

DIGITAL PAYMENT EXPANSION: A BOON FOR THE TRAVEL AND TOURISM INDUSTRY IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Digital wallets, digital cards, and online travel agents are all clearly influencing the growth of the tourism sector. Travelers can access profitable, safe, convenient, and secure experiences via digital channels. Numerous travel planning apps, like yatra.com, goibibo, skyscanner, make my trip, etc., have started operating successfully in India. The objective of this paper is to examine the effects of digital payments on the tourist industry in relation to the visitors to the Andhra Pradesh's temple town of Tirupati. Most respondents express great satisfaction with Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam's digital platform offerings, including its online seva ticketing, panchagavya items, lodging, and refund options.

Keywords: Digital wallet, Online Payment, Pilgrim, Tirupati, Travel.

INTRODUCTION

One of the key industrial sectors in the Indian economy is tourism. The primary goal of the tourism industry is to develop and promote tourism, retain India as a well-liked travel destination, compete with rival countries, and expand tourism products like adventure, medical, cruises, eco-tourism, etc. to foster employee development and economic progress. India is ranked 54th by the World Economic Forum's travel and tourism development index 2022 edition. India is anticipated to rank among the top five travel markets by 2030. India will have welcomed 30.5 million foreign tourists by 2028 as per the projections of India Brand Equity Foundation.

The finance minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman allots \$2400 billion in the union budget for the fiscal year 2022–23 for the ministry of tourism to implement various programmes. Budgetary support for 2022–23 is 18.42% more than that for 2021–22. Geographical density, 80 national parks, 37 sites designated as world heritage sites, 441 sanctuaries, and 10 bio-geographical zones are just a few of the diverse attractions in India. There are numerous beautiful beaches scattered around the nation's extensive coastline.

In recent years, pilgrimage tourism has grown in popularity among believers. The Indian government's "Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive" was introduced in the 2014–15 year. This program's primary goal is to improve pilgrimage sites for religious tourists. There are numerous well-known Hindu pilgrimage sites in India, including the Bhimshankar Temple, the Chidambaram Temple, the Chitrakoot Temple, the Dwarka Temple, the Madurai Meenakshi Temple, and others.

The most well-known Sikh pilgrimage sites are Hemkund Sahib, Anandpur Sahib, Goindwal Sahib, and the Golden Temple. Rajgir, Sanchi, Vaishali, and Kapilvastu are popular Buddhist pilgrimage sites. The South Indian Temples and Cathedrals, Velankani, the South Indian Church Tour, and the Beaches and Backwaters Tour are the most visited

pilgrimage sites by Christians. Popular Jain pilgrimage destinations include the Jain Temple at Gummileru, the Ellora Jain Cave in Basadi, Maharashtra, the Dallina Vardamana Mahaveera Jain Temple, and the Shantinath Jain Tirth in Maharashtra. The Muslim pilgrimage destinations of Dargahon Ki Ziyarat and Ajmer Sharif Tour are well-known.

Tirupati: A Pilgrims' Paradise

Tirupati is well known for its pilgrims. Tirupati ranks as Andhra Pradesh's ninth most renowned city. Tirupati is one of the 100 Indian cities chosen by the Indian government's Smart Cities Mission to be transformed into a smart city. In Tirupati, there are numerous temples, but one of the most well-known is the Seven Hills. There will be a huge influx of visitors from all states to Tirumala. Every day, on average, 70,000 pilgrims travel to Tirumala, and on significant days, that number may rise to one lakh. The Tirumala Hills are the second-oldest rock mountains in the world. Talakona Waterfalls, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Gardens, Deer Park, Sri Vari Museum, Sri Govindarajaswamy Temple, Sri Padmavati Ammavari Temple, and Kapila Theertham are the eight most significant attractions in Tirupati after Tirumala.

TTD offers internet services for the benefit of followers. The TTD official platform offers several digital services, including Darshan, Seva, Hundi, Srivari Sevaks, and donations. TTD also provides a digital booking option for Kalyana Vedhika and Kalyana Mandapam. TTD offers online seva (virtual participation) services, which is another distinctive aspect.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In their study *Adoption of Digital Payments for Travelers at Tourism Destinations*, Eko Susanto et al. (2022) looked at how digital payment technology is used and how travellers perceive the quality of service in tourist destinations. Tourists can use digital payments to pay for lodging, meals, and transportation, and it was discovered that usability is the key factor driving the adoption of digital payment technology.

In their study titled "The Relevance of Online Payment on Travel and Tourism Earnings-A Cross-Country Panel Data Study," Laura Lorente Bayona and Aurora Ruiz Rua (2019) examined how to promote international travel and how to boost tourism-related income. The study discovered that a significant high level of international tourism receipts is demonstrated by a high utilisation of the internet for company-to-consumer interactions. The study concludes that businesses using the internet to communicate with clients, sell goods and services, or buy goods and services, experience a decline in GDP percentage.

