

MARKET SEGMENTATION BY PREFERRED DESTINATION ATTRIBUTES - AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON RELIGIOUS TOURISTS

Mallika Srivastava*, Semila Fernandes**

**SVKM's Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India. Email: mallikasrivastava123@gmail.com*

***Symbiosis International (Deemed University) (SIU) Symbiosis Institute of Business Management, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India.*

Abstract

Purpose: The paper examines the application of segmenting religious tourists based on destination attributes, which is predicted assuming that every tourist product appeals to tourists in different manner. Tourists visit religious destinations for sacred inspirations to satisfy various needs related to cultural or recreational factors. Hence, the main objective of the present paper is to form clusters by profiling the segments of religious tourists based on their expectations related to destination attributes of religious cities using cluster analysis. The study aims to understand tourist behavior by discretely identifying market segments using conjoint analysis, to identify the destination attributes relevant for each cluster defined during cluster analysis.

Methodology: To address these research gaps, the study involved exploratory research where the preliminary study was conducted adopting focus group discussions that helped identify various factors and their attribute levels. The study was validated through statistical tests. After the preliminary study, exploratory data was collected through field study including 211 questionnaires that were related to behavioral and demographic information of the tourists. This study incorporates the techniques of conjoint, cluster analysis and binary logistic regression to segment the tourist markets in India.

Findings: From the overall sample of the prospective tourists, the most preferred combination was, Tour operator (viz. information), religious rituals (viz. Divine goal), Family safety (viz. security), Ashram (viz. accommodation), Government officials (viz. Complaint redressal) and cultural music (viz. Recreational activities). Socio-demographic variables, Gender and marital status had significant impact on religious tourist attribute preferences. Subsequently, destination attributes and relevant demographic variables resulted in formation of 2 distinct segments of tourist visitors. The resultant clusters were further divided into sub-groups by adopting a common sense approach. This approach helped in revealing religious tourist clusters based on their activities, motivations and preferred tourist destination attributes, which can provide a vast scope for the development of organized tourist destinations.

Implications: This empirical analysis should help in the management of the religious tourist destinations to strive in making these travel places memorable, welcoming and fostering an image filled with experiences and interactions. This will help in facilitating the marketers and the government in developing and designing marketing campaigns for the specific target segment. Identifying these destination attributes would help marketers in influencing tourists post visit behavior towards various tourist destinations.

Originality: This research asserts that the tourism market is segmented and proposes using destination based attributes by adopting conjoint and cluster analysis as one means of profiling and identifying segments. The paper evaluates the preferences and the choice set of the religious tourists to understand the most influential characteristics of tourist attitude towards a religious tourist destination.

Keywords: *Religious Tourist, Tourism, Conjoint and Cluster Analysis, Destination based Attributes, Segmentation*

Introduction

As per the definition by World Tourism Organization from the perspective of tourism statistical consultation, a tourist is an individual in another country who may have numerous purposes and not prohibited by the given country. A tourist stays in the country for a period of 24 hours to 1-year and is not involved in any paid task in the country. As indicated by the 2019 World Tourism Organization - UNWTO report International tourist arrival has increased globally by around 6% in 2018 i.e. approximately 1.4 billion. Market research data reported by the Ministry of Tourism in India on foreign and domestic tourist visits across States/UTs have depicted that the domestic tourist arrival to the States and UTs have increased from 1,431.97 million

in 2015 to 1,613.55 million in 2016 representing a progress of 12.68%. As posited by Smith in 1992, a tourist is perceived to be an activity, which is based on three elements viz. leisure time, social sanctions permissive of travels and discretionary income. Thus, it is evident that tourism is a promising sector and serves as a significant means to accelerate the growth of the economy which in-turn will raise the employment rate, quality of life and ultimately improves the overall (BOP) balance of payments and offsetting deficits in the other sectors. Further-on, tourism has been the most important industry of the global economy (Lopes et al., 2009). Tourism industry has seen a consistent growth since 2005 and 2006 and as per world tourism destinations, by the end of 2020, tourists' footfall in India is projected to increase by 10 million. India has 5000 years old civilization and is the largest employment generator (Aggarwal et al., 2008). Tourism per se has a long history, which has been practiced by Indians for ages. Literature exists in various sector-based tourisms like eco-tourism, medical tourism, adventure tourism, wedding tourism, and spiritual tourism etc., which are researched by scholars significantly. Tourism has been encouraged by every country for not only economic, social or environmental gains but also to improve the growth of the economy, enhance the quality of life, create opportunities for employment and improve the balance of payment (BOP) of the sector (Aggarwal et al., 2008). The tourist behavior is based on personal and external factors and are strongly related to answering questions like why travelers visit cities, how do they visit cities, what is their perception of those cities, what do they explore in cities etc. Answering these questions has been a challenge in tourism marketing (Suh & McAvoy, 2005). Traveler preferences are regarded as the most important elements of perception and attitude for explaining traveler behavior (Suh & McAvoy, 2005). The various travel motivators include cultural motivators visiting tourist places for learning about customs; physiological motivators for the enjoyment of food and accommodation; social motivators like visiting friends and family and fantasy motivators for escaping from the regular routine (Murphy, 1985). The multi-attribute hybrid services which the travelers prefer in the tourism industry could be information, security, choice, access, complaint redressal, value for money etc. (Tripathi et al., 2010). Choosing a tourist destination is a complex purchase process in which the choices are inter-related and are multi-faceted (Garcia, Garcia & Consolacion, 2014). Studies have also indicated that hospitality, infrastructure, special events, environmental management, accessibility, physiography, quality of service, local culture, place attachment, are some of the antecedents which people require for a memorable tourism experience (Kim, 2014).

The IBEF - India Brand Equity Foundation has projected that the tourism and the travel sector's contribution towards the Indian economy is projected to

upsurge from US\$234.03bn (Rs 15.24 trillion) in 2017 to US\$492.21bn (Rs 32.05 trillion) in 2028. This increase is because of the huge potential religious tourism conveys to become the major sector within the tourism industry. IBEF also indicates that religious tourism has been the largest untapped market for domestic travel where in almost 60% of Indian domestic tourism is religion-based. Travel to sacred places, which is religiously motivated, is perhaps the prevalent and the oldest type of travel in human history (Jackowski & Smith, 1992; Rinschede, 1992). Based on the degree of religious belief, tourists travel to sacred destinations in search of truth, authentic experience with the divine goal in mind and enlightenment to fulfil their material needs (Vuconic, 1996). In pilgrimage tourism, tourists are not aiming at luxurious stay but want to have internal joy of fulfilling divine goal of life. Religious tourism looks to be a newer academic area of study but has not been a new phenomenon and has recently attracted many researchers globally (Haq et al., 2008). The emerging trend towards the search of spirituality in the form of religious tourists can be selected by creating niche tourism segment known as religious tourism. India has been the hub of religious destinations for thousands of years and since it has the oldest living civilization; India can be the most sought for place for the religious tourism. However, to attract maximum tourists in India, a good religious tourism destination image needs to inculcate by providing satisfying and standard service to the religious tourists. Hence, the current paper evaluates the preferences and the choice set of the religious tourists by using application of conjoint analysis and later classifies the entire market into clusters by using cluster analysis to help marketers identify the potential target segment.

