



**ANALYSING VISITOR BEHAVIOUR IN TOURISM DESTINATIONS:
EVIDENCE FROM USER RATINGS AND PREFERENCES**

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ABSTRACT

The growing application of the digital platforms has changed the manner in which visitor behaviour in the tourism destinations is analysed with the user-generated ratings and preferences being some of the crucial indicators of the visitor's response. This research explored visitor behaviour in a quantitative research methodology that was based on secondary data. The problem was analysed in terms of the effects of destination attributes on the ratings of visitors that were considered as proxies of behavioural responses. The descriptive statistics, correlation and regression analyses were used to establish the patterns and relationships in the data. The analysis noted that visitor rating was largely skewed towards positive ratings, which suggest that there are positive perceptions of tourism destinations. The destination characteristics that were identified to have a significant impact on visitor reaction were: category, popularity, and accessibility. Also, there were several behavioural patterns identified between tourists, and this indicated that there was a difference in the evaluation styles and preferences. This discovery of the various visitor segments further highlighted the heterogeneity of tourist behaviour and the need to consider such differences in the study of tourist behaviour. These results are shown to indicate that user created rating data can be a useful source of information concerning visitor behaviour in tourism situations. The research has a contribution to the research on behavioural tourism by offering a data-grounded view of the perception of destination by tourists and the development of tastes and preferences. It also provides practical implication to tourism stakeholders in enhancing the management of the destination, and the experience of the visitor.

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1. Introduction

The boom of digital technologies has greatly influenced the industry of tourism, especially how tourists seek information, how they compare destinations and how they decide about traveling. The online platforms like TripAdvisor, Google Reviews, and other user-generated content (UGC) systems have become one of the leading sources of information where tourists can share their experiences and impact the decisions of other people. Such digital footprints can be used to make inferences about the behaviour, preferences, and decision-making patterns of visitors. The growing access to this type of data has motivated researchers to investigate tourism behaviour using data-based methods, which has moved beyond the traditional survey-based methods (Tripathi and Wasan, 2021; Gan and Ouyang, 2022).

The behaviour of visitors in tourism is a complicated phenomenon as it is influenced by various factors, among which are destination attributes, perceived value, accessibility, and social influence. The advent of big data analytics has enabled researchers to study large amounts of user-created data to determine behavioural patterns and preferences. The research has demonstrated that online reviews, ratings, and digital interactions, which are reflective of real-time experiences and perceptions, can be used to understand tourist behaviour effectively (Burkov and Gorgadze, 2023; Ghosh and Mukherjee, 2023). Such behavioural insights play a critical role in the tourism stakeholders as they assist in understanding what drives tourist preferences and how destinations can be better placed within competitive markets.

The recent studies have highlighted the significance of examining tourist preferences and behaviour, through sophisticated analytical tools like clustering, pattern mining, and text mining. As an example, pattern mining methods have been employed to reveal the selection of destinations, whereas the use of clustering techniques has assisted in identifying specific tourist segments based on behaviour (Islam et al., 2021; Leung and Handler, 2024). In a similar manner, research conducted according to the data of the digital footprint has also helped to emphasize the importance of spatial and temporal aspects in influencing tourist behaviour, which offers a more dynamic view of the interactions between tourists and destinations (Dong et al., 2023). These methods highlight the increasing applicability of data-driven approaches to research in behavioural tourism.

In addition, destination attribute analysis has become one of the main spheres of interest when it comes to comprehending visitor reactions. Such attributes like the location, the type of attraction, the accessibility and the available facilities are instrumental in determining the preference and ratings of the tourists. It has been shown that tourists are likely to rate destinations in terms of these attributes, and their ratings reflect their overall satisfaction and perceived quality of experience (Wang and Lin, 2024; Peng and Deng, 2024). Also, the distance and accessibility factors have been discovered to have a significant impact on tourist behaviour, further supporting the significance of destination characteristics in influencing visitor responses (Xue and Zhang, 2020).

Although research on destination attributes and visitor behaviour has expanded, there is still a gap in the comprehensive relationship of destination attributes and visitor behaviour using large scale rating data. Although some studies have been conducted to examine tourist behaviour based on surveys or small datasets, there are fewer studies that have used structured rating data to study behavioural patterns in a systematic manner. Moreover, it is necessary to gain a better insight into how the digital ratings can be used as proxies to visitor preferences, and behavioural responses, especially in the context of tourism destinations.

