



An Interface of Pilgrims, *Pera* Merchants, and Hoteliers at The *Mata Tripureswari Temple*: A Case from Tripura, India

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Abstract

This study explores how the *Mata Tripureswari Shaktipeeth* affects the potential growth of pilgrimage, *pera* merchants, and hoteliers in Udaipur. The study emphasizes the significance of domestic tourist influx, NSDPs, and PCIs in analyzing pilgrimage tourism. The survey of pilgrims reveals motivational factors such as praying for children's better future, seeking mental peace, the goddess's darshan, touring holy places, and fulfilling vows. Promoting pilgrimages helps expand tourism throughout the state. Pilgrims have a special bond with *Matabari Pera*, using it as a bhog (eatable) to the deity. Pilgrims' spending habits significantly influence the economic impact on *pera* merchants and hoteliers, each with its unique character. Pilgrims like day trippers, budget, domestic and foreign pilgrims, and events visit the shrine. Findings confirm the economic significance of pilgrimage for vendors and hoteliers surrounding the shrine. Tripura is poised to enhance circuit tourism by linking three Indian *Shaktipeethas* and four in Bangladesh.

Keywords: *Mata Tripureswari Temple*, Tripura, *Pera* Merchant, Hoteliers, Pilgrimage Tourism.

1. Introduction

Since Hiuen Tsang's visit to India in 627–643 AD (Singh, 2014), pilgrimage tourism has emerged as a niche segment in India's tourism industry for all religious brethren. The Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and Buddhist socioreligious groups observe respective festivals and visit places of religious importance as a mark of reverence, making pilgrimage tourism at the forefront of other segments. The UNWTO (2017) emphasizes the need to enhance tourist loyalty to holy sites and promote lesser-known destinations through effective promotional strategies due to the growing demand for pilgrimage tourism. Pilgrimage tourism, renowned for its value creation

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and positive local economic impact, is becoming increasingly crucial for sustainable development (Romanelli et al., 2021).

The number of domestic tourists visiting Indian pilgrimage sites increase from 677 million in 2021 to 1,433 million in 2022. The number of foreign tourists visiting religious tourism sites in the country has significantly increased from 1.05 million in 2021 to 6.64 million in 2022 (HT, 2023). The pandemic led to a decrease in foreign exchange earnings from pilgrimage tourism, from 21166.1 million INR in 2019 to 13454.3 million INR in 2022. The increase in domestic pilgrims visiting holy places in 2021, 2022, and 2023 is anticipated to significantly boost the total revenue generated from this segment.

Pilgrimage tourism is a growing segment of contemporary tourism that focuses on the spiritual journey of devotees (Polus et al., 2022). Spiritual tourism, a departure from religious tourism, is gaining popularity among self-conscious pilgrims (Mukherjee et al., 2020) seeking a break from the hustle and bustle of daily life. Studies highlight not only the economic impact of religious tourism on locals (Terzidou et al., 2008) and the desire for entrepreneurship to earn their livelihoods (Ojo and Busayo, 2017).

This study investigates the motivations of devotees visiting *Mata Tripureswari Temple*, one of the 51 *Shaktipeethas* (the seat of Shakti or Energy), a noteworthy Hindu shrine, and its economic significance for locals through a field survey of pilgrims. The preliminary examination indicates that religious tourism, despite the temple's sacred value among locals and pilgrims, significantly benefits the people of Udaipur. Prasad, a gift of grace, is offered to *Goddess Tripureswari* in the form of milk-based sweet *Pera*, a popular brand among Hindu people worldwide and a significant source of income for locales. Again, the shrine offers revenue-generating opportunities for restaurants, hoteliers, and *puja-offering* businesses in the vicinity. A field survey of locals provides a chance to thoroughly document these aspects and present a compelling argument. This situation prompted us to perform the present study.

The objectives of the study are i) to examine the motivational factors of pilgrims through field observation of devotees; ii) to gather the opinions of *pera* merchants and hoteliers surrounding *Mata Tripureswari Temple*; and iii) to provide a general overview of the issues that have arisen.

The remaining section of the study focuses on four aspects to gain a deeper understanding of the aforementioned situations. Section II of the study heavily relies on reviewing the literature and formulating hypotheses for the research. Section III outlines the methodology used for the study. Section IV presents a detailed account of *Shaktipeethas* across the South Asian Region. Section V provides a comprehensive report on the survey results of

pilgrims, locals, and hoteliers based on the hypotheses used. The last part (Section VI) highlights the discussion and comments on the emerging issues.

2. Review of the Literature

Traditional festivities attract sizeable pilgrims due to their ethnographic significance, with trip schedules and services varying based on the duration of special celebrations (Conrad 2004, as cited in Balomenou et al., 2015). In addition to religious tourism contributing to gross domestic product (GDP) and exports (Vijayanand, 2012), pilgrimage tourism can alter land use patterns, demographic composition, and cultural transformation in the host population, aiming to extend visitors' duration of stay (Ashfaq and Parveen, 2014). Religious entrepreneurs possess expertise in reverent protocols, rituals, and execution, enabling them to innovate and expand networks (Shinde, 2010) to suit their needs. Religious guides play a crucial role in enhancing the spiritual experience of visitors (Yasuda, 2020), which has emerged as a key element in religious tours.

