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Role of E-Commerce in Enhancing Pilgrims Satisfaction with Hospitality Services at Shri Swami Samarth Temple, Akkalkot

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Abstract

The increasing adoption of digital technologies has brought significant changes in the management of religious tourism and hospitality services. Shri Swami Samarth Temple, Akkalkot attracts a large number of pilgrims, creating a need for efficient, convenient, and well-organized hospitality facilities. This study examines the role of e-commerce in enhancing pilgrim satisfaction with hospitality services at Shri Swami Samarth Temple by analyzing pilgrims' awareness, usage, and perceptions of online services such as accommodation booking, digital payments, online donations, and related facilities. The study is based on primary data collected through a structured questionnaire administered to pilgrims. The findings reveal that e-commerce services play a positive role in improving convenience, saving time, and enhancing the overall hospitality experience of pilgrims, leading to higher satisfaction levels. Despite challenges such as network issues and limited digital literacy among some pilgrims, the overall impact of e-commerce on pilgrim satisfaction is found to be significant. The study emphasizes the need for improved digital infrastructure and user support to ensure inclusive and effective implementation of e-commerce in pilgrimage hospitality management.

Keywords: E-Commerce, Pilgrim Satisfaction, Hospitality Services, Religious Tourism, Digital Payments.

Introduction

Religious tourism has been an integral part of Indian culture for centuries, with millions of pilgrims traveling every year to sacred destinations in search of spiritual peace, devotion, and blessings. In recent years, pilgrimage destinations have witnessed a significant rise in visitor numbers due to improved transportation, communication facilities, and increased religious awareness. Shri Swami Samarth Temple, Akkalkot is one such prominent spiritual centre that attracts a large number of devotees from different parts of Maharashtra and India. With the growing inflow of pilgrims, the demand for quality hospitality services such as accommodation, food, transport, donations, and information support has also increased considerably. At the same time, rapid developments in information technology and digital infrastructure have transformed the way services are delivered and consumed. E-commerce, which refers to the buying, selling, and delivery of goods and services through electronic platforms, has emerged as a powerful tool in the service sector. Its application is no longer limited to commercial businesses; it has extended to tourism, hospitality, and even religious institutions. Online booking systems, digital payments, mobile applications, and web-based information services have become common features in modern pilgrimage management. In the context of pilgrimage tourism, e-commerce plays a crucial role in enhancing convenience, reducing waiting time, improving transparency, and ensuring better service quality. Pilgrims today prefer online room booking, digital donations, advance prasada booking, and cashless payment options, as these services save time and reduce physical stress during their visit. Effective use of e-commerce not only improves operational efficiency for service providers but also enhances the overall satisfaction and experience of pilgrims.

Shri Swami Samarth Temple, Akkalkot being a major pilgrimage destination, has gradually adopted various e-commerce-enabled hospitality services to meet the expectations of tech-aware devotees. However, the actual impact of these digital services on pilgrim satisfaction needs systematic examination. Understanding pilgrims' awareness, usage patterns, convenience level, and satisfaction with e-commerce-based hospitality services is essential for improving service delivery and planning future digital initiatives. This research study focuses on examining the role of e-commerce in enhancing pilgrim satisfaction with hospitality services at Shri Swami Samarth Temple, Akkalkot.

The study aims to analyze how digital platforms contribute to convenience, time efficiency, and overall hospitality experience of pilgrims. The findings of this research are expected to be useful for temple management, hospitality service providers, and policymakers in designing effective digital strategies for sustainable development of spiritual tourism.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the level of awareness and usage of e-commerce services among pilgrims visiting Shri Swami Samarth Temple, Akkalkot.
2. To analyze the impact of e-commerce services on pilgrims satisfaction with hospitality facilities such as accommodation, payments, and time management.
3. To evaluate the role of e-commerce in improving overall hospitality experience and convenience of pilgrims at Shri Swami Samarth Temple, Akkalkot.

Hypotheses of the study

Hypothesis 1 (H₁)

There is a significant positive relationship between the use of e-commerce services and pilgrim satisfaction with hospitality services at Shri Swami Samarth Temple, Akkalkot.

Hypothesis 2 (H₂)

E-commerce services significantly improve convenience and time efficiency for pilgrims during their visit to Shri Swami Samarth Temple, Akkalkot.

Research Methodology

1. Sample size selected

Researcher selected 100 pilgrims who visited shri swami Samarth temple regularly while using simple random sampling method.

2. Dada Collection

The present study analyses the role of e-commerce in enhancing pilgrim satisfaction with hospitality services at Shri Swami Samarth Temple. The analysis is based on the primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected from 100 pilgrims through a structured questionnaire. The secondary data was collected by reading researcher papers, Text material from internet source.

Dada Analysis

On the basis of analysed responses collected from 100 pilgrims through a structured questionnaire, Followings are some highlights came through data analysis.

Awareness and Usage of E-Commerce Services

The analysis shows that a large majority of pilgrims are aware of e-commerce services related to the temple. This indicates increasing digital literacy and exposure among pilgrims. Many respondents actively used services such as online donations, accommodation booking, prasad booking, and transport services, proving that e-commerce has become an integral part of pilgrimage planning.

Ease of Use and Accessibility

Most pilgrims reported that online services are easy or very easy to use, which suggests that e-

commerce platforms are generally user-friendly. However, a small section of pilgrims still faces difficulty, mainly due to lack of digital skills or language barriers. This highlights the need for guidance and support systems for first-time or rural users.

