

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS, TRAVEL BEHAVIOUR, AND TOURIST SATISFACTION: A STUDY OF MYSURU DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Tourism plays a vital role in promoting regional economic development by generating employment, supporting local businesses, and enhancing cultural exchange. Mysuru, one of Karnataka's premier tourism destinations, attracts a large number of domestic and international tourists because of its rich heritage, historical monuments, religious centres, wildlife attractions, and cultural festivals. This study examines the socio-economic characteristics, travel behaviour, expenditure patterns, preferences, and satisfaction levels of tourists visiting Mysuru District. Primary data were collected from 320 tourists using a purposive sampling technique across five major tourist destinations, namely Mysore Palace, Chamundi Hills, Mysore Zoo, St. Philomena's Cathedral, and other important tourist attractions. Descriptive statistical techniques were employed to analyse the data.

The findings reveal that the majority of tourists were domestic visitors belonging to the 20–40 years age group, with a balanced gender composition and relatively high educational attainment. Most respondents preferred medium-duration stays, hotel accommodation, hired taxis or auto-rickshaws for local transportation, and exhibited moderate expenditure patterns. The tourist satisfaction analysis indicates high levels of satisfaction with local hospitality, accommodation facilities, food services, safety and security, and the overall travel experience. However, comparatively lower satisfaction was observed regarding public convenience facilities, shopping opportunities, and tourist information services. The study concludes that Mysuru possesses strong tourism potential supported by its cultural heritage and quality visitor experience. Strengthening tourism infrastructure, improving public amenities, enhancing visitor information systems, and expanding shopping and transport facilities will further improve tourist satisfaction and contribute to sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: Mysuru, Tourist Behaviour, Tourist Satisfaction, Tourism Development, Heritage Tourism, Sustainable Tourism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism has emerged as one of the fastest-growing sectors of the global economy, contributing significantly to economic growth, employment generation, foreign exchange earnings, and regional development. Over the past few decades, international and domestic tourism have expanded rapidly due to improvements in transportation, communication, rising incomes, and increasing leisure opportunities. According to the **United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)**, tourism contributes substantially to global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and international trade, making it one of the world's most dynamic

economic activities. Besides generating revenue, tourism stimulates the development of related sectors such as transport, hospitality, trade, communication, infrastructure, and recreation, thereby creating multiplier effects throughout the economy.

Although international tourism has experienced remarkable growth, domestic tourism continues to account for a significant share of total tourist movements worldwide. Historically, tourism was restricted to a relatively small section of affluent society because travel was expensive, time-consuming, and often risky (Williams, 1998). However, technological advancements, affordable transport, improved infrastructure, and increased disposable incomes have transformed tourism into a mass phenomenon since the latter half of the twentieth century. Regions such as East Asia and the Pacific have witnessed particularly rapid tourism growth, while Europe continues to remain one of the leading international tourist destinations (Pearce, 1995; WTO, 2007).

The rapid expansion of tourism has increased the need to understand tourists' socio-economic characteristics, travel behaviour, expenditure patterns, preferences, and satisfaction levels. Tourist behaviour is influenced by several demographic and socio-economic factors, including age, gender, education, occupation, income, and place of residence (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2020). These characteristics shape travel motivations, destination choices, accommodation preferences, transportation modes, and spending behaviour. Understanding these factors enables destination managers and policymakers to develop tourism products and services that effectively meet visitor expectations and enhance destination competitiveness (Cooper et al., 2018).

Tourist expenditure is another important dimension of tourism research because it directly contributes to local economic development and generates indirect benefits through employment creation and business growth (Stynes, 1997). Similarly, analysing tourists' preferences for accommodation, food, shopping, transport, and recreational activities provides valuable insights for tourism planning and marketing (Middleton & Clarke, 2012). Equally important is tourist satisfaction, which reflects visitors' perceptions of destination quality and significantly influences repeat visits, destination loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth promotion (Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

Mysuru, one of Karnataka's premier tourism destinations, is renowned for its royal heritage, historical monuments, religious centres, wildlife attractions, cultural festivals, and well-developed tourism infrastructure. The district attracts millions of domestic and international tourists every year, making tourism an important contributor to the regional economy. In this context, an understanding of tourists' socio-economic profile, travel behaviour, expenditure patterns, preferences, and satisfaction is essential for promoting sustainable tourism development and improving destination management.

2. INFLOW OF TOURIST IN MYSURU

Mysuru District is one of Karnataka's leading tourism destinations, renowned for its rich cultural heritage, magnificent palaces, ancient temples, wildlife attractions, and scenic landscapes. The district attracts millions of visitors annually due to its unique blend of history, spirituality, architecture, and recreational attractions, making tourism a significant contributor to the local economy and employment. The period from 2021 to 2025 witnessed a remarkable revival of tourism following the COVID-19 pandemic, with substantial growth in visitor arrivals across major destinations.

