

Impact Of Covid 19 On The Promotional Strategy- A Case Study Of Spiritual Tourism In India

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Abstract

Purpose- The study aims to find out the effect of COVID-19 on spiritual tourism in India. The aims also extend to find out the factors influencing spiritual tourism in India. The objective also includes the approach of tourists in India during pandemic.

Research Methodology- A sample size of 200 is chosen for conducting the research and the responses are gathered from professionals who are involved with the promotional activities through a structured questionnaire. Regression analysis has been used to find out the effect of spiritual tourism demand, spiritual tourism supply, safety regulations and hygiene transport facilities on spiritual tourism in India.

Findings- Spiritual tourism demand and spiritual tourism supply have considerable impact on spiritual tourism in India. Spiritual tourism demand and supply also effects promotional factors. Safety regulations and hygiene facilities have greatly impacted spiritual tourism in India because to perform certain rituals, usually there are august gatherings.

Research limitations- The study is limited to spiritual tourism. India is incredible in terms of natural beauty and forts belonging to medieval India. Some more areas could be explored to have better results. The sample size could further be increased, and surveys may be conducted in new tourism destinations.

Originality/Value- Spirituality is the soul of India. Spiritual tourism now a days has become a new strategy for marketing a specific religion. In addition to that it gears up tourism. The present piece of work is different from other previous works in terms of spirituality. It sheds light on how spirituality inflates tourism. The study also differentiates the outcome with special reference to COVID-19.

Practical implications- In India there is a need all over the clock to generate employment. Tourism is one of the significant ways for the same. Spiritual tourism demand/supply, safety regulations, hygienic transport facilities and destination management are the key areas where the government may concentrate to increase employment. COVID-19 outbreak is only a lesson for us. The study has a special focus on the key variables to overcome.

Keywords: Spiritual Tourism, Spiritual Tourism Demand, Spiritual Tourism Supply, Safety, Hygienic Transport Facilities, Destination Management.

1. Introduction

Spiritual tourism is the earliest perspective or one-of-a-kind art of travelling for religious understanding & devotion (Kunwar, 2021). It is a spiritual travel that takes occur both physically to a holy location and inside for spiritual reasons of comprehending or relaxation (Kunwar & Thapaliya, 2021). The spiritual feelings that compel their adherents to visit holy and sacred locations and assist in the facilitation of spiritual activities and festivities are the primary motivations for religious journeys (Kunwar, 2017). The current Coronavirus outbreak is a public medical emergency that has created unpredictability and had a significant impact on practically all industries throughout the world. Leading to a lack of pilgrimage tourists to the location, key spiritual sites have been forced to close, resulting in a cultural - financial calamity in the tourism sector (Raj & Griffin, 2020). India is the most popular tourist attraction in South Asia, and it is rapidly expanding. In 2018, "the country welcomed over 17.5 million international tourists, up from 15.5 million in 2017" (UNWTO, 2021c). This expansion is evident in India's foreign tourist revenues, which totalled about \$29 billion in 2018, and domestic tourism investments, which exceeded \$2 billion in 2019. (Tourism & Unwto, 2021). This expansion resulted in almost \$105 billion in GDP in 2019 and over 27 million jobs, accounting for 5% of overall employment (WTTC, 2021). A few of the primary drivers of this expansion, as per the GWI's 2018 Global Wellness Tourism Economy Report (Global wellness institute, 2021), is the prevalence of wellness tourism in India, as several of India's value propositions comprise "meditation, yoga, and Ayurveda retreats". The government of India has implemented several

promotional strategies for endorsing spiritual tourism which includes the establishment of the “*National Medical & Wellness Tourism Promotion Board*”, which is created specifically for offering policy advice to the tourism industry and also for providing guidelines for quality and training, investment in promotional activities, economic assistance to the wellness centers situated across the nation, especially at spots of spiritual tourism. To further secure the roots of the traditional culture, India also rebranded the marketing campaigns and strategies by launching programs such as “Incredible India” and “Athiti Devo Bhava”, translation, “Guest is god”; along with launching apps in the digital platforms such as Incredible India mobile app that serves as a tour guide and trip planner to the foreign and Indian tourists. Along with several other interesting facilities, the app features details about spots to find the best of Indian spirituality, heritage, adventure, culture, yoga, and wellness (Global wellness institute, 2021).

In the framework of Indian tourism, internal spiritual tourism is a significant aspect of the culture. Spiritualism is a Indian culture's cornerstone, serving as the cornerstone for societal principles and everyday rituals. For centuries, India, is known as the home of civilization and the birthplace of 4 key faiths, has long been a renowned spiritual tourist destination across the world. Both international and domestic tourism are rising at the nation's old prominent holy sites. Internal tourism is India's core, and over 60% of internal tourism are tied to spiritual sites and pilgrimage, either implicitly or explicitly (Shinde, 2014). Therefore, religious tourism is a viable business concept for India's post-COVID-19 rehabilitation currently. The impact of spiritual tourism in revolutionizing the Indian tourist industry post-Covid19 is examined in this research, with an emphasis on internal tourism.

