

TOURIST ASPIRATIONS ON SANKARANARAYANAR TEMPLE AT SANKARANKOVIL, TENKASI DISTRICT – A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Tourist aspirations refer to the inherent desire, instinct, needs, and preferences that drive individuals to visit or travel to specific destinations. Sankaranarayanar Temple, a renowned Hindu religious site, attracts both domestic and international tourists, irrespective of their religious or non-religious affiliations. This research paper aims to investigate the factors that inspire tourists to visit Sankaranarayanar Temple. The primary objective of this study is to identify the key motivators that prompt individuals to choose Sankaranarayanar Temple as their destination. A total of 196 participants were selected as the sample respondents for this study. Statistical tools such as percentage analysis and mean were employed to analyze the collected

data. The findings indicate that a significant majority of the respondents visit the temple to fulfill their religious obligations and seek solace and tranquility.

INTRODUCTION

Tourist motivation refers to the factors that inspire and stimulate individuals to visit a specific destination. Tamil Nadu, known for its religious tourism, is blessed with numerous tourist spots, boasting over 4000 religious places, surpassing other states in India. Among these, the Sankaranarayanan Temple stands out as an ancient and renowned temple, constructed by Ukkirapandiya Thevar in the 11th century AD. Situated in the heart of Sankarankovil town, in the Thenkasi district, this temple is known by various names such as Avudaiyamman Temple, Gomathi Amman Temple, Sankaranayinar Temple, and Panchabootha Sthalam. A unique belief associated with this temple is that it offers a special sand called "Puttru Mann," which is believed to have curative properties for various skin diseases. The temple holds its own distinctive characteristics and specialties. Every year, it hosts several renowned festivals, including Aadi Thapasu, attracting a multitude of devotees.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Liza Rybina and Timothy j Lee (2021):

In this study the author made an attempt to describe the factors that motivates tourists for visiting scared places in Central Asia.

Irene Kamenidou and Rafaela Vourou (2021):

In this paper the author makes a detailed exposure of the factors that motivates for visiting religious sites in Lesvos Island.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS

The Sankaranarayanar Temple is a thousand to two thousand years old, attracting both religious and non-religious tourists. Even individuals without religious beliefs are drawn to this temple due to its captivating architecture, intricate sculptures, monumental entrance tower, and exceptional construction. Devotees with religious faith travel from the same town, nearby villages, other districts, and even other states to fulfill their religious obligations and perform sacred rituals to meet their needs and prayers. Referred to as a Panchabootha Sthalam, this temple is particularly famous for rectifying sarphathosam. Each sanctum of the temple, including Sankaranarayanar Sannadhi, Gomathi Amman Sannadhi, Sankaranayinar Sannadhi, and Navagraha Sannadhi, holds its own significance. Despite various studies on religious tourism, tourist motivation, and factors influencing tourists, there is a lack of previous research specifically focused on the Sankaranarayanar Temple. This absence of literature has motivated researchers to investigate the factors that motivate tourists to visit this temple.

METHODOLOGY

The study took place at the Sankaranarayanar Temple in Sankarankovil. A total of 196 participants were selected for the study using a convenient sampling method. The researchers utilized a pre-structured interview schedule to collect data from the participants. The data was gathered from individuals visiting the temple both for fulfilling religious obligations and without any religious purpose.

The collected data were analyzed using percentage analysis to examine the respondents' personal details, while mean scores were used to assess the motivation factors. Each variable was assigned a weight, and the weighted scores were calculated by multiplying the variables with their respective weights. The weighted scores were then divided by the total number of respondents to determine the mean scores.

RESULT

Out of the total 196 respondents, 55.1 percent were male, while the remaining 44.9 percent were female. In terms of age distribution, 12.75 percent of respondents fell into the 20 and below age group, 22.95 percent were between 21 and 30 years old, 36.73 percent were in the 31-40 age group, 15.81 percent were aged 41-50, and 11.76 percent were between 51 and 60 years old.

