PERCEPTIONS, AWARENESS, AND TRAVEL PATTERNS: EVIDENCE FROM SOUTH HARYANA

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the extent of tourism awareness, travel behaviour, and perceptions among people of South Haryana, a region that integrates rural cultural traditions with urban expansion but is still under-represented in mainstream tourism development. Data were gathered from 442 respondents in Mahendergarh, Rewari, and Gurugram utilising a descriptive research approach and structured questionnaires. Supported by SPSS and cluster methodologies, the research showed that even though 95.5% of respondents had travelled, there was still a lack of knowledge of local tourism resources, particularly man-made and cultural attractions. Word-of-mouth became the principal medium for tourism awareness, although travel behaviours differed significantly according to age, gender, income, and purpose. A significant proportion of respondents identified South Haryana as a prospective tourism destination and indicated willingness to visit inside the region, underscoring its unexploited development potential. The research advocates for focused awareness efforts, infrastructural enhancements, and community-oriented initiatives to promote sustainable tourism. These findings offer significant insights for policymakers seeking to advance inclusive, demographically informed tourism development. The study outlines significant limits concerning geographic coverage and the omission of visitor views, providing guidance for future research endeavours.

Keywords: Tourism Awareness, Travel Behaviour, Travelling Pattern, Perception, South Haryana

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has undergone remarkable expansion in recent decades at global level, becoming one of the most crucial and transforming sectors of the world economy. It has been acknowledged as a dynamic and transforming sector, providing economic growth and cultural interchange, while also presenting considerable obstacles and repercussions for local communities (Agarwal *et al.,* 2023). With the world becoming a more interconnected place, tourism has become a major driver of socioeconomic change in many places across the world, both positively and negatively (Agarwal *et al.,* 2023). Contemporary tourism is among the greatest and most rapidly expanding businesses, employing a significant work force (Gopal Vennila,

2023). It is one of the swiftly expanding industries in contemporary society, impacting social, governmental, and academic spheres. It is a continually growing service sector and is seen as a significant catalyst for economic development (Gopal Vennila, 2023). It has progressively evolved alongside human civilisation (Bhandari Scholar, 2022).

The tourism sector comprises enterprises that offer hotel, transport, and pleasure, points of interest, and eating and drinking services, collectively referred to as the "total package". The tourism and accommodation sectors have significant potential to foster economic growth and job creation, particularly in rural regions and tiny islands (Mazhenova *et al.*, 2016). With the possible exception of major transport and land development problems, the tourism and hotel sectors have historically been considered as highly "green" (Font & Tribe, 2001). Tourism possesses the capacity to enhance economies, provide employment, and stimulate infrastructure development, frequently offering an appealing opportunity for areas aiming to exploit its potential (Agarwal *et al.,* 2023). Tourism, in its integrated form, constitutes the economic activity associated with travel between locations (Bhandari Scholar, 2022). Many communities worldwide rely on tourism as an economic tool for generating cash, job, taxation, and infrastructure development. Tourism destinations are characterised by a multitude of interdependent stakeholders whose collaboration is essential for their success (Franzidis & Yau, 2018). Enhancement of both domestic and foreign exchange growth, employment creation, cultural integration, and assistance to the local population are some of the socioeconomic effects of tourism (Gopal Vennila, 2023). In the era of globalisation, tourism is a major force behind economic expansion, a means of fostering international ties, attracting foreign investment, and introducing the nation's cultural customs to other nations (Kliuchnyk *et al.*, 2023).

The tourism business has evolved as a means of generating cash, creating jobs, alleviating poverty, and promoting sustainable human development. The tourism sector generates more jobs and makes up a larger portion of the country's GDP (Gopal Vennila, 2023). Tourism is an economic endeavour that impacts all dimensions of sustainability, not solely the economic aspect (Gogitidze *et al.*, 2023).

Any systematic strategy must acknowledge that tourism activities yield both good and negative consequences (Schubert, 2009). It contended that involvement in tourism governance is especially pertinent, as the adverse impacts of tourism predominantly occur at the destination level, imposing a cost on local citizens (Joppe, 2018; Timothy, 2000). It is implied that different research on locals' opinions on tourism development yield a range of findings, including both approval (Madhavan & Rastogi, 2013; Muresan *et al.*, 2019) and dislike (Eshliki & Kaboudi, 2017; Štetić, 2012). Tourism is regarded as an essential component for development but produces externalities affecting the environment and society (Gogitidze *et al.*, 2023).

Community and Tourism

The emphasis on tourism development is especially necessary because tourism has great potential for sustainably developing rural regions socially, economically, and ecologically (Gogitidze *et al.*, 2023). Because of its various impacts on the standard of life developing local societies, tourism has also become widely popular in recent years (Brankov *et al.*, 2019). Increasing local community participation in developing elaborate and responsive tourist products constitutes the key elements of tourism development (Frînculeasa & Chiţescu, 2018). Perception and attitude of local people are essential to development, strategic growth, and sustainability of tourism sites (Hyasat, 2023). The understanding and attitude towards tourism in local areas are crucial factors in tourism growth. Tourism development depends heavily on local populations, and their perspectives on the industry might affect its success (Obradović & Tešin, 2023).

Perception of local community for tourism excitement is shaped by various elements, including the attraction's reputation, economic, social, and physical advantages, and bonds with the community, and overall quality of life (Kliuchnyk *et al.*, 2023). The believed authenticity of industrial legacy affects inhabitants' views towards supporting tourism development, their standards of participation, and their commitment to the location (Guerra *et al.*, 2022). Local communities are essential to the growth of tourism in their towns. Their viewpoints on tourism strongly influence its growth and development within the community (Lapuz, 2023). Local communities' sentiments are

influenced by the supposed effects of tourism expansion whenever they are socioeconomically impacted (Obradović & Tešin, 2023). Community engagement affects the relationship among community-driven tourism and long-term sustainable results for tourism industry (Wayan *et al*., 2022).

Tourism exerts both beneficial and detrimental effects on the standard of life within local communities. Beneficial consequences encompass economic enhancement, job creation, community pride, cultural exchanges, and augmented access to amenities (Hyasat, 2023). Negative implications encompass health, safety, environmental quality, cost of living, and accessibility to public amenities, social interactions, work satisfaction, and community engagement in tourism development (Prasad *et al*., 2023). Its effects, both beneficial and detrimental, have been extensively examined across multiple dimensions, particularly on its socio-economic implications for local communities (Agarwal *et al.,* 2023). The terms educated, active, and/or meaningful involvement indicate that stakeholders must comprehend the concepts and topics under discussion to engage successfully (Cole, 2006; Dabphet *et al*., 2012; Miller *et al*., 2010). Stakeholder engagement, or community involvement, encompasses more than merely soliciting individuals' desires and subsequently fulfilling them (Cárdenas *et al*., 2015).

