

INVESTIGATING THE FACTORS IMPACTING TOURIST SATISFACTION IN LUMBINI, NEPAL.

Bhim Bahadur Khadka

Department of Commerce and Business Administration, University of Allahabad, India

Anajani Kumar Malviya

Department of Commerce and Business Administration, University of Allahabad, India

Abstract

Lumbini is in the Rupandehi district of Nepal, the birthplace of Lord Buddha and features sacred temples and monuments, including the Maya Devi Temple. As a UNESCO World Heritage Site, this place attracts millions of tourists annually from Nepal and beyond, offering them a rich cultural and historical experience. This study aims to explore the factors that drive tourist satisfaction at Lumbini. The study surveyed 403 tourists who visited the site during the study period to collect data. This study employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze the data, assessing the reliability and validity of the measurement instruments by examining Cronbach's alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), factor loadings, and the Fornell-Larcker Criterion. The analysis of the outer model involved scrutinizing path coefficients, T statistics, and P values, as well as conducting significance tests to explore the relationships between the constructs and to ascertain the extent to which the proposed model elucidated variance in tourist satisfaction at religious sites in Lumbini. The findings reveal that factors such as accessibility, service quality, natural environment, religious events, spiritual significance and safety/security affect the satisfaction among tourists with the destination. The study's implications underscore the guidance to authorities of Lumbini and policymakers in prioritizing preservation efforts, developing infrastructure, enhancing visitor experiences, and promoting sustainable management practices at Lumbini and similar religious sites to ensure tourist satisfaction and long-term tourism sustainability.

Keywords:

Religious tourism, Pilgrimage, Religious sites, Satisfaction, Lumbini

1. Introduction

Religious tourism is one of the earliest manifestations of tourism (Rinschede, 1992) and has emerged as a significant and diversified sector within global tourism (Sharpley, 2009). It encompasses various activities such as pilgrimages, retreats, and festivals (Stausberg, 2014). Similarly, Raj et al. (2015) defined religious tourism as visits driven by both spiritual and secular

motives, playing a pivotal role in fostering economic development. Hence, the tourism sector recognizes religious tourism as a discernible and influential niche. Moreover, religious tourism is a social and economic phenomenon that confers new value to tourist destinations, both for visitors and for the recipient communities (Kim et al., 2020). Visiting sites of religious pilgrimage has evolved into the creation of a tourism product. Over the past decade, religious tourism has experienced widespread popularity and growth. Religious tourist sites draw over 300 million visitors annually, contributing to an industry valued at approximately US\$20 billion per year (Huang and Pearce, 2019). The unique characteristics of religious tourism have captured the interest of scholars across disciplines such as religious studies, psychology, leisure, sociology, and tourism (Argyle, 2002; Harris, 2004).

In Sanskrit literature, the concept of tourism in Hinduism is derived from the root "atan," including paryatan (travelling for pleasure and knowledge), deshatan (travelling to other countries primarily for economic purposes), and tirthatan (undertaking pilgrimage) (Rai, 2020). Similarly, within Buddhism, religious tourism is characterized by the pilgrimage to sites identified by Buddha to his followers as Lumbini (birthplace), Buddhagaya (the site of enlightenment), Sarnath (where he delivered his first sermon), and Kusinagara (the site of Nirvana-Buddha death) (Lafortune et al., 2020). This emphasis on pilgrimage underscores its enduring spiritual significance within Buddhism, with Lumbini particularly warranting comprehensive study due to its underexplored potential for global tourism.

Lumbini, revered as the birthplace of Gautam Buddha, has become a significant pilgrimage site and tourist attraction. Recent data from the Visitors' Information Centre of Lumbini Development Trust shows a noticeable increase in tourist arrivals, including domestic and international travellers from South, Southeast, and East Asia. The growth of religious tourism in Lumbini plays a crucial role in driving tourism from both within the country and abroad, supported by the area's historical significance, religious events, and improvements in transportation infrastructure (Poudel, 2022). In competitive market economies, ensuring tourist satisfaction is crucial for religious tourism destinations as satisfied visitors are more likely to revisit and recommend them (Correia et al., 2013). However, quantifying satisfaction is complex due to individual experiences and perceptions (Rajesh, 2013). Therefore, there is significant emphasis on understanding and enhancing visitor satisfaction within the religious tourism sector, which greatly influences site promotion and development (Ateljevic et al., 2007; Sharpley, 2009; Collins, 2010). In this context, it is necessary to conduct further comprehensive studies focusing on tourist satisfaction in Lumbini that would significantly contribute to policy intervention for enhancing visitor satisfaction within religious pilgrimage sites.

Prior research has highlighted various factors affecting tourist satisfaction; however, inconsistencies in methodologies and measurements have led to differing findings regarding significant determinants. Particularly, past studies have predominantly focused on satisfaction in contexts beyond religious sites, resulting in a gap in understanding tourist satisfaction at such destinations. While some studies have addressed tourist satisfaction at religious sites, there remains a notable gap concerning research exploring satisfaction at Lumbini, the largest Buddhist

pilgrimage site globally. This identified gap in existing literature emphasizes the critical importance of the current study. Accordingly, this study aims to investigate the determinants of tourist satisfaction at Lumbini in Nepal. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- To determine the religious significance of Lumbini by exploring its historical and cultural context within Buddhism.
- To assess the current tourism pattern and status of Lumbini, including visitor demographics, visitor numbers, and their motivations for visiting.
- To investigate the factors influencing tourist satisfaction at religious sites, with a specific emphasis on Lumbini in Nepal.

The study's findings can guide authorities of Lumbini and policymakers in prioritizing preservation efforts, developing infrastructure, enhancing visitor experiences, and promoting sustainable management practices at Lumbini and similar religious sites to ensure tourist satisfaction and long-term tourism sustainability.

2. Lumbini, Nepal: Understanding Accessibility, Religious Significance and Tourism Patterns

Lumbini is situated at (27°46'55" N and 83°02'49" E) Rupandehi District of the Lumbini Province in the Central Terai region of Nepal. It carries profound religious and cultural significance as the birthplace of Buddha, rendering it a revered religious site for adherents of Buddhism globally, as well as individuals from diverse religious backgrounds. It is 327 km southwest of Kathmandu, 175 km south of the famous tourist destination Pokhara, and 23 km west of Siddhartha Nagar, Bhairahawa. Likewise, it is 5 km north of Sunauli, a town located at the international border with India. Additionally, the transportation infrastructure facilitating access to Lumbini is robust, characterized by a regular bus service operating at half-hour intervals from Bhairahawa. From this pilgrimage, one can readily access the Siddhartha National Highway within a 30-minute bus ride linking Bhairahawa and other tourist places in Nepal (Poudel, 2022). Similarly, a tourist can embark on a flight journey approximately 35 minutes from Tribhuvan International Airport, ultimately arriving at Gautam Buddha International Airport in Siddharthanagar, situated 22 kilometres from the revered pilgrimage site of Lumbini (Rai, 2020).

