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DEMOGRAPHIC, ECONOMIC AND TRAVEL BEHAVIOR PROFILES OF PILGRIMS IN TTD IN TIRUPATI

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Abstract

Tirumala and Tirupati in Chittoor district of the state of Andhra Pradesh are considered to be the most sacred and world renowned pilgrim centers. The sacred place on the seven hills where the temple of Lord Venkateswara is existing is known as Tirumala and the town at the foot of the hills is known as Tirupati. The abode of the Hill Shrine of Lord Venkateswara is the most famous and sacred of all places on the earth. Lord Vishnu manifested Himself as Lord Venkateswara in the shrine. "VenkatadriSamamSthanamBramhandeNasthiKinchanaha" means Tirumala is the holiest place in the universe. Tirumala and Tirupati are the holy places which pilgrims visit in large number. Probably no place of worship anywhere in the world would attract as many pilgrims and receive as much revenue as the temple of Lord Venkateswara in Tirumala. Among multiple functions of TTD, providing amenities to the devotees who visit Tirumala and Tirupati is one of the important functions. This Paper presents the demographic, economic and travel behavior of the pilgrims, and studies the relationship of the demographic and economic characteristics with the travel behavior of the pilgrims.

Key Words: TTD, Pilgrims, Sacred, Demographic, Economic and Travel Behavior.

Introduction

Tirupati town is easily accessible by road and train and is about 144 kilometres from Chennai by road. Renigunta junction (on the way to Tirupati) is on the Chennai-Mumbai section of the southern railway. There is also a railway station Tirupati-East which is next to Renigunta junction. For those who prefer to go by air, Tirupati boasts of an airport linking it to major cities like Chennai and Bangalore. The flight from Hyderabad to Tirupati takes about one hour and thirty

minutes and from Tirupati to Chennai it takes half-an-hour. The airport is at a distance of 12 kilometres from Tirupati town.

There are five well-known paths leading to Tirumala, of which, two routes start at Alipiri of Tirupati, the stepped path-way, seven miles long and the motor road, twelve miles long. The third route is from SrinivasaMangapuram which starts at SrivariMettu, the stepped path-way. The fourth, starts from the Mamandur Railway station and the fifth passes by Nagapatla which

are only pathways through forest. Many pilgrims still prefer to walk up the hill by ancient path way of Alipiri and perform their pilgrimage. It would take about four hours to cover a distance of about seven miles to reach the top. Temples of Narasimha Swami and Sri Ramanuja are on this route used by the pedestrians to Tirumala. There are two towers on this route, the one at the foot of hills is called the AlipiriGopuram and the second one at the top is the GaliGopuram. The latter can be seen even from a great distance. The ghat road of 12 miles which was opened for traffic in 1944 is pucca surface road built and maintained by TTD. From Tirupati railway station, it takes about an hour's drive by this route to reach the temple at Tirumala. After 20 years, the second Ghat Road was opened for traffic in 1964.¹

Geographical Basis of Tirumala Hills

The group of hills lying in the shape of a coil called the Tirumala hills, forms a feature of the region of South India. It lies between the 13th and 14th degrees of North latitude and East longitude 79 degrees. The Tirumala range has seven principal peaks, each of them sacred and each of them bearing a separate name accounted for by a fable. Near one of them namely Seshachalam, stands the Tirumala temple and the whole range is often called after this principal peak.²

Topography of Tirumala

The physical geography of Tirumala like its social economy, typifies the interaction of the Tamil and Telugu culture of South India. The dominant topographical feature of Tirumala is the secluded hill top on which the temple is built. As a matter of fact this has been referred to in the following words used in Silappadhikaram:

“Venkatadamernnumenguyarmalaiyaththuchi mimisai”

This notion that the Lord was named as ‘Uchchiyilninran’ (He who stands on summit) appears to have persisted as a legacy of the tradition till the middle of the 13th century. The realization that the temple was actually on a much lower level than its surroundings became more general in later days.³

OBJECTIVES

- The first objective is Demographic, economic behavior of TTD Pilgrims in Tirumala.

- The second objective of this paper is Travel Behavior of TTD Pilgrims in Tirumala.

Methodology

Data Source

This paper is based on secondary and primary data. Secondary data was collected through journals and TTD published books. Primary data was collected by sample survey.

Samples design

An effort was made to elicit the views of the pilgrims about the amenities provided to them by the TTD. A stratified simple random method has been adopted in this study. For this, a structured schedule containing 50 numbers of questions were canvassed at random among 500 pilgrims at Tirumala and Tirupati who were drawn from different regions and states of India and abroad. The pilgrims were approached at Tirumala and Tirupati and their opinions were sought on various issues. To the extent possible, care was taken to include a cross section of pilgrims from different states of the country. Schedules were distributed to the pilgrims individually and group responses were discouraged. This is to encourage the respondent to furnish his/her views on pilgrim satisfaction and various other aspects.

Demographic, Economic and Travel Behaviour of Pilgrims in TTD

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the pilgrims. Demographic characteristics in the study are pilgrim group size, age of the group head, education level of the group head, occupation of the group head and state of origin of the pilgrim group. This section presents the economic characteristics of the pilgrims. Economic characteristics in the study are annual incomes of the pilgrim groups, the expenditures they incur at Tirupati and Tirumala on TTD-provided services and the expenditures in the entire trip. Further this section studies the relationship between annual incomes of the pilgrim. The travel behavior characteristics of the pilgrims. Travel behavior characteristics in the study area distance traveled to Tirupati, number of earlier visits in the last five years, lead time of the current trip, duration of stay at Tirupati and Tirumala and duration of the entire trip. Further this section studies the relationship of demographic and economic characteristics with travel behavior characteristics as well as the relationship

amongst the various travel behavior characteristics.

