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Factors Affecting Accessible Tourism – A Case on Pilgrimage Destinations in Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract

Accessible tourism enables persons with limited abilities access and allows them to function independently with equity and dignity while experiencing tourism products, services, and events. However, every destination does not follow accessible tourism more so in the context of developing countries. Pilgrimage tourism is the most popular form of tourism involving mass travel in India. In the absence of proper services and facilities, tourists with limited abilities face numerous challenges. The current research is an attempt to identify the various behavioural factors of accessible tourism as perceived by pilgrimage tourists, which thereby affect their satisfaction. The Convenience sampling method is applied to collect data from 487 respondents at select (07) pilgrimage destinations of Andhra Pradesh. The study employs Exploratory Factor Analysis, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and ANOVA to examine the variables of the study. The study obtains the accommodation, means of transport, organization of travel and travel time preparation as the key behavioural factors of accessible tourism having a significant effect on pilgrimage tourism satisfaction. The study also suggests guidelines for promoting accessible

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tourism, promoting a sense of equity among inaccessible tourists and increasing the tourist flow and diversifying the tourist base.

Keywords: Accessible Tourism, Behavioural factors, Persons with limited abilities, Accessible tourism satisfaction, Pilgrimage Destinations.

Introduction

Accessible tourism denotes the special steps taken by tourism stakeholders to assist persons with limited abilities to enjoy tourist destinations and activities. Universal accessibility encourages tourism for everybody regardless of abilities or disabilities. Universal design encompasses making tourism accessible to persons with disabilities, pregnant women, women with babies in prams, senior citizens, and children. Therefore, providing universal accessibility in the tourism sector can ensure the protection of a very fundamental human right on the one hand, while creating greater business opportunities on the other.

According to the World Health Organization's Report of 2022, it is estimated that 1.3 billion people have been suffering from significant disabilities. In other words, among the world population, one in every six members is experiencing significant disability. In the national context around 16 percent of the population has been experiencing a disability. Specific to the study area of Andhra Pradesh around 5.8 per cent of the total population are considered to be people with special needs. Hence, it is required to understand the appropriate accessible tourism development strategies in the state of Andhra Pradesh.

To respect the dignity and increase the travel intensity of this large group of people in every society, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) directs all its member countries to implement accessible tourism. Tourism, as the world's largest industry, cannot be indifferent to the needs of this segment of population. The UNWTO mandates the promotion of responsible, sustainable, and universally accessible tourism to ensure that tourism products and services are available to all human beings equally.

The state of Andhra Pradesh is a hub for various renowned pilgrimage destinations such as Arasavalli, Srikurmam, Simhachalam, Annavaram, Vadapalli, Dwaraka Tirumala, Indrakhiladri (Vijayawada), Amaravathi, Srisailam, Kanipakam, Ahobhilam, Mahanandhi, Tirupati, Kanipakam, etc. Every year lakhs of people flock to such destinations for pilgrimage. However, the absence of disable friendly civic amenities and services mar the pilgrimage experience of this section of tourists. Thus, whether the spirit of pilgrimage dominates the otherwise discomfort experienced by differently-abled tourists is a matter of academic curiosity and a subject of research.

The present study explores the various behavioral factors of accessible tourism and assesses their impact on the satisfaction of pilgrimage tourists. For the study, top pilgrimage tourist destinations are selected such as; Simhachalam, Annavaram, Dwaraka Tirumala, Indhrakhiladhri (Vijayawada), Srisailam, and Tirupati. The study considered accommodation, means of transport, organization of travel, and travel time preparation as independent variables and tourism satisfaction as the dependent variable. The current study aimed to explore the factors of the pilgrimage tourism experience of persons with limited abilities.

Literature Review

In order to understand the concept and parameters of accessible tourism it is imperative to analyse the available literature. With the growing awareness about the needs of people with limited ability, or the physically challenged, numerous studies highlight the issues of accessible tourism in diverse ways and contexts. However, what constitutes the travel experience of differently abled tourists is a subject, largely ignored by the previous researchers. Further "to what extent un/availability of such facilities or services contributes to the pilgrimage tourism experience" is a matter of paramount importance to extend the debate of "whether the spirit of pilgrimage dominates the otherwise discomfort experienced by differently-abled tourists".

