

FACTORS AFFECTING THE PERCEPTIONS OF PILGRIM TOURISTS IN SELECTION OF ACCOMMODATION AND TRANSPORTATION: A CASE STUDY OF GOLDEN TEMPLE, VELLORE CITY, TAMIL NADU, INDIA

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: This empirical study aims to identify the perceptions of pilgrim tourists' regarding their accommodation and transport facilities in the Golden Temple, Vellore city, Tamil Nadu, India.

Methodology: This study used both primary and secondary data for data collection among pilgrim tourists. Data were later on analyzed using SPSS statistical tools like percentage, Chi-square, ANOVA using Statistical Package for Social Sciences were applied.

Results: The findings of the study indicate that the income of the family doesn't relate to accommodation facilities and the age of the respondents was affected by the transport facilities in Vellore City.

Applications of this study: The study brings to highlights the basics of accommodation and transportation and the factors affecting the perception of pilgrim's tourists. It concludes that the age of the respondents affects the transport facilities in Vellore City. The transportation facilities should be improved for the tourists to attract and improve pilgrim tourism.

Novelty/Originality of this study: The study has found that the tourists had sufficient maturity, education and good exposure about their destination. The study found that accommodation facilities such as comfort, peace, safety and security, attitude and behavior of staff, and sanitation and hygiene are not more satisfied. Transport facilities such as Signboard, street lights, traffic rules have to be improved.

Keywords: Pilgrimage, Perception, Tourism, Accommodation, Transportation, Golden Temples.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is now one of the largest and most important industries in the world in terms of employment creation and generation of foreign revenue (UNWTO, 2013). It plays a major role in the creation of jobs, development of enterprises, growth of infrastructures and main revenue source to the Government. Thompson & Schofield clearly states that the "Transport plays an important role in providing mobility for tourists at the destination, and tourists' experience with public transport service may influence their satisfaction with the destination." (Thompson & Schofield, 2007). Pilgrimage tourism brings people from all along from different localities, races, religions, and civilizations to get a chance and to meet one another and to understand their culture. Domestic tourists experience their breath and deepness through their pilgrimage tourism. A foreigner visits the cultural destination to understand and to know the cultural civilizations of the host nation like India, built the nationalization 'Unity in Diversity' as part (UNWTO 2015).

CONCEPT OF PILGRIMAGE TOURISM

The word 'Pilgrimage' denotes a journey towards ethical or religious implication. Naturally, it is a journey to a holy place or other location of value to a person's principle and trust, or sometimes it means a journey into someone's own belief. It has creative expressions, community practice, materials, building a site, historic city centers, art, and objects. It brings individuals from various localities, castes, race and civilizations and to gives an opportunity for all to know each other.

GROWTH OF TOURISM SECTOR IN INDIA

According to the World Travel and Tourism Co-operation report (WTTC), the impact of the tourism industry on economic (Gross Domestic Product) reaches around Rs 1919.7 billion with 2 percent to Rs 4360.6 billion with 2.1 percent of GDP in 2023.

PILGRIMS TOURISTS ARRIVAL IN TAMIL NADU

According to the Tamil Nadu Tourism report, the number of domestic and foreign tourists from the month of January to December is shown in (table 1) and the domestic and foreign tourist's arrival from the year 2013 to 2018 is shown table 2.

SRIPURAM GOLDEN TEMPLE

Vellore is a hub for travellers. It is popularly known to be as 'the Fort city' of Tamil Nadu. Its features are blasted with a wealthy culture. The Sripuram which is very close to Thirmalaikodi is the place where the Golden Temple of Vellore is located. It is a famous spiritual place, the deity Goddess Mahalakshmi named the Narayani Amman. The temple has been designed with 1500 kilograms of gold and it is dedicated years to Goddess Mahalakshmi. The Golden Temple was

constructed within a stipulated time period i.e. 7 years and was swearing-in on 24th August 2007. This golden temple has 750 kg gilding dome which is double than that of the Golden Temple at Amritsar.

