

Chapter-7

DATA ANALYSIS- Objective 2 and 3

This chapter deals with presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the collected data for objective 2 and 3. The section 1 deals with Objective 2(a) and 2(b) and the section 2 deals with Objective 3. Section 1 is further divided into Part 1 and Part 2 for Objective 2(a) and 2(b) respectively.

Section 1

OBJECTIVE 2

To assess the problems surrounding the selected pilgrimage sites of north India.

2(a) To determine the problems of supply side of the tourism sector at the the selected pilgrimage sites.

2(b)To determine the problems of demand side of the Tourism sector at the the selected pilgrimage sites.

The aim of the second objective was to determine the problems of supply side at the selected pilgrimage sites and to determine the problems of demand side at the selected pilgrimage sites. This section is divided into two parts. Part one is systematic thematic analysis (Naeem et al., 2023) of objective 2(a), and part two is systematic thematic analysis of objective 2(b) (Naeem et al., 2023).

Part 1 (Objective 2(a))

1.1 Kedarnath

1.1.1 Supply challenge

i) Challenges to Demand and Restocking

During the peak season, shopkeepers face significant challenges in stocking products, particularly perishable items, as a result of the increased demand. The challenge of maintaining the high demand, which results in supply shortages, is highlighted by statements such as ‘unable to restock quickly, particularly for perishable goods’ (S1) and

‘difficult to restock it immediately’ (S2). The timely restocking of products is also frequently impacted by delivery delays. The efficiency of the supply chain is impacted by the issues caused by delayed shipments, as highlighted by comments such as ‘fresh ingredients take time to get delivered’ (S5) and ‘sometimes there are delays in delivery’ (S6).

ii) Scarcity of Specific Items and Premium Products

Sometimes businesses face problems due to the nature of the products they keep. For example, during peak season, sellers of particular items, such as almonds, cashews, or fruits, encounter scarcity, as highlighted by the statements ‘a specific almond or cashews starts selling more and becomes scarce’ (S2) and ‘some fruits are not available here’ (S3). Similarly, businesses that deal with premium and luxury goods encounter difficulties in maintaining consistent stock levels, as showed by the ‘limited availability of certain premium products and luxury goods’ (S7). This emphasizes that each business type experiences its own unique supply chain challenges during peak season.

iii) Transportation and Traffic Issues

Shopkeepers also encounter significant challenges relating to transportation and traffic. Even when products are readily accessible, the surge in traffic during peak season complicates their transportation. The logistical challenges encountered are made clear by statements such as ‘the traffic becomes so intense that even if the medicine is available, I have difficulty arranging it here’ (S4) and ‘the unavailability of transportation and the high volume of traffic is a concern’ (S8).

iv) No Problems

Some merchants reported that they did not encounter any supply issues, frequently as a result of their smaller operations. The statements ‘we work on a small scale’ (S9) and ‘I do not have any issues’ (S11, S12) suggest that the supply problems encountered by larger businesses may have a less significant impact on smaller operations.

In general, the thematic analysis of supply problems encountered during the peak season in Kedarnath demonstrates that there are substantial obstacles associated with demand and replenishing, scarcity of specific items and premium products, transportation and

traffic issues, delivery delays, and limited availability of premium products. By addressing these issues, the efficiency of the supply chain would be enhanced, and shopkeepers would be able to satisfy the increased demand during the peak season.

1.1.2 Operational Problems

i) Operational Challenges Specific to a Business

Different types of businesses face different operational problems during the peak season. Keeping a check on the inventory and ensuring a smooth functioning of the business is a challenging task. Statements like ‘maintaining inventory and ensuring smooth operations’ (S1) shows the operational issue of a retailer. On the other hand, the hoteliers face different kind of issues. It includes ‘ensuring the seamless check-in and check-out’ when the demand exceeds the number of rooms in peak pilgrim season and causes a problem when ‘occupancy rates are very high’ (S7).

ii) Handling Perishable Goods

Keeping perishable goods under control can be difficult, particularly in certain weather situations. Remarks like ‘some dates and almond tend to smell in certain weather conditions’ (S2) highlight the challenges associated with preserving the quality of perishable foods, which can have an effect on customer satisfaction.

iii) A single person management

Some shopkeepers find it challenging to manage inventory and customer flow while operating their own business. The difficulty individuals have managing multiple responsibilities at once is reflected in the statement ‘I run the shop alone, so managing the customer flow and inventory is difficult’ (S4).

iv) Upkeep of Quality

It is a problem to maintain the quality of food and other products during periods of high tourist influx. The observation (S5) that ‘maintaining the food quality of all batches becomes an issue’ emphasizes how challenging it is to maintain consistency in quality when demand is strong.

v) **No Problems**

Due of their smaller-scale businesses, some shops claimed not to have had any operational problems. Smaller businesses may have fewer operational complexities, as evidenced by comments like ‘we do not have operational issues’ (S8) and ‘I am a very small shop so I do not face any operational issues’ (S12).

Overall, the thematic analysis of operational issues encountered during Kedarnath's busiest season identifies difficulties with managing perishables, managing a single employee, maintaining quality, and the lack of problems with smaller-scale operations. By addressing these issues, retailers and service providers would operate more effectively and efficiently throughout the busiest travel seasons.

1.1.3 Manpower Problems

i) **Staffing availability and competition**

The availability and retention of staff is one of the major issues that business owners face. The competition for skilled labour in Kedarnath is highlighted by issues such staff members asking higher compensation or getting employed by other businesses, as stated in ‘demands a higher salary or becomes unavailable sometimes or is hired by other shops’ (S1). The difficulty of finding competent employees increases during busy times, and keeping them on board throughout the season is a major issue. The seasonal nature of personnel issues and high turnover rates, which limit reliable business operations, is highlighted by statements like ‘during peak season, getting good staff is a challenge every year’ (S10) and ‘the staff that we employ runs away the next season’ (S11).

ii) **Sole ownership or family management**

A solution to manpower issues is when retailers engage family members to assist in managing their businesses. Remarks such as ‘I sit here with my wife, and we manage the shop together, so no problem’ (S2) and similar ones, ‘very little issue’ (S3) reflects this dynamic. Another situation where manpower issues is absent when a shop is operated alone. The statement ‘I work alone at the shop. Nothing wrong’ (S4). It should be noted that in Kedarnath, some retailers manage independently, therefore they are not concerned about staffing.

iii) **The Lack of Skilled Workers and the Challenges of Hiring Them**

The absence of qualified personnel is a significant problem. Finding competent workers is challenging, as evidenced by comments like ‘huge unavailability of skilled staff here’ (S5), ‘need more employees to handle increased workload but it is difficult to find here’ (S6), and ‘skilled staff is a problem in this area’ (S7). The difficulties in recruiting are made worse by the need to hire workers from beyond the area, such as Rishikesh and Haridwar, and they have to pay more.

iv) No Problems

There were no labour shortages, according to some business owners. Comments like ‘we do not have many problems’ (S8) and ‘I’ve no problem’ (S12) imply that personnel issues do not affect certain organisations’ ability to run efficiently.

The theme analysis of Kedarnath’s workforce concerns as a whole identifies a number of problems, such as seasonal staffing and retention difficulties, skilled staff shortage and recruitment difficulties, and staff availability and competition. Still, some merchants handle their businesses alone or with the help of family members to avoid these issues. Businesses in Kedarnath would operate more efficiently if these issues were resolved.

1.1.4 Other problems

i) Infrastructure Challenges and Weather Impacts

Some businesses confront infrastructure issues that affect sales, particularly during bad weather. The comment ‘My shop does not have an extended roof, therefore when it rains, tourists move and stand near the shops that have. On such days, I sell less.’ (S1) discusses the impact of weather on businesses that lack proper infrastructure. But this challenge is unique to some shops.

ii) Competition and Standard Maintenance

Some businesses struggle to maintain consistent standards in the face of competition. Statements such as ‘I’ve a challenge of other competitors running similar businesses and obviously maintaining consistent standards.’ (S2), ‘There are other medical shops. So, obviously, competition exists’ (S4) emphasizes the competitive climate and the importance of maintaining quality.

iii) Business-Specific Challenges

Several specialized problems affect business operations, including hygiene and safety of food, product availability, balancing local sensitivity with premium services, and dealing with fake products. For example, ‘my challenge is maintaining food safety and hygiene

standards' (S5), 'unavailability of ingredients during peak season' (S6), 'the sensitive character of this area is a concern, and we offer luxury services. Balancing both is an issue.' (S7), or 'my issues are dealing with counterfeit product with the market and well maintaining the supply inventory level.' (S10) reflects the continued efforts to properly address these particular difficulties.

iv) **Tourist Behaviour Issues**

Rude behaviour by tourists, particularly when lodgings are fully occupied, is an issue. The statement states: 'The tourists are so rude; they do not take it into consideration that it's normal for rooms to be full' (S11) emphasizes the difficulty in managing customer expectations.

v) **No problems**

A few businesses reported no significant concerns. Statements like 'none as such' (S3), 'No problems' (S8), and 'No issues at all' (S9) suggests that certain businesses run well and without serious issues.

Overall, the thematic analysis of various issues encountered while running a business in Kedarnath highlights concerns about infrastructural constraints, competition and standard maintenance, business-specific challenges, and tourist behaviour. However, certain businesses report no serious concerns, demonstrating that shopkeepers' experiences vary.

1.1.5 Financial Problems

i) **No financial problems**

Many shopkeepers reported no financial issues. Statements like 'I face no financial problems' (S1), and 'I have no such issues' (S7) and 'No financial issues' (S12) show that a large majority of businesses are financially solid.

ii) **Relying on seasonal sales and loans**

Some businesses encounter financial challenges if sales do not match expectations, forcing them to rely on loans to begin the following season. Comments such as 'I need to take a loan when the next season begins' (S2) and 'we take loans from local money lenders for the season' (S3) show the reliance on seasonal sales and the accompanying financial issues.

iii) Issues with Online Payments

Some businesses are concerned about online payment issues, such as non-receipt of payments made through platforms such as Google Pay. Statements like ‘Customers Google pay me and I do not receive the payment’ (S4) emphasize the difficulties of digital transactions in the area. Increased crowd sizes might also lead to nonpayment, which is disappointing for business owners. The comment ‘I encountered non-payment. It's quite disheartening’ (S5) emphasizes the financial loss faced because of customers who do not pay and do not remember to pay in case of amount paid gets reverted.

iv) Price fluctuation and Quality Maintenance

Food prices and ingredient availability fluctuate, making consistency in quality and pricing difficult to achieve. The phrase ‘food prices here keep fluctuating... difficult to manage them and keep the menu price fixed’ (S6) illustrates the difficulty of combining cost and quality standards.

Overall, the thematic study of financial issues encountered by Kedarnath enterprises reveals a mix of stability and difficulty. While many shops report no financial concerns, others rely on seasonal sales and loans, experience online payment challenges, suffer with non-payments, and deal with price changes and quality control issues. Addressing these difficulties can help small businesses enhance their financial stability.

1.1.6 Problems Faced While Running Business in Kedarnath

i) Traffic issues

Residents face significant traffic congestion as a result of the inflow of tourists. For example, ‘The traffic congestion has increased so much due to the crowd.’ (S1), ‘Traffic congestion is a major issue’ (S7), and ‘traffic becomes a difficulty for us. Even when we are extremely ill, we cannot run to the hospital at will’ (S12) emphasizes the serious consequences of increased traffic on daily life, such as delays and health dangers.

ii) Transition into a tourist Spot

The transition from a sacred site to a tourism destination has provoked dissatisfaction among locals. The statement ‘The place has become a tourist destination rather than a pilgrimage site. I dislike this change since the influx of tourists is producing nothing but chaos’ (S2), depicts the harmful impact of this change on the surrounding environment and residents' perceptions.

iii) Infrastructure Pressure

The increased visitor influx puts a strain on local infrastructure. Posts such as ‘I feel there is an increase pressure on local infrastructure due to the tourist influx’ (S4) shows the impact on resources and facilities caused by an increasing number of visitors. Residents also face an increase in prices. Statements like ‘Rates have risen for everything’ depicts the economic effects of increasing tourism. The tourism boom has also increased the expense of living, especially rental costs. Statements such as ‘The cost of living has risen here’, and so has the rental fee’ (S5), emphasizes the financial strain that residents face as prices for commodities, services, and housing rise.

iv) Weather Change

Residents have noticed changes in weather patterns and higher prices for a variety of essentials. The phrase, ‘The weather change is real’ (S8), emphasizes the environmental effects of tourism in the area.

v) Non-Resident Issues

Some respondents do not live in the area permanently but visit for business during the tourism season. Statements such, ‘I do not live here. I just came during the season for business’ (S6), and ‘I actually live in Rishikesh, I'm only here for business’ (S3) suggests that some concerns are unique to temporary residents, who face different challenges than permanent residents. Several residents reported having no significant problems. Statements such as ‘None.’ (S9) imply that some people do not face the same challenges as others.

Overall, the thematic analysis of problems encountered by residents in a major tourist destination indicates issues such as traffic congestion, changes in the local environment, strain on infrastructure, increasing living costs, weather and cost rises, and unique

obstacles for non-residents. Addressing these concerns can assist improve the quality of life for residents while also meeting the needs of tourists.

1.2 Kashi Vishwanath

1.2.1 Supply problems

i) Issues with space and customer volume

During peak season, limited space and high consumer volume might provide considerable issues. The remark ‘We have a very small space. When there are more consumers, it becomes problematic’ (S13) emphasizes the challenges of running a small shop at peak times. The lanes near the Kashi Vishwanath temples are very narrow, the shops are crammed whenever tourists’ influx is more.

ii) Advanced Planning

Some business owners plan ahead of time to address supply issues. The statement ‘If I have knowledge or previous notice of a festival, I put my order in advance. So, I do not have any troubles’ (S14), demonstrates the benefit of advanced planning in preventing supply difficulties.

iii) Price fluctuations and seasonal demand

Prices can fluctuate dramatically during peak seasons and festivals, particularly for perishable commodities such as fruits. The statement, ‘The season causes the price of fruits to fluctuate’(S20), shows the difficulties of fruits sellers in Kashi. But this problem is business specific.

iv) No issues

Many responders reported no supply issues throughout the busy season. Statements such as ‘I have no problems at all’ (S15), ‘My business has not faced any problems till now’ (S16), and ‘none’ (S21) demonstrate the sufficiency of the current infrastructure and supply chain.

Overall, the thematic analysis of supply problems encountered during peak season reveals that, while space constraints and price fluctuations due to seasonal demand can be difficult, many business owners do not face significant supply issues, thanks to advanced planning and the sufficiency of local facilities. Addressing challenges of space limits and price variations might improve the business climate during peak seasons.

1.2.2 Operational Issues

i) Product and perishable goods management

Unavailability of certain products, as well as the handling of perishable goods, might cause operational issues. The comment ‘Sometimes a specific *prasad* is not accessible, which causes complications. Because we will have to adjust with other varieties’ (S18) emphasises concerns with the availability and need for substitute. In addition, ‘I face losses when fruits get stale or rotten’ (S20) emphasises the difficulties involved with managing perishable items, such as spoilage and financial losses.

ii) No operational issues

A considerable majority of responders stated that they were not experiencing any operational issues. Statements like ‘None at all’ (S13), ‘None’ (S14), and ‘No operational issues’ (S15) show that many business owners consider their operations to be smooth and problem-free. Additional responses include ‘There is no operational issue here’ (S16), ‘No issues’ (S17), ‘None’ (S19), and ‘None as such’ (S21) and ‘No problem’ (S22) support this theme, implying that many businesses operating in Kashi Vishwanath face little operational challenges. This is because Varanasi is an urban city with an efficient infrastructure.

Overall, the thematic analysis of operational problems encountered when running a business in Kashi Vishwanath demonstrates that many business owners do not confront significant operational challenges. However, the availability of certain products and the handling of perishable goods pose significant issues for some. Addressing these concerns can help local firms enhance their operational efficiency and sustainability.

1.2.3 Manpower issues

i) Family Support

Family members provide assistance for many business owners, which helps ease shortages of workers. phrases such as ‘My cousins and brothers support me. I have no issues with personnel’ (S13) and ‘No problems. Every employee is a member of our family’ (S16) emphasise how important family support is to making sure things go well. Most businesses when supported by family members face no issues at all.

ii) Local and centralised Workforce

It is common to hire locals to fill staffing gaps, and there is no scarcity of job searchers in the region. Remarks like ‘I appoint manpower when I need them from local areas. They are easily available’ (S14) and ‘All my employees are local people. No problem’ (S22) demonstrate how simple it is to locate local labour. Some companies employ personnel from different divisions, which helps in effective staffing management. The remark ‘None at all. Our main branch is in Rishikesh. All our staffs are from there’. A centralised

personnel model is indicated by (S15). This can be true for many other businesses operating in more than a single state.

iii) Consistent Staffing

Companies who have had the same employees for a number of years say they have no problems with staffing. ‘My staff has not changed since 2021’ (S17), highlights staffing stability. This also signifies the loyalty of the staff.

iv) No Problems with Manpower

Many responders said they were not having any issues with staffing at all. Phrases like ‘No problems’ (S19) and ‘No issues’ (S20) denote a trouble-free personnel experience and seamless operational experience.

The thematic study of manpower challenges encountered by Kashi Vishwanath business owners overall shows that a large number of them do not confront serious workforce challenges. This advantageous scenario is made possible by steady staffing procedures, local hiring, centralised staffing, and family support. Further improving operational effectiveness and business sustainability can be achieved by filling in any possible gaps in these areas.

1.2.4 Financial Issues

i) Issues with nonpayment

Non-payments are a problem for some business owners, especially when clients neglect to make payments. The claim that ‘Sometimes non-payment occurs when people forget to pay. But some tourists come back and pay me’. This problem is brought to light in (S13), although it is lessened by the integrity of certain tourists who come back to pay their bills.

ii) Temporary Financial Stress

It is common to take out loans during busy periods, such fairs or festivals, in order to handle rising costs. The statement ‘I occasionally need to borrow money during fairs or festivals’(S14), highlights the seasonal financial hardship that requires borrowing.

iii) Problems with Online Payments

Financial losses result from frequent online payment failures brought on by internet problems. Phrases such as ‘Online payment failures frequently result in nonpayment’ (S16), and ‘We have suffered losses as a result of internet-related payment failures. Several customers never even attempt refund’ (S21), draw attention to the difficulties posed by digital transactions.

iv)No Financial Issues

Numerous participants stated they were not having any financial issues. The fact that statements like ‘No issues’ (S15), ‘None’ (S17), and ‘No’ (S18) exist suggests that a sizable portion of enterprises are solvent.

The thematic analysis of Kashi Vishwanath businesses' financial issues overall shows a combination of stability and difficulties. While some businesses struggle with seasonal financial strain and nonpayment, others deal with concerns related to online payment failures. Nonetheless, a sizable portion of business owners say they have no financial problems, indicating that things are largely solid economically. The financial stability of the local enterprises can be further strengthened by addressing the particular financial difficulties.

1.2.5 Problems Faced While Running Business in Kashi Vishwanath

i) Pollution and Rising Costs

Residents face serious difficulties such as pollution and increased living costs. For instance, ‘Pollution is too much, rates for everything keeps increasing’ (S13), or ‘There's huge pollution and rising cost of living’ (S21) emphasises the environmental and financial challenges. The areas near the pilgrimage site are getting dirtier and more polluted as the tourist flow increases. This leads to degrading the place as well the quality of life of people living there. The statement, ‘The place is becoming crowded and dirtier’ (S16) expresses concern about environmental damage because of increasing tourism.

ii) Rising rental and living costs

The cost of renting shops and homes has grown dramatically. Statements like ‘rental rates have increased significantly’ (S14) and ‘in the last three years, it (rent) has been raised twice’ (S20) show the financial strain on residents living near the pilgrimage sites as rental expenses rise. The overall cost of living in the area has also gone up due to rise in tourist activity. Statements such as ‘the cost of living has increased’ (S15) and ‘the cost of living is also rising’ (S18) emphasises the extra financial strain on residents.

iii) Traffic congestion

Traffic congestion, particularly during peak seasons, is a severe problem. Statements such, 'The traffic is unbearable at times' (S17) and 'traffic congestion' (S22) highlights the problems encountered owing to excessive traffic.

