The Journal of Behavioral Science (TJBS)

Original Article

Understanding the Travel Behaviors of Indian Tourists in Thailand: A Mixed Methods Research Approach

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Abstract

Travel behavior has long been a key research area in tourism, however most of the focus is on tourists and not the other stakeholders. This mixed-methods research sought to understand the travel behavior for the emerging Indian tourist market by investigating the tourism attitudes of stakeholders. Phuket, a tourist location in Thailand, is used as the potential travel destination. The theory of planned behavior was used as the conceptual framework. First, twelve in-depth interview sessions were conducted to seek insights from the stakeholders. The interview analyses suggest three main unique behaviors among the Indian tourists: family-oriented tourism, seeking home comfort food, and tour guides' favored customers. These findings highlight the importance of understanding a particular segment of tourists based on culture and preferences. Secondly, online questionnaires were given to 368 potential Indian tourists. The iterative regression analyses indicate that predictors of infrastructure ($\beta = .26$, $t = 4.01$, $p < .001$), attitude ($\beta = .21$, $t = 4.45$, $p < .001$), variety ($\beta = .17$, $t = 3.61$, $p < .001$), and comfort ($\beta = .14$, $t = 2.00$, $p < .05$) had positive effects on travel intention. This is preliminary research that investigates emerging Indian tourist behavior. Some practical applications are provided for the tourism industry. This research suggests that place management should be thoughtfully considered, and that government and tourism policy makers engage in destination planning. Basic infrastructure and tourists' comfort zones are priorities in the new normal era.

In past decades, tourist markets in Phuket included mostly Europeans and Australians. Phuket is located approximately 900 kilometers south of Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand. The selection of Phuket as a data collection site was made because of the popularity the city enjoys as a tourist destination. Recently, Russians and Chinese became two of the key tourist segments to this destination (Ministry of Tourism & Sports, 2019). Chinese and Russian tourists share some similarities, for instance, both are non-English native speakers. However, while a Russian is seen as an individual mass tourist, Chinese are characterized as organized mass travelers (Cohen, 2017). Australian tourists are

another key tourist market for the Thai tourism business. The literature review indicates that Australian tourists have favorable image perceptions of Thai food (Promsivapallop & Kannaovakun, 2019). Recent findings show that, while Australians visited Thailand and Phuket because of food, the Chinese made the trip to Phuket for beaches (Promsivapallop & Jarumaneerat, 2018). Travel preferences often differ among tourist segments with tourists visiting a destination for a variety of reasons. In addition, different cultural dimensions and lifestyle factors from one tourist segment to another (Hofstede, 2016) may influence travel decision making. Therefore, investigations into different

tourist segments and their behaviors would be fruitful for tourism organizations.

In 2019, Indian tourists have become one of the most important markets for tourism businesses around the globe, especially in Thailand (Association Of Thai Travel Agents [ATTA], 2020). Changing life styles and increases in income levels have led to an increased frequency of travelling among Indian people (Verma et al., 2018). The rapid expansion of the Indian middle class is prompting tourism officials, including those in Thailand, to raise their estimates of how many visitors will come from India, which has a population of 1.3 billion. For instance, at least 10 million Indians are now expected to arrive in Thailand by 2028 according to Thaiger (2020). Indians are increasingly choosing Thailand as the location of their weddings–with some 200 Indian couples tying the knot there each year. To date, little is known regarding Indian travel behavior (e.g., Chincholkar, 2019, Ma et al., 2018, Vishwakarma et al., 2019). Furthermore, the growth of the Indian tourist market calls for destination readiness for hosting this emerging group and involves tourism stakeholders across sections. Tourism stakeholders consist of public, private, and local community sectors. Each stakeholder performs a unique role. For example, the public sector is generally recognized as a key stakeholder in tourism destination management, while the private sector provides most of the products and services for tourists. Additionally, the host communities and local residents have the right to participate in tourism developments. Currently, local Thai governments are promoting community-based tourism by drawing groups from the local communities to join tourism activities. Croft (2018) suggests the need for further work to understand how all stakeholders might be enabled to contribute equally to strategy-making, addressing the power differentials between actors through the allocation of appropriate resources. Hence, insights into tourist behavior from tourism stakeholders would be beneficial for the tourism industry, especially for an emerging tourist market. The current study was designed to discover a greater understanding of Indian tourist behavior from the perspectives of local tourism stakeholders along with the perspectives of potential tourists.

The review of the literature suggests that research regarding stakeholders in the tourism industry has been widely conducted. A number of scholars has focused on residents' perceptions toward growth in the tourism industry. For example, Xu et al. (2016) studied residents' perceptions of wine tourism development in terms of personal benefits and community impacts in the Piedmont region of North Carolina (U.S.). Some studies examined the relationship between hosts and guests (Bimonte & Faralla, 2016). This research argued that residents' perceptions of tourism impacts, and life satisfaction varied with the tourist season, and that tourism has a hidden cost in terms of perceived life satisfaction. Furthermore, a number of tourism scholars have examined the potential of destinations for providing tourism opportunities. In this group, Aqueveque and Bianchi (2017) have explored the key features of Chilean destination competitiveness from the tourism stakeholders' point of view. Their research indicated that basic services, for example, infrastructure, connectivity, and tourism amenities, are the primary key elements for destination competitiveness.