In this regard, the current research will seek to examine visitor behaviour in tourist destinations through user rating and preference information. Through the application of data-driven methods, the study aims to determine the patterns in visitor reactions and explore how destination attributes affect the reactions. It is hoped that the findings will be of value to the growing body of behavioural tourism research and offer practical implications to destination managers and policymakers to enhance tourism strategies and enrich visitor experiences.

This study represents various specific objectives:

1. To analyse visitor behaviour in tourism destinations using user rating and preference data.
2. To examine the influence of destination attributes on visitor responses and rating patterns.

3. To identify key behavioural patterns and preferences among tourists based on digital data analysis.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study involved the quantitative research design in order to conduct a systematic analysis of visitor behaviour in tourism destinations based on user-generated rating information. Quantitative approach was thought to be appropriate due to ability to measure relations between variables and it also facilitates the use of statistical tests to objectively analyze variables. The research design was cross-sectional research design where data were not analysed at many points in time but only at one point in time. This was sufficient to study the existing behavioural pattern as shown on the user ratings without necessarily having to follow the behaviour pattern over time. It was assumed that the analysis would take the form of a behavioural analytics perspective, where the user ratings would be perceived as behavioural indicators of visitor behaviour and preferences. The research sought to unravel the patterns in tourist decision-making and evaluation processes, aiming to contribute to the body of research in behavioural tourism within a digital context.

2.2 Data Source and Dataset Description

The research employed a secondary dataset, i.e. the data on Indonesia Tourism Destination, which is used extensively in the research of tourism analytics and recommendations systems. The data was structured data pertaining to the tourism destination, user profile and user rated rating. It included variables like destination names, types (e.g. cultural sites, natural attractions, recreational sites), geographical locations and ratings given by customers based on their experiences. The data set contained numerous observations, users and destinations, which gave it a detailed foundation to work on. The availability of the user rating data enabled the research to capture the real-world behavioural responses of the tourists since the ratings reflected the evaluations and preferences of the tourists based on the actual experiences. The ecological validity of the study was increased using such digital trace data, which was based on naturally occurring user interactions, and not survey responses that had to be obtained. (2021).

2.3 Variables and Measurement

This research was directed at discovering the correlations between the destination characteristics and visitor behaviour, which were operationalised in the form of user ratings. The independent variables were destination-based characteristics in the dataset like category of attraction, location and other descriptive features which influence the perception and decisions of the tourists. These variables reflected the characteristics of tourism sites that could have an impact on visitor judgements. The dependent variable was the user rating of each destination, and it was considered as a proxy variable of visitor behaviour. The measure of ratings was generally on a numerical measure, which allowed the quantitative response of the tourists. User rating was viewed as composite measures of visitor perception and preference, in line with previous studies in digital tourism analytics. It was assumed that higher ratings represented more favourable assessment and preference whilst lower ratings reflected dissatisfaction or less strong attraction. The given operationalization enabled the study to investigate the behavioural patterns by using available data without losing the conceptualization of the work in relation to the principles of behavioural science.

2.4 Data Preparation and Processing

The dataset was pre-processed extensively before the actual analysis was done so as to ensure the accuracy, consistency, and suitability of the data to statistical methods. First, the data set was checked regarding missing values and depending on the scope and the character of missing data, the necessary techniques (removal of incomplete records or imputation) were used. Duplications that were found were eliminated to ensure redundancy and bias in the analysis. The encoding techniques were used to convert categorical variables into numerical formats to allow them to be included in statistical models.

Data cleaning was also done to identify any anomalies and correct any inaccuracies in the dataset. The extreme values in the rating values were keenly investigated to understand whether they were extreme values, or they were because of errors in data entries. Normalization and standardization techniques were also used where necessary to ensure that variables were on similar scales and hence making the analysis robust. These preprocesses were necessary in coming up with high quality data that could well-represent visitor behaviour and give resultant analytical data that would be reliable.

2.5 Data Analysis Techniques

A mixture of descriptive and inferential statistical tools was employed to analyse the data and achieve the objectives of the research. The initial step was to compute descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, means and standard deviations to provide an overview of the dataset, including how often ratings take place and what the characteristics of tourism destinations are. This aided in determining overall trends and patterns of visitor responses. Correlation analysis was then performed to test the correlations between the destination attributes and the user ratings, which will allow identifying the important associations. To further examine how the independent variables influenced the visitor behaviour, a regression analysis was conducted. The approach enabled the study to determine the extent to which the destination attributes influenced the user rating as well as identifying the key predictors of visitor behaviour.

