

Tourist Perception and Satisfaction towards Pilgrimage Tourism A Comparative Study between Dindigul and Madurai Districts

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ABSTRACT

Pilgrimage is often seen as a special form of religious travelling which is done relatively rarely, possibly even only once in a lifetime like the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca. This article says that pilgrimage does not necessarily have to be such a rare and elevated form of religious behaviour; it can also be even a daily habit or a lifestyle a pilgrim wants to maintain. Pilgrimage in this case helps the pilgrim to maintain a set of values he or she considers important, connection to the local community. Although religious tourism and pilgrimage have been widely studied there is very limited research that explores the peculiarities in attitude and behaviour among tourists with different demographic factors. The present exploratory study enhances the discussion on perception of religious tourism behaviour. Specifically This article presents the sacred site visit of a north Tamilnadu such as Dindigul and Madurai districts.

1. Introduction

The Pilgrimage tourism in India is so deeply embedded in the cultural psyche and the number of pilgrimage is so large that the entire sub-continent may actually be regarded as one grand and continuous sacred space. Following the Vedic period the practice of pilgrimage seems to have become quite common, as is evident from sections of the great epic, the Mahabharata (350 BC), which mentions more than 300 sacred sites spanning the sub-continent. Hindus call the sacred places to which they travel as 'tirtha yathra'. The Sanskrit word tirtha means river ford, steps to a river, or place of pilgrimage. In India, all temples are considered sacred places and thus religious visitors to the temples may be described as pilgrims. For the purpose of our discussion, however, for a temple to be considered a true pilgrimage shrine it must have a long-term history of attracting pilgrims from geographic area beyond its immediate region. Given this condition, the number of pilgrimage sites in India is extremely large. The primary intention of a pilgrim's visit to a holy site is to view the darshan of the deity and to receive the blessings of the deity residing in the temple's sanctum or open-air shrine.

India is a vast country, peopled with diverse and ancient civilizations, and its religious geography is highly complex. Over 80% of India's population practices Hinduism, the ancient indigenous religion of India which has a wide variety of forms and expressions. Muslims, concentrated mainly in north India, constitute about 10% of the Indian population. Other significant religious groups in India include Sikhs, Jains, and Christians. Buddhism is almost extinct in the land of its birth, but many exiled Tibetan Buddhists now make their home in India, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Tourism indicates the movement of people from one place to another place which is social, cultural and economic phenomenon according to United Nations World Tourism Organization. Tourism involves a travel from their usual place

to an unusual place. Tourism is defined as a temporary movement of people to an outside place (Matheison and Wall 1982). McIntosh and Goeldner (1986) states that tourism is the process of attracting tourists, host governments and communities and hosting through the relationship arising there on.

Tourism is an activity in an outside place for travel, business etc. for not more than one consecutive year (Tazim Jamal and Mike Robinson 2009). The people who travel are termed as "travelers", tourists, excursionists, residents or non-residents. Travel is an act of moving outside their home for business or pleasure. Excursionists are persons travelling for pleasure, for a period of less than 24 hours. Tourists are persons who are travelling for pleasure with an overnight stay. Tourism is considered as "engine of growth" as it acts as a driver for growth of the world economy. As the importance of the tourism activity has increased, the Governments and various organizations also pay more attention on it.

2. Evolution of tourism industry

The evolution of Indian tourism policy was evolved after recognizing the advancement of tourism in other parts the word. The tenth plan recognizes the employment potential of tourism in addition to the promotion of national integration, foreign exchange earnings etc. The evolution can be bifurcated into various stages as below (Ministry of Tourism 2012):

- Prior to 1990, the National Tourism Policy was announced in India.
- After 1990, various states declared tourism as an Industry. Tourism Policy 2002 was announced with a stress on infrastructure development.
- Since 2005, various marketing strategies were developed to promote tourism and to attract tourists.

