

What Inspires you to visit our welcoming home? Tourist motivation for visiting rural destinations: The case of Jammu and Kashmir

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Abstract

This study investigates the push and pull factors influencing tourists' motivations to visit the Jammu region of the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, classifying these motivations into key dimensions. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 380 tourists, selected via simple random sampling. Twenty motivations (10 push and 10 pull factors) were analyzed using one-sample t-tests, paired-sample t-tests, Pearson correlation analysis, mean ranking, and factor analysis. The one-sample t-test showed that both push and pull motives significantly exceeded the neutral midpoint on the Likert scale, indicating their strong influence on travel decisions. The paired-sample t-test found no significant difference between the importance of push and pull factors, while Pearson correlation confirmed a strong positive relationship. Factor analysis revealed three key dimensions: 'Cultural and Experiential Motivation,' 'Environmental and Personal Well-being Motivation,' and 'Social and Emotional Motivation,' with cultural motivation being the most influential. These findings suggest strategies for promoting heritage sites, eco-tourism, and community-based initiatives to enhance sustainable tourism in the region. This study contributes to tourism scholarship by providing a deeper understanding of visitor motivations and informing targeted tourism development strategies.

Keywords:

motivation, push and pull factors, experiential and emotional motivation.

1 Introduction

One of a region's most significant industries is tourism. Yannopoulos & Roten-berg, 1999; Goeldner et al., 2000) cite tourism as an important sector worldwide. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (2013), this sector has substantial potential to generate employment, increase local revenue, and attract investment. These benefits underscore why regional authorities often develop tourism infrastructure and attractions to drive economic growth and development. The development of tourism in any area is influenced by broader industry trends, local conditions, and the potential to offer diverse tourism experiences. Among various forms of tourism, rural tourism has seen rapid growth, especially in developing countries. This growth is attributed to its numerous advantages for tourists, host communities, and the environment (San Martin & Herrero, 2012; Zielinski, Jeong, Kim & Milanés, 2020). Researchers such as Blezentis et al. (2012), Ćurčić et al. (2021), and Crăciun et al. (2022) emphasize the role of rural tourism in promoting economic development, sustainability, and cultural preservation. Rural tourism encompasses various forms, including farm tourism, agritourism, alternative tourism, and ecotourism (Chikuta & Makacha, 2016). There are numerous technical terms used to characterize both urban and rural tourism, according to Hall (2008). The idea of rural tourism tends to differ from country to country since different criteria are applied to define the term. According to Sihombing and Antonio (2022), rural tourism involves activities that satisfy tourists' desire for tranquillity, leisure, and outdoor experiences. Lane and Kastenholz (2018) even suggest viewing rural tourism as the antithesis of urban tourism.

Given the definitional ambiguity, a more precise understanding of rural tourism can be developed by examining tourist motivations. Roberts et al. (2017) argue that the idealization of the rural paradise is a key reason people visit such areas. Similarly, Hernantes et al. (2007) highlight that the appeal lies in experiencing rural life and nature. Studying tourist motivations is therefore essential for understanding this often-misunderstood segment of the travel industry. Tourism operators must recognize what drives visitors to choose specific destinations. Motivation is a fundamental concept in tourism, identified as the driving force behind travel behavior (Fodness, 1994; Crompton, 1979). Dimensions of motivation can be based on cultural, social, personal, educational, or utilitarian, while other motivational dimensions include weather, relaxation, adventure, and self-fulfilment (Crompton, 1979; Fodness, 1994). According to Mak et al. (2009), motivations also include the need for companionship, health benefits, enjoyment, relief, and escape. Wang and Leou (2015) suggest that escaping routine life, exploring new experiences, visiting family and friends, and relaxing are central reasons for travel. Ultimately, the choice of a destination is shaped by these motivations, which depend on individual needs and expectations (Pizam et al., 1979). Understanding these reasons helps stakeholders formulate strategies to enhance tourism offerings and experiences.

Motivational factors are generally classified into four types: driving motivation, interesting motivation, intrinsic motivation, and entryistic motivation (Plangmarn, 2012;

Dann, 1981). In several countries, rural tourism has become an increasingly popular development strategy, supporting both rural economies and tourism growth (Kastenholz et al., 1999; Farmaki, 2012; Rid et al., 2014). Despite the growing interest in rural tourism, no study has yet examined the motivations of tourists visiting the rural areas of the Jammu region. This research seeks to address that gap by identifying the pull and push factors influencing tourism in the region. It further aims to classify tourist motivations into key categories. By identifying and understanding these motivational patterns, the study will provide a framework for future research and policy formulation. Additionally, recognizing what draws tourists to rural areas can help stakeholders enhance the appeal of destinations by improving infrastructure, services, and marketing strategies. Ultimately, this can increase tourist satisfaction and enable rural destinations to compete more effectively with others.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Rural Tourism

Rural tourism broadly refers to tourism activities that take place in non-urban settings, typically involving travel to areas characterized by natural landscapes, agricultural environments, or traditional cultures. It is an umbrella term that includes subcategories like Agri-tourism, eco-tourism, and nature-based tourism (López-Sanz, 2021). Tourists are generally motivated to visit rural areas to experience authenticity, tranquillity, and a closer connection with nature.

Over the years, rural tourism has emerged as a strategic tool for economic development and social regeneration, particularly in marginalized and underserved communities. It creates employment opportunities, attracts investment, and can reduce rural-urban migration by encouraging people to remain in their hometowns (Munien et al., 2018; Dašić et al., 2020). In this context, rural tourism is also regarded as a means to enhance the quality of life in rural communities and revitalize local economies (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011). However, rural tourism development faces significant constraints. Many rural communities lack the infrastructure, expertise, and institutional support needed to fully exploit tourism's potential (McComb et al., 2017). Moreover, López-Sanz (2021) notes the conflicting interests of hosts and visitors, which can hinder the creation of mutually beneficial tourism experiences if not properly managed. The sustainable development of rural tourism requires strong collaboration among stakeholders, including local communities, tourists, and government authorities. Both hosts and visitors have a responsibility to preserve the environment and non-renewable resources (Park & Yoon, 2010). Government support at both national and local levels is also critical in building capacity and enabling tourism initiatives (Liu et al., 2020).

