

Consumer response to the new normal: examining the role of anticipated recovery, smart governance and prosocial behavior in driving satisfaction

Response to the
new normal

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Abstract

Purpose – Drawing on the stimulus–organism–response framework, this study examined the environmental stimuli driving tourists' internal, or organismic, states. In addition, the authors investigated the association of the identified organismic variables with the response variables during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the study examined how the associations between tourists' anticipation of recovery and the national government's smart governance, on one hand, and tourists' desire to travel domestically, their attitude toward domestic travel and their willingness to exhibit prosocial behaviors, on the other, further drive the satisfaction they derive from domestic travel.

Design/methodology/approach – The authors used an online questionnaire to collect self-report, single-wave data from individuals residing in India, an emerging market ($N = 421$).

Findings – The findings demonstrate (1) the association of anticipated recovery on the desire to travel and prosocial behavior; (2) the association of smart governance on attitude (although negative); (3) the association of desire, attitude and prosocial behavior on satisfaction; and (4) the lack of any moderation effect for perceived severity.

Originality/value – This study is the first empirical study to investigate the impact of tourists' perceptions and dispositions and the efficacy of the national government on tourists' desire to travel domestically and on their satisfaction with domestic travel. The findings can help emerging market multinationals and global brands engage better with domestic consumers in emerging markets within the context of the current pandemic. In addition, the findings can help to prepare these players to handle future disruptions caused by global health contingencies.

Keywords Consumer satisfaction, Consumer dispositions, Emerging markets, New normal, Smart governance, Tourism recovery

Paper type Research paper



1. Introduction

The world is currently experiencing one of the worst pandemics in human history due to the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The impact of the pandemic on the tourism and hospitality industry has been particularly devastating and has received significant attention. Leading journals have published a large volume of studies addressing a variety of tourism-

related challenges related to the persistent COVID-19 pandemic. These include altered tourist behavior (Farkić *et al.*, 2020; Gallego and Font, 2020; Kock *et al.*, 2020; Qiu *et al.*, 2020), the impact of quarantines and travel restrictions (Choquet and Sam-Lefebvre, 2020), postpandemic travel (Li *et al.*, 2020), industry transformation (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020), the role of smart governance and technology (Choi *et al.*, 2021; Fennell, 2020), discrimination against tourists (Tse and Tung, 2020) and the pandemic's long-term effects on short-term rental spaces (Dolnicar and Zare, 2020), among others.

Despite the substantial number of studies focusing on varied aspects of tourism in the context of the pandemic, a comprehensive review of the literature reveals that most studies have neglected to examine the impacts of the anticipated recovery of tourism activities and governmental response to the pandemic on tourists' perception and intentions. In fact, as pandemic restrictions have eased and tourist movement has increased (Business Standard, 2021), it becomes even more crucial to investigate the factors that may impact tourist behavior and the consequent pace and trajectory of traffic at tourist destinations. Furthermore, most studies have addressed pandemic-related tourism issues in developed countries (e.g. Talwar *et al.*, 2022, 2023), while paying little attention to developing countries, such as India. India is a particularly relevant case because it had a vibrant tourism sector prior to the onset of the pandemic (Kaushal and Srivastava, 2021), and it was among the most impacted countries in the world in terms of the number of COVID-19 infections and fatalities (John Hopkins University and Medicine, 2021). Because crises such as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic require the quick and efficacious intervention of all tourism stakeholders (e.g. Hadjilias *et al.*, 2021), understanding all related aspects in various geographical settings is essential.

We thus posit that the lack of research on anticipated recovery and governmental response represents a significant gap in the literature, which leaves the public policy aspect of the pandemic less understood in terms of its role in tourism recovery. We contend further that the narrow geographical scope of investigations (i.e. developed countries) is another gap in research, which has prevented researchers and practitioners from understanding tourists' perspectives in emerging markets. This lacuna is particularly problematic because emerging markets are essential from the perspective of international marketing (e.g. Epaminonda *et al.*, 2020; Herstein *et al.*, 2017; Pereira *et al.*, 2019; Singh *et al.*, 2021).

The extant research has underscored the pace of the tourism sector's recovery as a key consideration for determining the time it will take for the sector to become profitable again (Choquet and Sam-Lefebvre, 2020; Gössling *et al.*, 2020; Khanna, 2020; Qiu *et al.*, 2020). Noting that the satisfaction tourists derive from engaging in touristic activities has fallen precipitously due to fear of infection and the perceived severity of the pandemic (Hong *et al.*, 2020), scholars have expressed concerns that recovery may be an uphill task. The decline in satisfaction is a serious challenge, which is often linked to the intention to reuse or readopt a product or service (Alalwan, 2020; Prentice and Kadan, 2019) and thus may play a role in delaying the tourism sector's recovery. Thus, as the pandemic recedes, firms in the tourism sector must focus their attention on the issue of declining satisfaction to ensure that it does not become an impediment on the sector's path toward recovery. We suggest that reversing this decrease in satisfaction will require concerned stakeholders to focus more than ever on the factors that are traditionally known to increase consumer engagement and impact anticipated emotions (Christofi *et al.*, 2018; Maher and Mady, 2010).

It is equally important to note here that any discussion about the recovery of an industrial sector cannot be complete without contemplating the role of government. Indeed, recent research regarding COVID-19 and tourism has discussed the critical role of governments in promoting the industry's recovery by instituting mechanisms to ensure safe travel through smart technologies (Assaf and Scuderi, 2020; Fong *et al.*, 2021; Sharma and Nicolau, 2020).

The Indian government has, for example, sought to allay fears regarding travel during the pandemic by introducing smart governance initiatives, such as contact tracing apps and strict checks at every travel hub (Thakur, 2020). In addition, governments have enforced rules that require individuals' prosocial behavior, such as mask-wearing and social distancing, and thereby help to control the spread of infection (Chi *et al.*, 2021). These efforts, too, may have impacted tourists' perceptions. Although such rules and various digital initiatives have become increasingly common during the pandemic, it is unclear if they have actually helped to mitigate tourists' fear of travel and to enhance their confidence and satisfaction. Thus, we suggest that examining the role of smart governance and public health measures in driving tourism recovery by impacting tourists' perception will provide theorists and practitioners with useful new insights.

Based on the above discussion, we propose to examine the interplay of a set of factors—both external and internal to tourists—to understand the antecedents of tourists' response to the sector's recovery and smart governance as well as tourists' prosocial behaviors and disposition toward traveling during the pandemic. To this end, we advance and investigate the following research questions (RQs):

- RQ1. How do prosocial behavior, tourists' attitudes and tourists' desire to travel domestically associate with anticipated recovery and smart governance, on the one hand, and tourist satisfaction, on the other?
- RQ2. How, if at all, does the perceived severity of the pandemic affect the anticipated associations?

