

Role of Tourism in Social Development - A Case Study of Mahabalipuram, Tamilnadu

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ABSTRACT:

Tourism plays a major role in social development of a place. Developing a location for tourism not only brings in more tourists but also has several inter related advantages. There are several problems and possibilities faced during the development of tourism in a place. Developing a location for tourism brings in more tourists. Since the tourists rate increase, food and accommodation for tourists has to be provided. The hotels and lodges are opened for the tourists through whom revenue can be generated. Moreover transport facilities for that place increases, which paves way for the place to become a perfect holiday destination. Once it gets identified as a tourist spot, the government takes efforts to make it environmental friendly and the tourist rates increase rapidly. The major factor which is required to be considered is because of the opening of hotels and lodges, more job opportunities are created for the people and local community people have an extended advantage of being the tour guide of the destination.

This research paper focuses on the major tourist destination Mahabalipuram also called as Mahabalipuram located right on the coramandel coast very next to Bay of Bengal in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. During the Pallava dynasty in the 7th and 10th centuries, it was a well-known sea port and also has several arts, architectures, rock cut caves etc. The researcher feels that Mahabalipuram has seen a quick development socially as Tourism & handicraft industry provides several job opportunities to the people. Even the opening of several beach resorts and hotels increased the transport facilities and tourist rates. The researcher is undertaking a qualitative analysis by taking in depth interviews using questionnaires from the local community and workers there to know about the role of tourism in social development.

Keywords: Tourism, Social development, Hotels, Job opportunities & Environment friendly.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a dynamic, evolving, consumer-driven force and is the world's largest industry. Tourism is not just a source of revenues; it is widely used as a major tool for achieving the goals of development. The impact of tourism is not limited to the economic sector only. This industry has proven to be a strong stimulus for socio-cultural changes too. Tourism can be used as a vehicle for promoting social development. It can also bring about community pride, stimulate planning and establishment of facilities and lead to greater appreciation on the part of both tourist and local communities.

BACKGROUND:

Mahabalipuram, the city of architectural grandeur is located on the coramandel coast of Bay of Bengal, in Kancheepuram district, Tamilnadu. It was established as a town in 7th century by Pallava kings who ruled south of Madras. It became famous harbour town used for trading with many south eastern countries such as Kambuja (present-day Cambodia) and Shrivijaya (present-day islands of Malaysia, Sumatra and Java), and also with the Champa

Empire (known as Annam). Mahabalipuram is named after the King Mamalla (meaning the great warrior) also known as Narasimharman I (c. 630 – 670), who ruled during the 7th century at the head of the Pallava Dynasty, who scooped out most of the rock cut temples and carvings at that place. During 7th century, the temple building activity marked the beginning of rock-cut architecture in south India, as a part of Dravidian architectural monument. Some of the monuments built during this period are: Rock-cut rathas (Five Rathas) or chariots, the open air bas-reliefs known as the Descent of the Ganges, the rock-cut decorated caves like the Govardhanadhari, Mahishasuramardini, and the Jala-Sayana Perumal Temple, all attributed to Mamalla.

In 8th century, structural architecture became popular during the reign of another Pallava king, Rajasimha. His contribution to the same was immense, as he built one of the greatest temples known at that time, '**THE SHORE TEMPLE.**' It is acclaimed to be the only Shore temple in the world. The temple comprises of the Rajasimhesvara, a west-facing structure which has a small tritala vimana; the Kshatriyasimhesvara, an east-facing structure which has the largest vimana; and Nripatisimha Pallava Vishnugriha, another east-facing structure which is a flat-roofed mandapa

in oblong shape, and which enshrines the reclining Vishnu. The unique monuments in Mahabalipuram present a fusion of religion, culture and legends all related to Hindu religious pantheon. All these monuments located on this shores of Bay of Bengal imbibe the art and culture of tamilnadu.

The Pallava dynasty reigned from 4th to 19th century until it was defeated by Chola dynasty in 1987 A.D. Mahabalipuram historical importance was diminished after that, for some time it was only known as a port but eventually was destroyed. During Vijayanagara period, the roofing of Krishna mandapa and talsanyana perumal temple was built. Archaeologists of anti-quarian art rediscovered the monuments in the 19th century. In 20th century it became the major tourist attraction and was made a UNESCO world heritage site in 1984 and four categories criteria I, II, III and IV. The major development happened at Mahabalipuram was in the beginning of 1990's when Ministry of Tourism laid major emphasis on the development of the place. The Union Ministry of Tourism and Culture financed in 2003 towards the improvements in the place. Mahabalipuram has seen tremendous development during the years with improved tourism infra-structure which includes:

1. Better connectivity
2. Better accommodation facilities.
3. Development of local art-sculpture museum and sculpture business.
4. Shopping centres.
5. Increase in Tourist guides.

