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## **A comparative study on the motivational factors influencing non-resident Indian visitors to Char Dham Hindu pilgrimage sites in India**

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### **Abstract**

The research analyzed differences between the religious motives of Non-Resident Indian (NRI) visitors who frequently visit holy sites in India where millions of devotees gather annually. The analysis of 26 motivational items through factor analysis generated five essential dimensions. The research demonstrated identical motivational aspects among NRIs from four-nation groups yet showed substantial variances between NRI and native Indian tourists. The findings revealed that the two groups shared strong interests in cultural engagement as well as spiritual appeal with innovation preference but gave less priority to group social bonding and family bonding. As a result, Motivational differences between traveler segments require marketing strategies that address specific needs to target visitors of religious tourism effectively.

**Keywords:** Religious tourism, NRI visitors, motivational determinants, religious centers in India

### **Introduction**

India has sustained its reputation through time as an exceptionally religious land because faith functions deeply within daily operations and tradition (Acharya, 1982) <sup>[1]</sup>. The practices of most Indians are shaped by religion because religion affects everything including their basic routines along with their education system and political decisions (Bose, 1967) <sup>[7]</sup>. Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism are the seven main faiths practiced in India, a secular state that operates according to this principle. More than 80% of India's population follows Hinduism, making it the largest religion in the country (Ministry of Culture, 2007) <sup>[40]</sup>. The world's largest Muslim settlement exists in India behind Indonesia since Muslims are the second-largest religious group in the nation. The various religious traditions joined collectively to develop rituals celebrating festivals through dance and music and shared community meals according to Kaur (1985) <sup>[28]</sup>. According to Hindu tradition *teertha yatra* started as *teer* meaning sacred places located at river fords (Bhardwaj, 1989; Morinis, 1984; Singh & Das, 1991) <sup>[5, 57]</sup>. Religious travel mandates people to make visits to sanctified sites that require ritual veneration (Sagar Singh, 2002) <sup>[58]</sup>. Hindu religious teachings state that spiritual salvation and collectable religious merits come from traveling towards holy locations. The belief teaches travelers about genuine travel spirit which requires them to maintain respect for nature along with humanity (Sagar Singh, 2002, p. 27) <sup>[58]</sup>. The majority of Indian travelers who identify as Hindu prioritize religious devotion but simultaneously undertake pilgrimages to secure prosperity along with fertility and personal well-being in addition to recreational purposes (Jay, 1991) <sup>[25]</sup>. It is this orientation, among other factors, Since the 1960s, and particularly in the past 20 years, religious tourism in India has grown significantly due to this focus and other causes (Kiran, 2006; Shalini Singh, 2005) <sup>[32, 59]</sup>. Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in October 2022 reached 8,20,294 suggesting a modest 1.4% decrease from both previous October's statistics of 8,32,233 and a more total decline of 13.2% from October 2019's 9,45,017. The total Foreign Tourist Arrivals during January to October 2021 amounted to 76,80,628 with a 2.8% increase from 74,70,383 observed in the same period of 2022. Tourist arrivals during the current period fall short of 2019's numbers (86,11,517) with a 10.8% drop observed. The data shows continuing changes in international travel statistics which result from diverse worldwide and regional influences. In 2005, 3.92 million tourists (13.2% increases over the previous year) visited India, constituting 1.10 million nonresident Indians (NRIs; Ministry of Tourism, 2006) <sup>[41]</sup>.

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There were 5.51 million NRI arrivals in India during 2017, 6.98 million in 2019, and 5.48 million in 2021. Religious tourism was the main motive of more than 70% of NRIs. However, the tourism market consisting of Non-Resident Indians remains underdeveloped throughout India. The full potential of NRI tourism remains untapped because policymakers along with academics need to employ strategic methods. The emerging definition of religious tourism remains focused on tourism growth while the service sector economic importance sustains its central role as an industry. Because of its capacity to support sustainable development together with building beneficial guest-host bonds the Indian government recognizes religious tourism as a promising alternative tourism sector. Understanding why tourists choose India as their religious destination will allow tourism planners and marketers to create successful promotion strategies for making India a prime religious tourist destination. This research set out to answer the question, "What draws Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) to visit India's sacred religious sites?" by looking into the reasons behind the annual pilgrimages of millions of devotees and coming up with plans to promote India as a top destination for religious tourism. There are four parts to the remainder of this piece. The following section provides a literature overview on religious tourism and the variables that drive it. The research method will be presented followed by the analysis of study findings which leads to outcome demonstration. The conclusion along with resulting implications appears at the end of this article.

