

# PILGRIMAGE TOURISM: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF PILGRIMS' BEHAVIOUR IN NORTH INDIA

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**Abstract** *This research paper is an attempt to study the Pilgrim's Behaviour in North India. The study covers five important pilgrim sites namely Vaishno Devi (J&K), Chintpurni/ Jwalaji (H.P.), Golden Temple (Punjab), Kurukshetra (Haryana) and Haridwar (Uttaranchal). The main behavioural aspects studied include Purpose of visit, Frequency of visit, Sources of information used, Mode of transportation used, Accommodation preferred to stay, Reason for stay at a particular place, Days of stay at the site and Total expenditure per person.*

**Keywords** *Pilgrimage, Tourism, Pilgrims' behavior*

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism today is an important factor in the world trade with international dimensions, as a component of national economics, as a contributor to receipts-expenditures and balance of payments of different countries, as a means of foreign exchange earnings, as a provider of employment, as a powerful factor of development and so forth and has been considered as the fourth dimension of modern economics. Moreover, the industry is growing at a very fast rate throughout the world.

India has very rich natural resources like geographical and cultural diversity, forests, lakes, mountains, rivers and rivulets, sacred shrines, historic monuments and hospitable people, which are necessary for thriving tourism activity (Singh, 2002). As a result, tourism growth has also been visible in Indian Scenario and the governments at centre as well as state level have started giving due importance to this industry. Further, this area of research has attracted the attentions of researchers in the recent past, both at national and international level. Few such research studies on tourism have been summarized in the next segment.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Mishra (2000) in his study evaluated the growth and prospects of pilgrimage tourism in Brajmandal. The study revealed that with the increased mobility of urban class, more and more people were coming for weekend trips in Brajmandal area. The study also highlighted the main problems by pilgrims in Brajmandal.

Singh (2002) in his paper gave a brief overview of tourism policy in India. The study concluded that India had huge potential to develop tourism but the absence of appropriate process of policy formulation and implementation seemed to be the main hurdle in tourism development.

Bar and Hatab (2003) in this study examined the present condition of tourism in Palestine by comparing unique characteristics of modern day tourism and traditional pilgrimage tourism. They highlighted five factors i.e. motives, duration, religious affiliation and social background, travellers' reaction and services used by tourists which differentiated pilgrims from tourists.

Batra (2003) in his study highlighted different Buddhist pilgrimage sites like Lumbini, Bodhgaya, Sarnath, Rajgir, Nalanda and Kushinagar situated in India. The researcher viewed that India had tremendous potential to attract a large number of tourists from Far East and South-East Asia.

Bleie (2003) in his study discussed pilgrimage tourism in central Himalayas with the help of Manakamana temple in Nepal. He highlighted that traditional ways of pilgrimage contributed to a strong religious belief towards any religious site. The study suggested that pilgrimage tourism must build on principles of sustainable tourism to overcome the cultural, developmental, conservational and commercial risk associated with it.

Poria and Airely (2003) in this study discussed the effect of religion and religiosity on tourism industry. They observed that religion had direct impact on tourists' consumption habits and their preference to choose any destination. Moreover, different religious sites represented different things with

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different meanings to different tourists and these different meanings determined the behavioural pattern of tourists towards particular religious sites.

Bahuguna (2004) in her paper made an attempt to evaluate development of tourism industry in India with the help of tenth Five Year Plan approach. She concluded that India had vast potential for different types of tourism like eco-tourism, pilgrimage tourism and health tourism which required proper planning.

Rana (2004) in his study evaluated behavioural perspective of pilgrims and tourists in Banars (Kashi). The study highlighted different factors like economic, social, cultural, job status and perspective of life to study the behaviour of tourists. The study also examined tourists' purpose of visit, accommodation used, media of information, tourist attractions, mode of transportation, expenditure and their overall impression about the selected site.

Woodward (2004) in his article made an attempt to represent religious sites as an important source of income for many countries. He opined that the income generated by religious sites could be used for repair and maintenance of those particular sites and other religious sites.

Dixit (2005) in his study examined tourism pattern in Uttarakhand. He highlighted that religious tourists, pleasure tourists, and adventure and nature lovers preferred to visit Uttarakhand. Further these tourists had different behaviour patterns regarding food, transport and accommodation. He emphasized a close coordination of public, private and local government for expanding tourists' season in Uttarakhand.

