The Academic
International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research

An Online Peer Reviewed / Refereed Journal
Volume 4 | Issue 3 | March 2026
ISSN: 2583-973X (Online), SJIF IF: 5.6
Website: www.theacademic.in

Krishna Circuit Appeal: Impact of Destination Attractiveness on Tourist Behavior

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DOI : https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19541133

ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Accepted: 26-03-2026

Published: 10-04-2026

Keywords:

Attractiveness, Tourism, Religious Tourism, Lord Krishna, Tourist behaviour.

ABSTRACT

India is an opulent repost of religious sites that can provide a wide range of spiritual experience to visitors year-round. Therefore, it can be referred to as a religious tourism hub. The current research examines the fact that tourism attractiveness affects tourist behavior at destination sites related to Lord Krishna. Krishna is not a simple name; it symbolizes all virtues that the divinity encompasses, such as sharp wisdom, responsible behavior, inspiring effect, spectacular grace, beautiful appearance, noble character, and appreciation over centuries (Ythi 2019). The research hypothesis was that the attractiveness of Krishna sites has a significant influence on tourist behavior. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data (1,753 tourists) from Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Haryana using Google Forms. The respondents' ratings were obtained using a five-point Likert scale. Five statistically significant site attractiveness models were found to affect behavior at Krishna-related religious destinations, (i) food attractions, (ii) transport facilities, (iii) natural beauty, (iv) temple facilities, and (v) cultural attractions. The discussion reveals that these are the most positive determinants of tourist behavior towards Krishna-related religious locations.

Introduction

India is a fertile reservoir of tourism resources, that provides year-round tourism experience. Therefore, it can be defined as a country that is a perennial destination. The country is also blessed with a rich heritage

continuum, prehistoric practices of yoga, Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani and naturopathy as well as natural attractions covering 70 percent of the Himalayan ranges, a coastline of approximately 7,516 km, rich flora and fauna and medical facilities at the world level. These qualities have attracted a large number of global tourists. The backwaters, hill stations, caves, waterfalls, islands, and landscapes of the country also make the country attractive (Chavan et al., 2014).

Indian tourism has always flourished because of its strong spiritual background. India is being the birthplace of four major world religions-Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism, and Buddhism-, and receives a significant number of religious tourists worldwide (Gupta, 2020). In addition to religious influences, spirituality is a major attraction of international and local tourists to various places in the country (Nair et al., 2021).

People often make spiritual journeys when there is a meeting point of personal religion, experience and seeking truth which is often in the form of a journey. Through such travelling, people experience spirituality. India has always been a persistent attraction where seekers all over the world flock in search of ultimate knowledge (Timothy et al., 1998). Coupling spiritual tourism with cultural tourism and wellness tourism will be synergistic to bring about mutual growth and sustainable development of industries (Krivokapic, 2006). Tourists visiting places of religious importance usually have a background of economic disadvantages; therefore, any principles of pro-poor tourism should be factored when devising such circuits (Truong, 2015).