Overall, the thematic analysis of problems encountered by people in a major tourist destination indicates issues such as pollution, growing rental expenses, rising cost of living, crowding and filthiness, and traffic congestion. Addressing these concerns is critical for improving inhabitants' quality of life while properly controlling the surge of tourists.

1.3 Omkareshwar

1.3.1 Supply Problems

i) Issues with Stocking, Distance, and Traffic

Some owners of businesses emphasized how difficult it is to maintain stock and how far it takes to replenish supplies, both of which are made worse by heavy traffic during busy times of the year. The statement stated 'I do not face such issues. I keep my goods stocked. If a particular product goes out of stock, it becomes an issue considering the hundred kilometres and traffic' (S25), 'Considering the distance, it is very difficult to restock immediately' (S27), 'During the busiest time of year, traffic is an issue here. Stocking supply is thus an issue' (S30), and 'The distance and traffic during peak season are a big problem in my business. Some medicines are not restocked immediately and I do not like customers returning from my shop emptyhanded' (S34), highlight the logistical challenges brought on by extensive commutes and heavy traffic.

ii) The Effect of Weather

Flowers are one product whose availability can be impacted by weather conditions. 'Sometimes I do not get flowers due to weather'. According to (S29), variations in the weather often affect supplies. However, these variations are specific to businesses.

iii) No Supply Problems

A significant number of respondents stated that they had no supply issues during the busiest time of year. phrases such as 'I have not faced anything till now' (S23), 'None' (S24), as well as 'No problem. I've no problem in running the business' (S26) show that a large number of business owners do not face major supply issues. More responses along the lines of 'Since my suppliers are local shops only, I've no issues' (S28), 'No I've no problem in my business' (S31), 'None. I face no problems' (S32), and 'There are no

issues' (S35) support this idea by implying that supply issues are less in Omkareshwar since the majority of businesses use local suppliers or run small businesses.

Overall, the theme analysis of supply concerns encountered at the busiest time of year shows that although many business owners do not face serious supply problems, there are issues with distance, traffic congestion, weather effects, and stocking. The small-scale nature of businesses in Omkareshwar and their dependence on local suppliers account for the lack of supply issues faced by numerous enterprises. By resolving the logistical problems, supply chain effectiveness and business operations during busy times can be further enhanced.

1.3.2 Operational Issues

i) Logistical challenges

Some business owners emphasized the problems with traffic jams and the difficulty getting supplies during busy times. The statement, 'During the busiest time of year, the roadways become clogged. Obtaining supplies when something is urgently needed is challenging' (S23) highlights the logistical challenges brought up by high traffic. The impact of traffic and distance on operational efficiency was emphasized in the examination of supply problems, which also brought attention to this issue.

ii) Price Fluctuations

Price changes brought on by an increase in tourists can be problematic for certain business owners. The statement, 'The price fluctuations due to increase in tourists is a problem for me' (S28). Controlling such fluctuating prices is a challenge for operations. The supply issues that arose during peak seasons were also linked to this seasonal demand issue.

iii) No Operational Issues

Most respondents said they had no operational issues at all while operating their firms. Statements such as 'None' (S24), 'None' (S25), and 'No such issues' (S26) suggest that a considerable number of businesses do not face noteworthy operational difficulties. The responses like 'I face no issues as such' (S31), 'None' (S29), 'I do not have any operational issues' (S32), and 'None. I operate on a small scale' (S33), 'None' (S34), and 'None' (S35), clearly indicate the absence of operational issues.

Overall, the thematic analysis of operational concerns that Omkareshwar business owners confront indicates that majority of them do not deal with major operational problems. Nonetheless, some people have noteworthy difficulty with availability, price fluctuations and travel congestion during peak seasons.

1.3.3. Manpower issues

i) Untrained Employees and Attrition

Employing inexperienced local workers who quit for better chances after receiving training presents a problem for some business owners. The statement ‘get my staff from local areas... they run away for better pay or prospects’ (S23) highlights the difficulties in recruiting, developing, and retaining employees.

ii) Individual Management and oversight

Many of the respondents run their companies by themselves or with a family member, showing that they do not depend on outside help. Statements such as ‘manage alone’ (S27), ‘run the shop alone’ (S24), ‘handle the shop with my husband’ (S28), and ‘run the stall alone’ (S33) emphasise how being dependent on oneself or one's family to run a business causes lesser manpower problems.

iii) No Issues with Manpower

Many responders said they were not having any problems with manpower. Words such as ‘none’ (S29, S32, S34, S35), ‘no problem’ (S26), ‘no problems’ (S25), and ‘no issues at all’ (S30) imply that a sizable portion of business owners do not have trouble meeting their labour demands considering their small scale of operations. Overall, the theme analysis of the manpower concerns Omkareshwar business owners confront shows that while some struggle with turnover and inexperienced employees, many others run their companies alone or with family members and do not have serious manpower issues. Taking care of personnel retention and training could lessen the difficulties experienced by individuals who depend on outside labour.

1.3.4 Other Problems

i) Rising Living and Rent Price

Because of the high cost of shop rent and rising living expenses, business owners are under financial strain. Expressions such as ‘rent of the shop is high’ and ‘cost of living has increased’ (S23) point to serious financial difficulties in running their businesses.

ii) Cost and Availability Concerns

Businesses face challenges from faraway markets and high *prasad* pricing. Expressions such as ‘market area is so far away’ and ‘expensive prasad’ (S24) draw attention to the challenges associated with accessibility and pricing, which have an impact on both customer satisfaction and business profitability. The distance causes the cost of commodities to be high which the tourists end up complaining about.

iii) Problems of Management

Over time, there has been a rise in mismanagement that has impacted business operations. S25's statement that "mismanagement has increased" highlights worries about the effectiveness of administration and how it affects corporate operations.

iv) No Additional Issues

Many of the respondents stated they were not experiencing any new issues. Terms such as "none" (S26, S29, S30, S32) and "no problem in my business" (S31) imply that a number of business owners consider their operations to be seamless and error-free.

v) Environmental Concerns and Tourist Litter

The disregard for environmental issues and littering are caused by tourists. It is clear from statements like 'there's litter everywhere' (S27), 'water is badly contaminated near the ghats' (S33), and 'sanctity of the place is vanishing' (S35) that poor tourist behaviour diminishes the area's spiritual and cultural significance. Even though there are dustbins, tourists still throw trash at the bridge, the ghats, and inside the premises of the temple.

vi) Cleanliness and Infrastructure Concerns

Two major problems are infrastructure (bridges, for example) pollution and congestion. While residents, tourists, and business owners use the Narmada bridge to get to the other side, little is done to keep it clean. The statement 'bridge over the river has become so congested and dirty' (S28) emphasises how important it is to have better upkeep and management in order to sustain the town's potential for tourism.

vii) Traffic Concerns

Logistical issues arise due to remote supply sources and road congestion during festivals and peak months. The problems in ensuring a steady supply and controlling growing traffic are reflected in phrases like 'supply has to be bought from a very far' and 'traffic congestion is too much during peak months' (S34). Overall, a variety of difficulties, including monetary, logistical, environmental, and social ones, are shown by the thematic analysis of additional issues encountered when operating businesses in Omkareshwar. By addressing these issues, the business environment can be enhanced and the site's cultural and religious significance can be preserved.

1.3.5 Financial Issues

i) Unpredictability of Income

Regular pricing changes lead to financial difficulties. The statement 'price fluctuations is very common' (S28) implies that uneven pricing has an impact on the profitability and stability of corporate operations. Some business owners struggle with their inconsistent revenues. The expression 'earning is not constant' (S29) captures the fluctuating nature

of income and finances. Profitability is impacted by ongoing financial issues as well as growing costs. Words like ‘left with not much profit given the rising pricing of food’ and ‘financial problems are never ending’ (S33) draw attention to the continual struggles with money brought on by rising expenses.

ii) Poverty and Financial Instability

Some responders experience extreme poverty and financial uncertainty. Terms like ‘life is very difficult for the poor’ and ‘do not have enough money to even last another day’ (S24) draw attention to the fluctuations and financial difficulties that certain small business owners experience.

iii) No Financial Problems

A sizable portion of respondents said they had no financial problems. Statements such as ‘none’ (S23, S30, S32, S34, S35), ‘no such issues’ (S26), ‘no problems’ (S31), and ‘no such problems’ (S25) suggest that a large number of business owners do not face financial challenges in their operations.

iv) Problems with Online Payments

Occasionally, respondents mentioned experiencing issues with online payments. The statement ‘online payment causes a problem once or twice a month’ (S27) describes problems arising from digital transactions that have an impact on the operations of businesses.

Overall, the theme analysis of the financial difficulties faced by Omkareshwar business owners shows that, although the majority do not have major problems, some do, and these include severe financial instability, difficulties making payments online, fluctuating prices, and increasing costs. Resolving these monetary issues may contribute to the region's businesses' increased sustainability and stability.

1.3.6 Problems Faced While Running Business in Omkareshwar

i) Environmental Deterioration and Sanctity Loss

The area's sanctity has been lost and there has been serious environmental damage as a result of the tourist inflow. Tourism-related environmental damage is highlighted by terms like ‘place dirty,’ ‘river Narmada is polluted,’ ‘immerse dead bodies in the river’ (S23), and ‘litter sacred spaces’ (S31). Furthermore, the statements ‘pollution in the river is a sad sight’ (S34) and ‘sanctity of the place is being taken over by dirty roads and garbage’ (S26) highlight the detrimental effects on the site's spiritual and cultural significance.

ii) Environmental decline

The ecosystem in the area is harmed by improper waste management and a lack of growth. Significant pollution problems and a lack of infrastructure development are indicated by phrases such as ‘no development no help’, ‘land and water both are polluted badly’ (S24), ‘no proper waste disposal method’ (S26), and ‘dirty, mismanaged pilgrimage site’ (S28).

iii) Problems with High Rent and Traffic

Two major complaints for residents are traffic congestion and excessive rent. Statements like ‘rent of land and shops here skyrocketed’ (S25), ‘traffic congestion on the road as well as near the temple’ (S30), and ‘traffic is a big problem’ (S25) show the financial and logistical difficulties residents are facing as a result of increased tourist. The statement ‘renting space for this small stall is also expensive now’ (S29) highlights the increase in rental expenses even further.

iv) Health and Traffic Concerns

Everyday activities are impacted by traffic congestion, as is the availability of medical supplies and healthcare services. The serious influence of traffic on health and emergency services is highlighted with phrases like ‘if a flu or viral fever breaks out, and a particular medicine is out of stock, we get stuck in traffic’ (S30).

v) Financial Concerns

A prevalent concern is rising costs and economic strain. Expressions such as ‘inflation has increased’ (S24) and ‘prices of basic necessities have increased a lot’ (S32) highlight the financial hardship that rising living expenses are placing on residents.

vi) Problems with Infrastructure

Two of the main issues are inadequate infrastructure and government neglect. Words like ‘roads are not well maintained’ (S33), ‘no proper drainage,’ and ‘infrastructure is extremely poor’ (S35) highlight how badly the town's infrastructure has to be improved in order to accommodate its expanding population and influx of visitors.

The overall theme analysis of the concerns Omkareshwar inhabitants experience indicates a variety of difficulties, such as poor infrastructure, expensive rents, health-related problems, traffic congestion, environmental deterioration, and economic constraints. Resolving these issues is essential to raising the standard of living for locals and maintaining the pilgrimage town's religious and cultural relevance.

1.4 Mahakaleshwar

1.4.1 Supply problems

i) Intense Demand and Limited Supply

Demand for some products, especially flowers like *Dhatura* and *Belpatra*, surpasses supply during peak seasons and certain occasions. These flowers are offered to Lord Shiva to please him. Statements such as ‘high demand to fulfil’ and ‘some flowers are rare to find’ (S37) draw attention to the supply shortages that occur during times of strong demand.

ii) There are no supply issues

Many respondents stated they had no problems with supplies. Statements like ‘do not face supply problems’ (S40) and ‘no problems’ (S36, S38, S41, S42, S45) suggest that a sizable portion of business owners do not have trouble controlling their suppliers. This theme is further supported by ‘timely restocking on busy days’ (S39) and ‘regular restocking’ (S36). The absence of supply issues is frequently attributed to the availability of close suppliers and Ujjain's status as a developed city with a strong supply network.

iii) Seasonal Supply and Storage

Seasonal variations in flower availability are compounded by the absence of cold storage. Words like ‘do not have a cold storage’ and ‘flower seasons are different’ (S43) highlight the difficulties in controlling seasonal supply and the impossibility of properly storing perishable items. Problems with logistics, such late truck deliveries on holidays like Diwali and Shivratri, raise operating costs and shorten flower shelf lives. The logistical difficulties and the effect on perishable items are reflected in phrases like ‘trucks arrive late,’ ‘kept in cold storage,’ ‘raises the operating cost,’ and ‘flowers rotting early’ (S44). The thematic analysis of supply side issues that business owners in Mahakaleshwar face generally shows that, although many do not face major supply issues because of nearby suppliers and the developed nature of the city, others do face difficulties because of high demand and supply shortages, seasonal variations in supply, a lack of storage facilities, and logistical issues during peak periods. By addressing these issues, local businesses may see an increase in supply chain efficiency and a decrease in operating expenses.

1.4.2 Operational Problems

i) No Operational Issues

Many respondents (S36, S38, S39, S43, S44, S45, S46) stated they did not have any operational issues. This theme suggests that people are generally happy with

their operational aspects.

ii) Inconsistent Support

One noteworthy concern brought up by a few respondents was the inconsistent support from retailers and government agencies. S37, for instance, said, ‘Some days the shopkeepers are kind, and let me put a stall here. Other days they are groggy and throw me out. I’ve no place.’ Likewise, S41 encountered irregular permission to establish their booth: ‘On Some days I’m not allowed to put up my stall.’ S41, who was unsure of the rationale behind the irregular permission for stall setup and suspected the administration, police, or monopolistic shopkeepers were involved, also brought up the subject of bureaucratic obstacles.

iii) Maintenance Problems

Another major worry was maintenance issues. S40 brought out the inconsistent cleaning services provided by the public restrooms, saying, ‘We have public toilet common for all dormitories. We do not get a sweeper on a regular basis. In spite of paying them nicely they are not regular in their work. Due to this I get so many complaints from people who stay here’.

iv) Operational Stress

S42 expressed concern about operational strain resulting from busy days and insufficient manpower, stating that certain days are busier than others. On these days extra manpower is required to meet the demand. This emphasises how better manpower management is required to deal with varying crowd sizes.

We are able to understand the main operational problems that people at Mahakaleshwar encounter and pinpoint areas that require improvement in order to improve their overall experience by classifying and evaluating these remarks.

1.4.3 Manpower Problems

i) No Problems with Manpower

A number of respondents (S36, S41, S44, S45) stated they had no problems finding enough workers. S36, for instance, said, ‘It’s a small stall.’ S41 mentioned ‘None’ and said, ‘None’. This theme suggests that some people have no trouble running their booths without hiring more staff because their business is small scale.

ii) Limited Personnel

A few responders brought up problems with the labour shortage. As an example, S37 says, ‘I single handedly run this stall.’ Similar to S43, who handles everything alone save for the odd family assistance ‘I pluck flowers, make garlands, and set up the stall myself.

Sometimes it's a problem. In peak pooja timing I have to ask my son to miss school and work with me. I cannot afford manpower addition in this small shop.'

iii) Consistent Manpower

A few respondents mentioned steady employment conditions. S38 has been employing the same person for ten years. 'I have one guy as my staff for ten years now. I manage well with him.' For some, this theme suggests a steady and dependable labour situation.

iv) Operational Strain

Concerns were raised about operational strain brought on by erratic crowds and last-minute requests. 'You cannot predict the crowd here. Someday we are so busy we lose count of people. Our manpower becomes hard to manage on such days. But we cannot hire more because it's not feasible.' S42 said similarly, 'As I mentioned, getting manpower at short notice is a problem.'

v) Maintenance Problems

S40 emphasised maintenance issues related to irregular cleaning services: 'As I said, getting a regular sweeper is a task.' This suggests that poor cleaning personnel are making it difficult to maintain hygiene.

vi) Reliability Issues

S46 brought up reliability concerns with hired manpower, saying, 'The manpower I hire suddenly starts demanding more salary during peak season. These guys are not reliable but this happens every time.' This theme suggests that it can be challenging to keep trustworthy employees during peak times.

We can understand the main manpower-related problems people at Mahakaleshwar confront and pinpoint areas that require development to improve their overall experience by classifying and evaluating these assertions.

1.4.4 Other problems

i) Pollution and Traffic

Respondents brought some important points about pollution and transportation congestion. S36 said, 'The traffic congestion at times is for hours. Pollution has increased'. Similarly, S39 stated, 'The traffic issues have risen. The cost of rental space and housing has also increased.' These answers reveal the environmental issues the region is facing.

ii) Survival Challenges

S37 brought up the difficulties in surviving as a result of enforcement actions, 'The police also clear the roads saying I'm encroaching. How should a poor person survive?' This

shows the challenges sellers face when road clearance regulations are enforced by the government. S41 brought up concerns about unjust treatment when she said, 'I try to put stall near the temple. I find it unfair when I'm asked to move here and there.' This suggests that moving and placing stalls may present difficulties.

iii) Tourist Behaviour

Numerous participants brought up concerns over the conduct of tourists. For example, S38 said that 'the tourists throw litter here and there,' and S42 stated that 'the tourists are indifferent to the city's cleanliness. Every now and then, they litter. It's not enjoyable at all.' Furthermore, S40 expressed concerned regarding a lack of respect for the site's sacredness, 'The tourists sometimes do not respect the sanctity of the place. I'm strictly against the non-veg being served in my dormitory. Yet I found a chicken box in my dustbin. Why do you have to hurt someone's sentiments?'

v) Market Competition

S44 expressed concern about the competitive market around the temple region, saying, 'There's cut-throat competition near the temple area. Even after seven years in business, we constantly wonder when someone will step up to take our place.' The intense competition that tourists endure is reflected in this topic.

v) No Other Issues

A few responders said they had no more problems. S43, S45, and S46, for example, all said 'None,' while S46 added, 'Have not faced something major to share.' This suggests that not every respondent encountered noteworthy extra issues.

1.4.5 Financial Problems

i) No Money Problems

A number of respondents (S36, S40, S44, S45) stated they had no money issues. S36, for example, said, 'I've been in charge of the shop for the past three years.' S40 mentioned, 'None,' and there was no trouble. This theme suggests that money management is not a problem for everyone.

ii) Financial Strain

A few respondents brought up the stress of having to find additional work and low pay, which led to financial distress. S37 stated, 'As I said, I buy garlands. There are days when I cannot afford to buy a single one. But I try. One such days I wash utensils in restaurants. It helps.'

iii) Digital Divide

Payment-related technical difficulties were often brought up. S38 noted, 'None. Payment problems can arise when the server is unavailable.' S41 also said, 'Online payment is a problem for me. Some payments always get missed here and there,' whereas S42 stated, 'None. No one wants to pay cash these days. Payment failures are a major problem here.' S43 brought up adaptation concerns relating to the digital divide and the shift to online payments. 'People use online these days. They come and ask for UPI. I do not have UPI. In such low earnings, I cannot run to the bank every day. However, now that I'm losing clients, I'm thinking of adding QR to my stall.'

iv) Payment Failures and Frauds

S39 brought attention to issues relating to fraudulent activities when she said, 'payment failures and frauds have increased a lot lately. Especially on days we do not pay attention. People say we have paid but the money never reaches our account.' additionally, issues with payment systems' dependability were mentioned. S46, for example, said that 'payment failures are common. I occasionally consider converting to cash only. However, I do not.'

