



Pilgrim Satisfaction - A case study of Udupi Sri Krishna Temple

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Abstract

Spiritual tourism is the fertile ground for exercising cultures and talents, festering special kinds of relations between the pilgrims and host population, between the tourist and the host environment. Visit to a sacred place as an act of religious devotion is an age-old tradition, followed by people all over the world. The flow of tourists to places of religious importance in India has increased in the last couple of decades tremendously with availability of modern means of travel, like the airplane, train and road transport, increase in accommodation facilities, globalization and growth of technology that provides vast information about all places and facilities.

Apart from the spiritual aspect, looked at from the larger point of view, pilgrimage involves, excursions, traveling, access to local cuisine and buying the local memorabilia, almost everything a tourist does. It is important for tourism service providers to understand the diversity of their potential customers and attempt to cater to the needs of all population segments.

The objective of this research is to study the pilgrim satisfaction at Udupi Sri Krishna Mutt to capture their perception, preferences and satisfaction with various services and facilities available in Udupi and to measure the level of satisfaction with respect to transportation facilities in the temple town, Darshan /seva availability, accommodation, information and communication, Prasadam availability of souvenirs and behavior of local vendors.

Keywords: Pilgrim satisfaction, Tourist Information

Introduction

According to the World Tourism Organization, tourists are the people who "travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited". Tourism is mainly popular as a global leisure activity.

India being a vast and diverse country has something to offer to everyone (Gill 1996, P.10). Tourism in India is the largest service industry, with a contribution of 6.23% to the national GDP and 8.78% of the total employment in India. India witness's more than 5 million annual foreign tourist arrivals and 562 million domestic tourism visits. The tourism industry in India produced about US\$100 billion in 2008 and that is expected to increase to US\$275.5 billion by 2018 at a 9.4% annual growth rate. In the year 2009, 5.11 million foreign tourists visited India.

Religious travel is not a new phenomenon. Religion has long been an integral motive for undertaking journeys and is usually considered the oldest form of non-economic travel (Jackowski and Smith 1992). Travel for religious purposes has been there from the most ancient times. All religions have their Holy places and places of worship. Such places are called by different names like Devalaya (House of God) Temple, Church, Masjid and Gurudwara which mean a building for religious prayers and house for communal worship. The pilgrimage is a journey undertaken for betterment of spiritual knowledge and peace.



According to the World Tourism Organization, an estimated 300 to 330 million pilgrims visit the world's key religious sites every year. According to the U.S office of travel and tourism industries, Americans travelling overseas for "religious or pilgrimage" purposes has increased from 491,000 travelers in 2002 to 633,000 travelers in 2005(30% increase).

The practice of pilgrimage in India is so deeply embedded in the cultural psyche that the entire subcontinent may actually be regarded as one grand and continuous sacred space. An earliest source of information on the matter of sacred space comes from the Rig Veda and Atharva Veda.

In our society, the pilgrimage journeys performed to God's grace and to learn moral values and to get respect in the individual community. Within the holy space human beings are given the chance to transcend themselves when they come face to face, in contemplation, with the divinity.

Increases in spiritually motivated travel have coincided with the growth of tourism in the modern era (Lloyd 1998), and even though the industry and its "associated practices interact with religious life and the institutions of religion in virtually every corner of the world" (Bremer 2005:9260), religious tourism is one of the most understudied areas in tourism research (Vukonic 1998). The pilgrimage instead of diminishing in our apparently ever more secular, scientific and technologically oriented world, is experiencing considerable growth. This is true in all religions.

Religious tourism in Karnataka in the post-independence taking into consideration the economic and social potentialities of tourism industry, both the state and the central government have taken certain positive steps in order to develop the tourist industry, because the domestic tourism promotes local peace, harmony and friendship among the people.

In 2011, Karnataka began adding religious destinations, including its famed temples, popular and politically powerful religious mutts, dargahs and guru dwaras, among others, to its tally.

