



AWARENESS AND PREFERENCES FOR TOURISM AMONG PEOPLE IN COIMBATORE

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ABSTRACT

Tourism today is one of the largest and fastest growing industries employing the largest number of labour force globally. It has gained high priority one in terms of exchange earnings. It is an ever expanding service industry. In India, tourism contributes a greater percentage to the GDP. But it faces several problems like lack of transport facilities, poor accommodation facilities, lack of safety and security, cultural, environmental issues, poor quality food, lack of shopping facilities, lack of communication network, etc. There are different states in the country which are creating congenial atmosphere for various types of tourism adventures for different purposes to attract foreign and domestic tourists. Tamil Nadu has the largest tourism industry in India with a percentage share of 21.31% and 21.86% of domestic and foreign tourist visits in the country. The state has more than 4,000 years of continuous cultural history and has some of the most remarkable temple architecture in the country, music, dance, folk arts and fine arts, and is well known for its temple towns and heritage sites, hill stations, waterfalls, national parks, museum, beach resorts, local cuisine, natural environment and wildlife. It is because of this significance the present study focused to find tourism practices among the people in Coimbatore, assess their level of awareness on different forms of tourism and to analyse tourist preferences among them.

KEY WORDS: Tourists, Tourism and Awareness.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism today is one of the largest and fastest growing industries employing the largest number of labour force. According to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) more than 700 million tourists travel internationally every year spending more than 300 billion US dollars, accounting for 8 percent of the total world exports, 30 percent of international trade in services and more than one billion jobs. Tourism as an industry is a high priority one in terms of exchange earnings and eco-friendliness. It is one of the rapidly growing industries in the present day world, influencing society, government and academic circles. Tourism is an ever expanding services industry and is being perceived as an important instrument of economic development. The socio-economic implications of tourism include enhancement of domestic and foreign exchange growth, employment generation, cultural assimilation and support to the local people.

India is a mixture of multicultural experiences with a rich heritage and myriad attractions. The country is among the most popular tourist destinations in the world. It covers an area of 32, 87,263 sq. km, extending from the snow-covered Himalayan heights to the tropical rain forests of the south. As the 7th largest country in the world, India stands apart from the rest of Asia, marked off as it is by mountains and the sea, which give the country a distinct geographical entity.

Tourism industry has emerged as an instrument of income, employment generation, poverty alleviation and sustainable human development. On the one side, tourism industry contributes a greater percentage to the national GDP and to the employment generation. On the other side, it faces several problems like lack of transport facilities, poor accommodation facilities, lack of safety and security, cultural, environmental issues, poor quality food, lack of shopping facilities, lack of communication network etc. There are different states in the country which are creating congenial atmosphere for various types of tourism adventures for different purposes to attract foreign and domestic tourists.

Tamil Nadu has the largest tourism industry in India with a percentage share of 21.31% and 21.86% of domestic and foreign tourist visits in the country. According to the 2020 Ministry of Tourism report, the number of domestic arrivals was at 494.8 million making the state the second most popular tourist destination in the country, and foreign arrivals numbered 6.86 million, the highest in the country, making it the most popular state for tourism in the country. The state has more than 4,000 years of continuous cultural history. It has some of the most remarkable temple architecture in the country, and a living tradition of music, dance, folk arts and fine arts, and is well known for its temple towns and heritage sites, hill stations, waterfalls, national parks, museum, beach resorts, local cuisine, natural environment and wildlife.



India has seen a rise in tourism. In terms of intra-country business travel, around 18% of Indians traveling move within the country as a part of their job-related requirements. But when compared to the total population, people on tourism are less. Awareness and preferences for tourism among people are low. Hence in order to investigate the level of awareness and preferences of tourists towards different destinations, attractions, and experiences in India, and to identify the factors that influence their decision-making process when selecting a tourism destination in India, the present research focused on finding the awareness and preference for tourism among people in Coimbatore.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the present study are:

- To study the socio economic background of the respondents.
- To find tourism practices among the people in Coimbatore.
- To assess the level of awareness on different forms of tourism among them.
- To analyse tourist preferences among the respondents in Coimbatore.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Dinesh Kumar, Siranjeevi M S and Benita S Monica (2018), in their research paper on ‘Study on Tourism Preferences in Chennai’ based on 150 samples aimed to find the purpose to travel, analyse the mode of travel and compare the plan for existing and upcoming methods of travel. Results revealed 72% of male respondents, 49% above 35 years of age and 65% were working. It further found that about 40% of the respondents went on tour as they wished to visit new places around the world every time, 28% looked for a short leisure break from day to day life, 51% made their travel arrangements through travel agents, 49% chose economy hotels and 38% spent about ₹.5000/- during their trips. It also found that there was no significant relationship between gender and their willingness to spend for their vacation and there was no significant relationship between the age and their preferred vacation types.

