

IMPACTS OF SABARIMALA PILGRIMAGE IN THE INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

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Abstract

Today, tourism is Kerala's booming industry and one of the fastest growing, high income and employment generating sector. Constant efforts are on to promote Kerala abroad and marketing strategies are being evolved along with new and exciting tourism products. The state department of tourism along with private entrepreneurs is taking steps to improve the facilities and infrastructure at places with tourism potential. The development of tourism anywhere very much relies on the development of appropriate infrastructure, which services the needs of a tourist and encourages investment in the sector. Infrastructure such as accommodation, restaurants, built-up attractions, tours and transport are primarily developed by the private sector.

Introduction

Pilgrimage tourism is being recognized as a prime industry in most parts of the world for the purpose of earning maximum foreign exchange. Social significance of pilgrimage tourism cannot be said of less importance. Pilgrimages are not only a destination only for our religious faith but they also strengthen the economic development of the country. On domestic front religious tourism can be very helpful for regional development, employment generation, and can enroot again the cultural values.

Kerala, one of the smallest states of India, is host of a large number of temples, mosques, churches and several other places of worship. According to the Press Trust of India (PTI), it will soon become global pilgrim tourism centre. A pilgrim tour "Darshan Yatra" is decided to be launched by the Kerala Government in order to attract more tourists to the state. Pilgrim Destinations of one's choice can be selected from this special package designed by the State Tourism Department. Kerala is very famous for its pilgrimage options. Most of the religious sites are deep-rooted with shades of strong myths, legends and many do have long historical tales of more than 1000 years to tell. Finding a temple, church or mosque is not a difficult thing, as its almost present in every nook and corner.

Sabarimala a famous pilgrimage destination of Kerala, situated in the Pathanamthitta district, in the Valley of Sahyadri Mountains is a prominent holy place in Kerala. The hill shrine of Sabarimala is located in the forest abode of Lord Ayyappa in the Western Ghats of India. This temple has its own unique significance due to which devotees come in huge numbers to get the glimpse of Lord Ayyappa. Sabarimala is about 3000 feet above sea level, to come here symbolizes the journey of heaven, the route to Sabarimala is very adventurous and difficult. The shrine gets thronged with devotees especially

during the main pilgrim season from November to January. The two main events are Mandalapooja (Nov 15th) and Makarvilakku (Jan 14th). Other time the temple remains closed for the rest of the year, except during the first five days of every Malayalam month and during Vishu (April). The unique feature of this shrine is here there are no restrictions like in other temples on the basis of caste and creed.

Significance of the study

The development of tourism anywhere very much relies on the development of appropriate infrastructure, which services the needs of a tourist and encourages investment in the sector. Infrastructure such as accommodation, restaurants, built-up attractions, tours and transport are primarily developed by the private sector. Private investors would be unwilling to invest in tourism facilities, however, without good airport and road infrastructure and the availability of affordable basic services such as power, water, sewerage, electricity, health facilities and telecommunications, which together make tourism investments economically viable.

The Government identified infrastructure as a major stimulus to achieve the economic development through tourism. Road infrastructure is vitally important for the dispersal of tourists beyond major gateways. If we want to continue to grow tourism and in particular pilgrim tourism in Sabarimala, infrastructure is one area that needs urgent attention. It is also require new investment in road construction and improvements, along with the development of effective signage, roadside rest areas, maps and co-operative marketing between local businesses and government. The maintenance of existing transportation facilities to prolong their use and repair potholes should be a continuous program rather than on a need basis. Appropriate airport infrastructure is a basic requirement to attract suitable airline services. Long, slow-moving security queues and poor ambience are among the key gripes by foreign tourists at airports. The private sector will invest in the tourism infrastructure required to service visitors, such as accommodation, attractions, tour product and restaurants, if basic public infrastructure is provided.

