

A STUDY ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF KOTTARAKKARA GANAPATHY TEMPLE

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Abstract

Pilgrimage tourism is a type of tourism that completely or strongly motivates tourists to achieve religious attitudes and practises. Kerala's pilgrim tourism industry has yet to reach its full potential. Kottarakkara Ganapathy temple is a well-known Kerala temple with numerous rituals and traditions. Tourism has significant potential and challenges because it is a key component of open sustainable development. The purpose of this research is to examine the current phase of the Kottarakkara Ganapathy temple. The empirical results were obtained from a sample of 150 temple pilgrims. This study investigates the relationship between tourism infrastructure, recreational facilities, and tourism development.

Key words:- Pilgrim tourism, Pilgrims, Kottarakkara Ganapathy temple, social impact, economic impact.

Tourism is the act and process of spending time away from home for the purpose of recreation, relaxation, or pleasure. Tourism development creates opportunities for career advancement,

national integration, and income generation, and the impact of tourism extends not only to social and economic development but also to cultural changes. Tourism can be divided into several categories based on the purpose of the

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act, such as leisure, business, medical, sports, education, heritage, pilgrimage, and so on. In terms of the various types of tourism in India, pilgrimage tourism has grown significantly in recent years.

A journey or search with moral or spiritual significance is called pilgrimage tourism. It is a particular type of tourism that completely or strongly encourages visitors to advance religious attitudes and practices. The fastest-growing sector of tourism, pilgrimage travel, presents fantastic opportunities for making money, gaining foreign currency, and finding work. Because India is the birthplace of religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and others, pilgrimage travel there is very popular. Numerous factors draw pilgrims to India, including its diverse religions, distinctive places of worship, and a lifestyle that is heavily influenced by religion.

Kerala is well known for pilgrim tourism, particularly for the architectural design of its temples, monument towers, sculptures, and wall murals, among other structures. One of the most well-known and historically significant temples in south India, Kottarakkara Ganapathy Temple is a stopping point for pilgrims travelling from Thiruvananthapuram to Sabarimala. The current study's objective is to ascertain how devotees view the Kottarakkara Ganapathy temple in relation to various aspects.

History

The temple's original name is Manikanteswaram, and the main murti worshipped there is Shiva. However, the temple is now famous for Upa Devata Ganapathy. Mahaganapathi is the new

name for the Ganesha worshipped in the temple. The famous Master Carpenter of ancient Kerala, Perumthachan, is said to have consecrated the Ganpati murti in the temple. Kathakali, Kerala's world-famous art form, is also said to have originated at the Kottarakkara Ganapathy Temple. The history of Kottarakkara Ganapathy Temple is linked to the origins of Ramanattam, an art form that later evolved into Kathakali and Kathakali costume design. The temple is well-known for its Udayasthamana Pooja, which consists of a special offering (Abhilash Rajendran, 2021).

This offering was first made centuries ago by the childless Kottarakkara Thampuram in order to appease the gods and receive a child. The offering is made after one's wishes have been granted. Despite the fact that it is very expensive, there is such a rush among devotees that it is even difficult to get a date for making the offering. This, as well as the large number of devotees flocking to Kottarakkara Ganapathy Temple, (*Kottarakkara Sree Maha Ganapathi Temple | Kottarakkara | Kerala | India*, n.d.).

Kottarakkara is a town in the district of Kollam in the Indian state of Kerala. The town is near Kollam Port, which has a rich history dating back to the early mediaeval period and is known as an important commercial, industrial, and trading centre. Kottarakkara was the famous Ilayidathu (younger) dynasty's capital. Kottarakkara is also known as the Temple Land. Famous temples include Padinjattinkkara Mahadeva Temple, Kulasekharanalloor Sreekrishna Temple, Manikandeswaram Temple, Thrikkannamangal Mahavishnu Temple,

and Neduvathur Bhagavathy Temple. There are also numerous locations thought to be associated with the Ramayana. Famous places associated with Jadayu, Bali, and Sugreeva include Jadayumangalam, Valiyonkunnu, and Ugramkunnu. Poredam, also known as the battle ground of Ravana and Jadayu.

