



Heritage conservation and sustainable tourism development: Pathways to inclusive growth in Kolhapur district Maharashtra

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Abstract

Through employment, income generation, and cultural preservation, tourism advances regional development. Known for its historical significance, religious importance, and natural beauty, the Kolhapur district attracts both domestic and international visitors. Kolhapur, however, has not experienced notable expansion compared to other major travel destinations in Maharashtra. There are many challenges faced by tourism in Kolhapur. It aims to bridge the research gap by providing a comprehensive assessment of Kolhapur's current tourism situation, and recommending sustainable marketing strategies. By focusing on Kolhapur, the study aims to draw attention to an area with potential and offer ideas that could support a more inclusive and environmentally friendly tourism. Tourist satisfaction model is developed. Suitable suggestions are given to develop sustainable tourism in Kolhapur. Tourist are contacted at different destinations in Kolhapur district.

Keywords: Sustainable tourism, heritage tourism, tourist satisfaction, cultural destinations, community participation

Introduction

India's tribunal system has repeatedly generated the same constitutional anxiety: bodies created to exercise judicial or quasi-judicial power have often remained administratively dependent on the executive departments whose decisions Tourism is more than travel from one place to another. It can create jobs, support local businesses, encourage cultural exchange and give communities a reason to protect their heritage. At the same time, tourism can put pressure on roads, public facilities, natural areas and historic places when visitor growth is not properly planned. Kolhapur district has a strong base for historical, cultural, religious and nature-related tourism. Its identity includes the Mahalaxmi tradition, royal heritage, forts, temples, lakes, forests, pilgrimage places, wrestling, local cuisine, Kolhapuri Chappal, folk arts, music, theatre and traditional crafts. Attractions such as Mahalaxmi Temple, New Palace, Bhavani Mandap, Panhala Fort, Jyotiba and locations around Dajipur and Rankala represent different aspects of this varied destination. However, having attractions does not automatically create a well-managed tourism destination. The paper identifies concerns including infrastructure gaps, limited promotion, uneven implementation of policy and low community involvement. It also raises practical questions about visitor expectations, available facilities and the factors that influence satisfaction.

Problem Statement and Rationale

Globally, tourism has become a significant economic engine, driving employment creation, cultural interaction, and regional development. Rich in cultural legacy, historical sites, religious sites, and natural beauty, the Kolhapur district has great potential to be a significant tourism destination in Maharashtra. Policymakers and stakeholders cannot create sensible plans to increase tourism sustainably without a clear understanding of the current trends, challenges, and opportunities. Thus, an analytical study is indispensable to assess the development thus far, spot the obstacles, and suggest doable remedies for the next

expansion. This study aims to investigate the development path of the tourism industry in Kolhapur district and evaluate the combined influence of government policies, infrastructure, local community involvement, and promotional activities on sustainable tourism development.

Tourism is a significant economic driver that creates jobs, brings people from different cultures together, and helps regions grow. Kolhapur, a culturally rich district in Maharashtra, is expected to see an increase in tourism. Hence, this study is entitled "Preserving Heritage Driving Growth Sustainable tourism strategies for historic and cultural destinations"

Objectives of the Study

The study is guided by the following objectives

1. To study the expectations of tourists and facilities available for different stakeholders at selected historical and cultural destinations in Kolhapur district
2. To study factors affecting the growth of tourism at the selected destinations.
3. To suggest sustainable marketing strategies for the selected destinations based on tourist opinions

Research methodology

Sample selection

a. Population

The target population of the study was tourists.

b. Selection of samples: Mixed Sampling Method

Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method in which respondents are selected because they are readily available and willing to participate. In this research, tourists are selected based on convenience Sampling.

c. Sample Size

Sample Size: Tourist

In this research, there was no catalogue of the tourists who visited various tourist places in Kolhapur. Hence, the researcher chose an infinite sample size formula to calculate

the sample size of tourists. For this research study, the sample size will be calculated $n = (Z^2 \times p \times q) / e^2$ Where, n = the sample size Z = the table value of Z is 1.96 at a confidence level of 95% under the normal curve. p = Estimated proportion of the population with the tourist attribute $q = 1 - p$ (proportion of the population without the tourist attribute). Hence, for this study, the probability without the tourist attributes is 50%. ($q = 0.5$) e = the accepted error (confidence interval) assumed to be 5%. ($e = 0.05$) $n = ((1.96)^2 \times (0.5) \times (0.5)) / (0.05)^2 = 384$

Research Design

The study adopted a mixed-method research design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component will assess tourists perceptions of sustainable tourism, while the qualitative component will provide an in-depth understanding of heritage conservation, community participation, tourism management and sustainability challenges from the perspectives of tourist. The study was primarily descriptive, analytical and exploratory in nature. The descriptive component document the existing tourism conditions and practices in Kolhapur; the analytical component examine relationships between selected tourism and sustainability variables; and the exploratory component identify challenges and develop context-specific sustainable tourism strategies.

Study Area

The study was conducted in Kolhapur district of Maharashtra, with emphasis on selected historical, cultural and religious tourism destinations. The study area included major heritage attractions such as Mahalaxmi Temple, New Palace, Bhavani Mandap and Panhala Fort, together with selected locations representing local crafts, cuisine, festivals and other forms of living cultural heritage.

Data collection

Both primary and secondary data were gathered using appropriate techniques to ensure validity and reliability, in order to conduct thorough analytical research on the expansion of tourism in Kolhapur district.

Primary Data:

Using structured and semi-structured instruments, primary data were gathered from tourists.

Secondary Data:

Secondary data for the study came from Kolhapur Municipal Corporation, Zilla Parishad, Department of Tourism, statistical handbooks, research papers, newspapers, and websites among other sources. This mix of qualitative and quantitative techniques guaranteed a thorough knowledge of Kolhapur's tourism industry and enhanced depth and accuracy of analysis.

Statistical analysis and interpretation of data

To make inferences about patterns, relationships, and trends, analytical research design involves gathering, processing, and analyzing data. Correlation and regression analysis, as well as comparative analysis, are standard statistical analysis techniques. ANOVA, Pearson's correlation coefficient, and t-tests are among the instruments utilised.

Review of Literature

Sustainable tourism has increasingly become an important area of research because tourism development can generate employment, strengthen local economies and promote cultural heritage, while uncontrolled tourism may contribute to environmental degradation, pressure on infrastructure, overcrowding, commercialization of culture and deterioration of heritage resources. In the context of historical and cultural destinations, sustainability requires an appropriate balance between tourism development, heritage conservation, environmental protection, community participation and local economic benefits. Recent literature increasingly treats heritage tourism as a multidimensional system rather than merely as a means of attracting visitors.