1.4.6 Problems Faced While Running Business in Mahakaleshwar

i) Crowding and Traffic

Significant problems with traffic and crowding were mentioned by respondents as a result of the rising tourist population. S36 and S45, for example, both said, 'Crowd is more than the small lanes can handle,' and 'Parking issues. The rise in tourists is the reason for the heavy traffic these days.' These statements draw attention to the burden on the city's infrastructure as well as the difficulties locals have getting about.

ii) Safety and Cleanliness

Issues with hygiene and safety were also very important. The statement 'Pickpocketing, pollution has increased so much. Even tourists spit on roads' (S37) highlight how tourist presence pollutes the city. Crime rates also increase. The statement made by S43, 'This lane is so dirty because tourists throw things here and there', further highlights the harmful effect that tourist behaviour has on the area's cleanliness.

iii) Increasing Prices

The rising expense of living and conducting business was the most often brought up topic. S38 said that 'Rental space prices have increased, especially near the temple', and S40 went on to say that 'the prices of commodities, land, and rental space have all suddenly

increased in the name of a tourist spot. It used to cost INR 10–20 for a vehicle journey from here to the Mahakal Temple. It now costs forty. The increased cost of tourism is being borne even by the natives.’ S41 also emphasized the rising expense of rent and groceries, saying, ‘The prices of grocery are increasing every day. The house I rented, was costing me 800/month. Now it's 2000/month in two years. With the popularity of the place, we are at loss.’ These comments highlight a variety of financial difficulties locals are facing as a result of the increase in visitors.

iv) Increasing Prices and Hygiene

A few participants brought up concerns about both expenses and hygiene. S43 stated, for example, ‘Earlier I never paid for setting a stall. Now since the tourist inflow increased, they ask me to pay for this stall INR 50 per day. This lane is so dirty because tourists throw things here and there.’ This demonstrates the combined effects of growing expenses and declining sanitation as a result of increased tourists.

1.5 Baidyanath Dham

1.5.1 Supply issues

i) High Demand

A product's high demand often leads to supply problems. High demand can put a pressure on supply availability, as S48 noted when she said, ‘Sometimes one particular kind of bangle goes so high in demand that even wholesalers do not give it on time.’ S49 brought up the subject of seasonal supply when she said, ‘Shortage of milk during peak season. During the busiest time of year, everyone has to give milk to Shiva; as a result, even milkmen charge more. It presents issues for us.’ Additionally, S58 said that ‘Shortage of flowers is a problem due to sudden rain or high demand.’

ii) Issues with Restocking

S50 expressed concern about restocking concerns, saying, ‘It's a normal business issue that we face. Sometimes a particular *rudraksha* is not restocked on time, sometimes a particular idol. It happens because we get it from Ranchi.’ S52 brought up timing concerns brought on by the busiest travel periods, saying, ‘I have trouble acquiring supplies on time. Occasionally, when tourism peaks suddenly, supplies run out.’ S55 observed stock shortages, especially for small-scale operators, ‘Flowers get out of stock. I operate on a small scale.’

iii) Issues with Quality

S56 brought attention to quality issues with tampered products, 'I'm often scared of adulterated sugar and grocery', during peak tourist season.

iv) No Issues with Supply

No supply issues were mentioned by a number of responders. By saying 'No problem' or 'None,' for example, S47, S51, S53, S54, and S57 all indicated that they do not have serious supply concerns.

1.5.2 Operational issues

i) Traffic Congestion

Traffic congestion was a specific concern that was highlighted. S52 stated, 'There is a lot of traffic in these narrow lanes. It's a problem for my shop,' implying that excessive traffic in small lanes poses a considerable operating challenge.

iii) Intense Competition

Another issue identified was severe rivalry, particularly in terms of food safety. S56 noted, 'The severe competition is really a problem. Our rates are so marginal because of that. Anyone is simply opening up a shop. Nobody cares if they follow food safety.' This response highlights the difficulties of maintaining competitive pricing while also upholding food safety standards in the face of increased competition.

iii) No operational issues

Most respondents reported no operational issues during peak season. For example, S47, S48, S49, S50, S51, S53, S54, S55, S57, and S58 all reported that they had no problems. Statements such as 'No problem' and 'None' indicate a general level of satisfaction with their operations during peak season.

1.5.3 Manpower problems

i) No manpower issues

The majority of responders reported no manpower issues. For example, S48, S50, S53, S54, S55, S56, S57, and S58 all stated that they had no problems. Statements such as 'No problem' and 'None' indicate a general satisfaction with their staffing position.

ii) Unreliable employees

Some responders pointed out that staff unreliability was a major issue. S47 stated, 'I have a problem finding staff for table cleaning and odd jobs. These men come from small villages when they run away in a span of months', indicating an issue with employee retention. S49 shared this concern, 'We train unskilled labour who migrated from villages in Bihar, only to see that they run away in a few months. It's a major problem with migrant

labor.’ S52 also remarked that ‘Staffs are not reliable at all. They run away’, emphasizing the difficulty of retaining a stable workforce.

iv) **Reliable employees**

One responder reported having dependable employees. S51 stated, ‘None. I source my staff from good colleges. Even the cleaners are very loyal to me. I've a good staff base,’ underlining the advantages of hiring from prestigious universities and the subsequent loyalty and dependability.

1.5.4 Financial Problems

i) **No Financial Issues**

The majority of responders said they had no money issues. S49, S50, S51, S52, S53, S54, S55, S56, and S57, for example, all stated that they had no problems. ‘None’ and ‘No problem’ statements indicate that the respondents are generally satisfied with their financial circumstances.

ii) **Digital Payment Issues**

A few responders brought up issues with electronic payments. S47 said, ‘Payment failures are many. People do not pay cash anymore. I've a hard task maintaining and tallying inventory,’ the respondent said, expressing frustration with handling digital transactions. S48 expressed similar worry, saying, ‘I am not that literate. I have a problem in understanding online payments. But nowadays customers have no cash,’ highlighting the difficulty in adjusting to digital payment methods because of low literacy and a preference for cash transactions.

iii) **Uncertainty in Income**

For at least one of the respondents, unstable income was a cause of concern. S58 said, ‘Someday I earn 500, someday I do not even earn more than a hundred rupees. My husband is a labourer. It's very difficult,’ she said, referring to daily pay swings and the ensuing stress related to money.

1.5.5 Other problems

i) **Severe Competition**

Shop competition was a major source of concern. S48 said, ‘Competition is huge among the shops. Everyone is opening the same kind of businesses. The difficulty of standing out in a crowded market is highlighted by this statement.

ii) **Customer Issues**

S50 brought attention to customer expectations for discounts, saying, ‘People expect a lot of discounts. We do not do charity right. We sell quality products. They have to

understand that,' expressing the challenge of controlling client expectations without sacrificing quality.

iii) Marketing Difficulties

S51 mentioned the following difficulties with their marketing: "My hotel is a little pricey and far from the station. There are instances when visitors are unaware of my hotel. I agree that there is a dearth of marketing initiatives on my part, but better marketing plans are still required to draw in tourists.

iv) Inadequate infrastructure

A number of participants cited inadequate infrastructure as a significant concern. "I'm tired of the broken roads. They are not at all maintained. The security is another major problem. Traffic is crazy," they said, highlighting how bad it is for their businesses due to bad roads, insufficient security, and high traffic.

v) Inadequate Supervisory

The effects of poor management were a major worry. S53 stated, 'The mismanagement is a big problem. The roads are not maintained. The temple is mismanaged. There is a huge crowd. Garbage is dumped everywhere. Small stall owners keep their stalls anywhere in front of our shops,' S54 went on, 'I'm just angry at the mismanagement and crowd. It gets so suffocating. This road is already narrow, my customers cannot even reach my shop during huge crowds.'

vi) Absence of Government Assistance

S55 voiced her dissatisfaction with the government's lack of assistance, saying, 'We are getting no help from the government. The administration is poor too,' indicating a need for better administrative support and intervention.

vii) Unreliable Places for Stalls

S58 observed that stall locations were unstable, saying, 'My stall is not fixed. I'm occasionally pushed away from here,' illustrating how difficult it is to keep a constant place of business.

viii) No Other problems

A number of respondents said they had no further issues. S47, S49, S56, and S57, for example, all said they had no further problems. In general, people who say things like 'None' or 'I have not faced any major problems' are satisfied with their circumstances.

1.5.6 Problems Faced While Running Business in Baidyanath Dham

i) A rise in theft

S47 brought up security issues, specifically pickpocketing and stealing, ‘There has been an upsurge in theft here. Pickpocketing’, suggesting that additional security is required.

ii) Rising Costs and Poor Management

Poor management and increasing costs were mentioned by several responders. S48 declared, ‘The cost has gone up. Car rickshaw costs, rental costs, and goods. It's becoming more urban. It is so disregarded even after becoming a *Jyotirlinga*. The management here is not given any attention by the government,’ S54 observed, and the cost of necessities has gone up. Drivers of cars are charging more and more. This tourism tax is payable by the locals.’

v) Lack of Government Support

The absence of official assistance constituted a noteworthy concern. ‘The government support is really missing,’ S49 said, and S57 said, ‘It feels like the government is not even paying proper attention to the temple.’ The cost of renting from stores close to the shrine has significantly gone up.’

iv) Traffic Congestion and Poor Management

S50 brought attention to inadequate management and traffic congestion, saying, ‘There is too much traffic and crowding. It's not just visitors—we have natives there as well. The management of the temple is appalling, and this road is really narrow. On some days, it's quite troublesome for business,’ S52 continued. ‘It's unclean everywhere, there are broken roads, and there are issues with limited lanes.’

v) Safety Issues

S51 raised worries about crowd control in particular and stated, ‘The temple has become really risky. On crowded days I fear going inside because of suffocation and chances of stampede.’

v) Severe Competition

Another problem was severe competition. S53 said, ‘There's huge competition here. In this lane only there are 5 pooja shops beside mine.’

vi) Increasing Prices and Waste Handling

S55 emphasized concerns with waste management as well as growing costs. ‘The prices of all commodities have increased. The waste generation in this area is huge.’

vii) Overcrowding Issues

Concerns about overcrowding and the issues that followed were serious. ‘The crowd is more than these lanes can accommodate. It's a stampede-like situation.’

viii) Undependable Places for Stalls

S58 brought up the unpredictability of stall placements, saying, ‘My stall gets moved all the time. I do not have a fixed space. I’m very disappointed on days I do not have sale.’

1.6 Nageshwar

1.6.1 Supply issues

i) Disruptions to the Supply Chain

S61 brought up supply chain interruptions, saying, ‘Even as wholesalers, if for whatever reason, the supply becomes stuck. We do not receive supplies as local traders, thus problems at the wholesale level also impact local traders. Another response emphasized the ongoing supply issues brought on by the requirement to purchase everything, even water. S60 stated, ‘I do not face supply problems here. Water available is a year-long problem. We need to buy everything here. That’s why.’

ii) Issues with Distance and Transportation

The area’s relative isolation and transportation-related challenges were major problems. S63 noted, ‘Problems are day-to-day part of the business. The thing is transportation poses a major problem here. Sometimes delivery gets delayed. The relative isolation of this place causes supply chain disruptions.’ S64 also said, ‘Considering the distance from the main town, some stocks do not last. Restocking becomes an issue due to travel constraints,’ S65 continued, ‘Restocking during peak season is a problem. The transportation is not proper. And I do not have a car. There is inadequate transportation. I also do not own an automobile.’ S68 added, ‘Since we live so far away from the main town, sometimes customers have to wait for a day or two for their product if it’s not in stock and I’ve to bring it or order it.’

iii) Weather Impact

S66 mentioned how the weather affects supplies, ‘Sometimes I do not get enough flowers to sell. The weather is so hot here. It’s difficult for me.’

iv) No Supply Problems

Many respondents said that there were no supply issues during the busiest time of year. S59, S62, and S67, for example, all said ‘None,’ meaning they do not have any major supply problems.

1.6.2 Manpower issues

i) No Issues with Manpower

Most responders said they had no issues with personnel. For example, S59, S62, S64, and S66 all said they had no problems. Answers such as ‘None’ and ‘I’ve had staff working with me since the shop opened’ indicate that they are generally happy with

their staffing level.

ii) Retention Challenges

Several responders brought up the difficulty of keeping employees, especially during the off-season. As stated by S63, 'We have trained manpower here from reputed hospitality colleges. During off seasons, it's a challenge to retain them. They do not want to work in isolated locations. They move to other states for better prospects.' S67 went on, 'The workers are not constant. They tend to switch jobs as soon as they find an option with better pay.'

iii) Recruitment Challenges

S65 brought up the difficulties in recruiting, saying, 'On special pooja days, I'm short on manpower.' The statement, 'It's very hard to find a helper who does not run away at the first chance of pay increase' highlights the challenge of locating trustworthy assistants.

1.6.3 Operational issues

i) Limited Customer Base

A few responders brought up problems associated with having a small customer. S62 said, 'My customer base is very small. Tourists are less. So are the locals,' implying that their business is impacted by only a few customers.

ii) Inconsistent Income

Some respondents expressed concerns about income fluctuations and seasonal swings. S63 said, 'See we have very limited customers. Tourists who come to visit Dwarka or Nageshwar are not always looking for a luxurious stay. Especially during the off-season, maintaining a consistent income becomes a genuine issue for us.' S67 continued, 'Due to the uneven tourists the business has unequal earnings all around the year.'

iii) Monopoly Issues

S66 brought up competition difficulties resulting from larger retailers' monopolistic practices, 'The monopoly of the big shops does not even let me put my *tokri*. No matter how much I try, I end up being thrown out of the places I sit on.'

iv) No Issues with Operation

In the busiest season, the majority of responders said there were no operational issues. S59, S60, S61, S64, S65, and S68, for example, all stated that they had no problems. A general level of satisfaction with their operations can be seen in statements like 'None' and 'I have not had any operational issues.'

1.6.4 Problems Faced While Running Business in Nageshwar

i) Water Problems

A number of participants brought up concerns pertaining to water. S59 stated, for example, 'We have water scarcity. It's sour water. We need to buy packaged drinking water,' S68 said in response to this worry. 'Water is a problem here. As you must be knowing, we have sour water. So, we buy water and that's a big problem.' These claims highlight serious issues with the supply and quality of water.

ii) Crowd Control Issues

Some responders expressed worry about crowd management. 'The crowd becomes very hard to manage these days,' S60 said, emphasizing the challenges associated with maintaining crowd control during peak hours.

iii) Cleanliness and hygiene

Several responses brought up the problems with cleanliness and hygiene caused by careless tourists. S61 said, 'Tourists are very negligent about cleanliness and hygiene. They throw stuff here and there,' S67 continued, 'Tourists throw garbage here and there. We try to keep the city clean. We have two Pilgrimage sites. They should respect that.' Similar worries were also voiced by S64, 'The traffic and crowd are too much. The tourists are too careless about throwing stuff here and there.'

iv) Issues with Connectivity

S63 brought attention to connectivity issues, 'Sometimes connectivity is a concern here. We also need to provide cab service to customers due to unavailability of traffic,' showing difficulties in maintaining transportation and communication services.

v) Traffic and Hygiene

Some respondents expressed concerns about both traffic congestion and cleanliness. S64 said, 'The traffic and crowd are too much. The tourists are too careless about throwing stuff here and there,' The tourists' excessive carelessness in discarding items here and there is a reflection of the combined effects of heavy traffic and unkempt surroundings.

vi) No Issues

Numerous participants stated that they had no major issues in operating their businesses. S62, S65, and S66, for example, all reported that they had no problems. Terms such as 'None' and 'No issues' indicate that they are generally happy with the way their business is run.

1.7 Somnath

1.7.1 Supply problems

i) No Supply Problems

In the busiest season, the majority of respondents said there were no supply issues. S69 said, 'I've no issues. We are restocked.' S70 stated, 'I've no supply problems. The transportation from here to Ahmedabad is very smooth. We restock easily.' The same was true for S71 and S73, who both said, 'No supply problems,' and 'I have no supply issues.' 'I've got no supply problems,' S74 said, echoing S75 and S76's 'None.' S77 elaborated on the background, saying, 'Our city is developing. There are no supply issues. We are able to get supplies easily. The roads are smooth, all businesses are cooperative.' 'No supply problems,' S78, S79, and S80 echoed, and S80 ended, 'I've faced no supply issues.'

ii) Flower Supply Problems

A specific problem with flower supplies was brought up by one of the respondents. S72 said, 'There are days when I get no flowers. I do not have an earning that day,' the speaker said, implying that it is difficult to keep flowers in stock, which has an impact on their income.

1.7.2 Operational Problems

i) No Operational Problems

Most of the responders said that there were no issues with operations during the busiest time of year. 'No problems,' said S71, and S74 repeated, 'I've got no problems.' In a similar manner, S75, S76, S79, and S80 recorded 'None,' signifying a general level of satisfaction with their activities. S77 went into further detail about this, saying, 'Our city is developing. There are no supply issues. We are able to get supplies easily. The roads are smooth, all businesses are cooperative.'

ii) Hotel Management Issues

S69 and S70 brought attention to hotel management-specific operational issues. S69 mentioned, 'During peak season maintaining the easy check-in, cleaning process, check-out is a problem. Some tourists come in early morning before workers and cleaners. We do not have a strict time for check out. So, some tourists leave at night, and we are not yet cleaned the room and ready for another guests. I'm so stuck at that time. Everything has to be done so fast. Mine is a luxury hotel, it is a big issue if I'm not prepared on time.' S70 went on, 'This is a tourist town, but a quiet town, tourists arrive at 2-3 in the

morning as well. It's a tough job to cater to them at such early morning when the staff is also sleeping. My family stays active at night due to this.'

iii) Issues due to Temple Restrictions

One respondent brought up concerns about limitations placed on temples. S72 said, 'The new Somnath temple does not allow flowers inside. People buy for old temple only. Someday the tourists bring flowers being sold outside the new temple, due to which I sit all day waiting for them to buy.'

iv) Costs of Transportation

S73 brought up a specific concern about commuting expenses, saying, 'I have no issues. Just that we have to pay transportation cost for bringing all the stud down here, and that's why for some things price is so high.'

v) Inventory Management Issues

S78 brought attention to inventory management problems brought on by the haste and the discrepancy in computations. 'Due to this online payment and cash payment, I've a tough time maintaining inventory during peak season. People come, order, eat and leave. Some days the rush is so much, I'm behind the desk all day, and even then, I miss out maintaining the inventory. There is a mismatch in my calculation and my staff's.'

1.7.3 Manpower problems

i) No Issues with Manpower

Most responders said they had no issues with staffing. S69 stated that having trained workers has guaranteed them no problems, and S74 agreed, stressing how much their educated and supportive employees value their business. Furthermore, S76 emphasised the stability of long-term operations by adding that they had never experienced manpower issues. S77 also made a similar observation.

ii) Untrustworthy Employees

Concerns about untrustworthy employees were brought up by a few responders. S70 made reference to the staff's unreliability. They usually run away," S73 continued, adding that competitors occasionally convince their employees to leave by offering benefits. This points to a problem with personnel retention, which can cause operational disruptions for businesses and necessitate ongoing recruiting and training initiatives. The theme emphasises the value of employee loyalty and the challenges that arise when workers are unreliable.

iii) Family-owned Enterprise

Many respondents said that because their companies are family-run, labour shortages are less of an issue. S72 noted operating a little stand by themselves, S71 said they run the shop with family, and S75, S79, and S80 stressed how important family support is to them. S76 stated that the continuous participation of family members is the reason for their long-term operation's lack of issues. This theme argues that because family members are more likely to be dedicated to the company's success, family-run businesses benefit from innate trust and dependability.

iv) Self-managed business

One response made it clear that they manage the business by themselves. S72 described running a small stall by oneself, which suggests a significant personal workload even if there are no issues with manpower. This theme highlights the difficulties and self-reliance involved in one-person operations, in which the firm owner manages all duties without assistance from outside sources.

