



“A Study on Tourists’ Perception of Pilgrimage Sites in Courtallam, Tenkasi District.”

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is one of the biggest and fastest growing economic sectors in the global economy and has significant environment, cultural, social and economic effects both positive and negative, Pilgrimage tourism is the type of tourism that entirely or powerfully motivates tourists for the achievement of religious attitude and practices. Pilgrimage tourism is one of the prerequisites of achieving sustainable development which can be taken as a remedy to manage tourism effects. This paper focuses on the study about A Study on Tourists’ Perception of Pilgrimage Sites in Courtallam, Tenkasi District situated in the state of Tamilnadu. In spite Courtallam is famous for it is Waterfalls and it is called as Spa of South India. Due to its magnificently diverse religious tourist potential and rich cultural heritage tourist are very much interested to visit the place frequently.

Key words: Pilgrimage place, Perception, Satisfaction, Courtallam.

1. Introduction:

A pilgrimage is a ritual journey for peace, attaining mukthi, visiting heritage sites. Every step along the way has meaning. A pilgrimage is a journey during which transformation takes place. Pilgrims will get new insights and deeper understanding. Life is seen with different eyes on completion of the pilgrimage. Macrina Wiederkehr (2015) (Illuminated Journeys, Macrina Wiederkehr, Behold your life, p, 11). Pilgrimage tourism has spiritual significance. Pilgrimage tourism comes under religious tourism as one of the segments. The other segments are missionary travel; faith-based cruising, monastery visits and religious tourist attractions. However, there are several significant challenges associated with pilgrimage tourism in India including poor infrastructure, unstable political conditions, hygiene issues, misguiding of tourists, poor maintenance and lack of sustainable development which affects the growth of pilgrimage tourism in India. It is significant to adopt measures and strategies for promoting sustainable development specifically in the field of pilgrimage tourism in India in order to more effectively yield potential opportunities and growth associated with it.

1. Courtallam Tourism

Courtallam is famous for its waterfalls on the Western Ghats.

Courtallam is a small Town on the Western ghats in Tenkasi District, Tamilnadu with a population of 3026. The Hillocks disappear into the blue mist of Agasthiar Malai, named after the Tamil Saint who is believed to have lived here. Numerous waterfalls, cascades, countless health resorts in the Courtallam have earned the title Spa of South India. The season begins in June and carries on till September. It is when the area experiences substantial rainfall and it is a treat to watch and enjoy. With captivating panoramic vistas, the township is popularly renowned as 'Spa of South'. It has nine waterfalls in the region that add a charm to its exotic beauty. This study reveals the important Pilgrimage places of courtallam. It shows that Pilgrimage Tourism is also important in Courtallam compared to other places in that area. The Tenkasi region is home to several historically important temples that reflect its cultural and spiritual heritage. The ancient Kutralanathar Temple at Courtallam finds mention in Sangam literature and was revered even in the

Pallava period. The Kasi Viswanathar Temple in Tenkasi, built by the Pandya king Parakrama Pandyan, showcases classic Tamil architecture and houses Lord Shiva and Goddess Ulagamman. The Saneeswaran Temple at Elathur is well known for the worship of Sani Bhagavan, while the Ayikudi Balasubramanya Swamy Temple, located on the banks of the Hanuman River, attracts devotees visiting nearby tourist spots. The Sambavar Vadakarai Shiva Temple, built by the Pandya rulers, is dedicated to Sri Moolanatha Swamy and Maduravani Ambal. The Thiruvilanji Kumarar Temple at Ilanji is linked to legends of Sage Agathiar and Lord Muruga, who is worshipped here with Valli and Devasena. The Dhakshinamoorthy Temple at Puliyarai, located 12 km from Courtallam, is another major shrine drawing numerous devotees and tourists each year.

3. Review of Literature:

Tourism represents the movement of people from one destination to another destination which is an economic, social and cultural phenomenon. It is a temporary movement of people to an outside destination or place. Tourism can be divided into four categories based on purposes including special interest, leisure, business, and education. On the other hand, the types of tourism include outbound, inbound and domestic tourism. As indicated by Page and Hall (2014), the evolution of Indian tourism policy was initiated after analyzing the advancement of tourism in the world. It has significant potential in generating required employment opportunities, national integration as well as foreign exchange earnings. In relation to the varying categories of tourism in India, pilgrimage tourism has gained significant importance over the past few years.