Table 1: Domestic and foreign tourists from the month of January to December

Month	Domestic Tourists	Foreign Tourists	Total
January	14,16,675	19,411	14,36,086
February	14,16,878	19,473	14,36,351
March	14,16,486	19,211	14,35,697
April	14,17,376	19,325	14,36,701
May	14,18,996	19,711	14,38,707
June	14,17,196	18,332	14,35,528
July	17,57,749	18,090	17,75,839
August	18,45,636	19,899	18,65,535
September	19,37,918	21,491	19,59,409
October	20,34,814	22,565	20,57,379
November	21,36,555	23,919	21,60,974
December	26,98,936	22,755	27,20,891
Total	2,09,14,415	2,44,182	2,11,58,597

Source: Times-News Network

Table 2: The arrival of tourists (2013 to 2018)

Year	Domestic tourist	Foreign tourists
2013	9054286	91761
2014	1026267	89326
2015	1018466	92842
2016	1246520	122011
2017	1561697	217314
2018	2091441	244182

Source: Times-News Network

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The researcher identified the main problems and constraints of the study with the help of previous literature. Such as improper transportations, accommodation, no proper comfort regarding the place of stay in the hotel particularly during nights when they are with their families, the price of accommodation is high and the attitude of staff is not up to the mark. Water, electricity is not that sufficient, safety for tourists during night times is very low, and sanitation and hygiene are the main issues for pilgrim tourists. Based on the above statement of problems for the study, majority of the research studies conducted on Travel tourism, village tourism, medical tourism, cultural tourism and eco-tourism only, but only few studies on pilgrim tourism and so far no studies were conducted on “Accommodation and Transportation: The Factors Affecting the Perceptions of Pilgrim Tourists” in Vellore city, so, the researcher identified the research problem and try to fill the research gap for the study.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the demographic profile of the pilgrim tourist respondents.
2. To identify the factors affecting the perceptions of pilgrim tourists’ towards accommodation and transportation facilities in Vellore City.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The researcher presented the various literatures relating to pilgrimage tourists on transportation and accommodation which were collected from the various national and international refereed journals and the same was presented below.

[Amitabh Mishra and Ahmed \(2017\)](#) stated that the main reasons for dissatisfaction of tourists are Sanitation and hygiene at the destination. The hotel stay, shopping centers, and markets, food and beverages in the market were rated dirty and unhygienic; water and electricity are also rated low and dissatisfied by the majority of tourists. [Albalate and Belanalysed](#) that “in cities with good public transportation systems, few tourists need to hire private transport; however, in cities with

poor public transport, most tourists will have a higher demand for public transportation systems and hire private transport. Thus, the number of tourist arrivals to cities as a factor in the design of urban mass transportation supply.” ([Albalate & Bel, 2010](#)). [Ali and Howaidee \(2012\)](#) study says that “private and public transport dimension of tourism product that determines the cost, speed, and convenience with which a traveller may leave his place of residence and reach a chosen destination including infrastructure, equipment, operational factors, and government regulations and found that destination accessibility influences tourist satisfaction.” [Andriotis Agiomirgianakis and Mihiotis \(2008\)](#) in their study clearly identified these elements as important elements that can be listed as pricing, accommodation, and catering, host attitude, natural environment, road transport, entertainment, language, and communications. [Dell’Olio, Ibeas and Cecin \(2011\)](#) identified that waiting period, hygiene, comfort are the important variables that stand out alone in the grouping principle. It defines the eminence, competent and secure public transportation [Gaman \(2014\)](#) stated that “the power of transportation convenience on tourist accommodation facilities of health resorts situated in Carpathian areas, which presented the lowest level of transport accessibility on tourist accommodation facilities, was very low.” [G. Vasudevan \(2019\)](#) said that it is the need of the hours to sensitize and engage the cab and auto rich saw drivers in the city of Madurai to attract and retain the tourist for a day or more and they should be made as ambassadors of the city. Involving in fleecing the tourist should be stopped. “If you want the tourist to stay in the city for one or two days and that should be done through cab and auto rich saws. [Heung, Qu, and Chu \(2001\)](#) showed that age, gender, and education were important factors that visitors’ decisions to travel. Their study suggested that the lower age group evaluated the ‘investigation’ influence figure essentially higher than the higher age group. [Henderson \(2009\)](#) clearly identified that protected and efficacious transportation afford ease of use from abroad and mobility oncoming is a critical thought to aid the progress of tourist destination whereas its lack acts as an obstacle.