2. Literature Review

Because tourism requires human mobility between an origin and a destination, it is among the most susceptible businesses in moments of crisis, and much more therefore in instances of outbreak (Gössling et al., 2021). In terms of the effects of COVID-19, It has had a huge influence across the board, but tourism has paid the largest price (Balakrishnan Nair & Sinha, 2020). Tourism has a critical play a role in the transmission of disease across locations; consequently, in order to grow tourism, safety and health conditions must be prioritized (Peri et al., 2021). Until the twentieth century, pandemics were growing more and more common as a result of globalisation. SARS in 2002-2003, Bird Flu in 2009, MERS in 2012, Ebola in 2013-2014, and COVID-19 in 2019 (Gössling et al., 2021) are only few of the pandemics that have struck the world. The rising spread of the coronavirus has changed travellers' perceptions and behaviour, persuading them that travel is risky and that foreign travel should be avoided (Park & Reisinger, 2010). Per the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2021b), Every year, 330 million travellers visit the world's most important pilgrimage destinations, generating about US\$ 18 billion in income (Mróz, 2021). However, by the year 2020, the global pandemic, induced by coronavirus would have impacted over 45 million pilgrims from around 200 nations (Mróz, 2021). According to the second wave of the coronavirus, the pandemic's consequences will have a long-term impact on pilgrims' journeys, culture, economic, psychological, and social behaviours all over the world (Oxholm et al., 2021). This has resulted in the suspension or disruption of spiritual gatherings or festivals and activities, which has had a significant detrimental impact on pilgrimage travel in many regions. According to reports, due to the subsequent decline in the number of tourists leading to the loss of over 38 million jobs across India, the tourism industry faced an estimated loss of 137 billion USD (Statista Research Department, 2021).

2.1 Indian Context of Spiritual Tourism

Spiritual tourism is the most ancient type of tourism (Rogerson, 2019; Rinschede, 1992). The concept of spiritual tourism arose virtually simultaneously with birth of the human race. Human people have travelled to various holy locations from the beginning of history (Boris, 2015). The effects of the pandemic, according to the second wave of the coronavirus, will have a long-term influence on pilgrims' trips, culture, economic, psychological, and social behaviours all across the world (Tirosh-Samuelson, 2018). Spiritual tourism encourages visitors to seek spiritual inspiration (Albayrak et al., 2018). Through prehistoric days, India has experienced a period of spiritual inspiration highlighted by the growth of Indian holy practices and Hindu (and many other) spiritual activities, that are globally known to help alleviate the stresses and concerns of daily existence (Kunwar, 2021). India is said to be the birthplace of four major religions which include, Sikhism, Jainism, Hinduism, and Buddhism, and is also home to other religions namely Islam and Christianity. Spiritual tourism constitute a significant element of the tourist business in this regard (Albayrak et al., 2018; Davidson & Sahli, 2015). The 'Special Interest Tourism,' and it is mainly associated with adherents of specific faiths who visit areas that are deemed as holy sites or places with spiritual significance (Ghimire, 2015). Prior to COVID-19, holy Indian locations have been susceptible to disasters (mostly environmental calamities), albeit such interruptions have mostly been short-lived and quickly eclipsed by devotees and visitors' endurance and tolerance. Every calamity gives you a new energy after it is gone. It appears that holy places get an outpouring of support from pilgrims who return with fresh zeal. In terms of Indian pilgrims, tourists have always shown tremendous moral comfort in the aftermath of the calamity and have returned to these locations with newfound enthusiasm. During the pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus, the entire country came to a standstill, and all types of tourism in the country have come to a halt since the outbreak. The current COVID-19 epidemic is unlike any other in recent times, and it is expected to last for a long time. COVID-19 has dramatically

influenced all individuals and sectors, includes the travel, tourism, and hospitality sectors on a worldwide scale, and has irrevocably changed the globe in every conceivable way (Chang et al., 2020).