Objectives of the study:

The major objectives of the study are;

1. To find out the major infrastructure developmental factors regarding the impacts of pilgrim tourism.
2. To study about the effects of Sabarimala pilgrimage in the infrastructure development in local community.
3. To identify the major areas of improvement in the infrastructure development to strengthen the Sabarimala pilgrimage

Hypothesis:

Ho; There is no impacts of pilgrim tourism in the infrastructure development of the local community
H1; There is an impacts of pilgrim tourism in the infrastructure development of the local community.

Sampling and Data Collection

This research is empirical in nature and the samples are selected on simple random sampling method. The area selected for the study is Erumely local community, which is the most affected locality of Sabarimala pilgrimage. The sample selected for the study is 50. The structured Questionnaire method is used to collect the data from the resepondents.

Tools and Techniques used for the study

- Percentage analysis is done to identify the major infrastructural developmental factors regarding Sabarimala pilgrimage
- Hypothesis testing is used to find out the impacts of pilgrim tourism in the infrastructure development of the local community

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The following are the details of analysis regarding the impacts of sabarimala pilgrimage in the infrastructure development in the local community.

I. Personal Details regarding respondents**Table No.1****Personal Details regarding respondents**

Personal Characteristics	Description	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Region	Semi-urban	34	68
	Rural	16	32
	Total	50	100
Gender	Male	38	76
	Female	12	24
	Total	50	100
Age	below 30 Years	6	12
	31-45 Years	16	32
	46 - 60 Years	17	34
	Above 60 years	11	22
	Total	50	100
Education	School	15	30
	Pre-degree	18	20
	Degree	13	42
	PG & Above	4	8
	Total	50	100

(Source: Primary data)

The above table shows that the major respondents are males, from the semi-urban areas. The majority of the respondents come under in the age limit of 30- 60 range. Most of the respondents are under graduates.

II. Rating of the tourism infrastructure facilities in local community by the impact of Sabarimala pilgrimage

There are six major variables are considered for analyzing the infrastructure development of the Erumely local community because of the Sabarimala pilgrimage. They are;

1. Improvement in Transport Infrastructure

The following table shows that the impact of pilgrim tourism in infrastructure development in local community.

Table No.2

Improvement in Transport Infrastructure

Description	No. of Persons	Percentage
Very good	16	32
Good	17	34
Average	10	20
Bad	5	10
Very bad	2	4
Total	50	100

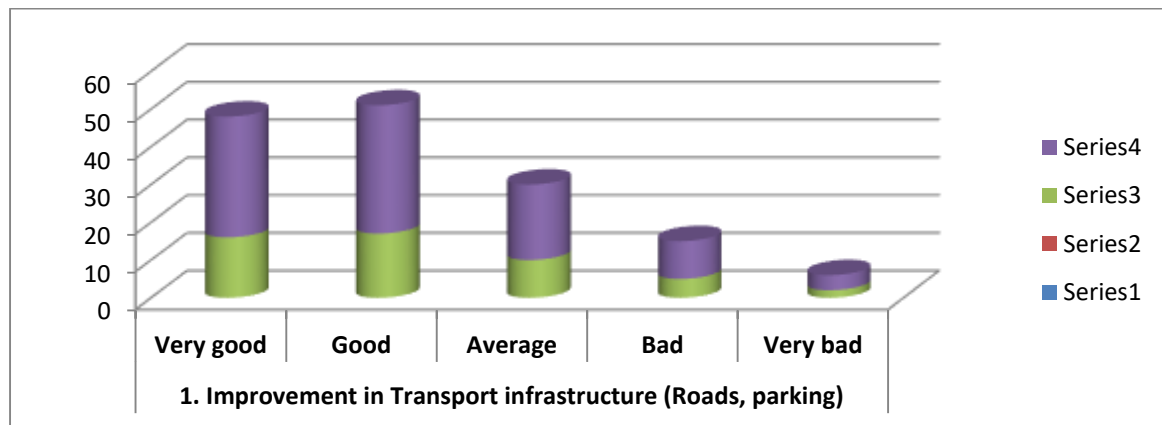
(Source: primary Data)

Interpretation:

The above table shows that the majority of the respondents' opinion regarding the improvement in infrastructure facilities in local community is good and 32% says that it is very good. Only 4% says that it is very bad.

