

Pilgrimage Tourism Development - Issues and Challenges of Pilgrims in Velankanni –A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Pilgrimage tourism is exclusively or strongly motivated for religious reasons. It is very oldest tourism in the worldwide phenomenon of religious history. In Velankanni, majority of domestic tourists are pilgrimage tourists (who come for pilgrimages), whose behaviour depends up on the exposure, which they have before visiting the place. The first dominant impression of tourists about this village is the pilgrimage notion like one of the most sacred cities for Christians, the abode of Jesus Christ and ghats along with the Indian Ocean. The Indian Ocean in Velankanni is the main attraction for all the visitors, but perceptual levels and degrees vary. Domestic pilgrimage tourists visiting Velankanni mainly involve in rituals and religious festivities, while foreign tourists enjoy recreation. The primary data collected are organized and explained with the help of statistical methods like MS Excel-97 and SPSS 10. The result of almost all the survey has been done for the period over 2010. The analysis and interpretation under different heads are discussed in the sequence.

KEYWORDS: *Pilgrimage Tourist, International Tourist, Perception, Cultural.*

Introduction

Pilgrims travel(ling) to pilgrimage centres are reported to have phenomenally increased in the past few decades due to increased accessibility and improvement in transport infrastructure. A large proportion of such journeys are motivated by 'religious needs' but exhibit touristic aspects (Kathryn Rountree Goddess 2002) whereas many tourists journeys have an explicit spiritual components (Mark Mac Williams. 1995). The scholarly discussion on discerning (the) similarities and differences between the two forms of travel, pilgrimage and tourism, that has dominated the literature (Inés Hernández-Ávila. 1996), seem to be inadequate in explaining the nature of such travel. The recent interest in describing such contemporary travel to sacred sites (Roger Friedland and Richard Hecht. 1998) has led to proliferation of composite terms such as religious tourism, pilgrimage tourism, etc. (John Elsner 1992). However, comparative studies and anthropological studies that have dominated the pilgrimage (and tourism) literature(s) have limited explanation on the implications of increase in contemporary pilgrimage travel on the sacred sites, environmental concern being one of them. Some discussion(s) on the environment in sacred sites has only recently begun to surface (Ioana JOSAN, 2009). The environmental issues are more significant in the Indian context, where more than 100 million Indians embark on pilgrimages each year (Times of India, 2001), thereby, contributing largely to domestic tourism (Kamla-Raj 2010). Differences in behavioural attributes like perception, attitudes and motives vary

according to the cultural background and personality. In Velankanni, majority of domestic tourists are pilgrimage tourists, whose behaviour(s) depends upon the exposure, which they have before visiting the city. The first dominant impression of tourists about this city is the religious notion like one of the most sacred cities for Christians, the abode of Jesus Christ and ghats along with the Indian Ocean. The Indian Ocean in Velankanni is the main attraction for all the visitors, but perceptual levels and degrees vary. Domestic pilgrimage tourists visiting Velankanni mainly involve in rituals and religious festivities, while foreign tourists enjoy recreation. This study deals with the potentials in pilgrimage tourism in Velankanni and problems faced by pilgrims in Velankanni and the article deals with transport facilities and accommodation facilities.

Methodology

In general, pilgrimage tourism data is collected from primary sources. The primary data are based on personal survey. For detailed behavioural and experiential information personal and sample surveys are the pre-requisite. Primary data is generated through detailed questionnaire and interview. This technique is independent of any institutional machinery instead it requires the modest behavioural skill to distinguish and identify the pilgrimage tourists and needs to collect information. It is notable that the time of taking the interview or survey exerts great influence upon the answers. In fact, the answers sought from the pilgrimage tourists at the time of arrival and departure from the destination may vary to a great extent; the differentiation between the two temporal answers reflect the pre-conceived image and re-oriented vision about the village. One should always be very careful to survey the pilgrimage tourists only in leisure time; this will help in mutual understanding as well as clarity in expositions. In designing the questionnaire, the major concern has been to ensure that it should not produce pre-determined results either by omitting unfavourable alternations in multiple choice questions or by suggesting desired responses through the phrasing and sequence of questions. To avoid these problems, the adopted questionnaire comprised of a series of alternate choice questions and ordering, which were arranged sequentially with a view to minimising the danger of suggested response. This format has been followed in the present survey. The questionnaires were filled in by two ways one is 5. Lickert scale and the other is rank method. Pilgrimage tourists were personally contacted for in-depth interviews. The main attention of the survey has been on preferences and behaviour pattern of tourists. However, the attitude and overall reaction of pilgrimage tourists towards varieties of things such as food, accommodation, people, transport, recreation and expenses on different times, etc. were also noted. The analysis of income, purpose of visit, age-sex structure, means of transport in the village and in other parts of Tamilnadu is helpful in reflecting the characteristics of pilgrimage tourists' behaviour, expenditure pattern and preferences. The primary data collected are organised explained with help of statistical methods like MS Excel-97 and SPSS 10. The result of almost all the survey has been done for the period 2010. The analysis and interpretation under different heads are discussed in the sequence.

