



Logistic Challenges For Pilgrims Visiting Navagraha Temples In South Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is one of the key industries in India in terms of bringing a considerable amount of foreign currency and help for the development of allied industries such as transport, accommodation and encourages many micro and small entrepreneurs in the places of tourist destinations. Tamilnadu is one of the top states in the country in attracting domestic and foreign tourists towards various tourist destinations. Pilgrimage tourism is popular in the state and many people are visiting Navagraha temples in south Tamilnadu. In a tour plan both transport and boarding & lodging are essential. Hence the paper studied the problems faced by pilgrim respondents related to transport and boarding and lodging. The researcher selected a total of 450 sample pilgrim respondents visited Navagraha temples in south Tamilnadu using convenient sampling method. The study collected primary data through an interview schedule. The data collected from the respondents were analysed using mean, standard deviation, coefficient of variation and One-way ANOVA. The study found that the problems of "Cheating by the local taxi/Auto/ Travel agents" and "Inadequate Parking Facility was moderate" were severe transport problems faced by pilgrim respondents in the tourist places of Navagraha temples. "Poor traffic control" and "Poor quality of Road and Poor quality" were least severe transport problems. Among the boarding and lodging problems, the problems of "Lack of quality of the Accommodation (Rooms)" was the most severe boarding and lodging problem in the tourist places of Navagraha temples and "Sense of in security" was the least severe boarding and lodging problem.

Keywords: Pilgrim, tourism, transport, boarding & lodging and Navagraha.

INTRODUCTION:

The tourism industry plays a vital role in India's economic and cultural development, with the country boasting numerous attractive destinations. India's tourism sector has witnessed a significant influx of tourists, both domestic and international, with foreign tourist visits and revenue increasing annually. In 2022, India earned a substantial revenue of 16.92 billion US\$ from international tourism. Tamil Nadu emerges as a leading state in attracting tourists, accounting for 17% of the country's total tourist visits in 2021, with 115.39 million tourists visiting the state.

Pilgrimage tourism holds significant importance in Tamil Nadu, particularly with regards to the Navagraha temples in southern Tamil Nadu. These temples, dedicated to the nine planets, attract a large number of devotees who believe in the significance of astrology and the benefits of worshipping these planetary deities. Despite the popularity of these pilgrimage centers, tourists face challenges related to transport and boarding and lodging facilities, which are essential for a seamless tourist experience. This research article focuses on addressing these issues in the context of Navagraha temples in southern Tamil Nadu, with a view to enhancing the overall tourist experience and promoting sustainable tourism development in the region.

DISCOMFORTS OF PILGRIMS

Pilgrims visiting the Navagraha temples in southern Tamil Nadu face significant logistic challenges, which hinder their spiritual journey. The temples are located in rural areas, making transportation a major issue.

While government and private transport facilities are available, they are often inadequate, unreliable, and unregulated, causing inconvenience and discomfort to the pilgrims. Moreover, the lack of proper signage, information centers, and navigation systems makes it difficult for pilgrims to locate and access the temples, leading to frustration and confusion.

Furthermore, pilgrims also face challenges related to boarding and lodging facilities. The limited availability of affordable and hygienic accommodation options forces many pilgrims to opt for substandard facilities, compromising their health and safety. Additionally, the scarcity of decent dining options and clean drinking water adds to the woes of the pilgrims. These logistic challenges not only detract from the spiritual experience but also pose a significant threat to the health, safety, and well-being of the pilgrims. This research study aims to investigate these challenges and identify solutions to address them, enhancing the overall experience of the pilgrims and promoting sustainable tourism development in the region

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The logistic challenges faced by pilgrims visiting Navagraha temples in south Tamil Nadu have significant implications for their spiritual experience, health, and safety. Despite the importance of these temples as a cultural and religious heritage, the lack of adequate transportation, accommodation, and other facilities hinders the ability of pilgrims to fully engage with their spiritual practices. This study aims to investigate these challenges and identify solutions to address them, thereby enhancing the overall experience of the pilgrims and promoting sustainable tourism development in the region.

