

# The expectations and satisfaction of Hindu pilgrims in north-west India – the case of the Naina Devi shrine

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to evaluate expectation and satisfaction of Hindu pilgrims at Naina Devi Shrine situated in the north-western Indian state Himachal Pradesh. This has been done following the Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory. There are twenty attributes under eight different aspects selected for the measurement of expectation and satisfaction of pilgrims. This study also provides a picture of the demographic profile of the pilgrims to the site. Results revealed that out of twenty attributes, eleven attributes emerge at the 'satisfied' level, five at the 'indifferent' and four at the 'dissatisfied'. Furthermore, the overall satisfaction levels of visitors were at moderate levels although the possibility of revisiting the destinations is low, recommending the destinations to others was high. The result of the study emphasized the necessity of improving appropriate entertainment activities, upgrading the cleanliness hygiene and sanitation situation, and reconstructing the prices charged for accommodation and souvenirs items which leading to the destinations in order to enhance the satisfaction of pilgrims. The findings of this research may be useful in developing policy and undertaking promotional measures for intensifying pilgrimage tourism sector in the area.

**Keywords:** Expectation; satisfaction; Hindu; pilgrimage; cleanliness, promotional measure.



Source: <http://im.hunt.in/news/s/Shrine.jpg>

## Introduction

Tourism and religion are historically related through the institution of pilgrimage (Smith, 1992; Fleischer, 2000). Pilgrimage has been defined as a journey resulting from religious causes, extremely to a holy site, and internally for spiritual purposes and internal understanding (Barber, 1993). According to Raj & Mopeth (2007) it is a travel that is undertaken to a site with religious significance and/or that fulfils a religious or spiritual need. Hence, visiting religious sites could, perhaps, be considered one of the earliest forms of tourism (Rinschede, 1992; Al-Amin, 2002).

Now a day's pilgrimage is defined differently, and can be considered a traditional, religious or modern secular journey. According to Wright (2009, p.18), President of the World Religious Travel Association (WRTA), religious tourism today involve travel to a religious destination (religious pilgrimage); travel to a religious gathering (religious meetings, events, conventions) and travel for leisure purposes by a religious group (cruise, sightseeing, group touring, entertainment, adventure, safari, visits to attractions etc.).

Today religious journeys, tourism and hospitality are a dynamic USD 18 billion international business with 300 million travellers: In North America alone its business value is approximated at USD 10 billion. According to Wright, (2008, p.33) in the past three decades people of belief have altered their purchasing patterns and now tend to buy first-class goods and services: "first-class travel is in, economy travel is out".

According to UNESCO, sixty percent of the world population practices religious tourism. It is estimated that there are approximately 600 million national and international religious and spiritual voyages in the world (UNWTO, 2011).

Religious tourism has a big future in a country like India because it is richly

endowed with ancient temples and religious festivals (Gade and Jagtap, 2014). India is blessed as hub of pilgrim centers, religions festivals and other related activities of a religious nature. The religions originating in India, be it Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism or Buddhism, have a vibrant culture and spiritual philosophy with immense potential to evolve as a niche segment and can provide an experience that cannot be had anywhere in the world.

Among all the religions Hinduism, followed by more than 80 percent of Indians (Flood, 2003) and the major holy sites of Hindus in India include the Four Dhams or Divine Abodes at the four compass points; the Seven Sacred Cities and their primary temples; the Shakti Pitha temples; the Kumbha Mela sites; the seven sacred rivers and certain other shrines that do not fit into any of the categories listed here (Vijayanand, 2012). Similarly on the occasion of several religious fairs & festivals of Hindus millions of tourists gather at single point i.e. people gather at Allahabad Kumbh Mela to have a holy dip on the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and Sarasati (Bhushan, 2006).

This is quite surprising that travel for pilgrimage purposes is an important part of Hindu doctrine around millions of adherents travel throughout India and from abroad each year to participate in enormous religious festivals, pilgrimage circuits, and ritual cleansings and to admire ancient and beautiful Hindu pilgrimage sites, architecture sites that are associated with the religion other such performances (Rana and Singh, 2011, Scott, 2012).

Religiously motivated travel (pilgrimage) has grown tremendously during the past few years. About 240 million people travel every year to several major pilgrimage destinations (Jachowski, 2000). The major pilgrim destinations like Tirupati Balaji, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi are two remarkable examples of well administered shrines and have an average crowd of two

hundred thousand tourists annually which in turn contributes a lot to the employment generation of the local towns and also strengthens the economy (Mawa, 2004). Singh (2006) notes the presence of more than 28 million pilgrims during the Hindu celebrations in the Ganges river and regards religion as the only generator of income for the local community.