Fig. No.1

Improvement in Transport Infrastructure



2. Availability of public transport

The table no.3 given the details regarding the availability of public transport facilities in Erumely locality because of Sabarimala pilgrimage.

Table No.3

Availability of public transport

Description	No. of Persons	Percentage
Very good	27	54
Good	14	28
Average	6	12
Bad	3	6
Very bad	0	0
Total	50	100

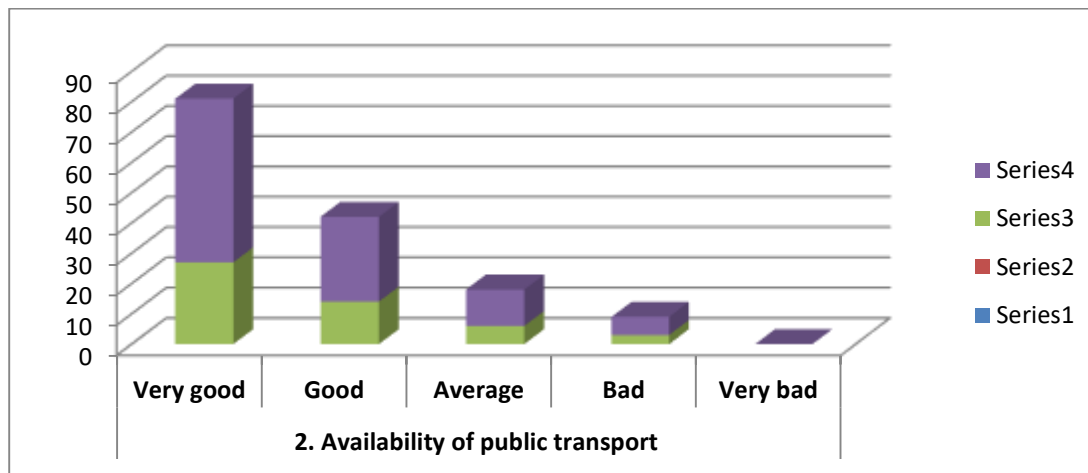
(Source: primary Data)

Interpretation:

The above table reveals that the availability of public transport facilities because of the Sabarimala pilgrimage in Erumely local community is very good. 28% of the persons says that it is good. It means that the impact of Sabarimala pilgrimage have a great influence in the infrastructure development in public transport.

Fig. No.2

Availability of public transport



3. Range and Availability of Accommodation

The following table depicts that opinion of the respondents regarding the availability of accommodation facilities in Erumely locality because of Sabarimala pilgrimage.

Table No.4

Range and Availability of Accommodation

Description	No. of Persons	Percentage
Very good	7	14
Good	12	24
Average	19	38
Bad	8	16
Very bad	4	8
Total	50	100

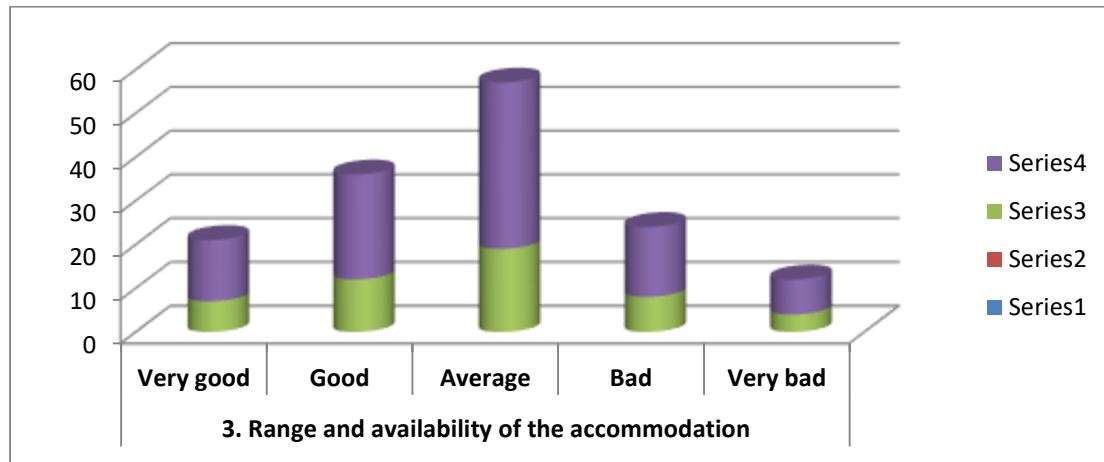
(Source: primary Data)