In their article titled "A Study on Tourism Perception towards Usage of Mobile Wallet," Pankaj Kumar Tyagi et al. (2021) seek to determine whether Indian tourists are at ease using digital wallets while travelling, the preferred method of payment, and the potential of digital wallets in the tourism industry. The primary goals of this study are to examine the preferred payment method used by Indian tourists and to determine whether these visitors feel comfortable using mobile wallets while travelling. According to the report, 40 percent of respondents use mobile wallets while travelling, and most of the respondents use a variety of payment methods, including cash, credit or debit cards, mobile wallets, or both.

In their work "Growth and Performance of the Tourist Industry in India," Ghatage and Kumbhar (2015) examined the expansion and performance of the Indian tourism sector. The study's goal is to examine the development and issues facing India's tourist industry. According to the report, the top international tourist destination states in India are Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, and Uttar Pradesh. The percentage of foreign tourists in India's top ten states in 2013 was 89.9%. India was ranked eighth in 2013.

In their research titled "Impacts of mobile payment-related qualities on consumers' repurchase intention," published in 2021, Sunny Sun *et al.* examined the degree to which consumers were satisfied with the functioning and usability of digital payments. A questionnaire was used to obtain the information from 879 respondents. The study discovered that each aspect of hotel repurchase via digital payments has a constant value. The analysis concludes that using digital payments for hotel reservations is the best course of action. The OTA partners and hotel managers work together to provide quick digital payments, which is a crucial component of usability.

In their 2019 study, "Perceptions and Trends of Booking Online Payments in Tourism," Fernando Almeida *et al.* examined how travellers perceived various forms of payment. Data from 238 respondents was gathered. According to the report, out of the seven payment options, debit card security came in first place, followed by the availability and simplicity of cash payments. According to the study's findings, credit card security received the lowest score, and PayPal received poor reviews for its availability.

In their study titled "Shaping Digitalization among German Tourism Service Providers: Processes and Implications," Hannes Thees *et al.* (2021) examined the effects of the COVID-19 epidemic on the digital transformation of the German tourism industry. 372 individuals participated in an online poll that collected the data. According to the report, 41% of respondents are unsure about moving toward digitalization, compared to 31% of respondents who observed a high degree of digitalization.

In their work "Exploring Tourist Adoption of Tourism Mobile Payments: An Empirical Analysis," Runhua Peng *et al.* (2012) examined the beneficial effects of perceived usability, security, and compatibility on perceived usefulness and behaviour intention. Structural equation modelling was used to acquire the data for the inquiry. A face-to-face questionnaire survey is used to collect data from the Chinese tourist destination of Guilin, utilising the easy sampling technique. The study discovered that tourists' perceptions of their utility were the main motivators for embracing digital payments. Perceived compatibility and perceived usefulness have a favourable relationship, according to research. The study finds that perceptions of security and convenience are important drivers of tourist digital payments.

Statement of the Problem

Digital payments have significantly accelerated the tourism industry's expansion. Smartphones have boosted the number of people who use digital payments. Even though the tourism industry has conducted a great deal of research on digital payments, a thorough amount of that research has been conducted by diverse respondents who use digital payments while making reservations for different TTD services. The purpose of this study is to determine how satisfied Tirumala pilgrims are with the use of digital payments and how they perceive it.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study how COVID-19 affects tourists use digital payments
2. To examine how tourists feel about using digital payments
3. To comprehend how satisfied travellers are with TTD's digital payment platform

METHODOLOGY

For the study, both primary and secondary data were gathered. The respondents are chosen using a straightforward random sample procedure from the pilgrims who go to Tirumala. The first responders come from a variety of Indian states. There were 107

participants. Data is gathered using a standardized questionnaire and Google forms. The respondents are informed that the data obtained is solely used for research purposes and is kept secret from third parties. The SPSS software is used for data analysis. The respondents provide the primary data through questionnaires while the internet, e-books, websites, and other sources provide the secondary data Table 1.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Demography	Distribution	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Age	20-25	21	19.6	19.6
	26-30	35	32.7	52.3
	31-35	17	15.9	68.2
	Above 36	34	31.8	100
Gender	Male	52	48.6	48.6
	Female	55	51.4	100
Monthly Income	Below 10,000	23	21.5	21.5
	10,000 – 20,000	32	29.9	51.4
	20,000 – 30,000	29	27.1	78.5
	Above 30,000	23	21.5	100
Education	SSC	17	15.9	15.9
	Intermediate	21	19.6	35.5
	Undergraduate	32	29.9	65.4
	Postgraduate	37	34.6	100
Occupation	Employee	24	22.4	22.4
	Businessman	29	27.1	49.5
	Unemployed	23	21.5	71.0
	Professionals	31	29.0	100

Table 1 displays the respondents' distribution of demographic characteristics. As far as age distribution of respondents is concerned, 19.6% is between the ages of 20 and 25, 32.7% is between the ages of 26 and 30, 15.9% is between the ages of 31 and 35, and 31.8% is over the age of 36. There were 48.6% of men and 51.4% of women in the sample population. The monthly incomes of 21.5% of the population are between Rs. 0 and Rs. 10,000, 29.9% are between Rs. 10,000 and Rs. 20,000, 27.1% are between Rs. 20,000 and Rs. 30,000, and 21.5% are beyond Rs. 30,000. Education classification provides that SSC students made up 15.9% of the population; intermediate students made up 19.6%; undergraduate students made up 29.9%; and postgraduate students made up 34.6%. Occupation of the sample population describes that 22.4% reported having a job, 27.1% said they ran a business, 21.5% said they were unemployed, and 29% said they were professionals.