1. Sustainable Tourism and Heritage Management

Recent research has emphasized the close relationship between heritage management and sustainable tourism. Urošević, Afrić Rakitovac, and Legović (2026) ^[12] conducted a systematic literature review of heritage management and sustainable tourism using the PRISMA approach. Their review identified governance, planning, conservation, visitor management, carrying capacity, community engagement and digital management as important themes. The authors argue that heritage management and sustainable tourism need to be integrated through coordinated planning, visitor management, carrying-capacity assessment and continuous monitoring. This perspective is particularly relevant to Kolhapur because the destination contains multiple heritage resources with different levels of tourism pressure and management requirements. Geçikli *et al.* (2024) ^[4] examined the international literature connecting cultural heritage tourism and sustainability through a bibliometric analysis of 657 publications indexed in Web of Science. Their study demonstrates the rapid growth of research connecting cultural heritage with sustainable tourism and identifies opportunities for further research. The study is significant for the present research because it confirms that cultural heritage tourism is increasingly being examined through a sustainability perspective rather than solely through tourism growth or visitor satisfaction. Yalçınkaya (2023) ^[13] conducted a systematic literature review of research on sustainability and cultural heritage tourism published between 2000 and 2022. The study demonstrates that cultural heritage and sustainability have become increasingly interconnected research areas and emphasizes the need for destination-specific approaches. Such findings support the need to examine sustainability at the local destination level rather than applying general tourism strategies uniformly to all heritage destinations. Mzembe *et al.* (2023) ^[9] reviewed the institutional antecedents of sustainable cultural heritage tourism. Their systematic review of 53 selected studies highlights the importance of institutions, governance and community agency in achieving sustainable cultural tourism. The study also points to fragmentation in the existing literature, suggesting that sustainability cannot be achieved through isolated conservation or tourism-development interventions. This provides a theoretical basis for examining institutional coordination and stakeholder participation in Kolhapur.

2. Community Participation and Socio-Cultural Sustainability

Community participation is increasingly recognized as a central component of sustainable heritage tourism. Brooks *et al.* (2023) ^[2] conducted a systematic review of the relationship between heritage tourism, sustainable community development and host-community wellbeing. From an initial 5,292 records, 102 studies were included in the review. The authors found that previous research frequently examined individual ecological, economic, political or cultural impacts, while comparatively less attention had been given to the capacity of heritage tourism to support long-term community wellbeing and participation. The findings are highly relevant to the proposed Kolhapur study because residents, artisans, local entrepreneurs and tourism-service providers constitute important stakeholders in a living cultural destination. Chen and Wang (2024) ^[3], in a review of conservation planning, examined approaches for maintaining people-place relationships in heritage areas. They emphasize the importance of social values, sense of place, living heritage and community relationships in conservation. Their discussion also considers the effects of overtourism and displacement on local traditions, memories and social relationships. This suggests that heritage conservation should not be restricted to the physical protection of monuments; it should also consider the communities and cultural practices associated with heritage places. Romera, Le Bigot, and Khoo (2025) ^[10] reviewed 174 studies concerning heritage education, tourism and sustainable development. Their systematic review identified four interconnected themes: protected areas, formal education, local communities and policies. They argue that sustainable heritage preservation involves multiple stakeholders, including governments, tourism organizations, tourists and local communities. For Kolhapur, this literature highlights the potential importance of heritage interpretation, visitor awareness, educational initiatives and community participation as components of a sustainable tourism strategy. Community-based cultural practices have also been associated with stronger tourism participation. Research published in *Annals of Tourism Research* examined the relationship between collective cultural activity, community capacity and sustainable community-based tourism. The study suggests that increased community capacity can strengthen local ownership, participation and cross-sectoral partnerships. This provides support for considering local cultural institutions, artisans, performers and entrepreneurs as active participants in tourism planning rather than simply as beneficiaries of tourism.

3. Sustainability Indicators and Destination Management

A major challenge in sustainable tourism research is translating the broad concept of sustainability into measurable indicators. Zubiaga *et al.* (2024) ^[14] developed an indicator-based framework for sustainable cultural tourism through a review of existing approaches and consultation with 21 European tourism destinations. The resulting framework includes environmental, economic, social, cultural and resilience dimensions and identifies 51 indicators. The study demonstrates the importance of multidimensional assessment for cultural destinations and provides a useful conceptual basis for developing indicators for Kolhapur.

The importance of integrated monitoring is also highlighted by Urošević *et al.* (2026) ^[12], who identify carrying capacity, visitor management and continuous monitoring as areas requiring greater attention in heritage tourism research. For Kolhapur, this suggests that a sustainable tourism framework should potentially incorporate indicators relating to visitor pressure, waste management, heritage condition, infrastructure, community participation, local economic benefits and cultural preservation rather than relying only on visitor numbers. Research on World Heritage tourism similarly emphasizes the need to reconcile conservation and tourism development. A systematic review of 179 studies on World Natural Heritage sites found that conservation and tourism development remain closely connected research concerns and that future research needs to address the relationship between tourism development and heritage conservation more comprehensively. Although Kolhapur is not being examined as a World Natural Heritage destination, the conservation-management principles are applicable to heritage destinations more broadly.

4. Indian Context of Sustainable Heritage Tourism

Indian heritage destinations present distinctive challenges because tourism frequently combines historical, religious, cultural and commercial functions. A recent systematic review of Indian heritage tourism by Trivedi and Kadam (2026) ^[11] synthesized 75 peer-reviewed studies and organized the literature around community engagement, sustainability and conservation, governance and policy, economic contributions, identity and interpretation, and innovation and branding. The authors identify persistent gaps in governance integration and uneven stakeholder participation. These findings closely correspond with the proposed research framework for Kolhapur, which incorporates heritage conservation, community participation, environmental sustainability, economic benefits and destination management. Indian research has also examined the role of intangible cultural heritage in sustainable development. A study on intangible cultural heritage tourism in India examined strategies for linking cultural practices with geotourism, geoeducation and geoconservation. It emphasizes strategic management, community participation and institutional cooperation as necessary for the sustainable development of cultural resources. This is relevant to Kolhapur because the city's tourism identity includes not only monuments and religious sites but also crafts, food traditions, festivals and other forms of living heritage. nnKrishna (2025) ^[7] examined the role of UNESCO heritage sites in supporting the sustainability of rural resorts in the Aurangabad region of Maharashtra in the post-COVID context. The study is particularly useful for the present research because it provides an Indian and Maharashtra-based perspective on the relationship between heritage resources and the sustainability of tourism-related local economies.

