

Travel Satisfaction as a Predictor of Behavioural Intentions: Evidence from Wellness Tourists Visiting Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract

Wellness tourism has proven to be a very fast-growing sector in the tourism industry. Wellness tourism in Himachal Pradesh is popular as a result of the region's natural environment, landscape, spirituality, and wellness facilities. This study seeks to measure the travel satisfaction of the wellness tourists and how it affects their behaviour intentions. A quantitative approach was used to carry out the research, and primary data were gathered from 392 wellness tourists via a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation coefficient, and linear regression analysis were conducted using SPSS. Travel satisfaction among the wellness tourists was found to be relatively high. The participants had positive attitudes concerning their behavioural intentions, especially recommending the place as a wellness destination, intention to visit again and word-of-mouth communication about the destination. Correlation analysis shows there was a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between travel satisfaction and behaviour intention of the wellness tourists ($r = 0.653$, $p < 0.001$). Linear regression also showed that there is a significant prediction of behavioural intentions of the tourists by their travel satisfaction ($\beta = 0.653$, $p < 0.001$). In conclusion, travel satisfaction plays an important role in determining the future behaviour intentions of the travellers.

Keywords: Wellness Tourism, Travel Satisfaction, Behavioural Intentions, Wellness Tourists, Himachal Pradesh.

1. Introduction

Wellness tourism has become one of the most rapidly growing segments in the global tourism industry, indicating the growing need among travellers to achieve holistic wellness through tourism experiences (Global Wellness Institute, 2023). In contrast to traditional tourism,

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Published: 27 June 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70558/IJSSR.2026.v3.i3.301162>

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wellness tourism involves engaging in practices and experiences aimed at fostering holistic wellness, self-improvement, relaxation, and rejuvenation **(Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001)**. Increased worries about stress, work-life balance, and non-communicable diseases have played a major role in the growing popularity of wellness tourism **(Smith & Puczko, 2014)**.

In this regard, India is well-known as a popular wellness tourism destination owing to its ancient tradition of yoga, meditation, Ayurveda, Naturopathy, and spiritual activities **(Aggarwal et al., 2008)**. In this context, out of several wellness destinations available in India, Himachal Pradesh has earned a reputation for itself because of its scenic beauty, tranquillity, spirituality, yoga centres, and wellness resorts.

Travel satisfaction is an important element that plays a significant role in tourists' behaviour after engaging in various wellness activities **(Baker & Crompton, 2000)**. Travel satisfaction denotes the tourists' evaluations regarding their travel experience. It is important since it is viewed as one of the most vital criteria for measuring destination performance **(Oliver, 1999)**. In accordance with the theory of disconfirmation of expectations, travellers feel satisfied when their travel experiences satisfy their expectations **(Oliver, 1980)**. When tourists feel satisfied, it is likely that positive behavioural consequences will occur **(Yoon & Uysal, 2005)**.

Tourist behavioural intention can be considered an indicator of how likely tourists are to behave in future, including revisiting the destination, recommending the destination to others, and sharing positive experiences using word-of-mouth communications **(Zeithaml et al., 1996)**. Tourist behavioural intention is important since it determines how sustainable tourism destinations are in terms of attractiveness and competitiveness. Studies conducted by several scholars found that tourists' satisfaction was positively related to their behavioural intentions, which included recommendations to other people **(Chen & Tsai, 2007; Prayag et al., 2017)**.

In the case of wellness tourism, it is important to understand the aspects that affect behavioural intentions. Even though there have been a number of research works that have analysed motivation, experience, well-being, satisfaction, and loyalty in relation to wellness tourism **(Kim et al. 2017; Voigt et al., 2011)**, very few researchers have explored the impact of travel satisfaction on the behavioural intentions of wellness tourists in the state of Himachal Pradesh. The importance of wellness tourism in the state has gained momentum over the years, making such an analysis quite relevant.

