

Promotion of Domestic Tourism in Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

Tourism being a very developing prospective area in India has also got impetus and tourism in India has started growing with a considerable pace. There are different ways to attract domestic and foreign tourists. Here, it is necessary to understand what types of services are required to attract and retain the tourists in order to develop tourism further. There is a large potential market for domestic tourism, which is yet to be given more attention to attract more tourists throughout India. As India is a multi-faceted country, promotion of domestic tourism will bring people of different cultures, faiths, languages and life-styles close to one another and it will provide a broader outlook of life. Domestic tourism is one of the most vibrant expressions of Indian heritage. It is the single unifying force, which helps to achieve understanding between various linguistic, religious and social groups living in different parts of the country.

Introduction

Tamil Nadu is a State with several distinguished tourism genre. It has cerulean mountains, verdant vegetations, sandy beaches, mammoth monuments, timeless temples, fabulous wildlife, scintillating sculptures and reverberating rural life. It has picturesque spots, continuing heritage, cultural confluence and aesthetic magnificence. Tamil Nadu has excellent hill stations like Ooty, Kodaikanal, Yercaud, Elagiri, Javvadhu Hills, Kolli Hills, Sirumalai Hills, Valparai, Topslip, Parvathamalai Hills and Pachamalai Hills. Tamil Nadu has been attracting tourists both from foreign countries and other Indian States. The Central and the State Governments have been investing resources for the development of tourism. Giving special focus on novel initiatives like medical tourism, eco-tourism, rural tourism, adventure tourism and 'Virunthinar Potruthum' (care for guests), Tamil Nadu ranks first in the country in medical tourism and second in foreign tourists arrivals and third in attracting domestic tourists in India. The State aims at making Tamil Nadu the topmost attractive tourist destination at the international level by increasing the number of tourist arrival, the length of stay and the average spending. Tamil Nadu Tourism has embarked upon a novel programme called Special publicity campaigns to showcase to tourists the culture and diversity of Tamil Nadu.¹

Tourists and Tourism a tourist is someone who travels for pleasure, May it be international or within their own country. In other words, a tourist is a visitor to certain place on

vacation, on business trips, attending a special event, participating in a sporting event, just sightseeing or visiting friends and relative from some other location without intention of staying permanently. Generally tourists want attractions and activities in the places they visit. They make visits to enjoy nature resources or scenic settings, human-made attractions, historical, cultural and ethnic attractions, unique recreational opportunities, festivals and other special events.

Hospitality and Tourism Promotion

In recent years, the term hospitality has become increasingly popular and may be interpreted in a number of ways whether it is commercial or industrial and public services. Tourism industry is not the same as the other industries. It is because we provide the services to the customer besides some of the other industries provide the tangible product. Thus, hospitality and tourism cannot be separated since hospitality is the key success to the tourism industry. The followings are the importance of hospitality towards tourism industry.

Firstly, there are several components in the tourism industry, for example, food and beverages, lodging, place of attractions, and transportation. All these components are related to hospitality. Each of the components has the connection with each other. So, in order to make sure that the customer will feel satisfied using the tourism services they have to ensure that the customer feels satisfied using each of the components. They need hospitality applied in the food and beverages, so that the customer feels well treated during their lunch, dinner, etc.² they also need hospitality applied in the transportation provider so that the customer feels comfortable during their journey. Other tourism components also need the hospitality. Thus, it is clearly understood how hospitality is very important to the tourism industry.

Government's Open Sky Policy

The Government's Open Sky Policy, permission for domestic airlines to commence international flights, start-up of various low-cost carriers, and fleet expansion by domestic players has created a huge incentive for domestic travelers to explore far-off destinations within and outside India. The booming aviation business is bringing an ever-increasing number of passengers to India, and pulling Indians out of their homes and into hotels.

Tourism Policies of Tamil Nadu

The Government of Tamil Nadu has formulated its vision recently to ring Tamil Nadu on the map of International Tourism by marketing it as an important destination with heritage sites. The Tenth Plan has set a target to increase the tourist inflow by 10-12% per annum instead of the present level of 7-9% and to increase the duration of stay of foreign tourists from 4-7 days to 6-8 days. In the case of domestic tourists the duration of stay in the State is set to be increased to 10-12 days from the present level of 7-9 days. The policy envisages promoting eco-tourism, tapping the potential of coastal belt and making the tourism a core competent sector.³ The seven-Point Action Plan presented in the 64th SKAL World Congress at Chennai in 2003 lays emphasis on the development of lesser-known destinations, positioning Chennai and Coimbatore as

Destinations for International conventions and exhibitions, developing common circuits with other States of India and immediate neighbour in particular. Filling up micro-level infrastructure gaps in major tourist destination, facilitating charter flights and cruise tourism etc. are other aspects, which have been stressed in the policy documents.

