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Comprehending Determinants and Outcomes of Cultural Tourism to India: Foreign Tourist's Perspective Using S-O-R Theory

Abstract

This study explores relevant cultural motives amongst foreign tourists visiting India for cultural tourism and explains their role in the formation of destination satisfaction using the S-O-R theory. The conceptual model is empirically tested through a survey using 378 samples using Exploratory Factor Analysis followed by Structural Equation Modelling. Our research found that motives, namely learning local culture, seeking spiritual experiences, experiencing novelty, engaging in social consumption, and experiencing relaxation, are the five principal drivers determining cultural tourist destination selection. This study identifies that tourism motives influence destination satisfaction and positively contribute to WOM intentions. Our research suggests that administrators must create thematic recreation/entertainment options that underscore the local flavour to improve destination satisfaction amongst foreign cultural tourists.

Keywords: cultural tourism motives, destination satisfaction, relaxation, spiritual experience, word-of-mouth intention, India

1. Introduction

Cultural tourism is a form of travel motivated by visitors' desire to learn/discover other geographical location's cultures/lifestyles (Richards, 2018). Primary visitation motivations behind cultural tourism are to engage in tours, appreciate performing arts, participate in festivals, physically visit historic sites and monuments, comprehend local folklore, or undertake pilgrimage in sacred destinations (Andreu et al., 2020). Cultural tourism is one of the fastest-growing areas (Solanki & Oberai, 2022). It accounts for about forty per cent of global tourism and is the primary driver of international tourism consumption (Richards, 2018). The exponential growth of cultural tourism has played an instrumental role in accelerating the economic development of tourist destinations that drive international visitors (Soh et al., 2021).

India is one of the top 10 countries globally in terms of contribution of revenue to GDP from travel (Solanki & Oberai, 2022). The travel and tourism industry contributed US\$ 121.9 billion to GDP in 2020, which is predicted to grow to US\$ 512 billion by 2028 (Shah et al., 2023). As a cultural tourism destination, India might cater to multiple tourism motives, considering India is known for scenic beauty and rich cultural heritage since it is the birthplace of numerous global religions (such as Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism)

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(Jacobsen & Kumar, 2018). Amidst the bouquet of offerings India can offer for cultural tourism, it is also essential to find out the salient visitation motives that drive cultural tourism in India to improve satisfaction amongst foreign tourists. However, such a study is still to be convened. This study attempts to address this gap. Accordingly, the first objective of this research is to explore the salient tourist motives among foreign tourists who undertake cultural tourism to India.

Destination loyalty is defined as the tourists' commitment to revisit the destination. Hence, it determines the competitiveness of destinations (Lv & Wu., 2021). Destination loyalty provides sustainable income for destinations through positive word of mouth, resulting in lower marketing costs (Lv & Wu., 2021). Prior studies in the cultural tourism context have focused on self-determination theory (SDT) (Chen & Rehman, 2018), cognitive appraisal theory (CAT) (Altunel & Erkurt, 2015), social capital theory (SCT) (Hsieh et al., 2017) to comprehend destination loyalty. While earlier research has shown the positive impact of travel motives on destination loyalty, revisit intentions (Chen & Rehman, 2018), and destination advocacy (Shoemaker & Lewis, 1999), these erstwhile theories (SDT, CAT, SCT, etc) do not take into cognizance the role of tourist motives in determining destination loyalty. The present study tries to bridge the gap between cultural tourism-determining motives and destination loyalty using the stimulus-organism response Theory (SOR). Accordingly, the second objective of this study is to comprehend how tourist motives impact destination loyalty and its associated positive outcomes using the S-O-R theory. This research can help travel managers, governments, and related agencies design strategies that promote loyalty to the destination amongst cultural tourists.

2. Theoretical background and hypothesis formulation

2.1. Cultural tourism motives (CTM)

Visitors' intention to engage in study tours, performing arts, travel to festivals, visit historic sites and monuments, appreciate folklore, and undertake pilgrimage can be construed as engagement with cultural tourism. Such tourists associate with historical artefacts, ancient structures, monuments, food, and lifestyle and participate in local rituals to get a deeper understanding of the culture of the geography (Andreu et al., 2020).