Because the proposed conceptual model combines external and internal factors and tourists' responses to them as measured through satisfaction, we ground the anticipated associations in the stimulus–organism–response (SOR) framework (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). Our model proposes anticipated recovery and smart governance as external environmental factors, or stimuli, and prosocial behavior, attitude to engage in domestic tourism, and desire to travel domestically, which sequentially impact tourist satisfaction, as dependent variables measuring response. In addition to the direct associations mentioned above, we investigate the moderation effect of the perceived severity of the pandemic on the relationship between tourist-level organismic dispositions and satisfaction; in this way, we aim to capture the role of individual differences in threat perception and the resulting impacts on derived satisfaction. To advance the conceptualized model, we test the proposed associations by analyzing data collected from 421 individuals in India.

Our study's findings inform theory and practice by offering a deeper and wider understanding of the ways in which the pandemic—the so-called *new normal*—has transformed consumer perceptions and responses in emerging markets. Our study is particularly relevant for emerging market multinationals and global tourism companies, who can utilize our findings to devise strategies that have a domestic focus and can, therefore, promote a more rapid return to previrus levels and beyond.

The remainder of the article is structured as follows. Section 2 presents the conceptual background followed by the hypotheses development. The next section presents the research methodology, with subsequent sections detailing and discussing the results. The article concludes by highlighting the implications, limitations and areas for future research.

2. Background literature

2.1 Conceptual background: SOR framework

Mehrabian and Russell (1974) first introduced the SOR framework as a way to investigate an organism's responses to external stimuli by understanding its nature and the internal state of

the organism, which drive the response sequentially. This theory is suitable in the current context for following reasons. First, recent studies have used it effectively to conceptualize changes in tourist behavior due to the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. [Talwar et al., 2023](#)). In fact, this framework is quite popular in the consumer behavior literature ([Jabeen et al., 2022](#); [Talwar et al., 2021b](#)) and in tourism studies to understand how various contextual factors impact individuals' experiences and emotions ([Hew et al., 2018](#); [Zhang and Xu, 2019](#)). Second, tourists' behavior has become all the more complex and less predictable due to the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic. Because it is conceptualized to gauge the impact of the changing external environment on consumers' response through changes in their internal state, the SOR may be better able to conceptualize this uncertainty.

As mentioned previously, to extend SOR to the present context, we operationalized the stimuli (S) through two variables: (1) anticipated recovery from the COVID-19-induced slowdown and (2) smart governance by the government. Next, to capture the internal state of the organism (O), we used three variables: (1) prosocial behavior, (2) attitude to engage in domestic tourism and (3) desire to travel domestically. In addition, we conceptualized the response (R) as the satisfaction tourists derive from engaging in domestic tourism activity. Finally, to make the model even more COVID-context-sensitive, we tested whether tourists' perceptions of the threat presented by the pandemic impact the strength of the associations between the variables measuring those tourists' internal state and the satisfaction they derive from undertaking touristic travel domestically. The moderating variable that we proposed in this regard is perceived severity. Apart from the direct and moderating influences explained above, we also considered four sociodemographic variables (i.e. gender, age, educational qualification and economic background) as controls to understand their potential confounding effects on the outcome variable, i.e. satisfaction. [Table 1](#) offers the operational definitions of the study variables, while [Figure 1](#) presents the conceptual model.

Variable	Description	Exemplary reference
Anticipated recovery	A tourist's expectations about the tourism sector's return to normal operations	Fong et al. (2021)
Smart governance	The government's use of smart digital technologies, such as mobile apps and text messages to manage processes during quarantine, contact tracing, and social isolation during a pandemic	Choi et al. (2021)
Desire to travel domestically	An individual's yearning to travel domestically	Gursoy et al. (2022) , Lee et al. (2012)
Attitude	An individual's favorable or unfavorable predisposition or belief regarding an object, person, event, institution, or any aspect of the individual's world	Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) , Ajzen (1987)
Prosocial behavior	A tourist's desire to contribute positively to the social, natural, and economic environment of the tourist destination; this study also includes tourists' propensity to engage in socially responsible behavior, such as mask-wearing during the pandemic	Frost and Frost (2021) , Gao et al. (2017)
Satisfaction	An individual's emotional or cognitive response to an experience after purchasing it	Giese and Cote (2009)
Perceived severity	An individual's belief about the degree of COVID-19's seriousness and the possible health concerns from contracting the virus	Laato et al. (2020) , Rahmati Najarkolaei et al. (2015)

Table 1.
Operational
description of the study
variables

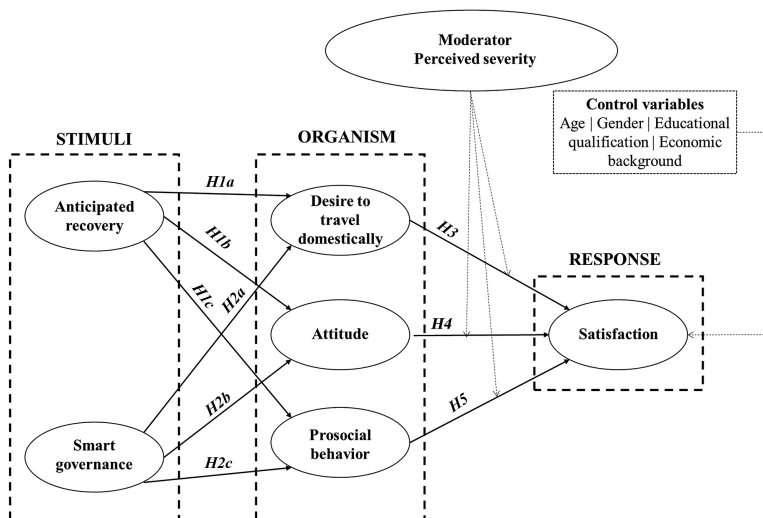


Figure 1.
The conceptual model
based on the SOR
framework

2.2 Stimuli and organism

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic brought all touristic activity and travel to a complete standstill, causing the sector to suffer extensive losses in terms of revenue and employment. Currently, the most stringent pandemic control measures are loosening, and stakeholders, scholars and other observers have expressed hope for an increase in tourism activity. However, the fear of contracting COVID-19 has made tourists more risk-averse in their tourism-related decisions (Zhang *et al.*, 2020). This risk-aversion can be seen as a physiological immune system response, which the literature describes as behavioral changes that tourists exhibit to ensure they do not contract a disease while traveling (Schaller and Park, 2011). Indeed, travelers and tourists have been identified as the most significant contributors to the spread of COVID-19 infection (Falk and Hagsten, 2020); therefore, the risk of the spread of infection is high in tourism settings. Against the backdrop of such fear, the revival of touristic activity will depend on how safe people feel in making the decision to travel for pleasure as pandemic-related restrictions ease. This question is even more pertinent for domestic travel because as travel restrictions are gradually lifted, domestic tourism is expected to be the first to recover from the effects of the pandemic (Gössling *et al.*, 2020). However, the mere removal of restrictions is not sufficient because tourists' intentions to travel will depend on their expectations regarding the ability of tourist destinations to recover from the pandemic (Gössling *et al.*, 2020). Thus, anticipated recovery can play a role in tourists' decision-making. In addition, because the pandemic is a public health emergency in which governments play a substantial role, smart governance by the concerned government can be another important factor in tourists' decision-making. Thus, our model conceptualizes anticipated recovery and smart governance as external environmental factors or stimuli. Similarly, as explained in the preceding parts, we captured tourists' decision-making through prosocial behavior, attitude and desire to travel domestically. The study thus theorizes that the stimuli of anticipated recovery and smart governance impact tourists' prosocial behavior, their attitudinal disposition and desire to travel domestically. Because scholars have not previously examined these associations, we have no *a priori* evidence upon which to draw. However, the plausibility of these associations is undeniable.

