



Tourist Perceptions Regarding Problem and Prospect of Religious Tourism in Nashik District

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Abstract

Tourism is two-way process has a complex and diverse impact on society, economy, ecology and landscape. But it is an accepted fact that, tourism is critical to the growth of tourism in a variety of communities, clusters, and individuals who rely on their morals, attitudes, and resources. Tourism growth brings with it a slew of issues. As a result, the visitor experience is critical to the image and development of a destination. This study aims to understand prospect and problems of tourism with the help of tourist perceptions and attitudes about tourism impacts in selected religious places of Nashik district i.e. Trimbakeshwar, Panchvati and Kalaram Mandir. Tourist responses to a variety of factors connected to tourism development have been measured using random sampling. Factor analysis, ANOVA, descriptive statistics were used to assess Likert scale answers. The findings revealed that tourists are concerns regarding religious tourist places of Nashik district. It is found that religious magnetism, natural magnetism and the destination's socio-cultural context are what draw visitors. On the basis of the responses of the tourist Trimbakeshwar is most popular religious tourist destination in Nashik district. As a result, evaluating tourist perceptions can be used as a metric for establishing a tourism location's competitiveness, as well as a tool for developing appropriate tourism regulations and infrastructure changes.

Keyword: Religious Tourism, Prospect and Problems, Factor Analysis.

Introduction

Tourism has turned into a noteworthy part of modern economic development (Weaver and Lawton, 2010). It has been acknowledged as a substantial contributor to the global economy (Holloway et al., 2009) and one of the most important parts of socio-economic development (UNWTO, 2010). Both developed and developing countries rely on tourism to bring in revenue (Rao, 2014). In 2019, there were 1.5 billion international visitor visits, with India leading the way with a 19 percent rise in international tourist arrivals in South Asia (UNWTO, 2019). It is critical to assess how people perceive a destination's social and physical surroundings in order to improve the tourism industry's performance (Petrosillo et al., 2006). Tourists are notoriously demanding, with multi-layered expectations and needs. Today's "postmodern visitors" are looking for specific conveniences and goals. As a result, both the government and the business sector must develop tourist-friendly facilities. Cina and Botha (2004) found that local support and attitudes had an impact on tourism sustainability. Based on their attitudes and perceptions, tourists develop their happiness or discontent with their holiday (Gnanapala, 2015). It is found that Individual interests and values influence tourist perceptions (Hall, 2005). A standardized questionnaire was utilized by several researchers to assess tourist perception. Sumaco and Richardson, 2011; Chheang, 2011; Elena et al., 2017; Ezeuduji and Mhlongo, 2019; Joo et al., 2019; Petrevska, 2019; Chebli et al., 2020) used a Likert scale with scales of 5, 7, or 10 where the highest figure indicates



agreement or satisfaction and the lowest figure indicates disagreement or dissatisfaction. Multivariate analysis (confirmatory factor analysis and principal factor analysis) was also employed to narrow down the number of significant factors (Dey et al., 2013). Chheang (2011) and Ezeuduji and Mhlongo (2019) applied Cronbach's Alpha to statistics. Andereck (2009), Dey et al. (2013), and Helen and Praise (2020) evaluated the change in perception by location using t-test and ANOVA procedures. To compare ordinal variables, Ezeuduji and Mhlongo (2019) employed Spearman's correlation, a nonparametric test. Furthermore, some researchers compared the means of replies using the Mann-Whitney U-test and the Kolmogorov-test Smirnov's (George and Mallery, 2003; Veal, 2011; Elena et al., 2017; Ezeuduji and Mhlongo, 2019).

Study Area

Nashik district lying in the Northwest part of the Maharashtra state located between 19° 35' 18" N to 20°53'07" N latitude and 73°16'07" E to 74°56'27" E longitude with an area of 15,582 sq. km. at an elevation of 565 meters above mean sea level. Three religious sites were chosen for the study lying in the Nashik District i.e., Panchvati, Kalaram Mandir and Trimbakeshwar. Panchvati is a spiritual, religious, and mythological location, situated on the left bank of the Godavari River, in the northern part of Nashik Municipal Corporation, tehsil: Nashik and District Nashik. The area is defined by coordinates: 20° 0' 28.51" N latitude and 73°47'45.88" E longitude. The Panchvati area is spread over an area of about 4 sq. km. on the bank of the Godavari River with an average elevation of 546 meters (MSL).

