

Exploring The Future Behavioural Intentions of Tourists Towards Religious Tourism Destinations in Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT

Religious tourism is one of the most important segments of the tourism industry in Tamil Nadu due to the presence of ancient temples, sacred shrines, and vibrant cultural traditions. The present study examines the socio-demographic profile of tourists and analyses their future behavioural intentions towards religious tourism destinations in Tamil Nadu. Primary data were collected from 384 tourists through a structured questionnaire using the convenience sampling method. The findings of the study reveal that the majority of the respondents are male, married, belong to the age group of 31–40 years, and are residents within Tamil Nadu. The study further identifies that revisit intention has the highest mean score among the dimensions of future behavioural intentions, followed by referral intention and promotional intention. The study concludes that improving destination management practices, visitor facilities, and tourism services can strengthen tourist loyalty and promote sustainable religious tourism development in Tamil Nadu.

Keywords: Religious Tourism, Future Behavioural Intentions, Revisit Intention, Referral Intention, Promotional Intention, Tourist Satisfaction, Tamil Nadu Tourism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Religious tourism is one of the most significant segments of the tourism industry in India, and Tamil Nadu has emerged as a major spiritual tourism destination due to its ancient temples, sacred shrines, and rich cultural heritage. Pilgrimage centres such as Madurai, Rameswaram, Palani, Chidambaram, Velankanni, and Nagore attract millions of domestic and international tourists every year. Religious tourism not only promotes spiritual fulfilment and cultural exchange but also contributes significantly to employment generation, local economic development, and the preservation of cultural traditions. In recent years, understanding tourists' future behavioural intentions has become increasingly important for tourism researchers and destination managers, as behavioural intentions such as revisit intention, positive word-of-mouth communication, recommendation intention, and destination loyalty directly influence the long-term sustainability of tourism destinations.

Recent studies conducted between 2021 and 2023 have highlighted that tourist satisfaction, service quality, destination image, and memorable tourism experiences are the major determinants of tourists' future behavioural intentions in religious tourism destinations. Kamenidou and Stavrianea (2022) found that memorable spiritual experiences and emotional attachment significantly enhance tourists' revisit intentions and loyalty towards religious destinations. Similarly, Sharma and Nayak (2022) observed that perceived service quality, tourist satisfaction, and destination value positively influence behavioural intentions such as revisit intention and recommendation behaviour among religious tourists. Furthermore, Kumar and Rajesh (2022) emphasized that effective destination management, infrastructure development, and quality tourism services are essential for strengthening tourists' positive behavioural intentions and ensuring sustainable tourism growth.

In the post-pandemic tourism environment, tourists have become more concerned about safety, hygiene, accessibility, and quality experiences while visiting religious destinations. Therefore, exploring the future behavioural intentions of tourists is essential for understanding their expectations, improving service quality, and developing effective tourism management strategies. The present study attempts to examine the socio-demographic profile of tourists and analyse their future behavioural intentions towards religious tourism destinations in Tamil Nadu. The findings of the study would help tourism authorities, policymakers, and temple administrations formulate suitable measures to improve tourist satisfaction, destination competitiveness, and sustainable religious tourism development.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Religious tourism is a significant segment of Tamil Nadu's tourism industry due to the state's rich spiritual heritage, historic temples, sacred shrines, and vibrant cultural traditions. Prominent pilgrimage destinations such as Madurai, Rameswaram, Palani, Velankanni, and Nagore attract millions of domestic and international tourists every year, contributing substantially to the socio-economic and cultural development of the state. In the contemporary tourism environment, understanding tourists' future behavioural intentions has become increasingly important for ensuring

destination sustainability, tourist retention, and long-term tourism growth. Future behavioural intentions such as revisit intention, recommendation behaviour, positive word-of-mouth communication, and destination loyalty are strongly influenced by tourists' satisfaction, service quality, spiritual experience, infrastructure facilities, and overall travel experience. Therefore, the present study aims to analyse the socio-demographic profile of tourists and explore their future behavioural intentions towards religious tourism destinations in Tamil Nadu to support effective destination management and sustainable tourism development.

3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study focuses on examining the future behavioural intentions of tourists towards religious tourism destinations in Tamil Nadu, which is widely recognized for its rich spiritual heritage and prominent pilgrimage centres. The study primarily covers major religious destinations that attract a large number of domestic and international tourists throughout the year. It analyses the socio-demographic profile of tourists based on factors such as age, gender, marital status, religion, income level, and place of residence to understand their travel patterns, preferences, and pilgrimage behaviour. Further, the study explores various dimensions of tourists' future behavioural intentions, including revisit intention, willingness to recommend destinations to others, positive word-of-mouth communication, and promotional intentions towards religious tourism destinations. In addition, the study examines the influence of service quality, infrastructure facilities, sanitation, safety measures, spiritual experience, and overall tourist satisfaction on behavioural intentions. The findings of the study will be valuable for tourism authorities, policymakers, temple administrations, and other stakeholders in formulating effective strategies to enhance tourist satisfaction and promote sustainable religious tourism development in Tamil Nadu.