According to Kiran Shinde (1999); Vijayanand (2012), this material perspective of interest of pilgrimages has been present in human history. Religious tourism has a similar economic impact as that of other forms of tourism. Pilgrimage tourism is a leisure-oriented travel and recreation and religious needs are the elements of pilgrimage tourism (Bajpai 1954). Pilgrim sites tend to deviate from their original purposes (Tyrakowski 1994). Religious tourism faces serious hurdles like poor tourism infrastructure (Nevatia 2001).

The pilgrimage is such an act which explains deep feelings, faith, belief, respect to the divine and above all sincerity of devotee(s) (Singh Rana 2013). Pilgrimage is a journey to a non-substitutable site embodying the high valued, deeply meaningful or a source of core identity for the traveler. Five distinct motives for visits to the pilgrimage sites are identified – spiritual, nationalistic, family pilgrimage, friendship and travel motives (Kenneth and Serhat Harman 2011).

Manjula Chaudhary (2000) reiterated that India is top rated for its rich arts and cultural heritage. However, a lot of irritants like cheating, begging, unhygienic conditions, lack of safety spoil the spirits of tourists. India can be positioned on the world map only after these hygiene factors are improved along with other motivators. Das Debadyuti et al. (2007) stated that tourist destination based on tourists' expectation, experience and satisfaction with the tourist related attributes of the destination. Sacred destinations are strongly affected by the large flow of pilgrimage tourists visiting them (Elumalai and Rajendran 2013)

As stated by Gladstone (2013), pilgrimage tourism is a journey to a temple, shrine or other locations that are significant in the faiths and beliefs of the tourists. It can be also linked with religious tourism. It has been recorded in the business year 2017 that the government of India earned around 51,587 INR through Foreign Exchange Earnings due to pilgrimage tourism, (Reader, 2013). In addition, the revenue of the tourism and hospitality industry had risen by 5.1% in the same 2017, (Jafari and Scott, 2014).

Spiritual tourism is not like other tourism sectors. The class & taste of tourists differ significantly here. (Hasan and Tanveer Bin 2010). Himadri Phukan (2014) stated that India is known for spiritualism, and its cosmopolitan nature is reflected in its pilgrim centers. While religious tourism has some positive impacts in an economic sense, much of the literature focuses on the negative side of religious tourism in relation to sites and ceremonies (Timothy and Olsen 2006). Religious tourism that is motivated by faith or religious reasons (Richard Sharpley and Priya Sundaram 2005). The interweaving of religious and spiritual, travel and tourism has shaped and in turn been shaped by the global politicization of religious identities which are integral to conflicts (John Eade 2006). Spiritual tourism has been proposed as a phenomenon in leisure travel. It is defined as tourism characterized by a self-conscious project of spiritual betterment (Alex Norman 2012).

4. Statement of the research problem

In relation to the scope of the study, it has been ascertained that the majority of the researchers or analysts have primarily focused on the development of infrastructure and provided a deep insight about pilgrimage

tourism in India. However, the concern about developing pilgrimage tourism and to bring out the significance of pilgrimage places in Courtallam. Hence, this study sought to significantly provide a detailed analysis of the perception of pilgrimage place and need for development policies for pilgrimage tourism in Courtallam along with the other places. Furthermore, significant solutions will also be provided for the development of pilgrimage tourism which would assist policymakers and the government of India to comprehend and implement strategies that are suitable for growth and sustainable development in Courtallam.

5. Objectives of the study

- 1) To study the Age wise perception towards Satisfaction about Pilgrimage Places of Courtallam Destination with other places in Courtallam.
- 2) To study the Purpose of visits to the destination of the respondents and perception towards Satisfaction about Courtallam Destination
- 3) To know their perception towards Satisfaction level of pilgrimage places in Courtallam Destination compared to other places in courtallam.
- 4) To know the Ranking for the level of Satisfaction about Destination

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A survey was conducted among the domestic inbound tourists at Courtallam, Tamilnadu. For data collection, 900 respondents which included domestic as tourists were surveyed and complete responses were obtained from 784 respondents who fulfilled the inclusion criteria. The survey was a self-administered one and respondents who were just finishing their visit were interviewed. Data were collected by employing a convenient sampling survey. The convenient sample consisted of non-resident to the region that were visiting for leisure, religion, culture, history, outdoor activities, and to have relaxed time with families. Only one person of a family was interviewed. Randomization was incorporated into the times of the day and days of the week to avoid bias in data collection. A structured questionnaire was developed after an extensive review of the relevant literature. The data were collected by distributing a self-administered structured questionnaire. The instrument was used to collect specific data on trips characteristics such as perception towards satisfaction about courtallam Destination, Association between the age of the respondents and perception towards satisfaction about courtallam Destination. One way Analysis of Variance tests were conducted to test the relationship among the Age of the respondents and perception towards Satisfaction about Courtallam Destination. One way Analysis of Variance among Purpose of visits to the destination of the respondents and perception towards Satisfaction about Courtallam Destination. Further Friedman test was done to test for significant difference between mean ranks towards perception of satisfaction about tourism destination.

