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Research Article

Residents' Attitude Towards Pilgrims: Development And Validation Of Sustainable Religious Tourism Scale

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ABSTRACT

The research aims to develop a sustainable religious tourism (SRT) scale that can assess the attitude of the local residents towards the pilgrims. The development of the scale starts with the literature review wherein the identification of dimensions of sustainable tourism and generation of attributes have been accomplished. This is followed by refinement of the items through the content validation procedure where both domain and industry experts are consulted and made their recommendations. The refinement of items through the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) followed the content validation process with a rotated component matrix yielding 5 factors with a total of 30 items for the SRT scale. The psychometric properties of the SRT scale are then tested with the help of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) which establishes both the reliability and validity of the SRT scale. The SRT scale thus developed by the study consists of a total of 30 items under the 5 different dimensions of SRT.

Key Words: Communities, Pilgrims, Policymakers, Residents, Shakti Peeth, Tourism

Introduction

The tourism industry is counted among the most significant sectors of the economy worldwide. It occupies a prominent place in the service sector and thanks to its ability to generate employment, bring investment, and spur economic activities; nations around the globe today attach significant importance to tourism (Akis et al. 1996, Andereck et al. 2000). Among the various categories of the tourism sector, religious tourism offers attractive prospects as it signifies the unique combination of spirituality, tourism, and cultural heritage of the pilgrimage sites. Especially in India, the prospects of religious tourism are enormous as the country has been long considered home to various deities, godheads, and celestial beings. Many studies conducted in the past explored the various aspects of religious tourism and growing interest in the field signifies the relevance this particular segment of tourism holds across the world. Concomitant to these studies is an investigation of the residents' attitude towards pilgrims as local communities play an important role in either making or breaking the perception of pilgrims towards the religious sites (Arora 2012; Barnes et al. 2014). The role of the regional authorities and administration is also an important aspect on which many researchers have been focusing their attention. As noted by Berry and Ladkin (1997), the attitude of the residents and their receptiveness to the pilgrims can prove instrumental in the emergence of the place as a prominent religious tourism centre. Among the prominent attributes identified by past research, a majority have highlighted the importance of goodwill, cooperation, receptiveness, attitude, and friendly behaviour of residents are the most prominent parameters (Bond and Morrison-Saundersn 2011; Boyacioglu and Akfirat 2015). Many researchers have also underscored the need to include residents as a major stakeholder in the development of the religious tourism ecosystem as their concerns are often neglected at the altar of tourists' needs (Cooke 1982; Bull and Lovell 2007; Case 2013). Of late, the concept of Sustainable Religious Tourism (SRT) has caught the attention of both scholars and practitioners in the tourism industry. By including residents as important stakeholders, the SRT attributes the due importance to local communities in the existing framework of Sustainable Tourism. In the context of this research, we have defined SRT as "the form of religious tourism which brings prosperity to the residents, offers delightful experiences to pilgrims, and maintains the quality of the environment to benefit both local communities and pilgrims". With the

operational definition in place, we move to the development of the scale that can measure the various attributes and parameters related to SRT. Specifically, the focus of the SRT scale is to offer a holistic tool that can be used to measure the attitude of the residents towards the pilgrims. For the development process, we draw on the themes of sustainable tourism to generate the initial pool of items which then undergo the process of refinement using both exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). These analyses are also done to evaluate the psychometric properties of the scale by confirming its important parameters including reliability and validity among others.