The findings of this study will contribute significantly to the existing body of knowledge on pilgrimage tourism, highlighting the need for infrastructure development, effective management, and sustainable practices in religious tourism destinations. By identifying the logistic challenges faced by pilgrims and proposing solutions to address them, this study will provide valuable insights for policymakers, tourism stakeholders, and temple authorities, enabling them to develop and implement effective strategies to enhance the pilgrimage experience, promote cultural heritage, and support local economic development.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the transportation problems faced by pilgrims visiting Navagraha temples in south Tamil Nadu.
2. To examine the challenges pilgrims face with finding suitable accommodation and food.
3. To explore how the level of transportation and accommodation problems affects pilgrims with different income levels and economic backgrounds.

METHODOLOGY

SAMPLING FRAMEWORK

The study employed a convenient sampling method to select a total of 450 pilgrim respondents who visited Navagraha temples in South Tamil Nadu. This sampling method was chosen to ensure a representative sample of pilgrim respondents who have experienced the transport and boarding & lodging problems in the study area.

DATA COLLECTION

The primary data were collected from the sample respondents using a well-structured interview schedule. This data collection method was chosen to gather first-hand information from the pilgrim respondents, providing a more accurate understanding of their experiences and perceptions.

STATISTICAL TOOLS APPLIED

The primary data collected from the respondents were analysed using various statistical tools, including mean, standard deviation, coefficient of variation, and One-way ANOVA. These tools were applied to identify patterns, trends, and significant differences in the data, providing insights into the transport and boarding & lodging problems faced by pilgrim tourists.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The existing body of research highlights the significance of pilgrimage tourism in India, particularly in Tamil Nadu.

Jeyakumar and Rajaram (2016) found a positive impact of pilgrimage season on income, employment, and standard of living in Tamil Nadu. However, they also identified inadequate infrastructural facilities, including transportation, sanitation, and drinking water, as major challenges faced by tourists.

Rangaswamy and Shobha (2018) evidenced discriminatory pricing and inadequate information dissemination as problems faced by international tourists in Karnataka.

Vidhya and Selvam (2019) identified transportation facilities as a significant factor affecting pilgrim tourism in Vellore City.

Selvarathinam (2020) found high satisfaction among respondents with amenities like water, restrooms, and transport, but highlighted the need for improvement.

Vidhya and Sekar (2020) evidenced a significant relationship between service quality and pilgrim tourists' satisfaction.

Umamaheswari et al. (2022) found no relationship between transport problems and place of visit, but identified environmental problems and lack of toilet facilities as major challenges.

Sati (2023) highlighted the importance of infrastructural facilities like transportation and accommodation in highland and valley pilgrimages.

Prathiba and Prabha (2023) identified historical monuments, climate, sanctuaries, and temples as top travel destinations in Tamil Nadu, but emphasized the need for improved infrastructural facilities.

RESEARCH GAP

While existing studies have investigated various aspects of pilgrimage tourism, limited studies have focused on the logistical inconvenience faced by respondents. The present study aims to bridge this gap by examining the transport and boarding & lodging problems faced by pilgrim tourists visiting Navagraha temples in South Tamil Nadu. By investigating these challenges, this study seeks to provide valuable insights for policymakers, tourism stakeholders, and temple authorities to enhance the pilgrimage experience and promote sustainable tourism development in the region. Limited studies have been conducted on this specific aspect, highlighting the need for further research to address the logistical challenges faced by pilgrim tourists.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

TABLE 1 -Rank of Problems Related to Transport

Table 1 presents the rank of problems related to transport faced by pilgrim tourists who visited Navagraha temples in South Tamil Nadu. The table shows the mean, standard deviation (SD), and coefficient of variation (CV) for each transport problem.

The problem ranked first is "Cheating by local taxi/Auto/Travel agents" with a mean value of 3.20, indicating that this problem was the most severe among the pilgrim respondents.

The problem ranked second is "Inadequate Parking Facility" with a mean value of 3.00, indicating a moderate level of severity.

The problem ranked third is "Poor quality of Public transportation services" with a mean value of 2.89, also indicating a moderate level of severity.

The problem ranked fourth is "Poor quality of Road" with a mean value of 2.76, indicating a relatively lower level of severity.

The problem ranked last (fifth) is "Poor traffic control" with a mean value of 2.65, indicating the least severe problem among the pilgrim respondents.

The SD and CV values indicate the amount of variation in the responses for each problem. A higher SD and CV indicate a greater range of responses, while a lower SD and CV indicate a more consistent response.

Overall, the table highlights the most critical transport problems faced by pilgrim tourists visiting Navagraha temples, which can help policymakers and tourism stakeholders prioritize areas for improvement.

