CHAPTER V

FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS & CONCLUSION

Tourism industry is globally known for its diversity and plurality in terms of offering products and services for leisure, pleasure, recreation, study, religious and business purposes. One of the popular forms is Pilgrimage tourism that fuels unprecedented demand for the rise of the growth of Domestic Tourism in India. Travelling to the holy shrines is an integral part of the tradition and custom of the people belonging to all the principal religions in India. More than 70 per cent of the visitors do pay their trips to the holy places.

This critical mass of the Domestic Tourism is religious tourists or pilgrims. They propel the growth travel across the regions in India and the travel and hospitality requirements during their sojourns at the respective sites have made the tourism industry more dynamic. Having been guided by phenomenal growth of Domestic Tourism backed by Pilgrimage activities, the present study has focused on the three prominent Pilgrimage sites in South India, i.e. Velankanni, Nagore and Thirunallar. The first two holy sites are located in the state of Tamil Nadu and the last one is located in Karikal as one of the enclaves of the UT of Puducherry.
Pilgrimage Tourism is determined by the strength and weakness of destination. The weakness is the lack of facilities, quality of services, quality of basic facilities, quality of amenities, safety and security, people and culture and Transport Network.

On the other hand, it has positive impacts like foreign exchange earnings, employment opportunities etc. Thus, both positive and negative impacts play a major role in Pilgrimage Tourism. Pilgrimage Tourists deal with selection of pilgrimage destination after evaluating quality of services, quality of basic facilities, quality of amenities, safety and security, people and culture and transport network.

This study is mainly based on Pilgrimage Tourism indicators and realization of Religious obligations. Religious duties are the major driving motivational forces which stimulate the religious-oriented people to undertake travel. The study is very unique in finding the linkage between the Religious obligations of the Pilgrims and sanctified atmosphere of the Religious sites. The sanctity of three places are preserved from the Religious perspectives for which a steady stream of visitors arrive at these holy places irrespective of several personal and destination related constraints. Pilgrimage Tourism supply factors highlight on the need for extensive of collaboration with the public sector, which is responsible for policy and promotion of the Pilgrimage site.
5.0. MAJOR FINDINGS

- As many as 368 male tourist respondents were interviewed for the study against 132 female respondents. Across the three groups of respondents on the basis of age, it consisted of 168 (33.6%) of below 25 year, 251 (50.2%) of 26-50 years and 81 (16.2%) respectively.

- Out of the sample respondents, majority of the respondents 341 (68.2%) were married, followed by 111 (22.2%) were unmarried and 48 (9.6%) were bachelor and spinster respectively.

- Monthly income of the three categories of respondents clearly reflected that 223 (44.6%) had sum of rupees 10,000 as monthly income, followed by 166 (33.2%) with a range between Rs. 10,001 and Rs. 20,000 monthly income and 111 (22.2%) with a monthly income of Rs.20,001 and above.

- Across the three categories of sample respondents, majority of them 266 (53.2%) made an expenditure of Rs. 5,000 and less during their visit to their respective pilgrim site, that is followed by 142 (28.4%) with an expenditure of Rs.5001-Rs.10,000 and 57 (11.4%) with an expenditure of Rs.10,001 and Rs.15,000 respectively.

- Majority of the respondents 260 (52.0%) visited their respective holy sites with family and friends, that is followed by 142 (28.4%) and 98 (19.6%) number of respondents paid their visit with their affinity groups.

- A little more than forty per cent of the respondents 216 (43.2%) stayed in the lodges and guesthouses as against a little more than one fourth of the
respondents 144 (28.8%) preferred to stay in the hotel. On the other hand, one fourth of the respondents 126 (25.2%) sojourned at the paying guest place and an insignificant number of respondents 14 (2.8%) could stay with their friends and relatives during their visit.

- Across the three groups on the basis of duration of stay, a little less than half of the sample respondents 241 (48.2%) could stay at the religious sites about 1-3 days as compared to other two groups. A little more than one fourth 141 (28.2%) and less than one fourth of them 118 (23.6%) could stay one week and more respectively.