Background of Velankanni

The historic marine shrine at Velankanni stands out as a light in darkness to

many who make their way from countries far and near to obtain blessing and healing from their mother dear. Pilgrims belonging to every religion caste and creed flock to shrine of our lady who meets their every need as one family they gather sinking every trace of disparity (resembling) truly a living example of unity in diversity. Amid the calm surroundings of palm groves on the shore of the bay of Bengal, nestles the magnificent shrine basilica of our lady of health, Velankanni. This marian shrine which has acquired international repute, is popularly known as the "Our Lady of Lourdes of the east". The place which our blessed mother chose to make her apparition, Velankanni, was once a tiny insignificant village on the coast of the Bay of Bengal. Now it resembles a flourishing town and accommodates countless pilgrims who visit the shrine daily. It lies 10 kilometers south of Nagapattinam, a port town. It may come as a surprise to many that Velankanni itself was once a port and there is ample evidence to prove this fact. It did have certain historical dealings with Rome and Greece, the ancient commercial centres of the world. However, in course of time, while Nagapattinam continued to flourish as a commercial town, Velankanni lost its importance in this sphere. The canal which dug for navigation between Nagapattinam and Vedaranyam, lies to the west of Velankanni. Velankanni which has developed beyond all recognition in the past twenty five years has a population of approximately 12,000 people. But this number keeps on increasing day by day due to the influx of new settlers. The place has all the facilities found in a flourishing town, such as a post office, banks, hospitals, higher secondary schools, home for the aged and the disabled, medical stores, bus station, telephone exchange and all other conceivable facilities. But above and beyond all these, at this renowned shrine of Velankanni, is it any wonder then that when one sets foot on the sacred soil of Velankanni, there is an instinctive feeling that one is on holy ground. It is an unassailable fact that the entire place throbs with the all-pervading presence of Mary. Here is truly a silent presence that reflects God's presence in the world through the ages. And it is to experience this silent but powerful presence of Mary that millions of her devotees, irrespective of caste or creed, flock to her hallowed shrine at Velankanni. They come from far and near to experience the divine consolation she diffuses. Whether the pilgrims come from the far east or from the far west or from far away Europe, their one cherished desire is to have a darshan (vision) of the "holy land" of Velankanni, and more so, that of the miraculous mother of good health. This lady of good health towers like a beacon, beckoning all her maternal solicitude, and she is ever keen to lead us all, sojourners in this valley of tears, to the harbour of eternal safety. Velankanni which was once an obscure village on the coast of the Bay of Bengal with a sparse population has now occupied pride of place in history. What is it that has placed this village on the world map. Without a shadow of a doubt it is the choice of our blessed mother to make her apparitions in Velankanni, that has transformed this place into a marian shrine of international repute.

The Portuguese in Velankanni; during the latter half of the 15th century the Portuguese had a flourishing trade. The port of Macao in China was in the hands of the Portuguese. As we had seen earlier it was the ship that sailed from Macao to Portugal that was caught in the violent storm in the Bay of Bengal and was washed to the shores of Velankanni through our blessed mother's powerful intervention. The sailors who had built a chapel in Velankanni as a token of their gratitude, made

many improvements on the capital they built, on their subsequent visits. Notable among these was the statue that they had chosen to erect with our lady holding the baby Jesus in her left hand and a sceptre in her right hand and standing majestically on the globe. The statue was placed at the altar and was called 'our lady of health' thus; the history of the Velankanni clearly shows that Mary had chosen to establish her throne in Velankanni to shower blessings on humanity. It has already been mentioned that Velankanni was a part of the parish of Nagapattinam, but as pilgrims began to pour into Velankanni, it was raised to the status of an independent parish in 1771, and Fr. Antonio de Rozario the last parish priest of the church of the immaculate conception, Nagapattinam was appointed the first parish priest of Velankanni. The feast of the new parish of Velankanni was celebrated on the feast of the nativity of our blessed mother on 8th September in a grand manner and this procedure has continued to this day. It must be mentioned here that the evidence to prove that Velankanni was raised to the status of an independent parish is found in the bishop's Mylapore. Vasco-da-Gama was followed by Alvares Cabral in 1501. This second expedition brought eight Franciscan missionaries who became the pioneers of modern missions in India. 'of the eight Franciscan missionaries that came over to India, Cabral, the author of *Mystras Lusitanas Do Oriente* says, one converted and baptized a rajah or prince of Calicut, another a rajah of Cochin, another the king of Cannanore and yet another a prince of the royal house of Narasinga, Vijayanagar. "it is interesting to note that at that period, Velankanni and nagapattinam were within the limits of the kingdom of Vijayanagar The headquarters and the main field of Portuguese missionary enterprise in India was Goa. However, we find the Portuguese Franciscan missionaries in charge of the tomb of St. Thomas at Mylapore in Chennai, already in 1534. And they were in Nagapattinam in 1534 and earlier still in Tuticorin, both places in the east coast in south India were also known as the Coramandal coast. By 1606 the missions in the Coramandal coast had developed enough to warrant the constitution of the diocese of Mylapore by virtue of the papal bull issued by his holiness Pope Paul V. The first bishop of Mylapore was Dom Sebastiano De San Pedro. From that time onwards Velankanni came under the jurisdiction of the diocese of Mylapore. The Franciscan missionaries, who took care of the province of Goa and Mylapore, also looked after Nagapattinam and Velankanni. They perpetuated the memory of their ownership of the shrine by giving a place of honour to two Franciscan saints, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Anthony of Padua, whose statues they placed on either side of the miraculous image of our lady on the high altar. The statues of these saints remained there till 1961. This is another evidence to prove that the shrine was under the custody of the Franciscan missionaries. The last Franciscan parish priest, Micheal Francisco Fernandez was in charge of the parish of Velankanni till 1889. In 1890 the parish was handed over to diocesan priests. Thereafter, the diocesan priests of the diocese of Mylapore were in charge of Velankanni. In 1952 when the new diocese of Thanjavur came into being, and Velankanni become a part of the new diocese, the diocesan priests of Thanjavur diocese became the custodians of the Velankanni shrine. Velankanni which was a substation of Nagapattinam until 1771, had all along been under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the bishop of the diocese of Mylapore. During that period the diocese of Mylapore was administered by what was known as the Portuguese 'Padroado' (which means patronage). Under the Padroada system