The literature suggests few travel behavioral studies have focused on tourism stakeholders such as local residents and local tourism companies. Thus, the present study fills this gap by addressing the travel behavior of the emerging Indian tourist market by including opinions and attitudes from a variety of tourism stakeholders.

It is implied from the literature that travel behavior varies depending upon circumstances and the tourism context. Crisis situations are expected to deter travel behavior. Some studies have looked at tourist motivation during crises. In this study, Rittichainuwat et al. (2014) suggested that short-distance destinations, novelty, and culture motivates local tourists during financial crises; but tourist recreation would deter them from traveling domestically. It was found that culture motivates people to travel during a crisis. For example, Thai tourists' need to visit temples for spiritual support during a financial crisis. The most recent study from Sukmak et al. (2020) indicated that the key purposes of the holiday post COVID-19 from the perspective of domestic travelers were having a natural experience, relaxation, and adventure, respectively. The review of the literature indicates there is a lack of studies examining the travel behavior post health crises. It is evident that travel behavior post crises

have been studied in the context of economic, natural, and political circumstances (Sukmak et al., 2020). Little is known about international tourist behavior after a health-related crisis.

As well as insights into travel behavior from the perspective of tourism stakeholders, this research aims to understand Indians' travel intentions regarding the destination of Phuket. Understanding tourists' intentions is important due to the significant effects of intentions on future behavior. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is considered appropriate as a theoretical model for this study. The TPB was proposed by Ajzen (1991) to explain that individuals are likely to perform an action because of two volitional elements and one non-volitional factor. The volitional elements are attitude toward behavior (AT) and subjective norm (SN), and the non-volitional factor is perceived behavioral control (PBC), which together influence behavioral intention.

Authors have utilized the TPB in a range of ways within two broad approaches in the tourism area. First, numerous scholars have applied the original TPB model as a key theoretical framework to answer a range of research questions (e.g., Jordan et al., 2018; Misung et al., 2012; Phillips & Jang, 2012). This approach has produced varying outcomes. For instance, a group of researchers focused on potential outbound tourists using the TPB to investigate travel intentions and to support the applicability of the TPB. They found that AT, SN and PBC had positive effects on travel intentions (Hsu & Huang, 2010; Jordan et al., 2018; Misung et al., 2012; Phillips & Jang, 2012). Similarly, Lam and Hsu (2006) studied potential outbound tourists and found that SN and PBC had a direct impact on behavioral intentions. However, in a Western context, Sparks (2007) found that SN only partially affected behavioral intentions.

In the second broad approach, researchers adapted the TPB to suit the tourism context. some researchers extended the theory by including other independent factors in the original model to examine tourist intentions. These factors include past experiences, travel motivation, and perceived risks and uncertainty. For example, a few scholars stated that past behavior had a positive effect on intentions (Han et al., 2017; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Phillips & Jang, 2012; Sparks, 2007). Hsu and

Huang (2010) found that some travel motivation had a positive effect on travel intentions and that behavioral intentions directly affected actual behavior when visiting the destination. Very few studies have examined the relationship between travel motivation and travel intention (Hsu & Huang, 2010; Park et al., 2017; Phillips & Jang, 2012). Results indicated that only particular motivation components, for example, shopping motivation (Hsu & Huang, 2010) and enjoyment (Phillips & Jang, 2012) significantly influenced tourist intention. This scarcity is a call for further research to verify the relationship between travel motivation and behavioral intention. The motivational factors used in previous studies (Hsu & Huang, 2010; Phillips & Jang, 2012) imply push factors (e.g., relaxation, knowledge seeking, enjoyment, escape and socializing) with limited pull motivation (shopping) (Park et al., 2017).

Based on the TPB model, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H1. Attitude (AT) has a positive effect on behavioral intention (BI).
H2. Subjective norms (SN) have a positive effect on behavioral intention (BI).
H3. Perceived behavioral control (PBC) has a positive effect on behavioral intention (IBI).

