



Assessment of Luxury Trains in India: A Case Study of Maharajas' Express

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Abstract

With Indian luxury trains recording a low rate of occupancy, it has become imperative to understand the perceptions of its service providers and consumers. The present study identifies the key concerns of service providers (n=83), which, according to them, are hampering the running of luxury trains in India. Service providers consulted for the study included employees and travel agents who were directly or indirectly associated with the functioning of luxury trains. Based on the identified themes of concerns, a total of 157 tourists from 20 countries were surveyed. To analyze the data, this study initially made use of the Structural Topic Model (STM), a general framework for topic modelling. Following this, the survey results along with the reviews on Tripadvisor, evince the radical validity of the identified themes that the employees and travel agents were primarily concerned with, i.e. *pricing and policies*, *product marketing* and *amenities* of the luxury train. The study, therefore, contributes by presenting the perspectives of service providers and tourists on India's most luxurious train, the Maharajas' Express.

Keywords

Luxury trains, Structural Topic Model, Maharajas' Express, Luxury tourism, Luxury travel

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Introduction

According to D'Arpizio et al. (2016), within the luxury industry, segments like luxury cars, luxury hospitality and personal luxury goods account for about 80% of the total luxury market. The global luxury industry reported a steady growth of 4% with an estimated retail sales value of €1.08 trillion in 2016. Their study further noted a shift of consumption from luxury goods to luxury travel, which supposedly benefitted luxury hospitality (up 4%), luxury cruises (up 5%) and fine restaurants. With an increasing rate of millennials in the luxury market, 2017 witnessed a 'brisk' growth in luxury travel. The sales of luxury cruises further increased by 14% (D'Arpizio et al., 2017). In spite of the luxury travel market showing a steady growth, India's luxury trains have been recording a low rate of occupancy (Dhawan, 2016; Janaki, 2016). A K Manocha, the then chairman and managing director of Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), in an interview shared his understanding on the running of luxury trains in India (Shekhar, 2016). During the interview, he raised his concerns towards the lower rate of occupancy in luxury trains. Mr Manocha propounded that domestic tourists preferred travelling in express trains over luxury trains and that the idea of luxury trains was confined to only a few states in India. He sensed a low rate of awareness among domestic tourists while reflecting upon the occupancy ratio of luxury trains in India. He further asserted that 60% occupancy in luxury trains is considered inimitable on a global front by throwing light upon the conundrum between pricing and exclusivity (Shekhar, 2016). Conversely, Indians took part in around 2 billion trips in the year 2018, and spent approximately \$94 billion on transportation and lodging (Sheth et al., 2019).

Therefore, this study first attempts to identify the major concerns of service providers (employees and travel agents) who are directly or indirectly associated with the functioning of Maharajas' Express, one of the most luxurious trains in India. Based on the identified concern areas of employees and travel agents, the study assesses the satisfaction levels of tourists travelling in Maharajas' Express. Along with the tourist survey, reviews from Tripadvisor were used as supporting data to authenticate the radical validity of concerns identified by the service providers.

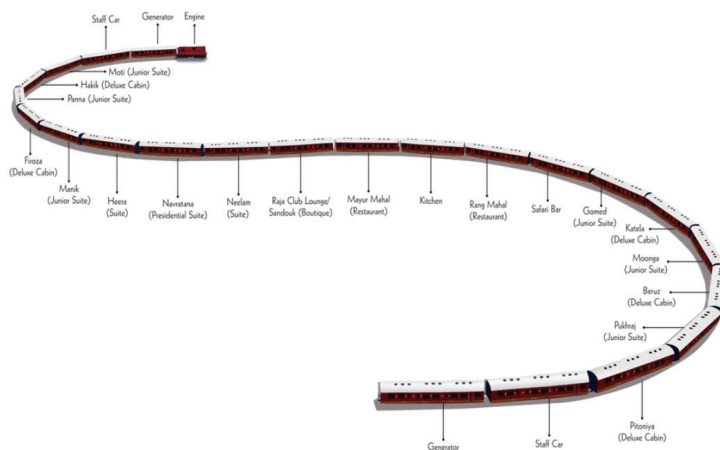


Figure 1. Maharajas' Express train layout (Train layout, n.d.)