## Literature Review

The current literature evaluation is structured as follows: first, religious tourism; and second, the factors that motivate religious tourists.

## Religious Tourism

The literature on tourist research often brings up the subject of religion in connection to religion, however it is related with a range of themes overall. Talks on the ties between faith and tourism show how places of worship impact the security, safety, and availability of services in a nation. Din (1989)<sup>[16]</sup> discovered that in some Muslim nations, the service provided to the guest may be impacted by the host and guest's different religious beliefs. Brunet Bauer, De Lacy, and T. Shering cite religious festivals, local customs, and religious traditions as key factors that might attract visitors to Bhutan (2001)<sup>[8]</sup>. There is sufficient evidence that religion is a motivating factor for tourism-related activities, to be demonstrated by the works of Constable (1976)<sup>[13]</sup>, Smith (1992)<sup>[60]</sup>, Jackson and Hudman (1995)<sup>[23]</sup>, Mansfeld (1995)<sup>[35]</sup>, Fleischer (2000)<sup>[18]</sup>, and Mattila, Apostolopoulos, Sonmez, Yu, and Sasidharan (2001)<sup>[37]</sup>. Srisang (1985)<sup>[61]</sup> proposed that tourism could be considered a type of religious social behaviour even when the tourists are not seeking their God but rather a particular truth. Fleischer and Pizam (2002)<sup>[19]</sup> highlighted the impact of a tourist's religious beliefs as a potential limit for the growth of tourism. Numerous academics have shown that certain religious sites are popular tourist destinations for a variety of reasons, including their historical significance, architecture, and aesthetic appeal (Cohen, 1998; Jackson & Hudman, 1995; Joseph & Kavoori, 2001; Smith, 1992)<sup>[12, 23, 26, 60]</sup>. Numerous academics have examined the theoretical link between religion and tourism as a social phenomenon

(Cohen, 1992a, 1992b; MacCannell, 1973)<sup>[11, 34]</sup>. Additionally, the literature showed that the earliest type of tourism was religious travel (Favreau-Lilie, 1995; Rinschede, 1992; Schiller, 1992; Shoval & Cohen-Hattab, 2001; Smith, 1992)<sup>[17, 52, 53, 56, 60]</sup>.

The core concept of religion arises across many areas of tourism research yet remains mostly centered on religious elements. Research on religious tourism relationships provides definitive information about the impact of holy places on national security together with law enforcement while determining service provisioning. Din (1989)<sup>[16]</sup> found that the hospitality level in particular Muslim nations could be altered based on religious belief differences between guests and hosts. Brunet Bauer, De Lacy, and T. Shering state that the cultural traditions of Bhutan, the local religious aspects, and the traditional religious celebrations are the main draws for tourists to the country (2001). The motivation power of religion for tourism activities is proven through the research by Constable (1976)<sup>[13]</sup>, Smith (1992)<sup>[60]</sup>, Jackson and Hudman (1995)<sup>[23]</sup>, Mansfeld (1995)<sup>[35]</sup>, Fleischer (2000)<sup>[18]</sup>, and Mattila, Apostolopoulos, Sonmez, Yu, and Sasidharan (2001)<sup>[37]</sup>. Srisang (1985)<sup>[61]</sup> demonstrated that tourism qualifies as a form of religious behavior independent of tourists seeking divine revelation because they look for specific truthful sources. Tourism expansion faces limitations because of tourists' religious beliefs according to Fleischer and Pizam (2002)<sup>[19]</sup>. Multiple scholars demonstrate that religious sites attract large numbers of tourists due to their historical value in combination with their architectural magnificence and their visual attractiveness (Cohen, 1998; Jackson & Hudman, 1995; Joseph & Kavoori, 2001; Smith, 1992)<sup>[12, 23, 26, 60]</sup>. Various scholars have evaluated the theoretical basis connecting religion to tourism as a social phenomenon through their work (Cohen, 1992a, 1992b; MacCannell, 1973)<sup>[11, 34]</sup>. The literature established religious travel as the first type of tourism based on the research of Favreau-Lilie (1995)<sup>[17]</sup>, Rinschede (1992)<sup>[52]</sup>, Schiller (1992)<sup>[53]</sup>, Shoval & Cohen-Hattab (2001)<sup>[56]</sup>, as well as Smith (1992)<sup>[60]</sup>.

