

Economic Perspectiveness of Tourism Development in Rameswaram in Tamilnadu Under the Globalization Period

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Abstract: *Rameswaram offers rail bridge tourism, disaster tourism and ride in backwater up to Dhanuskodi. Rameswaram has changed over the years. Fifteen years ago, there were just four lodges in the study area. Now there are around 200. People are converting their homes into lodges. Due to that local public living standard has been increased. The state has assumed the high status in order to attract the maximum tourists and large number of tourism development activities in Rameswaram. The international tourist arrival in Rameswaram has been increased year on year.*

Keywords: Rail bridge tourism, Disaster tourism, Priceless treasure and Rameswaram

1. Introduction

Rameswaram is perhaps the only place in the country where the rail route to the temple town offers a lifelong memorable experience. As the train slowly crosses the railway bridge connecting the Indian mainland and the Pamban Island in Rameswaram, one is fascinated looking at the sea below. This turns into thrill as the train enters the 1941-built cantilever railway bridge that opens upwards in the middle for ships to pass under. A slight fear creeps in when one remembers the story of the washing away of the Boat Mail train with over 110 passengers and the Dhanuskodi some kilometers away from Rameswaram by a huge tidal wave in 1964. Traditionally a pilgrimage centre, Rameswaram offers rail bridge tourism, disaster tourism (visit to 'ghost town' Dhanuskodi gobbled up by sea in 1964); a ride in backwater up to Dhanuskodi; water sports tourism and Kalam tourism (visit to former Indian President A.P.J.Abdul Kalam's home-cum-museum and his burial site).

2. Historical Legend of Rameswaram

"The attitude of pilgrims has changed over the years. They are on the lookout for invigorating experiences," Michael Dass Fernando, proprietor of Holy Island Water Sports Rental Services, told IANS. The company operates a water sports park offering rides like Jet Ski, kayak, banana ride, stand-up board and swan boat services and land-based games like Columbus ride, water ball and others. "After praying at the Rameswaram temple, people want to explore. Rameswaram has changed over the years. Fifteen years ago, there were just four lodges. Now there are around 200. People are converting their homes into lodges," Fernando said. Though several new star hotels have come up, the 56-room Hotel Tamil Nadu, on the sea shore and near the main temple, is strongly recommended. The hotel's relatively low tariff, the greenery, the big children's play area with swings and slides, (where ducks give you a welcome peck, and where pigeons of every shade roost) would make the stay memorable for everyone. One can also watch the fishing boats going to the jetty, while enjoying the morning breeze with a hot cup of coffee. A half hour boat ride is available

outside the hotel. "The days are not far off when corporate start holding their conferences here as there is something for everybody," M. Guneswaran, manager, Hotel Tamil Nadu, told IANS. Even for the not-so-religious, the holy dip in the sea and the bath at the 22 holy 'theerthams' (wells) in the Ramanathaswamy temple itself is an experience. The temple has the world's longest corridor with 1,212 pillars. The island has many temples and other holy places which, as per legend, are associated with Lord Rama and his efforts in building a stone bridge across the sea to Lanka to bring back Sita. Auto rickshaw drivers offer different packages to visit Ramar Padam, the place where Lord Rama stood and surveyed the area below to build the bridge to Lanka. One can also get the picturesque view of the island from that spot. According to legend, Lord Rama broke the bridge that he and his monkey army built to Lanka with his bow. Hence the place got its name Dhanush (bow) Kodi (end). The easiest way to reach Dhanuskodi is to take an auto rickshaw which would stop a few kilometers from the ghost town. There one can hop into a van (Rs.150 per head) which would ride on the backwater wet sand. The ride helps to see beautiful birds hopping around the sand and some stretches of the erstwhile railway track. The van stops where the Dhanuskodi railway station used to be.

There are some stalls selling tender coconut water, sea shells, fried fish and the like. "The three tall towers are the support structures for the water tank for the steam engines," Illangaian, a sea shell shop owner, told IANS. The enormity of the loss sinks in as one sees the ruins of a post office, church, customs office, port office and a Murugan temple.

The big post office building is now filled with white sand. "Many submerged structures came to our view briefly when the sea water receded several meters during the 2004 tsunami," Illangaian told IANS. Though termed a ghost town, it is home to around 350 huts and around 600 people. Illangaian wife Tamil Selvi told IANS that the increase in tourist traffic has led to higher incomes for people. At the sea, one can see a confluence of contrast: the calm Bay of Bengal and the rough Indian Ocean.

Global tourism scenario

Globally, tourism possesses a very pertinent place in the economies of both developed and developing countries.¹³ Tourism has become the world largest exporting industry. In the year 2003, according to the World Tourism Organization, about 694 million tourists travelled internationally and spent about US \$ 514.4 million. Tourism sector accounts for the 13 per cent of the total World exports. In the same year (2003) International tourism receipts represented approximately 6 per cent of the World-wide exports of goods and services (as expressed in terms of US \$). When considering service exports exclusively, the share of tourism exports increases to nearly 30 per cent. Around 6 per cent of World's working population is employed in tourism Industry. According to an estimate about 11 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP) comes from tourism. International tourism flows across frontiers is about 762.5 million in the year 2004 where as the domestic tourism flows are estimated to be 10 times greater. It comprises different sectors including lodging, boarding, transportation and entertainment. Precisely, it may be stated that tourism is an outcome of the rapid urbanization and industrialization, speedy change in life style of people's, standard of living, technological advancement and income followed by changing global view of growing fascination towards a culture of leisure.

