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Senthilkumaran Piramanayagam

Welcomgroup Graduate School of Hotel Administration, Manipal Academy of Higher Education,
senthil.kumaranp@manipal.edu

Nischal Kumar

Welcomgroup Graduate School of Hotel Administration, Manipal Academy of Higher Education,
nischal.kumar@manipal.edu

Jyothi Mallya

Welcomgroup Graduate School of Hotel Administration, Manipal Academy of Higher Education,
jyothi.mallya@manipal.edu

See next page for additional authors

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Tourist's Motivation and Behavioural Intention to Visit a Religious Buddhist Site: A Case Study of Bodhgaya

Authors

Senthilkumaran Piramanayagam, Nischal Kumar, Jyothi Mallya, and Rahul Anand

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Senthilkumaran Piramanayagam

Welcomgroup Graduate School of Hotel Administration, Manipal Academy of Higher Education
senthil.kumaranp@manipal.edu

Nischal Kumar B

Welcomgroup Graduate School of Hotel Administration, Manipal Academy of Higher Education
nischal.kumar@manipal.edu

Jyothi Mallya

Welcomgroup Graduate School of Hotel Administration, Manipal Academy of Higher Education
jyothi.mallya@manipal.edu

Rahul Anand

Welcomgroup Graduate School of Hotel Administration, Manipal Academy of Higher Education
rahulanand0000@gmail.com

The purpose of this study is to identify the motivation factors and investigate their impact on the behavioural intention of pilgrims at Bodhgaya, one of the most prominent Buddhist religious sites in India. To achieve this objective, 28 religious motivational items were identified based on previous studies and subjected to exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The EFA resulted in a three-factor model, which was further tested using confirmatory factor analysis. The identified religious motivational factors were *religious belief*, *service quality* and *history, architecture and cultural aspects of religious sites*. The role of these motivational factors and their influence on behavioural intention was further tested using structural equation modelling. The findings of the study reveal that *service quality* is a primary motivational factor affecting behavioural intention of religious tourists at Bodhgaya, followed by *religious belief*. However, *history, architecture, and cultural aspects of Bodhgaya* had no significant influence on behavioural intention of tourists. The study recommends that service providers at this destination need to pay more attention to enhancing service quality.

Key Words: pilgrimage religious tourism, Buddhist sites, Bodhgaya, motivation, behavioural intention

Introduction

Pilgrimage tourism, religious tourism, spiritual tourism, sacred tourism, or faith tourism is one of the earliest and now fast-growing forms of tourism in India. It has two main subgroups: pilgrimage tourists who travel to these sites for spiritual fulfilment, and other tourists, who visit these sites for non-religious purposes to study non-religious attractions at these sites, for example, artefacts, monuments, architecture, heritage, and sightseeing. India, known for its diversity, inherits a diverse range of religious practices by its citizens. Though most of the population follow Hinduism, other religions such as Islam, Sikhism, Christianity and Buddhism also have an active presence. The people of India follow many other religions such as Vaishnavism (one of the major Hindu demominations), the ancient religion of Jainism and there is an active Jewish community.

The government has developed and promoted several religious tourist circuits to facilitate travel and stay at religious sites. Some of the examples of religious circuits in India include:

The Sufi Circuit comprising the Awadh region, Delhi, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, and Aurangabad;

The Christian Circuit including the churches of Goa, Kerala and Tamil Nadu;

The Sarv Dharma Circuit, to promote national integration covering Tirupathi, Velankanni, Nagoor and Vaishnodevi, the Golden Temple, Sacred Heart Church, Nizamuddin, etc.

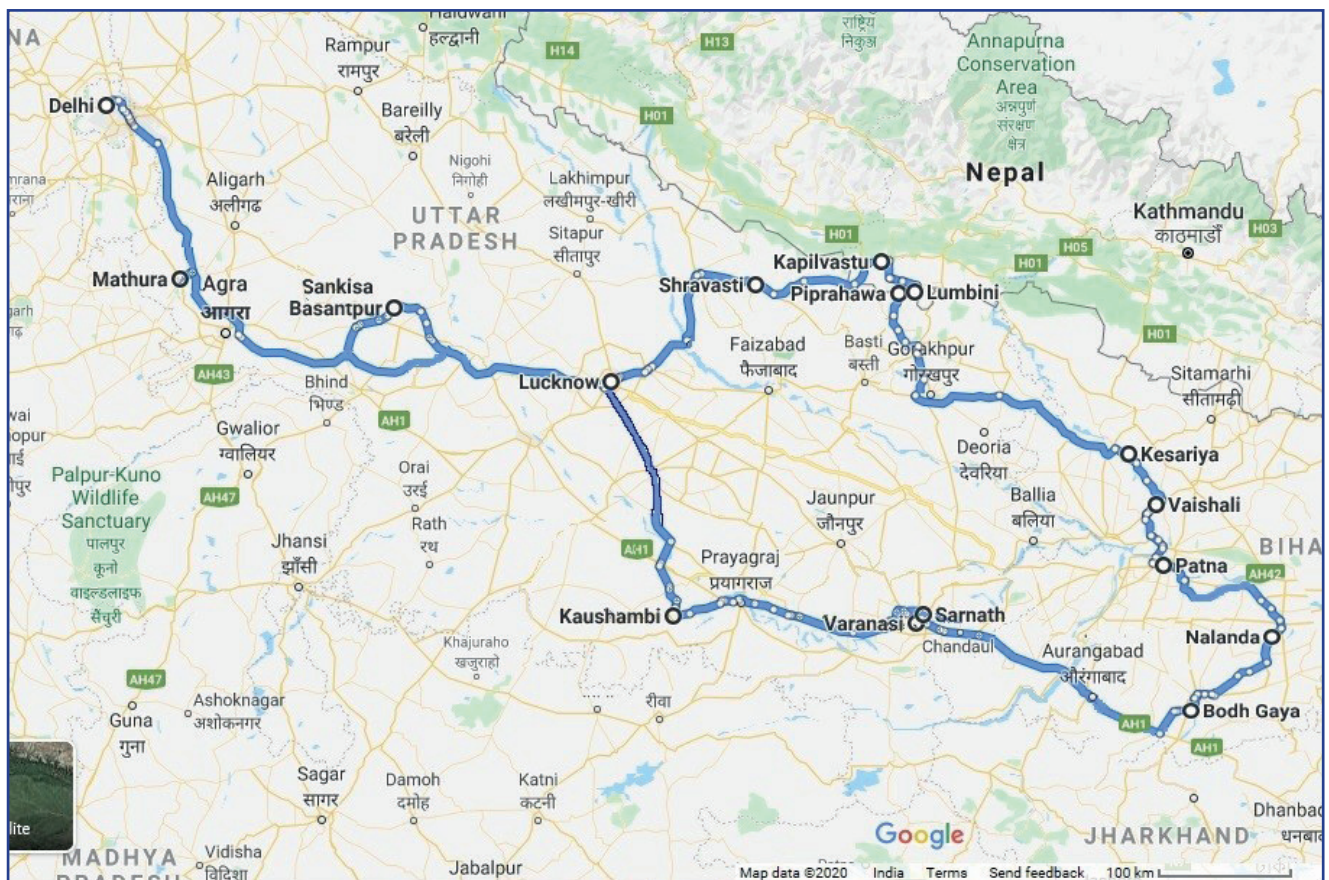
The Buddhist Circuit encompasses Bodhgaya, Sarnath, Kushinagar, and Piprahwa (Kapilvastu), with a day trip to Lumbini in Nepal (SIGA Team, 2012).