Pilgrimage tourism, in addition to its religious significance, promotes international understanding, supports local handicrafts and cultural activities, and significantly contributes to a country's economy through foreign exchange earnings, income generation, and job creation (Getnet, 2020). Holy sites often feature religiously oriented businesses and facilities, such as souvenir shops, travel agencies, and hotels, providing employment opportunities for the host community (Evans, 1998). Religious tourism enhances the local economy, employment, health, welfare, transportation infrastructure, and social and cultural development, attracting entrepreneurs and contributing to the overall development of the destination (Ojo and Busayo, 2017). Based on these findings, the following hypotheses are drawn.

H₁: The development of pilgrimage centres does not help promote tourism across destination areas.

The literature extensively highlights the spiritual, cultural, and sacred experiences of pilgrims in a pious setting (Sharpley and Sundaram, 2005; Vidic, 2007; Egresi et al., 2012). Kim et al. (2019) stressed that spiritual connectivity refers to the inner resolve of pilgrims, with secular motives often distinguishing between religious (push) and nonreligious (pull) factors driving their visits to holy destinations. Pilgrimage tourism, despite its emotional connection and sacred experiences (Taheri, 2016), often attracts large devotees due to its connection to past travel through diverse landscapes (Boyd, 2018). Tsironis et al. (2021) reported that the faith and demographic setting of pilgrims significantly impact their past and future religious tours.

People embark on sacred journeys to various holy places, seeking truth, enlightenment, or authentic experiences related to these places (Bo_zic et al.,

2016). Garg et al. (2021) found that features such as sacredness, forgiveness, healing, and love and respect for God are the top motivators of intentions. Religious journeys are often influenced by various motives, including nature appreciation, educational or cultural fulfilment, relaxation, self-care, and spending time with nature (Terzidou et al., 2018). The religious motivation factors identified by Senthilkumaran et al. (2021) include religious belief, service quality, history, architecture, and cultural aspects of religious sites. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H₂: Pilgrims are not driven by self-motivating factors when visiting a sacred place.

Local communities significantly influence the advancement of pilgrimage centres, with the host community's economic benefits being a top priority over other factors (Kaur, 2020). Annual religious festivals unite communities, preserve customs and traditions, and promote the conservation of pilgrimage sites, fostering socio-cultural harmony (Bindu and Aiswarya, 2022).

In extending people's support for tourist development, studies have revealed a correlation between the benefit accrued to locals and the resulting rise in trust toward destination managers and the authorities surrounding religious sites (Nunkoo and Smith, 2013; da Silva and Junior, 2016). Studies support the importance of locals providing relief to elderly pilgrims visiting religious sites through accessible tourism, as highlighted by Chang et al. (2012). Based on these findings, the following hypotheses have been drawn.

H₃: Pilgrims visiting the shrine have special bonds with Matabari Pera.

H₄: Local communities have not benefited from the growth of the pilgrimage centre.

The present study is the first to carry out field observations of pilgrims, hoteliers, and *pera* vendors surrounding the *Mata Tripureswari Temple* at Udaipur, Tripura, and a present case for them.

3. Methodology and Database

This study employs a field survey to evaluate the economic significance of pilgrims visiting *Mata Tripureswari Temple* in Tripura. The data collection process involves the preparation of structured schedules for a predetermined sample size of respondents. The data collection process is carried out by employing trained enumerators. Pilgrims visiting holy sites are randomly selected, regardless of their nationality, and informants find it easy to allocate their time. Between December 2023 and January 2024, approximately 96,000 pilgrims visited the shrine, resulting in 264 field surveys, accounting for 0.28 of the total. Hoteliers and *pera* vendors formed the core supply side and were also considered through field visits. The study employs a field survey method for data collection, but it acknowledges its limitations.

Secondary information was sourced from internet sources and government reports on the Department of Tourism, the Government of Tripura, the Ministry of Tourism, the Government of India, and related bodies to supplement the primary data. The data were analyzed using fundamental statistical tools such as ANOVA and the X^2 test as per the specific requirements.