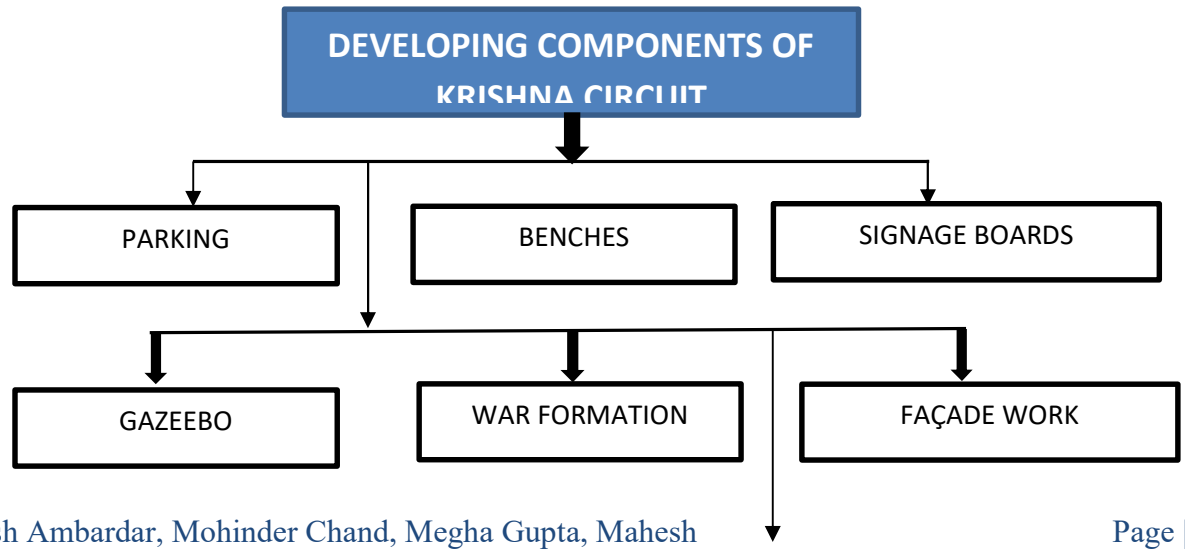
The Indian government has added the Swadesh Darshan Scheme to market religious tourism in the country. Under the Krishna Circuit, the Krishna Circuit is being designed with main emphasis on infrastructural deficit mitigation, enhanced connectivity, strengthened safety and security, by providing tourism related skills-training and development schemes. The project will focus on establishing tourism infrastructure that promotes environmentally friendly traveling in the region. Walking trails, restaurants, and hotels are planned to be constructed to reduce the environmental impact (2024).

Community involvement at the destination is the most effective in supporting the development of tourist products that are oriented towards pilgrimage or religious tourism as Rejman et al. (2016) emphasize. Engagement with local communities in the region improves sustainable development and makes this possible. Moreover, local communities are irreplaceable in the development of the original and true tourist experience. Visitors to sacred places expect to engage in various activities other than simply using simple facilities; the level of involvement they have with the destination and explore new experiences should be appropriately considered.

Although the latent potential of development may exist, there are several challenges in existing programs. The region has poor infrastructure such as insufficient budget accommodation, poor roads, final-mile transportation and sewage systems. In addition, sanitation and health conditions, waste collection systems and the growth of touts plague most sacred places. In addition, a lack of specifications in managing the religious behavior of visitors is an impediment to providing a mutually rewarding and respectful experience. Host communities and pilgrims need to effectively solve their problems to mutually benefit in the presence of each other.

The Krishna Circuit will be developed in a manner that allows them to overcome the infrastructural gaps existing in the different locations, promote skill development and training, and enhance the connectivity, safety and security of tourists (Medhekar et al., 2012). The main goal of the circuit is to create the locations of Lord Krishna in various states of India; thus, the life cycle of the deity, his birth, and his departure from the world are followed and demonstrated by a net of culturally and religiously important sites.

The National Committee on Development selected 12 major destinations under the Krishna Circuit Programme. Jaipur, Sikar and Nathdwara in Rajasthan; Kurukshetra at Haryana; Dwarka in Gujarat, Puri, Mathra, Vrindavan Bharsana, Gokul, Govardhan and Nandgaon in Uttar Pradesh. With this identification, the respective state governments were urged to develop and present comprehensive plans of development in these places as stipulated in the Annual Report of Government of India (2021-22). In addition, the Ministry of Tourism is developing tourism infrastructure in targeted pilgrimage and heritage sites through its PRASHAD Scheme. Puri, Mathra and Dwarka are also intended to be developed according to this scheme. Figure 1 shows the hierarchical arrangement of components involved in the development of the Krishna Circuit, including infrastructure, amenities, and visitor facilities.