Past studies contribute to the current research in developing the instrument with the social, economic, and ethical aspects associated

with required inclusive travel environments, such select studies have been presented in the following section.

Cameron, Darcy and Foggin (2003) in Barrier-Free Tourism for Persons with Disabilities in the Asia and Pacific Region, studied in detail the problems and issues of accessible tourism and the current policies and measures that are in place to improve the same. The study reveals that the sources of accessible-needs tourists are either the countries having a disabled majority population or the countries in the Asia-Pacific region. The study also reported that no other country in Asia and the Pacific region has researched accessible tourism except Australia, where two studies were conducted. But the importance of tourism in these countries has increased year by year in terms of world tourist arrivals and foreign exchange earnings. There is no gender discrimination in accessible tourism in these countries. Among these countries, Australia and New-Zealand have more disability populations with a well-established accessible tourism market.

Porto Natalia et al., (2019)- The goal of this paper was to make an exploratory, nationally comparable tourist accessibility measure (TAM). The paper identified that accessibility is a key factor in a destination's competitiveness and a necessary condition for all people with access to be able to enjoy it.

Jensen (2011) observed that people aged 55 and 65 plus assessed their social connection with family and friends significantly lower than those in younger age groups. It is common for elderly travellers to visit holy sites, while younger travellers typically see no need to do so.

Kołodziejczak (2019) in his study of the article "Information as a Factor in the Development of Accessible Tourism for People with Disabilities" explores that visibility, reliability and updated news are the required elements of tourist information. The study suggested that the focus of accessible tourism should be changed from catering to different types of disabilities to various social needs and information systems. The Tourism websites should contain detailed information regarding destinations, restaurants, accommodations, transportation, and recreation facilities provided to disabled tourists.

Zajadacz, A. (2015) The goal of this work is to share the results of a critical analysis of current disability models and how they can be used in real life. It also tries to answer the question, "Which model of disability (MD) will lay the best foundation for future efforts to make tourism more accessible?" The people doing the research started by doing a critical review of how the MDs linked to PwD were described in the literature, in some publications, and in the opinions of experts. Because there are so many different kinds of disabilities, it's not easy to come up with a way to make tourism more available for everyone. The results of the study (both medical and social) showed that there needs to be a synthesis of paradigms at the core of how specific models are thought of, even those that are usually seen as contradictory.

Raissova (2017) in her doctoral dissertation, critically examines tourism, leisure, and disability tourism. Services capes' is a term that denotes the service surroundings of differently-abled people. The researcher personally interviewed ten blind tourists to collect data regarding their travel experiences, travel barriers and cross-cultural differences, service expectations, behaviour and decision-making process. The study found that the sound of flatware and their sense of smell helped them to find out eateries. Noise, crowdedness, faulty acoustics and lack of contrast colour were some of the barriers identified.

Hua, Ibrahim, and Chiu (2013) observed that there are still a limited number of hotels that offer accessible rooms for people with disabilities that include broad doorways, low-level switches, hand dryers, towel racks and mattresses, chair lifts, and other equipment.

Michopoulou and Buhalis (2013) identified barriers to accessible tourism more recently, including infrastructural facilities at accommodation contrast for tourists who are physically challenged;

Randle and Dolnicar (2019) in their article studied enabling People with Impairments to use Airbnb to analyse the major accommodation barriers of accessible tourism. The study analysed the guest posts and host posts on the Airbnb community. The social model of disability is suggested by the study as a way to overcome the obstacles preventing disabled people from having full access to all opportunities. The study concludes that sufficient numbers of

peer-to-peer accommodation centres are available to the differently abled groups, but this information does not reach the groups at the proper time.

