

A STUDY ON TOURISTS AWARENESS AND PREFERENCE TOWARDS TOURIST SPOTS IN PUDUCHERRY

¹Dr. G. Madan Mohan, ²Nidhin Ramadas A.E

¹Assistant Professor, ² II – MBA

¹Department of Management Studies, Pondicherry University

Abstract: This descriptive research has made an attempt to assess the awareness level of tourists and their preference towards four tourist spots in Puducherry namely, Auroville, Paradise Beach, Aurobindo Ashram and Ousteri Lake by administering a well structured questionnaire to 101 of such tourists who visited Pondicherry, selected using Convenience Sampling. Results of the study revealed that out of the 101 tourists studied, 97, 92, 85 and 71 tourists are aware about the tourist spots of Aurobindo Ashram, Auroville, Paradise Beach and Ousteri Lake respectively. 4 tourists unaware about Auroville are not aware about Paradise beach while 12 tourists not aware about Paradise beach are aware about Auroville. Five tourists are unaware about both the spots and 80 are aware about both the spots. Furthermore, all the 9 tourists who are unaware about Auroville are aware about Aurobindo ashram while four tourists who are unaware about Aurobindo ashram are aware about Auroville and 88 tourists are aware about both Auroville and Aurobindo Ashram. All the 9 tourists unaware about Auroville are also unaware about Ousterilakewhile 21 tourists aware about Auroville are not aware about Ousteri Lake and 71 tourists are aware about both the tourist spots. Though Aurobindo Ashram has been known for most tourists, Auroville is the most preferred tourist spot and it also has been rated as the most unique spot, followed by Aurobindo Ashram, Paradise Beach and Ousteri Lake. Most importantly, tourists prefer tourist spots depending upon uniqueness of these spots. Auroville and Aurobindo Ashram are the tourist spots which have least number of Highly Displeased tourists, followed closely by Ousteri Lake and Paradise Beach. Tourists with different educational qualifications and those aged less than 30 years are pleased with Auroville while tourists aged 30-50 years, Businessmen and those with monthly income of more than Rs. 70,000 are moderately pleased. Private employees and tourists with monthly income of less than Rs. 30,000 are pleased while unmarried tourists and those above the age of 50 years are displeased with Auroville. Tourists with monthly income of less than Rs. 30,000, students and those aged 30-50 years are pleased with Aurobindo Ashram while those with monthly income of Rs. 30,000-70,000, private employees and those aged less than 30 years are moderately pleased. Both unmarried and married tourists, graduates and Diploma-Holders are highly pleased with Aurobindo Ashram. Tourists aged 30-50 years, graduates, unmarried and married tourists are pleased with Paradise Beach while those aged less than 30 years, Diploma-Holders, post-graduates, those with monthly income of more than Rs. 70,000, private employees and students are moderately pleased with Paradise Beach. Unmarried tourists, those with monthly income of Rs. 30,000-70,000, those aged less than 30 years and Under-graduates are pleased with Ousteri Lake while married tourists, private employees, post-graduates and graduates are moderately pleased.

Keywords: Puducherry, Tourist spots, Auroville, Paradise Beach, Ousteri Lake and Aurobindo Ashram

I. INTRODUCTION

The Union Territory of Puducherry consists of four regions namely, Pondicherry, Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam with Pondicherry being the capital. The capital city of Pondicherry has deep French connection as it was ruled by the French till 1954. Located along the east coastal line of Bay of Bengal, Pondicherry is well renowned for many tourists, religious, spiritual and recreational spots. Beaches and lakes have enabled Pondicherry to attract numerous tourists, both from other parts of India and other countries. Pondicherry also attracts numerous week-end tourists from the nearby cities of Chennai and Bangalore.

Pondicherry has the distinction of housing numerous religious institutions of temples, mosques and churches, statues, systematic town planning and buildings featuring French colonial rule and urban architecture boasting rich Tamil culture. The city is striving hard to preserve the rich blend of French and Tamil cultures making it to be referred to as Europe of India.