The appeal of rural destinations often lies in their natural and cultural assets. Identifying and leveraging these resources is crucial for attracting tourists and creating unique value propositions (Zhou, 2018). As Sanagustin-Fons et al. (2018) emphasize, rural tourism relies heavily on people and place-based identity. For this reason, community capabilities such as knowledge, access to financial and informational resources, and technical skills are vital to ensuring local participation and benefit-sharing (Ezeuduji, 2015; Bakhru et al., 2013).

2.2 Motivation

Tourist motivation has long been a focal point in tourism research. It is generally understood as the internal drive or psychological force that compels individuals to engage in travel behavior (Ye et al., 2021). These motivations are tied to personal needs and desires, such as the need for relaxation, escape, adventure, or social interaction (Park & Yoon, 2009). Motivation plays a key role in shaping tourist decisions about where to go, what to do, and how to experience a destination (Zeng & Yi Man Li, 2021; Pereira et al., 2019). The theoretical basis of motivation in tourism is rooted in consumer behaviour theory. Crompton and McKay (1997) define motivation as a state of need or tension that drives a person to seek fulfilment through travel. Kim and Ritchie (2012) further describe this as a force that triggers specific behaviours aimed at achieving satisfaction. Understanding these psychological drivers is essential for tourism marketers and planners who seek to design appealing experiences.

The motivations behind destination choices are diverse and complex. Tourists assess multiple offerings before making travel decisions, and destinations must align their products and services to meet these varying expectations (Rivera et al., 2010). Numerous studies have explored motivational factors to better understand what compels travellers to choose one place over another (Macintosh & Goeldner, 1986; Wu & Pearce, 2014; Zhang & Peng, 2014). A widely accepted framework for analysing tourist motivation is the push and pull model. Push factors refer to internal, psychological motives that prompt a person to travel, such as the desire for rest, novelty, or socialization. Pull factors, on the other hand, are external elements that attract individuals to a particular destination, such as natural beauty, cultural heritage, or recreational opportunities (Pan & Ryan, 2007; Mahmoudzadeh et al., 2014). This dual perspective is particularly useful for destination marketers aiming to match tourist desires with destination attributes in a strategic and informed manner.

2.3 Push and Pull Factors of Motivation

Push and pull motives are a widely accepted framework for understanding why individuals choose to travel (Jang, 2009; Cai, 2002; Gu et al., 2019). Pull factors are external attractions tied to a destination's features, such as its scenery, culture, lifestyle, heritage, climate, or events. These factors influence the choice of where to travel. Push factors, on the other hand, are internal, psychological motivations that drive the desire to travel, such as the need for escape, relaxation, adventure, or novelty. Pull factors pertain to the selection of a particular place, whereas push factors are mostly associated with the decision to travel (Wu, Pearce 2014; Luo, Ren 2020). (Wu & Pearce, 2014; Luo & Ren, 2020). Uysal and Jurowski (1994) categorize push motivations as intrinsic needs such as the desire for social connection, improved health, personal status, or simply a break from everyday routines. Crompton (1979) emphasized that one of the most common reasons for traveling is to temporarily escape everyday surroundings. Even people who are satisfied with their home life may feel the need for a change. Crompton noted that it isn't a specific type of home environment that prompts

travel; rather, it is the contrast between one's usual environment and the new, physically and socially different setting offered by tourism.

A clearer way to understand push motivation is to consider how everyday life, including home and work environments, can create pressures or desires that stimulate the urge to travel. These pressures (push factors) lead individuals to consider travel as a form of relief or reward. In turn, pull factors help them select a destination that aligns with those internal motivations (Guha, 2009). While tourism motivation has been widely studied, there has been relatively limited focus on the specific motivations for rural travel (Ye et al., 2021). However, interest in this area is growing (Frochot, 2005; Molera & Albaladejo, 2007; Park & Yoon, 2009; Farmaki, 2012; Rid et al., 2014; Fernández-Hernández et al., 2016). Motivation in rural tourism often includes both push and pull dynamics. Common pull factors for rural destinations include natural and historical environments, affordability, safety, available activities, and accessibility. Meanwhile, push motivations often relate to relaxation, family bonding, and the pursuit of knowledge or novelty (Demirović et al., 2019; Park & Yoon, 2009).

2.4 Theoretical framework and research hypothesis

Tourist motivation, the set of attributes driving travel decisions (Horner & Swarbrooke, 2016), forms the foundation for this study's exploration of why tourists visit rural destinations in the Jammu region. The push and pull framework (Crompton, 1979; Heitmann, 2011) provides a robust lens: push factors (e.g., relaxation, self-improvement) reflect intrinsic desires, while pull factors (e.g., scenic beauty, cultural heritage) represent destination-specific attractions. Rural tourism literature identifies motives like tranquility, authenticity, and social bonding (Countryside Commission, 1995; Molera & Albaladejo, 2007), with modern studies adding education, tradition, and affordability (Park & Yoon, 2009).

To contextualize these motives, rural tourist classifications offer insights. Kim (2005) categorizes tourists as active (seeking outdoor activities), passive (prioritizing leisure/culture), and relational (visiting friends/relatives). Devesa et al. (2010) propose four segments: tranquility-seekers, cultural visitors, gastronomy/nature enthusiasts, and social tourists. These classifications converge on common preferences: natural beauty, local hospitality, cultural authenticity, and social interactions (Cai, 2002; Frochot, 2005; Pesonen & Komppula, 2010).