According to Darcy and Pegg, rooms at the accommodation come with fewer facilities and less accessibility that are of a lower calibre (2011). Darcy (2010), in his article studied disability, Accessible Tourism and Accommodation Information Preferences. The paper investigated the fitness of accessible rooms and the availability of innovative accessible accommodation information formats. The variables considered for the study were divided into demographic profile, impairment-specific profile, accommodation, attributes, accommodation information preferences and travel patterns. The statistical techniques used for the study were the chi-square test, t-test and ANOVAs. The study found that accommodation information is the most influential factor in the travel decisions of the disabled.

Eichhorn and Buhalis (2010) A Major Goal for the Tourism Industry discuss a variety of obstacles to accessible travel under the three headings of physical access restrictions, psychological barriers, and informational gaps. Transportation issues and a dearth of accessible lodging and attractions are examples of physical access restrictions. Attitudinal barriers refer to the sympathetic attitude of the society towards active participation of the disabled. The lack of information here means the absence of dependable information regarding disabled tourism. The authors suggested that setting a universal design in motion in the tourism industry would be the best solution for eradicating the three aforementioned constraints.

Neumann (2006) in his article, conducted oral and written surveys among disabled tourists and interviews with the tourism service providers in 5 different destinations in Germany. He observed that the travel intensity of the older and disabled groups will increase with the provision of accessible facilities. Accessibility should be comfortable for the entire population as the numbers of older and disabled people increase year by year. The rate of growth in the numbers of elderly and differently-abled people indicates that this market segment is growing rapidly. Therefore, the study suggested considering it as a separate target group. It was concluded that

accessible tourism is economically significant and socially comfortable.

Cavinato and Cuckovich (1992)- In this study, the transportation and tourist-needs and opportunities of Americans with disabilities were investigated. The variables used for the study were classified into three: marketing variables, traveller variables, and affective associations. The study proposes that tour agencies and public agencies should take a first-hand effort to propagate accessible tourism information. The authors also state that the non-availability of medical facilities for the disabled while travelling is a major issue in the USA. The study concluded that the total size of the prospective market for the alternatively able is significant and the stakeholders should ensure opportunities for the travellers as well as the service providers.

Dimou and Velissariou (2016) in a conference paper analyse the level of satisfaction of tourists with disabilities after visiting the Island of Crete in Greece. The study reveals that tourists had low levels of satisfaction with the transport and infrastructural facilities. It also reveals that tourists were highly satisfied with the service of employees everywhere. The study concluded that if Crete improves its infrastructural facilities with the collaboration of the state, local authorities and public and private sectors, it will attract more differently-abled tourists in future.

According to Buhalis and Michopoulou (2011), service providers at many tourism destinations do not offer accessible tourist facilities as stated by law, which leads to tourist dissatisfaction.

Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management, (2010), (a report submitted to the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India) conducted a study named ―Problems and Prospects of Accessible Tourism in India. The study found out that word of mouth is considered the major source of information for the domestic tourist and as far as a foreign tourist is concerned, while the internet remains the major source of information. Regarding the frequency of travel, both categories of accessible tourists are less frequent. The average duration of their stay falls between 6 and 9 days. They usually travel in groups that consist of a minimum of 4 members. A majority of them carry mobility equipment. Domestic accessible

tourists mostly use road transport followed by rail. Conversely, foreign tourists use the road after air transport. The study suggests that there should be access-enabled websites at all travel and tourism establishments. Awareness about these facilities should be initially provided to the tourism facilitators. The landmarks and signs should be readable to visually challenged tourists.

The review of literature available on the accessible tourism practices concerning the Indian context is very nascent nevertheless, there is plenty of research studies on the general tourism aspects. Even the available research works are unable to identify the appropriate variables which may evoke accessible tourism intentions. We, therefore, view this as one of the study gaps to investigate the useful behavioural elements that may affect Indian tourism. Furthermore, the available studies are not able to manifest a linkage between the behavioural factors and their impact on tourism satisfaction. However, concerning accessible tourism the determination of tourism satisfaction has been a neglected area for the researchers. The current study thus considers the following objective to address the research gap and contribute to the body of knowledge.