2.2.1 Anticipated recovery. In the simplest terms, anticipated recovery refers to tourists' expectations about the return of the tourism sector to normal operations (Fong *et al.*, 2021);

it thus captures tourists' perceptions that "all is well" with the sector. Based on prior findings that risk-aversion causes tourists to exhibit behavioral changes (e.g. Schaller and Park, 2011; Zhang *et al.*, 2020), we speculate that people will desire to undertake touristic travel only if they expect the sector to recover quickly. If individuals are not optimistic about recovery, they will perceive their own uncertainty as a signal that something remains amiss in the wake of the pandemic, and as a result, they will be less disposed to travel. Furthermore, if people do not feel that the sector is recovering well, they will not be favorably predisposed to undertake touristic travel. More specifically, people's attitude or evaluation of a behavior (i.e. undertaking touristic travel in the present context)—i.e. its favorability (Steinmetz *et al.*, 2016)—is also likely to be affected by their anticipation of recovery. One way or another, anticipated recovery is thus likely to significantly impact individuals' desire to travel and attitude toward travel—particularly domestic travel because it resumed before international travel. Hence, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1a. Anticipated recovery is positively associated with the desire to travel domestically.

H1b. Anticipated recovery is positively associated with attitude toward domestic touristic travel.

Prosocial behavior captures the organismic state of an individual's willingness to travel to help the tourism sector. We identified two streams of literature on which to draw to provide deeper insight into prosocial behavior and the importance of anticipated recovery in this context. One stream relies upon the cultural perspective to present collectivist culture as an antecedent of prosocial behavior (e.g. Bénabou and Tirole, 2006; Malik *et al.*, 2021a). Drawing upon this approach, we anticipate that because our study is set in India—a collectivist culture in which the needs of the masses are considered greater than the needs of individuals (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005), people will avoid touristic travel until they believe they are no longer putting others at risk. This would make anticipated recovery an important consideration.

The second stream of literature is related to volunteer tourism, which we interpret as another expression of prosocial behavior. Volunteer tourism implies that tourists may attempt to travel as soon as possible after a crippling tourism event so that they can help the sector to recover (Han *et al.*, 2020; Wearing *et al.*, 2020). This underscores people's concern for recovery and supports our assertion regarding the association between anticipated recovery and prosocial behavior. In sum, although scholars have not previously examined the association between anticipated recovery and prosocial behavior, we expect a positive association between the two based on the preceding discussion. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1c. Anticipated recovery is positively associated with domestic tourists' prosocial behavior.

2.2.2 Smart governance. The literature has noted that pandemics can take a significant negative emotional toll, which often manifests as fear (Ahorsu *et al.*, 2020) and risk-averse tourist behavior (Zhang *et al.*, 2020). The government's timely action and effective performance in addressing the issues arising during a pandemic can reduce these negative effects to some extent (Lau *et al.*, 2010). Scholars have made similar observations regarding the governments' critical role in the case of the recent pandemic. For instance, Fong *et al.* (2021) observed that governments can substantially impact people's confidence in undertaking touristic travel during the COVID-19 pandemic. Other studies align with this view, urging governments to develop safe and effective pandemic responses to reconnect the world of travel and tourism (e.g. Mandić and Kennell, 2021). We build upon these observations by capturing governments' role via smart governance, expecting it to induce a positive organismic state in tourists.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, governments have deployed various technology-based tracking and prevention methods to ensure smart governance. Here, smart governance refers to the use of smart digital technologies, such as mobile apps and text messages, to control the spread of infection. Drawing evidence from various parts of the world, scholars have confirmed that smart governance has increased governments' effectiveness in combating the recent pandemic. For example, [Choi et al.'s \(2021\)](#) study, which focused on South Korea, revealed that smart governance via adequate technological interventions helped to increase people's confidence in the government's ability to manage the COVID-19 crisis. Similarly, [Thakur \(2020\)](#) noted that the Indian government introduced several smart initiatives—for example, requiring travelers to use “Arogya Setu,” a real-time contact tracing app that informs users if they may have been in contact with a COVID-19 patient. Such initiatives may indeed have functioned as positive stimuli to increase people's desire to engage in domestic touristic travel and develop a favorable attitude toward it. Because the extant literature on Indian consumers also warns of a perceptible resistance to smart initiatives and technologies ([Malik et al., 2021b, 2022](#); [Nguyen and Malik, 2022a, b](#)), however, this relationship may not be so straightforward. We suggest examining the association between smart governance, on the one hand, and the desire to travel domestically and attitude toward domestic travel, on the other. Such efforts can clarify if smart governance exerted a positive impact or if consumer resistance to technological innovations eroded the gains that could have been made. Hence, we propose the following hypotheses:

H2a. Smart governance is positively associated with the desire to travel domestically.

H2b. Smart governance is positively associated with attitude toward domestic touristic travel.

The extant literature supports a positive association between trust in government, on the one hand, and people's willingness to adhere to recommended behaviors during health emergencies and their actual prosocial behaviors, on the other. Past examples of these prosocial behaviors include following preventive measures to reduce the spread of the swine flu ([Rubin et al., 2009](#)), complying with social distancing norms during the Ebola outbreak ([Blair et al., 2017](#)), getting inoculated to control seasonal influenza ([Verger et al., 2018](#)) and making economic sacrifices to protect the environment ([Taniguchi and Marshall, 2018](#)). Scholars have observed people adhering to mandatory pandemic prevention interventions revealing the dependence of people on government mandates (e.g. [Betsch et al., 2020](#); [Stavrinos et al., 2020](#)). In sum, prosocial behavior is driven not only by peer influence, as recent studies have shown (e.g. [Andrews et al., 2020](#); [Chi et al., 2021](#)), but also and to a large extent by government action. These findings offer a sufficient basis for us to suggest the likely impact of smart governance initiatives on people's prosocial behavior, with such initiatives motivating individuals to contribute to the recovery of their country's stressed tourism sector by undertaking domestic touristic travel while also adhering to all pandemic control measures. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2c. Smart governance is positively associated with domestic tourists' prosocial behavior.

