



## ASSESSING GLOBAL PERCEPTIONS OF INDIA: POLICY IMPLICATIONS DRAWN FROM FOREIGN TOURISM NARRATIVES

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### ABSTRACT

This study scrutinizes India's growing appeal as a tourist destination, accentuated by government initiatives and innovative tourism policies like the e-visa program, Incredible India Campaign 2.0 and digital advancements in the travel sector. With the diminishing impact of COVID-19, there is a noticeable surge in various forms of tourism – inbound, outbound and domestic. The primary focus is to understand the driving factors behind the choice of India as a destination for inbound tourists. This research delves into these motivations, providing a global perspective on India's attractiveness. A mixed-method approach was employed, utilizing convenience sampling for data collection. The quantitative analysis was based on a survey, informed by a literature review, comprising 390 respondents from 10 diverse Indian destinations. Additionally, 25 qualitative interviews were conducted, aiming to enrich and triangulate the quantitative findings. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) revealed five predominant motivations among inbound tourists: culinary interests, spiritual pursuits, budget-consciousness, cultural curiosity and natural allure. These findings were substantiated through thematic analysis. The outcomes have significant practical ramifications for destination managers and tourism policy developers in India. By understanding these key motivators, they can devise targeted strategies for enhancing the appeal of India to these specific tourist segments. This study not only aids in refining tourism promotion efforts but also contributes to the academic discourse on tourist motivation offering a fresh international perspective on India's image as a tourist destination.

### KEYWORDS

tourist destination, outer perspective, exploratory factor analysis, mixed method, India

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is crucial to comprehend how different countries are viewed internationally in an era of fast globalisation and constant cultural interactions. The study of

global perceptions in India is crucial as it has strong implications for the country's international relations, trade and tourism. The information regarding the opinions set by the outside world of the tourism is of significant importance as it plays a role in shaping

a country's image and policies (Tosun et al., 2021). Like many countries that acknowledge the power of being seen, India is positively thriving for the attention of the world. India is recognised as a fascinating land of cultures, landscapes and experiences (Bhalla & Chowdhary, 2023). Its diversity makes India a unique and preferred tourist destination for travellers from all over the world.

India's Ministry of Tourism stands as a testament to the nation's dedication towards strengthening its global image as a premier travel destination through initiatives like the "Incredible India" and "Atithi Devo Bhava" campaigns, emphasizing culture and hospitality. Notably, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has resonated in changing marketing tactics and legislative improvements. Undoubtedly the impact of the pandemic has left a lasting impact on the people. Therefore, the importance of understanding foreign perceptions in the context of global events and their influence on tourism demand is timely (Aggarwal et al., 2023).

Focusing on the factors that attract foreign tourists to India is particularly significant, especially in the post-COVID-19 era where global tourism is striving for revival. Understanding these factors has become crucial for strategizing and rejuvenating India's tourism sector amidst changing dynamics and traveller preferences influenced by the pandemic's aftermath. Research question one (RQ<sub>1</sub>) focuses on understanding the specific expectations of tourists considering India, helping in specially curated marketing strategies. Meanwhile, research question two (RQ<sub>2</sub>) examines the overall perception of India among foreign tourists which can help to identify branding strengths and areas needing improvement (Kainthola et al., 2024). Addressing both questions offers a holistic view, suggestions for further developing the image and meeting traveller expectations:

RQ<sub>1</sub>: What are the expectations of the tourist who is looking to India?

RQ<sub>2</sub>: How India as a brand is perceived by foreign tourists?

For these requirements, the study surveyed 390 tourists across varied Indian regions to determine their reasons for visiting. Using descriptive research and convenience sampling, it identified five main reasons tourists are drawn to India: culinary experiences, spiritual journeys, affordability, cultural immersion and the country's natural beauty. Through this nuanced analysis, the article aims to offer invaluable insights for policymakers, destination managers and stakeholders in India's tourism landscape. By bridging the gap between global perceptions and actionable policy implications, this research aims to shape strategies that not only enhance India's appeal but also resonate with the diverse narratives that define its global image.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Studying the motivations and expectations of tourists visiting India as a tourist destination holds significant importance for shaping the country's tourism policies, enhancing visitor experiences and fostering sustainable tourism development (Kainthola et al., 2024). The perceptions and preferences of foreign tourists play a crucial role in influencing travel decisions and experiences, making it essential to understand motivations and expectations (Pestana et al., 2020). On the same lines, Preko and Gyepi-Garbrah (2023) emphasized the importance of understanding the impact of national cultural orientation in tourism development, underscoring the significance of studying tourists' sense of safety and the trustworthiness of tourism information.