1.7.4 Financial Issues

i) Financial Challenges as a Result of Low Sales

A few participants brought up the financial difficulties resulting from low sales. S72 stated, 'I work really hard to make ends meet. Not everybody purchases flowers. I have financial difficulties as a result.' This suggests that not all goods or services draw in enough clients, which puts individuals who depend on less well-liked items in a difficult financial situation. This subject emphasises how crucial it is to vary your offerings in order to reduce the financial dangers brought on by sluggish sales.

ii) Problems Using Online Payments

A small percentage of respondents said they were uncomfortable making payments online, which is increasingly common among consumers. 'I do not like online payments,' S73 declared. 'Customers do not carry cash anymore,' indicating a desire for conventional cash transactions. 'Everyone wants to pay online these days,' S76 continued. 'I am really not comfortable taking online payments. Payment failures are so common. And tallying is also a hassle.' This theme suggests that people who are not comfortable using technology may find it difficult to manage their finances as more transactions become digital. It emphasises the necessity of providing enhanced assistance and instruction regarding digital payment systems to help companies adjust to evolving consumer trends.

iii) No Financial Issues

The majority of responders said they had no money issues. S69 stated that their business operates year-round with minimal disruption, mostly due to recent developments in

Somnath. In a similar manner, S70 stated, 'I have no money problems. Their financial stability can be attributed to the supportive policies of the government, since they have been quite helpful' (S74, S75, S77, S78, S79, and S80). This theme emphasises how governmental support, a stable tourist industry, and a helpful infrastructure all help numerous enterprises maintain a secure financial position.

1.7.5 Problems Faced While Running Business in Somnath

i) Increasing Prices and Competition

A lot of respondents brought up the subject of growing prices and more competition. 'Prices have increased for literally everything. There's severe competition. So many unregulated businesses run here,' which highlights the problem of both increased costs and uncontrolled rivals. Similar worries were expressed by S72, who stated, 'Severe competition is increasing in Somnath. My son is a labour. I sell flowers. We run our house with much difficulty. Prices of goods and commodities, even essentials, have increased.' S75 continued, saying, 'The prices of goods and services have gone up. It's challenging to maintain competitive pricing while covering costs,' implying that it's getting more difficult to stay profitable. Additionally, S76 emphasised, 'There's severe competition among businesses here. Many unregulated businesses are popping up, affecting those who follow the rules.'

ii) Increasing Rental Prices

A number of respondents expressed serious concerns about the rise in rental expenses. According to S70, 'The rental space cost has increased, actually doubled over the last two years.' S77 continued, 'The rental costs for spaces have increased, making it difficult to afford decent business premises.' S78 reaffirmed this, saying, 'The increase in rental space costs is a significant burden. It has doubled over the past few years.' These claims suggest that it is becoming more difficult for companies to find and keep suitable property due to growing leasing expenses.

iii) Environmental Issues

One person brought up issues with plastic pollution and the environment. S71 said, 'There's huge plastic accumulated near the beach. The management warns against throwing plastics, but the tourists pay no heed to them,' This suggests that tourist behaviour is worsening environmental degradation, which may have an effect on the area's attraction.

iv) Increasing Prices

The general increase in living and business expenses was another issue brought up by many respondents. S73 stated, 'The economic growth and government support are there, but the demand-supply mechanism is making the town expensive to stay in.' S74 continued, 'Lands are becoming expensive, and the cost of living is rising due to increased demand from tourists and businesses.' S79 stated, 'The cost of necessities and basic goods has increased dramatically. The demand-supply imbalance is driving up costs,' S80 said, adding that it's very difficult to keep up with the escalating costs. Residents say that even if the economy is growing, living and operating in the town is becoming more expensive.

Part 2

Objective 2(b)

2.1 Kedarnath

2.1.1 Accommodation Challenges Faced by tourists in Kedarnath

i) Costly

The expense of lodging was mentioned frequently in the comments from a number of responders. R1 called the location 'very costly,' and R2 stressed that not making reservations ahead of time 'costed me heavily,' with hotels charging 10,000 rupees per night. R5 and R6 also drew attention to the excessive prices; R5 mentioned that they were charged between 15,000 and 18,000 rupees per night because they had not made reservations in advance. The terms 'high cost' and 'very costly' are used frequently in the responses (R10, R11, R12), suggesting that people believe the lodging costs are too high, particularly considering the surroundings and location. Pre-booked lodging through GMVN (Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam) was viewed as being comparatively more comfortable. For instance, R11 noted that they paid 8,000 INR and 12,000 INR, respectively, for a room at Kedarnath and Sonprayag, characterising their stay as 'expensive.' The general theme of excessive costs points to a major obstacle for pilgrims, indicating the necessity of price controls and more reasonably priced accommodations.

ii) Problems with Reservations

A number of issues, mostly connected to high prices and restricted availability, resulted from either insufficient planning or a lack of reservations. R2, R5, R8, R13, and R15 experienced significant challenges as a result of not making reservations in advance. The

financial effects of not making reservations were highlighted by R2 and R5, with R5 citing price fixing by hotel owners who raised the fee from 15,000 to 18,000 rupees per night. The terms ‘no booking’ and ‘unplanned trip’ come up frequently, pointing to a trend in which poor planning leads to higher expenses and less desirable lodging options. In light of the hefty expenses resulting from spontaneous choices, R15 concluded that it would have been preferable to ‘come planned.’

iii) Personnel Service

The quality of services provided by hoteliers also has an impact on the tourist experience. R5 described hotel owners as ‘rude,’ and also questioned their behaviour in a religious site. R6 stated being disrespected by staff in absence of pre booking, whereas R7 unethical attitude of raising price because of demand. There were however, positive experiences from people who ran GMVN lodging. R3 and R4 praised their ‘supportive’ and ‘good’ staff. This highlights how important it is to provide training to staff members.

4. Capacity Constraints

The capacity constraint is a huge challenge in Kedarnath. Several respondents remarked this problem. R7 stressed on the demand supply imbalance, stating that ‘there are more people than accommodation’. This is the reason the hoteliers overcharge. R14 had a similar opinion. This suggests how there is an urgent need to expand current facilities available at Kedarnath or limit the number of tourists visiting in absence of lodging facilities.

5. Cleanliness

Having a clean lodging is essential to the tourist experience. R1 claimed their stay to be comfortable but the facilities were ‘unhygienic and dirty.’ The problem with cleanliness is also highlighted by R4 who stated that the toilets were dirty. This clearly states that the tourist experience is impacted by the dirty toilets. The GMVN dormitories feature a shared lavatory that is also utilised by individuals awaiting at the helipad. The condition of the toilets is quite distressing.

6. Basic Amenities

While some respondents mentioned the presence of helpful amenities like geysers (e.g., ‘Geysers are available in GMVN cottage’ (R3), others noted that the provision of basic amenities fluctuated. These facilities are not available everywhere, though, and it is a typical grievance when these amenities are lacking in other accommodations. Depending on the amenities offered, pilgrims' comfort levels differ greatly. Some travellers battled with basic necessities, whereas others who made their reservations through GMVN frequently reported more comfortable stays (e.g., ‘Comfortable trip’ R9).

2.1.2 Food and Water Challenges Faced by tourists in Kedarnath

i) Limited Options

Many responders highlighted a lack of variety among Kedarnath's food options. This topic was obvious in complaints about the limited options and basic nature of the meals offered. For example, R1 stated, ‘The alternatives available are few,’ whereas R2 emphasised the lack of nutritious food options. This lack of diversity might be especially difficult for guests with special dietary needs or preferences. R14 supported this theme, stating that ‘the choices for food are very few,’ implying that pilgrims frequently must make do with whatever is offered, regardless of their dietary needs or preferences. Given the altitude of the pilgrimage site, it is difficult to transport many food options there. Pilgrims looking for more varied nutritional options are disappointed by the repetitious nature of the food options, such as Maggie noodles and *aaloo paratha* (potato stuffed bread).

ii) Expensive

The high cost of food and water was a cause of concern for many respondents. Several statements emphasised how pricey essential food items are. A major worry for many pilgrims is the expense of food. Food was called ‘expensive’ (R1, R12), ‘quite expensive’ (R8), and ‘basic yet expensive’ (R10) by several responders. It seems that even basic food products are more expensive than expected, which puts pilgrims under financial hardship. R1 described paying 400 rupees for a modest supper of two rotis and vegetables, as well as 50 rupees per litre of hot water. R8 echoed this expense, stating that ‘packaged water also costs a lot.’ The frequent mention of high expenses, such as R12's statement, ‘the price is although expensive,’ indicates that visitors believe the pricing is unfair, especially

given the basic nature of the food. The combination of restricted options and high pricing forces many pilgrims to spend more than they intended, which can cause financial difficulty. For example, R15 stated that retailers charge unreasonably high prices at night, escalating the financial burden on tourists.

iii) Health Concern

Several respondents raised health concerns about the food offered in Kedarnath. R4, for example, noted, 'The food is not intended for elderly persons or the ill. I have hypertension and diabetes. I could not locate anything less oily.' This demonstrates a substantial gap in catering to guests with unique health requirements. People with dietary restrictions struggle to find adequate meals because there are few nutritious, low-oil food options available. R3 also emphasised the challenge of surviving on limited options such as Maggie or aloo paratha, which are unsuitable for long-term consumption. The frequent mention of bad food choices emphasises the need for more balanced and nutritious options to meet a wider range of dietary requirements. R4 emphasises the dearth of diet-specific choices for those with medical issues. For these people, this restricts their food options and presents a serious health risk. Though food is available, descriptions like 'very basic food' (R12) and 'basic yet expensive' (R10) imply that it lacks the nutritional diversity required for a healthy diet.

iv) Water Availability and Quality

Some pilgrims gave Kedarnath's natural water high marks. The pilgrims value the natural water sources, which one respondent described as 'clear, delicious, and sparkling' (R2). The high Cost of Packaged Water: This is still a major problem, nevertheless. It becomes an expensive burden for pilgrims who depend on packaged water for convenience and safety when the costs are nearly double the standard rate (R8).

v) Service Issues

Respondents also raised concerns about service quality, namely the behaviour of food vendors. R15 stated, 'They start charging anything that comes to their mind' at night, implying inflated prices. This immoral behaviour not only increases the financial burden but also fosters mistrust and frustration among tourists. Though efforts to improve the

situation are being made, more needs to be done to regulate prices and ensure fair treatment of pilgrims. R8 acknowledged the hard work of people trying to restore normalcy after floods but noted that the high costs remained an issue. The acknowledgment of the recovery efforts draws attention to the difficulties currently encountered in restoring sufficient food and water supplies.

2.1.3 Travel Challenges Faced by tourists in Kedarnath

i) Limited Public transportation

The transportation problems include expensive private transportation and limited availability of public buses. R1 complained about the unregulated private transportation. R4 stated the expensive nature of private cabs. Buses are an economic option for the tourists, yet they are limited in number. R1 claimed that although the public buses are more accessible, they are very few in number. Tourists have to opt for pricier options in absence of adequate buses.

ii) Traffic Congestion

The heavy influx of tourists causes heavy traffic in the narrow mountainous area, especially near Rudraprayag, and Rampur. Respondents (R8, R14, R15) stated that the narrow roadways are the reason of traffic. R15 mentioned being stuck for six hours in traffic, whereas R8 added saying ‘crazy traffic’ before reaching Sonprayag.

iii) Dangerous Trek

The trek from Gaurikund to Kedarnath has been called dangerous and difficult by many respondents. R1 said that the trek is ‘dangerous,’ while R2 described it as ‘painful.’ The trek was called risky, as highlighted by the use of terms such as ‘nightmare,’ ‘dangerous,’ and ‘risky’ by respondents such as R3, R6, and R9. This is because the trek trail from Gaurikund to Kedarnath is hazardous. The path is broken at places due to heavy wear and tear by both tourist and horses. It is also in a state of neglect. There is a necessity to repair the trek with immediate effect. R1 observed that the ‘path is half destroyed’, R2 mentioned the difficulty to hike in that kind of broken trek, R9 stressed on the necessity of trek repair. Respondents (R2, R6, R9, R12, R13) used terms like ‘painful,’ ‘dangerous,’ and ‘risky’ to define their trekking experience, stressing on the risks they faced.

iv) Problems Concerning Horses

The '*khacchars*' or horses that are used by tourist and pilgrims present various challenges for both trekkers and riders. Respondents highlighted the risks associated with the presence of horses in the trek. R2 witnesses a woman fall off the horse which is a very commonly witnessed mishap in Kedarnath valley. R4 had a first-hand experience as his wife fell and injured herself. R10 also tumbled off the horse. Apart from the accidents caused by these horses, their presence makes the trek more challenging (R3, R7, R8). They obstruct the already narrow path (R1). They operate in huge numbers, and the horse's business is completely unregulated (R11) and their overwork causes them to tumble (R4). The horse dung makes the trek slippery and dangerous (R2, R13). The requirement for strict regulation of horse numbers was emphasised by R11, as the unregulated presence of horses disrupts both pilgrims and trekkers. The respondents recommended that horse traffic should be more strictly regulated. In order to lower the number of accidents, R5 and R13 suggested dividing paths for trekkers and horses. R7 suggested setting time limits for horses in order to prevent traffic jams. R11 highlighted that the number of horses must be controlled because they cause major disruptions by frequently coming up and down the path. R5 brought up the sight of dead horses on the trail, signifying the brutal circumstances and absence of regulations.

2.1.4 Dislikes in visiting Kedarnath

i) Expensive

The excessive cost of various services in Kedarnath was one of the most often mentioned issues. Respondents emphasised that the cost of food, accommodation, and other necessities was excessively high. R1 stated, 'The place is very costly. I have exceeded my budget by now. The food, hotels, Prasad everything is so costly.' R2 agreed with this opinion, stating, 'It's hell expensive. Everything is overpriced.' R6 also stated, 'I did not like the way everything is overpriced. It should be affordable to people of all earnings.' The rising costs make it difficult for visitors to manage their budget, as highlighted by R9, who mentioned, 'The prices of accommodation, things, food, and Prasad have skyrocketed in the last ten years. Earlier it was easy to travel here on a budget.' R12 highlighted the issue of unfair pricing, stating, "The only issue is the unfair price going on everywhere in Kedarnath from Sonprayag to Kedarnath." He found the

hotels, the food, and the bottle of packaged water to be 'so expensive'. R11 additionally incurred significant costs as a result of failing to reserve accommodations in advance. He stated, "I had to pay a whopping 12000 for a room in Sonprayag for a night."

ii) Commercialisation

Several respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the commercialisation of Kedarnath, claiming that it degrades the spiritual experience. R3 noted, 'A lot has changed since the last visit. The service got better but the place got commercialised'. She also objected to the commercialisation of a religious site. Similarly, R5 observed that 'The location has evolved into a hub for influencers rather than a religious site. This type of activity diminishes the sacredness of the location. There is a reason pilgrimage location are at such far-off places.'

iii) Medical and Accessibility Concerns

Another significant concern among respondents was the absence of quality medical services and accessibility facilities. R4 shared a distressing experience, stating, 'My wife fell off the horse. She suffered an injury. Painkillers were given to her; however, emergency medical services were not provided. I was in a state of panic, but they assured me that it would work.' This shows the pressing necessity for enhanced emergency medical facilities. R4 also identified the absence of accessibility, stating, 'There is also no wheelchair facility.' It is therefore challenging for individuals with mobility issues to completely engage in the pilgrimage due to the lack of accessibility.

iv) Hygiene and Sanitation

The respondents frequently mentioned the inadequate hygiene and sanitation conditions, particularly the condition of the toilets. R5 expressed dissatisfaction with the hygiene practices, stating, 'The mobile toilets are really dirty. I have level 2 diabetes and I need to urinate frequently. Those toilets stink and there are always high chances of infection.' R6 repeated this concern, stating, 'The toilets are seriously dirty. Menstrual hygiene is unavailable to women.' These statements highlight the pressing necessity for better sanitation facilities to guarantee the safety and well-being of visitors.

v) Overcrowding

Numerous respondents expressed concern regarding congestion, stating that the site's capacity was frequently exceeded by the volume of visitors. R7 expressed his dissatisfaction with the increased crowding, stating, 'It was overwhelming.' The temperatures outside the temple are so extreme and old people spend the night there. It is essential people are not permitted to remain in the area if there is no accommodation available. The necessity of crowd management was made clear.

vi) Trek safety

The safety of the trek to Kedarnath was a major concern, as many respondents described it as dangerous and risky. The trek's poor state was highlighted by R11, who stated, 'The issue was the broken trek and the roads of Kedarnath.' Additionally, R14 stated, 'The primary concern was the trek.' Certain parts of the path are broken which makes the 18-kilometer journey difficult. R13 highlighted the absence of proper gear preparation and guidance, stating, 'There should be appropriate gear for the trek, regardless of the pilgrim's age.' They should have a brochure that inspects the equipment prior to the commencement of the Gaurikund trek.

vii) Animal Welfare

Another significant concern for respondents was the treatment of horses used in the trek to Kedarnath. R4 revealed an upsetting incident, stating, 'The horse died immediately.' The horse industry is not subject to regulation. Therefore, such incidents are frequent. Additionally, R14 stated, 'The most awful incident I observed was the abusive treatment of horses.' During the trek, we observed dead animals. It is a disheartening sight. There is a dire need for stricter laws for the humane treatment of horses and khacchars used for transportation in Kedarnath.

viii) Conduct of Pandas

The behaviour of pandas was questioned by respondents. R1 stated, 'The priests themselves are breaking the queue.' R2 called them 'greedy and rude.' Additionally, R10 added, 'priests are a little problematic.' Respondents were angry about this attitude of the pandas. This not only impacts the tourist experience but also harms the sanctity of the pilgrimage site.