2.2 Impact of corona virus on spiritual tourism in India

The spread of the worldwide corona virus wreaked havoc on India's tourist industry. The direct and indirect effects of Covid-19 on India's tourism and hotel sector stunted growth to around 10% of GDP. This has experienced more than a fifth of its total damages, starting with the month of January. As per Indian Chamber of Commerce (Indian Chamber of Commerce, 2022), minimal total revenue is expected for the budgetary year of 20-21, resulting in a contraction in the Indian tourist industry. Internal and corporate travel within the nation may be somewhat affluent in the aftermath of the shutdown, but it will be severely constrained owing to the fear of public gatherings, according to the Indian tourist marketing organization. The tourism-related businesses were also overwhelmed with massive damages and entirely shut down, resulting in a major drop in the price of aviation fuel. Owing to the withdrawal of airline tickets and hotel reservations, the tourism and transport industries were also completely shut down. It also reduced the number of job openings in the nation (Painuly & Goutami, 2020). Bookings and overnight stays at tourist spots dropped by 80% in the month of January and February, as per the reports published by the Indian Ministry of Tourism (Ministry of Tourism, 2021). Elevated delegates from international organisations, as well as the public and private sectors such as the International Civil Aviation Organization, IATA, the World Health Organization, and the World Travel and Tourism Council, conducted a conference presided by the Secretary-General of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2021a), when major worries regarding a drop in religious tourism in India during the shutdown were raised. (Ministry of Tourism, 2021). The protracted consequences of this predicament will be determined by the length of the worldwide shutdown and the efficiency by which the tourism sector can adapt to the new Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). The Indian tourism sector is expected to lose USD 66 billion, according to Hospitality Valuation Services (HVS). In the year 2020 solely, branded hotels experienced a 50 percent to 60 percent revenue drop. Traffic congestion and public security are two major challenges in Indian spiritual spots. When places of spiritual significance are allowed to resume in the future, the different authorities and organizations in charge of them will have to develop and implement suitable crowd control procedures that do not harm or decrease the thoughts and sentiments of the devotees (Niewiadomski, 2020). Authorities would have to guarantee that spiritual sites are properly cleaned and sanitized in accordance with social rules. It would be a significant task for spiritual site managers to guarantee that all the employees at the spiritual spots adhere to the requirements for physical separation and temperature monitoring, as well as to ensure that all the other COVID-19 standards are followed appropriately (Aukland, 2018). Despite the pandemic, the demand for religious tourism among domestic travelers gradually increased towards the end of 2020 and beginning of 2021 (Quadri, 2020). Therefore, the promotional strategies adopted by the industry and the government needs to be revised as per the Covid-19 norms for maintaining a safe and hygienic environment for the tourists from around the globe.

2.3 Impact of coronavirus on promotional strategies in Spiritual Turkism in India

Covid-19 has nearly halted all tourism in India due to the measures adopted by the home and foreign governments to protect their citizens from the spread of the virus. Even as the economy and borders are being reopened by governments, the consumers approach tourism with guarded anticipation. While there is a pent-up desire to travel, there is equally a fearful avoidance of it due to the risk of social gatherings. Seeing that the perception of the consumers on tourism has changed, it is a wise course of action to redraft and reorient existing promotional strategies to acknowledge and reflect the changes brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. This section comprehensively lists the possible promotional strategies adopted and to be adopted as a result of coronavirus in India. A major factor that should be considered while redesigning promotional activities is the alleviation of health concerns (Manhas & Nair, 2020). For example, in the hospitality industry a programme called SAATHI (System for Assessment, Awareness & Training for Hospitality Industry) was initiated by the Ministry of Tourism conjointly with the Quality Council of India aiming to set standard operating procedures and offer certification on their covid-free status in the hospitality industry (Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture, 2021). The Government should aim to adopt similar practices for the spiritual tourism industry. Certifying religious destinations on their adherence to safety and health practices will give a quality seal of approval to the destination and go a long way in alleviating customer fears and improving their safety. The social distancing measures implemented during Covid-19 has naturally shifted communication and dissemination of information over to the internet. People increasingly seek information online from genuine and legitimate sites (Toubes et. al., 2021). In response to this, the Government should endeavour to create engaging digital content for tourists offering relevant information regarding the destination and its attractions. (Grant Thornton, 2020). In this regard, Incredible India in collaboration with Google, have created a 360degree virtual tour for various tourist destinations in India. (Dash & Sharma, 2021). In addition to this, emerging technologies like artificial intelligence can be used to answer queries, provide information, and maintain communications with tourists to build their individual resilience and capacity to deal with unexpected situations in the Covid-19 situation. For example, at the beginning of the pandemic, the Ministry of Tourism launched a portal with the title "Stranded in India", to provide information on the help available for foreign tourists who were stranded in India due to Covid-19 travel restrictions (Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on

Transport, Tourism and Culture, 2021). Also, promotions on social media sites can include pro-safety hashtags like #staysafe. Technology can also be gainfully utilised for contact tracing with sufficient steps taken to ensure data safety. Existing schemes like Swadesh Darshan Scheme (SDS) and the Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD) can be utilised to concentrate efforts on new and undiscovered tourist destinations. Already, fifteen thematic tourist circuits have been identified under the SDS Scheme, some of which are: Spiritual circuit, Buddhist circuit and Ramayana circuit (Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture, 2021). Finally, considering the fact that the international borders will be the last to be opened up, tourism adverts should be reoriented to target domestic tourists. Domestic tourists comprise of 70 per cent of the internal tourism expenditure. They are also less prone to travel restrictions unless imposed by the Government. Converting out bound tourist to domestic tourists by creating attractive and unique travel packages. In addition, the tourism can take advantage of the work-from-home culture to promote local and regional destinations. (Poonam et. al., 2022). In line with promoting domestic tourism, the Ministry of Tourism started the Dekho Apna Desh pledge to encourage domestic tourists to visit at least fifteen destinations outside their home state in one year (Dash & Sharma, 2021). Clearly, Covid-19 has had an impact on the promotional strategies in tourism in India. The new strategies adopted in the wake of the pandemic can be summarised as 1) prioritisation of the alleviation of health concerns 2) high adoption and integration of technology 3) repurposing existing government schemes and 4) promotion of domestic tourism.