Today Mahabalipuram stands tall as a centre of arts and as a testimonial to early Dravidian style of temple architecture. The rich portraits in stone of various gods, goddesses, celestial beauties and epic stories present an endless feast for the eye and the mind. Mahabalipuram offers glimpse of the glory of the Pallava Kings and the creativity of the craftsman, who is both a supreme artist and devotee. Also one can hear the sounds of wind on stone and the swish of waves.

There is also a museum of archaeology here with exhibits of sculptures and architectural pieces found in the area. The city has an architectural school that teaches stone carving and history of sculpture. Today Mahabalipuram is purely a tourist town and one of the major attractions around Chennai. The east coast road has made it easily accessible just about half an hour from the city.

GROWTH IN TOURISM IN TAMILNADU

Number of tourist's arrival in the state rose by 34.1 per cent in 2012 to 187.6 million from 140 million. Mr. Chendur Pandian, Minister for Tourism, Tamil Nadu Government said that tourist arrivals in 2012 was 187.6 million, includes 184.1 million domestic and 3.5 million foreign tourists, as

compared to 140 million (includes 136.7 million and 3.3 million foreign) in 2011 and 105.8 million in 2010 includes 103 million and 2.8 million domestic and foreign tourists respectively.

“A new Tourism Policy is being formulated, which aims to attract more high spending tourists and also investments in tourism and hospitality related infrastructure. The Policy will also ensure employment for skilled and unskilled persons, besides inclusive development for the local people. Meanwhile, to boost the sector, the Government is formulating a new Tourism Policy to take up Rs 500 crore worth project, with Asian Development Bank (ADB's) assistance.

GROUP OF MONUMENTS AT MAHABALIPURAM – WORLD HERITAGE SITE

Most of the monuments, like the rock-cut rathas, sculptured scenes on open rocks like Arjuna's penance, the caves of Govardhanadhari and Ahishasuramardini, and the Jala-Sayana Perusal temple (the sleeping Mahavishnu or Chakrin at the rear part of the Shore temple complex) are attributed to the period of Narasimhavarman I Mamalla.

The monuments may be subdivided into five categories:

- *Ratha* temples in the form of processional chariots, monolithic constructions cut into the residual blocks of diorite which emerge from the sand. The five ratha of the south, which are the most famous, date to the reign of Naharasimhavarman Mamalla (630-68), the great Pallavas king (the Cholas texts, moreover, call the city Mahabalipuram).
- *Mandapa*, or rock sanctuaries modelled as rooms covered with bas-reliefs (the *mandapa* of Varaha, representing the acts of this avatar of Vishnu; the *mandapa* of the Five Pandavas and, especially, the *mandapa* of Krishna and the *mandapa* of Mahishasuramardini).
- Rock reliefs in the open air illustrate a popular episode in the iconography of Siva, that of the Descent of the Ganges. The wise King Baghirata having begged him to do so, Siva ordered the Ganges to descend to Earth and to nourish the world. The sculptors used the natural fissure dividing the cliff to suggest this cosmic event to which a swarming crowd of gods, goddesses, mythical beings (Kinnara, Gandherya, Apsara, Gana, Naga and Nagini), wild and domestic animals bear witness.
- Temples built from cut stone, like the Temple of Rivage, which was constructed under King Rajasimha Narasimavarman II (695-722), with its high-stepped pyramidal tower and thousands of sculptures dedicated to the glory of Siva.

- Monolithic *rathas*, from single- to triple-storeyed, display a variety of architectural forms, while the Dharmaraja, Arjuna and Draupadi rathas are square in plan, the Bhima and Ganesa rathas rectangular, and the Sahadeva *ratha* apsidal. Structural architecture was introduced on a grand scale by Pallava Rajasimha (700-28), culminating in the erection of the Shore Temple.

Another piece of architectural beauty is the Shore temple, standing against the background of the deep blue waters of the ocean. It belongs to a period when the constructional style of the Pallavas was at its peak in its decorative beauty and intrinsic quality.

METHODOLOGY:

The primary sources of data for study were “active” interviews, informal conversation, on-site observation and through questionnaires. The methodology adopted here is of an explorative design & both primary and secondary data have been used. In-depth interviews were undertaken for the purpose of obtaining information and better understanding of social development. The qualitative interviews are beneficial, inductive and are explanatory (Bell and Bryman, 2007). An interview is a purposeful discussion between two or more people. (Kahn and Cannell 1957). Indeed, respondents freely injected thoughts and feelings throughout the interview process. The relevant secondary data has been analyzed by referring tourism websites, annual reports, online books, journals, manuals, observations & careful study of relevant literature.