2.3 Organism and response

2.3.1 Desire to travel domestically. Recent studies have highlighted the fact that pandemic-related restrictions on travel to tourist destinations have adversely impacted the well-being of individuals interested in touristic travel ([Yang and Wong, 2020](#)). This adverse impact has triggered a feeling of nostalgia and—as a coping mechanism—a heightened desire to undertake touristic travel as soon as possible ([Wang et al., 2021](#)). The existing findings on

consumer behavior, in general, have noted that the fulfillment of a strong desire produces a sense of satisfaction (Spreng *et al.*, 1996) and well-being (Prentice and Loureiro, 2018). Existing scholarship has likewise confirmed this association in the specific context of tourism. For instance, Boccia *et al.* (2020) classified consumer satisfaction based on the desire to spend time in a place and noted that tourists with a stronger desire were the most likely to be satisfied with their stay. Based on these findings, which are well-grounded in the consumer behavior and tourism literature, we anticipate that people's increasing desire to undertake touristic travel as soon as COVID-19 restrictions is eased domestically will result in a response in the form of higher satisfaction. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

- H3.* The desire to travel domestically is positively associated with the satisfaction tourists derive from engaging in domestic tourism during the pandemic.

2.3.2 Attitude. Scholars have investigated the association between attitude toward a particular behavior and satisfaction in multiple contexts. Most of these studies have been guided by the theory of planned behavior (TPB; Ajzen, 1991). In addition, the role of attitude in driving behavioral intentions and behavior-related variables, such as satisfaction, is well examined and established in the marketing literature. Interestingly, Armitage and Conner's (2001) meta-analysis of 185 articles based on the TPB revealed that attitude alone explained up to 49% of the variation in behavioral intentions. Many studies in the tourism and hospitality context have also used the TPB to explicate the relationship between attitude and satisfaction (Grilli *et al.*, 2021; Huang and Hsu, 2009; Zailani *et al.*, 2016). Observing the efficacy of attitude in driving consumer responses and outcomes, we speculate that people's attitude toward domestic touristic travel will impact the satisfaction they derive from their touristic activities during the pandemic. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

- H4.* Attitude toward domestic travel is positively associated with the satisfaction tourists derive from engaging in domestic tourism during the pandemic.

2.3.3 Prosocial behavior. The theoretical backdrop of the norm-activation theory advances our understanding of tourists' prosocial behavior (Frost and Frost, 2021). The norm-activation theory asserts that tourists exhibit prosocial behavior when they become aware of and take responsibility for the consequences their actions may produce for others (Frost and Frost, 2021; Gao *et al.*, 2017). An extremely relevant example of prosocial behavior in the tourism setting is volunteer tourism. Volunteer tourism means that people undertake touristic activities to benefit a destination or the tourism stakeholders involved (Wearing *et al.*, 2020). Interestingly, volunteer tourism behavior is more obvious during the recovery phase from a disaster when tourists wish to make a positive impact at their destinations (Wearing *et al.*, 2020); evidence supports this assertion during the COVID pandemic as well (Chi *et al.*, 2021). Advancing the discussion, we assert the need to understand that prosocial behaviors are primarily driven by a personal need for existential authenticity (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2017); fulfilling these existential authenticity needs, moreover, can lead to a satisfied touristic experience. Synthesizing and extrapolating from the accumulated knowledge regarding prosocial behaviors, in general, and during crises in the tourism sector, in particular, we expect that tourists' internal state of willingness to exhibit prosocial behavior to support tourism recovery will evoke a sense of existential authenticity, which will, in turn, increase the satisfaction they derive from engaging in domestic tourism during the pandemic. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

- H5.* Prosocial behavior is positively associated with the satisfaction tourists derive from engaging in domestic tourism during the pandemic.

2.4 Moderation effect of perceived severity

Protection motivation theory identifies the perceived severity of a particular situation among the factors that determine people's intentions to safeguard themselves from a threat (Rogers, 1975). Perceived severity, a quite popular construct in consumer behavior research regarding the impact of fear appeals, is defined as the extent to which individuals perceive themselves to be at risk from threat (Laato *et al.*, 2020). Scholars have found that fear of a situation is inversely related to the satisfaction an individual derives from engaging in an activity (Faullant *et al.*, 2011). In the specific context of the pandemic, scholars have noted that engaging in touristic travel during such a health crisis elicits feelings of guilt and fear (e.g. Sembada and Kalantari, 2020), which have the potential to reduce satisfaction derived from the touristic experience. This leads us to wonder whether perceived severity, which is likely to vary across individuals, will impact the strength of the positive association between the variables capturing tourists' organismic/internal states (i.e. desire to travel domestically, attitude and prosocial behavior) and the variable capturing response (i.e. satisfaction). Although, to our knowledge, scholars have not yet examined the moderation effect of perceived severity in the tourism setting, we propose the association to explore the effect of a variable that is contextually relevant and can yield deeper insights into the behavioral dynamics surrounding touristic travel during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, we anticipate the moderation effect to be negative because fear arising from perceived severity is likely to reduce the satisfaction individuals derive from undertaking touristic travel during the pandemic. Hence, we propose the following:

- H6.* Perceived severity negatively moderates the associations of (a) desire to travel domestically, (b) attitude and (c) prosocial behavior with the satisfaction tourists derive from engaging in domestic tourism during the pandemic.

2.5 Control variables

A review of prior research on domestic tourism reveals that tourists' demographic characteristics can significantly impact touristic intentions. These differences, moreover, may be accentuated during times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Bae and Chang, 2020). The extant literature supports this contention. For instance, Das and Tiwari (2021) investigated travel intentions during the COVID-19 pandemic, finding that women were more likely to perceive the disease to be highly severe and thus exhibited an increased preference for protective equipment. Similarly, prior research indicates that travel risk perceptions decrease with age (Neuburger and Egger, 2020). Thus, scholars must consider and control for the confounding effect of such factors. Our study, therefore, uses tourists' gender, age, educational qualification and economic background as control variables and models them to control for their confounding effects on the outcome variable, i.e. satisfaction.

3. Research methodology

3.1 Instrument

We designed a survey instrument to collect cross-sectional data to test the proposed hypotheses. The survey instrument included two stimuli-related variables, three variables representing tourists' organismic state, and one variable capturing tourists' response. The study comprised 26 items; of these, four were intended to collect sociodemographic details related to age, gender, educational qualification and economic background. The remaining 22 items measured the six variables of interest. Responses to each item in the survey instrument were collected on a seven-point Likert scale.