Learning local culture

Manolika and Baltzis (2020) stated that learning about local culture is one of the critical motives for engaging in cultural tourism. Meeting new people, participating in locally relevant events, experiencing local lifestyle and cuisine, and enhancing knowledge about the destination are prominent ways foreign tourists learn about local culture. Higher-order learning and social interaction pleasures motivate visitors to learn about the destination's local culture (Chen & Rahman, 2018). Few tourists engage in cultural tourism solely to immerse themselves in the Destination's local culture (Kay, 2009).

Relaxation

Relaxation is a psychological and physiological desire to refresh oneself by escaping daily stresses (Kay, 2009). Drule et al. (2012) stated that relaxation may be considered one of the critical non-religious motives for travel abroad. Most family travellers plan for a vacation abroad with the objective of relaxation (Yang, 2019). Through these vacations, families may seek togetherness, exploration, relaxation, and experiential learning for children (Lehto et al., 2017). Tourists with relaxation motives tour those destinations that offer scope for leisure activities and have exotic landscapes (Kay, 2009).

Novelty

Novelty is related to pleasure from curiosity and new sensations (Otoo & Kim, 2018). The destination's novelty and appealing culture could drive visitors to engage in foreign cultural experiences (Kay, 2009). A

novelty-seeking attitude drives travellers to visit foreign tourist attractions and foreign. Novelty motive can be strongly linked to cultural tourism since novelty is a push factor for travellers to visit foreign tourist places, explore the heritage, cuisine, and culture to learn and experience the unfamiliar (Agyeiwaah et al., 2019).

Spiritual experiences

Spirituality can be defined as the individual construction of the meaning of one's life, the dimensions of which are the inner self, alterity (other humans and nature), and the sacred (Robledo et al., 2023). Spiritual belief is crucial for visiting a particular religious place to seek spiritual satisfaction (Bond et al., 2015). Spiritual experience is gained through worship, celebrations, and performing rituals, showing the path to spirituality within and beyond religious connotations. Spiritual tourism uplifts visitor's sense of identity and enhances their (psychological) well-being (Robledo et al., 2023). It was found that seeking spiritual experiences drives foreign travellers' participation in large-scale religious events (Shekhar & Valeri, 2023).

Social consumption

Bayih and Singh (2020) define social consumption as the participation in cultural events outside consumers' households comprising interactions with other patrons. Kay (2009) states that social consumption is one of the vital tourism motive dimensions. Social consumption is built on the drive to have shared experiences among members. Tourist destinations that offer active participation of foreign visitors in activities and events attract cultural tourism-seeking visitors driven by social consumption motive. Such activities include food festivals, religious festivals, sporting events, religious congregations, fairs, etc. (Willson et al., 2013).

2.2. S-O-R theory

This study adopts Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) 'Stimulus-Organism-Response' (SOR) model as the underlying mechanism to build the conceptual relationships among the defined constructs. The SOR theory details how external environment stimuli impact the internal (psychological) state of individuals/organisms and drive them to respond behaviourally (Jacoby, 2002). Stimuli are attributes that influence the consumers' perception (Rasoolimanesh & Seyfi, 2021). In the current study context, destination visitation motives, namely relaxation, novelty, social consumption, spiritual experience, and learning local culture, are considered the stimuli for selecting a particular destination (Sangpikul, 2018). The organism relates to the internal processes between the inputs and the customer's final responses based on customers' evaluations and perceptions (Islam & Rahman, 2017). In this study, organism refers to the internal review of destination experiences through satisfaction/dissatisfaction (Rice & Khanin, 2019). The response relates to the outcome reflected through customers' actions and behaviour (Roschk & Gelbrich, 2017). In this study, response refers to the post-visit behaviour of a traveller in willingness to spread positive word of mouth about the visited destination. The relationships between stimulus and organism, organism and response are depicted as hypotheses below