Research demonstrates that economical, societal and cultural, environmental, interactional, awareness-related, and regional growth factors affect the perceptions of farmers and local inhabitants on rural tourism (Merkez & Yilmaz, 2022). It thoroughly analysed and synthesised contemporary studies on the economic and social effects of tourism on local communities (Agarwal *et al.,* 2023). The absence of a cohesive strategy for enhancing and leveraging local tourist potential, compounded by insufficient financial resources, manpower, and qualifications, presents a significant challenge in many instances (Frînculeasa & Chițescu, 2018).

Tourism Awareness

The term "tourism awareness" describes people's degree of comprehension and information regarding the travel and tourism sector and its effects. It includes the acknowledgement of the social, environmental, and financial impacts of tourism on a destination, along with the

endorsement of tourist development (Hyasat, 2023). Tourism awareness involves understanding its effects, promoting its growth, and doing research to assist sustainable management and decision-making (Kodaş *et al*., 2022). Public awareness and attitude surveys facilitate an understanding of broader societal knowledge and interests that can effectively support conservation goals (Jefferson *et al*., 2015). Public awareness aids in the dissemination and promotion of tourist knowledge, which in turn enhances people's comprehension of tourism-related activities and potential risks and issues, including their detrimental socio-psychological effects (Offiong *et al*., 2022).

This is mostly attributable to the distinctive site-specific characteristics inherent to each community and the non-homogeneous nature of communities. Consequently, perceptions and attitudes are not static; individual community members may possess distinct opinions (Andriotis, 2004; J. Williams & Lawson, 2001), which may also change over time (Canavan, 2013). Public awareness of tourism advantages, including income generation, resolution of balance of payments deficits, significant employment opportunities, and assured foreign exchange profits, could act as a catalyst for sustainable tourism development (Bukola & Olaitan, 2018). It contended that it is essential to concentrate on the disparities in residents' beliefs and attitudes about the sustainable development of traditional villages (Song *et al*., 2021). Numerous groups of people, including the general populace, stand to gain from tourism-related activities (Offiong *et al*., 2022). Enhancing public knowledge of sustainable tourism practices is essential for the sustainability of tourism development (Bukola & Olaitan, 2018).

Numerous variables influence local tourism awareness. The perception of how tourism affects the local community is a major one. Benefits like protecting natural and cultural resources could promote a positive outlook on the development of the tourism industry (Obradović & Tešin, 2023). Acknowledging the potential contribution of local communities to the growth of tourism is another problem. Locals are more inclined to take an active part in the growth of the tourism industry when they understand sustainable tourism principles and acknowledge their significant role (Andriansyah *et al.*, 2020). Impacts of tourism have become the

most researched phenomena in tourism (Moyle *et al*., 2010). However, regardless of the abundance of research on how communities view and feel about tourism, there are no universally accepted inferences, with many studies offering conflicting findings (Brida *et al*., 2011). The way tourism organisations are run and structured may have an impact on local tourism awareness (Hyasat, 2023). Clear job descriptions and efficient organisational management can improve the effectiveness of tourism companies and raise local tourism awareness (Sihombing *et al*., 2017). Communities may actively engage in the development of tourism and ensure that they benefit from it by improving local tourism expertise (Asmoro & Resmiatini, 2021).

Moreover, tourists exhibit variability, and numerous studies examining community sentiments towards tourists have faced criticism for omitting tourists from their analyses (Sharpley, 2014). Notwithstanding the variability in outcomes, all research concurs that assessing people' attitudes and views is crucial for effective operations, tourist planning, and development (Ap, 1992; Ko & Stewart, 2002). Research concerning citizens' perspectives primarily emphasises the elements influencing their views and attitudes in tourism destinations, associated theories, and analytical methodologies (Alrwajfah *et al*., 2019). Residents have more favourable opinions about tourism in the early phases of growth than in subsequent periods (Hao *et al*., 2011).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Since its inception, tourism has consistently risen in significance as a vital sector upon which numerous economies have based their socioeconomic progress (Offiong *et al*., 2022). The diverse types of tourism like adventurous, ecotourism, religious, gastronomic, and cultural, exert an enormous impact on economic growth via a "multiplier effect" mechanism (Offiong *et al*., 2022). The tourism business expands swiftly due to technical advancements globally and the developmental status of nations (UNWTO, 2016). The swift expansion of tourism results in the development of novel and more sustainable forms of tourism, including rural tourism (Butler, 1999; Pato & Kastenholz, 2017; Sharpley & Vass, 2006; Su, 2013). Merkez & Yilmaz (2022) investigated the perceptions of rural tourism among local residents and farmers in Mordoğan, Izmir, Turkey. Mteti *et*

al. (2025) evaluated local community perception and awareness of heritage resources for cultural tourist development.

Tourism Awareness and Travel Behaviour

Hyasat (2023) examined local residents' awareness, perceptions, and involvement in tourism-related activities as part of the promotion of area as a travel destination and focused how aware local people were of their part in the growth of tourism in their city, especially in rural areas where the government's arrangements were what turned the place into a tourist destination. Beritelli *et al*. (2007) and Pechlaner *et al*. (2010) emphasised the significant role of local residents as future participants in tourism management and broadens the existing comprehension of tourism governance, traditionally dominated by private and public entities, in order to involve local residents, thereby enhancing the future development of tourism destinations, regions, and mechanisms (Bichler, 2021). Timothy (2000) analysed the educational framework for local community members, focusing on professional, entrepreneurship, and general social awareness education within a developing country tourism destination.

Andriansyah *et al.,* (2020) offered insights on governmental approaches for developing tourism-oriented regions grounded in local knowledge. Franzidis & Yau (2018) studied people' impressions of tourists in a more popular tourist attraction. Nishinaka *et al*. (2023) categorised inhabitants' beliefs and attitudes through the analysis of socio-behavioural variables, with the findings serving as a foundation for developing strategic regional tourist planning. Offiong *et al*. (2022) confirmed the level of public awareness of the advantages of tourism in southern Cross River State, Nigeria, using a survey research methodology. Sabatini *et al*. (2022) enhanced understanding of the factors that raise awareness of age-related changes occurring in the latter part of life. Older individuals articulate both good and negative age-related transformations; yet, the factors that enhance their awareness of these changes remain largely unknown. Sabatini *et al*. (2022) employed content analysis to classify participants' written remarks and examined the degree to which the obtained categories corresponded with theoretical frameworks on impacts on understanding of age-related change (AARC).

