

**PERCEPTIONS OF TOURISTS TOWARDS TOURISM SERVICES IN THANJAVUR DISTRICT**

**Dr. S. MOHAN**

**\*Principal, SKSS Arts College, Tiruppanandal – 612 504**

**Abstract**

*Tourism today is one of the world's fastest growing and oldest industries. Throughout history people have traveled all over the world for a variety of purposes to trade, to see different lands, to know people and culture, and to educate themselves. Until recently only rich and leisured people in the society who have free time and money took up travel and tourism. But, with the change in demographic trends followed by increasing affluence and rising real incomes have made people move out for fun, pleasure, adventures and to educate themselves. Besides this, technological innovation has also offered greater mobility and access to travel. The growth of tourism industry thus reflects the desire to travel for educational, recreational and cultural reasons and the development of means to do so. Tourism industry has grown and changed rapidly and is considered to be an important vehicle for economic development. Various agencies of the government, along with the private sector do its utmost to increase tourist arrival to Thanjavur District. However the performance of tourism in the Thanjavur District is poor due to the late initiative taken for and development of tourism. Infact serious efforts towards effecting more foreign tourists started recently. The Thanjavur District entered into a new era of tourism development as of now, the wide range of incentives being offered to tourism sector, entrepreneurs are indicated to the significance being effected to this industry by our policy-makers. Now the strategy is toward holistic development of tourism in a thoroughly integrated way – wherein identification of tourist resources, judicious use of financial resources and close co-ordination in marketing actions are specially stressed upon. With ongoing efforts the Thanjavur District is likely to receive its rightful share in the market of tourism in due course of time. Even after the government has taken efforts to provide the infrastructure facilities in the Thanjavur District for sustainable tourism development the results are not found to be fruitful. Under these circumstances this study has been made to*

*analyse various factors that hinder the development of tourism in the district and various problems faced by the tourists.*

Tourism industry is gaining lot of importance in India because it provides employment opportunities, earns lot of foreign exchange and contributes for the development of the region. It enables contact among people, from distance parts of the globe, people of various languages, races, creeds, political beliefs. It provides greater scope for understanding among people of different cultures and communities. The most rewarding travel experiences are those that involve all senses. So, the traveler, in search of new and memorable journeys, is likely to see places, which can offer him or her historic and scenic beauty. The excitement and pleasure of sampling new cuisines, buying the things made by the local artisans sold in shops, participating in local customs and cultural events, experiencing the fun of local celebrations, and the tourist places and civic body facilities are obtained along with the experiencing feature. With its rich cultural heritage, splendid monuments, lush green lawns, beautiful temples, exotic cuisine, Thanjavur district is considered as an important tourism destination. Even after the government has taken efforts in providing the basic infrastructure facilities for sustainable tourism development, the results are not found to be fruitful. The satisfaction of the tourists is one of the essential considerations for the further growth of tourism. A tourist visit requires a combination of services that includes components such as attractions, transport, accommodation, refreshments (food and drink) shopping centers, entertainments, and infrastructure like banking, communication, etc. Hence an attempt is made in this paper to analyse the perception of the tourists visits Thanjavur district, Tamilnadu about the destinations.

The objective of this study is to inquire into the problems faced by tourists, their attitudes and their reactions on the existing facilities provided by the industry. For the purpose of the study, 300 tourists, i.e., 250 home tourists and 50 foreign tourists were selected at different tourism destinations in Thanjavur district using convenience sampling method. The analysis of collected information was made in this paper using percentage analysis and average score analysis.

### **Socio-economic profile of respondents**

Out of 300 sample respondents 197 are male and 103 are female. 21 respondents are under the age of 25, 201 are between 25 and 50 years, and 78 are above the age of 50. 172 respondents are married and 128 are unmarried. 31 respondents studied up to +2. 101 are graduates, 72 are post graduates and 96 have other qualifications. 133 respondents are occupied with business and profession, 102 work with somewhere, 65 occupied in the other sector. 61 respondents earn Rs.6000 or below per month, 68 earn Rs.6000 to 10000, 74 earn Rs.10000 to 20000 and 97 earn above Rs.20000. 250 are home tourists and 50 are foreign tourists. 215 percent are Hindus, 45 percent Christians, 24 Muslims and 16 others. Since there is more number of temples in the district, largest numbers of tourists (55 per cent) belong to the pilgrimage category. There is also a considerable size of tourists (31 per cent) seeking pleasure.