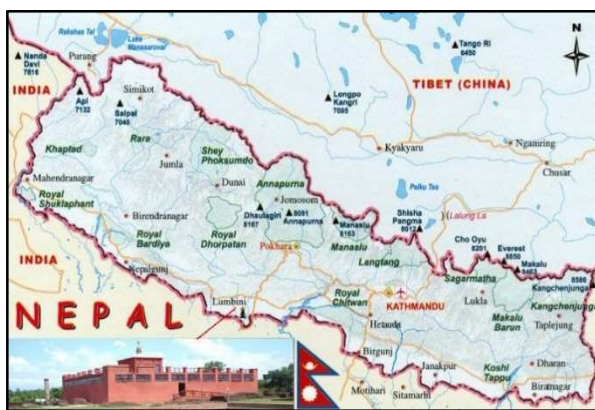


Figure 1: Map of Nepal showing location of Lumbini
(Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e5/Map_of_Nepal_showing_location_of_Lumbini.jp)

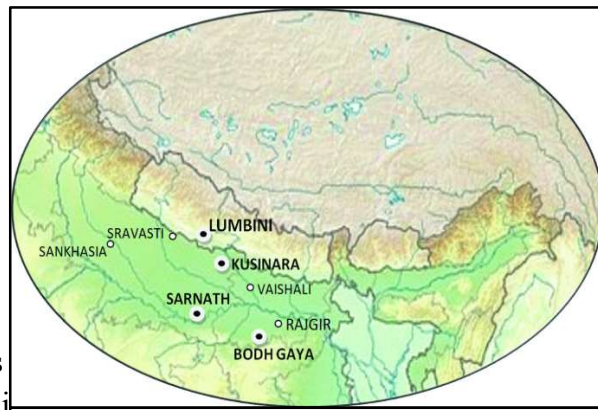


Figure 2: Major Buddhist pilgrimages including Lumbini
(Source: Paudel, 2022)

the esteemed birthplace of the "Sage of the Shakyas" (UNESCO, 2013). Furthermore, Lumbini is full of sacred gardens with the Maya Devi Temple, Puskarni Pond, stupas, and monastic areas. These features, dating back to the 6th century, have significantly contributed to the site's transformation into a revered Buddhist pilgrimage destination and centre of worship (Coningham et al., 2013).

Lumbini encompasses over 200 historical, archaeological, and pilgrimage sites associated with the life of Buddha and Buddhist culture, attracting pilgrims and tourists since ancient times. The archaeological landscape of Lumbini is rich with excavated remnants of Buddhist monasteries, including viharas and stupas dating from the 3rd century to the 15th century (Poudel, 2022). Notable among these archaeological sites is Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu, identified as Buddha's birthplace and his residence for 29 and Ramagrama is known as a significant archaeological site housing one of the original eight stupas containing Buddha's ashes (UNESCO, 2013). In addition, other efforts are underway to transform Lumbini into a premier Buddhist pilgrimage destination, aiming to preserve and showcase its rich archaeological heritage associated with the birth of Lord Buddha (Poudel, 2022).

Siddhārtha Gautama, the historical figure often revered as the Buddha, is also known as Sakyamuni, denoting his association with the Sakya clan and connoting 'the sage of the Shakyas'. Followers of Buddhism honour him as the Lord (Bhagwan), while 'Buddha' serves as an honorific title meaning 'awakened one', typically reserved for individuals who have attained enlightenment (Liu, 2022). As the Buddha approached the culmination of his life, he imparted guidance to his disciples regarding four pivotal religious destinations integral to his spiritual journey: Lumbini, marking his birth; Bodh Gaya, the site of his enlightenment; Sarnath, where he delivered his first sermon; and Kushinagara, the place for his anticipated Mahaparinirvana, or "Great Passing Away." These profound spiritual significances have historically motivated adherents of Buddhism to undertake pilgrimages to Lumbini as a gesture of reverence towards the enduring legacy of Lord Buddha (Trainor, 2004; Keown, 2013). In addition to the primary sites explicitly identified by the Buddha, Emperor Ashoka enhanced the prominence of four supplementary locations within the Buddhist pilgrimage tradition. These sites, namely Savatthi, Sankasia, Rajagaha, and Vaisali, were integrated into the Buddhist religious circuit. Therefore, the collective incorporation of these eight sacred sites served to underscore the historical and spiritual depth connected to the life and doctrinal heritage of the Buddha within the territories of Nepal and India (Poudel, 2022).



Figure 3: Eternal peace flame, Lumbini Nepal (Source: https://as1.ftcdn.net/v2/jpg/05/47/06/34/1000_F_547063433_CpslKBOuFtZa0mxFWtzMSxq0u8qqE66N.jpg)



Figure 4: Tourists visiting Lumbini on the day of Buddha Purnima (Source: The author)

Lumbini has emerged as a significant focal point for religious tourism, garnering substantial attention from visitors. Lumbini holds a special place in the collective consciousness of Nepal, symbolizing the nation's cultural and religious heritage with considerable national pride (Lafortune et al., 2020; Poudel, 2022). It stands as a site of profound importance within Buddhism, offering valuable insights into the characteristics of early Buddhist pilgrimage centres dating back to the 3rd century BC (Rai, 2020). The Lumbini Trust Development (LTD) is working on advancing and preserving the cultural and spiritual significance of Lumbini. It focuses on organizing national and international religious and cultural events, infrastructure improvements, educational programs, and community empowerment to enhance visitor experiences and promote socio-economic development in the region (UNWTO, 2017).

Table 1: Key activities for the development and promotion of Lumbini as a religious site

S.N.	Activities	Year
1.	UN Secretary-General U Thant visited Lumbini	1967
2.	Identification of Lumbini as an important tourist site by Nepal Tourism Master Plan	1972
3.	Completion of Lumbini Development Master Plan by Kenzo Tange (Japanese architect)	1978
4.	Approval of the Master plan by the Government of Nepal	1985
5.	The UN International Committee approved the Master Plan	1985
6.	Establishment of the Lumbini Development Committee	1985
7.	Inclusion of Lumbini as a World Heritage site by UNESCO	1997
8.	First Buddhist Submit "Lumbini as Foundation of World Peace"	1998
9.	First International Buddhist Conference	2001
10.	Restoration of Maya Devi (Mother of Buddha) Temple	2003

11.	Second World Buddhist Summit	2004
12.	Nepal Government organized "Visit Lumbini Year"	2012
13.	Visit of President of Sri Lanka, Mahinda Rajapaksa on November 25	2014
14.	Second International Buddhist Conference	2018
15.	Visit of President of Sri Lanka, Maithripala Sirisena on September 1	2018
16.	First International Conference on "Religion & Culture in Conflict & Peace: Reconciliation and Peace Building in South Asia held on May 26-27	2019
17.	Third International Buddhist Conference	2020
18.	Visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and prayed at Mayadevi Temple on May 16	2022

Source: UNESCO (2013); Poudel (2022)

Lumbini has undergone significant development and recognition over the years, marked by key milestones. These include the 1967 visit of UN Secretary-General U Thant, the identification of Lumbini as a prominent tourist site in Nepal's 1972 Tourism Master Plan, and the completion of the Lumbini Development Master Plan by architect Kenzo Tange in 1978. Subsequent approvals of the Master Plan by the Government of Nepal and the UN International Committee in 1985, along with the incorporation of the Lumbini Development Committee, further underscored its importance. Lumbini gained UNESCO World Heritage status in 1997, followed by significant events such as the First Buddhist Summit in 1998, the restoration of Maya Devi Temple in 2003, and the organization of "Visit Lumbini Year" by the Nepal Government in 2012. Notable visits by dignitaries like Sri Lankan Presidents Mahinda Rajapaksa and Maithripala Sirisena in 2014 and 2018, respectively, as well as Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit in 2022, have highlighted its international significance. Additionally, a series of international Buddhist conferences and scholarly gatherings have contributed to its recognition as a centre for Buddhist heritage and global peace efforts.

Lumbini receives a mix of visitors, including international and domestic tourists, religious pilgrims, and scholars. In addition to the religious significance of the site, visitors are also attracted to the modern amenities and services available, such as hotels, restaurants, and souvenir shops (Pathak & Paudel, 2019). Furthermore, the government has developed various tour packages that include visits to Lumbini, ensuring that it is included in many travel itineraries (Khanal, 2009). Despite the significant increase in tourist visits, Lumbini has yet to reach the pre-pandemic levels seen in 2019, when it welcomed more than 1.5 million tourists. The year 2020, impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, saw a sharp decline, similar to many other tourist destinations worldwide. Nonetheless, there has been a slow but steady recovery in tourist arrivals in the following years (Rai, 2020).