All items were extracted from prevalidated scales (see Table 3), which we adapted to suit the COVID-19 setting. To this end, we revised the prevalidated scales and prepared a preliminary questionnaire. To evaluate the instrument's content validity, we presented it to a panel of three

experts (two professors in the area of hospitality and tourism and one professor in the area of public policy) and requested their feedback regarding potential improvements. The panel made pertinent suggestions, which we incorporated to improve the preliminary draft of the survey instrument. Further, to assess the instrument's face validity, we invited three doctoral scholars who had undertaken touristic travel domestically during the preceding three months to offer feedback. They suggested rewording some items to clarify their meaning, and we revised the instrument again to incorporate their suggestions. As a final check for face validity, we piloted the revised instrument with ten respondents who represented the target group of the study. Their feedback and minor suggestions helped us to further revise the instrument so that it was simple, clear, unambiguous and easily understandable. This process of ensuring the instrument's face and content validity aligns with the process followed by recent studies (e.g. [Dhir et al., 2021](#)). Because India is a country of diverse languages and subcultures ([Dheer et al., 2015](#)), we also translated the survey instrument into the local language, Hindi. However, we did not use the translated version because the respondents who were interested and eligible to participate were comfortable with the instrument in the English language.

3.2 Data collection

Consistent with prudent pandemic control precautions, we collected the data using an online survey link. The choice of an online mode of data collection was also guided by the fact that even before the pandemic, online surveys had emerged as a popular method of data collection primarily due to their cost-effective, quick and convenient nature (e.g. [Dhir et al., 2021](#)). To ensure that we recruited participants qualified to respond to our survey, we provided adequate information regarding the study's premise and its boundary conditions to determine what constituted domestic tourism. In this regard, we clarified that any travel more than 50 km away from the concerned person's residence for the purpose of tourism and recreation was considered to be domestic tourism. We also added a screening condition requiring that the respondents had undertaken domestic tourism in the preceding three months. A total of 421 participants completed the survey without missing data and were considered eligible for the study.

Regarding the demographic distribution of the sample, 52.3% of our respondents were men. In terms of age, 27.6% of the respondents were 25 years of age or younger, 32.1% were between 26 and 35 of age, 36.3% of the respondents were between 36 and 45 years of age and 4% were 46 years or older. Regarding educational qualifications, 71.3% of our respondents held a master's degree or equivalent. In terms of economic background, 37.3% of the respondents earned less than one million rupees a year. [Table 2](#) presents the detailed demographic distribution of our sample.

Demographic variable		Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	222 (52.7%)
	Female	199 (47.3%)
Age	25 years or younger	116 (27.6%)
	26–35 years	135 (32.1%)
	36–45 years	153 (36.3%)
	46 years or older	17 (4%)
Economic background	Less than 1 million INR	157 (37.3%)
	1–2 million INR	158 (37.5%)
	2–3 million INR	89 (21.1%)
	More than 3 million INR	17 (4%)
Educational qualification	Bachelor's degree	121 (28.7%)
	Master's degree	300 (71.3%)

Table 2.
Demographic
distribution of our
sample

				Response to the new normal
Study measures	Measurement items	CFA	SEM	
Smart governance (SG) <i>Fong et al. (2021)</i>	SG1: Citizens received updated information on cases, guidance on health precautions and policy measures through Indian government websites, text messages and mobile apps	0.75	0.75	
	SG2: The Indian government ensured transparency in information sharing and public communications of COVID-19 information and policy measures through government websites, text messages and mobile apps	0.76	0.76	
	SG3: Citizens followed social distancing measures and exercised precautionary behavior voluntarily as they were well-informed and included, which fostered a sense of trust and responsibility	0.74	0.74	
	SG4: Trust in the Indian government was strengthened by wide-reaching public health communication, swift policy responses and action on challenges (e.g. making “public masks” available)	0.74	0.74	
Anticipated recovery (AR) [#] <i>Fong et al. (2021)</i>	AR1: I expect the demand for domestic tourism services in India to increase very soon	0.83	0.82	
	AR2: I expect domestic tourism in India to be back to normal very soon	0.80	0.82	
	AR3: I expect the supply chain related to domestic tourism in India to start functioning smoothly very soon	0.87	0.85	
Attitude (ATT) <i>Cao et al. (2020), Juschten et al. (2019)</i>	ATT1: I believe it is a good idea to undertake domestic touristic travel during the pandemic	0.78	0.78	
	ATT2: I would be excited about undertaking domestic touristic travel during the pandemic	0.72	0.72	
	ATT3: It would be relaxing to undertake domestic touristic travel during the pandemic	0.72	0.72	
	ATT4: It would be refreshing to undertake domestic touristic travel during the pandemic	0.64	0.64	
Prosocial behavior (PSB) [#] <i>Han et al. (2020)</i>	PSB1: I am willing to help the vulnerable sections in the domestic tourism sector during the pandemic, even at my own expense	0.70	0.69	
	PSB2: I am willing to make personal sacrifices while undertaking domestic touristic travel during the pandemic to prevent the spread of COVID-19	0.92	0.92	
	PSB3: I am willing to undertake domestic touristic travel during the pandemic to help the domestic tourism sector suffering from the economic and financial consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic	0.93	0.93	
	PSB4: I am willing to spend much more on domestic touristic travel during the pandemic to help the domestic tourism sector suffering from the economic and financial consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic	0.83	0.83	
	PSB5: I am willing to forgo any discounts on domestic touristic travel during the pandemic so as to help the sector to recover from the economic and financial consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic	0.88	0.88	
Desire to travel domestically (DTD) [#] <i>Lee et al. (2012)</i>	DTD1: I want to undertake domestic touristic travel in India in the near future	0.89	0.88	
	DTD2: I wish to undertake domestic touristic travel in India in the near future	0.92	0.93	
	DTD3: I am eager to undertake domestic touristic travel in India in the near future	0.90	0.90	
Satisfaction (SAT) <i>Nanu et al. (2020)</i>	SAT1: Domestic touristic travel is exactly what I needed during the COVID-19 pandemic	0.88	0.87	
	SAT2: My choice of domestic touristic travel during COVID-19 was a wise one	0.92	0.91	
	SAT3: I think I did the right thing when I went for domestic touristic travel during the COVID-19 pandemic	0.86	0.85	
Note(s): [#] Scales modified via focus group discussions with domestic tourists				Table 3. Factor loadings

3.3 Data analysis

We analyzed the data using a two-step approach: (1) a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and (2) a structural path analysis. These two steps constitute covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM), which has been quite popular among scholars (e.g. [Kumar et al., 2021](#), [Talwar et al., 2021a](#)). Our choice of SEM is grounded in the fact that the data under study met all multivariate requirements of normality, heteroscedasticity, linearity and multicollinearity ([Talwar et al., 2021a](#); [Kock and Lynn, 2012](#)). We performed the analysis using IBM SPSS and AMOS. Next, we tested all moderation hypotheses using PROCESS macro in SPSS.