The Maharajas' Express, with a maximum carrying capacity of 84 passengers in 23 compartments, is renowned as one of the most luxurious trains, not only in India but across the world. The types of accommodation offered in the Maharajas' Express include deluxe cabin, junior suite, suite and presidential suite. Each of the 23 cars includes ultra-modern avant-garde facilities such as a digital climate room, and full en-suite bathrooms with sink, shower and toilets. The train's presidential suite is globally acclaimed as the world's largest train suite.

Literature Review

Concept of Luxury

Though luxury has a variety of meanings (Yozcu, 2017), its consumption has been concurrent to that of human existence (Berry, 1994). There has been a general agreement among researchers regarding the lack of any considerable definition for luxury (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2012; Godey et al, 2013; Hennigs et al., 2013; Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie, 2006; Yeoman, 2011). This is primarily because of the change in the dynamics of luxury consumption and consumers (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2012). Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie (2006, p. 320), assert that "the concept of luxury is incredibly fluid, and changes dramatically across time and culture". While investigating the luxury value scales of Kapferer (1998), Vigneron & Johnson (1999) and Dubois et al. (2001), Chevalier & Mazzalovo (2012) concede four elements that customers look for while classifying anything as luxury, i.e. elitism (distinction), product quality & high price, personal emotion (hedonism)

and brand (reputation). In the same vein, Godey et al. (2013) identify beauty, quality, price, rarity and inspirational brand endorsement of products as common characteristics of luxury. Though Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie (2006) admit the continuance of classical luxury consumption and elitism, they believe that “luxury today is neither a necessity nor necessarily expensive. It can be mass market, not traditional, but personal, authentic and experiential” (p. 321). In addition to this, while referring to the two extremes of a continuum i.e. luxury goods and ordinary goods, Tynan et al. (2010) propound that “where the ordinary ends and luxury starts is a matter of degree as judged by consumers” (p. 1157). Despite the homogeneous nature of basic human needs, Kemp (1998) explains that the perception of goods as either luxury or necessity entirely depends upon the society in context. Illustrating this, Christodoulides et al. (2009, p. 3) affirm that “what is regarded a basic car in a developed country may be considered luxury in a developing country”. However, one of the most suitable conceptualizations for this study was that of Hagtvedt & Patrick (2009), where they define “a luxury brand as one that has premium products, provides pleasure as a central benefit, and connects with consumers on an emotional level” (p. 609).

Acknowledging the repercussions of mass production and the rise of competitors in the luxury market, Chevalier & Mazzalovo (2012), based on economic affordability, propose the segmentation of luxury into *true luxury* and *intermediate luxury*. The former involves authentic representation of luxurious lifestyles and therefore only few people can afford it. The latter, however, involves the ‘democratization of luxury’ whereby the middle class is allowed to be a part of the imaginary world offered by the intermediate luxury brands. While *intermediate luxury* pursues affordability, *true luxury*, without positioning itself as unaffordable, remains foreign to the topic. *Intermediate luxury* and *true luxury*, both, promise the consumers of escaping the masses through the consumption of much better (in the case of *true luxury*) or a bit better (in the case of *intermediate luxury*) than their compeers. Similarly, Vickers & Renand (2003) differentiate luxury goods and non-luxury goods based on three distinct dimensions: *functionalism* (ability to satisfy consumption needs), *experientialism* (ability to provide pleasure) and *symbolic interactionism* (ability to affirm a social status). Reflecting upon the luxury continuum suggested by De Barnier et al. (2012) and Vickers & Renand (2003), Chang et al. (2016) describe *inaccessible luxury* and *accessible luxury* on the basis of different socioeconomic classes. “Inaccessible luxury represents extreme levels of authenticity, prestige, exclusivity, quality and innovativeness” (Chang et al., 2016, p. 660), which the affluent class consumes. Conversely, “accessible luxury describes non-essential, prestigious and authentic products that are publicly well-known and reasonably priced” (Chang et al., 2016, p. 660). These are consumed by the middle or working class of people.