Table 2 presents a comprehensive dataset from 2014 to 2022 obtained from the Visitors' Information Centre, LDT, detailing the arrivals of tourists to Lumbini, Nepal. The data reveals fluctuations in tourist numbers over the years, with distinct trends and percentage differences between consecutive years. From 2014 to 2019, there was an evident increase in tourist arrivals,

with Nepalese visitors consistently forming the largest group, followed by Indian visitors and those from other third countries.

Table 2: The arrival of tourists in Lumbini

Year	Nepali	Indian	Third Country	Total	Percentage difference of consecutive years
2014	902621	154216	136991	1193828	
2015	488852	130262	129180	748294	-37.32%
2016	1015158	134269	136253	1285680	71.81%
2017	1251346	155444	145796	1552586	20.80%
2018	1170571	193635	169904	1534110	-1.19%
2019	1178140	206171	174015	1558326	1.58%
2020	COVID-19 Pandemic				
2021	463963	43732	1197	508892	-67.34% (Year 2019 and 2021)
2022	649063	230863	23942	903868	77.61%

Source: Visitors' Information Centre, LDT (2022)

Notably, there was a substantial increase of 71.81% in 2016 compared to 2015, indicating a significant surge in tourism during that period. However, in 2020, there was a notable absence of data due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected global travel and tourism activities. The subsequent years, 2021 and 2022, show varying degrees of recovery, with a sharp decline of -67.34% in total arrivals in 2021 compared to 2019, followed by a notable rebound of 77.61% in 2022 compared to 2021.

3. Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses Development

Based on a comprehensive literature review focusing on Lumbini, this study has taken a research framework comprising tourist satisfaction as the endogenous variable and accessibility, service quality, natural environment, religious events, spiritual significance and safety/security as exogenous variables. The study's framework draws upon the research of Canoves and Prat Forga (2016) and Verma and Sarangi (2019).

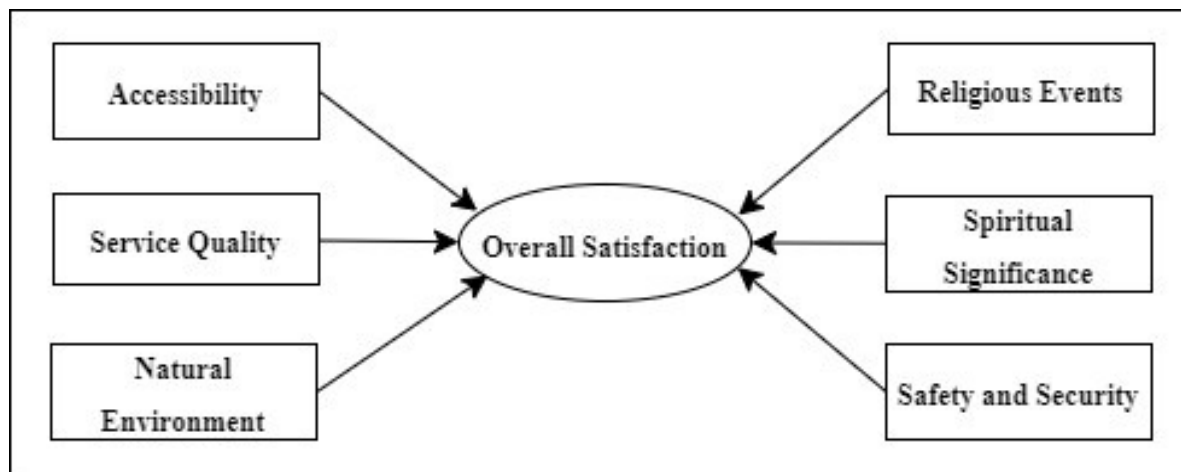


Figure 5: Theoretical framework of the study

3.1 Theoretical framework of the study

3.1 Theoretical framework

3.1.1 Tourism satisfaction: An endogenous variable

Satisfaction is the level of contentment arising from the perception of performance relative to prior expectations. Spreng et al. (1996) elaborated on two precursors of satisfaction: attribute satisfaction and information satisfaction. Various models and theories, such as expectation/disconfirmation and perceived overall performance, have been proposed to understand tourist/pilgrim satisfaction, adapted from marketing concepts (Kozak and Rimmington, 2000; Yoon and Uysal, 2005). Satisfaction significantly influences loyalty and revisit decisions in religious and tourist destinations (Kozak and Rimmington, 2000; Yoon and Uysal, 2005). Studies corroborate the link between satisfaction and loyalty in tourism (Chen and Chen, 2010; Lee et al., 2011; Khan, Haque and Rahman, 2013). Zhang et al. (2014) emphasized the importance of satisfaction attributes in assessing event loyalty and service performance in tourism.

In addition, the past literature shows different perspectives on tourist' satisfaction, as elucidated by researchers. Pizam, Neumann and Reichel (1978) described tourist satisfaction as the result of comparing how visitors feel about their experience with what they expected from the destination before they arrived. Pearce (1980) contended that tourist satisfaction is contingent upon tourists' perceptions both before and after their travel experiences. Kozak (2002) underscored the pivotal role of tourist satisfaction in shaping the success and marketing efficacy of destinations, influencing tourists' destination choices, product or service utilization, and intent to revisit. Similarly, Prayag (2009) and Wang and Hsu (2010) suggested that satisfaction may be contingent upon the quality of offerings and payment modalities. Hence, tourist satisfaction emerges as a multidimensional and intricate construct, centred on the tourism destination or area rather than isolated service encounters. Evaluation of tourist satisfaction typically occurs post-experience, following engagement in travel holidays or activities.

3.1.2 Exogenous variables of the study

i) Accessibility

Scholars define accessibility as encompassing all facilities and conveniences provided to tourists, enabling their reach to tourist destinations. Prioritizing enhanced accessibility ensures visitor flow to religious tourist destinations (Gržinić and Saftić, 2012). However, excessive ease of accessibility may lead to overcrowding, diminishing the destination's appeal (Siregar and Siregar, 2022). While adventurous travellers may be willing to exert efforts to visit exotic locations, most tourists prefer easily accessible destinations (Siregar and Siregar, 2022). Accessibility includes facilities and infrastructure facilitating visits to attractions, such as transportation along with factors like directional signage, airport and terminal locations, travel duration, cost, and transportation options (Ariesta et al., 2020). Shahrivar (2012) stressed the importance of supporting facilities and infrastructure at tourist destinations, including amenities like clean water, electricity, waste management, transportation hubs, and communication technology. Rajesh (2013) emphasized accessibility as a component of destination image that directly influences tourist satisfaction. Additionally, Castro et al. (2017) underscored the pivotal

role of accessibility in shaping tourist satisfaction. Andrianto and Sugiyama (2016) asserted that attributes such as accessibility contribute to the suitability and availability of tourism destinations, thus enhancing tourist satisfaction. Therefore, accessibility emerges as a significant determinant of tourist satisfaction, warranting hypothesis testing to explore this relationship further.

