

Analysis of Travel Constraints Among Indian Women Travelling Alone Across Himalayan Destinations

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Abstract

Women travelers is amongst the most emerging segment in tourism sector who looks for more advanced and customized travel solutions while travelling and selecting the destinations especially when they are travelling alone. The concept of solo travelling in context to women has mostly been analyzed and discussed in the western societies, whereas this concept is also attaining its edge in Indian scenario as well. Present study intends to analyze the numerous travel constraints among women travelers in Himalayan destinations that influence their choice for the destination. The study has been conducted in the major regions of Himalayas including Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand being the major tourist attractions of Himalayas. This paper used a random sample of 312 women tourists who travelled alone to the targeted destinations based on study context. The study explains the influence of constraints on destination choice and also explains the factors on which the destination choice is based among women travelers thus providing the destination authorities with the aspects of attracting the potential segment of women travelers to the destination and making them to participate in the travel activities more confidently by analyzing the numerous factors that determine the choice or preferences for destination(s) among women while travelling alone.

Keywords: Destination Choice, Himalayan Destination, Travel Constraints, Women Travelers

Introduction

Tourism destinations are frequently being quoted in the international tourism market and analyzed with the brand settings (Lee, 2001). With the increased options in

the market the selection of destination has also become critical. With the changing scenarios women are getting inclined towards tourism activities and are looking for opportunities to travel for their own pleasure and satisfaction (Myers, 2010). In fact, they have opened their sources for attaining pleasurable terminology of independence and traveling alone (Heimtun, 2012). More prominently women are becoming more conservative in their choice for different types of travel which also includes travelling for business purpose (Wilson & Little, 2005). Where women has been placed a significant segment that significantly contributes to tourism development (Li, 2003), issues and constraints related to gender (Whitelaw & Gillet, 2003) needs to be discussed and analyzed.

Accordingly, travel constraints are amongst the less discussed dimension in tourism studies (Hudson & Gilbert, 1999). On the other hand, tourist destination selection itself is a difficult task as it includes a high-intensity of uncertainties associated with the intangible services (Lok et al., 2015). As far as Indian scenario is concerned, women have conventionally been dejected from travelling alone due to customs and safety concerns (Plummer, 2017) which limit their travel choices and make them conscious about their decisions (Heimtun & Abelsen, 2013). The studies on travel constraints for women travelers are very limited with the western societies, this study tends to identify the various travel constraints and also analyze the influence of such constraints on destination choice among Indian women who travel alone. At the point where women represent a growing and influential market segment (McNamara &

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Prideaux, 2010), there requires to understand the potential constraints that hinders their participation in travelling activities and create indecisiveness while selecting a destination, so as to retain a refined approach and analysis for motivating and encouraging female tourists towards travel activities (Little, 2002).

Objectives of the Study

- To investigate the travel constraints among solo women travelers in Himalayan destinations.
- To analyze the factors that determines the destination choice among solo women travelers.
- To study the impact of travel constraints on destination choice among Indian women who travel alone.
- To suggest the developing strategies that can attract more solo women travelers to Indian Himalayan destinations.

Review of Literature

Destination Choice

Destination choice takes place within the widened framework of the decision making process among tourists (Summers & McColl-Kennedy, 1995). According to Sirakaya and Woodside (2005), choice set approach is utilized elucidate overall process. According to Klassen (2000) the destination choice relies on external inert factors. Choice is further consisted of assessment and selection procedure through which the tourists evaluate the destinations taken into consideration on the basis of available alternatives and elements. Whereas, Hsu et al. (2009) explained push factors that explicate the travel desires and pull factors for actual destination choice (Hsu et al., 2009). According to Goodall (1991), filters of choices are generally processed by the preferences of decision makers where tourists have to decide which of the destinations they desire to travel and which to avoid. In other words, it involves the process where available alternatives are evaluated and the selected over the other (Decrop, 1999). Analyzing the factors for destination choice among tourists, Summers & McColl-Kennedy (1995) in their study established the destination choice criteria with five factors including attractions, culture, tourism supply, prices and marketing influence. Further, Hsu et al. (2005) analyzed the destination choice set of

tourists with the two factors involving internal factors on the basis of psychological, physical, social interaction and exploration criteria and external factors on the basis of tangible and intangible criteria. Thus, in accordance with the choice set model, a destination should be put into each level of preference or choice so as to be got selected as final destination (Hsu et al., 2009).

