



A Study of Mahalaxmi (Ambabai) Pilgram Tourism in Kolhapur

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Abstract:

This research paper examines tourism of Mahalaxmi (Ambabai) Pilgrims in Kolhapur, an important historical and spiritual site in India. The study aims to understand why people visit the Mahalaxmi (Ambabai) temple and how it impacts the local community and economy. We conducted surveys and interviews with 95 visitors using a structured questionnaire, as well as discussions with hotel owners and Kolhapuri chappal shop owners to gather diverse perspectives.

The results show that visitors primarily come for spiritual reasons, cultural connections, and community bonding. The influx of pilgrims significantly benefits local businesses, including hotels and traditional crafts like Kolhapuri chappals, creating job opportunities and boosting the economy. However, challenges such as overcrowding and environmental concerns also emerged, highlighting the need for sustainable practices.

This study emphasizes the significance of Mahalaxmi (Ambabai) Pilgrimage tourism and its effects on Kolhapur. We recommend strategies to promote sustainable tourism that enhances visitor experiences while protecting the cultural and environmental integrity of the area.

Keywords: *Pilgrims, Mahalaxmi (Ambabai) Temple, Economic Impact, Local infrastructure, Local Businesses*

Introduction:

The Shri Mahalaxmi (Ambabai) Temple of Kolhapur in Maharashtra, India, is one of the Three and a half Shakti Peethas, also called Dakshin Kashi, listed in various puranas of Hinduism. According to these writings, a shakti peetha is a place associated with Shakti, the goddess of power. The Kolhapur peetha is of special religious significance, being one of the six places where it is believed one can either obtain salvation from desires or have them fulfilled. The temple takes its name from Mahalakshmi, the consort of Lord Vishnu, and it is believed that the divine couple reside in the area. The temple of Mahalaxmi is the main attraction for the tourists. The tourists of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Karnataka have deep faith in

Mahalaxmi and visit the temple. The important festivals of Mahalaxmi are Navratotsav, Rathostav, and Kiranotsav etc.

Attracting pilgrims and tourists from across India, the temple holds immense spiritual significance and plays a pivotal role in shaping the region's socio-economic landscape. This study focuses on analyzing the patterns and preferences of visitors to the temple, along with their socio-economic characteristics and perceptions.

Pilgrimage tourism is a key contributor to Kolhapur's economy, fostering growth in sectors like hospitality, transportation, and handicrafts. The study examines the origin and demographics of visitors, their expenditure patterns, and their preferred modes of transport. Additionally, it evaluates the duration of stays and the impact on

local businesses, such as hotels and artisans crafting Kolhapuri chappals.

Objectives:

1. To study the geographical distribution, modes of transportation, frequency of visits, socio-economic characteristics of visitors and to assess the duration of their stays, along with its impact on local businesses and tourism infrastructure.
2. To study the challenges and perspectives of hotel /Lodging owners and Kolhapuri chappal artisans.

Research Methodology:

The present research paper is based on the case study method. This paper has focused on study of the Mahalaxmi (Ambabai) Temple pilgrim's tourism in Kolhapur. The present study was completed by using the field work survey. In this survey researcher had approached directly and collected data. The researcher have collected primary data through questionnaires, discussions and observations. The secondary data have been collected through website of temple and articles in local newspapers. The analysis of this paper has been done on the basis of a sample collected during a specific period, so universalization of the researcher thoughts are not advisable.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Part A- Visitors Responses:

Visitors' responses regarding their place of origin, mode of transportation, sources of information about the Mahalaxmi (Ambabai) Temple, frequency of visits, socio-economic status, age group, expenditure, and opinions about the local infrastructure were considered.

The survey was conducted between December 25, 2025, and December 31, 2025, during the peak Christmas holiday period. Interviews were conducted at various times of the

day, including dawn, morning, afternoon, evening, and night. During the survey, 110 visitors were approached, out of which 95 responded positively to the questionnaires. The respondents included representatives of family groups, school/college trips, and other group visits. Therefore, the data analysis and results are based on the opinions of these 95 respondents.