the civil government of the king of Portugal met all the expenses incurred towards the maintenance of the diocese of Mylapore under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the roman pontiffs. In the year 1949 this dual system came to an end; the Portuguese patronage of the diocese of Mylapore was withdrawn once and for all. The diocese of Mylapore was placed under the sacred congregation for the propagation of faith under the direct control of the roman pontiff. In 1951 Dom Manuel Guerreiro, who was the 17th and the last bishop of Mylapore, was appointed the bishop of Angola in the province of Mozambique in Africa. The interim administration of the diocese of Mylapore was temporarily entrusted to rt. Rev. Msgr. Francis Arthur Carvalho who was appointed apostolic administrator of the diocese, while certain new arrangements and allocations and changes were being made. As Velankanni was in the district of Thanjur, it naturally came under the jurisdiction of the diocese of Thanjavur the new bishop whose motto was 'sacred hearts of Jesus and Mary, my hope, consecrated his diocese and placed it in a special way under the patronage of the sacred heart of Jesus and our lady of health, Velankanni. Thus, our lady of health, Velankanni became the second patroness of the newly established diocese of Thanjavur close on the heels of Thanjavur becoming an independent diocese, the church declared the year 1954, 'Marian year' this drew an unprecedented number of pilgrims all through the year. Almost all the parishes in the diocese of Thanjavur arranged pilgrimages to the shrine of Velankanni.

Pilgrimage and tourism potentials in Velankanni

Velankanni basilica

The main Basilica is an architectural beauty and there are two independent churches. In the above church people give Saree as offering and it is put on a statue of Mother Mary. This saree is later given to poor women during their marriage. The old original church is behind basilica towards the seaside. This place is always crowded with pilgrims.

Lady's Tank Church

At the end of the holy path you will find Lady's Tank and Lady's Tank Church. This is where Mother Mary first appeared to a milk boy in 16th century. You can buy holy water from this place. On the left of the church you will see "cloth cradles" hanging from tree branches. Couples tie these "cradles" as an offering to mother Mary asking the gift of a child in return. Many childless couples swear that they got a child after tying the "cradle offering" here.

Brief History of Velankanni Basilica Church

The history of Velankanni goes back as far as 16th century. According to legends, Mother Mary appeared twice to milk boys during this period. There are churches on both these places (inside Basilica complex). In the first appearance, Mother Mary asked for milk from a boy. Boy gave milk to mother and later it was found that the milk pot is still full. This place is known as "Our Lady's Tank". In the second appearance, Mother Mary cured a crippled boy. There is a small church at this place now. The third miracle happened sometime during seventeenth century and probably it was this miracle which caused rapid expansion of Velankanni church. A Portuguese ship going from Macao in China to Colombo was caught in a violent storm. The sailors prayed to Mother Mary for protection. It is said that the ship landed in Velankanni and as an offering sailors built a church at the seaside. In subsequent visits, Portuguese continued to build and expand the church complex.

Museum of Offerings

Behind the Basilica you will find Museum of offerings where a sample display of items people offer to Virgin Mary is displayed. You can read through people's experience expressed in various letters written to church. There is also a small bookstall inside this. You can buy a detailed guide to Velankanni and also a book on Velankanni from here. Other souvenir items such as key chains and "Jesus Loves You" stickers can be bought from here. There is a "blessed oil counter" and few handicraft shops run by Tsunami affected women on the ground floor.

Shrine Depot

The Shrine depot is located on the right side of museum of offerings. You can buy a lot of stuff including handicrafts and other religious materials. There is an information counter and a security office on the same building.

Sea side Shops

There is a narrow road behind basilica which takes you the Velankanni beach. After the Shrine depot visit we went to the beach. On both sides of the road there are numerous shops ranging from instant photo studios to shops selling DVDs. It is an interesting experience and reminds me that all of us love to shop! Check out some of the photos below to get a feeling of what it is like.