Literature Review

SRT Scale Development: Item Generation and Content Validation

Item Generation: The extant literature offers a divergent view on sustainable tourism with a few studies offering the dimensions of SRT in the view of economic, social, and environmental aspects pertinent to the industry. As mentioned by Gunn (1994), sustainability in tourism must offer protection against economic, social, and environmental degradation to the residents or local communities. It also helps to generate holistic opportunities for the local residents and communities and also leads to the overall development of the place and creates a win-win situation for all the stakeholders who are involved in the system (Stynes 1997; Kim and Fesenmaier 2017; Soulard et al. 2021). The theme of economic prosperity (EP) is centred on the financial aspects, job creation, investment potential, and spur to entrepreneurial activities and has been thoroughly explored by the researchers in the past (Hunter and Shaw 2007; Jepson et al. 2019; Jorgenson et al. 2019). The social influence (SI) dimensions and their attributes were taken from the studies by Ryan et al. (1998), Jepson et al. (2019), Kim (2014), and Ribeiro et al. (2018) among others. These researchers focused on the quality of life, issues related to the crowd and exploitation of the resources, and the impact of the tourists' visits on the values, ethics, and cultures of the local community. The factor of Environmental Concern (EC) is explored from the research of Ott (1978), Kinga et al. (1993), Sirakaya (1997) Hunter and Shaw (2007), and Case (2013) while regulatory compliances (RC) have been investigated from the studies conducted by King et al. (1993), Bull and Lovell (2007), Larsen (2007), and Jepson et al. (2019). The adverse impact on the environment because of the visits of tourists is well documented in the literature and for the generation of the items, our study refers to the attribute of ecological degradation (Ott 1978; Kinga et al. 1993), environment conservation and wildlife (Sirakaya 1997; Hunter and Shaw 2007), and Natural Diversity and Habitat (Case 2013; Soulard et al. 2021) among others. Under the dimension of Regulatory Compliances (RC), the attributes were taken from the studies of King et al. (1993), Bull and Lovell (2007), Larsen (2007); and Jepson et al. (2019). Akis et al. (1996) and Lindberg et al. (2001) researched Community Participation (CP) comprehensively and coupled with studies of Swart et al. (2003), Hunter and Shaw (2007), Singh et al. (2020), we identified the attributes such as Holistic Inclusion, Decisions making power, and Community values for the use in our study. The dimension of Pilgrims' Satisfaction (PS) is explored from the viewpoint of collecting feedback (Wang 1999; Andereck and Weaver 2000), analysing inputs (Arora 2012; Barnes et al. 2014), integrating improvements (Wang 1999; Barnes et al. 2014), and quality experience (Andereck and Weaver 2000; Arora 2012). The attributes considered under Holistic Opportunities (HO) were opportunities for locals (Dixey 1975; Cooke 1982), trading and promotion of native items (Weaver and Oppermann 2000; Wijaya et al. 2013). Table 1 given below offers the complete details of the 7 dimensions, their attributes, and contributing authors that are used for generating the initial pool of items:

Table 1: Dimensions and Attributes for SRT

S/N	Dimensions	Attributes	Literature Source
1	Economic Prosperity (EP)	Income, Opportunities, Investment, Tax revenue, Diversification, Development	Stynes (1997), Hunter and Shaw (2007), Jepson et al. (2019), Jorgenson et al. (2019)
2	Social Influence (SI)	Life Quality, Overcrowding, Exploitation of resources, Comfort and Convenience, Impact on culture and values	Ryan et al. (1998), Jepson et al. (2019), Kim (2014), Kim and Fesenmaier (2017), Ribeiro et al. (2018)
3	Environmental Concerns (EC)	Ecological Degradation, Natural Diversity and Habitat, Pollution, Environment Conservation, Wildlife	Ott (1978), Kinga et al. (1993), Sirakaya (1997) Hunter and Shaw (2007), Case (2013), Soulard et al. (2021)
4	Regulatory Compliances (RC)	Rules and regulations, Policies and Procedures, Management of facilities, Long-term planning, Safety and Support system	King et al. (1993), Bull and Lovell (2007), Larsen (2007); Jepson et al. (2019)
5	Community Participation (CP)	Holistic Inclusion, Decisions making power, Community values,	Akis et al. (1996), Lindberg et al. (2001), Swart et al. (2003), Hunter and Shaw (2007), Singh et al. (2020),
6	Pilgrims Satisfaction (PS)	Collecting feedback, analysing inputs, integrating improvements, quality experience	Wang (1999), Andereck and Weaver (2000), Arora (2012), Barnes et al. (2014)
7	Holistic Opportunities (HO)	Opportunities for local, trading of native items, promotion of neighbourhood items	Dixey (1975), Cooke (1982), Weaver and Oppermann (2000), Wijaya et al. (2013),

Content Validation: A total of 58 items under the 7 dimensions were generated with the help of an extant literature review for the development of the SRT scale. As per the recommendations of DeVellis (1991) and

Ap and Crompton (1998), this initial pool of items is then subjected to the content validation procedure. Both domain experts and industry experts reviewed the items on the criteria such as clarity, simplicity, neutrality, etc. Further, the guidelines for creating statements for the Likert scale offered by Edward (1957) were also kept in mind while reviewing this initial list of items. As a result of the content validation process, experts recommended the removal of 2 dimensions of regulatory compliances (RC) and holistic opportunities (HO) as these factors were overlapping with other dimensions. The items under these dimensions were not distinctive and lacked a separate identity. Both domain and industry experts recommended the removal and accordingly, these dimensions along with their items were removed from the list of dimensions. Further, experts recommended the modification of 7 items and the deletion of 8 items from the remaining list of items. At the end of the content validation process, the study was left with 42 items belonging to 7 different dimensions of the proposed SRT scale.