## Motivations for Religious Tourism

Maslow (1970)<sup>[36]</sup> together with Pearce (1993)<sup>[47]</sup> created a five-level hierarchy that explains how people choose different travel motives including relaxation, stimulation, relationships, self-esteem and personal growth and fulfillment. Just like careers human beings enter life at various starting points which can change their positions either higher or lower throughout their lives. The travel motives exist on two dimensions as per Pearce who highlighted that personal choices and external influences both direct travel motives and travelers pursue diverse types of fulfillment through their journeys. According to Burns and Holden (1995)<sup>[9]</sup> motivation grows from actual or artificial requirements that drive someone to decide their travel destinations. According to Parrinello (2002)<sup>[46]</sup> the first step that initiates every travel-related decision constitutes motivation. According to Plog (1974)<sup>[48]</sup> tourists fall into two distinct categories on a motivational model ranging from psychometric to allocentric tourists. Law-abiding adventurers make up the category of allocentric travelers since they choose secluded untouched locations for their journeys. Dann (1977)<sup>[15]</sup> established two main motivational blocks in travel behavior known as push and pull factors with push being social-psychological reasons

that drive people to travel and pull being external forces that guide their destination choices. Anomie (the need to escape) combined with ego-enhancement stood as fundamental reasons why people travel according to his theoretical model. Crompton (1979) <sup>[14]</sup> built upon Dann's model to identify nine travel motivations that consisted of escaping from dull surroundings, exploring oneself, seeking relaxation, attaining status, experiencing regression, developing family bonds, meeting new people and enjoying novelty and learning. The seven initial factors in his list functioned as push elements whereas the remaining two items operated as pull elements. Crompton chose to ignore the authenticity of travel destinations when describing his research model. Mayo and Jarvis (1981) <sup>[38]</sup> classified travel motivations into four categories: physical (rest and relaxation), cultural (desire for knowledge), interpersonal (meeting new people), and status-driven (recognition and prestige). Beach and Ragheb (1983) <sup>[3]</sup> created the Leisure Motivation Scale to reduce motivators into intellectual, social, competence-mastery and stimulus-avoidance categories. Modern motivational research explores interconnected models that connect personal characteristics with environmental influences (Graumann, 1981; Schmalt, 1996) <sup>[21, 54]</sup>. Very few research studies now analyze the relationship between lifestyle fulfillment and perceived quality of life through travel behaviors (Kernan & Unger, 1987). According to Kernan and Domzal (2001) <sup>[29]</sup> people display their personal identity characteristics through their leisure participation. According to Swarbrooke and Horner (2003) the basis of travel motivations for individuals stems from their personality along with their lifestyle combinations and experiential history and perceptions and their current life stage. The authors found that a combination of various elements simultaneously determines the travel decisions made by tourists. Bello and Etzel (1985) <sup>[4]</sup> explained how those who experience routine monotony choose adventurous stimulation but high-stress individuals go for relaxing familiar activities. According to Wang (2000) <sup>[66]</sup> people use holidays to escape the demanding structure of modern life as well as the daily routines and time constraints. Bogarin, Crowther and Marr (2003) <sup>[6]</sup> determined nine driving elements that include cultural value and knowledge alongside social interaction and relaxation as well as nine attracting elements consisting of safety and historical sites and budget-friendly features. According to the researcher's Saudi tourists placed the strongest value on cultural and religious attractions. Various elements motivate heritage tourism participants according to research conducted by Ashworth (2001) <sup>[2]</sup>. Studies about heritage site visitation purposes follow either descriptive patterns that explain visitor intentions or site-based attribute analyses (Timothy 1997) <sup>[63]</sup>. According to Kerstetter, Confer and Graefe (2001) <sup>[31]</sup> visitors pursue heritage sites because they seek educational learning experiences and cultural discoveries and wish to experience historical importance. The motives of heritage site visitors according to Moscardo (1996) <sup>[43]</sup> fall into educational, entertainment and social motivations. Jansen-Verbeke and Rekom (1996) <sup>[24]</sup> performed a behavioral research study at the Rotterdam Museum Park to determine visitor learning as the main driving factor. The main visitor motives consisted of relaxation together with socializing and creativity. Research by Jansen & Rekom (1996) <sup>[24]</sup> along with Josiam *et al.*