### **Transport**

Travel is implicit in tourism and it may entail transport by air, sea, rail or road. Large scale tourist movement will require more sophisticated passengers who will handle facilities which will have direct influence on the perceived quality of the total product. Table-1 shows the mode of transport chosen by the sample tourists to reach the study area i.e., Thanjavur district. The air transport has been more popular with foreign tourists (60 per cent) and rail transport (48 per cent) with home tourists. Though there is no air service to Thanjavur, the tourists used to reach Chennai or Tiruchirappalli by air transport. If the air service is started to Thanjavur, it will increase the tourists inflow and there by the economy of the host community. The tourists came by road also said that because of the inadequacy of train service, they visited by road transport. So the railway authorities have to take measures to increase the train service to Thanjavur district.

It is generally observed that the tourists would prefer a service depending upon several factors like flexibility, time, fare, comforts, etc. Mode of public transport adopted by sample tourists in different destinations is presented in table-2. Auto rickshaws and taxis were the two important modes of public transport used by the sample respondents. Especially bus service has not found favour with them because of inadequacy in services, overcrowded buses and inconvenient timings, etc.

64 per cent of foreign tourists have complained that taxi and auto rickshaw fellows charge unreasonable price whereas 56 per cent of home tourists have complained that the taxies and autos refuse to take them to certain destinations as in the table-3. Thus there is an immediate need for the concerned authorities to look into the problem and enforce strict measures to curb such practices.

### **Accommodation**

When people are away from home, whether for leisure or on business they need an accommodation which provides all comfort of home. Table-4 shows the type of accommodation chosen by sample tourists. 34 per cent of foreign tourists have preferred to stay in star hotels and resorts and 48 per cent budget hotels, compared to home tourists who have preferred the houses of friends and relatives (40 per cent) and lodges (24 per cent) for their stay.

It is understood from the table-5 that the accommodation is easily available in the Thanjavur district. Whether it is resorts/ star hotels/ budget hotels/ lodges 88 per cent of foreign tourists and 67 per cent of home tourists have expressed that the accommodation is available without any difficulty.

Table-6 gives the rating by the respondents to accommodation provided by the hotels and lodges. It could be seen from the table that only 2.5 percent were highly satisfied, 20.5 percent termed to be satisfactory and 15.5 percent viewed as neither satisfactory nor dissatisfactory. While 45.5 percent found dissatisfactory, 14.5 percent are most dissatisfactory. On the whole many of the tourists were dissatisfied with accommodation services however a lot remains to be done for the improvement of the service. The dissatisfied persons made the following as complaints: 1) Poor condition of walls and furniture; 2) Poor quality of pillows, bed sheets, and blankets; 3) Lack of cleanliness; and 4) High room tariff.

### **Communication**

It plays a very important role in tourism. Tourists are said to achieve greater understanding of host population and vice versa by traveling are coming into contact with people different from themselves. The reaction of sample tourists is given in the table-7. A look in to table gives an understanding that the response from tourists for the

question on communication problems is diametrically opposite in both home and foreign tourists. While 74 per cent of foreign tourists have faced communication problem, 78 per cent of home tourists were comfortable and did not face the communication problem.