Travel Constraints

Travel uncertainties and concerns have a major influence on the purchase decisions of tourists (Artuğer, 2015). In fact female travelers are more constrained than male travelers especially when they travel alone (Jackson & Henderson, 1995). Jackson in 1988 explained the constraints as factors that restrain individual's capability to contribute in leisure activities, to take benefits of holiday services, or to attain a preferred satisfaction level. Travel constraints are highly associated with gender, cultural settings and over all life cycle where women are found to experience more restrictions than men due to due to family roles, responsibilities and economic dispossessions (Shaw, 1994; Khan, 2011; Ahn et al., 2016). In fact their (women) travel behavior defines their values and societal norms, cultural limitations which further determines their travel choices and decisions (Apostolopoulos & Sonmez, 2001).

Wilson and Little (2005) further categorized constraints for women who opt to travel alone solo travel including personal, socio-cultural and distance constraints. Botha et al. (1999) identified factors like other domains, cost domain and fear domain where other domains are conceptualized into interpersonal constraints, the fear domain into intrapersonal constraints, and cost domain into structural constraints.

Accordingly intrapersonal constraints are related to psychological and attitudinal states that confines individual's participation like low self-confidence, attitude of reference group, fear etc. They are considered more effective and powerful as they influence individual's decision to travel to certain destination (Crawford et al., 1991). Doran in 2016 categorized guilt consciousness, self doubts, fear and perception of being unadventurous under personal constraints for women who undergo adventure tourism. A sense of guilt, in terms of their commitment to others, has been expressed by many women (Harris

& Wilson, 2007). In a recent study conducted by Yang and Tung (2018) and Chung (2016) categorized the fear, risk, health, reference group attitude, lack of interest, perceived self skills, stress and self consciousness under intrapersonal constraints for solo women travelers. Such aspects make women undergo vulnerability and self-consciousness (Jordan & Gibson, 2005). These doubts and constraints hinder women from participating in tourism activities at a stage that challenge their abilities (Doran, 2016).

Subject to the interpersonal constraints Crawford and Godbey (1987) explained it as anything that pertains to individual's relationship to society (Wilson & Little, 2008) where social expectations plays a significant role as constraint to women participation in tourism (Doran, 2016). Family commitments and lack of travel companions are significant barriers for women travelers (Wilson & Little, 2005; Fendt & Wilson, 2012; Chung et al., 2016; Nyaupane & Andereck, 2007; Yang, 2018). If unfamiliar with the destination they are visiting, women may have concerns for their safety regarding host male attitudes and differing cultural values, which may cause women to be cautious when choosing certain destinations or restrict their movements to the main tourism spheres while in the destination (Little & Wilson, 2005; Myers & Hannam, 2008; Wilson & Little, 2008).

Whereas, structural constraints represent the physical factors that hinders the actual participation of travelers in leisure activities (Wilson, 2004). Accordingly distance, convenience, lack of money time, lack of information, space acts as major deterrents for women travelers (Raymore et al., 1993; Gilbert & Hudson, 2000; Nyaupane & Andereck, 2007; Chung et al., 2016). Travel restrictions and spatial constraints restrict solo women's movements and freedoms within tourist surroundings as a result of which women tend to modify their decisions about destination to be selected (Wilson & Little, 2005; Heimtun & Abelsen, 2013).

Hypotheses of the Study

H1: Intrapersonal constraints have a significant effect on destination choice among solo women travelers.

H2: Interpersonal constraints have a significant effect on destination choice among solo women travelers.

H3: Structural constraints have a significant effect on destination choice among solo women travelers.