The current research proposed to examine the effect of travel motivation and destination image on travel intention. Travel motivation and destination image have been found to be key predictors in travel decision making (e.g., Caber & Albayrak, 2016; Park et al., 2017; Siri et al., 2012). Therefore, two additional factors were added to the original TPB model. Accordingly, the fourth and the fifth hypotheses are:

H4. Travel motivation (MOV) has a positive effect on behavioral intention (BI).
H5. Destination image (DI) has a positive effect on behavioral intention (BI)

Based on the original model of the TPB and the additional factors, the conceptual framework of this study is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

The Conceptual Framework
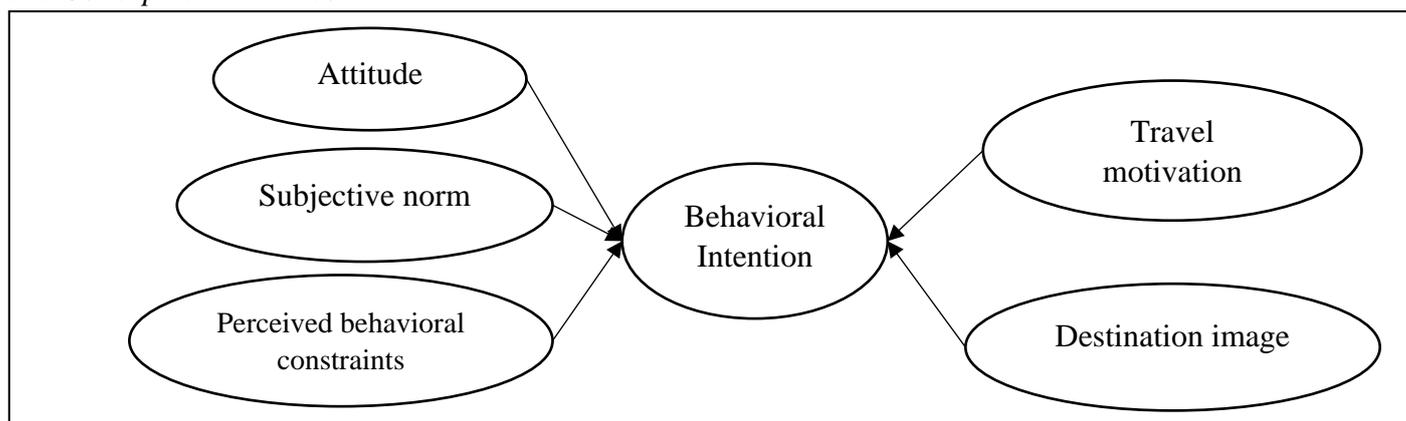
Source: adapted from Madden et al. (1992)

The previous study that is closest to the context of the current research is by Siri et al. (2012). They investigated Indian tourists' motivations and perceptions regarding Bangkok, Thailand. Their study showed that both push and pull factors stimulated Indians to travel. The most important motivation was to have fun, followed by enjoying the beautiful environment, scenery, and beaches. Family and/or friends and the Internet were perceived by Indian tourists as important sources in trip decision making. However, as mentioned earlier, further research into the Indian tourist market should be done to better understand Indian tourists in relationship to a world-class destination like Phuket. Especially, these insights into Indian tourists should be explored due to an easier accessibility to Phuket (Siri et al., 2012; Chincholkar, 2019; Khan, 2019).

Phuket is chosen as the potential tourist destination in this study. Phuket is located approximately 900 kilometers south of the capital city of Thailand, Bangkok. UNESCO selected Phuket in 2015 as the first creative city in gastronomy for the ASEAN region. In addition, Phuket was ranked among the top 15 city destinations worldwide in terms of international tourist arrivals in 2019 (Yasmeen, 2019) and has been named 14th among 15 world destinations in the Travelers' Choice Awards 2021 (TripAdvisor, 2021).

This study applied a concurrent mixed methods design. Two studies, qualitative and quantitative, were adopted in order to achieve a complimentary perspective and to strengthen the research findings. Prior to conducting fieldwork, ethical approval for this research was obtained from the Phuket Rajabhat University Human Ethics Committees (protocol number: PKRU2020-014). The operation of the qualitative study is presented first.

Study 1: Qualitative research

The purpose of the qualitative study was to seek insights into Indian tourists from the tourism supply side, namely, tourism business personnel. Therefore, the goal of this part of the research was to determine the nature of Indian travel behavior. The target population of study 1 was local Phuket tourism stakeholders who served Indian tourists. A purposive snowball sample included staff, business owners, employees, and government officers who worked in tourism areas. This study included one local resident from community-based tourism, two hotel entrepreneurs, two tourism attraction entrepreneurs, one tour guide, one restaurant manager, and one souvenir shop owner. In addition, two employees from tourism businesses and two from tourism public organizations were recruited. Thus, as suggested by Guest et al. (2006), twelve research participants were interviewed. Data saturation was reached at Interview 10; however, the remaining two interview sessions were conducted as planned.

In this study, 30 to 45 minutes in-depth interviews were conducted. The semi-structured interview guide consisted of three main sections that included general information, answers to key questions, and reflective notes. The draft of the semi-structured interview included questions about Indian travel behaviors, their experiences, and difficulties. It also requested suggestions for Indian market service. The interview sessions were conducted during April and May of 2020. The interviews were conducted at various times of the

day from 6 am in the morning to 6 pm in the evening at the key informants' convenience.