Research objectives:

1. To explore the various behavioural factors of accessible pilgrimage tourism for the senior citizens and differently-abled persons for tourism.
2. To assess the impact of the behavioural factors on the satisfaction of pilgrimage tourists.

Research hypothesis:

$H1_0$: There is no influence of behavioural factors of persons with limited abilities on accessible pilgrimage tourism.
H1a: Accommodation significantly influences accessible pilgrimage tourism.
H1b: Means of transport significantly influences accessible pilgrimage tourism.
H1c: Organization of travel significantly influences accessible pilgrimage tourism.
H1d: Trave time preparation significantly influences accessible pilgrimage tourism.

$H2_0$: There is a significance of behavioural factors of accessible tourism on tourists' satisfaction.
$H2_1$: There is no significance of behavioural factors of accessible tourism on pilgrimage tourism satisfaction.

Research methodology:

All of the samples needed for this study were collected using a convenience sampling technique. The data provided through samples were collected from 6 pilgrimage destinations of Andhra Pradesh such as Simhachalam, Annavaram, Dwaraka Tirumala, Indrakhiladhri (Vijayawada), Srisailam and Tirupathi. The pilgrimage destinations were chosen because they are popular destinations for pilgrims interested in both secular and religious tourism. More than 500 questionnaires administered out of which 487 have been selected as samples by the researcher from those chosen destinations. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to examine the data with the assistance of SPSS and AMOS version 26. A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used to evaluate each questionnaire item.

Descriptive statistics, factor analysis, and a reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha were all run on the data in SPSS version 26. In addition, a SEM model was implemented in AMOS to examine how various behavioral factors impacting the senior citizens and physically challenged persons for the tourism.

The study began with an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to discover the underlying structure of the measurement data, and then moved on to Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) used to finally put the research hypothesis to the test with ANOVA.

Data analysis and results:

Measures	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	297	61.0
	Female	190	39.0

Measures	**Items**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Age	Below 60 Years	206	42.3
	above 60 Years	281	57.7
Kind of Disability	Mobility	160	32.9
	Impaired Visibility	35	7.3
	Impaired Hearing	05	1
	Age based Disability	281	57.7
	Others	06	1.1
Marital Status	Married	473	97.1
	Unmarried	14	2.9
Education	Below SSC	164	33.7
	SSC	167	34.3
	Intermediate/Diploma	40	8.2
	Graduation	105	21.6
	Post Graduation	11	2.3

Measures	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Occupation	Government Employee	26	5.3
	Private Employee	15	3.1
	Business/Self Employment	71	14.6
	Farmer	114	23.4
	Retired Employee	57	11.7
	Home Maker	133	27.3
	Others	71	14.6
Pilgrimage Destination	Simhachalam	81	16.6
	Annavaram	80	16.4
	Dwaraka Tirumala	79	16.2
	Vijayawada	82	16.8
	Srisailam	87	17.9
	Tirupati	78	16.0

Table 1: Demographic details of tourists

Source: Primary Survey

In the above table 61% of the respondents are male in comparison with female respondents. 57.7% of the respondents are above the 60 years of age. Most of the respondents faced challenges due to their age followed by mobility problems. Respondents who visit pilgrimage destinations belongs to different occupations like self-employed, retired, farmers and home makers. Almost equal

distribution of respondents are there for all the six pilgrimage distributions.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA):

The study has used EFA to identify various factors of behavior aspects of assessable tourism from senior citizens and physically challenged tourists. EFA was conducted using Principal component analysis with Promax rotation. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) value helpful for supporting the adequacy of data. A high value of KMO (0. 854) and small value of significance (<0.05) of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity indicates that factor analysis is useful for our data.

The extraction of factors is based on criteria of factors having Eigen values above and equal to 1 with total variance of the factors above 50%. The study has selected 16 items for defining research variables derived from previous literatures underwent for factor extraction and results in extraction of final **five** factors having Eigen value above 1 and able to explain total variance of 77.78%. The findings of table 3 along with factor loadings of each item also mentioned Cronbach's alpha value. Current research has selected alpha values for measuring internal consistency of the data. Using Cronbach's alpha value above 0.7 threshold value criteria, reliability of the data is confirmed (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994).

