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An Assessment of Tourist Awareness Regarding Major Tourism Destinations in Tamil Nadu

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Abstract: Tourism refers to the provisional, interim movement of people from their routine activities and their day-to-day life-style in the places of residence and work to the places or destinations which are new to them and provide memorable experiences in their life journey. Destinations may fall based on various factors of the tourists such as economic conditions, status, life-style and exposure they wish to gain in their life. Tourists want to visit destinations within their national boundary may referred as Domestic tourism and outside the nation referred as International or Foreign tourism.

Keywords: Tourism, Tourist Awareness, Tourist Attractions, Destinations, Tourism infrastructures, Accommodation, Transport, Travel Agents, Tourism Development.

1. Introduction

Tourism is an act involving a multifaceted combination of material and psychological elements. The material ones are accommodation, transportation, the attractions and entertainment available. The psychological factors include a wide range of attitudes and expectations. Tourism can provide various employment opportunities to the people in a direct and indirect manners. It promotes the economical position of the particular tourist attractions, generates income to the local sellers, develops and maintains infrastructure and interacts with the new minds and souls.

Tourist attractions are differed from one to another in historical, cultural, religious and economic aspects. World offers so many new dimensions to the humanity. Tourism reveals all the dimensions to experience by the humanity. The success of the tourism depends upon not only the tourist attractions and destinations rather it depends on the awareness level of attractions at the destination and the sources of information which are available to the tourists.

2. Statement of the Problem

In South India, especially the state called Tamil Nadu which possess much tourist attractions and destination. Tourists must have all the information about the attractions and its benefits. In this modern era, internet provides plenty of tourist information to the potential users. Apart from that huge number of tourism resources such as travel agents, tourists' travel blogs, Government portal offer a wide range of information to the prospective tourists. The availability of information require accuracy, authenticated and accessible and most importantly enough for preparing the travel plan. Zimik and Barman (2024) Indeed, tourists prefer only popular destinations based on the available resources and many destinations which are not familiar to them but which possess plenty of tourism activities and amenities.

The present study focused on to identify the awareness level of the tourists of selected tourist attractions in Tamil Nadu and the factors which influence that awareness.

3. Review of Literature

3.1 Destination Image and Tourist Awareness

Hunt (1975) examined the relationship between tourism development and the images of destinations that are not traditionally recognised as major tourist centres. His work offers an early foundation for knowing the role of

destination image in attracting tourists. Longchar and Imsong (2023) Destination awareness and destination image are even though related but both are distinct concepts: awareness creates recognition and knowledge of a place, whereas image refers to the perceptions and associations attached to it.

3.2 Destination Image Formation

Gartner (1993) explained that destination image formation involves different information sources and image-forming agents. The study is relevant to tourist awareness because promotional activities, travel information, personal experiences, and other sources can shape tourists' understanding of destinations.

3.3 Tourism Marketing and Destination Promotion

Kotler, Haider, and Rein (1993) discussed the application of marketing principles to places and regions. Their work highlights the importance of identifying target audiences, communicating destination strengths, and developing a favourable image. Bhattacharjee (2024) These principles can be applied to Tamil Nadu's tourism destinations to examine how promotional strategies influence awareness.

3.4 Tourism and Sustainable Development

The World Tourism Organization and United Nations Environment Programme (2005) addressed sustainable tourism development and the importance of integrating economic, environmental, and socio-cultural considerations. Improving awareness of lesser-known destinations may contribute to more balanced visitor distribution when supported by adequate infrastructure, community participation, and environmental management.

3.5 Research Gap

The reviewed literature offers the theoretical foundations for understanding destination image, tourism marketing, information sources, destination branding, and sustainable tourism. However, these extensive concepts do not, by themselves, establish the current awareness level of tourists regarding selected Tamil Nadu attractions.

The proposed study seeks to address this experiential question by investigative tourist awareness across different categories of attractions in Tamil Nadu and investigating its association with demographic characteristics, travel experience, and information sources.

4. Research Objectives

The primary objectives of the study are:

1. To assess the level of awareness among tourists regarding selected tourist attractions in Tamil Nadu.
2. To identify the major sources through which tourists obtain information about tourist destinations.
3. To examine tourists' awareness of heritage, religious, cultural, coastal, hill-station, and nature-based attractions.
4. To examine the relationship between digital information exposure and awareness of tourist destinations.
5. To suggest appropriate promotional measures for improving awareness of tourist attractions in Tamil Nadu.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The study may adopt a descriptive and analytical research design. The descriptive component will assess awareness levels, while the analytical component will examine relationships between awareness and selected explanatory variables.

5.2 Study Area

The geographical focus is Tamil Nadu, situated within the broader tourism region of South India. The study may cover selected destinations representing different tourism categories.

The destinations include:

- Heritage tourism: Mamallapuram and Thanjavur.
- Religious tourism: Madurai and Rameswaram.
- Hill and nature tourism: Ooty and Kodaikanal.
- Coastal and scenic tourism: Kanyakumari and selected coastal destinations.
- Urban and cultural tourism: Chennai.

These locations are suggested sampling sites rather than a final list. The researcher should select destinations according to accessibility, research resources, visitor characteristics, and the intended geographical coverage.

5.3 Sources of Data

Primary data: Primary data may be collected from tourists using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire should cover destination recognition, knowledge of attractions, information sources, previous visits, travel preferences, and demographic characteristics.

Secondary data: Secondary information may be obtained from Tamil Nadu Tourism, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, official destination websites, academic journals, tourism reports, and relevant books.

5.4 Sampling Design

A suitable sampling method should be selected according to the availability of a sampling frame and the practical conditions at each destination. Stratified sampling may be appropriate where tourists can be grouped by destination or visitor category. If respondents are recruited at convenient locations, convenience sampling may be used, but its limitations must be clearly acknowledged.

The sample size should be determined based on the research objectives, expected variability, confidence level, margin of error, and available resources. A pilot study can help refine the questionnaire and assess the feasibility of the proposed design.

5.5 Statistical Tools

Toos are applied based on its necessities:

- Percentage analysis to pronounce awareness and information sources.
- Chi-square tests to examine associations between categorical variables.

6. Results of the Study:

6.1. Demographic factors: Gender-based data:

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	22	22%
Female	78	78%
Total	**100**	**100%**

Source: Primary Data

6.2. Level of Awareness:

Sources	Frequency	Percentage
Social media	76	76%
Travel websites	8	8%
Friends and relatives	10	10%
Travel agents	6	6%
Total	**100**	**100%**

7. Suggestions

Subject to confirmation by the research findings, the following measures may be considered:

1. Improve the convenience, accurate and accessible information through official websites, social media, and digital maps.

2. Offer information campaigns for destinations that are suitable for potential visitors and have satisfactory infrastructure.

3. Destination based information is being relevant and should available in local and regional languages and English to provide the needs of various visitor groups.

8. Conclusion

Tourist awareness is significant subject in tourism research because knowledge of accessible attractions can stimulus destination consideration and travel planning. Tamil Nadu offers wide range of tourism resources across heritage, religion, culture, coastal landscapes, and hill stations.

The proposed study offers a framework for examining tourist awareness in Tamil Nadu. By merging a planned questionnaire with appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, the research can assess destination recognition, information sources, and relationships between awareness and visitor characteristics.

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