3.1. Account of *Shaktipeethas* in South Asia

The detailed accounts of all Shakti Peethas are reproduced below (Singh, 2012):

Table 1: Location of Shakti Peeths and Incarnation of Goddess

Sl. no.	Pilgrimage center	Fall of Body organs	Incarnation of Goddess	Location	Country
01	Hingalaj	Brain	Bhairavi	Baluchistan	Pakistan
02	Amarnath	Throat	Mahamaya	Jammu & Kashmir	India
03	Shriparvat	Right temple	Shri Sundari	Ladakh	India
04	Kamakhya	Vagina	Kamaksha	Assam	India
05	Baurbhaga	Left thigh	Jayanti	Meghalaya	India
06	Udaipur	Right leg	Tripurasundari	Tripura	India
07	Chattal	Right arm	Bhavani	Chittagong	Bangladesh
08	Sugandha	Nose	Sunanda	Barisal	Bangladesh
09	Puri	Naval	Vimala	Orissa	India
10	Ratnavali	Right shoulder	Kumari	Chennai	India
11	Kanchi	Skeleton	Devagarbha	Chennai	India
12	Nellore	Anklet	Indrakski	Nellore	Srilanka
13	Kanyakumari	Back	Shravani	Tamilnadu	India
14	Suchindram	Upper teeth	Narayani	Tamilnadu	India
15	Karvira	Third eye	Mahishamardini	Kolhapur	India
16	Janasthana	Chin	Bhramari	Nasik	India
17	Prabhasa	Stomach	Chandrabhaga	Ambaji	India
18	Manivedika	Both wrist	Gayatri	Pushkar	India
19	Virata	Right toes	Ambika	Jaipur	India
20	Jalandhara	Left breast	Tripuramalini	Jalandhar	India
21	Jawalamukhi	Tongue	Siddhida	Kangra	India
22	Manasha	Right palm	Dakshayani	Manasaravara lake	Tibet, China
23	Gandaki	Right cheek	Gandaki	Muktinatha	Nepal
24	Pashupatinatha	Both knees	Mahamaya	Kathmandu	Nepal
25	Uchchaitha	Left shoulder	Uma	Janakpur	Nepal
26	Trisota	Left leg	Bhramari	Jalpaiguri	India
27	Karatoya	Left soul	Aparna	Bhavanipur	Bangladesh
28	Yoshora	Left palm	Yoshosheshwari	Jessore town	Bangladesh
29	Kalamadhava	Left nipple	Kali	Chandigarh	India
30	Nalhatti	Intestine	Kalika	Naihati, WB	India
31	Kalipitha	Other toes	Kali	Kolkata, WB	India

Sl. no.	Pilgrimage center	Fall of Body organs	Incarnation of Goddess	Location	Country
32	Batanagar	Crown (tiara)	Vimala	24 paraganas, WB	India
33	Vibhasha	Left ankle	Bhimarupa	Tumluk, WB	India
34	Panchasagara	Lower teeth	Virahi	Karwar	India
35	Kotitirtha	Left temple	Vishveshi	Godavari	India
36	Shrishailam	Neck	Mahalakshmi	Mallikarjuna temple	India
37	Bhairava-parbata	Upper lip	Avanti	Ujjain	India
38	Ujjayini	Elbow	Mangalya-chandika	Ujjain city	India
39	Vrindabana	Hair	Uma	Vrindabana	India
40	Kurukshetra	Right ankle	Savitri	Kurukshetra city	India
41	Patna	Right thigh	Sarvanandakari	Patna	India
42	Deoghar	Heart	Jai Durga	Deoghar	India
43	Nandipur	Necklace	Nandini	Bolpur, WB	India
44	Vaktresvara	Mind	Mahishamardini	Naihati, WB	India
45	Bahula	Left hand	Bahula	Brahmagram, WB	India
46	Attahasa	Lower lip	Phullara	Labpur, WB	India
47	Yugadya	Big toe	Bhutadhatri	Chhiragram, WB	India
48	Sona	Left nipple	Sonakshi	Sasaram town	India
49	Ramagiri	Right breast	Shivani	Chitrakut	India
50	Prayaga	Fingers	Lalita	Allahabad	India
51	Varanasi	Earring eyes	Vishalaxmi	Varanasi city	India

Source: Singh, 2012, p14-15.

Shaktipeethas of Goddess, derived from the *Puranas* (Hindu religious texts) (Sharma and Dixit, 2014), is a 'seat' representing the holy site of the deity revered by Hindus worldwide. The 51 *Shaktipeethas*, each representing the body parts of the goddess Sati, are a significant aspect of Hindu theology. Each *Shaktipeetha* is associated with a distinct incarnation of Goddess Durga, the wife of Lord Shiva. Mahajan (2024) has rightly observed that this journey is not a sacred one but a spiritual exploration of cultural legacy and unwavering faith in a consecrated goddess for centuries. *Shaktipeethas* attract large pilgrims year-round, serving as cultural centres for people from all walks of life and promoting their conservation (Bhandari et al., 2018). Indian temple architecture, known for its symmetrical arrangements and harmonious proportions, has attracted the interest of architects and artists of global repute for minute details (Goyal, 2023). Of the 51 *Shaktipeethas*, 41 are located in India, four are in Bangladesh, three are in Nepal, and one each is in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Tibet (China). Of the 51 *Shaktipeethas*, nine are located in the Indian state of West Bengal, three in North East India, and the highest concentration is in the South Asian Region (SAR).