### **Travel agency**

These are one of the important intermediaries in the tourism industry. They play a very important role in selling travel product to the public. They are therefore shop window of the travel sector of the tourism industry. They provide advice and information to the tourists for the purchase of travel. Table-8 shows the extent to which sample tourists depend on these agencies. 92 per cent of foreign tourists and 52 per cent of home tourists have depended on the travel agents for their travel bookings. Thus it may be concluded that they are playing an important role in the tourism industry. However, one cannot be satisfied with these results. Since tourism is a service industry, satisfaction of the tourists is most important. A dissatisfied tourist will do great harm to the industry as such. Therefore, an attempt is made to know the opinion of tourists in respect of services rendered by travel agents. From the table-9 it is understood that only 25 per cent of the tourists are fully satisfied with the services and 57 per cent are somewhat satisfied, and the remaining 18 per cent are totally dissatisfied. Further, it appears that foreign tourists are more dissatisfied compared to home tourists. Therefore, there is a need for training the personnel engaged in the industry.

### **Food at the destination**

The food and drinks that are available to tourists when they are away from home is very important to them. Tourists usually have high expectations of eating well, whether this includes trying new and unfamiliar dishes of the destination or simply looking for their favorite well cooked food. The opinions of tourists in this respect are given in the table-10. 64 per cent of the home tourists have opined that the choice of food is widely available at all places even though 14 per cent of them have said it is inexpensive and 50 per cent have said it is expensive. Another 24 per cent of the tourists have expressed that food of choice is available at select places only and 8 per cent have said that it is in-expensive and another 16 per cent expensive. 44 per cent of foreign tourists opined that the food is widely available and 36 per cent said that the food is

available only in selected places. However 12 per cent of home tourists and 20 per cent of foreign tourists opined that the food is not available in the destinations.

### **Shopping facilities**

Another important aspect of tourist attraction is the shopping facilities making available items such as handicrafts, works of art, decorated garments, etc., in the tourist destination. The Thanjavur district has good attractions on this front. It has some craft emporiums, shopping complexes, metal items and toys. The opinion of tourists in this regard is shown in the table-11. Out of the sample tourists only 6 per cent home and 12 per cent foreign tourists have expressed that they have to commute long distances to reach the shopping centers. 36 per cent of home tourists and 42 per cent of foreign tourists have expressed that they are able to get what they are looking for which implies that the shopping facilities are adequate and another 48 per cent of home tourists and 16 per cent of foreign tourists have said that the shopping centers are not in convenient location.

### **Hygiene/ Cleanliness**

Tourism attractions not merely depend upon transports, accommodation, foods, shopping complexes, but also on the hygiene and cleanliness. The ratings by sample tourists in respect of different tourist spots are presented in table-12. According to the table, foreign tourists are very much unhappy about the hygiene conditions in tour spots, railway station, bus terminus, etc. It also shows that the condition of roads is far from satisfactory. However they are somewhat satisfied with the conditions in restaurants places of tourist importance and shopping centers. Though no one said the roads are excellent, 120 home tourists accepted the roads in the district are good. 54 per cent, 50 per cent, 42 per cent of home tourists said that the restaurants, shopping places, and recreation halls are good. However 52 per cent, 34 per cent, 48 per cent, 38 per cent and 40 per cent of home tourists were dissatisfied with road condition, restaurants, cinema theaters, rooms in the hotels and bus stands. The dissatisfaction of the tourists will affect the business of the hosts in the future. The authorities concerned should take necessary steps to improve the hygiene of the tourism destinations.

### **Law and order**

The law and order situation will have a great impact on the tourism. If the place of destination does not ensure safety and security, tourists may not like to visit such places. If such a thing happens it is needless to mention the negative aspect. The Thanjavur has an added advantage in this respect. The law and order situation is more or less peaceful except the occasional outbursts. The communal violence and terrorism are not there. The opinion of tourists in this regard is shown in the table-13. The table shows that 60 per cent of home tourists and 52 per cent of foreign tourists are happy with law and orders situation in Thanjavur district. However they opine that some more measures of safety and security be ensured both for home and foreign tourists.

### **People of Thanjavur district**

Tourists enjoy their time not only in seeing the places of public interest and monuments, but also they expect good and friendly relationship with host population. A good, hospitable and kind words and gestures make a deep long standing mark in the minds of tourists. Besides this, the future tourist market depends on this account. The reactions of the tourists in this regard are shown in the table-14. The table makes clear that the people of the Thanjavur district are warm hospitable, cooperative and kind. Both home and foreign tourists have expressed unequivocal stand on this account.