- A little more than half of the sample respondents 266 (53.2%) visited their respective religious sites once as against 234 (46.8%) of them visited more than once. Respondents belonging to the age group between 26 and 50 constitute 50.2 per cent or 251 and similarly, 59.5 per cent belonging to the age group of 25 and less (100) visited for the first time.

- Out of the 73.6 per cent or 368 male sample respondents, 53.5 per cent or 197 visited for the first time and 52.3 per cent of the female respondents also visited first time.

- Out of 68.2 per cent or 341 sample respondents who are married, half of them visited more than once and once, whereas out of 22.2 per cent of the unmarried sample respondents, 58.6 per cent (65) visited once.

- As many as 341 (68.2 per cent) were the Hindu devotees, followed by 111(22.2%) were the Christians and the remaining 48 (9.6 %) were Muslims.

Out of 341(68.2 %) Hindu pilgrims visited Velankini, 195 (57.2%) are first-
time visitors. Similarly, it is reported that the number of first-time pilgrims has outstripped the number of repeat visits in case of pilgrims belonging to other two religions.

- Majority of the sample respondents are 223 (44.6%) with having income Rs.10,000 and less could visit their religious sites. Out which, more than half of them 129 (57.8%) had the income of Rs. 10,000 and less.

- Out of 266 (53.2%) of the sample tourist respondents who visited once and more than once, 151 (56.8%) of them could spend Rs. 5000 or less. Similarly, a little more than half (266 of 53.2%) of the first-time visitors who spent from Rs.5000 or less to Rs. 15,001 or more during their sojourn.

- A little half of the respondents (241 or 48.2%) extended their halt about 1-3 days and the remaining was shared by 141 (28.2%) respondents with a 1-6 days duration and 118 (23.6%) with one week and more duration at the religious sites.

- As much as 33 per cent (165) spent more on room as compared to 31.4 per cent (157) on transport and 27.6 per cent (138) on food.

- Across six major motivational factors that generally drive the tourists to visit the pilgrim sites, 31.2 per cent (156) visited for temple, followed by 20.8 per cent for beaches, 20.6 per cent churches, 17.4 per cent for mosque.

- A little more than half of the sample respondents 260 (52.0%) were accompanied by the family and friends when they visited their respective religious sites as against 142 (28.4 %) visited independently or alone and 98 (19.6%) visited with the affinity groups.
5.1. RESULTS OF THE ‘t’ TEST

- Two groups of sample Tourist respondents are significantly different for selection of accommodation and restaurant services, whereas different exists among the visitors on the criteria of reception upon arrival, reservation procedures and front office staff. Thus, it is found that reception upon arrival, reservation procedures and staff of front office is some of the critical elements of improving the quality of accommodation services.

- Differences exist while selecting transportation services such as road transport connectivity, operation of government/private bus services, safety and regularity of bus services, reasonable bus fare, improvement of rail connectivity, amenities at railway and bus stand and railway stations and safety and behaviour of conductors. It is however found that each group seems to have different perceptions and expectations from the transport services. It is quite obvious to find the differences of understanding of pilgrims who largely visit the religious sites.

- Respondents do not significantly differ while considering the quality of facilities, such as road condition, road maintenance, approaching roads, parking space, traffic arrangement and health services as one of the primary preferences for destination selection. Respondents have differences opinions on the availability of Banks and ATM services at the convenient places. It seems to reflect that pilgrims largely depend on the ATM services.
• No differences of opinion exit across the pilgrims on the availability of purified drinking water facilities, provision of rest shed, toilet and washroom, cloakroom, shopping centers, hygienic and cleanliness, safety & security, police outpost, pleasant place and peaceful place. Thus, it is found that respondents seem to accentuate on the key amenities to be improved and expanded for the comfort of pilgrims.