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.854
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4562.062
	Df	120
	Sig.	.000

Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Variable	Items	Loadings	Alpha values
Accommodation	I am satisfied with the cleanliness of the accommodation.	.874	0.876
	I feel that there is a sense of community and belonging in the accommodation.	.824	
	I feel that the accommodation is secured and other basic facilities are good	.849	
Means of transport	Adapted safety seat is provided in the journey	.865	0.863
	Electric powered wheel chair is provided in the travelling	.856	
	Availability of pick and drop facility	.830	
Organization of travel	I believe that the organization of travel is good, as we didn't face any inconvenience during the travel	.783	0.860
	I believe that organization of travel is effective in the organization, as I am able to cover all the destinations	.802	
	I prefer to repeat the travel because the organization of travel is good	.752	
	Organization of travel will make my trip convenient	.821	
	I believe that due to the appropriate travel time preparation, everything is coordinated well	.838	0.868

Variable	Items	Loadings	Alpha values
Travel time preparation	I believe that the travel time is prepared to cover all the pilgrimage spots	.809	
	I believe that due to the appropriate travel time preparation, the total tour is successful	.775	
Tourism satisfaction	I am satisfied with the accommodation facility	.791	0.867
	I am satisfied with the travel time preparation	.862	
	The organization of travel is excellent	.815	

Table 3: Factor loadings of variables

Hypothesis testing using Structure Equation Modelling (SEM):

SEM was performed using the maximum likelihood estimation method since it is the most used and preferred estimation method for hypothesis testing (Blunch, 2013).

Results for path analysis and hypothesis testing are reported in Table 4. Standardized path coefficients (regression weights) and their statistical significance for each relationship are shown along with the p-value. By referring to Table 4 and Figure 1, it is concluded that the standardized path coefficient (β) of all the factors influencing tourism satisfaction is positive and significant.

The organization of travel has significant impact on tourism satisfaction with β value = and p= , since p value is less than 0.05, hypothesis H1a is accepted, which signify organization of travel suggestively influencing senior citizen and physically challenged tourists satisfaction towards Andhra Pradesh pilgrim destination.

The impact of accommodation on satisfaction is positive and significant as the regression coefficient is = and p value = which is

less than 0.05. Thus, hypothesis H1b is accepted. Further, the impact of travel time preparation on satisfaction is positive with β value 0.25 and $p<0.05$, thus hypothesis H1c is approved.

Finally, the means of transport have a significant positive impact on tourism satisfaction among the tourists. The standardized coefficient of this path is 0.49 with $p=0.000$, therefore, hypothesis H1d was accepted. The standardized regression weights indicate the strength of impact of independent variables on dependent variables.

For the current study from the four behavior factors, the standardized regression weight is highest for means of transport, revealed that it is most influential factor determine the satisfaction of senior citizens and physically challenged tourists. The other factors are travel time preparation, organization of the travel and accommodation. The coefficient of determination (R^2) value is 0.51, for satisfaction inferred 51% of variation is explained by four behavior factors.

The overall fit statistics of the customer perception structural model, as presented in Table 5, indicated that the hypothesized four-factor model fits the sample data very well. The value of good indicator indices (GFI, CFI, NFI, AGFI) is near 1 or above the recommended criteria. The value of the bad indicator, i.e., RMSEA, is below 0.08; therefore, the SEM model is reasonably consistent with the data.

