Sustainable Spending in Destinations : Factors Discouraging Tourists

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Abstract

Purpose : This study investigated the factors influencing tourists' sustainable spending behavior in tourism destinations aimed to provide insights for policymakers and businesses to promote sustainability. The research objectives included identifying key factors affecting sustainable spending, assessing their impact, and examining their implications.

Methodology : A quantitative approach utilizing confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was employed to analyze data collected from tourists visiting destinations.

Findings : The major findings revealed six significant factors: Perceived costs, availability, awareness, convenience, hedonism & benefits, and culture, elucidating the complex interplay shaping sustainable spending behavior.

Theoretical Implications : The importance of perceptions, awareness, and cultural norms in understanding tourists' spending decisions has been found to be value added to the literature. A comprehensive measurement technique has been produced in the literature.

Practical Implications : This study offered insights for marketers to address perceived cost concerns, enhance availability, and promote awareness of sustainable options. Policymakers could use these findings to formulate targeted policies and incentives to encourage sustainable spending. This research also contributed to advancing the understanding of sustainable tourism spending and provided actionable insights to promote sustainability in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs).

Keywords : sustainability, spending, discouraging factors, tourists, sustainable options

JEL Classification Codes : Z32, Z33, Z38

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The hotel industry is predicted to generate US$446.50 billion by 2024 and draw 1,397.00 million visitors by 2028, respectively, as the worldwide travel and tourism business is anticipated to develop significantly.

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Sustainability issues are still present in spite of the industry's expansion (Miller & Torres-Delgado, 2023; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2023). Travelers increasingly seek authentic experiences, driving demand for off-the-beaten-path destinations (Apak & Gürbüz, 2023). Evidence suggests a shift toward sustainable travel in India (Ravichandran, 2023; Ruhanen et al., 2015). In this scenario, policymakers and destination marketers must prioritize sustainable spending promotion in tourism. Travelers emphasize sustainable and ecologically conscious spending when booking their trips; however, there are obstacles in the way (Gavurova et al., 2020). In other words, sustainable spending is managing expenses to meet current needs without compromising resources for future generations, prioritizing economic, social, and environmental balance.

In tourism, sustainable tourist spending refers to tourists' expenditures that support local economies, conserve environments, and respect cultural heritage for long-term benefits. It is necessary to conduct research to address the issues that deter businesses and politicians from making sustainable spending decisions, which have an impact on the economy. Additionally, research should be done to help address the financial aspects of sustainable tourism inclusion. The importance of sustainable spending in tourism cannot be overstated, as it plays a crucial role in balancing economic growth with environmental conservation and cultural preservation. Promoting sustainable spending is crucial to ensuring that the travel and tourist industry doesn't develop at the expense of future generations as it continues to grow at a rapid rate. Studies on sustainable tourist spending are still in their infancy, despite the benefits being widely acknowledged; this suggests a substantial vacuum in the body of knowledge. There is a great deal of untapped potential in this field of study, and the insights it provides can help stakeholders in the sector and policymakers promote sustainable tourism practices. As a result, an excerpt from extensive study has been created to help understand sustainable tourism behaviors. This paper examines the barriers that prevent travelers from making environmentally friendly purchases at the locations and offers suggestions to legislators and advertising agencies.

Research Background

Sustainable spending in tourism is increasingly recognized for its reflection of environmental and social responsibility. However, despite its importance, the economic implications of sustainable spending still need to be explored in the literature. Previous research has concentrated on the traits of travelers and how travel influences consumers' purchasing decisions (Brida & Scuderi, 2013; Marcussen, 2011). Factors such as travel party size, accommodation type, transportation modes, and destination choice have been identified as critical determinants of spending patterns (Bernini & Cracolici, 2015; Yang et al., 2021). However, there needs to be a more significant gap in understanding the broader financial aspects that influence sustainable spending. Tourists often base their spending decisions on economic benefits, such as perceived costs and availability of sustainable options. Studies indicate that visitors may be discouraged from selecting sustainable tourism goods and services because they believe that these options are more costly than traditional ones (Dodds et al., 2010; Hedlund, 2011).