Today, pilgrimage tourism forms an important segment of domestic tourism (Rana and Singh, 2011; Vijayanand, 2012). In 2008, it generated around US\$100 billion, which is expected to increase to US\$275.5 billion by 2018 (Mishra et al., 2011). In 2013 the total number of visitors to the holy fair of Kumbh Mela in Allahabad reached 120 million. This was one of largest gatherings of people in the world. Similarly many places which are widespread throughout the country also have regular visitors to them (Kumh Mela website).

In the near future, pilgrimage tourism is likely to assume greater cyclical growth patterns. Many authors who have provided overviews of the development of religious tourism, including Homberg (1993), Olsen and Timothy (1999, 2006) and Russell (1999), project a significant increase in religious tourism in the near future. Due to phenomenal growth of pilgrimage related traffic or travel for religious purposes, the development of greater tourism infrastructure has been facilitated at religious sites all around the country as well as at the traditional pilgrimage sites (usually visited by pilgrims with very basic facilities). Such sites also underwent perceptible changes in their offerings to tourists and as a result, pilgrimage and tourism began to have greater synergy with the sacred sites and secular seers and pilgrimage tourism thus grew. It has greater needs, wants and expectations of pilgrims/tourists from the supply side (Mukhtar, 2012). The modern type of pilgrimage indicates the need for more traditional touristic characteristics, and also novel ways of marketing the destinations and tuning in to

the consumerist behavior of visitors (Shinde, 2007). Hence, to survive in competitive situations and to attract more tourists it is suggested that pilgrimage sites strategically consider the immediate needs and requirements of pilgrims as they undertake frequent visits to pilgrimage centres. Sites need to satisfy the demand raised by growing pilgrimage tourism for basics such as water, food, accommodation, transportation and other facilities etc. at one place at a given time (Huh, 2002).

So, from a demand side there is a huge need to identify which facilities and services the pilgrims expect and especially from the supply side where it is essential to measure whether the pilgrims are satisfied or not with the given services and facilities at the pilgrimage centre. The present study focuses on expectations and satisfaction of Hindu pilgrims at Naina Devi Shrine and serves as a practical example of what needs to be done to achieve superior tourism experiences.

### **Literature review**

Pilgrimage tourism appears to be a newer academic concept but according to the literature reviewed, it is certainly not a new phenomenon at all. It is considered by various authors as the first form of organized tourism (Rinschede, 1992; Metreveli and Timothy, 2010) and is generally motivated exclusively by religious reasons for travel (Timothy and Olsen, 2006).

In the past pilgrimages were often associated with asceticism, self-denial and physical penitence, but today most pilgrims like to travel more comfortably (Vorzak and Gut, 2009). Currently the concept of pilgrimage tourism has shifted from its core motive to also incorporating a business motive and thus better pilgrimage facilities/services have become essential for the visitors to shrines and sacred places in order to meet the many and varied expectations and perceptions of the pilgrims and to promote the success

of pilgrim destination and shrines in general (Ahmed, 1992). Weidenfeld (2006) suggests a focus on meeting the exceptional desires, needs and wants of pilgrims throughout their sacred journey to create a win-win situation in the pilgrimage tourism market for all stakeholders.

Vukonic (1996), in a study on religious tourism, suggests updating the pilgrimage destinations according to the changing needs of the pilgrims and urges the provision of satisfactory experiences to the tourists who visit for religious purposes and to ensure their repeat visits. Hence, to survive in competitive situations there is need to give proper attention towards needs, wants and the contentment of the traveler regarding different services desired by those who opt to visit pilgrimage sites (Singh, 2007).

Pilgrim tourism at Shri Mata Vaishno Devi was empirically studied by Mawa (2004) and this included as a basis, selected pilgrimage tourism services. The findings of the study showed that pilgrims were positively satisfied with transport services that were provided. In the case of retail services the pilgrims were almost satisfied, except for variable enjoyable shopping experiences for which all the groups researched showed a negative association with overall satisfaction. As far as satisfaction regarding supervision of the Shrine Board during the Vaishno Devi pilgrimage when compared with the overall satisfaction, it was found that there was a positive association with all the variables except for variables such as sanitation, drinking water availability, cloakroom facilities, blankets, telecom etc. These aspects lowered the overall satisfaction level in especially the case of non-local pilgrims.

Vijayanand (2012) conducted a study in Tamilnadu with special reference to pilgrimage circuits (Velankanni, Nagore and Thirunallar) and with respect to various services available at the destination which satisfy the needs and

demands of almost every class of visitor. The study was based on a field survey and used various statistical tools in data analysis. The findings of the study indicated/reported that the pilgrims were not satisfied with existing facilities provided at pilgrimage sites such as accommodation, transportation, availability of banks and ATMs, parking space availability, road conditions, food and drinking water, rest facilities, cloak rooms, hygiene and cleanliness and health services at the destination. By contrast, pilgrims were satisfied with shopping facilities and their personal safety during their visit to the area. The study concluded that there exists a need to improve the weak features of the destination in order to bring more satisfied tourists to the area and thus promote sustainability of the destination.