Segments of Tourism in Tamil Nadu

The Tourism Department in the last three decades gained rich experience in interacting with all categories of tourists. On an analysis, it is seen that each tourist has certain individual priorities. Tamil Nadu possesses the tourist potential to satisfy their aspirations. The different tastes the tourists have in mind are epitomized below

Leisure Tourism

Some tourists visit Tamil Nadu only for fun or enjoying their leisure. The possibilities for leisure activities are enormous in Tamil Nadu. Marina Beach in Chennai, and Mamallapuram Beach close to Chennai, are the major beaches in Tamil Nadu. Although not a beach resort, Kanyakumari, which forms the southern tip of the country, looks out over the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal.⁴ It affords the rare spectacle of watching the sun set on the horizon at the same time as the moon rises on the other side. But, some of these beaches are not recommended for swimming. People usually visit hill stations, beaches, waterfalls, zoological parks for leisure activities.

Pilgrimage Tourism

Tourists especially senior citizens are interested only in visiting temples and offering worship to their favourable deity. They move to tourist centres only if time permits and provided the trip is easy on the purse. It requires planning and meticulous follow up.

Heritage Tourism

Tourists irrespective of their varied interests have one thing in common i.e. they would like to go around heritage monuments which are plenty in Tamil Nadu, viz. five world heritage monuments identified by the UNESCO, 48 centres declared as heritage towns by the Government of Tamil Nadu and Innumerable heritage monuments declared by the Archaeological Survey of India and the Archaeology Department, Government of Tamil Nadu.

Adventure Tourism

Adventure travel appears to have developed out of the broader, wider growth of traditional outdoor and wilderness recreation during the 20th century. Unlike other forms of recreation, adventure travel offers a unique opportunity in which participants become more experienced and pursue extended scales of "adventurous endeavours." Traditional forms of recreation usually involve elements of skill in a specific outdoor setting. It is this "setting" that provides the primary attraction in special interest travel. However, in adventure travel, it is the "activity" that attracts travellers as participants. This study argues that adventure travel is primarily associated with activities where the purpose of trip is to be engaged in experiences through participation rather than in sightseeing at traditional tourist attractions.⁵

To define adventure travel, various components including activity, motivation, risk, performance, experience, and environment must be considered. Tamil Nadu Tourism is promoting adventure tourism activities in all tourist spots. Adventure boats are available at Muttukadu and Mudaliarkuppam. Trekking equipments are given on hire to the tourists by Tamil Nadu Tourism. Apart from providing adventure sports activities, Tamil Nadu Tourism is also coordinating with Youth Hostels Association of India in conducting Trekking programme in the hilly region. Water scooters, Speed boats, Kayaks and Banana Boats in Mudaliarkuppam provide thrill to the youngsters. Variety of adventure sports have been introduced in island grounds with private participation. Paragliding in Yelagiris attract tourists in large numbers. Parasailing is going to be introduced shortly in Mudaliarkuppam.

Cruise Tourism

Rail and road transport are very common among the people. Some tourists go in for Air / Cruise mode of transport even if it is costlier. At any cost, the tourists desire to enjoy the holiday even before they reach the actual tourist spot. Tourists who are reaching Chennai and Thoothukudi Ports by cruise are taken to the nearby tourist destinations i.e. Mamallapuram and Madurai.

Rural Tourism

To showcase rural life, art, culture and heritage of rural locations in villages and to benefit the local community economically and socially as well as to enable interaction between tourists and local population for a mutually enriching experience, the Tamil Nadu Tourism has decided to develop and promote rural tourism. The rapid industrialization has forced the people to move out of villages. As a result, people especially children do not know what constitutes a village. The parents are keen to show their children the idyllic surroundings of our native villages. The way of life of the inhabitants is an important tourist product which attracts a large number of tourists.