[Jayaraman et.al \(2011\)](#) clearly identified that the “age, education and income were all significant variables in influencing the perceptions of overall service quality provided by bus and minibus taxis. The most significant service divers influencing the utilization of public transport service are season tickets, followed by ticket pricing and information service.” [Jensen \(2011\)](#) found that the age gathering of 55 to 64 years and 65 plus years rated societal association with family/companions notably lower than the lesser age bunches. Senior voyagers often travel to destinations where they can visit religious spots, while this perspective is not essential for the youths [Joobi V.P et.al. \(2018\)](#) he has interpreted that role played by women are marketing and sales of local products, catering of food, laundry services, local food production, crafts making, etc addition to their they engage in transportation, providing accommodation conserving arts, culture, providing excursion and attractions. [Lumsdon \(2006\)](#) concludes that the “design of the tourism bus network at the destination needs a comprehensive approach with market understanding and accounting for the difference between utility and recreational trips. Studies on the means of transport used at the destination found that tourists use private cars and taxis.” [Mishra and Ojha \(2014\)](#) focused on evaluating necessitate of advertising India as a rich tourism objective projecting India as a country that presents an entirely dissimilar tourism practice with its varied geography and cultures. The travel motivation is the deciding factor for tourists for choosing one specific destination over another. ([Crompton, 1979](#)). [Ramachandran \(2008\)](#) in his research study he has made some suggestion to the government about tourist accommodation, awareness, and satisfaction in Tamil Nadu that trade center should regulate the price of the products, Information center should provide all-around information, charges collected at toll plaza should be reasonable and the cost of parking also should be manageable. [Shobana Devi V \(2015\)](#) in his study she found that the number of tourists buses to the bus stand (Mahabalipuram) stand should be increased so that it reduces the number of personal car/vehicle users. She also found that STD in the tourist spots (Mahabalipuram) should be implemented. [Salilta saribut \(2017\)](#) in his paper “The Effect of previous experience and Travel Motivation” found the results for (Demographic Data) that 66.67% of the participants were retirees, 60.71% of them were married and personal income ranges between Rs. 2,00,000- Rs. 6,00,000 were 67.62%. Moreover, the majority of the participants of 46.90% were Bachelor’s degree holders and he concludes that the previous experience is more important and he examined that the retirees, married people, and income-earning a group of Rs 2, 00,000- Rs. 6, 00,000 are more experienced by the travel destination. [Sharma Aman \(2017\)](#) he said that Uttar Pradesh Government will set up a 24x7 phone helpline that seeks “better experience” for both foreign and domestic tourists visiting the state. It will be operated as a call center and will also provide information related to tour and package, accommodation and modes of transport and also acts as signboards which are absent in many tourist places. [Sharma and Giri \(2009\)](#) conducted a study by highlighting the importance of accessibility of tourist destinations, transport, and infrastructure. Furthermore to recognize the understanding in the apt context of the services a swot up was carried out by [Sathish and Venkatesakumar \(2014\)](#) with the target pilgrims who visit the sacred Tirumala Tirupati Temple, Andhra Pradesh. They measured the factors like a ticketing system, information, experience and facilities available at the temple.