Araújo Vila *et al*. (2021) investigated the methods in which two travel decision antecedents that are visit motivation and destination awareness which influence the choice to visit a location featured in a television show. Nishinaka *et al*. (2023) investigated how citizens' perceptions and attitudes about a modern art festival affect their encouragement for the event. Koufodontis & Gaki (2022) assessed travellers' awareness of the UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) designation of urban locations. Ibrahim *et al*. (2021) examined the local community's understanding of Geopark and how they view the responsibilities played by different stakeholders in promoting well-being through the growth of tourism and demonstrated the stakeholders' awareness of the efficacy of community education initiatives related to Langkawi's geopark sustainable development. Mazhenova *et al*. (2016) investigated how visitors in South Korea felt about the environmental policies of lodging establishments and travel agencies and specifically examined their awareness of green hotels' environmental initiatives and how this information affects their choice to book eco-friendly lodging. Liu *et al*. (2023) examined the correlation between the Marine Debris Governance Platform policy and the public's ecological awareness level.

Tourism Perception and Travelling Patterns

Hawkins *et al*. (2016) investigated shifts in public understanding and attitudes towards marine protection in the UK during a time of significant shifts to marine management and protection, employing data collected from three polls conducted over a ten-year period. Caton & Forrester (2024) examined the behavioural intentions of boaters and their awareness of anchoring to elucidate, for the first time, how particular boaters anchor on coral reefs. Pastore *et al*. (2025) aimed to evaluate whether beachgoers recognise the existence of ERBs on NSW beaches, comprehend their purpose, and regard them as an important safety feature. With regard to the various management alternatives between the Diani Chale and Kisite-Mpunguti MPAs on Kenya's south coast, it sought to evaluate and contrast the community's awareness and attitudes of the numerous advantages of coral reef ecosystems (Ochieng *et al*., 2024). Ulimboka *et al*. (2022) evaluated the urban population's knowledge of Tanzanian biodiversity conservation issues.

Sattarzadeh *et al*. (2023) examined Persian ethnic restaurateurs' views of authenticity and assessed their attitudes and awareness regarding the implementation of sensory tactics in their establishments. Tanalgo & Catherine Hughes (2021) examined the possibility of bat-watching to enhance tourists' understanding and opinions towards bats, and to ascertain how perceptions differ among demographic groups. Through a mixed-method approach, it sought to design an index form the employee viewpoint and build a tourism enterprise reliability dimension model (Hou *et al*., 2023).

Research shows that residents' perceptions of the impacts of tourism play a huge role in deciding whether or not they favour the industry's expansion (Alvares *et al*., 2020). The research done by Alvares *et al*. (2020) highlights how crucial tourism observatories are for producing information and insights for both private and public managers, improving the calibre of the travel offer and the experience for tourists (P. W. Williams *et al*., 2012). Public awareness and preferences about tourism are minimal (Gopal Vennila, 2023). Therefore, to examine the awareness and preferences of tourists regarding various places of interest, attractions, and experiences in India, as well as figure out the factors influencing their decision-making process when choosing a tourism destination in India, this research concentrated on exploring the awareness, behavioural pattern and perception for tourism among individuals in South Haryana.

Although the swift expansion of tourism as a global cultural and economic phenomenon, certain areas like South Haryana, characterized by its metropolitan hubs (e.g., Gurugram) and culturally vibrant rural locales (e.g., Mahendergarh, Rewari) with unexploited potential continue to be inadequately represented in traditional tourism development initiatives. South Haryana encounters obstacles including insufficient awareness of tourism assets, under exploitation of local resources, and inadequate stakeholder engagement. A significant disparity exists in the comprehension of academia and policy regarding citizens' perceptions of tourism and their awareness of its potential at the destination. This aspect highlights the need to examine local awareness about tourists, identify behavioural tendencies, and examine resident perceptions about tourism possibilities

engaging in or supporting tourism activities. Examining these aspects holds key importance for designing effective approaches towards utilizing the potential of tourists in South Haryana while complying with its socio-cultural paradigm. On the basis of extensive review of literature, this study tries to fulfil the gap with the following objectives.

Objectives

The research design was developed to fulfil the following key objectives:

- To understand the tourism awareness among the residents of South Haryana.

- To identify patterns of travel behaviour and preferences.

- To explore the perceptions of the local population regarding the tourism potential of South Haryana.

- To identify distinct patterns of tourism awareness and travel behaviour among residents of South Haryana

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive research approach to investigate tourism awareness, travel behaviour, and views among the population of South Haryana. The design is organised to facilitate a comprehensive knowledge of individuals' perceptions of tourism in this region, their awareness of local tourist resources, and how their travel decisions align with or promote tourism development. The target population comprised residents of South Haryana with diverse educational, occupational, and income backgrounds. 442 respondents were randomly selected following a stratified random sample method in order to represent various districts, genders, age groups, and occupations. Data was collected through structured questionnaire, which contained both closed-ended and multiple-choice items. Data collection was done through face-to-face approach and also through self-administration in order to incorporate both literate and less-literate respondents.

Responses were coded and SPSS used for analysis. Descriptive statistics (percentage, and frequency) were employed to describe the data. A two-step cluster analysis also was carried out to partition respondents into a few but homogeneous groups

based on their travel behavior and awareness attributes. Variables including age, income, gender, number of visits annually, length of stay, travel companion, and travel purpose were incorporated in the clustering model. It assisted in finding latent segments or "types" of people within study populations that could inform targeted tourism development initiatives for the region.

Study Area

Haryana, a north Indian landlocked state, was carved out of the erstwhile Punjab state in 1966. It borders several states, such as Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh, and surrounds the national capital, Delhi, on three sides. The state holds significant importance in India's agriculture, industries, and infrastructural development. Haryana stands apart through its deep-rooted cultural past, historical significance, and economic contribution, showcasing a unique blend of rural and urban attributes. The official classification of the state divides it into four main regions: North, South, West, and East Haryana. Each region exhibits distinct features for its topography, socio-economic conditions, and developmental indicators. South Haryana, which includes districts such as Mahendergarh, Rewari, and Gurugram, has emerged as a key region for study, more so for tourism development.