Accordingly, the current study seeks to explore the impact of travel satisfaction on behavioural intention of wellness tourists in Himachal Pradesh. In particular, this study will seek to explore whether high levels of travel satisfaction translate into high revisit intention, recommendation intention, and word-of-mouth amongst wellness tourists. These results will add to the increasing body of knowledge on wellness tourism while also offering practical insights.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Wellness Tourism

Wellness tourism has emerged as an important phenomenon of the global travel industry, specifically for people who are aiming to improve their health and wellness while traveling to new destinations **(Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001)**. This is definitely an experience that goes beyond the traditional vacation; it is about improving mental, physical, emotional and spiritual

health. It covers a variety of wellness activity classes, spa days, Ayurvedic massage, fitness retreats, yoga training, and enlightening retreats, among others (**Smith & Puczko 2014**). Wellness tourism has grown in recent years due to high incidence of stress-related health problems and lifestyle changes. People today are looking for a retreat that will relax them, help them develop themselves and bring them a total well-being (**Voigt et al., 2011**). This trend benefits the health and helps to sustain travel that benefits local businesses and enriches visitor experiences.

The tourism industry in India has developed a lot and it's all thanks to the innumerable benefits it offers to its tourists, who come to India to experience the country's heritage, yoga, meditation, ayurveda and spiritual cures. The natural beauty, climate, spiritual significance of Himachal Pradesh and also the development of wellness tourism packages have made it a tourist destination. The places like Dharamshala, McLeod-Ganj, Bir-Billing, Palampur and Manali, where people come for wellness tours, are places where they come seeking to restore their physical and spiritual wellness. Therefore, the study of the behavioural consequences for wellness tourists is important.

2.2 Travel Satisfaction

Satisfaction is an emotional response that is a result of consumer experience (**Woodruff, 1993**). According to **Kozak (2001)**; **Alegre and Cladera (2009)** tourists' satisfaction is an important determinant of their future tourism activities, and a satisfied tourist is more likely to return to a tourist destination. The satisfaction with travel is one of the most popular subjects of tourism studies because it reflects the satisfaction of travellers with their trips. Tourist satisfaction is when the tourist believes that their trip experience was at least as good as what they anticipated (**Oliver, 1980**). It is the check that we do after a journey, asking a question about whether what we expected has come to pass. **McMinn et al., (2017)** suggest that other factors like weather and landscape aesthetics also have an impact on service quality. **Oliver (1999)** has suggested that satisfaction actually influences the behaviour of the consumers in the future and their loyalty as well. Tourism is about happy travellers who will return to the destination, recommend it to friends and tell others about it.

According to **Baker and Crompton (2000)** satisfaction is essential if destination is to be super-competitive because it affects the tourists' perceptions of the destination and their behaviour in the future. The findings indicate that the service quality, perceptions of the destination, perceived value of the destination, overall experiences, and characteristics of the destination are all elements that affect travel satisfaction (**Chen & Tsai, 2007**). Wellness Travel: Happy is associated with the service, beauty, comfort, welcome and body and mind influence. This is why satisfaction is considered to be one of the important factors used to predict where they will go next and how likely they are to recommend it to friends. Wellness tourism is about how to make the travellers feel good about their visit to make them develop a positive attitude towards the destination. They then plan to return to share with someone else. In the article **McMinn et al. (2017)** the authors propose that service quality is also intermingled with other aspects such as weather and landscape beauty. Enjoyment is enhanced by natural beauty, cultural points of interest and scenery (**Pippin et al., 2021**; **Gössling et al., 2019**). The satisfaction dimension is

positively related to the willingness to return to the site, and is the most critical one (**Alegre & Cladera, 2009**).

2.3 Behavioural Intention

Meng and Choi (2016) further elaborated the theory by incorporating tourists' past behaviours and experience, indicating that these are important influences on tourists' perceptions of a destination and their willingness to revisit. Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) emphasizes the significance of attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control to guide the process of forming tourism intention, and extended models further add the experience of emotions, destination image and past behaviour in order to increase the explanatory power of the theory (**Ajzen, 1991; Meng & Choi, 2016; Wang & Liu, 2019**). Studies show a positive relationship between satisfaction and positive outcomes for tourists, which leads to positive behavioural results (**Yoon & Uysal, 2005**).