Research Methodology

Development of Scale: Purification of Items and Exploratory Factor Analysis

Purification of Items: The primary objective of the purification of items is to get rid of any non-discriminating variables that might be causing discrepancies in the development and validation of the proposed scale (DeVellis 1991). To carry out the purification process, exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the 216 responses taken from the residents of the Jawala Ji Pilgrimage Site located in the district Kangra of Himachal Pradesh in India. The place is a sacred pilgrimage centre and is famous for the "Flame-mouthed" deity which is one among the 51 Shakti Peeths situated in SouthEast Asia. Devotees from all across the globe visit this Shakti Peeth all year around, thereby making the residents of the place ideal respondents for the administration of the survey. Table 2 given below offers the demographic details of the respondents:

Table 2: Demographic Details

Sample size (n= 216)			
Characteristics	**Category**	**Number**	**Percentage**
Age	below 25	81	37.50
	Between 25 and 50	82	37.96
	50 and above	53	24.54
Gender	Male	153	70.83
	Female	63	29.17
Education Level	Matriculation	54	25.00
	Graduation	122	56.48
	Post Graduation and above	40	18.52
Annual Income	Less than 3 lakh	45	20.83
	Between 3 lakh and 7 lakh	134	62.04
	7 lakh and above	37	17.13
Employment Status	Job	44	20.37
	Business	64	29.63
	Retired	76	35.19
	Students	32	14.81

Prominent among the parameters required for developing a reliable scale is the replicability of the items included in the scale. The item-to-total-score correlation (r) is calculated with higher values indicating the reliable nature of the items. In the purification stage, 8 items with an r-value of less than 0.3 were discarded.

Data Analysis

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA): Next, the exploratory factors analysis (EFA) with varimax rotation was performed to find the underlying factor structure and condense the items into a manageable number of factors. The value of the KMO test for the sampling adequacy came out to be 0.88 while the Bartlett Test of Sphericity was significant at the level of 0.01 (Table 3):

Table 3: KMO and Bartlett Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.880
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2014.217
	df	326
	Sig.	.000

Table 4 given below has the detail of the Cronbach alpha, Eigen Value, and variance (%) of the loaded items.

Table 4: Cronbach alpha, Eigen Value, and variance (%)

	No of items	Cronbach Alpha	Eigen Value	Variance (%)
Economic Prosperity (EP)	7	0.88	8.31	20.21
Social Influence (SI)	7	0.86	6.12	16.41
Environmental Concern (EC)	6	0.84	3.46	14.32
Community Participation (CP)	5	0.81	2.11	7.09
Pilgrims Satisfaction (PS)	5	0.80	1.38	3.23

The rotated factor matrix shown in the table 5 list out the 30 items belonging to the 5 dimensions with their respective loadings:

Table 5: Rotated Component Matrix

EP1: I like pilgrims' visits because it helps in the generation of new income for the place	0.884				
EP2: I believe that visits of pilgrims bring new economic opportunities for the community	0.811				
EP3: I believe that visit of pilgrims generates substantial tax revenue for the local administrations	0.802				
EP4: Visits of Pilgrims boost the sales of local products good for the local economy	0.721				
EP5: Local Restaurants and Hotels are benefited by the visit of pilgrims	0.643				
EP6: I have experienced growth in my income due to visits from pilgrims	0.574				
EP7: Due to visits of Pilgrims, new products and services are being innovated in our communities	0.467				
SI1: I think pilgrims' visits have disrupted the social life of the community		0.852			
SI2: I think my social life has been impacted by the visits of pilgrims Our products add value to the life of customers		0.801			
SI3: I feel irritated because of the visits of pilgrims to our place		0.788			
SI4: We do take care of changing needs of pilgrims		0.708			
SI5: Resources of our community are being exploited due to the visits of pilgrims		0.625			
SI6: I think a number of pilgrims has grown very fast		0.612			
SI7: Our place is overcrowded because of visits from pilgrims		0.517			
EC1: The environment of our place has deteriorated because of the visits of pilgrims			0.686		
EC2: I believe that our community environment must be protected at all costs			0.678		
EC3: The pilgrims don't pay attention to the conservation of the local environment			0.595		
EC4: I think SRT should focus on educating pilgrims to protect the environment			0.511		
EC5: I believe SRT should encourage positive ecological ethics among pilgrims			0.479		
EC6: I believe SRT should strive to conserve the natural habitat of animals and contribute to ecological balance			0.455		
CP1: Community participate in decisions related to pilgrims and religious activities				0.823	
CP2: I think SRT must include all community members in the decision-making process				0.757	
CP3: I believe that all members of the community are not included in the decision-making related to religious tourism activities				0.606	
CP4: I believe that SRT should value the communities' opinions and take their suggestions to frame new policies				0.535	
CP5: SRT should strive to include all stakeholders of the community before future decisions				0.501	
PS1: I think pilgrims are satisfied by their visits to our place					0.757
PS2: I believe that Pilgrims enjoy their visits and will come again if given a chance					0.707
PS3: SRT must focus on the development of pilgrims-friendly policies for developing our place holistically					0.667
PS4: SRT is responsible for providing good facilities for pilgrims and meeting all their needs and requirements					0.553
PS5: I think SRT should monitor and record the satisfaction levels of Pilgrims to offer superior experiences in the future					0.517

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA): After the EFA analysis, we conducted the CFA to assess the validity of the SRT scale. The AMOS software was used to run the analysis to find whether the sample data fit the theoretical model or not (Doxey 1975; Hair et al. 2019). The results of the model fit are given below in Table 6 below:

Table 6: Model Fit Indices

	Desired Value	Obtained Value
CMIN/df	≤ 2	1.8
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.05
GFI	≥ 0.9	0.935
AGFI	≥ 0.9	0.89
NFI	≥ 0.9	0.921
CFI	≥ 0.9	0.934
TLI	≥ 0.9	0.921

Table 7 below lists the items, their factor loadings, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and Cronbach alpha, signifying the reliability of the SRT scale:

Table 7: Factor Loading, AVE, CR, and Cronbach Alpha Values

Dimension	Items	Factor Loadings λ	AVE = Σλ²/ n	CR = (Σλ) ² / (Σλ) ² + (Σe)	Cronbach Alpha α
EP			0.628	0.880	0.898
	EP1	0.853			
	EP2	0.794			
	EP3	0.899			
	EP4	0.718			
	EP5	0.727			
	EP6	0.715			
	EP7	0.823			
SI			0.621	0.877	0.887
	SI1	0.853			
	SI1	0.841			
	SI1	0.816			
	SI1	0.792			
	SI1	0.784			
	SI1	0.717			
	SI1	0.701			
EC			0.691	0.889	0.867
	EC1	0.909			
	EC2	0.861			
	EC3	0.823			
	EC4	0.829			
	EC5	0.811			
	EC6	0.745			
CP			0.772	0.906	0.887
	CP1	0.915			
	CP2	0.909			
	CP3	0.891			
	CP4	0.866			
	CP5	0.809			
PS			0.560	0.804	0.891
	PS1	0.861			
	PS2	0.728			
	PS3	0.721			
	PS4	0.719			
	PS5	0.701			

In order to determine the discriminant validity of the SRT scale, the inter-construct variance was calculated and compared with the value of AVE. The discriminant validity proves that the constructs are different and capture a unique phenomenon that is not measured by other measures. The value of AVE (diagonal values) for the SRT scale came out to be greater than the squared value of inter-construct correlation (values below diagonal values), thereby establishing the discriminant validity of the scale (refer to Table 8)

Table 8: Discriminant Validity: AVE and Inter-construct Squared Correlation

	EP	SI	EC	CP	PS
EP	0.628				
SI	0.078	0.621			
EC	0.045	0.031	0.691		
CP	0.032	0.054	0.056	0.772	
PS	0.004	0.002	0.034	0.087	0.560

The final SRT scale with 30 items loaded on five different dimensions is given below in Table 9:

Table 9: SRT Scale

S/N	Items
1	EP1: I like pilgrims visits because it helps in generation of new income for the place
2	EP2: I believe that visits of pilgrims bring new economic opportunities for the community
3	EP3: I believe that visit of pilgrims generates substantial tax revenue for the local administrations
4	EP4: Visits of Pilgrims boost the sales of local products good for the local economy
5	EP5: Local Restaurants and Hotels are benefited by the visit of pilgrims
6	EP6: I have experienced growth in my income due to visits from pilgrims
7	EP7: Due to visits of Pilgrims, new products and services are being innovated in our communities
8	SI1: I think pilgrims' visits have disrupted the social life of the community
9	SI2: I think my social life has been impacted by the visits of pilgrims Our products add value to the life of customers
10	SI3: I feel irritated because of the visits of pilgrims to our place
11	SI4: We do take care of changing needs of pilgrims
12	SI5: Resources of our community are being exploited due to the visits of pilgrims
13	SI6: I think the number of pilgrims has grown very fast
14	SI7: Our place is overcrowded because of visits from pilgrims
15	EC1: The environment of our place has deteriorated because of the visits of pilgrims
16	EC2: I believe that our community environment must be protected at all costs
17	EC3: The pilgrims don't pay attention to the conservation of the local environment
18	EC4: I think SRT should focus on educating pilgrims to protect the environment
19	EC5: I believe SRT should encourage positive ecological ethics among pilgrims
20	EC6: I believe SRT should strive to conserve the natural habitat of animals and contribute in ecological balance
21	CP1: Community participate in decisions related to pilgrims and religious activities
22	CP2: I think SRT must include all community members in the decision-making process
23	CP3: I believe that all members of the community are not included in the decision making related to religious tourism activities
24	CP4: I believe that SRT should value the communities' opinions and take their suggestions to frame new policies
25	CP5: SRT should strive to include all stakeholders of the community before future decisions
26	PS1: I think pilgrims are satisfied by their visits to our place
27	PS2: I believe that Pilgrims enjoy their visits and will come again if given a chance
28	PS3: SRT must focus on the development of pilgrims-friendly policies for developing our place holistically
29	PS4: SRT is responsible for providing good facilities for pilgrims and meeting all their needs and requirements
30	PS5: I think SRT should monitor and record the satisfaction levels of Pilgrims to offer superior experiences in the future

Conclusion and Discussion

The most important contribution of a study to the body of knowledge is to help in the development of new theories and measurement scales. Especially, when it comes to the development of attitude measurement tools, the contribution can be easily considered significant to both academia and practice. The SRT scale developed by the study consists of 30 items classified under 5 different dimensions: EP (7 items), SI (7 items), EC (6 items), CP (5 items), and PS (5 items). The development and validation of the scale were done in accordance with the guidelines of DeVellis (1991). First, the initial pool of items was generated with the help of a literature review which was then followed by the content validation for refining these items on clarity and conciseness. The EFA was conducted to refine the items and find the underlying factor structure so that a large number of items can be clubbed under the small number of manageable factors. The rotating component Matrix under the EFA analysis yielded the 5-factor structure with a total of 30 items. In the next step, the psychometric properties of the scale were tested with the help of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The procedure was conducted in order to ensure that the sample data fit the theoretical model well. The modern fit analysis resulted in indices which are aligned with the recommended values by the previous studies. The high factor loadings of all items along with AVE values of more than 0.5 for all constructs proved the convergent reliability of the scale. The composite reliability is also proven with all the values coming out to be higher than the recommended value of 0.7. Further, the discriminant value of the SRT scale was proven by making a comparison of AVE values against the squared value of inter-construct correlations. After establishing both reliability and validity, the SRT scale with 30 items has been fully developed and can be used for measuring the attitudes of local residents towards the pilgrims.

Most scholars and practitioners agree on the need to develop SRT; in that regard, this scale could prove to be immensely useful for the stakeholders in the ecosystem. Especially, when it comes to policymaking at the local and regional levels, the inclusion of the residents will prove instrumental in ensuring the successful implementation of plans specifically conceived for offering better facilities to pilgrims. As the majority of past studies have emphasised the role of local residents in making tourism sustainable, the SRT scale can be helpful in taking religious tourism to the next level and creating a win-win situation for all stakeholders who are part of the ecosystem. As for the future study is concerned, we plan to replicate the study at other religious sites especially in the southern parts of India as it will help us to further strengthen the reliability and validity of the SRT scale in the different economic and socio-cultural contexts.

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