3. Research Objective

1. To assess the extent of effect on Indian spiritual tourism due to the spread of Covid-19.
2. To investigate the variables that influence the promotion of spiritual tourism in India during the pandemic.
3. To study the several promotional strategies that aid other Asian and western countries in endorsing tourism.
4. To examine the impact of selected external variables on the approach of the tourists towards spiritual tourism in India over the pandemic.

4. Research Methodology

The present chapter discusses the research methodologies adopted for attaining the results of the current study. Following that, a review of the analysis and design approach of the investigation strategy, which needs a methodological procedure based on the chosen study objectives and architecture. The current chapter is broken down into several segments, the research design of the study is discussed first and then the concept, strategy, and technique are explained later. This section delves into the usage of structural equation modelling (SEM) and partial least square (PLS) for examining validity and reliability for all variables, as well as defining the structural assessment.

4.1 Data Analysis and Presentation

The current study adopts a qualitative analysis, or a technique that works with quasi data, to answer the study questions from the viewpoint of the attendees (Hammond & Wellington, 2012). This section of the analysis is focused on a qualitative descriptive technique, which is a survey of participant behaviour based on data gathered online (Silver et al., 2012). The resolution of the present research is to analyse the influence of the each of the chosen variables upon the promotional strategy of spiritual tourism in India over the pandemic caused by Covid-19, therefore, the study's research philosophies entail positive and productive philosophies, that will assist in investigating the involvement of aspects that contribute to improving the promotional strategies of spiritual tourism across the country, as well as classifying the definitive a conclusion that may be formed from the analysis of the data. Identification and selection of appropriate techniques is one of the study aims, which involves attaining the research's objectives. Each study employs either a direct or indirect methodological approach to answer the research questions (Saunders et al., 2009). The study design for the proposed study follows the following structure: a thorough review of the literature is conducted to develop a suitable research model based on the stated factors, and then a structured questionnaire is produced to take a poll and gather opinions from a sample group. Relevant propositions about the parameters and objectives are formed and evaluated using the data gathered from the analysis. The purpose of the study is evaluated, and the outputs are defined based on the empirical findings. Deductive and inductive techniques are two of the most popular research strategies (Saunders, 2011). The quantitative information acquired from the respondents who choose to engage in the present study is utilized to examine the hypotheses using the deductive technique. The deductive technique was adopted because the current study intends to analyse the correlation between the independent and dependent variables, especially to comprehend the influence of the independent parameters on the dependent one in order to achieve the anticipated conclusion. Surveys of professionals who have worked on the promotional strategies for tourism in various spiritual places around the country were employed to gather information for the research. The surveys were designed to contact respondents in as many ways as possible while assuring them that their personal information would be kept confidential. To collect responses for the created questionnaire, the questionnaires were sent out to the government and private tourism industries. Although more than 300 questionnaires were developed and distributed, only 200 replies were judged appropriate for inclusion in the research.

In the current study, research tools were used to verify the hypotheses proposed based on the objectives. These are all closed-ended questions for which respondents were required to utilize Likert scale surveys to choose the most appropriate

responses. The following parameters were investigated in this study: All responders to the survey were scored on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," as described. Among the independent variables are Spiritual Tourism Demand, Spiritual Tourism Supply, Safety Regulations, Hygienic Transport Facilities and Destination Management. The obtained data was weighted and processed using Stata software. To examine the effect of each characteristic on the promotional strategy designed by the professionals to promote tourism in spiritual spots. During pre-testing, the Questionnaire's reliability and validity are assessed. It should also be tested on a limited sample size to ensure that the responses are in line with the study questions and findings. The customized study's validity and the reliability are key components in any conducted study. When creating new interpretability (questionnaires), several challenges occur, one of which is evaluating the instruments' reliability and validity. Tools for evaluating or evaluating are put to the test to see if they are valid and reliable (preciseness). As, a consequence, it's critical to test the accuracy of the data and ensure that the inquiry is thorough (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The validity and reliability of the responses obtained for all the items in the questionnaire are assured by checking that almost all the study participants selected for the research are answering to the best standards. To protect the respondents' interests, every effort was taken to keep all aspects of the current study confidential. The data acquired for this study was maintained in a safe setting and was kept completely anonymous. To protect the volunteers' interests and well-being, every precaution has been made to keep all details of the current study private.

Proposed Hypotheses

- H₁.** Spiritual Tourism Demand positively impacts the effectiveness of spiritual tourism promotion in India during the pandemic.
- H₂.** Spiritual Tourism Supply positively impacts the effectiveness of spiritual tourism promotion in India during the pandemic.
- H₃.** Safety Regulations followed in the vicinity of the tourist destinations and places of stay highly impacts the promotion of Spiritual tourism in India during the pandemic.
- H₄.** Hygienic Transport Facilities facilitated by the government, or the tourism industry plays a major role in the promotion of Spiritual tourism in India during the pandemic.
- H₅.** Destination Management has a significant impact on the promotional strategies of Spiritual tourism in India during the pandemic.