Trimbakeshwar is one of the twelve Jyotirlingas and is located in the town of Trimbakeshwar, Nasik district, Maharashtra. The area is defined by coordinates: 19°55'55.79"N latitude and 73°31'50.63"E longitude. The city of Trimbakeshwar has located at the foot of Brahmhagiri hill, 718 meters MSL. The Kalaram temple is an ancient Hindu shrine dedicated to Lord Rama that can be found in the Panchavati section of Nashik City's Panchavati district. The area is defined by coordinates: 20° 0'25.00"N latitude and 73°47'43.97"E longitude. The Kalaram temple is located near the Panchvati region at an elevation of 549 meters (MSL).

Data collection

To obtain desired perceptions, a survey-based evaluation was performed. During the peak tourist season, standardised questionnaire surveys were used to collect data on tourist perceptions. Individual and group surveys were conducted in 2021-22. Precautions were made to minimise duplication. Because of a lack of participant attention and lucidity, several interviews were not used, which was particularly typical among group visitors. Following a thorough examination of the data's quality and scope, the decision was made to focus on individual tourists rather than groups or clusters. Tourists were interviewed while sitting and relaxing within the premises of neighbouring attractions. The interviews lasted anywhere from 15 to 45 minutes, with an average of 20 minutes.

Sample procedure

The information was gathered from travellers using a random sample technique. Each tourism site had about 90 interviews. A total of 270 tourists were polled over the course of two months. The gathering of data was suffered due to covid restrictions.

Survey instrument

To gather data, a questionnaire was employed, which included demographic and tourist perception questions. The first segment concentrated on the tourists' characteristics, such as gender, age, educational attainment, occupation, and domicile. The second section, on destination perceptions, used a five-point Likert scale, with 1 being the most negative and 5 being the most positive (positive). The relevant regions to study were determined using a trial instrument consisting of 52 indicators. Furthermore, questions about tourist journeys were



collected from the literature (Duman and Mattila, 2005; Suh and McAvoy, 2005). We changed our instrument to meet the study area as a result of this research. Following that, the final survey instrument included 52 variables in 8 categories.

Characteristics of Responders	Category	Trimbakeshwar	Kalaram Mandir	Panchvati
Age	15--20	10.7	9.5	14.3
	20--30	25.9	20.6	23.6
	30--40	18.4	41.3	44.7
	40--50	35.4	7.9	6.7
	50--60	6.5	9.1	9.1
	Above 60	3.1	11.5	1.5
Gender	Male	70.7	78.3	68.9
	Female	29.3	21.7	31.1
Marital Status	Married	39.5	62.1	61.5
	Unmarried	54.8	35.3	28.7
	Divorced	2.9	2.6	8.1
	Widow	1.5	0.0	1.2
	Widower	1.3	0.0	0.5
Nationality	Indian	87.2	97.4	86.6
	other	12.8	2.6	13.4
Native State (Indian Nationality)	Maharashtra	78.5	78.0	83.5
	other	21.5	22.0	16.5
If belong to Maharashtra Name of Home District	Nashik	67.5	41.1	62.8
	Other	32.5	58.9	37.2
Education	Primary	0.57	14.3	2.1
	Secondary	4.21	25.6	7.7
	Higher Secondary	6.70	14.2	11.2
	Graduate	58.43	24.6	61.5
	Post Graduate	29.69	18.2	14.3
	Illiterate	0.38	3.0	3.2
Occupation	Government Servant	16.09	3.44	5.23
	Private	28.93	15.72	31.63
	Businessmen	3.64	13.57	17.30
	Unemployed	18.20	14.20	13.20
	Retired	2.68	29.33	15.32
	Household Worker	4.21	3.41	2.10
	Student	22.03	11.40	13.70
	Other	4.21	8.93	1.52
Monthly Income	Less than 10000	19.35	20.56	41.02
	10000-25000	40.61	33.68	17.63
	25000 -50000	25.86	26.30	25.63
	50000-100000	7.85	10.23	6.96
	Above 100000	6.32	9.23	8.76