The above studies highlight the importance of tourism and especially pilgrimage tourism. India being a home of different religions having large number of world famous pilgrimage sites provides excellent opportunities for pilgrimage tourism. Due to enough sacred sites, the prospect of pilgrimage tourism in North India is very bright. However, the survey of literature on tourism has revealed that no comprehensive research work has been undertaken to study

pilgrimage tourism in North India. Hence the present study has been undertaken to study the pilgrimage tourism in north India.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The main objective of the study has been to study the behaviour of pilgrims and to obtain their opinion on some relevant aspects of pilgrimage sites. This has been done by studying Purpose of visit, Frequency of visiting, Sources of information used, Mode of transportation used, Accommodation preferred to stay, Reason for stay at a particular place, Days of stay at the site and Total expenditure per person.

The study covers five states of North India viz. Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, and Uttarakhand. From each of the above states, one pilgrimage site having importance both at national and international level has been selected for the study. The selected pilgrimage sites are as under:

1. Mata Vaishno Devi from Jammu and Kashmir.
2. Chintpurni and Jwalaji from Himachal Pradesh.
3. Golden Temple from Punjab.
4. Kurukshetra from Haryana.
5. Haridwar from Uttarakhand.

The study is based on primary data collected from 500 pilgrims (100 from each site) with the help of pretested questionnaire. The analysis of data has been done by using percentage analysis and Chi-square Test.

## DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Table 1 provides a profile of the respondents surveyed at the five selected pilgrimage sites.

**Table 1** Demographic profile of Respondents

Demographics		Pilgrimage sites.					
		Mata Vaishno Devi	Chintpurni/Jwalaji	Golden Temple	Kurukshetra	Haridwar	Total(Percentage)
Gender	Male	78	85	80	88	76	407 (81.4)
	Female	22	15	20	12	24	93 (18.6)
Age	Below 20 years	0	0	0	12	0	12 (2.4)
	20-40 years	69	33	62	42	37	243 (48.6)
	40-60 years	26	50	24	34	53	187 (37.4)
	Above 60 years	5	17	14	12	10	58 (11.6)

Annual Income(Rs.)	Below 100000	4	8	23	22	28	85 (17)
	100000-200000	46	39	36	36	44	201 (40.2)
	200000-400000	50	53	27	28	22	180 (36)
	Above 400000	0	0	14	14	6	34 (6.8)
Area	Urban	62	57	68	49	37	273 (54.6)
	Semi-urban	11	14	9	16	23	73 (14.6)
	Rural	27	29	23	35	40	154 (30.8)
Occupation	Businessman	16	20	26	5	15	82 (16.4)
	Professional	28	16	13	7	13	77 (15.4)
	Serviceman	22	29	25	29	24	128 (25.6)
	Agriculture	14	15	19	26	19	93 (18.6)
	Others	20	20	17	33	29	119 (23.8)
Qualification	Below Matriculation	14	14	18	30	16	92 (18.4)
	Matric and Under graduates	19	25	17	31	29	121 (24.2)
	Graduates	23	29	36	18	24	130 (26)
	Postgraduates	16	15	16	14	18	79 (15.8)
	Professionals	28	17	13	7	13	78 (15.6)
Type of Pilgrim	Individual	16	21	17	20	12	86 (17.2)
	Family Group	41	41	43	39	44	208 (41.6)
	Package Tour	20	17	18	14	20	89 (17.8)
	Friends Group	23	21	22	27	24	117 (23.4)
N		100	100	100	100	100	500

A view of the above table shows that out of 500 respondents, 81.4 per cent respondents are males and 18.6 per cent of the respondents are females. According to age-wise classification, 48.6 per cent of the respondents belong to age group '20-40 years', followed by age groups '40-60 years' (37.4%), above '60 years' (11.6%) and 'below 20 years' (2.4%). Respondents below 20 years have been surveyed from Kurukshetra only because a large number of children (studying in colleges and schools) visit here. Annual income-wise classification of the respondents shows that 40.2 per cent of the respondents have annual income between 'Rs.100000-200000' followed by those who have income between 'Rs. 200000-400000' (36%), 'below Rs.100000' (17%) and 'Above Rs. 400000' (6.8%). Area-wise, 54.6 per cent of the respondents are from the urban areas followed by those who are from rural (30.8%) and semi-urban (14.6%) areas. Occupation-wise classification shows that 25.6 per cent of the respondents are servicemen followed by others (23.8%), agriculturist (18.6%), businessmen (16.4%) and professionals (15.4%). Education-wise classification shows that 26 respondents are graduates followed by those respondents who are 'matric and under graduates' (24.2%), 'under matric' (18.4%), 'postgraduates' (15.8) and 'professionals' (15.6%). Pilgrim-wise, distribution of the respondents shows that 41.6 per cent of the respondents belong to 'family group', 'friends group'

(23.4%) 'package tour' (17.8%), and 'individual' (17.2%).