The highlighted portion (Table 1) suggests that a proposed *Shaktipeetha* Circuit spanning India's North Eastern States, Assam, Meghalaya, and Tripura and four Hindu pilgrimage centres in neighbouring Bangladesh

via Tripura are offering. The proposed cross-country tourism prospect aims to connect seven pilgrimage centres, benefiting both stakeholders and preserving the aesthetic value of the pilgrimage centres. The Tripura Tourism Policy 2020–25 effectively addresses the necessity for such a possibility.

4. Results

4.1. Tourist Influx, NSDP and PCI

Table 2 displays the contribution of domestic tourism arrivals (DTAs) to Tripura's net state domestic product (NSDP) and per capita income (PCI) from 2011 to 2012. Over nine years, all three variables experienced incremental growth, with the NSDP (12.11%) and PCI (11.51%) experiencing higher compound annual growth rates (CAGR) than DTAs (2.03%). The variables had a Cronbach's alpha reliability score of 0.918.

Table 2: Contribution of DTAs, NSDP and PCI of Tripura

Year	Domestic Tourist Arrivals in Tripura (nos)	NSDP at the current price (INR Crore) @	Per Capita Income (PCI) (Tripura) (INR) @
	(A)	(B)	©
2011-12	359731	17419.05	47155
2012-13	358625	19631.14	52574
2013-14	359995	23328.98	61815
2014-15	361581	26643.35	69857
2015-16	363828	32476.35	84267
2016-17	380578	35667.59	91596
2017-18	403394	39504.63	100444
2018-19	416860	44901.06	113016
2019-20	431142	48728.17	125674
Cronbach alpha reliability			0.918

Source: Department of Industries and Commerce, Govt. of Tripura (INR crore).
@ Economic Review of Tripura 2022-23, 2017-18, 2013-14.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix

		A	B	C
A	Pearson's r	—		
	df	—		
	p-value	—		
B	Pearson's r	0.931	—	
	df	7	—	
	p-value	<.001	—	
C	Pearson's r	0.932	0.999	—
	df	7	7	—
	p-value	<.001	<.001	—

The correlation matrix indicates a strong correlation between the PCI and NSDP (0.999) and between the PCI and domestic tourism influx (0.932), with p-values of 0.001 each. This strong correlation suggests that an increase

in domestic tourists and the NSDP leads to greater growth in the PCI of Tripura.

Table 4: Contribution of foreign tourism to net state domestic product (NSDP)

Year	Foreign Tourist Arrivals in Tripura (nos)	NSDP at the current price (INR Crore) @	Per Capita Income (PCI) (Tripura) (INR) @
2011-12	6550	17419.05	47155
2012-13	7817	19631.14	52574
2013-14	15376	23328.98	61815
2014-15	29086	26643.35	69857
2015-16	35619	32476.35	84267
2016-17	39229	35667.59	91596
2017-18	80094	39504.63	100444
2018-19	112955	44901.06	113016
2019-20	154993	48728.17	125674
Cronbach alpha reliability			0.826

Source: Department of Industries and Commerce, Greece. of Tripura (INR crore).
@ Economic Review of Tripura 2021-22, 2017-18, 2013-14.

Since 2011–12, foreign tourist arrivals have grown 42.13-fold, with the NSDP (12.11%) and PCI (11.51%) experiencing incremental growth, marking a significant shift in the tourism sector. The Cronbach's alpha reliability for the pre-pandemic level was 0.826.

Table 5: Correlation Matrix: Pre-pandemic

		A	B	C
A	Pearson's r	–		
	df	–		
	p-value	–		
B	Pearson's r	0.939	–	
	df	7	–	
	p-value	<.001	–	
C	Pearson's r	0.944	0.999	–
	df	7	7	–

The correlation matrix of FTAs, NSDPs, and the PCI showed the same trend before the pandemic, which was almost identical to that of domestic tourist arrivals. Foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) have a stronger correlation with the PCI than do domestic tourist arrivals.

The Department of Tourism in Tripura reports that 70% of DTAs in Agartala often visit the *Mata Tripureswari Temple* in Udaipur. The ratio for FTAs is reduced to 15% of the total. This is quite understandable because FTAs from various faiths are generally hesitant to visit a Hindu pilgrimage centre. The state experienced a surge in DTAs, resulting in a greater number

of pilgrims visiting Matabari. However, the state failed to attract a significant number of FTAs from neighbouring countries with beliefs similar to those of *Shaktipeeth*.

