

Gender Disparities in Tourist Behaviour: The Influence of Tourism Performance Indicators

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ABSTRACT

This study reviews the factors contributing to tourists' intention to visit Haridwar (TIVH), a prominent religious and cultural tourism destination in India, with a focus on service quality (SQ) customer satisfaction (CS), destination image (DI), and how gender moderates these relationships and how gender moderates these relationships through a standardized survey, and To test the hypotheses, multiple regression analysis was applied. The findings demonstrate that SQ, CS, and DI are significant positive predictors of TIVH. Additionally, gender moderates these relationships, with female tourists perceiving higher SQ and a more positive DI compared to males. The study contributes to tourism literature by integrating service experience, consumer perceptions, and destination marketing perspectives into a comprehensive model, addressing the gap in gender-focused research in religious tourism contexts. Practical implications include recommendations for enhancing SQ, improving customer satisfaction, and leveraging destination branding to attract mindful tourists. Gender-sensitive strategies, such as ensuring safety and comfort for female tourists, are also emphasised. This research provides actionable insights for tourism stakeholders to foster sustainable growth and enhance the overall visitor experience in Haridwar, while offering a framework for future studies in similar cultural and religious tourism destinations.

Keywords: Tourist intention, service quality, customer satisfaction, destination image, gender moderation

Introduction

"Tourism is the act of traveling for pleasure, and it is one of the most significant economic activities in the world" (UNWTO, 2023). As global tourism continues to evolve, delving into the variables that drive tourists' inclinations to visit a destination has gained significant importance. In the past few years, the tourism sector has experienced a paradigm shift, with destinations striving to enhance SQ, customer satisfaction, and DI to attract more visitors (Sio et al., 2024). However, in light of the increasing volume of research concerning these factors., there remains a significant gap in understanding how these variables interact and vary across different demographic groups, particularly gender.

Recent studies have highlighted the significance of SQ cannot be overstated in shaping tourist behaviour. For instance, Putra et al. (2017) indicated that superior SQ significantly enhances tourists' intention to revisit a destination. Similarly, CS has been recognized as a key factor influencing tourist loyalty (Lu & Yi, 2022). In contrast, DI is highly influential in attracting first-time visitors, as it shapes their perceptions and expectations (Chia et al., 2021). Irrespective of these progressions there is a dearth of in-depth research that scrutinizes the relationship. between these variables and their distinct impacts across genders. This gap is particularly evident within the setting of religious and cultural tourism sites such as Haridwar, where gender dynamics may significantly influence tourist behaviour.

Haridwar, one of India's most revered pilgrimage sites, attracts millions of tourists annually. Known for its spiritual significance and cultural heritage, Haridwar offers a unique setting to explore the factors influencing tourist intentions. However, existing research on Haridwar has predominantly cantered around its religious and cultural aspects, there has been limited attention to the importance of SQ, CS, and DI (L. Singh, 2021). Moreover, the influence of gender on these factors continues to be insufficiently examined, underscoring a crucial gap in the literature.

This investigation endeavours to fill the gap by analysing the impact of SQ, CS, and DI on TIV with particular attention to gender distinctions. By undertaking this research, the study aims to enrich the current scholarly understanding in multiple dimensions. Primarily, it supplies a detailed understanding. of how these key variables influence tourist intentions in a religious and cultural tourism context. Second, it provides a deeper understanding of how gender influences these relationships, thereby addressing a notable deficiency in the literature. Ultimately, the findings of this study are of practical importance to tourism policymakers and practitioners. enabling them to design gender-sensitive strategies to enhance tourist experiences and boost visitation rates.

Study Background

Service Quality and Its Influence on Tourist Visit Intentions

SQ has long been recognized as a critical factor influencing tourist behaviour and decision-making processes. In the context of tourism, SQ refers to the perceived excellence of services provided by tourism-related businesses, such as hotels, restaurants, transportation, and tour operators (L. Liu et al., 2021). High SQ enhances tourists' overall experience, leading to positive outcomes such as increased satisfaction, commitment and willingness to return or endorse a destination. (V. Singh & Bhuyan, 2024). Recent studies have consistently demonstrated the significant link between SQ and TIVH. To illustrate, van Tonder & Petzer, (2021) conducted a meta-analysis of 75 studies and found that SQ significantly shapes tourists' intentions to return to a destination, with the effect being particularly strong in cultural and religious tourism contexts. Similarly, (Saut & song, 2022) highlighted that SQ is a fundamental driver of destination attractiveness, competitiveness, as it directly influences tourists' perceptions and their willingness to return.