The Government of India (GoI) recognises the importance of pilgrimage tourism and the contribution it can make not only from an economic perspective but also as a tool to ensure communal harmony. To tap this potential, the GoI launched the national mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation And Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD) with the objective to integrate the development of pilgrimage sites in a planned and sustainable manner and provide visitors with a deep spiritual experience. Bodhgaya, a famous Buddhist site, is one of the twelve identified pilgrimage sites under this scheme. Even though roughly 450 million Buddhists around the world strive to visit one of the many sacred sites in their lifetime (IFC, 2012:12), the Buddhist circuit as an integrated whole has not yet achieved its potential. This can be attributed to many facts, such as low awareness, lack of supportive institutional policy, inadequate infrastructure, low quality or non-existence of essential tourism-related services, lack of safety measures, and poor connectivity. As a result, it is reported that only 0.005% of Buddhists visit the sacred Buddhist sites of South Asia (Bhonsale, 2019).

Meanwhile, past literature on Buddhist tourism is seen to focus on temple management (Tepsing & Boonprakarn, 2019) religious food (Son & Xu, 2013) awareness (Agrawal, Choudhary & Tripathi, 2010) destination branding (Geary, 2008), and segmentation (Olsen, 2013), while little or no attention has been paid to the relationship between motivational factors and tourist behavioural intention at Bodhgaya. Therefore, this case study aims to fill this gap through a quantitative survey linked with case study methodology. This approach is used to understand the behaviour of individual, groups, firms and events in social research. Case studies, using cross level inference occupy a central position in the research of various disciplines due to the epistemological shift in the recent decades. Case study can be qualitative or quantitative (Gerring, 2007)

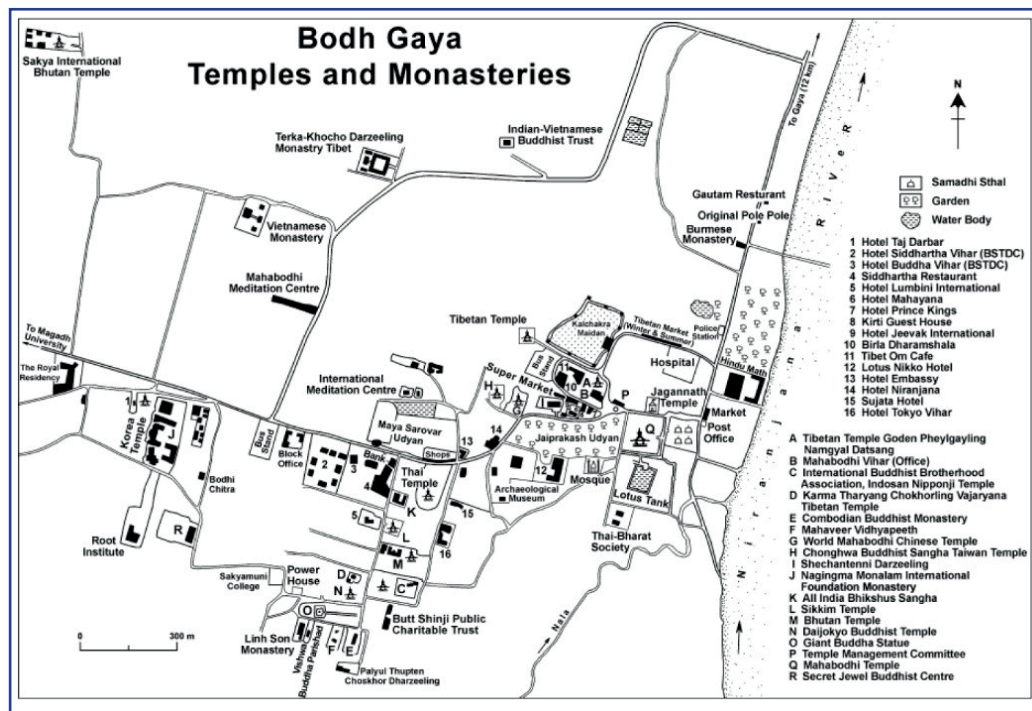
To achieve the objective described above, the present study identified three motivational factors: religious belief, service quality, and cultural environment of destination, and investigates their influence on the