Moreover, the limited availability of sustainable options in tourism destinations hampers tourists' ability to make sustainable choices (Scheyvens, 2002). This lack of accessibility further exacerbates the challenge of promoting sustainable spending. Additionally, a significant factor in how much tourists spend is their knowledge of sustainable practices and how they affect society and the environment. Many tourists need more awareness of sustainable options and their benefits, leading to a preference for conventional choices (Miller et al., 2017). Additionally, tourists perceive sustainable options as less convenient and accessible, influencing their decision-making and spending behavior (Martins et al., 2022; Scheyvens, 2002). Travelers' shopping habits are influenced by cultural norms and expectations in certain locations, which can lead them to value luxury and convenience over sustainability (Mehmetoglu, 2007). Understanding these barriers is essential for tourism markets, policymakers, and businesses, particularly from a financial perspective. Understanding cost-related aspects like perceived costs

and the availability of sustainable solutions is essential to evaluating the economic sustainability of sustainable tourism efforts. To increase tourism and encourage sustainable spending habits, financial players can devise strategies to lower the cost and increase the accessibility of sustainable solutions.

Moreover, recognizing the economic benefits of sustainable spending, such as contributing to local economies and reducing overhead costs, emphasizes the financial incentives for businesses to invest in sustainable practices. There is a significant research vacuum when it comes to examining the financial effects of these obstacles. More research is necessary to fully understand how perceived costs and availability affect sustainable spending habits as well as how they affect destination marketing strategies, legislative decisions, and the general economic viability of tourism destinations (Brida et al., 2020). To close this gap and support travelers' increasing willingness to pay for sustainable goods and services, more information might be obtained about how best to promote sustainability in the tourism industry (Hibbert et al., 2013; Wehrli et al., 2011). Furthermore, integrating the latest insights on consumer spending trends and economic outcomes in destinations that have successfully implemented sustainable tourism practices would provide a robust foundation for comprehensive understanding and addressing these issues. Stakeholders could work together to develop marketing plans and policies that incorporate sustainable spending components and emphasize the long-term financial advantages of sustainable tourism, making it an appealing and feasible choice for all parties. These stakeholders include businesses, government agencies, and tourism policymakers.

Derived Methodology

Type of the Research

An empirical method examined the variables deterring visitors from spending sustainably in Tamil Nadu's tourist attractions.

Sample Framework and Timeline

Tamil Nadu, an important Indian tourism destination with important historical monuments that are expected to draw 21.89 million visitors in 2022, was the subject of this study. Sampling focused on visitors to Tamil Nadu's tourism destinations after the outbreak.

Sampling Technique

Respondent-driven sampling (RDS), involving snowball sampling via Facebook travel groups, was used to ensure diverse respondent selection and data collection.

Sample Characteristics

The sample comprised 43% males, 40% females, and 17% respondents with other gender identities or undisclosed. Age-wise, 44.3% were aged 25 to 35, with 64.2% holding postgraduate degrees. The survey included 84% of Indian respondents and 16% from diverse countries, collected between 2022 and 2023.

Scaling Items

A scale development strategy was used because a consistent scale was required. Thirty-six dimensions were first

determined by literature analysis and expert talks. The questionnaire was improved to contain 29 items measuring six variables after a pilot study with 30 respondents, as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1. *Factors Discouraging Tourists' Sustainable Spending*

Factors Discouraging Tourists' Sustainable Spending

Perceived Cost (Five Items)

I believe sustainable options are more costly than conventional ones *(PC1).*

I cannot afford to buy sustainable products or services in the destinations *(PC2).*

I heard sustainable accommodation or transportation options are very high *(PC3).*

I think sustainable spending may have additional costs that are hidden *(PC4).*

I am unsure about the value for money when I go for sustainable options *(PC5).*

Availability (Five Items)

Sustainable options are very minimal in tourism destinations *(Av1).*

There are no varieties of sustainable products/services *(Av2).*

Lack of information or promotion about sustainable alternatives in tourism contexts *(Av3).*

Accessibility is a challenge for experiencing sustainable products/services *(Av4).*

The availability of sustainable accommodations could be improved in remote areas *(Av5).*

Awareness (Five Items)

I need to learn about sustainable products/services and their benefits in tourism *(Aw1).*

Many things need to be clarified about sustainability in tourism activities *(Aw2).*

More adequate education or information about sustainability needs to be provided by tourism stakeholders *(Aw3).*

Minimal exposure to sustainable tourism initiatives or campaigns *(Aw4).*

Lack of understanding of how tourists' choices contribute to sustainable development *(Aw5).*

Convenience (Four Items)

Sustainable options are less convenient *(Co1).*

Sustainable accommodations or attractions are in an inconvenient location *(Co2).*

I prefer convenience over sustainability due to time constraints *(Co3).*

Sustainable options in destinations create mobility issues and satisfy special needs *(Co4).*

Hedonism and Benefits (Five Items)

I like to have fun and enjoy it even if it is not the best for the environment in the long run *(HB1).*

I do not see any unique benefits or rewards for choosing eco-friendly options over regular ones *(HB2).*

I want to treat myself to something fancy or exciting, even if it could be more eco-friendly *(HB3).*