4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kayal (2023) investigated the motivations and behavioural intentions of religious tourists visiting sacred destinations in Saudi Arabia. The study applied Google Trends analysis, K-means cluster analysis, and regression analysis to identify tourist personas and motivational factors influencing visit intentions. The findings revealed that spiritual fulfilment, self-esteem, relationship needs, and emotional attachment significantly influenced tourists' intention to visit and revisit religious destinations. The study further emphasized that destination image, effective visitor management, and targeted marketing strategies positively influence tourists' future behavioural intentions. The author recommended improving tourism planning, destination promotion, and visitor engagement activities to enhance tourist satisfaction and revisit intention. The study concluded that understanding tourists' motivations and behavioural intentions is essential for the sustainable growth of religious tourism destinations.

Jerald and Periyasami (2023) examined service quality and tourist satisfaction in religious tourism destinations with special reference to Navagraha temples in Tamil Nadu. The study identified that factors such as sanitation, accommodation facilities, transportation services, crowd management, and destination infrastructure significantly influence tourists' satisfaction and future behavioural intentions, including revisit intention and positive word-of-mouth communication. The findings indicated that inadequate facilities negatively affect tourists' perceptions and loyalty towards pilgrimage destinations. The authors suggested improving infrastructure facilities, cleanliness, safety measures, and tourist guidance services to strengthen tourists' future behavioural intentions and ensure sustainable tourism development.

Prayag, Hosany, and Odeh (2022) examined the role of memorable tourism experiences in shaping tourists' future behavioural intentions towards tourism destinations. The study analysed how tourists' emotional experiences, satisfaction, and destination attachment influence revisit intention, destination loyalty, and recommendation behaviour. Using quantitative analysis, the researchers found that positive and memorable tourism experiences significantly enhance tourists' willingness to revisit destinations and recommend them to others through positive word-of-mouth communication. The authors suggested that tourism authorities and destination managers should focus on improving visitor experiences, infrastructure facilities, and destination management practices to encourage long-term tourist loyalty and sustainable tourism development. The study concluded that memorable and satisfactory travel experiences are key determinants of tourists' future behavioural intentions.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the socio-demographic profile of the respondents in the study area
2. To explore the future behavioural intentions of tourists towards religious tourism destinations in the study area

6. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The present study is descriptive and empirical in nature and is based on both primary and secondary data sources. The data for the study were collected during the period from January 2024 to April 2024 from major religious tourism destinations in Tamil Nadu. A structured survey questionnaire was used as the primary research instrument to collect responses from tourists. The study adopted a convenience sampling method, and a total of 384 respondents were selected for the analysis from an unknown population. The collected data were analysed using statistical tools such as Simple Percentage Analysis and Descriptive Statistics, including Mean and Standard Deviation. The statistical analysis was carried out with the help of IBM SPSS software.

7. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The demographic profile of the respondents is presented in the following table.

Table 1
Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Category	Profile	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	220	57.29
	Female	164	42.71
Age	Up to 20 years	20	5.21
	21 - 30 years	78	20.31
	31 - 40 years	122	31.78
	41 – 50 years	80	20.83
	51 – 60 years	32	8.33
	Above 60 years	52	13.54
Marital Status	Single / Unmarried	144	37.50
	Married	240	62.50
Religion	Hindu	180	46.88
	Christian	120	31.25
	Muslim	80	20.83
	Others	4	1.04
Monthly Income	Below Rs. 20,000	40	10.42
	Rs. 20,001 - Rs. 40,000	180	46.87
	Rs. 40,001 - Rs. 60,000	120	31.25
	Above Rs. 60,000	44	11.46
Area of Residence	With in Tamil Nadu	210	54.69
	Outside Tamil Nadu	150	39.06
	Outside India	24	6.25
Total		384	100

Source: Primary Data

The above table reveals that a higher proportion (57.29%) of the respondents are male, while a considerable number of respondents (31.78%) belong to the age group of 31–40 years. The analysis further reveals that the majority (62.50%) of the respondents are married. With regard to religion, the highest proportion of respondents (46.88%) belong to the Hindu religion. In terms of monthly income, a significant percentage of respondents (46.87%) earn between Rs. 20,001 and Rs. 40,000 per month. Moreover, the findings show that the majority of the respondents (54.69%) are residents within Tamil Nadu.

In order to explore the future behavioural intentions of tourists towards religious tourism destinations in Tamil Nadu, the scores based on the ratings given by the tourists on nine variables were calculated and presented in the following table.