The international tourist arrival across the world as a whole has been noticed an increase since 1951. The incessantly rise

has been very much appreciable and enthusiastic which is highly expanding and sprawling in all directions from east to west and north to south and contributing to one of the world's largest industry which is playing a decisive role in order to strength the world economy.

3. Perspectiveness of Tourism Development

The associated figures depict that there were 29 million tourists in 1951 which has reached up to 200 millions in 1981, 550 million during 1995, about 668.8 million in 2003 and more than 762.5 million during 2004 (**Table 1**). So, the tourist numbers has increased manifolds over a period of last 50 years. It could be claimed that if the same trends of phenomenal increase of growth rate remained continue the gigantic numbers would as much as 1000 million by 2011 A.D., by which time tourism would become perhaps the world's largest industry leaving behind the present top world oil industry with highly returned economic growth rate. Therefore, keeping in view the global importance of tourism, the United Nations General Assembly in December 1998 declared the year 2002, the "Year of Ecotourism".

The international tourist arrival in India in the year 2004 were 34,57,477 as compared to 27,26,214 in 2003 registering an increase of 26.8 per cent (**Table 1**) out of 762.5 millions world tourist arrivals in 2004.

Table 1: International tourist inflow worldwide during 1995-2004

| Region | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| World | | | | | | | | | | |
| Arrivals | 550 | 597 | 618 | 627 | 652 | 687 | 684 | 703 | 668.8 | 762.5 |
| % Annual Change | -- | 8.5 | 3.5 | 1.3 | 4.1 | 5.4 | -0.5 | 2.7 | -1.5 | 10.7 |
| Africa | | | | | | | | | | |
| Arrivals | 20.0 | 21.8 | 23.2 | 24.9 | 26.2 | 27.4 | 28.3 | 29.1 | 30.6 | 33.2 |
| % Annual Change | 5.8 | 9.0 | 6.4 | 7.3 | 5.2 | 4.6 | 3.3 | 2.8 | 3.9 | 8.2 |
| Americas | | | | | | | | | | |
| Arrivals | 109 | 115.2 | 117 | 120 | 122 | 128.0 | 120 | 115 | 113.1 | 125.7 |
| % Annual Change | 3.8 | 5.9 | 1.2 | 2.5 | 2.3 | 4.7 | -6.1 | -4.4 | -3.1 | 11.1 |
| Asia and the Pacific | | | | | | | | | | |
| Arrivals | 86 | 93.4 | 93.1 | 93.2 | 103 | 115 | 121.1 | 131 | 119.6 | 152.9 |
| % Annual Change | 6.1 | 8.6 | -0.3 | 0.1 | 10.1 | 12.4 | 5.0 | 8.4 | -8.8 | 27.8 |
| Europe | | | | | | | | | | |
| Arrivals | 322.3 | 354 | 371 | 374 | 381 | 393 | 391 | 400 | 395.9 | 415.2 |
| % Annual Change | -3.7 | 9.7 | 4.9 | 0.7 | 1.8 | 3.2 | -0.5 | 2.3 | -0.6 | 4.9 |
| Middle East | | | | | | | | | | |
| Arrivals | 14 | 13.3 | 14.3 | 15.1 | 20.5 | 24.0 | 23.6 | 27.6 | 29.6 | 35.6 |
| % Annual Change | 22.5 | -2.2 | 7.5 | 5.6 | 35.8 | 17.1 | -1.7 | 16.9 | 3.2 | 20.5 |
| India | | | | | | | | | | |
| Arrivals | 2.1 | 2.3 | 2.4 | 2.4 | 2.5 | 2.6 | 2.5 | 2.4 | 2.7 | 3.5 |
| % Annual Change | 12.6 | 7.7 | 3.8 | -0.7 | 5.2 | 6.7 | -4.2 | -6.0 | 14.3 | 26.8 |
| Share of India (IN %) | 0.39 | 0.38 | 0.38 | 0.38 | 0.38 | 0.39 | 0.37 | 0.34 | 0.39 | 0.45 |

Source: Tourism Department 2014.

4. Conclusion

Tamil Nadu, especially its coastal areas are unique and priceless treasure of India with tourism point of view. The rich and vast nature wealth like flora, fauna and water resources almost available in the lakes and beaches from this region must be carefully protected and preserved so that tourism potential of the region may be harnessed and tapped

properly and its associated activities may also be developed on large scale in order to provide the livelihood security to local people residing in these areas and to boost the local economy. With regard to tourism development, the state has assumed the high status in order to attract the maximum tourists and large number of tourism development activities is rapidly taking place because of the strategic location of its tourist destinations.

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