Velankanni Beach

The sea here is rough and deep and swimming here is obviously risky. But you can see hundreds of people swimming in the sea at any time. The sea side is filled with pilgrims in the evening.

Fountain of Revelation

On the right side of Basilica you will Fountain of Revelation. The fountain here doesn't seem to be working. Vannaru River meets the Bay of Bengal just on the other side of this fountain. There is also a counselling centre for people with personal problems.

Chapel of Adoration

Adjacent to Fountain of Revelation is the Church of Adoration. This is a place where you can spend some time in silent prayer. When we went to Velankanni, there was an exhibition on "history of salvation" in the nearby building.

Holy Path

Holy path is a sand road which connects Basilica church to Lady's Tank church. It is also the Way of the Cross. It is around 500 metres. You can see devotees crawling on their knees from Basilica to Lady's Tank Church as an offering. It is a painful way to pray and at the end of it there won't be any skin left on your knee.

Festivals in Velankanni

Flag-Hoisting Festival

Large concourses of devotees witness the flag hoisting on the 29th of August every year. The flag of our lady is hoisted every day during these nine days of the novena the feast. During this ceremony an intense feeling is aroused leaving behind rapturous eyes and murmuring lips, proclaiming her praises. Another important and crowded pulling event of those festive days is the car procession that takes place at 8 p. m. every day. This follows the liturgical service of the evening. Since Velankanni is the coast, the people from the beginning carry the "Chapparam"(cars) as pulling will be next to impossible. People in the east consider that participating in the festival, pulling the cars or witness the flag hoisting are scared and sacramental. These are

all symbolic expression of their love and commitment to god. When the cars and the big chariot are brought in front of the main church, prayers are offered for world peace and for the motherland for universal church and for the national leaders. Cultural Programs during Flag Hoist Every day after the car procession, there will be cultural items like musical concerts, plays, Bharathanatyam performances, etc. in an open auditorium near the shrine itself. Artists and other professionals from various fields deem it as a singular privilege to give performance in the virgin's land. Most of them also are deeply devoted to our lady here and come to fulfil their vows as gratitude. Wondrous legends surround the church-the most famous being that of the ship-wrecked Portuguese sailors, who in the 16th century, vowed to build a great shrine for the Virgin Mary, for saving their lives in a terrible storm. The Velankanni festival attracts thousands, clad in orange robes to the sacred spot where the ship landed. Equally famous are the Virgin Mary's miraculous healing powers- earning for the church the name 'Lourdes of the East'.

Velankanni Festival

Mysterious legends surround the church. A story goes behind the festival Our Merciful Mother rescued a few Portuguese merchant sailors from a violent storm, which wrecked their ship. When the merchants reached the shore of Velankanni they were taken by local fisherman to the thatched chapel. To give thanks and pay tribute to Our Lady, they built a small permanent chapel on their return trip. On subsequent visits they improved on it. The merchants dedicated the chapel to Our Lady on September 8th to celebrate the feast of her nativity and to mark the date of their safe landing to Velankanni. Today, the celebration of this feast is an annual festival which lasts for 9 days and draws more than a million and a half pilgrims. Velankanni attracts more pilgrims than any other sacred shrine in India. Not only do multitudes of Catholic travel there throughout the year but many non-Christians visit as well. Hundreds of miraculous cures are reported

Velankanni car festival

The Lady came floating in her car, shouldered by her foot soldiers of faith. And as she floated along the teeming thousands, her faithful knelt, some with open palms, some with absolute supplication – each with their own reason for reverence and surrender. Tuesday evening marked the penultimate day celebrations of the Velankanni Feast – the Velankanni car festival spruced with as much grandeur as the flag hoist ceremony, a week before. As if a metaphor, against the darkness of the late evening sky, the only light was from the shrine and the cars that carried the Gods. The car procession that commenced at half past seven – was harbingered by the occasional crackers against the dark sky above trailing the movement of the cars down below. From above, it was picturesque, like a floating car in a sea of humans. Five life-size screens were poised at locations for the benefit of the pilgrims that ran into tens of thousands. And for once, absolute supplication looked endearing – with each believer, soaking in the beauty of Our Lady of Health, with star-lit eyes and prayers galore. Each bespoke the call for myriad blessings, and amid the resonating hymns, the six cars floated ahead and the final car, carrying the Lady of Velankanni drifted her way and poised herself in front of the shrine for the sake of the blessed. For the thousands, who had thronged and lodged themselves hours before the procession, it was a penance of sorts – one that saw its expression in their star-lit eyes, rested bodies, and pleading-open palms in defenseless submission to the lady

almighty - as calls for 'peace among nations' and 'love among people' was made along the trail of the cars. It is said that those, who shouldered the car would be decided by the Parish on the basis of requests made by the faithful. While, the six small cars were shouldered by women, the final car with the Lady of Velankanni was carried by men. It was as if the grandeur of the event could only be matched by the grandeur of the reverence of the thousands gathered there.