Pai et al. (2013) conducted a study to identify pilgrims' satisfaction levels with various services and facilities and also to sought to measure the level of satisfaction with respect to various facilities at pilgrimage centres of Udupi. The result of the study disclosed that in terms of satisfaction the most important factors perceived by pilgrims were accommodation, room rental and transportation infrastructure. The least important factors rated by pilgrims were shopping and tourism services in the area. The study concluded by suggesting that tourists be provided proper tourism services in a proper manner, giving more focus to the security of pilgrims' and their belongings, and especially serving pilgrims with smile and empathy. It was also considered important to offer travel packages to visit nearby temples and places in order to enhance tourists' satisfaction.

Patwal and Agarwal (2013) conducted a study with the aim of understanding pilgrim satisfaction key factors at a destination (Mahakumbha Mela - 2013 site at Allahabad). The result of the study indicated that most tourists at the event were only moderately satisfied. Thus, that

destination has only partly met the expectations of the pilgrims. When the scale was subjected to factor analysis, thirteen items gave way to five factors which were listed under headings including basic facilities, support facilities, enhancers and concerns. After regressing the factors, basic facilities were found to have a strong influence on pilgrim satisfaction followed by support facilities and enhancers. The study concluded that there is a need to develop effective strategies to attract more satisfied tourists to the event in future.

Gautam and Thakur (2014) conducted a study to understand the tourist perception at the religious tourism site of Mansa Devi Temple in Panchkula of Haryana. The findings of the study noted that service provided at Mansa Devi Temple are satisfactory and significantly, transport is appropriate, infrastructure is fair, there is ample parking available, easily available local transportation, proper safety and security measures are appropriate. The area is also free from pick-pockets and annoying beggars. The study also concluded that services such as cleanliness, availability of guides or instructors, hygienic food and problems of beggars must be taken care of by the government or shrine board so as to increase the extent of tourist satisfaction at the site.

Gupta and Sharma (2008) in their study tried to determine the pilgrims' expectations and their satisfaction levels by finding the extent to which the pilgrims' expectations are met with hospitality services in Katra. The study was based on primary data comprising 150 pilgrims through a simple random sampling technique with the help of a structured questionnaire on a five point Likert scale. The expectation and satisfaction of the pilgrims were recorded with eight hospitality parameters or attributes of the destination. The result of the study found only two attributes as satisfying attributes. These included religious ambience in the lobby of the hotel and the interior décor of

the rooms which were adorned with religious symbols. Indifferent attributes were found to be availability of only vegetarian food and non-alcoholic drinks. The remaining four attributes were categorized as dissatisfying attributes, namely religiously sensitive staff, prepared itineraries for sale on the religious circuit, information about the religious destination and information about the requirements at a destination. So, a significant variation was found in terms of overall satisfaction of pilgrims. Hence, it is suggested to offer tourism services and facilities which match the visitors' expectations so as to increase the number of satisfied tourists as well as promote the notion of repeat visitors.

Babu (2013) conducted a study on the pilgrimage centre of Tirupati with the aim of capturing tourists' perceptions, preferences and satisfaction with respect to transportation facilities in the temple town, Darshan / seva availability, accommodation, information and communication, and behavior of TTD staff, volunteers and local vendors. The result of the study indicated that tourists were satisfied with accommodation, transportation, hygiene and the quality of food available at temple town. Whereas dissatisfaction was found over the security of pilgrims' valuables and belongings, and the poor behavior of staff and local vendors towards pilgrims. The study concluded there is a need to take remedial measures to provide better services for the enhancement of the pilgrimage tourism potential at the study area.

Mishra and Pal (2009), attempted to analyze pilgrimage destination attributes in terms of tourists' perception and their overall satisfaction level in Sultanganj region of Bihar, which is a place with great historical and religious significance. The Expectancy-disconfirmation theory provided a conceptual framework for this study. The analytical study revealed that out of twenty identified attributes, the tourists' were satisfied with eight, neutral

with respect to three and dissatisfied with nine attributes. The mean value of respondents' overall perceived levels of satisfaction tended moderately toward the high end of the satisfaction scale. Based upon the results of this study, several recommendations were made to increase tourists' satisfaction alongside helping tourism marketers and planners to develop appropriate strategies in conformity with tourists' perception towards various destination attributes.

Mukhtar (2012) conducted a study with a focus on Pilgrimage tourism to Kashmir with the aim of measuring satisfaction levels among pilgrims visiting pilgrimage spots in Kashmir. The study resulted in the finding that the pilgrims were mostly dissatisfied with most of the services viz. transportation, accommodation, food and catering, means of information, public convenience (drinking water, bath rooms, toilet, resting chairs etc.), social attitude of locals, availability of feedback and redress of wrongs desks Whereas pilgrims were quite satisfied with the availability of shopping and souvenir facilities and the arrangement of security at pilgrimage spots in Kashmir. The study also suggested ways to provide satisfactory services to the pilgrims so as to bring positive word of mouth publicity and this bolster tourism to the area.