ii) Service quality

In tourism, service quality encompasses delivery processes (e.g., friendliness, courtesy, efficiency) and outcomes (e.g., accommodation, food, leisure) (Baker and Crompton, 2000; Žabkar et al., 2010). Narayan et al., (2009) proposed a 10-dimensional scale for measuring service quality in the tourism context, while Gupta and Basak (2018) identified four essential attributes (basic facilities, ancillary facilities, signage, physiological needs) compared to the SERVPERF model by Cronin and Taylor (1992). Moreover, the established link between service quality and satisfaction, both in marketing literature and tourism research, underscores service quality as a pivotal determinant of satisfaction (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Baker and Crompton, 2000; Chen and Tsai, 2007). Tian and Crompton (2003) distinguish between service quality and satisfaction, emphasizing their significance at global and transactional levels. Furthermore, in the context of Indian religious tourism, studies emphasize the role of basic service facilities in enhancing satisfaction (Patwal and Agarwal, 2013; Gupta and Basak, 2018). Raza et al., (2012) and Lee et al. (2011) underscored the critical role of service quality in shaping satisfaction and intentions to revisit destinations, with Moon and Han (2018) further validating the correlation between destination service quality, tourist satisfaction, and visitation likelihood.

iii) Natural environment

Previous literature provides sufficient evidence that natural environmental factors significantly influence visitors' experiences and satisfaction with religious tourism. According to Mazumdar and Mazumdar (2004), the physical environment, encompassing natural aesthetics and unspoiled surroundings, influences the perception of religious ideals and spirituality. Additionally, these environments contribute to visitors' sense of enlightenment and existential authenticity (Wang et al., 2016). Stokols (1990) suggested that sacred places, secluded from urban tumult, provide solace and evoke an appreciation for organized garden landscapes or untouched natural environments. Moreover, interpersonal interactions and communication with religious staff deepen visitors' understanding and create positive, even sacred, memories (Trauer and Ryan, 2005). Furthermore, shared experiences in these environments foster a sense of belonging and satisfaction among visitors (Wang et al., 2016).

iv) Religious events

Religious events, festivals, and activities significantly influence tourists' satisfaction with religious destinations due to their ability to provide immersive and authentic cultural experiences (Olsen and Timothy, 2006; Gupta and Basak, 2018). Consequently, these events often serve as focal points for spiritual and communal gatherings, allowing visitors to witness and participate in rituals, ceremonies, and traditions unique to the destination's religious heritage (Yao et al., 2020). According to a study by Kim and Jamal (2007), such participatory experiences enhance tourists' perceived authenticity and satisfaction with their travel experiences. Moreover, religious festivals

can create a sense of belonging and connection for tourists, fostering a deeper appreciation for the destination's religious significance (Joseph et al., 2020). Furthermore, these events often showcase the destination's cultural heritage, attracting tourists interested in exploring diverse cultural expressions (Patwardhan et al., 2020). Consequently, tourists are more likely to leave with memorable and fulfilling experiences, contributing positively to their overall satisfaction and intentions to revisit or recommend the destination (Gupta and Basak, 2018). Therefore, the strategic integration of religious events, festivals, and activities into destination management can play a pivotal role in enhancing tourists' satisfaction and promoting sustainable tourism development.

v) Spiritual significance

Spirituality encompasses various perspectives such as the soul, self-identity, and psyche, reflecting the essence of human existence. Moreover, it involves the search for meaning in life and is perceived as non-material. According to Willson et al. (2013), spirituality is intrinsic to all individuals, representing a quest for meaningful existence beyond individual self-concepts. Similarly, Walach (2017) described spirituality as a source of profound and inspirational enlightenment. Additionally, Rai (2020) illustrated Buddhism's conceptualization of spirituality, which revolves around the awakening experiences of Gautama Buddha. The spiritual significance of religious sites plays a pivotal role in shaping tourists' satisfaction, offering them avenues for profound introspection and fostering connections with the sacred sites (Olsen and Timothy, 2006). Moreover, such spirituality frequently transcends tourism experiences, serving as transformative journeys that contribute to overall satisfaction and well-being (Verma and Sarangi, 2019). Furthermore, stakeholders in the tourism industry must acknowledge and actively promote the authenticity of this spiritual significance, as it holds considerable importance for the tourist's satisfaction and ultimately to the sustainable development of tourism (Willson et al., 2013).

vi) Safety and security

Large-scale events religious gatherings attract diverse crowds, primarily comprising potential visitors and tourists. Therefore, ensuring visitors' safety before and during such events impacts tourists' satisfaction (Korstanje et al., 2018). Moreover, research emphasizes the need for effective crowd management and safety measures, as highlighted by Illiyas et al., (2013) in the context of religious mass gatherings. Instances like the Allahabad religious event (Kumbh Mela) underscore the risks associated with overcrowding (Patwal and Agarwal, 2013). This poses significant challenges for event organizers in meeting safety and comfort requirements. Furthermore, there is prominent evidence that established a clear functional relationship between safety perception and satisfaction among participants in crowded religious events (Gayathri et al., 2017). Additionally, scholars argue that safety and comfort are context-dependent, and a thorough examination of factors contributing to these attributes enhances tourists' satisfaction (Sirgy et al., 2011). Consequently, when evaluating satisfaction, safety should be regarded as a fundamental requirement. Moreover, studies indicate that safety and security significantly influence tourist decision-making and intentions to revisit destinations, as well as subsequent satisfaction (Fuchs and Reichel, 2006). In conclusion, Korstanje et al. (2018) concluded that safe destinations are

typically favoured, whereas unsafe or risky destinations are often rejected. These findings support the assertion that safety attributes should be investigated alongside the determinants of tourist satisfaction in religious mass gatherings.

3.1.3 Motivation for visiting religious sites

Understanding tourists' satisfaction levels in religious tourism requires an examination of their primary motivations for visiting such sites. Wang et al. (2016) classified visitors into three main groups: those motivated by religious belief, cultural enjoyment, and mental relaxation. Consequently, their research underscores the roles of religious beliefs and mental relaxation as push factors, while cultural enjoyment and a subset of mental relaxation act as pull factors. Additionally, the intensity of religious belief impacts both push and pull motivations.

i) Religious belief

Religious beliefs serve as a fundamental driving force for religious tourists, as evidenced by their approaches to God, quest for religious belief, and seeking divine assistance. This aspect has been emphasized by Rinschede (1992) and Shinde (2020), who noted its significant influence on the motivations of religious tourists. Moreover, the religious belief experience fosters a desire to visit religious sites, as suggested by Schnell and Pali (2013). Additionally, tourists may develop a commitment to a specific spiritual centre based on past authentic experiences at that location (Cohen, 1979).

ii) Cultural enjoyment

Cultural enjoyment often directs religious tourists to specific destinations, manifesting through their appreciation of religious art, participation in festival events, and immersion in local customs (Wang et al., 2016). Additionally, temples and sites designed with a cultural atmosphere serve as attractions for tourists seeking inner exploration, as observed by Vorzsák and Gut (2009). Moreover, these cultural settings offer a retreat from secular complexities, fostering an environment conducive to spiritual exploration. Furthermore, many tourists are driven by a desire to engage with the historical and cultural heritage embedded within sacred sites (Lankford et al., 2005).

iii) Mental relaxation

Religious tourism, as elucidated by Wang et al. (2016), serves as a multifaceted phenomenon encompassing various motivations, among which mental relaxation stands out prominently. This dimension of motivation underscores the significance of religious tourism beyond merely spiritual or cultural enrichment, extending into the realm of psychological well-being. Furthermore, amidst the natural environments surrounding religious temples, tourists find happiness and enjoyment (Vorzsák and Gut, 2009; Schnell and Pali, 2013), providing moments of leisure and recreation. Additionally, indicators of mental relaxation within religious tourism include the pursuit of mental peace, inner happiness, mental self-comfort, and experiencing the religious atmosphere (Devereux and Carnegie, 2006; Wang and Hsu, 2010; Wang et al., 2016).

