

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE & MANAGEMENT

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UNREVEALED 'LADAPURAM'

SANJEEB PAL

HEAD

DEPARTMENT OF F & B SERVICE AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT
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ABSTRACT

The tourism industry in India has become one of the most efficient and dependable earners of precious foreign exchange revenue for the country. Not only the centre but the state governments too have begun to invest in tourism infrastructure and facilities to capitalize on this growing industry. As more and more people are acquiring surplus purchasing power the demand for leisure activities is growing on a parallel with the development of the road, rail and air networks. The surprising fact is that despite of being possessed of some of the most diverse and compelling natural assets, ranging from rugged mountains and picturesque hills to marvelous beaches and forests, from historical splendors of forts, palaces and shrines to an amazing variety of wildlife, for many decades since independence these were not given more than cursory attention in the successive Plans. It is only recently that the Government of India has woken up to the stark fact that tourism, if encouraged in the planned and appropriate direction, can earn the country thousands of crores of rupees in foreign exchange as well as provide domestic tourism the necessary infrastructure to make it a truly desirable and attractive proposition. The research theme chosen for this study has three faces: geography, culture and tourism. Ladapuram being a small town situated at the foothills of the Pachamalai hills appears on the centre stage for an in-depth examination of "development" and "tourism", the latter being the main theme of Tourism Geography, justifying land use for recreation and tourism. Funniest thing that one finds in the development planning is that the place invites multitudes of visitors, but neither the TamilNadu tourism nor the local bodies' cares to apportion land for use of tourism activities. With all these limitations, this study is a modest effort to unravel Ladapuram, establishing it as a perfect tourist place for all the nature lovers and the environment friendly tourist.

KEYWORDS

Natural assets, Development, Tourism, Unravel.

INTRODUCTION

An urge to travel is an inborn instinct in human beings. People like to see the wide world with its variety of languages, Habits, cultures, climates and an ever changing landscape. To the intellectual type, the art, culture, tradition, festivals and architecture is an added attraction. Man has changed his mode of travel over the centuries from barges and boats to high speed jet planes.

The restful, but time consuming voyage on a ship in contrast to a speedy and spectacular ride on a jet is more fascinating. In the fast changing world, the jets of today will be old fashioned and obsolete before the supersonic giants.

It has well been understood that tourism as an industry has the potential to revitalize all developing economies with its proved multiplier effect. Tourist spending relates not only to expenditure on accommodation, food, transport, shopping, etc., but also to earnings of those trades and services which supply the tourism industry with goods and services. Backward area development is assured with the right kind of tourism inputs.

Tourism has a tremendous impact on the economy of any country-the invisible gains in the balance sheet of the country. The countries tourist potential consists mainly of what is already a part and parcel of the land. The tourist does not part with any of these real assets but the impression and the experience gathered from the local people.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Within a short span, human numbers increased tremendously, particularly in the urban centres. All these factors culminated into ushering a new wave of migration, typically termed as 'mass tourism'.

Mass Tourism

Mass tourism has been, in many cases, a bane to the hosting communities, specially the third worlders, where adverse environmental impacts have been documented by social scientists as well as ecologists (Noronha, 1976; Pizam, 1978; Cohen, 1989; Smith, Fish and Richter, 1992). Some such studies have brought to light cultural shocks, demonstration effects, irreversible damages to fauna and flora, crime and prostitution besides other small similar dehumanizing influences. There is still much more to discover about the impacts of tourism on the environment as the subject is all too complex and challenging, demanding multi-disciplinary field analysis. One of the difficulties in understanding tourism holistically is that it cuts across many branches of disciplines. This complexity necessitates a mega-disciplinary approach in the study of tourism.

Tourism and Pilgrimages

India has had a unique tradition of age old domestic tourism in pilgrimage and sacred journeys. These pilgrimages constitute an important form of cultural tourism having religious bearing and are just as important for socio-economic reasons as any other form of tourism (Bharadwaj, 1973). Secular tourism, which somewhat forms an antithesis of religious tourism, needs to be scientifically examined. The blending of the two phenomena is a challenging task that involves the identification and allocation of resources, at the grassroots, so as to cause the least damage to the environment and culture.