[Toth & David \(2010\)](#) investigate the degree to which tourism profits from lodgings revenue are associated with available civic roads and establish that worldwide incomes are far more susceptible to favourable convenience than household ones. [Tyrinopolous and Antoniou \(2008\)](#) identified the following as “price, information provision, a behavior of personnel, waiting and in-vehicle conditions and accessibility as factors of quality affecting customer choice in transit ridership.” [Times-News Network \(2019\)](#) Three pilgrims who were aged around sixty years were mowed by a speeding car near Perambalur who were undertaking a padayatra to Temple to participate in the Poochorithal festival were severely injured and admitted. Due to lack of infrastructural facilities around the highways accidents are taking place and there is no safety for the pilgrims so necessary precaution needs to be taken to develop the infrastructural facilities.

METHODOLOGY

The Primary data consist of Questionnaire through the direct personal interview and Secondary data are collected through various journals, magazine, articles, newspaper, and websites. This study is formulated with a hypothesis setting, 123 questionnaires were issued, collected and taken for analyses only 103 and the remaining 20 were not taken for analyses due to incompleteness, and the sample area is covered in Golden Temple, Vellore District, Tamil Nadu, India. Population around 1000 visits per day. Data Analysis for the study is formulated with Percentage, Analysis of variance and chi-square using SPSS. The researcher applied reliability test in order to find out the reliability of all variables. The output of reliability comes to 0.762. Based on the results, it is very clear to say that all the variables used in the research are reliable for analysis. Both primary and secondary data were used.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

H1: There is no considerable bond amid family takings and the perception of accommodation facilities of pilgrim tourists.
H2: There is no significant relationship between age and perception of transport facilities of pilgrim tourists.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE: The following table 1 depicts the gender, marital status, age, family income, education, occupation and state with their respective variables using frequency distribution.

Table 3: Demographic Profile

Demographic Profile	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	71	71
	Female	32	32
Marital Status	Married	53	51.5
	Unmarried	50	48.5
Age	18 to 30	46	44.7
	31 to 43	41	39.8
	44 to 55	12	11.7
	Above 56	4	3.8
Family Income	Family Income Below 20,000	54	52.4
	Between 20,000- 40,000	39	37.9
	Between 40,000- 60,000	7	6.8
	Above Rs. 60,000	3	2.9
Education	Plus 2	25	24.3
	Graduate	59	57.3
	Post Graduate	16	15.5
	Others	3	2.9
Occupation	Student	23	22.3
	Agriculturist	9	8.7
	Private Employee	36	35.0
	Entrepreneur	18	17.5
	Business	5	4.9
	Self-employed	6	5.8
State	Others	6	5.8
	Tamil Nadu	42	40.8
	Karnataka	15	14.6
	Kerala	25	24.3
	Andhra Pradesh	18	17.5
	Other states	3	2.9

Source: Authors findings

Interpretation

From the table-3 it is inferred that under gender, a male is 71% and female is 32% which shows that male has the highest pilgrim when compared to female. Under marital status married are 51.5% and unmarried are 48.5%. Under age, there are four categories in which 18-30 age group has 44.7%, the 31-43 age group has 31.8%, the 44-55 age group has 11.7%, and above 56 age group has 3.9% in which the majority of the age group 18-30 are more visiting the pilgrim tourism. Then under family income whose income below 20,000 has 52.4%, between Rs 20,000-40,000 has 37.9%, between Rs 40,000-60,000 family income has 6.8% and family income whose income is above Rs 60,000 has 2.9% of frequency, it says that below Rs 20,000 family income groups visit the pilgrim tourism more when compared to other income groups. The next demographic factor is education under which plus 2 24.3%, the graduate has 57.3%, postgraduate has 15.5% and

others have 2.9%, in which graduates have the highest percentage of pilgrim tourist's visit. Under occupation students have 22.3%, agriculturist has 8.7%, private employees has 35.0%, the entrepreneur has 17.5%, the business has 4.9%, self-employed has 5.8%, and others to has 5.8% of frequency. Under different states Tamil Nadu has 40.8%, Karnataka has 14.6%, Kerala has 14.3%, Andhra Pradesh has 17.3% and another state has 2.9% of frequency which shows that Tamil Nadu has highest pilgrim visit to the tourism industry.