Regarding marital status, 79.59 percent of respondents were married, 15.30 percent were unmarried, and the remaining 5.11 percent were widowed. In terms of education, 5.11 percent had no formal education, 16.32 percent had completed primary education, 21.93 percent had completed secondary education, 29.08 percent had completed higher secondary education, 24.48 percent had obtained a degree or diploma, and 3.08 percent had studied professional courses.

Occupation-wise, 19.89 percent of respondents were farmers, 20.91 percent were employed in the private sector, 37.24 percent were involved in business activities, 7.14 percent were government employees, and 9.71 percent were engaged in professional work.

The variables were grouped into four factors based on their mean values. The respondents agreed that personal interest (4.53), fulfilling devoted responsibilities (4.45), seeking peace of mind

(4.28), and developing devotional wisdom (4.25) highly influenced their visits to Sankaranarayanar Temple. The historical significance of the place (3.73), environmental attractiveness (3.51), and occasional visits during business trips (3.06) moderately influenced their decision to visit the temple. The respondents disagreed that they were influenced by magazines and newspapers (2.59) or visited for holiday purposes (2.39). Furthermore, they strongly disagreed that factors like free trips organized by their company (1.83) or family members' compulsion (1.73) motivated them to visit Sankaranarayanar Temple.

CONCLUSIONS

Sankaranarayanar Temple in Sankarankovil is an ancient temple with significant historical importance. The study clearly indicates that devotees visit the temple primarily out of personal interest, to fulfill their religious obligations, and to seek inner peace. Some visitors also come to appreciate the historical significance of the temple on occasion.

The temple hosts notable special rituals such as Pirathosam, Bairavar Pooja, special poojas for Navagraha Sannathi, as well as specific days dedicated to Guru and Sanipagavan. These special occasions attract a larger number of devotees compared to regular days, with local people and those from nearby villages being the main attendees. During these events, devotees bring specific items like bindis, flowers, oil, candle wicks, sesame seeds, and kanmalar to offer for the rituals. However, it is crucial that after the completion of the poojas, devotees dispose of the remaining items and plastic covers properly to avoid polluting the temple's internal environment. Devotees are encouraged to use the designated waste boxes provided within the temple premises to

maintain cleanliness, as most respondents expressed their preference for a clean internal environment within the temple.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Table 1: Gender

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Male	108	55.1
Female	88	44.9
Total	196	100.0

Table 2: Age

Particulars	Frequency	Percent
Up to 20	25	12.75
21 to 30	45	22.95
31 to 40	72	36.73
41 to 50	31	15.81
51 to 60	23	11.76
Total	196	100.0

Table 3: Marital Status

Particulars	Frequency	Percent
Married	156	79.59
Unmarried	30	15.30
Widow	10	5.11
Total	196	100.0

Table 4: Educational Qualification

Particulars	Frequency	Percent
No proper education	10	5.11
primary education	32	16.32
secondary education	43	21.93
higher secondary	57	29.08
degree or diploma	48	24.48
Professional courses	6	3.08
Total	196	100.0

Table 5: Occupational Status

Particulars	Frequency	Percent
Farmer	39	19.89

Private employee	41	20.91
Business	73	37.24
Government employee	14	7.14
Professional	19	9.71
Student	10	5.11
Total	196	100.0

Table 6 Monthly Income

	Particulars	Frequency	Percent
	up to 10000	24	12.24
	10001 to 30000	34	17.34
	30001 to 50000	88	45.59
	above 50000	53	24.86
	Total	196	100.0

Table 7: Factors Motivating Tourists to Visit Sankaranarayanar Temple

Factors	Strongly agree	Agree	Moderately agree	Dis agree	Strongly disagree	Mean score
To complete devoted responsibility	530	312	24	4	-	4.45