Behavioural intention reflects one's willingness to engage in a behaviour in the future. It is also used in tourism to predict the post-trip behaviours of tourists, depending on their experiences (**Zeithaml et al., 1996**). This is considered one of the major indicators that people will come back to and aids in maintaining a positive attitude for sustained tourism. According to **Cheng et al. (2013)** place attachment, or "deep feelings people have for a place," can have a significant impact on pro-ecological behaviour. **Groot and Steg (2009)** argue that people's values and concerns about environmental degradation are the foundation of pro-environmental behaviours. **Meng and Choi (2016)** added the constructs of past behaviour and tourist experience to the theory and posited that they are important contributors to the formation of tourists' attitudes towards destinations and their propensity to return. Typically, there are three aspects to assess the behavioural intention: revisit intention, recommendation intention and positive word of mouth (**Chen & Tsai, 2007**). The measure of revisit intention is the willingness of a tourist to return in the future. Recommendation intention refers to their prediction of the probability of recommending the location to their family and friends. They share good opinions and experiences about the destination with others, as well as by positive word of mouth.

Behavioural intentions are important for the success of destinations and their competitiveness. Tourists would return and recommend it to their friends, increasing the chances of being successful in the long run (**Prayag et al., 2017**). Thus, the link with determining what influences these intentions is a substantial issue in tourism research. As a result, figuring out what affects these intentions is a big deal in tourism studies. Research conducted by **Cheng et al. (2013)** has indicated that place attachment- strong emotional ties between an individual and a destination can heavily influence environmentally conscious behaviours. The theory of planned behaviour is also supplemented by the research of **Hsu and Huang (2012)**, who extended the model to incorporate the influence of motivation, place attachment, and emotional experiences. Studies show that satisfaction is a key predictor of what people intend to do after a trip (**Baker & Crompton, 2000; Yoon & Uysal, 2005**). When tourists enjoy themselves, they feel good about the place and are likely to be loyal, leading to great experiences next time too. At wellness resorts, folks who like their stay will come back and tell friends about it. So,

looking at how satisfied travellers are helps us understand loyalty better and make good plans for managing tourist spots. **Meng and Choi (2016)** introduced the constructs of past behaviour and tourism experience to the theory, conjecturing that they are significant factors in the development of tourists' attitudes toward destinations and their likelihood of returning.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Objectives

1. To assess the travel satisfaction of wellness tourists visiting Himachal Pradesh.
2. To examine the influence of travel satisfaction on their behavioural intentions.

3.2 Hypothesis

H₁1 Travel satisfaction has a significant positive influence on the behavioural intentions of wellness tourists visiting Himachal Pradesh.

3.3 Research Design

This research adopted quantitative research approach to examine the level of satisfaction among wellness tourists as well as their likelihood of revisiting Himachal Pradesh for wellness activities. Data was obtained by the researchers at a single point of time using descriptive and cross-sectional research design. It is due to the reason that this method allows them to measure tourists' perceptions and apply statistical tools to determine the relationship among various variables.

3.4 Study Area

This study took place in three key districts of Himachal Pradesh for wellness tourism: Kangra, Kullu, and Shimla. The state draws many wellness seekers because of its beautiful scenery, peaceful ambiance, and places for yoga and meditation. It's also known for its retreats and holistic healing methods. They collected data from popular spots like Dharamshala, McLeod Ganj, and Manali.

3.5 Population and Sampling

The study focused on wellness tourists in Himachal Pradesh. These wellness tourists travel mainly to boost or keep up their health – physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually. They do this through yoga, meditation, wellness retreats, naturopathy, and Ayurveda, among other things.