(2004) <sup>[27]</sup> and Murray & Graham (1997) <sup>[44]</sup> shows that destinations influence how people motivate their travel. Situational factors also influence motivations. Poria, Butler and Airey (2003) <sup>[49]</sup> discovered that heritage travel intentions of visitors changed before and after their visit to the destination. Lowenthal (1985) <sup>[33]</sup> explained that sites of battlefield commemorate visitors at first but develop into regular tourist destinations as time progresses. Murray and Graham (1997) <sup>[44]</sup> documented that the cultural interpretations of heritage sites between religious and secular affect the quantity of visitors they receive. According to Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge (2000) <sup>[20]</sup> heritage managers must first grasp visitor meanings to navigate their tourism destinations successfully. Heritage artifacts that individuals can connect personally influence their potential to buy antique objects according to Michael's (2002) <sup>[39]</sup> analysis. According to Urieli, Israeli and Reichel (2002) <sup>[65]</sup> people who live near heritage sites such as Nazareth show different attitudes toward tourist development based on how they view those sites. According to Greg and Carlos (2007) <sup>[22]</sup> religious sites available as tourist attractions create measurable effects on visitor satisfaction while demonstrating that spiritual motives drive people to visit these sites. Research findings show motivation dimensions remain constant yet their significance depends on the specific destination together with its cultural backdrop. Family unity, curiosity about other cultures, fresh experiences, friendship, and religious fervour are some of the common motivating elements that have been documented in various research. However, significant variations in these motivations were observed across different destinations. Additionally, motivational factors differed notably based on certain demographic variables. Ultimately, domestic visitors exhibited statistically significant differences from non-residents, particularly in terms of socialization and cultural immersion. This study tests three hypotheses on the religious reasons why non-resident Indians attend Indian religious centres, taking into account demographic variations in this regard.