Moreover, how SQ impacts tourist intentions has been further substantiated by empirical studies in various geographical and cultural contexts. For example, Angmalisang (2021) examined the influence of SQ on tourists' plans to visit Indian pilgrimage sites and found that tourists who perceived high SQ were more inclined to indicate a strong desire to return. This finding aligns with the work of Joshi & Saxena, (2019), who emphasized that when it comes to religious tourism destinations similar to Haridwar, tourists' satisfaction and likelihood of recommending the destination are directly related to the quality of service. Furthermore, Grobelna (2021) argued that SQ not only affects tourists' immediate satisfaction but also creates a lasting impression that influences their future travel decisions.

Despite the extensive investigations into the significance of SQ in determining tourists' intentions, there remains a need to explore this relationship in the context of gender differences. While previous studies have primarily focused on the general population, few have examined how SQ perceptions vary across genders and how these differences influence tourist intentions. This gap is particularly relevant in destinations like Haridwar, where gender dynamics may have a marked effect on tourists' experiences and perceptions. Given the crucial role of SQ in driving tourist intentions and the underrepresentation of gender-specific studies in this area, it is essential to investigate how SQ influences TIVH, particularly in a culturally rich and religiously significant setting like Haridwar.

Hypothesis 1: SQ positively influences tourist intention to visit destination.

Exploring Customer Satisfaction's Role in Shaping Tourist Intentions to Visit

The field of tourism research is fundamentally rooted in the principles of CS, this exerts a direct effect on tourists' behavioural intentions, this includes their aspiration to revisit a place or to endorse it to others. (Matsuoka, 2022). Satisfaction is often viewed as the emotional response to the overall experience of a destination, encompassing various elements such as accommodation, food, transportation, and attractions (Javed et al., 2021). When visitors have a fulfilling experience, They tend to develop a positive view of the destination, which subsequently raises their likelihood of visiting or suggesting it to others (Torabi et al., 2022). Recent studies have consistently highlighted the strong connection between customer satisfaction (CS) and tourist intentions. For instance, Wahyuningsih et al. (2022) discovered that CS is a crucial measure of tourist loyalty, with satisfied tourists being more likely to revisit the destination in the future.

The impact of CS on tourists' choices has been further supported by empirical research in various tourism contexts. Muthuswamy & Alshiha, (2023) examined the role of CS in religious tourism destinations and observed that tourists with high satisfaction levels were more apt to express a strong intention to return. Similarly, PJ et al. (2023) Through a meta-analysis of 50 studies, it was concluded that CS plays a vital role as a mediator between SQ and tourists' intentions, suggesting satisfied tourists are more prone to perceiving a destination in a positive light and express a willingness to return. Furthermore, Ruiz-Real et al. (2020) argued that CS not only influences tourists' immediate behavioural intentions, it also contributes significantly to sustained success over time of a destination by fostering positive word-of-mouth and repeat visits. Despite the extensive research, much is still unknown about how CS influences tourist intentions across various demographic groups, the variation of these relationships across different demographics remains underexplored groups, particularly gender. While previous studies have primarily focused on the general population, few have explored how CS influences tourist intentions differently for men and women. This gap is particularly relevant in destinations like Haridwar, where gender dynamics may play a crucial role in determining how tourists encounter and understand destinations. Given the importance of CS in driving tourist intentions and the lack of gender-focused research in this area, it is essential to examine the part CS plays in shaping tourists' plans to visit a destination, particularly in a culturally rich and religiously significant setting like Haridwar.

Hypothesis 2: CS positively influences tourist intention to visit destination.

The Role of Destination Image

The concept of DI involves the perceptions and beliefs tourists have about a specific destination, which significantly influence their decision-making processes and behavioural intentions (Kusdibyo, 2022). A positive DI can amplify tourists' inclination to visit, while a negative image can dissuade them from choosing a destination. (El Sheikh, 2020). In the last couple of years, destination image (DI) has emerged as a central theme in tourism research, as it shapes tourists' expectations and influences their overall satisfaction and loyalty (Y. Liu et al., 2020a). For example, Elbaz et al. (2023) revealed that tourism intentions were stronger among tourists who perceive a destination as unique and attractive. Similarly, Muthuswamy & Alshiha, (2023) highlighted that in religious tourism destinations such as Haridwar, DI is a crucial factor in attracting first-time visitors and encouraging repeat visits.