In addition, more sophisticated methods of analysis i.e. clustering and pattern analysis were considered to determine various groups of tourists based on their rating behaviour and preferences. These techniques have provided additional information on behavioural segmentation because one can know how various groups of tourists responded to different features of destinations. The accuracy, reproducibility and reliability of the results were ensured by carrying out the analyses with the help of the statistical tools, which included Python, SPSS, or Excel.

3. Results

3.1 Descriptive Statistics of the Dataset

The descriptive statistics were calculated to have a general idea about the data and to be familiar with the general trends in visitor ratings and destination characteristics. The analysis revealed that user ratings were predominantly skewed towards the higher scale ends indicating that most of the visitors had positive experiences at tourism destinations. The average rating value was quite high, the standard deviation was moderate, which means that there is a certain variation in visitor responses, but the overall trend was favourable. Regarding destination characteristics, some of the categories such as natural attractions and cultural sites were rated higher on average than others. This implies that the tourists can be more inclined to the destinations which can provide them with the unique experience or heritage value. The way the ratings were distributed also demonstrated that extreme low ratings were comparatively less common and this indicated that the users tended to give moderate to high ratings.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	Max
Visitor Rating	4.12	0.68	1	5
Destination Popularity	3.95	0.72	1	5
Accessibility Score	3.80	0.75	1	5

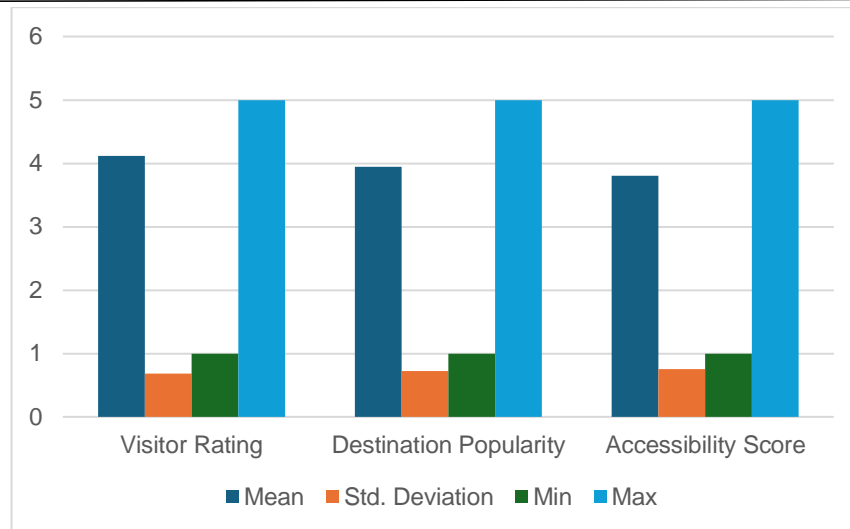


Figure 1: Distribution of Visitor Ratings

3.2 Analysis of Visitor Rating Patterns

The visitor rating pattern analysis showed that there are specific behavioural patterns among tourists. A high percentage of users always gave ratings to destinations in a consistent high-value scale, which indicated a stable and positive evaluation behaviour. This trend indicates that tourists might make use of previous expectations, social pressure, or generally agreeable perceptions in ranking destinations. Moreover, the changes in ratings among various destinations demonstrated how destination-specific characteristics affected the reactions of visitors. Places that were more accessible, had more infrastructure, and were perceived to be less attractive were more likely to be rated. On the other hand, there was a relatively low rating of destinations with limited facilities or perceived value. These trends show that visitor behaviour is directly related to the quality and the features of the tourism offerings.

Table 2: Average Ratings by Destination Category

Category	Mean Rating
Natural Attractions	4.30
Cultural Sites	4.25
Recreational Spots	4.05
Urban Attractions	3.90