Literature Review

Tourists have been visiting various religious destinations for many sacred inspirations. Nonetheless, it might not hold true for all the tourists; they may visit such places to fulfill different needs identified with social or recreational components. They might have different expectations when it comes to selecting a religious tourist package for themselves. The motivating factors for religious tourists to take on religious tours to various holy cities had been studied in the past (Timothy & Olsen, 2006). This study was initiated long back in the year 1958 by Lickorish and Kershaw who shared their perspectives that persuading factors for religious tours are sometimes not under control of the tourist and it might occur because of notion of family ties or extraordinary individual intrigue. Travelers also expect some kind of spiritual experience during these religious tours and may see this as an opportunity as a chance to team up with other fellow travelers (Turner & Turner, 1973). However, a few inspirations may not be connected with spiritual reasons yet might be firmly associated

with family get-away, or other social and cultural reasons (Andriotis, 2009; Nolan & Nolan 1992; Rinschede, 1992). Thus, religious tourism is not only the type of tourism with single-minded religious or spiritual motivation, but it also includes non-religious tourists expectations such as sightseeing and recreation (Mu et al., 2007). The experiences tourists look for in secular pilgrimages are sporting activities, secular shrines, festivals and sites, scared mountains and islands, archaeological sites, war graves and memorials etc. (Collins-Kreiner, 2010; Olsen, 2013). Travelers encounters are improved by availability to all zones of the site, amicable and accommodating attendants, great quality shows and displays and great directional signage boards. (Olsen, 2013). People search for internal peace and bliss through their tourism and travel activities such as emotional, physical or spiritual fulfilment to satisfy their needs (Kim, 2014). Tourism activities are considered by travelers to satisfy their inner journey of self-growth or for self-development purposes (Kim, 2014). In business and social studies, spiritual fulfilment through religious tourism has been an important branch of knowledge, which has been added to the domain of the tourism industry. (Phukan, Rahman & Devdutt, 2012). Religious tourism is usually motivated due to religious reasons or for attaining divine goal in life. The various segments of religious tourism are cultural tourism, religious travel and spiritual tourism (Shinde, 2010). Modern tourism has been a practice for most Indians to celebrate traditional festivals and for the purposes of pilgrimage. A pilgrimage is essentially for religious causes, which is externally for the holy cause and internally for spiritual and internal understanding. Such pilgrimages offer geographers an exceptional voice across spot, scene and space, which animates their inclinations towards the wonder (Collins-Kreiner, 2010). Spatial qualities incorporate lines, focuses and regions; sense of place includes visitors' expectations of gift shops, bookstores and a proper architectural style (Olsen, 2013). The encounters, geographers search for in secular pilgrimages are sporting activities, secular shrines, festivals and sites, scared mountains and islands, archaeological sites, war graves and memorials etc. (Collins-Kreiner, 2010; Olsen, 2013). Travelers' experiences are enhanced by accessibility to all areas of the site; friendly and helpful attendants; good quality displays and exhibits; and good directional signage boards (Olsen, 2013). Studies have concentrated on the tourist experiences of their tourist destination place to create a service experience worth recalling. The various tourist experiences could phenomenological be for leisure, gain experience, relief, acknowledge the new culture, wellbeing, idealism etc. (Xin & Yang, 2017). Foreign tourists visiting pilgrimage destinations seek assistance from the tour operator, facility of a tour guide, accessibility w.r.t the means of transportation, security, quality standards at hotels, acceptance of credit card facility, and availability of recreational facilities (Aggarwal et al., 2008). Technology and internet deployment has influenced this industry by

creating a prevalent consumer experience (Jauhari & Sanjeev, 2010; Gupta & Gulla, 2010). The multifaceted intersection between tourism experiences and religious experiences include common aspects like exposure, leisure, recreation etc. (Tribe, 2009). Religious journeys and tour experiences are the odysseys for self-fulfillment and spiritual quest and quench (Tribe, 2009). The travelers travel to different holy places not just for religious reasons or increasing customary astuteness but also since these heritage places have been marked as cultural and religious places. In this manner making it imperative to comprehend the attributes of destinations that would be favored by various sections of customers, which would help the marketers in structuring their service package (Timothy & Boyd et al., 2003). As of late in the year 2018, an endeavor was made by creators Srabanti Mukherjee et al. to build a scale to decide the quality of tourism destination. They affirmed that the quality of the tourism industry could be estimated by the quality of experience and quality of service and not by the quality of destination features. To distinguish the clusters, there is research by Despina et al. (2009) where the authors have embraced an analytical way to define the three segments namely the “vacationers”, the “cultural tourists”, and the “religious tourists”. A recent study (Ana Rameris et al., 2018) had likewise adopted cluster analysis to tourists’ motivations using religious destination attributes and recognized three distinct segments, which vary by travel behavior, demographics, destination assessment, satisfaction, and loyalty. The consequences of the study had distinguished three broad clusters: ‘conventional cultural tourists’, ‘spontaneous cultural tourists’ and ‘absorptive cultural tourists’. It additionally acmes that the attributes of destination that can influence satisfaction are some specific fundamentals of tourism like, accommodation, entertainment, and hospitality. The authors for making the clusters, grasped K means cluster approach. A comparative methodology is proposed for the present study.

