

# A Study of Pilgrims and the Facilities Provided at Pilgrimage Center Velankanni District Nagpattanam, State of Tamilnadu, India

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**Abstract:** *Tourism is one of the important activities of human being which deals at every stage. If the required facilities are provided to the tourist at reasonable cost they may be satisfied. It helps to bind the different class of people based on cast, race and religion; hence tourism is a double sized weapon of both blessings and blight. Hence, it is a socio-economic phenomenon, which has involved into one of the largest and fastest growing industries of the world. Now-a-days tourist places and pilgrimage places are the main attractions of the people; People visit the places of worship and sacred shrines, for different reason such as entertainment, holiness, blessing etc. In India so many pilgrimage centers of all faith are found everywhere, it is part of religion. Religion shows influence on cultural landscape as religion is vital part of culture; such landscapes are called as scared landscape or holy places. Religious landscape is varied ranging from houses of worship to cemeteries, way side shrines and place names etc. Pilgrimages place also one of them as religious point of view. It reflects a culture of their religion, for religion travel is necessary part of getting from home to the pilgrimage destination. At the pilgrimage destination accommodation, food, drinking water, cleanliness, medical facilities and parking facilities are provided pilgrims would be happy. In this paper the attempt has been made to review the facilities provided to pilgrims throughout the year and especially during the annual feast. For the study Velankanni village has selected because this place is very famous as a pilgrimage center in south India. Velankanni has one of the biggest and famous Catholic pilgrimage centers in India, the Basilica of Our Lady of Good Health; it is devoted to Our Lady of Good Health.*

**Keywords:** Basilica, Destination, Devote, Facilities, Feast, Pilgrimage

## 1. Introduction

Tourism is concerned with the temporary short-term movement of people, who travel on destination, outside the place, where they normally inhabit and work, including their activities during their stay at various destinations and the facilities created to provide their needs. The study of tourism means the study of people and their involvement in this activity. People from different places are coming together to enjoy, to entertainment, aims are different but object is the same. In this research study has focused on Pilgrims and the Facilities provided at Pilgrimage Center Velankanni.

Pilgrims are part of religious tourism, but pilgrimage should not be viewed in isolation, while the aim of pilgrimage is purely for religious gain, but at the same time it is also linked with visit to different places in addition to worship of sacred shrines. On the other hand, the domestic tourists, whose aim of touring is pleasure or holiday, when visiting important historical and archeological centers, hill stations, do not forget to, visit important religious places. Thus, activity shows the interdependence of tourism and pilgrimage.

The pilgrimage and other forms of tourism have much in common. The common aspects are seasonality, economic importance, and local surplus in tertiary sector, high occupancy rate, carrying capacity and good inter-regional connections in the spatial activities of travelers (Gisbert and Sievers 1987)

Recently increasing communication is making rapid changes in the character of pilgrimage itself. Technological changes

and modernization is giving pilgrimage an increasingly secular character within the society. Therefore, lower and middle class people also have more opportunities to travel, hence the volume of pilgrims seeking darshans, blessings and performing traditional religious tasks. When the groups of people involve in tourism activity for darshans they may visits to sight scene also.

## 2. Study Area

Velankanni is a small village located in Nagpattanam district of the state of Tamil Nadu, on the coast of Bay of Bengal, and lies between 10° 7' north latitudes and 79° 8' east longitudes it has occupies an area 5.5 sq.km. It is located at 88 meter elevation, according to census 2001 the population of village is 10,144 and density is 1800 per sq. km. It is a famous Roman Catholic pilgrim centre knows as "Our Lady of Health". It is also known as Lourdes of the East. This place is located in south India so throughout the year temperature is high still pilgrims are visits to this place.

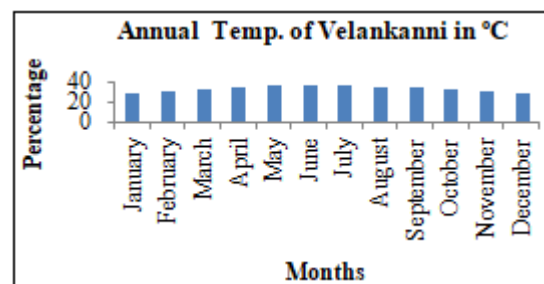


Figure 1

Source: Climate-Data.org

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**Objectives**

- 1) To assess spatial distribution of pilgrims visit to religious center.
- 2) To examine the facilities provided to pilgrims at pilgrimage center.