2.3. Relationships between motives, satisfaction, and loyalty in the context of cultural tourism evaluation

Impact of CTM on determining tourist satisfaction

Subjective expectations of tourists about the tourist destination are formed based on the underlying motives behind destination selection (Gnoth, 1997). Chon (1989) suggests that tourist satisfaction is determined by the degree to which a tourist's expectations about the destination match the evaluations made after experiencing a tourist destination. The higher the perceived performance of the destination on salient tourist motives, the greater the satisfaction generated (Fayed et al., 2016). Satisfied customers are likelier to show loyalty to tourist destinations through repeat visits and spreading positive word of mouth (Chen & Rahman, 2018; Bayih &

Singh, 2020). Therefore, tourism managers need to orchestrate cultural destination experiences closely with the tourists's motives to evidence satisfaction from tourists. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

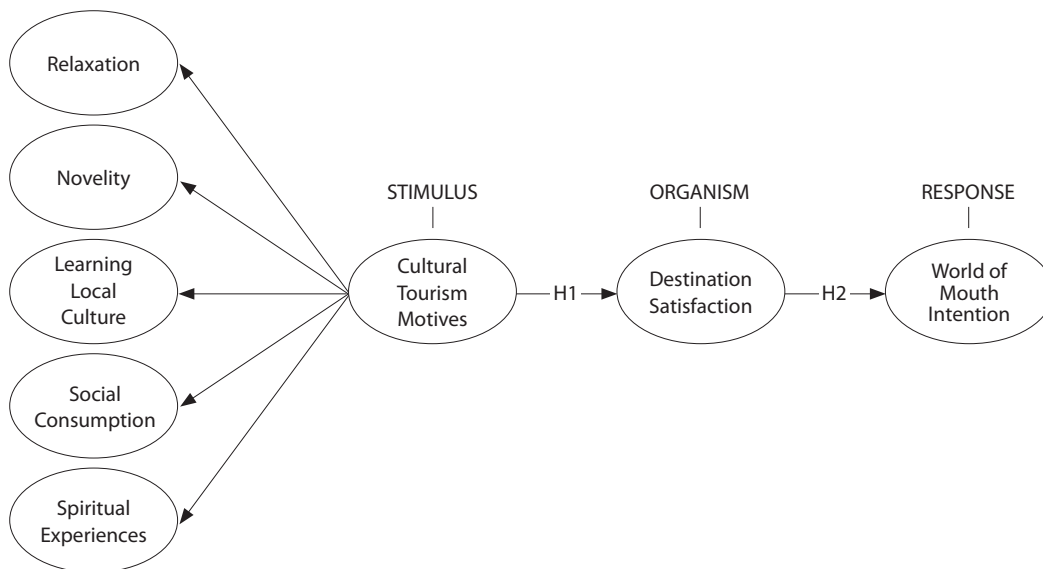
H1: Cultural tourism motives have a positive influence on destination satisfaction.

Impact of satisfaction on loyalty

Satisfaction with tourist destinations leads to strengthening a positive attitude about the destination and updating the belief that the destination is a source of positive experiences (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). This belief lends itself to actions culminating in loyalty toward the destination (Albarracin et al., 2000). Tourists' destination loyalty can be comprehended within two broad dimensions: revisit intentions toward the destination, which includes a) tourist's planned revisits (Yi et al., 2018) and b) tourist's recommendation to others (Chen & Rahman, 2018; Bayih & Singh, 2020) in the form of positive word of mouth behaviours (Chang & Wang, 2019) where visitors convey positive things about the destination place to their peers. This study measures destination loyalty using Word of Mouth (WOM) intentions. WOM intention refers to the intention of the visitor to recommend a particular tourist destination to significant others like family members, friends, peers, etc. (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). WOM intention is an essential outcome since a tourist's positive portrayal of a visited destination is regarded as a reliable and trustworthy source of information compared to advertisements/marketing literature (Chen & Rahman, 2018). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H2: Destination satisfaction has a positive influence on word-of-mouth intention towards cultural tourism

Figure 1
S-O-R framework



3. Research methodology

3.1. Measures and data collection

A self-administered survey was developed and administered to tourists who stayed in hotels and visited cultural tourism destinations across India. The questionnaire contained items on cultural motives, satisfaction, word-of-mouth intentions, and demographic characteristics. Scales used in the study were adopted from previous research in cultural tourism (see Table 2 for scale items and corresponding sources). All scale items

were measured on seven-point Likert-type scales, with ends as 1 ‘Strongly Disagree’ to 7 ‘Strongly Agree’. The validity of the research instrument was assessed through face, content, convergent, and discriminant validity. The face validity was evaluated by the pilot study of the research instrument with ten foreign cultural tourists for item clarity (Hardesty & Bearden, 2004).