Literature Review

Pilgrimage tourism is a collection of pilgrimage representatives from various faiths. A pilgrimage is a journey or quest for moral or spiritual meaning. Typically, it is a journey or shrine or other location significant to a person's belief and faith, but it can also be a metaphorical journey into one's own belief. A pilgrim is someone who undertakes such a journey.

(Vijayanand, 2012) Pilgrimage tourism is important for socioeconomic development. Among other findings, it has demonstrated that, when measured against GDP and exports, pilgrimage tourism has a significant economic impact on many countries in the region. Pilgrimage tourism is a sector in which many countries, particularly the least developed, have comparative, if not competitive, advantages and can efficiently convert domestic resources into foreign exchange. When used rightly, such foreign exchange can be used to purchase the investment goods required to support more broadly based economic development policies. The study found that pilgrimage tourism has a significant social impact when measured in terms of employment (particularly unskilled labour).

(Dr Mohammad Ashfaq, 2014) According to the research, pilgrimage

tourism is the lifeline of the Jammu region, particularly at the holy shrine of Mata Vashino Devi, which is an important pilgrimage destination. Katra town serves as a stopover for pilgrims on their way to Mata VashinoDevi. In terms of land use pattern, demographic setup, cultural milieu, and overall economic scenario, the town has undergone significant change. The study also found that the income generated by pilgrimage tourism ranged from 10 per cent to 23 per cent and from 13 per cent to 27 per cent of the advance estimate of Gross National Product.

(Shinde, 2014) There is an impact of pilgrimage tourism on the economic and socio-cultural activities of Alandi; the analysis of economic impacts reveals that pilgrimage has a higher positive effect on the destination, increasing the income of residents while degrading the quality of goods and services provided to tourists. The socio-cultural impact study clearly shows that pilgrim concentration at Alandi has created many socio-cultural problems, such as an increase in beggars, commercialization of religious ceremonies, traditions, and customs, and so on. However, pilgrims clearly created an image of Alandi as a centre of religious, social, and cultural communication.

(Ashfaq & Parveen, 2015) The findings of the this study clearly show that the Shahdhara Sharief pilgrimage tourism centre is playing a significant role in the overall development of the area, namely village Shahdhara Sharief and the twin remote districts of Rajouri and Poonch in Jammu and Kashmir. The land use pattern, infrastructure, socioeconomic conditions, and tourism-related employment in the area have all had a

significant impact on the Shahdhara Sharief village in this case study. According to the preceding analysis, pilgrimage tourism (Shahdhara Sharief) generates 1.31 per cent and 1.48 per cent of Gross Net State Domestic Product, with an advance estimate of Rs. 19687.08 crores (Digest of Statistics 2007-08) in 2008.

(Graave, 2017) The impact obtained with this analysis provides an indication of the impact of pilgrimage on the local economy of Galicia for stakeholders involved with pilgrimage, such as policymakers, government treasuries of local authorities, project developers, and tourism businesses. Although the estimates are rough and the range is wide, they suggest that the impact on the local economy will be significant, even in the most conservative scenario. This could be an argument for these stakeholders, and even other sectors that are unrelated to religious tourism but benefit from its growth, to invest more in religious tourism.

Research gap

Based on the above literature, it is identified that some studies were conducted to study the socio-economic impact of pilgrimage tourism based on the different pilgrimage tourism destinations. But the fact is that nobody has attempted to study the socio-economic impact of the pilgrimage centres in Kerala, especially Kottarakkara Ganapathy Temple. Hence the research gap is identified, namely the socio-economic impact of the Kottarakkara Ganapathy temple.

Statement of the problem

The lack of adequate infrastructure facilities and the high cost associated with pilgrimages to the Kottarakkara Ganapathy Temple pose significant social and economic challenges that demand immediate attention within Kerala's tourism industry.

Significance of the Study

The present study is beneficial to pilgrims, authorities and third parties for better understanding the problems in the sector and to make much better policies in the sector.

Objective of the Study

To study the pilgrims' perception of the socio-economic impact of Kottarakkara Ganapathy Temple

Hypothesis

Ho1 - Both Keralite and non-Keralite devotees have the same opinion on the socio-economic impact of Kottarakkara Ganapathy Temple.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the present study is limited to examining the experiences and behaviours of pilgrims who visit the Kottarakkara Ganapathy Temple.