Other Vellankanni Attractions

Vedranyam: Also known as Thirumaraikkadu, Vedranyam had been witness to C. Rajagopalachari's Salt March and Gandhiji's Dandi March. At a distance of 55 kms from Nagapattinam it also houses Shri Vedaranyeswarar Temple.

Kodikkarai: 66 kms from Nagapattinam and 11 kms south of Vedaranyam is the popular seaside town of Kodikkarai. Better known as Point Calimere, it has a wild life sanctuary for animals and Bivats sanctuary for migrating birds. The birds are known to travel from as far as Russia, Siberia, Iran, Australia and the Himalayas. Species include the flamingos, ibises, herons, spoonbills, woodcock, hornbills, storks, willow warbler, wagtail and the wild duck. The lighthouse is reminiscent of the Chola period, and popular belief says there is also a foot print of Lord Rama called Ramar patham.

Thirunallar: Thirunallar, located at a distance of 5 kms from Karaikkal, is the seat of Lord Saneeswara.

Festivals of Vellankanni:

- Arokkiyamadha Festival : August – September
- Christmas : 25th December
- New Year Festival : January 1st

Literature Review

It has also been observed by various authors that spirituality in general has recently become an important subject of research in social and business areas (Claudia Liebelt, 2010). The interest in spirituality has affected a number of industries around the world (Adrian Ivakhiv, 2003) including the tourism industry. Pilgrimage tourism seems to be a new concept but it is not a new phenomenon. Based on the literature review and interviews conducted with various stakeholders in various countries, this study defines a pilgrimage tourist as 'someone who visits a place out of his/her usual environment, with the intention of spiritual growth, without overt religious compulsion, which could be religious, non-religious, sacred or experiential in nature, but within the Divine context, regardless of the main reason for travelling'. A predominant theory of marketing argues that every market consists of groups or 'segments' of customers with different needs and demands (Bar, Doron and Cohen-Hattab, Kobi (2003) It should be noted here that segments are unlikely to be mutually exclusive, and this would also apply to pilgrimage tourism. To further identify the pilgrimage tourist and analyses his/her purchasing behaviour, there is a need to build a typology of the pilgrimage tourist. Typology comes from the Greek work 'typus' and describes various types of person based on his/her behaviour and attitudes (Dallen J. Timothy and Daniel H. Olsen, eds. 2006) This typology would help to understand the characteristics and motives of different typology of a pilgrimage tourist. It has also been observed by various authors that pilgrimage tourism in general has recently become an important subject of research in social and business areas. (John Elsner 1992) The interest in pilgrimage tourism

has affected a number of industries around the world (Jayashree B. Gokhale 1986) including the tourism industry. Pilgrimage tourism seems to be a new concept but it is not a new phenomenon. Based on the literature review and interviews conducted with various stakeholders in various countries, this study defines a pilgrimage tourist as 'someone who visits a place out of his/her usual environment, with the intention of pilgrimage growth, without overt religious compulsion, which could be religious, non-religious, sacred or experiential in nature, but within the Divine context, regardless of the main reason for travelling'. A predominant theory of marketing argues that every market consists of groups or 'segments' of customers with different needs and demands (Kathryn Rountree 2002). It should be noted here that segments are unlikely to be mutually exclusive, and this would also apply to pilgrimage tourism. To further identify the pilgrimage tourist and analyse his/her purchasing behaviour, there is a need to build a typology of the pilgrimage tourist. Typology comes from the Greek work 'typus' and describes various types of person based on his/her behaviour and attitudes. (Terry R. Slater 2004) This typology would help to understand the characteristics and motives of different typology of a pilgrimage tourist. The religion-tourism fraternity between the two polarities of pious and pleasure travellers lies a free, yet complex, range of compromised/mediated categories of pilgrims. Most researchers refer to this category as religious tourists (Paulla A. Ebron 1999). These are the new or modern versions of conventional pilgrims (Kathryn Rountree Goddess 2002) who engage with the stereotypical tokens of pilgrimages. The presence of such varying degrees of 'modified' and 'pure' pilgrims makes pilgrimages a heterogeneous phenomenon. Since it is almost impossible to determine a pilgrim from a tourist, it may be a useful exercise to identify the pilgrim from his/her behaviours and subsequent impact of their visitations, on the site and the setting. Even though Smith developed the 'pilgrim-tourist path' to represent the perspectives of other scholars (John Elsner 1992) she seemed less convinced of this representation and referred to it as 'momentary interpretation of present day thought' However, (Maria Eva Subtelny 1989) continuum on tourist experiences provides five distinct 'modes' in the spectrum of tourist-pilgrim experiences, namely 'Recreational', 'Diversionary', 'Experiential', 'Experimental' and 'Existential' (Lynn Huntsinger and María Fernández-Giménez 2000) These five hues of tourist/pilgrim behaviour seem to enable the categorization of visitors to any destination, including sacred sites. Of these five modes, the latter two, namely the 'experimental' and 'experiential' modes are inevitably visitor typologies found in sacred places. More pertinently, Cohen associates modern pilgrims with all the three types of tourists, namely; experiential, experimental and existential, based on their quest for spirituality and/or authenticity. In a more recent study, on a typology of Christian pilgrims (Paulla A. Ebron 1999) develop a coordinated pilgrim-tourism axis that is comprised of namely; secularism – sacredness and tourism – pilgrimage. In segregating forms of visitor travel (pilgrimage and tourism) from the commonly implied interpretations (sacred and secular), the proponents of this model have formally maintained the quintessential perspectives of each in terms of attitudes, beliefs and motivations. Such an approach to the sanctity and secularity of pilgrimages and tourism permits a rationalized understanding of each. Further, this seemingly logical compartmentalization sorts out the confusions generated by the metaphorical