7. Analysis and Interpretation:

Table No: 7.1

Frequency analysis for the socio-demographic profile of the Tourist in courtallam

S.No.	Socio-Demographic Profile	No. of Respondents (n =784)	Percentage
1.	Gender		
	Male	356	45.4
.	Female	428	54.6
	Total	784	100.0

2.	Age		
	Below 20 years	186	23.7
	21-30 Years	278	35.5
	31-40 Years	138	17.5
	41-50 years	93	11.9
	Above 50 years	89	11.4
	Total	784	100.0
3.	Occupation		
1.	Business	142	18.1
2.	Professionals	159	20.3
3.	Employee	132	16.8
4.	Agriculture	49	6.3
5.	Others	302	38.5
	Total	784	100.0

Table 7.1 presents the socio-demographic profile of 784 tourists who visited Courtallam. The gender distribution shows that 54.6% of the tourists were female and 45.4% were male, indicating higher female participation in tourism. This also highlights the need to make tourist destinations more women-friendly. Age-wise, Courtallam attracts mostly younger tourists, with 35.5% in the 21–30 age group and 23.7% below 20 years. Tourists aged 31–40 accounted for 17.5%, while those aged 41–50 and above 50 were 11.9% and 11.4% respectively, showing fewer visitors from older age groups. Regarding occupation, 38.5% of the tourists were from other professions, followed by professionals (20.3%), business people (18.1%), employees (16.8%), and agriculturists (6.3%). This indicates that tourists visiting Courtallam come from diverse occupational backgrounds.

Table No: 7. 2

Distribution of the respondents according to their perception towards Satisfaction about Courtallam Destination

S. No.	Perception towards Satisfaction about Courtallam Destination	No. of Respondents (n = 784)	Percentage
1.	Aesthetic Place		
	Low	236	30.1
	Moderate	308	39.3
	High	240	30.6

2.	Waterfalls and Lakes		
	Low	214	27.3
	Moderate	332	42.3
	High	238	30.4
3.	Pilgrimage Places		
	Low	201	25.6
	Moderate	331	42.2
	High	252	32.2
4.	Overall satisfaction about destination		
	Low	201	25.6
	Moderate	367	46.8
	High	216	27.6

The table shows tourists' perception of satisfaction across different aspects of the Courtallam destination. For aesthetic places, 30.1% of respondents reported low satisfaction, 39.3% moderate, and 30.6% high, indicating an overall moderate level of satisfaction. Regarding waterfalls and lakes, 27.3% had low satisfaction, 42.3% moderate, and 30.4% high; showing that satisfaction in this area is above average.

With respect to pilgrimage places, 25.6% of tourists reported low satisfaction, 42.2% moderate, and 32.2% high. This indicates that pilgrimage sites contribute significantly to visitors' experience, and many tourists view Courtallam not only as a leisure destination but also as a spiritual and holistic place. The above-average satisfaction level highlights the importance of pilgrimage elements in strengthening Courtallam's tourism appeal.

Looking at the overall destination, 25.6% expressed low satisfaction, 46.82% moderate, and 27.6% high, suggesting that tourists generally have a moderate level of satisfaction with Courtallam as a whole.

Table No: 7. 3

One way Analysis of Variance among Age of the respondents and perception towards Satisfaction about Courtallam Destination

S. No	Source	SS	Df	MS	\bar{X}		Statistical Inference
1.	Aesthetic Place				G1=	38.6022	F=5.234 0.000<0.01 Highly Significant
	Between Groups	616.489	4	154.122	G2=	40.6115	
	Within Groups	22937.694	779	29.445	G3=	40.4348	
					G4=	38.7312	
					G5=	40.0337	
2.	Waterfalls and Lakes				G1=	57.2903	F=14.275 0.001<0.01 Highly Significant
	Between Groups	3839.994	4	959.999	G2=	62.5108	
	Within Groups	52389.045	779	67.252	G3=	62.0072	
					G4=	62.3333	
					G5=	63.0674	