The tourist inflow into the State, which had dipped to 3.29 crore in 2009 from 3.75 crore in 2008 because of recession, had picked up in 2010 to 3.85 crore. But in 2011, it totted up an eye-popping 8.46 crore, thanks to religious tourism contributing 3.49 crore, which accounts for a massive 41.3 per cent. According to statistics provided by the Department of Tourism, while 8.46 crore travellers visited Karnataka in 2011, it rose to 9.14 crore, including 5.83 lakh foreign tourists, in 2012.

The flow of people to places of religious importance in India has increased in the last couple of decades tremendously with availability of modern means of travel, increase in accommodation facilities, growth of information and communication technology that provides vast information about the places, and the like:

A brief overview of Karnataka in India

Karnataka is a tapestry of colours, cultures, flavours, landscapes, timelessness and heart stopping beauty.

Karnataka is one of the four southern states of India. The name of the land Karnataka has come from 'Kari-nadu' meaning the land of black soil, & some others hold that 'Karunadu' also means elevated land; either way the land is celebrated as beautiful throughout its ancient literature. Karnataka is the eighth largest state in India in both area and population. It is situated on the western edge of the Deccan plateau and is surrounded by Maharashtra and Goa on the north, Andhra Pradesh on the east, and Tamil Nadu and Kerala on the south. On the west, it opens out on the Arabian Sea. Karnataka ranks 4th as a domestic tourism destination and 5th among foreign tourist arrivals. It has the 2nd highest number of nationally protected monuments, 752 monuments are protected by the State Directorate of Archaeology and Museums. There are 25 Wildlife Sanctuaries and 5 National Parks. The Vijayanagara Empire at Hampi and monuments at Pattadakal are listed as World Heritage Sites by





UNESCO and the waterfalls of Karnataka are among the „1001 Natural Wonders of the World“.

Table 1: Government of Karnataka’s projections on tourism of the state

Measures and indicators /projections	2005	2010	2020
Arrival of foreign tourists (in lakhs)	2.53	3.23	5.26
Employment generation by tourism(in lakhs)	4.49	5.72	9.32
Arrival of domestic tourists (in lakhs)	244.89	359.82	776.83
Revenue due to tourism (in Rs. Lakhs)	25587	46039	119413
Forex due to tourism (in Rs. Lakhs)	39153	49970	81396
Tourism contribution to state GDP (%)	13	15	25

Source: Adopted from the Government of Karnataka, Global Investors Meet 2010, Sector profile Tourism: p.9 Source: Govt. of India, Department of Tourism, Market Research Division, Final Report on 20 year Perspective Plan for Development of Sustainable Tourism in Karnataka – March 2003 Prepared by Dalal Mott MacDonald

UDUPI, SRI KRISHNA MUTT

Udupi, is the south India's holiest Vaishnavite coastal town in Karnataka, is located 381kms from the capital Bangalore. Udupi is new district formed separated from Dakshina Kannada district (South Canara) in 1997. The urban focus of Udupi is an open Square surrounded by temples and mutts. Udupi is the birth place of the 12th century saint Madhava, who set up eight sanyasi mutts in the town and is one of Karnataka's most important pilgrimage sites. Udupi is also known for its delicious cuisine and Udupi restaurants all over the country.

Places to Visit:

- Sri Krishna temple
- Chandamouleeswara temple
- Anantheshwara temple
- Malpe Beach
- St. Mary's Island
- Sri Mahalingeshwara Mahaganapathi Temple, Padubidri
- Maravante
- Kollur
- Manipal: 3 kms from Udupi, is a centre of modern learning with well-known medical and engineering colleges.

This city is identified with the famous Hindu saint Madhwacharya, who was born here (1238 -1317). Madhwacharya was the founder of the Dwaitha philosophy. He established the ashta (eight) Mutts at Udupi and is one of the Mokshapuris, who taught here 700 years ago. Udupi is most famous temple of Shri Krishna and Paryaya festival celebrated here with great zeal and enthusiasm.