3.2 Hypotheses development

The current study has developed the hypothesis to test the significant relationship between the exogenous variables (accessibility, service quality, natural environment, religious events, spiritual

significance and safety and security) on the endogenous variable (tourism satisfaction) and to explore the dimensions that could enhance tourist satisfaction at religious sites in Lumbini (Figure 5).

H1: There is a significant effect of accessibility (AC) on the overall satisfaction (OS) of tourists at Lumbini.

H2: There is a significant effect of service quality (SQ) on the overall satisfaction (OS) of tourists at Lumbini.

H3: There is a significant effect of the natural environment (NE) on the overall satisfaction (OS) of tourists at Lumbini.

H4: There is a significant effect of religious events (RE) on the overall satisfaction (OS) of tourists at Lumbini.

H5: There is a significant effect of spiritual significance (SP) on the overall satisfaction (OS) of tourists at Lumbini.

H6: There is a significant effect of safety and security (SS) on the overall satisfaction (OS) of tourists at Lumbini.

4. Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is descriptive, correlational, and exploratory. The study employed a quantitative method since primary data was collected through a survey questionnaire to fulfil the research objectives. The population for this study includes tourists who visited Lumbini in Nepal during a specific period, such as May 5 to May 18, 2023. A total sample of 403 tourists from an infinite population was calculated considering an additional 5% precision on 384 (Cochran, 1977) taken in the study who visited Lumbini during the specified time frame surveyed. The initial draft validation involved pilot testing the questionnaire during *Buddha Jayanti* (a significant global Buddhist festival marking the birth, enlightenment, and death of Buddha, typically occurring on the full moon day in May). The questionnaire was tested on various aspects such as the content of the questions, level of difficulty, and wording sequence. It was made available to the respondents in both English, Nepali and Hindi language. Finally, after the validation of the initial draft, a well-developed questionnaire using relevant attributes related to tourist satisfaction at religious sites was administered.

A convenience sampling technique was employed to select the sample respondents, which means that the participants were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate (Jager et al., 2017). Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with each of the six independent variables on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (not satisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). Finally, participants were asked to provide an assessment of their overall satisfaction with their visit, which represents their perceived or manifested satisfaction.

The study used SmartPLS to evaluate the reliability and validity of the measurement instrument, which involved assessing Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE) and factor loadings. Similarly, the Fornell Larcker Criterion was used to measure discriminant validity. The analysis of the outer model included examining path coefficients, T statistics, and P values and conducting tests of significance to explore the relationships between

the constructs and the extent to which the proposed model explained variance in tourist satisfaction at religious sites in Lumbini.

5. Results

5.1 Demographic analyses

When gathering information on the chosen variables, the survey asked respondents about their primary reason for visiting Lumbini, whether it was for religious belief, cultural enjoyment, or mental relaxation. The survey also inquired about the age group of the respondents, whether they were younger than 20 years, between 20 and 65 years, or older than 65. Lastly, the survey asked about the respondents' place of residence, whether they primarily reside in Nepal or a different country. Of the 403 visitors surveyed, 77 were younger than 20 years (19.1%); 245 were aged 20 to 65 years (60.8%); and 81 were older than 65 years (20.1%). The primary motivation for 111 visitors was religious belief (27.5%); 213 respondents were mainly interested in cultural enjoyment (52.9%) and 79 had come for mental relaxation (19.6%). A large majority i.e., 302 (74.9%) mainly resided in Nepal, 61 (15.1%) from India and 40 (9.9%) in other countries. For 247 (61.3%) participants, this was their first visit; 87 (21.6%) were making a second; 43 (10.7%) their third visit; and 26 (6.5%) had visited more than 3 times.

The result shows (Table 3) a mean perceived satisfaction value of 4.227 (on a 5-point scale), whereas the satisfaction induced by the independent variables had a value of 3.947. There are some differences depending on the degree of primary motivation for visiting Lumbini. Those who indicated mainly religious belief motives reported a slightly higher degree of perceived satisfaction (4.203) and induced satisfaction (3.916). The visitors motivated by mental relaxation had lower satisfaction levels (3.980 and 3.778). The overall degree of induced satisfaction (3.947 in total) was slightly higher than that of religious visitors. Comparing the results for induced and perceived satisfaction, it was observed that in all cases the latter value was slightly higher. This difference is likely explained by the use of an arithmetic average of the values assigned to all of the independent variables by those surveyed to calculate induced satisfaction; in reality, the visitors value each one of the variables differently.

Table 3: Survey results applied to the definitive model

The principal motivation of the visit to Lumbini	Total	Religious belief	Cultural enjoyment	Mental relaxation
Survey/ Variables	403	111	213	79
Religious events (RE)	4.123	4.082	4.347	3.940
Natural environment (NE)	3.972	3.611	4.005	4.300
Accessibility (AC)	3.840	3.880	3.764	3.877
Services quality (SQ)	3.818	3.772	3.928	3.755
Spiritual significance (SP)	3.706	4.272	3.743	3.104
Safety and security (SS)	3.589	3.880	3.194	3.692
Perceived satisfaction	4.227	4.203	4.077	3.980
Induced satisfaction	3.947	3.916	3.830	3.778

Difference between induced and perceived satisfaction	+0.280	+0.287	+0.247	+0.202
---	--------	--------	--------	--------

At the level of each independent variable, the high value assigned to the natural environment (>4 for each variable) by the mental relaxation visitors stands out. They also placed a lower value on spiritual significance and safety/ security. This group gave priority to nature and their surroundings during their visit to Lumbini. Their degree of perceived satisfaction was slightly higher than their induced satisfaction. Those who visited Lumbini mainly for religious belief reasons reported slightly more balanced satisfaction, considering all of the independent variables (ranging from 4.272 to 3.611). This group, while prioritizing the spiritual significance and religious events of their visit, also had a favourable opinion of all the aspects surveyed. Nonetheless, this group showed the greatest difference between perceived (4.203) and overall induced (3.961) satisfaction. Finally, those who were simply visiting Lumbini demonstrated their satisfaction with the religious events and natural environment, while they were least happy with the safety and security of the Lumbini. Therefore, the results suggested that visitors who undertake this activity mainly for religious beliefs are more satisfied with the visit, compared to other tourists.

5.2 Measurement model analysis

The measurement model was assessed to establish the reliability and validity of the constructs (Table 4). First, the factor loadings of all the items in the model have a greater than the minimum acceptable value of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2011). Although a factor loading over 0.70 is desirable (Vinzi et al., 2010), researchers frequently obtain weaker outer loadings (< 0.70) in social science studies. Rather than automatically eliminating indicators, the effects of the removal of the item on composite reliability, content and convergent validity shall be examined. Generally, items with outer loadings from 0.40 to 0.70 shall be considered for removal only if deletion results in an increase of Composite Reliability or Average Variance Extracted (AVE) over the recommended value (Hair et al., 2021).

In the current study, there was no need to remove any items during the analysis as their removal would not have significantly increased the composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) scores. This is because the construct values for the items were already above the recommended threshold. Additionally, when evaluating the confidence interval of the loadings, it was found that none of the outer loadings for the items included zero. Therefore, there was no requirement to eliminate any items from further analysis in this study.