**Database and Methodology**

For this, effort has been made to collected data by fieldwork with the help of questionnaires prepared with various questions and were put to pilgrims and asking their views regarding facilities provided to them at destination. The views are noted regarding facilities at destination noted as excellent, good, satisfactory and unsatisfactory. The collected data has been analyzed then factor wise level of satisfaction was calculated by their weightage with numerical numbers. For excellent 8 to 10, for good 6 to 8, for satisfactory 4 to 6 and for unsatisfactory 0 to 4 has selected. Similarly different simple statistical methods, cartographic techniques, GIS techniques and methods also have used to represent the data. The parameter wise level of satisfaction is calculated with the following formula.

$$Sti = \frac{\sum Mi \times Ni}{N}$$

Where,

Sti – Satisfaction index for the i'th factor.

Mi – Numerical values for particular level of satisfaction for the i'th factor.

Ni – Number of respondent deriving the particular level of satisfaction for the i'th factor.

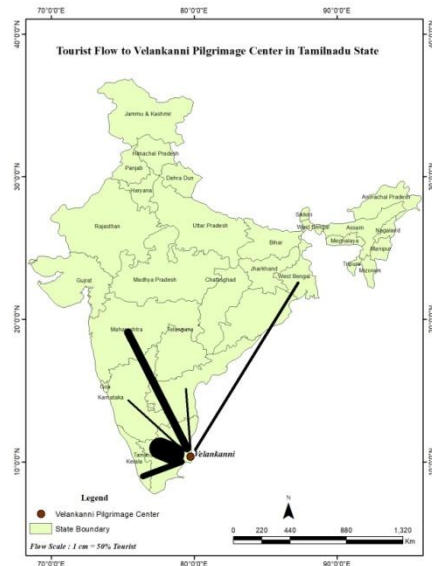
N – Total numbers of respondents for the factor for all level of satisfaction.

**Analysis of Data**

The survey is the common method of assessing the impacts. Questionnaires for the survey was designed it consist 35 questions regarding socio-economic, cultural and provided facilities aspects to measure their opinions as how pilgrimage affects different domains. Three community groups were selected for the collection of data such as pilgrims, local residents and shopkeepers. For collecting data of the local residents and shopkeepers into consideration one km. area away from pilgrim center, 200 residents, 600 pilgrims and 100 shopkeepers.

**Pilgrims**

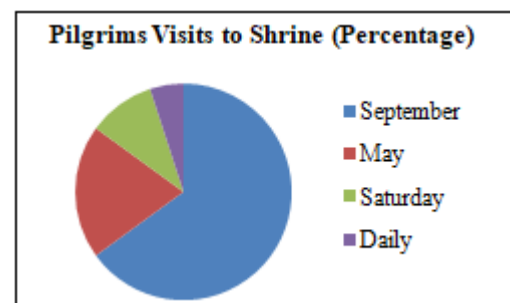
Pilgrims pay visit to Velenkkanni shrine from different places from the state, and all over India. Though it is Catholic Shrine but most of South Indian people are visit throughout the year. Some places are close to the shrine and some are far, still devotee's visit for different purpose, at around 50% pilgrims visit from Tamilnadu state, 18% from Maharashtra, 7% from West Bengal, 14% from Keral and 11% from Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.



**Figure 2**

Source: Compiled by author

Most of the pilgrims visits to shrine during Novena means nine days prayer it starts from 29<sup>th</sup> August to 8<sup>th</sup> September so approximate 65% pilgrims visit during Novena month of September, because in the month of September they are celebrating feast of the Nativity of Mary, 20% month of May, 10% pilgrims visit on Saturday and 5% visits daily. Most probably pilgrims visit the shrine to take darshans, for getting blessing from almighty God, to fulfill their wishes, for thanks giving etc.



**Figure 3**

(Source: Compiled by Researcher)

**Local Residents**

Tourism activity is very important because it will help to the change lifestyle of residents of tourist destination. It will benefits from the pilgrims to the local population because they will earn extra income from pilgrims, because most of the pilgrims are wish to take halt at destination so local people are providing accommodation and food facilities to them.