The Model

The Model used for attaining the outcome for the current study is,

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \varepsilon_i$$

Y is the Promotional Strategy of Spiritual Tourism

X₁ is the Spiritual Tourism Demand

X₂ is the Spiritual Tourism Supply

X₃ is the Safety Regulations

X₄ is the Hygienic Transport Facilities

X₅ is the Destination Management

5. Study Findings

This result depicts the statistical outcomes affecting to data composed from the participants of the study. Discussion relating to the statistical outcomes of the research study is also given. The study has considered Spiritual Tourism Demand, Spiritual Tourism Supply, Safety Regulations, Hygienic Transport Facilities and Destination Management as independent variables and Promotional Strategy of Spiritual Tourism is dependent variable. Internal reliability of the data was calculated using Cronbach's alpha value as part of a reliability analysis. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) is a factor analysis technique, and its main purpose is to discover the underlying correlations between variables measured.

The percentage analysis was used to determine the demographical information of the respondents. To summarise the data, descriptive statistics are employed. The mean standard deviation (mean \pm SD) is used to represent variables. To determine the relationship between the variables, regression analysis is performed. The link between a dependent (unobserved) variable and independent (observed) variables is represented using route diagrams in structural equation (SEM).

Table 1: Frequency of personal information

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	145	72.5
Female	55	27.5
Age		
21-30 years	55	27.5
31-40 years	49	24.5
41-50 years	50	25.0

Above 50 years	46	23.0
Qualification		
Metric	56	28.0
Secondary	48	24.0
Graduate	51	25.5
Postgraduate	45	22.5
Occupation		
Promotional Strategist	23	11.5
Tourism Marketing Director	63	31.5
Online promoter for tourism	44	22.0
Tour guide	30	15.0
Tourism Analyst	40	20.0
Income		
Less than INR 25,000	22	11.0
25,000 to 50,000	51	25.5
50,001 to 1,00,000	77	38.5
1,00,001 to 3,00,000	37	18.5
3,00,000 and above	13	6.5
Total	200	100.0

The above table represents the demographics of the chosen study in terms of gender, age, qualification, occupation, and income. Most of them are males of about 72.5% and the highest numbers of the respondents are of the age from 21 to 30. The participants primarily (28% of them) have metric qualification, 31.5% are employed as tourism marketing director and 38% of the respondents make an earning ranging from ₹50,000 to ₹1 lakh.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Spiritual Tourism Demand	4.55	0.65	2.00	5.00
Spiritual Tourism Supply	4.48	0.86	1.00	5.00
Safety Regulations	4.31	0.86	1.00	5.00
Hygienic Transport Facilities	4.32	0.90	1.00	5.00
Destination Management	4.46	0.98	1.00	5.00
Promotional Strategy of Spiritual Tourism	4.23	1.11	1.00	5.00

Descriptive statistics of variables were presents in table 2. The factor Spiritual Tourism Demand has a highmean of 4.55 with SD 0.65 while Promotional Strategy of Spiritual Tourism factors have least mean 4.23 with SD 1.11.

Reliability Analysis

As per the Cronbach's alpha rate, we determined the following about the data:

Cronbach's alpha value	Status
$\alpha \geq 0.9$	Excellent
$0.7 \leq \alpha < 0.9$	Good
$0.6 \leq \alpha < 0.7$	Acceptable
$0.5 \leq \alpha < 0.6$	Poor
$\alpha < 0.5$	Unacceptable

Table 3: Reliability analysis

	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha	Status
Spiritual Tourism Demand	4.55	0.65	0.936	Excellent
Spiritual Tourism Supply	4.48	0.86	0.976	Excellent
Safety Regulations	4.31	0.86	0.975	Excellent
Hygienic Transport Facilities	4.32	0.90	0.984	Excellent
Destination Management	4.46	0.98	0.993	Excellent
Promotional Strategy of Spiritual Tourism	4.23	1.11	0.995	Excellent

Table 3 exposes the reliability examination reports with statistical measures for each variable. Reliability analysis stated that there is a strong consistency between every variable and Cronbach's alpha values between 0.936 and 0.995.