Studies indicate that such resources generally abound in backward areas where primitivity safeguards the cultural genius of the region. Introducing convention tourism into these socially and economically depressed regions is a task beset with difficulties because of the fact that resources of these areas are sensitive and fragile. In many cases, they are reservoirs of culture heritage of the country. To achieve the best out of tourism, research based planned development becomes a pre-condition. Of all the recreation resources, cultural heritage is most sensitive and susceptible to tourism induced changes.

Cultural Tourism

India abounds in heritage resources with all its human history and the wondrous doings of man in the form of art, architecture and archaeology besides cultural expressions that manifest themselves in performing arts, dance, drama, fairs, festivals and the like. These assets have carelessly been harnessed for tourism promotion with a little or no research base and in many cases without sufficient planning and development policies. All these have resulted in cultural shocks and resource damage. It has been observed that development of cultural tourism can pose more problem than mass tourism. Cultural tourism relates to the 'doing of man' that lends attractiveness to the landscape. These cultural expressions constitute potential recreation resources like people, lifestyles, bizarre traditions, mores, manners, beliefs and faiths which often find expression in local/regional fairs and festivals, art forms and architecture. These human resources, coupled with heritage ruins of history, contribute to the richness of any landscape which a student of cultural tourism must study with geographical curiosity.

Tourism does not exist in isolation. It has certain basic components without which it cannot operate. In order to understand tourism systematically, it is necessary to know the various components which together make tourism in a region. Although tourism consists of various components, four of these may, however, be considered to be basic. These four basic components of tourism areas follow:

- a) Transport
- b) Locale
- c) Accommodation
- d) Food and cuisine

Tourist, in order to get to his destination, has to travel and, therefore, some mode of transport is necessary for this. This mode of transport may be a motor car, a coach, an aeroplane or a train which enables a traveler to reach his predetermined destination. The locale may include the holiday destination and what it offers to the tourist. The holiday destination may offer natural attractions like sunshine, scenic beauty or even pilgrimage facilities. Accommodation is another basic component which is essential for providing food and also rest. After having reached his destination, a tourist must have some kind of accommodation which provides him food and sleep.

Locale with its attractions and amenities is the most important as these are very basic to tourism. Unless these are there, the tourists will not be motivated to go to a particular place. However, since interests and tastes of tourists vary widely, they might choose from a wide range of attractions available at various destinations all over the world. Tourist demands are very much susceptible to changes in fashion. Fashion is an important factor in the demand for various tourist attraction and amenities. The tourist who visits a particular place for its natural beauty may decide to visit some other attractions due to change in fashion.

However, in addition to these basic components there are certain elements or ingredients which are also crucial to tourism.

These elements are the fundamental attractions of tourism. These include:

- a) Scenic attractions
- b) Amenable weather
- c) Historical and cultural factors
- d) Accessibility
- e) Amenities

Scenic attractions like good weather are very important factors in tourism. Scenery or the landscapes consisting of mountains, lakes, waterfalls, forests, are strong forces attracting people to visit them. Areas with attractive winter climates, winter warmth and sunshine are also important centres of tourist attraction. Climate then, is of particular significance to tourism and, there are many areas which because of their beautiful bracing climates can be potential tourist areas.

Characteristics of historical and cultural interest exert a powerful attraction for many. Since many centuries these have had a profound influence on the traveler. Large numbers of tourists are attracted every year to the city of Agra because of the presence of Taj Mahal.

Accessibility is a very crucial factor as it is a means by which a tourist can reach the area where attractions are located. Tourist attractions of whatever type would be of little importance if their locations are inaccessible by the normal means of transport. Easy accessibility thus is a key factor for the growth and development for tourist movements.

Amenities are a necessary aid to the tourist centre. It can be of two types; natural e.g. beaches, sea bathing, trekking etc., and manmade e.g., various type of entertainments and facilities which cater for the special needs of the tourists.

Accommodation is very basic to any tourist destination. The demand for accommodation away from one's home is met by a variety of facilities. The term is loosely used to cover food and lodging. The types of accommodation have undergone considerable changes since the last 25 years. There has been a decline in the use of boarding houses and small private hotels. The larger hotels are managing more or less to keep their share of holiday trade, especially in big metro areas and popular tourist destinations.

