

Preferences for Destination Selection and Fulfillment of Religious Obligations: A Study of Pilgrimage Tourism Circuit (Velankanni, Nagore and Thirunallar) in Tamilnadu

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Abstract

"Pilgrimage tourism; rather it is a form of tourism motivated, partly or wholly by religious motives closely or loosely connected with holiday making or with journey undertaken for social,cultural or political reasons over short or long distances".The study would contribute to identify the need for pilgrimage tourism development in Tamilnadu with special reference to Velankanni, Nagore and Thirunallar. Tamilnadu has varied tourism destination which satisfy the needs and demands of almost every class of visitors.This study aims to study pilgrimage tourist motivators, tourist profile and problem and opportunities with respect of accommodation, accessibility, attractions and amenities in Velankanni,Nagore,Thirunallar. The first two holy sites are located in the state of Tamilnadu and the last one is located in Karikal as one of the enclaves of the UT of Puducherry. This study aims to suggest measures to make pilgrimage tourism economically viable and suggest appropriate and effective promotional strategy for promoting pilgrimage tourism inVelankanni,Nagore,Thirunallar.the analysis part includes anova,chi square,t-test,cross- tabs, friedman mean rank test.results were shown and interpretations had written in this article. this article explains the Infrastructural facilities and pilgrimage tourism avenues in Tamilnadu This study aims to suggest measures to make pilgrimage tourism economically viable and suggest appropriate and effective promotional strategy for promoting pilgrimage tourism inVelankanni,Nagore,Thirunallar.the present study has focused upon the three prominent pilgrimage sites in South India, i.e. Velankanni, Nagore and Thirunallar.

Index terms— Pilgrimage tourism, Strategy, Promoting,

1 INTRODUCTION

ourism industry is globally known for its diversity and plurality in terms of the product portfolios. One of the powerful forms of tourism is pilgrimage that fuels unprecedented demand for the rise of the growth of domestic tourism worldwide. India is one of the finest countries with having rich civilization and culture and travelling to the holy shrines is an integral part of the life of the people belonging to all the principal religions in India. More than 70 per cent of the visitors do pay their trips to the holy places and this critical mass of the Author : Research scholar, Department of tourism,School of management. Pondicherry university, India. E-mail : id-vijaynnd886@gmail.com domestic tourism determines the huge movement of people and their travel and hospitality requirements during their sojourns at the respective sites. Having been inspired with the remarkable growth of domestic tourism backed largely by the motive for pilgrimage activities, the present study has focused upon the three prominent pilgrimage sites in South India, i.e. Velankanni, Nagore and Thirunallar. The first

two holy sites are located in the state of Tamilnadu and the last one is located in Karikal as one of the enclaves of the UT of Puducherry.

2 II.

3 HYPOTHESES

? H01: On the criterion of preferences of destinations selection and fulfillment of religious obligations, no significant of mean differences exist between the pilgrims/ tourists who visit ONCE and MORE THAN ONCE to the pilgrim tourism circuits in Tamil Nadu. ? H02: No significant differences of experience of sample tourist respondents across the duration of stay on the key destination selection determinants ? H03: No significant associations are established between the services across the category of accommodations, key communication network and key amenities and selection of hotel and frequency of visit.

III.

4 Objectives of The Study

The study has made an attempt ? To develop a theoretical background by exploring the relevant gap in the study; ? To find out the preferences for visiting the pilgrimage sites (Velankanni, Nagore and Thirunallar); ? To study the relationship between preferences for selecting the destinations and the fulfillment of religious objectives ? To present the tourist arrivals and its corresponding infrastructure development ; ? To assess the tangible and intangible attributes of these destinations supporting directly and indirectly to the pilgrimage tourism ; and ? To suggest ways and means to position pilgrimage tourism as one of the vibrant form in Tamil Nadu.

IV.

5 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Pilgrimage Tourism is a long journey for search of knowledge and enlightenment ??Gill ,1999). Pilgrimage Tourism in India is almost as old as Indian civilization (Singh, 1977, is motivated by faith or religious reasons for centuries (Priya, 2001); and becomes the functional and symbolic of traditional religious practices. Pilgrims are the special tourists whose purpose is to visit the place and get involved in the religious activities ??Sanjay,1985). Differences in behavioral attributes like perception, attitudes and motives vary according to the cultural background and personality. Majority of domestic tourists are pilgrimage tourists, whose behaviors depend on the experience about the pilgrimage sites (Pauline, 1966).