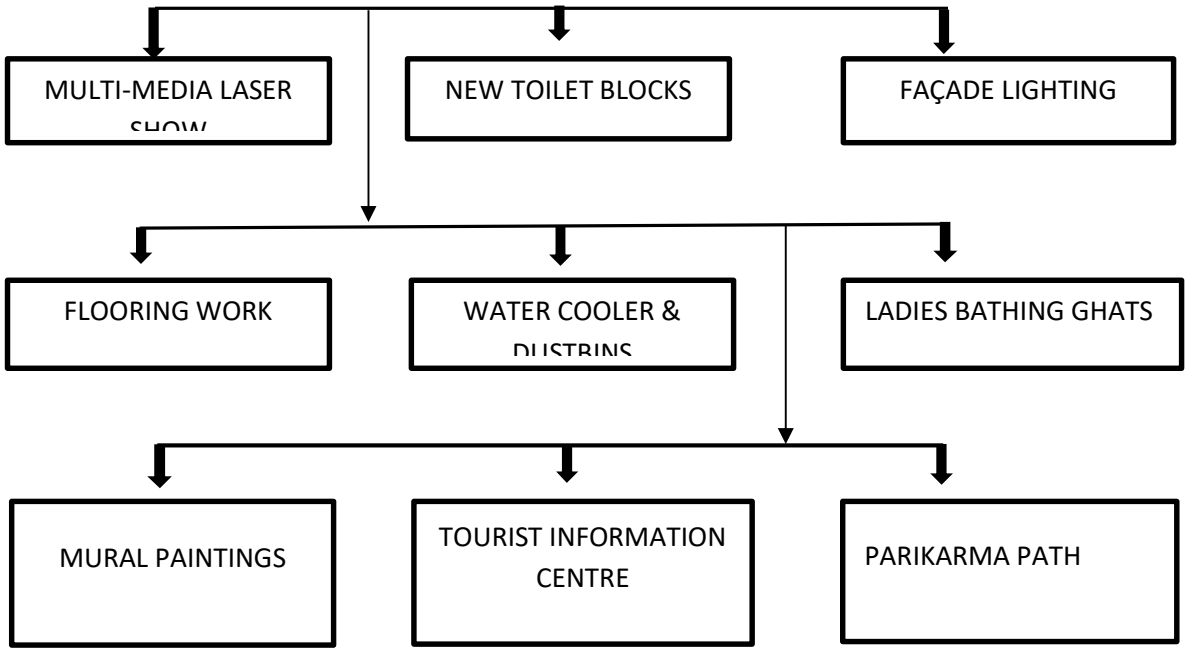


Figure 1. Developing Components of Krishna Circuit

Based on the proposals submitted by the respective State Governments, the Ministry of Tourism approved two projects under the Krishna Circuit, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. List of projects of Krishna Circuit (Ministry of Tourism, 2019)

S. No.	STATE / YEAR	SCHEME NAME	ALLOCATED FUNDS	AMOUNT DISBURSED
1	Haryana 2016-2017	Advancement of Tourism infrastructures at places related to Mahabharata in Kurukshetra	97.35	70.60
2	Rajasthan (2016-17)	Integrated enhancement of Khatu Shyam ji (Sikar), Govind dev ji Temple (Jaipur), and Nathdawara (Rajsamand)	91.45	45.72

In addition, the Ministry of Tourism is building tourism infrastructure at identified pilgrimage and heritage destinations under its PRASHAD Scheme. Puri, Mathura, and Dwarka were also identified for

the advancement of this scheme. The details of projects endorsed by the Ministry for these sites are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Tourism infrastructure Projects of PRASHAD Scheme (Ministry of Tourism, 2019)

S. No.	SCHEME NAME / YEAR	ALLOCATED FUNDS	AMOUNT DISBURSED
1.	Phase II development of Mathura–Vrindavan as a major tourist circuit (2014–15)	14.93	10.38
2.	Establishment of a tourist facilitation center in Vrindavan, Mathura District (2014–2015)	9.36	7.36
3.	Infrastructure enhancement at Shree Jagannath Dham, Puri–Ramachandi–Prachi Riverfront (Deuli) under the Mega Circuit initiative (2014–15)	50.00	10.00
4.	Tourism Advancement of Dwarka (2016–17)	26.23	6.85

Literature Review

Destination attractiveness integrates a sea of attributes and factors into a single framework where an in-depth evaluation can be carried out using one measure (Smith, 1987). Lue, Crompton, and Stewart (1996, p. 43) observed that destination attractiveness is primarily influenced by the preferences and interests of individual tourists. Tourists tend to choose attractions that appeal to their own motives, especially recreational attractions, such as weekend trips and holidays. Many researchers have shed light on the elements of destination attractiveness, including tourist attractions, natural resources and assets (Jeong, 1997; Priskin, 2001; Deng et al., 2002; Kim et al., 2003; Martin, 2008; Lee et al., 2010).