Table 4: Factor analysis with AVE and CR

	Factors					AVE	CR
	1	2	3	4	5		
Hygienic Transport Facilities						0.735	0.943
While travelling to a place of Spiritual Importance value, the transportation facilities are maintained with high hygienic standard	0.902						
Tour Guides are well behaved and maintain hygienic practices	0.886						
The expectation of the tourists while travelling during Covid regarding health and hygiene affects the spiritual tourism	0.872						
Due to Covid, tourists void public transport which impacts promotional activities of spiritual tourism	0.845						
Bans on large public gathering at religious spots highly affect promotion of spiritual tourism	0.834						
The need for vehicles used for transportation to be thoroughly sanitized increases the department expenses	0.801						
Destination Management						0.853	0.966
The destination must have essential facilities for the tourists		0.936					
There should be malls, hospitals, banking services and availability of internet in proximity of the spiritual destinations		0.928					
The destination must have highly appealing attraction spots for tourists with spiritual significance		0.923					
The destination must be hygienically and structurally well maintained		0.916					
Places of boarding must be quite well connected and have good ambience		0.915					
Safety Regulations						0.769	0.919
The migration policy for the foreign tourists during the pandemic has taken a toll in spiritual tourism			0.885				
Control and Prevention measures are enforced at all tourist spots			0.840				
The mandatory vaccination rules have tightened the security at tourist spots			0.830				
The health and safety regulations at the tourists check points have hindered spiritual tourism			0.826				
Safety and security are highly prioritized while visiting spiritual destinations			0.789				
Spiritual Tourism Demand						0.788	0.915
Covid-19 has impacted the national and international pilgrimages				0.906			
The paradigm shift of religious sentiments due to the pandemic has impacted the demand for spiritual tourism				0.900			
The demand for spiritual tourism has increased due to the Covid-19 pandemic				0.867			
The contemporary consumerism has impacted the pilgrim demand during the pandemic				0.852			
The need for soulful enlightenment has impacted the significance of spiritual tourism				0.580			
Spiritual Tourism Supply						0.714	0.864
There has been a lack of proper energy supply in places of tourism during the pandemic					0.814		
Tourist agents are hard to get hold of during the pandemic					0.791		
The pandemic has caused significant disruption in the tourism supply chain					0.788		
The supply of food and safe drinking water has deteriorated due to the pandemic					0.740		

Table 4 reveals the factor analysis of tourists' perception and satisfaction. The twenty-five are taken into a factor analysis. The total twenty- Spiritual Tourism Supply, Safety Regulations, Hygienic Transport Facilities and Destination Management. Table 4 also reveals CD Validity Test. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) should be superior to 0.5 and Composite Reliability (CR) should be larger than equal to 0.7. Here, all the factors of AVE values are superior to 0.5, and CR value is 0.9 which superior to equal to 0.7; hence Convergent, and Discriminant validity exists.

1. Six statements in the first factor which is named as "Hygienic Transport Facilities" with loading ranging from 0.801 to 0.902.
2. Five statements in the second factor which is named as "Destination Management" with loading ranging from 0.915 to 0.936.
3. Five statements in the third factor which is named as "Safety Regulations" with loading ranging from 0.789 to 0.885.
4. Five statements in the fourth factor which is named as "Spiritual Tourism Demand" with loading ranging from 0.580 to 0.906.
5. Four statements in the fifth factor which is named as "Spiritual Tourism Supply" with loading ranging from 0.740 to 0.814.

Table 5: Correlation analysis

	STD	STS	SR	HTF	DM	PSST
Spiritual Tourism Demand	1					
Spiritual Tourism Supply	.557**	1				
Safety Regulations	.526**	.636**	1			
Hygienic Transport Facilities	.470**	.703**	.655**	1		
Destination Management	.448**	.522**	.488**	.467**	1	
Promotional Strategy of Spiritual Tourism	.524**	.642**	.619**	.640**	.557**	1

** $p < 0.01$

STD= Spiritual Tourism Demand, STS= Spiritual Tourism Supply, SR= Safety Regulations, HTF= Hygienic Transport Facilities, DM= Destination Management and PSST= Promotional Strategy of Spiritual Tourism

