



A Study of The Problems Faced by Tourists Visiting Religious Tourism Destinations in Tamil Nadu Innasimuthu

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ABSTRACT

Religious tourism is an important segment of the tourism industry in Tamil Nadu due to its rich spiritual heritage, historic temples, and cultural traditions. The present study aims to identify the socio-demographic profile of tourists and examine the major problems faced by tourists visiting religious tourism destinations in Tamil Nadu. The study is descriptive and empirical in nature and is based on both primary and secondary data. A total of 384 respondents were selected using convenience sampling, and the collected data were analysed using simple percentage analysis, descriptive statistics, and Garrett Ranking Technique. The findings revealed that the majority of the respondents were male, married, belonged to the age group of 31 - 40 years, and resided within Tamil Nadu. The study identified lack of clean drinking water, inadequate accommodation facilities, pollution, poor cleanliness, and transportation difficulties as the major problems faced by tourists. The study suggests improving infrastructure facilities, sanitation, transportation, and tourist guidance services to enhance tourist satisfaction and promote sustainable religious tourism development in Tamil Nadu.

Keywords: Religious Tourism, Tourist Problems, Tourist Satisfaction, Tamil Nadu, Infrastructure Facilities, Sustainable Tourism

1. INTRODUCTION

Religious tourism is one of the oldest and most significant forms of tourism in India, and Tamil Nadu occupies a prominent position in this sector because of its rich spiritual heritage, ancient temples, sacred shrines, and vibrant cultural traditions. The state is widely recognized for its world-famous pilgrimage destinations such as Madurai, Rameswaram, Palani, Chidambaram, Velankanni, and Nagore, which attract millions of domestic and international tourists every year. Religious tourism not only promotes spiritual fulfilment and cultural exchange but also contributes substantially to employment generation, local business development, and the overall economic growth of the state. Despite the rapid growth of religious tourism, tourists visiting pilgrimage destinations in Tamil Nadu face several difficulties that negatively affect their travel experience and satisfaction. Common problems encountered by tourists include overcrowding during festival seasons, inadequate transportation facilities, traffic congestion, lack of parking facilities, poor sanitation, insufficient accommodation, high travel expenses, and ineffective tourist information and guidance services. In many temple destinations, the increasing tourist inflow has created pressure on existing infrastructure and public amenities, leading to discomfort and inconvenience for visitors. Moreover, inadequate crowd management, poor maintenance of public facilities, and environmental issues further reduce the quality of the pilgrimage experience.

Recent research studies conducted between 2020 and 2022 highlighted that service quality and infrastructural facilities play a crucial role in determining tourist satisfaction and revisit intention. Kavitha and Sugapriya (2021) found that the COVID-19 pandemic severely affected pilgrimage tourism in Tamil Nadu by creating health concerns, travel restrictions, reduced accommodation facilities, and limitations on temple entry. Their study emphasized the importance of sanitation, health safety measures, and digital management systems in restoring tourist confidence. However, transportation difficulties, sanitation issues, overcrowding, and inadequate tourism facilities identified as major problems faced by tourists visiting religious tourism destinations in Tamil Nadu. The study recommended improving basic infrastructure, accommodation facilities, cleanliness, and tourist guidance services to enhance the overall pilgrimage experience. Therefore, identifying and understanding the problems faced by tourists is essential for improving destination management, enhancing tourist satisfaction, and ensuring the sustainable development of religious tourism in Tamil Nadu. A proper assessment of tourists' perceptions and experiences would help tourism authorities, policymakers, and temple administrations formulate effective strategies to improve infrastructure facilities, service quality, and overall destination management practices.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Religious tourism is one of the major forms of tourism in Tamil Nadu, attracting a large number of domestic and international tourists to famous pilgrimage destinations such as Madurai, Rameswaram, Palani, Velankanni and Nagore. Although these destinations contribute significantly to the cultural and economic development of the state, tourists often experience several difficulties during their visits. Problems such as overcrowding, inadequate transportation, poor sanitation, insufficient accommodation facilities, traffic congestion, lack of proper guidance, and safety concerns negatively affect tourist satisfaction and overall travel experience. In recent years, the increase in tourist inflow and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic have further intensified these issues. Therefore, the present study titled “A Study of the Problems Faced by Tourists Visiting Religious Tourism Destinations in Tamil Nadu” aims to explore the socio-demographic profile of tourists and identify the major problems faced by them at religious tourism destinations in Tamil Nadu. Such a study would help policymakers and tourism authorities formulate suitable measures to improve tourist facilities and ensure sustainable tourism development in Tamil Nadu.

3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study focuses on examining the problems faced by tourists visiting religious tourism destinations in Tamil Nadu. The study mainly covers important pilgrimage centres that attract a significant number of tourists throughout the year. It aims to analyse the socio-demographic profile of tourists, including factors such as age, gender, marital status, religion, monthly income and the place of residence to understand their travel behaviour and preferences. Further, the study investigates the major issues encountered by tourists, such as transportation difficulties, accommodation problems, sanitation issues, overcrowding, safety concerns, and lack of tourism-related information and services. Based on the findings, the study intends to provide suitable suggestions for improving tourist facilities and service quality at religious destinations. The study will be useful for tourism planners, policymakers, temple authorities, and researchers in promoting effective management and sustainable development of religious tourism in Tamil Nadu.

