

# Moderating Impact of Social Support on Tourist Motivations, Experience, and Satisfaction: An Analysis of Solo Women Travellers Visiting Wellness Retreat Centres

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**Abstract** *The trend for solo travel has been seen increasing day by day amongst women, especially in the post-COVID-19 scenarios. The current study examines the various factors that act as motivators for solo women in wellness retreat centres. In addition, the significance of social support has been analyzed with overall experience and satisfaction with wellness retreats. Data was collected from five major retreat centres in India. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 22.0 and Amos 16.0. Data analysis revealed motivations amongst the solo women travellers towards the wellness retreat centres are derived from transcendence; rejuvenation; escapism and relaxation. Findings showed that social support is an important moderator in defining overall travel experience and satisfaction amongst solo women travellers. The study will be helpful for the authorities to analyze the role of selective constructs for promoting, branding, and creating a carefree and safe destination(s) keeping in India the societal impacts women have while deciding to travel solo.*

**Keywords:** *Experience, Motivations, Satisfaction, Social Support, Solo Women Travellers, Wellness Retreats*

## INTRODUCTION

Solo travel has been incessantly burgeoning in the international tourism market (Yang, 2021). A rise in individualized lifestyles and delayed marriages (Seow & Brown, 2018) have amalgamated to produce a considerable swap in travel trends and made the flocks to take travel alone (Laesser, Beritelli & Bieger, 2009). Karantzavelou (2018) asserts that there was a 42% increase in the prevalence of travelling solo from 2015 to 2018 and growing upwards since then. It shows that women comprise 84% of the comprehensive travel and tourism industry, accounting for 11% of the overall industry (Solo Travel Statistics, 2022). Solo women traveller bookings soared by 45% between

2015 and 2017, and a total of 72% of women in the US choose to travel solo (Karagoz, Işık, Dogru & Zhang, 2021). In literature, the significant growth of independent female travellers has been mentioned (Wilson & Little, 2005, 2008; Jordan & Aitchison, 2008; Berdychevsky et al., 2016). They are travellers who do not prefer to travel with a group and travel to the destination alone (McNamara & Prideaux, 2010). Prior research indicates that women do not travel alone because they are a hermit or they have no other alternatives, however, they are valiant, plucky, and adventurous and have some specific purpose for travel (Pereira & Silva, 2018). Females travel alone in the search of freedom, independence, self-determination, personal fulfillment, adventure, self-empowerment, and sometimes

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for life-changing experiences and escape (Wilson & Harris, 2006; Hamid et al., 2021). According to Hindustan Times (2022), most married women also have been travelling alone both nationally and internationally for the last two years. In India, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Varanasi, and Mahabaleshwar are considered as main hotspots for solo travellers, however, Maldives, Russia, and Dubai are well-known destinations internationally (Vajpayee, 2022).

According to new research anticipated in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the travel and tourism sector, the principal purpose of tourists is to gain meaningful life longing experiences through tourism, instead of just escaping in the trivial search for ‘authenticity’ (Hamid et al., 2021). They are searching for a sense of mental, physical, and spiritual satisfaction and quality of life through travel (Wilson & Harris, 2006). Tourists nowadays are keen to know the place that can offer opportunities for psychological or emotional healing, self-reflection, enjoying me-time, experiencing enlightenment, and discovering the true meaning of life (Hamid et al., 2021). Wellness retreats are designed for these kinds of travellers and offer a sequence of activities to achieve harmony between body, mind, and spirit by doing physical and psychological activities (Kim, Chiang & Tang, 2017). Lewis (2020) revealed that a higher number of solo women travellers choose wellness retreats for restorative and healing holidays and this trend gaining popularity since 2019 (Lewis, 2020). As per a survey conducted by Wellness Tourism Association (WTA), 44.93% of females want to travel solo for wellness holidays and among them, 46.57% are aged between 35 to 55, 43.26% above 55 and remain fall below 35 years (Spa Executive, 2018). Their family and friends encouraged them and emotionally supports thereof in travel. As a consequence, social support plays a vital role for women to travel alone. (Ko, Wang & Xu, 2013). Many tourists visit India for yoga (Maddox, 2015), meditation (Ghiya, 2019), Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, homeopathy, and naturopathy (Jaiswal & Williams, 2017) since the time of immemorial (Karunamoorthi et al., 2012) as they believe wellness traditions originated in India from ancient times (Newcombe, 2012). Kerala, Goa, and Uttarakhand are notorious wellness destinations in India (Tillu et al., 2020; Dar & Kashyap, 2022).