The destination attributes in terms of their preferences and acceptance can be analyzed for any tourism situation using a well-accepted choice modelling methodology termed conjoint analysis (Louviere & Timmermans, 1990; Pizam et al., 1999; Feather, Hellerstein & Tomasi, 1995). The conjoint analysis utilizes the concept of “Utility”, conceptualized by Bernoulli in 1954, which describes the total satisfaction attained from the consumption of goods and services. This theory connects with the preferences and choices, which are measured through ranking the alternatives based on the consumers’ preferences (Kucukusta & Guillet, 2014). Conjoint analysis has been adopted to analyze the recreation site usage and the impact of the tourist destination, its desirability and the attraction choice along with the residents’ attitude towards tourism (Thyne et al., 2006; Lindberg et al., 1999). Conjoint has also been adopted to understand the most influential characteristics of tourist

attitude towards a tourist destination (Thyne et al., 2006). Conjoint analysis estimates the value of every characteristic or the attribute levels pertaining to a product or service which would help identifying the characteristics of consumer behavior (Lopes et al., 2009). This tool helps to avoid response bias by avoiding asking questions directly as it has an advantage of collecting information indirectly (Aaker, Kumar & Day, 1998). This technique helps in assessing subjects on a whole in a consolidated way rather than rating the attributes individually. Conjoint analysis also prevents multi-collinearity issue and allows subjects to choose the various choice sets as a trade-off mechanism (Thyne et al., 2006). Conjoint analysis helps consumers choose between the various day-to-day decisions and helps in handling situations of dealing with options, which vary across two or more attributes. It is also a method for collecting the preferences and intention to buy and helps simulate how they react to the changes towards product or service consumption (Green et al., 2001). The needs and wants of the customers are very diverse in any industry, which makes the choice of choosing among the alternatives very complex. The consumers use judgements, impressions and assessments of the decision set before making their final choice of the product profile. This final choice is the total utility attained by the customer where in their needs and wants are fulfilled not by the goods themselves but by the characteristics of the goods and services (Kucukusta & Guillet, 2014). Conjoint analysis allows marketers to identify the customer preferences, which would help in grouping the consumers into homogenous segments (having similar preferences). This combines the benefits of both conjoint analysis and cluster analysis (Picón, 2004; Varela, Picón & Braña, 2004). To draw in travelers, destination attributes are critically important, which is the amalgamation of various elements that affect visitors at various stages. These could be safety activities, beautiful landscape, cultural exchange, shopping opportunities, cost, value etc. This determines the visitor’s future behavior in terms of revisit or word of mouth publicity (Kim, 2014). Hence studying these attributes becomes important for any form of tourism performance.

Table 1: The Potential Destination Attributes that Affect Tourism

Construct Attributes	Relevant Literature
Hospitality	Kim, 2014
Infrastructure	Kim, 2014; Suh, Y. K. and McAvoy, L., 2005
Environmental Management	Kim, 2014
Accessibility	Kim, 2014; Garcia, et al., 2014; Olsen, 2013; Tripathi et al., 2010

Construct Attributes	Relevant Literature
Physiography & Climate	Kim, 2014; Lopes et al., 2009
Quality of Service	Kim, 2014; Aggarwal et al., 2008; Suh et al., 2005
Cultural Offer	Kim, 2014; Xin & Yang, 2017; Lopes et al., 2009; Suh et al., 2005
Place Attachment	Kim, 2014
Information	Garcia, et al., 2014; Tripathi et al., 2010
Security & Safety	Garcia, et al., 2014; Kim, 2014; Tripathi, S. N. and Siddiqui, M.H., 2010
Destination Choice	Garcia, et al., 2014; Tripathi et al., 2010; Lopes et al., 2009
Complaint Redressal	Garcia, et al., 2014; Tripathi et al., 2010
Value for Money	Garcia, et al., 2014; Kim, 2014; Tripathi et al., 2010; Lopes et al., 2009
Special Events & Festivals	Kim, 2014; Collins-Kreiner, 2010; Olsen, 2013
Leisure & Recreational Activities	Collins-Kreiner, 2010; Olsen, 2013; Xin & Yang, 2017; Aggarwal et al., 2008; Tribe, 2009; Lopes et al., 2009; Suh et al., 2005
Salvation, relief	Xin & Yang, 2017; Aggarwal et al., 2008; Tribe, 2009
Gain Experience	Xin & Yang, 2017
Health	Xin & Yang, 2017
Exposure	Tribe, 2009
Shopping Opportunities	Kim, 2014; Suh, Y. K. and McAvoy, L., 2005
Unique Sites	Collins-Kreiner, 2010; Olsen, 2013; Suh, Y. K. and McAvoy, L., 2005

Research Objectives

The main objective of the present paper is to form clusters of religious tourists based on their expectations related to destination attributes of religious cities using cluster analysis. The study aims to adopt conjoint analysis to identify the destination attributes relevant for each cluster. This research permits management professionals to determine groups of prospective tourists having specific preferences and needs for religious tourism. In this manner, a segmentation based on the consumers' preferences consents professionals and researchers to identify information about the market, thereby developing marketing strategies that are most appropriate to each cluster recognized in the market.

Research Methodology

The study has been exploratory in design. However, the preliminary study was incorporated in order to identify the factor and factor levels. Three Focus group discussions (FGD's) and personal interviews were conducted with people from different backgrounds. The FGD's consisted of 8 people from different occupational backgrounds and had experience of being a religious tourist at least once in their lifetime. They discussed in detail their experiences and expectations both positive and negative from various occasions and perspectives. The personal interviews were conducted with experts in the domains from tourism industry and academics.

After the preliminary study, exploratory data was collected through field study. The combined usage of cluster analysis and conjoint analysis has several advantages in market segmentation to understand tourist preferences (Lopes et al., 2009). The procedure allows providing a detailed and robust information towards evaluating tourists' real preferences using conjoint analysis and allows subject grouping based on these preferences/attributes. The authors have also deliberated that this method of having competitive advantage to develop marketing strategies suiting consumer preferences is a much better form (Lopes et al., 2009). Segmenting the tourist population into homogenous segments and groups provides a basis for effective marketing mix development and an effective way to plan and assess the tourist sector (Mallou et al., 2004). There are three main steps for conducting Conjoint Analysis i.e. Determination of the attributes (1st step); Assigning of related levels (2nd step) & Compilations of the profiles of the attributes (3rd step) (Vander Pol and Rayan, 1996). As first step towards conjoint analysis, the attributes were recognized based on the extensive literature review and preliminary study. Table 2 depicts the attribute and attribute levels acknowledged as important by the FGD's, Interviews and literature review.