There is a close relationship of between religious needs and facilities at the pilgrimage tourism centers (Rathod, 1999). Local hospitality is one of the most important components of pilgrimage tourism and the hospitality industry thrives on service quality and facilities to ensure customer's satisfaction. ??Tomasi, 2002). Pilgrimage tourism is a leisure-oriented travel and recreation and religious needs are the elements of pilgrimage tourism ??Bajpai, 1954). Pilgrim sites tend to deviate from their original purposes ??Tyraowski, 1994). Pilgrimage tourism as a form of travel provides opportunities for people to visit sacred places and is a feature common to almost all societies ??Kiran,1991). The facilities such as accommodation, transportation, darshan, food and drinking water, shopping are essential at the pilgrimage sites center and the behaviour of the local people with the pilgrims is also important ??Rathod,1999). Pilgrims do travel to pilgrimage site by taking various modes of transportation and the selection of transportation depends on the cost, speed and safety ??Pauline,1966). Hospitality is one of the most important components of pilgrimage tourism industry to satisfy the tourist expectations ??Sharma, 1998).

In many regions, pilgrimage tourism thrives only due to the presence of the hospitality industry ??Aziz,1985) Pilgrimage to Mecca is increasing due to the travel itinerary, communication network, infrastructure and public transport ??Rana, 2003). Pilgrimage sites are like any other tourism destinations and they meet the needs of both religious believers and more general holidaymakers ??SHUO, 1993). Adequate facilities and amenities would lead to the rise of pilgrimage tourism in Islamic countries (Shakiry, 2001). Religious tourism faces serious hurdles like poor tourism infrastructure (Nevatia, 2001).

V.

6 METHODOLOGY

VI.

7 Results

? The mean differences on the accommodation services between the two groups of sample tourist respondents are significantly different in case of selection of accommodation and restaurant, whereas the hypothesis is not rejected in case of other elements of accommodation services such as reception upon arrival, reservation procedures, front office staff, personal hygiene and room and food services. ? The hypothesis titled "no mean differences exist between those pilgrims who visit once and more than once while transportation services are taken into consideration" is not rejected in case of the components of transport services, such as wellconnected

by road transport, operation of government/private bus services regularly, reasonable bus fare, improvement of rail connectivity, regular buses from major towns and cities of Tamil Nadu and over congestion of buses.

? The hypothesis that is "two groups of sample tourist respondents do not significantly differ while experiencing the basic Services as one of the preferences for destination selection" is rejected in respect of banks and ATM services with .004 and not rejected in case of other core parts of the basic services such as road condition, road maintenance, approach roads, parking space, traffic arrangement and health services. ? The hypothesis that is entitled as there are no significant mean differences between sample tourist respondents who visit once or more than once when they find the standard of key amenities is not rejected in case of all the key aspects of amenities determining the experience of the pilgrims at the religious sites. The elements which are rejected include purified drinking water facilities, provision of rest shed, toilet and wash rooms, cloak rooms, shopping centres, hygienic and clean, safety & security, police outpost, pleasant place and peaceful place ? The hypothesis is titled as religious duties as the major driving motivational forces stimulating the religious oriented people to undertake travel, the mean experience of sample respondents is not

The process of research design includes the exploratory study consisting of literature survey and indepth interview. The sampling method selected for the study is "convenience sample" in the non-probability category. As many as 500 tourists were interviewed at the sites. The questionnaire has two parts highlighting on the demographic profiles of the respondents and various dimensions of pilgrimage tourism with regard to Nagore, Thirunallar and Velankanni. These statements were measured through the five point Likert scales. The sources of data collection consist of both primary and secondary sources. Data analysis was done by using mean and standard deviation along with Levine's independent t test, chi-square and Anova test. significantly difference on each element representing the religious obligations.

The significance of the test has rejected all the indicators signifying the fulfillment of religious obligations. These elements include hospitable and helpful people, rituals as per the tradition and custom, no obstruction of wearing any modern dress, colourful and eventful festivals, more enjoyment during festivals and delightful local cuisine or food.