State and District wise classification of Visitors:

Table 1.: State wise classification:

Sr. No.	State	Number of visitors	Percentage %
1	Maharashtra	53	55.79
2	Karnataka	28	29.47
3	Andhra Pradesh	4	4.21
4	Gujarat	3	3.16
5	Goa	2	2.11
6	Uttar Pradesh	2	2.11
7	Madhya Pradesh	1	1.05
8	Rajasthan	2	2.11
Total		95	100

Source: Field work

From the above table, it shows that the most of the visitors are from Maharashtra (55.79%) and Karnataka(29.47) followed by other states like Andhra Pradesh(4.21), Gujarat(3.16), Goa(2.11), Uttar Pradesh(2.11), Telangana(1.05), Rajasthan(2.11) etc. According to religious tradition, most of the pilgrims visit Ambabai temple(Mahalaxmi temple) in kolhapur after visiting the Tirupati temple in Andhra Pradesh. Also, in November & December month most of the school/college trip from Maharashtra and Karnataka states also visits Mahalaxmi temple.

Table 2: District wise classification:

Sr. No	District	No. of visitors	Per %	Sr. No	District	No. of visitors	Per %
1	Kolhapur	18	18.95	16	Gulbarga	2	2.11
2	Pune	10	10.53	17	Udupi	2	2.11
3	Mumbai	5	5.26	18	Hyderabad	4	4.21
4	Sangli	6	6.32	19	Ahmedabad	2	2.11
5	Satara	3	3.16	20	Surat	1	1.05
6	Nashik	2	2.11	21	North Goa	2	2.11
7	Solapur	3	3.16	22	Luknow	2	2.11
8	Ratnagiri	1	1.05	23	Indore	1	1.05
9	Sindhudurg	1	1.05	24	Sri Ganganagar	1	1.05
10	Thane	1	1.05	25	Jodhpur	1	1.05
11	Ahilyanagar	2	2.11				
12	Sambhajnagar	1	1.05	Total		95	100
13	Belgaum	17	17.89				
14	Bijapur	5	5.26				
15	Dharwad	2	2.11				

Source: Field work

The survey near Mahalaxmi (Ambabai) Temple recorded responses from 95 visitors distributed across 25 districts. Kolhapur (18.95%) and Belgaum (17.89%) had the highest representation, followed by Pune (10.53%). Districts like Mumbai, Sangli, and Hyderabad

contributed moderately, while others such as Surat, Indore, and Jodhpur showed minimal participation, reflecting a diverse geographic spread of visitors.

Table 3: Mode of Transportation:

Sr. No	Mode of transport	No. of visitors	Per %
1	Private Cars	41	43.16
2	Private bus/Travels	11	11.58
3	Railway	10	10.53
4	MSRRTC bus	22	23.16
5	Two wheeler	11	11.58
	Total	95	100

Source: Field work

The survey revealed that private cars were the most popular mode of transportation among visitors (43.16%), followed by MSRRTC buses (23.16%). Private buses and two-wheelers were equally preferred (11.58% each), while railways

accounted for 10.53% of transportation. This highlights a significant reliance on personal and public transport for traveling to the Mahalaxmi (Ambabai) Temple.

Table 4: Frequency of Visit to Ambabai Temple:

Frequency of visit	Number of Pilgrims	Percentage %
First time	57	60
Once in year	27	28.42
Twice in year	8	8.42
Frequently in year	3	3.16
Total	95	100

Source: Field work

The survey indicates that 60% of visitors were first-time pilgrims to the Mahalaxmi (Ambabai) Temple, while 28.42% visited once a year. A smaller percentage visited twice a year

(8.42%), and only 3.16% visited frequently within a year. This highlights the temple's appeal to both new visitors and occasional pilgrims.

Table 5: Tourist Stay Duration Classification:

Particulars	No. of Visitors	Percentage %
One Day Visitors	44	46.32
One Day Stay	41	43.16
Two Day Stay	9	9.47
Three Day Stay	1	1.05
Total	95	100

Source: Field work

The survey shows that 46.32% of visitors were one-day visitors, while 43.16% stayed for a single day. A smaller proportion stayed for two days (9.47%), and only 1.05% extended their stay

to three days. This indicates that most visitors preferred short-duration visits to the Mahalaxmi (Ambabai) Temple.

Table 6: Occupation Status of Visitors:

Occupation	No. of Visitors	Percentage %
Business	16	16.84
Employees	41	43.16
Student	26	27.37
Housewife	12	12.63
Total	95	100

Source: Field work

The surveys show that most visitors are employees (43.16%) and students (27.37%), making up a combined total of 70.53%. Business owners account for 16.84%, while housewives

represent 12.63% of the visitors. These figures highlight a diverse range of occupations among the visitors, with employees and students being the largest groups.