Luxury Consumers

Concerning the luxury clientele, Chevalier & Mazzalovo (2012) posit that “luxury clients are in fact the very rich, and, also... everybody” (p. 117). Given the segmentation of luxury, there is always something that a common man can consume to make himself distinct from his peers (Vickers & Renand, 2003). According to Amatulli & Guido (2011), luxury consumption is a result of external and internal motives of the consumer. While external motivations may include ostentation, status accumulation and assertion (Truong et al., 2008) to be a part of the desired society (Ivanic, 2015), internal motivations represent self-esteem, materialism (Chan et al., 2014), self-reward, self-enrichment, self-fulfilment (Correia et al., 2020) and self-pleasure (De Barnier & Valette-Florence, 2013; Vickers & Renand, 2003). To better understand the motivation behind tourists’ luxury driven trips, Correia et al. (2020) developed a conceptual model entailing the antecedents and consequences of their behaviour.

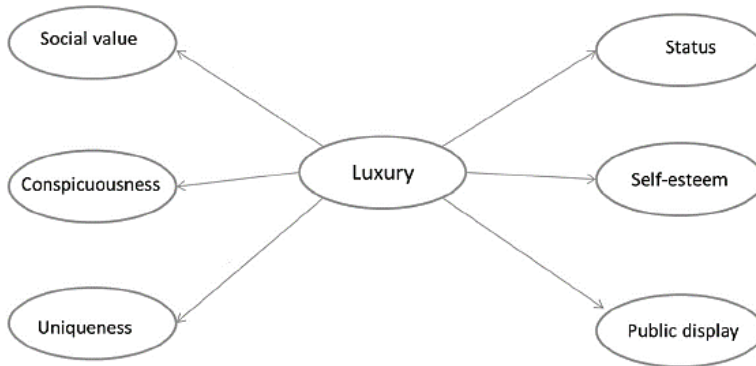


Figure 2. Antecedents and consequences of tourist behaviour (Correia et al., 2020)

Concerning luxury tourism, antecedents refer to the individual and social perceptions of luxury associated with the destination or experience. These include social value (sense of belonging to a group), conspicuousness (status differentiator) and uniqueness (sense of rarity). On the other hand, “consequences refer to the perceived value of tourists attitudes towards luxurious experiences” (Correia et al., 2020, p. 7). Consequents include public display, self-esteem and status.

Luxury Tourism and Luxury Travel

Irrespective of the global situation, luxury tourism and luxury travel has seen a rise in volume (D’Arpizio et al., 2016; Cetin & Walls, 2016; Demir & Saribaş, 2014; Novotná & Kunc, 2019; Popescu & Olteanu, 2014) and value (Popescu & Olteanu,

2014). Luxury has been associated with tourism since the time it was restricted to a small affluent and elite class of people (Demir & Saribaş, 2014). Today, luxury tourism is classified as a distinct segment of the tourism industry in terms of its supply and demand (Popescu & Olteanu, 2014). It usually involves a demand for luxury travel products that require premium service and expertise (Armoni et al., 2018). According to Popescu & Olteanu (2014), luxury tourism involves wealthy clientele willing to pay huge amounts of money for trips that would not only offer them pleasure, but would also distinguish them from their social circles.

However, in the postmodern era, with the changing dynamics of the luxury market, it is imperative to reframe the concept of luxury tourism. According to Eckhardt et al. (2015, p. 3), “new luxury involves affordability, mass-market proliferation, the divorce of status and class, and the availability in the mass market, ideally without undermining a brand’s luxury status”. In addition to this, today’s consumers have started consuming luxury for inconspicuous reasons as well (Eckhardt et al., 2015; Shao et al., 2019). While referring to the conspicuousness dimension of luxury (Truong et al., 2008) in tourism, Riley (1995) and Correia et al. (2016) assert that conspicuousness is more about the manner of travel rather than the destination. According to Hallott (2013), tourists taking part in luxury tourism activities look to explore a new or developing destination or experiencing an already visited destination in a new way. Therefore, in the contemporary world, luxury tourism involves tourists who are willing to pay for trips which are other than usual, entailing the essence of luxury and thereby satisfying their extrinsic and intrinsic needs.