5. Maharashtra and Regional Studies

Maharashtra provides a particularly relevant geographical context for studying sustainable historical and cultural tourism because the state contains forts, caves, temples, pilgrimage centres, historic urban areas, museums and living cultural traditions. Kamble and Chandel (2023) ^[6] examined sustainable tourism management at Maharashtra's UNESCO World Heritage Sites, particularly Ajanta, Ellora and

Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus. Their research considered visitor characteristics, sustainable tourism infrastructure, government regulations, conservation measures and community participation. The study provides evidence that sustainability assessment in Maharashtra can incorporate both visitor-management and institutional dimensions. Jagdale and Kumathekar (2024) ^[5] examined sustainable heritage tourism development at Vishalgad Fort in Maharashtra. The study is especially relevant because Vishalgad represents a heritage setting in western Maharashtra with historical, cultural and tourism significance. It demonstrates the applicability of sustainable tourism research to individual heritage sites within the state and provides a useful regional comparison for the proposed Kolhapur research. Mishra and Maitra (2024) ^[8] examined sustainable tourism at Lonar Lake in Maharashtra through a geopark approach. Although Lonar differs from Kolhapur in terms of its primary heritage resource, the study emphasizes conservation, biodiversity, local community participation, sustainable livelihoods and destination management. Its bottom-up approach demonstrates how local participation can be incorporated into sustainable destination development in Maharashtra. A recent study of Panchavati, Nashik, examined tourism's effects on cultural heritage through surveys, interviews and field observation. The research identified positive effects such as local economic activity and cultural awareness, while also reporting concerns relating to environmental degradation, overcrowding, waste generation, river pollution and cultural commercialization. The study recommends stronger sustainable tourism practices, regulation and community engagement. Its methodology and findings provide a useful regional comparison for the proposed Kolhapur study, although the smaller sample used in that research indicates the need for broader stakeholder-based research. Research on the Konkan region of Maharashtra has similarly identified environmental degradation, infrastructure deficiencies, socioeconomic disparities and tensions between tourism development and conservation as challenges to sustainable tourism. Such regional findings reinforce the importance of examining infrastructure, environmental management, conservation and community benefits together rather than treating them as separate issues. (ResearchGate)

6. Studies Specifically Related to Kolhapur

Begampure, Narkhede, and Jagdale (2022) ^[1] examined the significance of cultural tourism for sustainable development with special reference to Kolhapur City. The study emphasizes the role of tangible and intangible cultural resources, including culture, traditions, art, architecture and religion, in regional development and tourism growth. It also discusses issues and challenges associated with the use of cultural resources for tourism. This study is particularly

significant for the proposed research because it establishes a direct connection between cultural tourism and sustainable development in Kolhapur. However, the Kolhapur-specific study is primarily literature-based and conceptual. It does not provide a comprehensive empirical assessment involving multiple stakeholder groups, measurable sustainability indicators and systematic analysis of tourists, residents, tourism businesses, artisans and government stakeholders. Therefore, there remains scope to extend existing Kolhapur research from a conceptual understanding of cultural tourism toward an empirical and integrated sustainable tourism strategy.

7. Research Gap

The reviewed literature indicates five major observations. First, international research increasingly recognizes heritage management and tourism as interconnected dimensions of sustainable destination development. Second, community participation and local ownership are becoming central to discussions of socio-cultural sustainability. Third, recent studies increasingly advocate measurable sustainability indicators covering environmental, economic, social, cultural and resilience dimensions. Fourth, Indian and Maharashtra studies identify recurring concerns relating to conservation, infrastructure, environmental pressure, governance and community participation. Finally, the existing literature concerning Kolhapur has established the importance and potential of cultural tourism but provides limited empirical evidence integrating the different dimensions of sustainability. The principal research gap therefore lies in the absence of a comprehensive, destination-specific and stakeholder-oriented framework for assessing and improving sustainable historical and cultural tourism in Kolhapur. Existing studies tend to focus on individual sites, individual dimensions of tourism, or conceptual discussions of cultural tourism. There is comparatively less integrated research combining heritage conservation, environmental sustainability, socio-cultural sustainability, community participation, local economic benefits and visitor/destination management within a single empirical framework for Kolhapur. The proposed study seeks to address this gap by assessing the existing status of historical and cultural tourism in Kolhapur, identifying environmental, socio-cultural and heritage-conservation challenges, examining perceptions of tourists and local stakeholders, and developing context-specific sustainable tourism strategies. The study therefore moves beyond assessing tourism potential and aims to develop an evidence-based Sustainable Tourism Strategy Framework for Kolhapur.

Results and Discussion

The researcher developed/adopted and modified 52 items based on previous research studies.

Table 1: Instrument for Tourist (T)

Expectation about Tourism Experience (ETE)(Source: Narayan <i>et al.</i> , 2008)		
T1	ETE1	Ambience for having a relaxed leisure time at a tourist destination.
T2	ETE2	A quiet and peaceful atmosphere at the tourist destination.
T3	ETE3	Closeness to nature at tourist destinations.
T4	ETE4	Natural beauty at tourist destinations.
T5	ETE5	Sightseeing and leisure/recreational facilities at tourist destinations.
Expectation about Cultural Aspect (ECA) (Source: Narayan <i>et al.</i> , 2008)		
T6	ECA1	Experience cultural exchange with local people.

