

Religious Tourism in Madurai – Needs and Expectations of Tourists

Dr. K. Karthick

Guest Faculty

Centre for Tourism and Hotel Management

Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai 625021

ABSTRACT

Religious tourism is one aspect that is prevalent all over the country. Madurai is one of the oldest cities in South India. All through the centuries it has withstood many calamities. Madurai is an International Tourist centre. Many foreign tourists visit Madurai. Madurai is the second largest city in Tamil Nadu.

Madurai is popularly known as the temple city of South India. Madurai is a spiritual centre for the devotees across the globe. It is one of the ancient cities in Tamil Nadu and is famous for the architectural splendour of its numerous religious places. Tourism in Madurai is primarily religious in nature. Yet there is lot of dearth in its practices. This is mainly due to the fact that the basics are not clear for the tourism providers.

KEY WORDS

Religious Tourism – Spiritual Centre – Architectural Splendour – Tamil Nadu - Devotees.

1. INTRODUCTION

Today tourism is the largest service industry in India, with a contribution of 6.23% to the National GDP and providing 8.78% of the total employment. Indian witness more than 5 million annual foreign tourist arrivals and 562 million domestic tourism visits. The tourism industry in India is expected to generate US \$ 275.5 million by 2018 at 9.4% annual growth rate. The Ministry of Tourism is the nodal agency for the development and promotion in India and maintaining the “Incredible India” campaign. The government has initiated various steps such as the Heritage Sites, development of places of tourist, interests and provision of clean and inexpensive Hotel accommodation for budget tourists. Madurai is becoming one of the most frequently visiting tourist spot for its richness in temples, good stay and availability of various facilities which make the tourist a home like feeling. Religious Tourism is one of aspects that is prevalent all over the country Religious Tourism are becoming increasingly important source of revenue and employment for the countries. Madurai is one among the famous pilgrim and tourism centre in India.

Madurai is also known as land of festivals, all the days of the calendar see atleast one festival. This is primarily due to the religious fervor of it. People celebrate their respective festivals with great job and show, live in harmony and are religiously tolerant. In this aspect the major religious sites located in Madurai are liked, Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple, Thirupparenkundram Temple, Alagar Kovil and Thirumohu. Hence the Religious Tourism in Madurai needs and expectations of tourists was chosen as for research.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Tourism has gained importance as the fastest growing industry in the world. Madurai is commonly referred as the land of temples for obvious reasons. The temples of Madurai are known as much for their architecture and Historical Splendour as they are for their sacredness. Millions of people including foreign tourists belonging to a cross-section of the society are visiting religious and cultural significance of the place Madurai. The tourists need variety of services in the tourist spot. Hence the attempt is made to understand the needs, expectations and difficulties of tourist pertaining to transportation, accommodation, food, shopping services and hospitality in the tourist spot at Madurai.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To showcase the religious tourism practices of Madurai.
2. To know the socio-economic profile of Tourists.
3. To know the factors which influenced the sample respondents to go to tour.
4. To find at the problems faced at the tourist place.
5. To identify the area to be developed in the religious spot.

4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Madurai is famous for pilgrimage centre. The main attractions are the famous Sri Meenakshi Temple. To study confined to the needs and expectations of tourist in Madurai. It is an attempt to analysis thoroughly the needs and expectations of tourists in the religious spot, level of satisfaction towards the facilities availed by them and problem faced by them.

5. METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on primary data only. The primary data were collected from various tourists visiting in Madurai. The feedback of 60 tourists was studied. The tourists visiting in Madurai were selected and given a questionnaire and their responses were collected.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

George Michell in his book temple towns of Tamilnadu referred detailed about the religious history of Tamil Nadu. He also refers that the importance Hindus religious site and how to people to worship of god. He refers important pilgrimage sites of Madurai.

Rabindra Seth entitled that seven major hurdles to faster tourism growth in India. They are land law's power, telecoms, roads, transports, air-ports and aviation policy. The author says that these are the most sticking hurdles facing our tourism industry.

B .V.K. Joseph had focused the major attractions include religious, beach resorts, backwaters, scenic beauty, historical monuments, cultural performances, handicrafts, wildlife sanctuaries, mountain resorts, natural vegetation, waterfalls, beeches, sanctuaries and others.

STATISTICAL TOOL AND TECHNIQUES

The data collected are put into different statistical tools such as percentage analysis and the Garrett Ranking Techniques have been used for data analysis.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF TOURIST

The socio-economic profile of the sample respondents of 8 parameters is presented in Table-1 to understand the customer profiles that is area, ASR, education, social status and income.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF TOURIST

PARAMETERS	DETAILS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Area	Urban	12	20
	Semi-urban	36	60
	Rural	12	20
Age	Under 25 yrs	07	11.67
	25-35 yrs	07	11.57
	35-45 yrs	13	21.66
	45 and above	33	55.00
Education	Up to HSC	24	40
	Graduate	12	20
	Post-Graduate	12	20
	Professional	12	20
Occupation	Govt. Employee	07	11.67
	Private Employee	18	30
	Student	12	20
	House wife	23	38.33
Income	Upto Rs.5,000	12	20
	Rs.5,500-Rs.10,000	06	10
	Rs.10,000-Rs.15,000	35	60
	Rs.15,000 and Above	06	10

Source: Primary Data

TABLE NO 1

Table 1 reveals that the perception of tourists 60% of the respondents are coming from semi-urban area and the rest of them belonging to urban and rural areas. 55 percent respondents are aged between 45 and above. The education details reveal that a majority of the respondents are

Higher Secondary school level education. The occupation shows that 38 percent of the respondents are housewife and 30 percent of them privately employed persons. The table also shows that about monthly income of the respondents 60% of the respondents are getting salary between Rs.10,000 and Rs.15,000/-

FACTORS INFLUENCED TO GO FOR TOUR

S.NO.	FACTORS	MEAN SCORE	RANK
1.	Pleasure	65.1	II
2.	Religious	67.04	I
3.	Interest in Art Forms	49.98	IV
4.	Meet Friends and Relatives	49.48	V
5.	Personal Excitement of Travelling	57.72	III
6.	Education	42.36	VI
7.	Conference and meetings	28.26	VII

Source: Primary Data

TABLE NO 2

From the table 2, it could be inferred that the main and for most factor which influenced the respondents to go to tourist places was religious purpose. The least factor which influenced the respondents was conferences and meetings.