Causal Variables	**Outcome Variables**	**S.E.**	**C.R.**	**P**	**Path coefficient**	**Determination coefficient (R^2)**
Organization of travel	Tourism Satisfaction	0.076	2.904	.004	.179	0.507
Accommodation	Tourism Satisfaction	0.051	2.714	.007	.152	
Travel time preparation	Tourism Satisfaction	0.064	3.331	.000	.210	

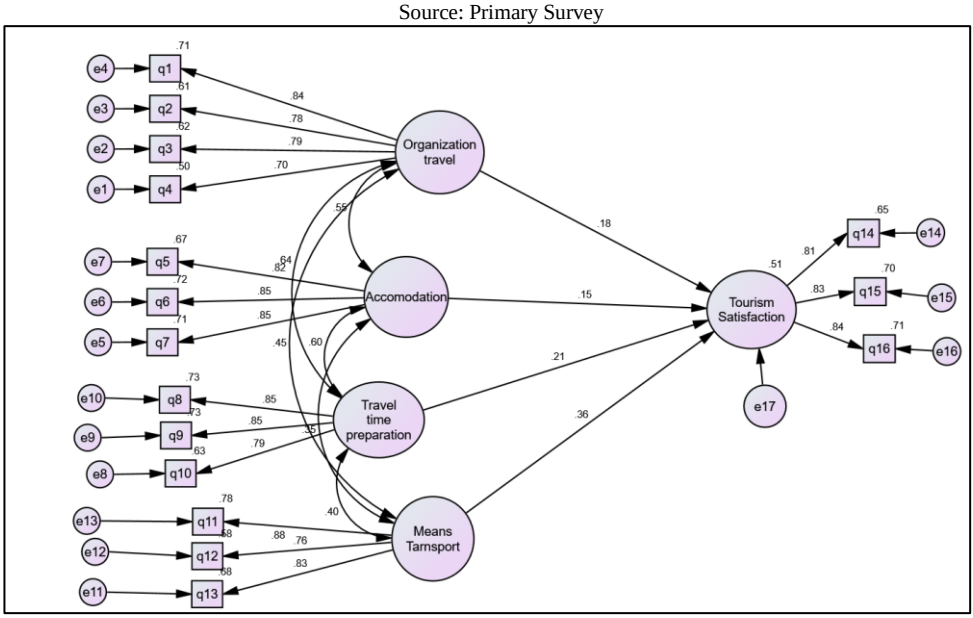
Causal Variables	**Outcome Variables**	**S.E.**	**C.R.**	**P**	**Path coefficient**	**Determination coefficient (R^2)**
Means of transport	Tourism Satisfaction	0.058	7.381	.000	.364	

Table 4: Path coefficients of the Structural model
Note: P refers to the differential probability.

Indices	**Abbreviation**	**Observed values**	**Recommended criteria**	**References**
Chi square	$\chi 2$	270.156	pval>0.05	Hair et al. (2010) Byrne (2010)
Normed chi square	$\chi 2/DF$	2.874 (DF=94)	$1<\chi 2/df<3$	
Goodness-of-fit index	GFI	0.919	>0.90	
Adjusted GFI	AGFI	0.883	>0.80	
Normed fit index	NFI	0.926	>0.90	
Comparative fit index	CFI	0.954	>0.95	
Root mean square error of approximation	RMESA	0.060	<0.05 good fit <0.08 acceptable fit	
Tucker-Lewis index	TLI	0.929	0<TLI<1	

Table 5: Goodness of Fit Statistics in the structure model
Source: The Author.

Figure: 1 Casual relationship model for accessible tourism satisfaction
Source: Primary Survey



Tourist Satisfaction about pilgrimage destinations facilities and services

The study has employed one-way ANOVA for measuring the variation in tourism satisfaction with pilgrim destinations. Six destinations of Andhra-Pradesh namely: Simhachalam, Annavaram, Dwaraka, Tirumala, Indhrakhiladhri (Vijayawada), Srisailam and Tirupati were selected as independent variable and satisfaction of persons with limited abilities as dependent variable.