• Tourist respondents do not significantly differ while performing several religious obligations such as offering prayers, fasting and penance, offering donations, participating festivals, eating holy prasad and feeding poor people. This seems to reflect that religious obligation is performed as per the tradition and custom. Irrespective of frequency of visit to these sites, pilgrims become more particular and serious for performing the rituals. Hus, it is found that all these key elements of religious obligations are directly and indirectly associated with facilities, amenities, accommodation services and transport services.

5.2. RESULTS OF ONEWAY ANOVA

• After finding the significant difference between three groups of respondents on the health services in Velankanni, Nagore & Thirunallar, respondents seem to have experienced different types of experience as far as health services are concerned. There are different types of health services such as first-aid, ambulance, medicine, etc. This finding seems to present that all these
key elements of health services are essential at the pilgrimage sites due to the health conditions of pilgrims. Majority of the pilgrims do visit these sites with fasting as a token of devotion for the god. Thus, many pilgrims fall in sick and need the health services.

- Differences do not exist on the amenities provided to the pilgrims for comfortable stay and visit is rejected in case of element of selected amenities such as purified drinking water, rest shed, toilet & washroom and hygienic & cleanliness of environment at three respective religious sites, excepting cloakroom and shopping centre. The study has found that all these pilgrimage sites have made provisions for amenities for the comfort of pilgrims. Thus, it seem to reflect that the present status of amenities does not seem to be adequate to cater the pilgrims.

- Significant differences do not exist while taking law and order situation as one of the key destination selection determinants. All the respondents unanimously agreed to ensure the law and order of these sites. Hundred thousands of pilgrims visit these sites during festivals and other auspicious occasions. The study has found no differences of experience of the pilgrims about the law and order situation at these three religious sites.

- Differences of experiences are not significant while taking religious obligations such as offering prayers, fasting and penance, offering donations, participating festivals, eating holy Prasadam and feeding poor people as one of the criteria for the destination selection. Thus, the demonstrates that there
are differences of experience on key elements signifying the religious obligations.

- Differences of experiences are not significant while taking the quality of transport services such as safety and regularity bus services, reasonable bus fare, improvement of rail connectivity, amenities at bus stand & railway station and behaviour of conductors as one of the criteria for the destination selection is taken into consideration. This indicates that there are differences of experience on these important actors determining the quality of transport services.

5.3. RESULTS OF PEARSON CHI-SQUARE TEST

- The results of Pearson Chi-Square test do reject the hypothesis in case of quality of services, reception, reservation procedures, prompt in settling bills, personal hygiene and distribution of expenditures and its association with the preferences of selecting types of accommodation. Thus, it is found from the results of Chi-Square that types of accommodation and different types of services provides by the accommodation service providers at the religious sites are associated. Each element of service can lead to customer satisfaction and loyalty to the hotel, lodges and guest houses.

- The association of frequency of visits with road condition, maintenance, banks and ATM, parking areas, parking arrangements and health services do not seem to exit as it has explained that pilgrims are obliged to travel to these
religious sites irrespective of all this factors. The study has found that devotees/pilgrims are motivated by their religious motives to visit pilgrimage site. Performing religious sites and staying at the religious places along with paying regular visits are generally independent of the provision of facilities.

- No significant associations exist between drinking water, rest shed, toilet & wash rooms, cloakroom services, shopping centre, hygienic & clean and frequency of visit. It is found that the frequency of visits is independent of the amenities at the religious sites

5.4. RESULTS OF FRIEDMAN MEAN RANK

- The mean rank results revealed that the difference of the mean rank values is statistically significant. Each factor contributes to the selection of pilgrimage tourism destination. However, news paper article is found to be the first preferred source of collecting information for the selection of destination for performing religious obligations. Irrespective of gathering information from various sources, news papers provide current status of pilgrimage centers as compared to other sources of information.

- The mean rank results revealed that all the elements of accommodation services have influenced the preference for selection of accommodation. However, easy reservation, being the factor with highest rank value seems to influence the pilgrims for selection of accommodation. It may be found that
customers seem to have given first preference to the easy reservation procedures due to their own considerations.