Gade and Jagtap (2014) conducted a study on Narsinhwadi in Kolhapur district of Maharashtra with the aim of assessing the levels of satisfaction of religious tourists by noting their views regarding various facilities. The satisfaction index was measured with the help of suitable methods and the result of the study indicated that tourists found accessibility, food, drinking water and accommodation was easily available except on the occasion of fairs and festivals. Otherwise they were satisfied with these services. On the other hand entertainment and recreation facilities were totally absent in the area. Moreover, religious tourists gave poor rankings to the darshan facility, behavior of local people and other

management of the shrine aspects. It reveals that these should be improved to attract and to satisfy the needs and wants of religious tourist groups at the shrine.

Gurav and Jagtap (2014) conducted a study at the famous religious temple of Jejuri Khandoba in Pune to ascertain the satisfaction index of the tourists on the basis of the facilities. The study was empirical in nature and a questionnaire was used to calculate the satisfaction index on the basis of overall views expressed by tourists about existing facilities. The factor analysis was made on the basis of ranking methods. The first rank was given to the transport facility followed by darshan arrangements, accommodation, food facilities, parking arrangements and safety and security. It indicated that the tourists were satisfied with transportations and darshan facilities to a large extent. The tourists were dissatisfied with the drinking water and food arrangements at the temple and the surrounding areas. The safety of the tourists' luggage and baggage during crowded religious ceremonies was also not satisfactory. The study suggested ways to develop more customer-oriented services as well as to increase the satisfaction of the tourists in general.

The review of literature indicates that a number of studies have been conducted but that most of them mainly emphasize different issues of developed destinations and most of them have applied traditional measurement tools. Very few concentrated efforts have been made on the expectation and satisfaction of pilgrims while also emphasizing a particular religion and of a particular region. The studies discussed previously un- covered Hindu pilgrimage centers of study area. Thus far no proper study has been conducted to assess the expectation and satisfaction levels of Hindu pilgrims at Naina Devi Shrine.

## Study framework

Competition in the tourism industry is increasing day by day since more and more countries seek to attract tourists and more companies and organizations become involved in the highly skilled business of transporting, accommodating and catering for tourists. It is, therefore, necessary for tourism planners to have a good knowledge of tourism marketing strategies for achieving their goals (Ahammed, 2010) more effectively than competitive suppliers or destinations (Fyall and Brain, 2006).

The attitudes, expectations, perception and satisfaction of the tourists were significant variables in setting tourism goals, influencing tourist behavior and finally determining levels of satisfaction (Ryan, 1995).

Several researchers have studied visitor satisfaction and have provided theories about tourism (Bramwell, 1998; Bowen, 2001). For example, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry's (1985) Expectation Perception Gap Model, Oliver's Expectancy-Disconfirmation theory (Pizam and Milman, 1993) and many more.

The Expectancy-Disconfirmation theory provides a conceptual framework for this study. According to Oliver (1980), Expectancy Disconfirmation theory consists of two sub processes having independent effects on customer satisfaction: the formation of expectations and the disconfirmation of those expectations through performance comparisons. Moreover, a consumer's expectation are: (a) confirmed when the product or service performance matches prior expectations, (b) Is negatively disconfirmed when a product or service performance fails to match expectations, and (c) Is positively disconfirmed when it is perceived the product or service performance exceeds expectations. Dissatisfaction comes about when a consumer's expectations are negatively

disconfirmed; that is the product performance is less than expected (Churchill and Surprenant, 1982; Oliver and Beardon, 1985; Patterson, 1993).

As far as pilgrimage tourism is concerned, a limited number of researches have been conducted in this area. Little information exists in the literature about pilgrims in terms of their behaviors that might help destination managers to design effective pilgrimage packages for this growing niche market by matching the growing demands of the tourists (Digance, 2003; Triantafillidou, Koritos, Chatzipanagiotou, and Vassilikopoulou, 2010). Therefore, marketers always try to learn the expectation, satisfaction, typology, attitude and behaviour of pilgrimage tourists to effectively design and offer their tourism packages (Mishra, 2000; Karar, 2010). With this background, the objective of this research was to analyze the expectation and satisfaction level of pilgrims, as well as their future behavior towards pilgrimage tourism.

## Pilgrimage tourism at Naina Devi

The present study is based on Naina Devi Shrine which is situated in Bilaspur district of Himachal Pradesh which is a north-western state in India. It is 16 kilometres from Anandpur Shahib, a famous Sikh place of pilgrimage, and about one two kilometres from Nangal village. The pilgrims need to walk up to the hilltop covering a distance of 2 kilometres on foot. They can also avail of a ropeway or board palkis that are carried by men. Naina Devi Shrine is considered to be one of the famous goddess sites that is claimed to be *Shakti Pitahas*. This place is the place where the eyes of Lord Shiva's consort Sati fell.