Table 4: Reliability and validity analysis

Construct	Items	Loadings	Alpha	rho_a	CR	AVE
Accessibility (AC)	AC1	0.801	0.811	0.843	0.876	0.643
	AC2	0.867				
	AC3	0.889				
	AC4	0.622				
Service quality (SQ)	SQ1	0.772	0.876	0.911	0.915	0.730
	SQ2	0.937				
	SQ3	0.936				

	SQ4	0.756				
Natural environment (NE)	NE1	0.653	0.777	0.802	0.856	0.600
	NE2	0.847				
	NE3	0.848				
	NE4	0.734				
Overall satisfaction (OS)	OS1	0.839	0.809	0.810	0.875	0.637
	OS2	0.84				
	OS3	0.776				
	OS4	0.733				
Religious events (RE)	RE1	0.834	0.766	0.796	0.850	0.588
	RE2	0.649				
	RE3	0.825				
	RE4	0.744				
Safety and security (SS)	SS1	0.883	0.824	0.856	0.882	0.654
	SS2	0.812				
	SS3	0.696				
	SS4	0.785				
Spiritual significance (SP)	SP1	0.792	0.808	0.825	0.873	0.635
	SP2	0.682				
	SP3	0.896				
	SP4	0.849				

Note: CR: Composite reliability and AVE: Average variance extracted

Table 5: Fornell Larcker criterion

	AC	SQ	NE	OS	RE	SS	SP
AC	0.802						
SQ	0.739	0.854					
NE	0.687	0.795	0.775				
OS	0.620	0.728	0.663	0.798			
RE	0.689	0.625	0.679	0.622	0.767		
SS	0.703	0.602	0.611	0.781	0.633	0.809	
SP	0.646	0.610	0.644	0.600	0.733	0.712	0.797

Note: Diagonal and integrated are the square root of the AVE. Below the diagonal elements are the correlations between the construct's values.

Furthermore, reliability was assessed in Table 4 using Cronbach's alpha, rho_a, and composite reliability, statistics for both were greater than the recommended value of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2021). The rho_a value returned was between Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (Sarstedt et al., 2017), it was found to be over 0.70, hence indicating good reliability (Henseler et al., 2016). Convergent validity was acceptable because the AVE was higher than 0.50 (Assaker et al., 2015). Likewise, discriminant validity was assessed by comparing the correlations among the latent

variables with the square root of AVE (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Hence, discriminant validity is established as depicted in Table 5.

5.3 Path analysis

The path analysis results of the model were obtained through the bootstrap process, which allowed for the examination of the variation explained by exogenous variables with endogenous variables. This analysis provided insights into the relationships between different constructs and assisted in establishing the validity of the model. Furthermore, the item loadings of each construct were assessed, contributing to the evaluation of the model's validity and reliability. The findings from this process are depicted in Figure 6, visually representing the intricate connections and effects among the variables investigated.

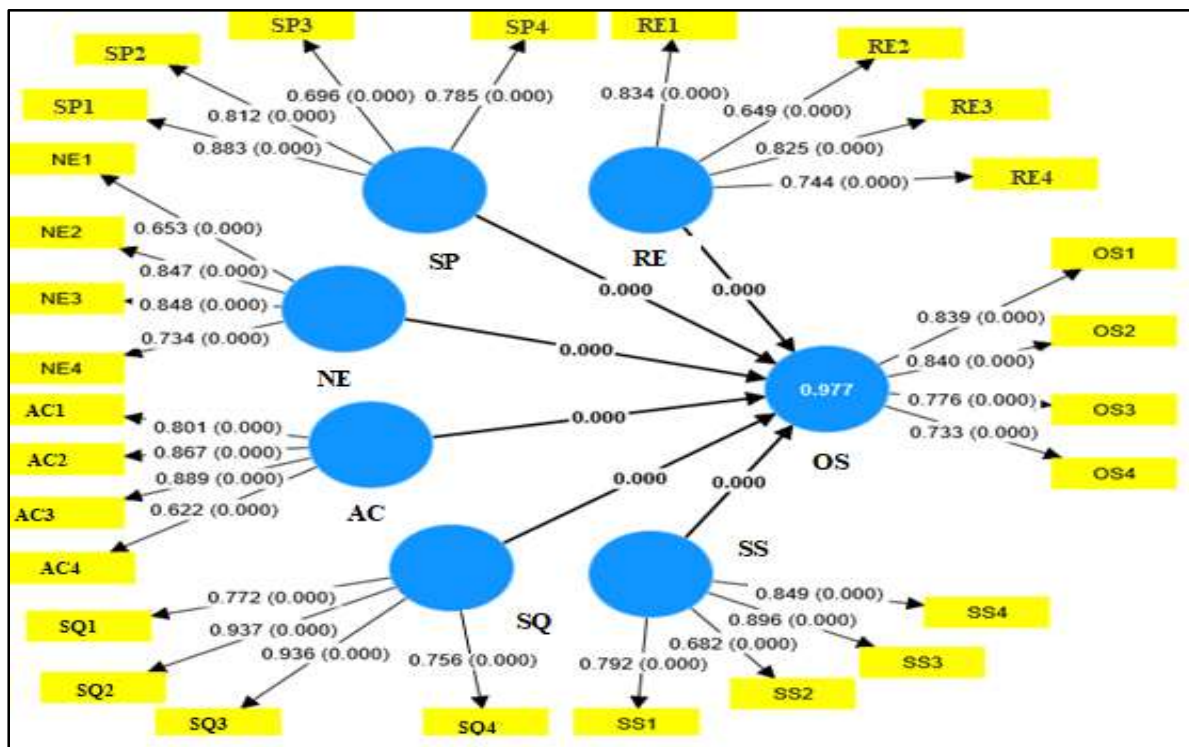


Figure 6: Diagram of measurement model

The model exhibited a satisfactory level of goodness of fit and demonstrated its applicability as a generic framework for understanding and explaining tourist satisfaction. Through the validation process, the model's suitability was confirmed for analysing satisfaction reported by visitors to Lumbini. By employing this robust model, the study successfully shed light on the complex dynamics of tourist satisfaction in the unique context of religious tourism in Lumbini, Nepal.

Table 6: Path coefficients

Hypotheses	Path	Coefficient estimate	<i>t</i> statistics	<i>p</i> values	Results
H1	AC -> OS	0.493	3.213	0.000	Accepted
H2	SQ -> OS	0.324	2.294	0.018	Accepted

H3	NE -> OS	0.764	2.674	0.000	Accepted
H4	RE -> OS	0.273	2.832	0.000	Accepted
H5	SP -> OS	0.389	3.214	0.000	Accepted
H6	SS -> OS	0.509	4.120	0.038	Accepted

**p < .01. *p < .05.

The study seeks to identify the dimensions that contribute to enhancing tourist satisfaction at Lumbini. Additionally, it aims to investigate the relationship between various exogenous variables (including accessibility, service quality, natural environment, religious events, spiritual significance, and safety and security) and the endogenous variable of tourism satisfaction in Lumbini. Therefore, path coefficients, T statistics, and P values were analysed to fulfil the objectives of the current study.

The data presented in Table 6 revealed significant findings regarding the factors that influenced overall satisfaction. The study found that accessibility (AC) (path coefficient = 0.493, $t = 3.213$, $p < 0.01$) and service quality (SQ) (path coefficient = 0.324, $t = 2.294$, $p < 0.05$) showed a significant positive impact on overall satisfaction (OS). Additionally, the natural environment (NE) exhibited a significant positive impact (path coefficient = 0.764, $t = 2.674$, $p < 0.001$). Likewise, religious events (RE) were found to have a significant positive impact on overall satisfaction (path coefficient = 0.273, $t = 2.832$, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, spiritual significance (SP) (path coefficient = 0.389, $t = 3.214$, $p < 0.01$) and safety and security (SS) (path coefficient = 0.509, $t = 4.120$, $p < 0.05$) were also significantly positively associated with overall satisfaction. These findings emphasized the significant positive relationship between exogenous variables (accessibility, service quality, natural environment, religious events, spiritual significance, and safety and security) and the endogenous variable (overall satisfaction) of the visitors to Lumbini, thereby confirming the significance of all the proposed hypotheses and accepted.