## BEHAVIOURAL ASPECTS OF PILGRIMS AT SELECTED SITES

### Purpose of Visit

Tourists may visit a particular place due to different motivations. In response to a query in this regard the respondents have cited pilgrimage, visiting friends/relatives, adventure and performance of rituals as the main reasons of their visit. The data so collected has been shown in Table 2.

The table reveals that pilgrimage is the main purpose behind their visit at selected sites followed by performing rituals, adventure and visiting friends. Further analysis reveals that pilgrimage remains the main purpose of visit at all the selected sites. Performance of rituals seems to be the 2<sup>nd</sup> most important purpose at Chintpurni/Jwalaji (45%), Vaishno Devi (33%) and Kurukshetra (30%). Further, 51 per cent of the respondents who have visited Golden Temple have highlighted adventure as another important purpose for visiting Amritsar. This is so because the people visiting Amritsar also prefer to visit Jalianwala Bag and Wagha

**Table 2** Purpose of Visiting Selected Sites

Purpose of Visit	Vaishno Devi	Chintpurni/Jwalaji	Golden Temple	Kurukshetra	Haridwar	Total
Pilgrimage	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)	95 (95)	92 (92)	487 (97.4)
Visiting Friends and Relatives	8 (8)	5 (5)	14 (14)	12 (12)	9 (9)	38 (7.6)
Other(Adventure)	20 (20)	-	51 (51)	-	24 (24)	95 (19)
Performing Rituals	33 (33)	45 (45)	17 (17)	30 (30)	23 (23)	148 (29.6)
Total	100	100	100	100	100	500

**Note:** Percentages are more than hundred because of multiple choices.

Border. In case of Haridwar as well almost equal number of respondents (Above 20%) have highlighted performance of rituals and adventure as the other purpose of their visit. It is worth mentioning here that presence of water bodies and small hills in vicinity provide excellent opportunities for adventure in Haridwar.

### Frequency of Visit

Table 3 reveals respondents' frequency of visiting selected sites. 49.4 per cent of the respondents have visited these sites 2-5 time followed by more than five times (26%) and once

**Table 3** Frequency of Visiting Selected Sites

Frequency of Visit	Vaishno Devi	Chintpurni/Jwalaji	Golden Temple	Kurukshetra	Haridwar	Total
Once	26 (26)	20 (20)	9 (9)	29 (29)	39 (39)	123 (24.6)
2-5 Times	54 (54)	43 (43)	64 (64)	43 (43)	43 (43)	247 (49.4)
More than 5 Times	20 (20)	37 (37)	27 (27)	28 (28)	18 (18)	130 (26)
N	100	100	100	100	100	500

Chi-square value = 35.97, d.f. = 8, Significant at 5 per cent level of significance.

**Table 4** Sources of Information Used by the Respondents

Source	Vaishno Devi	Chintpurni/Jwalaji	Golden Temple	Kurukshetra	Haridwar	Total
Religious Books	60 (60)	31 (31)	75 (75)	48 (48)	20 (20)	234 (46.8)
Magazines	27 (27)	13 (13)	9 (9)	18 (18)	7 (7)	74 (14.8)
Television	29 (29)	12 (12)	37 (37)	26 (26)	7 (7)	111 (22.2)
Friends	43 (43)	37 (37)	47 (47)	70 (70)	43 (43)	240 (48)
Parents	92 (92)	100 (100)	76 (76)	65 (65)	97 (97)	430 (86)
Internet	21 (21)	11 (11)	2 (2)	9 (9)	5 (5)	48 (9.6)
Radio	27 (27)	9 (9)	8 (8)	10 (10)	10 (10)	64 (12.8)
N	100	100	100	100	100	500

**Note:** Percentages are more than hundred because of multiple choices.

(24.6%). The sanctity attached with these places is the main reason behind pilgrims' frequent visit here. The Chi-square value at 5 per cent level of significance shows that significant behavioural differences exist among the respondents with respect to frequency of visiting at selected sites.

### Sources of information used by the respondents

To know the sources of information used by the respondents, they were asked about it. Table 4 depicts their responses.

The table shows that a large number of the respondents have got information about all the selected religious sites from their parents, friends, and religious books. Further, print media i.e. magazine and electronic media i.e. television (for Golden Temple, Vaishno Devi and Kurukshetra), internet and radio (for Vaishno Devi) are some other valuable sources of information about these places.