Contemplating the above concepts, the current research attempts to construct a conceptual framework, thus, adding valuable discussion about solo women travellers’ motivations for travelling for wellness holidays and their experiences as well as their satisfaction with wellness tourism. Additionally, as prior research focused on solo woman travellers’ motivation, different types of constraints or restrictions they encounter while travelling alone, how they perceive risks, their travel behavior, and how solo travel affects women’s well-being. And since no research has been done in the aforementioned area, the present study aims to fill this research gap by determining the

connection among solo women travellers’ motivation, experience, and satisfaction after visiting the retreat centre in India. It also investigates whether social support could potentially moderate the relationship between solo women travellers’ travel motivation and experience. The theoretical and practical implications as well as suggestions for future research are also discussed.

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND FORMULATION OF HYPOTHESES

### Solo Women Traveller’s Wellness Tourism Motivation

Motivation is the internal drive that pushes individuals to do something or take an action to satisfy their needs (Hudson, 2008). It influences people’s desire to visit a place, take part in an activity, enjoy alluring nature, and indulge in different kinds of services (Chen, Prebensen & Huan, 2008). Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, on the other hand, is frequently utilized to understand an individual’s travel behavior (Awaritefe, 2004) and according to that first, an individual attempts to meet or fulfill their own basic necessities such as nutrition and security, followed by high-level requirements such as adore, socialization, self-actualization, as well as esteem (Maslow, 1943; Težak Damijanić & Šergo, 2013). Chen et al. (2008), argued that motivation theory supports Maslow’s theory of needs (Karn & Swain, 2021) as the set of requirements of tourists influence them to take part in a tourist activity (Chen, Prebensen & Huan, 2008). Predominantly, to satisfy different kinds of needs tourists are propelled by their motivation to that particular place or destination (Leiper, 1990; Pesonen & Komppula, 2010). Mostly, tourists prefer destinations that are developed around inimitable natural-peaceful landscapes and sometimes golden beaches and mountains and sacred sites (Sheldon & Park, 2009). Wellness tourism destinations positioned in exclusive natural settings receive traffic throughout the year as it encompasses a diverse set of tourist motivations (Smith & Puczkó, 2008). Tourists primarily visit wellness retreats to preserve or improve their well-being (Parmer, 2017) and also to enhance life quality by engaging in meditation and yoga, as well as participating in various retreat practices (Smith & Reisinger, 2013; Heintzman, 2013).

In literature, pull and push motivation theory is widely used to understand tourists’ travel motivation to wellness retreats (Ashton, 2018) because this offers an effective way to assess tourists’ travel decisions. However, several researchers have embraced this theory to ascertain how the Y generation’s perceptions of their health and wellness influence their travel decisions (Ivancsóné Horváth & Printz-Markó, 2017; Hritz, Sidman & D’Abundo, 2014; Boulay, Hritz & Ashton, 2013). Moreover, push-pull motivation is often used as a

