



# Promoting heritage tourism in Tamil Nadu by innovative methods- A study

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## Abstract

Heritage tourism has a strong pedestal for Tamil Nadu tourism industry. Heritage is traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past, and "heritage tourism can include cultural, historic and natural resources. Heritage tourism product can be classified as tangible and intangible products. There are several heritage monuments, temples, forts and cultural dances which are very significant in Tamil Nadu . Promoting heritage tourism in innovative method will try to improve the State's brand image. The old style of thoughts and concepts should be replaced by innovative thoughts and creative ideas. Tamil Nadu has few UNESCO approved heritage tourism sites. Heritage tourism may be an lucrative economic revitalization strategy for the Tamil Nadu State. This paper also attempts how the various heritage tourist spots in Tamil Nadu and the various innovative approaches helps to promote heritage tourism .Heritage tourism has various benefits. If proper steps and strategies are taken both by heritage tourism private stake holders, Government and people Tamil Nadu will reach zenith in tourism which will improve our economy and the quality of life of State people.

## Keywords

Innovation, Heritage tourism, Tamil Nadu , Approaches, Tangible.

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## 1. Introduction

Tourism is the largest and most spectacular industry in the world. Tourism endorses national integration, broadmindedness and understanding of different cultures. Tamil Nadu may be rightly termed as temple state of India as it has numerous temples. More over it attracts by the marvelous architecture, surplus of early monuments and it appeals enormously to the culture and heritage tourism lovers from all over the globe.

Tamil Nadu has the exact tourism prospective and attractions to captivate the various types of tourists. Tamil Culture is tradition and heritage bound. The customs and the rituals revolve around the religion and they celebrate numerous fairs and festivals throughout the year. Festivals of Tamil Nadu are mostly associated with religion and temples. Music and dance are the important entertainments of Tamil Nadu . As important as the religion is to the people of TamilNadu , culture and entertainment rank as equally important which makes the State a vibrant one.

## 2. Rationale of the study

Usually the heritage tourism is based on visiting historical

sites, places of manifestations of culture, places of religious beliefs. Apart from these travelling to destinations of ancient monuments, archeological sites, museums, temples are termed as heritage tourism. This type of tourism is getting popular in Tamil Nadu. It is in this context present study assumes special importance and relevance. Certain significant challenges in heritage tourism of Tamil Nadu have been discussed and highlighted in this paper which may be of immense worth to policy makers, researchers, academicians and entrepreneurs engaged in tourism growth and development. The researcher has tried to find out an innovative methods and approaches to boost the heritage tourism.

### 3. Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study is to

1. To identify challenges on heritage tourism in Tamil Nadu.
2. To evaluate ways to overcome such challenges by providing an innovative methods and strategies to develop heritage tourism.
3. An attempt is made to know that heritage tourism can bring sustainable and profitable development to Tamil Nadu.

### 4. Data and Methodology

For analyzing the various relevant issues of heritage tourism in Tamil Nadu this study has used relevant available data have been collected from Primary as well as secondary sources of information. Useful first hand information was available through informal discussion with the officials of the Tamil Nadu tourism department. The methodology adopted for this research paper is study of tourism policy notes, online books, manuals, observations, data analysis and careful study of relevant literature. Research papers published in various journals, books, reports, surveys and ideas of tourism experts have largely contributed towards the construction of this paper.

### 5. Review of Literature

Melanie K. Smith, in his book, **Issues in Cultural tourism Studies**, (London, 2003), aims to be contemporary in his focus reflecting the recent developments in the tourism and cultural industries in the UK and in World nations. The author highlights how the growing concerns for environmental and recognition of the need for integrated conservation strategies for global heritage which have necessitated collaboration between tourism and heritage organizations at all levels, especially in the context of World Heritage sites. However, the author has mostly concentrated on cultural heritage and gives only passing references to Natural Heritage Tourism.

In the report titled **Cultural Tourism in India: Its Scope and Development with Special Reference to the Monumental Heritage** submitted by F.R. Allchin, in 1969 he points out the various difficulties encountered by the foreign tourists

in India. He also suggests various recommendations like classification of monuments and solutions to problems affecting the monuments and increasing role of museums and natural heritage centres in promoting cultural tourism in India.

In the Research Article “**World Heritage Site- Is It and Effective Brand? A case study of a Religious Site**” published in the Journal of Travel Research Volume 50 Number 5 September 2011 of The Travel and Tourism Research Association the author Yaniv Poora states that UNESCO’s main aim is to sustain the Heritage site. However, the different stakeholders such as the state, local community, and the site management interests focus on the expected growth of visitors flow, aiming at “economic gains”(Hall 2006,p.51).

### 6. Tamil Nadu Tourism

Tamil Nadu is rich in Dravidian culture. Tamil Nadu is famous for the cultural heritage tourist attractions.