The sampling frame for the study was repeated foreign tourists visiting India staying in Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, and Kolkata during the data collection period. The study sample was limited to the stated cities for the following reasons: a) all the cities chosen were Metro Cities having international airports. Each city corresponded to different geographical directions: Delhi in the North, Mumbai in the West, Kolkata from the East, and Hyderabad from the South. Since these cities are Metro cities, they offer good connectivity to prominent cultural locations. A market research agency that had a pan-India presence was used for data collection. Data was collected at the exit points of airports and prominent hotels attracting foreign tourists across the stated cities.

With eight latent variables, forty-four observable variables, a significance level of 0.05 and an anticipated medium effect size, the required sample size was found to be two hundred and fifty (Soper, 2014). The study was commissioned to generate hundred and fifty responses for each city. Accordingly, five hundred self-administrable questionnaires were distributed. Four hundred and twenty-three respondents filled out the study questionnaire, of which three hundred and seventy-eight responses were found usable (See Table 1 for demographic characteristics).

Table 1
Demographic profile of respondents in the sample (n=378)

Demographic group	Demographic sub-group	Count	Percentage
Gender	Male	214	56.6
	Female	164	43.4
Age	Below 30 years	23	6.08
	31 - 40 years	87	23
	41 - 60 years	160	42.32
	61 years and above	108	28.57
Residence	Bangladesh	117	30.95
	United States	88	23.28
	United Kingdom	80	21.16
	Sri Lanka	52	13.75
	Canada	41	10.85
Educational qualification	Under-graduate and below	89	23.5
	Graduate	151	39.94
	Post-graduate and above	138	36.5
Annual income level	Below USD 5,000	126	33.33
	USD 5,000-25,000	132	34.92
	Greater than USD 25,000	120	31.74
Preferred zone of visit	East India	38	10.05
	West India	87	23.01
	North India	122	32.27
	South India	131	34.65

3.2. Data analysis: EFA and CFA

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) followed by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to assess construct validity. EFA with varimax rotation was performed to check the uni-dimensionality of the research constructs (Yong & Pearce, 2013). Satisfactory KMO (>0.8) and significance in Bartlett’s test was achieved ($p < 0.001$). No cross-loadings were observed at a factor loading cut-off value of 0.5. See Table 2 for items, source of items, EFA factor loadings, and associated reliability metrics.