The major tourism attractions in the town includes Auroville, Promenade Beach, Aurobindo Ashram, Paradise Beach, White town, parks and gardens such as Botanical Garden, Ousteri Lake, National Park, Bharathi Park and Science Park (Puducherry Science Centre and Planetarium), Museums, Monuments and statues such as the four-metre tall Gandhi Statue, 2.88-metre tall Dupleix statue and marble statue of Joan, French War Memorial on Goubert Avenue, Aayi Mandapam (Park Monument), places of worship such as Sri Manakula Vinayagar Temple, Varadaraja Perumal Temple, Vedhapureeswarar Temple, Kanniga Parameswari Temple, Kamatchiamman Temple, Basilica Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Eglise de Notre Dame Des Anges (the Church of our Lady of Angels in Rue Dumas), Cathedral of our lady of Immaculate Conception, Church of Capuchins, St. Andrew's Church, Church of the Assumption, Church of our lady of Lourdes, Church of our Lady of Good Health, Meeran Mosque, Kuthbha Mosque and Muhamadia Mosque.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Gunasekharan, ShaikSurajBasha&Lakshmana (2015) have found that customer preference is subject to frequent changes and crafting and execution of effective promotion mix strategies of personalised Selling, Advertising and Public Relation alone can help businesses to tide over this profound problem.

Shallu&Sangeeta Gupta (2013) have also expressed a similar view that promotion mix strategies of advertising through televisions and newspapers, peer group opinion and word of mouth exert significant impact on consumer's decision to buy certain brands.

HaythemAyachi and Said Jaouadi (2017) conducted a survey in Saudi Arabia and unearthed those factors such as local people, resources and availability of natural and social traditions influence tourists preferring specific eco-tourism spots. They have further found that age positively and gender negatively influences eco-tourism preferences of tourists.

Sanjay Jain and KaruneshSaxena (2010) have found that the managers of pharmaceutical companies need to understand the characteristics of the medicines and identify the promotional objectives before the promotional mix is designed.

N.Gunasekaran and Victor Anandkumar (2012) suggest that there are four factors, namely homely atmosphere, value for money, local touch and guest-host relationship that influence the tourists to choose alternative accommodation in Pondicherry.

J. Eugene (2013) suggests that Pondicherry as a spiritual destination has the potential to attract spiritual tourists.

K. Mohan & Babu P George (2007) suggests that the market strategies currently implemented to promote tourism in Pondicherry are very weak and there is an urgent need to develop appropriate and workable strategies for promoting tourism in Pondicherry.

A. SARAVANAN and Y. VENKATA RAO (2013) suggest that rural tourism proved to be one of the most important factors for securing the sustainable rural and livelihood development in regions.

Review of many articles like those cited above have revealed that no study has been undertaken to unearth opinion of tourists about popular tourist spots in Pondicherry and this study tries to fill this gap by studying the awareness among tourists about the four popular tourist spots of Auroville, Aurobindo Ashram, Paradise Beach and Ousteri Lake and ascertain the uniqueness of these spots and tourists preference of these spots and finally, determine the impact of uniqueness of the spots on tourists preferring such spots.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the tourist spot in Puducherry which most tourists are much aware about;
2. To identify the uniqueness and preference of tourists towards the tourist spot which they are most aware of;
3. To find the impact of uniqueness of tourist spots over preferences of tourist for the tourist destinations.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The proposed study is descriptive in nature, based purely on primary data collected by administering a well-structured questionnaire to 101 tourists who visited Puducherry, selected using Convenience sampling technique. Data collected have been represented using tables and figures and analysed using SPSS 16, employing the statistical tools of Mean, Percentage, Frequency, Chi-square Analysis, Cluster Analysis, Correspondence Analysis and Regression Analysis.

V. DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents Selected

Of the 101 tourists selected for this study, 83.2% are males and 16.8% are females; 72.3% are aged less than 30 years, 23.8% are aged 30-50 and 4.0% are aged above 50; 5% are under-graduates, 10.9% are Diploma-holders, 41.6% are Graduates, 35.6% are Post Graduates, 2% are Ph.D.-holders and 5% possess other educational qualifications; 5.9% are Government Employees, 66.3% are Private Employees, 9.9% are Businessmen, 15.8% are Students and 2% are Pensioners; 56.4% have a monthly family income of less than Rs. 30,000, 32.7% have income of 30,000-70,000 while 10.9% have a monthly income of more than Rs. 70,000; 60.4% are unmarried, 37.6% are married and 2% are separated.

5.2 Awareness of Tourists about Auroville compared with the Other Tourist Spots

The 101 respondents were asked to indicate whether they are aware about Auroville, Paradise Beach, Aurobindo Ashram and Ousteri Lake as tourist spots and the awareness of tourists about Auroville has been compared with that of other three spots using Crosstabs and the results are portrayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Comparison of Awareness of Tourists about Auroville with the Other Spots

Spot		Aurobindo Ashram	
		Unaware	Aware
Paradise Beach	Unaware	4	12
	Aware	5	80
Aurobindo Ashram	Unaware	0	4
	Aware	9	88
Ousteri Lake	Unaware	9	21
	Aware	0	71

Table 1 displays that 92 of the 101 tourists surveyed (91.1%) are aware about Auroville as tourist spot in the region of Puducherry while 85 tourists are aware about Paradise Beach, 97 are aware about Aurobindo Ashram and 71 tourists are aware about Ousteri Lake.

Table 1 further shows that four tourists unaware about Auroville are not aware about Paradise beach while 12 tourists not aware about Paradise beach are aware about Auroville. Five tourists are unaware about both the spots and 80 are aware about both the spots. Furthermore, all the 9 tourists who are unaware about Auroville are aware about Aurobindo ashram while four tourists who are unaware about Aurobindo ashram are aware about Auroville and 88 tourists are aware about both Auroville and Aurobindo ashram. Finally, the table portrays that all the 9 tourists unaware about Auroville are also unaware about Ousterilake while 21 tourists aware about Auroville are not aware about Ousterilake and 71 tourists are aware about both the tourist spots.

5.3 Tourist's Opinion about Uniqueness of and Preference towards the Tourist Spots

Tourists are of the opinion about uniqueness of and preference towards the four tourist spots has been obtained in Likert's five point scale and the response has been depicted in Table 2.

Table 2: Tourist's Opinion about Uniqueness of and Preference towards Tourist Spots

Spot	Uniqueness	Preference
Auroville	4.0326	3.9783
Aurobindo Ashram	3.9072	3.8866
Paradise Beach	3.6941	3.6588
Ousteri Lake	3.5211	3.493

It can be inferred from Table 2 that tourists have rated Auroville pretty high regarding its uniqueness and preference followed by Aurobindo Ashram, Paradise Beach and Ousteri Lake.

5.4 Impact of Uniqueness of Tourist Spot on Tourists Preferring the Spot

The impact exerted by tourists opinion about uniqueness of tourist spots on their preference towards such spots has been assessed using Regression Analysis and the results are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3: Impact of Uniqueness of Tourist Spots on Tourists Preferring the Spot

Spot	Coefficients				Model Fit		R ²
	B	Std. Err	F	P	F	P	
Auroville	0.658	0.077	8.512	0.000	72.450	0.000	0.446
Aurobindo Ashram	0.561	0.097	5.804	0.000	33.685	0.000	0.262
Paradise Beach	0.567	0.101	5.604	0.000	31.405	0.000	0.275
Ousteri Lake	0.487	0.107	4.553	0.000	20.727	0.000	0.231

It can be observed from Table 3 that uniqueness of the spot predicts the preference of tourists towards the spot to the tune of 26.2% in the case of Aurobindo Ashram, 26.6% in the case of Paradise Beach, 23.1% in the case of Ousteri Lake and 44.6% in the case of Auroville. The table further suggests that the Regression model in respect of all the four spots is quite fit as the significance value in respect of all the four cases is short of 0.05.