This study synthesizes the push/pull framework with these classifications to guide its analysis of tourist motivations in the Jammu region. Push factors, such as escapism and social enrichment (Jang & Wu, 2006), align with active and social tourist segments, while pull factors, like Jammu's heritage sites and pristine landscapes (Molera & Albaladejo, 2007), attract cultural and nature enthusiasts. The framework hypothesizes that diverse motives—cultural, environmental, and social—drive Jammu's tourists, informing the selection of 20 motives (10 push, 10 pull) for testing. Factor analysis is employed to classify these into dimensions, reflecting the complexity noted by Yousaf et al. (2018). This approach links motivations to tourist behaviour and satisfaction (Holloway, 2004), guiding stakeholder strategies for sustainable rural tourism in the Jammu region.

Table 1: Push and Pull Factors

| Push Factors | Pull Factors |
|--|---|
| Interacting with local communities in rural destinations is important to me | The quiet and peaceful atmosphere of rural areas is appealing to me |
| I am motivated by the opportunity to explore new and unspoiled environments | I prefer rural destinations that are easily accessible |
| I seek to escape from my daily routine by visiting rural destinations | Experiencing traditional rural cuisine is a key motivation for my visit |
| Traveling to rural areas helps me relieve stress and rejuvenate | I am attracted to rural areas that offer a variety of outdoor recreational activities |
| I enjoy meeting new people and socializing during my visits to rural areas | I am interested in the cultural heritage of rural communities |
| I am interested in learning about the traditions and lifestyles of rural communities | The quality of facilities and services in rural areas affects my choice to visit |
| Experiencing local culture and heritage motivates me to visit rural destinations | I visit rural areas to engage in farm stays and other agritourism experiences |
| Spending time in nature-rich rural settings improves my mental well-being | Experiencing traditional rural lifestyles is appealing to me |
| Visiting rural destinations provides opportunities for personal growth | I am drawn to rural areas because of their clean and unpolluted environment |
| Experiencing adventure in rural settings appeals to me | The natural landscapes of rural areas attract me to visit |

(Source: own compilation (2024))

Therefore, the study has proposed:

The main focus of the study is to identify the pull and push factors that are effective for tourists travelling to Jammu region and classifying their motivations into key factors.

Furthermore, the study has proposed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Pull motives are significantly important for travel motivation to rural areas.

Hypothesis 1.1 All the factors of pull motives are equally important to travellers

Hypothesis 2: Push motives are significantly important for travel motivation to rural areas.

Hypothesis 2.1 All the factors of push motives are equally important to travellers

Hypothesis 3: Push factors are significantly more important than pull motives for travel motivation

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant relationship between push and pull factors of travel motivation.

3 Methodology

3.1 Material and Methods

In this study, data were collected using a questionnaire, consisting of three modules. The first module focused on the profile of tourists in Jammu Region. The second module focused on the travel patterns of tourists. The third module focused on the motivations of tourists for travel to Jammu Region. In designing the motivations, the theory of pull and push factors was considered. In all, 20 motivation factors, including 10 push factors and 10 pull factors, were used as shown in table 1. For designing the questionnaire and selecting the motivations, previous research (Beard, Ragheb 1983; Correia et al. 2007; Esichaikul 2012; Francioni Kraftchick et al. 2014; Prayag, Hosany 2014; Rid et al. 2014; Wu, Pearce 2014; Zhang, Peng 2014; Yosefi, Marzuki 2015; Bideci, Albayrak 2016; Lai et al. 2020) was used. Nevertheless, the conditions of the origin and destination points of the journey were considered, and the pull and push factors were found to be compatible with the conditions of the origin and destination points. Motivations were measured through a 5-point Likert scale. Reliability test was conducted, and the result of Cronbach's Alpha was 0.967 as shown in table 2.

In general, by studying the world literature, a set of factors were compiled, and then factors that were compatible with the conditions of selected areas of Jammu Region were selected to advance the research.

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

| Case Processing Summary | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----|
| Cases | | N |
| | Valid | 380 |
| | Excluded ^a | 0 |
| | Total | 380 |
| Reliability Statistics | | |
| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items | |
| .967 | 20 | |

3.2 Selection of Study Area

The research was conducted in Akhnoor, Ambaran, Gool, and Mandi areas of Jammu division, as these rural destinations were listed on NIDHI portal on the recommendations of ministry of tourism along with CNA-RT & RH (central nodal agency for rural tourism and rural homestays) 2023, on the basis of high potential of rural tourism development and tourist arrival. The selected villages are comparatively well developed and provided similar rural tourism resources and activities for rural tourists.