Table 4: Perception of tourists against Accommodation facilities- One way ANOVA

Variables	Family Income	Mean Score	F	Significant Value
Availability of accommodation	Family Income Below 20,000	3.41	2.260	0.86
	Between 20,000- 40,000	3.67		
	Between 40,000- 60,000	3.71		
	Above Rs. 60,000	4.67		
Comfort and peace	Family Income Below 20,000	3.28	1.800	.152
	Between 20,000- 40,000	3.46		
	Between 40,000- 60,000	3.71		
	Above Rs. 60,000	4.00		
Service facility (water, electricity, toilets)	Family Income Below 20,000	3.26	2.391	.073
	Between 20,000- 40,000	3.33		
	Between 40,000- 60,000	3.71		
	Above Rs. 60,000	4.33		
Safety and security	Family Income Below 20,000	3.09	2.349	.077
	Between 20,000- 40,000	3.49		
	Between 40,000- 60,000	3.71		
	Above Rs. 60,000	3.67		
Price and accommodation	Family Income Below 20,000	3.30	1.654	.182
	Between 20,000- 40,000	3.15		
	Between 40,000- 60,000	3.86		
	Above Rs. 60,000	3.67		
Attitude and behavior of staff	Family Income Below 20,000	3.19	2.041	.113
	Between 20,000- 40,000	3.51		
	Between 40,000- 60,000	3.86		
	Above Rs. 60,000	3.33		
Sanitations and hygiene at a place of stay	Family Income Below 20,000	3.22	.996	.398
	Between 20,000- 40,000	3.44		
	Between 40,000- 60,000	3.29		
	Above Rs. 60,000	4.00		

Source: Authors findings

Interpretation – Mean score

From the above table it's inferred that for the first item's highest mean score is 4.67, which infers that the respondents who earn above Rs 60,000 are more satisfied with the accommodation at the destination and the least mean score is 3.41, so it is inferred that the respondents who family income below Rs 20,000 are less satisfied with the accommodation at the destination. The second highest mean score is 4.00, which infers that the respondents whose family income above Rs 60,000 are agreed that they have good comfort and peace at the destination and the least mean score 3.28, which infers that the respondents below Rs 20,000 of family income feel that the comfort and peace at the destination is not up to the level. The third highest mean score is 4.33, which infers that the respondents whose family Income above Rs 60,000 are very much satisfied with the service facility (water, electricity, toilets) at the destination and the least mean score 3.26, infers that the respondents are not satisfied with the service facility (water, electricity, toilets) at the destination. The fourth highest mean score is 3.71, which infers that the respondent's family income between Rs 40,000- 60,000 income earns is well satisfied with the Safety and security at the destination and least mean score of 3.09, which infers that the respondents whose family income below Rs. 20,000 are not satisfied with the Safety and security at the destination. The fifth highest mean score of the respondents is 3.86, which infers that the respondents whose family income between Rs 40,000-60,000 are satisfied with the Price and accommodation and the least score 3.15 whose income lies between Rs 20,000- 40,000 are not at all satisfied with the Price and accommodation at the destination. The final highest mean score of 3.86 whose family income is between Rs 40,000- 60,000 are highly satisfied with Attitude and behaviour of the staff at the destination and the least mean score is 3.19, which infers that family income below Rs 20,000 are not satisfied with the Attitude and behavior of the staff facilities at the destination and 4.00 whose family income is above Rs. 60,000 are more satisfied with Sanitation and hygiene at a place of stay and the least mean score is 3.22 whose family income is below Rs. 20,000 are not satisfied with the Sanitation and hygiene at a place of stay.