Table 2
Results of exploratory factor analysis

Sl.No	Item	Construct	Literature	Loadings	CR	Cronbach's alpha
1.	To have fun	Relaxation	Drule et al., 2012; Pandora, 2009	0.83	0.87	0.92
2.	To be entertained by others			0.78		
3.	To relax physically			0.76		
4.	To relax mentally			0.75		
5.	To hear famous performers/entertainers			0.74		
6.	To have a change from my daily routine			0.72		
7.	For thrill / excitement			0.71		
8.	To learn about local culture	Learning local culture	Drule et al., 2012; Pandora, 2009	0.81	0.85	0.88
9.	To learn about local history			0.79		
10.	To learn about local performing arts			0.75		
11.	To meet locals			0.72		
12.	To see famous cultural places			0.67		
13.	Contact with tradition and Values			0.65		
14.	Desire to discover cultural beauty			0.64		
15.	To consume local cuisine	0.64				
16.	To explore my inner self	Novelty	Pandora, 2009	0.91	0.81	0.86
17.	To forget about demands of daily life			0.88		
18.	To satisfy my curiosity			0.76		
19.	To have a high quality life experience			0.75		
20.	To do something I want to do			0.71		
21.	To escape into another world			0.68		
22.	To tell my friends and relatives about it	Social consumption	Pandora, 2009	0.79	0.78	0.79
23.	To enhance my social position			0.75		
24.	To demonstrate my ability to travel			0.72		
25.	To go somewhere safe			0.69		
26.	Desire to interact with people			0.67		
27.	To buy goods and souvenirs			0.64		
28.	To gain the respect of others	0.63				
29.	I vist new places for wellbeing of myself / family members.	Spiritual experiences	Moal-Ulvoas, 2017	0.84	0.82	0.76
30.	I often undertake journeys with the motive of spiritual growth			0.78		
31.	Seeking spiritual experiences by visiting new places is of my life goals.			0.75		
32.	Spiritual experiences provide meaning to my life			0.71		
33.	I often prefer visiting tourist destinations that are of religious / spiritual significance			0.69		
34.	My choice of visiting a cultural destination was a wise one.	Destination satisfaction	Lee et al., 2012; Oliver, 1980	0.85	0.73	0.91
35.	I am sure it was the right decision to visit the destination.			0.81		
36.	This was one of the best destination I have ever visited			0.77		
37.	My experience at the destination was exactly what I needed			0.72		
38.	I am satisfied with my decision to visit this destination			0.68		
39.	This destination made me feel happy			0.63		
40.	I really enjoyed myself at this destination			0.62		
41.	I will share my experience of this tourist destination with others	WOM intention	Harrison and Walker, 2001; Riduan et al., 2015.	0.83	0.71	0.82
42.	I will discuss more often this tourist destination place than other tourist attractions			0.79		
43.	I will say good things about this tourist destination to others			0.73		
44.	I am proud to tell about this tourist destination to others			0.69		
45.	I would recommend others to this tourist destination			0.68		

CFA, derived from structural equation modelling (SEM), is a more rigorous test of uni-dimensionality (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Thus, CFA was utilized to confirm further the uni-dimensionality of measurements that resulted from the EFA. Guidelines and the goodness of measurement model fit using SEM were followed to assess the CFA and determine the model's fit (Hair et al., 1998).

A measurement model was conceived based on the results of EFA. We found all items to construct loadings as significant ($p < 0.001$, ranging from 0.63 to 0.91), supporting the convergent validity of all scale dimensions. In addition, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was more significant than the preferred cut-off (0.60) for all constructs, further supporting the convergent validity. We followed Fornell and Larcker's (1981) procedures to establish discriminant validity. For all the constructs in the measurement model, the respective square roots of the AVE values were higher than their corresponding inter-construction correlations, supporting discriminant validity. The composite reliability (CR) estimates of all hypothesized constructs were between 0.71 and 0.87 in support of these results, indicating adequate scale reliability (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988) (See Table 2 for construct-wise results).

Table 3
Descriptive figures for the hypothesized constructs, AVE and correlations

Constructs	Mean	SD	Skewness	kurtosis	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Relaxation (1)	5.58	0.91	0.12	0.14	0.85							
Learning local culture (2)	6.11	0.99	-0.32	-0.01	0.51*	0.76						
Novelty (3)	5.82	1.12	-0.12	0.34	0.41*	0.39*	0.79					
Social consumption (4)	5.93	1.13	0.15	0.22	0.47*	0.43*	0.35*	0.84				
Spiritual experiences (5)	6.12	1.57	-0.26	0.14	0.43*	0.49*	0.56*	0.52*	0.82			
Cultural tourism motive (6)	5.29	1.09	0.21	0.13	0.49*	0.45*	0.52*	0.34*	0.59*	0.85		
Destination satisfaction (7)	5.7	1.29	0.51	0.11	0.39*	0.49*	0.42*	0.34*	0.47*	0.51*	0.83	
WOM intention (8)	5.54	0.82	0.26	-0.04	0.59*	0.51*	0.43*	0.45*	0.38*	0.48*	0.52*	0.75

Note. N = 378. Diagonal elements are AVE.

* $p < 0.01$.

