

Religious Tourism in and Around Pune City: New Emerging Trend

Priyanka Tushar Rembhotkar*, Honey Vikalp Tyagi**

Abstract

Religious tourism refers to travel that is primarily done with the intention of experiencing a religion's nature or the byproducts it creates, such as the local art, civilisation, customs, and architecture. Religious tourism in India has two distinct characteristics: first, there is the faith of the domestic tourist, who has a spiritual connection to the deity/destination and their religious beliefs; second, there is the category of "foreign" tourist, who is someone who belongs to a different religion or region, and for whom the tourist destination and the religious practises have the element of "novelty," or a spiritual experience different from their own. The hospitality and tourist industries gain from and contribute to religious tourism. Furthermore, Indians who live overseas are choosing to travel to their place of origin for their vacations. The development of infrastructure facilities at the destination is made possible by tourism, which also helps generate sustainable income for the local community and the government, supports regional development strategies through the "umbrella" effect, and fosters peace and socio-cultural harmony. But in order to manage and prevent the negative effects, tourist development needs to be regulated across every area. Due to its complexity, which includes aspects of the economy, ecology, culture, and psychology, tourism is regarded to be of utmost importance for development. It is also acknowledged as one of the biggest industries in the world, contributing significantly to the GDP, and it has a huge potential for future expansion. As a result, "Sustainable religious tourism development" is now crucial for both wealthy and developing nations. Given the presence of basic infrastructure and the variety of tourist themes offered by diverse places in Maharashtra, there is a significant potential for expansion in the tourism industry. Maharashtra has a storied past and vibrant culture. In the following paper, we are attempting to concentrate on Pune, a location for both established and developing religious tourism.

Keywords: Religious Tourism, Historical Sites, Economic Impact, Cultural Heritage, Tourism Development

INTRODUCTION

Numerous religions are practised in India. Most people practise Jainism, Buddhism, Islam, Sikhism, Hinduism, and Christianity. Throughout the year, Indians celebrate a variety of holidays including Diwali, Holi, Id, Christmas, etc. People climb all types of geographical terrain with unwavering trust in their hearts to reach areas of religious tourism in order to seek the blessings of God. Whether they are climbing steep mountains or deep valleys, they do so with unwavering faith and simply the desire to seek the god's blessings. People are not bothered by waiting in line for hours to see the local deity. These religious sites are now more popular with tourists than only pilgrims as a result of the times we live in. Worshippers want to go in comfort and safety. They view the security of their food, lodging, and health as an essential component of their pilgrimage, so in order to meet their needs and demands, business organisations, individuals, organisations, and even the government have begun to play a significant role in providing services to the pilgrims, resulting in the growth of a sizable sector for religious tourism. The World Tourism Organisation estimates that between 300 and 330 million pilgrims travel to the major destinations throughout the globe each year. Religious tourism is crucial to India's development because it is one of the countries with the largest religious diversity. Religious tourism refers to visiting a site of worship with the aim of receiving blessings from the god as well as just for the enjoyment of travelling, taking in the art, culture, traditions, and architecture. Traveling to locations or taking part in activities that have a religious or spiritual value is referred to as religious tourism. The tourism industry can come under fire for adhering to so

* Assistant Professor, AISSMS College of Hotel Management & Catering Technology, Pune, Maharashtra, India.

** Assistant Professor, AISSMS College of Hotel Management & Catering Technology, Pune, Maharashtra, India.
Email: honeyrajputtyagi@gmail.com

many strict religions, such as Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and others. The travel industry is a fundamental part of many people's rigid routines and is typically pursued for important societal objectives. Additionally, there may be substantial effects on the local economy and the maintenance of social legacies (Shyamala, 2016).

Maharashtra, one of the biggest and most populated states in India, is home to several holy sites that symbolise different religions and customs. Many of these religious locations have tourist infrastructure built around them by the state, enabling exploration and travel by pilgrims and tourists simpler. Maharashtra's religious tourism allows visitors the chance to immerse themselves in the state's rich cultural heritage, traditions, and rituals in addition to giving them a look into its spiritual and religious aspects. In conclusion, Maharashtra's religious tourism is a fusion of history, spirituality, and cultural diversity, which makes it an alluring destination for tourists looking to explore and experience the state's rich religious legacy.

One of India's eight megacities, Pune is the second-largest and the most rapidly expanding metropolis in the state of Maharashtra. Pune has earned the nicknames "Oxford of the East," "Queen of the Deccan," "Pensioner's City," "Cycle City," and "Detroit of India." Pune has a rich cultural and religious heritage and was crucial in pre-independence India. Following independence, the city concentrated on expanding its economy. Pune is referred to as the "cultural capital of Maharashtra" because of its illustrious past. Pune began making significant investments in the manufacturing and information technology sectors with the implementation of an economic liberalisation policy in the 1990s, and it eventually established itself as a centre for both these sectors. For the purpose of creating sustainable urban planning and management, the historical context is crucial. Understanding historical urban expansion will aid in making more accurate predictions of future urban growth and its effects on all future human activities (Mundhe, 2017).

The travel industry in Pune city is a significant source of income, as it attracts many tourists every year. Pune offers a range of attractions and experiences, making it a popular destination for both domestic and international travellers. Here are the key aspects of tourism in Pune (Shinde A. S., 2017).

- *Historical Sites:* Pune is home to several historical sites that offer insights into the city's rich history

and heritage. Some notable sites include the Aga Khan Castle, Shaniwar Wada, and Sinhagad Fort.