4.2. Survey of Pilgrims

Between December 2023 and January 2024, approximately 96,000 pilgrims visited the *Shaktipeeth*, resulting in 264 field surveys, accounting for 0.28% of the total. The descriptive statistics of the pilgrims visiting the *Mata Tripureswari Temple* are given below:

Table 6 shows that 52% of the pilgrims were male, 43% were female, and 5% were transgender. The survey revealed that 5% of men and 3% of women were aged 5–20 years. The 21–30 age groups comprise 17% males, 22% females, and 46% common genders. A total of 36% of men, 35% of women, and 46% of transgender individuals were aged 31–50 years. Among the 51+ age groups, transgender and men represented (42%) each, followed by women (40%). The majority of female respondents (61%) were graduates, followed by 48% males and 15% transgender. Male informants had the most postgraduate degrees (31%), followed by females (20%) and common genders (15%). The survey revealed that 31% of the common genders possess 12th-standard qualifications, while 17% of men and 15% of women have 12th-level qualifications. Transgender hold 39% of the 10th standard qualifications, followed by 5% of males and 4% of females. The Cronbach's alpha reliability for the descriptive statistics is 0.78579.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics of the Pilgrims Observed

Parameters	Male (%)	Females (%)	Others (%)	Total
Gender	137 (52)	114 (43)	13 (5)	264
Age: 5-20	7 (5)	3(3)	0	10
21-30	23 (17)	25 (22)	6 (46)	54
31-50	49 (36)	40 (35)	6 (46)	95
51+	58 (42)	46 (40)	1 (8)	105
Educational qualifications: 10th std	7 (5)	5 (4)	5 (39)	17
12th std	23 (17)	17 (15)	4 (31)	44
Graduates	65 (48)	69 (61)	2 (15)	136
Post Graduate	42 (31)	23 (20)	2 (15)	67
Cronbach alpha reliability score				0.78579

Source: Compiled during field observation

Table 7: Tourism parameters across the destination area

Parameters	Attributes	Male	Female	Transgender	Total
Nature of tour party (persons)	1-4	51	32	8	91
	5-7	45	56	4	105
	7+	41	26	1	68

Parameters	Attributes	Male	Female	Transgender	Total
Occupation (no of informants)	Public sector	65	48	1	114
	Private sector	43	39	1	83
	Self-employed	29	27	11	67
Did they visit adjoining locations? (no of informants)	Yes	97	88	9	194
	No	40	26	4	70
Name the place (no of informants)	Mangal Chandi Temple	97	88	13	198
	Kamalasagar	86	76	8	170
	Kasba Kali Bari	89	79	7	175
	Jaggannath Temple	97	88	13	198
	Chaturdas Devta Temple	97	88	13	198
	Neer Mahal	87	81	9	177
	Ujjayanta Palace	97	88	13	198
	Chhabimura	69	63	10	142
	Dumbur Lake	69	63	10	142
	Sepahijala wildlife sanctuary	97	88	13	198
	Pilak, Buddhist sculpture	69	63	10	142
Length of stay (no of informants)	One day	65	54	9	128
	Two days	47	38	2	87
	Three days	25	22	2	49
Chi-square value: 44.111157		P value: 0.3019559			

Source: Calculated by the author

Table 7 presents five parameters and 22 development attributes of tourism within a 100-kilometre radius around *Mata Tripureswari Temple*. The survey revealed that 39.77% of respondents preferred a tour party with 5-7 members, followed by 34.45% for 1-4 members and 25.76% for 7+ members. The majority of male informants (37.23%) had 1-4 tour members, 32.85% had 5-7 members, and the remaining (9.93%) had 7+ members. The majority of females (49.12%) had a group size of 5-7 persons, followed by 1-4 persons (28.07%), and 22.81% had a group size beyond 7 members. The optimal tour party for transgenders is 1-4 members (61.54%), followed by 30.77% for groups of 5-7 members and 7.69% for groups of 7+ members.

The occupations of the informants surveyed included employment in public sector units, private sector units, and self-employed informants. The majority of informants (43.18%) were in the public sector, 31.44% were in private sector units, and the remaining 25.38% were self-employed. Male informants held 47.45% of government jobs, 31.39% of private sector jobs, and 21.17% of self-employed personnel. The study revealed that female respondents occupied 42.11% of public sector jobs, 34.21% of private sector jobs, and 23.68% of self-employed jobs.

In contrast, 84.62% of the transgenders were self-employed, with 7.69% working in both the public and private sectors. The majority of respondents (73.49%) expressed satisfaction with their tour itinerary, stating that they enjoyed visiting nearby locations. The remaining 26.52% of the pilgrimage group primarily visited Matabari, avoiding any other nearby locations. Seventy-five% of respondents toured nearby attractions such as the Mangal Chandi Temple, Jagannath Temple, Chaturdas Devta Temple, Ujjayanta Palace, and Sepahijala Wildlife Sanctuary. A total of 67.05% of travellers saw Neer Mahal's architectural marvel, while 66.29% found spiritual solace in Kasba Kali Bari. The survey revealed that 53.79% of respondents each chose Chhabimura, Dumbur Lake, and Pilak, a place of Buddhist architectural heritage, as a part of their tour itinerary.

Pilgrims not only visit sacred landscapes but also explore other tourism interests, with 2/3rd of them venturing to enjoy the experience. The prime attractions include Ujjayanta Palace, Neer Mahal, Chhabimura, Dumbur's scenic beauty, and the Sipahijala Wildlife Sanctuary, which caters to visitors' needs. These tourism products significantly increase the length of tourists' stays, particularly for pilgrims. Generally, pilgrims visiting a shrine typically stay for one day. A total of 48.49% of the informants confirmed the same for a one-day stay at the holy place. However, during the festive season, 32.96% of respondents chose to stay for two days, while 18.56% opted for three days. Let us test the following hypothesis at the 5% level of significance.