**H1:** Tourists' motivational factors and the religious sites they visit do not significantly differ from one another.

**H2:** The motivational factors vary significantly based on certain demographic variables.

**H3:** "There is no substantial variation in motivational determinants between domestic and NRI visitors."

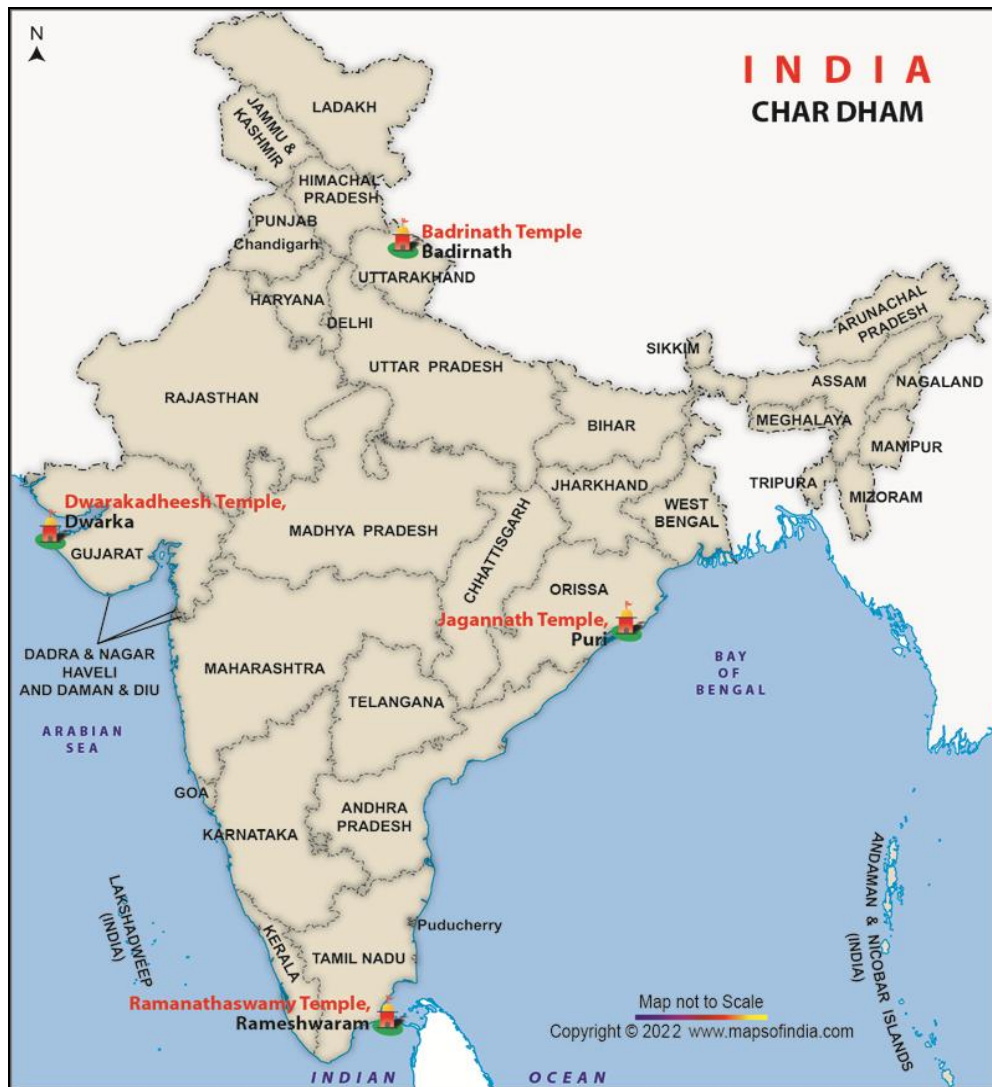
### Research Methodology

Therefore, these elements were determined to be the most suitable for assessing the reasons why non-resident Indians visit holy religious sites in India.

### Study Area

Sites of worship in India were the subjects of the research because of their prominence as global religious tourism attractions. The research area char dham was chosen to include the following holy sites: See Figure 1 for the study area map, which includes Kedarnath Dwarka, Badrinath, and Rameshwaram. The study was conducted from April to September 2021 using a convenience sample approach and, in certain locations, research assistants.





### The sample Size

In all, 1,582 surveys were filled out by locals and non-resident aliens (NRIs) in the research region; 772 NRIs and 728 domestic visitors made up the total. On the other hand, 628 domestic replies and 600 from non-resident Indian tourists were deemed useful upon additional inspection. For the sake of statistical integrity, the sample was equalised using just 600 replies, which were randomly picked among domestic visitors.

### Research Instrument

Using a literature review approach, this research compared the motivations of Indian citizens and non-resident Indians who visited religious centres in India. In order to determine what may serve as a survey instrument and what reasons could motivate people to travel for religious purposes, previous studies were examined.

Based on previous research, a structured questionnaire was created with questions on the following: respondents' demographic profile (age, gender, education level, and marital status); factors representing motivating drivers for religious visits; and so on. The variables that were thought to motivate people to attend places of worship were assessed using Likert-type scaled statements that dealt with certain motivating aspects. Thus, this study was based on the scale and methodology developed by various authors in the review of literature (Bogarín, Crowther, & Marr, 2003; Poria *et al.*, 2003; Prentice *et al.*, 1997; Wang, 2000)) [6, 49,

50, 66]. There were 38 incentive components that surfaced at first, but only 26 were deemed important following the poll. "Strongly agree" is represented by 1, "agree" by 2, "neither agree nor disagree" by 3, "disagree" by 4, and "strongly disagree" by 5 on a Likert-type scale. We wanted people to rate how much they agreed with these claims based on how they felt about them.

### Methods of Analysis

The factors under consideration in this research were measured using several scales, drawing on the current literature. An oblique rotation was used in the main component factor approach to construct the underlying factor of the 26 original items measuring religious motivation. We utilised the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sample adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity to assess whether factor analysis was adequate. A factor was considered kept in this analysis if its eigenvalue was more than 1.0 and its factor loadings were more than 0.4. If we wanted to know how reliable each scale was, we could calculate a reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) for each component. For the purposes of this analysis, any factor with a reliability coefficient greater than 0.6 was valid. We used the t-tests to disprove the notion that there were significantly distinct reasons driving domestic and non-resident alien visitation. Also, to look for significant differences among French, British, American, and Canadian tourists, we used an ANOVA test.

## Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the breakdown of the study's sample respondents according to the demographic variables. With 65% of male visitors being from inside the country and 68% being from outside the country, it is clear that there were more men than women who filled out the survey. The age range of 30-40 was the most common for both groups. The majority of answers fall within the 30-40 age bracket, which includes 43% local visitors and 42% non-resident Indian tourists. Compared to domestic tourists, most non-resident

Indians had some college under their belts, whereas the bulk of domestic visitors had bachelor's degrees or greater. Out of the total number of respondents, 45% are non-resident Indians and 40% are domestics with a bachelor's degree or above. The majority of responders had positions within the government. Religious tourism destinations had longer stays from non-resident Indians (NRIs) than from domestic tourists (less than 10 nights vs. 20 nights). Married people made up the majority of responses in both categories.

**Table 1:** Demographic Profile of Respondents (N= 600)

Demographic Characteristics	Domestic Visitor (N=600) %	NRI Visitor (N=600) %
<b>Age</b>		
20-30	10	8
30-40	43	42
40-50	25	37
50 above	22	13
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	65	68
Female	35	32
<b>Occupation</b>		
Service	45	53
Professional	20	17
Self-employed	15	16
Students	12	9
Housewives	8	5
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	47	40
Married	53	60
<b>Education</b>		
High school or less	30	45
College	40	25
University	30	30
Length of stay (nights)	40	20
Less than 10	37	28
10-20	23	52
Above 20		

Note - NRI=Non-resident Indian

All the information you need to know about the five factors—innovation, social bonding, spiritual appeal, family connection, and cultural engagement—is in Table 2. The entire variance, which is higher than the usually recognised limit of 59.22%, was explained by all variables ranging from 26.66 to 5.70%. All factors exhibit satisfactory level of construct reliability as suggested by Nunnally (1978) <sup>[45]</sup>, All items pass the eigenvalue (more than 1.00), the cut-off points (factor loading not less than 0.34). All five components have relatively high Cronbach alphas (0.82-0.51). Factors that have been defined or identified have a fair greater correlation with their individual items if Cronbach's alpha factor loadings are high.

### As shown in Table 2

Factor 1, Cultural engagement, contains four religious motivation items, Physically and emotionally immerse yourself in the culture of the area, Discover the true character of a location by getting out and about, Take part in and appreciate artistic and craft-related activities, Participate in and enjoy traditional rituals and customs. The items Explore and experience the genuine essence of a place with highest loading (.82). This exemplifies the deep cultural roots of religious tourism. The reason for this is that travelers, whether they were from the country or not, really

immersed themselves in the local culture. They found great satisfaction in participating in the rituals and traditions seen at the many holy sites. The second factor, spiritual appeal, consists of eight elements: a well-known tourist spot; learning about the site's history; finding new and interesting things to do; appreciating the site's unique atmosphere; becoming emotionally attached to the site; understanding the site's symbolic and religious significance; and finally, recognising the site's unique atmosphere. There seems to be a close connection between religious tourism and this. The substantial variation explained in this component relative to others reflects the fact that it is fundamental to religious tourism. Also, when looking at eigenvalue (8.28) and variance explained (26.66%), this component is much up there with the best of them. Having placed this inspirational item at the top of their list, the majority of NRI tourists report feeling emotionally invested in religious sites. The item with the highest loading is the world-famous tourist site (.77). Factor 3, Social bonding, consists of four religious motivational items, connecting and engaging with individuals who share similar interests and values, establishing lasting friendships and meaningful relationships, expanding understanding of diverse cultures and social dynamics, alleviating monotony and seeking stimulation. It stresses the need of establishing meaningful

relationships with others who share one's beliefs and interests, and of maintaining friendships based on shared religious and philosophical principles. The fourth component, innovation, consists of five religiously motivated items: seeking out novel experiences, offering benefits, and pursuing them, that fulfil my personal desires, deliver thrills and excitement, explore and embrace adventure look for enjoyable and entertaining activities. The pursuit of novel and exciting experiences, as well as the satisfaction of individual needs, are reflected in it. Pursue novel and exciting experiences came out on top among all the motivating elements with a loading value of 0.65, while explore and embrace adventure came out on the bottom. This data suggests that of all things, seeking for novel and

exciting experiences was the top goal for NRI tourists. The fifth factor, "Family Bonding," has five religiously motivated items: enhance family ties and connections, teach my family about our religious traditions, spend more time as a unit, feel pride while visiting the place, and want to worship there. As a result of learning about religious culture and spending more time with family, religious tourists report stronger family relationships and bonds, which is consistent with the item with the highest factor loading values. They also get a sense of pride from visiting sacred sites because of this. The findings indicate that Tourists' motivational factors and the religious sites they visit do not significantly differ from one another. The results confirm H1.

