

Food and Beverage Outlets in Madurai: Opportunities for Tourism Development

Aravindha Kugan .M .S
MBA, Department of Management Studies
Bharath Institute of Science and Technology,
Selaiyur, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600 073
Bharath Institute of Higher Education and Research

ABSTRACT

India's travel and tourism industry has improved tremendously over the past few decades, due to which reason the hotel industry, out of all other sectors that make up the tourism sector, has truly benefited. Madurai is, thus, a hub of activity, and a city that never sleeps. People can entertain themselves completely through various cultural activities, parks, museums, clubs, yoga and cinema. After traveling, people can enjoy south Indian delicacies at their best here, as the city is famous for its reasonable and delicious food. Apart from this, the local people are very friendly, helpful and cheerful so one can be relaxed and eased out. Hotels and motels around the country pay great attention to provide excellent in-house facilities and incentives to their guests. The hotel industry with its striking features has been contributing much in the promotion of tourism. It is natural that budget and luxury hotels in India can afford to achieve the standard of hotels at international level. The South Indian food and North Indian food have attracted not only foreign tourists but also domestic tourists. There is no doubt that the food attraction is an important factor to promote tourism. Hence, the present paper discusses the food and beverages outlets in Madurai and also presents the opportunities and obstacles for tourism development in Madurai.

1. INTRODUCTION

India's travel and tourism industry has improved tremendously over the past few decades, due to which reason the hotel industry, out of all other sectors that make up the tourism sector, has truly benefited. Visitors, whether from foreign lands or from within the country, are attracted to a place more so if the accommodation is of high standards and easily available. Hotels are probably the most visible and vital aspects of a country's infrastructure. Today, the rise in corporate activities, leading to greater number of business trips, as well as the wish to travel on holiday has made the hotel industry a very competitive one. Hotels and motels around the country pay great attention to provide excellent in-house facilities and incentives to their guests.

Hotel industry in India has witnessed tremendous boom in recent years. It is inextricably linked to the tourism industry and the growth in the Indian tourism industry has fuelled the growth of Indian hotel industry. The thriving economy and increased business opportunities in India have acted as a boon for Indian hotel industry. The arrival of low cost airlines and the associated price wars have given domestic tourists a host of options. The "Incredible India" destination campaign and the recently launched "Atithi Devo Bhavah" (ADB) campaign have also helped in the growth of domestic and international tourism and consequently the hotel industry. The hotel industry in India

is going through an interesting phase. India has tremendous potential to become a major global tourist destination and Indian tourism industry is exploiting this potential to the hilt. India holds some of the best hotels of the world that offer unmatched services with great quality. The upgraded national highways connecting various parts of India has opened new avenues for the development of budget hotels in India. These opportunities in hotel industry have helped the improvement of Tourism in Madurai too. This paper examines the same so as to maximize the opportunities and minimize the obstacles to enhance the image of tourism in Madurai.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The hotel industry plays an important role in the service sector of the economy. It has achieved a lot and had also faced so many problems like infrastructure bottlenecks and hectic competitions. In order to analyse the hotel industry, many works related to hotel industry, its performance, and its problems are reviewed. An attempt is made here to collect the available literature regarding the hotel industry and also from tourism industry which is directly related to the hotel industry in order to assess the studies undertaken earlier.

Santhosh Kumar M (2015) in his paper explores about the food preference and likings of the tourists in Madurai. The objective of the study was to evaluate the preference of food by sample tourists and to analyze the impact of food and beverage experience during a tour. The study requires both secondary and primary data. The findings of the study revealed that the foreigners have really enjoyed the food and provided by our food and beverage outlets and the place could be suggested as culinary tourist destination of south India.

Gurmeet Singh (2006) in his speech titled “Hotel industry can meet international standards” stated that the industry become very labour intensive and also he pointed out hotel industry requires a lot of man power. The process of recruitment had also undergone changes according to the current trends in the industry.

Deane Ford (2007) in his article titled “Opportunities and challenges of creating hotel management and tourism education programs in developing countries” identified some challenges facing hotel industry such as shortage of skilled employees, retaining quality force, shortage of rooms, competition and customer expectations. Among these challenges one of the greatest challenges is plaguing the hospitality industry is the unavailability of quality workforce in difference skill levels. The hospitality industry has failed to retain good professionals.