- The mean rank results revealed that online transfer is the most convenient mode for payment for travel services. Besides, all other modes of payment such as third person payment, debit/credit card and cash seem to have become the preferred mode for payment of travel services.

- The mean rank results revealed that comfort becomes the most preferred criteria for selection for transport services. This finding seems to have indicated that all other factors like regularity, affordability, safety, behaviour of staff, easy payment and quick alternative are some the preferences for the selection of transport services apart from comfort, being the first preference.

- The mean rank results revealed that fulfillment of long-cherished desire is identified as the most preferred factor to select these religious sites to visit in the life time. Apart from being influenced by the fulfillment of long-cherished desire, other preferences such as rituals and offering, festivals, strong religious belief and faith, enlightenment of life, giving alms to poor and enrichment of knowledge seem to have influenced the selection of pilgrimage centres.
5.5. SUGGESTIVE MEASURES AND INTERVENTIONS

- It is suggested that reception upon arrival, reservation procedures, front office staff, personal hygiene and room and food services are some of the critical elements of improving the quality of accommodation services. Both the government and private tourism service providers should seriously look into the shortcomings that may impede the growth of pilgrimage tourism in the tourism circuit.

- It is strongly suggested that the transport network highlighting on the connectivity, operation, regularity and reasonable fare should be improved round the year and more specifically, during the festive occasions. It is also suggested that transport tariff should be reasonable to the pilgrims as majority of them are budget category of tourists. The study has also recommended that government should evolve some mechanisms to subsidize the cost of visiting to these holy pilgrim sites. More particularly, domestic tourists with the proof of Below Poverty Line (BPL) should be provided with transport subsidy as there is no difference of experience of the first time and repeat visitors with regard to the improvement of transport network and other ancillary benefits.

- The findings of the study have suggested for the improvement of basic facilities such as road, parking areas, traffic and health services. Since there is a strong relationship between preferences for destination selection and improvement in basic services, efforts should be made at the higher level of
the government administration to help build the infrastructure at all three sites. When these three religious sites have gained visibility worldwide, the Government of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry can take all promotional measures to increase the domestic tourist arrivals by showcasing the pilgrim tourism circuits. This can bring about improvements of socio-economic conditions of local people.

- The study has also found insufficient provisions for purified drinking water facilities, rest shed, toilet and wash rooms, cloak rooms, shopping centres, hygienic and clean, safety & security and police. It is therefore suggested to the Governments to gear up with adequate budgetary outlays to make the amenities of the three places more visitor friendly, thereby making the place more pleasant and peaceful as the symbol of spiritualism. As such, most of the holy shrines and pilgrimage sites are facing the problem of unhygienic, litter, crime and contaminated water. Thus, approaches should be made to help the religious sites overcome the problem of maintaining the amenities with the direct intervention of the Public Works Department (PWD), Heath Department, Home Department, etc and the Ministry of Tourism should take the lead role in bringing all them into one umbrella resolve the chronic problem.

- Religious duties as the major driving motivational forces stimulating the religious-oriented people to undertake travel, the mean experience of sample respondents is not significantly difference on each element representing the religious obligations. Thus, the study is very unique in finding the linkage
between the religious obligations of the pilgrims and sanctified atmosphere of the religious sites. Fortunately, all these three places have preserved the sanctity and purity of the places from the religious perspectives for which a steady stream of visitors are arriving into these holy places irrespective of several personal and destination related constraints.

- Since the duration-of-stay is a critical independent factor influencing the experience of the visitors at the religious sites; the study has found the differences of experiences of the sojourners on basic infrastructure. Moreover, religious tourists are generally long-haul visitors and their length-of-stay is relatively more due to their attachment to the religious places. With this backdrop, the study has suggested to ensure the improvement of infrastructure to help the pilgrims stay comfortably.