- *Educational Institutions:* Pune is renowned for its prestigious educational institutions, such as the University of Pune, Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), and National Defence Academy (NDA). Many students from India and abroad come to Pune for their education, contributing to the city's tourism.
- *Food and Nightlife:* Pune is known for its vibrant food and nightlife scene. The city has a variety of restaurants and cafes offering local and international cuisine. Additionally, there are numerous bars, pubs, and clubs that provide an exciting nightlife experience.
- *Adventure Tourism:* Pune is surrounded by the Sahyadri mountain range, offering ample opportunities for adventure tourism. Activities like hiking, camping, and rappelling are popular among tourists seeking outdoor adventures.
- *Religious Tourism:* Pune is also famous for its pilgrim sites and has a very rich background of culture and religion. Destinations which are famous for religious tourism in and around Pune city are: Shreemant Dagdusheth Halwai Ganpati, Pataleshwar Caves, Alandi, Jejuri, Ozar, Bhuleshwar, Chaturshringi, Ranjangoan Ganpati, Sarasbaug Ganpati, Jogeshwari Temple Kasba Ganpati, Balaji Ketkawla Mandir.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- *Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage: A review by Dallen and Boydell (2018):* With an emphasis on the various forms and motivations of religious travel, this review paper examines the concepts of religious tourism and pilgrimage. The authors also look at the effects of religious travel and pilgrimage on the economy, society, and culture.
- *Marketing and Branding Strategies for Religious Tourism Destinations: A review by Mohd and Hossain (2018):* In this study of the literature, destination branding, social media, and online marketing are highlighted as important marketing and branding tactics for promoting religious tourism destinations. The authors also cover the difficulties and possibilities faced by religious tourism marketers.

- *The Impact of Religious Tourism on Local Communities: A review of the literature by Novelli and Scarles (2018)*: The social and cultural effects of religious travel on local communities are examined in this review article, besides concerns of identity, authenticity, and community empowerment. The importance of programs for community-based tourism that involve and enrich locals is also covered by the authors.
- *Religious Tourism and Peacebuilding: A review of the literature by Brouder and Teixeira (2019)*: This literature review explores the possible contribution of religious travel to the promotion of peace and amity in conflict-affected areas.
- *The Economic Impact of Religious Tourism: A case study of India by Singh and Sarker (2017)*: The Hindu pilgrimage centers of Haridwar and Rishikesh are the subject of this study's analysis of the economic effects of religious tourism in India. The authors discovered that religious tourism makes a substantial economic contribution to the region, providing revenue and job opportunities for people in the area.
- *Environmental Impacts of Religious Tourism: A case study of the Holy Land by Gursoy and Kendall (2016)*: In order to better understand how religious travel affects the environment in the Holy Land, this study focuses on how tourist activities damage ecosystems and natural resources. If not handled responsibly, the authors discovered that religious tourism can have serious adverse environmental effects.
- *Religious Tourism and Cultural Heritage Preservation: A case study of Egypt by Saad and Abou Elnasr (2018)*: With a concentrate on the function of government agencies and local communities in preserving cultural heritage, this study analyses the connection between religious tourism and cultural heritage preservation in Egypt. The researchers discovered that sustainable tourism techniques can support both economic growth and cultural heritage preservation.
- *The Role of Infrastructure in Religious Tourism Development: A case study of Israel by Golan and Kacen (2019)*: With a focus on the development of transportation and lodging facilities, this study investigates the function of infrastructure development in fostering religious tourism in Israel. According to the authors, having a sufficient infrastructure is essential for the expansion of religious tourism and can assist to address issues like overcrowding and environmental deterioration. Initiatives for dialogue, cultural exchange, and conflict transformation.
- *Potential of Religious Tourism in Satara Tehsil – A Geographical Perspective: A Research Paper by Dr. Arjun Gena Ohal (2021)*: This study looks at how we might consider places that are culturally rich and have a lot of historical relevance in terms of religion and other factors. Additionally, it describes how the potentials of the specific areas can be developed while still making a significant economic contribution.
- *Reframing the Intersections of Pilgrimage, Religious Tourism and Sustainability: A Research Paper by Kiran A. Shinde and Daniel H. Olsen (2022)*: This study demonstrates how pilgrims and holy sites need sustainability to fully experience contemporary religious travel. It also demonstrates how people are addressing the study of sustainability in religious tourism and pilgrimage. The author has made an effort to show how sustainability models can be used to preserve and revitalize pilgrimage sites and prevent them from reaching a degree of stagnation after a given amount of time. The author makes the case that sustainability should be redefined as a place's capacity to maintain its sacredness or sense of place.
- *Analytical Study of Different Aspects of Spirituality among the citizens of Pune city: Ms. Manjusha Wadekar and Ms. Rajeshree Gokhale (2020)*: This study shows the various factors that drove people's tendency toward spirituality and mental serenity in Pune. The aim of the study was to determine how differently Pune city people viewed the idea of spirituality and to identify any patterns across various spiritual trends and practices.
- *Pilgrimage and the environment: Challenges in a pilgrimage centre in Maharashtra, India: Ms. Priyanka Patange, Srinithivihahsini N., Mahajan D. M. (2013)*: This study highlights the challenges which are faced by the travellers at Pilgrimage centers in Maharashtra. From Pune City, Alandi has been focused which attracts millions of tourists every year from all over as the deity is popular for its 'Wish fulfilling power.' Issues like Environmental

challenges, lack of infrastructure and inadequate amenities has been observed due to afflux of pilgrims and tourists.

- *A Geographical Analysis of Major Tourist Attraction in Pune District, Maharashtra State - International Journal of Researches in Social Sciences and Information Studies by Mr. Amol S. Shinde – 2017*) – The study highlights the analysis Pune city and its major tourist attraction. The aim is to highlight the places in study area and to review the progress of tourism related works in study area.