Table 7: Total Expenditure per Person

Amount in Rs.	No of Visitors	Percentage %
0-500	23	24.21
500-1000	43	45.26
1000-2000	15	15.79
2000-3000	8	8.42
Above 3000	6	6.32
Total	95	100

Source: Field work

The survey indicates that 45.26% of visitors spent between ₹500-₹1000 per person, making it the most common expenditure range. Around 24.21% spent less than ₹500, while 15.79% spent ₹1000-₹2000. Higher spending brackets, ₹2000-₹3000 (8.42%) and above ₹3000

(6.32%), were less frequent, highlighting a preference for moderate budgets among visitors.

The survey conducted near the Mahalaxmi (Ambabai) Temple during the peak holiday period from December 25 to December 31, 2025, reveals that the majority of visitors

came from Maharashtra and Karnataka, with Kolhapur and Belgaum being the most represented districts. Private cars emerged as the most common mode of transportation, followed by public buses. A significant portion of visitors were first-time pilgrims, while others visited occasionally throughout the year. Most visitors preferred short stays, typically lasting a day, with the expenditure spent per person averaging between ₹500 and ₹1,000. The visitor profile was dominated by employees, followed by students, with business owners and housewives also forming a significant part of the group, highlighting a diverse mix of backgrounds.

Part B - Responses from Hotel/Lodging Owners near Mahalaxmi (Ambabai) Temple:

A survey was conducted among 4 hotel owners near Mahalaxmi (Ambabai) Temple in Kolhapur to understand tourism trends, challenges, and business performance. The region, known for its religious significance, attracts a significant number of pilgrims throughout the year. The surveyed hotels included 2 high or medium-range establishments offering premium services like AC, food, parking, and other essential amenities, along with 2 smaller hotels such as Yatri Niwas, which provide basic services catering to budget-conscious travellers.

The High and Medium-Range Hotels cater to both luxury and budget-conscious guests, offering a balance of quality services, including premium amenities, while ensuring affordability for a broader range of visitors. The Medium-Range Hotel focuses on providing comfortable yet affordable accommodations, targeting middle-income travellers seeking a budget-friendly, pleasant stay near the temple.

The Yatri Niwas hotels focus on providing basic economical accommodations for pilgrims, emphasising affordability for guests who prefer religious visits over luxury.

Hotel owners expressed concerns over fluctuating demand during off-seasons and suggested improvements in infrastructure, better transportation, good gesture and marketing. They also highlighted the need for better toilet facilities near temple area and clearer information regarding Kolhapur for tourists.

Part C - Responses from Kolhapuri Chappal Owners:

Chappal owners near Mahalaxmi (Ambabai) Temple, Kolhapur, express mixed responses regarding tourist interactions. They note that tourists form a significant portion of their customers, attracted by the authenticity and craftsmanship of Kolhapuri chappals. Tourists often appreciate the heritage value of these handcrafted leather sandals, and their purchases contribute substantially to the artisans' income.

However, artisans highlight certain challenges in catering to tourists. Many visitors bargain extensively, reducing profit margins. Additionally, some tourists prioritize low-cost imitations over authentic products, which impacts the sale of genuine Kolhapuri chappals. Language barriers also occasionally hinder communication, affecting the shopping experience.

Another challenge reported is the lack of proper sanitation facilities, particularly toilets, in the area. This issue affects both tourists and artisans, who find it inconvenient while spending long hours in the market.

To enhance tourist engagement, chappal makers suggest promoting awareness about the Geographical Indication tag of Kolhapuri chappals.

Conclusion:

This study highlights the tourism trends at the Mahalaxmi (Ambabai) Temple in Kolhapur, where most visitors come from Maharashtra and Karnataka, traveling primarily by private cars and

MSRTC buses. The majority are first-time tourists who prefer short, one-day trips. Especially in this December month most of the employees class and student class visits the Temple. Visitors typically spend expenditure per Person approx. ₹500 to ₹1000; this will help to boosting small businesses and the local economy. To ensure sustainable tourism growth, improving infrastructure, supporting artisans, and enhancing tourist services are essential, along with promoting Kolhapur's cultural heritage. This study will be useful for Local business,

Researchers, Tourism Authorities and Local authorities for boost economy and also for tourism management.

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