Domestic tourist arrivals increased significantly from 3,829,090 in 2021 to 24,037,489 in 2025, reflecting the rapid recovery of the tourism sector. This growth can be attributed to

improved transport connectivity, enhanced tourism infrastructure, government promotional initiatives, and the increasing popularity of heritage, cultural, and religious tourism. Although foreign tourist arrivals recovered from 1,617 visitors in 2021 to 77,089 in 2025, they reached a peak of 282,676 visitors in 2023 before declining, indicating that international tourism remained comparatively volatile.

Among the major attractions, Mysore Palace continued to be one of the most preferred destinations, with domestic tourist arrivals increasing from 1.04 million in 2021 to 4.26 million in 2025. The Sri Chamarajendra Zoological Garden (Mysuru Zoo) also recorded impressive growth, attracting 4.56 million domestic visitors in 2025. Chamundi Hill emerged as the district's most visited attraction, with domestic tourist arrivals rising from 1.29 million to 6.96 million, emphasizing its importance as a major pilgrimage and sightseeing destination.

Other tourist destinations also experienced positive growth. Varuna Lake gradually emerged as an eco-tourism attraction, while Talakadu recorded steady increases in domestic visitors because of its historical and religious significance. Somanathapura witnessed a notable rise in foreign tourist arrivals during 2023, reflecting increased international interest in Hoysala heritage, although the numbers declined in the following years. Nanjanagudu remained an important pilgrimage destination with consistently high domestic tourist arrivals, whereas the Bylakuppe Golden Temple experienced substantial growth owing to its religious and cultural importance. Chikkadevamma Betta also registered a remarkable increase in domestic tourist arrivals during the study period.

Overall, the tourism trends indicate that domestic tourism has become the primary driver of tourism development in Mysuru District. Heritage monuments, religious centres, wildlife attractions, and cultural destinations continue to attract the largest share of visitors. The sustained increase in domestic tourist arrivals demonstrates the resilience and expanding potential of Mysuru's tourism sector, while the fluctuations in foreign tourist arrivals highlight the need for stronger international marketing, improved destination management, and enhanced visitor facilities to achieve balanced and sustainable tourism growth.

3. OBJECTIVE:

- To analyse the socio-economic characteristics, travel behaviour, expenditure patterns, and preferences of tourists visiting **Mysuru**.
- To assess the level of tourist satisfaction with various aspects of their travel experience in **Mysuru**.
- To suggest suitable measures for enhancing tourist satisfaction and promoting sustainable tourism development in **Mysuru District** based on the findings of the study.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

A **purposive sampling technique** was employed to collect primary data from tourists visiting the major tourist attractions in Mysuru District. Sampling is an essential research technique that enables researchers to obtain representative data from a selected group of respondents for meaningful analysis (Bryman, 2016). A total of **320 tourists** were surveyed across five prominent tourist destinations, namely **Mysore Palace** (100 respondents), **Chamundi Hills** (60 respondents), **Mysore Zoo** (60 respondents), **St. Philomena's Cathedral** (50 respondents), and **other tourist attractions within Mysuru city** (50 respondents). These destinations were selected because they represent the district's diverse

tourism resources, encompassing heritage, religious, wildlife, and recreational attractions. The sample was proportionately distributed across these locations to ensure adequate representation of different categories of tourists and travel purposes (Veal, 2018). The respondents comprised both domestic and international tourists who visited these destinations during the survey period, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of tourist characteristics, travel behaviour, expenditure patterns, preferences, and satisfaction levels.

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

5.1: Socio- economic characteristics

a. Age Composition: The age profile of tourists visiting Mysuru indicates that the 20–40 years age group constituted the largest share of respondents (41.56%), followed by those aged 60 years and above (23.44%) and 40–60 years (20.94%). Tourists below 20 years accounted for the smallest proportion (15.06%). The findings suggest that Mysuru is particularly popular among young and middle-aged travellers, while also attracting a considerable number of senior visitors due to its cultural, historical, and religious attractions. Overall, the destination appeals to tourists across all age groups, reflecting its broad tourism potential.