Table 2: Attributes and Attribute Levels for the Study

Attributes	Attribute Levels	Source
Information	Electronic Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Garcia, et al., 2014; Tripathi et al., 2010, ● Exploratory study
	Word of mouth	
	Tour operator	
Security	Luggage Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Garcia, et al., 2014; Kim, 2014; Tripathi et al., 2010, ● Exploratory study
	Medical Insurance	
	Family Safety	
Divine Goal	Peace of mind	Exploratory study
	Religious rituals	
	Internal joy	
Complaint Redressal	Ombudsman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Garcia, et al., 2014; Tripathi et al., 2010, ● Exploratory study
	Feedback form	
	Govt.officials/ Tourism dept.	
Accommodation	Ashram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kim, 2014; Suh, Y. K. and McAvoy, L., 2005, ● Exploratory study
	Hotel	
Recreational activities	Celebration of festivals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collins-Kreiner, 2010; Olsen, 2013; Xin & Yang, 2017; Aggarwal et al., 2008; Tribe, 2009; Lopes et al., 2009; Suh, Y. K. and McAvoy, L., 2005 ● Exploratory study
	Cultural dance	
	Cultural Music	

After careful selection of attributes and levels, six attributes with each having 3 levels except accommodation (which has 2 levels) were identified. The possible outcomes of various combinations would be $3*3*3*3*3*2 = 486$ profiles. Ranking all these variables in an efficient manner is a challenge for researchers. Hence as suggested by Hair et al., 2006; and Green in 1974, fractional factorial design has been considered for the study to get the combinations relevant for the study. The calculations of fractional factorial design for the study was done through SPSS 20.0 version. A special class of fractional design are orthogonal arrays, which is adopted for the study.

The assumption being that most of the interactions available in stimuli have been negligible. It permits for effective estimate of all main effects of interest (Kuhfeld, Tobias & Garratt 1994; Green, Krieger & Wind 2001). The orthogonal arrays (orthoplan) generated 18 combinations and hence tourists had to gauge the questionnaires, which consisted of 18 combinations.

For the empirical study, Metric Conjoint Analysis was adopted. For finding out the preferences of the sample respondents, the respondents were asked to offer preference ranking for the tourism package as defined by the 18 combinations. The respondents were requested to rank the 18 combinations from being the most favored to the least favored. The most favored combination being ranked 1 while the least favored combination being ranked 18.

The survey questionnaire was close ended. The questionnaire also had questions that were related to behavioral and demographic information of the tourists. Of the total number of questionnaires that were distributed, 211 were found to be complete in all respects. As per the study conducted by Akaah et al., 1988; the sample size which is more than 100 are most suitable for conjoint analysis (SPSS, 1994). Hence, the collected sample size of 211 was considered as acceptable for the study. The information was gathered from tourists at various religious places and hotels in India. The data was collected by personally visiting the respondents to ensure authenticity of information. The sample had representation from various demographic characteristics based on age, gender, marital status, profession, and annual household income. These demographics were selected for the study based on the previous research in the similar context (Tripathi et al., 2010, Lopsi & Jesus, V. M., 2009). Table 3 gives the demographic profile of the sample.

Table 3: Demographic Profiling of Respondents (Overall Sample)

		Frequency	Percentage
Age	<25	32	15%
	25-35	40	19%
	36-45	85	40%
	>45	54	26%
Marital Status	Married	110	52.14%
	Single	101	47.86%
Gender	Female	91	43%
	Male	120	57%

		Frequency	Percentage
Profession	Student	26	12%
	Housewife	46	22%
	Business	77	36%
	Services	62	29%
Monthly Household Income	< 50K	58	27%
	50K to 1 Lac	87	41%
	> 1 Lac	66	31%

The data collection lasted for around four months starting from November 2018 to February 2019.

The third step of conjoint analysis is the compilation of the profiles of the various attributes. Determining the preferred attribute levels and the attributes relative importance was obtained by utilizing part worths or utility scores. The contribution of all the levels of attributes in comparison to overall evaluation was measured using the utility scores. Higher the range, higher will be the importance score and therefore higher will be the importance of the attribute (Portinga et al., 2003). Hence the basic model in conjoint analysis would be $y = b_1(\text{attribute } 1) + b_2(\text{attribute } 2) + b_3(\text{attribute } 3) + b_4(\text{attribute } 4) + b_5(\text{attribute } 5) + b_6(\text{attribute } 6) + c + e$, where y is the preferences of the tourism combinations, while e is the error term, c is the constant and b_n ($n = 1, 2, 3, \dots$) is the beta weights.

Conjoint Analysis Findings

The utility scores signify the choice and preferences for every attribute level that is included in the conjoint analysis. The conjoint analysis results over the 211 respondents which indicate the correlation values between estimated and observed preferences as Pearson's $R = 0.902$; Kendall's tau = 0.634. The results of this analysis w.r.t utility of the attribute levels across the total sample is shown Table 4.

Conjoint Analysis helps in getting the ideal combination of the attributes for religious tourism as expected by the tourists. The ideal combination is made by adding all the part-worth's of the preferred levels in each of the attributes along with the constant as given in table 4 and the same has been depicted from chart 1 to chart 7 in appendix. Thus, the most preferred combination for our sample is: $1.275 + 1.050 + 0.661 + 0.559 + 0.887 + 1.061 + 9.204 = 17.022$ i.e. the most preferred combination is: Tour operator (information), Family

safety (security), religious rituals(Divine goal), Government officials/Tourism dept. (Complaint redressal), Ashram (accommodation) and cultural music (Recreational activities).

Table 4: Conjoint Analysis Results on the Total Sample

Utilities			
Attributes	Importance Values	Attribute Levels	Utility Estimate
Information	28.088	Electronic Media	0.593
		Word of mouth	-1.868
		Tour operator	1.275
Security	16.278	Luggage Safety	-0.279
		Medical Insurance	-0.771
		Family Safety	1.050
Divine Goal	11.159	Peace of mind	-0.074
		Religious rituals	0.661
		Internal joy	-0.587
Complaint Redressal	8.928	Ombudsman	-0.119
		Feedback form	-0.440
		Govt.officials/Tourism dept.	0.559
Accomodation	15.859	Ashram	0.887
		Hotel	-0.887
Recreational Activities	19.688	Celebration of festivals	0.081
		Cultural dance	-1.142
		Cultural Music	1.061
(Constant)			9.204

Binary Logistics

The application of conjoint analysis for developing a desirable package within the tourism sector was analyzed using binary logistic regression. Binary logistic regression was conducted to examine the effect of the demographic variables viz. Age, Gender and Marital status on the preferences of attribute levels. In binary logistic regression, these preferences of attribute levels using dummy variable regression were considered as dependent variable while the demographic variables were the predictor variables in the model. To convert the preferences of attribute levels into dummy variables, the most preferred

combination per respondent was chosen and within that combination, the preferences per attribute were checked to convert the choices into dummy variables of zeros and ones. The results of the study are represented in the following table (Table 5).