4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kumar and Rajesh (2022) examined the problems faced by tourists visiting major pilgrimage destinations in South India with special reference to temple tourism. The study identified several challenges encountered by tourists, including overcrowding during festival seasons, inadequate transportation facilities, poor sanitation, traffic congestion, lack of proper accommodation, and insufficient tourist information services. The researchers found that these issues significantly affected tourist satisfaction and overall pilgrimage experience. The study further suggested that tourism authorities and temple administrations should improve infrastructure facilities, strengthen crowd management practices, provide better sanitation services, and enhance digital information systems to ensure convenience and safety for tourists. The research concluded that effective destination management and quality service delivery are essential for the sustainable development of religious tourism destinations.

Kamenidou and Stavrianea (2022) analysed tourists’ experiences and satisfaction in monastery tourism destinations with special reference to religious tourism in Greece and Turkey. The study focused on understanding the factors influencing tourists’ experiences, satisfaction, and revisit intentions towards religious destinations. Using quantitative analysis, the researchers identified that tourists often faced issues related to inadequate visitor facilities, overcrowding, insufficient destination management, and limited-service quality at religious sites. The findings revealed that these challenges affected tourists’ overall pilgrimage experience and satisfaction levels. The study suggested that tourism authorities and destination managers should improve infrastructure facilities, visitor guidance services, cleanliness, and crowd management practices to enhance tourist satisfaction and strengthen destination loyalty. The authors concluded that effective management and quality tourism services are essential for improving tourists’ experiences and promoting sustainable religious tourism development.

Kavitha and Sugapriya (2021) analysed the consequences of COVID-19 on Hindu pilgrimage tourism places in Tamil Nadu. The study highlighted that tourists visiting religious destinations faced serious challenges during the pandemic period, including travel restrictions, health and safety concerns, limited accommodation facilities, overcrowding fears, and reduced accessibility to temples. The findings indicated that the pandemic negatively affected tourist confidence and pilgrimage activities across major religious centres in Tamil Nadu. The researchers recommended adopting improved sanitation practices, digital information systems, crowd management measures, and health safety protocols to restore tourist confidence and ensure sustainable religious tourism in the post-pandemic period.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the socio-demographic profile of tourists in the study area
2. To identify the problems faced by the tourists in the study area and provide suitable suggestions based on the findings

6. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The following table clearly presents the research design and methodological framework adopted for the present study

Table 1 Research Design and Methodology

Parameters	Brief Note
Type of Research	Descriptive & Empirical in Nature
Data Collection Method	Primary & Secondary Data (Mixed Method)

Data Collection Period	January 2023 – March 2023
Geographic Location	Tamil Nadu (Major Religious Tourism Destinations Only)
Research Instrument	Survey Questionnaire
Sampling Type	Convenience Sampling
Sample Size	384 (Unknown Population)
Statistical Analysis	Simple Percentage Analysis, Descriptive Statistics & Garrett Ranking Technique
Software Tools Used	IBM SPSS & MS Excel

7. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The demographic profile of the respondents is presented in the following table.

Table 2 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Category	Profile	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	220	57.29
	Female	164	42.71
Age	Up to 20 years	20	5.21
	21 - 30 years	78	20.31
	31 - 40 years	122	31.78
	41 – 50 years	80	20.83
	51 – 60 years	32	8.33
	Above 60 years	52	13.54
Marital Status	Single / Unmarried	144	37.50
	Married	240	62.50
Religion	Hindu	180	46.88
	Christian	120	31.25
	Muslim	80	20.83
	Others	4	1.04
Monthly Income	Below Rs. 20,000	40	10.42
	Rs. 20,001 - Rs. 40,000	180	46.87
	Rs. 40,001 - Rs. 60,000	120	31.25
	Above Rs. 60,000	44	11.46
Area of Residence	With in Tamil Nadu	210	54.69
	Outside Tamil Nadu	150	39.06
	Outside India	24	6.25
Total		384	100

Source: Primary Data

The above table reveals that the majority (57.29%) of the respondents are 'Male', and 31.78% of the respondents belong to the age group of '31 - 40 years'. It also shows that 62.50% of the respondents are 'Married', while the majority (46.88%) belong to the 'Hindu' religion. Under the monthly income category, most of the respondents (46.87%) have a monthly income ranging between 'Rs. 20,001 and Rs. 40,000'. Further, the majority of the respondents (54.69%) reside 'Within Tamil Nadu'.

In order to identify the problems faced by the tourists visiting religious tourism destinations in Tamil Nadu, Garrett Ranking technique was applied and the results are displayed in the following table.