We used a convenience sampling method because we don't have a full list of wellness tourists. We just asked those who were willing to fill out our survey on that particular point of time. In total, 392 questionnaires were handed out via Google Forms.

3.6 Instrument Development

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of three sections. The first section gathered demographic information such as gender, age, education, occupation, and income. The second section measured travel satisfaction, while the third section assessed behavioural intentions.

Travel satisfaction was measured using instruments from earlier tourism research (**Baker & Crompton, 2000; Yoon & Uysal, 2005**). Three aspects of behavioural intention were measured: the intention to revisit, the intention to recommend, and the intention to engage in positive word-of-mouth, which were all derived from the established tourism literature (**Chen & Tsai, 2007; Zeithaml et al., 1996**).

All measurement items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

The primary data were obtained from respondents using a self-administered questionnaire through google forms. This was done by conducting surveys at wellness tourism locations and wellness centres in Himachal Pradesh. Before proceeding with the survey, participants were told about the objective of this research and were assured that the information given would be used exclusively for academic purposes and kept confidential.

3.8 Data Analysis

Data was coded and analysed using the SPSS software. To look at the demographic characteristics of respondents, and also analyse the main variables in the study, descriptive statistics was used.

The association between travel satisfaction and behavioural intention was assessed using Pearson's Correlation Analysis. Simple linear regression analysis was carried out to find out the level of prediction of travel satisfaction on behavioural intention by wellness tourists traveling to Himachal Pradesh.

4. Results

4.1 Tourist Profiling

Table No. 4.1.1

Classification on the basis of Nationality

Parameter	Categories	No. of Respondents (N=392)	Percentage
Nationality	Indian	350	89
	Foreigners	42	11
Total		392	100

Source: Data collected through questionnaire

Table No. 4. 1. 2

Classification on the basis of Gender

Parameter	Categories	No. of Respondents (N=392)	Percentage
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Gender	Male	260	66
	Female	132	34
Total		392	100

Source: Data collected through questionnaire

Table No. 4.1.3

Classification on the basis of Age

Parameter	Categories	No. of Respondents (N=392)	Percentage
Age	21 – 30	158	40
	31 – 40	160	41
	41 – 50	53	14
	51 – 60	11	3
	Above 60	10	2
Total		392	100

Source: Data collected through questionnaire

Table No. 4. 1. 4

Classification on the basis of Marital Status

Parameter	Categories	No. of Respondents (N=392)	Percentage
Marital Status	Single	178	45
	Married	185	47
	Separated	20	5
	Divorced	09	3
Total		392	100

Source: Data collected through questionnaire

Table No. 4. 1. 5

Classification on the basis of Education Status

Parameter	Categories	No. of Respondents (N=392)	Percentage
	High School or Less	33	8

Education Status	Graduate	159	41
	Post Graduate	126	32
	Doctorate	74	19
Total		392	100

Source: Data collected through questionnaire

Table No. 4. 1. 6

Classification on the basis of Occupation

Parameter	Categories	No. of Respondents (N=392)	Percentage
Occupation	Government Employee	70	18
	Private Sector Employee	194	50
	Entrepreneur	95	24
	Homemaker	21	5
	Retired	12	3
Total		392	100

Source: Data collected through questionnaire

Table No. 4. 1. 7

Classification on the basis of Annual Income

Parameter	Categories	No. of Respondents (N=392)	Percentage
Annual Income	Below Rs 5 Lakhs (Below \$6,500)	102	26
	Rs 5 Lakhs – 10 Lakhs (\$6,500 – \$12,500)	188	48
	Rs 10 Lakhs – 20 Lakhs (\$12,500 - \$25,000)	74	19
	Above Rs 20 Lakhs (Above \$25,000)	28	7
Total		392	100