Formica (2002) rationalized the concept of destination attractiveness in a demand-supply model that acknowledged the importance of tourism resources in determining destination attractiveness. To expand this point of view, a number of investigations have determined a positive correlation between destination attractiveness and place attachment, meaning that more desirable destinations contribute to the

development of emotional and psychological bonds among travellers (Cheng et al., 2013; Reitsamer et al., 2016; Xu and Zhang, 2016; Song, 2017). A considerable variety of tourism situations have explored the concept of destination attractiveness, such as honeymoon travel, pilgrimage tourism, and religious destination mapping, highlighting the applicability of this concept in leisure- and faith-based contexts (Wang et al., 2016; Bhat, 2014; Chaudhary and Islam, 2020).

According to Foxall (1974), tourist behavior is the mass behavior of tourists. Behavioral intention is associated with individuals' thoughts of individuals on what they intend to do under particular circumstances (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). According to Moutinho (1987), tourist behavior is cited as a salient issue that impacts tourist decision. Although behavioral intentions and tourist satisfaction are two different constructs, they are interconnected as satisfaction can support a tourist decision concerning the patronage of a specific hospitality service (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Oliver, 1981).

Destination image has become an important determinant of understanding and modelling tourist behavior, including behavioral intentions towards a destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1996) identified two categories of behavioral intention: affirmative and non-affirmative. Positive behavioral intentions play a role in creating the perception of a good destination image; intention results in increased chances of tourists in a destination recommending the destination, loyal tendencies, willingness to revisit, and more expenditure (Zeithaml et al., 1996). Conversely, negative behavioral intentions discourage such behaviors.

The study of tourist behavior aims to identify the causes of consumer selection of a holiday destination and the kind of services and destinations they purchase (Horner and Swarbrooke, 1996). The tourist decision-making study is intended to determine the cognitive process and behavioral patterns of held by the tourists in deciding and buying tourism products and services. Motivation plays a key role in the decision-making process and has been facilitated by academic and industrial literature that focus on tourism (Fodness, 1994).

The highly positive image of the destination in the minds of travellers could create a competitive advantage as postulated by Kotler; Brown; et al. (2002). The measurement of such an image can be performed through traveller behavioral intentions. Local food is an important factor in the overall experience of tourists; gastronomy is one of the elements that determine whether a tourist will return (Kivela and Crotts, 2006). Visitor's satisfaction is very important in predicting future behaviors, including the probability of returning (Chen and Chen, 2010; Ladhari, 2009; Robinson, 2012).

The attractiveness of a destination is also vital in meeting the primary needs and wants of visitors. This, in turn, creates high service and hospitality quality perceptions, which ultimately impact tourist behavior (Hou et al., 2006). The uniqueness of a destination takes precedence in traveling, making it unique compared to other destinations (Rozak, 2012).

The special attraction of any destination is a critical factor for tourist attraction in a global context (Benur et al., 2015). The concept of destination attractiveness can be defined as the combination of both subjective and objective influence, which may manifest through personal experiences and perceptions, and objective aspects, which include individual expectations, natural resources (flora and fauna), high-quality hospitality services, and artificially created attractions. These factors offer a wide range of location choices to explore (Monica et al., 2022).

Expectations and motivations shape tourist behavior, including behavior and decision-making processes preceding, during, and following travel (Van Vuuren et al., 2012). According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2009), the concept of tourist behavior identifies how individuals attempt to gratify needs by consuming tourism-related products and meals offered by a hospitality establishment. According to experts, tourists' behaviour is conditioned by psychological, social, and demographic factors (Van Vuuren et al., 2012).

Research Objective

This study aims to determine the effect of destination appeal on tourist behavior in the Krishna Circuit.

Methodology

A structured questionnaire was used as a primary data gathering tool, which was applied in-person through a structured questionnaire and Google Forms. The questionnaire, which was originally in English, was later translated into the Hindi language to increase the understanding of the respondents. A pilot survey was also conducted before the main survey, which involved 83 visitors (20 each of Vrindavan, Sikar and Jaipur and 23 of Kurukshetra). Pilot testing has resulted in a few revisions in terms of attributes and response options to enhance clarity and relevance. Information was collected from tourists in Krishna Circuit destinations in India. The questionnaire had 64 variables, and all answers were given on a five-point Likert scale of five points where 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree) will be considered.

Result

Demographic profile

This was done descriptively to investigate the demographics of the 1,753 tourists. Table 3 illustrates the demographic data of tourists.