A choice of tourist destination, however, depends on a variety of other factors as well in addition to the ones discussed above. Hospitality is one such factor. A friendly and appreciative attitude on the part of the nationals of the host region will make visitor feel at home and help enjoy his stay better. A satisfied tourist is an asset and helps promote a destination in a much more effective way than any tourist promotional campaign or publicity.

Establishment of information bureaux is another important step in the direction of welcoming visitor. It is very necessary to have information bureaux where the visitor who is unfamiliar with the region and who is perhaps not familiar with the language of the region or the place can readily acquire information about places of interest and the various facilities available there. Trained and competent guides familiar with the tourist language are also essential and are a great help to the tourist.

Tourism promotion and marketing may be instrumental in creating and fostering a tradition of travel. The promotional activities of individual operators and of the official tourist organizations will enhance the growth of tourism in the region. Newspapers, magazines, films, radios, televisions play a important role in the use of leisure through the dissemination of information about leisure activities, industry, travel and holidays.

At the local level there is a face to face contact between the host / residents and the tourist. So planning at the local level entails a different process. Given below are certain requirements for local level planning:

1. **Resource Analysis:** one of the basic requirements for all localities embarking on tourism development efforts is to be aware of the resources available to attract tourists to an area before undertaking any efforts. Too, often, local development effort focuses on bringing tourists into an area before understanding why anyone would want to come. Resource analysis or inventory preparation, thus, is the pre-requisite for local planning level.
2. **Community Awareness:** local residents do not often understand the economic benefits from tourism, especially if they are not on the receiving end of the tourist expenditures. Instead, they tend to focus more on the negative impacts resulting from congestion and overcrowding, inflation and other ills related to hosting function.
3. **Opportunity Recognition:** one of the most difficult things is to recognize the tourism possibilities in their own area. Too often, communities overlook even some of the spectacular attractions available to them. There appears a feeling that if it exists in your backyard, then it must not be notable attraction. Attractions that are not easily recognizable such as ethnic or socio-cultural resources, receive even less attention. At the same time what might be identified may not have a market; hence, proper identification of attractions is crucial.
4. **Tourist profile:** concurrent with attraction inventory assessment, a visitor profile assessment should be undertaken. Current tourists can reveal a great deal of information about not only the quality of present attractions, but of services present or lacking and the need for additional attractions. Tourist profile will also reveal the quality of guests coming to the area and whether the residents want these kinds of tourists or not.

The onus of local level tourism planning is with the elected local bodies and officials. Very often they not only lack expertise in the area but are also not aware of the tourism potential. This leads to lack of will and initiative and often danger of playing to the tune of outsiders is there. There is a triangular interaction at the destination between tourists, local communities and the tourism products (Attractions).

HYPOTHESES

This study considers the under mentioned assumptions:

1. Given the scenic beauty along with a combination of nature and architecture in the form of temples, tourism promotion can definitely stimulate economic process of development in the Ladapuram region.
2. Tourism development has to be researched based, appropriate and technologically sound to integrate with other sectors of regional economy; the contrary can be counter productive and likely to damage the resources.
3. Gifted with some of the best resources, Ladapuram can be placed on the tourist map with sound marketing and management techniques that shall develop it into a growth centre.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The present study was undertaken with the following basic objectives:

1. To position a small but beautiful tourist site amidst the limelight of Tourism.
2. To explore the resources through direct interaction with the tourist and the local people.
3. To prepare a tourism profile of Ladapuram as a tourist destination in Tamil Nadu.

METHODOLOGY

Because of the crisis in basal information of the place, physical surveys of the various places were considered the best method approach for obtaining purposeful information for this work.

Physical surveys of the distinctive attractions as sample areas in Ladapuram were conducted for a closer look into the history and facilities on the spot. Historical and cultural facts on the place were collected from a few writings by surveyors and geographers. To understand the influence of tourism on the social environment sample surveys were carried out on the host community, especially on that segment of population that is in direct contact with the guests.

Discussion and interviews were also organized with planners and local people with an aim to formulate appropriate plans and policies.