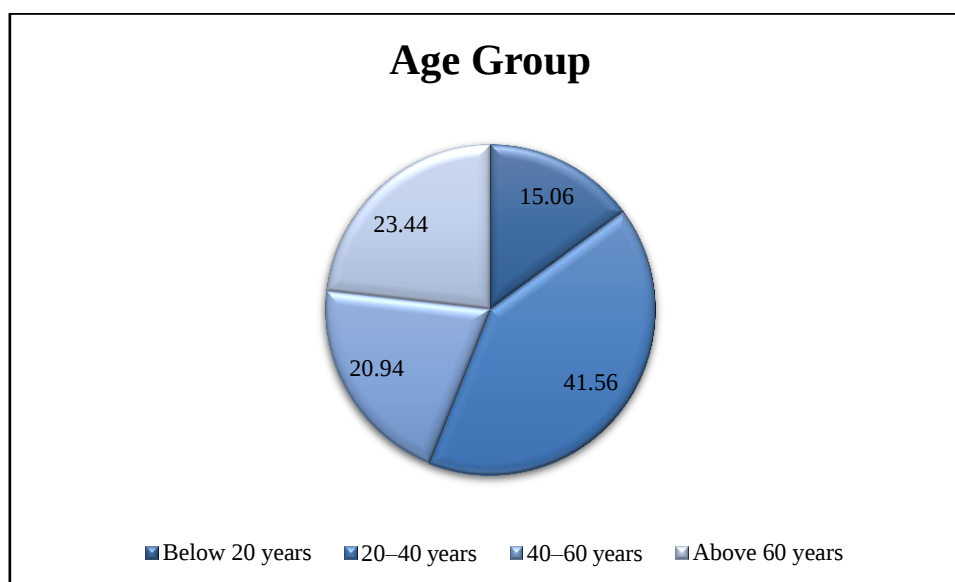


Figure 1

b. Gender Distribution: The gender distribution of tourists visiting Mysuru shows a nearly balanced composition, with female tourists accounting for 52.19% (167 respondents) and male tourists comprising 47.81% (153 respondents). The slight predominance of female visitors suggests that Mysuru is perceived as a safe, accessible, and tourist-friendly destination. The balanced representation of both genders reflects the city's broad appeal, supported by its rich heritage, religious centres, cultural attractions, and recreational facilities. Overall, the findings indicate that Mysuru successfully attracts and caters to the preferences and travel needs of both male and female tourists.

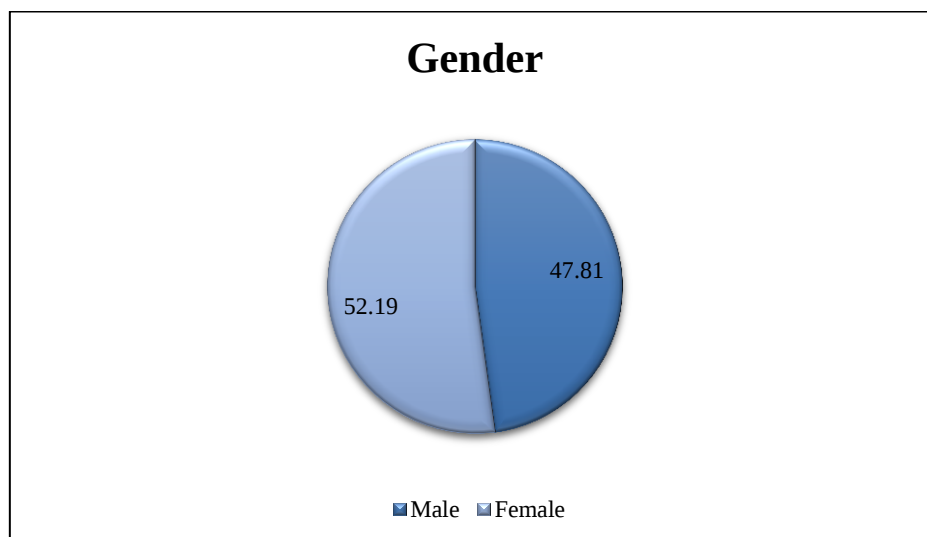


Figure 2

c. Tourist Origin (Domestic and International): The origin of tourists indicates that domestic visitors constituted the majority (79.06%) of the respondents, while international tourists accounted for the remaining 20.94%. The dominance of domestic tourists highlights Mysuru's strong appeal among Indian travellers due to its rich cultural heritage, religious sites, historical monuments, and recreational attractions. At the same time, the presence of international visitors reflects the global recognition of Mysuru's palaces, festivals, and architectural heritage. Overall, the findings demonstrate that domestic tourism is the primary driver of the district's tourism sector, while foreign tourists contribute to its international visibility and economic growth.

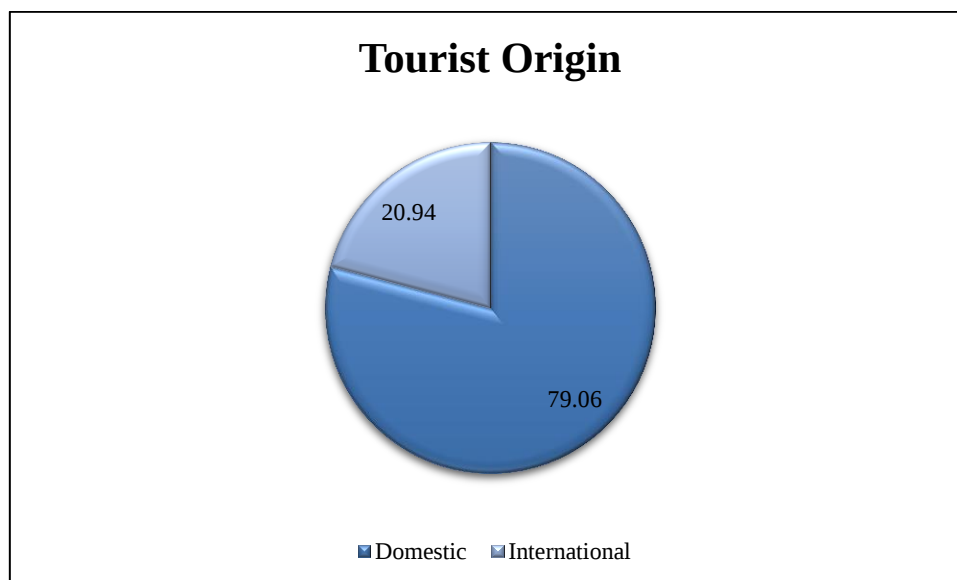


Figure 3

d. Educational Status: The educational profile of tourists visiting Mysuru indicates that 26.25% of respondents possessed postgraduate or higher qualifications, followed by those with secondary education (22.50%) and graduate degrees (20.31%). Tourists with primary education accounted for 18.11%, while 13.13% had no formal education. The findings suggest that Mysuru attracts a relatively well-educated tourist population, reflecting its appeal as a heritage, cultural, and educational destination. Higher educational attainment is generally