Figure 1: Buddhist Pilgrimage Sites



Source: Authors / Google Maps

Figure 2: Bodhgaya City Map



Adapted from Singh and Kumar (2011)

behavioural intention of Buddhist tourists at Bodhgaya. Tourists' behaviour generally refers to the behaviour that is exhibited by the tourists when they consume any product or service. This behaviour is likely to be affected by multiple factors. It also involves search, evaluation, purchase, and repurchase of products or services of the consumer. Therefore, it is essential to study tourists' motives and behaviour from the destination marketing point of view. It is crucial to understand how tourists behave as individuals or groups and how they opt for, purchase, and share their experiences with their peers. The outcome of this research study would help tourism marketers in positioning their products or services to a specific group of people. Therefore, this study embraces the behavioural intention of tourists as a dependent variable to understand the role of motivational factors of Buddhist tourists at Bodhgaya. To this effect, a structured questionnaire was distributed to 426 tourists at Bodhgaya. The data were analysed using exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and structural equation modelling.

Buddhist Circuit in India: Important Sites

Recently, pilgrimage has gained significant interest among tourists, especially the sites related to Lord Buddha.

To this effect, the Ministry of tourism has launched the Strategy for Integrated Tourism Development of Buddhist Circuit in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh (Geary, 2014). The Buddhist circuit can be defined as comprising those holy places of Buddhism, where Lord Buddha was born, taught, preached, and attained 'enlightenment' and 'Nirvana'. These are spiritual venues for Buddhism, housing many Buddhist temples and monasteries of religious significance. Some of the important Buddhist sites are as follows:

Bodhgaya

Located in Bihar, this is the place where Prince Siddhartha (later known as Buddha) attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Vriksha (Bodhi tree) after meditating for 49 days in ca. 528 BCE. This sacred town and pilgrimage centre for Buddhists from across the world houses the famous Mahabodhi Temple (a World Heritage Site, enlisted in 2002 - Figure 3) that serves as nucleus for all events in Bodhgaya. It is also home to many other temples and monasteries built by Buddhist Sanghas from different countries. These temples together attract a large number of tourists and pilgrims to worship, meditate and attain peace of mind (Singh & Kumar, 2011). The other vital tourist' attractions at Bodhgaya include Vajrasana

Figure 3: Mahabodhi Temple, Bodhgaya

Source: Authors

Figure 4: Animesh Lochana Chaitya

(It is believed that Buddha spent one week here looking at tree out of gratitude and without blinking his eyes)



Source: authors

Throne Muchalinda Lake, the site of Animesh Lochana Chaitya (Figure 4), and a number of holy trees such as Ratnachankramana, Ratnagaraha, Ajapala Nigrodha, and Rajyatna. Bodhgaya also houses many monasteries established by the Buddhists of Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Japan, and Thailand.

Figure 5: Great Buddha Statue, Bodhgaya

Source: Authors

Figure 6: The Dhamekh Stupa, SarnathSource: <http://www.uptourism.gov.in/post/varansi-sarnath>

Sarnath

The city of Sarnath is part of Varanasi and lies about 10 km from the city centre, a place where Buddha gave his first sermon after attaining enlightenment in ca. 528 BCE. This is the place where Buddha established his Sangha, or group of disciples to promote his new doctrine. The famous Lion pillar erected by King Ashoka is also in Sarnath. The other attractions of Sarnath are Chaukhandi Stupa, Mulagandha Kuti Vihar, and Sarnath Ashram.

Kushinagar

This place is in the Gorakhpur district of Uttar Pradesh in India. It is *en route* to Kapilavastu and is the place where Buddha fell ill and died in 483 BCE. It is interesting to know that all four major incidents in the life of Buddha:

Figure 7: Mahanirvana Stupa, Kushinagar

Source: <https://kushinagar.nic.in/tourist-places>

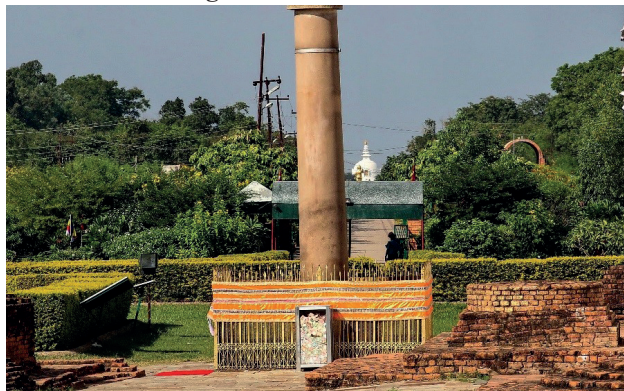
birth 563 BCE, enlightenment 529 BCE, first sermon 528/527 BCE and death 483 BCE) (Singh, 2003) took place on Vaishaka Purnima, i.e. Full moon day of the Lunar month of April-May.

Piprahwa (Kapilavastu)

Piprahwa / Kapilavastu is a village near Birdpur in the Siddharthnagar district of Uttar Pradesh, India. It is

Figure 8: Tilaurakot: The ancient city of Kapilavastu

Source: <http://www.uptourism.gov.in/post/kapilavastu-explore>

Figure 9: Ashoka Pillar

Source: <https://kathmandupost.com/>

situated in the heart of Buddha's homeland and is 12 miles from Lumbini, a world heritage site believed to be the birthplace of Gautama Buddha. Piprahwa is best known for its archaeological site (Figure 8). A huge stupa and the ruins of several monasteries are also located within this site.

Lumbini

Lumbini is a pilgrimage site in the Rupandevi district of Nepal. It is a place where Queen Mahamayadevi gave birth to Siddhartha Gautama in 563 BCE. This is one of the most sought out places in the Buddhist circuits and comprises temples, monuments, monasteries, a museum and Holy Pond, where Buddha's mother took the ritual dip prior to his birth and where Siddhartha had his first bath.