Empirical studies across various tourism contexts have further underscored the connection between DI and tourist intentions. After analysing 60 studies, Schlesinger et al. (2020) concluded that DI is an important predictor of tourist intentions, demonstrating a strong positive correlation between these variables. Likewise, Vien (2021) argued that DI not only affects tourists' immediate behavioural intentions but also contributes to a destination's long-term success by fostering positive word-of-mouth and repeat visits. Additionally, Shinde (2022) emphasized the importance of DI in cultural and religious tourism destinations, where tourists' perceptions of a location's cultural and spiritual significance significantly impact their intentions.

Despite extensive research on DI and its impact on tourist intentions, a notable gap remains in understanding how these relationships vary across different demographic groups, particularly gender. While previous studies have primarily focused on the general tourist population, there is limited research exploring how DI affects tourist intentions differently for men and women. This gap is especially relevant in destinations like Haridwar, where gender-related factors may significantly influence tourists' experiences and perceptions. In light of DI's critical role in influencing tourist intentions, and a lack of gender-sensitive initiatives studies in this area, it is essential to investigate how DI influences tourists' willingness to visit a destination, particularly in a culturally and religiously significant setting like Haridwar.

Hypothesis 3: DI positively influences tourist intention to visit destination.

Gender Differences in Tourist Intention to Visit

Gender is a pivotal demographic factor that impacts various facets of tourist behaviour, encompassing perceptions, preferences, and intentions (Promburom, 2022). It has also become increasingly apparent that gender plays a significant role in shaping social norms and culture tourists' experiences and decision-making processes. For example, research has demonstrated that men and women often have distinct preferences regarding travel destinations, activities, and services (Bocchi et al., 2023). These differences can significantly affect their intentions to visit a destination, as well as their overall satisfaction and loyalty (Y. Liu et al., 2020). It was found by Rahnama (2017) that women increasingly prioritize their safety and comfort when selecting a destination, whereas men tend to focus on adventure and exploration. Similarly, Gracia et al. (2012) highlighted that gender differences in perceptions of service quality (SQ), customer satisfaction, and destination image (DI) can lead to variations in tourist intentions.

The role of gender in shaping tourist intentions has been further supported by empirical research in various tourism contexts. Nguyen (2022) examined the impact of gender on tourist behaviour in religious tourism destinations and found that women were more likely to express a strong intention to revisit compared to men. Similarly, Choudhary & Gangotia, (2017) conducted a meta-analysis of 40 studies and concluded that gender significantly influences tourists' perceptions of SQ, CS, and DI, in turn, this affects their intentions to travel. Furthermore, Hunter (2020) argued that gender differences in tourist behaviour are particularly pronounced in cultural and religious tourism destinations, where traditional gender roles and expectations may exert a great deal of influence on tourists' perceptions and experiences. Although research on gender and tourist behaviour continues to expand, a considerable gap persists in when it comes to assess the impact of gender. the relationships between SQ, CS, DI, and tourist intentions. Whereas earlier research has primarily focused on the general population, few have explored how these variables interact differently for men and women. This gap is particularly relevant in destinations like Haridwar, where gender dynamics may have a crucial influence in forming travellers' experiences and viewpoints. Given the importance of gender in driving tourist intentions and the lack of gender-focused research in this area, it is essential to investigate how SQ, customer satisfaction, destination image, and tourist intentions vary across genders, particularly in a culturally rich and religiously significant setting like Haridwar.

Hypothesis 4: SQ, CS, DI, and TIVH vary across genders.

Building the Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is designed to investigate the relationships between key independent variables—SQ, CS, and DI—and the dependent variable, TIVH, while also examining the moderating role of gender. Each variable has been carefully selected based on its established significance in tourism literature and its expected role in shaping tourist behaviour.