From the data we can get an idea, about the local residents, residents felt that heavy pilgrims concentration at destination has higher effect on increasing numbers of beggars (40%), spreading epidemic disease like trouble of dogs, genesis of mosquito, water pollution etc. due to throwing garland, garbage, flowers and unused things.

According to the data collected through interviews of the residential; 35% families are staying near the pilgrimage centre since from 25 yrs, 37% families are settled between

25 to 50 yrs and 28% families are staying more than 50 yrs. These families are facing lots of problems from pilgrims such as lack of sanitary problems (56.28%), traffic and parking problems (27.63%) and those families stay very close to the pilgrimage centre (16.08%) they are facing noise pollution and all above problems.

Though they are facing problems but they felt that the pilgrimage has a higher effect on increasing the income because there is an opportunity to sell different products and opportunities of new shops. Now-a-days so many shopping complexes, hotels, lodges have been introduced surrounding the pilgrimage centre.

#### Shop keepers:

To collect the data 100 shopkeepers has interviewed from different shops they have numbers of religious articles shops, cutlery shops, vessels shops, sweet marts, barbers shops, garlands and flowers shops, coconuts and poojathali shops etc. All shopkeepers state their opinion our economy is depends on pilgrims or tourist because all religious people visits this places throughout the year and we are earning sufficient money from them, because from

different part of country pilgrims are they are buying some goods or things visits in the remembrance of this place obviously it is helping to improve our economy.

#### Factor-wise level of satisfaction of Facilities at Centre:

Basic facilities are providing as like all religious places, accommodation, hotels, bungalows and lodges, Bhakta Niwas are providing but one more things they are providing common gas facilities because most of the families are visits with the family members so they cannot afford outside food and sometimes they don't like south Indian food also so they are carrying grocery and cooking materials with them and they can cook and save money also. Pilgrims are taking accommodation over here and for food they are cooking to fulfill the demand of their people. Medical and drinking water facility is good though most of the tourists are purchasing water bottle from shops. Pilgrims are facing various problems such as congestion, dirtiness, garbage disposed system, parking, sanitary facilities etc. 40% pilgrims' state their opinions that no proper drinking water facilities, no toilets, but they provide good medical facilities.

**Factor Wise Level of Satisfaction Index (Mi)**

Sr. No.	Factors	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	
1	Transportation	145	176	181	98	600
2	Accommodation	334	142	107	17	600
3	Darshan Facilities	375	94	85	46	600
4	Food	127	158	217	98	600
5	Shopping facilities	153	265	157	25	600
6	Cooking Facilities	164	162	169	105	600
7	Medical facilities	193	174	128	105	600
8	Drinking Water	160	43	157	240	600
	Average	206.37	151.72	150.12	91.75	600
	Percentage	34.39	25.28	25.01	15.29	100

Source: Data compiled by field work

The reactions were classified into four categories such as, Excellent, Good, Satisfactory and Unsatisfactory, eight factors influencing the level of satisfaction have identified. It reveals that regarding facilities provided to pilgrims are noted excellent 34.39 percent, good 25.28 percent, satisfactory 25.01 percent and unsatisfactory 15.29 percent, therefore it is observed that satisfaction of pilgrims is very high only 15.29 percent pilgrims stated that the facilities are provided to them are not satisfactory at pilgrim center.

### 3. Conclusions

As seen from the opinion of these three community groups like pilgrims, local residents and shop keepers, it's clear that huge number of pilgrims concentrated at Velankanni pilgrimage center throughout the year, due to them, number of baggers are increased in the surrounding area. During the festival or feast various facilities are provided to them at center. The factor wise satisfaction index reveals that in general the pilgrims are satisfied with the facilities but it is observed that about drinking water facility pilgrims are unsatisfied. Local government and authority should take serious note of such situation and can handle to fulfill the demand of pilgrims.

### 4. Suggestion

- During festival proper arrangement should be there.
- Pay and park facility should be started by the government it will helpful for unnecessary vehicles parking.
- To maintain the cleanliness in the surrounding area of pilgrimage center.
- National language should be used for communication it will helpful for proper guidance.

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