4. Results

4.1 Multicollinearity and common method bias

Before proceeding with the CFA, we tested our data for two common issues in quantitative research based on primary data: (1) multicollinearity and (2) common method bias (CMB). Consistent with the prior literature, we calculated the variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance values. The VIF values were less than ten, and the tolerance values all exceeded 0.10, thus confirming that our independent variables were not correlated with one another ([Eric et al., 2020](#); [Hair et al., 2010](#)). Because the data were collected using a single data collection instrument, CMB was a potential concern. Consistent with Harman's single-factor test ([Harman, 1976](#)), we loaded all items on a single factor and found that it explained 32.25% of the variance. This was below the threshold of 50% suggested by [Podsakoff et al. \(2003\)](#) and followed by recent studies in the field of tourism and hospitality ([Talwar et al., 2020](#)).

4.2 Measurement model

We assessed the measures' validity and reliability through a CFA. The measurement model returned a good model fit ($\chi^2/\text{df} = 1.89$, CFI = 0.97, TLI = 0.97, RMSEA = .05). Further, the factor loading of each item exceeded the recommended level of 0.4 ([Hair et al., 2010](#)), thus confirming each item's reliability ([Table 3](#)).

We also calculated the composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) and found their values to exceed the cut-off values of 0.7 and 0.5, respectively ([Fornell and Larcker, 1981](#), [Table 4](#)). Further, we established discriminant validity by verifying that the square root of the AVE always exceeded the correlations of the constructs. [Table 4](#) also reveals that the correlation between the constructs in the study fell below the upper threshold of 0.8.

4.3 Control variables

We incorporated four control variables for the tourists' demographic characteristics: age, gender, educational qualification and economic background. While age, gender and

	Mean	SD	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	PSB	SG	SAT	AR	DTD	ATT
PSB	4.88	1.57	0.93	0.73	0.51	0.23	0.56					
SG	5.97	0.79	0.83	0.56	0.03	0.01	−0.05	0.75				
SAT	5.18	1.42	0.92	0.79	0.46	0.19	0.68	−0.06	0.89			
AR	3.99	1.47	0.87	0.70	0.20	0.08	0.44	0.04	0.36	0.83		
DTD	5.18	1.44	0.93	0.81	0.51	0.19	0.71	0.03	0.59	0.30	0.91	
ATT	6.14	0.77	0.81	0.51	0.03	0.01	−0.04	−0.16	0.06	0.01	−0.10	0.72

Table 4.
Validity and reliability
analysis

Note(s): Composite reliability = CR, Average variance extracted = AVE, Maximum shared variance = MSV, Average shared variance = ASV, Prosocial behavior = PSB, Smart governance = SG, Satisfaction = SAT, Anticipated recovery = AR, Desire to travel domestically = DTD, Attitude = ATT

educational background had no confounding effect on satisfaction, economic background was significantly and negatively associated with satisfaction ($\beta = -0.09, p < 0.05$). These results imply that economically well-off tourists were less likely to feel satisfied with the current travel scenario.

4.4 Structural model

The model returned good model fit indices in the structural path analysis ($\chi^2/df = 2.35$, CFI = 0.94, TLI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.06). We found support for H1a, H1c, H3, H4 and H5. In other words, anticipated recovery was positively associated with prosocial behavior (H1a; $\beta = 0.50, p < 0.001$) and the desire to travel (H1c; $\beta = 0.37, p < 0.001$), and prosocial behavior (H3; $\beta = 0.55, p < 0.001$), attitude (H4; $\beta = 0.10, p < 0.05$) and the desire to travel domestically (H5; $\beta = 0.27, p < 0.001$) were all positively associated with satisfaction. However, we were unable to find support for the hypotheses investigating the relationship between anticipated recovery and attitude (H1b; $\beta = 0.01, p > 0.05$), smart governance and prosocial behavior (H2a; $\beta = -0.06, p > 0.05$) and smart governance and the desire to travel domestically (H2c; $\beta = 0.01, p > 0.05$). Furthermore, smart governance was negatively associated with attitude (H2b; $\beta = -0.16, p < 0.01$); hence, H2b was also unsupported. The research model explained 44.5% of the variance in satisfaction, 13.6% of the variance in the desire to travel domestically, 2.5% of the variance in attitude and 25.1% of the variance in prosocial behavior. Figure 2 summarizes the results.

4.5 Moderation analysis

We performed the moderation analysis using PROCESS macro Model 1. Perceived severity was taken as a moderator of the relationship between tourist-level variables and satisfaction. The results revealed that perceived severity did not moderate the associations of satisfaction with prosocial behavior, attitude to travel domestically and the desire to travel domestically (see Table 5). Hence, H6 was not supported.

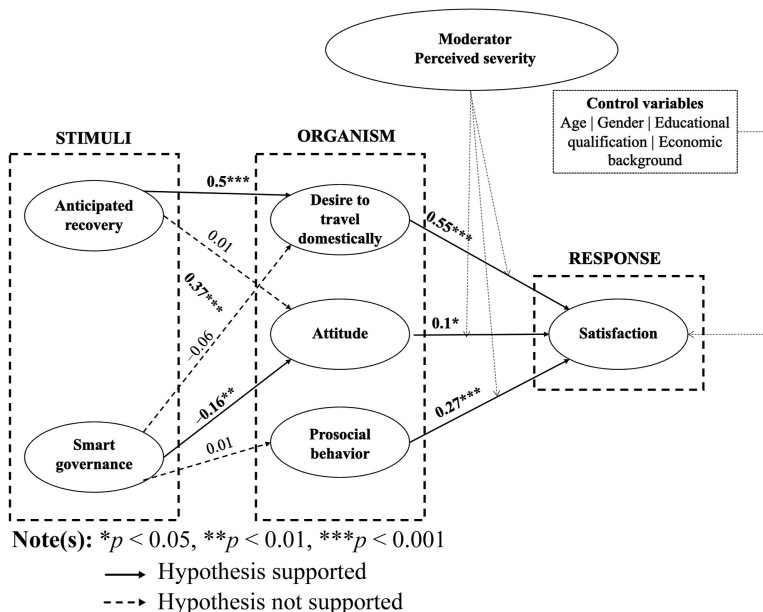


Figure 2.
Results of the
hypotheses testing

5. Discussion

Seeking to inform marketing theory and practice on various nuances of consumer behavior in the light of the “new normal,” this work aimed to identify the factors driving the recovery of domestic tourism in India in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our results offer support for H1a, H1c, H3, H4 and H5. To explain further, H1a, H1b and H1c proposed to examine the associations of anticipated recovery with tourists’ desire to travel domestically, attitude and prosocial behavior, respectively. The results revealed that anticipated recovery was positively associated solely with the desire to travel (H1a) and prosocial behavior (H1c). Although scholars have not previously examined these associations, we found them plausible in light of the existing findings (e.g. Schaller and Park, 2011; Zhang *et al.*, 2020; Malik *et al.*, 2021a; Han *et al.*, 2020; Wearing *et al.*, 2020). These results align with our argument that tourists who anticipate the industry’s recovery to be favorable are more likely to engage in prosocial behavior. Further, decreased fear resulting from this anticipated recovery may increase individuals’ desire to travel for prosocial purposes. Specifically, the results imply that if people expect domestic tourism services to return to normal and begin functioning smoothly after the pandemic, they will wish to and be more eager to travel for touristic purposes. The expectation of a quick recovery is also likely to positively impact their willingness to make personal and financial sacrifices to promote the tourism sector’s recovery. In contrast, H1b, which proposed a positive association between anticipated recovery and attitude toward domestic touristic travel on the basis of prior studies in different contexts (e.g. Steinmetz *et al.*, 2016), was not statistically supported. We discuss the potential reasons behind this outcome later in the paper.