Also, Gnoth (1997) assessed bargaining motivations and attitudes, emphasizing the importance of understanding motivations and behaviours in shaping travel experiences and satisfaction. Several studies have used the tourist motivations to classify the tourists into categories to cater to them more efficiently (Cohen, 1979; Jeong & Shin, 2020). These studies provide valuable insights into the influence of tourists' motivations and expectations on travel experiences and satisfaction. Therefore, understanding the motivations and expectations of tourists visiting India is crucial for enhancing satisfaction and loyalty (Hsu et al., 2010).

Similarly, Rather et al. (2022) explored the antecedents and consequences of engagement among tourists in India, highlighting the significance of understanding motivations and behaviours in shaping engagement and experiences. No country can survive in a vacuum. While the connection with the world has both its pros and cons, India's domestic challenges are shaped by global forces. Also, the power of different forms of marketing tools in manoeuvring its image is researched and acknowledged by several authors (Sun et al., 2014). Further, the importance of management is discussed to find out ways for improvement. These studies provide valuable insights into the influence of foreign perceptions on destination marketing and national identity (Yen et al., 2020).

Indian tourism offers a diverse range of experiences, including wellness, cultural, rural, and dark (Chowdhary et al., 2022; Gursoy & Kaurav, 2022). Food tourism, in particular, has been extensively studied, with a focus on understanding the motivations of visitors and tourists (Fusté-Forné, 2019). Gupta and Mohta (2022) discussed Indian cuisine, with its diverse flavours and regional variations, playing a significant role in attracting tourists. Food choices in India are influenced by physical, geographical, and cultural factors, and food tourism is promoted as a way to explore the diverse cuisines. Additionally, India's rich cultural heritage, historical sites and natural beauty contribute to its appeal as a tourist destination (Verma et al., 2018).

The wellness sector, including yoga and spirituality, is also a major draw for tourists. India is known for its yoga and spiritual practices, and tourists visit places like Rishikesh to experience wellness and spiritual healing (Bowers & Cheer, 2017; Goyal & Taneja, 2022). Shopping is a motivation for tourism in India, with tourists interested in buying local and ethnic products (Kathuria et al., 2023; Kaurav & Gupta, 2022). Figure 1 indicates all motivations towards India, investigated in existing literature. However, there is limited research specifically addressing these motivations in the context of Indian tourism. Further studies are needed to explore and understand the specific factors that drive tourists to engage in cuisine-oriented, yoga and spirituality orientation shopping-minded tourism, rich culture and history, and the natural beauty in India.

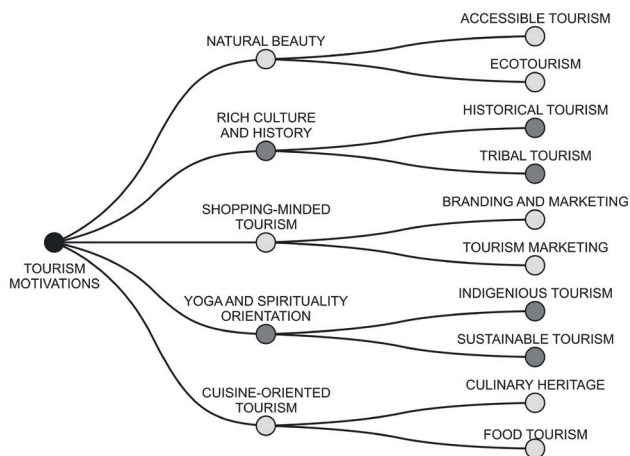


Figure 1. Literature classification on different aspects of perception towards the India  
Source: authors using Scopus