Tamilmani T, et al. (2009) in their article titled” Employees Perception towards Service Climate – Hotel Industry in India: An Empirical Study” examined the perception of employees about the service climate in various dimensions like service leadership, service encounter, service systems, human resource management, customer satisfaction in hotel industry. They suggested that hotel industry must take steps to improve the employee morale in order to enhance the value of the employee and also it should provide facilities to develop the service quality.

Venkatesh, (1999) identified that the Asian crisis and the general slowdown in the economy have affected the hotel industry. Hotels derive their income mainly from Food and Beverage. Room occupancy plays an important role in determining the pre-tax profits of hotels. The income derived from restaurant and rooms in metros like Calcutta and Chennai are in the ratio of 0.8 to 1.0.

Rajesh, (2000) found that the success of the hotels rests on the data base to meet the changing preferences of the customers. Greater attention is essential to analyse the likes and dislikes of the guests. The consistency in hospitality is also expected from the management approach to its stakeholders.

Raja Rajeshwari, (2004) pointed out that the entry of new participants in the luxury segment of the hotel industry would change the rules of the game. This increasing entry of international chains would force domestic players to raise their service quality. The star classifications of the hotels are a function of the service provided by them. The adoptability of the domestic players to new competition would provide them the edge to retain existing customers and attract new ones.

Selvakumar, R., (2006) conducted a research titled "Tourism Attraction through Tamil Cuisine". The main objective of the reports is about the various food attractions in Tamil cuisine in Tamilnadu. The delicious dishes from the state are relished all over the country and abroad. The cuisine has important delicacies like dosa, idli and vada served with sambar and chutneys. There is a wide range of rice and vegetable preparations. The meals are traditionally served on banana leaves".

RESEARCH GAP

Reviews presented bring out the importance of hotel industry for the development of Tourism at a destination. It also shows that the food of a destination and its pattern of service serves as an attraction. Beyond these information, none of the reviews have highlighted the opportunities and obstacles in the chosen area of the researcher namely Madurai. In that respect, the current study is validated. Moreover, it is hoped that the study will be useful for the objectives of enhancing the Destination Image of Madurai.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Tamil Nadu is a flourishing state both in terms of economy and tourism and draws scores of tourists all the year round. The things to watch in Tamil Nadu are almost endless and whether we are an adventure lover or a pilgrim, this amazing state has a lot in store for its visitors. Here, we can come across beautiful beaches, wildlife sanctuaries, historic landmarks, monuments and grand festivals. Almost all the important tourist destinations of Tamil Nadu offer a range of fine lodging facilities to its tourists depending on their interest and preferences. We can select from the five stars to the three star and budget category of the Tamil Nadu hotels.

Chennai, the capital city, offers top-notch accommodation facilities to its visitors. The city has some of the finest five star hotels that offer world-class facilities and are acclaimed for their high standard of facilities and services coupled with traditional south Indian hospitality. The

five star hotels have lavishly done up guestrooms with guest amenities such as speakerphones with international direct dialing facility, Internet connectivity, mini-bar, personal safe, channel music and color television with satellite programs.

Madurai is, thus, a hub of activity, and a city that never sleeps. People can entertain themselves completely through various cultural activities, parks, museums, clubs, yoga and cinema. After traveling, people can enjoy south Indian delicacies at their best here, as the city is famous for its reasonable and delicious food. Apart from this, the local people are very friendly, helpful and cheerful so one can be relaxed and eased out.

POTENTIALS OF TOURISM IN MADURAI

Madurai a temple town and an industrial city of Tamil Nadu is thronged by pilgrims from across the country. The major landmark of Madurai is the Meenakshi temple. The Meenakshi-Sundareswarar temple happens to be one of the important pilgrim places for the Hindus. There is a temple art gallery inside the temple complex that should not be missed for its spectacular stone and brass images. Close to the Meenakshi temple is the Mariamman Teppakulam tank with the idol of Vinayaka or Vigneshwara at the centre of the platform. The Mariamman Teppakulam tank of Madurai happens to be the venue of the annual Teppakulam float festival. Beside is the Tirumalai Nayak Mahal. The architecture of the palace will surely sweep you off your feet. Then there is the Gandhi Museum in the old palace of the Rani Mangammal that provides insight into the life and times of Mahatma Gandhi. Eight kilometers ahead of Madurai are the Pandyan rock-cut shrines of Thirupparankunram. At a distance of two kilometres is the Koodal Alagar temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu.