By extrapolating findings from other tourism and general consumer behavior studies (e.g. Choi *et al.*, 2021; Blair *et al.*, 2017), we further anticipated the associations of smart governance with tourists’ desire to travel domestically (H2a), attitude (H2b) and prosocial behavior (H2c). In contrast to our expectations, however, only H2b was statistically significant. Even this statistical significance, though, does not imply support for H2b from the perspective of our study because we had proposed a positive association between governance and attitude, while the results indicated a negative relationship. This outcome also contradicts the existing literature, which has unanimously observed a positive relationship between good governance and people’s confidence (e.g. Choi *et al.*, 2021; Fong *et al.*, 2021). We speculate that these contrary results may be related to the Indian government’s inadequate implementation of smart governance initiatives. For instance, during the initial release of the contact tracing app, various security researchers and news outlets raised concerns regarding the app’s collection and appropriation of data (Bhandari, 2020; Dasgupta, 2020); these concerns may have engendered large scale skepticism of government initiatives among individuals desiring to undertake touristic travel. This skepticism, in turn, may have disinclined such individuals toward touristic travel by compounding their fears of COVID-19. As mentioned previously, our results also failed to demonstrate a significant association between attitude and anticipated recovery. This unexpected finding may suggest that attitude is not a relevant gauge of people’s thought processes in the present context where fear of infection and travel anxiety can impact risk perception (Luo and Lam, 2020). However, additional research is required to support this claim. Our study’s inability to provide

Table 5.
Results for moderating
influence of perceived
severity

	β	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	Moderation?
ATT → SAT	0.02	0.18	0.86	−0.1848	0.2217	No
PSB → SAT	−0.00	−0.04	0.97	−0.0675	0.0646	No
DTD → SAT	0.00	0.07	0.94	−0.0756	0.0813	No

statistical support for the associations of smart governance with tourists' desire to travel domestically and their tendency to exhibit prosocial behavior also indicates the need to further examine these associations in the tourism setting. Because the literature offers appreciable evidence for the positive impact of government action on people's confidence, particularly in times of crisis, such future efforts should take into account potential confounding factors and external influences.

With regard to the organism-response component of the conceptual model, we proposed three hypotheses (H3, H4 and H5) positing positive associations between tourist-level organismic variables—i.e. the desire to travel, attitude and prosocial behavior—and satisfaction. We proposed these associations on the basis of the past extended literature (e.g. Boccia *et al.*, 2020; Grilli *et al.*, 2021). Consistent with the literature, our results indicated support for all three hypotheses. To explain further, statistical support for these three hypotheses implies that the desire and eagerness to engage in domestic touristic travel as well as the anticipation that such travel following the pandemic will be exciting and relaxing may heighten tourists' satisfaction with their domestic touristic experiences. At the same time, our results suggest that individuals' readiness to make personal and financial sacrifices to promote the tourism sector's recovery will increase the satisfaction they derive from their touristic travel.

Finally, our results did not support the proposed moderation effects of perceived severity on the associations of tourists' desire to travel domestically, attitude and prosocial behavior with satisfaction (H6a, H6b and H6c). The lack of evidence for the moderation effects of perceived severity may be due to the fact that the desire to travel domestically, attitude and prosocial behavior already account for the pandemic's perceived severity by reflecting tourists' internal positive state of having overcome their fear of touristic travel.

6. Conclusion

Focusing on creating a safe domestic tourism environment is an effective approach to promote the vitality of the tourism sector and accelerate economic recovery in the postpandemic world. Thus far, however, we know a little about people's perceptions of travel and tourism during the pandemic. Clarity in this regard can help regulators and firms in the sector to plan their recovery strategies more effectively. Recognizing this, we sought to understand people's perceptions about domestic touristic travel in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Using the sequential mechanism of SOR, we first contemplated the associations of environmental factors (stimuli)—i.e. anticipated recovery and smart governance—with tourists' internal or organismic states—i.e. their desire to travel, attitude and prosocial behavior. We then examined the associations between these variables and tourist satisfaction, which represented the response variable in the SOR setting. Specifically, we sought to answer two research questions by testing six hypotheses. To test the proposed hypotheses, we collected data from 421 respondents who had undertaken domestic touristic travel in the three months preceding the time of data collection.

By addressing RQ1, we aimed to understand how tourists' internal or the organismic states—captured in their desire to travel domestically, attitude and prosocial behavior—were associated with the stimuli measured via anticipated recovery and smart governance and the response measured via satisfaction. Our results confirmed the positive associations of anticipated recovery with the desire to travel domestically and prosocial behavior. In contrast, smart governance did not exhibit the proposed positive associations with any of the organismic variables. Rather, we found an unanticipated statistically significant negative relationship between smart governance and attitude, which requires further research to understand. We encountered no such surprises for the associations between the three internal states—desire to travel domestically, attitude and prosocial behavior—and the

response variable of satisfaction. All three anticipated positive associations received statistical support. To respond to RQ2, we examined the moderation effect of perceived severity on the relationship between tourists' internal states and satisfaction. The moderation analysis did not statistically support any of the three hypotheses. The results of the study revealed some of the "big picture" lessons we can learn from the COVID-19 crisis with regard to alterations in consumers' dispositions and the impact of national response in an emerging market. Two specific observations are particularly interesting: the underwhelming ability of smart governance to positively impact tourists' organismic states and the insignificant moderating role of perceived severity in weakening the positive association between tourists' internal states and their response. On the whole, the study offers some simple yet intuitive and actionable implications, which we discuss below.

6.1 Theoretical implications

Our study offers three key academic implications. First, we proposed and examined the sequential integration of variables using the SOR theory to elucidate the mechanism driving the satisfaction people derive from undertaking domestic touristic travel during the COVID-19 pandemic. In doing so, we contribute to the sparse, albeit growing, body of literature explaining the impact of pandemics on the tourism sector (e.g. Rassy and Smith, 2013; Shi and Li, 2017); in particular, we addressed the exigent need—suggested by recent studies in the area (Fennell, 2020; Gössling *et al.*, 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020; Qiu *et al.*, 2020)—to comprehensively explicate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our theoretical contribution in this regard is enhanced by the timing of our study, which captured the visible flattening of the curve of the pandemic (John Hopkins University and Medicine, 2021) and the easing of lockdown restrictions in India. This timeline enabled us to make a novel contribution to the body of literature by examining the postdisaster recovery of tourism in action (Khazai *et al.*, 2018; Sheller, 2020; Wearing *et al.*, 2020), which is important for anticipating the future trajectory of recovery. In particular, we investigated the impact of the tourism sector's recovery on satisfaction, which is considered a key metric in consumer behavior studies (e.g. De Nisco *et al.*, 2017). In sum, a key theoretical contribution of our study lies in examining tourists' perceptions at an interesting point in time during the pandemic and thereby enriching the academic understanding of recovery from crises.