**Cultural heritage Resources in Tamil Nadu** : The cultural attractions of Tamil Nadu are its History, Architecture (temples, historic buildings, heritage sites), Performing arts (music, dances, folk song, concerts), Martial arts (Silambattam, folk games, Jallikattu, cock fight) Fairs and Festivals, Arts and Handicrafts and Cuisine. Generally the cultural tourism is divided into two ways.

1. Destination based : Cultural visitors see heritage sites, historic buildings, museums, etc.

2. Activity based: Listening to music concerts, watching bull fight, hearing folk songs etc.

**(i)Architecture:** The architecture pattern practiced by Tamilians in the temples, historic buildings are of a Dravidian style. Foreigners wonder our temples architecture, sculpture and plannings. Rameswaram temple’s walking halls are the biggest in the world. Srivilliputhur Andal temple has the highest tower in TamilNadu. Madurai Meenakshiamman temple is the largest in area., The Brihadeeswara temple in Thanjavur, Trichirapalli Rock cut temple, Gangaikonda Chola-puram temple and Tharsuram temples are cultural wonders of Chola architecture.

**(ii)Performing Arts:** The rich cultural heritage of the land is manifested in the various Performing Arts of Tamil Nadu. It includes music, dance and theater. Music can be divided into several categories such as film songs, folk song, devotional songs Carnatic music. Music concerts enthrall the tourists in a great way. It provides the people of the state and tourists with a great deal of entertainment.. Music and dance played an important role in the life of Tamil Nadu. Bharatha Naatyam is a unique form of Dance which has received the greatest recognition throughout the world. Music concerts in various places enthrall the tourist crowd.

**(iii)Martial arts:** Silambattam is a very old martial art of Tamil Nadu which is mainly practiced by men folk for their self defense from enemies and wild animals. **Jallikattu or** bull taming is a traditional sport in which individuals try to hold the hunch and cross a certain distance. Thousands of people including foreigners visit Alanganallur in Madurai district



and witness the traditional combat between man and the beast. Cockfight also attracts a large number of tourists. Thayam (dice game), pallankuzhi and sillatam are the tamil folk games .

(iv) **Arts and Handicrafts** : Tamil Nadu is very popular in arts and handicrafts sector. The making of musical instruments is a major craft in Thanjavur. The famous brass and copper metal ware has a rich and ancient tradition in Tamil Nadu . The well-known Tanjore paintings are the most important handicrafts . The artisans of Tamil Nadu are famous for pottery and woodcraft. The large terracotta horses are made in Salem and Pudukottai. Tamil Nadu 's artistically created basketry and fiber products is in demand. The main centers of these crafts are to be found in Dharampuri, Salem, Coimbatore, South Arcot and Tiruchirapalli districts.

#### **Unique cultural heritage specialities of TN**

(i) **Temple Cars**: There is temple car in each temple. (Ther). But Madurai Meenakshiamman temple car, Srivilliputhur Andal kovil and Thiruvarur temple cars are the big and famous in Tamil Nadu .

(ii) **Arts and Crafts**: Thanjavur paintings and toys (thaiyatti bommai), Thanjavur thattu (plate), Kanchipuram silk work are very famous art and crafts work.

(iii). **Kolam**: The Floor Decoration - Kolam. In Tamil Nadu there is a widespread practice in Tamil families the young girls and ladies with appealing faces are occupied each and every morning, early before the sunrise in forming a ornamentation in front of their door step is called "kolam". These kolams are ancient Dravidian geometrical patterns Its attractive patterns make villages, towns and cities more festive, pleasant, and devotional. In places, where there is a great gathering of people like Temples and Wedding Halls, rice paste made by mixing rice flour with water is used to draw kolams.

**Cultural heritage tourism and its influence in tourists**: 50 % of Tamil Nadu tourists seek to visit sites that have to do with culture and heritage. Cultural tourism has become one of the basic elements of the tourist industry and a benefit to national economies. Tamil Nadu is increasing being recognized as cultural tourism destination which has exciting, unique, diverse tourist destinations which has much to interest visitors beyond its world renewed heritage and cultural attractions. It has a wide range of cultural assets including museums, art galleries, historic and indigenous sites, performing arts and live concerts designed to enrich educate and entertain visitors.

Tamil Nadu is one of many destinations in India which offer a varied cultural experience. The historic or heritage buildings like Gingee fort , various festivals and fairs like Dance Festival in Mamallapuram, Natyanjali Festival in Chidambaram, Cultural displays sound and music show in Madurai Nayak Mahal, art and craft workshop in Poompohar, Thanjavur, performing arts like Bharathanatyam, Mayilattam, Oyiattam are great attractions for the tourists. Regions highlights , outstanding buildings, natural wonders, spectacular festivals, unforgettable journeys are a great part of cultural tourism.