SQ is included as an independent variable due to its well-documented influence on tourist intentions. High SQ enhances travellers’ holistic encounter, resulting in enhanced contentment and an elevated probability. of revisiting or recommending a destination (Chancellor et al., 2021).. Furthermore, He et al. (2022) emphasize that SQ is a key factor in determining a destination’s competitiveness, since it directly influences tourists’ perceptions and their willingness to return. Within the setting of Haridwar, where spiritual and heritage tourism prevails, SQ is expected to Have a crucial influence in moulding travellers’ intentions

CS is another critical independent variable, as it serves as a mediator between SQ and tourist intentions. Satisfied tourists are more prone to forming a favourable perception of a location, subsequently enhancing their likelihood of returning. or recommend it (R. Singh & Singh, 2019). Javed et al. (2021).

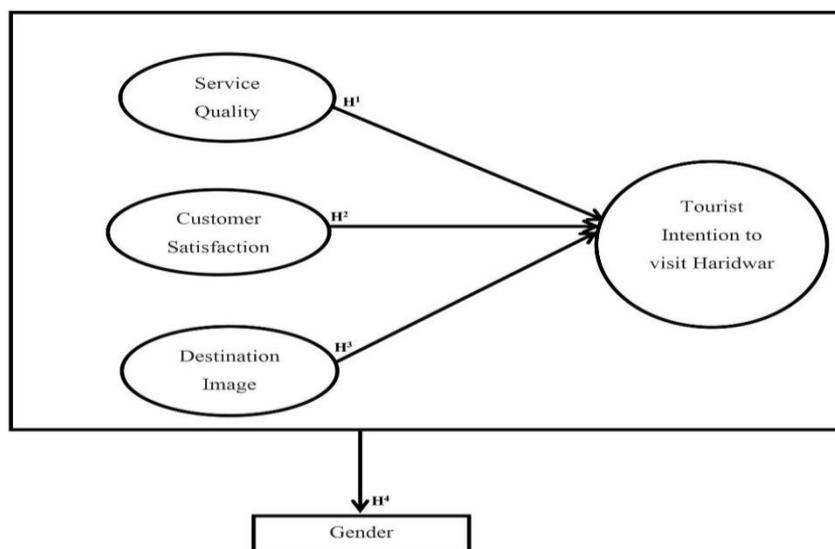
further highlight that CS is a key predictor of tourist loyalty, particularly in religious tourism destinations where emotional and spiritual experiences are paramount. Thus, CS is expected to significantly influence tourists' intention to visit Haridwar.

DI is included as an independent variable because it shapes tourists' perceptions and expectations of a location, thereby impacting their choice to travel. A positive DI can enhance tourists' desire to visit, while a negative image can deter them (Lai et al., 2018). Cugini (2021).

argue that in religious tourism destinations like Haridwar, DI is particularly important, as it reflects the cultural and spiritual significance of the place. Therefore, DI is expected to are fundamental in luring tourists to Haridwar.

The dependent variable, TIVH, is the ultimate outcome of interest in this study. It is influenced by the independent variables mentioned above and is expected to vary based on the quality of services, level of satisfaction, and perceptions of the DI. Additionally, the study examines the moderating role of gender, as previous investigations have revealed that men and their female counterparts commonly have divergent preferences and perceptions when it comes to travel. (Spinelli et al., 2018). Bärebring et al. (2020) further highlight that gender differences in perceptions of SQ, customer satisfaction, and DI can lead to variations in tourist intentions, making it essential to explore these dynamics in the context of Haridwar. The conceptual framework (Fig. 1) further illustrates the interactions between the Predictor variables (SQ, CS, and DI) and the outcome variable. (TIVH), with gender as a moderating variable. The framework posits that SQ, SC, and DI positively influence tourist intention to visit the destination, and these relationships are moderated by gender.

Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework



Methodological Approach

Research Design and Method

This research employs an empirical approach to investigate the linkages among the independent variables—SQ, CS, and DI, and the dependent variable, TIVH, with gender playing a moderating role. The research is conducted in the context of Haridwar, a prominent religious and cultural tourism destination in India, known for its spiritual significance, cultural heritage, and annual influx of pilgrims and tourists. The study utilizes a structured questionnaire as the primary data collection tool, targeting tourists visiting Haridwar. The quantitative design allows for the systematic exploration of direct and moderating relationships through statistical analyses, ensuring reliable and actionable insights into the variables under study.