2.2 Kashi Vishwanath

2.2.1 Accommodation Challenges Faced by tourists in Kashi Vishwanath

i) High demand

The overbooking and high demand for accommodation in Kashi Vishwanath has created significant issues for tourists. R16 stated, 'Kashi is always overbooked. Tourists flock here all the time. Getting a good deal is sheer luck'. On the contrary, R24 stated, 'I do not think lodging is a problem in Varanasi. Accommodation is readily available and reasonably priced near the pilgrimage site.' These different perspectives indicate that the tourist experiences vary depending on the type of accommodation booked. It also depends on the timing of the booking, for instance, during peak season, it is a hassle. Considering the holy city of Varanasi is flocking with tourists at all times, there is a shortage of accommodation near famous landmarks, like Kashi Vishwanath temple and Ghat. Responses like 'overbooked places' (R16) and 'high tourist influx' (R23) highlight issues in finding lodgin during peak pilgrim season. There were some other issues with pre-booking through online sites. R17 complained, 'Whenever I book through an online site, I feel I get tricked,' showing a lack of trust in these online websites. This perception evidences the unreliability of the such sites with regard to representation, costs and location. This absence of transparency disappoints the tourists.

ii) Accessibility Issues

The narrow lanes of Kashi Vishwanath present considerable accessibility problems. R17 said, "The lanes are so tiny that no vehicle comes here. "I have to drag my luggage," highlighting that the jammed layout makes it problematic for tourists to bring their goods to their booked lodgings. The Densely packed areas near the pilgrimage site makes it difficult to reach by car. This becomes troublesome for older and impaired tourists who come for a *darshan*.

iii) Proximity and Location Benefits

The closeness of hotels to famous landmarks, such as the Ganga River and the Kashi Vishwanath temple, has a substantial effect on tourist satisfaction. Respondents who had an accommodation near these landmarks normally had memorable experiences because

of their suitable location. R18 stated, 'The hostel was close to the river,' while R29 added, 'My accommodation was near the temple. So, I had no troubles in that area either.' R23 said, "Accommodation is easily available in the city, especially near the temple," suggesting that such sites are both suitable and attractive. These statements suggest that being closer to famous landmarks enhances the entire visit experience by letting them attend ceremonies such as Ganga Aarti. Accommodations at such proximity allows the tourist to engage with rituals and ceremonies which adds to their experience.

iv) Pre-booking Benefits and General Availability

Pre-booking accommodations can help to alleviate some of the hassles that come with high demand and booking difficulties. Furthermore, many respondents said that rooms were generally available, although not always in the most convenient areas. Given Varanasi's considerable visitor traffic, there are plenty of lodgings available. However, because of how dense the area of Pilgrimage site is, getting an accommodation adjacent to the temple can be tough. Tourists often desire to stay near the temple, which explains the grievances about inadequate lodgings. However, respondents who pre-booked their rooms reported more seamless experiences. R20 commented, 'I had booked everything before my arrival. So, I did not have that difficulty,' emphasising the need to plan ahead of time to avoid problems at the last minute. Pre-booking guarantees that tourists have a safe place to stay, avoiding the stress and uncertainty that come with obtaining lodging upon arrival. This is especially useful during peak season, when rooms are in great demand. Visitors who reserve a room ahead of time can avoid the increased prices and restricted availability that often come with last-minute bookings. Despite certain obstacles, lodging is widely available in Kashi Vishwanath. R21 stated, 'My accommodations were very nice. It's easily accessible here.' While the most attractive spots near the temple may be more difficult to obtain, there are several accommodations accessible around the city. This wealth of options means that, with some effort, tourists can typically find a place to stay that matches their requirements.

2.2.2 Food and Water Challenges Faced by tourists in Kashi Vishwanath

i) Hygiene and Quality Concerns

Respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the quality and hygiene standards of food, primarily street food, despite the positive aspects. R25 observed, 'Food is easily available in the alley near the temple. Although there are not very good restaurants, there are a lot of alternatives for street food, snacks, and breakfast.' These statements indicate that, despite the ample supply of food, there are concerns regarding the hygiene practices of certain vendors.

ii) Access to Nutritious and Balanced Meals

Although street food and beverages are readily available, it can be difficult to locate nutritious and balanced meals in close proximity to the temples. R26 observed, 'Food and water are so easily available here. I did not find a proper meal right outside the temple, but the city has so many options to try.' This suggests that, despite the availability of alternatives, it may be more challenging to identify nutritious and well-balanced meals. Although Kashi offers a wide range of alternatives to food and is abundant in them, there are certain major obstacles that need to be addressed. Enhancing the availability of nutritious food and ensuring its quality and hygienic conditions are significant aspects that require focus. By resolving these issues, Varanasi's status as a welcoming pilgrimage destination will be preserved, in addition to improving the dining experience for visitors.

iii) Positive aspects

The variety of food was greatly appreciated in Kashi Vishwanath. Varanasi is known for its varied street food. R15 stated, 'There are plenty of options for food available in the city. I love the food here. There's no issue related to food.' R16 added, 'There are some pretty good options for food available here. I found some good dosa options for breakfast. The food is diverse here in Varanasi.' R24 shared similar view regarding availability. R21 stated, 'Food and water are not a concern in Varanasi' and R25 added, 'Food and water are easily available in this location.' R29 also said, 'I did not encounter any food-related complications.' All these statements evidence the varied availability of food near Kashi Vishwanath.

2.2.3 Travel Challenges Faced by tourists in Kashi Vishwanath

i) Exploitation

Local transportation providers frequently exploit travellers. Auto and rickshaw drivers frequently engage in deceptive practices and overcharge visitors. One respondent observed that the lanes outside the temple are so confined that no auto or rickshaw is willing to travel there without difficulty. The difficulty and expense of accessing the temple area are made worse by the fact that they charge unreasonably from the visitors (R16). Another tourist emphasized the financial exploitation and deceit that tourists encounter by stating, ‘The auto rickshaw lied, cheated, and overcharged me’ (R18). Another respondent repeated the issue of overcharging, stating that ‘auto rickshaws cheat you.’ They provide rate quotes that vary depending on the individual (R21). Furthermore, the difficulty of navigating narrow lanes where ‘a car cannot enter’ necessitates the use of auto rickshaws and tuk-tuks, which overcharge tourists (R24). Uber drivers were also observed to ‘charge almost double the price from tourists,’ which led tourists to suspect that a ‘cartel-like WhatsApp group’ was responsible for inflating prices (R19). These issues lead to the disappointments of the tourists.

ii) Positive Experience

Many tourists reported that they faced no substantial travel challenges. R17 stated ‘I did not face any travel issues’, R25 added ‘I had no travel issues in the place’. Some tourists also applauded the comfort and convenience of transportation available, for instance, Vande Bharat Express, which is ‘smooth and takes less time’ (R23), ‘rental bikes’ (R20) and battery rickshaws which are ‘available in abundance’ (R28). These statements define how the experience of tourist has overall been smooth.

2.2.4 Dislikes in visiting Kashi Vishwanath

i) Security Measures

Pilgrims frequently feel that the intrusive security measures, particularly the extensive frisking, undermine the sanctity of their visit. Many individuals express dissatisfaction with the manner in which these security measures are implemented, despite acknowledging their necessity. One tourist expressed their dissatisfaction with the security personnel's excessive frisking (R16). Another individual expressed a similar opinion, expressing frustration with the authorities' ‘frisking’ and a desire for ‘a few moments of peace to look at the lingam’ (R17). In addition, another pilgrim observed that

‘security has become more intense,’ which gives the impression that ‘God is under security at all times’ (R16). These comments emphasize an increasing frustration among visitors who aspire to a spiritual experience that is both serene and uninterrupted but is impeded by the frequent and intrusive security checks.

ii) Exploitation

Local service providers frequently exploit tourists by overcharging, manipulating, and stealing. One visitor observed that ‘auto drivers...overcharge us’ when they recognize that you are an outsider (R19). Similarly, another tourist observed that flower shops ‘deceive tourists into purchasing at predetermined prices’ solely to store their belongings (R20). They also expressed their disapproval of the fact that flower shops ‘manipulate tourists into purchasing at their predetermined prices in exchange for keeping the phone and footwear in their lockers’ (R20). Additionally, the frequent occurrence of theft and pickpocketing adds to visitors' feelings of insecurity, further degrading their overall experience. These practices, which contribute to a feeling of exploitation and insecurity, worsen the atmosphere in the temple.

iii) Management Issues

There is a serious need for improved crowd management and guidance for solo travellers. Many tourists emphasize the importance of more structured and respectful management practices. A tourist criticized the management for ‘manhandling devotees’ and also emphasized the necessity of a ‘guide for solo travellers’ (R18). Another individual compared the situation to that of other temples, emphasizing that the current practices are ‘completely inappropriate for Shiva devotees’ and suggesting that the temple could benefit from following management procedures at the ‘Tirupati Temple Trust’ (R25). Furthermore, a tourist reported a ‘management mismatch’ in which individuals were ‘pushing one another in the queue,’ which suggests inadequate queue management (R19). Another tourist mentioned the absence of ‘separate queues for senior citizens’ and the necessity of improved ‘ventilation in the waiting area,’ as the current arrangement is challenging for elderly visitors (R26). These remarks emphasize the necessity of enhanced management practices that prioritize the spiritual aspect of the pilgrimage and guarantee a more organized and respectful experience for all visitors.

iv) Preferential Treatment

Visitors are subjected to a sense of inequality as a result of preferential treatment based on their financial contributions. This commercialized approach to the spiritual experience is readily apparent in statements such as ‘the bigger your plate, the better attention’ from pandits (R21) and the notion that ‘the amount of money you give...determines how quickly you can do the darshan’ (R26). One tourist described how the quantity of the prasad plate affects the level of attention received from priests, resulting in a transactional experience (R21). The treatment of ‘VIPs with large donations’ is superior, while ordinary devotees are frequently ‘pushed towards the exit pretty soon’ (R23). This was also emphasized by another tourist. These experiences emphasize the substantial impact that financial disparities can have on the spiritual journey, rendering it more transactional than sacrosanct and instilling a sense of injustice among less affluent visitors.

v) Economic Bias

The behaviour of priests and temple authorities, particularly in terms of economic bias, is a significant source of frustration. Visitors think that the standard of Pooja services should not depend on their financial situation. One guest observed the ‘monopoly and behaviour of priests,’ who ‘ask for *dakshina* so casually’ and differentiate between individuals based on their economic status (R28). Another individual remarked on the unjust treatment of devotees when ‘VIPs with large donations arrive,’ suggesting that ordinary devotees are frequently ‘harshly pushed away’ to make room for those with more money (R29). The broader concerns about the commercialisation of spiritual rituals and the preferential treatment of affluent visitors are reflected in these remarks, which undermine the equal spirit that a pilgrimage site should embody.

vi) Panda Behaviour

Pandas (priests) are frequently criticized for their conduct, particularly for their business-like attitude and their demand for donations. One tourist observed that the ‘sole concern was the priest's conduct,’ emphasizing that the priests' demeanour was problematic, despite the fact that crowd management and sanitation were effectively managed (R22). After initially behaving politely, another tourist described how priests ‘started asking for money for the smallest help’ (R29). The priests' insistence on *dakshina* and differential

treatment based on the size of prasad plates further emphasizes the issue of economic bias. Furthermore, another visitor (R18) expressed substantial reservations regarding the priests' 'commercialisation' of spiritual services and their 'rude demeanour.' These incidents disappoint the tourists and hurt their sentiments.

vii) Safety and Exploitation

Tourists often expressed feeling unsafe due to the incidents of pickpocketing and theft just outside the vicinity of the temple. One tourist emphasized that flower shops 'manipulate tourists into buying at predetermined prices' in exchange of keeping their belongings safe (R20), and also added 'pickpocketing and snatching are frequent problems near the temple'. Another tourist remarked that the entire spiritual experience has been transformed into a 'money-making' process because of 'commercialisation', because of which the sanctity of the place is harmed (R27).

2.3 Omkareshwar

2.3.1 Accommodation Challenges Faced by tourists in Omkareshwar

i) Absence of Good Hotels and Infrastructure

The availability of accommodations at Omkareshwar was a cause of concern for respondents visiting the pilgrimage site. R30 could not locate a good hotel in the premises. R40 stated that the pilgrimage site 'lacks a good infrastructure by all means,' evidencing a service quality gap. R41 shared that while accommodations are 'easily available,' they are of 'not good quality' and lack 'basic amenities,' suggesting that the facilities are substandard for tourists.

ii) Basic Facilities and Manageable Stay

The availability of only simple accommodations that are barely manageable for brief stays is a prevalent theme. R32 states that the accommodation 'is not very good' but has 'basic facilities' sufficient for a day's stay, while R31 found a 'basic accommodation near the temple' that was 'manageable for a day stay.' These responses suggest that, despite the availability of certain lodging options, they frequently fail to deliver the desired level of quality and comfort.

iii) Booking Challenges

Even with prebooked accommodations, certain respondents encountered difficulties. According to R33, accommodations are no longer providing rooms to single occupants as a result of a recent incident. Additionally, the facilities are subpar, despite the fact that R33 booked with his father. This highlights the inconsistent policies and substandard accommodations that visitors encounter, regardless of whether they reserve accommodations in advance.

iv) Smooth Stay with Prebooking

For the most part, respondents who reserved their accommodations in advance had more enjoyable experiences. R34, R35, R36, and R43 all reported that they did not encounter any accommodation issues as a result of their prebooking. R34 declared, "I had prebooked a small hotel in Omkareshwar prior to my arrival, so that was not a concern." R35 and R36 had similar opinions, highlighting the rewards of prebooking. R43 also added, 'Accommodation was not an issue because I had booked in advance.'

v) Community Support and Clean Accommodations

Many respondents were able to get affordable and clean lodging in their community. R42 lodged in a community Dharamshala that was "pretty good and affordably priced."

vi) Comfortable and Affordable Stays

Many respondents spoke about their positive experiences with affordable and comfortable accommodations. R39 found a 'clean and affordable' and 'comfortable stay in Omkareshwar,' demonstrating that there are high-quality substitutes available, although they may be less in number.

2.3.2 Food and Water Challenges Faced by tourists in Omkareshwar

i) Availability

Many respondents praised the various alternatives of food and water available in the pilgrimage site. R30 stated that there are 'enough choices' of food. Similarly, R33 observed that food is accessible 'at all times' denoting the easy availability of food. R34

had similar views regarding the availability of food, while R35 specified that there are ‘several alternatives available, causing no issues to the tourists. R36, R38, R40, R41, and R43 constantly supported the availability of food in the pilgrimage site.

ii) Quality and variety

The food was applauded for its quality and variety. R32 defined the food as ‘tasty’ having ‘quite a lot of alternatives,’ while R31 found it ‘nice’ with a variety of North Indian and Gujarati options. R37 also noticed that the food was ‘quite good,’ suggesting that they were satisfied with the quality. R39 expressed a more moderate perspective, stating that the cuisine is ‘okay,’ with a ‘basic taste but nice.’ This theme implies that the cuisine quality is generally satisfactory; however, there are a variety of choices available to accommodate a variety of preferences.

iii) Affordability

Another favourable aspect that respondents identified is the affordability of food and water. R38 emphasizes that food is ‘easily available at reasonable prices,’ while R42 indicates that ‘everything is available at a variety’, indicating that there are a variety of options to accommodate different budgets. In general, the statements indicate that tourists have a generally positive experience with a wide range of options, satisfactory quality, and affordability.

2.3.3 Travel Challenges Faced by tourists in Omkareshwar

i) Parking Issues

Parking was identified as an important concern by numerous respondents. R30 references a ‘significant parking issue’ that is ‘misused by individuals,’ suggesting that the parking spaces are not well-managed. R34 also observes that though travel was not an issue, ‘parking is a problem in Omkareshwar.’ R36 refers to parking as ‘the only issue,’ while R41 characterizes it as a ‘massive problem,’ stating the necessity of ‘begging shopkeepers’ to park private cabs or automobiles. These responses indicate that the travel experience can be enhanced through effective parking management.

ii) Traveling Comfortably

A significant number of respondents reported that their travel experience was quite enjoyable. R31 reported that the trip was 'comfortable' and 'fairly priced,' and that there were no complications. R32 and R33 describe their travel as 'comfortable' and 'quite good,' with R32 locating a 'comfortable buses' from Bhopal. R35 also asserts that 'buses are comfortable,' and R42 found the bus ride to be 'comparatively okay.' These responses imply that the availability of affordable and comfortable bus services enhances the travel experience of numerous tourists.

iii) Traffic Congestion

For certain tourists, traffic congestion presented a substantial obstacle. R37 refers to a "two-hour-long traffic jam" that originated from the "narrow roads" that led to the *Jyotirlinga*. R38 voiced similar opinion about the traffic that caused 'an entire day wasted'. The traffic often causes obstruction of movement for hours that causes 'long journey' even though Indore to Omkareshwar is just 100kms.

iv) Driver Issues

R36 highlighted a unique concern about the drivers. She said 'bus drivers keep fighting among themselves,' for passengers which causes discomfort for the tourists. There is a need for enhanced rules for buses and drivers to ensure a smoother experience.

2.3.4 Other Challenges Faced by tourists in Omkareshwar

i) Panda Interference

A number of respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the behaviour and interference of the priests. According to R30, the disorder is partially the result of individuals entertaining priests who provide 'fast pooja' or 'shortcut entry'. R37 was dissatisfied with the 'rude attitude of the priests,' which led him to doubt the faith and devotion of the location. R40 characterizes the 'monopoly of priests' as a potential hazard, while R38 encountered difficulties with priests 'nagging' them. The pandas take advantage of the chaos and ask for donation/dakshina for fast pooja or queue breaking. This causes dissatisfaction for some tourists. This theme highlights the necessity of stricter rules of priestly activities in order to enhance the tourist experience.

ii) Navigation Challenges

A number of respondents encountered difficulties with navigation and a lack of guidance. R31 encountered challenges in locating their way out, because of ‘language barrier’. They lost their way while doing ‘*parikrama*’ and could not get help. R32 also mentioned the ‘lack of directions’ and ‘inadequate guidance’ near the pilgrimage site. the need for signboards and help desk is necessitated by theme statements.

iii) Queue Management Issues

The greedy behaviour of pandas was a cause of concern. R34 stated that the temple was ‘completely mismanaged at all levels’ as there was improper queue management in the premises. The excess crowd added to the problems and it led to chaos. R35 stated this experience was proving to be a ‘nightmare’ for children and old aged citizens as devotion was being compromised. R39 had similar opinions and advised the temple management ‘follow and learn the Mahakal management and facilities’ and implement the same in Omkareshwar. R42 blamed the temple management for the chaos stating the risk of stampede. R43 and R36 also criticised the ‘complete chaos’. Implementing crowd control measures is a necessity in this pilgrimage site.

iv) Stampede Risks

The risk of stampede and security concern was highlighted by various tourists. R40 blamed the ‘monopoly of priests’ as a potential cause of stampede, whereas R42 believed that inadequate management would lead to high ‘risk of stampede’. R41 also warned against visiting this *Jyotirlinga* for claustrophobic people. This highlights how unsafe the tourists feel in the temple premise. The risk of stampede is high while waiting in queue.

2.3.5 Dislikes in visiting Omkareshwar

The thematic analysis of the dislikes about Omkareshwar reveals several recurring issues, each highlighted with specific phrases from the respondents

1. Poor management and administration

The temple's management and administration have been the subject of much frustration among numerous respondents. R42 criticizes the 'really bad' management, citing the 'unofficial special entry' and the absence of temple management personnel, which rendered the experience 'painful.' R43 emphasizes the absence of respect for the *Jyotirlinga* by highlighting the 'really average management' and the 'absolute chaos' during darshan. This theme emphasizes the necessity of enhanced organisational supervision to improve the experiences of visitors.

2. Poor Crowd Control and Overcrowding

Overcrowding and inadequate crowd control are substantial concerns. R31 reports that the temple is 'so overcrowded that it is beyond capacity,' with visitors queuing for 'nearly five hours.' This situation has prompted concerns for the elderly and mothers with infants. In the opinion of R32, 'crowd management is an issue,' while R40 stated that the pandas 'push the visitors outside the temple' and restrict the time for darshan. A smoother and more respectful tourist experience is dependent upon the effective administration of crowds.

3. Unethical behaviour and corruption

Numerous respondents highlight corruption and dishonest practices. The temple premises are characterized by R41 as a 'hub for corruption and sheer mismanagement,' with pandits serving as brokers and inflating the cost of basic services. R36 cautions visitors to be cautious of 'pandas and local vendors' who 'con you,' while R37 asserts that the priests are solely interested in 'making money off of you.' These practices diminish the temple's spiritual sanctity while also undermining tourists' confidence.

4. Commercialisation and Exploitation

Another recurring theme is the temple's commercialisation and the exploitation of visitors. R36 criticizes the 'commercialisation of the place,' observing that it 'destroys the sanctity' of the temple. R39 observes that the temple is 'overpowered by greedy pandas,' which hinders the proper performance of *abhishek* as a result of the crowd and the resulting commotion. This theme emphasizes the detrimental influence of commercial interests on the temple's spiritual and religious atmosphere.