Table 3 Problems Faced by the Tourists Visiting Religious Tourism Destinations in Tamil Nadu

S. No	Problem Statements	Garret Score	Mean	Rank
1	Inadequate accommodation facilities	42.96		2
2	Insufficient parking facilities at religious sites	40.29		4
3	Inadequate public transportation and local travel options	39.32		7
4	Inadequate medical facilities at religious sites	39.52		6
5	Lack of clean drinking water	44.83		1
6	Inconvenience caused by beggars and street vendors	39.82		5
7	Pollution, poor cleanliness and environmental degradation	41.90		3
8	Poor mobile network and internet connectivity	32.79		10
9	Lack of tourist information centres and guidance	33.09		9

10	Language barriers in communication with locals	36.54	8
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Source: Computed Data

The above table clearly express that the problems faced by the tourists visiting religious tourism in Tamil Nadu with total mean score and ranks. 'Lack of clean drinking water' has been ranked first with highest mean score of 44.83, 'Inadequate accommodation facilities' has been ranked second with mean score of 42.96, 'Pollution, poor cleanliness and environmental degradation' has been ranked third with mean score of 41.90 and 'Poor mobile network and internet connectivity' has been ranked tenth with lowest mean score of 32.79.

8. MAJOR FINDINGS

1. It is evident from the study that majority (57.29%) of the respondents are 'Male'
2. It is understood that majority (31.78%) of the respondents belong to the age group of '31–40 years.'
3. It is clearly shows that majority (62.50%) of the respondents are 'Married'.
4. It is understood that majority (46.88%) of the respondents belong to the 'Hindu' religion.
5. It is evident that most of the respondents (46.87%) have a monthly income ranging between 'Rs. 20,001 and Rs. 40,000'.
6. It is understood that majority of the respondents (54.69%) reside 'Within Tamil Nadu'.
7. Regarding problems faced by tourists visiting religious tourism destination in Tamil Nadu, 'Lack of clean drinking water' has been ranked first with highest mean score of 44.83.

9. SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher offers the following suggestions to the various stakeholders.

- Adequate clean drinking water facilities should be provided at all major religious tourism destinations in Tamil Nadu, as lack of clean drinking water was identified as the most significant problem faced by tourists.
- The tourism authorities and temple administrations should improve sanitation and hygiene facilities around pilgrimage centres to ensure a safe and comfortable environment for tourists.
- Proper crowd management measures should be implemented during festival seasons to reduce overcrowding and traffic congestion at religious destinations.
- Transportation facilities such as local buses, parking areas, and road connectivity should be enhanced to improve accessibility and convenience for tourists.
- Affordable and quality accommodation facilities should be developed near pilgrimage destinations to meet the increasing needs of tourists.
- Tourist information centres, signboards, digital guidance systems, and multilingual support services should be established to help tourists obtain accurate travel-related information.
- Safety and security measures, including surveillance systems and emergency medical services, should be strengthened at religious tourism destinations.
- Regular maintenance and cleanliness of temple premises, public toilets, and surrounding areas should be ensured through effective monitoring by local authorities.
- Awareness programmes should be conducted among tourists and local stakeholders to promote responsible tourism and environmental sustainability.
- The Government of Tamil Nadu and tourism departments should formulate effective tourism policies and infrastructural development programmes to enhance tourist satisfaction and promote sustainable religious tourism development in the state.

10. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study is subject to certain limitations. The study is limited only to selected religious tourism destinations in Tamil Nadu; therefore, the findings may not represent all pilgrimage centres in the state. The study is based on the opinions and perceptions of tourists collected during the survey period, which may vary over time depending on seasonal and festival conditions. The accuracy of the findings depends largely on the responses provided by the respondents, and there may be chances of personal bias or incomplete information. Due to time and financial constraints, the researcher could not cover a larger sample size and wider geographical area. Further, the study mainly focuses on tourists' problems and does not include the perspectives of temple authorities or tourism officials.

11. CONCLUSION

Religious tourism plays a vital role in the socio-economic and cultural development of Tamil Nadu, as the state attracts a large number of pilgrims and tourists to its famous spiritual destinations. The present study identified the socio-demographic profile of tourists and examined the major problems faced by them while visiting religious tourism destinations in Tamil Nadu. The findings revealed that the majority of the respondents were male, married, belonged to the age group of 31–40 years, Hindu religion and resided within Tamil Nadu. The study further identified that lack of clean drinking water, inadequate sanitation facilities, overcrowding, transportation difficulties, and insufficient tourist guidance services were the major problems affecting tourists' overall pilgrimage experience.

The study emphasizes that improving basic infrastructure and service quality is essential for enhancing tourist satisfaction and ensuring sustainable religious tourism development. Proper maintenance of sanitation facilities, provision of safe drinking water, effective crowd management, and improved transportation and accommodation services would significantly enhance the travel experience of tourists. Therefore, coordinated efforts from tourism authorities, temple administrations, local bodies, and other stakeholders are necessary to develop religious tourism destinations in Tamil Nadu in a more efficient, safe, and tourist-friendly manner.

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