There is a multifaceted impact of foreign perceptions on various domains, highlighting the importance of considering these perspectives in shaping India's global engagement and tourism policies. In conclusion, researching foreign tourists' perceptions of India as a tourist destination is essential to developing sustainable tourism regulations, improving tourist experiences and promoting sustainable tourism. The sources reviewed are very helpful in revealing how destination image affects many tourism sectors. These sources also stressed the importance of recognizing and resolving these issues to boost India's tourism.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

A survey was conducted with foreign tourists visiting India to explore the motivating factors attracting them. In the initial phase, semi-structured interviews were carried out with foreign tourists on trains from Agra

to Delhi and Gwalior, considering that Agra hosts a significant number of foreign tourists. To ensure diverse perspectives, the research team interacted with tourists from various classes and seating arrangements on the train. These interviews were conducted in the mix of first-class air conditioned (AC), AC-II tier, AC-III tier, executive class chair, air-conditioned chair or coaches and sleeper coaches in variety of trains like the Rajdhani, Shatabdi and Gatimaan Expresses. These interviews were conducted in an informal setting to facilitate candid responses, and the interviewers were proficient English speakers.

It is crucial to note that the research team considered the class-specific nature of places in India. Interviews were conducted on trains to capture diverse perspectives, considering the various classes and seating arrangements. The team also ensured interaction with tourists from different budget categories. Regarding the selection of interviewees, the team employed a non-biased approach, avoiding judgments based on skin colour. Tourists were approached based on their presence on the selected trains and willingness to participate, ensuring inclusivity and recognizing the diverse experiences of international tourists in India.

The interview schedule aimed to uncover attributes influencing the decision to travel, and additional attributes were identified through these interviews. The information gathered was later integrated into the survey instrument.

The survey questionnaire comprised two major sections. The first collected demographic and socio-economic information, while the second included 28 attributes derived from the literature review and refined through panel discussions. Respondents were asked to select the attributes they perceived as most desirable, and these were carefully filtered in consultation with three professors and seven research scholars. The items were measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all important*) to 5 (*extremely important*).

The instrument underwent a pilot study with 15 international tourists, leading to language improvements and the merging of similar attributes. After the pilot, a final set of 24 attributes was established for the instrument.

### 4. DATA COLLECTION

Data collection took place in ten popular tourist destinations in India, including Agra, Jaipur, Delhi, Varanasi, Gwalior, Mumbai, Goa, Khajuraho, Mathura and Ujjain. These locations were chosen based on their significance, popularity and diverse destination personality. Within each city, different locations were selected for data collection to ensure a representative sample.



This occurred pre-pandemic using convenience sampling and interviewers approached respondents during their rest periods. A total of 485 questionnaires were distributed, with 390 usable forms returned. After eliminating incomplete and illegible forms, the final sample size remained with 340, representing a 70% response rate (pre-pandemic: 219, post-pandemic: 121).

## 5. MIXED METHOD APPROACH

It is noteworthy that a mixed-method approach was employed. Pre-pandemic, quantitative data were collected through surveys. Post-pandemic, qualitative data were gathered from international travellers using online, video and in-person methods in the same cities, providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing travel decisions and experiences.

After the pandemic, to deepen understanding of the changed travel motivations and experiences, we conducted in-depth interviews with international travellers. These interviews aimed to provide deeper insights beyond our initial survey data. Chosen travellers had recent visits to India post-pandemic, and we connected with them via video calls, ensuring everyone's safety. Each interview lasted 30–45 minutes, focusing on their post-pandemic experiences and perceptions of India. Furthermore, based on these interviews, we updated our survey questions to capture the changing travel dynamics effectively. This combined approach, blending qualitative interviews with quantitative data, offers a thorough understanding of post-pandemic tourism trends in India. These interviews aimed to complement the pre-pandemic quantitative survey data with rich, qualitative insights.

## 6. DATA ANALYSIS

### 6.1. QUANTITATIVE APPROACH

The data analysis process comprised two distinct stages, each leveraging a specific statistical tool with its own inherent importance and significance. The overarching strategy employed for data analysis unfolded in two sequential steps. Initially, frequencies and descriptive statistics were utilized to elucidate the fundamental demographic and socioeconomic backgrounds of the respondents, effectively profiling the study participants. Subsequently, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted, employing principal component analysis, to discern pivotal factors motivating individuals to visit India.