Market Profile of Buddhist Circuits

A tourist undertaking a circuit of the main Buddhist religious sites would require between seven to fifteen days to complete their trip.

The seven-day tour circuit includes Bodhgaya (airport or Railway stn.) → Nalanda and Rajgir → Sarnath (Varana-si) → Kushinagar → Kapilvastu / Piprahwa → Lumbini and Tilaurakot → Vaishali → back to Bodhgaya.

A 15-day tour circuit would include Lucknow (airport... coming from New Delhi) → Shravasti → Kapilvastu/ Piprahwa → Lumbini and Tilaurakot → Kushinagar → Kesaria → Vaishali → Patna → Nalanda and Rajgir → Bodhgaya and Gaya → Sarnath and Varanasi → Kaushambi → Sankia <passing via Agra> → Mathura → New Delhi (airport).

In addition to the sites, various festivals and ritual ceremonies serve as attractions, drawing large numbers of international tourists. Leading among these is Kalachakra Puja, a well-known festival held in the month of January every year. At this festival, His holiness, the Dalai Lama holds initiation rituals for followers of Buddhism worldwide. Other major attractions in this area include monasteries of Mahayana and Theravada traditions. In the temple town of Bodhgaya alone, about 58 monasteries are mentioned on the Bodhgaya Temple Management Committee website.

While the circuit is almost exclusively patronised by Buddhist pilgrims, their numbers are low when compared to the large numbers of Buddhists globally. Also, the majority of pilgrims are relatively low spending travellers. Non-Buddhist travel on the circuit has been very limited when compared to the overall leisure travel figures in India. The current non-Buddhist travel is primarily of a backpacking, budget nature. This can be attributed to several factors, such as limited road and rail infrastructure available in the area, limited brand recognition and market reach by the state and local authorities, limited provision of multi-lingual guides by the temple authorities, and low standard of tourist-related services and products offered by the service providers (IFC, 2012). An International Finance Corporation (2012) report, entitled *Investing in The Buddhist Circuit*, identifies four important visitor segments based on purpose of visit. These are:

Budget pilgrims: Devout Buddhists committed to visiting sacred sites where the Buddha was born (Lumbini), became enlightened (Bodhgaya), taught (Sarnath - his first sermon), and died (Kushinagar). This segment prefers basic facilities and services.

Comfort pilgrims: Devout Buddhists committed to visiting the full circuit or at least part of it, especially the four most sacred sites of Buddha's birth, enlightenment, first sermon and death. This segment requires more travel comfort than budget pilgrims and travellers can be in the form of independent travellers or belonging to a large or small group.

Budget explorers: Non-Buddhists on an independent budget backpacking trip or domestic family holiday in northern India. They prefer to visit a few of the Buddhist sites as a quick visit component of a wider itinerary.

High-end explorers: High to medium-end foreign package tourists and independent flashpackers on a wider India itinerary, as well as domestic leisure travellers on a holiday break.

In these scenarios, it becomes crucial for the researcher to understand the motivating factors that influence the behavioural intention of each segment of visitors. All segments visit a some of the Buddhist sites and require comfortable and good-quality facilities, services, shopping, and recreation.

It is also found that many of the domestic visitors cite spiritual / religious belief as a reason to visit the circuit. Nearly one third (34%) cited leisure and entertainment. However, a vast majority of the international visitors travelled to the Buddhist circuit for spiritual / religious purposes. Meanwhile, Bodhgaya is the preferred destination for domestic as well as international tourists. Moreover, it was found that international travellers begin and conclude their journey at Bodhgaya and Sarnath because of the availability of airports at Gaya and Varanasi (IFC, 2012). Mindful of these various patterns and flows, it becomes critical to investigate the factors that influence the behavioural intention of Buddhists at Bodhgaya. Thus, this study aims to investigate the role of service quality, religious beliefs, and history, architecture and culture of Bodhgaya on the visitors' behavioural intentions.

Studies on Religious Motivation and Behavioural Intention

Religious tourists are broadly classified into two categories; pilgrim tourists and secular tourists (Adler, 1989) based on why they visit religious sites. While religious reasons primarily or exclusively motivate pilgrims, secular tourists prefer to participate in conferences, festivals, and rituals at sacred sites (Rinschede, 1992). The main motivational factors of religious tourists are to explore the historical roots of their religion or faith, deepen their religious faith, experience different or unique cultural experiences, and to have fun during the journey (Wang, Chen & Huang, 2016). Further, religious sites present a wide variety of other offerings, such as local food, music and other structural facilities such as museums, historic buildings, and architectural monuments of a religious nature (Griffin & Raj, 2017). Thus, the religious tourists' motivation can be divided into two factors: push factors such as faith seeking, relaxation and socialisation; and pull factors such as cultural aspects of the religious sites, religious beliefs, and facilities and accessibility. Furthermore, push and pull factors are considered as internal and external motivations (Dann, 1981). The current study adopts push-pull motivation as a theoretical underpinning to test the empirical examinations of religious tourists at Bodhgaya. While religious pursuit is considered as one of the principal motivating factors for religious tourists to visit holy places (Rinschede, 1992),

it is also evident that some religious tourists also seek to experience different lives and societies (Turner & Ash, 1975). The religious atmosphere at holy sites can also be one of the motivation factors to visit (Toader, Vorzsak & Gut, 2009). Some the tourists may also be interested in experiencing the history and cultural heritage of religious sites (Lankford *et al.*, 2005).