associated with greater awareness of tourism opportunities and increased interest in cultural and historical experiences.

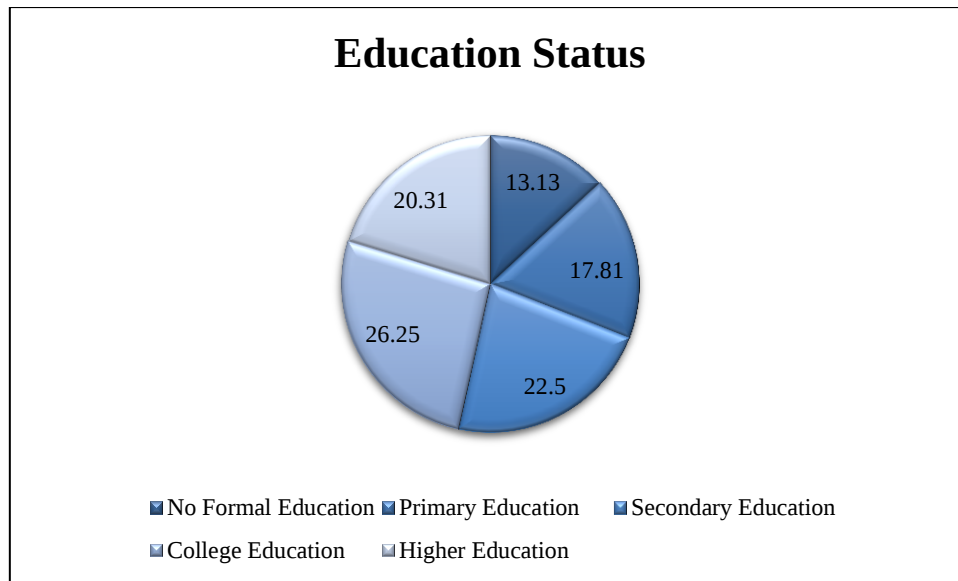


Figure 4

e. Occupational Structure: The occupational profile of tourists visiting Mysuru shows that students and research scholars (22.19%) formed the largest group of respondents, followed by government employees (19.38%) and business professionals (18.13%). Housewives and retirees accounted for 13.75%, while other occupations represented 16.86% of the sample. Tourists engaged in agriculture constituted the smallest share (9.69%). The findings indicate that Mysuru attracts visitors from diverse occupational backgrounds, particularly educated and economically active groups, reflecting its broad appeal as a heritage, cultural, and religious tourism destination.

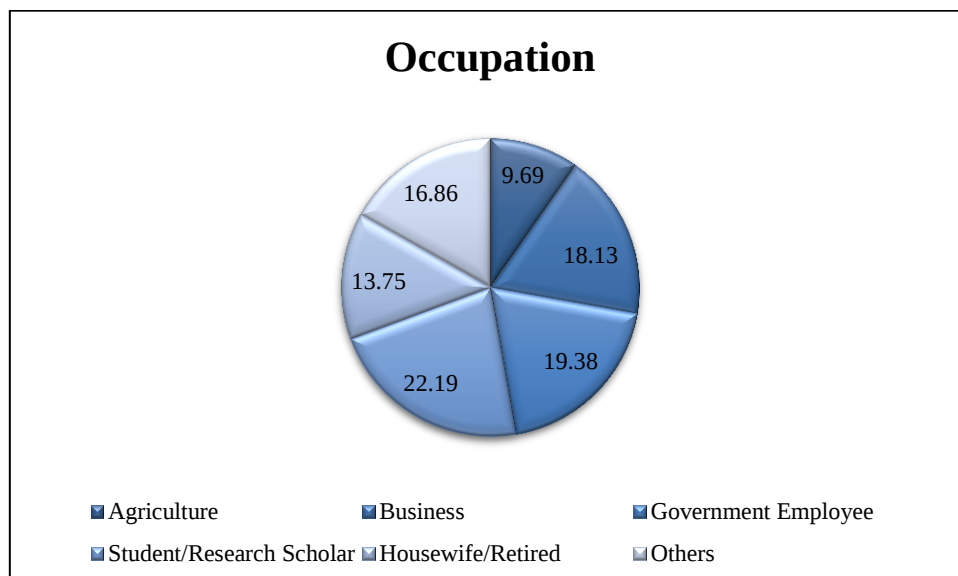


Figure 5

f. Duration of Stay: The majority of tourists (52.50%) stayed in Mysuru for 2–4 days, indicating that a medium-duration visit is the most preferred. Around 25.94% of respondents stayed for more than four days, while 21.56% visited only for an overnight stay. The

findings suggest that most tourists spend sufficient time exploring Mysuru's heritage, cultural, religious, and recreational attractions. The substantial proportion of visitors staying for more than four days further reflects the destination's ability to retain tourists through its diverse attractions and experiences. Overall, Mysuru is primarily a medium-duration tourist destination.