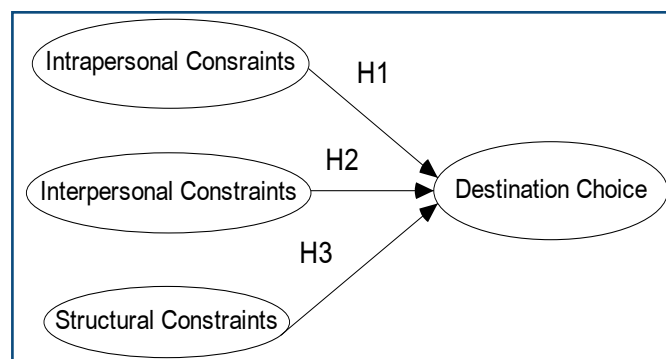


Fig. 1: Suggested Research Model

Research Methodology

The sampling frame is consisted of women travelers who travel alone to various Himalayan destinations including Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The study area was consisted of the destinations with major tourist influx including Srinagar, Ladakh (Jammu and Kashmir), Shimla, Khajjiar (Himachal Pradesh), Dehradun and Rishikesh (Uttarakhand). The survey was conducted in major tourist destinations of Himalayas in India from January to March, 2018 and May to July, 2018 considering the peak seasons for the targeted destinations. Since the population for the study was unknown, the 500 sample was targeted for the study as according to Lomax and Schumacker (2004) the sample size of 250-500 respondents is sufficient for the research, whereas only 312 were found reliable for the study. Questionnaire was prepared considering the dimensions for constraints i.e. intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural and the scale for destination choice was selected and reframed in accordance with the study requirement, retrieved from a literature review as discussed earlier. Further, respondents were asked to mark the numerous constraints they face while taking a solo trip (Where 1-not at all and 5-always) and the numerous attribute they consider while selecting a destination (1-very low and 5-very high). Accordingly the data was coded and analyzed using SPSS 22.0.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Demographic of the Respondents

The most women travellers belonged to the age group of 19-23years (40.7%) followed by the age group of 24-30 years (37.1%), 40-50 years (24%) and above 50 years

(34%). Most of the respondents were single i.e. 208. When asked about the travel frequencies, 109 mentioned once in a year, 144 mentioned that they use to travel twice a year, 41 as three times a year and only 18 as more than 4 times.

Scale Validation and Reliability

The exploratory factor analysis was conducted to define the structure of the data for travel constraints and destination choice using SPSS 22.0. The calculated alpha value for the 15 items of travel constraints was 0.883 and the calculated alpha value for the 22 items of destination

choice was 0.846, which can be considered as satisfactory for determining internal reliability of the constructs as alpha value was above 0.70 (Hair et al., 2009) (table 1). The analysis revealed the three factors available for travel constraints and six factors for destination choice (table 2 and 3). The factors with loading higher than 0.50 were considered and taken for further analysis. Further the CFA was also conducted using through AMOS 16.0 so as to retain the structural representation of the constructs (Fig. 2) where the loadings of all the variables to their subsequent factors for constraints and destination choice are above 0.50 again confirm their relevance for further usage to the research practice.

Table 1: Reliability of Scales utilized for the Research

<i>Travel Constraints</i>	<i>Eigen value</i>	<i>Cumulative %</i>	<i>Alpha Value</i>	<i>KMO</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D</i>
Structural Constraints	5.978	31.869	0.883	0.875 (p=.000)	3.665	0.01
Intrapersonal Constraints	2.790	57.485			3.387	0.03
Interpersonal Constraints	1.503	68.480			3.435	0.02
<i>Destination Choice</i>	<i>Eigen value</i>	<i>Cumulative %</i>	<i>Alpha Value</i>	<i>KMO</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D</i>
Tangible factors	7.298	31.571	0.846	0.862 (p=.000)	3.646	0.03
Seeking/exploration	2.932	42.347			3.318	0.02
Physical factors	1.797	51.697			3.647	0.10
Intangible factors	1.408	59.514			3.727	0.08
Psychological factors	1.288	66.319			3.608	0.04
Social Interaction	1.156	72.178			3.318	0.02

Table 2: Factor loadings for Tourism Constraints among Solo Women Travelers

	<i>Component</i>		
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
Work and Family obligations (IC1)			.906
Travelling without a companion is not allowed in my social structure (IC2)			.875
Travelling involve too much risk (IPC1)		.781	
Concerned with Health issues (IPC2)		.762	
Discouragement by Family and friends (IPC3)		.766	
Solo traveling is considered unsuitable for my gender in my social settings (IPC4)		.729	
It is not fun to travel by myself (IPC5)		.703	
I am highly conscious about my safety and service issues (IPC6)		.686	
Travelling alone is very stressful (IPC7)		.641	
Non Availability of information about places to visit (SC1)	.816		
Money/price of the services is a concern (SC2)	.804		
Ease of Access to the destination (SC3)	.874		
Distance of the place from my native/domicile (SC4)	.912		
Lack of Time (SC5)	.929		
Overcrowding (SC6)	.914		

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. (Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization)

a. Rotation converged in 4 iterations.

Table 3: Factor loadings for Destination Choice

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Novelty seeking (SE1)		.658				
Culture exploration (SE2)		.794				
Adventure seeking (SE3)		.762				
Enjoying night life (SE4)		.769				
Rest and Relaxation (PF1)			.811			
Medical treatment (PF2)			.825			
Health and Fitness (PF3)			.776			
Need for an escape (PYF1)						.779
Self actualization (PYF2)						.790
Visiting friends/relatives (SI1)					.805	
Meeting new people (SI2)					.863	
Destination image (Positive/negative) (IF1)				.883		
Service experience (IF2)				.897		
Transportation facilities (TF1)	.812					
Friendliness of people (TF2)	.833					
Quality and variety of food (TF3)	.916					
Accommodation facilities (TF4)	.836					
Personal safety (TF5)	.873					
Price (TF6)	.928					
Culture and historical resources (TF7)	.862					
Shopping (TF8)	.882					
Environmental safety and quality (TF9)	.890					

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis (Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization).