To understand religious tourists' motivation, several studies have developed different measurement scales. By adopting the phenomenological approach, Andriotis, (2009) identifies five experiential dimensions: spiritual, cultural, environmental, secular, and educational. In the same year, Shuo, Ryan and Liu (2009) examine 28 motives and weight them in terms of their importance into seven groups in the Mazu pilgrimage tourism context. Further, they extract three factors from 28 motives: social exploration, experience religion, and experience belief. Hyde and Harman (2011) use 29 variables to identify five distinct motives for visits to the Gallipoli battlefields, a secular 'pilgrimage' site: spiritual, nationalistic, family pilgrimage, friendship, and leisure travel. A mixed-method study among senior religious tourists conducted by Moal-Ulvoas (2016) identifies six motivational factors: enjoy life, nostalgia, chosen sociability, relax, personal enrichment, and create reified memories. Similarly, self-growth and reflection, being with nature, relaxation and meditation, and learning and education are the four motivational factors identified by Chun, Roh and Spralls (2017). More recently, a study conducted by Silva *et al.*, (2019) at Jerusalem identifies faith, personal enrichment and calling as three motivational factors to visit Jerusalem. However, none of these studies on religious tourism has tested the role of non-religious factors, such as service quality and history, or architecture and cultural attractions at religious sites. Also, none of these studies have tested the model fit of measurement scale. To fill this gap in literature, Wang, Chen and Huang (2016) developed a three-factor model of religious motivation based previous studies (Digance, 2003; Jackson & Hudman, 1995; Shuo, Ryan & Liu, 2009). Using an initial 28 motivational items, they identified three factors: Religious beliefs, Cultural enjoyment, and mental relaxation. The model fit was assessed using confirmatory analysis and their findings suggest that tourists' past experience and degree of religious belief had a significant positive effect on religious belief.

However, past experience and degree of religious belief had no influence on the cultural environment.

Meanwhile, Behavioural intention (BI), which is defined as the individuals' subjective probability that they will perform the behaviour, is extensively studied by academics in the tourism context. Many researchers have regarded BI as one of the most predominant predictors of potential tourists (Albayrak, Caber & Çömen, 2016; Wantara, 2016; Zhang & Yan 2016). The structural relationships between tourist motivation and future behaviour have proved to be well established (Li & Cai, 2012; Marzuki, Hashemi & Kiumarsi, 2017). Meanwhile, extant literature on Buddhist religious tourism has focussed on perception (Huang & Pearce, 2019), spiritual values (Huang *et al.*, 2019), and religious food (Son & Xu, 2013), while little or no attention has been paid to the structural relationship between motivational factors and behavioural intention of religious tourists. Also, much of the literature available on religious tourism is from other parts of the world (Gomes, Losada & Pereiro, 2019; Iriobe & Abiola-Oke, 2019; Kilipiris & Dermetzopoulos, 2016), with some focus on Buddhist religious sites. Moreover, religious tourism has a multi-faced impact on the economy (Shinde, 2018) and, thus, it becomes critical for the religious entrepreneur to understand the role of motivation and its influence on the behavioural intention of religious tourists.

Research methods

Study site and context

Bodhgaya, a UNESCO World Heritage Site (Latitude 24° 41' 45" N, longitude 85° 2' 2" E, Altitude 113 meters) is located about 96 kilometres from Patna, the capital city of Bihar, a state of India. Bodhgaya is one of the 24-community blocks of Gaya district. As per the Census of 2011, the population in the Bodhgaya block was 197,804 (Census of India, 2011). It is well-connected by road from Gaya, Nalanda, and Varanasi. The nearest airport and railway station are at Gaya (BSTDC, 2018).

Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodhgaya was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the year 2002. Though, this forest hermitage was not a significant site for pilgrimage during Buddha's time, over time,

disciples of Buddha began to visit the place and gradually transferred this site into a centre of Buddhist worship and sacred veneration. Today, Bodhgaya, like other prominent destinations of tourism and pilgrimage, is a social and cultural meeting ground between local and global pilgrims (Geary, 2008).

Measurement Scale

Though there is no consensus on the tourism motivation construct, the push-pull theory proposed by Dann in 1977, is generally accepted and widely used in tourism research. Push factors, also referred to as intrinsic motivators, are defined as forces that cause tourists to seek activities to fulfil their needs, such as a desire to escape, rest and relax, achieve prestige, health and fitness, and fulfil religious belief. Pull factors, also referred to as extrinsic motives, are contextual factors, such as the attractiveness of the destination (beaches, mountains, rivers etc.), temple architecture, and cultural heritage of the religious site. Traditionally, push factors are considered important in initiating travel desire, while pull factors are considered more important in the decision-making process of destination choice. To identify the underlying push-pull motivational factors of religious tourists at Bodhgaya, the researchers of this study identified 24 motivational items based on previous literature (Wang, Chen & Huang, 2016) under four constructs. The identified factors include religious belief, service quality, cultural heritage of the temple, and socialisation. The dependent variable - behavioural intention - was measured using five items adapted from the study (Patwardhan *et al.*, 2019). The measuring instrument had two parts. The first

part had statements regarding the tourist's motivation (24 items) to visit Bodhgaya. The measuring instrument used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The second part of the measuring instrument captured demographic details such as age, gender, and education.

Research Model and Hypotheses

Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses are proposed

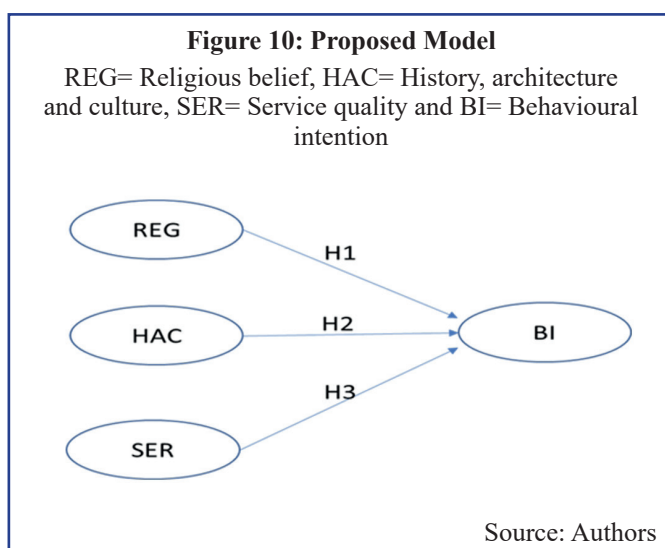
Hypothesis 1: Religious belief has no positive influence on Behavioural intention