Within the sampled population, gender distribution was nearly balanced, with 51% identified as males and 49% as females. While respondents below the age of 18 constituted a minor proportion (2.32%) of the sample, their inclusion was deemed essential due to their discernible impact on destination decision-making processes. The age distribution revealed that 47.79% of respondents fell within the 19–30 age bracket, while 31.78% belonged to the 31–50 age group. The remaining 18% comprised respondents aged 50 and above. Noteworthy is the fact that a substantial majority (67%) of the respondents were first-time travellers to India.

Geographically, the majority hailed from Europe (21.11%) and North America (22.5%). Approximately 42% represented the Asian and Australian regions, while respondents from African countries constituted the smallest subset. These demographic patterns closely mirrored the official statistics reported in Indian tourism statistics (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2022). Furthermore, the sample exhibited a nuanced distribution across continents, encompassing 21% from Asian countries, 17% from European nations, 20% from North American territories, and 21% each from Australia and Africa and South America combined.

### 6.2. EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS (EFA)

A meticulous examination of existing literature in the field of tourism motivation revealed a prevailing trend, with over 70% initiating their exploration with factor analysis as a methodological cornerstone (Gan et al., 2023). Consequently, in alignment with this established approach, the current article adopted a similar methodology, in the pursuit of uncovering the latent factors influencing motivations, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted, employing principal component analysis (PCA) as recommended by Oguz et al. (2020). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure for sample adequacy yielded a commendable value of 0.742, and Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 237.789$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Given the recommendation by Gorsuch (1983) to maintain a minimum ratio of 10 respondents to 1 item for a newly developed instrument, the study's sample size of 340 with a ratio of 14 : 1, was considered robust (Carpenter, 2018). These results substantiate the suitability of the data for factor analysis.

Utilizing principal component analysis with the varimax rotation method (Kaurav, Gursay & Chowdhary, 2020), a five-factor solution was derived, collectively elucidating 66.9% of the total variance. Eigen values for all the factors were more than 1, which is above the threshold. Factors with loadings exceeding 0.5 were deemed significant contributors, leading to the exclusion of statements failing to meet this. Consequently, the analysis retained five factors comprising 20 items,

Table 1. Rotated component matrix of motivations and leading factors

Factors	Items/Questions	Factor loadings	Model validity
Cuisine oriented	India is profuse in multiple cuisines, varied from traditional, regional and international	0.862	Eigen values: 7.805 Percent of variance: 15.162 Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ): 0.863
	Ease of availability of foreign chains of foods	0.732	
	Multi-ethnic country	0.713	
	Variety of delicious cuisines	0.674	
	Indian food is prepared according to local traditions	0.644	
	Ease of availability of local food	0.567	
Yoga and spirituality orientation	India offers high Ayurvedic medicinal quality, rich, aromatic, green and herbal leaves	0.765	Eigen values: 7.654 Percent of variance: 13.54 Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ): 0.845
	India is rich in Ayurveda and medicines	0.716	
	Land of many rituals and festivals	0.665	
	Great place to do yoga and meditation	0.654	
	India is famous for spiritual learnings	0.543	
Shopping minded	Good and reasonable shopping destinations for artefacts, clothes, handicrafts and accessories	0.757	Eigen values: 6.579 Percent of variance: 12.113 Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ): 0.858
	Indian products offer a good value for money	0.674	
	Cost effective in services, like accommodation, transportation, body spa and body therapy	0.638	
Rich culture and history	Forts and monuments	0.712	Eigen values: 5.682 Percent of variance: 11.45 Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ): 0.716
	Rich cultural heritage	0.701	
	Fascinating history about kings and dynasties	0.698	
	Rich Indian ethnic culture and traditions	0.657	
Natural beauty	Diverse landscapes, like beaches, forests, deserts and mountains	0.642	Eigen values: 4.682 Percent of variance: 9.67 Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ): 0.706
	Ethnic products of India are a significant attraction, like clothes, food and artefacts	0.613	

Source: authors using SPSS.

with the removal of four items due to insufficient factor loading. To assess the internal consistency of each factor, Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) was computed. This methodological approach aligns with evolving standards within the research community and ensures a rigorous evaluation of the factors identified through the analysis (refer Table 1).