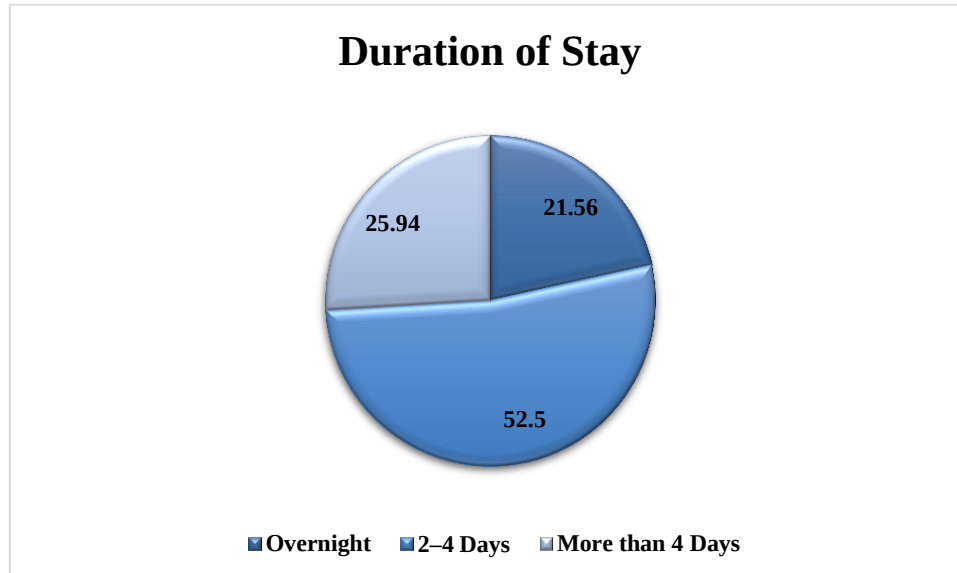


Figure 6

g. Local Mode of Transportation: The findings indicate that hired taxis and auto-rickshaws were the most preferred local transport mode, used by 23.75% of respondents, followed by private/public transport (20.00%) and own vehicles (18.13%). Tour operator or tourist department buses were used by 16.56%, while two-wheelers accounted for 12.81% of the respondents. Only 8.75% did not specify their mode of transport. The results suggest that tourists prefer convenient and easily accessible transport options, with hired taxis and auto-rickshaws playing a vital role in facilitating local travel within Mysuru.

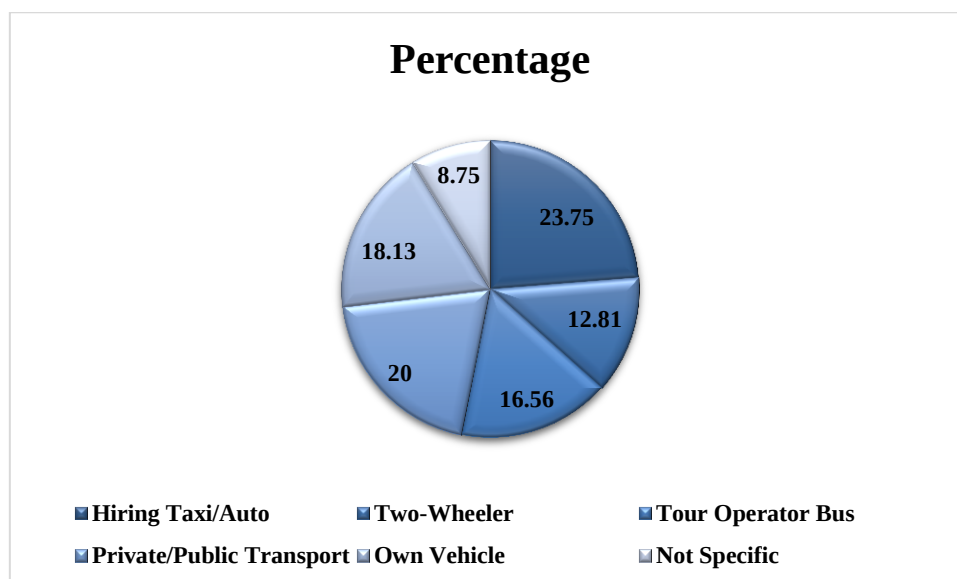


Figure 7

h. Accommodation and Food Preferences: Hotels were the most preferred accommodation choice among tourists visiting Mysuru, with 31.88% of respondents opting for hotel stays. This was followed by homestays (19.37%), resorts (17.50%), staying with friends or relatives (16.25%), and guest houses (15.00%). The findings indicate that tourists primarily prefer hotels due to their comfort, convenience, and availability. However, the considerable preference for homestays and resorts suggests a growing demand for personalized and experiential accommodation. Overall, Mysuru offers diverse lodging options that cater to the varying preferences and budgets of different categories of tourists.