6. Conclusion

The study concludes the role of religious belief, cultural enjoyment, and mental relaxation on tourists' motivation to visit Lumbini, revealing a positive relation between these factors and visit motivation. Firstly, religious events emerge as a paramount factor influencing satisfaction among tourists, irrespective of their primary motive for visiting. Similarly, the spiritual significance associated with Lumbini's religious events resonates strongly with tourists, particularly those driven by religious beliefs. Additionally, the natural environment holds significant importance, particularly for those seeking mental relaxation, underlining its role as a contributing factor to overall satisfaction. Moreover, while accessibility, service quality, and safety/security contribute positively to visitor satisfaction, the disparity between perceived and induced satisfaction indicates a nuanced understanding of visitor experiences. It underscores the multifaceted nature of tourists' experiences at Lumbini and emphasizes the importance of catering to diverse motivations and preferences.

The field research conducted for the current study at Lumbini provides empirical evidence supporting the assertion that factors identified during the exploratory phase significantly contribute to tourist satisfaction. Consequently, the study concludes that tourist satisfaction is multifaceted,

influenced by accessibility, service quality, the natural environment, religious events, spiritual significance, and safety/security measures at religious sites. Furthermore, the findings indicate a pervasive sense of satisfaction among all segments of tourists surveyed at Lumbini. Nevertheless, individuals whose primary motivation for visiting Lumbini is rooted in religious reasons demonstrate significantly elevated levels of satisfaction in contrast to other tourist segments. This suggests that while various factors contribute to overall tourist satisfaction, religious motivations play a particularly significant role in enhancing the tourist experience at religious sites like Lumbini.

Authorities of religious sites should formulate marketing strategies focusing on the spiritual, cultural, and natural allure to accommodate diverse tourist satisfaction. Concurrently, they should enact eco-friendly measures for sustainable development, emphasizing stakeholder engagement with local communities to enhance tourist satisfaction and foster sustainable tourism. Moreover, policymakers must prioritize the preservation of religious events and environmental integrity at these sites through regulatory frameworks and resource allocation, while also enhancing infrastructure and safety protocols to elevate tourists' accessibility and service quality. The main limitation of this study is that the survey was conducted by utilizing convenience sampling and was not a probabilistic sample, which could limit the extrapolation of the results obtained. In future research related to the topic of this study, it would be of interest to carry out similar studies, using a similar survey instrument, in other areas with religious tourism sites, to test and refine the group of independent variables identified by the field research in the present case.

7. About the author

Bhim Bahadur Khadka (Author 1) holds an MPhil degree in Management and is pursuing a PhD from the University of Allahabad, India. He is currently serving as an Assistant Professor at Mid-West University, Nepal. His research interests focus on tourism, and he has published several research papers in this field.

Anjani Kumar Malviya (Author 2) holds a PhD in Tourism Marketing and is currently a Senior Professor at the University of Allahabad, India. He previously served as the Head of the Department of Commerce and Business Administration and is now the Dean of the Faculty of Commerce and Business Administration at the University of Allahabad. With 35 years of teaching experience, his research interests are centered on tourism marketing, and he has published numerous research papers in this field.

8. References

- Ariesta D, Sukotjo E and Suleman NR (2020) The effect of attraction, accessibility and facilities on destination images and its impact on revisit intention in the marine tourism of the Wakatobi regency. *International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research* 9(3): 6605–6613.
- Assaker G, Hallak R, Assaf A.G et al. (2015) Validating a structural model of destination image, satisfaction, and loyalty across gender and age: Multigroup analysis with PLS-SEM. *Tourism Analysis* 20(6): 577-591.

- Ateljevic I, Morgan N and Pritchard A (2007) *The critical turn in tourism studies*. Elsevier Oxford.
- Baker D.A and Crompton J.L (2000) Quality, satisfaction and behavioral intentions. *Annals of Tourism Research* 27(3): 785–804.
- Canoves G and Prat Forga J.M (2016) The determinants of tourist satisfaction in religious destinations: The case of Montserrat (Spain). *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage* 4(5): 26–36.
- Castro J.C, Quisimalin M, Pablos C et al. (2017) Tourism marketing: Measuring tourist satisfaction. *Journal of Service Science and Management* 10(3): 280–308.
- Chen C and Chen F (2010) Experience quality, perceived value, satisfaction and behavioral intentions for heritage tourists. *Tourism Management* 31(1): 29–35.
- Chen C and Tsai D (2007) How destination image and evaluative factors affect behavioral intentions? *Tourism Management* 28(4):1115–1122.
- Cochran W.G (1977) *Sampling techniques*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Cohen E (1979) Rethinking the sociology of tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research* 6(1):18–35.
- Collins-Kreiner N (2010) The geography of pilgrimage and tourism: Transformations and implications for applied geography. *Applied Geography* 30(1):153–164.
- Correia A, Kozak M and Ferradeira J (2013) From tourist motivations to tourist satisfaction. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research* 7(4): 411–424.
- Cronin Jr J.J and Taylor S.A (1992) Measuring service quality: a re-examination and extension. *Journal of Marketing* 56(3): 55–68.
- Devereux C and Carnegie E (2006) Pilgrimage: Journeying beyond self. *Tourism Recreation Research* 31(1): 47–56.
- Fornell C and Larcker D.F (1981) Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research* 18(1): 39–50.
- Fuchs G and Reichel A (2006) Tourist destination risk perception: The case of Israel. *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing* 14(2): 83–108.
- Gayathri H, Aparna P and Verma A (2017) A review of studies on understanding crowd dynamics in the context of crowd safety in mass religious gatherings. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 25: 82–91.
- Gržinić J and Saftić D (2012) Approach to the development of destination management in Croatian tourism. *Journal of Contemporary Management Issues* 17(1): 59–74.
- Gupta S and Basak B (2018) Exploring pilgrim satisfaction on facilities for religious events: A case of Ratha Yatra at Puri. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research* 23(8): 765–779.
- Hair J.F, Ringle C.M and Sarstedt M (2011) PLS-SEM: Indeed, a silver bullet. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice* 19(2):139–152.
- Hair Jr J.F, Hult G.T.M, Ringle C.M et al. (2021) *Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) using R: A workbook*. 1-29.

- Hair Jr, J.F., Hult, G.T.M., Ringle, C.M., Sarstedt, M., Danks, N.P. and Ray, S. (2021) *Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) using R: A workbook*. Springer Nature.
- Henseler J, Hubona G. and Ray P.A (2016) Using PLS path modeling in new technology research: updated guidelines. *Industrial Management and Data Systems* 116(1): 2–20.
- Huang K and Pearce P (2019) Visitors' perceptions of religious tourism destinations. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management* 14:1-10.
- Illiya F.T, Mani S.K, Pradeepkumar A.P et al. (2013) Human stampedes during religious festivals: A comparative review of mass gathering emergencies in India. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 5:10-18.
- Jager J, Putnick D.L and Bornstein M.H (2017) More than just convenient: The scientific merits of homogeneous convenience samples. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development* 82(2):13–30.
- Joseph J.K, Ambady K.G, Dev K.A et al. (2020) Pilgrim satisfaction in a mass religious gathering: study from Sabarimala destination, Kerala state of India. *Journal of Religion and Health* 59: 713–1727.
- Keown D (2013) *Buddhism: A very short introduction*. OUP Oxford.
- Khan A.H, Haque A and Rahman M.S (2013) What makes tourists satisfied? An empirical study on Malaysian Islamic tourist destination. *Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research* 14(12): 1631–1637.
- Khanal P (2009) *An Assessment on Prospects of Religious Tourism in Nepal (A case study of Lumbini in Rupandehi District)* (Doctoral dissertation, Central Department of Rural Development).
- Kim B, Kim S and King B (2020) Religious tourism studies: evolution, progress, and future prospects. *Tourism Recreation Research* 45(2):185–203.
- Kim H and Jamal T (2007) Touristic quest for existential authenticity. *Annals of Tourism Research* 34(1):181–201.
- Korstanje M.E, Raj R and Griffin K (2018) *Risk and safety challenges for religious tourism and events*. Cabi.
- Kozak M and Rimmington M (2000) Tourist satisfaction with Mallorca, Spain, as an off-season holiday destination. *Journal of Travel Research* 38(3): 260–269.
- Lafortune-Bernard A, Suwal R.N, Weise K et al. (2020) Religious tourism and environmental conservation in Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha, World Heritage Site, Nepal. *Religious Tourism and the Environment*: 83–94.
- Lankford S.V, Dierker R.B and Walker G.J (2005) Self-construal and pilgrimage travel. *Annals of Tourism Research* 32(3): 802–804.
- Lee S, Jeon S and Kim D (2011) The impact of tour quality and tourist satisfaction on tourist loyalty: The case of Chinese tourists in Korea. *Tourism Management* 32(5): 1115–1124.
- Liu X (2022) *Early Buddhist Society: The World of Gautama Buddha*. State University of New York Press.