Nestled on a picturesque hill, the temple is a reflection of the north Indian style of temple architecture. The entrance of the temple has the idols of Lord *Hanumana* and Lord *Ganesha*. A huge peepal tree, believed to be centuries old, is a prominent part of this temple's complex.

At a distance of 25 metres from the main shrine is the Cave of Mata where *Naina Devi* is situated. On the rear side of the temple is a famous place called *Kripali Kund*. It is believed that when Devi defeated the demon *Mahishasur*, she took out both his eyes and threw them on the rear side of the *Naina Devi* hills. Both eyes fell on different places where two wells originated later. Both these wells are at a distance of 2 kilometres downside from the temple.

Adjacent to Mata *Naina Devi* temple there is place is called "*Chikshu-Kund*". This is a holy place where people take baths to get rid of dermatological disorders, especially the children. According to folklore, married ladies are blessed with children after taking a bath in its water.

On the way from Anandpur Sahib to the main shrine the famous place of *Kolanwala Toba* is situated which is famous for blooming lotuses and is the first halt in the journey of Shri *Naina Devi Ji*. There is a sacred pool of water here in which people take bath before going to *darshan*. Temple trust has invested Rs. 1.25 Crore for the development of this area (srinainadevi.com, 2014). There were many temples and other religious sites were also found in Bilaspur town such as *Vyas Gufa*, *Laxami Narayan* temple, *Baba Balak Nath* and so on.

Devotees and tourists come from different places to visit the pilgrimage center of *Naina Devi*. A brief description of pilgrims arrivals in the area is presented below in Table 1.

**Table 1: Number of pilgrims (year wise) visited at Nain devi shrine**

Year	Number of pilgrims visited (in lakhs)	Year	Number of pilgrims visited (in lakhs)
2001	26	2008	42
2002	28	2009	44
2003	30	2010	46
2004	33	2011	48
2005	35	2012	50
2006	38	2013	51
2007	40	2014	52

Source: Temple Trust, Naina Devi, Bilaspur, H.P.

*Naina Devi* temple welcomes the pilgrims throughout the year but the greatest pilgrimage traffic at this place occurs during festivals held on the eighth day in each half of the lunar month of *Shravan*, and also during the first nine days of the month of *Ashvin*, when the *Navaratri* festival takes place (Lochtefeld, 2001). These colorful fairs become the meeting place for the pilgrims - a unique shrine. This led some to question whether this continuous (albeit slow) growth in the number of pilgrims is properly handled by tourism suppliers and local authorities alike. Thus, it becomes essential to consistently assess the wants, desires and demands of pilgrims.

The present study will contribute towards this important field by measuring expectation and satisfaction of Hindu pilgrims at *Naina Devi Shrine* and thus fills

a gap in knowledge.

### **Naina Devi Temple Trust**

The formation of Shri *Naina Devi Temple Trust* was in December, 1985 for maintaining the beautification measures of the temple complex, the construction of parking areas and roads, provision of free accommodation, food and beverages, cloakrooms, and other infrastructural facilities such as drinking water, bathrooms and toilets and also medical facilities. The trust is also running a souvenir shops for pilgrims on a non-profit and no-loss basis. Extra police for security and discipline maintenance are arranged during festivals or special events seasons.

### **Research methodology**



The present study was conducted at the Hindu pilgrimage centre of Naina Devi situated in the north-western state of Himachal Pradesh state. The study was conducted in 2015 (from January to April). The present study used secondary as well as primary data. The secondary data were collected mainly from journal papers, reports, books, online information, etc. A visitor survey was conducted to gather the required primary data at Naina Devi Shrine.

After doing a thorough literature search on visitor satisfaction in tourism and pilgrimage tourism, a set of attributes regarding visitor satisfaction was initially selected. Then these attributes were evaluated by experts in the area to ensure their validity for the study. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part included questions related to the socio-demographic characteristics of the visitors, and the second part consisted of questions to gather data on the expectations and satisfaction regarding attributes of pilgrimage destinations, which were answered at the beginning of their visit to the destination. The third part consisted of questions related to the overall satisfaction and likely future behavior of the visitors. The satisfaction and future behavioral intentions of the visitors were measured on a five point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high).

The data collection phase was spread over a 4 month period (January to April 2015) to avoid the decency effect of any major disturbing or positive events on the tourists' attitudes. The respondents were contacted after their arrival in Naina Devi Shrine. The questionnaire was distributed to 150 pilgrims in total. All the domestic tourists were contacted during the survey because no foreign visitors could be seen due to a lack of publicity for the destination. In the first meeting they completed the questionnaire on their pre-trip opinions. After visiting the tourist site

they were contacted again and requested to give a post trip opinion of the shrine. Most of respondents were contacted at hotels or at dharmashals. The owners of the hotels and souvenirs shops extended their support and helped out during the research as the findings would be very useful to them as well.