- The study has found the differences of experiences of pilgrims on the amenities at the three religious sites, it is suggested that the existing provisions of amenities are extremely inadequate and more provisions should be made to improve the condition of the amenities, thereby making tourists feel at home and their stay comfort and memorable.

- Law and order is one of the socio-political risk factors that mostly hamper the tourism business whether it is special interest or common interest tourism. The study has found out sharp differences of experience of the pilgrims about the law and order situation at these three religious sites. Thus, it is suggested that the government should be more vigilant in enforcing the law and order when these three places receive huge number of tourist traffic during the
festivals and other auspicious occasions. More police outpost and the concept of community police should be introduced to help maintain the law and order in a sustainable way.

- There are differences of experience of the sample tourist respondents on many of the elements signifying the religious obligations. Therefore, it is suggested that the ultimate purpose of visiting these three sites should be respected since the performing rituals and offering prayers are some of the activities that most of the pilgrims do at the sites. Efforts should be made to inspire the people and respect the emotional sentiments and attachment to the places.

- While rejecting the most of the elements in the hypothesis, the study has strongly suggested for an effective transport services so as to ensure the operation of the transport more regular, affordable, reliable and adoptable.

- The lack of association between the services attributes of the accommodation and selection of the types of hotel has led to providing a critical thought of bringing about a radical change in the operation of the accommodation units at these three religious sites. It is suggested that government should enhance the capacity of the frontline staff in the hotel by conducting regular training programme. More particularly, soft skills and personal grooming and etiquette should be highlighted in the training programme, thereby imbibing the professional culture in the hospitality sector.

- When the results showed no association between the frequency of visit and primary facilities, it is quite pertinent to suggest that government should take
note of this finding and be proactive in making adequate provisions of primary facilities for the comfort and safety of the pilgrims visiting the religious sites.

- The Department of Tourism, Govt. of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry should promote the pilgrim tourism circuit with the aid of travel magazines, brochures/newspaper. As it seems from the mean rank results that preference of the visitors to collect travel related information is high.

- Since it is revealed that timely services is the first rank preference factor with the test of significance, thus, all the service providers should seriously ponder over and find the ways to make efficient and effective time services at the hotel, restaurant, bus stand, etc.

- As the sample respondents preferred the easy reservation procedures to reserve the room, perhaps the present reservation methods are not as effective as it is desired for the industry. Thus, all accommodation operators should take cognizance of it and imbibe professionalism along with technology into the reservation procedures.

- It is expected that online transfer would be the highest preference for making the payment for travel services as majority of the visitors are tech-savvy or they get it done through some body. The process of online transfer services should be encouraged and clients should be given discount when they make the payment through online.

- Since comfort has become the highest preference for the visitors while visiting these religious sites, transport service providers should pay attentions to improve the comfort of the passengers along with other factors such
regularity, affordability, safety, behaviour of staff, easy payment and quick alternative.

- Since the fulfillment of long-cherished desire is the highest preferred mean rank factor, it is in the line of the common understanding of selecting the pilgrimage center. However, other six factors have also been preferred while selecting these three religious places. Thus, it is suggested that government administration and private tourism establishment should be serious concerned for the long-cherished desire that is quite sensitive, emotional and personal.

5.6. SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- The Findings of the study have opened the windows for undertaking further research on varied themes pertaining to the Pilgrimage Tourism. The research work has laid much importance on the indicators, such as quality of services, quality of basic facilities, quality of amenities, safety and security, people and culture, Transport Network, etc. These are the significant elements for studying preferences for destination selection and fulfillment of Religious obligations.

Therefore, the future researchers may take up the study on tangible and intangible attributes of Pilgrimage Tourism destination with special to other pilgrimage sites in South India in particular. The future study work should focus more on micro study of the destinations. Thus, the study on “selection of Pilgrimage Destination and
Realization of Religious Obligations: As assessment of Pilgrimage Tourism Circuit (Velankanni, Nagore and Thirunallar) in Tamil Nadu is relevant from the social, cultural and economic perspectives.