THE STUDY AREA: LADAPURAM

Ladapuram is situated in the foothills of the Pachamalai Hills. Pachamalai is a green hill range, just 80 kms from Tiruchirapalli to Perambalur in Tamilnadu. "Pachai" means Green and "malai" means mountain. Pachamalai which spread with a few range is a heaven of the tribal of this region, with unique culture and way of life. Its altitude is 500 m to 1000 meters above msl. This mountain range in itself has different small regions like Thenparanadu, kombainadu, Athi Nadu and Vannadu. It is a good hill range for trekking to enjoy nature and the animal life small streams and falls add colour to these hills.

PACHAMALAI HILLS

Ladapuram is located in the north-east end of Perambalur district, the nearest city is Tiruchirapalli or presently called as Trichy most famous for its Rockfort temple. The Pachamalai hills surround the town of Ladapuram. So small a spot, it is not even on the map. Ladapuram is regularly given the slip by the normal tourist, mainly because of ignorance (**hence referred to as a hidden**). But this place is a regular jaunt for the ones who like to rough it out, to get away, far from the maddening crowd. Deserted as it may sound, don't be surprised to find a bunch of die-hard adventurers camping out.

Just about 80 km ride from the city; one can come face-to-face with rural Tamil Nadu, but connected by the National Highway 45. The main attraction of Ladapuram is its wilderness and nature. The experience of camping out is what draws people here. Ladapuram is complete with a waterfall, small hillocks, ideal for climbing (for any inexperienced climber) and greenery all around. The road from the last village towards the hillocks is nothing but a sand pathway with huge boulders and rocks strewn around. It is an ideal picnic spots, located near the falls. Ladapuram is close to both Thuraiyur as well as Perambalur. The average rainfall is about 600mm to 1400 mm which is lesser than Western ghats. The average width of Eastern ghats is about 125km over a length of 1600km between the Mahanadi river and Vaigai along the Eastern ghats. The Eastern ghat is divided in three major sub regions. The Pachamalai and Kollimalai come under the central Eastern Ghats. The summer temperature goes to around 40 degree while the winter temperature is around 10-12 degree.

On the way to Ladapuram one has to pass through Perambalur, [about 50 km from the nearest city, Trichy], the district under which Ladapuram falls. There are also several tourist places or places of interest at Perambalur. Some of the places of interest at Perambalur are as follows...

- **Gangaikonda Cholapuram**:- the great monument at Gangaikondacholapuram, the second Brihadisvara Gangaikondacholesvara temple rears its head nobly and bespeaks the imperial dignity of the capital that Rajendra (1012-44), the son of Rajaraja, established after his victorious march to east India up to the river Ganga. The capital itself has disappeared even the place where the emperor dwelt does not exist except in ruins marked by brick debris about 1.5 km away from the temple, at a place known as Ulkottai, where a mound even now called Maligaimedu, 'palace -mound', supplies bricks to the villages. At the temple itself a ruined gopura greets the visitor; it is in the inner compound-wall of the temple, the outer and largest wall, with its gopuras, having been despoiled long ago. On entering through the gopura one sees, beyond the bali-pitha a huge bull, which unlike its counterpart at Thanjavur, is not monolithic. The temple is 54.86m high and in arrangement follows its Thanjavur predecessor. But while the latter is tall and stately, with its contour straight and severe, suggestive of strength, the present one is shorter and its contour more graceful and delicate and somewhat feminine in its lack of angularity.
- **Siruvachur Mathurakaliyamman Temple**: Siruvachur Mathura Kaliyamman temple at Siruvachur in Perambalur taluk is one of the most popular shrine in the district. The presiding deity of the temple is known as Sri Mathura Kaliyamman. She is one of the forms of Kali. Poojas are performed on Monday and Friday of every week. The Car festival is celebrated on the first in Chithirai.
- **Chettikulam Thandayuthapani Swami Temples**: The Ancient Arulmigu Ekambareswar and Thandayuthapani Swami Temples are situated in Chettikulam Village, Perambalur District. The temples were built by King Kulasekara Pandian, some 500 years ago. These temples are situated 22 kms away from Perambalur and 8 km west of Alathur gate in Tiruchi-Chennai National Highway {NH-45}. These temples reflect the architecture of the early days.
- **Ranjankudi Fort**: Ranjankudi is located 17 kms north of Perambalur. The Fort was built by a jagirdari under Nawab of Carnatic in the 17th century A.D.. The fort walls are built with neatly cut stone blocks. There are three fortification walls at different heights and the bottom most is the main rampart. It is oblong on plan with semi circular bastions and encircled by a moat fed by a tank on the Southern side. The fort contains a palace, residential buildings, underground chambers, mosque and flag mast.