interpretations of the two phenomena as it substantiates the variables necessary to identify the pious from the ritualistic and the mundane from the self-absorbed. Although this model was developed through an empirical investigation, future explorations are desirable to further our understanding of the model without which metaphorical parallelisms between tourism and pilgrimages may perpetuate.

Objectives of study

- To find out the pilgrimage tourism potential in Velankanni.
- To study the problems of pilgrimage tourism in Velankanni. .
- To study the transport exchange and lodging facilities in Velankanni.
- To find out the problems of basic infrastructure facilities in Velankanni.

Pilgrimage as tourism

Pilgrimage is the religious phenomena existing in all main religions of the world; Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islamism. (Pillai, Rajasekharan, 2007) defined pilgrimage as a journey resulting from religious causes, externally to a holy site, internally for spiritual purposes and internal understanding'. John Elsner, 1992 suggested that the pilgrimage involved in three essential steps. The first step involves the significant separation of the pilgrimage from home and ordinary life and the journey to the sacred centre. The separation can be identified with cloths, ritual or any unusual behaviour. The second step is the interaction with the sacred such as some ritual acts. The third step is the return home, which is always marked by a sense of renewal. Pilgrimage has often been linked with tourism. It can be said that the pilgrimage can be seen as the earliest form of traveling. (John Elsner, 1992). In pilgrimage tourism context, most researchers refer to the pilgrim as religious tourists. (Terry R. Slater, 2004) One of the reasons is that the pilgrimage provides the mix of pious and pleasure state through the course of the travel. With the exceptional of the devotional aspect, pilgrimage involves sightseeing, traveling and visiting different places. Besides, the nature of tourist experience shares some similarity with the pilgrimage essential steps. For example, Paula A. Ebron, (1999) claimed that the tourist can be compared to the modern day pilgrim because they took the journey to experience the quest for the authenticity (Kathryn Rountree, 2002). Shinno Toshikazu, (2002) also described tourism as a sacred journey in the sense that it was the situation which individual escaped from the secular everyday world to the land of play. Roger Friedland, (1998 cited in Inés Hernández-Ávila (1996).

Views of Pilgrims Regarding Facilities:

In this study an attempt has been made to understand various facilities like accommodation, transportation, Darshan facility, food and drinking water, shopping, behaviour of the local people with the pilgrims. Personal safety and general views about Velankanni. The pilgrim's opinions about these facilities were noted in the year 2010. These were classified as excellent good satisfactory and unsatisfactory and noted in percentage. In Velankanni there is no good lodging facilities about 8% people say it is a good lodging facilities and about 2% pilgrims restyle to live here and 69% percentage show dish owing and lodging facilities only one church trust is available in Velankanni so pilgrim live in this male however about 69% people on the open ground outside the village. They half according to their time probate they live about three day. It shows that there is free accommodation and other facilities. But these facilities cannot provides to the

pilgrims somewhere for light and drinking water provides to the pilgrims and somewhere it will not facilities in it pilgrims both level in church trust and open ground solve their own problem on their own level and complete their basic urgent needs.

Problems and Issues in Velankanni

Pilgrimage tourism based on religious sites or artefacts faces difficulties and raises controversial issues. These include competition between faiths for a location and heritage and conflicts between pilgrimage and secular, commercial tourism, the building shrine or artefact may have great spiritual value but a commercial value too as such and often in any openly accessible situation. It is vulnerable to theft and to vandalism. Furthermore, as with other specialist or low-key tourism assets, financial benefits associated with say, church visiting do not pay for the resource and its management. Velankanni church may be the attraction but the money is spent in the beach, restaurant, or gift shop and with little re investment in presentation or conservation of the site, building or artefact. The situation is not sustainable. There are aspects of sacred site visiting and management already noted that vander some problems particularly important. There can be serious conflicts between desires to keep facilities freely open to religious visitors. Need to raise money to maintain the fabric and the vulnerability of often remote sites to vandalism, theft and desecration. According to the English tourist board survey more than half of the churches assessed had suffered from theft and almost as many from vandalism with up to 80% of sites affected. There were problems of wear and tear, damage to buildings, noise disturbance and litter a more recent study considered the problems of pilgrimage tourists.