Table 5: Binary Logistic Regression Output across Attribute Levels

Attribute Levels	Constant	Age	Gender	Marital Status
Information				
Electronic Media	0.577	0.153	.05*	0.537
Word of mouth	-1.252	0.363	0.707	0.05*
Tour operator	-1.843	0.421	.065**	0.230
Security				
Luggage Safety	-1.662	0.833	0.606	0.615
Medical Insurance	-0.200	0.614	0.491	0.944
Family Safety	-0.517	0.465	0.214	0.633
Divine Goal				
Peace of mind	-0.061	0.925	0.686	0.045*
Religious rituals	-1.628	0.628	0.456	0.096**
Internal joy	0.334	0.633	0.302	0.623
Complaint Redressal				
Ombudsman	2.185	0.726	0.909	0.943
Feedback form	-2.251	0.442	0.05*	0.049*
Govt.officials/Tourism dept.	-3.786	0.894	0.07**	0.105
Accommodation				
Ashram	-0.437	0.636	0.369	0.525
Hotel	0.437	0.636	0.369	0.525
Recreational Activities				
Cultural Music	0.154	0.935	0.029*	0.826
Cultural dance	-2.266	0.748	0.026*	0.149
Celebration of festivals	1.522	0.522	0.781	0.072**

Note: * Significance at 5% level of significance.

** Significance at 10% level of significance.

As per Table 5, Gender and Marital Status showed significant effect on certain attribute levels. Gender showed significant effect upon the importance

attached to electronic media, tour operator, feedback form, government officials, cultural music and cultural dance. Additionally, marital status had significant effect on celebration of festivals, word of mouth, peace of mind, religious rituals and feedback form. It was observed that age did not show significant effect on the dependent variables.

Conjoint analysis helped in forming the preferences for market-based segmentation for which hierarchical cluster analysis was administered. Based on the dendrogram, it revealed that 2 clusters were formed. These two clusters were separately analyzed using the above-defined conjoint methodology. The two clusters formed different demographic profiles. Cluster 1 had 175 samples and cluster 2 had 36 samples. The details of the respondents in each cluster is given in Table 6.

Table 6: Demographic Profiling of Respondents for Each Cluster

		Cluster 1		Cluster 2	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Age	<25	24	13.7	8	22.2
	25-35	36	20.6	4	11.1
	36-45	72	41.1	13	36.1
	>45	43	24.6	11	30.6
Marital Status	Married	92	52.6	16	44.4
	Single	83	47.4	20	55.6
Gender	Female	79	45.1	12	33.3
	Male	96	54.9	24	66.7
Profession	Student	21	12	5	13.9
	Housewife	40	22.9	6	16.7
	Business	66	37.7	11	30.6
	Services	48	27.4	14	38.9
Monthly Household Income	< 50K	47	26.9	11	30.6
	50K to 1 Lac	74	42.3	13	36.1
	> 1 Lac	54	30.9	12	33.3

Based on the table above, it is evident that in the two clusters, maximum tourists belong to the age group of 36 to 45 years and ‘Male’ gender group.

The conjoint analysis in each cluster indicated the correlation values Pearson's R = 0.898; Kendall's tau = 0.634 for cluster 1; and Pearson's R = 0.904; Kendall's tau = 0.572 for cluster 2. The results of this analysis in terms of the utilities of the attribute levels across the total clusters is shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Conjoint Analysis Results for Clusters (Market Segments)

Attributes	Importance Values Cluster 1	Importance Values Cluster 2	Attribute Levels	Utility Estimate Cluster 2	Utility Estimate Cluster 1
Information	27.055	31.441	Electronic Media	0.544	0.602
			Word of mouth	-1.894	-1.863
			Tour operator	1.350	1.260
Security	16.174	15.397	Luggage Safety	-0.378	-0.259
			Medical Insurance	-0.606	-0.804
			Family Safety	0.983	1.063
Divine Goal	10.843	11.952	Peace of mind	-0.022	-0.084
			Religious rituals	0.628	0.668
			Internal joy	-0.606	-0.584
Complaint Redressal	10.739	6.837	Ombudsman	-0.394	-0.065
			Feedback form	0.311	-0.587
			Govt.officials/ Tourism dept.	0.083	0.653
Accommodation	15.202	18.169	Ashram	0.938	0.877
			Hotel	-0.938	-0.877
Recreational Activities	19.987	16.204	Cultural Music	0.139	0.070
			Cultural dance	-0.906	-1.188
			Celebration of festivals	0.767	1.119
(Constant)				9.188	9.208

A similar conjoint analysis by summing up the part-worths of the most preferred levels for each attribute gave us the importance of the most preferred combination in both the markets as shown in chart 8 and 9 in the appendix. Thus, the most preferred combination by cluster 2 is: $1.350+0.983+0.628+0.311+0.938+0.767+9.188 = 14.165$ i.e. the most preferred combination is: tour operator (information), Family safety (security), Internal joy (Divine goal), Feedback form (Complaint redressal), Ashram (accommodation) and Celebration of festivals (Recreational activities). Moreover, the most preferred combination by cluster 1 is: $1.260+1.063+0.668+0.653+0.877+1.119+9.208 = 14.848$ i.e. the most preferred combination is: electronic media (information), Family safety (security), religious rituals (Divine goal), Government officials /Tourism dept. (Complaint redressal), ashram (accommodation) and Celebration of festivals (Recreational activities).

Discussion and Implications

Based on the data analysis, it is evident that:

- The various motives of religious tourists behind such tourist destinations are for religious ritual purposes rather than just internal joy or peace of mind.
- Most of the tourists also believe that Indian customs and religions are most sacred to them and have felt it being more satisfying and hence would love to embrace cultural music and celebration of festivals when they visit such tourism destinations (Aggarwal et al., 2008). Thus, the attributes Divine goal and recreational activities can be featured as part of the motives of religious tourists.
- Additionally, these tourists have certain experiences, which are based on certain information available, security and safety, complaint redressal and the existence of the accommodation facilities.
- Most of them felt that they receive great amount of information about religious tourist destinations from the tour operators and electronic media (Tripathi et al., 2010). Prospective tourists look out for informed decision-making w.r.t tour packages, lodging, sightseeing, accessibility etc. (Tripathi et al., 2010).
- It is also surprising that the tourists do not rely on word for mouth especially for visiting religious tourist programs. Furthermore, they felt that family safety was the most important parameter under security attribute while they visit for religious purposes.
- Accommodation facility where-in the tourists would want to stay at

Ashrams itself during their visit was the prominent feature that was seen in the study.