NEED OF THE STUDY

- *Determining the Potential of the Travel Industry Pertaining to Religious Tourism:* The review can help in understanding the potential of the religious travel business in Pune and the surrounding areas. The experts in the travel industry and organizations may find this information useful in developing targeted marketing strategies to entice more tourists.
- *Identifying Well-Known Challenges:* The review can help in identifying the challenges to the tourism sector in Pune and the surrounding areas. To generate and strengthen these concerns and entice more travellers, this information can be used.
- *Developing the Framework Further:* The review may include the need to strengthen the foundation in the notable objections. This can include improved transportation options, comforts, and conveniences to make the complaints convert into appraisalment.
- *Increasing the Local Economy:* Regulations in the travel sector related to Religious Tourism may have a significant impact on the local economy. The study can help you identify strategies for assisting local networks and organizations to benefit from the travel sector.
- *Why Preserving Social Legacies:* Many of the objections in and around Pune are historical and politically significant. The review can help with identifying strategies for preserving these places and their social legacies for future generations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

An extensive survey of people of all ages was conducted to collate the numerous activities used by tourism

locations in Pune and the surrounding area. On the basis of this survey, feedback was gathered after these methods were implemented in the form of questionnaires. This study was specifically conducted to assess the potential for growth in religious tourism. To comprehend the difficulties and client perspectives.

Primary data were used in the investigation.

- *Questionnaire* - By using a basic random sampling technique, questionnaires were given out to 150 – 200 people in a range of age groups. 121 responses were received from various age groups. The tourists that participated in this survey had a range of strengths, weaknesses, and preferences.
- *Secondary Data* - In order to comprehend, support, and validate the main facts, conceptions, theories, roles, functions, concerns, challenges, problems, and prospects of weekend tourism, as well as visitor expectations and experiences, secondary data were gathered from both published and unpublished sources. National and international journals, books, periodicals, databases, newspapers, pamphlets, brochures, tourist reports from the State and Central Governments, World Travel and tourist Council reports. These secondary sources included information and data about the beginnings, development, expansion, and recent advancements of the tourism sector, as well as about domestic and religious travel, visitor expectations, experiences, and satisfaction.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

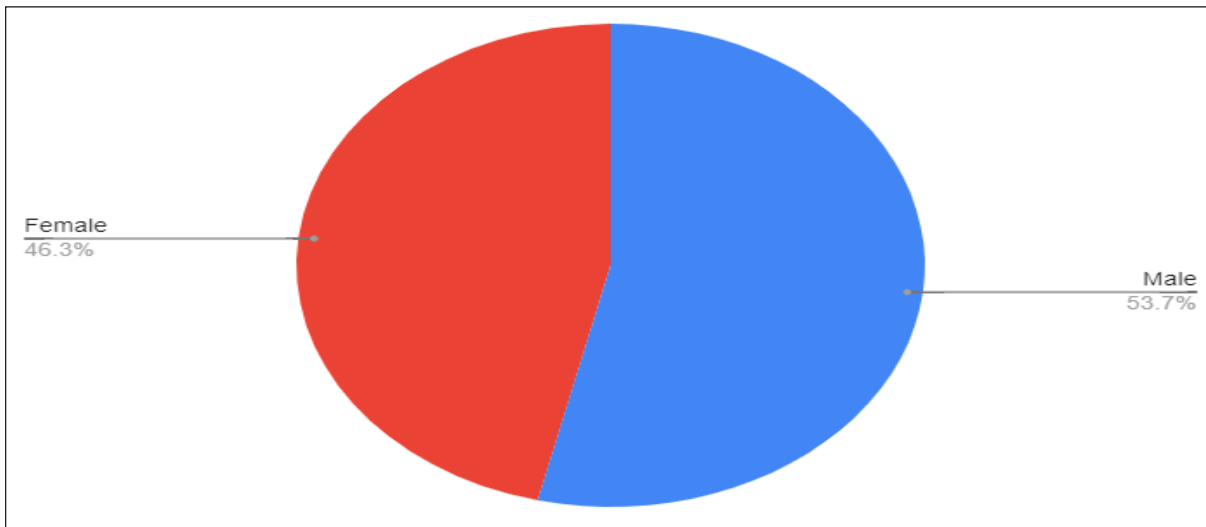
- To identify well-known Travel destinations in and around Pune city of Religious Tourism.
- To study Religious Tourism as a growing trend in various age groups, as well as the purpose of visits in and around Pune city.
- To identify the challenges and opportunities for travellers in Religious Tourism in and around Pune city.

HYPOTHESIS

H1 - The marketing and promotion strategies employed by religious tourism destinations significantly impact the number of visitors in Pune.