After each interview, the researcher transcribed the recording on the same day of the interview in order to maintain the freshness of the ideas reflected from the conversation. Then, the data gathered from the interviewees were coded, transcribed into themes, and interpreted for meanings (Creswell, 2009). Thematic data analysis was used in this study. Preliminary analysis and interpretation were undertaken progressively. Following this process, to ensure credibility—which is accepted as a strength of qualitative studies (Bryman & Bell, 2011), the double interpretation process was used and the reports' findings were compared to ensure that all the findings accurately represented the participants' perspectives. The qualitative findings were then utilized to develop a suitable tourism model for Indian tourists visiting Phuket.

Twelve interviews of individuals were obtained on-site in Phuket, Thailand. All respondents were working with tourism and hospitality businesses and focused on Indian tourists. In this study, one local resident from community-based tourism, two hotel entrepreneurs, one tourism attraction staff, two tour operators, one restaurant manager, and one MICE business owner were contacted. In addition, one staff from tourism education and three tourism public organizations were recruited. Eight of the key informants were male and the rest were female. Nearly all of them were in their 30s and 40s. Only one of them was in his 60s. Their working experience ranged from two years to 20 years. Those who had longer working experience had been engaged in the tourism industry for over 10 years. All participants were given a pseudonym for the purpose of anonymity.

The interview analyses suggest three main unique behaviors among Indian tourists. It was found that the Indian tourist market included family-oriented tourists as they preferred to travel in family groups. In addition, they intensely looked for home cuisine while at a destination. The interviews indicated that Indian food was a must for an Indian tourist. Furthermore, Indians were a favorite of tour guides. The first highlighted behavior is discussed next.

Family-oriented Tourists

The informants revealed that Indian tourists' favorite travel companions was their families. In contrast to other tourists visiting Phuket, Indians were more likely to travel with family. Most of the informants used the term "family" when talking about Indian tourist behavior. For example, "Indian

tourists, at least my Indian customers, all of them come here [Phuket] with family. They travel as a group. They eat together. They book hotels for more than one room at a time for a whole group" (Informant 4).

One informant revealed that Indian tourists thought of their families and involved them in the trip even when the family members were not able to come. It was explained by informant 1 that "I have one Indian friend who always come to Phuket every year. He always shows his family what he sees, where he goes, always calls his family, like they travel together."

One evidence of Indians being family-oriented tourists deserves exploration. It was found that one popular event Indian tourists engaged in during their trips to Phuket were weddings. The analysis indicated that Indian couples are interested in organizing their wedding receptions in Phuket. This is one of the reasons for traveling with family. For instance, informant 3 shared that "They love to have a wedding party in Phuket…at a luxury hotel. For them, they bring all the family along."

In addition, being from a collectivist culture helps to explain why Indian tourists prefer traveling with family. Collectivism, according to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, describes a society in which tightly integrated relationships tie extended families and others into in-groups. These in-groups are laced with undoubted loyalty and support of each other when a conflict arises with another group. For instance, "I think they are like us [Thais]. We normally take a family trip every year, at least, my family. We like getting together among family. We stay in this kind of culture" (Informant 2).

Seeking Comfort Food from Home

As well as the family-oriented behavior, all of the informants mentioned the food consumption behavior of Indian tourists during their vacations. All of those who mentioned this behavior seemed to agree that Indian tourists prefer their home cuisine while they are at a destination. "Indian food" and "vegetarian food" were often spoken of. Informant 4 expressed that "The first time I worked for Indian tourists, I really had a hard time because they always asked for their Indian food." In addition, "They will go for dinner at Indian restaurants only" (Informant 1). "They don't care where they are as long as Indian food is available" (Informant 6).

One informant explained a possible reason for this preference. Perhaps, cultural difference is the key reason. "I think it is because of their culture. I think people with food restrictions may prefer to play

it safe and don't want to feel guilty by eating things they don't know" was shared by Informant 1.

In addition, there are many types of vegetarians. One type has no meat products including seafood, but still allows eggs and dairy products. The other, vegan, has no meats or eggs plus no dairy foods (such as milk, cheese, yogurt, and ice cream), no ingredients made from milk (such as whey and casein), and no honey.

However, there are always exceptions. Not all Indian tourists request Indian food while on holidays. Especially those who have often traveled overseas—this includes Indians who have studied outside of their country. The comment underlining this that "My Indian friends [who studied with me in the UK] don't have to have Indian food all the time, as long as it is vegetarian" (Informant 1).

One key informant provided a slightly different opinion. This informant found Indian tourists to be similar to others. Some of them are likely to try other cuisine including local food. For instance, "My tailored made tourists asked me to take them to try Thai food" (Informant 11). "… seeing Indian restaurants, whether they eat there or not, is important for them. As long as they know we have [Indian restaurants], they are happy" (Informant 11).