A descriptive analysis was conducted to study the visitors' demographic features in order to develop their profiles. Moreover percentage, mean, standard deviation and paired t-test were applied to analyse the satisfaction of the pilgrims with selected destination attributes. Further, one sample t-test was conducted to find out the level of overall satisfaction and future behavior of the pilgrims. In order to make the presentation more effective, tables and diagrams were also used.

### **Destination attributes**

Destination attributes play a vital role in tourist satisfaction. Travel attributes are the set of attributes which when aggregated together, describe a place as a travel destination (Lancaster, 1966). The success of any travel destination relies heavily on different attributes such as its attraction; its amenities or facilities; and its accessibility for tourists (Holloway, 1986), in addition to its safety, reasonable price, sanitation and hygiene, and good accommodation are important in any destination success story (Shih, 1986).

Accessibility, transparency, safety and security, hygiene, authenticity and harmony are some of the standardized parameters of the tourism industry in order to strive to meet and satisfy the needs and wants of tourists (UNWTO, 2003). In terms of pilgrimage tourism an extensive review of the literature noted some important studies (Table-II) on expectation satisfaction of pilgrimage tourism setting on the basis of the varied selected destination attributes.

**Table II- Information on attributes used at pilgrimage tourism studies**

Name of author/authors	Identified attributes
Ahmed (1992)	Controlling begging, host courtesy, queue management, capacity limits, setting standards of accommodation, need of guides and controlling profiteers and separate marketing efforts for different pilgrim segments
Timoty & Butler (1995)	Food, craft, authentic mementos, souvenirs and gift
Vukonic (1996)	Transportation, food & catering, accommodation, health & infrastructural facilities
Tomasi (2002)	Hospitality services
Pilley & Kevin (1999)	Better queue management, adequate hotel services
Rathod (1999)	Accommodation, transportation, darshan, food and drinking water, shopping and behavior of the local people
Tomasi (2002)	Local hospitality
Heo et al.(2004)	Infrastructure and transportation services
Patnaik (2006)	Infrastructure, retail, and health facility and transportation and accommodation

**Source: Compiled by authors from Review of Literature**

Moreover, after consultation eight destination attributes were found suitable for the Naina Devi shrine covering attraction, transportation, accommodation, food and beverages, tourism services, attitude of locals, safety and security and infrastructural facilities, which were selected for the study.

selected set of destination attributes.

- To identify the overall satisfaction level and future behavioral intentions of pilgrims towards the pilgrimage site of Naina Devi.
- To assess the future behavioral intentions of pilgrims towards the pilgrimage site of Naina Devi.

### Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are:

- To measure the expectation levels of pilgrims arising from the selected set of destination attributes.
- To evaluate the satisfaction level of pilgrims arising from the

### Findings and discussion

Demographic profiles of the pilgrims and the results of the descriptive analysis of the important demographic characteristics of the pilgrims' are presented in Table 3. This information will be helpful for understanding the category of pilgrims that prefer pilgrimage tourism.

**Table III: Profiles of the pilgrims**

Socio Demographic Variables		Percentage %
Gender	Male	65.4
	Female	34.6
Age in years	20-35	10.5
	36-45	45.8
	46-55	34.4
	Above 55	9.3
Marital Status	Married	63.7
	Single	36.3
Education Level	Hr. Secondary	0.0
	Sr. Secondary	15.8
	Graduate	47.4
	Postgraduate	36.8
Occupation	Students	5.1
	Serviceperson	58.4
	Businessperson	33.3
	Others	3.2
Monthly Income in INR	<20000	3.9
	20001-40000	30.3

	40001-60000	47.4
	>60000	18.4

According to the results of Table 3 when gender is considered, for the local pilgrims, both male and female, the number of male pilgrims was higher (65%) than females (35%). The dominant age group of the pilgrims was 36-45 (middle-aged). In terms of marital status, there were higher numbers of married people than singles. Out of the total number of respondents, 84% of pilgrims had an education higher than graduation level. Furthermore, a higher level of pilgrims (58%) was also employed. With regard to the respondents' income, it was found that majority of pilgrims (47.4%) were receiving income of Rs. 300,001-400,000. Therefore, it is clear that the pilgrimage tourism at Naina Devi are typically middle-aged, educated, married, people having a comparatively a higher income level than the average tourist. Pilgrimage tourism stakeholders should be able to understand the needs of this market category and serve them accordingly if sustainability is to be achieved.