Methodology

The present research is based on primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected using an interview schedule. Primary data were collected from 150 tourists of various age groups through simple random sampling. Pilgrims who are from Kerala and outside Kerala were considered for the study.

Results and discussions

The variables used for studying the socio- economic impact of the Kottarakkara Ganapathy temple are as follows:

Socio impact:-

- Search for authenticity
- Diversified product offering.
- Generation of indirect employment opportunities.
- Improvement in standard of living of the residents.
- Infrastructural development.
- Recognised landmark.

Economic impact:-

- Opportunities for women.
- New fields for commercial activities.
- Pilgrimage tourism opens up new possibilities for ventures.
- Attracts new investment in the city.
- Tourist spending provides the necessary income for preserving and managing places of attraction.
- Revenues for municipal councils (E.G parking fee, tourist taxes etc.)

Socio impact

The Friedman test was used to assess which of the variables have higher socio impacts and which is lower, and the test results are shown in Table 1.

Based on the responses of the pilgrims, it is evident that they have the highest perception of the infrastructural development of the Kottarakkara Ganapathy temple. They also have the highest perception of the diversified product offering at the destinations. The authors also opined that the standard of living of the residents was also good. They have the lowest perception on the variable “recognized landmark.” Since the p value is less than 0.05 at the 5 per cent significance level, the Friedman test is found to be significant.

Socio impact among the Keralite and Non Keralite

In order to find out whether there is any significant difference in the socio impact among the Keralite and Non Keralite the Mann Whitney U test was done and the test results shown in table 2.

Table 1

Friedman test for Socio-impact of Kottarakkara Ganapathy Temple

Sl. No	Socio-impact	Median	Mean Rank	Test statistics	
V1.1	Search for authenticity	3	3.18		
V1.2	Diversified product offering	4	4.34		
V1.3	Generation of indirect employment opportunities	3	3.29	N	150
V1.4	Improvement in standard of living of the residents	4	4.13	Chi-Square	723.317
V1.5	Infrastructural development	4	4.47	df	5
V1.6	Recognised landmark	2	1.59	Asymp.Sig	<0.001**

Source: Primary data

Table 2
Mann Whitney U test for the socio impact of Kottarakkara Ganapathy Temple

Socio impact	Type of pilgrims		Z value	P-value
	Keralite	Non- Keralite		
Search for authenticity	189.60	195.48	0.724	0.469
Diversified product offering	194.20	191.87	0.300	0.764
Generation of indirect employment opportunities	170.36	215.31	4.147	<0.001**
Improvement in standard of living of the residents	189.34	195.75	0.785	0.432
Infrastructural development	187.55	197.56	0.942	0.346
Recognised landmark	200.54	184.29	1.547	0.122
Overall socio impact	180.53	204.72	2.154	0.031*

Source: Primary data

The Mann-Whitney U test was used to assess whether there was any significant difference between the Keralite and non-Keralite pilgrimages. Since the p value is less than 0.05 at the 5 per cent significance level, the null hypothesis is rejected on the variable “generation of indirect employment opportunities.” Based on the mean rank, it is evident that non-Keralite tourists opine more on the variable “generation of indirect employment opportunities” than Keralites. No difference was found on other variables.

Economic impact of pilgrims

In order to find out the economic impact of pilgrims, the Friedman test was used, and the test results are shown in Table 3.

The Friedman test was used to assess which of the aforementioned variables was highest and which was lowest. Based on the mean rank, it is evident that pilgrims have the highest perception on the variables “revenues for municipal councils (e.g., parking, tourist taxes, etc.)” and “attracts new investment in the city,” followed by the variable “Pilgrimage tourism opens up new possibilities for

ventures.” Since the p value is less than 0.05 at the 5 percent significance level, the Friedman test is found to be significant.

Economic impact of Keralite and non-Keralite tourists on Kottarakkara Ganapathy Temple

To check whether there is any significant difference in the economic impact of Keralite and non-Keralite tourists on Kottarakkara Ganapathy Temple, the Man Whitney U test was used. The test results are shown in Table 4.