From the above 7 variables relating to the perception of pilgrim tourists about accommodation, the calculated value is more than the hypothetical value at 0.05. So, a null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant relationship between family income and accommodation facilities.

Table 5: Perception of pilgrims against Transportation facilities - Chi- Square Test

Variables	Age	P value	Significant Value
Availability means of transportation	18 to 30	23.751	.041
	31 to 43		
	44 to 55		
	Above 56		
Comfort and Luxury	18 to 30	9.438	0.082
	31 to 43		
	44 to 55		
	Above 56		
Safety during travel	18 to 30	20.874	0.039
	31 to 43		
	44 to 55		
	Above 56		
Fare of Transportation	18 to 30	11.365	0.027
	31 to 43		
	44 to 55		
	Above 56		
Attitude and Behaviour of transporters	18 to 30	25.416	0.271
	31 to 43		
	44 to 55		
	Above 56		
Availability of adequate signboards on road	18 to 30	18.799	0.831
	31 to 43		
	44 to 55		
	Above 56		
Availability of adequate street lights	18 to 30	17.674	0.770
	31 to 43		
	44 to 55		
	Above 56		
Conditions of roads at destination	18 to 30	30.566	0.413
	31 to 43		
	44 to 55		
	Above 56		
Traffic management on the roads	18 to 30	8.213	0.103
	31 to 43		
	44 to 55		
	Above 56		

Source: Authors findings

Interpretation

From Table 5 it is vivid that Chi-Square value for that first variable “Availability mean of transportation” construct F-value is 23.751 and its significance value is 0.04, and for “Comfort and Luxury” construct F-value is 9.438 and its significant value is 0.082. The “Safety during travel” construct F-value is 20.874 and its significant value is 0.039, and for “Fare of Transportation” constructs F-value is 11.365 and its significant value is 0.027. The “Attitude and behavior of transporters” construct F-value is 25.416 and the significance value is 0.271 and for “Availability of adequate signboards on-road” construct F-value 18.799 and significance value is 0.83. The “Availability of adequate street lights” construct F-value is 17.674 and its significance value is 0.770, and for “Conditions of roads at destination” construct F-value is 30.566 and its significance value is 0.413. The “Traffic management the roads” construct F-value is 8.213 and its significance value is 0.103.

From the above One Way ANOVA it is interpreted that the calculated value for the above 9 variables relating to transportation facilities, the calculated value is more than the hypothetical value at 0.05. So, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant relationship between age group and Transportation facilities.

CONCLUSION

India is a country with various cultures and traditional heritage with a mixture of religious, caste, and races. India is a country with all types of cultural and spiritual places where domestic and foreigners visit India's and this is a major source of revenue for our country. The study has concluded that the tourists had sufficient maturity, education and good exposure to their destination. The tourists experienced that variables relating to the perception of accommodation facilities such as comfort and peace, safety and security, attitude and behavior of staff, and sanitation and hygiene are not more satisfied. Signboard, street lights, traffic rules have to be improved. The study concluded that the pilgrim tourist who stays in Vellore city has no significant relationship between income and accommodation.

The sample size for the study is restricted to 103. The study covers only Vellore city in Tamil Nadu that only the respondents who visit the golden temple. The result of the study cannot be compared with other similar studies carried out in other pilgrim cities like Tiruvannamalai and Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu and Tirupathi in Andhra Pradesh. Based on the research study the researcher want to suggest few points like conditions of roads, traffic management, signboards, proper direction about route should be improved so that pilgrims who are visiting the golden temple will feel satisfied to reach the destination on time. Accommodation at hotels, guest house and lodging should be maintained properly and the behavior of staff and their attitude should be improved. Hygienic foods and cleanness in the hotels should be improved by the tourist's management for more attraction of the pilgrims.

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