Impact of Covid – 19 on usage of Digital Payments

Gender Crosstab * Are you using digital wallets due to Covid-19						
	Yes	No	Total	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Gender						
Male	43	9	52			
Female	35	20	55			
Total	78	29	107			
Pearson Chi-Square				4.91	1	0.03
Age Crosstab * Are you using digital wallet due to fear of transmission of Virus Covid-19						
Age						

20-25	14	7	21			
26-30	29	6	35			
31-35	15	2	17			
Above 36	27	7	34			
Total	85	22	107			
Pearson Chi-Square				3.15	3	0.37
Occupation Crosstab * Are you feel safe using digital wallets other than debit/credit cards in Covid-19?						
Occupation						
Employee	17	7	24			
Businessman	28	1	29			
Unemployed	17	6	23			
Professionals	28	3	31			
Total	90	17	107			
Pearson Chi-Square				9.21	3	0.03
Monthly Income Crosstab * Is it safe to use digital wallets while travelling in Covid-19						
Monthly Income						
Below 15,000	20	3	23			
15,000 – 20,000	31	1	32			
20,000 – 30,000	19	10	29			
Above 30,000	20	3	23			
Total	90	17	107			
Pearson Chi-Square				11.68	3	0.009
Education Crosstab * Are you using digital payments before Covid-19 while travelling						
Education						
SSC	2	15	17			
Intermediate	8	13	21			
Undergraduate	12	20	32			
Postgraduate	5	32	37			
Total	27	80	107			
Pearson Chi-Square				8.72	3	0.03

According to gender, Table 2's usage of digital payments because of the COVID-19 pandemic reveals that Pearson chi-square has asymptotic significance 0.03 which is below the 0.05 level of statistical significance. This indicates that the gender component of COVID-19 has a significant impact on the use of digital payments. When using a digital wallet out of concern about the spread of the COVID-19 virus on age, Pearson's chi-square asymptotic significance of 0.37 which is above the statistical significance. This indicates that the dissemination of COVID-19 across age groups has had little to no effect on the use of digital wallets. The p-value for table 2's safety of digital payment methods other than debit and credit cards is 0.03, which is less than the significance threshold. This indicates that COVID-19, which is based on the respondents' occupations, has a substantial impact on the use of digital wallets other than debit or credit cards. The asymptotic significance of Pearson chi-square for the statement "Use of digital payments is safe while travelling" is 0.009, which is less than the standard value. Based on the respondents' monthly income, it means that COVID-19 has a considerable effect on the use of digital payments when travelling.

Prior to COVID-19, using digital payments while travelling had a p-value of 0.03, which is below the level of statistical significance? This demonstrates that the level of education has a significant influence on the use of digital payments while travelling before and after COVID-19.

Satisfaction Level on usage of Digital Payments in TTD Bookings

Table 3					
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation

Are you satisfied to book online seva tickets using digital mode?	107	1	5	2.20	0.98
Are you satisfied to purchase magazines and e-books using digital mode?	107	1	4	1.35	0.66
Are you satisfied to purchase panchagavya products using digital mode?	107	1	5	1.64	0.98
Are you satisfied in booking accommodation using online mode?	107	1	5	1.74	1.049
Are you satisfied with refund for already booked advance booking?	107	1	5	1.70	1.021
Valid N (listwise)	107				

Based on respondents' levels of satisfaction with the TTD digital platform, the mean and standard deviation are determined in Table 3. The five-point Likert scale, which ranges from highly satisfied to highly dissatisfied, is used to collect data. The standard deviation of online seva ticket bookings, magazine, and e-book purchases, panchagavya product purchases, hotel bookings, and refunds made via digital method was 0.98, 0.66, 0.98, and 1.05 respectively. When the standard deviation is less than 1.8, it indicates that the TTD platform for lodging, refunds, and online purchases of panchagavya items, periodicals, and e-books was well-liked by the respondents.

Findings

The dissemination of COVID-19 across age groups has had little to no effect on the use of digital wallets. Most responders are between the ages of 26 and 30 and most responses are from women. Recent graduates tend to dominate responses. The report makes it clear that most respondents utilise digital wallets like PhonePe, GooglePay, Paytm, etc. rather than debit or credit cards because of COVID-19. Most travellers prefer to use digital wallets while on the road, the survey claims. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the data unequivocally demonstrates that most respondents use digital payments. Most respondents express great satisfaction with TTD's digital platform offerings, including its online seva ticketing, panchagavya items, lodging reservations, and refund options.

CONCLUSION

One of the most popular Hindu pilgrimage sites in the world, Tirumala draws visitors from all around. The multilingual online services system makes it possible for pilgrims to comfortably access any seva special darshan, lodging, hundi, kalyana vedika, Sri Vari Trust gift, etc. However, because of the high volume of visitors and high demand, the website is down. TTD must therefore take action to solve this issue.

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