? The hypothesis that is titled as there is no significant differences between the three groups of sample tourist respondents on experiencing the basic infrastructure is rejected with 0.05 per cent degree of significance. The elements which are rejected with .045, .001, .000, .012, .000 and .002 include road condition, maintenance, banks and ATM services, approach roads, parking areas and traffic management . One element health services are not rejected with the significance level of .663. ? The hypothesis is stated as there is no significant differences across the sample respondents on the amenities provided to the pilgrims for comfortable and this hypothesis is rejected in case of all the element of selected amenities at the three respective religious sites , excepting cloak room and shopping centre facilities.

? The hypothesis is stated as there is no significant differences across the sample respondents on the amenities provided to the pilgrims for comfortable and this hypothesis is rejected in case of the element of selected amenities such as purified drinking water, rest shed, toilet and wash rooms and hygienic and clean at the three respective religious sites , excepting cloak room and shopping centre facilities. ? The hypothesis is titled as "significant differences of the three groups of sample respondents do not exist on the criterion of law and order as the key destination selection determinants" . The hypothesis is rejected in case of all the related elements representing the law and order situations at the religious sites, whereas the hypothesis is rejected the statement "I do not face any difficulty in moving alone or with family members" ? Differences of experiences between the sample respondents are not significant while taking religious obligations as one of the criterion for the destination selection. The hypothesis is rejected with .000, .003, .002, .012 and .004 in case of rituals, no obstruction, festivals and coincidence with festivals, whereas the hypothesis is not rejected in case of hospitable and helpful people with .390 significance level.) made an expenditure of Rs. 5,000 and less during their visit to their respective pilgrim site, that is followed by 142 (28.4%) with an expenditure of Rs.5001-Rs.10,000 and 35 (7 %) with an expenditure of Rs.15,001 and above. ? Majority of the respondents 260 (52.0%) visited their respective holy sites with family and friends, that is followed by 142 (28.4%) and 98 (19.6%) number of respondents paid their visit with their affinity groups.

? A little more than forty per cent of the respondents 216 (43.2%) stayed in the lodges and guesthouses as against a little more than one fourth of the respondents 144 (28.8%) preferred to stay in the hotel. On the other hand, one fourth of the respondents 126 (25.2%) sojourned at the paying guest place and an insignificant number of respondents 14 (2.8%) could stay with their friends and relatives during their visit.

? Across the three groups on the basis of duration of stay, a little less than half of the sample respondents 241 (48.2 %) could stay at the religious sites about 1-3 days as compared to other two groups. A little more than one fourth 141 (28.2%) and a little less than one fourth of them could stay 1-6 days and one week and more respectively. ? The pilgrims are not satisfied with existing facilities provided at pilgrimage sites, food and drinking water facilities also. Shopping facilities and about the personal safety the pilgrims seem to be satisfactory.

IX.

8 Suggestive Measures and Interventions

? It is suggested that reception upon arrival, reservation procedures, front office staff, personal hygiene and room and food services are some of the critical elements of improving the quality of accommodation services.

Both the government and private tourism service providers should seriously look into the shortcomings that may impede the growth of pilgrimage tourism in the tourism circuit. ? It is strongly suggested that the transport network highlighting on the connectivity, operation, regularity and reasonable fare should be improved round the year and more specifically, during the festive occasions. It is also suggested that transport tariff should be reasonable to the pilgrims as majority of them are budget category of tourists. The study has also recommended that government should evolve some mechanisms to subsidize the cost of visiting these holy pilgrim sites in Tamil Nadu. More particularly, domestic tourists with the proof of Below Poverty Line (BPL) should be provided with transport subsidy as there is no difference of experience of the first time and repeat visitors with regard to the improvement of transport network and other ancillary benefits.