See Annexure

TABLE 2-ANOVA between Economic Variables and Transport Problems

The results of the ANOVA analysis show that the calculated F-values for the transport problems "Poor quality of Road", "Poor quality of Public transportation services", and "Inadequate Parking Facility" are 5.337, 6.321, and 2.988 respectively, which are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that there are significant differences in the level of these transport problems faced by pilgrim respondents based on their income level. Additionally, the F-values for the transport problems "Poor quality of Public transportation services" and "Cheating by local taxi/Auto/Travel agents" are 2.994 and 3.086 respectively, which are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating significant differences in the level of these transport problems based on annual savings. Furthermore, the F-values for the transport problems "Poor quality of Public transportation services" and "Cheating by local taxi/Auto/Travel agents" are 6.896 and 6.545 respectively, which are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating significant differences in the level of these transport problems based on expenses for the pilgrim visit.

The outcome of testing the hypothesis is that the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, indicating that there are significant differences in the level of transport problems faced by pilgrim respondents based on their economic variables (income, annual savings, and expenses for the pilgrim visit). This suggests that economic variables have a significant impact on the level of transport problems faced by pilgrim respondents.

The implications of this analysis are that policymakers and tourism stakeholders should consider the economic variables of pilgrim respondents when addressing transport problems. The findings suggest that targeted interventions are needed to address the specific transport problems faced by pilgrim respondents based on their economic variables. By doing so, policymakers and tourism stakeholders can effectively mitigate the impact of transport problems on pilgrim respondents and enhance their overall experience. This analysis highlights the importance of considering economic variables in addressing transport problems and provides

valuable insights for policymakers and tourism stakeholders to develop effective strategies to improve the transport infrastructure and services for pilgrim tourists.

See Annexure

TABLE 3-Rank of Problems Related to Boarding and Lodging

The results of the analysis of table 3 show that the most severe boarding and lodging problem faced by pilgrim respondents who visited Navagraha temples is the "Lack of quality of the Accommodation (Rooms)" with a mean value of 3.17, followed by "Lack of quality of the Hotel food" with a mean value of 2.83. The problems of "Location of the Hotel", "Lack of quality of the Hotel Staff services", and "Sense of insecurity" were found to be least severe with mean values of 2.69, 2.76, and 2.51 respectively. The standard deviation and coefficient of variation values indicate a moderate level of deviation in the problem levels among the respondents.

The implications of this analysis are that policymakers and tourism stakeholders should prioritize improving the quality of accommodation and hotel food to enhance the overall experience of pilgrim tourists. The findings suggest that economic variables may have an impact on the severity of boarding and lodging problems, and therefore, targeted interventions are needed to address the specific problems faced by pilgrim respondents based on their economic variables. By doing so, policymakers and tourism stakeholders can effectively mitigate the impact of boarding and lodging problems on pilgrim respondents and enhance their overall experience. This analysis highlights the importance of considering economic variables in addressing boarding and lodging problems and provides valuable insights for policymakers and tourism stakeholders to develop effective strategies to improve the quality of accommodation and hotel services for pilgrim tourists.

See Annexure

TABLE 4- ANOVA between Economic Variables and Boarding and Lodging Problems

The results of the ANOVA analysis in the table 4 show that the calculated F-values for the boarding and lodging problems "Location of the Hotel", "Lack of quality of the Hotel food", and "Lack of quality of the Accommodation (Rooms)" are 4.826, 5.165, and 6.851 respectively, which are statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) with respect to income level. This indicates that there are significant differences in the level of these boarding and lodging problems faced by pilgrim respondents based on their income level. Additionally, the F-values for the problems "Location of the Hotel" and "Lack of quality of the Hotel Staff services" are 2.856 and 3.351 respectively, which are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) with respect to annual savings. Furthermore, the F-value for the problem "Lack of quality of the Hotel Staff services" is 2.977, which is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) with respect to expenses for the pilgrim visit.

The outcome of testing the hypothesis is that the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, indicating that there are significant differences in the level of boarding and lodging problems faced by pilgrim respondents based on their economic variables (income, annual savings, and expenses for the pilgrim visit). This suggests that economic variables have a significant impact on the level of boarding and lodging problems faced by pilgrim respondents.