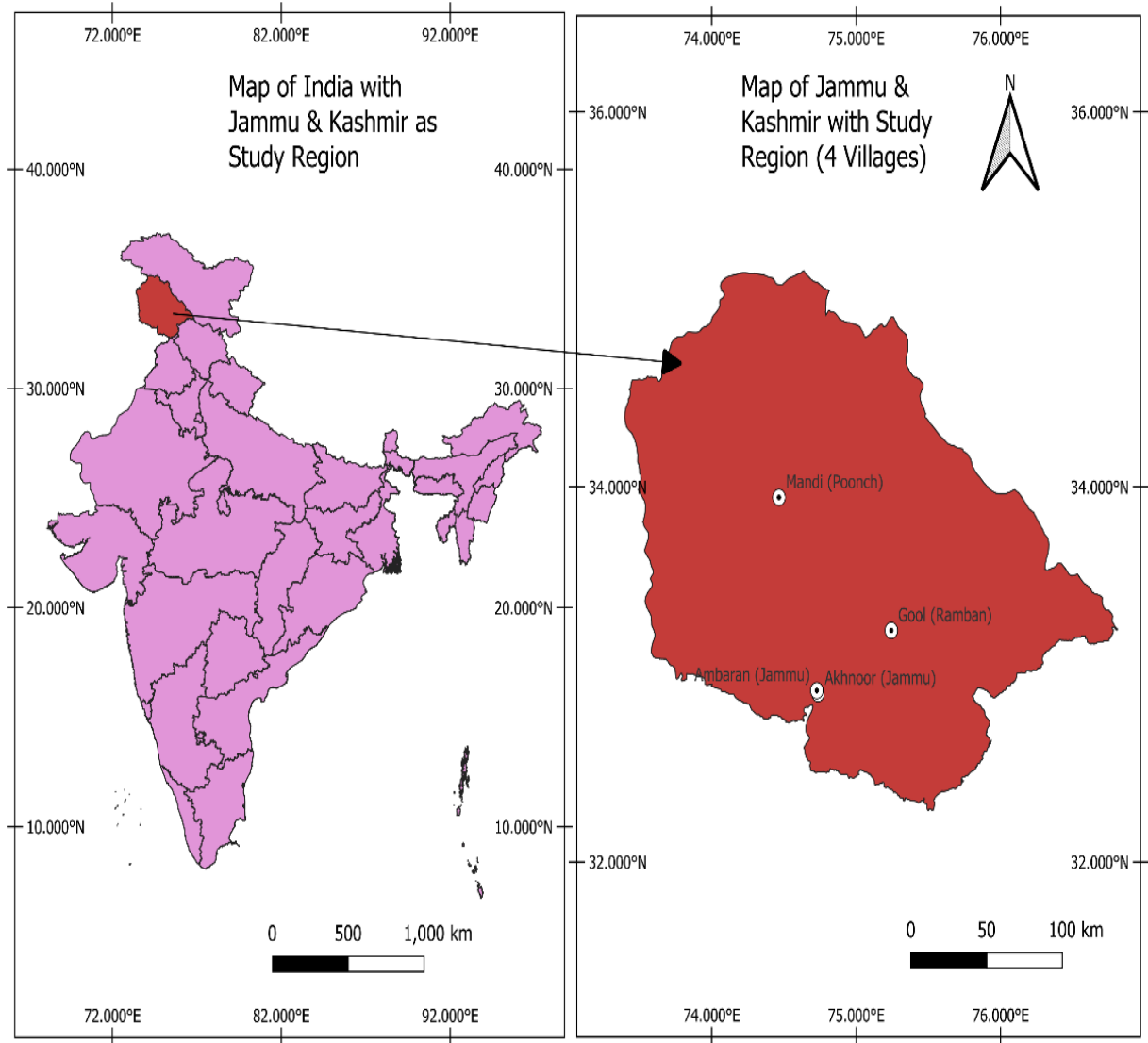


Figure 1: Geographical location of the studied area
Source: own compilation (2024)

3.3 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sample for this study consists of tourists visiting rural areas within the Jammu district, specifically “Akhnoor and Ambaran villages, Ramban district (Gool village), and Poonch (Mandi village). The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's formula (1967), which provides a simplified method for calculating sample sizes for surveys. The average score of tourist arrivals from 2019-2023 was calculated to determine the sample size. The calculated mean score was near the tourist arrivals of 2022. Therefore, 2022 was taken as the base year.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{16210875}{1 + 16210875(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 399.99$$

After employing the Taro Yamane's formula, the sample size turned out 399.99 and would be considered as 400.

The survey questionnaires were distributed to the survey sites, and respondents freely participated in answering the survey questionnaire after they had stayed in the village for at least one night. Then, researchers visited and collected the survey questionnaires from each village. Since the researcher was present at the time of completing the questionnaire, explanations were provided if necessary. From the 400 self-administered questionnaires distributed in the villages, a total of 380 usable questionnaires were obtained from rural visitors who travelled to rural destinations for at least one night during the survey. The data were collected between March and June 2024 by a simple random sampling method. After the elimination of incomplete questionnaires, 380 usable questionnaires were included in the analysis and analysed by the SPSS software. Then the descriptive statistics of the characteristics of tourists as well as their travel patterns were evaluated by frequency and percentage. Paired sample t-test was used to evaluate whether push motives were more important for travel motivations as compared to pull factors. Furthermore, a one-sample t-test and Pearson's correlation test were conducted. Finally, a factor analysis, specifically principal component analysis (PCA), was used to classify the motives into main factors.