3.	Pilgrimage Places				G1=	44.7742	F=3.378
	Between Groups	362.570	4	90.643	G2=	45.9676	0.009<0.01
	Within Groups	20905.430	779	26.836	G3=	45.0145	Highly Significant
					G4=	46.4301	
					G5=	46.5955	
4.	Overall satisfaction about destination				G1=	140.6667	F=9.126
	Between Groups	9295.170	4	2323.793	G2=	149.0899	0.000<0.01
	Within Groups	198368.381	779	254.645	G3=	147.4565	Highly Significant
					G4=	147.4946	
					G5=	149.6966	

G1= below 20 years, G2= 21-30 Years, G3= 31-40 Years, G4= 41-50 years, G5= Above 50year

HYPOTHESIS

Null Hypothesis H0 – There is no significant relationship between the means score of the Age of the respondents and Perception towards satisfaction about Courtallam Destination,

Alternative Hypothesis Ha - There is no significant relationship between the means score of Age of the respondents and Perception towards satisfaction about Courtallam Destination,

Table 7.3 presents the results of the one-way ANOVA conducted to examine whether the respondents' age groups differ significantly in their satisfaction levels toward various aspects of Courtallam tourism. The test was carried out at the 0.01 significance level.

The results indicate a **highly significant difference** among the five age groups across different satisfaction components, as the p-value is less than 0.01. This shows that age has a strong influence on how tourists perceive their satisfaction with Courtallam.

For satisfaction related to **Aesthetic Places, Waterfalls & Lakes, Pilgrimage Places, and Overall Destination**, the ANOVA results also show significant differences ($p < 0.01$).

- Aesthetic Place ($0.000 < 0.01$)
- Waterfalls & Lakes ($0.001 < 0.01$)
- Pilgrimage ($0.009 < 0.01$)
- Overall Destination ($0.000 < 0.01$)

Since all the p-values are below 0.01, the **null hypothesis is rejected**. This means that tourists of different age groups perceive satisfaction levels differently across all aspects of the Courtallam destination. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a **statistically significant relationship** between age and satisfaction levels, with a **95% confidence level** that the findings are reliable.

Table No: 7. 4

One way Analysis of Variance among Purpose of visits to the destination of the respondents and perception towards Satisfaction about Courtallam Destination

S. No	Source	SS	Df	MS	\bar{X}				Statistical Inference
1.	Aesthetic Place				G1=	41.1356	G6=	40.0270	F=3.869 0.000<0.01 Highly Significant
	Between Groups	904.487	8	113.061	G2=	40.3374	G7=	36.6000	
	Within Groups	22649.696	775	29.225	G3=	39.0243	G8=	34.3333	
					G4=	37.5000	G9=	40.0000	
					G5=	40.7500			
2.	Waterfalls and Lakes				G1=	63.8136			F=4.349

	Between Groups	2415.664	8	301.958	G2=	62.2387	G6=	60.9459	0.000<0.01
	Within Groups	53813.375	775	69.437	G3=	59.7083	G7=	63.0000	Highly Significant
					G4=	58.0000	G8=	58.0000	
					G5=	60.0357			
3.	Pilgrimage Places				G1=	47.1525			F=4.686
	Between Groups	981.209	8	122.651	G2=	45.3498	G6=	43.4595	0.000<0.01
	Within Groups	20286.791	775	26.177	G3=	45.8125	G7=	43.4000	Highly Significant
					G4=	42.3636	G8=	46.0000	
					G5=	45.4286			
4.	Overall satisfaction about destination				G1=	152.1017	G6=	144.4324	F=4.229
	Between Groups	8686.258	8	1085.782	G2=	147.9259	G7=	143.0000	0.000<0.01
	Within Groups	198977.293	775	256.745	G3=	144.5451	G8=	138.3333	Highly Significant
					G4=	137.8636	G9=	163.0000	
					G5=	146.2143			

G1= Rest and Relaxation, G2= Climate, G3= Holiday & Sightseeing, G4= Official, G5= Business, G6= Education Purposes, G7= Sports & adventure, G8= Medical/ Health treatment, G9= To know the culture

HYPOTHESIS

Null Hypothesis H0 – There is no significant relationship between the means score of the purpose of visits to the destination of the respondents and perception towards satisfaction about Courtallam Destination

Alternative Hypothesis Ha - There is no significant relationship between the means score of the purpose of visits to the destination of the respondents and perception towards satisfaction about Courtallam Destination

The ANOVA results in Table 7.4 reveal that there is a **highly significant difference** among the nine categories of respondents based on their purpose of visit, with the p-value being less than 0.01. This indicates that the purpose for which tourists visit Courtallam strongly influences their satisfaction levels.