### **Average score analysis**

The development of tourism industry mainly depends on the level of satisfaction of tourists during their visit which includes destinations and attractions. The various destinations and attractions were rated by the sample tourists according to their satisfaction. The ratings and their average scores are presented in table-15. It is observed from the table that tourism destinations and attractions due to many factors play a vital role in affecting the satisfaction levels of the tourists of the Thanjavur district. Pragaswari big temple is the star attraction (Average score = 4.79) to the tourists visiting Thanjavur district. It is followed by the temples and mahamaham tank in Kumbakonam (Average score = 4.69), Grand anicut (Average score = 4.65), and Thiyagaraja arathana music festival in Thiruvaiyaru (Average score = 4.23). Although there are several other tourist spots, it is obvious that the Tourism department other

relevant authorities have to step up its efforts to propagate these places through advertising in different powerful medium and also ensure more tourist attractions by taking developmental activities.

### **Problems perceived**

All tourists visiting the destinations want to travel without encountering any problem. Like every tourist spot, Thanjavur district also has its own share of problems like environmental pollution, poor standard of cleanliness and its accompanying problems, beggars' nuisance, poor sanitary, etc. The problems faced by the tourists in the Thanjavur district are presented with their average scores in table-16. It is inferred from the table that the basic problem faced by the tourists is the environmental pollution which is caused due to extensive use of plastic and disposal of the same and other litters in the places other than allotted dustbins. Hence the chance of harm done to nature due to inability for recycling the same is a serious problem which calls for immediate remedy. Tourism department and other competent authorities should initiate steps to display notice in prominent places against use of non-degradable items. Also levy of penalties for wrong doers should be implemented on an immediate basis. The next biggest problem is the beggars' nuisance which looms large before the tourism department and acts as a potent deterrent against development of tourism. The government should initiate steps against beggary or evolve schemes for self employment or development of handicrafts or introduce entrepreneurship schemes to alleviate beggary. The water in the district is also contaminating. Adequate measures for protecting water resource are an urgent one. The water harvesting scheme is to be implemented to increase the quality ground water. Mosquitoes are the major problem in the district particularly in towns. It is due to the non-drainage of waste water and lack of cleanliness in the destinations. The increase in mode and number of transport vehicles used calls for the arrangement of ample parking facilities. Moreover, systematic and allotted parking slots will help in the smooth flow of traffic.

### **Conclusion**

From the analysis of the opinions of the sample tourists, it is concluded that since there are many temples in Thanjavur district, most of tourists visited for pilgrimage/



religion purpose. Many of the tourists are satisfied with the foods, law and order, and culture of the district. As far as hygiene, public transport, train service, behaviour of taxi and autorickshaw fellows, communication facility, electricity, water contamination, shopping facilities, beggars’ problem, mosquitoes, and parking facilities are concerned they require the need of the authorities. The policy planners should initiate steps to develop more attractive tourist destinations. A need of the hour is to promote the facilities like, infrastructure, transport, accommodation, restaurants, shopping facilities, communication, etc., in all tourist destinations. It is necessary to increase the promotional activities to draw a steady stream of tourists and ensure beautification of the places of archaeological importance and generate the resources to upgrade the infrastructure for development of tourism in the Thanjavur district. If these steps are taken, one can hope that many of the current problems of the tourism will be solved. Given these dimensions of tourism and potential which exists in the district, there is tremendous scope for accelerated growth of tourism industry in this district.