TOURISM & ITS IMPACTS – A BRIEF REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Tourism brings people of different cultures together, provides a direct contact between them and thus serves as a powerful means of diffusion of world cultures. It provides an opportunity for friendly and peaceful dialogue leading to better understanding between and nations. It can build bridges and create friendship between nations leading to the establishment of peace – the penultimate goal of the United Nations. But from another perspective, tourism is a factor of acculturation which affects attitudes, alters popular beliefs, changes mentalities and spreads new concepts relating to work, money, and human relationships. Sometimes it also destroys the ties that bind people to their faith, religion and aesthetics. With the restaurants, bars, discos and other entertainment may come disturbing public behaviour, drunkenness, vandalism, crime, and indecency. Local youth in many cases emulate the visitor’s behaviour and social and cultural conflicts arise.

Much of the recent literature on the development of world tourism has been concerned with the impact of tourism on the host community. As countries (and region within

countries) have turned to tourism as a means to increase national income, employment and living standards, and to end the dependency on limited range of primary products, pressure from tourism and its associated development have begun to affect the local population (Sevign, Nicos, & Jonathan, 1996)

Initially, the tourists, who constituted a very small number, were treated as guests under the traditional system of hospitality. Pi-Sunyer has also suggested that the tourists are treated as a part of the traditional guest-host relationship at the initial stage of tourism development (Pi-Sunyer 1977). However, as the number of tourist increased, they became less and less welcome (Cohen 1982a)

The impact of tourism also changes at different stages. Tourism development goes through five stages known as tourism product life cycle beginning with discovery, then involvement, development and consolidation. From here destinations may move in to declination, rejuvenation or stabilization, depending on innovation or measures designed to ameliorate the negative impact of tourism. Butler (1980)

Tourism can yield enormous socio-cultural benefits as well as devastating costs. The net effect depends upon the responsibility exercised by the various stakeholders of the industry including the public and private sectors as well as the tourists and residents.

TOURISM AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN MAHABALIPURAM

Tourism in Mahabalipuram grew substantially over the years which contribute to the growing number of tourist arrival. Initially tourist were small in numbers and treated as guest but now hospitality become commercialized. The host community of Mahabalipuram is enthusiastic and thrilled by the development of the tourism in the region. They welcome the strangers and there is a mutual feeling of satisfaction. There are job opportunities and money flows along with the tourist. This state is similar to the level euphoria as described by Doxey (1976) regarding the attitude of the host community.

DEMONSTRATION EFFECT

Demonstration effect is the direct Socio-Cultural impact of tourism. Tourist inflow influences the behaviour of the host population for the demonstration effect to take place. The introduction of foreign culture and behaviour influences the behaviour of the host population by the changed attitude. UNESCO (1976) suggested that at the outset the host may developed the inferiority complex, which set Hi-Tech economic expectation among the local population who aspired to the material standard and value of tourist leading to the copy of their consumption pattern. Greater well and upward social mobility would become increasingly

desirable, particularly for the young members of the host community. These changes stimulate for the introduction of the new forms of the communication, transport and infrastructure primarily provided for the tourism development. These changes in the consumption pattern would include consumer durable such as Television, Videos etc., will expose the local population to a great range of wants which speed up the process of the social change.

The Socio-Cultural impact can be either positive or negative.

One of the positive impacts highlighted in Mahabalipuram was the exchange of cultural information, ideas and beliefs. And cultural belief where tourist appreciated the cultural heritage of the region, that stimulated the host pride in their heritage and fostered sculpture making, local crafts, tradition and customs.

The negative social impact on the region was the potential of the tourism development. The demonstration effect is advantageous if it encouraged people to adapt or work for things which they can improve. In this context, tourism is credited for introducing both positive and negative changes in the social development.

1. Tourism – A vehicle for social development.

The overall result indicates that the tourism is a vehicle of social development in Mahabalipuram. Out of 50 respondents 35 (75%) were expressed positive about social development. The people who directly or indirectly involved in tourism related business, expressed there is growth in their economic level, community development and new job opportunities such as hotel jobs, self-employment like sculpture making, tourist guide etc. 90% of the respondents agreed that the tourism has increased job opportunities and economic development in the region.

2. Tourism as a promoter of art and heritage

70% of the respondents agreed tourism is the promoter of art and heritage. Tourism has helped in taking the Richness & Uniqueness of Pallava dynasty heritage and the architectural grandeur of Shore temple, Five Rathas, etc. and the exquisite sculpture making to world. The UNESCO declaration of Mahabalipuram as a World Heritage site in 1984 symbolizes the richness of the region and helped in conservation and promotion.

3. Tourism enhances the standard of living of the local community

85% of the respondents expressed that the tourism helped in improving their standard of living and through disposable income with better lifestyle and educational facility. The host community showed positive attitude towards tourism which in turn increased their involvement in the way they have treated tourist. They are enthusiastic and thrilled by the development of the tourism and increased tourist flow in the

region. They believe there will be more opportunities for them and money flows along with the tourist. Tourism created a sense of mutual feeling of satisfaction.