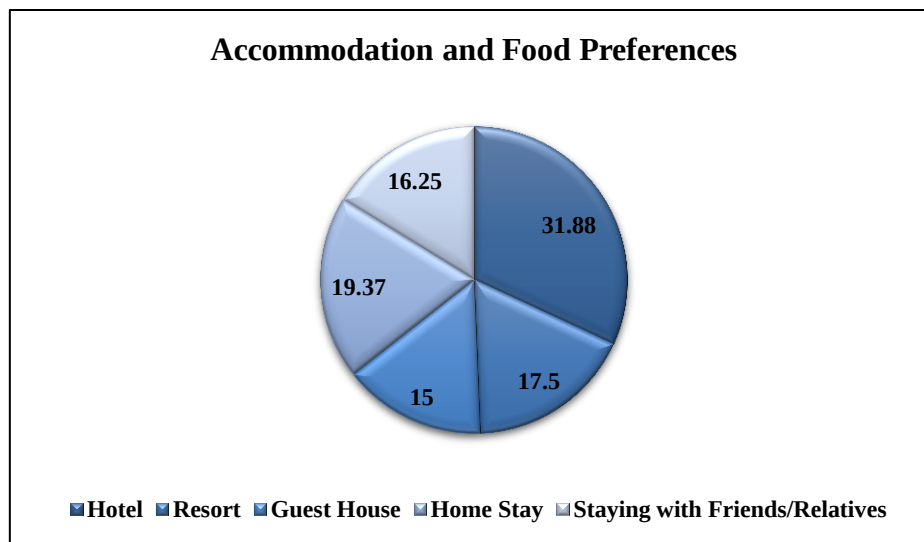


Figure 8

i. Tourist Expenditure: The expenditure pattern of tourists indicates that the largest proportion of respondents (36.87%) spent between ₹10,000 and ₹20,000 during their visit to Mysuru. This was followed by 25.63% who spent ₹20,000–₹30,000, while 23.13% spent less than ₹10,000. Only 15.37% of tourists reported spending more than ₹30,000. The findings suggest that most visitors belong to the medium expenditure category, reflecting moderate spending behaviour. Overall, Mysuru attracts tourists with diverse spending capacities, with the majority making moderate expenditures on accommodation, food, transportation, shopping, and sightseeing.

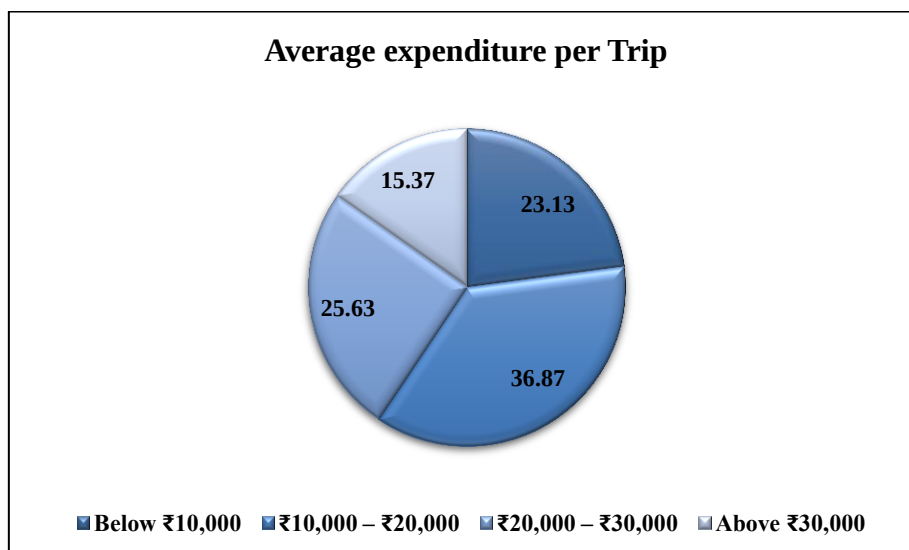


Figure 9

j. Tourist Spending Behaviour: The classification of tourists by expenditure shows that the majority of respondents (62.50%) belonged to the moderate expenditure category, followed by 23.13% in the low expenditure group and 15.37% in the high expenditure group. The findings indicate that most visitors to Mysuru exhibit moderate spending behaviour, reflecting the destination's affordability and appeal to middle-income travellers. Although a smaller proportion of tourists reported high expenditure, their contribution remains important to the local tourism economy. Overall, Mysuru caters to tourists with varying spending capacities while predominantly attracting moderate-spending visitors.