H_2 : The development of pilgrimage centres does not help promote tourism across destination areas.

Table 7 displays a chi-square value of 44.111157 and a P value of 0.3019559 at the 5% level of significance. The calculated P value surpasses the alpha value ($0.3019559 > 0.05$), leading to the rejection of the hypothesis. From this, it can be inferred that the development of pilgrimage centres helps promote the growth of other tourism products as well.

Table 8: Factors Motivating Pilgrims' Choice Decisions

Factors	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
For mental peace	45	53	56	50	60	264
The habit of visiting holy places	41	49	61	55	58	264
To fulfill a vow	59	61	43	64	37	264
Praying for a better future for children	47	52	50	60	55	264
To have darshan of Mata Tripureswari	51	49	55	62	47	264
To see the architectural design of the temple	43	52	54	65	50	264
Chi-square value: 19.670986					P value: 0.47867	

Source: Compiled during the survey

Table 8 presents six factors that drive pilgrims to visit sacred sites, rated on five scales ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. For restoring mental peace, the Shaktipeeth pilgrimage received 41.67% support for the

proposition, and 37.12% negated it, with 21.21% remaining indeterminate. The survey revealed that 43.94% of respondents frequently visit holy places across the country, while 34.09% differ and 23.11% remain undecided. The majority of respondents (38.26%) visited the sacred place to offer prayer after fulfilling their vow, while 45.46% denied it, leaving 16.29% uncertain. The *Mata Tripureswari Temple* was visited by 43.56% of respondents to offer prayers for the better future of children, with 37.5% deciding against it and 18.94% remaining indeterminate.

The study revealed that 41.29% of respondents wanted to visit *Mata Tripureswari Temple* for darshan (the auspicious sight of a deity), 37.88% denied such wishes, and 20.83% remained neutral. The temple's architectural design piqued the interest of 43.56% of the informants, while 35.99% were uninterested, leaving 20.46% uncertain. Let us test the following hypothesis at the 5% level of significance.

H_2 : Pilgrims are not driven by self-motivating factors when visiting a sacred place.

Table 11 displays a chi-square value of 19.670986 and a P value of 0.47867 at the 5% level. The calculated P value is greater than the alpha value ($0.478672864529 > 0.05$), indicating the rejection of the hypothesis. Alternatively, it is inferred that pilgrims are motivated by self-motivating factors to visit *Shaktipeeth*.

4.3. Survey of Pera Vendors

In February 2024, 60 *Pera* merchants, primarily producing milk-based sweets, were interviewed using convenience sampling for their *Pera-selling* business around the Temple campus. *Pera's* are a local tradition of offering bhog (eatables served to the deity) to the goddess, valued by millions of Hindu devotees worldwide. *Pera* is considered a valuable possession by devotees visiting the temple year-round. *Pera* merchants have been residing there for generations and are prepared to provide puja offerings to pilgrims as needed. Table 9 shows the descriptive statistics of the *pera* vendors observed.

Table 9: Descriptive Statistics of the Pera Vendors Surveyed

Parameters	Attributes	Number	Percentage
Age	21-30	7	11.67
	31-40	18	30.00
	41-50	31	51.67
	51 plus	4	6.67
Family members	1-4	33	55.00
	5-7	16	26.67
	8 plus	11	18.33
Educational qualifications	10 th standard	19	31.67
	12 th standard	22	36.67
	Graduate	12	20.00
	Post Graduate	7	11.67

Source: Compiled during the survey

Table 9 provides descriptive statistics on *pera* merchants within the shrine premises. The *pera* hut comprises only male vendors, with other members supporting them by supplying high-quality products. The age profiles of the *pera* vendors revealed that 51.67% were 41–50 years old, 30% were 31–40 years old, 11.67% were 21–30 years old, and 6.67% were 51+ years old. The majority of the *Pera* vendors (55%) had families of 1-4 members, 26.67% had families of 5-7 persons, and 18.33% had families of more than 8 members. Third-generation entrepreneurs in *Pera* vendors are primarily graduates and postgraduates, while second-generation informants have either 10th or 12th-standard qualifications.

Of the 60 *pera* vendors, 36.67% had 12th standard educational qualifications, 31.67% had 10th standard, 20% were graduates, and 11.67% had postgraduate degrees.

Table 10: Responses of the Pilgrims to Matabari Pera

Parameters	Attributes	Yes (%)	No (%)
Did you offer puja at the temple	Prayer	79	21
Kind of bhog offered to Mata.	<i>Pera</i>	74	26
	Fruits	29	71
Did you purchase <i>pera</i> from local vendors	Local vendors	85	15
Quality of <i>pera</i> purchased	Excellent	82	18
How long <i>pera</i> can be used?	15-25 days	79	21
How can you distinguish between Matabari <i>pera</i> and other <i>pera</i>	Quality	90	10
Do you take back <i>pera</i> to your house?	Prasad	86	14
Do you distribute <i>pera</i> to your keens?	Keens	79	21
F ratio: 36.38063	P values: 0.000017		

Source: Compiled during the survey.