South Haryana is characterized by transitional landscape that merges rural heritage with rapid urbanization, particularly in and around Gurugram, which has emerged as a key corporate and IT hub. On the other hand, districts like Mahendergarh and Rewari maintain a more traditional socio-cultural and agrarian profile. This blending provides a diverse socio-economic and demographical basis, which makes the region highly suitable for tourism-related studies. Further, South Haryana has a variety of unexploited or inadequately promoted tourism assets, ranging from historical sites to religious sites, natural scenery, and cultural heritage. Even if it holds great prospects, the region has attracted very little attention in state-level tourism planning. Such a situation makes it a key area for studying patterns of tourism awareness, behaviour, and local perceptions, which could inform future initiatives toward sustainable and people-centric tourism development. Such a study focuses on South Haryana, i.e., Mahendergarh, Rewari, and Gurugram districts. Such a region

contains a unique blending of urban growth and rural patrimony, which makes it a key case study for understanding regional tourism dynamics. Gurugram illustrates rapid modernization and international connectivity, while Mahendergarh and Rewari represent historical and cultural capital, often overlooked in tourism promotions.

RESULTS
Sample Demographics

Ethical Considerations

Taking part in the study was entirely voluntary, and respondents were informed about the aim of the research. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the process of collecting data and reporting results.

Table 1: Demographics of the Sample (N = 442)

Demographic Variables	Frequency	%		Demographic Variables	Frequency	%
Gender				**Annual Income**		
Male	239	54.1		Below `50,000	145	32.8
Female	203	45.9		`50,000-1 Lakh	68	15.4
Age				`1-2 Lakhs	77	17.4
Below 18	13	2.9		`2-5 Lakhs	90	20.4
18-50	349	79.0		Above `5 Lakhs	62	14.0
50-60	65	14.7		**Occupation**		
Above 60	15	3.4		Student	71	16.1
Place of Living				Research Scholar	47	10.6
Rural	169	38.2		Homemaker	41	9.3
Urban	273	61.8		Self-employed	31	7.0
Education				Teacher	25	5.7
Below Graduation	86	19.5		Private Sector Employee	19	4.3
Graduation	138	31.2		Unemployed	15	3.4
Post-graduation	140	31.7		Tour Operator	6	1.4
Above post-graduation	73	16.5		Other Occupations	187	42.3
Illiterate	5	1.1				

Source: Author's Own Elaboration

The research surveyed 442 participants from South Haryana. There were 45.9% female participants and 54.1% male participants, indicating a well-balanced gender distribution. A majority of responders (79%) were between the 18-50 age range, signifying a youthful and economically engaged demographic. A predominant 61.8% were urban residents, indicating that urban populations may possess superior connectivity and access to tourism-related activities. The sample had a high level of educational attainment: 31.2% were graduates, 31.7% were postgraduates, and 16.5% possessed qualifications beyond postgraduate studies, while merely 1.1% were illiterate. This indicates a significant opportunity for digital and informed tourism marketing initiatives.

The majority of respondents (32.8%) reported yearly incomes under 50,000, with 20.4% earning between 2 and 5 lakhs. This income distribution indicates a predominance of low-to-middle-income people, perhaps affecting budget-conscious travel habits. A diverse array of occupational backgrounds was represented, comprising students (16.1%), research scholars (10.6%), and homemakers (9.3%). Significantly, 42.3% of respondents were categorised as "Other Occupations," reflecting occupational diversity and the possibility of undeclared employment sectors, including informal labour or entrepreneurship.

Tourism Awareness

Table 2: Tourism Awareness Channels and Resources

S. No.	Variables		Frequency	%
1.	Have You Travelled Anywhere	Yes	422	95.5
		No	20	4.5
2.	Tourism Awareness Channel(s)	Study	83	18.8
		Advertisement	70	15.8
		Word of Mouth	126	28.5
		Not Aware	53	12.0
		Study, Advertisement	9	2.0
		Study, Word of Mouth	34	7.7
		Advertisement, Word of Mouth	31	7.0
		Study, Advertisement, Word of Mouth	36	8.1
3.	Awareness of Tourism Resources	Natural	214	48.4
		Man-made	87	19.7
		Cultural	86	19.5
		None of These	55	12.4

Source: Author's Own Elaboration

A significant 95.5% of participants reported prior travel experience, underscoring the importance of researching tourism behaviour in the region. The principal sources of tourism awareness were word of mouth (28.5%), followed by research (18.8%), and advertisements (15.8%). This indicates that interpersonal communication is a potent mechanism for disseminating tourism information, although formal routes also significantly contribute. Concerning awareness of tourism resources, 48.4% recognised natural resources, whereas 19.7% acknowledged man-made resources and 19.5% identified cultural resources. Nonetheless, 12.4% were oblivious to any resources, underscoring a deficiency in local tourism education or promotion.

Travel Behavior Patterns and Preferences

A majority of individuals travelled more than once year, with 30.3% travelling 3 to 5 times and 29.9% travelling twice. This indicates a highly mobile demographic category. The majority of respondents favoured travelling with family (23.8%), friends (6.1%), or in diverse group configurations, with 21% indicating travel with varied partners, including organisations. Concerning travel destinations, 20.4% visited district, state, and out-of-state places, whilst 16.3% travelled exclusively to other states, signifying considerable inter-district and inter-state mobility. Merely 1.4% indicated international travel, which corresponds with the income profile of the group. Personal vehicles (35.3%) and public transit (46.4%) were the predominant forms of transport, reflecting issues of affordability and infrastructural accessibility. Road transport was the most favoured mode at 30.1%, succeeded by combinations of road with rail and air at 20.1%.