The table further portrays that uniqueness of the tourist spot has a direct impact on tourists preferring the spot as the B values in respect of all the spots is in the positive side and the values are also quite large. Hence, tourists who are aware about tourist spots prefer such spots depending upon the uniqueness of these spots.

5.5 Level of Preference among Tourists towards Different Tourist Spots in Puducherry

This study has considered four tourist spots in Puducherry namely, Auroville, Paradise Beach, AurobindoAshramandOusteri lake. A brief outlook on tourist’s preference towards thesetouristspots has been attempted and the number of tourists pleased and displeased with these spots has been arrived at using Cluster Analysis and the results are portrayed in Table 4.

Table 4: Tourists Preference towardsTouristSpots

Spot	Highly Pleased Group		Moderately Pleased Group		Highly Displeased Group	
	Mean	Frequency	Mean	Frequency	Mean	Frequency
<i>Auroville</i>	4.50	68	2.80	20	1.00	4
<i>Paradise beach</i>	5.00	20	3.50	56	1.67	9
<i>AurobindoAshram</i>	4.51	67	2.73	25	1.00	4
<i>Ousteri Lake</i>	4.31	39	2.78	27	1.00	5

It can be observed from Table 4 that Auroville and AurobindoAshramare the tourist spots which have the least number of Highly Displeased tourists (4 each), followed closely by Ousteri Lake (5 tourists) and Paradise Beach (9 tourists). The two spots of Auroville and Aurobindo ashram have large number of tourists who are highly pleased. However, Ousteri Lake has got larger number of highly pleased tourists than those who are moderately pleased while it is the other way around in the case of Paradise Beach.

5.6 Profile-wise Analysis of Tourist Preference Towards Tourist Spots

Profile-wise analysis of tourist preference towards different tourist spots in Puducherry has been attempted using Correspondence Analysis and the results have been portrayed in figures 1-20.