### Mode of Transportation Used by the Respondents

Table 5 shows the mode of transportation used by the respondents to reach the selected sites. As is evident from the table, bus (51.6%) is the most preferable mode of

transportation used by the respondents followed by train (25.4%) and own vehicle (23%). The main reason behind using bus and train to visit these places is that a large number of respondents belong to middle class. Further, Chintpurni/Jwalaji does not have train connectivity. The Chi-square value at 5 per cent level of significance shows that significant behavioural differences exist among the respondents with respect to mode of transportation used to reach the selected sites.

### Accommodation Preferred to Stay

As shown in Table 6, 65.67 per cent of the respondents like to stay in dharamsala/religious place. Further, 28.39 per cent of the respondents have preferred to stay in budget hotels followed by friends/relatives (5.92%). In Kurukshetra, number of respondents who have stayed in budget hotel is nil as a large number of dharamsalas having hotel like facilities are available for stay. The Chi-square value at 5 per cent level of significance shows that significant differences exist among the respondents with respect to accommodation preferred to stay by the respondents at such sites.

Further, as given in Table 7, easy accessibility, tariff, nearness to Gurudwara/Mandir, cleanliness, image/sanctity of the place and nearness to bus stand are the main reasons for stay at a particular accommodation at selected sites.

**Table 5** Mode of Transportation Used by the Respondents

Transport Used	Vaishno Devi	Chintpurni/Jwalaji	Golden Temple	Kurukshetra	Haridwar	Total
Bus	58 (58)	56 (56)	54 (54)	40 (40)	50 (50)	258 (51.6)
Train	35 (35)	-	26 (26)	33 (33)	33 (33)	127 (25.4)
Own Vehicles	7 (7)	44 (44)	20 (20)	27 (27)	17 (17)	115 (23)
N	100	100	100	100	100	500

Chi-square value = 70.48, d.f. = 8, Significant at 5 per cent level of significance.

**Table 6** Accommodation Preferred to Stay

Stay	Vaishno Devi	Chintpurni/Jwalaji	Golden Temple	Kurukshetra	Haridwar	Total
Dharamsala/Religious Place	51 (51)	49 (61.25)	56 (68.29)	42 (87.5)	68 (71.57)	266 (65.67)
Budget Hotel	45 (45)	31 (38.75)	21 (25.60)	-	18 (18.94)	115 (28.39)
Friends/Relatives	4 (4)	-	5 (6.09)	6 (12.5)	9 (9.47)	24 (5.92)
Total	100	80	82	48	95	405

Chi-square value = 48.04, d.f. = 8, Significant at 5 per cent level of significance.

**Table 7** Reasons for Stay at a Particular Accommodation

Reasons for Stay	Vaishno Devi	Chintpurni/Jwalaji	Golden Temple	Kurukshetra	Haridwar	Total
Tariff	77 (77)	76 (95)	14 (17.07)	39 (81.25)	60 (63.15)	266 (65.67)
Quality of Services	55 (55)	35 (43.75)	17 (20.73)	-	14 (14.73)	121 (29.87)
Cleanliness	49 (49)	44 (55)	17 (20.73)	26 (54.16)	26 (27.36)	162 (40)
Image/sanctity of the Place	43 (43)	41 (51.25)	34 (41.46)	14 (29.16)	17 (17.89)	149 (36.79)
Nearness to Bus Stand	39 (39)	26 (32.5)	-	9 (18.75)	12 (12.63)	86 (21.23)
Nearness to Mandir/Gurudwara	-	60 (75)	64 (78.04)	29 (60.41)	30 (31.57)	183 (45.18)
Easy Accessibility	86 (86)	79 (98.75)	22 (26.82)	42 (87.5)	89 (93.68)	318 (78.51)
N	100	80	82	48	95	405

**Note:** Percentages are more than hundred because of multiple choices.

### Stay Pattern of the Respondents

Regarding stay pattern of the respondents at selected sites (See Table 8), 42.6 per cent of the respondents have preferred to stay for two days followed by 3-5 days (29.6%) and one day (27.8%). In Vaishno Devi (83%) and Chintpurni/Jwalaji (43%), pilgrims stay between 3-5 days. It is worth mentioning here that Vaishno Devi and Chintpurni/Jwalaji are situated at high altitude and pilgrims come from faraway places due to popularity of these places. These facts directly affect their stay pattern. As a result the visitors have a longer stay period here as compared to other places under study. In golden temple and Haridwar between 50-60 per cent of the respondents have preferred to stay for two days. In Kurukshetra, majority of the respondents have preferred to stay for one day only as a large number of the respondents who have visited Kurukshetra generally belong

to nearby states like Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab and Himachal. Moreover, Vaishno Devi, Chintpurni/Jwalaji, Amritsar and Haridwar are the full year destinations as compared to Kurukshetra where tourism is mostly event based (e.g. Sun Eclipses and Geeta Jyanti). The Chi-square value at 5 per cent level of significance shows that significant differences exist among the respondents from various sites with respect to days preferred to stay by them at such sites.