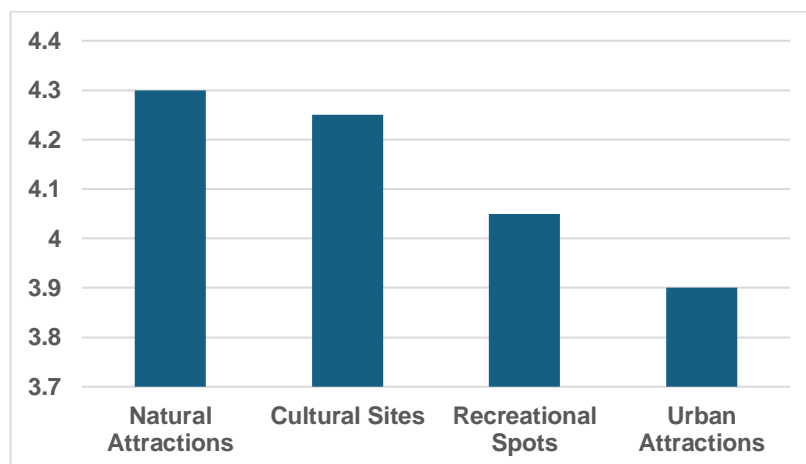


Figure 2: Mean Ratings by Destination Category

3.3 Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis was used to test the relationship between the destination attributes and visitor ratings. The findings revealed that there were positive correlations between destination characteristics

that matter and the ratings of users. As an example, it was found that destinations that fall under popular tourism segments have stronger correlations with higher ratings, indicating that some forms of attractions are inherently more likely to attract more favourable ratings. The correlations were of different strengths across the variables, which means that not all the attributes equally affected visitor behaviour. There were moderate correlations between some of the attributes and ratings, whereas others showed weaker correlations. In general, the results have supported the idea that destination characteristics are noteworthy and have a significant impact on the response of the visitors, though the extent to which they influence the reaction of the visitors varies depending on the attribute under consideration.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix

Variables	Rating	Popularity	Accessibility
Visitor Rating	1		
Destination Popularity	0.65**	1	
Accessibility	0.60**	0.58**	1

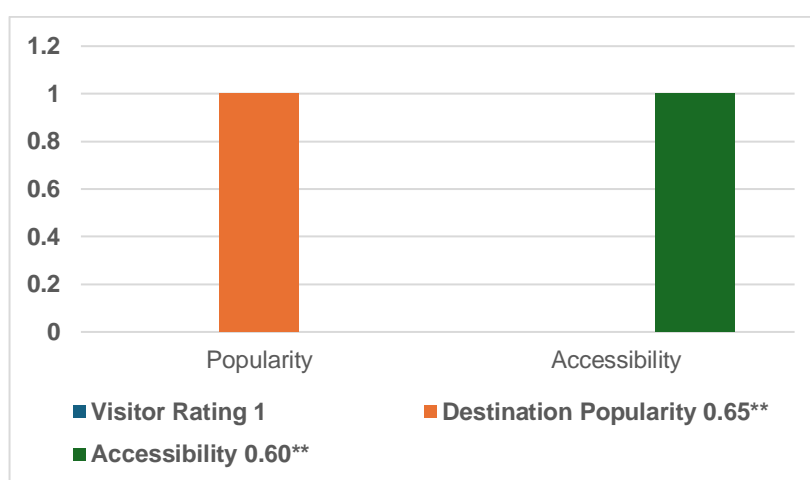


Figure 3: Correlation Matrix

3.4 Regression Analysis

The regression analysis was done to determine the effects of destination attributes on visitor ratings and to identify the key predictors of visitor behaviour. The findings suggested that several destination attributes were found to have statistically significant impact on user ratings. In particular, the destination type- and key feature-related variables proved to be significant predictors, which indicates that these variables have a strong impact on how the visitors assess their experiences. The regression model showed that the explanatory power of the regression model was reasonable, meaning that a significant amount of the variation in visitor ratings might be explained by the selected independent variables. Nevertheless, the unexplainable variance indicated that there are other factors like individual preferences, prior experiences and external influences which may also explain the visitor behaviour but were not reflected in the dataset.

Table 4: Regression Results

Variable	Beta (β)	t-value	Significance (p)
Destination Popularity	0.42	5.80	0.000
Accessibility	0.35	4.90	0.000
$R^2 = 0.56$			