Tour Guides' Favored Customers

It was found that tourism service providers, including tour guides, are pleased to serve this tourist market. For example, "if you know them, you will like them" (Informant 11).

Although many tourists now prefer to travel and self-organize trips, Indian tourists still use tour guides. For example, "They prefer to travel as a family group; therefore, a tour guide is somewhat important for them" (Informant 1). In addition, "Perhaps, as a family trip, if they organized their own trip, it would cost more" (Informant 2). "They like to take their father and mother to travel. That is why they have to contact travel agents" (Informant 11).

Moreover, perhaps, the tourists who can afford overseas vacations are those in the middle class of India. Therefore, convenience is preferred. Tour packages are then their answer. As such, they prefer to travel with a tour guide. "They prefer comfort and convenience. So, tour guides can help them" (Informant 3). In addition, it was found that friendships can form.

The expression "what you see is not what you get" seems to apply to Indian tourists. Many Thais mistakenly perceive that Indians are loud, tightfisted, and very critical of other people. However, it was discovered that Indian tourists are easy-going and

friendly according to the perspective of those who accommodate this tourist market. Many informants talked about this behavior of the tourists. For instance, "… I like them. They are easy, they are friendly, and they easily understand the things we tell them" (Informant 3). Moreover, "actually, they are friendly, they never ask for anything formal" (Informant 10).

The analysis reflects the unique themes common to the Indian tourist market. In order to be competitive, a destination is required to meet the unique requirements of its tourists. Destinations should plan to deal with Indians' particular characteristics as they cope with the particular Indian tourist segments—for example, providing their home comfort foods. The next section will cover the second part of this research, which involves seeking predictors of travel intention.

Study 2: Quantitative research

The quantitative research was conducted to provide a greater understanding of the behavior of potential Indian tourists. The population of study 2 was potential Indian tourists. Convenience non-probability sampling was employed in this study. Data was collected from 300 potential Indian tourists in order to meet the conditions for reliable statistical analysis (Hair et al., 2010). The quantitative session was conducted in May and June 2020.

The instrument for this empirical study was an online questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed based on the initial literature review. The quantitative data collected in this study was comprised mostly of interval level measurements. The survey instrument in this study adopted five-point Likert scales and treated it as interval data. There were three major parts of the instrument. First, screening questions were asked to ensure that the sample respondents were English speaking Indians. Second, there were two major sections of questions related to the four key constructs (i.e. theory of planned behavior items, push factors, destination image, social influence, and travel intention) shown in the conceptual framework. The existing research assisted in the refinement of the survey instrument as the questionnaire items in relation to the planned behaviors were adapted from the previous research (e.g., Ajzen, 1991; Hsieh et al., 2016; Jordan et al., 2018). Questions regarding travel motivation and destination image were also adapted from the existing research (e.g., Caber & Albayrak, 2016; Park et al., 2017; Siri et al., 2012). These items were then adapted to fit Phuket's destination image. The final part contained demographic questions. Review

panels assessed the face and content validity of the items within and between the construct and dimensions. A pre-test of approximately 15 Indian tourists was undertaken to ensure that the questionnaire was clear and could be understood easily. A pilot study with 100 Indians was undertaken to confirm the coverage of the research questions in order to test reliability and to refine the instrument (Creswell, 2009; Kumar, 2011; Neuman, 2011). After the instrument was refined, using techniques such as factor analysis, the final stage was executed.

To analyze the quantitative data, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was applied for descriptive and inferential analyses. Univariate analysis, such as frequency distributions, measures of central tendency, and measures of dispersion (Babbie, 2013; Neuman, 2011), were used to describe most variables. Also, Cronbach's alpha was adopted to test the reliability of the measures in this study. Further, the internal consistency and validity among the constructs were tested by factor analysis. Then, multivariate analysis using regression analysis was applied to explain the relationships between the variables.

Of the 368 usable cases, as shown in Table 1, more respondents were male than female. More than half were 21 to 30 years old, followed by those who were 31 to 40 years old. More than 60% of them were single and had obtained their Master's degree or higher. Most of them (77.20%) spoke Hindi as their mother tongue. The majority of the respondents (53.80%) preferred to travel independently, the rest of them wanted to take a package tour. Nearly 90% would be a first-time tourist in Phuket. Nearly half of them preferred to travel with friends, while 40% of them would travel to Phuket with a spouse or partner. More than 90% had their key travel purpose as vacationing and only 5% of them would take a honeymoon trip.