T7	ECA2	Experience the richness of cultural heritage.
T8	ECA3	Experience a variety of landmarks (e.g., museums, galleries, temples, etc.)
Expectation about Aesthetic Appeal (EAA) (Source: Lather, 2012)		
T9	EAA1	Natural beauty of the destination to be impressive
T10	EAA2	Places generally would be less polluted and refreshing in Kolhapur
T11	EAA3	Eco-friendly tourist practices adopted in Kolhapur
T12	EAA4	Tourist destinations not to be overcrowded in Kolhapur
Expectations about Destination Information (EDI) (Source: Lather, 2012)		
T13	EDI1	Information about various sports options in Kolhapur to be adequate.
T14	EDI2	Promotional literature regarding tourism in Kolhapur to be impressive.
T15	EDI3	Information on trekking to the exact tourist spot to be up to the mark.
T16	EDI4	Availability and reliability of counter maps to be high for Kolhapur tourism.
Expectations about Safety and Security (ESS) (Source: Lather, 2012; Narayan <i>et al.</i> , 2008)		
T17	ESS1	Safety and security measures at the tourism spot are good.
T18	ESS2	The quality of equipment used in the tourism spot is good as per the safety standards.
T19	ESS3	Rescue operations to be good at tourist spots.
T20	ESS4	The crime rate is not high at tourist spots at tourist spots.
Expectations about Infrastructure Condition (EIC) (Source: Singh <i>et al.</i> , 2020)		
T21	EIC1	Condition of roads at tourist place.
T22	EIC2	Condition of sewage (toilet) system at tourist place.
T23	EIC3	Condition of electricity and lighting at the tourist place
T24	EIC4	Condition of clean drinking water at tourist place
Expectations about Availability of Facility (EAF) (Source: Singh <i>et al.</i> , 2020)		
T25	EAF1	Availability of shopping facilities at tourist spots till midnight.
T26	EAF2	Availability of public transportation at tourist spots till midnight.
T27	EAF3	Availability of recreational / leisure activities till midnight at tourist spots. (e.g. laser shows, historical/ religious drama)
Expectations about Amenities (EA) (Source: Singh <i>et al.</i> , 2020)		
T28	EA1	Mobile connectivity at tourist places.
T29	EA2	Availability of ATMs at tourist places.
T30	EA3	Internet connectivity at tourist places.
Expectations about Value for Money (EVM) (Source: Narayan <i>et al.</i> , 2008)		
T31	EVM1	Price worthiness of goods in shops.
T32	EVM2	Price worthiness of local transportation (like buses, taxis, and auto).
T33	EVM3	Price worthiness of the tour package. (like the Kolhapur Darshan Bus)
T34	EVM4	Price worthiness of food at restaurants
T35	EVM5	Price worthiness of street food
Expectation about Food (EF)(Source: Lather, 2012; Narayan <i>et al.</i> , 2008)		
T36	EF1	Availability of food at tourist destinations to be adequate.
T37	EF2	Quality of food at tourist destinations.
T38	EF3	Food to be hygienic at tourist destinations.
Expectations about Accommodation (EAC) (Source: Lather, 2012; Singh <i>et al.</i> , 2020)		
T39	EAC1	The number of accommodation units at the tourist destinations to be adequate.
T40	EAC2	Accommodation facilities to be comfortable at the tourist destinations.
T41	EAC3	The quality of the tents and their accessories such as mattresses and sleeping bags are good at tourist destinations
Policy Framework (PF) (Source: Singh <i>et al.</i> , 2020)		
T42	PF1	Kolhapur tourism development policy developed by the tourism ministry of the Government of Maharashtra is good.
T43	PF2	Kolhapur tourism development policy developed by MTDC is good.
T44	PF3	Kolhapur tourism development policy developed by local Governing bodies (e.g., Municipal Corporation, District Administrative office) is good.
Strategies for Enhancing Tourist Experience (SETE) (Source: Ken Simpson, 2001; Padma, 2016)		
T45	SETE1	Governmental opinions (central, state, or local) influenced the final strategic direction for tourism development.
T46	SETE2	Local Residents' opinions influenced the final strategic direction for tourism development.
T47	SETE3	Local tourism industry (Hotelier, Travel Agencies, Local shop owners) opinion influenced the final strategic direction for tourism development.
T48	SETE4	Other local non-tourism organizations' opinions influenced the final strategic direction for tourism development.
Tourist Satisfaction (TS) (Source: McMullan & O'Neill, 2010)		
T49	TS1	After seeing this tourist place, I feel I have chosen the right place.
T50	TS2	After seeing this tourist place, I felt it was better than I expected.
T51	TS3	After seeing this tourist place, I experienced a flow of happiness within me.

The above 14 subfactors and 52 items encompassed the following variables and factors.

- Expectations of tourists
- Facilities available for tourists

- The perception of tourists towards strategies adopted by various stakeholders.
- Perception of tourists toward a tourism policy framework
- Satisfaction of tourists

Table 2: Tourist Destination

Destination	Frequency	Percent
Ambabai Temple	58	12.7
Bahubali	36	7.9
Balumama Aadmapur	30	6.6
Barki Fall	1	.2
Jotiba	42	9.2
Kalamba Talaw	15	3.3
Kneri Math	34	7.5
Mase Pathar	18	4.0
New Palace	17	3.7
Nursinghwadi	1	.2
Pawangad	25	5.5
Pawankhind	48	10.5
Pohale	40	8.8
Radhanagri Dajipur	28	6.2
Rankala lake	1	.2
Shahu Birthplace	15	3.3
Shivaji University	22	4.8
Vishalgad Forest	24	5.3
Total	455	100.0

Source: Analysis of Survey Data

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.745 a	.555	.542	.55694

a. Predictors: (Constant), SETE, EAA, EVM, EAF, EDI, ECA, EIC, EF, EA, ETE, ESS, EAC, PF

b. Dependent Variable: TS

The multiple correlation coefficient 0.745 indicates a strong relationship between the predictors Factor 1: Expectation about Tourism Experience (ETE), Factor 2: Expectation about Cultural Aspect (ECA), Factor 3: Expectation about Aesthetic Appeal (EAA), Factor 4: Expectations about Destination Information (EDI), Factor 5: Expectations about Safety and Security (ESS), Factor 6: Expectations about Infrastructure Condition (EIC), Factor 7: Expectations about Availability of Facility (EAF), Factor 8: Expectations about Amenities (EA), Factor 9: Expectations about Value for Money (EVM), Factor 10: Expectation about Food (EF), Factor 11: Expectations about Accommodation (EAC), Factor 12: Policy Framework (PF), Factor 13: Strategies for Enhancing Tourist Experience (SETE), and dependent Factor 14: Tourist Satisfaction (TS). The independent variables account for 55.5% of the variance in the dependent variable, with R^2 values typically 0.4-0.6 in social sciences, which is considered acceptable. The adjusted R^2 accounts for 54.2% of the variance, slightly lower than R^2 ($55.5 - 54.2 = 1.3$), indicating that if a regression model were run on the population rather than the selected sample, then variance would be lowered by 1.3%, which is a minimal amount. Hence, this model is appropriate for the population, i.e. all tourists visiting the Kolhapur destination. The standard deviation of residuals, which measures the average distance

from the regression line, indicates a better model fit. A smaller value indicates better model fit, and a standard error of approximately 0.55 indicates moderate precision on a 1-5 scale. However, the variance remains unexplained because variables other than these 13 predictors affect tourist satisfaction (TS) in the Kolhapur district.