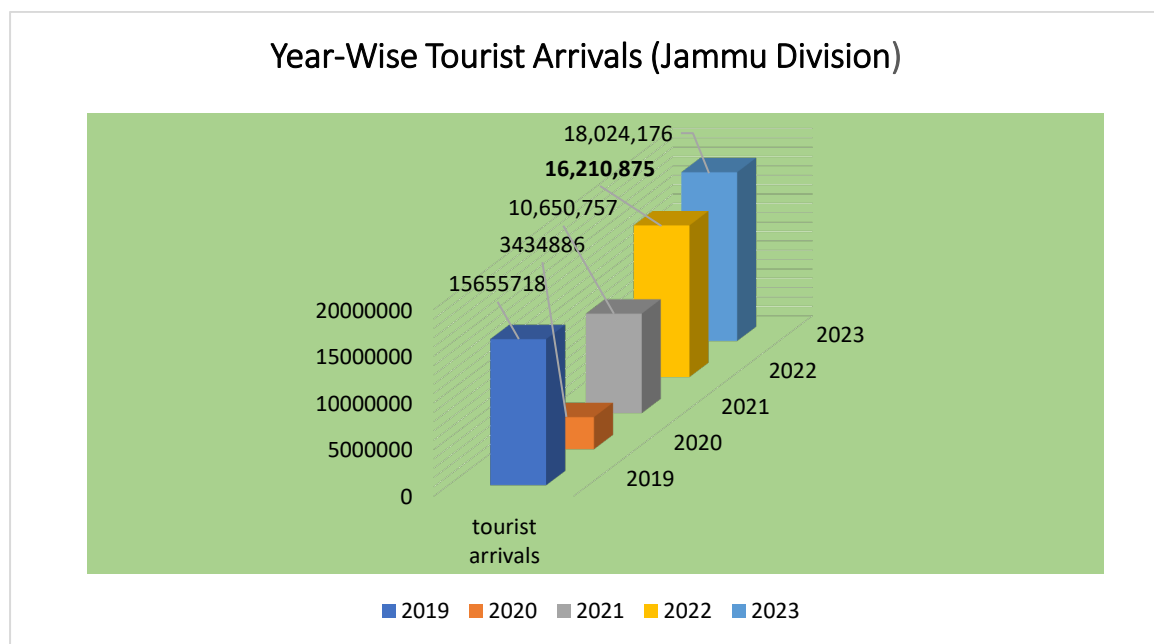


Figure 2: Tourist arrival
Source: own compilation

4 Research Findings:

4.1 Demographic profile of respondents

Table 3: Demographic Profile

| <i>Variable</i> | <i>Values</i> | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>%</i> |
|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------|----------|
| <i>Gender</i> | Male | 236 | 62% |
| | Female | 144 | 38% |
| <i>Age</i> | 15-24 | 46 | 12.1% |
| | 25-34 | 124 | 32.6% |
| | 35-44 | 106 | 27.9% |
| | 45-54 | 58 | 15.3% |
| | Above 55 | 46 | 12.1% |
| <i>Marital Status</i> | Married | 244 | 64.2% |
| | Single | 136 | 35.8% |
| <i>Education</i> | Diploma or below | 35 | 9.2% |
| | Graduate | 163 | 42.9% |
| | Post Graduate or above | 182 | 47.9% |

Table 3 shows that 62% were males while the remaining 38% were females. In terms of age, 12.1% of tourists were aged between 15 and 24, 32.6% were between 25 and 34, 27.9% were between 34 and 15.3% were between 45 and 54, and 12.1% were more than 55 years old. The marital status of the tourists indicates that 35.8% were married and the remaining 64.2% were single. Furthermore, the educational levels of the tourists highlight that 9.2% were having diploma or below, Graduate 42.9%, Post Graduate or above 47.9% respectively.

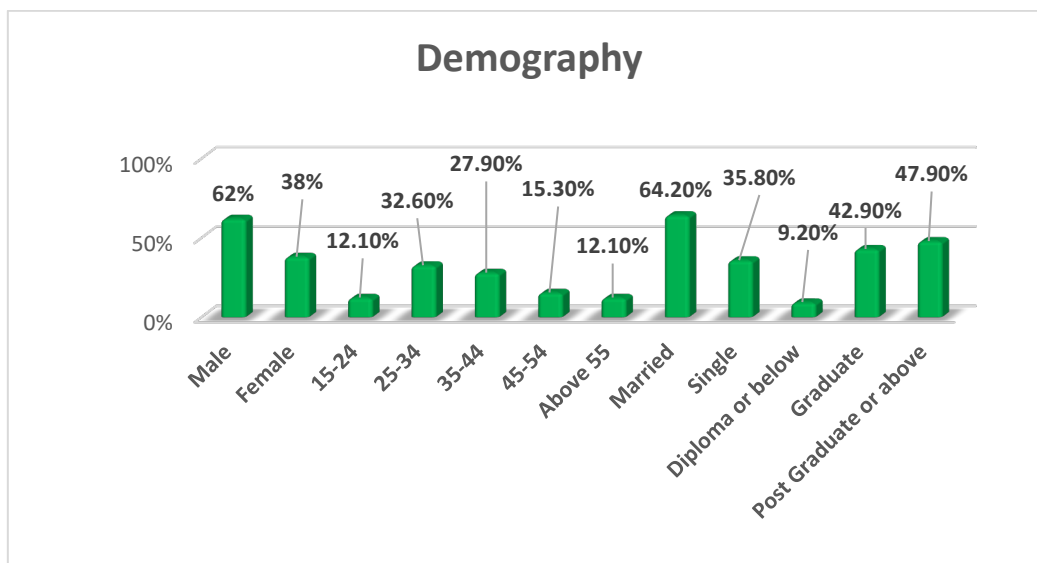


Figure 3: Demographic profile of tourists
Source: own compilation

Table 4: Travel Pattern

| Variable | Values | Frequency | % |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|-----------|------|
| Travel times | First time | 243 | 63.9 |
| | More than once | 137 | 36.1 |
| Residence location | Villa rental | 69 | 18.2 |
| | Camping | 81 | 21.3 |
| | Relatives, friends | 79 | 20.8 |
| | Homestays | 151 | 39.7 |
| Familiarity with the destination | Internet | 59 | 15.5 |
| | Local friends | 81 | 21.3 |
| | Media | 183 | 48.2 |
| | Accidental | 57 | 15.0 |
| Travel time priority | Weekends | 102 | 26.8 |
| | Weekdays | 118 | 31.1 |
| | Holidays | 92 | 24.2 |
| | Free time | 68 | 17.9 |
| Travel companions | Alone | 127 | 33.4 |
| | Family | 116 | 30.5 |
| | Friend | 137 | 36.1 |

Table 4 shows tourists' travel patterns. Among 380 samples, 243 tourists travelled to the selected areas of Jammu Region once and the remaining 137 tourists travelled to selected areas of Jammu region more than once. The tourists' stay in the province included villa rental (18.2%), camping (21.3%), and homestays (39.7%). Tourists' familiarity with the selected destinations was via Internet (15.5%), local friends and acquaintances (21.3%), media (48.2%) and accidental (15%). In terms of times of travel, the statistics showed weekends (26.8%), weekdays (31.1%), holidays (24.2%) and free time (17.9%). Furthermore, Travel companions included 33.4% alone, 30.5% with family and 36.1% with friends.