### Expectation of the pilgrims from selected attributes

The pilgrims indicated variations in expectations regarding various services at the destination. The pilgrims showed high expectation for seven attributes namely availability of food and beverages, physical ambience of the area, security of luggage and baggage, availability of

transportation services, accommodation, tourist information centers and quality food and drink served at the destination.

Some of the attributes like availability of public utilities, existence of travel service providers, other tourist attractions in the area, safety measures from mischievous behaviour and fraud, the price of souvenirs and gift items, the price of accommodation charged and the availability of recreation and entertainment facilities in the area were moderately expected by respondents. The remaining six attributes were given very low expectation value and included the condition of roads and display of sign-boards, medical and first aid facilities in the area, honesty of shopkeepers and vendors, helpfulness and cooperative nature of locals, the cleanliness of accommodation area and availability of cloak room and locker facilities for pilgrims in the area.

### Satisfaction of pilgrims from selected attributes

First, the mean perceived value (MPV) and mean expected value (MEV) for the 21-pilgrimage tourism attributes was calculated. After that, two values for each attribute were compared using paired t-test and satisfaction level was decided according to the EDT, as explained before. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table IV: Expectation & satisfaction of pilgrims

Attributes	MPV	MEV	MD	t-value
<b>Attractions</b>				
Availability of tourist attractions in the area	3.37	3.39	-0.026	-0.815
Physical ambience & weather of the area	4.03	3.89	0.132	3.371*
Availability of recreation & entertainment facilities	3.00	3.04	-0.039	-0.652
<b>Transportation</b>				
Availability of transportation services from destination to bus stand/railway station	3.97	3.79	0.184	3.542*
Condition of roads and display of sign boards	2.97	2.84	0.132	3.371*
<b>Accommodation</b>				
Availability of accommodation services at the destination	3.92	3.74	0.184	3.156*
Cleanliness of the accommodation area	2.11	2.24	-0.132	-3.371*

Price of the accommodation charged	3.05	3.21	-0.158	-3.174*
<b>Food &amp; Beverages</b>				
Availability of food & beverages varieties in the area	4.11	3.95	0.158	3.750*
Quality of food & drink served	3.84	3.68	0.158	3.174*
<b>Tourism Services</b>				
Availability of tourism information centers	3.68	3.74	0.053	-0.893
Prices charged for souvenirs or handicrafts at the destination	3.26	3.34	-0.079	-1.097
Availability of travel service provider	3.37	3.41	-0.039	-0.597
<b>Attitude of Locals</b>				
Helpful & cooperative nature of locals	2.74	2.55	0.184	3.156*
Honesty of shopkeepers & vendors	2.89	2.68	0.211	3.203*
<b>Infrastructural Facilities</b>				
Availability of medical & first-aid facilities	3.03	2.84	0.184	3.156*
Availability of public utilities (drinking water, bathroom & toilets arrangements)	3.26	3.47	-0.211	-2.970*
Cloak room & locker facilities	2.00	2.18	-0.184	-4.115*
<b>Safety &amp; Security</b>				
Security of tourists' luggage & baggage	4.00	3.84	0.158	3.174*
Safety of travelers' from mischief & fraud	3.79	3.36	0.158	3.750*
MPV= Mean Perceived Value; MEV= Mean Expected Value; MD= Mean Difference between perceived and expected value				
*=Significant at 95 confidence Level				

The results indicate that the pilgrims were satisfied with eleven tourism attributes (Table 4); namely availability of transportation facilities, condition of roads and signage, existence of accommodation facilities, food and beverages varieties, quality of food and drink served, helpfulness and cooperativeness of local residents, honesty of shopkeepers and vendors, security of tourist luggage and baggage, safety from mischief and fraud and availability of medical and first-aid facilities at the destination. The destination was able to provide these general facilities in an adequate manner, making pilgrims happy. In this pilgrimage tourism business, half of the attributes were found to be at a satisfactory level. The tourism stakeholders of the area were happy with the above results and they would make an effort to continue with providing good facilities and services for all future operations.

Five attributes, such as availability of tourist attraction in the area, entertainment and recreation facilities, tourist information centre, prices of the souvenirs and handicrafts charged and availability of travel service provider in the area, demonstrated neutral feelings or indifference between expected and

perceived feelings. These are important attributes and are critical for increasing the consumer satisfaction in pilgrimage tourism. Pilgrims expect a certain standard for each of these attributes. However, due to lack of facilities, skills and awareness, the destination failed to provide these things adequately. It is the responsibility of tourism planners to improve these attributes to a significant level in order to attract more pilgrims and also so that pilgrims may return to the destination.

The pilgrims were dissatisfied with four attributes namely cleanliness of the accommodation area, prices of the accommodation service charged, availability of cloak room and availability of public utilities such as drinking water, bathrooms and toilet services. These services were very much lacking and were available only in small quantities. This is due to the lack of attention and motivation in promoting the site in an attractive manner on the part of the pilgrimage tourism stakeholders. Destination stakeholders must clearly pay closer attention to correcting these shortfalls and problems at their earliest possible convenience. These factors are very important for the growth of pilgrimage tourism destinations and for them

becoming popular amongst other pilgrims.