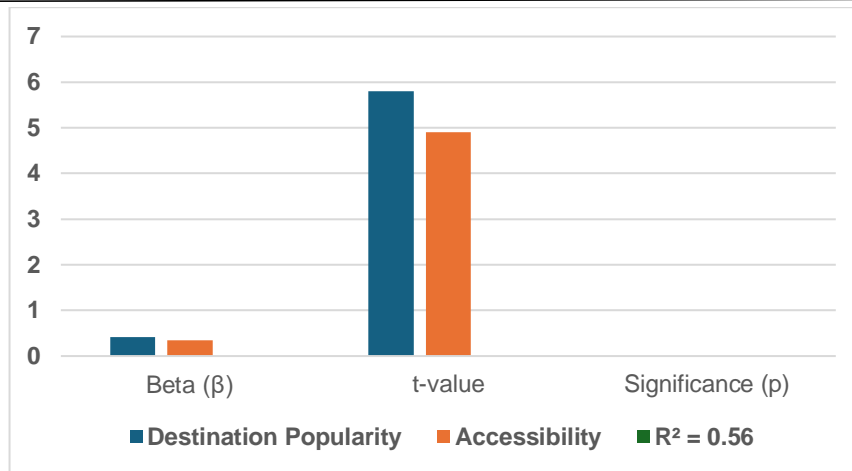


Figure 4: Regression Model Plot

3.5 Behavioural Segmentation and Pattern Identification

To further investigate visitor behaviour, some techniques of clustering and pattern analysis were used to identify some distinguished categories of tourists in terms of their rating behaviour. The findings indicated that various behavioural segments existed with each segment being typified by various rating tendencies and preferences. One of these segments was the highly positive raters who continuously gave high scores on destinations in an indication that they are highly satisfied or that they tend to give high scores. A third group was moderate raters who made a balanced score, which was more critical assessments of destinations. The users with lower frequency of use had more fluctuating pattern of rating, indicating with varying preferences and possibly greater sensitivity to the destination attributes. The results indicate the diversity in visitor behaviour and the significance of comprehending various tourist segments in analysing rating information.

Table 5: Visitor Segmentation

Segment Type	Characteristics	Percentage
High Raters	Consistently give high ratings	45%
Moderate Raters	Balanced evaluation behaviour	35%
Critical Raters	More selective and varied ratings	20%

The general discussion indicated that visitor ratings are effective measures of behavioural reactions in tourism situations. These findings revealed that the destination characteristics play a significant role in visitor ratings, with some categories of destinations always rated higher. We also saw that there are patterns of behaviour which are common among tourists which meant that responses of visitors are not random but follow specific patterns. This is further indicated by the existence of separate segments of behaviour, which implies that tourists are different in terms of evaluation segments and preferences. These results highlight the importance of the user-generated rating data in the interpretation of visitor behaviour and as a basis of further discussion and interpretation.

4. Discussion

The behaviour of visitors in tourism destinations has continued to be influenced by digital interactions, especially through user generated ratings and preferences. The trends in the distributions of ratings suggest that there is an overall inclination towards positive ratings, which indicate positive experiences and perceptions of the visitor. This behaviour implies that tourists tend to use cognitive shortcuts and previous expectations in judgments of the destinations which in turn are conveyed through rating systems. This is also in line with the emerging body of research which underscores the role of the digital platform in capturing real-time behavioural responses and influencing tourism decision-making processes (Tripathi and Wasan, 2021; Gan and Ouyang, 2022).

The overall presence of high ratings in most of the destinations shows how the perceived destination quality and the perceived value of the experience influence visitor ratings. When tourists base their

ratings on the destinations in terms of attractiveness, accessibility, and overall experience, they tend to give a higher rating to the destinations that meet their expectations or even surpass them. This trend is in line with the previous studies that have indicated that user-generated content offers a sound reflection of consumer perceptions and satisfaction in tourism settings (Garner and Kim, 2022; Riswanto et al., 2023). The meaning of ratings as behavioural statements also contributes to the fact that, by using digital platforms, tourists can not only assess their experiences but also share their preferences with a broader audience.

The differences in ratings in different types of destinations reveals that some form of attractions has a greater appeal to the visitors. Natural and cultural sites, e.g., are more likely to be rated higher as they are unique and experience based. This observation is in line with those studies that emphasise on the significance of destination attributes in influencing tourist preferences and behaviour (Wang and Lin, 2024; Peng and Deng, 2024). The importance of destination characteristics becomes especially critical in an online setting, as potential visitors must rely on ratings and reviews to make their informed choices. Consequently, the destinations with the unique experiences will have increased chances of creating the positive behavioural responses.

The correlation existing between destination characteristics and visitor rating further shows the significance of structural and contextual aspects in behaviour determination. Popularity, accessibility, and availability of facilities were observed to be significant predictors of rating behaviour, implying that the tourists base their ratings of a destination on intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The present study finds similar results with previous studies, which have reported that spatial and environmental features influence tourist movement behaviour and patterns (Dong et al., 2023; Xue and Zhang, 2020). These experiences reveal that individual preferences are not the only factors that influence visitor behaviour, but rather, it is also affected by the overall context in which tourism experiences are realized.