Exploring motivations in the tourism domain involved a meticulous analysis of the data, revealing five distinct factors with eigenvalues exceeding one and collectively explaining 62% of the variance. Each factor underwent scrutiny for reliability using Cronbach's alpha, considering a threshold of  $\alpha > 0.6$  for acceptance (Mehmetoglu, 2005).

#### Factor one: Cuisine orientation

Comprising seven items centered around cuisines, spices and food, this factor, labelled "cuisine-oriented", exhibited high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.863). Accounting for 15% of the variance, it underscored the global importance of Indian cuisine, reflecting the country's cultural diversity and culinary richness (Mangalassary, 2016).

Additionally, it is also a reflection of India's diversity in culture that is much in evidence in the diverse cuisines it offers (Rathore & Shekhawat, 2008). The local traditions, geography and history of a community play a crucial role in its gastronomy (Mangalassary, 2016). Local food is generally prepared according to

the traditions of a community. Due to flexible trade policies, various international food chains are easily available across the country which have also promoted cooking to a certain extent in India. Thus, the multi-ethnic country offers a wide range of delightful and different cuisines.

### Factor two: Spiritual orientation

Encompassing themes of spiritual experiences, yoga and meditation, the second factor, named “spiritual orientation” demonstrated a reliability of 0.845 (Cronbach’s alpha) and 14% explained variance. With an eigenvalue of 7.654, this factor resonated with India’s profound spiritual history and its reputation as the birthplace of various religions and spiritual practices.

India is considered the birthplace of many religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism and a place with profuse spiritual experiences (Aggarwal et al., 2008; Balutiya, 2019; Sharpley & Sundaram, 2005). Also, the country has an extended history in Ayurveda due to which the country is rich in Ayurvedic treatments and still upholds traditional medication and other wellness practices (Kumar, 2017). Peace and spiritual essence make India a great place to carry out wellness-related activities (Choudhary & Qadir, 2022).

### Factor three: Shopping minded / budget centred

The third factor, “budget centred”, highlighted aspects of value for money, inexpensive prices and affordable services. With a robust Cronbach’s alpha of 0.858, it explained 12% of the variance. The factor emphasized India’s affordability, diverse accommodation options and the allure of ethnic products, making it a competitive shopping destination (Choudhary & Qadir, 2022). Moreover, India offers a range of accommodation and experiences suitable for all kind of travellers, be it luxurious journeys or budget-friendly ventures. India was also seen as a place providing value for money with its rich history, diverse culture, its ethnicity, adventure and abundance of natural beauty. Also, the ethnic products of India are a significant attraction for many foreigners making it a competitive shopping destination for artefacts, antiques, handicrafts, traditional clothes and accessories.

### Factor four: Cultural inclination

Factor four, named “cultural inclination”, comprising items associated with ethnicity and culture, demonstrated a reliability value of 0.716 and explained 11% of the total variance. This factor celebrated India’s rich cultural tapestry, featuring diverse structural designs, historical contributions and vibrant traditions (Choudhary & Qadir, 2022). The themes prevailing here can be represented as India offering a fascinating history of numerous kings, their dynasties and contribution to making the land prosperous and rich in

culture. This richness can be appreciated in intangible aspects such as the diversity in structural designs at forts, monuments and museums. Indian ethnicity is seen in its traditions, rituals and festivals celebrated across the country by its people.

### Factor five: Natural beauty

The fifth factor, labelled “natural beauty”, incorporated statements related to India’s diverse landscapes and tourism opportunities. With a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.706, it explained 10% of the variance, emphasizing India’s picturesque offerings, from mountains and beaches to forests and deserts. In adopting a concise approach, these factors succinctly encapsulate the diverse motivations and experiences driving international tourists to explore the country.

India stands out as a coveted tourist destination for a multitude of compelling reasons, as illustrated in Figure 2. Foremost among these is its rich and diverse cultural heritage, spanning from the ancient remnants of the Indus Valley Civilization to the awe-inspiring architectural marvels of the Mughal Empire. This historical tapestry provides visitors with a captivating journey through India’s past. Secondly, the country boasts some of the world’s most breathtaking natural landscapes, ranging from the snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas to the verdant tropical forests and backwater of Kerala, offering an array of experiences for every traveller. Thirdly, India holds profound spiritual significance, featuring revered sites like Varanasi, Rishikesh and Bodh Gaya, attracting seekers of enlightenment from around the globe. These locations hold particular importance in Hinduism (Aggarwal et al., 2008; Bandyopadhyay & Nair, 2019; Phukan, 2014; Rana, 2015).