Nobody notices or says anything when I am eco-conscious with my choices *(HB4).*

I prefer luxurious things because they feel more memorable and enjoyable than eco-friendly options *(Hb5).*

Culture (Five items)

I see my community prioritizing convenience and luxury rather than sustainability *(Cu1).*

I feel like I need to do what everyone else is doing when I am traveling *(Cu2).*

My people do not value or understand the importance of sustainable practices *(Cu3).*

When I am with my friends or in a group, I tend to spend money based on what everyone else is doing *(Cu4).*

I usually go for the typical tourist experiences instead of choosing more sustainable options *(Cu5).*

Data Collection

A total of 285 travelers completed the survey out of 361 received links through Facebook Messenger. Ninety-nine were selected as the final sample after being screened for response credibility.

Discussion

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) were employed in this investigation. To evaluate the underlying dimensions, SPSS's EFA dimension-reduction technique was used first. Varimax rotation was used during the study to improve the interpretation of the results. Then, CFA was used to confirm the existence of the model and measure the factors that discourage sustainable spending in tourism destinations and its significance.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

The number of elements to keep was determined by applying EFA with varimax rotation and the eigenvalues surpassing one criterion. With the retention of 29 components, this method produced a six-component solution. Every factor had an alpha coefficient that was higher than 0.5, which suggests that the internal consistency was adequate. Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) testing was used to verify sample adequacy, and the results showed a KMO value of 0.822. A total of 75% of the variance was explained by a factor structure that the EFA clarified. The findings of the EFA are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. *EFA Results : Factors Discouraging Sustainable Spending by Tourists*

Rotated Component Matrix	Components						CR	AVE	DV	Alpha	Mean
	1	2	3	4	5	6					
Perceived Cost							0.955	0.746	0.844	0.843	**3.98**
PC1			0.831								4.9
PC2			0.840								3.6
PC3			0.744								3.8
PC4			0.697								4
PC5			0.729								3.6
Availability							0.911	0.786	0.759	0.859	**3.74**
Av1	0.858										4.2
Av2	0.916										4
Av3	0.921										3.6
Av4	0.873										3.8
Av5	0.795										3.1
Awareness							0.936	0.808	0.841	0.876	**3.486**
Aw1			0.908								2.9
Aw2			0.795								3.6
Aw3			0.652								3.33
Aw4			0.655								4.1

Item				CR	AVE	DV	Alpha	Mean
Aw5		0.725						3.5
Convenience		0.746		0.867	0.821	0.863	0.832	**3.475**
Co1		0.685						4.1
Co2		0.753						4
Co3		0.795						3.3
Co4		0.820						2.5
Hedonism & Benefits				0.896	0.841	0.899	0.863	**3.86**
HB1	0.690							3.9
HB2	0.751							4.5
HB3	0.795							4.1
HB4	0.805							3.9
HB5	0.841							2.9
Culture				0.965	0.881	0.844	0.843	**3.56**
Cu1			0.753					2.7
Cu2			0.841					4
Cu3			0.752					3.7
Cu4			0.821					4
Cu5			0.833					3.4

Note. *PC* – Perceived Costs, *Av* – Availability, *Aw* – Awareness, *Co* – Convenience, *HB* – Hedonism and Benefits, *Cu* – Culture. All these items are ordered per the list of items in Table 1 in the research methodology section. CR – Composite reliability, AVE – Average variance extracted, DV – Discriminant validity, Alpha – Reliability.

The results highlight six factors influencing tourists' sustainable spending behavior in tourism destinations. Factor 1, Perceived Costs, significantly impacts spending decisions, with solid reliability and discriminant validity (α = 0.955, AVE = 0.746, DV = 0.844). Factor 2, Availability, also strongly influences spending (α = 0.911, AVE = 0.786) despite slightly lower discriminant validity (DV = 0.759). Factor 3, Awareness, plays a notable role in spending decisions, with high reliability and discriminant validity (α = 0.936, AVE = 0.808, DV = 0.841). Factor 4, Convenience, exhibits moderate factor loadings and strong reliability (α = 0.867, AVE = 0.821, DV = 0.863). Factor 5, Hedonism and Benefits, significantly influences spending, with high reliability and discriminant validity (α = 0.896, AVE = 0.841, DV = 0.899). Ultimately, component 6 (Culture) exhibits a significant impact on spending behavior and has strong discriminant validity and reliability (α = 0.965, AVE = 0.881, DV = 0.844). All of these elements work together to highlight how perceptions, awareness, and cultural norms interact intricately to influence travelers' sustainable spending patterns. The mean values indicate that Cultural Norms, Availability Issues, and Perceived Cost are the main deterrents to sustainable spending. Perceived Cost is the most discouraging factor, with high mean scores (ranging from 3.6 to 4.9), indicating significant concerns about affordability and hidden expenses. Availability is the second factor, with minimal options and lack of variety scoring notably high (mean scores ranging from 3.1 to 4.2). Finally, Cultural Influences play a substantial role (ranging from 2.7 to 4), reflecting the prioritization of convenience, societal norms, and group dynamics over sustainability.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