Time Saving and Convenience

A significant proportion of respondents agreed that e-commerce services save time and reduce waiting queues. Online bookings and digital payments allow pilgrims to plan their visit efficiently, minimizing delays in accommodation, donations, and other services. This time efficiency directly contributes to a more peaceful and spiritually satisfying pilgrimage experience.

Satisfaction with Hospitality Services

The data indicates that most pilgrims are satisfied with accommodation and hospitality services booked through online platforms. The availability of advance booking, transparent pricing, and confirmed services enhances trust and comfort among pilgrims.

Improvement in Overall Hospitality Experience

The majority of respondents felt that e-commerce services have improved their overall hospitality experience to a great or some extent. This shows that technology plays a crucial role in improving service quality, coordination, and pilgrim management at religious destinations.

Digital Payment Convenience

Digital payment methods such as UPI and online wallets were found to be highly convenient by most pilgrims. Cashless transactions reduce the burden of carrying cash and improve transaction speed, further increasing pilgrim satisfaction.

Problems Faced by Pilgrims

Despite positive responses, some pilgrims reported problems such as network issues, payment failures, lack of guidance, and language difficulties. These challenges suggest that while e-commerce services are effective, infrastructure and support services need further improvement.

Future Preference and Overall Satisfaction

A large number of pilgrims expressed their willingness to continue using e-commerce services in future visits, indicating high acceptance and trust. Overall satisfaction levels were also found to be high, confirming the positive impact of e-commerce on hospitality services.

Testing of Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 (H₁)

There is a significant positive relationship between the use of e-commerce services and pilgrim satisfaction with hospitality services at Shri Swami Samarth Temple, Akkalkot. The research hypothesis is accepted based on data analysis and The Null Hypothesis H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between use of e-commerce services and pilgrim satisfaction is rejected.

Hypothesis 2 (H₂)

E-commerce services significantly improve convenience and time efficiency for pilgrims during their visit to Shri Swami Samarth Temple, Akkalkot. The research hypothesis is accepted based on data analysis and Null Hypothesis H₀₂: E-commerce services do not significantly improve convenience and time efficiency for pilgrims.

Findings of the Study

Based on the analysis of primary data collected from pilgrims visiting Shri Swami Samarth Temple, the following key findings are drawn:

1. The study reveals that a majority of pilgrims are aware of e-commerce services related to the temple. Most respondents have used at least one online service, indicating growing acceptance of digital platforms in pilgrimage tourism.
2. Online accommodation booking is the most widely used e-commerce service, followed by digital donations and prasad booking. This shows that pilgrims rely heavily on e-commerce for managing essential hospitality needs.
3. Most pilgrims find e-commerce services easy to use. User-friendly platforms have encouraged wider adoption, even among pilgrims with basic digital knowledge.
4. E-commerce services significantly help pilgrims in saving time. Advance bookings and online transactions reduce waiting time and physical effort during the pilgrimage.
5. A large proportion of respondents are satisfied with hospitality services, especially accommodation and payment facilities provided through e-commerce platforms.
6. Digital payment systems such as UPI and cards are found to be convenient and reliable, enhancing the overall pilgrimage experience.
7. Though many pilgrims did not face major problems, some respondents reported issues such as network connectivity, lack of guidance, and payment failures.
8. Most pilgrims expressed willingness to use e-commerce services in future visits, indicating a positive attitude toward digital hospitality services.
9. Overall satisfaction levels are high, confirming that e-commerce plays a significant role in improving pilgrim satisfaction and hospitality experience.

Conclusion

The present study concludes that e-commerce has a significant and positive impact on pilgrim satisfaction with hospitality services at Shri Swami Samarth Temple, Akkalkot. The analysis reveals a high level of awareness and usage of e-commerce services among pilgrims, indicating increasing digital acceptance in pilgrimage tourism. Online facilities such as accommodation booking, digital donations, Prasad booking, and cashless payments have made pilgrimage planning more convenient, time-efficient, and comfortable. Most pilgrims found these services easy to use and

expressed satisfaction with hospitality facilities, especially accommodation and payment systems. The findings clearly support the first hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between the use of e-commerce services and pilgrim satisfaction.

Further, the study confirms that e-commerce services significantly improve convenience and time efficiency for pilgrims, thereby supporting the second hypothesis. Digital payments and advance online bookings reduce waiting time, minimize physical effort, and enhance the overall hospitality experience. Although some pilgrims faced challenges such as network issues and lack of guidance, the overall response toward e-commerce services remains highly positive. In conclusion, e-commerce has become an essential tool for improving hospitality management and pilgrim satisfaction at Shri Swami Samarth Temple, Akkalkot and with improved infrastructure and support systems, its role can be further strengthened for sustainable pilgrimage development.

Suggestions

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are offered to improve e-commerce-based hospitality services at Shri Swami Samarth Temple, Akkalkot.

1. Awareness programs should be conducted to educate pilgrims, especially from rural areas, about available e-commerce services and their benefits.
2. User interfaces of online platforms should be made simpler and multilingual to ensure ease of use for all pilgrims.
3. Strong internet connectivity should be ensured in and around the temple area to reduce network-related problems.
4. Help desks or digital assistance centres should be set up to guide pilgrims in using online booking and payment services.
5. Secure and reliable payment gateways should be maintained to minimize payment failures and build trust among users.
6. Integration of all hospitality services such as accommodation, prasad, donations, and transport into a single digital platform can further enhance convenience.
7. Feedback mechanisms should be introduced to continuously improve e-commerce services based on pilgrims' experiences.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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