

Exploring Pilgrims' Attitude towards Buying Souvenirs – a Case Study in Kerala

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Abstract-This research empirically examines the attitude of pilgrims towards buying souvenirs. The study based on Guruvayur, the most famous pilgrimage centre of Kerala was conducted by collecting responses from 120 pilgrims during their visit to the centre. The analysis of survey responses was made with the mean scores and non parametric binomial test results. The findings of the study reveal that pilgrims highly prefer to buy handicrafts items having religious importance where uniqueness and peer pressure are the dominant factors influencing their buying decisions.

Key Words: Pilgrim, Souvenir, Buying attitude, Binomial test

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism has been a major social phenomenon from time immemorial. Tourists travel for various purposes such as recreation, leisure, religious, family and business, usually for a limited duration. Tourism is not only associated with international travel but may also refer to travel to another place within the same country. Today, tourism has become a popular global activity. It is also a major source of income for many countries and affects the economy of both the source and host nations. The elements constituting any kind of tourism include attractions, accessibility (Transport), accommodations and amenities or other facilities. Of the different types of tourism, pilgrimage or religious tourism is very prominent in India. In India, visiting the places of religious importance or the 'sacred-site-seeing' has been the common form of tourism from the ancient days to the present-day. Since most of the famous shrines, especially temples in India have been established either at the top of mountain or in the middle of dense forest or on the seashore, they are having a locational advantage to attract more visitors. Today owing to the development, mainly

transportation facility, a large number of pilgrim centers in our country has been attracting tourists to the centers. Hindu temples are the most sought-after pilgrim centers in India. Devotees visiting various temples are now provided with varieties of accommodation and amenities. Like any other type of tourism, pilgrimage tourism also offers shopping facilities to tourists or pilgrims. Thus, souvenir shopping becomes an integral part of pilgrimage tour.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Gorden, (1986) defined souvenir as some specific objects that remained certain incident or journey. He stated that the existence of souvenirs could help visitors explore and stay in contact with a travel experience not long ago and tourists purchase souvenirs as a proof of the places they had visited. Dey and Sarma(2012) remarked that there are number of reasons motivating a tourist to buy souvenirs of the places visited. Wicks et al. (2004) observed that one of the most important characteristics of souvenirs is authenticity; among all types of souvenirs authenticity may be the most important factor that affects tourists' buying intentions. Tourists want to identify the local character to the souvenir. They prefer symbolic and manufactured products that are made in the local area and handcrafts that have traditional and cultural meaning. Several authenticity categories can be noted, some are: whether the crafts are different from those the tourists already own, made a new way, or more unique to the region or the country where produced. Authentic souvenirs are not the ones people see duplicates of in every shop they visit. Kim and littrell (2001) observed in their study that if people visit a number of times to a specific destination, their perception towards the originality of souvenir

shopping may change. They specially remarked that people travel the more to Mexico, the less they want to buy stereotype souvenirs, because the special souvenir for tourist that is highly indicative of the destination would be purchased in the first visit. Smith and Olson (2001) expressed that knowing a destination through several visits may affect the meaning and types of purchased souvenir. The study showed that the first time visitors of a place tend to shop in expensive, stereotype, trade or symbolic souvenir. Upon increasing of awareness about the destination in the next trips, they may change their minds and decide to purchase meaningful handicrafts or visit the craftsmen directly, or the like. Anderson & littrell (1995) observed in their study that the role of souvenir as gift is more powerful among women.

3. PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES

Tourism is an activity which is both old as well as wide spread. People travel for variety of reasons. One of the major motives of tour is the religious purpose. In all types of tourism, including pilgrimage tour, travelers shop variety of items. Therefore, it may be true to say that tourism needs the supply of souvenirs. Tourists may buy souvenirs at the stalls located at the tourist spots or at the big hotels or in specific shopping centers. Tourists may also purchase handicraft created instantaneously for them in local manufacturing centres. Such items of souvenirs are meant to cherish memories of one's experiences in life. These

experiences can be anything. Thus in the context of traveling, souvenirs attain immense significance, especially when people visit truly exotic or cultural destinations. Guruvayur is one of such prominent cultural centers in India with the presence of a Hindu temple, where large number of pilgrims pay their visit daily. In this context an empirical study is attempted to analyze the attitude of pilgrims towards souvenir purchase with reference to Guruvayur temple of Kerala. The study is mainly aimed at the following objectives

1. To analyze the preference of pilgrims at Guruvayur towards buying souvenirs
2. To analyze the determinants influencing the attitude of pilgrims of Guruvayur temple towards souvenir shopping.

4. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The population of the study consists of the pilgrim tourists to Guruvayur . Sample size for the study has been fixed arbitrarily as 120 and primary data were collected through a survey conducted among pilgrims who have been selected under convenient sample framework. The study used both descriptive and inferential tools for analyzing the collected data.

5. PROFILE OF SAMPLE RESPONDENTS

The profile of sample respondents is depicted in table1

Table 1: Profile of Sample Respondents

#	Variable	Group	Frequency	%
1	Gender	Male	58	48.33
		Female	62	51.67
3	Age	Below 30	36	30.00
		30-60	58	48.33
		60 and above	26	21.67
4	Education	School Education	28	23.33
		Degree /Diploma	74	61.67
		Post graduate / professional degree	18	15.00
5	Occupation	Agriculturists	22	18.33
		Salaried employees	46	38.33
		Wage earners	31	25.83
		Self employed / professionals	09	07.51
		House wife and unemployed	12	10.00
6	Monthly Income of Family(Rs)	Less than 30000	36	30.00
		30000-60000	47	39.17
		60000-90000	25	20.83

		90000 and above	12	10.00
7	Visit Experience	First Time Visit	37	30.83
		Second Time Visit	55	45.83
		More Than Two Visits	28	23.33
8	Souvenir buying from pilgrim centre	Always	44	36.67
		Occasional	62	51.67
		Rare	14	11.66
9	Percentage of total pilgrim expense for Souvenir buying	Less than 10	29	24.17
		10-20	59	49.16
		20-30	17	14.16
		30-40	15	12.5
10	Intension of purchase	Gift to others	42	35
		Own family use	78	65
11	Nature of purchase decision	Planned	51	42.5
		Impulsive	69	57.5

Survey Data

In this study majority of respondents are female pilgrims (51.67%), and are having either a degree or a diploma (61.67%). While almost 50 per cent of respondents are middle aged, more than 60 % are employees. Regarding the family income, more than 2/3 of sample respondents have a monthly income less than Rs 60000. The survey reveals that majority of pilgrims (70 %) are having previous experience of visiting the Guruvayur temple. It is also revealed that majority of (57 %) sample pilgrims buy souvenirs from pilgrimage centers occasionally while more than 30 % buy souvenirs during their every pilgrimage trip. It is also notable that almost 60 % of respondents spend 10-20 % of their tour expenses for souvenir purchase and the decision is found mainly impulsive in nature. Moreover, the dominant intension of purchase for 78% of respondents is to use the items in their family itself rather gifting to others (Table 1).

6. SOUVENIR PREFERENCE OF PILGRIMS

One of the objectives of the studies was to analyze the preference of pilgrims towards buying various types of souvenirs during their pilgrimage. The study selected

eight categories of products for rating the preference of respondents on a 3 point scale. When 56% of respondents rated their souvenir preference at high level towards handicrafts having religious importance with a mean score of 2.44, almost 51% rated the same level of preference towards other handicrafts with mean score 2.34. While around 53% of respondents rated their high preference on toys and games with mean score 2.28, the same proportion of respondents expressed preference towards temple food products with a mean score of 2.38 (Table 2). The descriptive analysis of these ratings clearly indicates that pilgrims have an above moderate level preference towards souvenirs such as different handicrafts, temple food products and products for kids such as toys and games. But in the inferential analysis through Binomial test, the results validate an above moderate preference only in respect of handicrafts having religious importance (Table 3). Hence it is logical to infer that pilgrims visiting the temple have only a low to moderate level of preference towards in respect of all the selected products except in the case of handicrafts having religious importance.