Udupi is a small district yet it attracts devotees from every nook and corner. Every day devotees in large number come and have Darshan of Sri Krishna. Being it is a holy kshetra, the surrounding place, nature, and people everything is gentle and superb. It is a unique place. Hence it is popular. The main entrance to temple is on the southern side. If we come by this way, we see on the right side' a tank called 'Madhva Pushkarani'. It is fully covered by stone steps. And at the centre of this there is 'Mantapam'. Actually there is no front door to this temple. At the very outside through one window devotees may take: Darshan of Lord Sri Krishna. One idol is clearly visible from outside. Here we can see 'Gopurami - which is just in front of this window.

As earlier said there is a Mantapam in the centre of Pushkarani, here Krishnapur, Puttige, and Kaniyoor mutts are worshipping on the evening of Utthana Dwadashi every year. This worship is called 'Kshirabdi Pooja'. Stone bridge is being used to move. It is a feast to observe the Teppotsava (floating



festival) which will be held on Rathotsava night. This tank has a great history. Devotees with lot of earnestness, trust and devotion worship this tank. Here we see a shrine of Bhagirathi which is on the south west corner of the tank. This sacred tank is called by -different names. It was known as 'Virajtheerth', in Kritayuga, 'Ananth Sarovar' in Tretha & Dwapar yuga, and after Madhavacharya.

It is being called as 'Madhava Sarovar'. Ever since the period of Madhvacharya, once in twelve years Bhagirathi is flowing into this tank. For the daily worship of Sri Krishna the same holy water is being used for Abhisheka.

While coming out of this sarovar, just opposite to the tank we see entrance to Sri Krishna matt. Here quite opposite to this door we see an idol of Sri. Channakeshav. Just behind the idol there is way to reach Garbhagriha. But this door is not always opened, it opens only on the day of Vijay Dashami. During this day bunches of fresh crop of paddy is stored. It is a custom which is following till the day. To the south of garbhagriha, there is Suryashala chaavadi and by the side of this, in some rooms golden palanquin and other valuable Jewellery are safely kept.

Towards the west there is idol of Sri Krishna. There is a window wherein we may take Darshan of God day and night. This window is called 'Navagraha' window. This window is covered by silver sheet and also these are 24 different images of God which are embossed is seen. Just opposite of this there is one Theerth Mantapam. Here every night chamar Seva Pooja and Mantap pooja take place. Here we may see chandrashala. The Darshan of the idol may be seen through the window at all times from outside the matt. This is a place where Bhajanas and puranas are running. Further we may see here the idols of Sri Mukhyaprana and Garud. These are on northern and southern sides. These are the idols brought from Ayodhya and installed by Sri Vadiraj Theerth.

To take an entry into sanctum sanctorum is through one, door to reach this we have to move towards north. Here on the left side of the door, there is a idol of Madhvacharya. This is installed by Sri Vadiraj. In this garbhagudi there are two rooms. In one room this idol of Sri Krishna is seen. Numbers of wick lamps are burning here. It is said that among these, some are lighted by Sri Madhvacharya. These are continuously burning since then. In another room, which is bigger than the previous one, is a place, where daily 'Tarpana' is held by Swamiyaars. Here silver mantapam with a golden cradle is seen. At the end of the day, Ekantha seva or Shayanotsava takes place.

At the time of performing 'Raatripuja', every night, we may observe three rows of wicklamps. This is on the outer walls of the garbhagudi. On some special occasion these lights are lighted even during the early morning time. i.e, during the, month of Kartik at the time of 'Paschima Jagan Pooja'. On the upper portion of the garbhagraha around the wall beautiful murals depicting 'Dashavtar' (Ten Avatharas of Vishnu) are seen. : Tulsi Vrindavan and Deep stambha are also here. The first one is at the right of theerth, mantapam and other one is at north of garbhagraha.