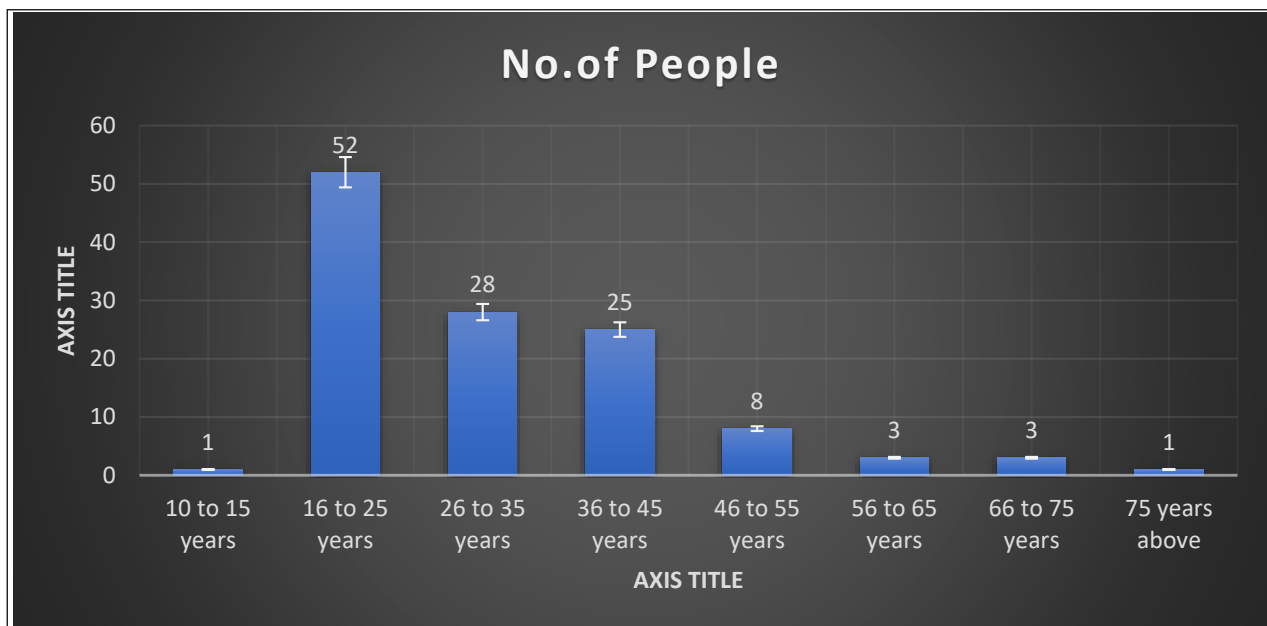
DATA ANALYSIS

GENDER



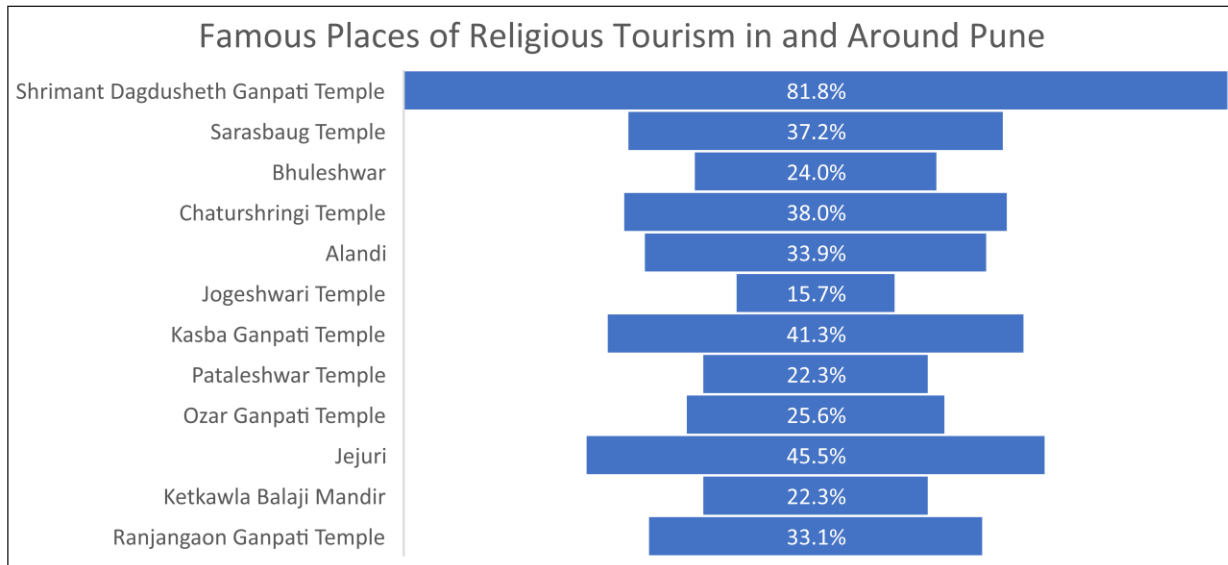
The Pie Chart above illustrates the gender composition of the respondents. It is seen that 46.3% Females has responded and 53.7% Males has responded on the questionnaire.

AGE



Responses were received from age groups 16 to 25 (43%), 26 to 35 (23%), 36 to 45 (21%) and other age groups (5-7%) on average.

