



A Spatio Temporal Analysis on the Economic Perfectiveness of Tourism Development in Rameswaram - Tamil Nadu

KEYWORDS

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INTRODUCTION

It is 570 Kms from the State Capital Chennai. A small Island and Major Pilgrim Centre in the Gulf of Mannar. It is connected to the mainland by Pamban Bridge. On his return from Ceylon after Ravana Yudh in Lanka, Sri Rama offered his repentance prayer to Lord Siva to absolve his sins that he had committed by Slaying Ravana. 22 Holy theertham [wells] are in the temple, It is believed that number of wells denotes 22 arrows in Rama's quiver. The temple has striking long corridors in its interior, running between huge colonnades on platforms above five feet high. Pilgrims visiting Rameswaram cannot miss the darshan of Ramanatha Swamy and bathing in all the 22 theerthams to absolve oneself from all sins. The three most revered nayanmars [saivite saints] Thirunavukkarasar, Sundarar and Gnanasambandar have glorified Ramanathasamy with their songs. Beautiful beaches at Olaikuda, Danushkodi and Pamban are other attractions apart from the religious point of view. Scuba diving and Migratory birds watching during winter are also a part of the entertainment schedule. Commercial Deep Sea fishing Sea Cucumber, Lobster and Conch collection are the main economic activities of Rameswaram.

The Ramanathaswamy temple is renowned for its magnificent corridors and massive sculptured pillars. The third corridor of Ramanathaswamy temple is the longest one in the world.

The Island has a population of 44,856 (2011 Census) The preparation of the 20-year perspective tourism plan for Tamil Nadu has been principally for identifying development aspects of the tourism industry including identification of new tourism product in the state so that a direction and long-term goals can be evolved for a meaningful and growth oriented tourism in the state

TTDC was incorporated during July 1971 under the Companies Act 1956. The entire share capital of Rs.678.63 lakhs has been subscribed by the State Government. TTDC was formed with the objective of promoting tourism in Tamilnadu by providing infrastructure facilities of transport and accommodation. To fulfill this objective, TTDC has expanded its activities into 3 main operations, namely, Hotels, Transport and Fairs.

Hotels of TTDC is at present having 78 outlets Out of the 54 hotels under the control of TTDC, two hotel units have been handed over on long term lease of 30 years during the year 1995. The Government of Tamilnadu have already approved proposal of franchising 30 hotel units of TTDC and 7 Restaurants. Efforts are being taken to franchise these hotels on long term basis for 10 years in respect of

small hotels with 5 rooms and 15 years in respect of other hotels. Temples are a marked feature of the landscape of Tamil Nadu.

The style of temple buildings is known as Dravidian style. Few prominent places of pilgrim interest can be identified as – Madurai, Chidambaram, Kancheepuram, Kanyakumari, Nagore, Palani, Rameshwaram, Thiruvannamalai, Srirangam, Thanjavur and Velankanni. There is a large number of heritage sites which even today reflect the cultural, social and ethnic background of this region in various forms. Some of the significant locations include Chennai, Gangaikonda Cholapuram, Gingee, Dindigul, Madurai, Mamallapuram, Poompuhar, Thanjavur, Tiruchirappalli, and Vellore. Among the places of scenic beauty (beaches, hill stations, forests/ sanctuaries) are Ooty, Kodaikanal, Yercaud, Rameshwaram, Coonoor, Sathanur Dam, Kanyakumari, Chennai, Pichavaram, Point Calimere, Coramandel Coast, Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary and National Park, Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary National Park, Mukkurthi National Park, Kalakkadu Wildlife Sanctuary, Mundanthurai Wildlife Sanctuary, Point Calimere Wildlife Sanctuary, Srivilliputhur Grizzled Squirrel Wildlife Sanctuary, Guindy National Park, Vallanadu Black Buck Sanctuary, Vedanthangal and Karikili Bird Sanctuaries, Arignar Anna Zoological Park, Madras Crocodile Bank Trust, Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park.

Tamil Nadu is a magical blend of timeless traditions and colourful festivals – a seat of cultural heritage. The festivals include – summer festivals, saral festival, silk festival, sculpture fair, pilgrim festival, dance festival, tea and tourism festival, Pongal festival, and the music festival. Trekking, aqua sport, hang-gliding, angling, and water surfing offer opportunities of adventure to the tourists in Tamil Nadu. Golf, snooker, and horse racing are some of the leisure activities that help develop leisure tourism.

TOURISM PROMOTIONAL SERVICES OFFERED BY TAMILNADU TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

There are few TTDC owned hotels/ units that are suffering losses and need be franchised to private parties. There is an absence of heritage hotels, paying guest accommodations, and dormitories at pilgrim destinations; the budget hotels are available at all the surveyed locations; the star category hotels are absent from a few locations. The situation as regards the heritage hotels, paying guest accommodations, and dormitories in destinations of scenic beauty, heritage, adventure, and leisure, is similar to that of pilgrim destinations.

Tamil Nadu ranks second in terms of transport network. The state utilises all the three modes of major transporting

facilities in an effective manner. It is well connected globally by means of international seaports and airports. There is an international airport at Chennai besides domestic airports at Chennai, Salem, Trichy, Coimbatore, Madurai, Neyveli, and Tuticorin. There is a total railway track length of 6,693 km and there are 690 railway stations in the state. Main rail junctions in the state include Chennai, Madurai, Trichy, Salem, Coimbatore, etc. The length of total road network in Tamil Nadu, taking together both surfaced and unsurfaced roads, is nearly 1.82 lakh km. Tamil Nadu has a long sea coast (ECR) which can be used to connect places on the East coast and provide added attraction for tourists. Possibilities of inland cruise service on the river/ canals are also suggested to be explored. All pilgrim destinations are well connected by road etc. the levels of service and satisfaction, however vary between them. Where most locations have a satisfactory level/ quality of service, Kancheepuram, as suggested by the results of the market survey, has less satisfactory road and transport.