Table 4: ANOVAa

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	170.765	13	13.136	42.349	.000b
Residual	136.790	44	.310		
Total	307.555	45			

a. Dependent Variable: TS

b. Predictors: (Constant), SETE, EAA, EVM, EAF, EDI, ECA, EIC, EF, EA, ETE, ESS, EAC, PF

The ANOVA results confirm the model's statistical significance, $F = 42.349$ at $p < 0.01$. This outcome of the ANOVA test tells us that there is less than a 0.1% chance that the F-ratio this large would happen if the null hypothesis were true. Hence, researchers can conclude that the above regression model results in a significantly better predictor of tourist satisfaction (TS) in the Kolhapur district. In other words, researchers can say that the regression model predicts tourist satisfaction (TS) in the Kolhapur district significantly well overall. The combination of Factor 1: Expectation about Tourism Experience (ETE), Factor 2: Expectation about Cultural Aspect (ECA), Factor 3: Expectation about Aesthetic Appeal (EAA), Factor 4: Expectations about Destination Information (EDI), Factor 5: Expectations about Safety and Security (ESS), Factor 6: Expectations about Infrastructure Condition (EIC), Factor 7: Expectations about Availability of Facility (EAF), Factor 8: Expectations about Amenities (EA), Factor 9: Expectations about Value for Money (EVM), Factor 10: Expectation about Food (EF), Factor 11: Expectations about Accommodation (EAC), Factor 12: Policy Framework (PF), Factor 13: Strategies for Enhancing Tourist Experience (SETE) explained 54.2% of the variance in tourist satisfaction TS, supporting the adjusted R^2 value in the model summary.

Table 5: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.728	.175		4.151	.000
	ETE	.117	.060	.128	1.944	.053
	ECA	.131	.053	.137	2.450	.015
	EAA	.405	.059	.395	6.848	.000
	EDI	-.129	.064	-.120	-2.017	.044
	ESS	.154	.068	.151	2.269	.024
	EIC	-.204	.049	-.237	-4.194	.000
	EAF	-.019	.046	-.025	-.411	.681
	EA	.138	.055	.155	2.489	.013
	EVM	-.089	.042	-.084	-2.117	.035
	EF	.122	.063	.126	1.929	.054
	EAC	.019	.059	.021	.319	.750
	PF	.112	.067	.120	1.674	.095
	SETE	.090	.068	.091	1.319	.188

Dependent Variable: TS

The model reveals that Expectations about Availability of Facilities (EAF), Expectations about Accommodation (EAC), Policy Framework (PF), and Strategies for Enhancing Tourist Experience (SETE) do not significantly contribute to tourist satisfaction (TS). Tourist satisfaction (TS) would have the significant impact on Expectation about Tourism Experience (ETE), Expectation about Cultural Aspect (ECA), Expectation about Aesthetic Appeal (EAA), Expectations about Destination Information (EDI), Expectations about Safety and Security (ESS), Expectations about Infrastructure Condition (EIC), Expectations about Amenities (EA), Expectations about Value for Money (EVM), Expectation about Food (EF).

Constant (B = 0.728): It indicates that when all three significant predictors, Expectation about Tourism Experience (ETE), Expectation about Cultural Aspect (ECA), Expectation about Aesthetic Appeal (EAA), Expectations about Destination Information (EDI), Expectations about Safety and Security (ESS), Expectations about Infrastructure Condition (EIC), Expectations about Amenities (EA), Expectations about Value for Money (EVM), Expectation about Food (EF), are 0, then Tourist Satisfaction (TS) is also expected to be 0.728.

Expectation about Tourism Experience (ETE) (B = 0.117): It shows that a one-unit increase in Expectation about Tourism Experience (ETE) increased Tourism Satisfaction (TS) by 0.117 units. This interpretation is true and accurate when the remaining significant predictors are constant. Expectations about tourism experience positively impact satisfaction, as supported by Expectation-Confirmation Theory and empirical research. When experiences align with or exceed expectations, satisfaction levels increase.

Expectation about Cultural Aspect (ECA) (B = 0.131): It shows that a one-unit increase in Expectation about Cultural Aspect (ECA) increased Tourism Satisfaction (TS) by 0.131 units. This interpretation is true and accurate when the remaining significant predictors are constant. Cultural Aspects (ECA) positively impact tourism satisfaction, but its impact is generally low compared to other experiential dimensions like aesthetics and service quality.

Expectation about Aesthetic Appeal (EAA), (B = 0.405): It shows that a one-unit increase in Expectation about Aesthetic Appeal (EAA), increased Tourism Satisfaction (TS) by 0.405 units. This interpretation is true and accurate when the remaining significant predictors are constant. Aesthetic appeal significantly enhances tourism satisfaction, as numerous empirical studies have confirmed that visually and emotionally pleasing environments enhance tourists' experiences.

Expectations about Safety and Security (ESS), (B = 0.154): It shows that a one-unit increase in Expectations about Safety and Security (ESS), increased Tourism Satisfaction (TS) by 0.154 units. This interpretation is true and accurate when the remaining significant predictors are constant. Studies show that perceived safety enhances trust, comfort, and overall enjoyment in tourism, especially in

regions impacted by political or health-related risks, and meeting or exceeding safety expectations is crucial.

Expectations about Amenities (EA), (B = 0.138): It shows that a one-unit increase in Expectations about Amenities (EA), increased Tourism Satisfaction (TS) by 0.138 units. This interpretation is true and accurate when the remaining significant predictors are constant. Research shows that expectations about amenities (EA) positively impact tourism satisfaction, as meeting these expectations directly enhances satisfaction and return intentions, as essential services like accommodation, transportation, and dining facilities are essential for a comfortable and fulfilling tourist experience.

Expectation about Food (EF), (B = 0.122): It shows that a one-unit increase in Expectation about Food (EF), increased Tourism Satisfaction (TS) by 0.122 units. This interpretation is true and accurate when the remaining significant predictors are constant. Research shows that meeting or exceeding tourists' expectations about food quality, authenticity, and service significantly enhances overall satisfaction and memorability of a trip, as food is a crucial experiential and cultural component of travel.

Expectations about Destination Information (EDI), (B = -0.129): It shows that a one-unit increase in Expectations about Destination Information (EDI), decreased Tourism Satisfaction (TS) by 0.129 units. This interpretation is true and accurate when the remaining significant predictors are constant. Overly optimistic destination information can lead to unrealistic pre-travel expectations, resulting in decreased tourist satisfaction and dissatisfaction, especially when these expectations are not met, especially through promotional materials. Studies suggest that exaggerated or misleading information about a destination can increase tourist expectations beyond what the destination can realistically provide, increasing the risk of dissatisfaction.