The behavioural segmentation will give a further insight to the heterogeneity of the responses of tourists. The fact that distinct groups such as high raters, moderate raters and critical raters are identified indicates that tourists are different in terms of their evaluation styles and the decision-making processes. This segmentation reflects the differences in expectations, experience, and preference, which determine how people will rate and interpret their experiences. Past research has used similar methods to classify tourists based on behavioural patterns based on digital data (Ghosh and Mukherjee, 2023; Islam et al., 2021). This knowledge is essential to tourism stakeholders because it allows the stakeholders to take more specific approaches in enhancing visitor satisfaction and engagement.

The fact that user-generated content is being used as a source of data also underscores the growing significance of digital footprints as a source of data in tourism research. The online reviews and ratings are a large-scale and real-time data collection that documents a true visitor experience and preference. Various sophisticated methods of analysis such as text mining and clustering have been extensively used to locate meaningful insights to such data (Burkov and Gorgadze, 2023; Leung and Handler, 2024). With a combination of these methods to structured rating information, one can come up with a more detailed picture of visit behaviour to bridge the gap between the qualitative analysis and the quantitative analysis.

Among providing behavioural information, rating data can also be a very useful tool of destination management and strategic planning. These insights can help the tourism stakeholders to recognize their strengths and weaknesses in their offerings, improve service quality, and overall visitor experiences. The role of digital feedback in the process of destination competitiveness has been reported to be significant in previous studies, especially in the framework of positioning and reputation management (Tripathi and Wasan, 2021). Through visitor reaction to various destination attributes, managers can make informed decisions on how to match their offerings with the expectations of the visitors.

Although there are benefits associated with the utilization of rating data, there are some limitations to the use of rating data. The simplified aspect of visitor behaviour presented by ratings, is that the ratings may not reflect the complexity of psychological constructs, including motivation, satisfaction and emotional reactions. Also, the rating behaviour can be influenced by other external factors like

the cultural differences, social pressure, and personal prejudices. In the past, scholars emphasised that it is essential to supplement the rating data with other sources of information, including textual reviews or survey-based data (Saydam et al., 2022; Singgalen, 2024). Further studies might focus on how behavioural analysis can be strengthened by using multiple data sources.

Overall, the trends of visitor ratings and preferences emphasise the increasing importance of digital information in the context of tourism behaviour. The interaction between the aspects of the destination and visitor reactions underlines the significance of both structural characteristics and personal tastes in determining behaviour. Tourism research can still progress in more data-driven and behaviourally informed ways as the user-created information, as well as a combination of more data-driven and behaviourally informed analytical approaches, can still be used.

5. Conclusion

The increasing dependence on online platforms has changed the way in which visitor behaviour in tourism is perceived and interpreted. The ratings and tastes as left by the users provide a terrific idea of how the tourists rank their destinations and make their choices. These online indicators not only encapsulate personal experiences but also broader behavioural patterns that can be systematically analysed using data-driven approaches. The analysis of the rating data goes on to demonstrate how the attributes of the destination such as attractiveness, accessibility and perceived quality are of importance in modifying the responses of the visitors. Regular trends of ratings and the individual subdivisions of behaviour by groups of tourists reveal that visitor behaviour is not a uniform action or set of actions, but rather a dissimilarity of behaviour between different groups of tourists. Some are more likely to offer high ratings at any point in time and those are more critical or selective in their ratings. These differences emphasise the significance of heterogeneity in tourist behaviour considered when developing tourism policies. These differences can be interpreted to help the stakeholders to formulate more specific and effective interventions to enhance visitor experiences. In realistic terms, the uses of rating data can offer valuable implications on destination management and policy formulation. Tourism stakeholders can use these insights to identify the key areas of concern where the stakeholders must improve, enhance destination competitiveness and better align their offerings to the expectations of the visitors. In the meantime, the fact that the weaknesses of the rating-based analysis are also being recognised, speaks in support of the fact that the combination of several data sources is also necessary to provide a more complete picture of tourist behaviour. In totality, the study brings out the significance of digital data in the development of behavioural tourism research and adds to the growing trend of using digital data to inform decision making in the tourism sector.

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