The Socio-Economic Development through Pilgrimage Tourism in Velankanni

The economic impact of pilgrimage tourism can be seen its contribution to Velankanni, the largest contributions to pilgrimage tourism are seen in the many pilgrimage places in Tamilnadu. Many small places economies are highly depend on pilgrimage tourism as evidenced by the significant share of pilgrimage tourism in their total Earnings. In 2010, pilgrimage tourism alone contributed 44.5 percent of the total export earnings in Velankanni. Pilgrimage Tourism in Velankanni has also provided a substantial contribution to Tamilnadu tourism, amounting to 13.7 percent in 2010, taking full advantage of the potential of their natural, pilgrimage tourism resources, countries like India and foreign countries are benefiting from the pilgrimage Tourism. In 2010, pilgrimage tourism in Tamilnadu and neighbouring countries accounted respectively for 23.3 and 22.5% of their total foreign exchange earnings. In the other countries of the region, the contribution of pilgrimage tourism and is averaged between 50 to 60% mainly because of their potentialities and wealth. However in the light of the extracted continuing growth of the pilgrimage tourism in the foreseeable future, it can be assumed that the share of pilgrimage tourism in the Velankanni economy will be more significant. While there are various definitions of them converge around the concepts of improving the wellbeing of a country citizens, promoting higher standards of living, employment and conditions of economic and social progress. Therefore in the absence of better indications to measure the impacts of pilgrimage tourism, its importance for employment has been used in the present document. The pilgrimage tourism contributes

significantly to the creation of employment, both directly and indirectly in 2010, the industry in Velankanni region provided jobs for about 21% people. Representing an average of 8.9% of total employment. Pilgrimage tourism employment in Velankanni is estimated at 3500 jobs or 6.1% of total employment. This situation is attributed mainly to Velankanni where 1 out of 10 people works in a pilgrimage tourism related industry. The importance of pilgrimage tourism becomes more significant. When the structure of the work force in Velankanni economy is analyzed, a comparison with countries in other sub regions indicated that the share of total employment in pilgrimage tourism sector in 2007 varied from 2.4 percent in India to 5% in other countries. Fuelled by sustained growth, the pilgrimage tourism industry has managed to become a significant provider of employment in Velankanni. There by improving the economic situation at the people in Velankanni. In addition, revenue generated from pilgrimage tourism has enabled government to allocate pilgrimage resources, for improving pilgrimage tourism.

Policies and Planning for Pilgrimage Tourism

The main aim of the Tourism Policy is to give a boost to the pilgrimage tourism sector and help the place meet its social and economic growth objectives. This policy aims to increase the annual international pilgrimage tourist traffic from 0.1 million to 0.5 million and annual domestic pilgrimage tourist traffic from 1 million to 5 million in the next five years. The policy provides various concessions and incentives to entrepreneurs in pilgrimage tourism-related activities.

The key features of the policy are:

- To select pilgrimage tourist destination with proper planning for development so as to retain high quality of aesthetic and environmental beauty and to develop the destinations in a sustainable and eco-friendly manner.
- To develop basic Infrastructure and ensure cleanliness of pilgrimage tourist destinations.
- To develop specialised tourism – pilgrimage tourism, Ecotourism, Health tourism, Rural tourism, Adventure tourism, Plantation tourism. Back water tourism as well as domestic tourism, especially Pilgrimage tourism.
- To build a good infrastructure through participation by the private sector and through private public partnership with the Government in pilgrimage centres.
- To continue extensive and aggressive marketing of pilgrimage tourism at National and International markets and promote it as unique pilgrimage tourism destinations.
- To strengthen the domestic pilgrimage tourism sector initiated by local Governments
- To bring about quality in pilgrimage tourism services and facilities
- To ensure the safety and security of pilgrimage tourists
- To clearly specify the role of government as a catalyst and facilitator in infrastructure development in pilgrimage tourism.

Statistics in pilgrimage tourism around the globe

Although no definitive study has been completed on worldwide religious tourism, some segments of the industry have been measured:

- According to the World Tourism Organization, an estimated 300 to 330 million pilgrims visit the world's key religious sites every year.

- According to the U. S. Office of Travel and Tourism Industries, Americans traveling overseas for "religious or pilgrimage" purposes has increased from 491, 000 travellers in 2002 to 633, 000 travellers in 2005 (30% increase).
- According to the Religious Conference Management Association, in 2006 more than 14. 7 million people attended religious meetings (RCMA members), an increase of more than 10 million from 1994 with 4. 4 million attendees.
- The United Methodist Church experienced an increase of 455% in mission volunteers from 1992 with almost 20, 000 volunteers compared to 110, 000 volunteers in 2006.
- The Christian Camp and Conference Association states that more than eight million people are involved in CCCA member camps and conferences, including more than 120,000 churches. Religious attractions including Sight & Sound Theatre attracts 800,000 visitors a year while the Holy Land Experience and Focus on the Family Welcome Center each receives about 250,000 guests annually. Pilgrimage tourism, also commonly referred to as faith tourism, is a form of tourism whereby people of faith travel individually or in groups for pilgrimage, missionary, or leisure (fellowship) purposes.
- 50,000 churches in the United States with religious travel programs
One-quarter (25%) of traveller's said they were currently interested in taking a PILGRIMAGE vacation.

Drinking Water Supply

There is no full -fledged treatment facility for the water supplied. The water intake from tank is very near the bathing ghat and there is chance of coliform bacteria as well as well as pathogens entering the intake water.