This is primarily because the roads are narrow and the surface in and around Kancheepuram, poor. As regards water supply among pilgrim destinations, only Rameshwaram has a shortage of potable water. Sewerage and drainage conditions at Rameshwaram and Trichy are less than satisfactory. There is no problem on account of telecommunication system, post and telegraph, and banking.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT – OBJECTIVES

- To trigger higher growth of economy, also balancing for sustained socio cultural and physical environment;
- To introduce new tourism products i.e. adventure tourism, heritage tourism, business tourism, sports tourism, education tourism and so on;
- To identify infrastructure and other development needs for supporting and substantiating tourism;
- Projection i.e. identification of projects, their financing and management strategies

TOURISM AS AN INTEGRATED SYSTEM

- Tourism related legislation and regulations, such as standards and licensing requirements for hotels and tour and travel agencies
- Organizational structures, especially government tourism offices and private sector tourism associations such as hotel associations.
- Education and training programmes and training institutions to prepare persons to work effectively in tourism
- Availability of financial capital to develop tourist attractions, facilities, services and infrastructure, and mechanism to attract capital investment
- Marketing strategies and promotion programme to inform tourists about the country or region, and induce them to visit it, and tourist information facilities and services in the destination areas
- Travel facilitation of immigration (including visa arrangements), customs and other facilities and services at the entry and exit points of tourists
- Enhancing and distributing the economic benefits of tourism
- Environmental protection measures
- Reducing adverse social impacts and conservation of the cultural heritage of people living in the tourism areas.

PLANS FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Other important aspects of sustainable development relate to emphasis on community -based tourism and

quality tourism. This approach to tourism focuses on community involvement in the planning and development process, and developing the type of tourism which generate benefits to local committees, besides providing tourist attractions, facilities and services that offer 'good value for money' protecting tourism resources and attract the kinds of tourists who will respect the local environment and society. Tourism development policies and plans will be prepared for relatively long term periods of 20 years depending upon the predictability of future events in the region. Strategic planning typically is to be oriented to rapidly changing future situations and how to cope with changes organizationally. It will be more action oriented and concerned with handling unexpected events.

TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE

Tourism is a highly perishable commodity, in the sense that unsold airline seats, hotel rooms, etc have no residual value. The industry is highly infrastructure dependent, and relies upon various transport services to deliver clients. Immigration and entry/ exit control regulations have a direct influence on the supply on international tourism services. Important challenges facing the industry include environmental and infrastructure problems, as well as rapid technological change. Adequate infrastructure must be provided and sufficiently maintained¹ so as to support any intended tourism activities, both for domestic and international tourism. This includes airport facility, port facility, road system, and telecommunication, water supply, electric power facility, and, sewage treatment facility.

Sri Ramanathaswamy Temple

Noted among the 275 most important Shiva temples for the Shaivaite sect of Hindus, the Sri Ramanathaswamy Temple is a part of the Char Dham pilgrimage of the Hindus. The temple was said to have been established by Lord Ram himself and is built in the Dravidian style of architecture. The site of the temple was expanded by the Pandya kings in the 12th century who are responsible for the current structure of the temple.

Agnitheertham

The sandy shores of Rameswaram are one of the most holy places for the Hindu pilgrims. The Agnitheertham, are a collection of 22 such spots at the shores which the pilgrims bath in. according to Hindu mythology Lord Ram took a bath at the shores to absolve him from the sin of the killings in the war against Ravana.

Gandamadana Parvatham

The hillock lies at a short distance of 3 kilometers from Rameswaram and is the highest point on the island. Gandamadana Parvatham is considered to house a foot print of Lord Rama on a Chakra. The hill lies at an amazing location and one can get the panoramic views of the entire island from this point.

The Five-faced Hanuman Temple

The temple is famous for its unique incarnation of the mighty monkey god *Lord Hanuman*. The image of the deity has five faces namely Lord Hanuman, Lord Adivaraha, Lord Narasimha, Lord Hayagriva and Lord Garuda. The idol is carved from a large senthooram stone from which vermilion is derived. The ancient idols of Lord Ram, Sita and Lakshmana that were brought during a cyclone from Dhanushkodi are also placed here.

Dhanushkodi

A famous picnic spot on the island, Dhanushkodi is also an important pilgrim spot on the Rameswaram Island. The name Dhanushkodi literally means the end of the bow and is spot where Lord Ram built the famous bridge with floating stones. The place is famous for the various migratory birds that flock here and its pristine views of the ocean.

Being one of the most important pilgrim spots for the Hindus, Rameswaram is a city that exemplifies the richness of Indian culture and the Hindu religion. The abovementioned places are the most frequented and popular places that one should not miss on their trip to Rameswaram.

CONCLUSION

Tourism plays an important role in the socio-economic development of any country. It is also one of the major sources for earning the foreign exchange. Strengthening of the existing infrastructure can promote tourism and serve the local community too. Tourism promotion also generates employment in urban as well as rural areas, which may arrest the large-scale migration of rural mass to urban centers and in turn help avoid formation of more slums. Tamil Nadu, with its picturesque hills, beaches, waterfalls, wildlife sanctuaries, temples, ancient monuments, places of worship for all faiths and centers of art and culture has lot to offer to the domestic and international tourists. An effort has been made to identify areas requiring improvement including those currently not so developed or popular but with sufficient potential for attracting tourists.

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