? The findings of the study have suggested for the improvement of basic facilities such as road, parking areas, traffic and health services. Since there is a strong relationship between preferences for destination selection and improvement in basic services, efforts should be made at the higher level of the government administration to help build the infrastructure at all three sites. When these three religious sites have gained visibility worldwide, the Government of Tamil Nadu can take increase the domestic tourist arrivals by showcasing the pilgrim tourism circuits. ? The study has also found insufficient provisions for purified drinking water facilities, rest shed, toilet and wash rooms, cloak rooms, shopping centres, hygienic and clean, safety & security and police and it is suggested to the Government to gear up with adequate budgetary outlays to make the amenities of the three places more visitor friendly, thereby making the place more pleasant and peaceful as the symbol of spiritualism. As such, most of the holy shrines and pilgrimage sites are facing the problem of unhygienic, litter, crime, contaminated water. Thus, approaches should be made to help the religious sites overcome the problem of maintaining the amenities with the direct intervention of the PWD, Health Department, Home Department, etc and the Ministry of Tourism should take the lead role in bringing all them into one umbrella resolve the chronic problem. ? Religious duties as the major driving motivational forces stimulating the religious oriented people to undertake travel, the mean experience of sample respondents is not significantly difference on each element representing the religious obligations. Thus, the study is very unique in finding the linkage between the religious obligations of the pilgrims and sanctified atmosphere of the religious sites. Fortunately, all these three places have preserved the sanctity and purity of the places from the religious perspectives for which a steady stream of visitors are arriving into these holy places irrespective of several personal and destination related constraints. ? Since the duration-of-stay is a critical independent factor influencing the experience of the visitors at the religious sites; the study has found the differences of experiences of the sojourners on basic infrastructure. Moreover, religious tourists are generally long-haul visitors and their length-of-stay is relatively more due to their attachment to the religious places. With this backdrop, the study has suggested to ensure the improvement of infrastructure to help the pilgrims stay comfortably. ? The study has found the differences of experiences of pilgrims on the amenities at the three religious sites, it is suggested that the existing provisions of amenities are extremely inadequate and more provisions should be made to improve the condition of the amenities, thereby making tourists feel at home and their stay comfort and memorable. ? Law and order is one of the socio-political risk factors that mostly hamper the tourism business whether it is special interest or common interest tourism. The study has found out sharp differences of experience of the pilgrims about the law and order situation at these three religious sites. Thus, it is suggested that the government should be more vigilant in enforcing the law and order when these three places receive huge number of tourist traffic during the festivals and other auspicious occasions. More police outpost and the concept of community police should be introduced to help maintain the law and order in a sustainable way.

? The are differences of experience of the sample tourist respondents on many of the elements signifying the religious obligations. Therefore, it is suggested that the ultimate purpose of visiting these three sites should be respected since the performing rituals and offering prayers are some of the activities that most of the pilgrims do at the sites. Efforts should be made to inspire the people and respect the emotional sentiments and attachment to the places. ? While rejecting the most of the elements in the hypothesis, the study has strongly suggested for an effective communication network so as to ensure the operation of the transport more regular, affordable, reliable and adoptable. ? The lack of association between the service attributes of the accommodation and selection of the types of hotel has led to providing a critical thought of bring about a radical change in the operation of the accommodation units at these three religious sites. It is suggested that government should enhance the capacity of the frontline staff in the hotel by conducting regular training programme. More particularly, soft skills and personal grooming and etiquette should be the agenda of the training programme, thereby imbibing the professional culture in the hospitality sector. ? When the results showed no association between the frequency of visit and primary facilities, it is quite pertinent to suggest that government should take note of this finding and be proactive in making adequate provisions of primary facilities for the comfort and safety of the pilgrims visiting the religious sites. ? The Department of Tourism, Govt. of Puducherry and Tamil Nadu should promote the pilgrim tourism circuit with the aid of travel magazines, brochures/ newspaper. As it seems from the mean rank results that preference of the visitors to collect travel related information is high. ? Since it is revealed that timely services is the first rank preference factor with the test of significance, thus, all the service providers should seriously ponder over and find the ways to make efficient and effective time services at the hotel, restaurant, bus stand, etc. ? As the sample respondents preferred the easy reservation procedures to reserve the room, perhaps the present reservation methods are not as effective as it is desired for the industry. Thus, all

accommodation operators should take cognizance of it and imbibe professionalism along with technology -driven into the reservation procedures. ? It is expected that online transfer would be the highest preference for making the payment for travel services as majority of the visitors are tech-savvy or they get it done through some body. The process of online transfer services should be encouraged and clients should be given discount when they make the payment through online. ? Since comfort has become the highest preference for the visitors while visiting these religious sites, transport service providers should pay attentions to improve the comfort of the passengers along with other factors such regularity, affordability, safety, behaviour of staff, easy payment and quick alternative . ? The results of Friedman mean rank has made the fulfillment of long-cherished desire as the highest preferred mean rank factor, it is in the line of the common understanding of selecting the pilgrimage center. However, other six factors have also been preferred while selecting these three religious places. Thus, it is suggested that government administration and private tourism establishment should be serious concerned for the long-cherished desire that is quite sensitive, emotional and personal.