One kitchen is here, where for the purpose of Naivedyam to God is being cooked. Nearby this one 'Simhasan', is there, where idols of paryar Swamiyar are kept. This room is significant-one-because, here only the original seat of Sri Madhvacharya is kept. This seat is used by exclusively by paryay Swaiyar. This is a tradition. To perform pooja, and Naivedya, a pure water is necessary. Hence the well, which is on the 'northeast corner is kept safely. Water is unpolluted Next to this is, one door. This is being used only when there is too much rush. A sandal 'pooja is prepared in Naivedya shala for daily Pooja.

If we move from north entrance of the temple to northern side, we will reach a place 'Chouki' a dining hall, where, Swamiyars along with invited guest takes 'Prasad' (meals) on the top of this building there is another dining hall which is meant for invited guests. It is a big hall and any number of men may have their meals here. This service is called 'Mrishtanna Pankti'. Thereby if we move towards south of chouki we see general kitchen. Further on eastern side of the chouki yet another specious hall is there, where in this general dining hall unlimited number of uninvited Brahmin guests and school children are given food service. On the top of this hall, another hall is there, here pilgrims may take food. Presence of subrahmanya installed by Sri Vadiraj theerth Swamiji of sodemutt is seen to the north of



this general dining hall. Nearby this vasanth mahal yard with mantapam is seen. This is also called Vasanth Pooja Mantapam. In this spacious hall public lecture, dramas, cultural activities and religious discourses are held. Thus here everything is clean, orderliness, neatness is found. The service in every wing is praise worthy.

Table 2

Destination	Domestic	International	Total
Pilikula Nisarga Dhama	584,555	2,114	586,669
Udupi- Shri Krishna Temple	543,604	1,946	545,550
Malpe beach	571,346	4,140	575,486
Maravanthe beach	133,512	499	134,011
Someshwara beach	88,838	681	89,519
Rabindranath Tagore beach & Devbagh beach	202,711	759	203,470
Gokarna	456,538	4,536	461,074
Yana	106,064	4,689	110,753
Murudeshwara beach	427,880	14,361	442,241
Dandeli sanctuary	41,110	65	41,175
Om beach	201,020	11,393	212,413
Total	3,357,178	45,183	3,402,361
Contribution to tourist inflow in Dakshina Kannada, Udupi & Uttara Kannada districts in percentage	25%	91%	25%

*source: Department of Tourism, Karnataka

Objectives of the study

The overall objective of the research was to

1. Capture devotee's perception, preferences and satisfaction with various services and facilities available in Udupi
2. To measure the level of satisfaction of respondents with respect to transportation facilities in the temple town, Darshan/Seva availability, accommodation, information and communication, prasadam, and behavior of local vendors in particular.

Material and Methods

The study is basically a survey based research, which was done in three stages viz., Desk Research, preparation of Interview schedule and the Field work. For collection of primary data, a sample size of 157 was arrived picked by convenience and random sampling techniques. Data relating to devotees perception was collected through structured interview schedules and personal discussions. The questionnaire has been designed to find out the role of demographic variables in predicting the satisfaction level at different shrines. An attempt has been made on five point scale ranging from 1(Highly Dissatisfied) to 5 (Highly Satisfied) to rate their responses towards various attributes related to transportation, food and accommodation, retail services, supervisory services and various infrastructure and related services. Further these attributes has been reduced to meaningful and correlated form with factor analysis. Secondary data is gathered from publications, Text books, journals, newspapers and web sources. The respondents' views and level of satisfaction could have been influenced by their most recent experience, from which generalizations must be drawn with great caution.

Respondent profile

About 25% of respondents are below 30 years of age, 32% between 31-45 years, 29% between 46 years to 55 years, and the rest are above 55 years. Male and female respondents are 49 and 51% respectively, 41% hailing from other states. Respondents from other than Karnataka represent Tamilnadu (25%), Kerala (14%), Andrapradesh (12%) and the rest from other parts of the country.