- Moreover, the visitors were more reliant on addressing their issues and complaints through the tourism department or government officials themselves. This would help speed up the process of complaint redressal.
- However, among the hierarchical preference structure, this attribute was the least important for the tourists (Tripathi et al., 2010).
- Overall, the two clusters formed have provided insights into the preferences chosen by them w.r.t religious tourism. The two clusters differ based on the attribute of accommodation where cluster 2 has given emphasis to accommodation in comparison to cluster 1. Both the clusters have indicated that the attribute Information is the most valuable indicator for the religious tourism package. Among all the attributes, complaint redressal was the least preferred choice for the tourists. Differences in their preferences are important to form market-based segmentation.

The authors have also delved into further identifying the market segments and clusters within each of the identified two clusters, which are enunciated below:

Within Cluster 1

The results of religious tourism clusters revealed that majority of tourists prefer safety and accommodation alongwith information before they choose their choice of the destination.

Cluster 1.a - Information-Seeker Tourists

This group signifies approx. 27% weight among the cluster 1 sample who link their religious destination choices to the kind of information available through electronic media, word of mouth or through tour operator himself. Members of this group expressed positive opinion primarily towards information being provided by the tour operator.

Cluster 1.b - Cultural-Heritage Tourists

This group signifies approx. 20% weight among the cluster 1 sample who can be categorized in search of recreational activities and cultural experiences when they intend visiting religious destinations. The visitors of this group are attracted towards cultural music and dance and celebrating various festivals having association with local cultural festivities.

Cluster 1.c - Guarantee-Sensitive Tourists

This segment account for approx. 42% weight among the cluster 1 sample. These associates are primarily concerned of the security of their family members and would prefer visiting destinations, which would help, provide them with medical insurance and safety of their belongings. To a certain extent, these travelers would prefer the choice of their religious tourist destination if the tourist department or an ombudsman were guaranteed to resolve their complaints by giving them a chance to provide feedback. Accommodation at the 'Ashram', which is the place of the tourist destination itself, is the most preferred option than a stay in the hotel.

Within Cluster 2

The results of religious tourism clusters revealed that majority of tourists prefer Complaint redressal, family safety and accommodation alongwith information before they choose their choice of the destination.

Cluster 2.a - Convenience-Oriented Tourists

This cluster account for almost 40% weight among the cluster 2 sample. These tourists sought the benefit of proper guidance/complaints redressal. To a certain extent, these travelers would prefer the choice of their religious tourist destination if the tourist department or an ombudsman were guaranteed to resolve their complaints by giving them a chance to provide feedback. They also seek benefits of being secure. These associates are primarily concerned of the security of their family members and would prefer visiting destinations, which would help, provide them with medical insurance and safety of their belongings. Accommodation at the 'Ashram', which is the place of the tourist destination itself, is the most preferred option than a stay in the hotel.

Cluster 2.b - Wellness-Vacation Tourists

This is the smallest segment accounting for 12% weight among the cluster 2 sample. These associates are religious tourists who prefer to choose a destination for attaining their divine goal of being able to perform religious rituals and have peace of mind and fulfilment of internal joy. Additionally, 16% of cluster 2 tourists prefer recreational activities pertaining to cultural music, cultural dance and celebration of various festivals, which gives them the sense of religious attainment.

Cluster 2.c - Information Seeker Tourists

This group signifies approx. 31% weight among the cluster 2 sample who are like cluster 1 where-in they link their religious destination choices

to the kind of information available through electronic media, word of mouth or through tour operator himself. Members of this group expressed positive opinion primarily towards information being provided by the tour operator.

The cluster names have been depicted in the Fig. 1.

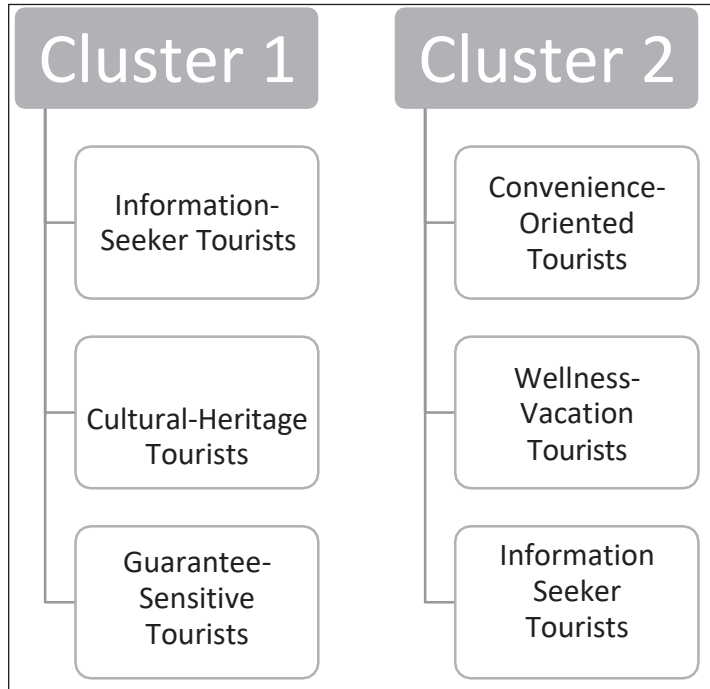


Fig. 1: Diagrammatic Representation of the Clusters

Thus, the major objective of the paper would be to identify the market segments who sought certain benefits which marketers should look for to devise marketing strategies appropriate to the specific cluster in an effective and an efficient manner. The study will examine the motivations and activities of the tourists, which provides potential for the development of organized religious tourist destinations. The study indicated that a certain group of tourists visits a certain destination due to the amount of information, which is provided by the operator, for divine goal attainment, for recreational activities, for security, for complaints redressal mechanism available with the destination site or the place of accommodation. The empirical findings suggest that to attract specific market segments, managers of religious tourist destinations and local authorities can collaborate with the tour operators to

make the experience a better one. Future research can check the perception and responses of other stakeholders who are involved in the expansion of the religious tourist destinations like travel agencies, hotel owners or restaurant managers. The conclusions of the study posited that substantial co-presence of religious tourism, which helps merge pilgrimage with reasons and the purpose of their visit, which could be for ethnic attraction or for holidaying or just for pleasure.