Since the p value is less than 0.05 at the 5 per cent significance level, the null hypothesis is rejected on the variables such as “Opportunities for women,” “Pilgrimage tourism opens up new possibilities for ventures,” and “Overall economic impact.” That means pilgrims have different opinions on the aforementioned variables. Based on the mean rank, it is evident that Keralite have a higher perception of variables such as “Pilgrimage tourism opens up new possibilities for ventures” and “overall economic impact.” While non-Keralite, have more perception on the variable ‘opportunities for women’.

Table 3
Friedman test for the economic impact of pilgrims

Sl. No	Economic impact	Median	Mean Rank	Test Statistics	
V2.1	Opportunities for women	3	3.98		
V2.2	New fields for commercial activities	2	2.17		
V2.3	Pilgrimage tourism opens up new possibilities for ventures	3	3.89	N	150
V2.4	Attracts new investment in the city	3	4.20	Chi-Square	578.40
V2.5	Tourist spending provides the necessary income for preserving and managing places of attraction	2	2.44	df	5
V2.6	Revenues for municipal councils (E.G parking, tourist taxes etc.).	3	4.32	Asymp.Sig	<0.001**

Source: Primary data

Table 4
Mann Whitney U test for the economic impact of Kottarakkara Ganapathy temple

Economic impact	Type of pilgrims		Z value	P-value
	Keralite	Non-Keralite		
Opportunities for women	170.48	213.95	3.992	<0.001**
New fields for commercial activities	195.87	189.15	0.640	0.522
Pilgrimage tourism opens up new possibilities for ventures	218.17	166.29	4.802	<0.001**
Attracts new investment in the city	196.27	188.65	0.714	0.477
Tourist spending provides the necessary income for preserving and managing places of attraction	197.69	188.22	0.796	0.416
Revenues for municipal councils (E.G parking, tourist taxes etc.).	200.63	184.20	1.521	0.128
Overall economic impact	203.94	180.82	2.059	0.039*

Source: Primary data

Findings

- Pilgrims have the highest perception of the socioeconomic impact of Kottarakkara Ganapathy Temple, such as infrastructural development and diversified product offerings at the destinations.
- Pilgrims opined that they have a very low perception of the impact of land mark generation as a renowned pilgrimage centre.
- Compared to pilgrims from Kerala, non-Keralite tourists are more inclined to agree that Kottarakkara

Ganapathy Temple is generating more indirect employment opportunities.

- Compared to pilgrims from Kerala, Non-Keralite tourists were opined that, Kottarakkara Ganapathy temple has more socio impact.
- Pilgrims have the highest perception on the variables “revenues for municipal councils (e.g., parking, tourist taxes, etc.)” and “attracts new investment in the city,” followed by the variable “Pilgrimage tourism opens up new possibilities for ventures.”
- Pilgrims from Kerala opined that Kottarakkara Ganapathy Temple opens up new possibilities for ventures.
- Compared to pilgrims from outside Kerala, pilgrims from Kerala opined that the Kottarakkara Ganapathy temple has a significant economic impact.
- Pilgrims from outside Kerala have a more positive perception of the Kottarakkara Ganapathy Temple, which generates more opportunities for women.

Suggestions

- The authorities to collaborate with all pertinent stakeholders and undertake a comprehensive effort to enhance the infrastructure facilities at the temple.
- Government, Devaswom Board and other relevant authorities formulate well-defined pilgrim policies for the temple.

Conclusion

The Kottarakkara Ganapathy temple is a well-known pilgrimage site in Kerala. Many devotees come from various Indian states intends to visit this temple. Uliyannoor Perumthachan, a well-known master carpenter, completed all of the work on this temple (craftsman). As a result, the Kottarakkara Ganapathy temple is well-known for its aesthetic and architectural beauty. This temple in South Kerala is the most popular with devotees. Despite being a Shiva Temple, the small Ganapathy temple in the precincts is the focal point of this place. The appam served with Prashad is extremely popular. This study was conducted to examine the socio-economic impact of the Kottarakkara Ganapathy temple based on all of these factors. As a result of the findings, the study concludes that the Kottarakkara Ganapathy temple has a significant economic and social impact.

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Published in 2007	Pages 114	Priced Rs. 80	Paperback
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