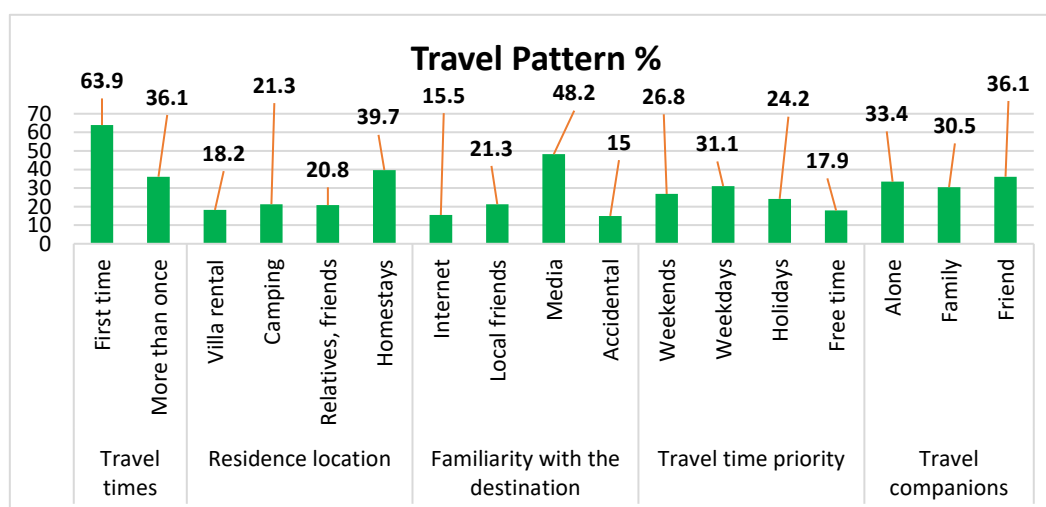


Figure 4: Travel pattern

4.2 T-test

A one sample t-test was conducted whether the mean of the push and pull motive scores were significantly different from 2.5, the midpoint of rating scale of 1 to 5. The sample mean of push 3.432 was significantly higher than 2.5, $t(379) = 23.07$, $p < .001$, whereas, the sample mean of pull 3.40 was also significantly higher than 2.5, $t(379) = 19.73$, $p < .001$. The results support the conclusion that both push and pull factors of motivation were significantly higher than neutral midpoint of 2.5 on a 5-points scale. This highlights that both intrinsic (push) motives and extrinsic (pull) motives strongly influence the respondent's decisions to visit rural attractions.

Table 5: One sample T-test

| | Test Value = 2.5 (midpoint of ratings 1 to 5) | | | | | | |
|--------------|---|--------|-----|---------------|-----------------|---|--------|
| | Mean | t | df | Sig(2-tailed) | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Push factors | 3.432 | 23.074 | 379 | .000 | .93289 | .8534 | 1.0124 |
| Pull factors | 3.40 | 19.730 | 379 | .000 | .90553 | .8153 | .9958 |

4.3 Paired sample t-test

A paired samples t-test was conducted to evaluate whether push motives were more important for travel motivations as compared to pull factors. The results indicates that the mean of push factors ($m=3.432$) is marginally higher than the mean of pull factors ($m=3.40$). this indicates that, on average, push factors were rated marginally more important than pull factors. However, the difference between the means is minimal (0.0273). The results of the paired sample t-test yielded a t-value of 1.596 and a p-value of 0.111. since the p value is greater than commonly used significance level of 0.05. this indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the importance of push and pull factors of travel motivation at the 95% confidence level. Therefore, the data does not support the hypothesis that push factors are significantly more important than pull factors in driving travel motivation.

Table 6: Paired sample test

| | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | t | df | Sig(2-tailed) | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
|------------------|-------|----------------|-----------------|-------|-----|---------------|---|--------|
| | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Pair Push – Pull | .0273 | .33422 | .0171 | 1.596 | 379 | .111 | -.00634 | .06108 |

4.5 Descriptive statistics

Table 7 presents the descriptive statistics for various push factors motivating travelers to visit rural destinations, ranked by their mean scores. The push factors overall showed significance with an average mean score of 3.432 and a standard deviation of 0.788.

Table 7: Descriptive statistics of push factors

| Descriptive | Mean | Rank | Std. D |
|--|--------------|------|-------------|
| Push Factors | 3.432 | | .788 |
| Interacting with local communities in rural destinations is important to me | 3.62 | 1 | .869 |
| I am motivated by the opportunity to explore new and unspoiled environments | 3.61 | 2 | 1.015 |
| I seek to escape from my daily routine by visiting rural destinations | 3.55 | 3 | .980 |
| Traveling to rural areas helps me relieve stress and rejuvenate | 3.55 | 4 | .961 |
| I enjoy meeting new people and socializing during my visits to rural areas | 3.53 | 5 | .967 |
| I am interested in learning about the traditions and lifestyles of rural communities | 3.42 | 6 | 1.140 |
| Experiencing local culture and heritage motivates me to visit rural destinations | 3.32 | 7 | 1.074 |
| Spending time in nature-rich rural settings improves my mental well-being | 3.31 | 8 | 1.046 |
| Visiting rural destinations provides opportunities for personal growth | 3.25 | 9 | 1.042 |
| Experiencing adventure in rural settings appeals to me | 3.18 | 10 | 1.145 |
| Valid N (listwise) 380 | | | |

The highest-ranked push factor was "Interacting with local communities in rural destinations is important for me" (mean = 3.62). This suggests that the opportunity for authentic social interaction is a key motivator for rural tourism, aligning with the growing trend of tourists seeking meaningful, community-based experiences. The second-highest ranked factor, "I am motivated by the opportunity to explore new and unspoiled environments" (mean = 3.61), reflects a strong desire among tourists for natural and pristine settings, often considered a hallmark of rural travel. The motivations of escaping daily routine (mean = 3.55) and relieving stress and rejuvenating (mean = 3.55) ranked third and fourth, respectively, indicating that psychological restoration is another significant driver behind rural tourism. Social motivations, such as "enjoying meeting new people and socializing" (mean = 3.53), also featured prominently, reinforcing the importance of social engagement in enhancing travel experiences.

Mid-ranked factors, including "interest in traditions and lifestyles of rural communities" (mean = 3.42), "experiencing local culture and heritage" (mean = 3.32), and "spending time in nature-rich rural settings" (mean = 3.31), emphasize the role of cultural learning and environmental connection in shaping tourist motivations, though to a slightly lesser extent compared to social interaction. The lower-ranked factors were "visiting rural destinations for personal growth" (mean = 3.25) and "experiencing adventure in rural settings" (mean = 3.18). This suggests that while rural areas offer opportunities for personal development and adventure, these aspects are relatively less influential compared to cultural immersion and relaxation motives. Overall, the results highlight that rural tourists in the Jammu region are primarily motivated by opportunities for social connection, environmental exploration, cultural engagement, and stress relief, rather than adventure or self-development alone.