Second, we contribute to the literature on smart governance and the management of pandemics (Choi *et al.*, 2021; Jiang, 2021) through smart governance technology. Although past studies have discussed smart governance through the use of smart technologies, the impact of such governance efforts on tourists' perceptions and behavior has remained unclear. By revealing that smart governance does not always instill confidence among tourists, we highlight the need for additional research not only into adoption but also resistance behavior toward the government's use of these smart technologies to manage crises, especially health crises where the "fear factor" could be quite high. In sum, our study underscores the need for scholars who are attempting to decode consumer behavior under the impact of crises to carefully consider the quality and effectiveness of national governments' responses to such crises through the use of disruptive technologies.

Third, our results contribute to a growing body of literature on volunteer tourism during times of disaster (Blackman *et al.*, 2017; Fairley *et al.*, 2016) by considering the pandemic as a disrupter in the tourism sector. Prior studies have noted that people engage in volunteer tourism in times of disaster to help destinations recover (Wearing *et al.*, 2020). Although our study did not explicitly examine volunteer tourism, it implicitly addressed the concept through the construct of prosocial behavior, which captures, among other factors: (a) tourists' willingness to help vulnerable sections of the domestic tourism sector, even at the tourists' own expense, (b) tourists' willingness to undertake domestic touristic travel to help the

domestic tourism sector recover from the economic and financial consequences of the pandemic, (c) their willingness to spend significantly more on domestic touristic travel to help the domestic tourism sector recover from the economic and financial consequences of the pandemic and (d) their willingness to forgo any discounts on domestic touristic travels to help the sector recover from the economic and financial consequences of the pandemic—all of which can be seen as voluntary initiatives to help the sector. Furthermore, our study incorporates volunteer tourism through the construct of prosocial behavior and satisfaction. Our results suggest that tourists who behave in a more prosocial manner to aid the recovery process derive increased satisfaction from their domestic touristic travel during the pandemic. These findings underscore the importance of understanding prosocial behaviors (with a substantial element of volunteer tourism inclination) as fundamental drivers of satisfaction and further engagement.

6.2 Managerial implications

The current study also presents three managerial and policy implications. First, by revealing the positive associations of anticipated recovery with tourists' desire to travel domestically and their prosocial behavior, we facilitate policymakers, regulators and national governments' efforts to accelerate the recovery of the tourism sector and the economy in general. To explain further, policymakers, regulators and national governments can publish transparent and easy-to-understand statistics to convince people of the positive nature of a particular sector or overall economy's recovery from a crisis. These actors can also send positive signals through public information campaigns. These communications can further aim to encourage volunteer tourism. Such information and appeals can be expected to have the dual effect of (a) helping people recover from the negative emotional toll—manifested as fear (Ahorsu *et al.*, 2020) and risk-averse tourist behavior (Zhang *et al.*, 2020)—that the pandemic-enforced isolation had on them and (b) expediting the recovery of the tourism sector from the economic and financial consequences of the complete stoppage of activity at the peak of the pandemic. In this way, policymakers, regulators and national governments can not only promote recovery on the economic front but also enhance the well-being of their citizens.

Second, because anticipated recovery is associated with tourists' desire to travel, managers can tailor their marketing communications to induce nostalgia and increase the desire to travel. Managers in the tourism sector can also use our results to design marketing communications that better disseminate recovery-related messages. For instance, airlines can communicate that they have resumed flying most routes. Businesses can also consider offering stay-at-home tours and packages (Farkić *et al.*, 2020) guided by AR/VR technology. These efforts are likely to be especially important in high-risk areas where people with a strong inclination toward prosocial behavior may avoid travel to safeguard others but would nevertheless be willing to participate in some form of tourism to help the sector.

Third, we observed that smart governance does not impact tourists' desire to travel or their willingness to engage in prosocial behavior. This outcome suggests that the use of smart or disruptive technologies to mitigate the effects of a crisis could prove to be a double-edged sword, which may negatively affect people's attitudes. By showing that smart governance through the use of smart technologies does not always instill confidence among tourists, we suggest that the acceptance and use of these smart technologies to manage crises in tourism settings must proceed with caution; indeed, inept execution or ineffective interfaces may discourage tourists from traveling rather than making them feel secure and eager to travel. In sum, we recommend that governments not rush headlong into disruptive, albeit innovative, solutions; rather, they should carefully ascertain and weigh the efficacy and reliability of smart initiatives to manage crises.

6.3 Limitations and future research directions

Like all research, our study entails certain limitations. First, we collected data for this study when domestic tourism was just beginning to resume. At the time, however, COVID-19 cases in India were continuing to rise each day. As [Qiu et al. \(2020\)](#) observed, the respondents, therefore, may have been experiencing severe emotional distress during the study, which may have affected their responses. We thus recommend that researchers validate and extend our findings by collecting new data now that the pandemic situation is more settled. Second, due to ongoing social distancing norms, we conducted our survey entirely online, which means that our sample may have overrepresented educated respondents. However, this was simply unavoidable during the pandemic. Again, as circumstances on the ground improve, researchers can reassess our model by collecting data via an offline approach. The third limitation of our study arises from our choice of context. Because it was among the most impacted countries in terms of COVID-19 caseloads, India presented an ideal context for this study. However, this choice of geography limits our study's generalizability because results may vary significantly across countries, especially in the context of consumer behavior within the tourism and hospitality sector ([Arun et al., 2021a, b](#); [Thirumalesh Madanaguli et al., 2021](#)). In the case of India, the severity of the pandemic—and, therefore, the collateral damage it caused—was quite high, which likely impacted people's perceptions about the study variables. It is thus highly likely that people's perceptions regarding domestic touristic travel in other countries where the pandemic's effects were much less severe would be quite different. We suggest that scholars undertake country-specific studies to capture tourist responses now, while their experiences of touristic travels during the pandemic remain fresh in their minds.

Apart from the intuitive methodological extensions of our work discussed above, we suggest two additional streams of future research. First, scholars can investigate the impact of other specific technologies, such as AR/VR ([Serravalle et al., 2019](#)) and AI ([Malik et al., 2021b](#)), on tourism recovery following a health crisis. Second, studies can adopt a cross-cultural perspective to undertake cross-boundary studies ([Ferraris et al., 2020](#)) and thereby investigate possible differences in cultural contexts where innovative, disruptive technologies may be perceived more favorably.

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