Interpretation:

The table no.4 mention that the availability of accommodation facilities in Erumely town because of Sabarimala pilgrimage. 38% of the respondents says that it is average. Only 14% of the people says that it is very good. It reveals that the Accommodation facility is not much improved till date.

Fig. No.3

Range and Availability of Accommodation



4. Availability of public utilities

The table No.5 describes the respondent’s opinion regarding the availability of public utilities in Erumely Locality.

Table No. 5

Availability of public utilities

Description	No. of Persons	Percentage
Very good	11	22
Good	22	44
Average	14	28
Bad	3	6
Very bad	0	0
Total	50	100

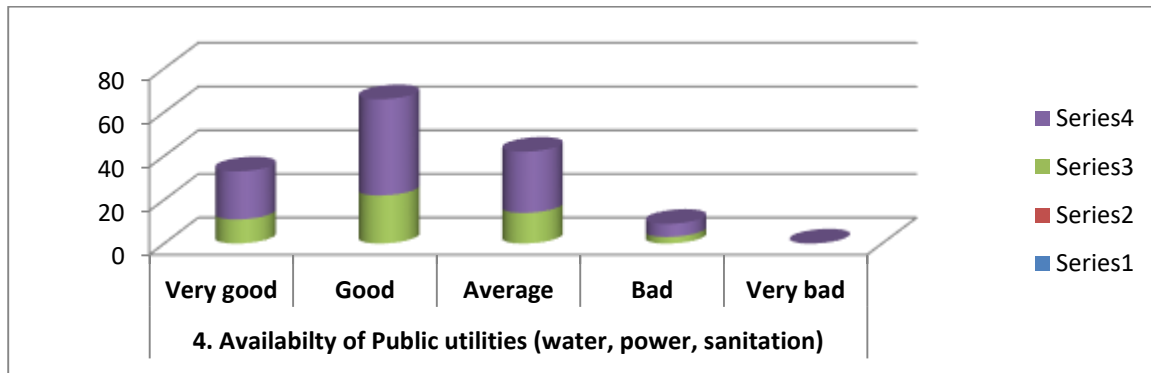
(Source: primary Data)

Interpretation:

The table reveals that 44% of the respondents having the good opinion regarding the availability of public utilities in Erumely local community.28% of the people says that it is average.

Fig. No. 4

Availability of public utilities



5. Improvement in Financial Facilities

The following table shows that the infrastructure development regarding the financial facilities in Erumely locality because of Sabarimala pilgrimage.

Table No. 6

Improvement in Financial Facilities

Description	No. of Persons	Percentage
Very good	9	18
Good	14	28
Average	18	36
Bad	4	8
Very bad	0	0
Total	50	100