Though there has been a considerable amount of literature on luxury tourism (Armoni et al., 2018; Brenner & Aguilar, 2002; Correia et al., 2020; Demir & Saribaş, 2014; Novotná & Kunc, 2019; Popescu & Olteanu, 2014; Yozcu, 2017), studies have failed to address the discrepancy between luxury tourism and luxury travel. Medlik (2003) describes travel as “any journey from one place to another, over short or long distances; to, from and as part of one’s work, during leisure and for any purpose; using any mode of transport by air, land or sea” (p. 170). As travel may include short or long stays in between successive destinations for various purposes, the World Tourism Organization (2008) declares tourism as a subset of travel. Therefore, luxury travel refers to a traveller’s journey through any means or class of transport, which is a destination in itself and entails the main components of luxury such as distinction, quality, rarity, reputation etc.

Luxury Trains

According to Blancheton & Marchi (2013), the concept of luxury trains dates back to the 1980s when they emanated as a blend of rail tourism incorporating discovery, history and nostalgia. They argue that “trips on luxury trains are special experiences

limited to a wealthy clientele or to visitors splurging on a major event” (p. 36). In the same vein, Kovačić & Milošević (2016) contend that luxury transport is a type of transport which surpasses the usual standards of travelling in terms of quality, pricing, uniqueness and that which can only be afforded by a small number of people. Although the ‘experiences’ and ‘standards’ suggested by Blancheton & Marchi (2013) and Kovačić & Milošević (2016) may be pertinent in today’s luxury trains, new luxury involves affordability without compromising upon its quality component (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2012; Eckhardt et al., 2015; Vickers & Renand, 2003). “Democratization doesn’t change the elements that define luxury, or even necessarily lower the bar—it simply reflects a deeper, more pervasive desire among increasingly sophisticated consumers for more frequent luxury experiences” (Taylor et al., 2009, p. 94). Luxury trains are not intended to be used as usual transportation but as “museum-style attraction”, “an activity to do”, “to employ historic dining” or “somewhere to eat and sleep as part of novelty, nostalgia and entertainment purposes”. These trains usually incorporate historic rolling stocks, onboard entertainment, itineraries, slower journeys, luxurious rides etc (Wikivoyage, 2019). A luxury train is not just a means to reach a destination, but a destination in itself.

Impact of Marketing Mix on Tourists

Marketing Mix refers to a set of activities undertaken by an organization to carry out business and meet the needs of the customers (Goi, 2009). The original concept of marketing mix proposed by Borden (1964) comprised 12 elements, which, if implemented properly, would lead to a ‘profitable business operation’. McCarthy (1964) simplified these 12 elements into a four-element framework i.e. 4 Ps. While investigating the impact of tourism marketing mix on tourists’ satisfaction, the four fundamental elements considered for the study by Magatef (2015) were product, price, place and promotion. Morley (1994), while assessing the impact of price on tourists’ choices, found airfares, hotel tariffs and exchange rates to have a significant impact on tourist demand. However, the factor having the greatest impact on tourist demand was airfare. As part of his study, Morley (1994) found that a 10% decrease in the airfare from Kuala Lumpur to Sydney increased the number of tourists from Kuala Lumpur choosing Sydney as a destination by nearly 12% while a 5% increase in hotel tariffs due to taxes decreased the demand for Sydney by 2%. Similarly, in the context of medical tourism, Han and Hyun (2015) found perceived quality, satisfaction and trust to have a significant impact on the tourists’ intention to revisit the country.