3. Various Categories of Tourism

Peter Atiemo (2014) states that the tourism industry has various categories and the most popular categories are Leisure tourism, Business tourism, Medical tourism, Cultural tourism, Adventure tourism, Wellness tourism, Eco tourism, Sports tourism, Religious tourism, Cruise tourism, Wildlife tourism etc.

- **Leisure tourism** deals with relaxation only and has no work involved. The leisure activities are shopping, sports activities for pleasure, sleeping, visiting friends and relatives and walking on shore for enjoying the serenity.
- **Business tourism** deals with business transactions. The business tourism is mainly involved with the activities of conducting business transactions, attending conferences, exhibition or events associated with the business etc.
- **Medical tourism** involves activities of taking or receiving medical advice or treatment in a different place. It includes medical facilitation, travel arrangements, transportation and tour packages.
- **Cultural tourism** refers to tourism concerned with the region's culture, lifestyle, history, art, architecture, religion and other elements of people or a country.
- **Adventure tourism** is an outdoor activity takes place in an unusual, remote area. Adventurous activities are mountaineering; wind surfing, rafting, rock climbing, diving, paragliding, etc.
- **Wellness tourism** involves the activities like health maintenance, massages, facial treatments, exercise facilities & programs, nutrition programs, Spa treatments etc. (Susie Ellis 2011)
- **Eco tourism** is about natural destinations, ecological conservation and awareness, economic development, empowerment of local communities and respects the local people. Here the tourist feels the natural way of life encircled by natural circumstances (Peter Atiemo 2014).
- **Sports tourism** involves the sports related activities.
- **Pilgrimage tourism** is a journey to a shrine, temple or other locations which are important to the visitors' beliefs and faiths.
- **Religious tourism** also commonly referred to as faith tourism, is a type of tourism, where people travel for pilgrimage or missionary. Hajj pilgrimage is the largest form of mass religious tourism takes place annually in Mecca, Saudi Arabia (Religious tourism 2007).

4. World tourism and its growth

UNWTO statistics state that it projects a growth of 1.4 million international tourist arrival worldwide by 2020 and 1.8 million by 2030. Region wise growth is expected at an increase of 331 million arrivals in Asia are forecast to 535 million in 2030.

5. Growth of Tourism in India

Tourism in India has grown to such a level which has recorded a contribution of 2178 INR Billion to the Country's GDP in 2013. Tourism is the 3rd largest net earner of foreign exchange for the country and one of the sectors which employs

the largest number of manpower (Statistics of Hospitality Industry in India 2014).

Increase in FTA (Foreign Tourists Arrival) is the major reason for flourishing Tourism sector in India. World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC)'s statistics indicate that domestic tourism revenue has risen by 5.1% in 2013 and goes further to increase to 8.2% during next years. The total market size of the tourism and hospitality industry in India is expected to reach 418.9 billion USD by 2022 which will be 4 times of what achieved during 2013 (Statistics of Hospitality Industry in India, 2014).

FEE (Foreign Exchange Earnings) was 51,587 INR during 2013 which has already crossed to 56,760 INR during 2014, registered a growth of 17.9%. 2014 has seen a recorded growth over 2013 on VOA (Visa on Arrival) scheme. Around 12,000 VOAs have been issued during 2014 compared to 9000 last year (India Tourism Statistics at a glance 2013). India is expected to be number one for growth globally in the wellness tourism sector in the next five years, with a record growth of 20% by 2017.

6. National Tourism Policy 2002

Tourism Policy 2002 stresses on the above Seven "S" namely: Safai (Cleanliness), Swagat (Welcome), Sochna (Information), Suvidha (Facilitation), Suraksha (Security), Sahyog (co-operation), Samrachna (Infrastructure) - (Source: Ministry of Tourism).