5. Infrastructure and maintenance concerns

Infrastructure and maintenance issues have a significant impact on the visitor experience. The temple is described as 'isolated' by R30, with having a 'severe network issues' in addition to a lack of high-quality hotels. Meanwhile, R35 notes the 'poor infrastructure' and absence of facilities provided by the temple management. R39 observes the temple's 'poorly maintained' condition, while R38 emphasizes the 'dirty surroundings' that 'make you cringe your nose in disgust.' In order to preserve the temple's appeal and guarantee a pleasant visit, it is essential to enhance the infrastructure and sanitation.

6. Accessibility and Discrimination Issues

The responses also raise concerns regarding accessibility and discrimination. R33 questions the *Dharamshalas'* inquiry about caste prior to providing accommodation, expressing frustration and inquiring, 'Which year are we in?' R39 specifies that the wheelchair facility is provided to the tourists 'subject to the wishes of the pandas,' which highlights that accessibility provision is unreliable. It is important to address these challenges for creating a more comprehensive and friendly environment for tourists.

2.4 Mahakaleshwar

2.4.1 Accommodation Challenges Faced by tourists in Mahakaleshwar

i) Safety and Proximity Concerns

Some tourists raised concerns regarding the lodgings in close proximity of the temple. There was a sense of fear in some female travellers. One tourist said that the accommodation 'does not feel safe for women' (R44) and another witnessed 'creepy looking people' (R45) coming out of the hotel. This is a very subjective view. However, now that solo travelling has increased in India, there needs to be a sense of security for travellers especially near the pilgrimage site. The complaints of some *Dharamshalas* being "far from the temple" (R44) also raised some logistical concerns for some.

ii) Quality Concerns

Many respondents identified the false representation on online booking system. These claims are highlighted by statements like "hotels are not of the quality they claim online"

(R47) and "not good" (R52). The accessibility of such lodgings near the pilgrimage site is further worsened by 'narrow lanes' (R47) near the temple.

iii) Dirty budget friendly accommodations

Although the tourists stated that the Dharamshalas was a budget friendly alternative for tourist, it had its own struggles. Most dharmshalas were far from the temple site, and had a shared bathroom. These bathrooms were not cleaned for many days which was a cause of concern. The accessibility and affordability were highlighted by 'quite affordable and pocket-friendly' (R49) and 'cheap and in my budget' (R50). However, the struggles faced was also evident by 'common toilets' were 'a little dirty' (R49) and 'very dirty' (R54).

iv) Advantages of Pre-Booking

Some issues were solved by pre-booking accommodations. Tourists who reserved accommodations in advance observed that they were available at a 'reasonable price' (R51) and that they were 'comfortable for a day or two' (R51). This suggests that although the quality may not be exceptional, reserving in advance facilitates a more seamless experience. On the contrary, tourists who planned in the last minute faced certain problems. They had "trouble getting a decent place" (R48) and were also "overcharged" (R48).

2.4.2 Food and Water Challenges Faced by tourists in Mahakaleshwar

i) Overall Satisfaction

The majority of tourists expressed that the food available at Mahakaleshwar was satisfactory. The phrases 'the food is good' (R54, R44), and 'I had no issues' (R48) show that the food's quality and availability are generally acceptable. The general sentiment implies that tourists did not complain a lot about food.

ii) Convenient accessibility

Numerous respondents emphasized the ease of access to food and water. Statements like 'food and water are easily available' (R53, R52) highlight how simple it is to access basic

necessities in the area. This availability enhances the overall experience by guaranteeing that visitors do not encounter any challenges in fulfilling their fundamental requirements.

iii) Abundant Variety

Numerous individuals valued the diverse array of food alternatives. The tourists identified a diverse selection of alternatives, including ‘snacks, juices, and meals’ (R51) and ‘pure vegetarian food’ (R49). The temple's proximity to a variety of food options facilitates the search for suitable options for visitors with a wide range of dietary preferences. The variety of options, which enables guests to sample a range of meals throughout their visit, further enhances the dining experience. Nevertheless, there were some references to the limited availability of specific cuisines, such as ‘South Indian food’ (R47, R46), suggesting that there is room for improvement in overall diversity.

iv) High quality

Numerous respondents expressed their satisfaction with the quality of the cuisine. The high quality of the cuisine available in the area is reflected in phrases such as ‘tasty and of good quality’ (R49) and ‘authentic Gujarati good options’ (R55). The variety of options further enhances the dining experience, allowing visitors to enjoy different types of meals during their stay.

v) Affordable and Genuine

Tourists found the authentic and affordable culinary options to be a significant positive. Comments such as ‘cheaper price’ (R55) and ‘quite cheap and in my budget’ (R50) highlighted the affordability of meals, particularly in *dharamshalas*. The authenticity of regional cuisines, such as Gujarati food, which gave guests a taste of local flavours, improved the cultural experience.

vi) Limitations and Varieties

Although the diversity of food options was generally highlighted, certain tourists identified specific constraints. The absence of specific cuisines, such as ‘South Indian food’ (R47), and the manageability of North Indian alternatives at a pilgrimage site (R46),

suggest that the overall variety is satisfactory; however, there is still room to accommodate more diverse food preferences.

2.4.3 Travel Challenges Faced by tourists in Mahakaleshwar

i) Efficient Public transport

Many tourists were all praises for the Madhya Pradesh public transportation system. The efficiency and accessibility of Chartered buses are highlighted by statements such as ‘The bus service in Madhya Pradesh is simply marvellous’ (R55) and ‘The buses were available easily’ (R51). The general perception indicates that public transportation, including chartered buses, is dependable and enhances the travel experience for tourists visiting Mahakaleshwar.

ii) Effortless Communication

Tourists frequently cited the seamless connectivity between various modes of transportation. The ease of transitioning between trains, flights, and buses is evident in comments such as ‘I booked a train to Bhopal, then had a chartered bus to Omkareshwar and now Mahakaleshwar’ (R54) and ‘I came to Bhopal by flight and then took a chartered bus service to the temple’ (R53). Ensuring a smooth journey guarantees a pleasant experience and also ensures revisit intention.

iii) Luxurious travel

The luxury of the entire journey was a recurring theme. Tourists used statements like ‘comfortable journey’ (R52) and ‘I enjoyed the journey’, ‘It was comfortable’ (R47) to indicate that the transportation services gave them a really pleasant travel experience. The smooth working, ticketing and tracking system of Chartered buses was lauded by tourists.

iv) Presence of Cabs

The easy availability of private cabs was appreciated by the tourists. Statements like ‘I observed that there were many cabs available’ (R45) and ‘I reserved a cab for a day’ (R45) suggested that the presence of private transportation alternatives was a cause of convenience for some tourists who prefer it.

v) Need for Fare Regulation

The auto rickshaws operating near the temple were differently priced. Tourists complained about the exploitation of tourists by all auto rickshaw drivers. This calls for a price regulation for auto drivers in pilgrimage sites. Charging excessively leads to ruining of the religious experience of the devotees at pilgrimage sites. There should be a price range even when the demand is really high during peak seasons.

2.4.4 Other challenges in visiting Mahakaleshwar

i) Fairness and Queue Management

There were some complaints and dissatisfaction regarding the lengthy queue and VIP system of entry. The use of VIP entries, which are referred to as a "shortcut" (R44), highlights concern regarding equity and fairness among pilgrims. Although it may be advantageous for some, it may result in dissatisfaction among those who are forced to wait in lengthy lines. The VIP devotees are treated differently by the Pandas and their pooja and darshan experience is smoother.

ii) Chaotic Behaviour

The disruptive behaviour of tourists, particularly in relation to the use of mobile phones and impatience, was of major concern. The actions of 'clicking pictures' (R45) and 'people visiting and their impatience' (R55) disrupt the serenity of worship within the temple. This behaviour obstructs the spiritual experience, which irritates both the temple priests and the devotees.

iii) Inadequate communication

Misinformation was identified as an issue. As per statements like 'Misinformation is a problem in Mahakaleshwar' (R46), inaccurate or unclear information ruins the overall experience and causes confusion. Most of the tourists complained of not doing proper research and had no idea about *Bhasm Aarti*. In order to resolve this matter, it is necessary to enhance communication and ensure the distribution of important information to tourists. The absence of guidance and support was identified as an issue by numerous respondents. The absence of assistance desks at important location, such as airports and

bus stations (R47, R48), posed challenges, particularly for individuals who were attempting to obtain tickets for specific events, such as the *Bhasm Aarti*, or who were experiencing language barriers.

iv) External Concerns

The behaviour of shopkeepers outside the temple was a cause of concern. The ‘cunning’ and ‘cheating’ vendors (R51, R52, R54) had a detrimental effect on the experience of the tourists. few misleading acts caused distrust among the tourists.

v) Positive Experience

Many tourists had an exceptionally nice experience in their visit. They had no specific complaints to make. Statements like "I had no problems in the temple" (R49) and "The management is doing a pretty good job" (R50) evidenced the pleasant experience that these tourists had.

2.4.5 Dislikes in visiting Mahakaleshwar

i) External Concerns

The conduct and behaviour of the vendors operating outside the pilgrimage site was questioned by many tourists. R44 stated that vendors and merchant ‘mislead the people’ and R51 added that they ‘cheat the tourists’ which leads to a bad experience. This misconduct by vendors fosters a feeling of disappointment in the tourists.

ii) Crowd Management

The tourists were also annoyed by the behaviour of other tourists and the inability of temple management to manage the rush. This was evident by the statements like ‘the rush is so much’ (R45), ‘priests do not allow you to stand near the *Jyotirlinga*’ (R45), and ‘the crowd is too much’ (R50). The devotees who try to pray in peace are often disrupted by the other tourists ‘consistently taking pictures’ (R45, R50). There is a sense of annoyance with the tourists who keep ‘flashing mobile cameras on your faces’ (R55). Limiting mobile phones in the shrine area was suggested by many devotees.

iii) Positive Experience

Many tourists were satisfied with their visit experience stating they ‘liked everything in Mahakaleshwar’ (R49, R52, R53) and that the temple was ‘properly managed’ (R47), in spite of some challenges.

iv) **Miscommunication and misinformation**

Some tourists felt misinformed in their visit. Statements like ‘misinformed at most places’ (R46) highlight that the lack of information regarding the *Bhasm Aarti* and other important rituals resulted in time wastage. Due to this, some tourists had problems with ticketing and access during *Bhasm Aarti*. Some tourists had o miss the ceremony, as they were unable to obtain a last-minute ticket (R48) due to lack of information.

2.5 Baidyanath Dham

2.5.1 Accommodation Challenges Faced by tourists in Baidyanath Dham

i) Hygiene and Cleanliness

The inadequate sanitation and hygiene conditions in Dharamshalas were frequently cited by visitors. The toilets were especially criticized for their filthiness, despite the fact that some individuals found the rooms to be manageable. For example, one visitor observed that ‘the *Dharamshalas* are quite dirty’ (R56), while another stated that ‘the toilets are very dirty, but the rooms are manageable’ (R57). This underscores the gravity of the deficiencies in the fundamental sanitation facilities that pilgrims have access to.

ii) Price vs. Quality

A difference between the standard of the accommodations and their cost was identified by multiple tourists. The quality of accommodations does not always meet expectations, resulting in a sense of disappointment among travellers, even when they are considered premium or reasonably priced. A tourist observed that ‘the price is not correlated with the quality’ (R64), and another noted that ‘even if the quality of the food and hotel is quite high, the product you receive will be of poor quality’ (R64). This problem gets worse by the scarcity of alternatives, which complicates the process of locating satisfactory accommodation for visitors.

iii)Variety and Availability

Positively, many tourists discovered that lodging was effortlessly accessible in the city. This opinion is reflected in comments such as ‘hotels were readily accessible in the city’ (R61) and ‘accommodation is relatively straightforward to locate’ (R67). However, the quality of options differs, with some visitors choosing hotels over Dharamshalas due to the superior conditions, despite the fact that availability is generally not an issue. For instance, a tourist stated, ‘I reserved a luxury hotel in the city’ (R60), emphasizing that there are superior alternatives available, although they may be scarce.

iv)Personal Preferences and Repeat Visits

Several tourists have discovered accommodations that meet their expectations and have opted to reserve the same accommodations each year. This indicates that it is feasible to locate accommodation that is satisfactory with the assistance of research and experience. A visitor expressed their satisfaction and reliability with specific accommodations by stating, ‘I book the same hotel every year on my visit’ (R65).

2.5.2 Food and Water Challenges Faced by tourists in Baidyanath Dham

1. Easy Availability

The tourists do not have issues relating to the availability of food and water near Baidyanath Dham. Statements like ‘food and water are also available pretty much everywhere’ (R67) and ‘food and water are easily available everywhere’ (R56) reflect this sentiment. Most of the tourists unanimously praised the easy availability of food in Baidyanath Dham.

2. Wide Variety of food

The tourists mentioned the wide variety of food options available near the pilgrimage site. Statements like ‘many alternatives to food available in the area’ (R66), ‘good options’ (R60), and ‘pure veg options are quite good’ (R61), ‘quite good’ (R63) and ‘decent’ (R58), suggests that the food available adequately caters to the preference of the tourists. the pure veg option is greatly appreciated.

3. Health Concerns

The many options available was praised by the tourists, yet the tourists with certain dietary limitations had issues with the food. One of the respondents stated, ‘everything available is either oily or contains something unhealthy’ (R65), while others who had diabetes issue brought packaged food from home (R62). These concerns necessitate the availability of healthier food options near such pilgrimage sites.

4. Inconsistency in quality and price

The disparity between food available and price charged was an issue for some tourists. As R64 stated, ‘a ten-rupee samosa costs twenty’, it reflected the unfair price mechanism followed near pilgrimage sites. An effective pricing strategy would help solve this issue.

2.5.3 Travel Challenges Faced by tourists in Baidyanath Dham

i) Convenient and affordable travel

The travel alternative available and their affordability were appreciated by the tourists. Statements like ‘I had no issues while traveling. Train is available easily’ (R56) and ‘Travelling was no issue for me’ (R60), ‘the travel experience was cheap and nice’ (R57), and ‘comfortable’ (R62) reflect the sentiments that travel was both convenient and affordable to the tourists. Additionally, statements like ‘It was comfortable’ (R62) and ‘The travel was comfortable’ (R67) further highlight the easy and convenience of travel.

ii) Accessibility issues

While the availability and affordability were greatly appreciated, the tourists had particular concerns regarding accessibility and road conditions. The narrow lanes just outside the temple was filled with pebbles that were a challenge for tourists who walked bare foot. The statements ‘The road had pebbles’ (R58) and ‘The roads are so hard and full of tiny minute pebbles’ (R61) highlight the difficulty faced by tourists in walking towards the temple. R66 expressed his dissatisfaction about the absence of wet carpets that causes discomfort in walking on pebbles and sand. In general, the journey to Baidyanath Dham is both accessible and affordable. However, there are concerns

regarding road conditions and accessibility that must be resolved to guarantee a more comfortable experience for all visitors, particularly the elderly and disabled.

2.5.4 Dislikes in visiting in Baidyanath Dham

i) Mismanagement and Overcrowding

A lot of visitors have identified overcrowding as a significant concern, which hinders the peaceful performance of pooja and induces stress as a result of the overwhelming number of devotees. The crowd is frequently mismanaged, with individuals pushing each other regardless of their age, which poses a safety hazard, particularly for the elderly and disabled. Tourists reported that the holy place was overcrowded, causing them to feel suffocated. Some even found it hard to breathe. The mismanagement extends to the manner in which devotees are managed, as there are reports of individuals being pushed like herds and priests occasionally resorting to hitting the devotees in order to manage the throng. Examples include: 'The shrine is so overcrowded that it is impossible to perform pooja in peace' (R56), 'The crowd is so poorly managed that individuals continue to push' (R57), and 'It was difficult to breathe inside the shrine' (R61).

ii) Hygiene and Cleanliness Concerns

The temple premises and outlying areas were frequently described as dirty and inadequately maintained. Tourists observed that the roads are paved with bricks and pebbles, which can be particularly inconvenient to navigate, particularly during the busy month of Sawan. Furthermore, the temple premises are soiled by individuals who throw flowers, leaves, and matchsticks. The overall experience is adversely affected by the absence of appropriate waste management and cleanliness. This theme is illustrated by the following statements: 'The temple premises are so filthy' (R56) and 'The filthy premises cause us to trip over anything' (R57).

iii) Safety and Accessibility

Safety and accessibility concerns were expressed, with a particular emphasis on the elderly and disabled. The temple premises are difficult to navigate due to the absence of adequate facilities for wheelchair users (R60). Many individuals who desire to visit are

unable to do so safely due to the lack of accessibility. Pickpocketing was also identified as a prevalent issue (R58), which further worsened safety concerns.

iv) Disrespect and Misbehaviour

Tourists claimed that some tourists and pandas behaved inappropriately. The temple's sanctity is tarnished by such actions. Young tourists push, chant slogans for fun, show hooliganism in the temple premises (R62). Some pandas keep following for special darshan and fast darshan. (R64). This kind of conduct was neither welcomed nor appreciated by the tourists visiting Baidyanath Dham.

v) Inadequate Facilities

The absence of certain facilities was a cause of concern for some devotees. The absence of proper storage facilities for personal goods (like mobile phones, purse) and footwear was distressing. R58 complained about 'no places to keep mobiles' and R64 said 'I lost my footwear'. These are some desirable facilities that tourists seek while they visit a pilgrimage site currently. Their absence tends to cause dissatisfaction to the tourists.

2.6 Nageshwar

2.6.1 Accommodation Challenges Faced by tourists in Nageshwar

i) Absence of Accommodation facility near the Pilgrimage site

The most prominent worry of the tourists was the unavailability of any accommodation near the temple. Its isolation from the town was worrisome for some. Tourists were obligated to lodge in Dwarka, as is highlighted by statements like 'could not find a hotel nearby' (R72) and 'no accommodation available near the temple' (R68). However, some tourists who lodged in Dwarka, had a favourable experience. Statements such as 'pretty decent hotels are available' (R71), 'I liked the hotels and guest houses alternatives available' (R74) and 'no complaints at all' (R77) highlight how the available alternatives in Dwarka fulfilled the expectations of some tourists. There were some mixed responses, as R69 stated "the sheets are dirty in most hotels" indicating a room for improvement. It is to be understood, however, that the pale-yellow colour of the water available in the area is responsible for discoloured linens.

ii) Navigational challenges

Some tourists faced difficulties in finding a hotel upon arrival. R75 raised disappointment with the ‘inexperienced auto driver’ in locating a reasonable hotel. Navigation and a lack of help desk to navigate the isolated town of Dwarka was a cause of concern for many tourists. The railway station is deserted due to which tourists who come unplanned find themselves to be clueless upon reaching. There is also a misinformation as tourists normally have no idea about no accommodation being available near Nageshwar.