Most of the respondents (65%) are visiting the divine shrine 2nd time or more, but still finding new procedure/ system/ development in every visit, which shows that how Sri Krishna mutt administration responds to keep pace with the needs of ever increasing number of pilgrim tourists to the most sought after spiritual destination. Very few respondents (12%) visited Udupi through tour operators (both government- KSTDC, and private operators). Only 30% came to the temple town with prior arrangement for accommodation, 35% said they did not require accommodation as pilgrims amenities centers are helpful in fresh up, bath etc., but the sizeable 35% required accommodation, had to stand in line for the same. About 20% came to the Rajata Peetha by train, 55% reached by buses and 25% came by private vehicles.

Results and Discussion

About 25% respondents were very well aware about other tourist spots in Udupi and feel that services at temples in and around Udupi are excellent, 25% felt they have very good knowledge, 30% said average, while 20% admitted it's poor.

Three fourth of devotees who stayed at guest houses, cottages and choultries were satisfied with accommodation. Interestingly higher percentages (84 percent) of the devotees staying in the Ashta Mutt choultries were satisfied with the accommodation. The research study shows that most of the devotees staying in choultries belong to lower socio economic classes (SEC). This segment of the devotees finds free choultries affordable and convenient. A correlation between duration of stay and satisfaction with accommodation shows that devotees staying for longer duration are relatively less satisfied. This was because the longer the stay, the shortcoming on the housekeeping and hygiene aspects were more pronounced. Also the need to re-book the accommodation creates some discomfort. Experience of respondents largely is diverse in terms of darsanam, availability of prasadam and the like which is very much influenced by the day of interviewing, time etc.

About 65% of respondents feel that the transportation facility from different places to Udupi and from Udupi to other cities is adequate or very much adequate, while the rest see some room for betterment. The sanitation and public conveniences are very much satisfactory to about 76% of respondents, while the overall satisfaction towards price, variety, hygiene and quality of food is 63%. Majority of respondents (55%) perceive that the information centers are easily approachable and they get required information. Krishna Mutt stalls selling books, CDS, calendars and the like are accessible and availability of required is satisfactory to over 65% of respondents. A vast majority (85%) feel physically secured during their stay in the temple town, while many (55%) expressed concern for security of belongings and valuables. Some found the behavior of Mutt employees/ volunteers towards pilgrims to be indifferent at various points of contact say at cloak room, room allotment, vacation, shoe-keeping and the like. The behavior of local vendors towards pilgrims, and prices they charge for the products/ services also leaves some room for concern.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Udupi, the divine domicile of Lord Sri Krishna, attracts thousands of tourists to Karnataka from places across the state, country and the world. Pilgrims visiting Udupi Sri Krishna Mutt were moderately satisfied with accommodation, transport and retail services.

Among these factors the most important factor as perceived by pilgrims was Accommodation, Room Rent and Transport Infrastructure. The least important factor as perceived by the pilgrims was Shopping and Tourism Services.

Practically, it may not be possible to provide highly personalized services to the all the tourists, however, better care could be and must be taken to make the pilgrim experience more divine and cherishing.

The following suggestions could help towards the endeavour.

Measures should be taken to provide darshan, accommodation, prasadam in more transparent manner, with a common devotee in mind, eliminating any room for middlemen to play mischief Travel Packages to visit to nearby temples and places of importance within the town and Dakshin kannada



district must aggressively promoted, even in collaboration with private vehicle operators. Security should be tightened up to ensure safety of pilgrims' valuables and belongings, Krishna Mutt staff and volunteers must properly trained and sensitized to serve the pilgrims with smile and empathy.

It is advisable for municipality and local Governing body to properly manage the roads coming under town area committee. As the major source of transport is through roads in the state and their proper maintenance based on time bound plan is needed.

Bad condition of roads to adjoining temples and its maintenance must be properly checked and necessary actions in terms of developments like lights on track, railing and stairs, retiring facility should be taken.

Demanding tips from the pilgrims must be discouraged by strong action Local vendors must be sensitized to deal with pilgrims decently, and conduct business on fair terms

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