Table 3. Demographic data of Tourists

Demographic variables		**Number**	**Percent**
Krishna circuit location	Vrindavan	247	14.1
	Mathura	178	10.2
	Govardhan	119	6.8
	Barsana	150	8.6
	Gokul	91	5.2
	Nandgaon	92	5.2
	Jaipur	241	13.7
	Nathdawara	148	8.4
	Sikar	246	14.0
	Kurukshetra	241	13.7
Gender	Male	1020	58.2
	Female	733	41.8
Age	Less than 30	808	46.1
	31 - 40 Years	503	28.7
	Above 40 years	442	25.2
Marital status	Married	1086	62.0
	Unmarried	628	35.8
	Widowed	39	2.2
Nationality	INDIAN	1734	98.9
	GERMANY	4	.2
	ITALIAN	7	.4
	LATVIA	2	.1
	SPAIN	6	.3
Qualification	Not educated	89	5.1
	10th pass	312	17.8
	Under graduate	305	17.4

	Graduate	654	37.3
	Post Graduate	292	16.7
	Doctorate	101	5.8
Occupation	Student	389	22.2
	Business	561	32.0
	Private employed	424	24.2
	Govt. employed	136	7.8
	House wife	242	13.8
Annual income	Below 2.5 lakh	239	13.6
	2.5 lakh -7 lakh	701	40.0
	7.1 lakh - 15 Lakh	180	10.3
	Above 15 lakh	54	3.1
	No Income	579	33.0
Region	Rural	517	29.5
	Urban	1236	70.5
Family size	Nuclear family	1292	73.7
	Joint Family	461	26.3
Religion	Hindu	1677	95.7
	Sikh	52	3.0
	Jain	1	.1
	Christian	23	1.3

Vrindavan (14.1 mean 0.1), Jaipur (13.7 mean 1.1), Mathura (10.2 mean 1.1), Sikar (14.0 mean 1.1), Nathdawara (8.4 mean 1.2), Kurukshetra (13.7 mean 1.1), Nandgaon (5.2 mean 1.2), Gokul (5.2 mean 1.1), Govardhan (6.8). In addition, 58.2 proportion of the participants were male and 46.1 age were less than 30 years old. Three-fourths were married, 37.3% had a graduate degree, three-fifths were businessmen, three-fifths lived in urban places, three-fifths were nuclear families, and three-fifths were Hindus. Domestic tourists contributed to 98.9 per cent of the sample, with foreign tourists contributing the remaining 1.1 per cent.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

The hypothesis of the study was that the destination attractiveness of Krishna circuit sites in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Haryana determine tourist behavior. Stepwise forward multiple linear regression

analysis (MLRA) was used after establishing a series of assumptions. The data were involved was analyzed in terms of outliers, multicollinearity, normal data, error independence, linearity, homoscedasticity and non-zero variance (see Table 2).

The first assumption that was tested concerned standardized residuals. The level of 99% confidence was used to define observations as potential outliers in that the standardized residual values fell below or equal to -2.58 or fell above or equal to +2.58. All observations were computed as standardized residual values. The findings showed that the lowest value of the data was -3.719 and the highest value was 2.072, so outliers were present in the data, and therefore, the data met the assumption of standardized residuals.

Table 4. Residual statistics

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted value	3.08	5.08	4.08	.099	1753
Residual	-2.111	1.176	.000	.566	1753
Std. predicted value	-10.02	10.07	.000	1.000	1753
Std. residual	-3.719	2.072	.000	.999	1753

NOTE- a. Dependable variable: Destination attractiveness of Krishna circuit.

Additional tests were performed to evaluate the assumptions of normally distributed residuals, homoscedasticity, and linearity. Naturalness Analysis of the regression residuals in standardized form was conducted using histograms and normal probability (P-P) plots to determine normality and the use of the same graphical techniques to determine homoscedasticity and linearity. The histogram of standardized residuals was symmetrical and well-distributed implying that the residuals were normally distributed. This resulted in the assumptions of normality, homoscedasticity and linearity being sufficiently satisfied (Figure 2).