T Kumarasamy (2018), in his paper on ‘Impact of tourism industry development in Coimbatore city’ was based on 75 samples. It focused to find the socio-economic background of the respondents, find the factors influencing the choice of a tourist place and rank the tourist places in Coimbatore. The study found that about 82.7% of the respondents were below 30 years of age, 56% - female respondents, 78.7% followed Hinduism, 80% of the tourists who visited Coimbatore were Indians, 81.3% went on vacation and about 46.7% of the respondents’ purpose of trip was for sightseeing. It also found that 69.3% choose the place of visit based on good environment and location, 29.3% ranked Siruvani waterfalls as the best spot. About 26.6% said it was Perur Temple, 34.66% said Isha Yoga, 18.7% ranked Singanallur Lake, 34.66% ranked Maruthamalai Temple and 29.33% ranked Vellingiri Hill Temple.

M Renukadevi, G A Hema and Swathi (2019), in their research study on ‘A study on traveller’s perception and preferences towards tourism services’ aimed to find the traveler’s preferences towards tourism services, study the factors influencing the traveler’s preferences, find the level of satisfaction towards tourism and hospitality services and analyse the challenges faced by them. It is based on 100 respondents from Coimbatore city. The study found that about 40% of the respondents preferred to travel by their personal vehicles and 51% travelled for adventure. It also found that there was no significant relationship between gender of the respondents and purpose of travel. But there was a significant relationship between age, educational qualification, and occupational status, family monthly income of the respondents and the purpose of visit.

S Dhanabagiyam (2020), in her study on ‘Impact of digitalization on travel decisions in Coimbatore city’ examined the gender difference towards the factors of online booking and analysed the internet access, frequent travel, travel websites group difference towards the factor of online booking. The study based on 250 samples revealed that 66.4% of respondents were female, 44.8% were between 25 to 35 years of age, 46.8% have completed post-graduation, 61.6% were unmarried, 34.4% earned an income above ₹.40,000/- per month, 37.2% were private employees, 38.0% accessed internet for about 4-6 years, 31.2% often travel 6 months once and 42.8% mostly used makemytrip.com travel websites for online booking. It also found that male and female respondents had different opinion towards the factor usefulness, but had the same opinion for aesthetics, ease to use, intention to purchase and intention to recommend. It showed that married and unmarried respondents had different opinion towards the factor of intention to purchase, but had same opinion for usefulness, aesthetics, ease to use and intention to recommend. For the factors like aesthetics, ease to use, intention to purchase and intention to recommend the different age group had the same opinion. And it was observed that different frequent travel group had different opinion for the factor of usefulness. But they had the same opinion for the factors like aesthetics, ease to use and intention to purchase and intention to recommend.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was confined to Coimbatore district of TamilNadu. Convenience sampling technique was adopted in the



selection of samples. Database for the study was drawn from 113 responses elicited through a detailed interview schedule personally administered, and observations from surveying the locality and through personal interviews. On completion of data collection, appropriate research analytical tools such as simple percentage, Chi-square, Ranking, Henry Garrett Ranking and Weighted average were applied.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

I. SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF THE RESPONDENTS

The findings of socio-economic background of the respondents revealed that about 58.4% (Table 1) of the respondents in Coimbatore were between '20-30' years of age, 61.06% male, 77% were undergraduates and 38.05% of respondent families received a monthly income of ₹.40000-60000.

TABLE 1
SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF THE RESPONDENTS

Sl. No.	Variables	Percentage	
1.	Age of the respondents (in years)	Below 20	15.5
		20 to 30	58.4
		31 to 40	16
		41 to 50	7.07
		Above 50	3.53
2.	Sex of the respondents	Male	61.06
		Female	38.94
3.	Education qualification of the respondents	Primary	2.65
		Secondary	1.77
		Higher secondary	6.19
		Under Graduate	77
		Post Graduate	12.38
4.	Family income of the respondents (in ₹)	Below 20000	1.76
		20000-40000	24
		40000-60000	38.05
		60000-80000	27.4
		80000-100000	5.30
		Above 100000	3.53

Source: Primary data, 2023.

II. TOURIST PRACTICES OF THE RESPONDENTS

Findings on tourist practices of the respondents revealed that 92.03% had the practice of going on excursions.

TABLE 2
TOURIST PRACTICES – SIMPLE PERCENTAGE

Sl. No.	Variables	Percentage	
1.	Times of visit in a year	Below 5	28.33
		5-10	56.63
		Above 10	15.04
2.	Travel	Alone	16.8
		With family	43.4
		With friends	31
		With organization group	8.8
3.	Preferences for tourist assistance	Yes	47.8
		No	52.2
4.	Duration of every visit	Below 5 days	56.63
		5-10 days	32.74
		Above 10 days	10.63
5.	Mode of transport	Tourist Transport	68.1
		Public Transport	31.9
6.	Amount spent by respondents for holidays	Below 2000	15



	per head (in ₹)	2000-5000	34.5
		5000-1000	39.8
		Above 10000	10.6

Source: Primary data, 2023.