Famous Options of Places for Religious Tourism in Pune City



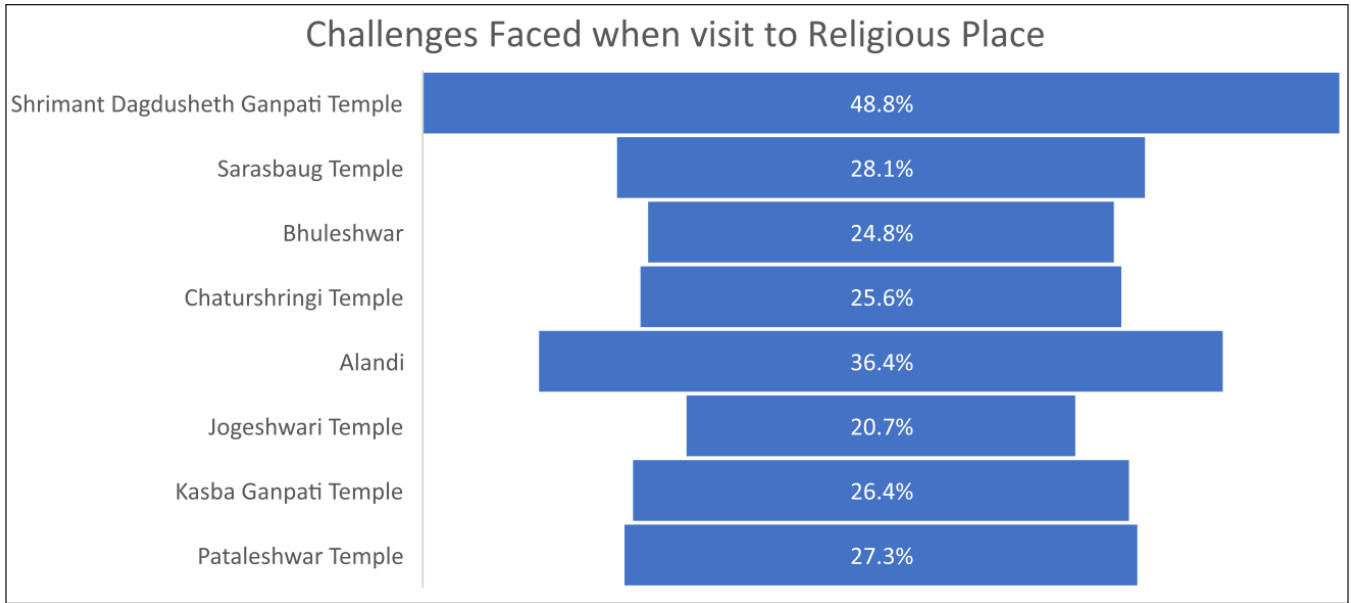
According to the data presented above, 121 people showed their choice for visiting religious sites in and around Pune. People prefer to attend Shremant Dagdushet Ganpati

(81.8%), whereas Jogeshwari Temple (15.7%) is the least preferred.



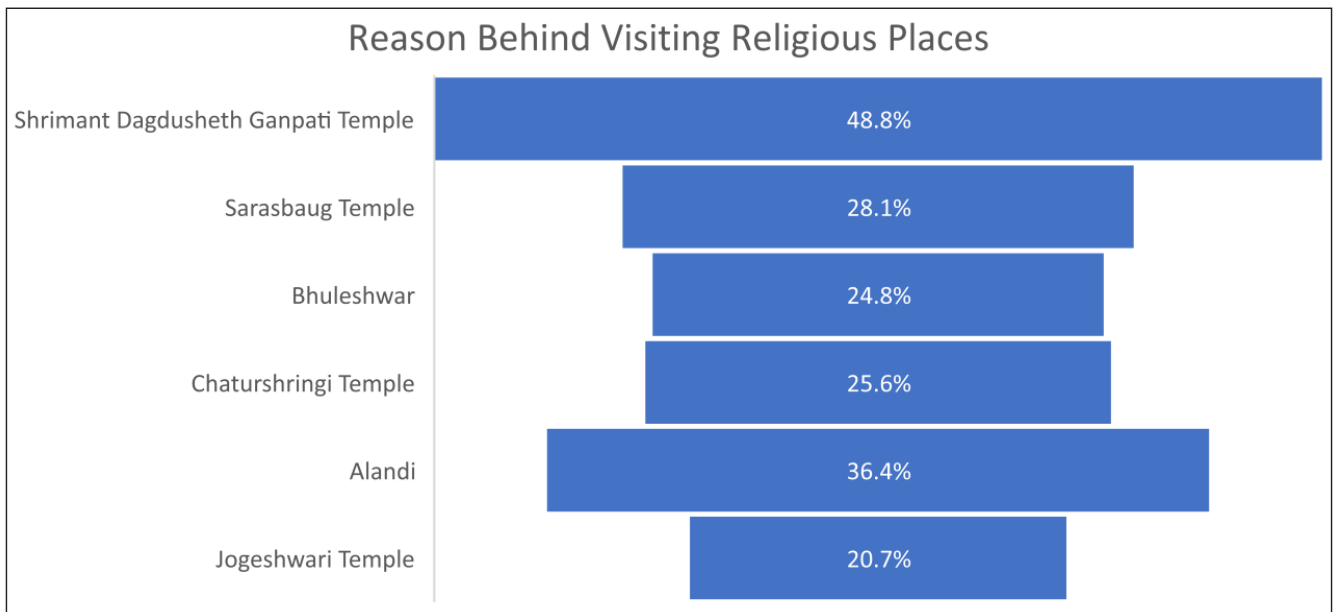
According to the pie chart, (38.8%) of people visit religious sites once a year, (24%) once a month, (22.3%) once every six months, (10.7%) once a week, and (4.1%) every day. According to the research shown above, people spend less time getting to holy sites than they do on leisurely excursions. However, it also asserts that a

huge number of individuals make the effort to visit their religious deity's shrine once a month or once every six months to show respect and to keep their lives in perfect harmony. The data also provides information regarding weekly and daily visitors, but in extremely restricted numbers.



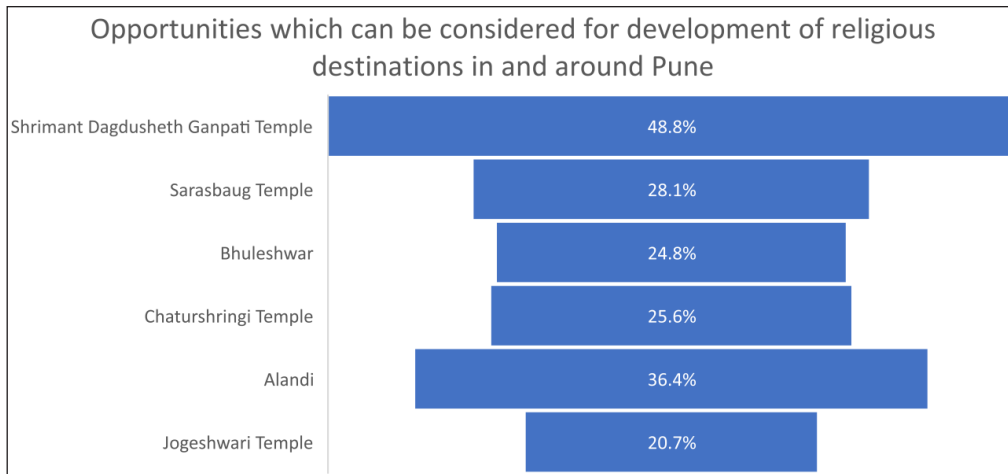
According to the study, the two most common challenges encountered by tourists visiting religious places, particularly those in and around Pune City, are congestion (74.4%) and parking availability (66.9%). Because