Table 3: Travel Behavior Patterns and Preferences

S. No.	Variables		Frequency	%
1.	Number Of Visits Per Year (Except Earning Purpose)	Once	112	25.3
		Twice	132	29.9
		3 To 5 Times	134	30.3
		Above 5 Times	52	11.8
		Never	12	2.7
2.	Travel Companion	Alone	19	4.3
		Family	105	23.8
		Friends	27	6.1

		Organisation Group	1	.2
		Never	7	1.6
		Alone, Family	7	1.6
		Alone, Friends	15	3.4
		Family, Friends	59	13.3
		Family, Organisation	5	1.1
		Friends, Organisation Group	6	1.4
		Alone, Family, Friends	57	12.9
		Alone, Family, Organisation Group	7	1.6
		Alone, Friends, Organisation Group	6	1.4
		Family, Friends, Organisation Group	28	6.3
		Alone, Family, Friends, Organisation Group	93	21.0
3.	Travel Destination	Within District	37	8.4
		Other District	43	9.7
		Other State	72	16.3
		Abroad	6	1.4
		Within District, Other District	42	9.5
		Within District, Other State	18	4.1
		Other District, Other State	54	12.2
		Other District, Abroad	2	.5
		Other State, Abroad	12	2.7
		Within District, Other District, Other State	90	20.4
		Within District, Other District, Abroad	3	.7
		Within District, Other State, Abroad	6	1.4
		Other District, Other State, Abroad	12	2.7
		Within District, Other District, Other State, Abroad	45	10.2
4.	Preferred Mode of Transportation	Road	133	30.1
		Rail	33	7.5
		Air	9	2.0
		Water	1	.2
		Road, Rail	84	19.0
		Road, Air	37	8.4
		Road, Water	1	.2
		Rail, Air	16	3.6
		Road, Rail, Air	89	20.1
		Road, Air, Water	8	1.8
		Rail, Air, Water	1	.2
		Road, Rail, Water	2	.5
		Road, Rail, Air, Water	28	6.3
5.	Transportation Choice	Own Vehicle	156	35.3
		Private Transport	81	18.3
		Public Transport	205	46.4
6.	Primary Purpose of Travelling	Relatives	70	15.8
		Business	12	2.7
		Leisure/Pleasure	90	20.4

		Pilgrimage	53	12.0
		Cultural Event	65	14.7
		Adventure	67	15.2
		Health	22	5.0
		Education	49	11.1
		Other	13	2.9
		Earning	1	.2
7.	Duration of Visit	Below 3 Days	154	34.8
		3-7 Days	196	44.3
		7-10 Days	62	14.0
		Above 10 Days	30	6.8

Source: Author's Own Elaboration

The primary goals of travel encompassed leisure (20.4%), adventure (15.2%), and visiting family (15.8%), indicating both social and recreational incentives. A lesser proportion travelled for health (5.0%), education (11.1%), or pilgrimage (12%).

The visit durations were predominantly brief: 44.3% lasted 3-7 days, while 34.8% were under 3 days, suggesting a preference for short to moderate trip lengths, perhaps attributable to temporal or economical limitations.

Perception of Local Tourism Potential

Table 4: Perception of Local Tourism Potential

S. No.	Variables		Frequency	%
1.	South Haryana (Mahendergarh, Rewari and Gurgaon) as a Tourism Region	Yes	290	65.6
		No	152	34.4
2.	Willingness to Travel in Future	Yes	371	83.9
		No	44	10.0
		Maybe	27	6.1
3.	South Haryana (Mahendergarh, Rewari and Gurgaon) Should be a Tourist Region	Within District	37	8.4
		Other District	43	9.7
		Other State	72	16.3
		Abroad	6	1.4
		Within District, Other District	42	9.5
		Within District, Other State	18	4.1
		Other District, Other State	54	12.2
		Other District, Abroad	2	.5
		Other State, Abroad	12	2.7
		Within District, Other District, Other State	90	20.4
		Within District, Other District, Abroad	3	.7
		Within District, Other State, Abroad	6	1.4
		Other District, Other State, Abroad	12	2.7

		Within District, Other District, Other State, Abroad	45	10.2
4.	Which Area Can Be Developed as Tourist Destination in South Haryana (Mahendergarh, Rewari and Gurgaon)	Mahendergarh	132	29.9
		Gurugram	112	25.3
		Rewari	102	23.1
		Narnaul	22	5.0
		No One	17	3.8
		All	5	1.1
		Mahendergarh and Gurugram	14	3.2
		Mahendergarh and Narnaul	13	2.9
		Mahendergarh and Rewari	3	.7
		Rewari and Gurugram	19	4.3
		Don't Know	3	.7

Source: Author's Own Elaboration

A significant 65.6% of respondents regarded South Haryana (Mahendergarh, Rewari, Gurugram) as a tourism region, while 83.9% indicated a readiness to travel in the future, reflecting a favourable attitude towards regional tourism. Upon inquiry regarding possible tourist destinations in South Haryana, Mahendergarh (29.9%), Gurugram (25.3%), and Rewari (23.1%) were identified as the primary selections, underscoring their recognised cultural or recreational value. The data indicates a youthful, educated, and mobile demographic in South Haryana, characterised by modest income levels and varied employment. Tourism awareness is primarily fostered through informal channels, with much acknowledgement of the region's natural resources. The favourable public view of South Haryana as a tourism destination, coupled with their demonstrated propensity to travel, underscores the potential for focused tourism development projects in the region.

Cluster Analysis

A Two-Step Cluster Analysis was conducted using SPSS for identifying unique patterns of tourist awareness and travel behaviour among residents of South Haryana. This method was selected for its appropriateness for datasets with categorical variables, which constituted the bulk of variables in this study. The clustering algorithm autonomously identified the ideal number of clusters utilising the log-likelihood distance metric.

Age and Travel Frequency (Based on Age and Number of Visits)

The model summary (refer to Figure 1) demonstrates that the method effectively discerned four distinct clusters from the dataset, utilising two principal input variables. The Silhouette measure of cohesiveness and separation, a statistical score assessing the quality of the clustering solution was roughly 0.6, categorising it within the "Good" range (0.5-1.0). This indicates that the clusters are distinctly separated from one another and exhibit internal cohesion. This grade level also affirms the cluster solution's validity and reliability, indicating that tourists can efficiently be clustered based on their tourism awareness and behavioural patterns. A Two-Step Cluster Analysis in SPSS identified meaningful groupings of South Haryana people based on their attributes connected to tourism. Two variables were included in the clustering approach:

- Age group (categorical), and

- Number of tourism-related visits per year (continuous).

The algorithm autonomously identified the appropriate cluster count utilising the log-likelihood distance metric and the Schwarz Bayesian Criterion (BIC).
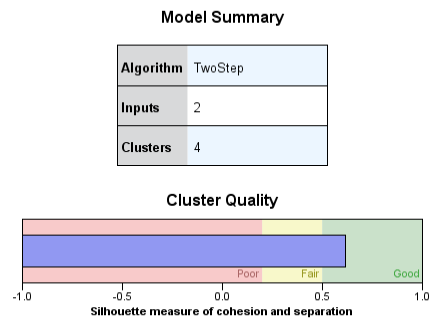
Figure 1: Model Summary and Cluster Quality Output (Age and Travel Frequency)

Source: IBM SPSS Statistics

Figure 1 shows that the model successfully identified four distinct clusters, indicating that participants can be grouped into four meaningful segments based on age and travel frequency. The Silhouette score, which measures how well each data point fits within its cluster, was approximately 0.6, placing it in the "Good" range (above 0.5). This suggests that the clusters are both internally cohesive and clearly differentiated from one another.