Architecture and landscape have worked significantly together in shaping the cultural landscape of Ladapuram region. It is a fusion of natural and man-made resources i.e., both water falls, scenic beauties and temples. Temples are one of the major attractions in Ladapuram. Some of them are

- Sivan Kovil
- Mariaamman Kovil
- Vinayagar Kovil
- Murugan Kovil
- Alai amman Kovil
- Draupadi amman Kovil
- Ramar Kovil

With all this in the backdrop, interestingly the religious factor makes it a unique region, quite distinctive from the other regions of Tamil Nadu. While socio-economic backwardness that plagues the region has on one hand preserved its native charms and rusticity, on the other it becomes an important reason to provide a dose of development through viable tourism which can act as a catalytic agent for economic revitalization and growth stimulation in the region.

A SURVEY OF AREA CHARACTERISTICS

Ladapuram is situated in the foothills of the Pachamalai hills having a total population of about ten thousand two hundred and thirty one, with six thousand two hundred males, but having a very seasonal climate very much unlike to the hill resort climate of Ooty or Kodaikanal. Ladapuram is located in the north-east end of Perambalur district; the nearest city is Tiruchirapalli or presently called as Trichy – 80 kms. Trichy is well connected with the other parts of Tamil Nadu through airways, railways as well as roadways. Ladapuram is connected with Trichy through roadways with only one bus. Bus timings from Trichy are as follows:-

Evening at 8.45 pm. starting from Mainguard gate, Trichy. The same bus stays in Ladapuram and starts at Morning 5.45 am. One can also take a bus to Perambalur which is around 50 kms from Trichy and from Perambalur he can take a bus to Ladapuram.

There are also bus services from Ladapuram to Perambalur:

Morning-4.40, 8.15, 10.30 am

Afternoon-12.15 noon

Evening-4.00 pm

Night- 9.00 pm

Bus fare:

Trichy to Perambalur; Rs.25.00/-

Perambalur to Ladapuram; Rs.15.00/-

Trichy to Ladapuram; Rs.35.00/-

After reaching Ladapuram one has to arrange their own modes of Transport.

Through the Ages:

The Dravidian roots.....!!

Tamil Nadu represents the nucleus of Dravidian art and culture. Ancient customs and traditions, going back 3000 years, still flourish, woven inextricably into the lives of the people. Their mother tongue, Tamil, is the oldest living language of the world.

The perfect blend of Geography and History richly contribute to the overall gestalt of this unique and aesthetically appealing landscape. The green landscape all around Ladapuram gives a soothing effect to the tourist especially for those who want to take a break from daily hassles of everyday life. Being a very quiet place, growing in popularity as visitors find that they can holiday here without burning their pockets. One can also find the remains of the past in the form of cave temples.

One of the major attractions according to the local people and the tourist is the place called as "Nathakadu"[See above] where they believe the "PANCHAPANDAVAS" spent their days of exile when they were sent for the same by Duryodhana. One can find the rock on which it is believed that Arjuna- the great archer used to practice his art by sitting on it. One can even observe the footmarks on the stone {as believed by the local people}.

Another major attraction is the "Mayilootru Aruvi" or as famous with the local people- peacock falls. Mayil means peacock and Aruvi means waterfalls. This falls is basically a seasonal and natural falls which is to be developed by the government to make it a major attraction. One can find water only during the rainy season from late October as monsoon starts late in this part of Tamil Nadu. It is believed that lot of peacocks used to come to this lace during rainy season and hence the name.

This complexity of resource mosaic, however, defies practically all attempts to quantify the touristic attributes under specific categories for eco-friendly tourism development. Nevertheless, an effort has been made to select a suitable methodology for a scientific resource analysis of Ladapuram's potentials for tourism development.