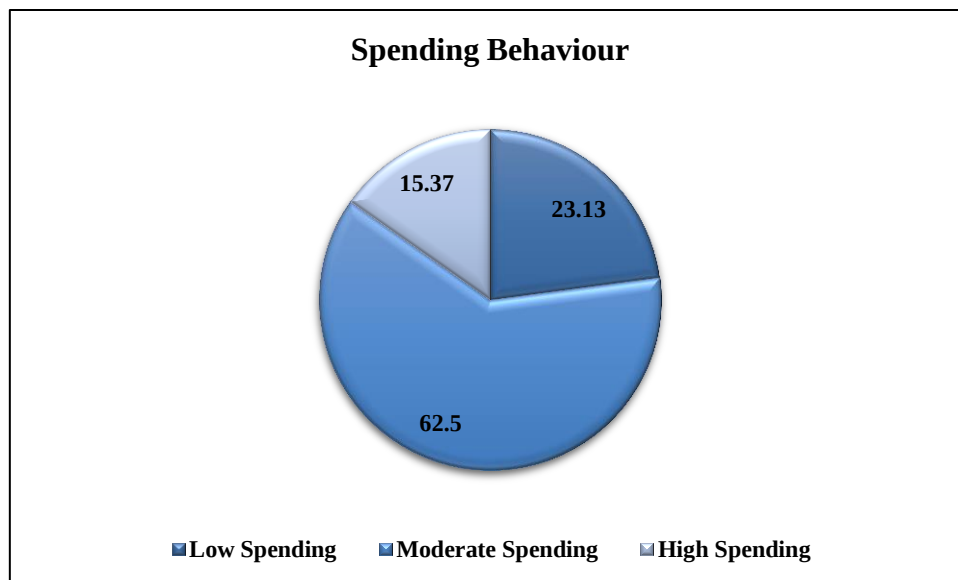


Figure 10

5.2: Tourist Satisfaction and Perception in Mysuru

Tourist satisfaction is one of the most important indicators of destination quality and competitiveness, as it reflects visitors' overall evaluation of tourism facilities, services, and experiences. Satisfied tourists are more likely to revisit a destination and recommend it to others, thereby contributing to sustainable tourism growth through positive word-of-mouth. The present study evaluated tourist satisfaction across ten major dimensions, including accommodation, food services, transportation, shopping opportunities, local people's behaviour, safety and security, public convenience facilities, tourist information services, maintenance of tourist places, and the overall travel experience.

The findings reveal that tourists generally expressed a positive perception of Mysuru as a tourist destination. More than two-thirds of the respondents reported satisfaction with most tourism attributes, indicating that the district provides quality services and memorable travel experiences. The comparative assessment further highlights the strengths and areas requiring improvement within the tourism sector.

Table -1: Comparative Statistical Analysis of Tourist Satisfaction Levels

Satisfaction Dimension	Positive Responses (%)	Negative Responses (%)	Satisfaction Gap (Positive – Negative)	Comparative Performance	Rank
Local People's Behaviour	72.50	13.12	59.38	Excellent	1
Accommodation Facilities	69.38	13.75	55.63	Very Good	2

Overall Tourist Experience	70.63	15.37	55.26	Very Good	3
Food Services	69.69	15.00	54.69	Very Good	4
Safety and Security	70.00	15.37	54.63	Very Good	5
Maintenance of Tourist Places	68.13	15.00	53.13	Very Good	6
Transportation Facilities	67.19	15.69	51.50	Good	7
Tourist Information Services	65.00	16.87	48.13	Good	8
Shopping Opportunities	63.44	16.56	46.88	Moderate	9
Public Convenience Facilities	63.13	17.50	45.63	Moderate	10

Source: Primary Survey, 2025

Among all the dimensions, local people's behaviour recorded the highest level of satisfaction, with 72.50% positive responses and a satisfaction gap of 59.38%, ranking first. This finding demonstrates that the hospitality, friendliness, and helpful attitude of local residents significantly enhance visitors' experiences. Positive interactions between tourists and local communities contribute to a welcoming destination image and encourage repeat visits, making local hospitality one of Mysuru's strongest tourism assets.

Accommodation facilities ranked second, with 69.38% positive responses and a satisfaction gap of 55.63%. The results indicate that tourists were generally satisfied with the quality, cleanliness, comfort, and accessibility of accommodation facilities available in the district. Similarly, the overall tourist experience ranked third, with 70.63% positive responses, reflecting visitors' favourable perceptions of Mysuru as a well-managed tourism destination offering diverse attractions and satisfactory services.

Tourists also expressed high satisfaction with food services, which received 69.69% positive responses. The availability of diverse cuisines, hygienic food outlets, and authentic local dishes appears to have contributed positively to visitors' experiences. Likewise, safety and security received 70.00% positive responses, indicating that tourists perceive Mysuru as a safe and secure destination for leisure, pilgrimage, and family travel. A secure environment enhances visitor confidence and positively influences destination image.

The maintenance of tourist places ranked sixth, with 68.13% positive responses, suggesting that heritage monuments, parks, and public spaces are generally maintained in satisfactory condition. Proper maintenance not only improves visitor experiences but also contributes to the conservation of cultural and historical resources, thereby supporting sustainable tourism development.

Although transportation facilities received favourable ratings, with 67.19% positive responses, they ranked seventh among the evaluated dimensions. The findings suggest that while transport connectivity and accessibility are reasonably satisfactory, improvements in public transport integration, traffic management, and visitor mobility could further enhance tourist convenience.