**Table 2:** Factor analysis of Motivations for religious place in India

Motivational Factors and Items	Factor Loading	Eigen value	% Variance Explained	Cumulative %	Cronbach's Alpha
1. Cultural engagement		2.85	8.20	30.00	0.82
Immerse yourself in the local culture on a deep emotional and physical level.	0.81				
Explore and experience the genuine essence of a place.	0.82				
Take part in and appreciate artistic and craft-related activities.	0.80				
Participate in and enjoy traditional rituals and customs.	0.73				
2. Spiritual appeal		8.28	26.66	26.80	0.73
Renowned tourist destination.	0.67				
Gain knowledge about its historical significance.	0.61				
Discover new and unique experiences.	0.49				
Appreciate the distinctive ambiance.	0.48				
Establish a personal connection to the location.	0.45				
Recognize the site's symbolic importance.	0.43				
Acknowledge the site's religious significance.	0.42				
Renowned tourist destination.	0.41				
3. Social bonding		2.37	8.20	36.25	0.52
Connecting and engaging with individuals who share similar interests and values.	0.47				
Establishing lasting friendships and meaningful relationships.	0.41				
Expanding understanding of diverse cultures and social dynamics.	0.35				
Alleviating monotony and seeking stimulation.	0.32				
4. Innovation		2.20	7.30	30.12	0.70
Pursue new and unique experiences	0.65				
Provide advantages that fulfill my personal desires	0.64				
Deliver thrills and excitement	0.61				
Explore and embrace adventure	0.49				
Look for enjoyable and entertaining activities	0.50				
5. Family bonding		1.99	5.70	41.35	0.66
Strengthen family bonds and connections	0.71				
Educate my family about religious traditions	0.66				
Dedicate more time to family togetherness	0.41				
Visiting the site evoked a sense of pride	0.36				
Felt a desire to offer prayers there	0.34				
Total Variance Explained			59.33%		

The mean ratings of domestic and NRI visitors vary, as seen in Table 3. There are statistically significant differences between domestic and NRI visitors with regard to four motivating factors: innovation, social bonding, family bonding, and cultural participation, according to T-tests. The spiritual appeal, however, deemed both guests to be important. Visitors from outside the country had a somewhat lower mean score than those from inside the country. The mean score was greater for domestic visitors compared to non-resident Indian tourists, nevertheless. It is clear that domestic tourists are more likely to visit Indian religious sites than non-resident Indian tourists. When comparing the two scenarios, the spiritual appeal incentive seemed to have the highest mean ratings, while the social bonding motivation came in second. Also, although social

and familial bonds were rated low, religious motivating aspects including spiritual attractiveness, cultural involvement, and innovation were rated high by both visits. Domestic and NRI visitors' motivating factors do not differ much, according to the results. Thus, we reject hypothesis H3.

The mean ratings of domestic and NRI visitors vary, as seen in Table 3. According to the results of the T-tests, there were four aspects of motivation that were significantly different between the two groups: Cultural engagement, Social bonding, Family bonding, and Innovation. However, both domestic and NRI visitors showed similar significance for Spiritual appeal. The mean scores for domestic visitors were generally higher than those for NRI visitors. This is expected, as domestic visitors are more likely to be drawn to

Indian religious sites compared to NRI visitors. Among all motivational factors, Spiritual appeal had the highest mean scores for both groups, followed by Social bonding. Additionally, both domestic and NRI visitors assigned higher ratings to religious motivational factors such as

Spiritual appeal, Cultural engagement, and Innovation, while giving lower ratings to Social bonding and Family bonding. The findings suggest that there is no significant variation in motivational determinants between domestic and NRI visitors. As a result, hypothesis H3 is rejected.

**Table 3:** Differences in Religious Motivation between Domestic and NRI Visitors

Motivational Factors	Domestic (N=600)	NRIs (N = 600)	t-Value
Cultural engagement	3.35	3.25	1.45
Spiritual appeal	3.90	3.65	8.57b
Social bonding	3.10	3.05	1.03
Innovation	3.25	3.00	1.10
Family bonding	2.50	2.35	1.25

**Note:** NRI=Non-resident Indian.

\*Based on mean value. b Significant at the.01 level."