The analysis revealed distinct travel behavior patterns linked to specific age groups:

- Certain clusters denote younger, high-frequency travellers, whereas others indicate older respondents with minimal or no tourism engagement.
- This segmentation establishes a basis for targeted tourism strategies, including age-specific promotional initiatives or infrastructural enhancements aligned with travel behaviours.

Income and Travel Behaviour (Based on Income and Number of Visits)

A Two-Step Cluster Analysis was carried out in SPSS to explore travel behavior patterns across different income groups. The model included annual income as a categorical variable and the number of trips per year as a continuous variable. This approach was selected for its ability to handle mixed data types and automatically determine the optimal number of clusters. The analysis resulted in five distinct clusters, segmenting the population based on income levels and travel frequency. The model's quality was assessed using the Silhouette measure of cohesion and separation, which returned a score of approximately 0.45. This places the

solution in the "Fair" range, indicating moderate consistency within groups and some differentiation between them. While this is not as strong as a "Good" clustering score ($\geq$ 0.5), it is considered acceptable for exploratory research in social sciences and tourism behavior studies.
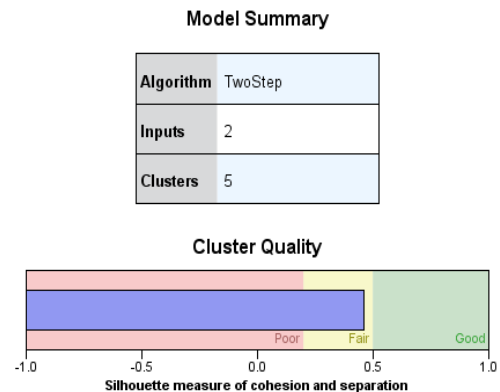

Figure 2: Model Summary and Cluster Quality Output (Income and Travel Behaviour)

Source: IBM SPSS Statistics

The cluster results reveal clear differences in travel frequency across socioeconomic groups. This segmentation helps identify how various income levels engage in tourism, enabling more precise targeting of policies or marketing strategies. For instance, individuals in higher income brackets may travel more often, while those in lower brackets might benefit from awareness campaigns or cost-reduction measures. Each of the five clusters reflects a distinct mix of income level and travel behavior, offering valuable insight into how financial capacity influences tourism involvement in South Haryana. This kind of profiling supports more strategic planning such as offering subsidized travel packages for lower-income groups and developing premium experiences for wealthier tourists.

Table 5: Income and Travel Behaviour (Based on Income and Number of Visits)

Cluster	Income Group	Mean Visits/Year	Cluster Label
1.	`50,000–1 Lakh	3.1	Budget Frequent Travelers
2.	Below `50,000	1.2	Low-Income Infrequent
3.	`2–5 Lakhs	4.6	Middle-Income Active
4.	Above `5 Lakhs	5.9	High-Income Explorers
5.	`1–2 Lakhs	2.5	Emerging Travelers

Source: Author's Own Elaboration

Age and Travel Pattern (Based on Age and Duration of Visit)

A Two-Step Cluster Analysis was performed using SPSS to examine patterns in tourism behaviour among various age groups. The model employed age as a categorical variable and visit time as a continuous variable, facilitating the identification of behavior-based clusters that illustrate the normal journey duration of various age groups. The technique yielded a two-cluster solution, with a Silhouette score of around 0.48, signifying a "Fair" quality of clustering. Although this does not exemplify optimal separation between clusters, it is deemed statistically acceptable in social science research, since behavioural patterns frequently intersect across age categories.

This analysis indicates that respondents can be categorised into two distinct segments based on age-related travel patterns. One cluster may represent younger respondents who undertake shorter yet more frequent travels, while another may comprise elderly individuals who participate in less frequent but longer-duration travel. These clusters illustrate the impact of age on tourism time investment, which has ramifications for tourism planning and destination marketing. Although there is moderate difference across groups, the clustering yields significant insights into the variation of trip time across different life phases, hence facilitating the creation of age-specific tourism packages in South Haryana.
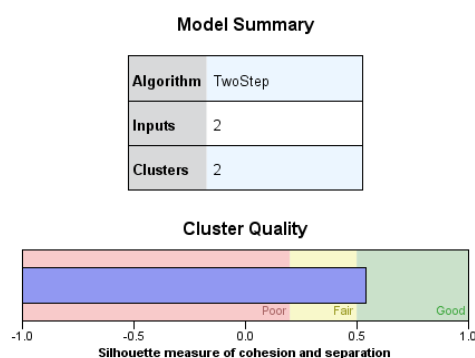

Figure 3: Model Summary and Cluster Quality Output (Age and Travel Pattern)
Source: IBM SPSS Statistics

The subsequent profiles can inform the creation of tailored travel experiences, including brief weekend excursions for younger demographics and extended pilgrimage or cultural trips for elderly travellers.

Table 6: Gender and Travel Behaviour (Based on Gender and Duration of Visit)

Cluster	Dominant Age Group	Avg. Visit Duration	Label
1.	18-35 years	2.8 days	Young Short-Trip Travelers
2.	50+ years	5.6 days	Older Long-Stay Travelers

Source: Author's Own Elaboration

Gender and Travel Behaviour (Based on Gender and Duration of Visit)

A Two-Step Cluster Analysis was conducted in SPSS to explore gender-based differences in tourism behavior, specifically in relation to trip duration. The analysis used gender as a categorical variable and travel duration as a continuous variable, aiming to identify distinct behavioral segments based on typical travel lengths among different genders. The model produced a two-cluster solution, with a Silhouette score of approximately 0.6, indicating a solid clustering structure. This score reflects strong internal consistency within each cluster and clear separation between them, suggesting that the relationship between gender and journey duration is statistically meaningful and well-defined.
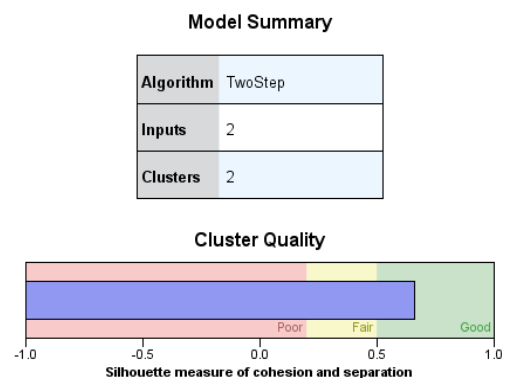