Methodology

In line with the objectives of this study, 83 employees and travel agents associated with the functioning of Maharajas’ Express were initially interviewed. Travel agents

dealing with luxury train bookings in New Delhi (the train's origin) and Udaipur (en-route destination) were selected for the interview along with the employees of the Maharajas' Express governing body i.e. Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC). As part of the interviews, respondents were asked to reflect upon the running of luxury trains through a set of open-ended questions. One of the major benefits of "open-ended responses is that they provide a direct view into a respondent's own thinking" (Roberts et al., 2014a, p. 1065). The latent theme underlying these questions were the train's performance, complaints, and issues. The interviews were conducted in September 2019 and each interview lasted for approximately 25 minutes. All the interviews were tape-recorded and a verbatim transcription was prepared for transcript-based analysis (Alrawadieh et al., 2020; Beyea & Nicoll, 2000; Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech & Zoran, 2009). The verbatim transcription of interviews included responses like:

Employment of better equipment, some other tracks and more luxurious cabins is necessary as this equipment is old (Maharajas' Express employee)

Railways have to provide special halting point away from the busy railway station. So that the passengers can sleep good without hearing the unnecessary announcements by railways (Maharajas' Express employee)

There should be promotion on huge level so that people are aware of the luxury trains... (Travel agent in Udaipur)

Tariff should be low so domestic tourist will increase [...] people do not want to spend on travel by train (Travel agent in New Delhi)

Use of probabilistic topic modelling method was ideal given the nature of this study (Stamolampros et al., 2019a; Stamolampros et al., 2019b). "In principle, topic modelling is a set of unsupervised machine learning techniques which self-organize textual corpora in groups of topics evaluating how specific groups of words appear together using both volume and context as inputs" (Stamolampros et al., 2019b, p. 18). Similar to studies of comparable nature (Roberts et al., 2014a; Stamolampros et al., 2019a), this study made use of the Structural Topic Model (STM), a generative model of word counts (Roberts et al., 2014b) that allows the inclusion of document metadata. To estimate the data using Structural Topic Model (STM), the following preprocessing steps were undertaken (a) word text tokenization (splitting of text into a list of tokens) (b) standardization (conversion of characters into lower case) (c) removal of numbers and punctuation marks (d) removal of stop words and context-specific words and (e) stemming (reducing inflected words to their root forms). Infrequent terms that appeared less than 3 times in the corpus were removed as part of the preparation process (Roberts et al., 2014b). The number of topics ($K = 3$) were determined based on (a) held-out likelihood (b) exclusivity of topic words to the topic and (c) semantic coherence of the topic structure (Stamolampros et al., 2019a;

Stamolampros et al., 2019b). The topics were then labelled with the help of a luxury train supervisor, who accompanied the authors throughout the interviews.

Based on the identified topics and concern areas of employees and travel agents, a structured tourist questionnaire was developed. 157 tourists travelling on the Maharajas' Express were surveyed. The survey included tourists from countries like the United States of America (39), the United Kingdom (35), Japan (18), United Arab Emirates (10), Canada (9), China (7), Germany (7), Australia (6), India (6), Saudi Arabia (5), Russia (4), France (3), Austria (1), Czech Republic (1), Indonesia (1), Iran (1), Italy (1), Nepal (1), Oman (1) and Sri Lanka (1). Countries with the most number of onboard tourists were the USA, the UK and Japan. The tourist survey was conducted in October and November 2019. The tourist questionnaire included 17 questions based on the concern areas identified as part of the employee and travel agent interviews. All the responses were measured on a five-point semantic-type differential scale. While the data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) – Version 25, the statistical techniques applied for analysis included 'Descriptive statistics' (Frequencies and Crosstabs) and 'Tables' (Custom Tables). In addition to this, reviews from Tripadvisor were used as supporting data (Thirumaran & Raghav, 2017) to examine the validity of the identified concerns.

Table 1
Demographic profile of tourists on-board Maharajas' express

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage*
Gender		
Male	104	66.2%
Female	53	33.8%
Age		
<20 Years	4	2.5%
20-40 Years	33	21%
>40 Years	120	76.4%
Educational Qualification		
Undergraduate	22	14%
Graduate	50	31.8%
Post Graduate	83	52.9%
Other	2	1.2%
Occupation		
Employed	93	59.2%
Unemployed	19	12.1%
Other	45	28.6%
Monthly Income		
<1000 USD	3	1.9%
1000–1500 USD	16	10.2%
>1500 USD	138	87.9%
Marital Status		
Married	108	68.8%
Unmarried	49	31.2%

Findings and Discussion

To explore the topics in question, the authors investigated the collection of words associated with the topics (Roberts et al., 2014b). Table 2 represents the top FREX words associated with each topic along with the percentage of topic prevalence. FREX words are words that are both frequent and exclusive, and help in distinguishing topics. The most frequently discussed topic of concern (42.4%) in most of the employee and travel agent interviews was *pricing and policies*. The second most commonly discussed topic that accounted for 32.8% of the interviews, was *Product Marketing*. Each of the three topics of concern identified from the interviews were related to the elements of marketing mix except place, i.e. *pricing and policies* (price), *product marketing* (promotion) and *amenities* (product).