The above table 1 among the 500 pilgrims from whom the opinions are collected, a classification was made based on the sex. The majority of the pilgrims are male. In most cases, men were interviewed as it was found that majority of the women folk had not come alone to Tirumala without their male companions the 82.8 percent of respondents are male and 17.2 percent are of the female category occupational Distribution of Heads of Pilgrim is presented in table 2

Occupational Distribution of Heads of Pilgrim

Occupation	Respondents	Percentage
Business	116	23.2
Employment	233	46.6
Self Employment	55	11.00
Agriculture	30	6.00
Retired	66	13.2

The table 2 indicates the occupational distribution of the heads of the sample pilgrim. It can be seen that 46.6 per cent of them are employees, 24 per cent businessmen, 13.2 per cent retired employees, 11 per cent self-employed and 6 per cent agriculturists. Employee category is the modal group, accounting for about 50 per cent of the sample respondents the distribution of heads of pilgrims in TTD by Their State of Origin is presented in table 3.

Distribution of Heads of Pilgrims in TTD by Their State of Origin

State	Respondents	Percentage
Andhra Pradesh	300	60.00
Other southern states	100	20.00
States other than south	100	20.00

The table 3 indicates the Distribution of Heads of Pilgrims in TTD by Their State of Origin sample pilgrim. It can be seen that 60.00 per cent of them are Andhra Pradesh pilgrims, 22 per cent other southern states and 20.00 per cent states other than south the annual income distribution of TTD pilgrims is presented in table 4.

Annual Income Distribution of TTD pilgrims

Annual Income (Rs)	Respondents	Percentage
Less than 75000	145	29.00

75001-150000	155	31.00
150001-300000	108	21.60
300001-500000	60	12.00
More than 500000	32	6.40

The table 4 indicates the Annual Income Distribution of TTD sample pilgrim. It can be seen that 29.00 per cent of them are less than 75000, 31 per cent 75001-150000, 21.60 per cent 150001-300000, 12.00 per cent 300001-500000, and 6.40 per cent more than 500000 of annual income of pilgrims. Pilgrims overall expenditure in the current trip is presented in table 5.

Pilgrims Overall Expenditure in the Current Trip

Annual Income (Rs)	Respondents	Percentage
Less than 2000	77	15.4
2001-4000	172	34.4
4001-6000	112	22.4
6001-8000	60	12.00
80001 - 10000	38	7.6
More than 10000	41	8.2

Table 5 presents the overall expenditures pilgrims incurred in the entire trip starting in the originating place back home, including the expenditures at Tirupati and Tirumala. Looking at the lower end of the overall expenditure distribution, it can be noticed that 15.4, 34.4 and 22.4 per cent of the pilgrims fall into the first three expenditure classes at the lower end respectively. Said in other words, in aggregate 74 per cent of the pilgrim spent less than Rs. 6,001 and the rest of 26 per cent of the pilgrim incurred overall expenditure above Rs. 6,000 particulars of visit in Tirumala are presented in table 6.

Particulars of Visit in Tirumala

Come to Tirumala	Respondents	Percentage
Alone	18	3.6
With members of family	366	73.2
With relatives	37	7.4
With friends	79	15.8

The above table 6 an enquiry was made to know that whether the respondents came to Tirumala and Tirupati alone or with their members of family or with relatives or with friends. The majority number of pilgrims came along with their members of family that

among the 500 respondents, 73.2 percent came along with their members of family, 15.8 percent with friends, 7.4 percent with relatives and only 3.6 percent alone the pilgrim's opinion on transport facility in TTD is presented in table 7.

Pilgrims opinion on transport facility in TTD

Opinion	Respondents	Percentage
Good	334	66.8
Satisfactory	157	31.4
Bad	9	1.8

The above table 7 an attempt was made to ascertain the views of the pilgrims on transport facility for Tirumala. It can be that about 66.8 percent of the 500 pilgrims interviewed have replied that transport facilities were good. 31.4 percent of the respondents expressed their satisfaction. However 1.8 percent of the respondents have replied that transport facilities were bad the details of conveyance used for reaching Tirumala are presented in table 8.

Details of conveyance used for reaching Tirumala

Come to Tirumala	Respondents	Percentage
By Bus	246	49.20
Four Wheeler	88	17.60
Two wheeler	14	2.80
On foot	44	8.80
By private taxi	54	10.80
By own vehicle	54	10.80

The above table 4 an attempt was made to know that how the pilgrims reached Tirumala. 49.2 percent of the 500 pilgrims reached by buses, 17.6 percent by four wheelers, 2.8 percent by two wheelers, 8.8

percent on foot, 10.8 percent by private taxis, 10.8 percent by own vehicles.

Conclusion

In this paper the demographic, economic and travel behavior characteristics of the pilgrims were analyzed. It was found that most of the pilgrim groups are nuclear families with heads from all age, education and occupation groups. Most of the pilgrim groups are from Andhra Pradesh. Pilgrim groups from lower income levels were more in number than those from higher income levels. It was found that there exists a direct relationship between annual income of pilgrim groups and expenditures they incurred in the pilgrimage. As far as travel behavior characteristics are concerned, it was found that pilgrims visit Tirumala as a regular habit, made frequent visits with maiden visitors on the increasing trend, and are staying for 2 or more days at Tirupati and Tirumala Finally, it was found there exists relationship between demographic and economic characteristics and travel behavior characteristics as well as amongst various travel behavior characteristics. The research next studies the extent of service utilization by pilgrims and it's relationship with pilgrim characteristics.

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