The implications of this ANOVA analysis are that policymakers and tourism stakeholders should consider the economic variables of pilgrim respondents when addressing boarding and lodging problems. The findings suggest that targeted interventions are needed to address the specific boarding and lodging problems faced by pilgrim respondents based on their economic variables. By doing so, policymakers and tourism stakeholders can effectively mitigate the impact of boarding and lodging problems on pilgrim respondents and enhance their overall experience. Specifically, the analysis highlights the need to improve the quality of accommodation, hotel food, and hotel staff services, and to ensure that the location of hotels is convenient for pilgrim respondents. Additionally, the analysis suggests that economic variables such as income, annual savings, and expenses for the pilgrim visit should be by considered when developing strategies to address boarding and lodging problems.

See Annexure

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Transportation Problems:

1. The most severe transportation problem faced by pilgrim respondents is "Cheating by local taxi/Auto/Travel agents" with a mean value of 3.20.
2. The problem ranked second is "Inadequate Parking Facility" with a mean value of 3.00.
3. The problem ranked third is "Poor quality of Public transportation services" with a mean value of 2.89.
4. There are significant differences in the level of transportation problems faced by pilgrim respondents based on their income level.
5. Economic variables have a significant impact on the level of transportation problems faced by pilgrim respondents.

Boarding and Lodging Problems:

1. The most severe boarding and lodging problem faced by pilgrim respondents is "Lack of quality of the Accommodation (Rooms)" with a mean value of 3.17.
2. The problem ranked second is "Lack of quality of the Hotel food" with a mean value of 2.83.
3. The problems of "Location of the Hotel", "Lack of quality of the Hotel Staff services", and "Sense of insecurity" were found to be least severe.
4. Economic variables may have an impact on the severity of boarding and lodging problems.
5. Targeted interventions are needed to address the specific problems faced by pilgrim respondents based on their economic variables.

ANOVA ANALYSIS:

1. There are significant differences in the level of transportation problems faced by pilgrim respondents based on their income level, annual savings, and expenses for the pilgrim visit.
2. There are significant differences in the level of boarding and lodging problems faced by pilgrim respondents based on their income level, annual savings, and expenses for the pilgrim visit.
3. Economic variables have a significant impact on the level of transportation and boarding and lodging problems faced by pilgrim respondents.

IMPLICATIONS:

1. Policymakers and tourism stakeholders should consider the economic variables of pilgrim respondents when addressing transportation and boarding and lodging problems.
2. Targeted interventions are needed to address the specific problems faced by pilgrim respondents based on their economic variables.
3. Improving the quality of accommodation, hotel food, and hotel staff services, and ensuring that the location of hotels is convenient for pilgrim respondents, can enhance their overall experience.
4. Economic variables such as income, annual savings, and expenses for the pilgrim visit should be considered when developing strategies to address transportation and boarding and lodging problems.

SUGGESTIONS**Transportation Issues:****1. Public Transportation Services to be Improved:**

Transportation providers are to be worked with to increase the frequency and reliability of public transportation services.

Dedicated bus services for pilgrims are to be introduced, with clear signage and information.

A user-friendly ticketing system is to be implemented.

2. Local Taxi/Auto/Travel Agents to be Regulated:

A regulatory body is to be established to monitor and control local taxi/auto/travel agents.

A complaint mechanism is to be introduced for pilgrims to report any issues.

A rating system is to be implemented to incentivize good service.

3. Parking Facilities to be Enhanced:

Additional parking areas near temples and other pilgrimage sites are to be identified and developed.

A parking management system is to be implemented to optimize space usage.

Clear signage and directions to parking areas are to be provided.

Boarding and Lodging Issues:**4 Accommodation Quality to be Improved:**

A rating system for hotels and lodges is to be established, with clear criteria and standards.

Incentives are to be provided for hotels and lodges to improve their services and facilities.

A complaint mechanism is to be introduced for pilgrims to report any issues.

5. Hotel Staff Services to be Enhanced:

Training and capacity-building programs are to be provided for hotel staff on customer service and pilgrim needs.

A feedback mechanism is to be introduced to monitor and improve staff performance.

6 Convenient Hotel Locations to be Ensured:

Hotels and lodges are to be identified and developed in convenient locations for pilgrims.

Clear signage and directions to hotels and lodges are to be provided.

Modalities for Implementation by policy makers**1. Regular Surveys and Feedback to be Conducted:**

Regular surveys and feedback sessions with pilgrims are to be conducted to monitor and improve services.

Feedback is to be used to identify areas for improvement and implement changes.