3.3. Common method bias test

To check for the impact of standard method bias, in line with the recommendation by Lance et al. (2010), we have carried out two CFAs. By adding a method factor, the first measurement model was conceived. Without including the method factor, a second measurement model was conceived. We compared both models. A firm fit was found in the analysis of the second measurement model without the system factor ($\chi^2 (238) = 412.51$ ($p < 0.001$), $\chi^2/df = 2.19$, 0.95 GFI, 0.073 SRMR, 0.92 CFI, and 0.05 RMSEA). A comparatively weak fit ($\chi^2 (213) = 324.65$ ($p < 0.001$), $\chi^2/df = 2.16$, GFI = 0.76, SRMR = 0.094, CFI = 0.87, and RMSEA = 0.086) was seen while testing the first measurement model with the method factor. This test confirms the absence of common method bias.

3.4. Data analysis: SEM

We followed the two-step approach Anderson and Gerbing (1988) suggested to test the proposed study hypotheses. Firstly, using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), we confirmed the validity of the measurement model. Model fit indices of measurement model suggest a good model fit ($\chi^2/df = 2.266$; GFI = 0.967; AGFI = 0.945; NFI = 0.983; CFI = 0.964; RMSEA = 0.052). Later, we formulated the structural model to test the hypotheses. After verifying the psychometric properties of the dimensions of the scale, the hypothesized

model was evaluated with the maximum probability estimation approach using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The model, along with the path coefficients, is reported in Figure 2. Model fit indices suggest a good model fit ($\chi^2/df= 2.256$; GFI= 0.972; AGFI= 0.951; NFI= 0.977; CFI= 0.956; RMSEA= 0.047). In our model, cultural motives are represented as second-order constructs with first-order constructs as destination visitation motives: relaxation, novelty, social consumption, spiritual experience, and learning local culture. All paths originating from second-order construct to first-order construct were found significant, confirming the importance of these destination visitation motives in the context of cultural tourism. The path coefficient from cultural motives to destination satisfaction suggests a positive effect ($\beta = 0.587$) with a t-value of 5.67, which is significant at the 5% significance level. This finding supports study hypothesis 1 that cultural tourism motives strongly predict destination satisfaction with the destination. The path coefficient from destination satisfaction to positive WOM intention suggests a positive effect ($\beta = 0.469$) with a t-value of 7.2967, which is significant at the 5% significance level. This finding supports study hypothesis 2 that satisfaction with the visited destination positively influences the intention to spread positive word of mouth about the visited destination.

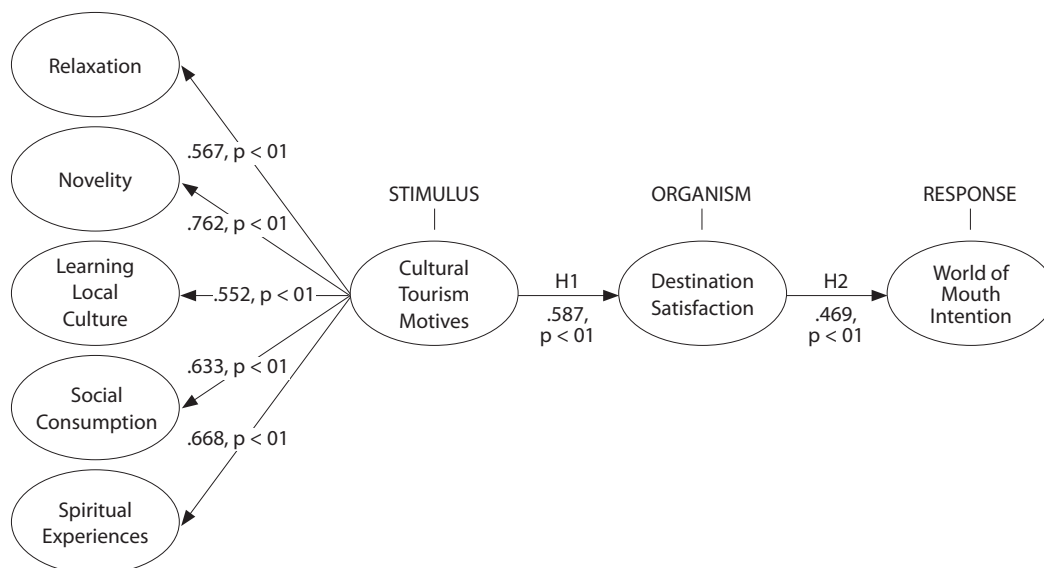
Table 4
Standardized path coefficients and hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Estimates	Result
H1: Cultural tourism motives => Destination satisfaction	0.587 (0.10)*	H1 Supported
H2: Destination satisfaction => WOM intention	0.469 (0.05)*	H2 Supported