Source: Data collected through questionnaire

Table No. 4. 1. 8

Descriptive Analysis of Travel Satisfaction

Travel Satisfaction	Mean	Standard Deviation
I feel that this trip has enriched my life.	3.68	1.233
I am really glad and cherished I had this trip	3.67	1.202
I feel much better about things and myself after this trip	3.70	1.189
I accomplished the real purpose of the vacation / trip	3.76	1.152
Travel journey was rewarding to me in many ways.	3.66	1.177
I am satisfied with the overall travel experience	3.69	1.124
It was a wise choice for me to select and travel to Himachal Pradesh for Wellness activity	3.68	1.153

Source: Data collected through questionnaire

Table No. 4. 1. 8 states that statements, “I accomplished the true purpose of the vacation/ trip” yielded the highest mean scores (Mean = 3.76, SD = 1.152), implying that most of the respondents felt that their objectives with respect to well-being travel had been accomplished. It is evident that tourism in Himachal Pradesh works effectively in meeting the requirements of wellness tourists. Besides, it can be seen that the respondents experienced positive feelings about the trip emotionally. This is clear from statements such as “I feel much better about things and myself after this trip” (Mean = 3.70, SD = 1.189) and “I am satisfied with the travel experience in general” (Mean = 3.69, SD = 1.124). Furthermore, the emotional enriching state such as “I feel that this trip has added value to my life” (Mean = 3.68, SD = 1.233) and “It was wise of me to choose and travel to Himachal Pradesh for the purpose of wellness activity” (Mean = 3.68, SD = 1.153) show that the respondents felt that the trip was beneficial for them.

The item-wise descriptive analysis of travel satisfaction reveals that wellness tourists reported a moderately high to high level of satisfaction with their travel experience in Himachal Pradesh. The mean scores for all seven statements range between 3.66 and 3.76, indicating generally positive perceptions across different dimensions of travel satisfaction.

Table No. 4. 1. 9

BEHAVIOURAL	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
I will speak positive things about Himachal Pradesh as a wellness tourist destination to others	3.70	1.197

I hope to revisit Himachal Pradesh for Wellness and wellness activity	3.67	1.236
I will recommend Himachal Pradesh to others as a perfect Wellness destination	3.71	1.171
I will release positive information on social media and other platforms	3.49	1.251

Descriptive Analysis of Behavioural Intentions

Source: Data collected through questionnaire

Table No. 4. 1. 9 shows that among all the behavioural intention scale items, “I will recommend Himachal Pradesh to others as a perfect wellness destination” has the highest mean (Mean = 3.71, SD = 1.171) score, which clearly shows that the tourists have high intentions of advocating the place. Similarly, the tourists also wanted to communicate with each other positively and share good things about Himachal Pradesh as a wellness tourist destination. The tourists were found to say, “I will speak positive things about Himachal Pradesh as a wellness tourist destination to others.” This item holds a mean score of 3.70 (SD = 1.197). Moreover, the revisit intention scale items show that the tourists would probably revisit the place because the average mean score is 3.67 (SD = 1.236) for “I hope to revisit Himachal Pradesh for wellness and wellness activity.” Nevertheless, “I will release positive information on social media and other platforms” scored the lowest mean among the five items (Mean = 3.49, SD = 1.251).

Based on the item-wise descriptive analysis of the behavioural intentions, it can be concluded that the well-being tourists have moderately high positive behavioural intentions towards Himachal Pradesh. This is because the average values obtained for all four items range between 3.49 and 3.71, reflecting favourable intentions related to revisit, recommendation, and positive word-of-mouth.

4. 2 Regression Analysis

Relevance of the regression analysis can be traced in the fact that it gives the researcher an opportunity to determine the level of association that exists in terms of the effects of travel satisfaction and behavioural intentions among wellness tourists. While the descriptive analysis simply provides the researcher with information on the nature of any existing association between two variables in the data set, the regression analysis is aimed at determining whether such association exists in the context of prediction. The travel satisfaction will be the independent variable while the behavioural intentions will be the dependent variable.