### Expenditure Pattern of the Respondents

Tourists spend on different tourism infrastructure facilities namely transportation, food, accommodation, rituals and shopping according to their need and income. To check their expenditure pattern, the respondents were asked to specify their total average expenditure per person on the above activities during their visit to the selected site.

**Table 8** Days Preferred to Stay at Selected Sites

Total Time	Vaishno Devi	Chintpurni/Jwalaji	Golden Temple	Kurukshetra	Haridwar	Total
1 day	-	19 (19)	23 (23)	56 (56)	41 (41)	139 (27.8)
2 days	17 (17)	38 (38)	66 (66)	40 (40)	52 (52)	213 (42.6)
3-5 days	83 (83)	43 (43)	11 (11)	4 (4)	7 (7)	148 (29.6)
N	100	100	100	100	100	500

Chi-square value = 250.74, d.f. = 8, Significant at 5 per cent level of significance.

**Table 9** Total Expenditure by the Respondents

Total Expenditure	Vaishno Devi	Chintpurni/Jwalaji	Golden Temple	Kurukshetra	Haridwar	Total
Upto 1000	16 (16)	43 (43)	23 (23)	55 (55)	10 (10)	147 (29.4)
1000-2000	57 (57)	29 (29)	51 (51)	26 (26)	39 (39)	202 (40.4)
Above 2000	27 (27)	28 (28)	26 (26)	19 (19)	51 (51)	151 (30.2)
N	100	100	100	100	100	500

Chi-square value = 86.44, d.f. = 8, Significant at 5 per cent level of significance.

Table 9 reveals that 40.4 per cent of the respondents have spent between Rs. 1000-2000 per person followed by those who have spent Rs. above 2000 (30.2%) and upto Rs. 1000 (29.4%). Place wise, the table highlights that above 50 per cent of the respondents from Vaishno Devi and Golden Temple have spent between Rs. 1000-2000 whereas in Haridwar 51 per cent of the respondents have spent above Rs. 2000. However, in Chintpurni/Jwalaji and Kurukshetra 40-55 per cent of the respondents have spent up to Rs. 1000 only. The Chi-square value at 5 per cent level of significance shows that significant differences exist among the respondents with respect to their pattern of expenditure while visiting the selected sites.

## Suggestions

Though large number of basic tourism infrastructure facilities are provided by concerned state government and management bodies but after studying the behavioral aspects of pilgrims/tourists visiting these sites, certain areas which need improvement are clearly visible. The main suggestions to improve tourism at these sites are as under:

- Pilgrimage is the main purpose of the respondents who have visited these selected sites. Among the selected sites, kurukshetra needs to be developed as a full time destination.
- Parents, religious books and friends are the main source of information about these places. Thus availability of books having authentic and complete information can be useful. Further, Internet which seems to be the modern way of communication can be promoted to encourage tourism. This requires updating of sites at regular intervals.
- To visit these selected places, bus and train are the main mode of transportation used by the respondents. However during festivals, the visitors face inconvenience due to overcrowding. To overcome this problem, more buses and trains are needed especially during festivals. Further, comfort and fare must be bal-

anced keeping in view the income levels of visitors.

- Dharamsalas are the most preferred place to stay at religious places followed by budget hotels. But during festivals dharamsalas become overcrowded and people face problems to find accommodation. So to overcome this problem more accommodation with better basic facilities and with low tariff must be constructed by the tourism departments with the help of state government and managements of religious sites. Further, such accommodations should be nearer to the religious sites to avoid inconveniences to the pilgrims.
- An average stay period at selected places is between 2-5 days. By developing some other tourist attractions (religious or adventurous) near these pilgrimsites, this period can be increased.
- As pilgrims like to visit the selected sites again and again due to sanctity attached with such sites, every positive experience is likely to increase their frequency of visit. Thus these places should have proper infrastructure and should be properly managed.

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