Meenakshi temple Madurai is surmounted by soaring gop-

uras and home to a range of spectacular festivals. The Nilgiri Blue Mountain Railway journey is a bone shaking ride up to Ooty and it is one of Asia's last steam railways which was as a must for Raj-ophiles. Journey is worth it for the views alone. The great spectacles of South India are temple chariot (rath) festivals and it is very famous for the big temple car in Thiruvarur.

#### **Tamil Nadu 's Cultural Heritage Tourists Profile**

Tamil Nadu receives the largest number of cultural tourists from the United Kingdom, followed by the United States, Sri Lanka, France, Germany and Canada.

#### **UNESCO world heritage monuments in TN**

Tamil Nadu has been bestowed with 5 world heritage sites which is very popular among tourists.

1. Airavateswara Temple near Kumbakonam.
2. Brihadeeswarar Temple (Big Temple) at Thanjavur.
3. Monuments at Mahabalipuram near Chennai.
4. Gangaikonda Cholapuram Temple at Jayakondam.
5. Nilgiri mountain railway.

## **7. Heritage tourism and heritage tourist destinations in Tamil Nadu**

Heritage is something which has been inherited from the ancient times and which can be passed on to the coming generations. In Tamil Nadu heritage tourism is flourishing due to the rich heritage it possess.

### **7.1 Heritage Tourism**

As per the author Ravee Chauhan it is a leisure trip with the primary purpose of visiting historic, cultural, natural, recreational and scenic attractions to learn more about the past in an enjoyable way.

As per the author Charu Sheela Yadav it is a creative expression of a people's existence in the past , their traditions ,beliefs, rituals, festivals, and lifestyle. It gives just a chance to know the people who have inhabited this land before us and made and invented objects, customs and concepts that help us to live and strive further for improvement as we are doing for the future generation. Heritage tourism links our past with our present by showing us what we have achieved in the past and how we have become what we are today.

Heritage tourism can be basically classified on two types of heritage tourism products- 'Cultural and natural ( UNESCO Classification).

Classification of heritage tourism product.

Tangible- Historical monument, Archaeological sites

Intangible – customs, traditions, cuisine, handicrafts

Natural –flora and fauna , geological an physical formations.

As per the Final report of the 20 year perspective tourism plan for the State of Tamil Nadu the following are the heritage locations and Historic monuments.

#### **Place Main Attraction**

Gangai kond Cholapuram Chola Temple

Mammalapuram Shore Temples



Chennai Fort St.George, Santhome Church, Kalshetra, Rippon building, Gandhi Mandapam and St. Thomas Mount. There are also a number of wellmaintained mosques in and around Chennai including Wallajah and Thousand Lights mosques amongst others.

Gingee Gingee Fort  
 Vellore Vellore Fort  
 Poompuhar Legendary Port city  
 Thanjavur Thanjavur Palace  
 Madurai Tirumalai Naik Mahal  
 Dindigul Hill Fortress.

## 8. Challenges in Heritage Tourism

The researcher personally contacted few foreign heritage tourists who had the following difficulties in Tamil Nadu. The Tamil Nadu heritage tourism sector lacks the marketing, advertisement and infrastructure for tourism that is available in other states.

- Poor connectivity to heritage tourism spots
- Lack of accommodation
- Lack of health facilities /first aid
- Power supply shortage
- Erratic Water supply and poor sanitation standards
- Lack of proper travel booking
- Lack of garbage disposal
- Lack of proper medical facilities
- The Tamil Nadu luxury tax is high. Service tax also high
- Fluctuating tariff in budget hotels
- Entry fees for foreigners is prohibitive
- Camera entry ticket at m any places spots is higher than entry fee for tourists people
- Language problem for the local people
- Difficulty in Understanding the local language for the tourists
- Poor bus frequency to tourist spots like Gingee, Vellore, Mammalapuram and Poompuhar.

## 9. Few Stratesies and innovative methods to promote Heritage

In the heritage tourists like Saraswathy Mahal in Thanjavur and Thirumalai Naikar Palacein Madurai if the tourists are received by the keepers of the in the ancient period royal costumes and at least imitation jewellery tourists may be fascinated as visitors.

The Tamil Nadu Tourism Department, Private Stakeholders of tourism sector and /the NGO and public can join hands and conduct 3 day heritage festival highlighting the culture,heritage dance, music and handicrafts in the heritage destinations of Tamil Nadu.This will bring new life to our heritage and culture which can be done through a serices of seminars, walkthrough and performances. The organizers mal also conduct this festival as a yearly affair with natural and gastronomic heritage seminars discussions and exhibitions. that can included too.