restrooms are required for all age groups, both men and women encounter this problem. Along with the previously mentioned concerns, safety and security are viewed as barriers to frequent visits to religious sites.



According to the data gathered above, 67.8% of individuals visit places of worship to express their beliefs and improve their spirituality, while (57.9%) of people

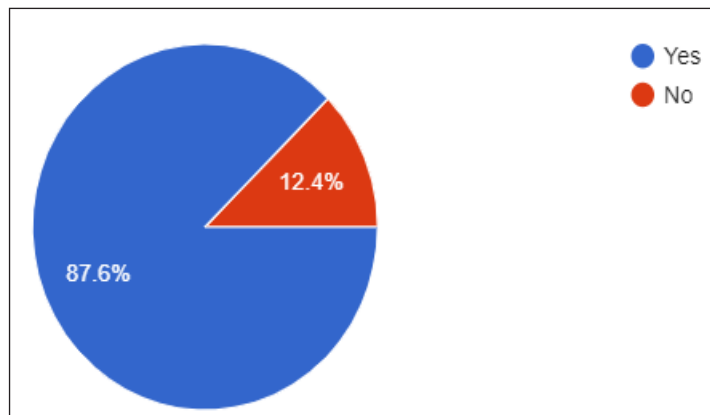
have been observed visiting religious sites to escape their daily routines and achieve peace of mind.



Respondents (71.9%) believe that religious groups in Pune should educate the public about culture and customs to benefit future generations, whereas respondents (21.5%)

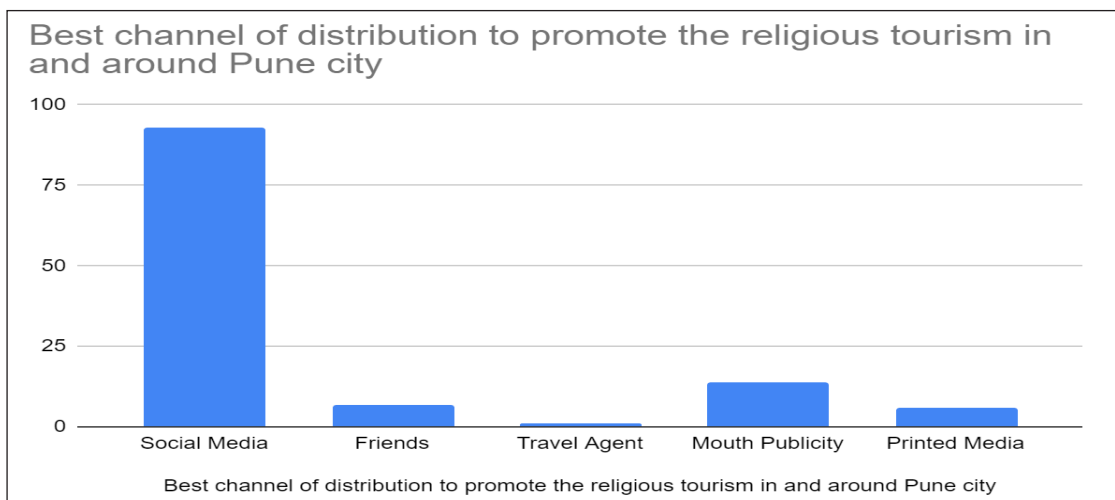
believe that local employment opportunities should be provided.

As per your opinion can Pune city is 1 of the emerging destination for Religious Tourism?



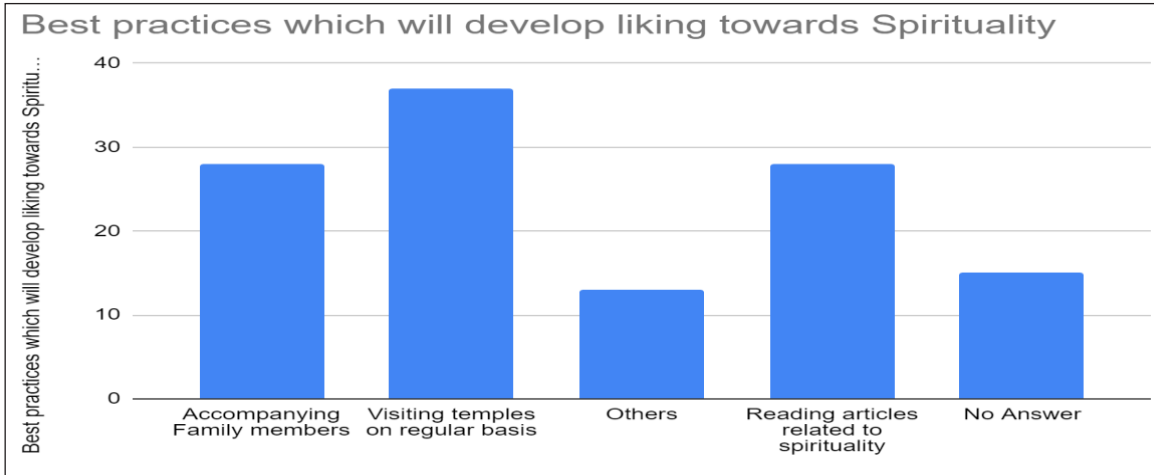
According to the data gathered, respondents of all ages believe Pune would be regarded as a new growing destination for well-known religious sites. According to (87.6%), Pune is one of the newest places where pilgrims go to pray and pay their respects. Such places

are common, and they include the historical, cultural, and wish-fulfilling context that causes people to prostrate themselves before God. (12.4%) feel that it is more involved in other tourism-related industries.