Figure 4: Model Summary and Cluster Quality Output (Gender and Travel Behaviour)
Source: IBM SPSS Statistics

The resulting clusters reveal notable differences in average trip durations between male and female participants. For example, one cluster may represent male travelers who typically take longer trips, while the other may primarily include female travelers who prefer shorter travel durations. These findings offer deeper insight into gender-specific tourism behaviors in South Haryana and can support the development of gender-sensitive

tourism strategies. This type of segmentation equips planners and marketers with practical information to tailor travel packages, trip lengths, and promotional content to better align with the preferences and patterns of male and female tourists.

Table 7: Differences in Average Trip Durations between Male and Female Participants

Cluster	Dominant Gender	Avg. Duration of Visit	Cluster Label
1.	Male	5.2 days	Extended-Stay Male Travelers
2.	Female	3.1 days	Short-Stay Female Travelers

Source: Author's Own Elaboration

Income and Travel Pattern (Based on Income and Visit Duration)

A Two-Step Cluster Analysis was carried out in SPSS to examine how income levels influence trip duration among residents of South Haryana. The model included annual income as a categorical variable and travel duration as a continuous variable. This approach enabled the identification of behavioral patterns based on economic status and the amount of time individuals invest in travel.
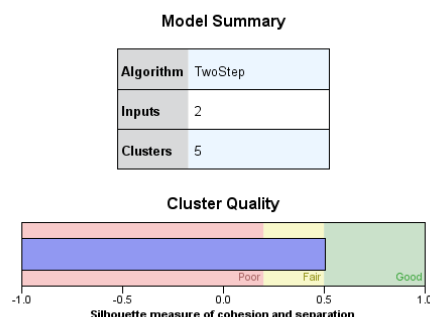
Model Summary

Algorithm	TwoStep
Inputs	2
Clusters	5

Cluster Quality

Silhouette measure of cohesion and separation

Figure 5: Model Summary and Cluster Quality Output (Income and Travel Pattern)
Source: IBM SPSS Statistics

The system automatically produced a five-cluster solution, with a Silhouette score of approximately 0.45, indicating "Fair" quality in terms of cohesion and separation. While the clusters are not highly distinct, they show reasonable internal consistency and differentiation. The five clusters reflect diverse combinations of income levels and travel durations, pointing to meaningful segmentation. For instance, one group may include low-income individuals who prefer shorter trips, while another may represent higher-income travelers who opt for

longer stays. These groupings provide valuable insights into how economic capacity influences tourism behavior, highlighting the importance of developing income-sensitive strategies for tourism promotion and product design.

Table 8: Correlation between Selection of Travel Companions and Length of Tourism Visits

Cluster	Dominant Income Group	Avg. Duration of Visit	Cluster Label
1.	Below `50,000	2.1 days	Budget Short-Stay Travelers
2.	`50,000–1 Lakh	3.2 days	Emerging Explorers
3.	`1–2 Lakhs	4.0 days	Moderate-Income Tourists
4.	`2–5 Lakhs	5.5 days	Middle-Class Long-Stay Travelers
5.	Above ` 5 Lakhs	6.2 days	Affluent Leisure Travelers

Source: Author's Own Elaboration

Travel Companion and Travel Pattern (Based on Travel Companions and Visit Duration)

A Two-Step Cluster Analysis was performed using SPSS to examine the correlation between the selection of travel companions and the length of tourism visits. The research incorporated travel companion (a categorical variable) and visit duration (a continuous variable) to investigate behavioural groupings within the respondent population. The model autonomously generated a solution of two clusters. The Silhouette measure of cohesiveness and separation was roughly 0.2, positioning it at the lower limit of the "Fair" category. This suggests that the clusters are just slightly different and partly overlapping; yet, the solution is still statistically acceptable for exploratory study.
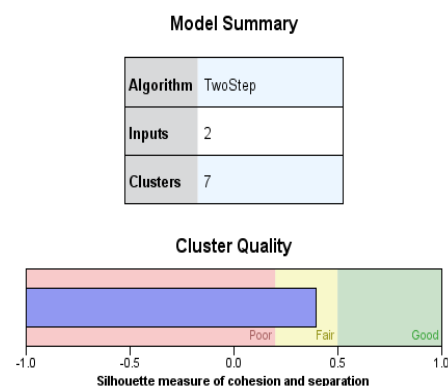
Model Summary

Algorithm	TwoStep
Inputs	2
Clusters	7

Cluster Quality

Silhouette measure of cohesion and separation

Figure 6: Model Summary and Cluster Quality Output (Travel Companion and Travel Pattern)
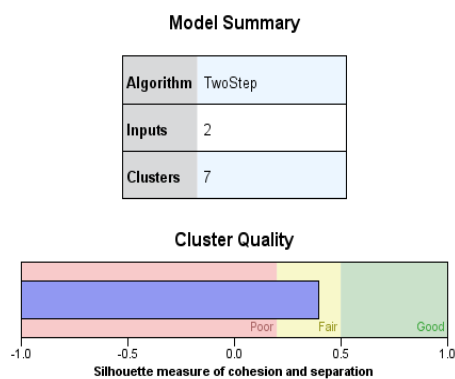**Source:** IBM SPSS Statistics

Figure 7: Model Summary and Cluster Quality Output (Primary Purpose and Travel Pattern)
Source: IBM SPSS Statistics

The clustering revealed two general patterns:

- One cluster likely comprises persons who travel with family or bigger groups and typically undertake extended travels.
- The other may denote individuals who journey independently or with others, typically choosing brief travel experiences.

This segmentation offers preliminary insights into the impact of social context on travel time commitment. Although the differentiation across clusters is not pronounced, the findings indicate a possible trend: family or group travellers tend to undertake longer journeys, whereas solo or peer-group travellers may favour shorter, more impromptu excursions.