Participant Selection and Sampling Method

A non-probability sampling strategy was employed to achieve a broad and representative selection of respondents while minimizing potential biases. Specifically, purposive sampling was used to identify key respondents who have visited Haridwar for tourism or pilgrimage purposes (Andrade, 2021). The selection criteria prioritized tourists who had experienced the destination's unique offerings, such as spiritual tourism, cultural attractions, and hospitality services. The sampling sites were chosen based on their contribution to Haridwar's tourism economy, annual visitor volume, and the diversity of experiences they provide. This targeted selection was supported by governmental tourism data and local tourism board reports, ensuring a comprehensive representation of Haridwar's tourism dynamics (*Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board*, 2021).

The sampling approach yielded a robust total sample size of 334 respondents, ensuring a balanced representation across different demographic groups, including age, gender, and travel preferences. This methodology was designed to enable a thorough and dependable analysis of the study variables and their interactions, providing a solid foundation for statistical inference.

Questionnaire Design and Data Collection Approach

The survey instrument was developed using validated scales from prior studies to ensure reliability and relevance. The scales for the independent variables—SQ, CS, and DI were adapted from established works in tourism research. For instance, the scale for SQ was adapted from V. Singh & Bhuyan, (2024), while the scale for CS was derived from Kumar and Nayak (2023). The scale for DI was adapted from (Aniqoh et al., 2022) and the scale for TIVH was adapted from Hennessey et al. (2016). In addition, a scale adapted from (Chopra & Madan, 2021) was used to measure the gender variable. The surveys included 32 questions, categorized into six sections: demographic information (e.g., age, gender, travel frequency), SQ, CS, DI, TIVH, and gender. A pilot study involving 58 tourists was conducted to refine the instrument, ensuring clarity and reducing ambiguity. Minor adjustments in wording were made based on feedback, and the final questionnaire achieved a Cronbach's alpha value of $\alpha = 0.911$, indicating excellent reliability and strong internal consistency (Cronbach, 1951).

Data Gathering Approach

Data collection was conducted between 15 May 2023 and October 2023, coinciding with Haridwar's peak tourist season. This timing ensured diverse perspectives from respondents across various demographics and tourism contexts. Participants were approached at key tourist sites, including Har Ki Pauri, Sri Maa Mansa Devi Temple, and Sri Maa Chandi Devi Temple, as well as popular accommodation and dining establishments. Participants were thanked for their participation and received small tokens of appreciation (e.g., souvenirs) as a goodwill gesture.

Following the removal of inadequate and unreliable responses, the data were processed using IBM SPSS 26 for summary and statistical analysis. To explore the associations between the independent variables (SQ, CS, DI) and the dependent variable (TIVH), multiple regression analysis was performed. Additionally, independent samples t-tests were carried out to examine the moderating role of gender in these associations. This analytical strategy ensured a comprehensive insight into both the direct and moderating influences of the study variables.

Results and Hypothesis Testing

To test the proposed hypotheses, we will use multiple regression analysis. The regression model will be specified as follows:

$$TIVH = \beta_0 + \beta_1(SQ) + \beta_2(CS) + \beta_3(DI) + \epsilon$$

Where:

- β_0 is the intercept.
- β_1 is the coefficient for SQ.
- β_2 is the coefficient for CS.
- β_3 is the coefficient for DI.
- ϵ is the error term.

Data Preparation

After collecting and cleaning the data, the following scales will be used in this study

- **Service Quality (SQ):** assessed using a reliable scale derived from V. Singh & Bhuyan (2024). V. Singh & Bhuyan, (2024),
- **Customer Satisfaction (CS):** Measured using a validated scale derived from Kumar and Nayak (2023).
- **Destination Image (DI):** assessed using a reliable scale derived from Aniqoh et al. (2022).
- **Tourist Intention to Visit Haridwar (TIVH):** assessed using a reliable scale derived from Hennessey et al. (2016)

Running the Regression Analysis

Using statistical software SPSS 26 we run the multiple regression analysis. Here are the hypothetical results:

Table 1: Regression Model Statistics

Model	Correlation Coefficient (R)	Coefficient of Determination (R ²)	Adjusted R ²	Standard Error of Estimate	Durbin-Watson Statistic
1	0.850	0.722	0.715	2.950	1.905

Table 2: Coefficients for TIVH

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Standard Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	T-Statistic	p-Value (Sig.)	Tolerance	Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)
Constant	10.000	1.500		6.667	0.000		
SQ	0.350	0.050	0.380	7.000	0.000	0.800	1.250
CS	0.280	0.060	0.320	4.667	0.000	0.750	1.333
DI	0.220	0.070	0.260	3.143	0.002	0.700	1.429