According to the data acquired, the respondents (76.9%) believe that social media is currently the most important factor for fostering religious tourism in Pune and the surrounding area. Travel agency received the fewest

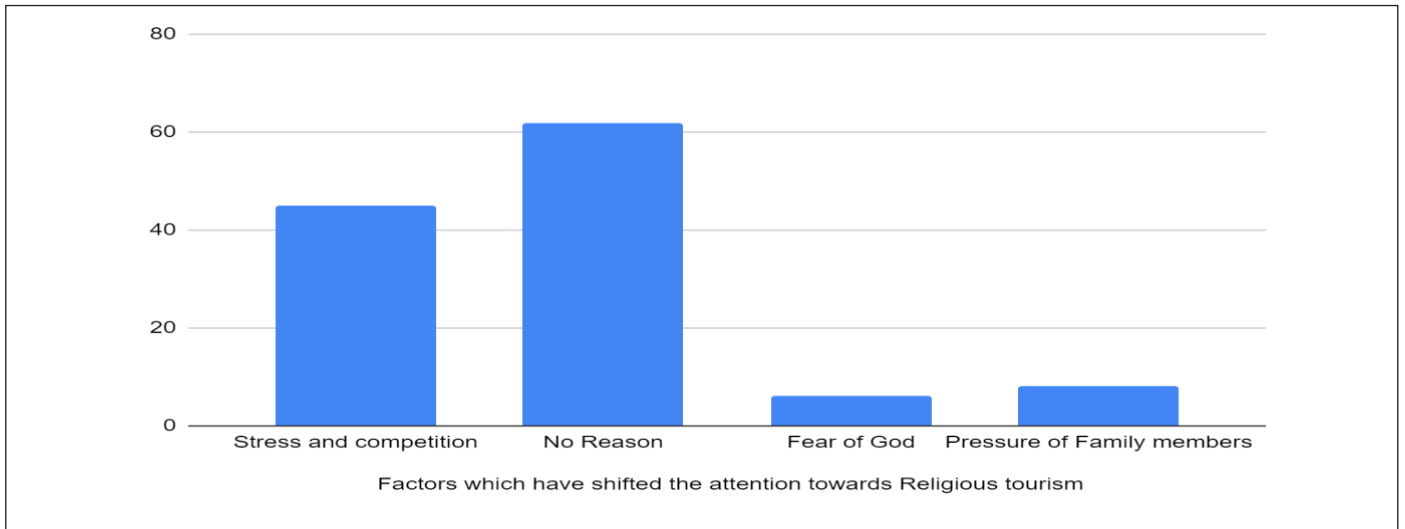
votes since, generally speaking, their contributions tend to promote other aspects of tourism more than religious tourism.



According to the data gathered, 30.6% of respondents believe that frequenting temples will cause individuals to lean more towards spirituality. (23.1%) believes it will be easier to acquire an appreciation for spirituality if you read spirituality-related material and spend time with your family. (10.7%) of respondents believe that

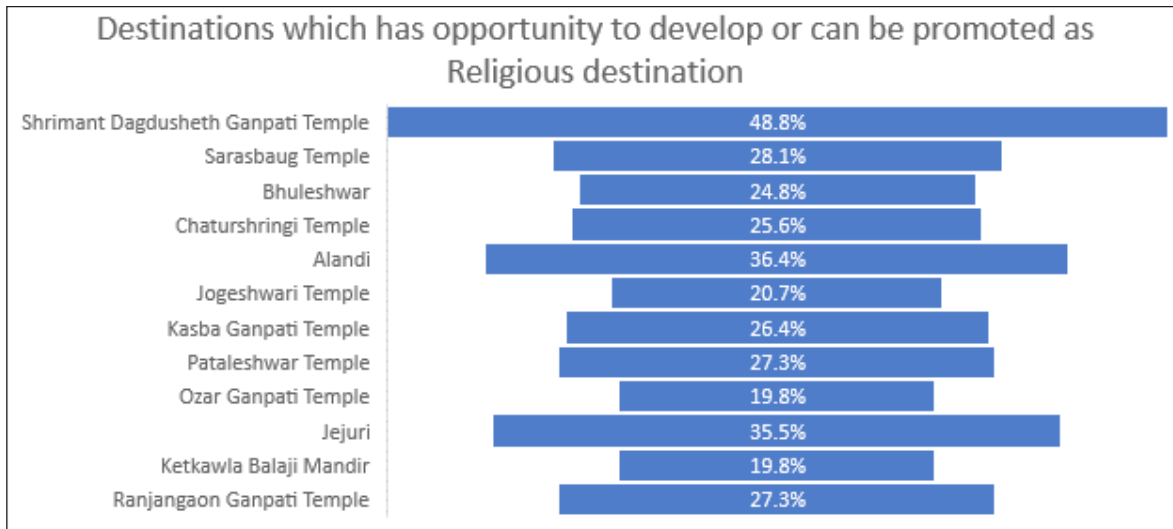
there are more variables at play, such as word-of-mouth advertising, community dominance, excessive religious influences, etc.