A Mobile Museum with heritage products such as ancient mortar and pestle, agriculture equipments, cooking utensils etc along with a traditional souvenir shop with handicrafts can be set in all the heritage destinations in TN such as Kadambadi and Thandarai villages

The Tamil Nadu Tourism Department (TTDC) may participate in various tour and travel exhibitions across India in which the heritage tourism aspects of TN may be highlighted and it should ensure its presence in the most of tourism conclaves, conferences and conventions to have direct interface with travel industry at all locations. Through this TTDC can provide a platform for travel suppliers within Tamil(Tour operators, Hoteliers, Farm tourism Operators, ground handlers etc.) to link with travel buyers (tour operators, holiday planners of other locations outside TN).

### *Organizing festivals, melas and events for foreign tourists*

The researcher during a visit in Thanjavur had a personal experience in which the German young couple participated in the Tourism Department's Pongal celebrations. In this Pongal Festival celebrations the TTDC department had organized in such a way that the local people cooked the Sweet Pongal dish in an area and served to the foreigners. Apart from these the local people performed the folk dance and music. In this festival event the foreigners mingled with the local people and they were allowed to cook and know about our culture and heritage in which the German couple were so fascinated. They promised that they will bring their kid next year for this festival . The next year they came and named their girl baby Lakshmi by the local tourism officer which shows their love for the TN culture and heritage.

The heritage tourism marketing should not only be cost effective but also be people- oriented.

It can be enhanced by innovative method such as inviting mixed tourism enthusiasts from various countries which has more tourist writers .These group should be taken to our heritage destinations by the TTDC and the guides should explain our rich heritage in a vivid way.By these the group may act as our brand ambassadors .

### *Innovative methods to attract heritage tourists*

In the heritage tourist spots the tourists may be taken in bullock carts or they may be allowed to ride bullock carts. The tourists may be given traditional authentic village food like rice kanji, ragi porridge with accompaniments such as groundnut paste, chilli and onion etc. Then they may be taken to village temples and poojas performed in village style. Tourists can taken part in harvesting , agricultural operations. Ancient village games like Pacchai Kuthirai (Jumping ) (a girl will bend and stand and others will jump over her back), Dhayam (Dice game), Pallankuzhi (A wooden equipment with 14 pits in two rows for 2 players and in each 5 numbers of play materials like seashells or tamarind seeds are put in the pits and played), Sillattam (Hopnotch game), Nondi play (children bend one leg and with the other leg jump, run and catch the others) kallangai (A village game where small pebbles are thrown in the air and collected in the hand) and Paramapatham



(Snake and ladder game played with dice). Paramapatham is a snake and ladder game which is printed on a sheet of paper. These can be adopted in Kadambavanam village.

The tourists may be allowed to involve in the leisure activities so that they can understand our old heritage and cultural practices. The leisure activities are Kili Josiyam, (Parrot Astrology) Palmistry, Palm Reading, and Kuri Solluthal. Parrot Astrology or Parrot Josiyam, also known as Kili Josiyam (is an intriguing blend of science, skill and mysticism that predicts future with amazing accuracy). Parrot Astrologers are the fortune tellers who interpret ones future with the help of a parrot. This can be followed in Karamadai village.

#### **Benefits of promoting heritage tourism**

As per author Charu Sheela heritage tourism provides an extraordinary opportunity to expand the travel experience by incorporating the arts, music, cuisine, artistic traditions and material vestiges of built cultural environment, including monuments, historic public buildings, farms, castles, cathedrals, museums, archaeological ruins and relics. Also research suggests that people visit heritage places to enhance learning, satisfy curiosity and feelings of nostalgia, grow spiritually relax, get away from home, spend time with loved ones or discover themselves (Confer and Kerstetter 2000; Krakover and Cohen 2001)

There are several benefits of heritage tourism in Tamil Nadu.

It has a positive economic and social impact and it establishes and reinforces identity, it helps to preserve the cultural heritage with culture as an instrument it facilitates harmony and understanding among people. It supports culture and helps to renew tourism. (Richards, 1996).

- It improves quality of life and builds community pride
- Diversifies the local economy
- Promotes resource protection, increases visitor expenditures
- Generates employment, preserves the unique character of a community
- Tool for poverty alleviation, tourism promotion rural sites
- Attracting visitors interested in history and preservation
- Increasing historic attraction revenues
- Preserving local traditions and culture
- Increasing awareness of the site or areas significance.

## **10. Conclusion**

Heritage tourism promotion is a significant tool for creating awareness about the Tamil Nadu heritage destinations. The travel agents and tour operators are using several type of medias like print media, visual media and social networking

sites for promotion which is a very innovative use of technology, but there needs to be more effort to reach various heritage tourists of the globe. To promote this type of tourism the TTDC, private sectors and public should have innovative mind which produces creative methods and positive professional tourism approach. This adds value to tourism services and supports the development of tourism. From this research article it may be inferred that the benefits by innovative practices of heritage tourism will help Tamil Nadu to reach greater heights in tourism sector.

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