Madurai has something for everybody. The famous Float Festival is of great religious importance and attracts pilgrims from across the country. The adventurous lot of tourists can visit Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary and Megamalai tea estates, while the nature lovers can go to Kodaikanal, Suruli and Kumbakkarai Water Falls. Thus, Madurai presents a beautiful blend of art, culture, spirituality, technology and entertainment, thus making it a popular tourist destination. The magical Madurai is indeed a temple town worth more than a visit. Madurai has got the greatest potentiality for the development of Tourism in South India. Therefore the performance of the Hotel industry in Madurai has to play a vital role in the tourism development. The existing major hotels in Madurai should focus their fullest attention on the better and effective performance of their hotels in terms of customers' satisfaction, Customer Relationship Management, Employees satisfaction and providing world class service to the tourist public.

DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN TOURISTS ARRIVALS IN TAMILNADU AND MADURAI REGION

YEARS	TAMILNADU			MADURAI REGION		
	DOMESTIC TOURISTS	FOREIGN TOURISTS	TOTAL	DOMESTIC TOURISTS	FOREIGN TOURISTS	TOTAL
2004-2005	3412729	253236	3665965	426593	31655	458248
2005-2006	3466484	255984	3722468	427961	31998	459959

2006-2007	3533306	265179	3598485	430891	32339	463230
2007-2008	3567582	293338	3860920	435071	32342	467413
2008-2009	3628643	276647	3905290	437186	33331	470517
2009-2010	3423086	283279	3706365	412420	34130	446550
2010-2011	3723944	322994	4046938	446668	38915	485583
2011-2012	3754023	366984	4121007	452292	44215	496507
2012-2013	3925840	384721	4310561	467362	46352	513714
2013-2014	3451048	415124	3866172	415789	50015	465804

Source: Tourist Information Centre, Madurai

TABLE NO 1

4. PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

The following suggestions have been made to improve the food and beverage provided to tourists in Madurai.

- The taste of continental food is not up to the expectations in south Indian hotels particularly in Madurai in the opinion of some tourists. Therefore, it is suggested that the government should introduce regular quality checks at the hotels which will improve not only the taste but also help towards the health of the tourists.
- It is the duty and obligation on the part of the hoteliers to maintain good public relations. For this purpose, a handy travel packet guide referred as coffee table book can be introduced which can provide detailed information about Indian tourism and hotel facilities and service should be given.
- There is always an obstacle of communication between the tourists and the service provider at the budget level hotels. It is suggested that the standard menu may please be printed and published on parallel menu cards in the language of the majority of tourists visiting/crossing Madurai. For example a Parallel Menu Card having the list of food items and their respective prizes say in Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Hindi will do a world of good for the domestic tourists. The same can be done as English and French for the foreign tourists.
- The hoteliers are not concerned about customer satisfaction and quality of facilities and food services. The hotel association should therefore form a committee which consists of hoteliers and government representations to watch the standard of services and facilities offered by the hotels.
- Most of the tourists are referring that they do not have enough of information on regional food. Hence, it is suggested that the hoteliers can come forward to specialize on specific regional delicacies among themselves so that the tourists can be introduced to such items as an attraction also. For example Millets, Pongal, Jigerthanda and so on.
- There is a great opportunity for the hoteliers to conduct Food Festival on regular basis so as to attract domestic tourists who love good food. In fact, Food Production Competition is also a great opportunity to bring out talents in this field.

5. CONCLUSION

Tourism, at the international level has emerged as an organized industry. The hotel industry with its striking features has been contributing much in the promotion of tourism. It is natural that budget and luxury hotels in India can afford to achieve the standard of hotels at international level. Food is one of the basic needs of human life. The hotel and catering industry is mainly concerned with the production and services of food. Thus it may be concluded from the study that South Indian food and North Indian food have attracted not only foreign tourists but also domestic tourists. Hence, there is no doubt that the food attraction is an important factor to promote tourism. Finally, hotel industry is the backbone of tourism industry, which creates national integration and international good will and understanding.

6. REFERENCES

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