In lieu of the motives and the experiences discussed above, it should be pertinent to marketers to use this information while they devise their product strategies and marketing/ promotional strategies to promote religious tourism and generate more revenues. Marketers and firms should be able to organize more cultural festivals and cultural music events throughout the year (Aggarwal et al., 2008). Marketers should also provide proper accommodation facility at the Ashram itself in addition to tour operators being available to provide proper information thereby making their stay and journey comfortable and safe. In addition, Marketers should be able to provide support to address the complaints of the tourists as they have chosen to be religious tourists for the sole purpose of religious rituals and not merely for internal joy or peace of mind. Thus, tour operators and government officials should be motivated and educated to recommend such religious packages to the prospective customers (Djokic, 2013).

The binary logistic regression analysis results however reveal that few demographic variables played a significant role in shaping the importance of the underlying attribute levels which indicate that the religious tourists would probably be sensitive to these attribute levels.

The study helps demonstrate that the utilities of the various attributes among the clusters can vary under various circumstances (as the scores of the utility are situational) and would in-turn reveal and measure the hidden needs and requirements of the customers. Specific customer groups can be targeted for finding a suitable niche market for the companies' operations. Thus, the conjoint analysis and cluster analysis provides extremely interesting business research and academic research opportunities. Combining multi-dimensional scaling along with cluster analysis could also deliver interesting ideas for marketers (Koo et al., 1999). These designs provide an examination of the importance and weight of the attributes and its levels in addition to the interactions between the attributes (Huertas-Garcia et al., 2014). These designs would support marketers in identifying the demand for newer products or coming up with line extensions or designing of newer religious tourism packages in terms of brochures, newsletters etc. (Huertas-Garcia et

al., 2014). The current study also recognizes that among the market segments there are varying tastes and preferences in addition to differences in responses w.r.t the combination of attributes rather than simply analyzing demographic characteristics of the respondents.

From the management perspective, this analysis can empower the tourism departments with relevant information about the tourist preferences, which would lead to creating a better relationship between the service provider and the customer. Thereby bridging the gap between the services that are provided and the desired services of the tourists to design customized tourism packages. The study will help the key players understand the behavioral aspects of religious tourism i.e. why people like to go on religious tours. Knowing these aspects will help the key players strategize their plan of actions to cater to larger and more relatable customers. It will also help them develop personalized campaigns for different segments and run them according to the needs of religious tourists in those particular segments. For instance, the religious tourists who chose tour operators as their preference for getting information will be coming across campaigns having tour operators as the information provider. Then they will be more inclined towards going on the tour, hence a win-win situation for the player as well as customer.

In nutshell, the analysis of this paper will help in formulating the preference of attributes for religious tourism. This will facilitate the government and the marketers in developing and designing marketing campaigns for the specific target segment. The adopted Conjoint analysis methodology would allow marketers to identify the customer preferences, based on which they would be able to group the consumers into homogenous segments (having similar preferences). In addition, the private and Government sector should work seriously with an assurance to progress India, as the most attractive religious tourist destination in the world.

Limitations and Future Scope

- The identified segments can overlap into each other and hence there may be an error in establishing these clusters. Future researchers may identify more meaningful reasons for choosing the religious destinations.
- Certain variables such as the price of the religious tourism package, the location of the hotel, quality of the room, accessibility, availability of clean drinking water etc. were not considered as potentially relevant attributes.
- The sample size was also a limiting factor, as it did not permit us to

determine the significance of certain variables. A detailed analysis of the product attributes has not been analyzed in this paper. Future research may scrutinize the practicality of promoting specific product features in everyday practice, such as stimulating an ultimate tourism package.

- The authors also felt that it is challenging to develop combinations with greater than three levels of product characteristics under each of the identified attributes. This would also be cumbersome due to the difficulty that respondents had in responding to the standardized questionnaires if the number of levels increased. In the current research, the limitation was that we focused on six factor categories each with three or less than three levels.
- Additionally, due to limited resources and work force support, convenience-sampling methodology was adopted for data collection and hence may create a hindrance in reflecting the market. Further research can also analyze the current religious tourism sector by delving into market segmentation and a detailed analysis of the clusters along with its demographic characteristics. Thematic analysis capturing the consumers' religious experiences can also be dealt with in future studies, which will help analyze religious phenomenon.
- Research scholars can also delve into the demographic analysis of the clusters formed to get a closer perspective of the market segments.