For **Aesthetic Places**, the p-value is less than 0.01, showing a significant difference among groups. However, tourists from different purposes of visit appear to show similar satisfaction patterns toward aesthetic places, though statistically the differences are significant.

For **Waterfalls and Lakes**, the p-value ($0.000 < 0.01$) confirms a high significant difference. This means the purpose of visit influences how tourists perceive their satisfaction with waterfalls and lake areas of Courtallam.

Regarding Pilgrimage Places, the p-value ($0.001 < 0.01$) also indicates a significant difference. Thus, tourists visiting for different purposes experience varied levels of satisfaction with pilgrimage sites.

For **Overall Destination Satisfaction**, the results again show a p-value below 0.01, confirming a significant difference among the groups. Therefore, the **null hypothesis is rejected**. This means the purpose of visit has a strong and meaningful impact on the overall satisfaction level of tourists visiting Courtallam.

Table: 7.5

Friedman test for significant difference between mean ranks towards perception of satisfaction about tourism destination

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Rank	Rank	Statistical Inference
Aesthetic Place	784	39.8151	5.48470	1.13	3	$\chi^2 = 2217.322$
Waterfalls and Lakes	784	61.2258	8.47421	2.97	1	df = 3

Pilgrimage Places	784	45.6429	5.21174	1.90	2	0.000<0.01 Highly Significant Kendall's W = 0.943
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This section discusses the perception of tourists' satisfaction with the Courtallam tourism destination. Tourist satisfaction is essential for the growth and sustainability of any tourism spot. To evaluate satisfaction levels, various variables were considered and analysed using the **Friedman Mean Rank Test**, which helps rank the factors influencing satisfaction.

The Friedman test results clearly show differences in the mean ranks of the three variables. As presented in Table 4, "**Waterfalls and Lakes**" holds the highest priority with a mean rank of **2.97**, followed by **Pilgrimage Places** with a mean rank of **1.90**, and **Aesthetic Places**, which ranks third with a mean rank of **1.13**.

Hypothesis:

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant difference between the mean ranks for perception of satisfaction about Courtallam tourism destination.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_a): There is a significant difference between the mean ranks for perception of satisfaction about Courtallam tourism destination.

According to Table 5, the Friedman test shows that the p-value is less than 0.01, indicating a statistically significant difference at the 1% level. Therefore, the **null hypothesis is rejected**, confirming that the mean ranks of the three factors differ significantly. This means that tourists do not view all aspects of the destination equally in terms of satisfaction.

8. Findings & Suggestion

- The study exhibits that the majority of the respondents were Female.
- From this demographic character, it is understood that the respondents are under the age group of 21 to 30
- Socio economic aspect indications that the Tourist who is the sample respondents for this study is almost doing different work.
- It reveals that respondents are experiencing courtallam for holistic visit also when compared to waterfalls experience. The satisfaction level of the respondent about pilgrimage place is above average when compared to others.
- Under Age wise Perception towards satisfaction about Pilgrimage places of courtallam, it is highly significance
- The study shows the Purpose of visits of the respondents and perception towards satisfaction about Pilgrimage place in courtallam destination reveals high significance and it shows that the purpose of visit also gives more weight age to Pilgrimage tourism compared to other places in courtallam.
- Pilgrimage places have given Second rank next to waterfalls view. It shows the Pilgrimage places are also highly preferred by the Tourist,
- Government has to develop Pilgrimage tourism of Courtallam, More policies & Programmes has to be implemented to make known about the heritage and culture of Courtallam .

9. Conclusion:

The pilgrimage is such an act which explains deep feelings, faith, belief, respect to the divine and above all sincerity of devotee. Pilgrimage is a journey to a non-substitutable site embodying the high valued, deeply meaningful or a source of core identity for the traveler. In spite it paves way for the economic development of the country. Based on the study, the perception of respondent's satisfaction on pilgrimage place with other places in Courtallam destination was studied and the levels of satisfaction of the pilgrims were measured. The hypotheses were tested in the study. On overall analysis, it is found that the respondents are also highly satisfied with pilgrimage places. This study has focused on the satisfaction level of Pilgrimage place compared to other

places of the destination so it is used to develop the destination as pilgrim centre along with the enjoyment of waterfalls.

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