travel motivation model for choosing travel destinations (Hassan & Hemdi, 2016). Pull motivations are attributes of a destination that attracts tourist towards it (Karn & Swain, 2021) and it includes, natural environments, local culture, nature-based activities, peaceful atmosphere, and historical significance (Baniya & Paudel, 2016) and on the contrary, push motivations are internal desires that pushed tourist towards the place or activity where they satisfy their needs or desires (Karn & Swain, 2021) and it includes transcendence, escape, relaxation, indulgence, self-esteem, and novelty (Ashton, 2018). When it comes to solo women travellers' travel motivation, push motivational factors plays a significant role because women travel alone to satisfy their internal desires or in pursuit of uniqueness as well as self-development (Wilson & Harris, 2006). Basically, women want to grow out of their particular comfort zones and feel independent and autonomous (Wilson & Little, 2008) and their utmost motive includes, transcendence, rejuvenation (Khan, Chelliah & Ahmed, 2017; Vazquez-Illa, 2014), escapism (Wilson & Little, 2005) and relaxation (McNamara & Prideaux, 2010). Therefore, they travel to wellness retreats to fulfill their internal desire and obtain mental, physical, and spiritual satisfaction and also for emotional healing as well as personal reflection (Hamid et al., 2021).

To summarise the preceding literature, we propose that the wellness tourism motivation of solo women travellers' is a relatively high interpretive factor with four first-order dimensions: transcendence, rejuvenation, escapism, and relaxation. As every factor shows completely separate attributes about the solo women traveller wellness tourism motivation and it is considered that they are not interchangeable. So, it was hypothesized that:

*H1: The wellness tourism motivation of solo female travellers is a second-order factor that is comprised of four first-order factors (i.e., transcendence, rejuvenation, escapism, and relaxation).*

## **Solo Women Travellers' Wellness Tourism Motivation and Experience**

According to earlier studies, tourist travel motivation and experience are related to each other, and experience is also believed as a crucial component of travel (Stienmetz et al., 2021; Pearce, 2011; Uriely, 2005). It is considered the psychological state developed by the tourist (Otto & Ritchie, 1996) at travel destinations that build indelible memories, touch hearts and stimulate minds (Song et al., 2015). Experience is principally dependent upon an individual's perception and ambiance of what they see, feel, obtain and perceive at the destination (Özdemir Bayrak, 2011; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Nevertheless, experience is a process in which tourists influences by environments, objects or things, situations, and events (Svabo et al., 2013)

and a psychological journey that stays with tourist memories and includes some special enjoyable events and activities performed by tourists and also learns new astonishing things (Sundbo & Hagedorn-Rasmussen, 2008).

By extending the literature Voigt, Howat, and Brown (2010) explored the wellness tourism experience from a positive psychological perspective and explained that wellness tourism experience assists in the psychological as well as personal growth of tourists and also leads to holistic health (Dillette, 2016). Services offered at the retreat centres like, yoga, meditation, salubrious meals, quality interaction with staff and alluring natural environments expedite for marvelous experience (Johnson & Redman, 2008; Thal & Hudson, 2019). In the contrast to group travel, tourists prefer to travel solo, especially women traveller quite often travelled wellness retreat centres (Dillette, 2016). The natural landscape and pleasant atmosphere tug them and also their intrinsic motivation to experience uniqueness and novelty, escape from the outer world and rejuvenate their physical, as well as psychological health, pushes them (Pereira & Silva, 2018). In light of the previous section's literature review, the hypothesis below is suggested:

*H2: Solo women travellers' motivation has a significant impact on the experience.*

## **Solo Women Travellers' Wellness Tourism Experience and Satisfaction**

Since tourists' satisfaction is directly affected by the quality of their travel experiences (Kim & Tussyadiah, 2013), Rust and Oliver (1993) explain that an experience elicits positive emotions, and a significant impact of emotion influences the satisfaction of tourists (Chen & Chen, 2010) Satisfaction in the context of tourism is mainly the result of tourists' pre-trip expectations and post-trip or during-trip experiences that are met during or after the trip (Warangkana & Supawat 2020). Specifically, satisfaction referred to the evaluation of the thinking and emotional thoughts of a visitor after experiencing or using a product or service and it is regulated by social and psychological factors such as behavior, attitude and needs or wants, and social group interactions (Ranjanthran & Mohammed, 2010). It can also be defined as the disparity between presumption before travel and experience gained after the travel; in turn, tourists may be satisfied (expectations are fulfilled and gratified) or dissatisfied (Supawat & Teerawat, 2019). When the visitor experiences agitation and unhappiness, this indicates that they are not satisfied (Alegre & Garau, 2010; Reisinger & Turner, 2012). The situations wherein the solo women travellers can feel refreshed, relaxed, and independent are the principal source of satisfaction for them (Bianchi, 2016). In wellness retreats, they understood themselves well and in the calm atmosphere, they find their inner-self and