Table 2
Words associated with Topics

Topic	Topic Label	Prop. (%)	Top FREX Words
1	Pricing and Policies	42.4	price, cancel, high, domest, polici, peopl
2	Product Marketing	32.8	chang, market, itinerari, promot, year, tourist
3	Amenities	24.8	group, tour, cabin, servic, wifi, time

Since the data was collected over a period of two months and two trips, demographic analysis (age, monthly income and marital status) of the surveyed participants explained the type of tourists frequently travelling in Maharajas’ Express. The majority of tourists (112) onboard the Maharajas’ Express were above the age of 40 with a monthly income of more than 1500 US dollars. From these, 80.3% (90) of the tourists were married. Apart from that, the survey included 25 tourists (20 to 40 years old) of different marital statuses with a monthly income of more than 1500 US dollars. The questionnaire included questions regarding tourists’ satisfaction with price, policies, marketing and services of the Maharajas’ Express. In terms of pricing, while 28% (44) of the tourists were ‘very satisfied’, 41.4% (65) of the tourists were ‘moderately satisfied’ with the ticket’s pricing. Similarly, an analysis of the responses regarding the policies of luxury trains revealed that while the current cancellation and schedule policies were ‘acceptable’ to 31.8% (50) of the tourists, they were only ‘somewhat acceptable’ to 51% (80) of the tourists. Questions regarding product awareness and onboard services were also asked. Out of the 157 tourists surveyed, 53.5% (84) of the tourists were only ‘moderately aware’ of the products being offered by the Maharajas’ Express. While 57.3% (90) of the tourists considered the onboard services of Maharajas’ Express to be ‘very good’, only 38.2% (60) tourists considered the services to be ‘excellent’. Tourists showed a moderate level of satisfaction with the pricing of Maharajas’ Express as well as the cancellation and rescheduling policies of the train. In addition to that, there was a neutral level of awareness among the tourists of Maharajas’ Express regarding its products. However, the results suggest that 95.5% of the tourists were satisfied with the train’s onboard services.

To better understand the experiences and issues of tourists with the Maharajas' Express, reviews from Tripadvisor were used as supporting data (Thirumaran & Raghav, 2017). An excerpt of a review by Elly (pseudonym) from the United Kingdom, who travelled on the Maharajas' Express in November 2019 is given below

Almost anyone who has paid \$12,000 for a week on a train will tell you it's fantastic. I was stupid enough to pay and it wasn't. The train is so noisy and shaky, it's like trying to sleep in a washing machine and the Indian food on the train is bland and poor by UK standards. (Tripadvisor, 2020)

Similar reviews were given by Daniel (pseudonym) and Angelina (pseudonym) from the United States of America, who travelled in the Maharajas' express in February 2020

The first impression of our deluxe room was that it was tired, dated and badly in need of renovation. The beds were extremely hard, and there was no carpet on the floor. Sadly, I don't feel that the Maharajas' Express is value for money... (Tripadvisor, 2020)

Try and find the best quality earplugs you can, and maybe bring some sleeping tablets – it is really quite difficult to sleep at night as the train tracks are mainly laid on sand, and the train toots at least every other minute (if not more!) through the night. (Tripadvisor, 2020)

Clearly, these reviews reveal the current condition of the compartments in Maharajas' Express. Similar to the concerns of employees and travel agents, tourists consider the refurbishment of cabins and railway tracks to be urgent and necessary. Congruent to the data collected, though the following reviews reflect upon the fine onboard services of Maharajas' Express, they encapsulate its pretentious celebrations and poor value for money aspect.