2.6.2 Food and Water Challenges Faced by tourists in Nageshwar

i) Positive Experience

Many tourists expressed their satisfaction with the availability of food and water. Statements such as ‘food is acceptable’ and ‘no food and water issues’ (R68). The availability of basic necessities (R73) suggests a widespread sense of satisfaction with the current circumstances. Furthermore, statements like ‘the food is to my liking’ and ‘No complaints at all’ (R77) reflect satisfaction on an individual level.

ii) Wide Availability

The high quality and accessibility of the food were observed by many tourists. Positive experiences with the food options are indicated by comments such as ‘the food is good’ (R69) and ‘food is nice here’ (R75). The availability of packaged drinking water was also valued, despite the necessity of frequent purchases (R75). The positive feedback indicates that tourists generally perceive the food available near Nageshwar as of satisfactory quality and readily accessible.

iii) Variety and Quality of Food

The positive aspect was emphasized as the diversity of culinary options, which included local delicacies. The diversity of culinary options, particularly breakfast options, was well-received by visitors. The variety and quality of the food are underscored by statements such as ‘breakfast options are quite nice here’ (R74) and ‘a lot of options actually are available here’ (R76), which contribute to a positive dining experience.

iv) Concerns Regarding Water Quality

The quality of water was a concern for many visitors, despite the overall satisfaction with the cuisine. The issue of the local water supply's flavour and appearance is further emphasized by comments such as 'the water is really sour' (R71) and 'the water is yellowish and sour' (R72). Tourists expressed their sympathy for the local residents who are confronted with these water quality concerns on a daily basis, suggesting that, despite the availability of packaged drinking water, the quality of the local water requires significant improvement.

v) Concerns Regarding Food Quality

Certain culinary options that are available at restaurants have raised concerns among certain visitors regarding their healthfulness. One visitor observed that 'restaurants offer Chinese cuisine, but it is not particularly nutritious' (R70), indicating that the quality of the available food could be enhanced, despite the fact that a variety is present. This suggests that there is a necessity for healthful food options that are suitable for all dietary preferences and needs.

2.6.3 Travel Challenges Faced by tourists in Nageshwar

i) High Cost and absence of Alternatives

The limited number of travel alternatives in Nageshwar is a cause of concern for the tourists. The statements 'no alternative available' (R68, R69), 'cabs are overpriced' (R73), 'no travel facility here' (R71), and 'no public service bus here' (R76) signifies the disappointment of tourists regarding the absence of public transportation alternatives. The availability and affordability are both hit in Nageshwar. The tourists find it difficult to visit the Nageshwar temple from Dwarka. This issue can only be solved by the addition of public transit buses exclusively for Nageshwar devotees.

ii) Rude behaviour of Tour bus Drivers

Since there is no specialised buses for tourists visiting Nageshwar, tourists often avail the tour buses that takes them to *Bhewt Dwarka*, *Rukmini Mandir* and Nageshwar temple in a specified time limit. Tourists complained for a really small stoppage (less than 15 minutes) in Nageshwar, and they raised complaints against private bus drivers stating 'drivers are quite rude' (R70) and 'keep threatening to leave' (R70). This strict schedule

and less stoppage times causes problems to the tourists. There is not enough alternative for these buses, and the cabs exceed the budget of the tourists. there is an immediate need for conveyance that is affordable and exclusive for Nageshwar.

iii) Obligation of availing private transportation

Tourists who have to perform a specialised pooja in Nageshwar (i.e. *Kaal Sarp Dosh Nivaran Pooja*) often have to avail the private cabs in spite of the exceedingly high prices. They consider it a necessary charge for fulfilling their religious obligation. This dependence is highlighted by ‘private car rental is essential for pooja’ (R74).

2.6.4 Other Challenges in visiting Nageshwar

i) Limited accommodation

There is an absence of accommodation near the temple. This was further worsened by safety concerns. The nearest accommodation to the Nageshwar temple was in Dwarka, sixteen kilometres away. Tourists also spoke about the isolation of the temple. This was highlighted in statement like ‘locals tell me the area is unsafe’ (R68), ‘the place is so isolated, it's scary for outsiders’ (R69). This fosters the need for better accommodation near the temple.

ii) Challenges Associated with Travel

Travel-related concerns, notably the conduct of bus drivers, were identified. The quality of service provided by transportation providers requires development, as evidenced by the observation of ‘rude bus drivers’ (R70) by one tourist. This implies that the visitor experience could be improved by improving the training and customer service standards of chauffeurs and the need for better transportation options, such as a bus from the station or Dwarka to Nageshwar temple is also stress upon. (R76).

iii) Acknowledgement of Minor Issues

In some cases, tourists expressed an acceptance of minor inconveniences, viewing them as a part of the pilgrimage experience. In the context of a religious journey, comments such as ‘nobody calls people to a pilgrimage site... you do not get god's blessings without

a little discomfort’ (R72) showcase a willingness to overlook minor issues. This suggests that there is a subset of tourists who are willing to endure some discomfort as part of their journey.

iii) The importance of Planning

Mental preparation and planning were emphasized as important aspect of a successful visit. One tourist emphasized the advantages of prebooking accommodation and stated that there is no problem if one is prepared (R73). This implies that offering visitors additional resources and information to assist them in organizing their travels could potentially remove some of the obstacles.

iv) Infrastructure Enhancement

The demand for enhanced infrastructure, such as government guest houses or dharmshalas, was acknowledged. A recommendation for ‘a few government guest houses or dharamshalas’ (R74) suggests that the visit could be more pleasant for tourists if the infrastructure is improved. This involves improved facilities and accommodations in close proximity to the temple.

v) Positive Experience and Isolation

Despite the fact that the isolation was unexpected for some, it did not spoil their overall positive experience. Comments such as ‘the absence of people surprised me’ and ‘everything is fine’ (R75) indicate that the solitude and the experience are satisfactory, indicating that for certain tourists, the isolation may be advantageous. In general, the overall experience for tourists visiting Nageshwar would be significantly enhanced by effectively addressing safety concerns, elevating the quality of travel services, improving infrastructure and connectivity, and providing better planning resources.

2.6.5 Dislikes in visiting in Nageshwar

i) Unavailability of accommodation

The temple’s isolation is lauded by the tourists, but this also causes several issues to them. The absence of accommodation is a challenge that causes discomfort to the tourists. They are forced to stay in Dwarka and commute for *puja* and *darshan*. This discomfort is

highlighted in statements like ‘no hotels available nearby’ (R68) and ‘unavailability of hotels nearby’ (R72).

ii) Absence of Basic amenities

There is an unavailability of basic essential services near the temple. Even a medical shop is absent. A tourist (R69) stated ‘no medicines nearby’ and ‘no first aid’ available. R71 added that there were insufficient number of alternatives for pooja items. Because of the isolation of the temple, the devotees have to be completely dependent on the pooja items available in the temple premises. There was a scarcity of food vendors near the Nageshwar temple. The absence of healthy refreshments is stated in the statement ‘no shops nearby’ and ‘all you get is a carbonated beverage’ (R70).

iii) Absence of Guidance and Support

The absence of assistance or guidance for tourists was identified as a disadvantage. One tourist described the absence of a tourist office in the vicinity of the temple or railway station as ‘eerie’ and recommended the establishment of one. The absence of assistance can be particularly difficult for first-time visitors.

iv) Inadequate Flexibility and Alternatives

Some tourists experienced a sense of constraint due to the absence of flexible transportation options. For instance, the brief stops and the absence of alternative transportation options were sources of frustration for passengers on tourist buses. A tourist expressed a desire to spend additional time at the temple, but was unable to do so due to the transport schedule, stating that "no other alternative available" (R75).

2.7 Somnath

2.7.1 Accommodation Challenges Faced by tourists in Somnath

i) Affordable and Convenient

Many tourists expressed satisfaction with their lodgings in Somnath. S78 stated ‘very standard hotel, affordable rates, and clean’, and S88 added, ‘I liked my stay here’. All these positive experiences highlight the satisfaction of tourists. The affordability of the

accommodation options was greatly appreciated by the tourists. The close proximity of accommodation just behind the temple added to their satisfaction and ease. S83 stated, 'cheap price of single rooms' and S80 added 'just near the temple, very affordable' which highlighted the comfort of having an affordable accommodation near the temple. This led to an ease of access to the temple and enjoy the aarti in morning and light show in the evening.

ii) Proper management

Repeat tourists found the accommodation options to be well managed and consistent in their services. R81 stated 'I come every year' and R82 added 'no issues in accommodation'. Consistency in management and quality services ensure the revisit of tourist to the same accommodation. The proper management and affordability added to the satisfaction. It was highlighted by 'really nice hotel, very luxurious yet so affordable' (S87).

iii) Smooth process

Tourists claimed that the smooth process of booking and check-in while visiting added to their satisfaction. They found it easy to locate the accommodation on arrival, which is highlighted by 'booked the accommodation on arrival, helpful auto drivers' (S79) and 'came from Kerala without booking, good accommodation' (S89). There was a mixed response regarding locating the accommodation as some also had problems as stated by 'I was unaware that there was accommodation available in close proximity to the temple' (S85).

2.7.2 Food and Water Challenges Faced by tourists in Somnath

i) Diverse food

The diverse food available near Somnath was greatly commended by tourists. The food was satisfying to the tourists, as highlighted by statements like 'the food is very tasty' (R78), 'exceptionally tasty' (R80), and 'the food is tasty in Gujarat' (R87). The appreciation for regional food was added by R79, 'Gujarati thali is very tasty', and 'good Gujarati thali' (R83). The availability right outside the temple premises delighted the tourists as stated by R89 'Somnath has all cuisines available right outside the temple'.

Jalebi and *fafda* are the most commonly available breakfast that was also appreciated, as R86 was ‘a fan of the breakfast they serve’.

ii) Affordable Food

Tourists had a positive remark about accessibility, affordability and availability of food in Somnath. the food and beverage available are good" (S85) and "good food near my accommodation... fairly priced and tasty" (S88).

2.7.3 Travel Challenges Faced by tourists in Somnath

i) No travel issues

Tourists claimed to have no travel issues. Statements like ‘I had no travel issues’ (R83) and ‘no issues at all’ (R80) support this theme. There is availability of trains, buses directly to Somnath. There is also alternative of cabs and auto rickshaws in the proximity of the temple. Due to the easy availability and accessibility of travel alternatives, the tourists found the visit to be satisfactory. Statements like ‘very comfortable’ (R79) and ‘easily accessible (R86) highlight the affordability and accessibility of travel alternatives in Somnath.

ii) Comfortable and accessible alternatives

The comfort of the travel alternatives was highlighted by ‘comfortable trip’ (R84) and ‘comfortable journey’ (R88). This implies how these accessible and affordable alternatives are also comfortable.

iii) Assistance

Outside the proximity of the temple, autorickshaws were the most affordable, easily accessible and convenient means of transport. These auto rickshaw drivers work in a systematic way and even have a visiting card with a list of all places that they tour across Somnath at a minimal fee of Rs500/day. These auto drivers are friendly (R82, R89). They ‘thoroughly help after coming here’ (S88).

2.7.4 Dislikes in visiting in Somnath

i) No dislikes

The use of positive phrases highlighted the satisfaction of the tourists. Phrases such as ‘nothing to dislike’ (S78, S79, S82, S84), ‘nothing at all’ (S79, S81), and ‘I did not dislike anything’ (S85, S89) highlight this unanimous satisfaction. The tourists were even satisfied by the experience as highlighted by ‘amazed by the facilities offered’ (S86) and ‘I am surprised’ S80.

Objective 3

To identify the issues in the management of selected pilgrimage sites.

Problems In management

1. Kedarnath Dham

In the late nineteenth century, managing Kedarnath Dham was a difficult issue. The Rawal, or head priest managed the temples, and the ruling authority of Tehri State supervised them. The presence of these dual authorities caused debates and led to severe mismanagement. The need for a stronger and effective management structure arose because of this. ‘The Shri Badarinath and Shri Kedarnath Temples Act’⁸, passed in 1939, marked an important milestone. This law resulted in the setup of the Shri Badarinath Kedarnath Temple Committee (BKTC); a self-financed government body to take care of both these pilgrimage sites. The committee was set up to improve transparency and efficiency in temple management.

Enactment and repeal of the Char Dham Devasthanam Management Act

In December 2019, the Uttarakhand government introduced the ‘Uttarakhand Char Dham Shrine Management Bill, 2019’⁹, to improve management of all the four ‘Char Dham’ pilgrimage destinations. This Act created a single uniform management looking after four pilgrimage sites and 49 related temples, thereby increasing accountability, protecting traditions, and improving pilgrim services. The Uttarakhand Char Dham Devasthanam Board was hence, formed on January 15, 2020, and was chaired by the honourable Chief

⁸ <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/79495367/>

⁹ https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/16843/1/char_dham_shrine_act_19_egnl.pdf

Minister. The Act was taken back, though, after the panda committee of the Gangotri-Yamunotri temples spoke out against it. This displayed how important it is for the government to respect faith customs and the requirements of all parties involved.

Responsibilities of BKTC

The Act has many responsibilities, all of which are aimed at ensuring the smooth operation of the temples and enhancing the pilgrim experience.

1. Maintenance and Renovation: The committee performs regular maintenance and renovations on the temple structures to ensure their historical and architectural integrity. This includes repairing natural damage and ensuring that temples are always in good condition to welcome devotees.

2. Financial Management: Efficient financial management is critical to the BKTC's operations. The committee oversees the collecting of gifts, administers expenses, and guarantees that money is used transparently for temple maintenance and development.

3. Pilgrimage Management: Managing the flow of pilgrims is crucial. The BKTC provides basic necessities such as lodging, food, medical care, and sanitation. It works with local authorities to handle huge crowds, particularly during peak seasons, while assuring the safety and convenience of all visitors.

4. Religious Services: The BKTC guarantees that all religious services and rituals run properly and in accordance with traditional norms. This entails working closely with temple priests and other religious personnel to maintain the holiness and spiritual ambiance of the temples.

5. Community Engagement: The committee actively works with the local community and other stakeholders, addressing their issues and incorporating them into temple activities. This encourages a sense of community ownership and involvement, which is essential for the temples' overall management.

6. Disaster Management: Given the temples' high elevation and remote position, the BKTC is prepared for natural catastrophes and calamities. The committee has measures

in place to respond to emergencies such as landslides, floods, and other disasters, assuring the safety of both temples and pilgrims.

Analysis of insights from BKTC Officials

General Information

1. Employees: As of June 2024, the Badrinath-Kedarnath Temple Committee (BKTC) employed 694 people, including teachers, executive engineers, and other professionals. With the dissolution of the Char Dham Devasthanam Board, BKTC is fully operational.
2. Temple and Premises Maintenance: The BKTC is in charge of the temple's overall maintenance. Currently, the Kedarnath Masterplan is in effect, under which BKTC manages puja, darshan, and temple grounds care. The government offers support without getting involved and appoints eleven members to the BKTC.
3. Medical and Security Provisions: The government provides medical staff and security services. BKTC has an Ayurvedic dispensary at Kedarnath.
4. Funding and discontent: When requested, BKTC donates funding to the government to aid the Kedarnath pilgrimage, which has caused some staff discontent.
5. Prasad Committee: BKTC manages the distribution and sale of prasad (offerings), with various NGOs providing assistance. These NGOs pay royalties to BKTC.

Appointment of Rawal Ji

The chief pujari (priest) of the Kedarnath Temple, Rawal Ji, is a member of the Lingayat community in Karnataka. 324th in line is the present Rawal Ji, Bhimashankar Linga. He upholds the sacredness of the temple and makes sure that all poojas and rituals conform to centuries-old protocols. The Rawal position was founded by the Tihri royal line and has historically been quite powerful, including appointing priests. Nonetheless, in compliance with the 1948 Act, the Kedarnath Temple Committee has been selecting the Rawal Ji since 1948. Having lived in the temple for his entire life as a celibate, Rawal Ji now travels in the winter to propagate Sanatan Dharma. Baikunth Bhairav was the first

Rawal, and Siddheshwar Ling was the last. In Hinduism, rawals are highly esteemed and lack a specific title.

Pujari vs. Pandas

Pandas are organized into hierarchical groupings, with families dividing regions and monitoring pilgrimages across generations. For instance, a panda that is assigned to Maharashtra monitors the number of visitors from that region. Pilgrims are expected to meet with their respective pandas, who are not salaried BKTC employees, and sign documents. Pujaris (priests) are "*dharmadhikaris*" who are employed by BKTC on a salary. Despite the fact that pandas ask *daan/dakshina* from tourists, the BKTC prohibits pujaris from engaging in this behavior and imposes disciplinary action if they do. At Kedarnath, there are six pujaris. Tourists are prohibited by officials from paying pandas to expedite the queue. Kedarnath is home to approximately 3,000 pandas, who are not affiliated with the BKTC. Nevertheless, they frequently visit the homes of devotees during the temple's winter closure. This is not permissible for pujaris.

Educational and Social Initiatives

Beyond temple management, the BKTC is dedicated to education and social welfare. It runs seven Sanskrit Vidyalayas and an Ayurvedic pharmacy college in Guptkashi, offering students free hostel accommodations and scholarships. These projects seek to promote the Sanskrit language and traditional Ayurvedic treatment, so contributing to the larger cultural and educational scene.

Upkeep of Subordinate Temples and Dharamshalas

The BKTC also maintains 45 subordinate temples and roughly 20 Dharamshalas along the Shri Badrinath and Shri Kedarnath pilgrimage routes. These facilities provide pilgrims with rest and leisure, enriching their experience and ensuring they have decent accommodations throughout their pilgrimage.

Overcoming Challenges

The operation of Kedarnath does not present any substantial budgetary or management challenges, as per officials. However, the management of a geographically isolated and

sacred site such as Kedarnath presents significant challenges, particularly in the areas of infrastructure development, environmental sustainability, and disaster preparedness. The site's infrastructure and resources are further burdened by the high volume of devotees, which worsens these issues.

The operational efficiency and sanctity of Kedarnath are the responsibility of the BKTC, the temple management personnel, in the face of these challenges. The BKTC's strategies for effective site management encompass the implementation of extensive policy frameworks, the improvement of infrastructure, and the assurance of disaster preparedness. The BKTC has made significant progress in enhancing temple management and infrastructure, despite the numerous challenges. The committee's continuous attempts serve to enhance the tourist experience and guarantee the temples' survival for future generations. The BKTC's multifaceted responsibilities guarantee that these temples continue to thrive as significant spiritual and cultural monuments, offering a secure and meaningful experience to the millions of pilgrims who visit each year.

Furthermore, the BKTC receives substantial support from the government, particularly in light of the Kedarnath master plan's implementation. The site's supervision and development are dependent upon this assistance. By collaborating with the government, the BKTC is capable of resolving urgent matters and ensuring the sustainable management of Kedarnath.

2. Kashi Vishwanath

The management and oversight structure of the Sri Kashi Vishwanath Temple, a prominent temple in Varanasi that is dedicated to Lord Shiva and known as Sri Kashi Vishwanath or Adi Vishweshwar, are outlined in the Uttar Pradesh Sri Kashi Vishwanath Temple Act¹⁰, 1983, which was officially enacted on January 28, 1983. This temple is a significant site of public worship for Hindus and is home to a variety of subordinate temples, shrines, wells, tanks, and other structures.

Governance and Definition

The term "Temple" includes the entire compound of Sri Kashi Vishwanath Temple, which includes all accompanying structures, images, and deities. The Board of Trustees for Sri

¹⁰ https://prsindia.org/files/bills_acts/acts_states/uttar-pradesh/1983/1983UP29.pdf

Kashi Vishwanath Temple is responsible for the administration and governance of the temple and its endowments, effective as of the designated date. This Board is a corporate entity with perpetual succession, and it has the capacity to both sue and be sued in its name. It is the responsibility of the State Government to notify the Board of its constitution and any modifications thereto.

Board Membership

1. A non-official Hindu president who is well-versed in Hindu theology and has been nominated by the State Government is a member of the Board of Trustees.
2. Sri Jagadguru Sankaracharya of Sringeri.
3. Ex-officio members: Commissioner of Varanasi Division, District Magistrate of Varanasi, Vice-Chancellor of Sampurnanand Sanskrit Vishwavidyalaya, Secretary to the Government of Uttar Pradesh in the Department of Cultural Affairs, Finance, Dharmarth Karya Vibhag, Judicial/Legislative Department (by rotation), and Secretary to the Government of Uttar Pradesh in the Department of Cultural Affairs.
4. The State Government has nominated two local eminent individuals who possess specialized knowledge in temple administration and rituals.
5. The State Government has nominated three distinguished Hindu scholars who are proficient in Hindu theology.
6. The ex-officio Chief Executive Officer (added by an amendment in 1989).