Table 10 displays the reactions of the pilgrims to *Pera*, a milk-based sweet with traditional significance, at the *Mata Tripureswari Temple*. The majority of the informants (79%) offered prayers at the Matabari during their stay, while 21% abstained from them. Seventy-four per cent of respondents offered bhog (eatable to the deity) in the form of *pera* to the mata (mother), while 29% offered fruits to the goddess. The remaining 26% and 71% of the informants did not offer *pera*, or fruits, to the deity. Local *pera* merchants had the privilege of attracting 85% of devotees to buy from their stalls, while 15% avoided it. The survey revealed that 85% of respondents purchased *pera* from local vendors, with 74% using it as a bhog for the deity and the remaining 9% for personnel consumption. The bulk of respondents (82%) were satisfied with the quality of the *pera*, while 18% were dissatisfied. 79% of the pilgrims believe that Matabari-sourced *pera* can maintain its quality for 15–25 days, while 21% disagree. 90% of the pilgrims agreed on the unique features of *pera* purchased from Matabari and outside, while 10% disagreed. 79% of the pilgrims maintained *pera* bought from Matabari for friends and relatives,

while 21% opted against it. Let us test the following hypothesis at the 5% level of significance.

H_3 : Pilgrims visiting the shrine have a special bond with Matabari *Pera*.

The ANOVA test results indicate an F value of 36.38063 and a P value of 0.000017 at the 5% level of significance. The calculated P value is significantly lower than the alpha value ($0.000017 < 0.05$), indicating that the result is significant. Thus, it can be inferred that pilgrims visiting the shrine are believed to have a unique connection with Matabari *Pera*.

4.4. Survey of Hoteliers and Restaurants

In February 2024, a field survey was conducted with 60 hoteliers and restaurant owners surrounding the Matabari locality. Pilgrims visiting the shrine should stay in nearby accommodations and purchase food from hotels according to their needs. Hoteliers and restaurant owners, such as *pera* vendors, rely on the income generated by devotees visiting temples. The descriptive statistics of the hoteliers and restaurant owners are given below:

Table 11: Descriptive Statistics of Hoteliers and Restaurant Owners

Parameters	Attributes	Number	Percentage
Age	31-40	35	58.33
	41-50	21	35.00
	51 plus	4	6.67
Family members	1-4	19	31.67
	5-7	36	60.00
	8 plus	5	8.33
Educational qualifications	10 th standard	21	35.00
	12 th standard	34	56.57
	Graduate	5	8.33

Source: Compiled during the survey

Table 11 presents descriptive statistics of hoteliers and restaurant owners, focusing on age, family size, and educational qualifications. The majority of hotel and restaurant owners (58.33%) surveyed were aged 31–40, unlike *pera* vendors. Thirty-five per cent of hoteliers and restaurant owners are 41–50 years old, while 6.67% are in the 51+ category. The majority of families, 60%, had a family size of 5-7 persons, 31.67% had a family size of 1-4 individuals, and 8.33% had a family size of more than 8 persons. The majority of the informants had a 12th standard education, 35% had completed the 10th standard, and 8.33% were graduates.

The Pilgrims survey revealed that 78% of the devotees visiting the shrine had food in local hotels, and 63% of them stayed at local hotels. 22% of the participants may have sourced their food from wayside amenities, while 37% stayed in other locations such as Agartala. The survey revealed that 71% of the pilgrims found the food and room conditions in Udaipur satisfactory, while 29% did not agree.

4.5. Economic Impact

Table 12 shows the composite economic impact of pilgrim arrivals to Matabari upon *pera* vendors hoteliers and restaurant owners.

Table 12: Economic Impact on *Pera* Vendors and Hoteliers/
Restaurant Owners

Attributes	Av 80 Pilgrims contingent spending (INR)	Av <i>Pera</i> vendor's monthly income (INR)	Av Hotel/ restaurants' monthly - income (INR)
Budget pilgrims (Av)	7,500	15,000	22,500
Day tripper (Av)	10,000	20,000	30,000
Domestic pilgrims	15,000	30,000	45,000
Foreign Pilgrims	25,000	40,000	55,000
Deluxe tourists	35,000	65,000	80,000
Festival tourists	50,000	80,000	90,000
F statistics: 0.5304		P value: 0.5933	