5.7 Age-wise Preference of Tourist Spots

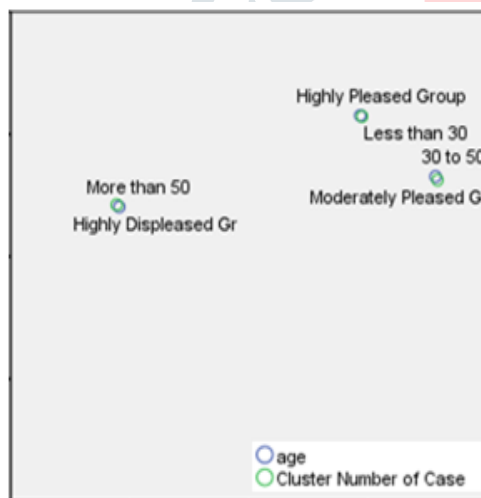


Fig. 1: Auroville

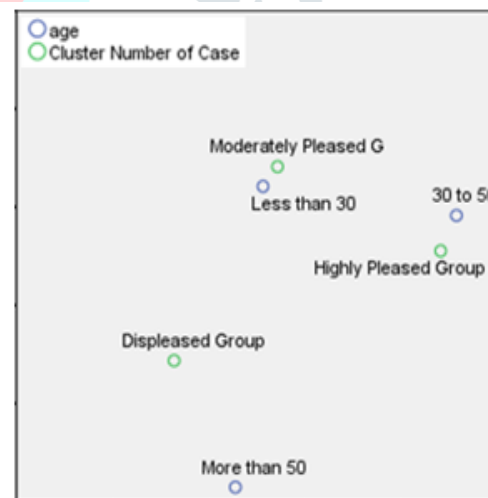


Fig. 2: Paradise Beach

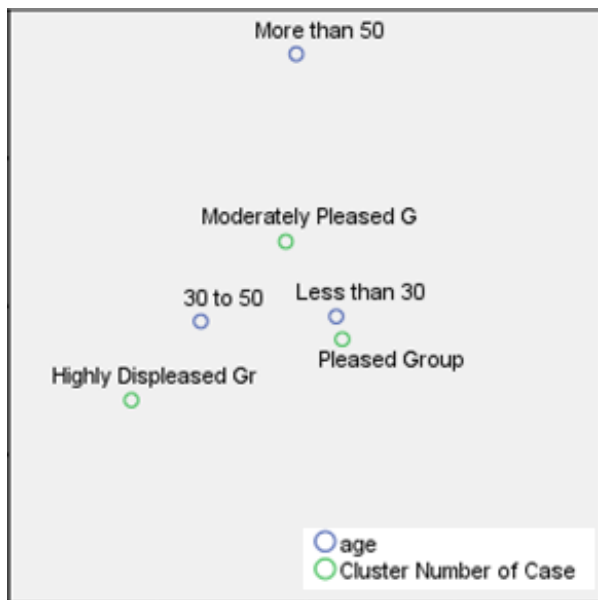


Fig. 3: Ousteri Lake

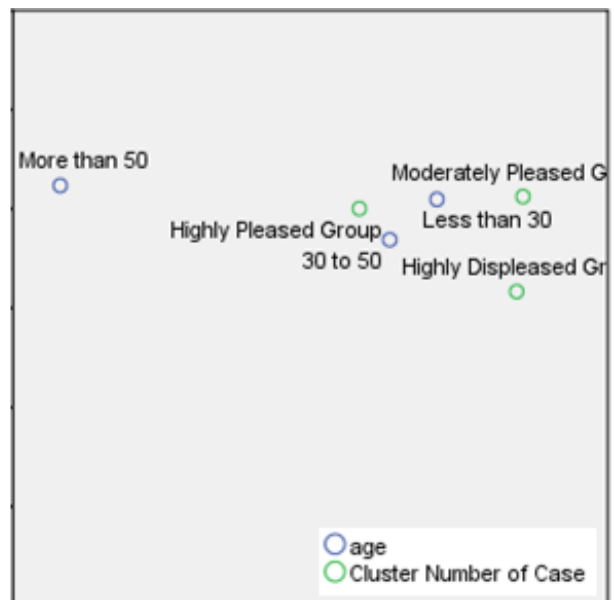


Fig.4: Aurobindo Ashram

It can be inferred from the figures 1-4 that tourists aged less than 30 years are moderately pleased with Aurobindo Ashram and Paradise Beach while they are pleased with Ousteri Lake and Auroville. Furthermore, tourists aged 30-50 years are pleased with Aurobindo Ashram and Paradise Beach while they are moderately pleased with Auroville. The figures further highlights that tourists above the age of 50 are highly displeased with Auroville.