Duties and Responsibilities

The Board is responsible for the following

- i) Guaranteeing that Hindu Shastras are adhered to in the performance of worship, rituals, and ceremonies.
- ii) Ensuring the temple's sanitation, health, and public order.
- iii) Ensuring the temple's assets, properties, and finances are protected.
- iv) Overseeing and safeguarding the temple's secular affairs and properties.
- v) Guaranteeing that the wishes of the donor are honored in the way endowment funds are spent.
- vi) Enabling pilgrims to engage in appropriate devotion.
- vii) Offering pilgrims medical relief and convenience.

- viii) Enhancing communication channels, constructing accommodations, and conducting sanitary works for pilgrims.
- ix) Offering appropriate compensation to salaried personnel.
- x) Distributing complimentary Bhasm derived from Belpatra.
- xi) Offering free education classes and technical education, as well as conducting research and providing opportunities related to Vedic Culture.
- xii) Establishing and managing free medical centers and lodging facilities for devotees.
- xiii) Distributing prasadam and other offerings to the destitute and devotees.
- xiv) Conducting seminars and publishing magazines to advance the trust's objectives.
- xv) Executing all requisite tasks to guarantee the temple's efficient operation and the comfort of pilgrims and devotees.

Shri Kashi Vishwanath Special Area Development Board Varanasi Act, 2018 (U.P. Act 31 of 2018)

The Shri Kashi Vishwanath Special Area Development Board¹¹ was established in 2018 to supervise the comprehensive redevelopment of the temple and its precincts, which encompasses the Lalita, Jalasen, and Manikarnika ghats. The objective of this initiative, which is a component of the Vishwanath Dham project, is to improve infrastructure and utilities, thereby preserving the temple's cultural, spiritual, mythological, and architectural heritage and promoting tourism.

Functions and Objectives of the Development Board

The Special Development Area's development and rehabilitation plans are among the Board's primary objectives.

- i) Ensuring the preservation of heritage within its jurisdiction.
- ii) Enhancing the pilgrimage and tourism experience through infrastructure improvements.

The establishment of this Board has been designed to address the necessity for a structured and systematic approach to the maintenance and development of the temple's surroundings. This approach ensures the preservation of the temple's

¹¹ https://prsindia.org/files/bills_acts/acts_states/uttar-pradesh/2018/2018UP31.pdf

historical and religious significance while also accommodating the requirements of modern-day pilgrims and tourists.

Analysis of insights from temple management officials

1. The Sri Kashi Vishwanath Temple Fund, which is managed by the Board, consists mainly of income generated by the temple's movable and immovable properties. It also covers contributions from the state government, donations or charitable contributions to the temple, gifts from institutions, local authorities, or the public, penalties and fines imposed under the Act, and any other recoveries made in line with the Act. Additionally, it includes offerings made to the deities. These funds are exclusively used for purposes that are authorized by the Act.
2. The temple complex was comparatively small prior to the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor's inauguration. Nevertheless, the new corridor has expanded to nearly 5 lakh square feet, which has introduced new infrastructural challenges. Although the temple management is committed to improving services, they are confronted with new challenges and issues on a daily basis as a result of the expansion. Officials recognize that it will require time to thoroughly understand and resolve these matters.

The temple management receives substantial support from the state and central administrations, which provide security personnel for the temple. This collaborative attempt is essential for the management of the increased number of tourists and activities within the expanded campus and the preservation of security.

3. Since the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor was inaugurated, the Kashi Vishwanath Temple has seen a substantial increase in pilgrimage. The following are the monthly visitation figures for 2021-2022: Pilgrims numbered 4,842,716 in December 2021, 7,459,471 in January 2022, 6,856,142 in February, 7,171,163 in March, 6,587,264 in April, 6,290,511 in May, and 6,916,981 in June. The highest number of pilgrims was 7,681,561 in July, 6,711,499 in August, 4,013,688 in September, 3,830,643 in October, and 3,870,403 in November. The temple's earnings have also been substantially increased by the surge in visitors, with donations increasing from Rs 14-15 crore annually before 2017 to Rs 100 crore after the corridor's opening, a 500% increase.

3. Omkareshwar

In 1959, the Madhya Pradesh Public Trusts Act of 1951¹² designated the Omkareshwar Temple in Madhya Pradesh as a public trust. In 1967, Section 27 of the M.P. Public Trust Act was implemented to establish a management scheme. A board of seven trustees was constituted by this scheme, which includes:

1. The managing trustee is the Rao of Mandhata.
2. A trustee who has been nominated by the Rao of Mandhata
3. The Collector of Khandwa designates two trustees.
4. A trustee who represents the Khandwa Zilla Panchayat
5. A trustee who represents the Block Panchayat of Punasa
6. A trustee who represents the Nagar Panchayat of Omkareshwar

Rao Devendra Singh, a member of the Rao family, serves as the current managing trustee.

Omkareshwar is home to approximately 400 pujaris from various regions of India, in addition to the management structure. These pujaris are renowned for their dedication and assistance. Many of them are Acharyas, executing a variety of Abhisheks, including *Rudrabhishek* and *Laghu Rudrabhishek*. Their service and expertise are essential to the religious and spiritual activities of the temple, guaranteeing that rituals are performed with the utmost precision and devotion. The temple is perpetually crowded with devotees, many of whom have bathed in the Narmada River. Coconuts, pots filled with Narmada water, and other articles of worship are frequently transported by these devotees. Many individuals participate in Abhishek or special worships conducted by the priests, which contributes to the temple's lively religious ambiance.

Analysis of insights from temple management officials

1. All other regulations of the Madhya Pradesh Public Trusts Act of 1951 are essential to the temple, and the temple's finances are under the government's complete control.

¹² https://devasthan.rajasthan.gov.in/orders_circulars/The_Madhya_Pradesh_Public_Trusts_Act_1951.pdf

2. Both pujaris and pandas are subject to removal in the event of complaints, as specified by law. They are frequently cautioned regarding their corruption and misconduct; however, none have been removed to date.
3. The temple is efficiently operated. The tourists who arrive and discard plastics and wrappers in the water body are the individuals responsible for the pollution. Even when leaf plates are accessible, some individuals submerge plastic plates in the river with earthen diyas and flowers.
4. The management is implementing a regular schedule of meetings in order to enhance the amenities.
5. There is a significant increase in the number of tourists, especially those from Madhya Pradesh, who regard the temple as a picnic destination. They are a source of concern for the preservation of the sanctity of the *Jyotirlinga*.
6. Three regular 'Pujas' are conducted in Omkareshwar daily. They are:
 - i) Morning Puja: Conducted by the temple trust.
 - ii) Midday Puja: Conducted by the pujaris of the Scindia state.
 - iii) Evening Puja: Conducted by the pujaris of the Holkar state.

7. Mahakaleshwar

Following India's independence in 1947, the Municipal Corporation of Ujjain took over responsibility for the Mahakaleshwar Temple in Ujjain. The sacred site is currently under the jurisdiction of the collectorate office of the Ujjain district. The Madhya Pradesh Shri Mahakaleshwar Mandir Adhiniyam, 1982 (Act 21 of 1983)¹³, which went into effect on March 6, 1983, governs the temple's management. The purpose of this act was to guarantee the improved maintenance, preservation, administration, and governance of the Shri Mahakaleshwar Mandir and its endowments.

Definitions

"Panda": Any person authorized to guide and assist pilgrims in offering worship or any related matters.

"Pujari": Any person authorized to perform worship, puja-archana, or other rituals.

"Sevak": A person authorized to assist the pujari in performing his duties, especially in keeping the Gruha Kaksha of the Mahakaleshwar deity clean and well-guarded.

¹³ <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/82940217/>

"Mandir": The temple of Shri Mahakaleshwar in Ujjain, including all lands, temples, buildings, and structures mentioned in the schedule and any authorized additions after the commencement of the act.

Administration

The possession, administration, control, and management of the mandir and its endowments vest in the Shri Mahakaleshwar Mandir Managing Committee, a body corporate with perpetual succession and a common seal, headquartered in Ujjain.

Constitution of the Committee

The Committee consists of:

1. The Collector of Ujjain District, who serves as the Chairman, or an Additional/Deputy Collector nominated by the Collector.
2. Two officers nominated by the Collector.
3. The Mayor of the Municipal Corporation, Ujjain, or a Councillor nominated by him.
4. The Principal of Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya, Ujjain.
5. Mahant (Guru Kapil Muni) of Shri Panchayat Mahanirvani Akhada, Omkareshwar, at Ujjain.
6. One Pujari nominated by the State Government.
7. Two non-officials nominated by the State Government, one of whom must have special knowledge of Hindu religion, rites, and customs relating to the form of worship practiced in the Mandir.

Duties of the Committee

The Committee is responsible for the following:

1. Coordinating the mandir's daily and periodical rites, puja-archana, and worship.
2. Establishing facilities for the worship offerings of devotees.
3. Managing the properties that belong to the mandir and ensuring the secure possession of funds, valuables, and jewellery.
4. Ensuring that the mandir is kept clean, hygienic, and orderly.

5. Guaranteeing that the mandir's endowments are allocated in accordance with the benefactors' known preferences.
6. Executing all duties that are beneficial to the mandir's efficient operation and the comfort of its tourists.
7. Encouraging additional religious, educational, cultural, or charitable endeavours associated with the mandir.

Financial Management

The Mandir Kosh fund, which is overseen by the Committee, includes the income generated by the mandir's immovable and movable assets, contributions, donations, favours, and offerings, as well as all funds received in accordance with the Act. The Kosh may be used to fulfil the Committee's obligations and responsibilities, provided that activities that are not associated with the Mandir require prior authorisation from the Commissioner.

Recent Developments

A panel of experts from the Archaeological Survey of India and the Geological Survey of India visited Ujjain on January 19, 2019, to evaluate the erosion¹⁴ of the Shivalinga in the Shri Mahakaleshwar Temple.

Chemical Erosion: The Bhasma Aarti's pH value of 10.51 is reactive with the Cryptocrystalline siliceous cementing material of orthoquartzite, resulting in the deterioration of the *Jyotirlinga*. It was essential to implement improvements in drainage and sanitation.

Mechanical Erosion: The Mund Mala and Serpakarnahas' weight resulted in mechanical erosion. Despite the fact that their weight has been reduced by half, mechanical abrasion remains as a result of their current weight. Devotees were prohibited from rubbing the Lingam in order to prevent further erosion.

Offerings: The erosion was attributed to the regular offerings of ghee, milk, curd, and honey. The Temple Management Committee resolved to regulate the quantity of pure and natural offering material provided to pilgrims. Devotees are permitted to distribute a restricted amount of pure milk, while traditional puja materials may be employed during

¹⁴ <https://www.casemine.com/judgement/in/5aeb187b9eff430a8a070081>

temple-performed rituals. The rubbing of the Shivalinga is limited to traditional puja and *archana* that are conducted on behalf of the temple.

8. Baidyanath Dham

Pre-1970 Management

The temple was initially managed by the chief priest (Sardar Panda) of the shrine who was traditionally a hereditary position, held by descendants of Ram Dutt Jha and other Pandas. The senior priest was required to be at least forty years of age. The then head Panda was terminated by the Additional Judge of Burdwan, under the Civil Suit No. 18 of 1897, who deemed him unfit for the position of Sardar Panda and trustee of the temple at Baidyanath. The judge established a precedent for a more regulated management structure by directing the appointment of three individuals to oversee the temple and its properties. Then, the temple's administration was delegated to a Council of Trustees, which consisted of the high-priest, other Pandas, and one layman. The objective of this initiative was to guarantee proper administration, and it continues to operate in a broad sense.

Management shift in 1972

The Bihar State Religious Trust Board transferred the responsibility of temple management to the Deoghar Deputy Commissioner (DC) in 1970 due to a pending case before a local court in Deoghar regarding the hierarchy of the Sardar Panda.

Modern day Legislation

Baba Baidyanath Dham-Basukinath Shrine Area Development Authority Act, 2015 (Act No. 6 of 2016)¹⁵

The Raghubar Das government enacted this act in response to the death of 11 pilgrims in a stampede during the Shrawani Mela. To oversee the regulation, development, and management of the shrine area, including the Shrawani Mela, with an emphasis on the provision of facilities to devotees, security, and safety.

Analysis of insights from temple management officials

¹⁵

https://prsindia.org/files/bills_acts/acts_states/jharkhand/2016/Act%20No.%206%20of%202016%20Jharkhand.pdf

1. All Pandas are members of a branch of the *Maithil Brahmins*, *kulin brahmin*, and *kanykubj brahmin*, with over 300 families. They assist pilgrims in conducting the numerous ceremonies associated with the veneration of God.
2. As of 2024, the existing management structure is as follows:

Under the 2015 Act, the Baba Baidyanath Mandir (*Sanchalan evam Prabandhan Upsamati*) is overseen by a five-member committee.

Administrator: Sri Vishal Sagar (I.A.S.), Deputy Commissioner, Deoghar.

Temple In charge: Smt. Sagari Baral (J.A.S.), Sub Divisional Officer, Deoghar.

Duties of the committee: The temple's operation and development are the responsibility of the DC and SDO of Deoghar.

Steps Taken by District Administrator During Shrawani Mela

- i) The designation of no-entry zones for industrial vehicles and four-wheelers.
- ii) The prohibition of VVIP, VIP, or out-of-turn offerings on Mondays.
- iii) Distribution of parking spaces at various places.
- iv) The deployment of bike squads and rapid response teams to combat drunkenness.
- v) Deploying 500 security personnel in the temple premises.
- vi) The implementation of rate charts for merchants to prevent disputes with pilgrims.

Continued Conflicts

The Jharkhand State Hindu Religious Trust Board and the current temple management committee frequently engage in disputes regarding management rights and procedures.

Specific Powers and Responsibilities with the authorities as per the Act

The Authority has the authority to make decisions regarding the appropriate operation, development, regulation, and management of the Shrine Area. It has the authority to impose entry and toll fees, provide amenities, conduct charitable functions, create master plans, and license a variety of activities within the Shrine Area.

The authority overseeing the shrine area has the capacity to make critical decisions that ensure the proper functioning and improvement of infrastructure and facilities, enforce

regulations to maintain order, and manage the shrine area with a focus on safety and welfare. Developing policies, procuring funding, and imposing a variety of fees and tolls are all revenue generation capabilities. The Authority is additionally charged with the supply of amenities, the implementation of user fees, and the organisation of charitable activities to assist pilgrims and associated individuals. Administrative guidance is provided to officers at the divisional and district levels, and the authority develops master plans for long-term strategies. The establishment of standards and conditions for activities within the shrine area is facilitated by regulatory and licensing powers. Furthermore, the Authority has the authority to suggest disciplinary actions against non-compliant officials, control operations during the mela period, and recommend the inclusion of new areas or activities based on their significance. Finally, the authority has the authority to establish regulations that are functional in operation, provided that they are ratified by the state government. This broad scope guarantees a sustainable, well-regulated, and structured environment within the shrine area, thereby fostering both cultural preservation and development.

Overcoming challenges

The biggest challenge that the authorities face during the year is during the Shravani Mela when lakhs of devotees from Jharkhand and Bihar come barefoot to the shrine and offer Ganga water. It's a challenge to balance their sentiments and make them follow rules inside the premises. Setting up check points, ensuring security in and around the city and conducting the entire Shravani Mela event smoothly is another challenge. Nevertheless, every year they try to learn from previous incidents and provide a better facility and experience to the pilgrims. They are often saddened by the politics and accusations of the previously running boards, and the clash between pujaris and pandas.

9. Nageshwar

Apart from not getting any data from the priests operating in the temple, there were no records of temple management committee or any laws managing the temple. This is a very serious issue as far as the viability of this *Jyotirlinga* is concerned. No information about the temple board or management committee was found. The son of Late Gulshan Kumar is still seeing the maintenance of the temple.

10. Somnath

The Somnath Trust¹⁶ continues to preserve and develop the Somnath temple, honouring its rich legacy and spiritual significance.

History

The Somnath temple faced its first major invasion at the beginning of the 11th century by Mahmud of Ghazni. This marked the start of a series of conquests, destruction, and restorations that the temple would endure over the centuries. Mahmud's attacks are often seen as symbolic of the broader encounters between Islam, Muslim invaders, and South Asia. From the 11th to the 18th century, the Somnath temple was desecrated multiple times by various Muslim invaders, including Alauddin Khilji and Aurangzeb. Despite these repeated attacks, the temple was consistently rebuilt by the local Hindu population, demonstrating a resilient reconstructive spirit. The Mughal emperor Aurangzeb ordered the destruction of the Somnath temple in 1701, inflicting what was considered the final blow during the period of Muslim invasions. Post independence, on November 13, 1947, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, India's first Home Minister, visited the ruins of the Somnath temple. He took personal interest in the reconstruction of the temple, symbolizing a revival of national pride and heritage. The site of the Somnath temple was located in the princely state of Junagadh, which had a Hindu majority. The Nawab of Junagadh fled to Pakistan, leading to the state's integration into the Indian Union. This allowed the Indian government to proceed with the reconstruction plans. The first President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, performed the Pran-Pratistha ceremony on May 11, 1951, marking the official consecration of the newly reconstructed Somnath temple. This event symbolized the temple's restoration to its former glory as a significant site of Hindu worship.

Formation and Role of Shree Somnath Trust (SST)

The Shree Somnath Trust (SST) was established as a religious charitable trust under the Gujarat Public Trust Act, 1950. The trust was formed based on a deed that defined its terms of settlement with the government of the then Saurashtra state. The SST was given exclusive authority to manage and maintain the Somnath temple along with 64 other temples in Prabhas Patan, its guesthouses, and 2,000 acres of land. Unlike other major temple committees, the SST does not share its revenue with the government. The Trust has full control over the money generated through offerings and donations, which it uses

¹⁶ <https://somnath.org/>

for temple maintenance, development projects, and social initiatives. The SST is governed by an eight-member Board of Trustees, including a chairman and a secretary. Trustees are often appointed for life, though they can resign voluntarily or be removed for a "breach of trust."

Role and Objectives

1. Restoration of Worship: The primary objective of the SST was to rebuild the Somnath temple as an active place of worship, thereby restoring its ancient glory. This included installing an idol, reopening the temple for religious ceremonies, and establishing it as a major pilgrimage site.

2. Expansion Projects: The SST envisioned constructing new structures such as a Sanskrit University and a *dharmshala* (pilgrims' rest house) to support and enhance the pilgrimage experience.

3. Social and Development Projects

i) Ram Temple and Krishna Temple: The SST is involved in building a Ram temple at a cost of Rs 10 crore and another temple in Prabhas Patan, where Lord Krishna is believed to have been killed by a hunter's arrow.

ii) Sanskrit University: The Trust donated Rs 55 lakh and a palace for establishing a Sanskrit University.

iii) Malnutrition Aid: The SST distributed Rs 50 lakh worth of *sukhadi* (a sweet made of wheat, jaggery, and ghee) to anganwadi children in Gir Somnath district to support the state government's efforts to tackle malnutrition.

The history of the Somnath Temple is marked by cycles of destruction and reconstruction, symbolizing resilience and the enduring spirit of faith. The modern management under the Shree Somnath Trust aims to preserve its religious significance while managing extensive properties and resources. The Trust continues to play a crucial role in maintaining the temple as a place of worship and a symbol of India's rich cultural heritage. The involvement of high-profile political figures underscores the temple's importance as both a religious and national symbol. The SST's robust financial management and commitment to social initiatives further enhance its role in supporting the local community and preserving the temple's legacy.

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