Opinions for the factors which have shifted the attention towards religious tourism.



According to the data above, (51.2%) of respondents claim that there is not a specific cause for the trend towards religious tourism. (6%) People believe that the

least important characteristic that may be used to explain a person's propensity for religious travel is their fear of God.



Despite being one of the well-known tourist locations, Shreemant Dagdusheth Temple, according to the data gathered (48.8%), has further potential for growth. Ozar Ganpati and Ketkawla Balaji Mandir received the least votes (19.8%).

FINDINGS

As per the data collection and the responses received from the people in and around Pune city certain findings were made.

Numerous of these holy places are rich in history and culture, which enhances the entire experience for visitors interested in the area's legacy. Pune's religious tourism industry serves both travellers interested in discovering the city's rich religious and cultural legacy and pilgrims in search of enlightening encounters. Visitors can discover the spiritual and historical facets of this thriving region through religious tourism in and around Pune city, which offers a rich and diversified cultural experience. By incorporating sustainability into religious travel in Pune, it is feasible to achieve a balance between the spiritual and the natural, allowing visitors to take in the region's religious and cultural significance while safeguarding it for future generations. Religious tourism in and around Pune city continue to grow and diversify, offering one-of-a-kind and enriching experiences for a wide spectrum of visitors, by utilizing these chances and adjusting to new trends.

As per the interpretation destinations which have more scope to develop themselves as religious tourism destinations in and around Pune are also there and in spite of being famous still people thinks that there certain

changes or implementations needs to be done so that they can be well maintained and people will start getting attracted towards that destination.

People opinion on diverting their mind to visit religious place do not have any specific reason but because of the current situation on the society and competition in every aspect personally and professionally people think and incline towards visiting religious places to attain peace of mind.

CONCLUSION

Pune city exemplifies the region's unique fabric of history, culture, and spirituality. Pune is a unique destination for religious tourism due to its broad array of holy spots that cater to both the culturally curious traveller and the pilgrim seeking meaningful experiences. Integrating sustainability into religious travel practices is a forward-thinking method that strikes a harmonic balance between the spiritual and the natural, assuring the preservation of this cultural heritage for future generations. As the religious tourism business in Pune grows and diversifies, stakeholders have a clear opportunity to embrace these trends and provide visitors with an ever-changing assortment of engaging experiences. Pune has the ability to cement its position as a vibrant and sought-after destination for spiritual and cultural development.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- Only data obtained through the survey's restricted parameters were used in the study.

- The research was relevant to the state of the market. In light of the insights, knowledge, and prophesies of the responses are contingent on time, status, and other variables circumstances and mentality.
- The report also considers the boom and needs of the today's religious tourism and how it differs if there is a change in the climate or demography.

SUGGESTIONS

To further enhance the religious tourism industry in Pune, the following suggestions can be considered:

- *Marketing and Promotion:* Implement effective marketing strategies to promote Pune as a religious tourist destination. This can include digital marketing campaigns, collaborations with travel agencies, and participation in travel fairs and exhibitions.
- *Infrastructure Development:* Improve tourism-related infrastructure such as transportation, accommodation, and tourist facilities. This will ensure a comfortable and convenient experience for visitors.
- *Tourist Information Centres:* Set up well-equipped tourist information centers at key locations in Pune to provide visitors with information, maps, and assistance. These centers can also offer guided tours and promote local religious attractions.
- *Heritage Conservation:* Preserve and maintain well-known religious sites and landmarks to protect Pune's rich cultural heritage. This can be done through regular maintenance, restoration projects, and awareness campaigns.
- *Community Involvement:* Involve local communities in tourism initiatives, such as promoting homestays, local handicrafts, and cultural events. This will not only benefit the local economy but also provide an authentic experience for tourists.
- *Sustainable Practices:* Strict guidelines for rubbish disposal, the prohibition of disposing of anything relating to the gods in rivers or other bodies of water, and awareness of the environmental harm caused by superstitions.

By implementing these suggestions, Pune can further develop its tourism industry and attract more visitors, boosting the local economy and promoting its unique cultural heritage.

REFERENCES

- Patange, P., Srinithivihahsini, N. D., & Mahajan, D. (2013). Pilgrimage and the environment challenges in a pilgrimage centre in Maharashtra, India. *International Journal on Environmental Sciences*.
- Shyamala, G., & Kakati, S. (2016). A study of religious tourism – Potential possibilities with reference to Shirdi A place of Religious Tourism. *Online International Interdisciplinary Research Journal*, 115-124.
- Mundhe, N., & Gajbhiye, R. J. (2017). *International Journal of Environment Ecology, Family and Urban Studies*.
- Shinde, A. S. (2017). *International Journal of Researches in Social Sciences and Information Studies*.
- Shinde, K. A. (2018). Governance and management of religious tourism in India. *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*, 58-71.
- Shinde, K. (2018). Governance and Management of Religious Tourism in India.
- Bhonsale, M. (2019). Strengthening India's outreach to Southeast Asia. Report No. 97.
- Sharma, T. (2019). Prospects of religious tourism in India, 358-367.
- Selvam, K. (2019). Potentials, problems and prospects of religious tourism in Puducherry (UT), 1-15.
- Wadekar, M., & Gokhale, R. (2020). Analytical study of different aspects of Spirituality among the citizens of Pune city.
- India Tourism Statistics. (2021). Government of India Ministry of Tourism Market Research Division.
- Ohal, A. G. (2021). A research paper by potential of religious tourism in Satara Tehsil – A geographical perspective.
- Shinde, K. A., & Olsen, D. H. (2022). A research paper by reframing the intersections of pilgrimage, religious tourism and sustainability.