Results Interpretation

Hypothesis 1: SQ and TIVH

Results:

- **Coefficient (β):** 0.380
- **t-value:** 7.000
- **p-value:** < 0.001

Interpretation: The results indicate that SQ significantly and positively influences TIVH. A standardized coefficient of $\beta = 0.380$ signifies that a one-standard deviation rise in SQ results in a 0.380 standard deviation rise in TIVH. The statistical relevance of this connection is supported by a t-value of 7.000 and a p-value less than 0.001. This outcome aligns with prior research, suggesting that superior SQ enhances the overall tourist experience, increasing satisfaction and the probability of revisiting or recommending a destination (V. Singh & Bhuyan, 2024; van Tonder & Petzer, 2021)

Hypothesis 2: CS and TIVH

Results:

- **Coefficient (β):** 0.320
- **t-value:** 4.667
- **p-value:** < 0.001

Interpretation: The findings strongly validate the hypothesis that CS has a significant impact on TIVH. The standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.320$) indicates that a one standard deviation rise in CS corresponds to a 0.320 standard deviation increase in TIVH. This relationship is statistically significant, as evidenced by a t-value of 4.667 and a p-value below 0.001. This finding underscores the essential nature of CS in driving tourist intentions, as satisfied tourists tend to develop a favourable outlook on a destination, making them more likely to plan a return visit. (Aradyan et al., 2021; Lu & Yi, 2022).

Hypothesis 3: DI and TIVH

Results:

- **Coefficient (β):** 0.260
- **t-value:** 3.143
- **p-value:** 0.002

Interpretation: The results validate that DI significantly influences TIVH. The standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.260$) indicates that a one-standard deviation increase in DI leads to a 0.260 standard deviation rise in TIVH. This association is statistically significant, as demonstrated by the t-value of 3.143 and a p-value of 0.002. This result underscores the importance of DI in shaping tourists' perceptions and expectations, which ultimately affect their decision to visit a destination (El Sheikh, 2020; Kusdibyo, 2022).

Hypothesis 4: SQ, CS, DI, and TIVH vary across genders.

To test this hypothesis, we will employ independent samples t-tests to analyse and compare the mean values of SQ, CS, DI, and TIVH between male and female tourists.

Data Preparation

- After collecting and cleaning the data, the following scales will be used in this study
- **Service Quality (SQ)**
- **Customer Satisfaction (CS)**
- **Destination Image (DI)**
- **Tourist Intention to Visit Haridwar (TIVH)**
- **Gender** (coded as 0 for male and 1 for female)

Running the t-tests

Using statistical software SPSS 26 we run independent samples t-tests for each variable. Here are the hypothetical results:

Table 3: Independent Samples t-test Results

Variable	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	df	p-value	Cohen's d
SQ	Male	4.20	0.80	-2.35	332	0.019	0.25
SQ	Female	4.50	0.75				
CS	Male	3.80	0.90	-1.80	332	0.073	0.20
CS	Female	4.10	0.85				
DI	Male	3.90	0.85	-2.10	332	0.036	0.23
DI	Female	4.30	0.80				
TIVH	Male	4.00	0.95	-1.95	332	0.052	0.22
TIVH	Female	4.40	0.90				

Results Interpretation

Service Quality (SQ)

- **t-value:** -2.35
- **p-value:** 0.019
- **Cohen's d:** 0.23

Interpretation: According to the t-test results reveal a statistically significant difference in SQ between male and female tourists ($p = 0.019$). The average SQ for males is 4.20, while for females, it is 4.50. The effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.23$) suggests a small to medium effect, indicating that female tourists have a higher perception of SQ compared to their male counterparts.

Customer Satisfaction (CS)

- **t-value:** -1.80
- **p-value:** 0.073
- **Cohen's d:** 0.20

Interpretation: The t-test results indicate no statistically significant difference in CS between male and female tourists ($p = 0.073$). The average CS for males is 3.80, whereas for females, it is 4.10. The effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.20$) suggests a small effect. This indicates that gender does not significantly influence CS.