Expectations about Infrastructure Condition (EIC), (B = -0.204): It shows that a one-unit increase in Expectations about Infrastructure Condition (EIC) decreased Tourism Satisfaction (TS) by 0.204 units. This interpretation is true and accurate when the remaining significant predictors are constant. Infrastructure quality significantly impacts tourist satisfaction, as mismatches between actual conditions and prior expectations can lead to dissatisfaction and negatively impact the overall tourist experience.

Expectations about Value for Money (EVM), (B = -0.089): It shows that a one-unit increase in Expectations about Value for Money (EVM) decreased Tourism Satisfaction (TS) by 0.089 units. This interpretation is true and accurate when the remaining significant predictors are constant. Poor infrastructure conditions, especially in developing destinations, negatively impact tourist satisfaction, especially when high expectations may lag behind the marketing image presented to tourists. The following regression equation can explain it: $Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + \dots + b_pX_p$ $Y = a + bX + e$ $Y =$ Tourism Satisfaction (TS) $a =$ constant $X_1 =$ Expectation about Tourism Experience (ETE) $X_2 =$ Expectation about Cultural Aspect (ECA) $X_3 =$ Expectation about Food (EF) $X_4 =$ Expectation about Aesthetic Appeal (EAA) $X_5 =$

Expectations about Safety and Security (ESS) X6= Expectation about Food (EF) X7= Expectations about Destination Information (EDI) X8= Expectations about Infrastructure Condition (EIC) X9= Expectations about Value for Money (EVM) b = regression coefficient of X e = an error term, normally distributed with a mean of 0 (usually e is assumed to be 0) Y (TS) = 0.728+ 0.117(ETE)+0.131(ECA)+0.455(EAA)+0.154(ESS)+0.138(EA)+0.122(EF)- 0.129(EDI)- 0.204(EIC)-0.089(EVM)

The following four null hypotheses are not rejected here; it is concluded that:

H0: Expectations about the availability of Facilities (EAF) insignificantly contribute to tourism satisfaction (TS).

H0: Expectations about Accommodation (EAC) insignificantly contribute to tourism satisfaction (TS).

H0: Policy Framework (PF) insignificantly contributes to tourism satisfaction (TS). 1.4] **H0:** Tourist Experience (SETE) insignificantly contributes to tourism satisfaction (TS).

The following six null hypotheses are rejected here, and it is concluded that:

Ha: Expectation about Tourism Experience (ETE) positively and significantly contributes to tourism satisfaction (TS). **Ha:** Expectation about Cultural Aspect (ECA) positively and significantly contributes to tourism satisfaction (TS).

Ha: Expectation about Food (EF) positively and significantly contributes to tourism satisfaction (TS).

Ha: Expectation about Aesthetic Appeal (EAA) positively and significantly contributes to tourism satisfaction (TS).

Ha: Expectations about Safety and Security (ESS) positively and significantly contribute to tourism satisfaction (TS).

Ha: Expectation about Food (EF) positively and significantly contributes to tourism satisfaction (TS).

The following three null hypotheses are rejected here, and it is concluded that:

Ha: Expectations about Destination Information (EDI) negatively and significantly contribute to tourism satisfaction (TS).

Ha: Expectations about Infrastructure Condition (EIC) negatively and significantly contribute to tourism satisfaction (TS).

Ha: Expectations about Value for Money (EVM) negatively and significantly contribute to tourism satisfaction (TS).

H0: There is no significant difference in the satisfaction of tourists at different destinations

The study tests the hypothesis that tourists in Kolhapur district experience similar satisfaction levels regardless of their destination, aiming to determine if specific destinations outperform others in meeting tourist expectations, guiding future investment and improvement efforts.

Table 6: Difference in tourist satisfaction among the various destinations.

Destination	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Ambabae	58	3.4526	1.01896	.13380	3.1847	3.7205	1.00	5.00
Bahubali	36	3.9236	.78335	.13056	3.6586	4.1887	2.50	5.00
Balumama Aadmapur	30	3.4417	.74476	.13597	3.1636	3.7198	2.50	5.00
Jotiba	42	3.8929	.57948	.08942	3.7123	4.0734	2.50	5.00
Kalmba Talaw	15	3.8167	.74082	.19128	3.4064	4.2269	3.00	5.00
Kneri Math	34	3.8750	.53033	.09095	3.6900	4.0600	3.00	5.00
Mase Pathar	18	4.0833	.82248	.19386	3.6743	4.4923	3.00	5.00
New Place	17	3.6176	.52379	.12704	3.3483	3.8870	3.00	4.50
Pawangad	25	4.1400	.79083	.15817	3.8136	4.4664	3.00	5.00
Pawankhind	48	4.2031	.73415	.10597	3.9899	4.4163	2.50	5.00
Pohale	40	4.6563	.75253	.11899	4.4156	4.8969	2.50	5.00
Radhanagri Dajipur	28	3.7679	.84964	.16057	3.4384	4.0973	2.50	5.00
Shahu Birthplace	15	4.0500	.81941	.21157	3.5962	4.5038	3.00	5.00
Shivaji University	22	4.0227	.67660	.14425	3.7227	4.3227	3.00	5.00
Vishalgad Forest	24	3.7396	.72035	.14704	3.4354	4.0438	2.75	5.00
Total	453	3.9099	.82306	.03859	3.8341	3.9857	1.00	5.00

Source: Analysis of Survey Data

The table displays tourist satisfaction scores for 15 destinations in Kolhapur. The overall mean is 3.91, indicating moderately high satisfaction across the district. Pohale, Pawankhind, Pawangad, Mase Pathar, and Shivji University are the top satisfaction destinations, indicating excellent tourist experiences due to infrastructure, cleanliness, scenic beauty, or cultural importance. Mean above 4.00 for all five destinations. Tourist satisfaction in destinations like Balumama Aadmapur, Mahabuba (Mahalaxmi Temple), and New Place is below the mean of 3.61, suggesting potential issues such as crowding, a lack of amenities, or an insufficient number of facilities. Standard deviations (0.52-1.01) in tourist satisfaction ratings vary between destinations, with low variation in Kneri Math and New Place and high variation in Ambabai, possibly due to

inconsistent service delivery or changing crowd conditions. Tourist satisfaction in Kolhapur varies significantly. Some destinations, such as Pohale, Pawankhind, and Pawangad, offer exceptional experiences, while others, like Ambabai and Balumama Aadmapur, fall short.