Hypothesis 2: History, architecture, and Cultural aspects have no positive influence on Behavioural intention

Hypothesis 3: Service quality has no positive influence on Behavioural intention

Data Collection, Sampling, Pilot Test, Construct Identification and Validation

A three-step process was adopted for scale development and testing of the constructs in this study (Chen & Hsu, 2001). At first, a pilot study was conducted using 162 samples to identify the items to be included in the scale before conducting the final survey. The measuring instrument was distributed to the tourists when they were resting after visiting the temple. The research team comprised four postgraduate students (two male and two female) who were trained for this survey and employed to collect the data. During the data collection, the purpose of the study was explained to the visitors and those who were willing to take part in the survey were asked to fill in the questionnaire. A convenience sampling technique was used to distribute the questionnaire. All of the 24 motivational items were factor-analysed using principal component analysis with Varimax (orthogonal) rotation. The analysis resulted in four factors explaining a total of 65.01% of the variance. Factor one was named **Historical Attractions and Culture**. The items loaded on this factor were authenticity of the temple, the environment of the temple, history of the temple, temple design, landscape of the temple, and customs and experience at the temple. This factor explained 42.81% (Eigenvalue= 11.99) of the variance. The second factor was **Service quality**. The items loaded on this factor were parking, hotel stay, and accessibility to the temple, staff, how the temple staff dealt with the devotee, and shopping at the temple



premises. The variance explained by this factor was 7.74 % (Eigenvalue= 2.16). The third factor was termed as **Religious belief**. The items that were loaded on this factor were: to pray, to wish, belief, to chant, holistic desire, and temple atmosphere. This factor explained 5.78 % (Eigenvalue = 1.16) of the variance. The fourth factor was named **Socialisation**. The items that were loaded on this were: to escape from routine, to enjoy and rest, and to meet new people. The variance explained by this factor was 3.71 % (Eigenvalue= 1.39). The fifth factor was labelled as **Behavioural Intention**. This factor explained 4.96 % (Eigenvalue=1.04) of the variance. The items loaded were, I will visit Bodhgaya with my relatives and friends, I would like to visit Bodhgaya one more time, I recommend Bodhgaya to my family and friends, I am ready to spend more money to visit Bodhgaya and, visiting Bodhgaya is more important than visiting any other religious place. Items such as 'temple location', 'destination management' and 'transportation' were deleted from further analysis they had low factor loading and cross-loading. Thus, a hypothetical model with three

religious tourist motivation constructs was derived from the EFA. The reliability coefficient i.e. Cronbach's alpha for all four religious motivation factors was calculated and it was found that all were above the recommended value of 0.6, except for socialisation (0.314). Therefore, this construct, was eliminated from further analysis. The data collected in the pilot test were not used in the final analysis because the purpose of the pilot test was not to test the hypothesis but to validate the measuring instrument. For testing the hypothesis, a total of 426 new questionnaires were distributed to visitors of Bodhgaya. 385 valid responses were used for further assessment after eliminating the missing information.

Results

Sample characteristics

Out of the 385 respondents, 227 (59%) were males, and 158 (41%) were females. The age of respondents varied from 18 to above 64. Nearly half of the respondents belonged to the age group of 34-48. Seventeen percent

Table 1: The mean, standard deviations and reliability of variables

Items in the scale	Item code	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
I visit Bodhgaya because of its authenticity	HAC1	4.23	0.79	0.85
I visit Bodhgaya because of the environment of the Temple	HAC2	4.27	0.79	
I visit Bodhgaya because of the History of the Temple	HAC3	4.22	0.88	
I visit Bodhgaya because of the Temple design	HAC4	4.22	0.83	
I visit Bodhgaya because of Landscape of the Temple	HAC5	4.11	0.82	
I visit Bodhgaya because of the customs followed at the Temple	HAC6	3.95	0.97	
Parking facilities at Bodhgaya are professionally managed	SER1	3.89	0.91	0.883
Hotel stay at Bodhgaya is pleasant	SER2	3.88	0.92	
Accessibility to the Temple is good	SER3	3.83	0.89	
Temple staff provide efficient service to devotees	SER4	3.97	0.92	
Dealing of Temple staff with devotees is professional	SER5	3.92	0.92	
Shopping at the Temple premises is enjoyable	SER6	3.92	0.91	
I visit Bodhgaya to pray	REG1	3.80	1.13	0.875
Visiting Bodhgaya was my wish	REG2	3.68	1.19	
I visit Bodhgaya because of my religious beliefs	REG3	3.78	1.14	
I visit Bodhgaya to chant	REG4	3.62	1.20	
I visit Bodhgaya for my holistic desire	REG5	3.84	1.03	
I visit Bodhgaya to see the temple atmosphere	REG6	4.07	0.93	
I visit Bodhgaya to escape from the routine	SOC1	3.58	1.27	0.495*
I visit Bodhgaya to enjoy and rest	SOC2	3.93	1.07	
I visit Bodhgaya to meet new people	SOC3	3.66	1.16	