ANOVA					
Satisfaction					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.745	5	.149	1.456	.203
Within Groups	49.251	481	.102		
Total	49.996	486			

Table 6: Analysis of variance for tourist satisfaction

The findings of ANOVA table reveled that there is no significant difference in satisfaction of senior citizens and pilgrims with limited abilities for six Pilgrimage destination as F=1.456 with p=0.203, since p value is greater than 0.05, there is no sufficient evidence to reject null hypothesis. Therefore, it is concluded that there is no difference in satisfaction of tourist with respect to Pilgrimage destinations.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Simhachalam	81	3.7922	.34614	.03846	3.7156	3.8687
Annavaram	80	3.8021	.33762	.03775	3.7269	3.8772
Dwaraka Tirumala	79	3.7722	.34092	.03836	3.6958	3.8485
Vijayawada	82	3.7764	.25421	.02807	3.7206	3.8323
Srisailam	87	3.7816	.29125	.03123	3.7195	3.8437
Tirupati	78	3.6816	.34313	.03885	3.6043	3.7590
Total	487	3.7683	.32074	.01453	3.7398	3.7969

Table 7: Descriptive

Based on descriptive statistics, mean value of satisfaction is highest for Annavaram (M=3.8021), followed by Simhachalam (M=3.79), Srisailam (M=3.78), Vijayawada (M=3.776) and Dwaraka Tirumala (M=3.77). All the satisfaction mean values are near to agreement level indicating satisfaction of tourists for all the six Pilgrimage destinations.

Factors restricting tour:

Which factor/s influence your Pilgrimage Tours?

Factors	Frequency	Percent
Lack of Accessible Facilities during Pilgrimage Tour	130	26.7
Busy Work Schedule	112	23
High Tour prices/Charges	152	31.2
Lack of Financial Support	93	19.1
Total	487	100

Discussion

India is home to a diverse population, however, religion remains close to every Indian as it continues to shape and influence the lives of people nationwide, providing a framework for spiritual, social, and ethical dimensions of their existence. India's tourism industry relies heavily on pilgrimage and cultural tourism. By examining the factors influencing the behavioral aspects of differently-abled tourists, we gain a deeper understanding of the social, economic, and ethical aspects associated with creating inclusive travel environments and fostering greater societal inclusivity.

This research shows that the differently-abled pilgrimage tourists were of an appropriate age, highly educated, and familiar with the area they visited. Differently-abled Pilgrims have reported feeling dissatisfied across a range of categories related to their impressions of lodgings, including amenities, accessible infrastructure,

promotion towards accessible facilities being offered at pilgrimage destinations, exclusive provisions for pilgrims with limited liabilities, quietness, security, friendliness of personnel, and cleanliness. The main factors which are limiting the pilgrimage tours are high tour packages and lack of accessible facilities during the pilgrimage tour.

The majority of the reputed temples in the state are striving towards the goal of becoming more accessible to visiting tourists with disabilities. However, these initiatives require adequate promotion to reach out to the target audience. Vision problems affect a significant portion of senior citizens; hence the temple boards may allow attendants and guides with such tourists. There is a need for the provision of boarding/parking facilities close to the temple premises for differently-abled tourists or transfer facilities may be kept in place from the designated parking area. There is a need to establish ramps and other accessibility infrastructure throughout the temple premises. There is a requirement for toilets and bathrooms with handrails that make the usage comfortable by the differently-abled tourist. Providing special counters for booking darshan tickets, prasadam, and separate lines for darshan, hair-tonsure and the like may enhance the experience of such tourists.

Such provisions may add to the creation of new employment opportunities. The jobs in providing public utilities, like water, sewer, sidewalks, lighting, parking, public bathrooms, trash control, and landscaping, span a wide range, from the minimum to the professional level. The provisions can be utilized by the residents, tourists, and temple staff in need.

Conclusion

The study is limited to the opinions of pilgrimage tourists with disabilities and includes senior citizens. However, there are several other segments of differently-abled tourists who may require different services and facilities. During the data collection, respondents who expressed their dissatisfaction could not elaborate on them. This may owe to inadequate experience and exposure to disable-friendly infrastructure. Despite the experience of discomfort, many considered the experience an essential part of the pilgrimage experience. So in such cases, the spirit of pilgrimage dominates the otherwise discomfort experienced by differently-abled tourists.

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