experience nature which contributes to satisfaction (Luo et al., 2018). Accordingly, the study purposes under mentioned hypothesis:

*H3: Solo women's traveller experience has a significant influence on satisfaction.*

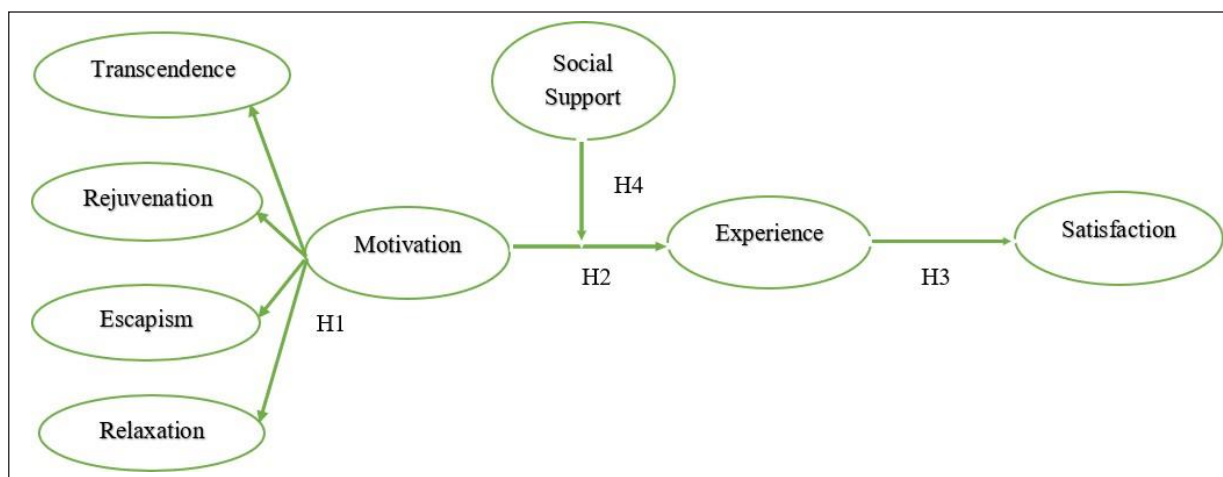
## The Moderation Role of Social Support between Solo Women Travellers' Motivation and Experience

The presence of supportive relationships has significant implications for making travel decisions and maintaining one's well-being (Freeman, 2021). They are family, friends, colleagues, and employers who provide social support to an individual (Skarin et al., 2019). It is "a resource exchange between two persons that either the giver or the recipient beliefs are done to enhance the recipient's well-being" (Shumaker & Brownell, 1984). However, Kautish et al. (2021) asserted that social support is the group of individuals who are accessible to a person for love and attention, psychological well-being, and another kind of assistance (Awang et al., 2014). Social support is interpreted in a variety of ways in the field of social psychology (Karagöz et al., 2021; Ruchirasak & Tuicomepee, 2021) including sentimental, affectionate, instrumental, intellectual, and sociocultural togetherness, all of which contribute to quite hectic and wholesome social surroundings (Karagöz et al., 2021; Mikal & Grace, 2012). Social support is most of the time viewed as

psychological support and non-psychological support (Cobb, 1976; Caplan, 1979). Both intellectual and mental support is referred to as psychological support, whereas information assistance is termed as non-psychological support, also known as tangible support (Chung et al., 2017). As social support is often used as an important factor to change the travel behavior of tourists (Skarin et al., 2017), importantly, psychological support helps to accelerate favorable social and emotional consequences for tourists (Ong & Ward, 2005).