4. Tourism inspire community pride

95% of the respondents expressed a sense of pride about their culture and history. The host community is so proud that the people from the various parts of the world come to the Mahabalipuram to see the richness and the heritage of the Pallava dynasty. This instil greater community pride that they belong to one of the prestige and unique society of the world. The host community is proud that the tourist appreciates their skills of sculpture making to the perfection and buys the same as a souvenir. This is one of the predominant reasons why sculpture making business is still alive and carried through the generation.

5. Tourism & Infrastructural development

90% of the respondents agreed that tourism helped in enhancement of the local infrastructure with better accommodation facilities, better connectivity such as increased frequency of buses from nearby areas and especially from Airport, Central Railway Station and Chennai Bus terminal. The establishment of facilities such as restaurants, hospitals, entertainment facilities etc. has improved the quality of their life significantly.

6. Up keep of the Heritage site

70% respondents expressed the domestic tourist are not sensible and responsible in their behaviour, e.g. Most of the tourists are not sensitive towards protecting the heritage site because they throw waste, eatables near the monument and most often damage the monuments especially Five Rathas by climbing on top of the monument for taking photograph, thus resulted in defacing of the sculptures. On the other hand, the conduct of the foreign tourists and their behaviour towards the monuments are highly appreciated.

Discussion & Prediction

Tourism in Mahabalipuram plays an integral part of their economy. Tourism is credited for bringing several positive developments in the region. Host community is an integral part of tourism system at the destination and thereby development of society and its people have profound influence in the overall tourist experience. Tourism was a promoter of employment in the region. One can find lot of hotels ranging from small lodges to 5 star hotels, multi cuisine restaurants, shops, arts & handicrafts, travel agencies which created huge job opportunities for the local people. People took lot of pride in serving the tourists. One of the key observations in the local community is their positive attitude towards tourism development. Another factor of demonstration effect is the adoption of tourist behaviour and consumption patterns of local residents, especially young people. (Rivers 1973).

In 1984, Mahabalipuram gained a status of 'World Heritage Site' by UNESCO. Archaeological Survey of India has placed their best possible efforts to protect the site. As per UNESCO & ASI, there shouldn't be any shops or activities near the monuments (300mts). In Mahabalipuram, one can find shops very close to the monuments resulting in people polluting the place by throwing the waste and eatables in the monuments, also heavy vehicles and cars pass very close to the monument which can have a drastic effect on the same. In addition to this, most of the tourists touch the sculptures and some climb on the monument to take photographs has caused the defacing of the sculptures.

The Ministry of Tourism and culture is financing multicore projects called "Integrated Development of Mahabalipuram". This plan will ensure that the monuments will have better fencing, parks and even the monuments will be connected through better landscaping and so on. This will help to enrich the celestial beauty of the place and might attract more number of tourists. On the other hand, the people of Mahabalipuram have a sense of fear and hesitant to move away from the heritage site. They feel that their livelihood might get affected. The government must ensure people that there will be enough job opportunities and establishment of facilities. They must also try to instil awareness that developing Mahabalipuram will bring more tourist inflow which will help enhance the standards of living.

Tourism in Mahabalipuram is a seasonal business where most of the foreign tourist visits the place during November to March. The people of Mahabalipuram try to make most of the money during season time. Nowadays, they feel that the cost of living is very high and a few left the traditional business of sculpture making and ventured in to auto and taxi business to improve the standard of living.

Tourism is undergoing a stage of drastic transformation. There is a noticeable change in the number of tourist arrivals, tourist spending and consumption patterns of facilities, duration of stay, activities at the sites. There can be increase in number of staff to exercise strict control against people touching the monuments. Most of the domestic tourist sees Mahabalipuram as a mere picnic spot. The department of Tourism should try and elevate the image in the minds of the people through marketing and other initiatives.

Department of Tourism, Government of Tamilnadu has taken initiatives such as:

- New parking spaces of 8 acres for visitors
- New Bus terminal to avoid congestion and modern facilities.
- Enhancement of the place where Indian dance festival happens every year
- Maritime Heritage museum in Mahabalipuram.

- Enhanced auditorium facilities.
- Light and sound shows.
- Focus on improving sculpture making business.

Tourism, if planned, controlled and properly monitored, can help in achieving the desired stages of development, but at the same time it has tremendous possibilities to cause deleterious impacts on the socio-cultural environment of the destination, if it grows unplanned and uncontrolled. If the plan of "Integrated Development of Mahabalipuram" gets implemented, Mahabalipuram will be the best tourism destination. So attempts must be focused towards protection and conservation of the uniqueness which Mahabalipuram offers to the world of tourists. The government must have serious concern over the sustainable socio-economic development of the place.

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