The train itself was lovely, especially the dining cars, and we thought the staff on board were just fabulous. Unfortunately, the off-board program and tours were average at best. So disappointing that you would be subjected to wasting time being taken on touristic shopping stops, or charged for additional add on tours. We also felt uncomfortable with all the excessive Maharajas branding and fake celebrations. We loved our authentic experiences post Maharajas Express much better than the train. (Tripadvisor, 2020)

Staff was wonderful and amazing. Food was super delicious. But these things should not be priced for \$10k tag. They rip off people basically. People of this country are very poor, you even feel bad taking luxury [...] train is well decorated from inside but ride is awful. You cannot sleep, environment outside is extremely polluted and dirty. Extremely unsafe. The train does not worth more than \$1k. (Tripadvisor, 2020)

Similar to the results of Thirumaran & Raghav (2017), the above reviews suggest the incipient phase of luxury tourism in countries like India. Their study reflects upon the relation between the infrastructure in developing countries and the existence of luxury tourism in such emerging destinations.

Conclusion

The study tried to assess the concerns of employees and travel agents associated with the functioning of Maharajas' Express, a premier luxury train in India through the application of Structural Topic Model (STM). Keeping in mind the limitations of closed-ended questions (Roberts et al., 2014a), the interviewers employed the use of open-ended questions regarding the trains' performance, complaints and issues. This helped in providing a direct view of the respondents' thinking. The analysis led to the identification of 3 major themes. 42.4% of the total concerns were about the pricing and policies of Maharajas' Express, and 32.8% of the concerns were about the train's marketing. This included concerns about the itinerary and marketing efforts of the luxury train. The third topic included concerns about the amenities of Maharajas' Express, such as cabins and other services. Based on the identified themes, 157 tourists from 20 countries were surveyed with the help of a structured questionnaire. In addition to the tourist survey, reviews from Tripadvisor were used as secondary data to strengthen the findings of this study. 41.4% (65) and 51% (80) of the tourists showed moderate levels of satisfaction towards pricing and policies of Maharajas' Express respectively. In addition to this, reviews of recent travellers on Tripadvisor further evince the pervasive discontent among tourists with the current pricing of the Maharajas' Express. However, 53.5% (83) of the tourists were only moderately aware of all the products offered by Maharajas' Express. Demographic analysis of the respondents helped in identifying the prevalent consumer base of Maharajas' Express. The analysis showed that 71.3% (112) of the tourists were married and above the age of 40 years, with a monthly income of more than 1500 US dollars. The relatively smaller number of Indian tourists (6) travelling on the Maharajas' Express further evince the lack of interest and awareness among domestic travellers. The results, therefore, reflect upon the need for large scale promotions, not only among the pervasive customer base but also among people of different age groups, nationalities and socioeconomic classes. While the survey and reviews both concede the ravishing onboard services of Maharajas' Express, the latter sheds light upon the poor state of cabins, tracks and beds which contribute in excessive rattling, thereby affecting the luxury experiences of tourists.

Based on the literature review and the findings of this study, it would be in the wise interests of the authorities to introduce intermediate luxury products, which is not only affordable, but also captures the essence of luxury (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2012; Eckhardt et al., 2015; Taylor et al., 2009). Such products, along with large scale promotion amongst people of different age groups and socioeconomic classes may help in mitigating the lower rate of occupancy in Indian luxury trains. However, the challenges of organizing luxury tourism in developing countries can hardly be overlooked. As suggested by Thirumaran & Raghav (2017, p. 148), "developing countries have difficulties delivering the perfect luxury feel". In this case, the required infrastructure

for the conduct of luxury tourism (for example, railway tracks) is not at the desired level. Therefore, this study, to some extent, confirms the findings of Thirumaran & Raghav (2017) as infrastructure is important for organizing luxury tourism.

Limitations and Future Research

There has been little research about the functioning of luxury trains, especially in countries like India. Since the study was exploratory in nature, it tried to explore more about luxury trains in order to develop some hypotheses and predictions which could be tested in future research (Trochim, 2001). Researchers may try to investigate the expectations and perceptions of luxury train tourists, to better understand the market of luxury trains. Moreover, future researchers may also work upon the consumption patterns of luxury train tourists.

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