Table 7: ANOVA

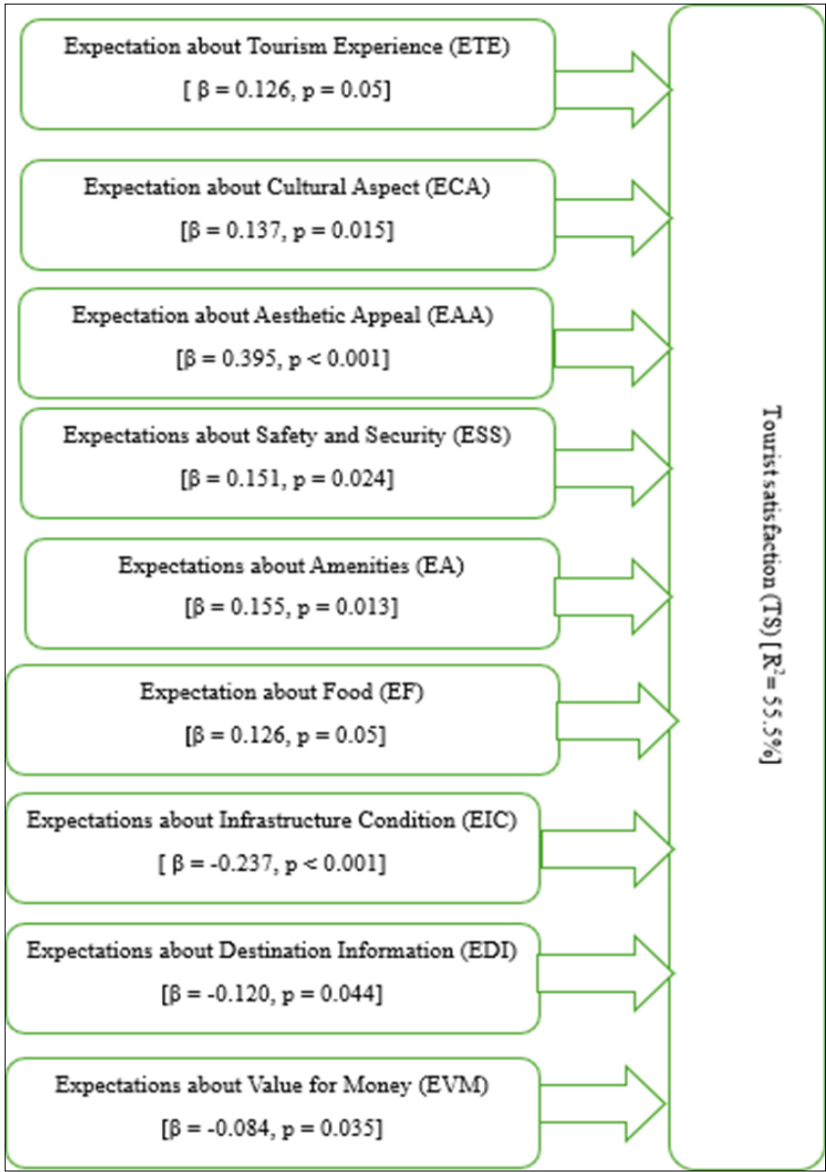
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	51.321	17	3.019	5.149	.000
Within Groups	256.235	437	.586		
Total	307.555	454			

Source: Analysis of Survey Data

The F-value of 5.149 indicates greater variance between groups, while the significance (p-value) is less than 0.05, indicating statistical significance. The null hypothesis is rejected, as the p-value is $0.000 < 0.05$, indicating a significant difference in tourist satisfaction levels across different destinations in Kolhapur district. Tourism

authorities should focus on underperforming destinations to enhance facilities, services, and visitor experience, while high-performing spots like Pohale and Pawankhind can serve as benchmarks.

Tourist Destination Satisfaction Model



Source: Developed for this study

Suggestions/Implications for Enhancing Tourist Satisfaction

1. Strengthening Aesthetic Appeal (EAA)

This factor has a highly positive and significant effect on tourism destination satisfaction ($\beta = 0.395, p < 0.001$). This emphasis on the tourist highly and positively relies on the aesthetic quality of the destination. This suggests that for routine landscape care, think about hiring teams that specialize in cleaning, planting, and trimming. To improve environmental sustainability, utilize native plants and employ environmentally friendly irrigation techniques. Monument restoration and encroachment prevention should be given top priority in heritage site preservation.

2. Enhance Safety and Security (ESS)

This factor has a significantly positive effect on tourism destinations' satisfaction ($\beta = 0.151, p = 0.024$). This shows

that tourism satisfaction is influenced by enhanced safety and Security. To improve visibility, specialized tourist police units are deployed to assist visitors at strategic locations. Help desks are strategically positioned near attractions, and patrol frequency is increased in areas with high traffic volumes. To increase safety awareness and foster confidence in law enforcement, frequent interactive sessions with tourists are held. Place high-definition CCTV cameras in tourist locations to monitor people's behavior and deter criminal activity. Utilize AI-enabled CCTV for real-time alerts, integrate with surveillance Android for enhanced real-time surveillance, and ensure privacy and data retention. Installing streetlights, offering facilities exclusively for women, encouraging safe transportation choices, setting up a round-the-clock tourist hotline and educating service providers on gender sensitivity are all ways to guarantee family-friendly and women-friendly

surroundings. Establish safe transportation options, make sure public spaces are well-lit, and run campaigns to raise awareness of safety regulations.

3. Improve Amenities (EA)

This factor has a significant impact on tourism destination satisfaction ($\beta = 0.155$, $p = 0.013$). This shows that tourism satisfaction is influenced by internet access, ATM availability, and mobile connectivity. Basic facilities, such as internet access, ATM availability, and mobile connectivity, should be enhanced to increase visitor satisfaction. Installing additional towers, signal boosters, and collaborating with telecom providers can help achieve this goal. ATMs should be regularly maintained and strategically positioned in locations close to marketplaces, transportation hubs, and popular attractions. By providing free high-speed Wi-Fi, promoting reliable internet services, and developing both offline and online travel apps, internet connectivity can be enhanced. These upgrades will improve the experience and satisfaction of tourists.