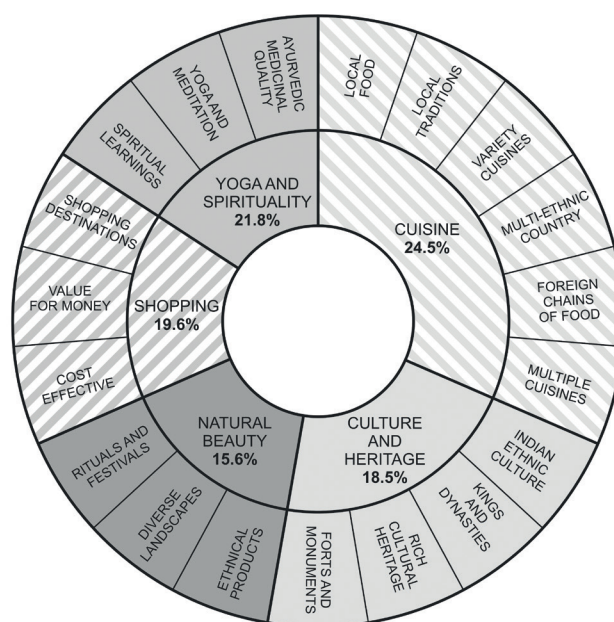


Figure 2. Experiences that drive towards India (foreign view)  
Source: authors



Table 2. Thematic analysis of interview transcripts

Theme (number of participants)	Participant number	Analysis
Cuisine orientation (9)	P1, P2, P5, P6–P9, P15, P21	Participants expressed fascination with the diversity and uniqueness of Indian cuisine, highlighting it as a significant aspect of their travel experience
Spiritual orientation (9)	P4, P6–P9, P22–25	Responses indicated a strong inclination towards India's spiritual aspects, with experiences in yoga, meditation, and religious diversity being highly valued
Budget centred (8)	P3, P11–P17	The data underscored the importance of affordability in enhancing travel experiences, with participants appreciating value for money in various services
Cultural inclination (8)	P4, P16–P21, P24	Cultural heritage, historical sites and traditional practices were major attractions, as reflected in participants' interests in exploring India's rich culture and history
Natural beauty (10)	P8–P12, P16, P22–P25	Participants were captivated by India's diverse natural landscapes, from mountains to beaches, emphasizing the country's scenic beauty as a key motivator

Source: authors.

Moreover, India's vast geography and varied seasons have fostered a rich tapestry of cultures and cuisines, providing tourists with a diverse experience (Bhartwal & Sharma, 2022; Gupta et al., 2022; Rathore & Shekhawat, 2008). Lastly, the perception of India as an affordable destination, coupled with its allure as a shopping haven, further enhances its appeal to international tourists. The novelty, arts and crafts that form part of the shopping experience contribute to India's distinct brand identity (Ahmad, 2014; Khan et al., 2017). This multifaceted attractiveness positions India as a multifaceted destination, catering to a wide spectrum of interests and preferences for global travellers.

### 6.3. QUALITATIVE APPROACH

In this second part of the study, a sample of 25 participants was meticulously selected to provide insights into post-pandemic travel motivations, perceptions, behaviours, attitudes and experiences. The gender distribution was evenly balanced, with a slight male predominance. Age-wise, the majority of participants were young adults, primarily falling in the 19–30 age bracket, reflecting the active and adventurous segment of travellers. Geographically, the participants were diverse, representing various continents, with a significant number hailing from Europe and North America, in line with the global travel trends. Notably, a considerable proportion of these respondents were visiting India for the first time, offering fresh perspectives on their travel motivations and experiences in the country. Thematic analysis was done to decipher the inner experiences and also to triangulate what is been said in quantitative part of this study (Aggarwal et al., 2023; Kainthola et al., 2024; Kaurav, Suresh, Narula & Baber, 2020; Tiwari & Kaurav, 2022).