Majority of the respondents visited '5-10 times' in a year (56.63%) (Table 2), most travelled 'with family' (43.4%) and did not prefer 'tourist assistance' (52.2%). Majority of the respondents visited 'below 5 days' (56.63%) during their visit, travelled in 'tourist transport' (68.1%) and spent from '₹5000-10000' (39.8%) on every trip.

Weighted average analysis revealed that most of the respondents visited 'other state' (mean score: 4.01) (Table 3). The respondents spent high amount on travel (mean score: 4.19) and least amount on tourist guide (mean score: 3.46).

TABLE 3
TOURIST PRACTICES – WEIGHTED AVERAGE

Sl. No.	Variables	Total score	Mean score	
1.	Area of visit of the respondents	Within the district	392	3.46
		Within the state	380	3.36
		Other state	454	4.01
		Abroad	290	2.56
2.	High spending on	Shopping	410	3.62
		Food	402	3.55
		Travel	474	4.19
		Tourist guide	391	3.46
3.	Importance given for activities during tour	Lodging	434	3.84
		Food	493	4.36
		Observe Wildlife	447	3.99
		Observe Fauna	424	3.75
		Photography	432	3.82
	Outdoor activities like swimming, trekking, etc.	357	3.15	

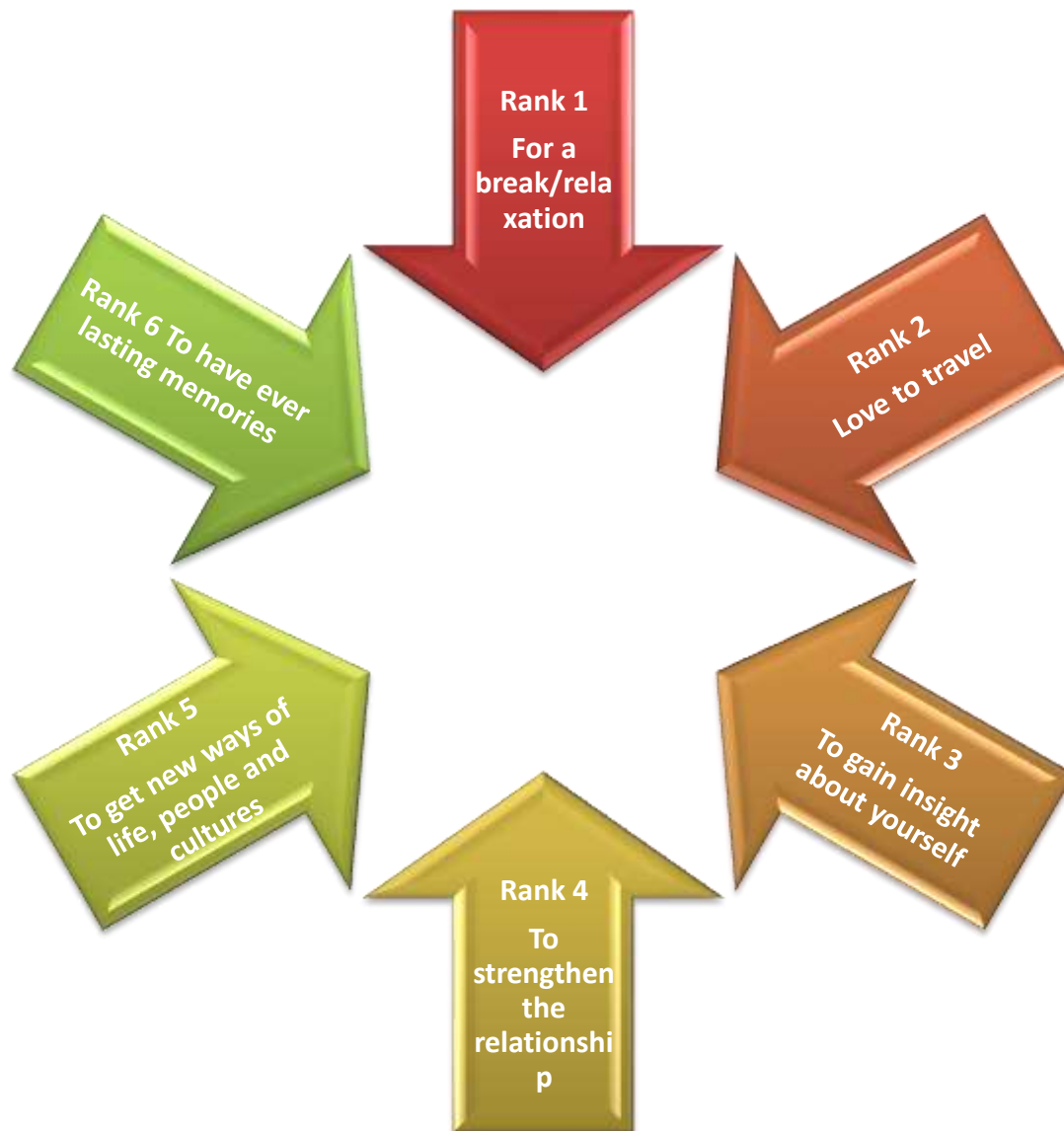
Source: Calculated data, 2023

The study revealed that the respondents gave very high importance for food (mean score: 4.36) (Table 3), observe wildlife (mean score: 3.99) and for photography (mean score: 3.82). And less importance to observe fauna (mean score: 3.75) and least importance for outdoor activities like swimming, trekking, etc. (mean score: 3.15).

The purpose of tour by respondents was found using Henry Garrett ranking (Figure 1). Results revealed that most of them went on tour just to have a 'break/relaxation (rank 1)', had a 'love to travel (rank 2)', 'to gain insight about yourself (rank 3)' and 'to strengthen the relationship (rank 4)'. A less number of the respondents went on tour 'to get new ways of life, people and cultures (rank 5)' and 'to have ever lasting memories (rank 6)'.



FIGURE 1
PURPOSE OF TOUR



III. RESPONDENT AWARENESS ON TOURISM

Awareness on different forms of tourism

Awareness on different forms of tourism was found. Results showed that Awareness on different forms of tourism was found. It was revealed that about 35.39% of the respondents were highly aware of pilgrim tourism and 31.85% were highly aware of environmental tourism. About 30.97% were aware of cultural tourism to a very high level and 30.97% were moderately aware of medical tourism. Around 35.39% were highly aware of heritage tourism and 39.82% highly about recreational tourism. Almost 26.54% were moderately aware of cruise tourism and 49.55% were aware of educational tourism to a very high level. Majority of the respondents had a very high awareness on adventure tourism (39.82%) and high level of awareness about village tourism (30.97%). Around 44.24% of them were moderately aware of sports tourism and 36.28% were aware of wildlife tourism to a very high level.