**Tables**

Table – 1  
MODE OF TRANSPORT USED TO REACH THE STUDY AREA

Tourists	Air	Rail	Road	Rail & Road	Total
Home	40 (16)	120 (48)	60 (24)	30 (12)	250 (100)
Foreign	30 (60)	15 (30)	5 (10)	-	50 (100)
Total	70	135	65	30	300

Table – 2  
MODE OF TRANSPORT USED IN THE DESTINATIONS

Tourist	Bus	Auto rickshaw	Taxies	Others	Total
Home	50 (20)	90 (36)	105 (42)	5 (2)	250 (100)
Foreign	-	22 (44)	28 (56)	-	50 (100)
Total	50	112	133	5	300

Table – 3

TAXIES AND AUTO RICKSHAWS SERVICE

Tourist	Adequate Taxies& Autos	Refuse to take certain destinations	Unreasonable fares	inadequate Taxies& Autos	Total
Home	31 (16)	109 (56)	55 (28)	-	195 (100)
Foreign	4 (9)	14 (27)	32 (64)	-	50 (100)
Total	35	123	87	-	245

Table – 4

ACCOMMODATION SELECTION

Tourists	3 star hotels & Resorts	Budget hotels	Lodges	Houses of Friends & Relatives	Total
Home	50 (20)	40 (16)	60 (24)	100 (40)	250 (100)
Foreign	17 (34)	24 (48)	9 (18)	-	50 (100)
Total	67	64	69	100	300

Table – 5

AVAILABILITY OF ACCOMMODATION

Tourists	Easily Available	Slightly Difficult	Very Difficult	Total
Home	100 (67)	50 (33)	-	150 (100)
Foreign	44 (88)	6 (12)	-	50 (100)
Total	144	56	-	200

Table – 6

SATISFACTION ON ACCOMMODATION

Parameter for rating	No. of Respondents			Percentage
	Home	Foreign	Total	
Highly Satisfactory	4	1	5	2.5
Satisfactory	31	10	41	20.5
Neither Satisfactory Nor Dissatisfactory	20	11	31	15.5
Dissatisfied	79	12	91	45.5
Highly Dissatisfactory	14	15	29	14.5
No response	2	1	3	1.5
Total	150	50	200	100

Table – 7  
COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS IN THE DESTINATIONS

Tourist	Communication problems		Total
	Yes	No	
Home	55 (22)	195 (78)	250 (100)
Foreign	37 (74)	13 (26)	50 (100)
Total	92	208	300

Table – 8  
DEPENDENCE ON TRAVEL AGENTS

Tourists	Depending on travel Agents	Not Depending on travel agents	Total
Home	130 (52)	120 (48)	250 (100)
Foreign	46 (92)	4 (8)	50 (100)
Total	176	124	300

Table – 9  
SATISFACTION ON THE SERVICES OF TRAVEL AGENTS

Tourists	Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	Not Satisfied	Total
Home	31 (24)	81 (62)	18 (14)	130 (100)
Foreign	14 (30)	19 (42)	13 (28)	46 (100)
Total	45	100	31	176

Table – 10  
OPINION ON THE AVAILABILITY OF FOOD

Tourist s	Widely Available Inexpensive	Widely Available Expensive	Available at Selected Places inexpensive	Available at Selected Places Expensive	Not at all Available	Total
Home	35 (14)	125 (50)	20 (8)	40 (16)	30 (12)	250 (100)
Foreign	18 (36)	4 (8)	8 (16)	10 (20)	10 (20)	50 (100)
Total	53	129	28	50	40	300

Table – 11  
 AVAILABILITY OF SHOPPING FACILITIES

Tourists	Adequate Shopping Facilities	Long distances to reach	Able to get what I am looking for	Shopping centers are not Conveniently Located	Total
Home	25 (10)	15 (6)	90 (36)	120 (48)	250 (100)
Foreign	15 (30)	6 (12)	21 (42)	8 (16)	50 (100)
Total	40	21	111	128	300