Table 1

The Profile of the Respondents

Characteristics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	215	58.40
	Female	153	41.60
Age	20 years or below	33	9.00
	21 – 30 years	203	55.20
	31 – 40 years	96	26.10
	41 – 50 years	30	8.20
	Older than 50 years	6	1.60
Status	Single	233	63.30
	Married	135	36.70
Education	Master's degree or higher	253	68.80
	bachelor's degree or diploma	106	28.80
	High school	9	2.40
	Other	37	10.10
Travel arrangement	Independent travel	198	53.80
	Package tour	170	46.20
Type of visit	First-time	329	89.40
	Repeat visit	39	10.60
Key travel companion(s)	With spouse/partner	146	39.70
	Children	8	2.20
	Friends	171	46.50
	Tour group	26	7.10
	Other	17	4.60
Key travel purpose	Vacation/Leisure	334	90.80
	Honeymoon	15	4.10
	Won an incentive/bonus	1	0.30
	Sponsored by business	8	2.20
	Attend convention/meeting	9	2.40
	Other (please indicate)	1	0.30

The 368 usable cases were factor analyzed using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation for each of the scales. This study involved six factors. The first four factors consisted of the theory of planned behavior factors, namely, attitude, reference group, travel constraints, and travel intention. The other two additional factors were travel motivation and destination image. Prior to performing the PCA, the data was assessed for suitability for factor analysis. Inspection of the correlation matrix suggests a considerable number of sizable correlations (> 0.3) for all constructs (Field, 2009).

Overall, the EFA results reported that all scales were within acceptable limits. The KMO test statistics for all of the scales were above 0.7 and this is considered to be good according to Field (2009). Moreover, values for Bartlett's tests of sphericity were significant at the one percent level in all cases. In addition, all factor loadings were greater than 0.4.

All items retained showed communality scores above 0.40. Most factors demonstrated good internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha test value of 0.70 in accordance with Field (2009). The results from the PCA, starting with those found in relation to the factors of planned behavior theory are presented in the sections that follow.

The planned behavioral factors were operationalized using 14 items. An initial eigenvalue indicated four constructs that explained a variance of 36.43%, 13.36%, 8.61%, and 7.48%. Those constructs were reference group, attitude, travel constraints, and travel intention, respectively. The factor loadings ranged from 0.67 to 0.91. Four factors demonstrated good internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha test value of above 0.60. The factor loadings, variance explained, and the reliability of the scales is displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

EFA Results of Factors based on the Theory of Planned Behavior

Items	Loading	Communalities	Eigen values	% of variance explained	α
Reference Group			5.10	36.43	0.89
I travel to Phuket because my friends/family have talked a lot about it	0.91	0.79			
I travel to Phuket because it has been recommended by friends/family.	0..87	0.82			
I travel to Phuket because it is popular among my friends/family.	0.84	0.82			
Attitude			1.87	13.36	0.79
Visiting Phuket is valuable.	0.78	0.67			
Visiting Phuket is beneficial	0.74	0.65			
Visiting Phuket is enjoyable	0.72	0.59			
Visiting Phuket is interesting.	0.67	0.61			
Travel Intention			1.21	8.61	0.78
I will recommend to others	0.82	0.76			
I will visit Phuket in the near future	0.76	0.69			
I will provide positive reviews on social media	0.73	0.66			
Perceived Constraints			1.05	7.48	0.67
Whether or not I visit Phuket is completely up to me.	0.76	0.59			
I am confident that, if I want, I can visit Phuket.	0.75	0.67			
I have resources, time, and opportunities to visit Phuket.	0.67	0.54			

The next constructs regarding travel motivation were operationalized using 17 items. After iterative factor analyses, 15 items were retained. An initial eigenvalue indicated three possible constructs that explained a variance of 38.79%, 10.79%, and 6.20%. Those constructs were namely relaxation, exploration, and variety, respectively. The factor loadings ranged from 0.50 to 0.81. Three factors demonstrated good internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha test value of above 0.75. The factor loadings, variance explained, and the reliability of the scales is displayed in Table 3.

Table 3

EFA Results of Travel Motivation Constructs

Items	Loading	Communalities	Eigen Values	% of variance explained	α
Relaxation			6.60	38.79	0.86
To enjoy the beautiful environment, scenery, beaches	0.81	0.69			
To see and experience a new destination(s)	0.80	0.71			
To reduce stress	0.75	0.58			
To escape from the routine of work or life	0.74	0.56			
To do something exciting	0.72	0.64			
Exploration			1.87	10.97	0.78
To meet new friends (in new destination)	0.77	0.65			
To go places my friends/relatives have not visited	0.77	0.57			
To take advantage of travel agent/airlines promotion	0.73	0.64			
To be together with friends	0.63	0.48			
To learn new things	0.47	0.48			
Variety			1.05	6.20	0.79
To visit different places in one trip	0.75	0.54			
To visit historical places, ancient ruins, temples, palaces	0.70	0.58			
To enjoy shows and entertainment	0.58	0.43			
To enjoy a stage where I can afford an international trip	0.57	0.55			
To enjoy international travel experiences	0.50	0.56			

The next EFA analysis involved an analysis of destination image factors. The destination image related components were operationalized using 21 items. The EFA suggested three constructs in this regard, namely, infrastructure, comfort, and hygiene.

