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.908	.693		2.753	.007
1st order determinants	.862	.083	.642	10.452	.000
2nd order determinants	.059	.080	.043	.730	.466
3rd order determinants	.063	.075	.050	.842	.401
4th order determinants	-.355	.085	-.250	-4.157	.000

Based on above specific equation will be stated as using the coefficient values from Table.

$$\text{Destination Choice (Y)} = (1.908) + (0.862) \text{ DETERMINANT1}$$

The role of determinants of religious tourism in destination choice is depicted in this equation.

Table-6 shows that a first determinant is responsible for destination choice up to 86.9 percent alone. Determinant 1 has positive coefficient, indicating a positive link between independent and dependent variables. Other determinants are either insignificant or have a negative coefficients showing negative link between independent and dependent variables.

The t-value indicates whether the independent variable (determinants) is a significant predictor of destination choice for each individual regression coefficient in the model. The t-value of results show that determinant1 (t=10.452, P=0) is significant at the 0.05 level.

The impact of determinant factors on destination choice is indicated by the results of the standardised beta value (β). The null hypothesis is rejected because p=0.0000<.005, F=31.621, p<0.05. As the standardised Beta (β) value is 0.642, it can be stated that the determinant 1 have a considerable and favourable impact on destination choice of religious tourism destinations.

CONCLUSION

The government, tourist agencies, and destination management should focus extensively on upgrading the destination image and current marketing efforts in the next years of tourism in India, particularly religious tourism. By cooperating with tourist policies, destination marketing should optimise and benefit all parties involved. In order to manage the disputes that arise from diverse stakeholders, governments must use a strategic marketing mix. It should be viewed as a method for achieving long-term and possible goals in the future. Increased destination marketing

competition, along with new tourist products and prices, would increase the number of individuals eager to travel domestically, both intentionally and unintentionally. The new phenomena of word-of-mouth marketing can be important in the twenty-first century, with social networking sites playing a key role. The fact that internet evaluations about a place are an essential source of information for travellers should alert destination management. As a result, any good or bad feedback received from such sources might function as either a free sales lift or a sales deterrent for that particular destination's tourism. The image of the place is another aspect that might help with marketing to a significant extent. The government should ensure existing varied tourist sites known for their heritage, climate, and other factors maintain their image, whilst new offbeat locations should focus on developing a vivid positive image that will help them sell themselves. Projecting a location for its adventure, leisure, culture, or legacy may appeal to domestic visitors, as evidenced by the fact that the majority of domestic travellers visit destinations that portray a similar image, according to the poll. Thus, a thorough grasp of how to shape a destination's image, along with the appropriate marketing tactics, would aid Indian tourism managers and the government in efficiently managing destination sales.

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