2. Pilgrim Welfare Committee to be Established:

A committee comprising representatives from government, tourism stakeholders, and pilgrim organizations is to be established.

The committee is to oversee the implementation of these suggestions and address any issues that arise.

3. Budget and Resources to be Allocated:

A dedicated budget and resources are to be allocated for implementing these suggestions.

The budget and resources are to be utilized effectively and efficiently.

4. Collaboration with Stakeholders to be Ensured:

Collaboration is to be ensured with transportation providers, hoteliers, and other stakeholders to implement these suggestions.

All stakeholders are to be aware of their roles and responsibilities.

5. Progress to be Monitored and Evaluated:

Progress is to be regularly monitored and evaluated.

Findings are to be used to make adjustments and improvements as needed.

By implementing these suggestions, the transportation and boarding and lodging issues faced by pilgrims are to be effectively addressed, enhancing their overall experience and promoting sustainable tourism development in the region.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research study has highlighted various transportation and boarding and lodging issues faced by pilgrims visiting Navagraha temples in South Tamil Nadu. While the study reveals several positives, such as the availability of public transportation services and the presence of hotels and lodges, it also exposes negatives like inadequate parking facilities, poor quality of accommodation, and lack of convenient hotel locations. Furthermore, the study identifies economic variables like income, annual savings, and expenses for the pilgrim visit as significant factors impacting the severity of these issues. However, by implementing the suggestions outlined above, such as improving public transportation services, regulating local taxi/auto/travel agents, enhancing parking facilities, improving accommodation quality, and ensuring convenient hotel locations, these issues can be effectively addressed. Additionally, regular surveys and feedback, establishment of a Pilgrim Welfare Committee, allocation of budget and resources, collaboration with stakeholders, and monitoring and evaluation of progress can ensure the successful implementation of these suggestions. Ultimately, by addressing these issues, pilgrims can have a hassle-free and enriching pilgrimage experience, which will not only enhance their spiritual journey but also promote sustainable tourism development in the region.

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ANNEXURE

Table1: Rank of Problems Related to Transport

Sl. No.	Problem	Mean	SD	CV	Rank
1	Poor quality of Road	2.76	1.33	48.25	IV
2	Poor quality of the Public transportation services	2.89	1.35	46.56	III
3	Cheating by the local taxi/Auto/ Travel agents	3.20	1.38	43.07	I
4	Inadequate Parking Facility	3.00	1.44	47.95	II
5	Poor traffic control	2.65	1.36	51.48	V

Source: Primary Data

Table 2: ANOVA between Economic Variables and Transport Problems

Sl. No.	Problems	Income		Annual Savings		Expenses for the Pilgrim Visit	
		F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.
1	Poor quality of Road	5.337	0.005	0.319	0.812	1.730	0.160
2	Poor quality of the Public transportation services	6.321	0.000	2.994	0.048	6.896	0.000
3	Cheating by the local taxi/Auto/ Travel agents	0.482	0.749	3.086	0.045	6.545	0.000
4	Inadequate Parking Facility	2.988	0.049	1.128	0.337	1.447	0.228
5	Poor traffic control	1.226	0.299	1.101	0.348	0.725	0.538

Source: Primary Data

Table3: Rank of Problems Related to Boarding and Lodging

Sl. No.	Problem	Mean	SD	CV	Rank
1	Location of the Hotel	2.69	1.35	50.03	IV
2	Lack of quality of the Hotel food	2.83	1.30	46.05	II
3	Lack of quality of the Accommodation(Rooms)	3.17	1.39	43.78	I
4	Lack of quality of the Hotel Staff services	2.76	1.38	49.98	III
5	Sense of in security	2.51	1.25	49.90	V

Source: Primary Data

Table 4: ANOVA between Economic Variables and Boarding and Lodging Problems

Sl. No.	Problems	Income		Annual Savings		Expenses for the Pilgrim Visit	
		F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.
1	Location of the Hotel	4.826	0.000	2.856	0.037	0.619	0.603
2	Lack of quality of the Hotel food	5.165	0.000	0.355	0.786	1.397	0.243
3	Lack of quality of the Accommodation (Rooms)	6.851	0.000	0.184	0.907	1.484	0.218
4	Lack of quality of the Hotel Staff services	1.125	0.344	3.351	0.027	2.977	0.032
5	Sense of in security	0.852	0.493	0.900	0.441	0.309	0.819

Source: Primary Data