The P-P plot of the standardized residuals revealed that the points were closely clustered along the diagonal reference line which again confirmed that the standardized residuals were close to being normally distributed (see Figure 2.1). The standardized residuals versus standardized predicted values in a scatter plot showed an even and random distribution around the reference line indicating a constant variance form of correlation and a linear relationship. These trends support the sufficiency of the assumptions of normality, homoscedasticity and linearity (see Figure 2.1).

Predictor variables were tested as collinear variables. A correlation table shows that the correlation among the destination attractiveness dimensions was not high, with all correlation coefficients (r) not exceeding 0.9. Additional measurement of multicollinearity was performed using the variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance. All 13 variables of destination attractiveness have VIF values; that were less than the threshold of 10, and the values of the corresponding tolerance were more than 0.2. In addition, the non-zero variance assumption was met and the predictor variables did not have zero variance, - gether All these findings indicate that multicollinearity was not a problem and that the data fulfilled the conditions of the regression analysis.

The Durbin-Watson test was used to test the likelihood of autocorrelated residual values. The ideal value of 2 was used to determine whether the assumption of independent errors was met and whether the residuals were uncorrelated because the Durbin-Watson value of 1.909 was close to that. Thus, all the necessary regression assumptions were met, which made the data suitable for multiple regression analysis.