- Mazumdar S and Mazumdar S (2004) Religion and place attachment: A study of sacred places. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 24(3): 385–397.
- Moon H and Han H (2018) Destination attributes influencing Chinese travelers' perceptions of experience quality and intentions for island tourism: A case of Jeju Island. *Tourism Management Perspectives* 28: 71–82.
- Narayan B, Rajendran C, Sai L.P et al. (2009) Dimensions of service quality in tourism—an Indian perspective. *Total Quality Management* 20(1): 61–89.
- Olsen D.H and Timothy D.J (2006) Tourism and religious journeys. In *Tourism, Religion and Spiritual Journeys*. Routledge, 1–21.
- Parasuraman A, Zeithaml V.A and Berry L.L (1994) Reassessment of expectations as a comparison standard in measuring service quality: implications for further research. *Journal of Marketing* 58(1):111–124.
- Pathak A and Paudel S (2019) Tourist satisfaction towards tourism products and market with special reference to Lumbini. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications* 9: 401–409.
- Patwal A and Agarwal T (2013) Pilgrimage satisfaction of religious event: An empirical study. *South Asian Journal of Tourism and Heritage* 6(2):77–91.
- Patwardhan V, Ribeiro M.A, Woosnam K.M et al. (2020) Visitors' loyalty to religious tourism destinations: Considering place attachment, emotional experience and religious affiliation. *Tourism Management Perspectives* 36: 1-17.
- Pearce P.L (1980) A favorability-satisfaction model of tourists' evaluations. *Journal of Travel Research* 19(1):13–17.
- Pizam A, Neumann Y and Reichel A (1978) Dimensions of tourist satisfaction with a destination area. *Annals of Tourism Research* 5(3): 314–322.
- Poudel P.C (2022) Lumbini, Nepal: The Birthplace of Buddha and the Powerful Place of Pilgrimage in the World. In *Practising Cultural Geographies: Essays in Honour of Rana PB Singh*. Springer: 403–429.
- Rai H.D (2020) Buddhism and tourism: A study of Lumbini, Nepal. *Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Education* 10: 22–52.
- Raj R, Griffin K and Blackwell R (2015) Motivations for religious tourism, pilgrimage, festivals and events. *Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Management: An International Perspective*. Wallingford: Cabi: 103–17.
- Rajesh R (2013) Impact of tourist perceptions, destination image and tourist satisfaction on destination loyalty: A conceptual model. *PASOS. Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural* 11(3): 67–78.
- Raza M.A, Siddiquei A.N, Awan H.M et al. (2012) Relationship between service quality, perceived value, satisfaction and revisit intention in hotel industry. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business* 4(8): 788–805.
- Rinschede G (1992) Forms of religious tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research* 19(1): 51–67.

- Sarstedt M, Ringle C.M and Hair J.F (2017) Treating unobserved heterogeneity in PLS-SEM: A multi-method approach. In *Partial least squares path modeling: Basic concepts, methodological issues and applications*: 197–217.
- Schnell T and Pali S (2013) Pilgrimage today: The meaning-making potential of ritual. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 16(9): 887–902.
- Sharpley R (2009) *Tourism development and the environment: Beyond sustainability?* Routledge.
- Shinde K.A (2020) Managing the environment in religious tourism destinations: A conceptual model. *Religious Tourism and the Environment* 6(2): 42–59.
- Siregar O.M and Siregar A.M (2022) Literature Review: Identification Of Sustainable Ecotourism In Tangkahan. In. *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, IOP Publishing.
- Sirgy M.J, Kruger P.S, Lee D.J et al. (2011) ‘How does a travel trip affect tourists’ life satisfaction? *Journal of Travel Research* 50(3): 261–275.
- Spreng R.A, MacKenzie S.B and Olshavsky R.W (1996) A reexamination of the determinants of consumer satisfaction. *Journal of Marketing* 60(3):15–32.
- Stausberg M (2014) Religion and spirituality in tourism. *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Tourism*: 349–360.
- Stokols D (1990) Instrumental and spiritual views of people-environment relations. *American Psychologist* 45(5): 641–654.
- Tian-Cole S and Crompton J (2003) A conceptualization of the relationships between service quality and visitor satisfaction, and their links to destination selection. *Leisure Studies* 22(1): 65–80.
- Trainor K (2004) *Buddhism: The illustrated guide*. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Trauer B and Ryan C (2005) Destination image, romance and place experience—an application of intimacy theory in tourism. *Tourism Management* 26(4): 481–491.
- UNESCO (2013) *Lumbini: The birthplace of Lord Buddha in Nepal*. Completing the Kenzo Tange Master Plan.
- UNWTO (2017) *International congress on religious tourism and pilgrimage*. Retrieved from <http://europe.unwto.org/event/international-congress-religious-tourism-and-pilgrimage>
- Verma M and Sarangi P (2019) Modeling attributes of religious tourism: A study of Kumbh Mela, India. *Journal of Convention & Event Tourism* 3(2): 296–324.
- Vinzi V. E, Chin W. W, Henseler J et al. (2010) *Handbook of partial least squares*. Springer.
- Vorzsák M and Gut C (2009) The place of religious tourism in Romania’s tourist industry. *WSEAS Transactions on Business and Economics* 6(8):425–434.
- Walach H (2017) Secular spirituality—what it is. Why we need it. How to proceed. *Journal for the Study of Spirituality* 7(1): 7–20.
- Wang C and Hsu M.K (2010) The relationships of destination image, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions: An integrated model. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing* 27(8): 829–843.

- Wang W, Chen J.S and Huang K (2016) Religious tourist motivation in Buddhist Mountain: The case from China. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research* 21(1): 57–72.
- Willson G.B, McIntosh A.J and Zahra A.L (2013) Tourism and spirituality: A phenomenological analysis. *Annals of Tourism Research* 42:150–168.
- Yao D, Zhang K, Wang L et al. (2020) From religious belief to intangible cultural heritage tourism: A case study of Mazu belief. *Sustainability* 12(10): 4229- 4247.
- Yoon Y and Uysal M (2005) An examination of the effects of motivation and satisfaction on destination loyalty: a structural model. *Tourism Management* 26(1): 45–56.
- Žabkar V, Brenčič M.M and Dmitrović T (2010) Modelling perceived quality, visitor satisfaction and behavioural intentions at the destination level. *Tourism Management* 31(4): 537–546.
- Zhang H, Fu X, Cai L.A et al. (2014) Destination image and tourist loyalty: A meta-analysis. *Tourism Management* 40: 213–223.