Peace of mind	470	360	-	-	12	4.28
Devotional wisdom	510	220	81	24	-	4.25
Compulsion of family member	15	52	36	148	94	1.73
Trip organized by working institution	25	44	48	164	82	1.83
To spent the holidays	10	200	81	124	55	2.39
Occasional visit at the time of business trip	135	236	81	134	16	3.06
Personal interest	665	204	-	16	4	4.53
Through magazine and news paper	135	140	48	142	47	2.59
Historical importance of the place	310	284	72	62	8	3.73
Attractiveness of the environment	200	280	153	48	11	3.51

Table 8: KMO and Bartlett's Test for Motivating Factors that Influenced the Decision to Visit the Religious Tourism Spot

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.577
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Chi-Square	201.583
	Degrees of freedom	153
	Significance	0.000

Source: Computed Data

High value of Kaiser – Meyer – Olkin (KMO) test of sample adequacy (0.577) indicates the correlation between the pairs of variables explained by other variables and thus factor analysis is considered to be appropriate in this model.

The Bartlett's test of sphericity chi-square indicates the population correlation matrix. It is an intensity matrix. The test of statistics for sphericity is based on X^2 test, which is significant. The value is 201.583.

Findings of the KMO and Bartlett's test reveals that the factor analysis can be rightly employed in this context as evidenced through a higher KMO Measure (0.577) and a significant Bartlett's test result. Hence factor analysis is attempted. Analysis of motivating factors that influenced the decision to visit the religious tourism spot is made through rotated factor matrix which reveals that there are six major motivating factors that influenced the decision to visit the religious tourism spot. The findings of the rotated factor analysis on the motivating factors that influenced the decision to visit the religious tourism spot are presented in Table.

Table 9

Rotated Factor Matrix for motivating factors that influenced the decision to visit the religious tourism spot

Sl. No	Factors	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	h^2
1.	VAR00010	.860	.136	.057	.156	.041	.018	.565
2.	VAR00009	.704	.385	.077	.100	.109	.145	.584
3.	VAR00011	.686	.085	.134	.065	.131	.072	.523
4.	VAR00013	.557	.217	.101	.238	.074	.051	.936
5.	VAR00008	.529	.084	.072	.013	.261	.130	.946
6.	VAR00017	.084	.956	.036	.136	.039	.051	.652
7.	VAR00014	.155	.884	.015	.086	.095	.041	.692
8.	VAR00007	.044	.049	.808	.103	.324	.165	.788
9.	VAR00016	.228	.009	.786	.095	.006	.276	.523
10.	VAR00005	.145	.375	.051	.841	.097	.233	.527
11.	VAR00006	.069	.126	.013	.710	.114	.164	.593
12.	VAR00015	.046	.026	.104	.263	.895	.252	.595
13.	VAR00012	.225	.105	.075	.101	.817	.072	.755
14.	VAR00001	.058	.026	.192	.120	.626	.216	.800
15.	VAR00003	.092	.017	.139	.023	.115	.744	.751
16.	VAR00018	.111	.042	.291	.149	.237	.554	.485

17.	VAR00004	.145	.212	.249	.121	.097	.539	.345
18.	VAR00002	.086	.015	.087	.075	.093	0.521	0.298

Extraction Method : Principal Component Analysis
 Rotation Method : Varimax with Kaiser Normalization
 Source : Primary Data

The above table exhibits the rotated factor loading for the eighteen statements (variables) of motivating factors that influenced the decision to visit the religious tourism spot. It is clear from table that all the eighteen statements have been extracted into six factors.

Table 10

Motivating factors that influenced the decision to visit the religious tourism spot – Factor Wise Analysis

Sl. No	Factors	Eigen Value	Percentage of Variance	Cumulative Percentage of Variance
1.		2.491	12.818	12.818
2.		1.676	15.101	27.920
3.		1.168	13.001	40.921
4.		0.929	10.925	51.846
5.		0.775	7.588	59.434
6.		0.694	7.967	67.400

Source: Computed Data

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