Table – 12  
 OPINION ABOUT CLEANLINESS/ HYGIENE OF DIFFERENT PLACES

Places	Excellent		Good		Bad		Poor	
	HT	FT	HT	FT	HT	FT	HT	FT
Roads	-	-	120 (48)	6 (12)	75 (30)	26 (52)	55 (22)	18 (36)
Restaurants/ Eat outs	30 (12)	9 (18)	135 (54)	36 (72)	50 (20)	3 (6)	35 (14)	5 (10)
Place of tourist interest	30 (12)	-	165 (66)	39 (78)	45 (18)	6 (12)	10 (14)	5 (10)
Cinema/ Recreation Halls	25 (10)	-	105 (42)	12 (24)	75 (30)	36 (72)	45 (18)	2 (4)
Shopping Places	80 (32)	15 (30)	125 (50)	21 (42)	45 (18)	11 (22)	-	3 (6)
Railway Station	45 (18)	-	105 (42)	12 (24)	100 (40)	28 (56)	-	10 (20)
Rooms in hotels	45 (18)	9 (18)	110 (44)	21 (42)	60 (24)	12 (24)	35 (14)	8 (16)
Bus Terminus	45 (18)	5 (10)	105 (42)	18 (36)	35 (14)	20 (40)	65 (26)	7 (14)

Table – 13  
LAW AND ORDER SITUATION

Tourists	Adequate law & order	Work of pick pockets	Lack of safety for tourists	Total
Home	150 (60)	55 (22)	45 (18)	250 (100)
Foreign	26 (52)	6 (12)	18 (36)	50 (100)
Total	176	61	63	300

Table – 14  
PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE PEOPLE OF THANJAVUR DISTRICT

Tourists	Warm and hospitable	Cooperative and kind	Inhospitable	Suspicious	Total
Home	130 (52)	120 (48)	-	-	250 (100)
Foreign	30 (60)	20 (40)	-	-	50 (100)
Total	160	140	-	-	300

Table – 15  
SATISFACTION ON DIFFERENT DESTINATIONS AND ATTRACTIONS IN THE DISTRICT

Destination/Attraction	HS	S	N	DS	HDS	Total	Av. Score	Rank
Pragathiswara Big Temple	240	56	4	0	0	300	4.79	1
Sivaganga park	66	144	78	12	0	300	3.88	8
Museum	30	86	78	106	0	300	3.13	13
Manimandapam	22	106	112	60	0	300	3.30	11
Mariamman temple	28	228	44	0	0	300	3.95	7
Kumbakonam Temples	224	60	16	0	0	300	4.69	2
Grand Anicut	208	80	10	2	0	300	4.65	3
Poondi Church	34	146	112	8	0	300	3.69	10
Manora	30	204	62	2	2	300	3.86	9
Temples around district	118	120	60	2	0	300	4.18	5

Green lands & rivers	82	184	34	0	0	300	4.16	6
Thiyagaraja Music festival	114	154	20	12	0	300	4.23	4
Rajarajan sadaya festival	14	106	96	84	0	300	3.17	12

Table – 16  
PROBLEMS FACED BY THE TOURISTS DURING VISITS

Problems	SA	A	N	DA	SDA	Total	Av. Score	Rank
Water contamination	20	122	118	30	10	300	3.37	4
Environmental Pollution	32	132	106	28	2	300	3.55	1
Beggars' Nuisance	40	120	90	46	4	300	3.49	2
Exploitation by taxis & Autos	14	54	122	100	10	300	2.87	9
Uncultured behaviour of people	0	12	68	174	46	300	2.15	13
Impolite behaviour of hotel staff	0	20	42	164	74	300	2.03	14
Mosquitoes	28	172	36	38	26	300	3.46	3
Lack of cleanliness	14	80	136	56	14	300	3.08	5
Shop owners problem	6	44	90	138	22	300	2.58	11
High admission charge	22	44	38	118	78	300	2.38	12
Relationship with hosts	12	28	54	62	144	300	2.01	15
Inadequate banking facility	2	32	178	54	34	300	2.71	10
Inadequate sanitary facility	2	90	140	42	26	300	3.00	7
Inadequate transport	14	56	166	32	32	300	2.96	8
Inadequate parking facility	30	92	92	34	52	300	3.05	6

Note: \*Figures in brackets are common size per cent to total.

\*\* HT = Home tourists and FT = Foreign tourists

HS = Highly Satisfied; S = Satisfied; N = Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied;  
DS = Dissatisfied; HDS = Highly Dissatisfied.  
SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neither agree nor disagree;  
DA = Disagree; SDA = Strongly Disagree

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