As per the tourism context, social assistance to the tourist can be provided by two sources; close ties and weak ties (Chung, 2017). Here close ties refer the social support from friends and family and weak tie refers to social support from other tourists (Kim & Tussyadiah, 2013). Close ties provide information about the place, give encouragement and provide emotional support (Klooster & Go, 2006), on the contrary, weak ties provide extended information about the destination which helps to reduce possible fears about the destination and also provides guidance about the trip (Huang & Hsu, 2010). However, social support also assists in a better experience and positive physical and mental health (Ward, 2001). As a result, the above literature asserts that social support moderates the relationship among solo women's motivation for travelling and experience, and the proposed hypotheses are:

*H4: Social support serves as a moderator such that social support strengthens the impact of solo women's motivation on experience.*



Source: Authors conceptualization.

**Fig. 1: Theoretical Model of the Research**

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Sample and Data Collection

In this study, purposive sampling technique was employed (Richardson, 2010). More specifically women who had availed of the wellness services were asked to proceed with

the questionnaire, so that authenticity of the research could be ascertained (Jain, 2019). In terms of sampling design, Lomax and Schumacker (2004) believed that a sample of 250–500 respondents is sufficient for carrying out any research. Also, Kline (2015) and Harrell (2015) stated that 10-15 respondents are sufficient for each variable. So, for retrieving more reliable responses we targeted about 500

respondents (Osborne, 2014) and out of which 353 received suitable and reliable for analysis.

Before analyzing the survey data, the scale was tested among the sample to ensure whether the items were reliable and in line with the current research. A preliminary survey of 10 doctoral candidates and two professors as well as two managers from two different wellness retreat centres was carried out, and minor changes to the questionnaire were made in response to their comments. Five significant holistic wellness retreat centres located around India (like Atmantan, Maharashtra; Vana Retreat, Dehradun, Uttarakhand; Ananda in the Himalaya; Uttarakhand; Mekosha, Kerala; Niraamaya Retreats Surya Samudra, Kerala) (Hotelivate Research, 2020) were targeted and surveyed using a self-administered questionnaire for the second stage of data collection.

## Measurement Scale

To obtain data on sample characteristics, including age, education, gender, and household income of respondents, a survey questionnaire was created. The measurement scale for the research was adopted from various studies (refer to Table 1). The structured questionnaire was framed using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = highly disagree, 5 = highly agree). The scale items for motivations consisted of 12 items [referred from Kessler, et al. (2020); Voigt, Brown & Howat (2011); Dimitrovski & Todorović (2015); Fakfare et al. (2020); Tuzunkan, (2018); Yousefi & Marzuki (2012)]; experience consisted of 5-items [adopted and modified from Dillette et al. (2021); Hwang & Lee (2019); Kim et al. (2015)]; satisfaction consisted of 4-items [adopted and modified from Su et al. (2020); Shavanddasht and Allan (2019); Chen et al. (2015)] and social support consisted of 4-items (adapted and modified from Karagöz et al. (2021); Xie & Keh (2020); Kautish et al. (2021)).

To identify potential outliers, Mahalanobis ( $d^2$ ) square distance values have been used, and the asymmetry coefficients of skewness (Sk) and kurtosis (Ku) were tested to determine whether the study variables were normally distributed (Hair et al., 2015; Kautish et al., 2021). 15 observations in all had problematic  $d^2$  values, indicating the need to exclude outliers ( $p_1$  and  $p_2 = 0$ ). As a result, the final data was used later in the research study.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The adopted scales' psychometric properties were examined utilizing SPSS 22.0. Using Exploratory Factor Analysis and

reliability check, the data structure was established. Results indicated outstanding internal reliability of the constructs, which, according to the standard proposed by Hair et al. (2014), should be 0.50 or higher. The findings showed the variables with loading greater than 0.50 and attested to the data's applicability to the ongoing study.