CFA has been used to confirm the model's existence regarding the factors discouraging tourists from spending sustainable time in destinations. The CFA model fit assessment encompasses three key phases: absolute,

parsimonious, and incremental. Two iterations were conducted based on the modification index (MI) values, indicating errors in factor correlations. One item, Aw3 of the awareness factor, was removed due to its MI value of 64, which threatened the model fit. The second iteration involved 28 items across the six dimensions. Absolute model fit was evaluated using root mean square error approximation (RMSEA) and goodness of fit index (GFI). Incremental model fit included adjusted goodness of fit (AGFI), comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker–Lewis's index (TLI), and normed fit index (NFI). The parsimonious fit was assessed through the chi-square value divided by degrees of freedom (CMIN/df). The results indicate favorable model fit: CMIN/df = 2.54 (<5), NFI = 0.911, TLI = 0.963, CFI = 0.958 (close to 1), RMSEA = 0.063 (<0.08), aligning with acceptable model fit ranges (Zhang et al., 2022). The interrelationships between the factors are also positively significant ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion

The study identifies six key factors impacting tourists' sustainable spending behavior: Perceived Cost, Availability, Awareness, Convenience, Hedonism and Benefits, and Culture. Among these, perceived costs, lack of availability, and cultural norms are the major deterrents to sustainable spending. This short communication has various theoretical and practical implications, limitations, and further scope for research in this arena.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

The findings offer insights into the complex dynamics influencing tourists' sustainable spending behavior. First, the six identified factors comprehensively evaluate the decision-making processes that contribute to the individuals' financial well-being (Sehrawat & Vij, 2020). Second, the researchers' assessment of customer behavior with respect to pricing strategies and product creation is made easier by perceived costs, culture, and hedonism. While the existing literature highlights more green economy consumption (Yumei et al., 2022), public spending (Liu et al., 2022), and government spending (Ridwan et al., 2023), this research has focused on consumers' sustainable spending. Moreover, the derived scale for measuring the sustainable spending of tourists is novel among all the other existing literature insights, offering a unique analytical measurement scale to assess and promote sustainable financial behaviors in the tourism sector.

Practical Implications

This research highlights that tourists face challenges that prevent them from sustainable spending. For marketers, understanding the discouraging factors like high perceived costs and limited availability would contribute to product pricing, differentiation and distribution strategies to make sustainable options more accessible and affordable. These tactics would encourage the markets to improve and promote the environmentally conscious and sustainable consumption habits of customers (tourists) (Ghose & Chandra, 2018; Sharief & Panghal, 2023). This research also contributes to policymakers' focus on raising sustainability awareness and incentivizing tourism businesses to offer eco-friendly alternatives. Such policy implications determine successful business economies and derive sustainable competitive advantage for industries (Bhatti & Negi, 2018; Denyse & Bhagat, 2018).

Additionally, addressing cultural norms through education campaigns and community engagement would significantly influence consumer preferences toward sustainable spending. This research also contributes to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) 2030 by informing strategies for sustainable

consumption (Goal 12), mainly in tourism. It has helped legislators create focused programs by identifying the obstacles, such as availability and cost perception. In line with partnership aims (Goal 17), it promotes environmental sustainability (Goal 13) and inclusive economic growth (Goal 8).

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

The primary limitation is regarding the sample. This research was conducted on tourists visiting specific destinations, potentially limiting the findings' generalizability to other regions or tourist demographics. Increasing or decreasing the sample size may produce varied results. This study, however, sets the venue for further research into the dynamics of sustainable spending behaviors, including longitudinal studies and cross-cultural comparisons. The research findings can be applied to the creation of sustainable tourism offerings, fostering innovation and enhancing industry competitiveness. In order to promote sustainable tourist practices and lessen obstacles to sustainable spending, stakeholders—including companies, governments, and community organizations—can collaborate more effectively, as suggested by the research findings.

Authors' Contribution

Dr. Sabari Shankar Ravichandran developed the creativity of this short communication. Dr. Subhashree Natarajan reviewed the literature and context setting, while Dr. Elizabeth Renju Koshy did the extreme analysis. This is an extract from research on understanding tourists' sustainable behaviours in destinations.

Conflict of Interest

The authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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