GASTRONOMY

Ladapuram is a region more known for its typical vegetarian south Indian cuisine particularly idlis and dosas. The best places to eat are found around Perambalur which is about 18 kms from Ladapuram. The best food to go for is good idlis, and dosas, the south Indian vegetarian meals, and parathas served with a special khorma made from coconut. Egg parota and kothu parota are two non-vegetarian specialities in the region other than Biryani. Boiled egg pakora is one more item which is very famous as a snack specially during tea time in the evening.

THE LADAPURAM REGION

Growth and Development of tourism

Tamil Nadu represents the nucleus of Dravidian art and culture. Ancient customs and traditions, going back 3000 years, still flourish, woven inextricably into the lives of the people. Their mother tongue, Tamil, is the oldest living language of the world.

The history of the Tamils presents an exciting pageant of a powerful civilization whose origin dates back to ancient times. It is clear that the Tamils, who belong to the Dravidian race, were the first major occupants of the country and settled in the north-western part of India long before the coming of the Indo-Aryans. Excavations have revealed that the features of the people of the Indus Valley Civilization bore a strong resemblance to this race.

Temples and worship are the dominant characteristics of Tamil Nadu. Even the small towns like Ladapuram are replete with temples- each more famous than the other and all of them engraved with the finest carvings, for that was the temple architect's highest offerings to the Gods they worship round the year, when in trouble and when joyously happy.

The Tamils have always been a God-fearing people and are ardent worshippers of Siva, Vishnu, their consorts Parvati and Lakshmi, Vinayaka, Subramanya (also known as Muruga). And each of these god takes on different names at different temples depending on the legend of the temple. In simple terms, for the sake of identification it is enough to know that whenever 'Eswaran' is the suffix in the name of the presiding deity, the temple is dedicated to Lord Siva. The South has very few temples where Siva is depicted as anything other than a lingam. A few notable exceptions are the temple of the Cosmic Dancer at Chidambaram and the Ardhanareeswarar temple at Tiruchengodu. Out of all the temples in Ladapuram, the most famous among the local people is the Mariaamman Amman temple which resembles the goddess shakti and the goddess is kept inside a kugai(cave). However, none of these places could develop as a regular centre of visitation except the Mayilootru Aruvi(Falls), in the study area which was no better than a subdued wilderness until even 2 years back, when it started attracting local tourist.

Understanding travel motivation and relating them to the different types of tourist attractions and forms of tourism are vital for tourism planning of a country, region or an area. Tourist attractions, be they natural, man-made or special interest requires a planned development approach. Many attractions have developed spontaneously. However, often there are problems which result from lack of planning and development controls. Hence these attractions require planned rejuvenation.

Tourism plans must be based on realism i.e something that can be implemented. The plan should necessarily consider the techniques and procedures of implementing what is recommended while the plan is being formulated. Outlining the implementation guidelines, techniques and procedures to be followed makes the plan more perfect. Tourism's complicated and multi-sectoral character makes plan implementation a challenging task. Plan implementation, to a large extent, is solely dependent on the political process. This is because governance is involved in achieving implementation. Inherent in the political considerations of the plan being adopted and implemented, especially at the local level, is community understanding and support of the plan. After a through physical survey of the area it was observed that till date neither the local panchayat nor the Tamil Nadu government has taken any sort of initiative to uplift the area as far as tourism is concerned. The roads inside Ladapuram are still far from modernization and still one has to travel through a rugged sand and bolder pathway not more than four feet wide. The main attraction at Ladapuram, i.e the Falls, doesn't have a proper pathway to reach and becomes extremely difficult for the tourist to climb the big boulders and cross them in order to see the beautiful peacock falls or Mayilootru Aruvi as it is famous.

The planners with their pious intentions should promise to retain the original character of the region by providing spaces for gardens and greens and by creating amusement parks and entertainment areas for the tourists, a dream that remains yet to be realized. The hard fact is that the town planners are not the developers of the region, nor the native residents seem to have any say in the development of the city they inhabit. The community tourism development planners should organize periodic awareness programme to instruct the local residents of the benefits of tourism. Few other tourist infrastructure like decent accommodation, enough number of food outlets are lacking at Ladapuram though there is enough space that could be used for the development of accommodation purpose.

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