The thematic analysis in Table 2 reveals key aspects of India's appeal to international travellers. Cuisine orientation is a significant draw, with participants enamoured by the diverse and unique flavours of Indian food. Spiritual orientation underscores India's role as a center for spiritual activities and enlightenment, particularly through yoga and meditation. The budget centred theme highlights India's affordability, enhancing its attractiveness as a travel destination. Cultural inclination reflects a deep interest in India's rich historical heritage and diverse cultural practices. Lastly, natural beauty emphasizes the allure of India's varied landscapes, from serene beaches to majestic mountains.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

A versatile destination with 28 states and eight union territories, each state offering a unique encounter with its history, culture and geography. The beauty of Indian monuments like the Taj Mahal, its nature, the grandness of its temples, diverse cuisines and the vastness of its culture is conspicuous in the numerous works dedicated by the scholars over the years, especially foreign authors. Tourism in India is significantly increasing and witnessing growth. While COVID-19 did bring a temporary halt (Assaf et al., 2022; Kainthola et al., 2021), it is again at a steady rise (Saxena et al., 2021). The study of tourist motivation is of great value in planning, marketing and administrating a destination and India is seen as a place providing value for money with its rich history, diverse culture, its ethnicity and abundance of natural beauty. The study enlightens the readers with the major motivations of the tourists visiting India, highlighting the expectations they have from their journey revealing their image.

This study's findings triangulate with both quantitative and qualitative approaches and underscore its multifaceted appeal as a travel destination in the post-pandemic era. The blend of rich cultural heritage, diverse culinary experiences, spiritual depth, natural beauty and affordability, positions India uniquely in the global tourism landscape. Future research could explore how these factors influence repeat visitation and the long-term perception of India in the international tourism market. Additionally, understanding the evolving expectations of post-pandemic travellers can aid in tailoring tourism strategies to meet the new dynamics of global travel.

India is a country with a lot to offer tourists, and it is no wonder that it is becoming an increasingly popular destination for travellers from all over the world. With its rich culture, amazing food and beautiful scenery, India has something for everyone.

## 8. MANAGERIAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The study offers practical implications for destination managers and tourism policy planners in India and the findings will lead to the policy implications. The above stakeholders can concentrate on planning in different ways and it will, therefore, provide insights to improvise the Incredible India campaign. It has theoretical implications, especially for the existing literature on tourist motivations in developing economies. The study suggests easy management, better catering for tourists, enhancing products and understanding the market. This article could be insightful for planner, managers and policymakers of tourism-related businesses, especially those that are working with inbound tourists. The results of this study suggest the direction for the segment of international tourists. How they should be catered for and targeted for futurist market campaigns? What are the expectations of the tourist who is looking towards India? These questions have been answered by this study.

## 9. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The government of India has launched, in 2014, a first of its kind AYUSH (ayurveda, yoga and naturopathy, unani, siddha and homeopathy) Ministry. This initiative was envisioned to revive the profound knowledge of our ancient systems of medicine and ensuring the optimal development and propagation of Ayush systems of healthcare. Such initiatives are a strong step towards strengthening and expanding the spirituality essence of Indian tourism. India is gaining

a significant focus on yoga and spirituality. Especially after the detrimental impact of COVID-19, travellers are seeking meaningful and relaxing journeys (Kainthola et al., 2022). India has the potential of being a world leader in the sector.

## 10. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study, while comprehensive, acknowledges certain limitations that pave the way for future research directions. Firstly, the sample representation of visitors from each continent was small, indicating the need for a larger, more cross-cultural study to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Secondly, data collection was concentrated in North India, which may not fully represent the diverse tourist experiences in South and Northeast India. Thirdly, the statistical methods allowed some chances of error in the grouping of factors, a larger sample is a possible solution of this problem. Lastly, data gathered pre-pandemic may not reflect the potential post-pandemic surge in interest towards spiritual and yoga-related tourism in India. Future studies could address these gaps by expanding the geographical scope of data collection, increasing the sample size for a more diverse cultural representation, collecting data from South and Northeast India, and examining post-pandemic tourism trends to capture the evolving dynamics of travel motivations and preferences.

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