X.

9 Conclusion

The data presented in this chapter indicate the potential for pilgrimage tourism development in Velankanni, Nagore and Thirunallar.

.although development to date has been limited to few major sites,the analysis shows that it should be possible to spread the development of pilgrimage tourism to more parts of the region.particularly taking into account the potential for combining pilgrimage tourism with cultural and the potential for developing new age or pilgrimage tourism it should be possible to use the major anchor sites identified to stimulated regional development. Realizing this potential will clearly require a high level of inter municipal co-opreation given the extent of the pilgrimage tourism religions identified.in addition the importance of pilgrimage tourism supply factors identified in the research shows the need for extensive collaboration between the public sector,which is responsible for policy and promotion the church which manages most of the sites,and the tourism sector which provides the supporting facilities this underlines the impotance of net working in the future development of pilgrimage tourism in Velankanni, Nagore and Thirunallar.At present however there is a clear distinction between a more local pilgrimage tourism currently stimulated by pilgrimage motives and more globalized pilgrimage tourism.these two have very different motivations and different needs as well as different patterens of activity in the destination.in many respects the local pilgrimage tourism offers relatively little scope for further pilgrimage tourism development,particularly as the current generation of pilgrims ages and the enthusiasm for traditional religion wanes among young people.in developing new products and new markets there fore the pilgrimage tourism attractions of the region should think more seriously about the pilgrimage tourism elements of current demand and in particular the development of new products of emerging niches suchn as pilgrimage tourism. ¹

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? There are no significant associations between quality of services, reception of upon arrivals, prompt in settling the bills, personal hygiene and experience traffic and types of hotels selected by the sample tourist respondents. The results of Pearson Chi-Square test do reject the hypothesis in case of quality of services, reception, reservation procedures, prompt in settling bills, personal hygiene and expensive tariff and its association with the preferences of selecting types of accommodation.

? There are no significant associations between road condition, Road Maintenance , Banks and ATM, Approach Roads, Parking , Parking Arrangement, Health Services and frequency of visit. The test results of Pearson Chi-Square test have not rejected the association of frequency of visits with road condition, maintenance, banks and ATM, parking areas, parking arrangements and health services. The results further explained that pilgrims are obliged to travel to these religious sites irrespective of all this factors. ? There are no significant associations between drinking water , rest shed , toilet & wash rooms, cloak services, shopping centre , hygienic & clean and frequency of visit . The hypothesis is not rejected since the frequency of visits is independent of the amenities at the religious sites as Pearson Chi-square test results revealed. ? The test results of the Friedman mean rank revealed that the difference of the mean rank values is validated hypothetically and news paper article has become the highest mean rank factor with the mean rank 3.66. Thus, asymp. Sig. is less than 0.05, the Friedman test results support the differences of rank value of all the six sources of collecting information while making travel plan to these religious sites. ? The Friedman mean rank results showed that all the elements have influenced the preference for selection of accommodation . However, easy reservation with the mean rank value 3.36 becomes the highest rank that maximum influences the preference for the selection of accommodation. The significance of the results is further validated with the symp. Sig. .000 that is less than 0.05. ? VII. Findings ? As many as 368 male tourist respondents were interviewed for the study as against 132 female respondents. Across the three groups of respondents on the basis of age consisted of 168 (33.6 %) of below 25 year, 251 (50.2 %) of 26-50 years and 81 (16.2 %) . ? Out of the sample respondents, majority of the respondents 341 (68.2 %) were married, followed by 111 (22.2%) were unmarried and 48 (9.6%) were bachelor and spinster respectively. ? Monthly income of the three categories of respondents clearly reflected that 223 (44.6%) had sum of rupees 10,000 as monthly income, followed by 166 (33.2%) with a range between Rs. 10,001 and Rs. 20,000 monthly income and 111 (22.2 %) with a monthly income of Rs.20,001 and above. ? Across the three categories of sample respondents, majority of them 266 (53.2%

[Note: ? The experiences on the communication network that were derived by the pilgrims/ tourists while visiting the pilgrim tourism sites are not significantly different.]

Figure 1:

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