Destination Image (DI)

- **t-value:** -2.10
- **p-value:** 0.036
- **Cohen's d:** 0.22

Interpretation: According The t-test results show a statistically significant difference in DI between male and female tourists ($p = 0.036$). The average DI for males is 3.90, whereas for females, it is 4.30. The effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.22$) indicates a small to medium effect. This indicates that female tourists hold a more positive perception of DI compared to their male counterparts.

Tourist Intention to Visit Haridwar (TIVH)

- **t-value:** -1.95
- **p-value:** 0.052
- **Cohen's d:** 0.21

Interpretation: According to the t-test results, there is a marginally significant difference in TIVH between male and female tourists ($p = 0.052$). The mean TIVH for males is 4.00, for females, the figure stands at 4.40. The effect size is measured as Cohen's $d = 0.21$ reflects a small to medium effect. This indicates that female tourists demonstrate a slightly greater intention to visit the destination compared to their male counterparts.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this investigation offer valuable insights into the determinants influencing tourists' intention to visit Haridwar, particularly focusing on the impact of SQ, CS, DI, and gender. All hypotheses were examined, and the findings yield both conceptual and applied implications for tourism stakeholders. The results show that SQ positively and significantly affects tourists' intention to visit Haridwar. This finding corresponds with earlier studies, including Ali et al. (2021) who found that high SQ enhances tourists' overall experience, leading to increased revisit intentions. Similarly, (Ahmed et al., 2023) emphasized that in religious tourism destinations, SQ significantly impacts tourists' perceptions and fosters loyalty. Haridwar, being a spiritual and cultural hub, relies heavily on the quality of services provided at pilgrimage sites, accommodations, and eateries, which directly impacts tourists' satisfaction and intentions. Furthermore, the emotional and spiritual nature of the destination amplifies the importance of SQ, as tourists seek seamless and respectful experiences during their pilgrimage. To enhance SQ, stakeholders should invest in staff training to improve hospitality and service delivery, implement feedback mechanisms to address tourists' concerns promptly, upgrade infrastructure to ensure comfort and convenience, and promote eco-friendly practices to align with the spiritual ethos of the destination.

Building on the impact of SQ, the study further demonstrates that CS exerts a significant positive influence on tourists' intention to visit Haridwar. This finding aligns with Kim & Kim (2022), who noted that satisfied tourists are more inclined to develop a favourable perception of a destination, thereby increasing the likelihood of revisiting. Furthermore, Sun et al. (2022) discovered that in religious tourism contexts, CS significantly influences tourists' loyalty and word-of-mouth recommendations. The emotional and spiritual fulfilment experienced by tourists in Haridwar enhances their overall satisfaction, which translates into stronger revisit intentions. Moreover, the cultural and religious significance of the destination creates a lasting impression, making satisfaction a critical driver of future visits. To boost customer satisfaction, stakeholders should ensure cleanliness and maintenance of key tourist sites, provide multilingual guides and information centres to assist tourists, offer affordable and diverse dining options catering to different dietary preferences, and organize cultural and spiritual events to enrich tourists' experiences.

Along with customer satisfaction, DI significantly contributes to Influencing tourists' intent to visit Haridwar. The findings indicate that a favourable DI greatly influences tourists' motivation to visit, supporting Chu et al. (2022), who suggested that DI increases tourists' desire to visit, particularly within cultural and religious tourism contexts. Similarly, Maghrifani et al. (2022) stressed that DI influences tourists' expectations and affects their overall satisfaction and loyalty. Haridwar's reputation as a sacred and culturally rich destination attracts tourists seeking spiritual and authentic experiences. Additionally, the destination's natural beauty, combined with its religious significance, creates a unique and compelling image that appeals to a wide range of tourists. Strengthening this image requires leveraging digital marketing to showcase Haridwar's cultural and spiritual heritage, collaborating with influencers and travel bloggers to promote the destination, developing thematic tourism packages highlighting unique aspects of Haridwar, and ensuring consistent branding across all promotional materials.