The National Action Plan for Tourism reiterates 7 objectives as below:

(Travel and Tourism Management – Emerging concepts of Effective Tourism Development by Prakash Talwar 2006)

- Socioeconomic development of areas;
- Increasing employment opportunities;
- Developing domestic tourism for the budget category;
- Preserving national heritage and environment;
- Development of International tourism;
- Diversification of the tourism product;
- Increase in India's share in world tourism;

7. Growth of Tourism in Tamilnadu

- The Tamilnadu Government has released the "Vision Tamilnadu 2023" document on 22 – 03 - 2012.
- It envisages fast growth in tourism and hospital sectors with an investment of Rs.10000.00 Crore through participation of Government and Private Investments by 2023.
- FTA (Foreign Tourists Arrival) is expected to reach 15 million by 2023.
- Aims to bring Tamilnadu as an attractive tourist destination at the International level.
- To position Tamilnadu as a visible global brand in Tourism.

The statistics show the domestic and foreign tourist arrivals to Tamilnadu from 2004 and 2013: (source: Ministry of Tourism 2013)

Domestic and foreign tourist arrivals to Tamil Nadu State

(Figures are in actual numbers)

Year	Domestic	Foreign
2004	300,76,832	10,58,012
2005	3,23,39,478	11,79,319
2006	3,92,14,721	13,35,661
2007	5,06,47,188	17,53,103
2008	6,26,18,252	20,40,419
2009	7,80,37,607	23,69,050
2010	10,30,10,435	28,04,504
2011	13,67,50,750	33,08,408
2012	18,41,36,840	35,61,740
2013	24,42,32,487	39,90,490
2014	3,27,55,233	46,57,630

Source: Commissioner of Tourism, Chennai.

The above table indicates that the tourists' arrival to Tamil Nadu state has been increasing every year and Tamil Nadu state has been marked with highest percentage of tourists' arrival among all other states.

Domestic and Foreign Tourist Visit to various locations in Tamil Nadu 2014

S. No	Destination	Domestic	Foreign	Total
1	Chennai	3,42,37,753	9,86,721	3,52,24,474
2	Elagiri	30,40,920	5,611	30,46,531
3	Mamallapuram	1,16,90,933	6,04,461	1,22,95,394
4	Kancheepuram	1,45,64,678	3,36,552	1,49,01,230
5	Tiruttani	62,47,711	5,986	62,53,697
6	Chidambaram	71,02,262	25,383	71,27,645
7	Pitchavaram	6,86,278	4,965	6,91,243
8	Udhagamandalam	1,72,92,988	3,33,566	1,76,26,554
9	Coonoor	25,87,248	27,706	26,14,954
10	Mudumalai	12,27,855	18,113	12,45,968
11	Thanjavur	1,33,46,094	2,19,881	1,35,65,975
12	Velankanni	74,35,350	69,825	75,05,175
13	Nagore	58,67,411	17,885	58,85,296
14	Poompuhar	30,41,722	13,319	30,55,041
15	Madurai	2,02,74,902	2,89,745	2,05,64,647
16	Kodaikanal	1,32,65,093	2,50,316	1,35,15,409
17	Palani	1,29,13,093	92,551	1,30,05,644
18	Rameswaram	2,19,69,506	1,22,170	2,20,91,676
19	Courtallam	79,78,257	48,106	80,26,363
20	Panchalankurichi	4,48,206	1,483	4,49,689
21	Kanniyakumari	1,69,00,227	4,13,162	1,73,13,389
22	Tiruchirappalli	1,13,32,399	3,06,431	1,16,38,830
23	Salem	1,34,61,241	19,927	1,34,81,168
24	Yercaud	93,14,892	20,996	93,35,888
25	Hogenakkal	1,44,75,054	30,269	1,45,05,323
26	Tiruchendur	15,51,0834	94,538	1,56,05,372
27	Coimbatore	1,40,14,724	64,453	1,40,79,177
28	Kumbakonam	1,04,73,214	78,642	1,05,51,856
29	Tiruvannamalai	1,68,54,388	1,54,867	1,70,09,255
	Grand Total	32,75,55,233	46,57,630	33,22,12,863

Source: Commissioner of Tourism, Chennai.