Indicator	Variables	Trimbakeshwar	Kalaram Mandir	Panchvati
Companion	Alone	14.37	4.6	11.1
	With Spouse	20.31	16.6	34.4
	Friends	38.51	3.6	8.4
	Family	9.96	52.3	29.3
	Relative	12.07	15.7	9.3
	Co-workers	4.21	4.2	5.2
	Other	0.57	3.0	2.2
No of Persons Accompanied	Less Than 5	58.24	33.60	29.36
	5--10	35.44	52.30	66.46
	Above 10	6.32	14.10	4.10
Duration of Visit	Less than 24 Hours	67.43	89.66	74.85
	24 hours - 72 Hours	30.46	8.23	21.33
	more than 72 Hours	2.11	2.11	3.82
Distance Travelled	Less than 50 km	9.39	6.53	13.64
	50 km--100 km	20.88	21.67	21.63
	100 km - 200 km	59.20	29.59	35.10
	More than 200 km	10.54	42.21	29.63
Mode of Travel	Own Vehicle	76.25	45.54	67.98
	Public Transport	23.75	54.46	32.02
Visit Frequency	First time	32.38	39.52	21.34
	Second Time	40.04	22.30	28.33
	Third Time	19.16	20.14	24.63
	Forth or more time	8.43	18.04	25.70
Purpose of Visit	Leisure	5.94	3.10	9.23
	Religious	59.20	92.20	79.63
	Adventure	19.54	0.00	1.10
	Meditation	2.49	0.00	2.38
	Eco-Argo tourism	0.57	0.00	0.00
	Monsoon Tourism	2.49	0.00	0.00
	Family Vacation	9.77	4.70	7.66
Travel Planning	Owned	92.34	69.12	85.34
	Agent	7.66	30.88	14.66
Source of Information	Social Media	39.46	1.22	3.02
	Govt. Advertisement	4.98	0.00	1.96
	Travel Agency	2.49	10.33	15.63
	Friends and Relatives	23.56	78.32	62.33
	Books & Travel Guide	12.45	0.00	2.31
	Travel Blogs	12.45	1.69	8.80
	Other	4.60	8.44	5.95
Weather During Visit	Sunny	2.49	76.10	89.01
	Pleasant	6.90	3.01	8.60
	Overcast	78.35	0.00	0.00
	Showery	7.85	0.00	0.00
	Rainy	4.41	0.00	0.00
	Foggy	0.00	0.00	0.00



	Other	0.00	20.89	2.39
Preferred Season To visit	Summer	23.95	58.52	70.59
	Winter	8.81	34.33	23.11
	Monsoon Tourism	67.24	7.15	6.30

Tourist profile

Factors	Indicators	Mean	SD	SK	KR	Rank	Factor Loading
Motivating/magnetic Factor (Average: 3.70) (Eigen Value: 2.801)	Religious	4.95	0.64	-1.208	4.251	2	0.759
	Natural Scenery/Beauty	3.65	0.67	-1.024	1.254	19	0.658
	Adventure	2.22	0.82	-0.998	0.145	25	0.425
	Architecture/Heritage	4.31	0.89	-0.65	0.2654	11	0.522
	Spiritual/Meditation	3.25	1.06	-0.042	0.112	22	0.358
	Fair/Festival	4.01	1.08	0.128	0.0268	15	0.666
	Kumbh	4.98	1.11	0.248	0.2147	1	0.784
	Other	2.21	1.26	-0.033	-0.214	26	0.529
Primary facilities (Average: 4.02) (Eigen Value: 2.698)	Water Availability	3.65	0.39	0.072	2.1753	19	0.633
	Electricity	4.1	0.47	-1.93	4.4425	14	0.532
	Medical Facility	3.98	0.51	-0.924	1.2658	16	0.559
	Food A availability (Hotel/Prasadalay)	4.33	0.88	-1.055	3.2254	9	0.741
Availability of Services (Average: 4.40) (Eigen Value: 2.584)	Banking	4.35	0.98	-0.048	1.2478	8	0.732
	ATM	4.22	1.02	0.242	3.21	13	0.724
	Telecommunication	4.28	1.23	0.112	2.14	12	0.711
	Internet	4.8	1.12	-0.752	1.0287	3	0.648
	Transport	4.65	0.69	-0.247	0.2147	4	0.564
	Shops	4.62	0.88	-1.05	0.325	5	0.692
	Accommodation	3.86	0.76	-0.05	0.331	18	0.672
Administration (Average: 3.55) (Eigen Value: 2.419)	Tourist Facility Centre	3.98	1.02	0.021	0.248	16	0.654
	Security and Safety	3.59	1.05	-0.124	-0.553	21	0.445
	Availability of Guides	3.08	1.02	-0.143	-0.258	24	0.692
Environmental Issues (Average: 4.13) (Eigen Value: 2.018)	Air Pollution	4.44	0.73	-0.074	1.02146	7	0.441
	Water pollution	4.62	0.89	-0.921	2.0042	5	0.668
	Solid waste Management	4.32	0.77	-0.248	1.2154	10	0.497
	Overall Cleanliness	3.12	0.92	-1.01	0.832	23	0.471
Overall Cronbach's Alpha (a)=0.889		3.98					