Note. N = 378. Values in the parentheses shows standard error.

* p < 0.01.

Figure 2
SEM path coefficients



4. Discussion

The study aimed to understand the motives influencing travellers toward cultural tourism that influence travellers' destination selection and loyalty. Past studies that investigated cultural tourism from perceived service quality (Wantara, 2016; Chen & Rahman, 2018; Yoon & Uysal, 2005), religious and nonreligious motivation (Drule et al., 2012) perspectives, push and pull motivations for domestic tourism (Bayih & Singh, 2020), culinary tourism (Agyeiwaah et al., 2019), creative tourism (Yoon & Uysal, 2005) etc. The present

study is unique as it studies cultural tourism motives from individual international tourists' perspectives and its impact on destination satisfaction and WOM intention.

Our study goes in line with the findings of Blom et al. (2016), Iversen et al. (2016), and Kay (2009) in confirming learning about local culture, novelty, and spiritual experiences as motives behind engaging cultural tourism. This study identifies two more motives for engaging in cultural tourism: relaxation and social consumption from an Indian perspective, considering India is known for its rich spiritual heritage and heterogeneous cultures and sub-cultures (Velassery, 2021). Secondly, the study shows that novelty followed by spiritual experience is the dominant motive for visitors to select a cultural tourist place ($\beta = 0.762$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.668$, $p < 0.001$), and supports the findings of prior studies (Kay, 2009; Suhartanto et al., 2020).

The need for novelty is driven by the need to break the continuous state of uniformity in life through conscious efforts (Otoo & Kim, 2018). In behavioural psychology, there are two forms of novelty: absolute and relative newness. Absolute novelty means stimuli that have not been experienced, while relative news has familiar characteristics not previously found in a combination or arrangement (Barto et al., 2013). Novelty can increase motivation when a person undergoes new activities and attracts and redirects visitors' attention to new places. For a foreign tourist, Indian geography, apparel, cuisine, culture, customs, and folklore offer absolute novelty as they have no similarity with the Western World (Chaudhary, 2000). This is the primary reason for the influx of foreign tourists to the Indian landscape: to escape the pattern and experience novelty.

Indian mythology, folklore, and philosophy have always emphasized spiritual upliftment as a true accomplishment in contrast to material well-being. Religions that surfaced in the Indian subcontinent over the centuries, beginning from Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Jainism, have provoked similar value propositions for contentment and salvation of one's life. Experiencing such heritage sites and absorbing this ideology by participating in related activities such as visiting temples (and other places of religious/spiritual significance), participating in rituals, experiencing the associated folklore through the viewing of performing arts, literature and undertaking religious/spiritual pilgrimage might have perspective altering spiritual experiences (Willson et al., 2013). Our study affirms that seeking spiritual knowledge is the second most important motive for a visit to India.

Using the S-O-R theory, this study posits that motives affect satisfaction, leading to loyalty. Based on our model, it can be concluded that a tourist destination that intends to build loyalty amongst its tourist base should orchestrate the tourist experience very closely to the tourist's motives for the visit. This finding aligns with previous research in the tourism sector (Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Agyeiwaah et al., 2019). This alignment between experiential stimuli and foreign tourist motivations enhances satisfaction and fosters loyalty-induced behaviours (Bayih & Singh, 2020). A satisfied tourist is more likely to revisit the destination, seeking to continue the positive and tailored experiences that initially captured their interest.