Table 8: Descriptive statistics of pull factors

| Descriptive | Mean | Rank | S. D |
|---|--------------|------|-------------|
| Pull Factors | 3.405 | | .894 |
| The quiet and peaceful atmosphere of rural areas is appealing to me | 3.60 | 1 | .938 |
| I prefer rural destinations that are easily accessible | 3.54 | 2 | 1.012 |
| Experiencing traditional rural cuisine is a key motivation for my visit | 3.50 | 3 | 1.105 |
| I am attracted to rural areas that offer a variety of outdoor recreational activities | 3.49 | 4 | 1.046 |
| I am interested in the cultural heritage of rural communities | 3.44 | 5 | 1.060 |
| The quality of facilities and services in rural areas affects my choice to visit | 3.42 | 6 | 1.098 |
| I visit rural areas to engage in farm stays and other agritourism experiences | 3.39 | 7 | 1.189 |
| Experiencing traditional rural lifestyles is appealing to me | 3.38 | 8 | 1.104 |
| I am drawn to rural areas because of their clean and unpolluted environment | 3.23 | 9 | 1.081 |
| The natural landscapes of rural areas attract me to visit | 3.06 | 10 | 1.201 |
| Valid N (listwise) 380 | | | |

Table 8 presents the descriptive statistics for various pull factors motivating travelers to visit rural destinations, ranked according to their mean values. The overall mean score of 3.405 indicates that respondents strongly agree that pull factors significantly influence their travel decisions. Among the factors, "The quiet and peaceful atmosphere of rural areas is appealing to me" ranks highest (mean = 3.60, SD = 0.938), underscoring that the search for peace and escape from urban stress is a primary motivation. This finding resonates with previous studies suggesting that tranquillity and relaxation are critical appeals of rural

destinations. The second-ranked factor, “I prefer rural destinations that are easily accessible” (mean = 3.54, SD = 1.012), highlights the crucial role of accessibility, indicating that travel convenience heavily shapes tourists' choices. “Experiencing traditional rural cuisine is a key motivation for my visit” ranks third (mean = 3.50), reflecting the growing importance of authentic culinary experiences in enhancing destination attractiveness. Outdoor recreational opportunities (mean = 3.49) and interest in the cultural heritage of rural communities (mean = 3.44) further reveal tourists' preference for active engagement and cultural enrichment during rural visits. Moderately ranked factors such as the quality of facilities (mean = 3.42), farm stay experiences (mean = 3.39), and traditional lifestyles (mean = 3.38) suggest that while supportive amenities and authentic living experiences are important, they are not the primary motivators. Interestingly, environmental attributes like a clean and unpolluted environment (mean = 3.23, SD = 1.081) and the appeal of natural landscapes (mean = 3.06, SD = 1.201) rank lower. This contrasts with the common perception that nature is the foremost draw in rural tourism, indicating that for this group, cultural immersion and accessibility outweigh purely scenic attractions. These findings offer important insights for rural tourism development, suggesting that enhancing cultural experiences, ensuring accessibility, and maintaining a peaceful atmosphere should be prioritized to attract and satisfy rural tourists.

4.6 Correlation Analysis

Pearson's product-moment correlation of push and pull factors of travel motivation (Table 9) reveals an extremely strong positive relationship between the variables, with statistical significance ($r = 0.924$, $p < 0.001$), thus rejecting the null hypothesis (H_0).

Table 9: Pearsons correlation between push and pull factors

| Correlations | Push Factors | Pull Factors |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Push Factors | 1 | .924** |
| Pull Factors | .924** | 1 |

Correlation at 0.01(2-tailed)

This indicates that as push factors (such as personal desires and needs) increase, there is a corresponding increase in pull factors (such as the destination's attractiveness and features). The strong correlation (0.924) suggests that these factors are highly interrelated, implying that a marketing strategy focusing on enhancing push factors (e.g., appealing to travelers' desires for relaxation, adventure, or cultural exploration) could have a significant impact on boosting the destination's pull factors (e.g., the appeal of the location, its activities, and amenities). Therefore, destination marketers should consider how both internal motivations (push factors) and external attractions (pull factors) can be aligned in promotional efforts to attract travelers effectively.

4.7 Factor Analysis

Table 10. shows that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure is 0.915, which indicates excellent sampling adequacy, as the value above 0.90 are considered very good for factor analysis. The Bartlett's test of sphericity indicates an approximate chi-square value of 8265.726 with 210 degrees of freedom, and a significance level of 0.000. Therefore, the p-value is less than 0.05, indicates that the correlation matrix is significantly different from identity matrix. Therefore, the results of the KMO and Bartlett's Test suggest that the data is suitable for factor analysis.

Table 10: KMO and Bartlett's Test

| KMO and Bartlett's Test | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|----------|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure... | | .915 |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | Approx. Chi-Square | 8265.726 |
| | Df | 210 |
| | Sig. Bartlett | .000 |

4.8 Principal components analysis

Principal components analysis (PCA) was performed on the importance ratings of the 20 push and pull motivation factors identified in the instrument development process. The first run produced a four-factor solution with eigenvalues greater than 1, accounting for 69.8% of the total variance. However, four variables with low factor loading (below 0.5) were observed. These variables were deleted from the analysis, and a new factor solution was obtained using eigenvalues greater than 1 and varimax rotation that resulted in a three-factor solution accounting for 74.01% of the total variance. The factor loadings of all the relevant variables in the rotated factor matrix were clearly related to only one factor each. These results point to the fact that tourism in rural areas is an extremely diverse sector leading to a wide range of visitors' needs and expectations. The resultant six factors represent specific dimensions of the motivation for participating in rural tourism. The final solution is presented in table 11.