Appendix

Conjoint Analysis Findings Charts

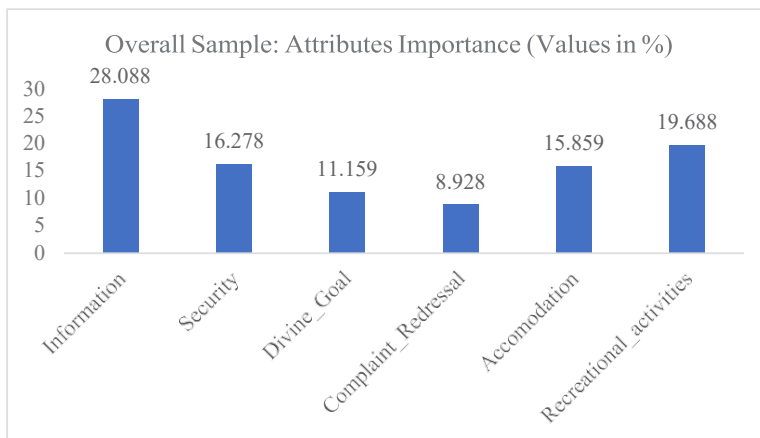


Chart 1: Overall Sample: Attributes Importance

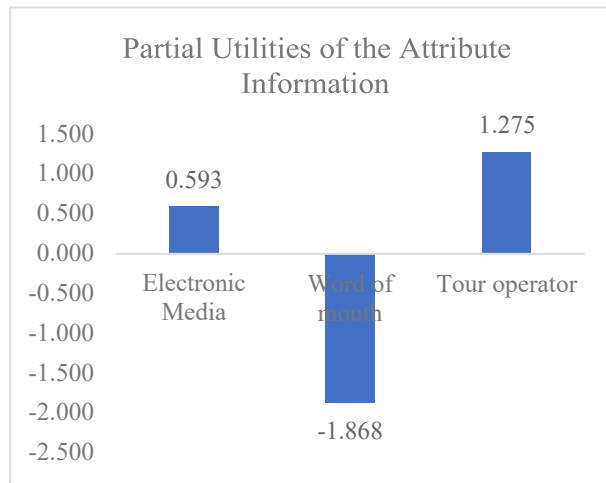


Chart 2: Partial Utilities of Attribute Information

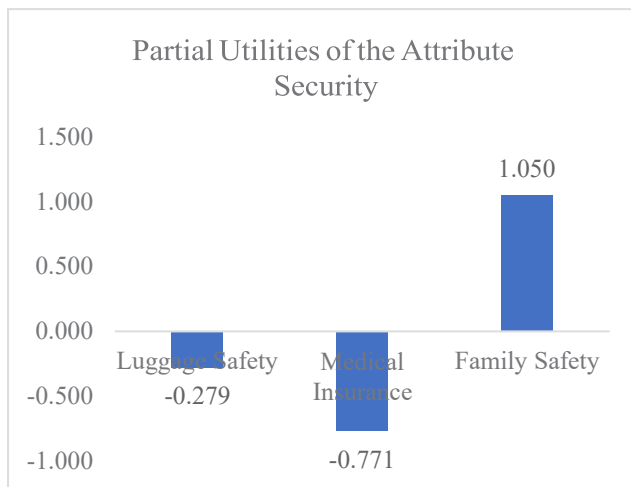


Chart 3: Partial Utilities of Attribute Security

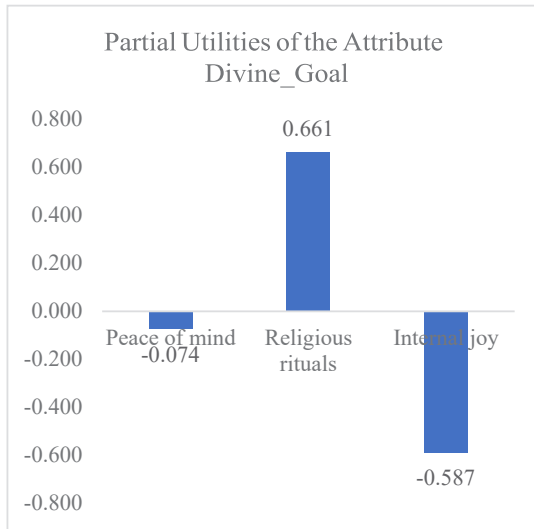


Chart 4: Partial Utilities of Divine Goal

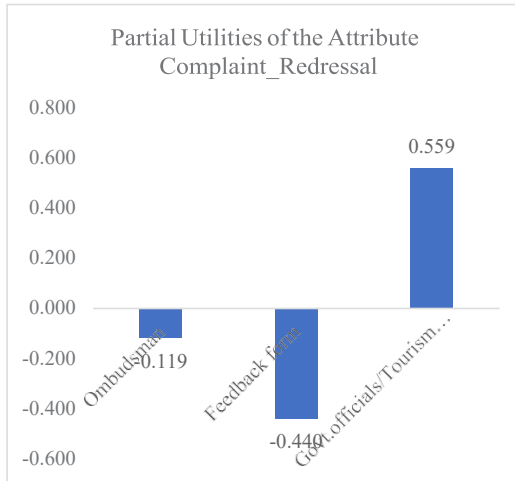
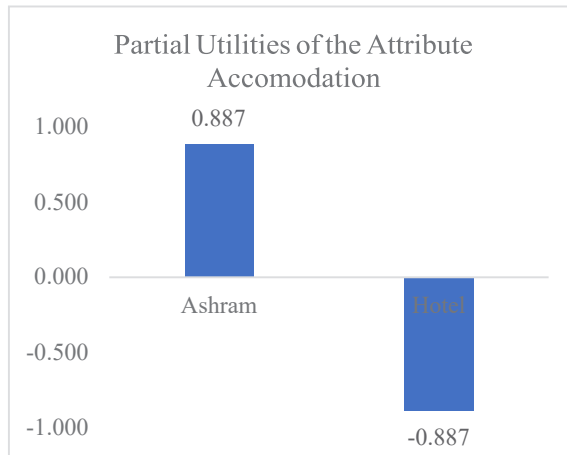
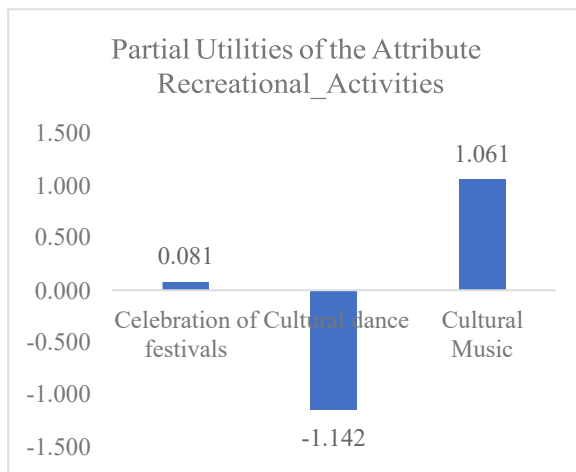


Chart 5: Partial Utilities of Complaint Redressal

**Chart 6: Partial Utilities of Accommodation****Chart 7: Partial Utilities of Recreational Activity**

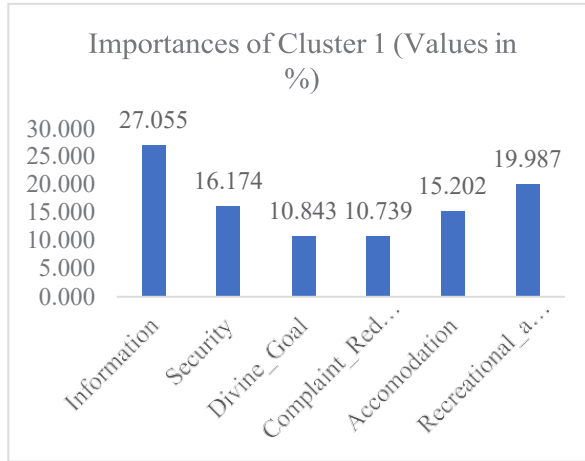


Chart 8: Importance's of Cluster 1

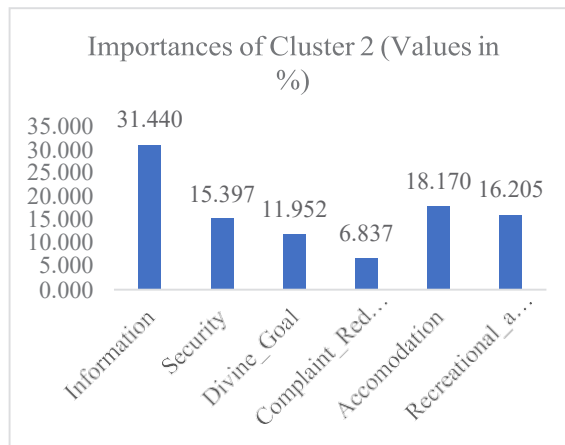


Chart 9: Importance's of Cluster 2

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