The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India has partnered with the UNDP for Endogenous Rural Tourism as pilot projects for capacity building. Within prescribed limits, the hardware projects are funded by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and the funds for capacity building are provided by the UNDP through Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. The software component was implemented with the involvement of an NGO identified by the UNDP in co-ordination with the District Collector and the local community. The GOI also extends the scheme of Capacity Building for Service Providers (CBSP) to other rural sites beyond those covered under partnership with the UNDP⁶

Responsible Tourism

Tamil Nadu Tourism has been taking ceaseless efforts for the promotion of rural areas as it has the responsibility to showcase its villages, its way of life to tourists especially to the younger generations. This strategy turns rural areas tourist- friendly and it develops the socio-economic status of the local inhabitants. The aim of Responsible Tourism is to inculcate the responsibility of the local populace (hosts) towards fragile eco-system, best practices and caring

the guests and also making the visiting tourists more responsive towards culture, conventions and customs to avoid exploitation.⁷

Business Tourism

Top business executives toil throughout the year to make more and more profits. They rarely find time to go anywhere except where the business demands their presence. Whenever they find even a small gap, they will not hesitate to make a short visit to the nearest tourist spot.

Medical Tourism

Tamil Nadu provides a very good health care to people from all over the world. Ultra-modern corporate hospitals, talented medical professionals, state-of-the-art medical facilities and a large number of Government hospitals have helped patients from various parts of the country and the world to come, convalesce and return with good health. The Department of Tourism has realised that it is essential to provide facilities for them to visit places of tourists' importance, so that they can recuperate and get rejuvenated to normalcy in a short period of time. Further, the Department of Tourism in association with the hospitals has embarked on the mission of spreading the concept of Medical Tourism.⁸ This initiative will grow at an exponential rate and bring success to all players concerned by providing utmost satisfaction to the patients from diverse backgrounds. Considering the importance of Medical Tourism, a Medical Tourism Information Centre has been established in the Tamil Nadu Tourism Complex. Travel Desks in various hospitals were set up in Chennai and Madurai.

Eco-Tourism

Some of the tourists evince keen interest in nature. There is abundant natural wealth in Tamil Nadu viz. hill stations, waterfalls, forests, bird sanctuaries, beaches, etc. A separate Eco-Tourism Wing is being set up by Tamil Nadu Tourism by posting an officer from the Forest Department. The vision is to make Tamil Nadu a world renowned destination specialising in sustainable tourism through focused efforts on creating synergy among all stakeholders, encouraging capacity building and public-private partnerships with revenue generating strategies.

Tourism Promotional Activities in Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu Tourism comprises Tourism Department in the Secretariat, and a Commissionerate of Tourism functioning to formulate policies and implement programmes for the development of tourism sector in the State. Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation is a State owned public sector undertaking to initiate novel ventures and innovate new schemes for providing demonstration effect to the private sector. In performing this role, Tamil Nadu Tourism coordinates the activities of various other Government Departments / agencies and the private sector. Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation (TTDC) has been operating Hotels, Youth Hostels, Restaurants, Tours, Boat houses, Telescope houses as a forerunner for the private sector to follow as new area of business proposition.

Comfortable hotels and accommodation facilities play a very important role in popularizing any tourist destination. If a person, who is quite far away from home, gets to enjoy the same facilities and comforts as he enjoys at his home, then he is bound to become attached to

the place. On the other hand if the tourist ends up at a place where the hotels and accommodation facilities are not satisfactory, it is quite likely that he might never return to that place. So, any research work on tourism will not get fulfilled if information provided by the accommodation providers about the tourism is not considered. Therefore, in the present study on promotion of domestic tourism in Tamil Nadu due weightage is given to viewpoints of accommodation providers about various aspects of tourism. The remaining part of this chapter is filled with evaluation of their viewpoints statistically.

Hotel Industry and Promotion of Tourism

Hotel Industry in India has witnessed tremendous boom in recent years. Hotel Industry is inextricably linked to the tourism industry and the growth in the Indian tourism industry has fuelled the growth of Indian hotel industry. The thriving economy and increased business opportunities in India have acted as a boon for Indian hotel industry. The Hotel industry comprises a major part of the Tourism industry. Historically viewed as an industry in providing a luxury service to the economy, the industry facilitates tourism and commerce. Hotels in India are broadly classified into seven categories (five star deluxe, five star, four star, three star, two star, one star and heritage hotels) by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, based on the general facilities offered. The ratings are reviewed every five years.

Conclusion

Though potentiality for tourism promotion and development in Tamil Nadu is good, the extent of potentiality for promotion and development of tourism is not same in all regions as perceived by the Hoteliers. It is finally concluded that the major hurdles for promotion of tourism is identified as taxation (Service tax & others) followed by lack of Government assistance and complicated procedure for getting license by the hoteliers.

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