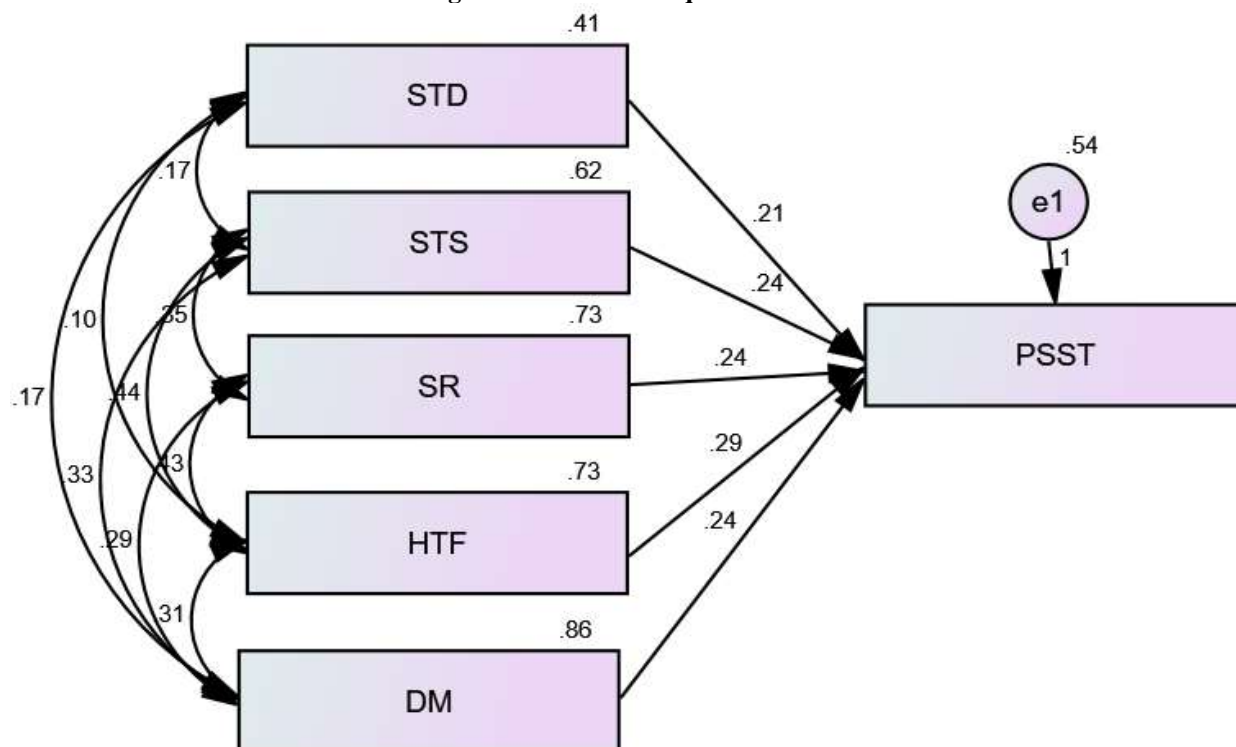
Table 5 depicts the correlation analysis to find the relationship between Spiritual Tourism Demand, Spiritual Tourism Supply, Safety Regulations, Hygienic Transport Facilities and Destination Management and Promotional Strategy of Spiritual Tourism. From the above results, it shows Promotional Strategy of Spiritual Tourism displayed a significant relationship with Spiritual Tourism Demand ($r = 0.524, p < 0.01$), Spiritual Tourism Supply ($r = 0.642, p < 0.01$), Safety Regulations ($r = 0.619, p < 0.01$), Hygienic Transport Facilities ($r = 0.640, p < 0.01$) and Destination Management ($r = 0.557, p < 0.01$).

Table 6: Linear Regression analysis

	STD	STS	SR	HTF	DM
Beta (SE)	0.902 (0.104)	0.834 (0.071)	0.804 (0.073)	0.788 (0.067)	0.634 (0.067)
t value	8.646	11.778	11.094	11.716	9.429
Adj. R square	0.270	0.409	0.380	0.406	0.306
p-value	0.000**	0.000**	0.000**	0.000**	0.000**

SE- Standard Error, Dependent variable- Tourists Satisfaction, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 6 depicts the influence of Spiritual Tourism Demand, Spiritual Tourism Supply, and Safety Regulations, Hygienic Transport Facilities and Destination Management on Promotional Strategy of Spiritual Tourism. The significance values of Spiritual Tourism Demand ($\beta = 0.902, p < 0.01$), Spiritual Tourism Supply ($\beta = 0.834, p < 0.01$), Safety Regulations ($\beta = 0.804, p < 0.01$), Hygienic Transport Facilities ($\beta = 0.788, p < 0.01$) and Destination Management ($\beta = 0.634, p < 0.01$) specified that the factors did impact on Promotional Strategy of Spiritual Tourism.

Figure 1: Structural Equation Model**Table 7: SEM Model**

			Unstandardized coefficient	S.E	Standardized coefficient	p-value
PSST	<—	STD	0.209	0.090	0.130	0.020**
PSST	<—	STS	0.238	0.096	0.182	0.013**
PSST	<—	SR	0.237	0.080	0.196	0.003***
PSST	<—	HTF	0.294	0.088	0.243	0.0001***
PSST	<—	DM	0.235	0.066	0.211	0.0001***

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.10

Table 8 depicts the hypothetical interdependence between ten factors (Spiritual Tourism Demand, Spiritual Tourism Supply, Safety Regulations, Hygienic Transport Facilities and Destination Management and Promotional Strategy of Spiritual Tourism) SEM was carried out. The fit directories reveal a model is a goodfit as the factors are initiate to be significant at the $p>0.05$ (Table 8).