5.6. CONCLUDING NOTE

The world and its species have been created by God. Nothing seems to move in the world without the knowledge and blessings of God. Human beings themselves are the creations of God. The nature’s greatest creation is the man and its coexistence with others is to survive and grow for its own sake and others. Thus, interdependence is inevitable and permanent. People have strong belief and faith in God as He is the Creator, Maintainer and Destroyer of the world. People across the religions believe in God strongly with devotion and fear. As such, humans do not believe in God as long as they do not confront difficulties or hurdles in the life. They repose faith in God when they wish to overcome the difficult time in the life. Many of them are successful in the life after worshipping God and Goddesses.

People have strong faith in God for achieving success in the life. Whether it may be the acquisition of knowledge, wealth, social status, position, recognition, etc, or it may be the hope for finding new knowledge. In addition to this, people wish to visit the abode of Gods and Goddesses as per their tradition and custom. For example, Hindu religiously travel to Badrinath, Dwaraka, Puri and Rameswram after getting relieved from the social
obligations. Similarly, Muslims travel to Mecca and Madina and Christians visit Jerusalem. Buddhists visit Lumbini and Bodh Gaya.

Apart from these principal religions, people worship certain Gods to take blessings of their divine power. For example, Muslim followers visit Ajmer Dargha in Rajasthan and Christians visit God for offering prayers to Basilica in Goa. In Hinduism, there are 33 crores Gods and Godesses and they are worshipped in different names. Each God or Goddess has different manifestations.

Pilgrimage activities started when human beings were aware of the divine power. Thus, people have been visiting religious places of interest for the fulfillment of religious duties and obligations to gain more virtues. Each individual must have done some sins or others while taking life in the different directions. They resort to Gods finally to get rid of sins for which people take bath in the River Ganges and Narmada for washing away their sins.

It is inferred that existence and progress of human life is controlled by the divine power and the success and failure in the journey of human life is carried out as per HIS wish and instructions. Obviously, human beings are the creatures of nature and their creations and destructions are determined by the Gods. The growth of travel to pilgrimage places of interest must be attributed to the increasing of faith of people towards God along with connectivity and facilities.
Tourism constitutes significant portion of total domestic tourism in India. A vast majority of people travel to religious places of interest to perform rituals for their healthy and happy life. The primary travel motivation of pilgrims is to do pilgrimage activities along with visiting friends & relatives. Thus, this study has become unique in carrying out the research work with regard to the fulfillment of religious obligations and destinations selections.

Gone are the days, pilgrims did not care for facilities and amenities at the pilgrimage sites and used to manage themselves with basic facilities. In the present time, pilgrims will hardly select a pilgrimage tourism destination without assessing the quantity and quality of facilities & amenities. The pilgrims in western countries are more particular about the destinations attributes, whereas pilgrims in India did not seem to be so serious about the facilities & amenities. However, pilgrims in India are now more particular and concerned for safety, facilities and amenities that can facilitate for increasing the duration of stay and frequency of visit.

Thus, the study has unearthed several gaps in the theory and practice of pilgrimage and religious tourism literature. With the help of scientific research methods, the study has analyzed and interpreted the data for findings logical inference. The study has built many arguments in the course of review of literature and analysis of hypothesis tests. Destination selection cannot be independent of religious obligations. Both are complementary to each other and cannot be studied separately. Moreover, there must require a study of destination competitiveness and religious significance of pilgrimage
sites in the future. The study will certainly become an importance reference point for the policymakers and planners of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry to read and make use of the findings and suggestions while developing pilgrimage tourism in *Velankanni, Nagore and Thirunallar*.

Finally, this study may be concluded with three pertinent questions: Can these pilgrimage tourism destination’s tangible and intangible attributes meet the pilgrimage needs of pilgrims? Will these two governments refer this study for implementation of policy and programmes? Will the principal and secondary service providers take the findings and suggestions of the study for making profit maximization and committing for social responsibility?