The religious motivations of non-resident Indian (NRI) tourists from the United Arab Emirates, the United States, Canada, and Malaysia vary, as seen in Table 4. We have selected these top four countries where most of the Indian have migrated (Source: official government source counting "overseas Indians" as of May 2022, accessed via Insider Monkey). All of the religious motivating factors were found to be substantially different among the non-resident Indian tourists from four different countries, with a significance level of.01. those from the United States have a somewhat greater value than those from other countries. While there were notable variances among NRIs from Malaysia and Canada, the data showed no significant differences across US and UAE nationals visiting Indian holy sites. In terms of

cultural engagement, spiritual appeal, and social bonding, there were no significant variations between NRI visits from the US and Canada. However, when it came to innovation and family connection, there were substantial variances. When comparing American and Malaysian tourists, we found no significant differences in cultural involvement, spiritual appeal, or innovation; however, we did find substantial variations in social bonding and family bonding. Last but not least, the data show that the relationship between family connectedness and religious motivation is not very important in either Malaysia or Canada. Therefore, there were substantial differences in motivating factors based on a few demographic characteristics (H2 verifies).

**Table 4:** Variations in Religious Motivation across Four Countries

Motivational Factors	UAE	US	Malaysia	Canada	f-Value	Sig. (p > F)
Cultural engagement	4.25	4.45	3.52	3.22	18.13	0.000b
Spiritual appeal	3.82	3.89	3.09	3.35	10.08	0.000b
social bonding	3.66	3.70	2.10	3.51	24.58	0.000b
Innovation	3.49	3.50	3.25	2.85	18.67	0.000b
Family bonding	3.15	3.56	2.25	2.32	9.17	0.000b

""\* Based on mean value. b significant at the.01 level."

## Conclusion and Implications

This research set out to create plans to promote India as a top destination for religious tourists by investigating the reasons why non-resident Indians (NRIs) go to India to visit the country's many sacred places, which attract millions of worshippers annually. The five underlying characteristics emerged from the component analysis of 26 motivator items used in the comparative study: cultural involvement, social bonding, family bonding, innovation, and spiritual appeal. It suggests that the questions and scale used to evaluate motivation in one nation may also work in another. While creating a measurement scale, it is important to take into account certain aspects of the destination.

The findings demonstrate that there was a notable disparity in the motives of domestic and NRI visitors, suggesting a level of heterogeneity. Domestic tourists, according to the mean score, are more likely to be highly motivated than non-resident Indian visitors. In addition, analysis of variance shows that various groups of visitors from the four nations had considerably diverse motives. All of the religious motivating factors were found to be substantially different among the non-resident Indian tourists from four different countries, with a significance level of.01. those from the United States have a somewhat greater value than those

from other countries. While there were notable variances among NRIs from Malaysia and Canada, the data showed no significant differences across US and UAE nationals visiting Indian holy sites. In terms of cultural engagement, spiritual appeal, and social bonding, there were no significant variations between NRI visits from the US and Canada. However, when it came to innovation and family connection, there were substantial variances. When comparing American and Malaysian tourists, we found no significant differences in cultural involvement, spiritual appeal, or innovation; however, we did find substantial variations in social bonding and family bonding. Last but not least, the data show that the relationship between family connectedness and religious motivation is not very important in either Malaysia or Canada.

Research into the reasons that motivate people to engage in religious tourism is necessary in light of the increasing popularity of this activity in the nation. The objective is to enhance these travel offers in the business by gaining a deeper knowledge of the reasons that motivate religious tourism and how it impacts the growth and development of the tourism sector.

According to the study's results, using motivation analysis to separate target audiences and discover various



requirements and desires is crucial when developing religious trip packages for NRI tourists. For their part, destination service providers should do two things: (1) study what drives visitors, and (2) go outside the box to create products and services that will appeal to them. Furthermore, tour operators may learn more about their customers' motivations for purchasing a product or service via motivation-based segmentation. This allows them to tailor their marketing campaigns to each category and better satisfy their customers' needs. Therefore, the research is an effort to fill a small gap in the existing empirical literature on religious tourism.

The research has two primary drawbacks. The first one is on how people feel about religious tourism as a motivating factor. As a result, there may have been upward or downward reporting of measurements due to respondent bias. The second one is about the sample. It is possible that the sample may not accurately reflect all religious tourism attractions in India as it only includes a subset of these locations. This study suggests directions for further research while taking the study's shortcomings into account. The topic of cultural distinctions across the four nations needs more investigation.

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