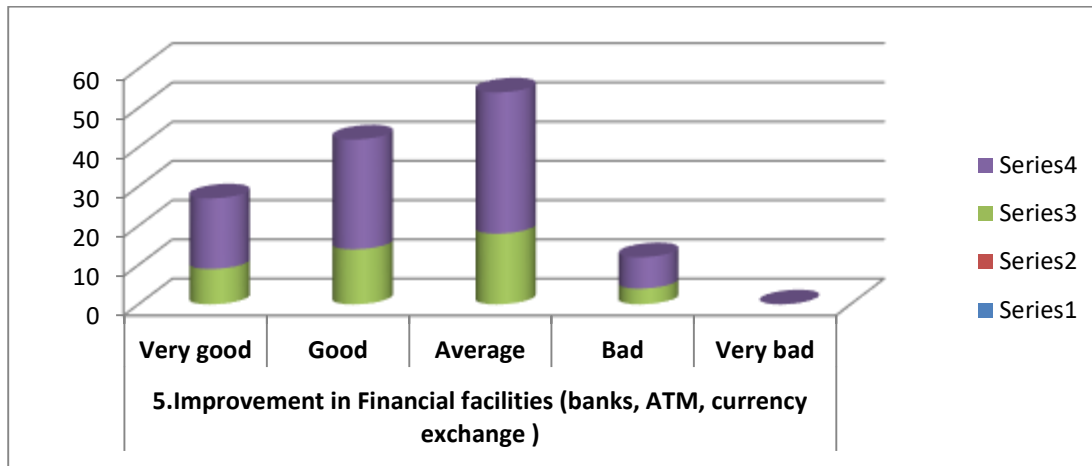
(Source: primary Data)

Interpretation:

The table depicts that most of the respondents opined that the improvement in financial facilities in Erumely local community is only average. 28% of the people says that it is good.

Fig. No. 5

Improvement in Financial Facilities



6. Existing communication facilities

The table no.7 describes the opinion of respondents regarding improvement in communication facilities because of the effect of Sabarimala pilgrimage.

Table No. 7

Existing communication facilities

Description	No. of Persons	Percentage
Very good	5	10
Good	21	42
Average	10	20
Bad	11	22
Very bad	3	6
Total	50	100

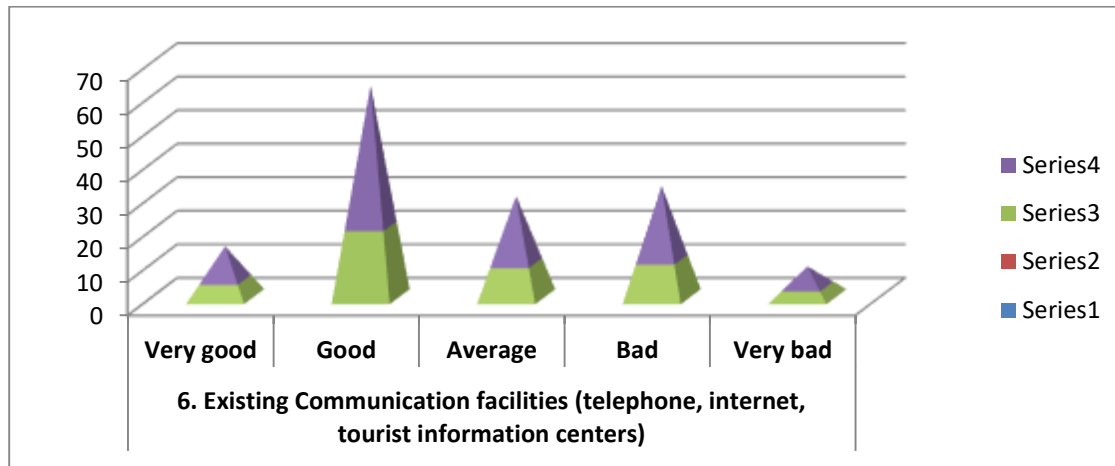
(Source: primary Data)

Interpretation:

The above table shows that majority of the people says about the existing communication facilities in Erumely by the impact of Sabarimala pilgrimage is good. Only 6% having the very bad opinion about it.