## Demographic Profile

Since the respondents were already selected based on their gender i.e., female, questions regarding the respondents' age and qualifications were asked. Accordingly, it was found that most of the respondents were postgraduates (198 in number), 83 were graduates and only 72 were Ph.D. or higher qualifications. As far as the age group is concerned, most of the customers who obtained the services at retreat centres were between the age group of 25-30 (169 in nos.) where about 141 were in the age group of 31-40 and only 43 were in the age group of above 41. When asked about their marital status, most of the respondents were single (182 in nos.), 98 respondents mentioned it as separated or divorced and only 73 mentioned their marital status as married. As far as nationality is concerned most of the travellers were Indians (202 in nos.) and the rest 151 were foreigners.

## Reliability Analysis

Since the values of Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha$ ) or reliability coefficient value were above the recommended threshold of more than 0.70 (Kiliç, 2016). Similarly, to make the results more authentic, the convergent and discriminant validity had been tested to ensure construct validity is at par with the required criteria. The factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR) were used to determine convergent validity. Accordingly, the observed variables with factor loadings under 0.60 were excluded from the data analysis (Table 1).

The discriminant validity of the constructs, which surpassed correlation for the chosen constructs for research, was shown using comparative estimations of the square root of the AVE for each construct (see Table 2) (Hilkenmeier et al., 2020). Additionally, none of the component-to-component correlation estimates were higher than 0.70, which may indicate the existence of multicollinearity in the present investigation (Hair et al., 2019). Additionally, results for discriminant validity support the components' validity for research hypotheses testing (Table 2) as the values of diagonal elements are larger than the off-diagonal elements.

**Table 1: Construct Loading and Statistical Measures**

Variables	Items	Loadings	Mean	S. D
<b>Motivation</b>				
<b>Motivation</b>	<b>Transcendence</b> (Cronbach $\alpha$ = 0.818; AVE = 2.13; CR =0.911)			
	To improve mental health	0.719	4.21	0.52
	To find my inner self	0.801	4.09	0.71
	To connect with nature	0.667	4.55	0.56
	<b>Rejuvenation</b> (Cronbach $\alpha$ = 0.782; AVE = 2.36; CR =0.92)			
	To improve physical health	0.823	4.01	0.43
	To feel healthier	0.776	4.53	0.56
	To revive over me	0.705	4.27	0.59
	<b>Escapism</b> (Cronbach $\alpha$ = 0.753; AVE = 2.07; CR =0.901)			
	To get away from daily routine	0.688	4.59	0.82
	Get away from the pressures of work	0.742	4.39	0.57
	To take an escape from a motors lifestyle	0.731	4.16	0.51
	<b>Relaxation</b> (Cronbach $\alpha$ = 0.753; AVE = 1.46; CR =0.907)			
	To experience something new and exciting	0.821	4.08	0.55
	To experience calmness	0.754	4.44	0.54
	To feel relaxed	0.596	4.76	0.67
To live energetically	0.677	4.52	0.48	
<b>Experience</b> (Cronbach $\alpha$ = 0.764; AVE = 1.53; CR = 0.926)				
<b>Experience</b>	On this vacation, I felt more satisfied with my life	.748	4.61	0.74
	This vacation made me more knowledgeable and stimulated mycuriosity	.717	4.02	0.57
	This holiday experience encouraged me to understand me better	.683	4.71	0.62
	After this trip, my perception of life changed	.702	4.59	0.59
	I felt free from the pressures of life on this trip	.732	4.43	0.54
<b>Satisfaction</b> (Cronbach $\alpha$ = 0.802; AVE = 1.47; CR = 0.921)				
<b>Satisfaction</b>	I am satisfied with my experience during this wellness holiday	.599	4.75	0.56
	My experiences on this holiday exceeded my expectations	.684	4.51	0.53
	I am happy about my decision to choose this wellness center	.769	4.52	0.64
	I have enjoyed a lot myself this wellness holiday	.771	4.03	0.52
<b>Social Support</b> (Cronbach $\alpha$ = 0.747; AVE = 1.37; CR = 0.890)				
<b>Social Support</b>	My Family and friends provide me an emotional support	.657	4.55	0.52
	My Family and friends encouraged me about solo travel	.702	4.62	0.54
	My colleagues provide support for travelling alone	.729	4.37	0.51
	My family helps me to take solo travel decisions	.614	4.61	0.57