Relatively lower satisfaction levels were observed for tourist information services, shopping opportunities, and public convenience facilities. Tourist information services recorded 65.00% positive responses, indicating that visitors expect better availability of information centres, multilingual signboards, maps, digital guidance, and destination interpretation services. Effective information systems play an important role in improving accessibility and enriching the visitor experience.

Similarly, shopping opportunities received 63.44% positive responses, ranking ninth among all service dimensions. Although Mysuru is well known for products such as Mysore silk, sandalwood handicrafts, and traditional artefacts, tourists indicated scope for improving shopping infrastructure, product variety, pricing transparency, and organized retail experiences.

The lowest-ranked dimension was public convenience facilities, with 63.13% positive responses and a satisfaction gap of 45.63%. This suggests that public amenities such as toilets, drinking water facilities, seating arrangements, parking spaces, waste disposal systems, and rest areas require further improvement. Since these facilities directly influence visitor comfort, enhancing their quality should be a priority for tourism authorities.

Overall, the comparative assessment demonstrates that Mysuru enjoys a strong positive image among tourists, particularly in terms of hospitality, accommodation, food services, safety, and the overall travel experience. The relatively high satisfaction levels across most dimensions indicate effective destination management and a well-developed tourism environment. However, the comparatively lower performance of public convenience facilities, shopping opportunities, and tourist information services highlights areas where targeted infrastructure investment and service improvements are necessary.

The findings suggest that strengthening visitor information systems, upgrading public amenities, improving shopping infrastructure, and enhancing transport connectivity would significantly improve the overall tourist experience. By addressing these service gaps while maintaining its strengths in hospitality, cultural heritage, accommodation, and safety, Mysuru can further strengthen its position as one of India's leading heritage and cultural tourism destinations and promote sustainable tourism development.

6. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION:

Based on the findings of the study, the following measures are suggested to enhance tourist satisfaction and promote sustainable tourism development in Mysuru District:

1. Upgrade public convenience facilities, including clean toilets, drinking water, seating arrangements, parking spaces, and waste management systems at major tourist attractions.
2. Strengthen tourist information services by establishing multilingual information centres, digital kiosks, mobile applications, improved directional signage, and interactive destination maps.
3. Improve local transportation through better public transport connectivity, integrated tourist transport services, and regulated taxi and auto-rickshaw facilities.
4. Enhance shopping infrastructure by promoting authentic local products such as Mysore silk, sandalwood handicrafts, traditional handicrafts, and local cuisine through organized shopping complexes and cultural markets.

5. Continue investing in the conservation and maintenance of heritage monuments, religious sites, parks, and other tourist attractions to preserve their historical and cultural value.
6. Strengthen destination marketing through digital platforms, social media campaigns, cultural festivals, and international promotional activities to attract a larger share of foreign tourists.
7. Encourage greater participation of local communities in tourism development by promoting hospitality training, entrepreneurship, and community-based tourism initiatives.
8. Promote sustainable tourism practices through improved environmental management, responsible tourism awareness, visitor education, and conservation of natural and cultural resources.

Implementation of these recommendations will enhance visitor satisfaction, strengthen Mysuru's tourism competitiveness, and support balanced and sustainable tourism development in the district.

The study provides valuable insights into the socio-economic characteristics, travel behaviour, expenditure patterns, preferences, and satisfaction levels of tourists visiting Mysuru District. The findings demonstrate that Mysuru continues to be one of Karnataka's most attractive tourism destinations, drawing a predominantly domestic tourist population while gradually strengthening its international appeal. Heritage monuments, religious centres, wildlife attractions, and cultural resources remain the major factors influencing tourist arrivals.

The analysis reveals that most tourists are young and middle-aged, well educated, and belong to economically active occupational groups. Visitors generally prefer medium-duration stays, hotel accommodation, hired local transportation, and moderate levels of expenditure, indicating that Mysuru successfully caters to a broad spectrum of tourists. The district's tourism industry has also shown strong post-pandemic recovery, with substantial growth in domestic tourist arrivals between 2021 and 2025.

Tourist satisfaction levels were generally high across most service dimensions. Hospitality shown by local residents, accommodation facilities, food services, safety, and the overall travel experience emerged as the key strengths of Mysuru's tourism sector. These attributes contribute significantly to visitor satisfaction and enhance the destination's reputation. However, comparatively lower satisfaction with public convenience facilities, tourist information services, transportation, and shopping opportunities indicates areas requiring further improvement.

Overall, the study concludes that Mysuru possesses significant potential for sustainable tourism development. Continued investment in tourism infrastructure, visitor services, heritage conservation, and destination management will strengthen tourist satisfaction, encourage repeat visitation, and enhance the district's competitiveness as one of India's leading heritage and cultural tourism destinations.

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Data Source

1. Department of Tourism, Government of Karnataka. (2025). *Tourist arrival statistics of Mysuru District (2021–2025)*. Bengaluru: Department of Tourism.

Primary Source

1. Primary Survey conducted by the researcher among 320 tourists visiting major tourist destinations in Mysuru District during 2025.