Fig. No. 6

Existing communication facilities



7. Overall opinion about the impact of pilgrim tourism on infrastructure

The table no. 8 mention the overall opinion of the people regarding the infrastructure development

Table No. 8

Overall opinion about the impact of pilgrim tourism on infrastructure

Description	No. of Persons	Percentage
Very good	14	28
Good	16	32
Average	10	20
Bad	7	14
Very bad	3	6
Total	50	100

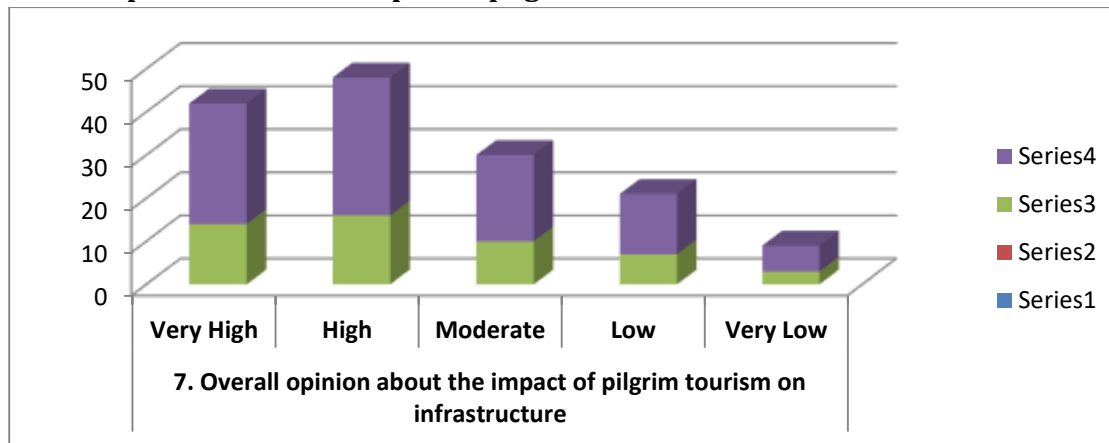
(Source: primary data)

Interpretation

The above table described that 32 % of the people having good opinion regarding the overall improvement in infrastructure development in Erumely local community by the impact of Sabarimala pilgrimage.

Fig. No. 7

Overall opinion about the impact of pilgrim tourism on infrastructure



3(Source :Primary Data)

Hypothesis Testing:

Ho; There is no impacts of pilgrim tourism in the infrastructure development of the local community

H1; There is an impacts of pilgrim tourism in the infrastructure development of the local community

Group Statistics					
	3.	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
INFRASTRUCTURE	1	20	21.3000	3.27832	.73305
	2	30	22.2333	2.25424	.41157

Independent Samples Test											
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
										Lower	Upper
Infrastructure	Equal variances assumed	2.183	.146	-1.195	48	.238	-.93333	.78125	-2.50415	.63748	
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.110	30.857	.275	-.93333	.84069	-2.64825	.78158	

Interpretation:

The output from the T test shows that the The Sig. (2-Tailed) value (.238) is greater than .05. So we reject Ho, it means we can conclude that there is a an impact of pilgrim tourism in the infrastructure development of the local community

Findings:

1. The study reveals that the availability of public transport is very good in Erumely local community because of Sabarimala pilgrimage

2. The people having a good opinion regarding the infrastructure development like; improvement in transport infrastructure, public utilizes and communication facilities
3. The respondents having only an average opinion connected with the accommodation facilities and financial related facilities in Erumely locality
4. The overall study mention that there is a good impact of Sabarimala pilgrimage in the infrastructure development in Local community of Erumely.

Suggestions:

The study depicts that there is an improvement needed in the accommodation and communication facilities

Conclusion:

The study reveals that there is a high impact of pilgrim tourism in the infrastructure development of the local community. The people are much satisfied with the availability of the public transport. The study shows that the Erumely locality is much developed by the impact of Sabarimala pilgrimage. The overall opinion of the respondents regarding the impacts of pilgrim tourism on infrastructure development is very high. The locality must be improved with the facility to accommodate the pilgrims. The government should take more steps to improve the various infrastructure facilities especially like to establish the airport in nearby locality.

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