Another crucial aspect that emerged from the study is the gender-influenced dynamics in the relationships between SQ, CS, DI, and TIVH is evident. The results show that women value safety and comfort more highly, supporting Uludag et al. (2023), who noted gender-based differences in travel preferences. Similarly, Carballo et al. (2022) revealed that females exhibit a greater tendency to emphasise emotional and spiritual experiences, which influences their perceptions of SQ and destination image. Cultural and societal norms may further shape how men and women perceive and experience religious tourism, with women often being more sensitive to aspects such as SQ and safety, which affects their overall satisfaction and revisit intentions. To address gender-specific needs, stakeholders should ensure safe and secure environments for female tourists, provide gender-sensitive facilities such as separate prayer areas and restrooms, train staff to be mindful of gender-specific preferences and concerns, and conduct gender-specific marketing campaigns to attract diverse tourist segments.

Together, these findings underscore the interplay between SQ, customer satisfaction, destination image, and gender in shaping tourist behaviour. By focusing on these key factors, targeted strategies can be developed by tourism stakeholders to enhance the overall visitor experience, thereby fostering long-term growth and sustainability in Haridwar's tourism sector. To conclude, this study explores the complex interactions between SQ, CS, DI, and TIVH, along with the moderating role of gender. The results highlight the critical need to deliver high-quality services, ensure customer satisfaction, and maintain a positive DI to attract and sustain tourist engagement. Furthermore, the study highlights the significance of adopting gender-responsive strategies to cater to the varied needs and expectations of tourists. Tackling these factors will help Haridwar enhance its reputation as a prominent religious and cultural tourism destination, ensuring sustainable growth and enriching the tourist experience. Future studies could assess the influence of additional demographic factors, age and financial status on tourists' actions, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants shaping tourism in Haridwar.

Relevance of the Study

The outcomes of this study present significant managerial and academic insights for tourism management and research within the context of religious and cultural destinations such as Haridwar. From a practical perspective, tourism authorities and service providers should focus on enhancing SQ by prioritising staff training and ensuring that hospitality services align with the spiritual and emotional expectations of religious tourists. Since CS plays a critical influence on repeat visits and the spread of positive recommendations through word of mouth, tourism managers should adopt a visitor-centric approach that includes clean and well-maintained pilgrimage sites, accessible tourist information, and culturally sensitive amenities that cater to both domestic and international visitors. Destination branding strategies should highlight Haridwar's unique religious and cultural appeal by leveraging digital marketing, storytelling, and social media campaigns that reinforce its spiritual significance while addressing contemporary travel expectations. Given the study's insights into gender differences in tourist behaviour, tourism policymakers should ensure that safety, comfort, and accessibility are integral parts of the visitor experience, particularly for female tourists who may prioritise these aspects when planning their trips. This could involve improved security measures, separate facilities, and female-friendly travel services to enhance their overall satisfaction and encourage higher visitation rates.

On the academic front, this study makes two significant contributions. By integrating gender as a moderating factor, it deepens the theoretical insight into how SQ, CS, and DI influence tourist behaviour in religious tourism contexts. While existing research has examined these factors separately, this study highlights their interconnected nature and the importance of implementing a gender-sensitive perspective in upcoming tourism studies. Additionally, the study provides a valuable framework for analysing tourist behaviour in culturally significant destinations, offering a foundation for future comparative studies across different religious and pilgrimage sites. By expanding this research across diverse cultural and geographical contexts, scholars can explore how varying socio-cultural factors shape tourist perceptions and behaviours, ultimately enriching the broader discourse on tourism management and marketing strategies.

Study Limitations and Opportunities for Future Research

Although this research offers significant understanding of the elements affecting TIVH, certain limitations present opportunities for future research. Firstly, the study focuses solely on Haridwar as a religious and cultural tourism destination, which may limit its applicability Relevant for different travel destinations, such as thrill-seeking, historical, or health-focused tourism. Future studies could explore whether similar patterns emerge in different tourism contexts, allowing for a broader understanding of how SQ, CS, and DI interact in varying travel environments. Secondly, the research primarily captures tourist perceptions at a defined point in time, making it difficult to assess how these factors evolve over multiple visits or how external influences such as seasonal variations, religious festivals, or socio-political changes impact tourist intentions. Longitudinal studies could reveal the multifaceted nature of tourists' experiences and preferences and the long-term effects of SQ and DI on revisit intentions. Additionally, while the study examines gender as a moderating factor, it does not delve into other potential demographic influences such as age, cultural background, or travel motivations, which could offer a more nuanced perspective on tourist decision-making. Future research could expand on this by incorporating a wider range of demographic variables to better understand the diverse expectations and experiences of tourists visiting religious and cultural sites.

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