Association between qualification of the respondents and their awareness level on education tourism

To find out association between qualification of the respondents and their awareness level on education tourism, Chi-square test was used.

**Hypothesis:**

H_0 : There is no significant association between the qualification and awareness level on educational tourism of the respondents.

H_1 : There is a significant association between qualification and awareness level on educational tourism of the respondents.

TABLE 4

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN QUALIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENTS AND THEIR AWARENESS LEVEL ON EDUCATION TOURISM - CHI-SQUARE TEST

FACTOR	CALCULATION VALUE	DF	TABLE VALUE	REMARKS
Qualification	18.70	16	18.30	Rejected

Source: Calculated data, 2023

It is clear from Table 4 that, the calculated value of Chi-square at 0.05% level is more than the table value. Hence, the hypothesis is rejected. So, there is a significant association between qualification and awareness level on educational tourism.

IV. TOURIST PREFERENCES OF THE RESPONDENTS

Weighted average method is used to find out the respondents Preferences for tourist destinations. Findings portray that most of the respondents preferred hill station (mean score: 4.29), amusement parks (meanscore: 4.12), safaris (mean score: 4.01) and temples (mean score: 3.86).

Probing into the respondents' preference for tour arrangements revealed that majority of them (69.02%) preferred for 'own arrangement' and (30.08%) respondents preferred for travel agencies.

Type of accommodation preferred by the respondents was found using rank analysis. Findings show that at most of the respondents assigned rank 1 for 'Economy hotels', rank 2 for 'Lodges', rank 3 for 'Resorts' rank 4 for 'Star hotel', rank 5 for 'Others' and rank 6 for 'Dormitory'

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Tourism industry is a high priority one in terms of employability, exchange earnings and eco-friendliness. Tourism is one of the rapidly growing industries in the present day world. It is an ever expanding services industry with latest vast growth potential. Because of the growing significance of tourism industry, the present study focused to find tourism practices among the people in Coimbatore, assess their level of awareness on different forms of tourism and to analyse tourist preferences among them. The study found that tourism among 30 years and above age was lesser. Hence, leisure in the form of tourism has to be promoted among the age group. Majority did not take tourist guide assistance. Taking the assistance of tour guide would help the tourist get better information about the places. The respondents were moderately aware of medical tourism, cruise tourism and sports tourism. Hence these forms of tourism have to be promoted among the public.

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