PROBLEMS FACED AT THE TOURIST PLACE:

There are different problems faced by the tourists at the tourist spot. It was presented and ranked in Table 3.

PROBLEMS FACED AT THE TOURISTS PLACES

S. NO.	PROBLEMS AT THE TOURIST PLACE	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	TOTAL SCORE	RANK
	MARKS	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1		

S. NO.	PROBLEMS AT THE TOURIST PLACE	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	TOTAL SCORE	RANK
	MARKS	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1		
1.	Individual Nuisance	12	10	7	6	9	3	4	4	5	355	II
		108	80	49	36	45	12	12	8	5		
2.	Guide Facility	4	6	8	13	10	7	4	3	5	319	V
		36	48	56	78	50	28	12	06	5		
3.	Special Dharsan Counter	19	6	13	06	04	6	2	1	3	401	I
		171	48	91	36	20	24	06	02	3		
4.	Cheating by Traders	6	11	9	4	8	8	6	6	2	333	IV
		54	88	63	24	40	32	18	12	2		
5.	Behaviour of Traders	7	12	18	07	07	05	05	05	04	341	III
		63	96	56	42	35	20	15	10	04		
6.	Lack of cleanliness	8	07	06	5	9	6	12	05	2	317	VI
		72	56	42	30	45	24	35	10	2		
7.	Information availability of Tourist	2	3	6	7	5	6	10	14	07	240	VII
		18	24	42	42	25	24	30	28	07		
8.	Services of Restaurants	2	4	7	5	2	9	9	12	10	236	VIII
		18	32	49	30	10	36	27	24	10		
9	Parking Facilities	1	1	5	5	6	10	04	09	19	171	IX
		9	8	35	30	30	10	12	18	19		

Source: Primary Data

TABLE NO 3

Table 3 showed that out of nine problems faced at the tourist place, the main problem faced by them was Special Dharsan counter. Hence, it was placed in I rank. The problem which the sample respondents faced at the least was parking facilities. Hence it was concluded that the respondents did not like special counter and felt that cash should not speak in front of god.

AREAS TO BE IMPROVED IN THE TOURIST SPOT

Table 4 shows the areas to be developed in the Tourist Spot.

AREAS TO BE IMPROVED IN THE TOURIST SPOT

S. NO.	AREAS TO BE DEVELOPED	I	II	III	IV	V	TOTAL SCORE	RANK
	MARKS	9	8	7	6	5		
1.	Transport facility	06	14	14	11	15	165	III
		30	56	42	22	15		
2.	Infrastructure facility	07	06	12	17	18	147	V
		35	24	36	34	18		
3.	Reconstruction	5	09	14	18	13	152	IV
		25	36	42	36	13		
4.	Protection of environment	25	15	9	7	4	230	I
		125	60	27	14	4		
5.	Police protection	17	15	10	07	11	200	II
		85	60	30	14	11		

TABLE NO 4

Source: Primary Data

Table 4 depicted that majority of the respondents reported that the Tourism Department should protect the environment in Madurai. Since 'Protection of Environment' was the main area to be improved in the Religious Tourist Spot. It was given as I rank. There was ample "Infrastructure facility" available in the tourist spot. Therefore it was given as V rank.

SUGGESTIONS

1. In the religious spot, each and every one should be given equal rights to the Dharsan.
2. Government should formulate a strict policy on environment cleanliness.
3. Parking facilities and sufficient number of bio-toilet facilities should be provided.
4. To introduce the religious handbook on religious sites of Madurai.
5. To introduce the exclusive tours for lesser known religious sites.
6. To improve the safety and medical facilities for religious tourist.
7. Police protection should be given at the crowded area.

6. CONCLUSION

Madurai is an International Tourist Centre. Many foreign tourist peoples visit Madurai. Madurai is a place of great historical importance. Madurai is becoming one of the most frequently visiting tourist spot for its richness in temples, good stay and availability of various facilities. At present tourism is practiced only on the aspect of religious. It is important for the state government to organize Religious Tourist in a better way so that there repeat tourists in this sector of Tourism. Madurai being the religious capital of Tamil Nadu and it is the right place for the development of Religious Tourism.

Finally it must be accepted that tourism will flourish only in atmosphere of peace and cordiality. Tourist traffic will improve only when tourists are assure of a comfortable and better facilities. The suggestive measures outlined in the study when implemented will help Madurai to attract number frequency of the tourist.

7. REFERENCES

- [1] Bhatia, A.K., Introduction to Tourism, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2003.
- [2] Rajesh Singh, Pilgrimage Tourism, Sonali Publications, New Delhi, 2011 (Vol.I).
- [3] Rabindra Seth, Tourism – Problems & Prospects, Yojan, Vol.43, No.8, Aug.1999.
- [4] Joseph, B.V.K., Extent of Demand for the Tourist Products of Kerala Southern Economist, Vol.30, No.12, Oct. 18, 1991.
- [5] www.madurai.org.uk
- [6] www.maduraireligioustourism.org
- [7] www.mustseeindia.com