4. Cultural Experience Matters (ECA)

This factor has a significant impact on tourism destination satisfaction ($\beta = 0.137$, $p = 0.015$). This suggests that cultural experience influences tourist satisfaction. Organizing frequent festivals, folk music events, and art exhibits, encouraging homestays and community-based tourism projects, and starting guided heritage walks and workshops can all help to improve visitor experiences and make trips unforgettable. Investing in restoration, recording oral histories, and collaborating with historians, artists, and craftspeople are all essential to preserving and advancing cultural heritage. This can highlight regional customs, draw in culture-conscious tourists, and set destinations apart. Diverse tourist interests can be satisfied by providing a variety of attractions, such as thematic tourism circuits, unambiguous multilingual signage, and improved infrastructure. Increasing and improving landmark experiences can promote longer stays, return visits, and goodwill.

5. Ensure Quality of Food (EF)

This factor has a moderate positive impact on tourist satisfaction ($\beta = 0.126$, $p = 0.05$). It shows that food experience marginally boosts tourist destination satisfaction. Establish a variety of establishments, advertise food trucks, and support flexible meal schedules and packed services at popular tourist destinations, transportation hubs, and remote locations to ensure that visitors can easily access food. To enhance local cuisine, regularly train chefs and food handlers, encourage farm-to-table methods, and identify high-quality eateries via travel boards or online resources. Strict hygiene regulations and routine inspections are in place to ensure food safety and health. Restaurants display their hygiene ratings, allowing visitors to make informed decisions. "Clean Food, Safe Tourism" and other public-private initiatives are introduced.

6. Maintain Experience Expectations (ETE)

This factor has a moderate positive impact on tourist satisfaction ($\beta = 0.126$, $p = 0.05$). It shows that experience expectation marginally boosts tourist destination satisfaction. Eco-friendly tourism zones, wildlife safaris, guided nature walks, and village stays should be developed

to enhance visitors' experiences in nature while promoting sustainable interaction and ethical tourism practices. Promoting lesser-known attractions, waste management, eco-sensitive building, and beautification initiatives are all important ways to preserve and highlight the area's natural beauty, thereby drawing tourists. In addition to introducing multilingual guides, maps, and digital kiosks for visitors, the city of Kolhapur has upgraded its roads, parking, and recreational amenities.

7. Improve Infrastructure Conditions (EIC)

This factor has a moderate but negative impact on tourist satisfaction ($\beta = -0.237$, $p < 0.001$). It shows that experience expectation marginally affect tourist destination satisfaction. The foundation of a satisfying travel experience is the infrastructure. There are significant obstacles to enjoyment, comfort, and safety when essential infrastructure components, such as roads, public transportation, restrooms, and basic amenities, are insufficient or poorly maintained. This results in annoyance, unfavourable opinions, and a decreased desire to suggest or return to the location. One important factor influencing tourists' satisfaction is the state of the infrastructure. Tourists who visited Kolhapur were likely to be unhappy because the infrastructure does not meet their expectations, especially those established by the Kolhapur MTDC marketing communications programme. Developing and maintaining modern sewage treatment systems near tourist sites, hotels, and food courts is being done. Regular cleaning, waste disposal, and eco-friendly awareness campaigns are being launched to enhance environmental appeal and public health. Install solar-powered streetlights for sustainability, advise on lighting areas to maximise visitor experience, and establish a 24/7 electricity supply in tourism zones. Encouraging free water access in local restaurants and hotels, as well as installing water kiosks and filtered dispensers in tourist areas, transportation hubs, and public spaces, can help provide access to safe drinking water.

8. Address Destination Information Gaps (EDI)

This factor has a low but negative impact on tourist satisfaction ($\beta = -0.120$, $p = 0.044$). Addressing destination information gaps has adversely affected tourist destination satisfaction. Travellers may not be as satisfied if their pre-trip expectations are excessively high compared to actual reality, due to overly optimistic information about the destination. These studies confirm the theory that misleading or overly optimistic destination information can raise visitor expectations above what the location can realistically deliver, thereby increasing the risk of dissatisfaction. Establish a centralised digital tourism platform run by the district or tourism board, offering up-to-date details and realistic information about travel destinations, modes of transportation, facilities, and services. Incorporate GPS tracking, route recommendations, and interactive maps. Obtain input from local stakeholders, ensuring it is accurate and relevant. Use genuine photos, descriptions, and verified information in brochures, websites, social media, and travel portals to standardise promotional content. Steer clear of hyperbolic claims and emphasise special historical, cultural, and natural advantages. Add QR codes for virtual tours or real-time updates. Enhance both digital and physical mapping tools by putting multilingual, GPS-synchronised tourist maps at

landmarks, hotels, and train stations; updating physical signs and maps regularly; and encouraging cooperation with TripAdvisor or Google Maps for lesser-known locations. Destinations can increase trust, facilitate planning, reduce dissatisfaction, and enhance the overall visitor experience by providing travellers with accurate, realistic, and up-to-date information. This will result in more positive reviews and repeat business.

9. Manage Expectations about Value for Money (EVM)

This factor has a marginally negative but still low impact on tourist satisfaction ($\beta = -0.084$, $p = 0.035$). Tourists often perceive a mismatch between the cost they pay for tourism and the experience they receive from tourism. Tourist who expects high value for money often express disappointment when experiences or services deviate from their price-based expectations. High standards for value for money can lead to cognitive dissonance when the experience falls short of expectations, thereby lowering overall satisfaction. In cases where visitors value money highly, any departure results in disappointment and significantly affects their levels of satisfaction. Even in cases of significant natural or cultural attractions, unrealistic pricing, hidden fees, and inconsistent cost structures can cause visitor discontent. A significant part of solving the discrepancy in perceived and actual value in food, transportation, and shopping is. Mark prices in local businesses, restaurants, and transportation providers, demand that tour operators and guides offer itemised cost breakdowns, and use rate boards at bus stands, railway stations, and tourist destinations to ensure openness and standardisation of pricing. Establish a feedback system for visitors to report instances of overpricing or fraud and implement a "Fair Price Tourism" certification program that allows local governments or tourism boards to certify companies that adhere to fair pricing policies. Promote digital payments and e-ticketing systems by combining tour packages, entrance fees, and transport bookings into a centralised app or website with consistent pricing and real-time updates. Provide price guides at hotels, airports, and info centres; educate visitors and businesses on shared expenses and ethical pricing policies; train local businesses and service providers in tourism development programs. Destination managers can enhance visitors' sense of value for money, reduce the risk of discontent or exploitation, and establish a good, reliable reputation that motivates return visits and positive reviews by guaranteeing fair, consistent, and transparent pricing.

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