Additionally, the satisfaction derived from these aligned experiences catalyzes positive word-of-mouth promotion, as tourists are inclined to share their gratifying experiences with others, contributing to the destination's positive reputation (Agyeiwaah et al., 2019). Our study reinforces the Suhartanto et al. (2020) position that satisfaction is a critical mediator between tourist motives and loyalty-induced behaviours. In this regard, satisfaction can act as the bridge that transforms the positive stimuli derived from aligned motives into observable tourist behaviours, such as revisiting the destination and engaging in positive word-of-mouth promotion.

5. Conclusion and managerial implications

Our research found that motives, namely learning local culture, spiritual experience, novelty, social consumption, and relaxation, are the five major instrumental drivers amongst foreign tourists who visit India

for cultural tourism. Our study also suggests that tourist loyalty towards a destination is reflected in WOM intentions. Our study also links tourist motives with WOM intention using SOR theory. This study was convened from the lens of foreign tourists visiting India to experience various facets of cultural tourism. In this study, we have not distinguished foreign tourists from different geographical locations.

This study confirms all five motives in determining foreign tourist satisfaction; however, the top two motives influencing foreign tourists to show interest in traditional Indian culture are novelty and spirituality associated with Indian destinations. Hence, tourism planners must provide avenues for greater engagement with geographical and cultural artefacts unique to the Indian subcontinent. Study findings also suggest that destination satisfaction is pivotal in spreading positive word of mouth to attract more tourists. Therefore, marketers need to maintain a positive image of the destination by maintaining aesthetic appeal, ensuring easy transport to the destination, and ensuring basic facilities such as residential, hygiene, and sanitation services, keeping in mind the requirements of foreign tourists (Harchandani & Shome, 2021). To ensure memorable tourism experiences for foreign tourists, local administrators must create thematic recreation/entertainment options that underscore the local flavour. More information should be provided to foreign tourists about social activities that enable them to involve themselves with the locals to fully explore the motive of social consumption behind their visit to India. Such information could be about prominent local fairs (known as Melas), local theatres, and puskarams (worshipping of rivers during specific days in the year), which generally attract people from different parts of the country. WOM intention plays a pivotal role in the repetitive visit of a favourite tourist destination; hence, local administrators, tourist operators, and local government must focus on the unique requirements of foreign tourists regarding their food, stay, and security to ensure positive WOM from foreign tourists.

Destination management should aim to attain maximum happiness by providing excellent services, satisfying auxiliary services, offering engaging activities, and maintaining the uniqueness of heritages, as overall satisfaction is one of the most significant indicators of tourists' intention to return (Suhartanto et al., 2020). The current research model indicates that cultural tourism should be treated as a separate economic sector with distinctive features. Therefore, it is recommended that destination managers create differential policies and strategies for cultural tourist development to foster growth and increase this industry's overall economic impact (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). This study could establish linkages between tourist motives, satisfaction, and revisiting intentions and behaviour, such as spreading positive word of mouth. Our study can be a starting point for destination managers to orchestrate how various push and pull incentive variables could affect international tourists' demand, satisfaction, and post-visit behaviour while engaging in cultural tourism in India (Bayih & Singh, 2020). In developing foreign tourism policies, strategies, and decision-making processes, it is crucial to consider the causal relationship between motives, satisfaction, and visitor behavioural intentions. Our study reaffirms the need to devise strategies for all cultural tourism initiatives closely related to foreign tourists' cultural tourism motives for a more significant impact (Agyeiwaah et al., 2019).

7. Research limitations and future research directions

This study used cross-sectional data from 423 randomly picked foreign visitors from four places over a year to investigate the behavioural model of international tourists. Future researchers can expand this behavioural model by adding more predictors, such as destination image, perceived quality, place attachment, and perceived worth, to comprehend foreign tourists' behavioural intentions fully. Future research can study the moderating role of foreign tourists' geographical origin in determining satisfaction and WOM intentions. Future research can also explore each motive in a qualitative–thematic manner for thick descriptions using in-depth interviews to generate more managerial insights into destination planning and policy making.

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