Table 11: Total Variance Explained (Push and Pull factors)

| Factors | Factor loading | Eigenvalue | % of variance | Cumulative % |
|---|----------------|------------|---------------|--------------|
| Cultural and Experiential Engagement (Motivation) | | 12.348 | 61.739 | 61.739 |
| I am interested in the cultural heritage of rural communities | .788 | | | |
| Experiencing traditional rural cuisine is a key motivation for my visit | .787 | | | |
| I prefer rural destinations that are easily accessible | .776 | | | |
| Experiencing traditional rural lifestyles is appealing to me | .732 | | | |
| I am interested in learning about the traditions and lifestyles of rural communities | .715 | | | |
| I am attracted to rural areas that offer a variety of outdoor recreational activities | .651 | | | |
| I seek to escape from my daily routine by visiting rural destinations | .628 | | | |
| The quality of facilities and services in rural areas affects my choice to visit | .623 | | | |
| Environmental and Personal Well-being Motivation | | 1.428 | 7.139 | 68.878 |
| Spending time in nature-rich rural settings improves my mental well-being | .815 | | | |
| I visit rural areas to engage in farm stays and other agritourism experiences | .813 | | | |
| Visiting rural destinations provides opportunities for personal growth | .794 | | | |
| I am drawn to rural areas because of their clean and unpolluted environment | .737 | | | |
| The quiet and peaceful atmosphere of rural areas is appealing to me | .728 | | | |
| Social and Emotional Motivation | | 1.026 | 5.132 | 74.01 |
| Interacting with local communities in rural destinations is important to me | .757 | | | |
| Traveling to rural areas helps me relieve stress and rejuvenate | .750 | | | |
| I enjoy meeting new people and socializing during my visits to rural areas | .723 | | | |
| Total variance extracted (%) | 74.01 | | | |
| Cronbach's a of all items | .967 | | | |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

Table 11 highlights the results of factor analysis, which was performed on the 10 push and 10 pull factors of travel motivation to rural areas. The factor solution was obtained using eigenvalues greater than 1 and varimax rotation that resulted in a three-factor solution accounting for a total variance of 74.01. the factor loadings of all the relevant variables in the rotated factor matrix were clearly related to only one factor each. The first factor was labelled as “cultural and experiential motivation”. The first factor with an eigen value of 12.358, has the highest percentage of explained variance equal to 61.739 and consists eight motivational factors, including, I am interested in the cultural heritage of rural communities, Experiencing traditional rural cuisine is a key motivation for my visit, I prefer rural destinations that are easily accessible, Experiencing traditional rural lifestyles is appealing to me, I am interested in learning about the traditions and lifestyles of rural communities, I am attracted to rural areas that offer a variety of outdoor recreational activities, I seek to escape from my daily routine by visiting rural destinations and The quality of facilities and services in rural areas affects my choice to visit.

The second factor was labelled “environmental and personal well-being motivation” with an eigen value of 1.428, and has the second highest percentage of variance equal to 7.139, consists of five motivational factors, including Spending time in nature-rich rural settings improves my mental well-being, I visit rural areas to engage in farm stays and other agritourism experiences, Visiting rural destinations provides opportunities for personal growth, I am drawn to rural areas because of their clean and unpolluted environment and The quiet and peaceful atmosphere of rural areas is appealing to me.

The third factor, which was labelled as “social and emotional motivation” with an eigen value of 1.026, and the explained variance of 5.132, consists of three motivational factors, including Interacting with local communities in rural destinations is important to me, traveling to rural areas helps me relieve stress and rejuvenate and, I enjoy meeting new people and socializing during my visits to rural areas.

However, the other four variables are not loaded with any one of the factors, including Experiencing local culture and heritage motivates me to visit rural destinations, I am motivated by the opportunity to explore new and unspoiled environments, The natural landscapes of rural areas attract me to visit, and Experiencing adventure in rural settings appeals to me.

5 Conclusion and suggestions

5.1 Conclusion

This study aimed to identify the motivations of tourists visiting the Jammu region of the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, focusing on push and pull factors. Ten push and ten pull factors were analyzed, with one-sample t-test results showing that both intrinsic (push) and extrinsic (pull) motives significantly exceeded the neutral midpoint on Likert's scale, indicating their strong influence on decisions to visit rural attractions. The paired sample t-test found no significant difference between the importance of push and pull factors, while Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong, statistically significant positive relationship between them. Factor analysis categorized the 20 motivations into three dimensions: 'Cultural and Experiential Motivation,' 'Environmental and Personal Well-being Motivation,' and 'Social and Emotional Motivation,' reinforcing the role of both push and pull factors in travel motivation.

These findings carry important practical implications for rural tourism stakeholders in the Jammu region, including tourism authorities, local communities, and businesses. To capitalize on cultural and experiential motivations, stakeholders should promote heritage sites, traditional festivals, and local crafts to attract tourists seeking authentic experiences. For environmental and personal well-being motivations, developing eco-tourism trails, wellness retreats, and nature-based activities can appeal to visitors prioritizing sustainability and relaxation. To address social and emotional motivations, community-based initiatives such as homestays and guided village tours can foster meaningful interactions between tourists and local residents. Implementing these strategies can enhance economic opportunities, preserve cultural and natural assets, and promote sustainable tourism development. Stakeholders are also encouraged to collaborate to improve infrastructure, such as rural connectivity and accommodations, and to leverage digital marketing strategies to reach wider audiences.

5.2 Suggestions for Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights into tourist motivations, its limitations suggest specific directions for future research. First, longitudinal studies could explore how tourists' motivations shift across seasons or socio-economic contexts, addressing the cross-sectional nature of this study. Second, qualitative approaches, such as in-depth interviews or focus groups, could uncover nuanced cultural or social factors influencing travel decisions, complementing the quantitative findings. Third, investigating the impact of social media and digital marketing on push and pull motivations could provide a contemporary perspective on evolving travel trends. Finally, comparative analyses with other rural tourism destinations in India could identify unique opportunities and challenges specific to the Jammu region, thereby informing more targeted tourism development policies. These focused research directions build upon the current study's findings and limitations, offering valuable pathways for advancing both tourism scholarship and practice.

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