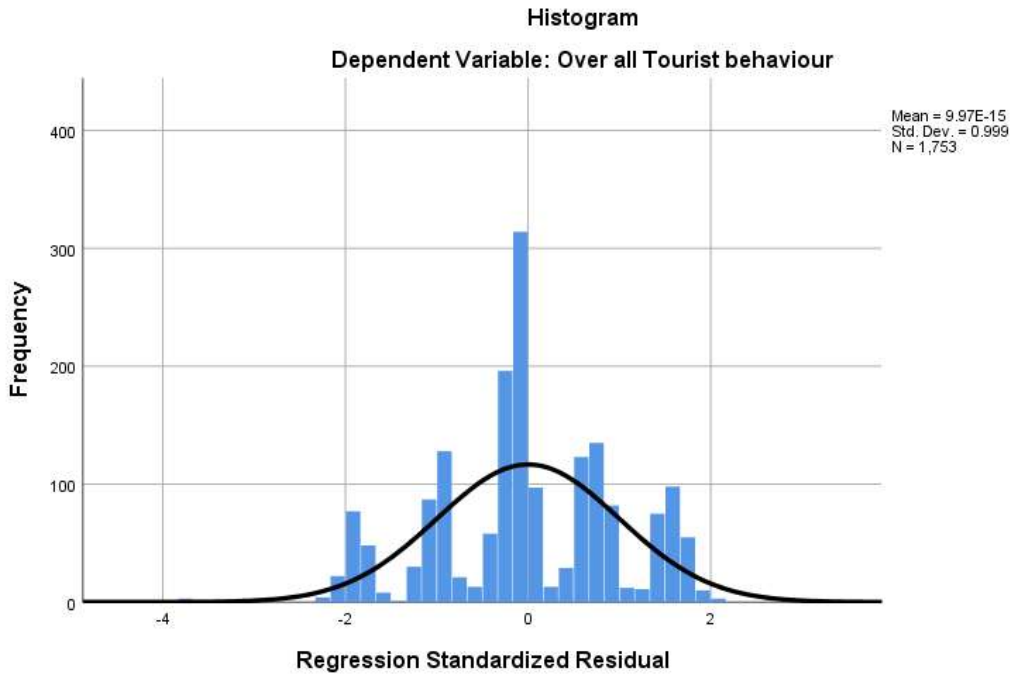


Figure 2. Histogram illustrating the normal distribution of residuals

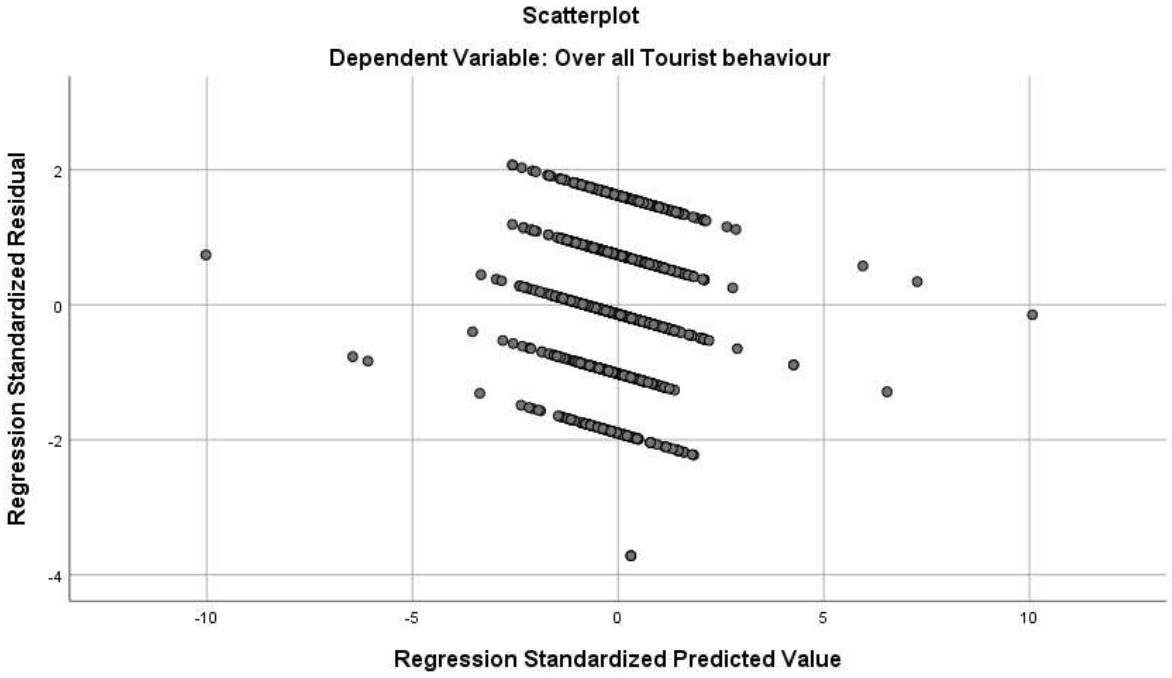


Figure 2.1. Standardized residuals plotted against standardized predicted values

Table 4.1. Collinearity diagnostics in stepwise multiple regression of destination attractiveness and tourist behaviour

Positive Destination Attractiveness	**Tolerance**	**VIF**	**Variance**
Natural beauty at destination	.687	1.445	.184
Facilities at the temples of destination	.699	1.431	.069
Food attractions at destination	.874	1.144	.227
Transport facilities	.698	1.433	.152
Cultural attractions at destination	.745	1.343	.218

Stepwise forward regression analysis identifying positive destination attractiveness determinants of tourist behaviour

Stepwise forward multiple regression analysis was used to determine the destination attractiveness variables that had the most positive impact on tourist behavior into the Krishna Circuit. The most significant determinants were identified into five key regression models: natural beauty at the destination, temple-related facilities, food attractions, transport facilities and cultural attractions. The effect of these five positive destination attractiveness factors and the models of these factors were measured based on the R 2 values in the model summary.

Table 4.2. Model summary of stepwise regression analysis between the destination attractiveness and tourist behaviour.

Model Equation		**R**	**R square**	**R square Adjusted**	**Durbin-Watson**
1	$Xe=a+Y_1 Z_1$	.99[a]	.10	.09	1.909
2	$Xe=a+Y_1 Z_1+Y_2 Z_2$	.36[b]	.19	.17	
3	$Xe=a+Y_1 Z_1+Y_2 Z_2+Y_3 Z_3$	.49[c]	.22	.21	
4	$Xe=a+Y_1 Z_1+Y_2 Z_2+Y_3 Z_3+Y_4 Z_4$	.61[d]	.26	.24	
5	$Xe=a+Y_1 Z_1+Y_2 Z_2+Y_3 Z_3+Y_4 Z_4 +Y5 Z5$	.73[e]	.30	.27	

The regression equation comes out as follows:

Xe =Total tourist behaviour; a = constant (intercept coefficient);

Y 1 = = Regression coefficient of natural beauty;

Y 2 = Regression coefficient temple facilities;

Y 3 = Regression coefficient of food attractions;

Y 4 = = Coefficient of regression of transport facilities;

Y 5 = Cultural attraction regression coefficient.