Table 2: Preferences towards Buying Various Category of Souvenir

#	Souvenir Type	Level of Preference			Mean Score
		High	Moderate	Low	
1	Temple food Products	64 (53.3)	38 (31.7)	18 (15.0)	2.38
2	Religious Publications	25 (20.8)	59 (49.2)	36(30.0)	1.49
3	Special photograph	51 (42.5)	29 (24.2)	40 (33.3)	2.09
4	Traditional clothing	38(31.7)	43 (35.8)	39 (32.5)	1.99
5	Handicraft(religious)	67(55.8)	39 (32.5)	14 (11.7)	2.44
6	Handicraft(non-religious)	61 (50.8)	39 (32.5)	20 (16.7)	2.34

7	Local food products	44 (36.7)	38 (31.7)	22 (31.6)	1.92
8	Toys and games	63(52.5)	27(22.5)	30(25.0)	2.28

Survey Data. Note: Figures in Brackets are Percentages

Table 3: Preferences towards Buying Various Category of Souvenir -Binomial Test Results

#	Souvenirs	Observed proportion N=120		Test proportion	Exact Sig. (2-tailed)
		Moderate and Low <= 2	Above moderate > 2		
1	Temple food Products	.47	.53	.50	.556
2	Religious Publications	.79	.21	.50	.004*
3	Special photograph	.57	.43	.50	.362
4	Traditional clothing	.68	.32	.50	.000*
5	Handicraft(religious)	.44	.56	.50	.000*
6	Handicraft(non-religious)	.49	.51	.50	.366
7	Local food products	.63	.37	.50	.000*
8	Toys and games	.47	.53	.50	.661

Source: Data Compiled; Note: *Significant at 5% level

7. DETERMINANTS INFLUENCING SOUVENIR PURCHASE BEHAVIOR

The second objective of the study was to analyze the level of influence of various determinants on souvenir purchase behavior of pilgrims. In this case also the respondents rated their opinion on a three point scale. The analysis of perception of pilgrims indicates that the majority of pilgrims rate an above moderate level influence of factors namely and uniqueness of product,

peer pressure and prestige, with mean scores of 2.61, 2.54 and 2.36 respectively (Table 4). But the Binomial test results, in further inferential analysis, validate an above moderate level of influence only in the case of factors ‘uniqueness of product’ and ‘peer pressure’ and therefore it is logical to infer that the influence of all other factors namely religious significance, price, quality and prestige on the souvenir purchase behavior of pilgrims is found at low to moderate level (Table 5).

Table 4: Factors Influencing Pilgrims to buy Souvenirs

#	Factor	Level of Influence			Mean Score
		High	Moderate	Low	
1	Religious importance	54 (45.0)	36 (30.0)	30(25.0)	2.06
2	Price benefit	43(35.8)	59 (49.2)	18 (15.0)	2.21
3	Better Quality	56 (46.7)	29 (24.2)	35(29.1)	2.18
4	Prestige value	62 (51.7)	39 (32.5)	19(15.8)	2.36
5	Uniqueness of product	72 (60.0)	39 (32.5)	19(15.8)	2.61
6	Peer pressure	78(65.0)	29(24.2)	13(10.8)	2.54

Survey Data. Note: Figures in Brackets are Percentages

Table 5: Factors influencing Pilgrims towards Buying Souvenir - Binomial Test Results

#	Factor	Observed proportion N=120		Test proportion	Exact Sig. (2-tailed)
		Moderate and Low <= 2	Above moderate > 2		
1	Religious importance	.55	.45	.50	.550
2	Price benefit	.64	.36	.50	.002*
3	Better Quality	.53	.47	.50	.262
4	Prestige value	.48	.52	.50	.188
5	Uniqueness of product	.40	.60	.50	.000*
6	Peer pressure	.35	.65	.50	.000*

Source: Data Compiled; Note: *Significant at 5% level

8. CONCLUSION

This study exploring the attitude of pilgrims visiting Guruvayur in Kerala highlights the significance of souvenir in tourism. Though the study may needs further validation with a larger sample framework ,the observations from the study shows some lights on the preferences and determinants on the shopping behavior of tourists visiting pilgrim centers in Kerala .Since ,shopping is an important element of any tour including pilgrimage, the temple authorities and all other responsible stakeholders should initiate steps to attract more pilgrims to pilgrim centers in Kerala by improving infrastructure including the shopping facilities and there by boost the pilgrimage tourism in this state on a sustainable manner.

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