Source: Compiled during the survey

Table 12 shows the economic impact of pilgrimage on *pera* merchants hoteliers and restaurant owners surrounding the Matabari localities. It is estimated that the expenditures of 80 pilgrims in the respective domain fetch the approximate monthly income for the *pera* vendors and hoteliers. The budget pilgrims from other regions of India, the lowest spending category, usually spend 7,500 INR at the destination on average. At the given expenditure level, *pera* vendors are likely to obtain a monthly income of 15,000 INR and 22,500 INR for hoteliers and restaurant owners. A day tripper normally spends the whole day at the destination with hired vehicles ready to spend 10,000 INR per group. *Pera* vendors can earn 20,000 INR from day trippers, which increases to 30,000 INR per month for hoteliers. Domestic pilgrim groups expend approximately 15,000 INR, which can increase *pera* vendor's monthly income to 30,000 INR and 45,000 INR for hoteliers. Foreign pilgrims officially spent approximately 25,000 INR per group, which is likely to increase *pera* merchants' monthly earnings to 40,000 INR and hoteliers to 55,000 INR. Deluxe tourists who often look for comfort usually spend 35,000 INR per contingent, improving the monthly income of *pera* vendors and hoteliers to 65,000 INR and 80,000 INR, respectively. Festival tourists often embark on trips to sacred places during festivities and are ready to spend extra during events. The contingent spending for festival tourists was 50,000 INR, which increased the overall income for vendors and hoteliers to 80,000 INR and 90,000 INR, respectively. The above variations in income levels for *pera* vendors and hoteliers are spread across seasons, and the impact is greater during festivals. Let us test the following hypothesis at the 5% level.

H₄: Local communities have not benefited from the growth of the pilgrimage centre.

Table 12 shows F statistics of 0.5304 and a P value of 0.5933 at the 5% level of significance. When the calculated value of P is greater than the alpha value (0.5933 > 0.05), the result is insignificant. Alternatively, it can be inferred that local communities benefitted from the growth of the pilgrimage centres in Udaipur.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This paper explores the influence of *Shaktipeeth's* pilgrimage on the development prospects of the local population in Udaipur, Tripura. In doing so, the study carried out a field survey on pilgrims, *pera* vendors, and hoteliers to assess the impact. First, this study focuses on evaluating the economic impact of DTA and FTA on the NSDP and PCI of Tripura. The promotion of pilgrimage tourism is primarily driven by DTAs to the state. The *Mata Tripureswari Temple*, a prominent Hindu pilgrimage centre, has become a significant source of DTA for devotees across the country. 70% of DTAs visit Matabari as part of their tour itinerary and as a significant revenue source for locals.

The analysis of DTAs, NSDPs, and PCIs indicates that DTAs are equally rewarding for Tripura. South Asian countries have significant Hindu settlements, as evidenced by the spread of *Shaktipeethas*. The interlinking of holy shrines can not only capitalize on their potential tourism but also generate revenue for their development and local community resources. Tripura is strategically positioned to boost circuit tourism by connecting three Indian *Shaktipeethas* and four in Bangladesh. *Shaktipeethas* in India, including Kamakhya (Assam), Baurbhaga (Meghalaya), and Udaipur (Tripura), are well connected and can reach Bangladesh via the Maitryee Setu (bridge), 50 km from Matabari. Tripura shares an international border with Bangladesh, which spans 840 square kilometres. The recent facilitation of the rail and road network from Tripura via Bangladesh to Kolkata (West Bengal) indicates the possibility of opening such a circuit.

A survey of pilgrims revealed six key motivational factors that drive devotees to visit holy shrines. The six motivators revolve around divine intervention in human behaviour, with the final motivator focusing on the archaeological aspects of religious structures. The focus seems to be more on praying for a better future for children than on the other five factors. Trips to regain mental peace come next. This follows the darshan of the goddess, the habit of touring holy places, and the fulfilment of a vow down the order. The test findings indicate that promoting a pilgrimage centre consistently aids in the expansion of tourism throughout the state.

Pilgrims have a special bond with Matabari *Pera*, and test findings suggest that such a possibility exists. For generations, locals have been using *Pera's* as a bhog to the deity. The shrine is surrounded by numerous *pera* stalls, which rely on the income generated from them for their livelihoods. Owners prioritize the preservation of *pera* preparations, which are highly regarded by tourists across geographical boundaries. After the completion of rituals, pilgrims rely on local hotels and restaurants for their food needs. During festive events, several makeshift restaurants come up to meet increasing demands.

The economic impact on *pera* vendors and hoteliers can be gauged from the spending habits of pilgrims; each of them possesses a special character depending on their earning source and purpose of travel. Day trippers typically travel from urban centres to a specific destination and return to the same place at the end of the day. Budget tourists often opt for long-haul tours with multiple team members, spending less compared to other segments. Domestic pilgrims from other states frequently contribute to the generation of revenue for the shrine, serving as a significant source for vendors and hoteliers. Foreign pilgrims often bring much-needed foreign exchange to the state, with 15% offering prayers at the Matabari as a symbol of pride. Festival time attracts numerous pilgrims to these *Shaktipeeth*, generating significant income for *pera* vendors and hoteliers. The test results confirm the economic significance of pilgrimage, especially for *pera* vendors and hoteliers surrounding the shrine.

This study did not comprehensively examine the development of the shrine or the perspectives of priests and members of the *Mata Tripureswari* society.

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