**Table 2**

	<b>M1</b>	<b>M2</b>	<b>M3</b>	<b>M4</b>	<b>Ex</b>	<b>SAT</b>	<b>SS</b>
M1	1.45						
M2	0.39	1.53					
M3	0.56	0.61	<b>1.43</b>				
M4	0.43	0.44	0.55	1.20			
Ex	0.21	0.53	0.63	0.33	1.23		
SAT	0.47	0.57	0.34	0.64	0.50	1.21	
SS	0.49	0.63	0.42	0.51	0.41	0.62	1.17

Diagonal elements (bold) are the square root of variance shared between the constructs and their measures (AVE) and off-diagonal elements are the correlations between the constructs.

Note: M1: Transcendence; M2: Rejuvenation; M3: Escapism; M4: Relaxation; Ex: Experience; SAT: Satisfaction; SS: Social support.

## Measurement Model and Hypotheses Testing

Utilizing maximum likelihood estimation and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), the measurement model was evaluated. Four factors were identified and tested for Motivation (considering factors: Transcendence; Rejuvenation; Escapism; Relaxation); Experience; Satisfaction; Social Support while considering the measurement model. Only the constructs above the regression weight of .60 were considered. Finally, using the suggested thresholds, the measurement model showed the following good fit: Normed  $\chi^2 = 1.265$ ; Goodness-of-fit Index (GFI) = 0.97; AGFI = 0.99; CFI = 0.99; IFI = 0.97; NFI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.062 and SRMR = 0.071 (Hair et al., 2019).

Thus, it confirms our 1<sup>st</sup> Hypothesis of the research that the wellness tourism motivation of solo female travellers is a second-order factor that is comprised of four first-order factors (i.e., transcendence, rejuvenation, escapism, and relaxation).

Further, the structural model was analyzed to test the hypotheses developed in the study. At this stage, the moderating influence of social support was not considered. The structural model depicted a good fit: Normed  $\chi^2 = 1.502$ ; GFI = 0.95; AGFI = 0.89; CFI = 0.99; NFI = 0.99; TLI = 0.97; RNFI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.049 and SRMR = 0.084 (Hair et al., 2015). Findings indicate that transcendence ( $\beta = 0.592$ ;  $t = 6.232$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), rejuvenation ( $\beta = 0.467$ ;  $t = 2.765$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), escapism ( $\beta = 0.232$ ;  $t = 5.106$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ) and relaxation ( $\beta = 0.409$ ;  $t = 2.221$ ;  $p = 0.00$ ) have a positive and significant impact on tourist experience which further influence the satisfaction level of solo women travellers ( $\beta = 0.724$ ;  $t = 2.254$ ;  $p = 0.05$ ), thereby confirms the relationship between constructs and confirms the H2 and H3 of the research as well and lead us to accept the same.