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Results and Hypotheses Testing

To define the hypotheses proposed in this research, structural equations modeling (SEM) was conducted using AMOS 16.0. The fit indices for the model overall depicted the values within acceptable limits where RMSEA =0.068, GFI= 0.933, AGFI= 0.877, IFI =0.969, CFI=0.968 and $\chi^2=2.906$, overall defining the goodness of fit. The standardized β coefficients (Fig. 2) defines that the travel constraints directly affect the destination choice of women who travel alone, validating the three hypotheses of this study i.e. H1: Intrapersonal constraints (IPC) have a significant effect on destination choice among solo

women travelers as $\beta=0.35$ ($p<0.01$); H2: Interpersonal constraints (IC) have a significant effect on destination choice among solo women travelers as $\beta=0.53$ ($p<0.01$); H3: Structural constraints (SC) have a significant effect on destination choice among solo women travelers where $\beta=0.60$ ($p<0.01$) (table 4).

Comparatively, structural constraints are found highly affecting the destination choice among women travelers rather than Interpersonal and intrapersonal constraints. In other words women are more concerned /conscious about structural aspects in their choice for the destination while traveling alone (table 4).

Table 4: Path Analysis of Hypotheses Testing

Structural Relationships	Coefficients (β)	T-statistics	Result ($p<0.05$)
Intrapersonal Constraints→Destination Choice	0.35	7.38	Supported
Interpersonal Constraints→Destination Choice	0.53	6.53	Supported
Structural Constraints→Destination Choice	0.60	2.38	Supported