Table 2 Future Behavioural Intentions of Tourists

S. No		Future Behavioural Intentions	Mean	SD	Rank
1.	Revisit Intention	I intend to revisit this religious destination in the future	4.116	0.596	I
2.		This site will be my first choice for religious/spiritual tourism			
3.		I am satisfied with the site facilities and service quality, leading me to plan repeat visits			
4.	Referral Intention	I will recommend this religious site to my friends and family	3.896	0.568	II
5.		I will share my positive experience of this site on social media or travel platforms			
6.		I will encourage others within my religious or social community to visit this site			
7.	Promotional Intentions	I intend to make financial contributions to develop this site in the future	3.180	0.385	III
8.		I intend to organize spiritual tours combing religious visits with cultural experiences			
9.		I will volunteer for promotional events or campaigns hosted by the site administration			

Source: Computed Data

The above table evidently shows that the mean and standard deviation of the future behavioural intentions towards religious tourism destinations in Tamil Nadu. Among the three future behavioural intentions, Revisit Intention of tourists has been ranked first with highest mean score of 4.116, Referral Intention has been ranked second with mean score of 3.896 and the Promotional Intention has been ranked third with lowest mean score of 3.180.

8. MAJOR FINDINGS

1. The study reveals that a higher proportion (57.29%) of the respondents are male.
2. The findings indicate that most of the respondents (31.78%) belong to the age group of 31–40 years.
3. The analysis shows that the majority (62.50%) of the respondents are married.
4. It is observed from the study that the highest proportion (46.88%) of the respondents belong to the Hindu religion.
5. The study highlights that a considerable number of respondents (46.87%) earn a monthly income between Rs. 20,001 and Rs. 40,000.
6. The findings further reveal that the majority of the respondents (54.69%) are residents within Tamil Nadu.
7. Regarding the future behavioural intentions of the tourists' revisit intention has been ranked first with highest mean score of 4.116,

9. SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are offered to the various stakeholders to strengthen tourists' future behavioural intentions towards religious tourism destinations in Tamil Nadu.

- Since the majority of the respondents are male, tourism authorities should design safety-oriented and activity-based tourism services that cater to the preferences and expectations of male tourists while also ensuring inclusive facilities for all categories of visitors.
- As most of the respondents belong to the age group of 31–40 years, tourism planners should introduce family-friendly facilities, digital information services, and comfortable travel arrangements to enhance their overall pilgrimage experience.
- Considering that a majority of the respondents are married, adequate accommodation facilities, family rest areas, childcare support services, and hygienic food services should be provided at religious tourism destinations.
- Since a large proportion of the respondents belong to the Hindu religion, temple administrations should preserve the spiritual atmosphere, traditional practices, and cultural authenticity of religious destinations to strengthen tourists' emotional attachment and destination loyalty.
- As most respondents belong to the middle-income category, affordable transportation, accommodation, and tourism packages should be developed to encourage repeat visits and improve tourist satisfaction.
- Since the majority of tourists are residents within Tamil Nadu, regional tourism promotion programmes, weekend pilgrimage packages, and local cultural events should be organized to encourage revisit intention and positive word-of-mouth communication.
- The study identified revisit intention as the most significant future behavioural intention among tourists. Therefore, tourism authorities and temple administrations should focus on improving service quality, sanitation, infrastructure facilities, safety measures, crowd management, and tourist guidance services to enhance tourist satisfaction and encourage repeat visitation to religious tourism destinations in Tamil Nadu. The Government of Tamil Nadu and tourism departments should formulate effective tourism policies and infrastructural development programmes to enhance tourist satisfaction and promote sustainable religious tourism development in the state.

10. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study is subject to certain limitations. The study is restricted only to selected religious tourism destinations in Tamil Nadu; therefore, the findings may not represent the behavioural intentions of tourists visiting all pilgrimage centres across the state. The study is primarily based on the opinions and perceptions of tourists collected during the survey period, which may vary depending on seasonal conditions, festival periods, and personal experiences. The accuracy of the findings depends on the responses provided by the respondents, and there may be possibilities of personal bias or incomplete information. Due to time and financial constraints, the researcher could not include a larger sample size or wider geographical coverage. Furthermore, the study mainly focuses on tourists' future behavioural intentions and does not consider the perspectives of temple authorities, tourism officials, or local stakeholders.

11. CONCLUSION

Religious tourism plays an important role in promoting the cultural, spiritual, and economic development of Tamil Nadu. The present study examined the socio-demographic profile of tourists and explored their future behavioural intentions towards religious tourism destinations in Tamil Nadu. The findings revealed that tourists exhibit positive future behavioural intentions, particularly in terms of revisit intention, referral intention, and promotional intention towards religious destinations. The study indicates that tourists are willing to revisit religious destinations in the future,

recommend them to friends and family members, and share their positive experiences through social media and other communication platforms. Further, many tourists expressed their interest in supporting the development and promotion of religious tourism destinations through participation in spiritual tours and promotional activities. The study highlights that factors such as service quality, infrastructure facilities, cleanliness, safety measures, and overall tourist satisfaction significantly influence tourists' behavioural intentions. Therefore, tourism authorities, temple administrations, and other stakeholders should focus on improving visitor experiences and destination management practices to strengthen tourist loyalty, encourage repeat visitation, and ensure the sustainable development of religious tourism destinations in Tamil Nadu.

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