Table 9: Impact of Social Context on Travel Time Commitment

Cluster	Primary Travel Companion	Avg. Visit Duration	Cluster Label
1.	Family / Group	5.2 days	Long-Stay Family Travelers
2.	Alone / Friends	2.9 days	Short-Stay Independent Travelers

Source: Author's Own Elaboration

Primary Purpose and Travel Pattern (Based on Travel Purpose and Duration)

A Two Step Cluster Analysis was performed in SPSS to investigate the relationship between the primary reason of travel and the duration of stay, utilising primary travel purpose (categorical) and length of visit (continuous) as input variables. The objective was to identify behavioural segments that

illustrate the impact of travel incentives on time investment in tourism activities. The model produced a seven-cluster solution, with a Silhouette measure of around 0.35, which falls within the lower end of the "Fair" cluster quality spectrum.

This indicates that although there is a certain differentiation within clusters, the extent of separation and internal cohesiveness is limited. Such results are permissible in social science research, because overlapping behaviours frequently occur, but should be interpreted judiciously. The resulting clusters likely represent varying patterns such as:

- Short-duration educational or work-related travel,
- Moderate-length leisure trips, and
- Longer-duration pilgrimage or health-related stays.

This segmentation provides insights into the influence of travel purpose on the duration of stay at locations, which is essential for the development of tourism infrastructure, marketing strategies, and service duration planning. Pilgrims and health tourists may necessitate prolonged lodging and local assistance, whereas leisure or educational travellers may favour brief, activity-intensive itineraries.

Table 10: Influence of Travel Purpose on the Duration of Stay at Locations

Cluster	Primary Purpose	Avg. Visit Duration	Cluster Label
1.	Pilgrimage	6.8 days	Extended Religious Travelers
2.	Education	3.2 days	Academic Short-Stay Tourists
3.	Health	7.1 days	Medical Stay Tourists
4.	Leisure	4.0 days	Moderate-Stay Leisure Travelers
5.	Adventure	2.5 days	Quick Trip Adventurers
6.	Business	2.0 days	Fast-Paced Business Travelers
7.	Cultural Event	3.8 days	Event-Centric Visitors

Source: Author's Own Elaboration

DISCUSSION

This study offers a comprehensive analysis of tourism awareness, behavioural patterns, and perceptions among inhabitants in South Haryana, a region characterised by urban development

(Gurugram) and cultural-rural diversity (Mahendergarh and Rewari). The results indicate a notably high level of tourist participation, with 95.5% of respondents indicating prior travel experience. This signifies a strong foundation of travel activity; nevertheless, there is a distinct deficiency in focused understanding of tourist resources, especially man-made and cultural attractions, acknowledged by fewer than 20% of respondents.

Cluster analysis effectively elucidated diverse travel behaviours based on age, gender, income, and trip intent. Younger demographics engaged in shorter, more frequent excursions, whilst older individuals favoured extended durations. Gender-based segmentation indicated that males undertook lengthier journeys than females. These intricate patterns highlight the necessity of customising tourism tactics for distinct demographic groups. Awareness channels are primarily informal consisting of word-of-mouth, studies, and advertisements with word-of-mouth being the most prominent. This indicates a strength (organic information dissemination) and a difficulty (restricted formal promotion). The inclination towards natural tourism resources rather than cultural or artificial ones indicates insufficient exposure to the complete array of attractions in the area.

The substantial propensity (83.9%) to travel inside South Haryana, along with 65.6% of participants identifying it as a tourism destination, indicates a dormant potential that can be realised by enhanced promotion and infrastructural advancement. Mahendergarh has emerged as the most favoured location for prospective tourism development, despite Gurugram's urban preeminence, indicating an unexploited interest in rural and cultural tourism.

IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study have considerable implications for policymakers, tourism planners, and stakeholders aiming to advance sustainable tourism development in South Haryana. The study indicates that although locals exhibit significant travel activity and a desire to explore the region, their awareness of local tourist resources, particularly cultural and man-made attractions, is notably deficient. This indicates an urgent requirement for more organised and inclusive tourism communication initiatives. Furthermore,

the demographic-specific behavioural patterns shown by cluster analysis present an opportunity for the development of targeted tourism advertising. Younger demographics may exhibit more responsiveness to brief, adventure-oriented travel options, whereas older or affluent persons may favour extended and more immersing experiences, such as cultural or religious tourism. These implications are especially beneficial for state tourist agencies and local government entities seeking to incorporate community involvement in tourism governance. The favourable view of South Haryana as a tourism destination indicates grassroots readiness, which can be strategically utilised to improve local economic prospects, generate employment, and strengthen regional identity.

CONCLUSION

The study suggests that South Haryana has significant yet underexploited tourist potential, influenced by a relatively informed, mobile, and demographically varied populace. Although most acknowledge natural resources as tourism assets, recognition of cultural and artificial resources is limited. Trip behaviour patterns varied markedly based on age, gender, income, and trip intent, providing a framework for tailored tourism planning. Despite infrastructural and promotional constraints, inhabitants exhibit optimism and a readiness to participate in tourism within their territory. South Haryana is an exemplary prospect for sustainable and inclusive tourist efforts that are attuned to demographic subtleties.

LIMITATIONS

This study provides significant insights into tourism awareness and behaviour in South Haryana; however, it has limits. The study is geographically restricted to three districts i.e. like Mahendergarh, Rewari, and Gurugram which potentially constraining the generalisability of the results to other regions of Haryana or India. Moreover, since the study depends on self-reported data from residents, there exists a risk of response bias, especially with socially desired responses or mistakes in recollection. The study's cross-sectional design collects perceptions at a singular moment, complicating the evaluation of evolving attitudes or enduring behavioural tendencies. A further disadvantage is the omission of tourist viewpoints; comprehending how tourists perceive the place could have enhanced the research of tourism

potential. Furthermore, structural elements such as political endorsement, policy execution, or comprehensive infrastructure evaluations were not thoroughly analysed, potentially affecting the viability of certain proposals offered.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To effectively exploit the unused tourism potential of South Haryana, future initiatives need to emphasise cohesive policy frameworks that correspond with local socio-economic conditions and demographic trends. Strategic awareness efforts require using digital platforms, community media, and educational outreach to augment understanding of cultural and anthropogenic tourist assets. Enhancing infrastructure, especially transportation, signs, and visitor services, would augment accessibility and overall experience. Local tourist committees, training courses, and microfinance projects can be established to encourage communities, particularly women and young people, to get involved in tourism-related businesses. Moreover, the following research may broaden its geographical scope and integrate tourists' viewpoints to enhance the comprehension of demand-side expectations and optimise tourism development strategies accordingly.

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