The nature of respondents was based on their socio-demographic characteristics including: gender, age, education, religion, occupation and travelling preferences are summarized in Table 1. The ratio between male and female respondents was 72.6 to 27.3.

The majority of the respondents were aged 21 to 40 years whereas those aged less than 15 or older than 60 were insignificant, majority of the responders were married. Approximately 48.17 percent of the responders were possessing university degree and about 25.42 percent engaged in private services, majority of the responders has income ranging between 10000-250000. In response of companion for the visit, majority i.e., 23.77 percent respondent relied to visit with spouse.

In response to number of persons accompanied, about 51.8 percent responders reply to visit with group of 5-10 persons. The analysis reveals the largest proportion of the responders visited for short duration of less than 24 hours, also majority of responders travelled distance of less than 200 km. In response to the source of information 54.73 percent of the responders noted to know about the location through family and friends.

Descriptive statistics, skewness, and kurtosis

According to criteria recommended by Chou and Bentler (1995), there were no indicators that fell beyond the skewness limits, indicating that all of the indicators are relatively skew-free. Except for three indicators: religion, food availability, and ATM, all kurtosis values were found to be lower than the cut-off value of 3.0 after examining the data.

Overall rating of the destinations by the tourists

Tourism in the Trimbakeshwar, Panchvati and Kalaram Mandir has nearly same level of agreement based on tourist responses. Overall, the Trimbakeshwar has highest agreement of positive perception followed by Kalaram Mandir and Panchvati.

Factors	Trimbakeshwar		Kalaram Mandir		Panchvati	
	Mean	Eigen Value	Mean	Eigen Value	Mean	Eigen Value
Motivating/magnetic Factor	3.61	2.741	3.67	2.854	3.70	2.801
Primary facilities	4.35	2.685	4.21	2.755	4.02	2.698
availability of Services	4.04	2.602	4.18	2.417	4.40	2.584
Administration	3.67	2.154	3.64	2.264	3.55	2.417
Environmental Issues	2.58	2.008	4.25	2.108	4.13	2.018
Overall Cronbach's Alpha	0.785		0.821		0.889	

Discussion

The Nashik district has great importance in the Hindu religion, and mythology, thus tourist who visited Nashik generally has great attractions towards the religious places of district. In addition, the local community also affects the number of tourists and their perceptions as their behavior and hospitality play a vital role in tourism development. Tourists are more likely to return and recommend the destination to their friends and relatives when they feel comfortable and welcomed by host communities. On the other hand, if tourists are treated indifferently or with disregard, a destination can gradually become less attractive. Another important factor in the growth of tourism in recent year is travelling ease and availabilities of facilities and services. Many well-known tourist attractions confront comparable challenges, which are difficult to handle in the setting of "crowds and pollution."



There has been a shift in opinions recently, especially among tourists from metropolitan areas who want destinations to be free of crowds and pollution.

The result of the questionnaire survey suggest that all three religious places has significantly has highest agreement. In the availability of primary services and other availability of other services all three tourist places receive have level of agreement. Religion is major motivating factor in according to the responders. All mentioned tourist destination were serving primary facilities which includes availability of portable and drinking water, electricity medical facilities and food. Apart from these facilities like banking, ATM, telecommunication, internet, transport, shopping and accommodation. In terms of environmental issues Panchvati and Kalaram Mandir has highest agreement while Trimbakeshwar has low agreement which indicating presence of environmental issues in Trimbakeshwar. In terms of administration, the tourist has moderate perception, which mean the administrative services which includes tourist facility centre, security and safety and availability of guides.

Overall, the religious tourist destination of Trimbakeshwar, Kalaram Mandir and Panchvati offers several services and facilities but these places concern with several administrative difficulties, environmental issues, overcrowding, and excessive stress on services.

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