Table No. 4. 2.1

Predictor	B	Std. Error	β (Standardized)	t-value	Sig.	Result
Travel Satisfaction	0.466	0.027	0.653	17.041	0.000	Significant

Source: Data collected through questionnaire

Dependent Variable: Behavioural Intentions Level of Significance: $p < 0.05$

Table No. 4. 2.1 illustrates the regression output analysis of the relationship between travel satisfaction and the behavioural intentions of wellness tourists. The result shows that travel satisfaction is positively related and has a significant effect on behavioural intentions ($\beta = 0.653$, $t = 17.041$, $p < 0.001$). This implies that a rise in satisfaction levels from a wellness vacation trip positively influences one's behavioural intentions. The behavioural intentions may include re-visiting the destination, recommending it to others, and positive word-of-mouth behaviour. Travel satisfaction proves to be a very strong determinant of behavioural intentions, as is depicted by the high standardized beta coefficient. Overall, the results confirm that improving travel satisfaction plays a crucial role in fostering favourable future behavioural responses among wellness tourists.

RESULT

H₁: Travel satisfaction has a significant impact on behavioural intentions of wellness tourists

5. DISCUSSIONS

Satisfied wellness tourists tend to communicate their positive experiences personally rather than through digital channels. It correlates with the personal nature of wellness tourism as a type of activity and the positive transformation of visitors. Nonetheless, even though the intentions to communicate positive information about Himachal Pradesh via social media were not so strong, there was still quite a decent level that could be promoted through efficient destination marketing (**Gable et al., 2018; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014**).

The above regression analysis corroborates these findings with the demonstration of the presence of a robust, positive and statistically significant predictive relationship between travel satisfaction and behavioural intentions. With the assistance of the very high standardised beta value, the above analysis affirms that travel satisfaction has considerable predicting power in relation to future behaviour of revisiting, recommending and engaging in word of mouth about the experience. This corroborates the theoretical perspective according to which satisfaction works as a post-consumption evaluation that determines tourists' behaviour related to their loyalty towards particular destinations (**Oliver, 1999; Seow et al., 2024**).

6. CONCLUSION

This current research explored the degree of satisfaction enjoyed by wellness tourists while travelling to Himachal Pradesh and further assessed the impact of satisfaction on behavioural intentions. The results indicated that wellness tourists demonstrated a relatively high level of satisfaction with respect to their travel experience. This was specifically seen in the context of satisfaction with regards to their wellness travel goals, emotions associated with their travel experience, and value associated with their wellness experience.

Moreover, it was discovered that wellness tourists have positive Behavioural intention towards Himachal Pradesh. The participants showed willingness to promote Himachal Pradesh to other people, return to it for more wellness activities, and practice good word-of-mouth

communication. It shows that Himachal Pradesh is capable of developing destination loyalty amongst wellness tourists.

From the correlation test conducted, there was a very high and significant positive association between travel satisfaction and behavioural intentions ($r = 0.653$, $p < 0.001$). In addition, from the regression analysis, the results indicated that travel satisfaction was significantly able to predict behavioural intentions of wellness tourists ($\beta = 0.653$, $t = 17.041$, $p < 0.001$). These results have indicated that the more satisfied a tourist is with wellness tourism services, the more likely they will go back and make recommendations to others.

This study adds value to existing studies on wellness tourism by offering an empirical basis through data collected from Himachal Pradesh, one of the new wellness tourism destinations in India. The results of the study confirm the significance of travel satisfaction as one of the most important determinants of tourists' future behaviours. From a managerial point of view, it is suggested that destination managers, providers of wellness services, and policymakers concentrate their efforts on improving the quality of the destination itself and tourists' experience at that destination.

Overall, the study concludes that travel satisfaction plays a vital role in shaping the behavioural intentions of wellness tourists and serves as an important driver of sustainable growth and competitiveness for wellness tourism destinations in Himachal Pradesh.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research is sponsored by Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR).

This research has been carried out under the Doctoral Fellowship awarded by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi, and is an outcome of the financial support provided through Fellowship File No. **ICSSR/RFD/24-25/MGT/GEN/106**.

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