Further, the moderating influence of social support was tested with structural equation modeling. The model fit indices were checked for the authenticity of the tested model. The findings revealed that Normed  $\chi^2 = 1.607$ ; TLI = 0.97; IFI = 0.98; CFI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.042 and SRMR = 0.076, which specified that all the estimates lie within the threshold criteria and are acceptable (Hair et al., 2015). The study results further demonstrated there is a connection between transcendence and experience was defined significantly among solo women travellers having social support ( $\beta = 0.683$ ;  $t = 4.605$ ;  $p = 0.01$ ). Likewise, when the influence of social support on solo travellers was tested with ( $\beta = 0.518$ ;  $t = 4.782$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) rejuvenation on experience, it also depicted a significant increase in impact between the constructs. For escapism and experience, social support again defined its significance as a moderator ( $\beta = 0.388$ ;  $t = 6.902$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). In addition, the relationship between relaxation and tourists'

experience where is also found significant among solo women travellers having social support ( $\beta = 0.567$ ;  $t = 4.010$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Overall, the motivation when supported by social support helps in increasing the experience (Xiong et al., 2021; Chang et al., 2021) of solo women travellers. Lastly, the underlying association between tourists' experiences and satisfaction among solo women travellers was also found to have significantly increased with the moderation effect of the social support ( $\beta = 0.769$ ;  $t = 2.264$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) (Sirgy, Kruger, Lee & Yu, 2011). Thereby H4 of the research is also accepted.

## CONCLUSION

The principal objective of the research was to construct a conceptual framework that encompassed solo women travellers' motivations, experiences, and satisfaction with social support. The current research defined the motivations for travelling to retreat centres in India as transcendence; rejuvenation; escapism and relaxation (Parmer, 2017). The findings provide sufficient support that travel motivations associated with wellness retreat centres derive a significant experience and satisfaction amongst solo women travellers (Smith & Puczko, 2008; Heintzman, 2013; Smith & Reisinger, 2013). It may be the post-COVID-19 situation revival that has made the women decide to travel alone (Economic times, 2022) for wellness getaways (Hindustan times, 2022). Meanwhile, social support has been recognized as a significant contributor to enhancing the tourist experience (Kim & Tussyadiah, 2013). Considering this, the moderating impact of social support was realized and tested in this research, which was found to play an important role in increasing the experience and life satisfaction of solo women travellers. The results are found to be reinforced by previous studies accomplished by Karagoz, Işık, Doğru and Zhang (2021) and Kim and Tussyadiah (2013). Hence, the authorities while branding and marketing the destinations or services are required to give due concern to the societal impact the women have on their decision to solo traveling (Karagöz et al., 2021).

## Theoretical Implications

This study contains both theoretical and psychological information that could be useful to the government in deciding what destinations and services would provide the most value to developing and potential tourism markets for women. Marketers are advised to emphasize the experiential components of the destinations to the tourists who are avidly seeking their mental well-being by partaking in tourism activities. To meet the psychological as well as the social support mechanism of this tourist sector and increase tourist influx, it is also advised that the authorities capitalize on

social and emotional values, brand the destinations as wellness tourism destinations, and offer satisfactory services.

## Practical Implications

The outcomes of this research have also practical implications. Though solo women travel is a growing segment of both the domestic and international tourism markets, wellness service providers should prioritize the quality of service. Additionally, the current scenario offers possibilities for developing awareness campaigns intended to improve the favorable image of the destination among women. And ensuring them a safe and secure travel experience to retain positive and high social support while travelling alone. Moreover, security is one of the main priorities for women solo travellers, so destination marketers and managers should promote a safe and comfortable travel culture. This could render solo women travellers happy and satisfied even at ease.

## LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Similar to all studies, the present research does have some restrictions. Since the data is retained from women travellers only, future research can include the other segments and groups as Millennials Gen X, or Gen Y in a cross-sectional design. The research is undertaken with the selective retreat centres; however, the results may vary with other wellness restart centres based on the level of services, location, etc.

Also, the research gives the direction to future researchers to conduct the analysis based on demography which due to the lack of time was not considered and taken. Again, it falls under the limitation of the research that the results may vary concerning the nationality and other demographic parameters and hence be analyzed in the future.

Lastly, this research demonstrates solo female travellers' motivation to travel for wellness holidays, as well as their experience and satisfaction at retreat centres, and the subsequent effect of social support. Therefore, it is recommended that future research should emphasize other constructs such as perception, quality of life, and behavioral intention of solo women travellers in the field of wellness tourism.

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