Table 8: Model fit summary

Variable	Value	Suggested value
Chi-square value (χ^2)	20.231	
Degrees of freedom (df)	4	
P value	0.000	P-value <0.05 (Hair et al., 2006)
GFI	0.916	> 0.90 (Daire et al., 2008)
AGFI	0.921	> 0.90 (Daire et al., 2008)
NFI	0.893	>0.90 (Hair et al., 2006)
IFI	0.895	> 0.90 (Daire et al., 2008)
CFI	0.911	>0.90 (Hu and Bentler, 1999)
RMR	0.067	< 0.08 (Hair et al., 2006)
RMSEA	0.055	< 0.08 (Hair et al., 2006)

The model fit was measured by the universal fit method (7 different fit keys). In other words, how well the suggested matrix of covariances (as per the hypothesised model) and the sample covariance matrix (based on data) appear to match

together (Bollen, 1989). The structural model's grade of fit was adequate for the sample data ($\chi^2(4) = 20.231$, NFI (Normed Fit Index) = 0.893; IFI (Incremental Fit Index) = 0.895, $GFI = 0.916$, $AGFI = 0.921$), which is much higher than the 0.90 threshold given by (Byrne, 1994) and 0.95 criteria (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004). $CFI = 0.911$, $RMR = 0.067$, and $RMSEA = 0.055$ are all lower than the threshold value of 0.08. (Steiger, 1989).

6. Discussion & Conclusion

The study's goal is to look at tourists' perceptions and contentment with India as a spiritual tourism destination, as well as the consequences for managing it. Tourists can visit various spiritual locations and possibilities in India. Spiritual Tourism Demand, Spiritual Tourism Supply, Safety Regulations, Hygienic Transport Facilities and Destination Management are the five major aspects highlighted in this study. All these characteristics have been examined to determine their influence on the promotional strategies for spiritual tourism in India during the pandemic. For each aspect, credible propositions are formed to elicit reactions from the employees, which are then evaluated to provide the study's findings. The obtained correlation value demonstrated that the spiritual tourism demand while the lockdown caused by the Covid-19 pandemic was enforced and spiritual tourism supply has had a lasting impact over the past two years in the promotion of spiritual tourism in India. The analysis also highlighted the impact of safety regulations, hygienic transport facilities and destination management on the promotion of tourism. Since the pandemic has caused a traumatic impact on the minds and hearts of people across the globe, the demand to reconnect with the purpose of life both mentally and spiritually has aided in increasing the demand for spiritual tourism. As India is known for its spiritual tourism, this demand has positively impacted the tourism industry. However, these demands come with several conditions that need to be met by the government of India and the private tourism industries. A fair amount of research has been carried out to analyse the influence of demand on the promotional factor of tourism over the pandemic (Carriere, 2019; Zheng et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2021; Sigala, 2020). The supply required for promoting and meeting the standards of spiritual tourism has also been greatly impacted due to covid. Since the pilgrimages in India usually happen in large gatherings and follow certain customs and traditions which could not be conducted due to safety issues, the lack of supply and arrangements had a negative impact on the promotional activities of spiritual tourism over the pandemic. Sharma and Lecturer (2019) talks about the deficiency of proper supply to support spiritual tourism in India and its influence on the tourism promotion. Similar conclusions have been drawn by González-Torres et al. (2021), Salih Tellioglu (2021), Guan et al. (2020) and OECD (2020). The Now, Next and Beyond also discussed the management of the impact that Covid-19 has had on the supply chains in India and its direct impact on the domestic tourism in the June 2020 (Taneja et al., 2020) issue. The other three factors taken into consideration for the current study include safety regulations, hygienic transport facilities and destination management. The safety protocols and measures have held priority in the industry of tourism since the outbreak. Its impact on the promotional activities of spiritual tourism has been huge and the same has been discussed by OECD (2020), Muhammad Khalilur Rahman, Md. Abu Issa Gazi, Miraj Ahmed Bhuiyan, and Md. Rahaman (2021). The results attained align with the conclusion drawn by several studies that the need for safety regulations has greatly impacted the tourism management regarding travel risk and perception of the tourists. The hospitality industry also includes the transport facilities, and the outbreak has had an equally significant effect on the transport industries due to the responsibility of maintaining a highly hygienic and secure environment for the tourists to travel in (IEA, 2020). Int J Hosp Manag (Kaushal & Srivastava, 2021), Gössling et al. (2021) have affirmed that Covid-19 has arguably damaged the transport and tourism industry. Destination management has always been one of the core factors impacting the promotional activities of spiritual tourism in India regardless of Covid-19. Since India is known for its customs and traditions, the expectations of the tourists from the destinations are considerably high and it is often burdensome to meet the demands. However, given the circumstances created by the pandemic, it has become highly essential to maintain high standards of destination management for promoting successful spiritual tourism to the domestic and international tourists. The sustainable recovery in the tourism industry can only be made through promoting promising destination management, this harmonizes with the statements made by Jaffar Abbas et al. (2021), Orindaru, et al. (2021) and Grant Thornton, (2020).

Therefore, the current study provides a credible documentation of the prominent factors that impact the promotional strategies of spiritual tourism, thereby offering insights on the areas that need to be enhanced by the tourism industry and the policy makers for the retrieval of the Indian Spiritual Tourism during the time of global pandemic.

Author contributions

At the very outset the study was conceived by Ms Seema Barthwal, who is working on her doctoral thesis on spiritual tourism. She designed the skeleton of the study. Mobin Anwar collected the data and analysed the data along with Arvind Kumar Shukla. All the authors contributed to writing the conclusion part.

Funding

We do not have any financial support from any funding and award-granting bodies.

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