8. Need of the Study

Tourism plays an important role in the economic development of a country, besides it also provides employment to the local people. This comparative study towards the Madurai and Dindigul is undertaken, since, both places are renowned by history, also the places of worship and further hill town is available. Whenever people plan to visit Madurai, they plan to visit Palani, Kodaikanal as part of their tour program.

Since, independence contribution to the development of infrastructure is very less in these places (except Madurai). Only in recent past the government has taken initiative for the development of infrastructure, in these areas, tourists face many problems when visiting these places, it is in this interest and to provide suggestions for improvement in those areas which are lacking development. This study would reveal the problems, that are faced by the tourists, and also the level of

satisfaction among the tourists are to be brought out through this study.

9. Significance of the Research

Pilgrimage tourism is based on strong religious beliefs, faiths and spiritual motivation. Large numbers of tourists visit pilgrim centers to fulfill their religious customs. Pilgrims through the pilgrimage centers more during the festival seasons, which have good influence on the environment. "Tirth Yatra" as said in the olden days, is a journey performed for purifying the spiritual mind and for betterment of spiritual pursuits.

Based on the various issues observed in pilgrim centers, this research has been undertaken in identifying the problems and for finding solutions. Various studies have already been undertaken to study the issues and challenges and services offered in pilgrim centres. However, this study has been undertaken to study with special reference to Madurai and Dindigul District.

10. Objective of the study

- To analyse the facilities available to foreigners during the time of pilgrimage tourism
- To evaluate the socio economic and demographic status of the tourists
- To inquire the utility of amenities among the tourists
- To assess the status (perception level) amenities among the tourists
- To find out the problems faced by the tourists on amenities during the time of pilgrim
- To suggest the government regarding the amenities to be provided to the devotees.
- To identify expenses pattern of pilgrimage tour
- To identify the level of satisfaction toward the darshan, accommodation and transport

11. Statement of the Problem

The research problems are to capture the devotees' preferences, perception, expectations and satisfaction with various services and facilities available in Madurai and Dindigul District. To measure the level of satisfaction of the tourists with respect to transportation facilities in the temple town, darshan, other facilities, availability of accommodation, information and communication, prasadam availability, etc, in Meenashi Amman Temple Madurai and Palani in Dindigul District. For this study the quality of the services, quality of basic facilities, quality of amenities, quality of the transport network and

facilities inside the temple premises have been taken into account.

12. Methodology

In this research study, an attempt has been made to measure the pilgrim's satisfactory level towards the facilities available and these standards at both the temple are analysed, further, the study also analyses the perception and expectation of the tourists', and also the issues and challenges faced by the tourists' are inquired and interpreted.

Scientific investigation method is adopted; stratified random sampling method was used to collect the data from the respondents.

Strata		Population
Palani	Thiruavinankudi	75
	Palani Hills	75
Kodaikanal	Silver Strings	75
	Crockers Walk	75
	Pillar Rock	75
	Lake	75
Madurai	Meenakshi Amman Temple	75
	Azhagar Malai/Pazhamudir Solai	75
	Thiruparankundram	75
TOTAL		675

13. Conclusions

Before independence very less importance was given to the tourism industry. Even after independence the Governmental activism was limited on this front. As a result India could have its first tourism policy in 1982 only. However, the economic reforms of 1991 had a positive impact on tourism due to the increased participation of the private sector. In 2002, the Government came with a new tourism policy which seeks to enhance employment potential within the tourism sector and foster economic integration through developing linkage with other sectors.

State government also has improved the tourism plans and aiming to bring attractive tourist destination by giving lot of amenities. Government efforts during the tenth five year plan have started yielding positive results. In south India the selected districts had attached varying importance to tourism namely Dindigul and Madurai districts. Both the foreign and the domestic tourist arrivals have shown increasing trend. It is positive trend towards the pilgrimage tourism and economic and spiritual development of the country.

Reference

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