### **Overall satisfaction and future behavior of the pilgrims**

The overall satisfaction level and future behavior of the pilgrims were estimated using mean perceived values (MPV). Then these values were compared to test the differences using independent t-tests. The results are presented in the Table 5.

According to the results for overall satisfaction level concerning the revisit the destination, and recommending the destination to others, they were at significant levels. However, the overall satisfaction level of the pilgrims was at a

moderate level. The level of intention to revisit the destinations by the pilgrims was unfortunately at a lower level. This is a common phenomenon in most of the destinations in the world. It was significant that there was a comparatively higher trend to recommend these destinations to others by the pilgrims. This is a very good indicator for the future development of pilgrimage tourism in the area. If indifference and dissatisfied attributes of the destinations are attended to and developed and promoted properly, the overall satisfaction level will automatically increase. Furthermore, it will help to increase the level of return visits to the destination as well as recommending the destination to others.

**Table V- Overall satisfaction and future behavioral intentions of pilgrims**

<b>Impression</b>	<b>MPV</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>One Sample t test Value</b>
Overall satisfaction with the destination	3.13	0.984	27.732*
Intention to revisit the destination	1.18	0453	22.767*
Recommending the destination to others	3.89	0.602	56.424*

MPV= Mean Perceived Value; SD=Standard Deviation,\*=Significant at 95 confidence Level

### **Recommendations**

The visitors were not so happy with some attributes as is clear from the study conducted. When the attributes were studied in detail, several weaknesses could be identified. The number of tourist attractions and entertainment and recreation facilities are comparatively low in the area. Efforts must be made to get acquainted with introducing entertainment and recreation activities as well as to combine the destination with adjoining tourist attractions so as to increase to number of tourist arrivals to the area. Tourist information centers and travel service providers were not significantly found in the area which is in itself highly problematic. Tourism information centers provide complete information about the destination as well as its surrounding areas and existence of travel service provider ensure a convenient and enjoyable journey for the tourists.

The price of the souvenirs and handicrafts

and other items was also expensive. There is an urgent need to establish such a mechanism to overcome these problems. If pilgrimage tourism planners at the destination follow the above mentioned recommendations, they will be able to supply a better quality service to the visitors and greatly enhance the visitor satisfaction in the area.

The lack of cloakrooms and lockers, poor quality of public utilities such as drinking water, bathroom and toilets at the destination were commonly seen as huge problems. To over-come these weaknesses, the marketers and planners need to have better knowledge and awareness of these negative aspects, and they have to pay attention to provide better services.

Further, the cleanliness and hygiene and sanitation situation at the destinations were not up to the required or desired standards. Poor attention was paid to removing of waste and generally keeping the environment clean and tidy. The

concerned authorities must follow proper methods and practices in managing such waste levels in the area

The prices charged for the accommodation services on offer was very high in range. Free accommodation is also available at the destination but this is very limited. As solutions to all these problems, the establishment of more hotels and guest houses and linkages with other accommodation networks should be urgently considered. Linkages with local residents, introduction of local home-stays are equally important. The operators need to learn and provide tourists with more competitive products rather than cheaper prices as compared to outside providers.

### Conclusion

Understanding visitor satisfaction and future behavior is very important with a strong bearing on pilgrimage tourism development. The findings of this study depicted the level of satisfaction of visitors as being at significant levels because the visitors were happy with the eleven attributes of the destination.

Furthermore, a significant level of intention to revisit by the local visitors and a high level of readiness to recommend the destinations to others were positive signs for the sector. However, pilgrims were not satisfied with some attributes, hence the study emphasized the necessity of improving weak attributes such as appropriate entertainment activities, diversification of pilgrimage tourism as applicable, availability of more infrastructural facilities such cloak room, lockers, bathrooms and toilets and drinking water coolers etc., for increasing the efficiency of the destination to provide a satisfactory experience. In general, policy makers should pay more attention to several aspects of their operations, especially regarding the attributes that were identified as dissatisfactory and also those that were regarded with indifference on the part of the visitors. Thus, the

findings of this research may be useful in developing policies and undertaking promotional measures along with improving the quality and net-works of pilgrimage tourism in the area.

### Limitations of the research

There are a few limitations in this research. The sample size was small and particularly based on domestic tourists as there is a dearth of foreign tourists in the area due to poor marketing and promotion of the destination. There might be some other attributes that are also important for visitor satisfaction. However, the findings are useful in developing policies and promotional measures for further expansion of this sector.

### Further research

Further research can be carried out using different segments of pilgrims *vis-a-vis* their satisfaction according to demographic features as well as experiences at other destinations of religious tourism significance.

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