All items obtained factor loading greater than 0.40. All construct received the reliability scores of greater than 0.80. The EFA results of the destination Image are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4

EFA Results of Destination Image Constructs

Items	Loading	Communalities	Eigen values	% of variance explained	α
Infrastructure			6.60	38.79	0.93
Condition of infrastructure on the way to tourist spots	0.79	0.75			
Warm welcome for tourists	0.71	0.68			
Accessibility of tourist spots	0.71	0.76			
Reliable weather	0.67	0.59			
Condition of infrastructure at the tourist spots	0.66	0.67			
Interesting culture	0.63	0.60			
Security at the tourist spots/places of visit	0.62	0.61			
Personal guidance at tourist spots	0.60	0.58			
Safety of domestic travel (e.g. airlines, trains, buses, taxis, autorickshaws)	0.56	0.61			
Variety of short, guided excursions/tour	0.54	0.58			
Public transportation	0.53	0.57			
Comfort			1.87	10.99	0.86
Easy to access	0.77	0.72			
Budget accommodation	0.71	0.67			
Affordable trip	0.66	0.63			
Availability of Indian restaurants	0.60	0.45			
Thai hospitality	0.56	0.51			
Home comfort	0.48	0.51			
Hygiene			1.05	6.20	0.84
Standard health service	0.75	0.71			
Cleanliness	0.75	0.75			
Hygienic destination	0.72	0.68			
High quality restaurants	0.58	0.53			

A series of multiple regression analyses were then conducted using one dependent variable (i.e., Travel Intention) and nine independent variables (i.e., attitude, reference group, travel constraints, relaxation, exploration, variety, infrastructure, comfort, and hygiene). To ensure reliable results for the regression analysis, a range of assumptions had to be met including those involving normality, outliers, and multicollinearity. All variables were normally distributed, and outliers were within the acceptable range. With nine independent variables, the sample exceeded the minimum required number of 180 recommended by Hair et al. (2010). Overall, the sample size of 368 was considered suitable for a regression analysis. Prior to using the technique of

regression analysis, the tolerance value was found to be less than 0.01 indicating VIF values were less than 10, the cut-off point according to the values recommended by Hair et al. (2010). None of the correlations of the variables exceeded 0.80. Therefore, these results affirmed that the multicollinearity was negligible.

Table 6 presents the regression results for travel intention as the outcome. Results showed that the model was significant, and nine predictors collectively made a significant contribution by explaining 53% of the variance of travel intention. The predictors of infrastructure, attitude, variety, and comfort had a positive effect on travel intention. Infrastructure had the strongest effect on travel

intention, followed by attitude. Both had an impact on travel intention above 0.20. The findings showed that the Indian tourists were likely to have strong intentions to visit a destination when the destination offered a suitable infrastructure and they, themselves, had positive attitudes toward the destination. In addition, the destination should provide various activities and they should be able to explore new experiences. Furthermore, comfort was a concern when taking a trip overseas.

Table 5

Regression Analysis of Predictors of Travel Intention

Predictors	r	β	t	Sig.
Attitude	0.54**	0.21**	4.45	0.00
Referent group	0.32	0.05	1.11	0.27
Travel constraints	0.46	0.05	1.18	0.24
Relaxation	0.51	0.04	0.80	0.43
Exploration	0.54	0.11	1.94	0.05
Variety	0.48**	0.17**	3.61	0.00
Infrastructure	0.63**	0.26**	4.01	0.00
Comfort	0.61*	0.14*	2.00	0.05
Hygiene	0.53	0.04	0.65	0.52
F		46.34		
Model significance		0.00		
Adjusted R^2		0.53		

Note. β = Standardized regression coefficient; ** $p < .01$, *$p < .05$

As shown above, five of the nine predictors had a significant influence on the outcome variable. The predictor of Attitude had a significant impact on the overall model for the outcome. Therefore, Hypotheses 1 was supported. The predictors of travel motivation (i.e., variety), and destination image (i.e., infrastructure and comfort) had a significant impact on the overall model for the outcome. Hence, Hypotheses 4 and 5 were supported. The series of the regression models reported that the referent group and travel constraint factors made no significant contribution to the outcomes in the overall models. The predictor of referent group had an impact on travel intention for the married travelers. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3 were rejected. The summary of hypothesis testing is displayed in Table 6.