Sewage Disposal

Facilities provided at Velankanni for the collection, conveyance, treatment and disposal are grossly inadequate. At Velankanni most of the toilets are being constructed near by the side of the church and hence the leach ate from the latrines reaches the ocean. Unscientific disposal of sewage is causing severe water pollution problem. Due to inadequacy in number of latrines provided at Velankanni open defecation is common. This is causing unhygienic and unrightly condition and water and air pollution. The problem becomes all the worse when coupled with waste water from hotels and other commercial establishments.

Garbage Disposal

Solid waste consisting of mainly the food waste generated at Velankanni is being discharged in a haphazard manner. Solid waste generated at Velankanni is being disposed near the ocean; the decayed garbage is washed off during the rains in to the ocean. The solid waste management at Velankanni is also not satisfactory. During the recent years, solid waste collection at Velankanni has improved significantly due to the activities of church trusts. But onsite storage facility of solid waste transport, segregation, processing and safe disposal facilities are lacking. Till recently the solid wastes collected are dumped into the ocean creating environmental pollution.

Transport Facilities

Existing network of roads in Velankanni is quite inadequate to meet the ever-increasing needs of the pilgrims, especially during the festival season. Due to traffic blocks the pilgrims have to wait long hours at Velankanni for their vehicles to reach

their boarding point. In addition to road network, the public transport is also inadequate.

Parking Facilities

Parking facilities provided for private vehicles at Velankanni is not adequate. Traffic area blocks of vehicles entering and leaving the parking area and is frequent causing hardships to the people and giving rise to air pollution. Sufficient parking space with fuelling facilities and basic amenities to the drivers and passengers are not available at Velankanni.

Findings & Suggestion

- 1 Provision of infrastructure facilities/basic amenities at pilgrimage destination (viz. drinking, toilet facilities, restaurant, illumination, cloak room, signages etc)
- 2 Provision for dress changing room, rest shed bathrooms, pathway and protective ring around ponds, hand railings and etc
- 3 Children's park and power supply, street lights.
- 4 Provision for roads, pathways, parking lot, partition board.
- 5 Lodges, hotels, lighting facilities.
- 6 Immediate replacement of old and worn out coaches/tempo travels.
- 7 Up gradation of the restaurants of TPDC with first class furniture and interiors.
- 8 Introduction of cost reduction measures in hotels like the energy saver, etc.

Recommendation

The present given different types of the facilities to the pilgrims are so important. Though Velankanni has become the main transport religious state, the buses TPDC are not available as per timetable in the festival duration and it is necessary to build the railway route at Velankanni. To lodge in Velankanni pilgrimage site we have only few Dharmashala that is why the lodging problem is increasing per pilgrims. As per my knowledge, the following lodging facilities should be given to the pilgrims. To increase the numbers of Dharmashala by the side of pilgrimage sites the hotels, lodges should be available are in large number but room rate is very high. The temporary living facilities should be available at around pilgrimage sites. The local religious trust should be paid the attention on the market of the devotional goods and daily needs items that whether the shopkeepers sell the goods in proper prices or not. The pilgrims are satisfied with existing facilities provided at pilgrimage sites and opinion about the state, food and drinking water facilities. Shopping facilities and about the personal safety the pilgrims seem to be satisfactory.

The other strategies are as follows.

1. Advertisement in dailies, magazines, etc. (both domestic and foreign).
2. Telecast of short films and advertisements in TV channels.
3. Publicity in close circuit televisions at railway stations, airports, bus terminals etc.
4. Touch screen information at important places.
5. Interactive website.
6. Printing and distribution of high quality literature in multiple languages.
7. E-marketing.
8. Sponsoring of live and recorded programmers in radio and TV.

Suggestion and Conclusion

The present given different types of facilities to the pilgrims are so important.

Though Velankanni has become the main transport religious village, here is lack of the railway route. The buses of Velankanni are not available as per time table in the festival duration. And it is necessary to build the railway route at Velankanni To lodge in Velankanni, we have only one church trust that is why the lodging problem is increasing per pilgrims. As per my knowledge, the following lodging facilities should be given to the pilgrims. To increase the numbers of church trust by the side of the churches, the hotels, lodges should be available in large number. The local religious trust should be paid the attention on the market of the devotional goods and daily needs items that whether the shopkeepers sell the goods in proper prices or not. The pilgrims are not satisfied with existing facilities provided at transportation facility. Opinion about the village food and drinking water facilities. Shopping facilities and about the personal safety the pilgrims seem to be satisfactory only few pilgrims are un-satisfied with food drinking water and transportation.

Pilgrimage tourism is now recognized as a source of diversifying the Indian economy. It would how ever be folly to pretend that the sector will continue to stimulate the economy without. pro-active measures aimed at managing the forces confronting this sector. The study has revealed various problems that confront the sustained development of pilgrimage destination. These problems are been analysed in detail. As a basis for proposed strategies, statistics, it is use full to consider these various suggestions. These conclusions and suggestions abundantly show that by the paper effective implementation of these suggestions. Velankanni can be developed as a heavenly destination for pilgrimage tourism.

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