5.8 Educational Qualifications-wise Preference of Different Tourist Spots

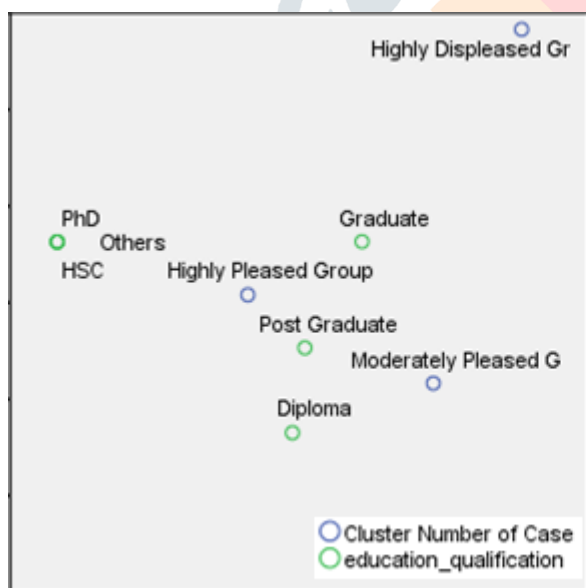


Fig. 5: Auroville

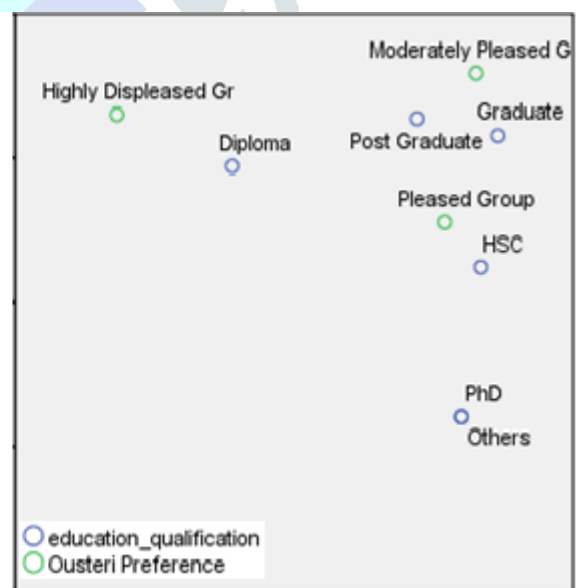


Fig. 6: Ousteri Lake

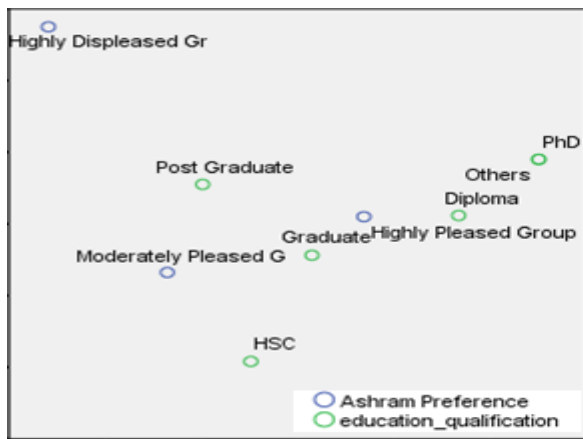


Fig. 7:Aurobindo Ashram

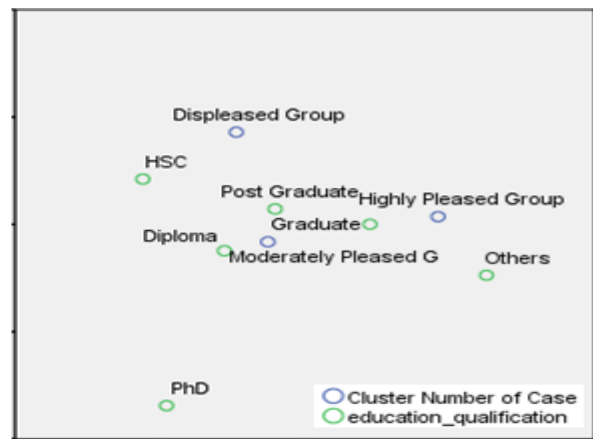


Fig. 8:Paradise Beach

It can be inferred from figures 5 - 8 that post-graduates are moderately pleased with OusteriLake and Paradise Beach while graduates are pleased with Paradise Beach, moderately pleased with Ousteri Lake and highly pleased with Aurobindo Ashram. While Under-graduates are pleased with OusteriLake, Diploma-Holders are moderately pleased with Paradise Beach and highly pleased with Aurobindo Ashram. Interestingly, tourists with different educational qualifications are all pleased with Auroville.