Table 2: Factor Loadings of all Measured variables

Items	Item code	Factor Loading			
I visit Bodhgaya because of its authenticity	HAC1	0.785			
I visit Bodhgaya because of the environment of the Temple	HAC2	0.776			
I visit Bodhgaya because of the History of the Temple	HAC3	0.693			
I visit Bodhgaya because of the Temple design	HAC4	0.715			
I visit Bodhgaya because of the Landscape of the Temple	HAC5	0.607			
I visit Bodhgaya because of customs followed at the Temple	HAC6	0.506			
Parking facilities at Bodhgaya are professionally managed	SER1		0.769		
Hotel stay at Bodhgaya is pleasant	SER2		0.700		
Accessibility to the Temple is good	SER3		0.614		
Temple staff provide efficient service	SER4		0.566		
Dealing of Temple staff with devotees is professional	SER5		0.639		
Shopping at the Temple premises is enjoyable	SER6		0.608		
I visit Bodhgaya to pray	REG1			0.807	
Visiting Bodhgaya was my wish	REG2			0.846	
I visited Bodhgaya because of my religious belief	REG3			0.682	
I visited Bodhgaya to chant	REG4			0.598	
I am willing to spend more money to visit Bodhgaya	BI3				0.721
Visiting Buddhism sites is very important to me	BI4				0.543
I recommend Bodhgaya to my family and friends	BI5				0.657

of the respondents were above 64 years. Almost equal percentage (16% and 17%) of respondents belonged to the age groups 18-33 and 49-63. Among the respondents, graduates dominated comprising 48.6% of the sample, followed by postgraduate with 32.5%, high school was the lowest count, which was 19%.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

To validate and assess the model fit, CFA was conducted on 385 samples. CFA was used because it is an important analysis tool for many areas of social and behavioural sciences. It allows a researcher to investigate the causal relationship between the latent and observed variables in theory-based models such as this motivation - behavioural intention model. The advantage of CFA lies in its ability to aid in bridging the gap between theory and observation. Further, CFA also facilitates the investigator valuable information regarding the fit of the data in a theory driven model. The results of CFA revealed that all the items were loaded onto the respective constructs. The items that had factor loading values of less than 0.6 were removed (i.e. destination management). The model

fit was evaluated based on multiple bases. First, the ratio of chi-square to degrees of freedom (χ^2/df) was 2.683, which was well within the value of 3, as recommended by Hair *et al.* (2010). Second, the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) were 0.932, 0.944 and 0.944, respectively. These values were above 0.9 as recommended by Bentler and Bonett (1980). Third, the Root Mean Square error of approximation (RMSEA) was 0.066, which was less than the recommended threshold level of 0.08 (Browne & Cudeck, 1992).

The construct validity was inspected by examining the convergent validity and discriminant validity. The convergent validity was assessed by the Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) score. The results confirmed that there exists convergent validity among the construct measured (Table 3). To test the discriminant validity, it is suggested that AVE per construct should be higher than the correlations between any two different constructs. AVE matrices can be seen in Table 3, with the AVE on the diagonal and squared

Table 3: Test of reliability and validity

	CR	AVE	MSV	REG	SER	FAC	BI
REG	0.872	0.631	0.531	0.794			
SER	0.843	0.518	0.466	0.378*	0.720		
FAC	0.881	0.554	0.545	0.588*	0.683*	0.744	
BI	0.741	0.589	0.545	0.729	0.424	0.738	0.767

Significance of Correlations * $p < 0.001$

correlations among constructs on the off diagonal. The results specify that the elements in the principal diagonal were greater than the off-diagonal elements confirming the presence of discriminant validity.

Structural Equation Model (SEM)

SEM is a multivariate statistical analysis technique that is used to analyse structural relationship measured variables and latent constructs. This technique is the combination of factor analysis and multiple regression analysis and is preferred by the researcher because it estimates the multiple and interrelated dependence in a single analysis. In this analysis, two types of variables are used - endogenous variables and exogenous variables. Endogenous variables are equivalent to dependent variables and are equal to the independent variable.

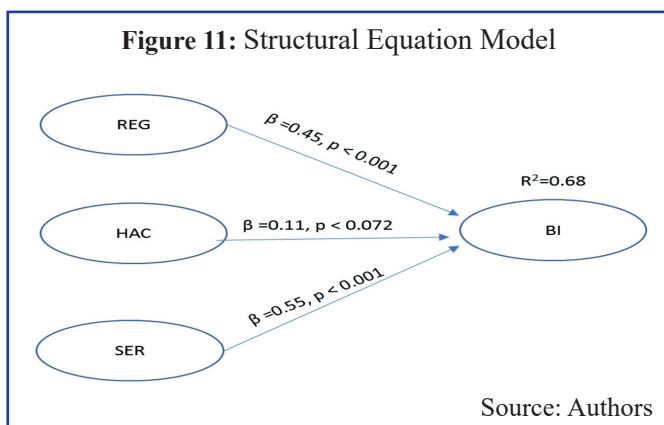
Thus, to test the proposed hypothesis, a structural model (Figure 11) was built. The model indices for the structural model fit are as follows: CMIN/DF = 2.757, RMSEA = 0.068, CFI = 0.941, IFI = 0.942, TLI = 0.929. The results indicate a satisfactory fit between the model and the observed data. Figure 11 shows the results of the structural model. Further, the SEM offers the standardised path coefficients between model constructs

and their statistical significance. The test also produces the squared multiple correlations (R^2), which indicates the variance of the dependent constructs.

Discussion and Conclusion

India is one of world’s largest reservoirs of history, culture, philosophy, heritage, and religion and these together list the country amongst the most desired destinations for tourists and pilgrims. The Buddhist Circuit, one of the important religious circuits in India follows the footsteps of Buddha from Lumbini (birth), to Bodhgaya (enlightenment), to Sarnath (first sermon) and Kushinagar (death). It visits the most significant and revered pilgrimage destinations for Buddhists as well as travellers worldwide. There have been continuous efforts to develop and promote the Buddhist circuit since the launch of the *Action Plan for the Development of Buddhist Circuit* in 1986. The rationale behind investing in the Buddhist Circuit is to improve the visitor experience of these sites, to deliver sustainable and inclusive growth, to create jobs and generate income, and to create opportunities for micro and small enterprises. It is evident that benefits of tourism reach the local population and thus contribute to the quality of life of the locals (IFC, 2012). Especially, in case of states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, India’s most populous states, accessing these benefits is vital for the growth.