Table 6

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Results
H1: Attitude will have a positive effect on behavioral intention.	Supported
H2: Subjective norms will have a positive effect on behavioral intention.	Rejected
H3: Perceived behavioral control will have a negative effect on behavioral intention.	Rejected
H4: Travel motivation will have a positive effect on behavioral intention.	Supported
H5: Destination Image will have a positive effect on behavioral intention.	Supported

Discussion and Conclusions

Indian tourists have become the emerging tourists recently. This research sought to gain insight into Indian tourist behavior from across tourism stakeholders. In doing so, this investigation focuses on both tourism supply and demand. Opinions, attitudes, and experiences of local companies toward hosting the Indian tourist market are explored. Furthermore, the study examines travel intention from potential Indian tourists. This research makes key theoretical contributions to the body of literature by: (1) developing a deeper understanding of

emerging tourist behavior, especially in the context of Indian tourists, and (2) illustrating the most influential predictors of travel intention. While most of the literature seeks travel behavior from tourists themselves, this study addressed a research gap as it highlights the key behavior of a particular tourist market from the perspective of the tourism service providers, as well as the tourists. Hence, this research is among the first to study Indian travel behavior from the supply side. In general, the current investigation indicates that Indian tourists are likely to travel with family. Therefore, they are considered to be family-oriented tourists. Furthermore, Indian tourists can be seen as first-timers to Thailand. Thus, Indian tourists can emerge as a key travel segment of tourists visiting Thailand and Phuket. In addition, previous studies demonstrated that Phuket's old friends, including the Chinese and Australians, enjoyed local Thai food while on holidays (e.g., Promsivapallop & Jarumaneerat, 2018; Promsivapallop & Kannaovakun, 2019). However, this research argues that Indian tourists prefer to have their native comfort cuisine at a travel destination.

This research adds further arguments to the previous literature utilizing the TPB as a theoretical framework. In a Western context, Sparks (2007) found that reference groups only partially affected behavioral intention whereas Goh et al. (2017) indicated reference groups and attitude had a significant impact on the outcome. However, in the case of some Asian studies, all predictors of the TPB (i.e, attitude, reference group, and perceived behavioral control) had positive effects on travel intentions (Hsu & Huang, 2010; Jordan et al., 2018; Misung et al., 2012; Phillips & Jang, 2012). Nevertheless, Lam and Hsu (2006) studied potential outbound Chinese tourists and found that social norms and perceived behavioral constraints had a direct impact on behavioral intention. The inconsistent findings indicate that significant variables depend on the context of the study. The current research argues that, in the case of Indian tourists, only attitude of the TPB predictors is a significant factor of travel intention to Phuket. A possible reason, as indicated by the key informants, is that Phuket is often the first overseas destination of a first-time tourist. Therefore, they have obtained a positive attitude toward Phuket. The key reason regarding non-significant factors for social reference and travel constraints may be due to the nature of Indians themselves. For example, those who can afford oversea trips will find less constraints. In addition, Indian tourists are likely to travel with a

family group. Therefore, approval from family is a less significant predictor for travel decision making.

This research contributes to the tourism literature by furthering understanding of predictors of Indian tourists' intentions to visit Phuket. This research adopted and extended the theory of planned behavior by including travel motivation and destination image in the original model to examine tourist intention. The current investigation adds to the few studies that previously examined the relationship between travel motivation and travel intention (e.g., Hsu & Huang, 2010; Park et al., 2017; Phillips & Jang, 2012). While only particular motivation components significantly influence tourist intention, for example, shopping motivation (Hsu & Huang, 2010) and enjoyment (Phillips & Jang, 2012), this research further found that variety significantly affects travel intention. In addition, while shopping was found as a predictor of travel intention (Park et al., 2017), the current study extends that infrastructure and comfort are perceived as predicting factors of Indian travel intentions to Phuket.

As well as the theoretical implications above, this research provides some practical implications to the tourism industry. Indian tourists are likely to travel with a family group and often look for their home cuisine. A new business owner should take this information into account and prepare tourism services for the Indian market. This is consistent with findings from Aqueveque and Bianchi (2017) in that the basic tourism needs and infrastructure is the key attribute of destination competitiveness. For instance, an airline company who plans to serve this market should offer what they love including Indian meals on-board and service for family passengers. A hotel business can attract Indian tourists by offering room types that are suitable for families. Availability of Indian style breakfasts may provide an advantage over other service providers. In terms of tourist attractions, promotions for families will provide an advantage. An international tourist market including Indians is motivated to visit destinations because of the variety of activities and the idea of exploration. Therefore, a destination manager should consider things to offer in order to meet this need. It was also found that potential Indian tourists have positive attitudes toward selected destinations. This aspect may highlight tourist confidence to visit such destinations. Therefore, the destination should ensure measures of health crisis prevention in a world wary of Covid-19 (e.g., Sukmak et al., 2020).

Although these research findings contribute greatly to the tourism literature and provide practical implications to the tourism industry, some limitations should be taken into account. The first limitation of this research involves the research context. The current study focused only on one particular emerging tourist market, namely Indian tourists. According to BRIC markets, Russian and Chinese tourists have been the majority in Phuket and Thailand. Therefore, a comparison study among these key travel markets of the destination should be conducted. In addition, due to the convenience sampling technique used in the quantitative stage of the study, the current findings may not be generalized to the Indian tourist market as a whole.

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