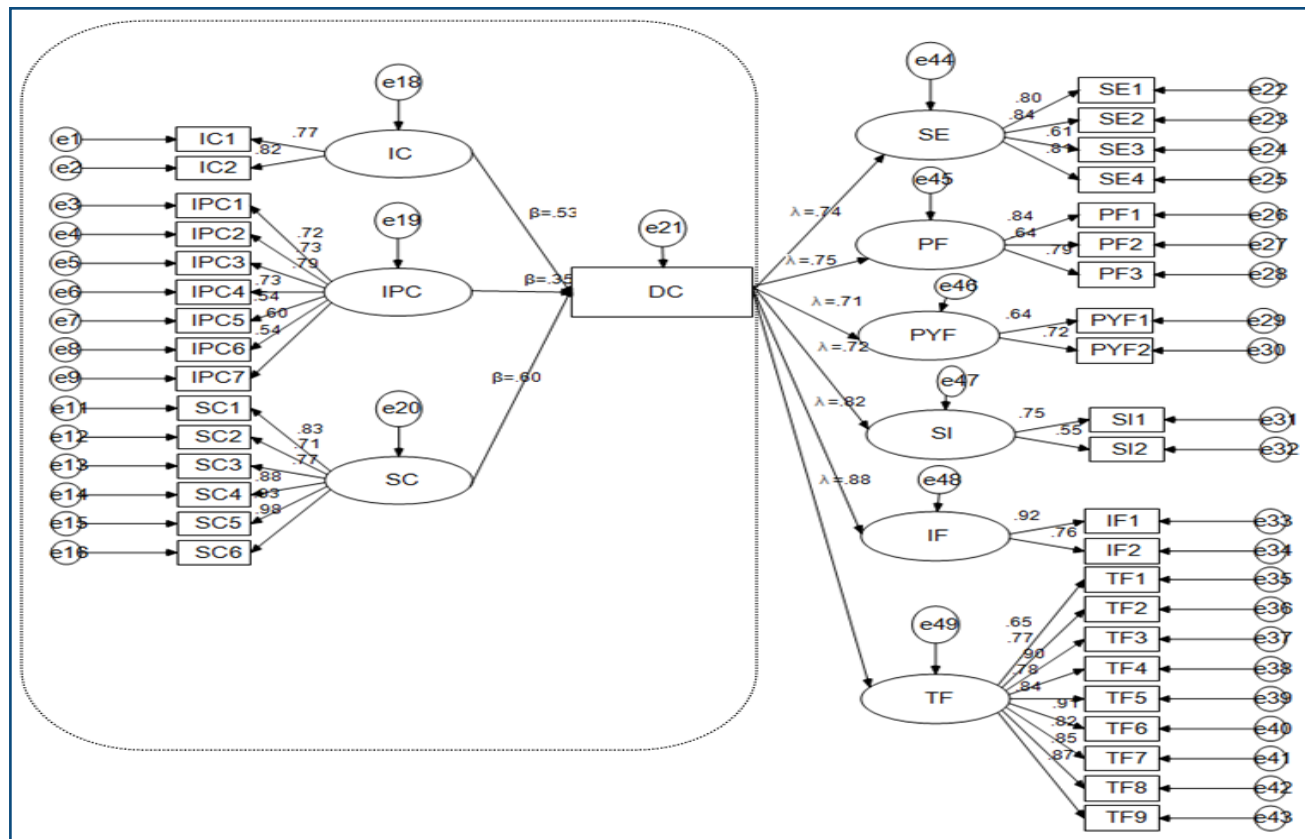


Fig 1: Analyzed Structural Model

[Where IC (IC1&IC2): Interpersonal constraint; IPC: Intrapersonal Constraint (IPC1-IPC7); SC: Structural Constraint (SC1-SC6); DC: Destination Choice; SE (SE1-SE4): Seeking/Exploration; PF (PF1-PF3): Physical Factors; PYF (PYF1 & PYF2): Psychological Factors; SI (SI1 & SI2): Social Interactions; IF (IF1 & IF2): Intangible Factors; TF (TF1-TF9): Tangible Factors]

λ = Construct Reliability; β = standardized coefficients

Conclusion and Discussion

This study analyzed the travel constraints that influence the destination choice of women travelers who travel alone in Indian Himalayan regions where the constraints are found to be determined by three factors like Intrapersonal constraints, interpersonal constraints and structural constraints. The analysis also revealed that the destination choice is determined by six factors where women travelers considers Seeking/Exploration; Physical Factors, Psychological Factors, Social Interactions, Intangible Factors and Tangible Factor while deciding upon traveling alone. Accordingly the destination choice is highly influenced by the structural constraints (Mean=3.66; S.D= 0.018) as women travelers tend to look for more information about the destination, access to the destinations, distance time etc (β =.60) followed by

interpersonal constraints (including family obligations and travelling without companion) (β =.53) and intrapersonal constraints (health, discouragements, social settings, safety and security) (β =.35). In other words women are conscious about the challenges of travelling alone that make them sensitive towards support structures that are accessible and easily available at destination(s) (Wilson & Little, 2005).

More particularly the women are more found to be abide by the structural constraints (Mean=3.66; S.D= 0.018) followed by interpersonal (Mean=3.435, S.D=0.02) and intrapersonal constraints (Mean= 3.387, S.D= 0.03). While selecting the destination women are more conscious about the intangible factors (including services and image of the destination) (Mean=3.72, S.D=0.081) followed by tangible factors (including transportation, friendliness of the people, food quality, accommodation,

etc.) (Mean= 3.64, S.D=0.034), Physical factors (Mean= 3.64, S.D=0.10) (including rest, medical treatment, fitness and health concerns), Psychological factors (Involving escapism and Self actualization) (Mean=3.60, S.D= 0.04) and Social Interaction (including visiting family and relatives and meeting new people) (Mean=3.31, S.D= 0.02) (table 1). Overall, results suggest the requirement for considering the constraints for marketing and development of destination for such prospective segment of the society thus influencing the destination choice or selection for travel especially while travelling alone.

Implications and Limitations of the Study

The results of this research are valuable for academic aspects. This study represents the empirical analysis of the influence constraints on the destination choice of the increasing solo travelers' segment, and establishes linkage to analyze each of the three dimensions of constraints to destination choice. More specifically, this study also represents the numerous factors on which the choice for the destination is sorted or determined by the women travelers especially when they travel alone in targeted Himalayan destinations. This study will help the tourism authorities to consider the potential constraints that hinder the women travelers to participate in tourism activities, thus making the destination choice much easier and even much reliable for the solo women travelers adopt more memorable experiences through tourism activities (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). This study also helps the management authorities to derive the directional approach towards the destination branding and marketing by analyzing the numerous factors that determine the choice or preferences for destination among women while travelling alone and make them to work towards attracting the potential segment of the market towards the destinations. Since study is limited to the Himalayan destinations of India, the responses may vary with the respondents of other Indian destinations depending upon their social settings, geography, travel frequency, education etc. The time and distance constraints are also a limitations of the study as the responses have been collected at the major Himalayan destinations whereas study does not differentiate the constraints and choice sets among women based upon their type of the tourism undertaken (adventure, eco tourism etc) where their level of constraints may vary.

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