Mahabodhi Temple located on the banks of Niranjana river at Bodhgaya, is one of the holiest sites for Buddhists. It illustrates the vitality of the ongoing debate on the meaning, understanding, and use of the sacred in the Indian context (Joshi, 2019). A descendant of the Bodhi Tree under which Buddha gained enlightenment stands adjacent to this temple. According to the Bodhgaya Temple act of 1949, the responsibilities of protecting,



managing and monitoring the temple and its properties are jointly shared by Bihar state government, Bodhgaya Temple Management, and an advisory board. In June 2002, the Mahabodhi Temple became a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The amendment to the Bodhgaya Temple Management Act, 2013 allows the Gaya District Magistrate to be the Chairman of the Committee, even if he is not Hindu (*The Hindu*, 2016). The Advisory Board consists of the governor of Bihar and twenty to twenty-five other members, half of them from foreign Buddhist countries.

The primary motive of pilgrimage travel to this site is religious and spiritual salvation and there are also groups of travellers who are interested in the associated factors attached to the religious sites such, historical attractions, monuments, temple design, landscape etc. Thus, this study aimed to identify both religious as well as non-religious motivational factors influencing the behavioural intention of tourists at Bodhgaya. To achieve this objective, the twenty-four motivational variables were identified in previous literature. Initially, all 24 items were analysed using EFA. The EFA resulted in a three-dimensional model, comprising *Religious belief*, *Historical attraction and culture*, and *Service quality*. Confirmatory factor analysis was performed to test the factor structure of the constructs. The results suggest a satisfactory model fit. Therefore, structural equation modelling was performed to test the proposed hypotheses.

The results suggest that *Service quality* is a significant predictor of the behaviour intention of Bodhgaya visitors. This finding is in line with a study conducted by Canny (2013), which suggests service quality is one of the crucial predictors of behavioural intention of religious tourists. Regardless of religious motivation, tourists have a certain level of expectation of services provided at a religious site such as accessibility, parking facilities, accommodation, etc. (Nolan & Nolan, 1992). Therefore, temple authorities need to consider this finding and concentrate on the allocation of human resources to provide better service quality at Bodhgaya. Additionally, the temple authorities need to pay attention to the five dimensions of service quality identified by Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988). *Tangibles* refer to the physical appearance of the facilities, personnel, and other material at religious sites. *Reliability* refers to the dependable and accuracy of

information provided by the service personnel at sites. *Responsiveness* describes willingness and promptness of temples authorities in helping the devotees. *Assurances* relates to knowledge and courtesy of temple service personnel. Finally, *Empathy* deals with caring and providing individualised attention to devotees. The temple authorities should focus on improving infrastructure such as parking facilities, accommodation, transportation, and service quality of the temple staff. Authorities should also pay attention to other attractions at each site, such as shopping, religious souvenirs, and the availability of literature on history and culture of the Buddhists circuits. With the availability of these facilities, visitors are better able to meet their need and requirement, take pleasure, and generate awareness.

Religious belief has emerged as a second significant predictor of religious tourists at Bodhgaya. The study conducted by Wang, Chen and Huang (2016) suggests that the religious belief was the deepest source of motivation for Buddhists in China. Religious belief has emerged as one of the strongest pull factors for Buddhist pilgrimage in India. This finding is in line with a study conducted by Wibowo and Masitoh (2018) which reveals that religious belief has a significant influence in shaping the behavioural intention of visitors. In other words, the higher the degree of religious belief, the stronger is the intention to visit the Buddhist site. This important finding will be useful for the temple authorities. The concerned temple authorities can organise a permanent annual event such as Buddha Jayanti and invite religious leaders from Southeast Asian countries. The government can also encourage tour operators to hold religious conferences in Bodhgaya, a holy place for two different religions, Buddhism and Hinduism (Sayers, 2010). This would help to popularise this site, while also improving the quality of life of the locals (Bhonsale, 2019).

The finding of this study suggest that *Historical attractions and cultures* are found to be non-significant, contrary to the findings of studies conducted in the past. (Lankford *et al.*, 2005; Toader, Vorzsak & Gut, 2009). Though it is found to be non-significant, the temple authorities can still pay attention to this factor because historical attractions, local customs, religious atmosphere etc., also attract visitors to the religious sites. It is worth noting that destinations along the Buddhist circuits

comprise of archaeological and spiritual gems from the preserved birthplace at Lumbini to the tranquil and surreal peace under the Banyan tree at Mahabodhi Temple. This circuit also includes 2,500 year old relics at Sarnath, the magnificent reclining statue of Buddha, monasteries and one of the oldest universities in the world at Nalanda, in addition to Vishwa Shanti Stupa in Rajgir and many more archaeological attractions. This circuit provides the unique opportunity to promote the site by focusing on various elements such as spiritualism, religion, history, archaeology, education, leisure and wellness, and has a huge potential to attract large numbers of visitors from all types of segments. Findings of this study will help the policymakers in formulating an appropriate brand image, packing and promoting strategy for this Buddhist site and establish it as a one of prominent sites of the Buddhist circuit.

Limitations

One of the limitations of the study is that data are collected from a single Buddhist site in India. Future studies can include a greater number of religious sites of the Buddhist circuit for a better understanding of motivation and behavioural relationships. Another limitation of this study is that it only identifies four factors of motivation; future studies can include a higher number of push-pull factors such as personal enrichment, religious learning, relaxation, pleasure-seeking, novelty-seeking, enjoyment, family togetherness, social status etc. Also, future studies should investigate the mediating effect of satisfaction and perceived value of religious tourists at Bodhgaya. Future studies could also investigate the moderating role of demographic variables such as age and gender on the relationship between motivation and behavioural intention of Buddhists circuit visitors.

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