In a close examination of Table 4.2, the fifth regression model (R 2 = 0.30) showed that it made a middle contribution, which is about 30 percent, to the total tourist behavior. As such, destination attractiveness plays an optimistic role in visitor experience and has a positive influence on overall tourist behavior at the Krishna Circuit.

The overall goodness of the regression models was also evaluated to determine whether they significantly explained the variation in overall tourist behavior. Table 4.3 shows the key statistics, such as the sum of squares due to the model (SSM), sum of squares of residuals (SSR), F-ratio, degrees of freedom, and probability value of all the models. The findings prove that all the regression models have statistically significant proportions of variance in the dependent variable. The fifth model had the best explanatory power as it had the highest SSM value and lowest SSR value compared to the other four models. This observation indicates that the fifth destination attractiveness model is a significant predictor of overall tourist behavior with an F value of 10.812, $p < 0.01$, R 2 = 0.30, and adjusted R 2 = 0.27.

Table 4.3. ANOVA for Stepwise Forward Regression Analysis between Destination attractiveness and tourist behaviour

Model	Regression (SS_M)	Residual (SS_R)	Df	F	Significance
1	5.705	574.784	1751	17.380	.000[b]
2	10.755	569.734	1750	16.518	.000[c]
3	12.917	567.572	1749	13.269	.000[d]
4	15.020	565.469	1748	11.608	.000[e]
5	17.423	563.066	1747	10.812	.000[f]

Conclusion

The empirical research reached a firm conclusion that destination attractiveness has a substantial and positive contribution to tourist behavior in the Krishna Circuit. Although it was a stepwise forward

multiple regression analysis, five core dimensions of destination attractiveness, natural beauty, temple-related facilities, food attractions, transport facilities and cultural attractions were found to be statistically significant predictors of overall tourist behavior. Taken together, these dimensions account for 30 percent of the variance in tourist behavior, which implies a moderate but significant impact on satisfaction, revisit intentions, and overall destination engagement of tourists.

Among such determinants, natural beauty is a ground-level component that provides Krishna Circuit destinations with a spiritual atmosphere that attracts both pilgrims and people who visit the place to relax. The developed temple infrastructure also enhance the pilgrimage experience in that it brings comfort, accessibility, and convenience, thereby leading to positive emotional and spiritual satisfaction. Moreover, food attractions, especially traditional and region-specific cuisine, also add value to the experiential satisfaction of tourists due to enriched cultural immersion and engagements.

Effective transport facilities are also great enabling factors by enhancing accessibility, lessening the fatigue associated with travelling and motivating factor to further stay and frequent visits to various circuit destinations. Lastly, cultural attractions such as festivals, rituals, heritage buildings and traditional performances enhance emotional attachment and cultural attachment of the Krishna Circuit among tourists and strengthen positive behavioral intentions such as word-of-mouth promotion and destination loyalty.

In general, the results indicate that religious tourism attraction sites such as the Krishna Circuit are not only places of religious significance but also complex tourism product in which spiritual, cultural, infrastructural and experiential aspects interact to influence tourist behavior. This paper highlights the necessity of tourism planners, policymakers and destination managers to embrace an integrated destination development strategy to conserve spiritual sanctity and simultaneously develop infrastructure, accessibility, cultural authenticity and visitor services. These dimensions should be enhanced in a balanced and sustainable way to ensure long-term competitiveness, visitor satisfaction and sustainable development of the Krishna Circuit as a key religious tourism destination in India.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to express their gratitude to all respondents who willingly provided time and experience in the data collection process. The current contribution contains the findings of research projects exploring destination attractiveness and tourist behavior in the Krishna Circuit in India as presented in Exploring the Entice of the Krishna Circuit: Analyzing the impact of destination

attractiveness on tourist behaviour. The authors thank academic colleagues and experts in their subject fields whose advice and constructive criticism during the previous versions of this manuscript were invaluable. The anonymous reviewers are also given special praise, and this is due to their consideration and meaningful remarks that have contributed greatly to improving the quality and understanding of this paper.

Authors Contributions

Credit: **Mahesh:** Conceptualization, Data collection, project administration, writing - original draft, review, and editing; **Ankush Ambardar**: Conceptualization, Project administration, writing - original draft, review, and editing; **Mohinder Chand**: Project administration, writing - review and editing, **Megha Gupta:** Project administration, writing - review and editing.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Funding Statement

This study received no external funding.

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