5.9 Profession-wise Preference of Different Tourist Spots

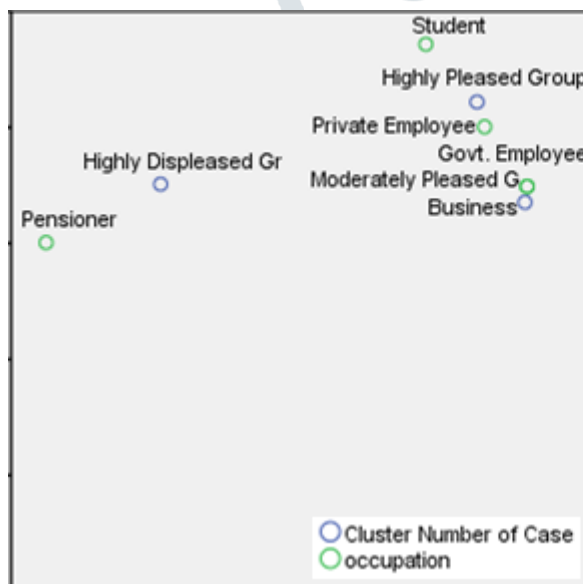


Fig. 9:Auroville

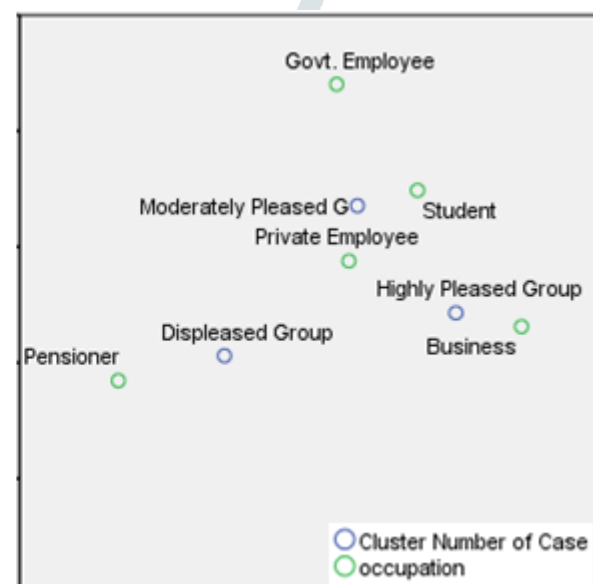


Fig. 10:Paradise Beach

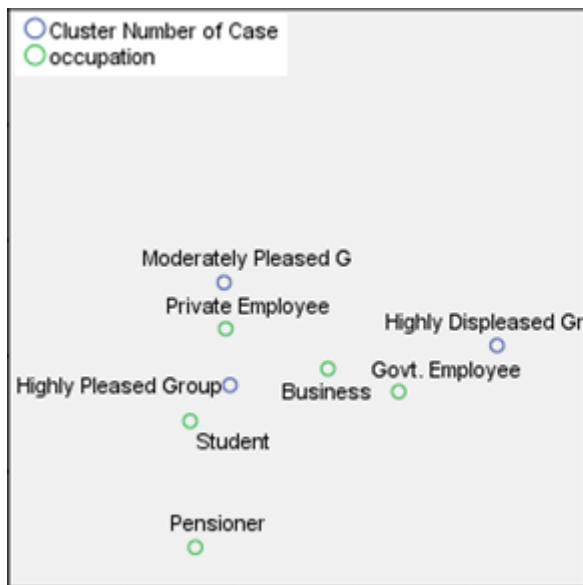


Fig. 11:Aurobindo Ashram

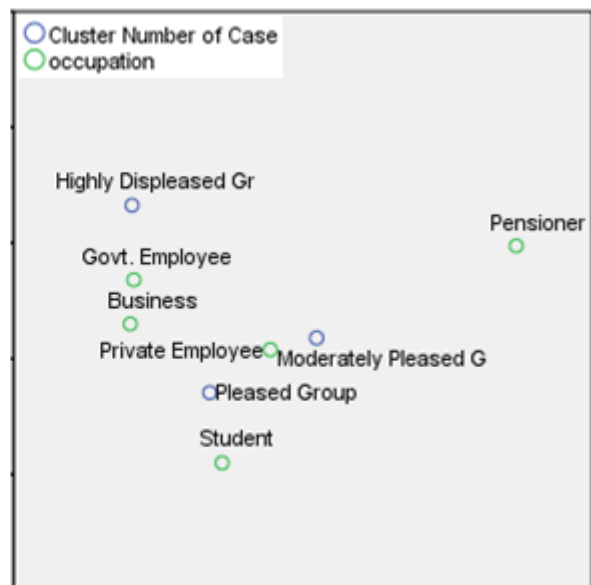


Fig. 12:Ousteri Lake

It can be inferred from figures 9-12 that private employees are pleased with Auroville and moderately pleased with Ousteri Lake, Aurobindo Ashram and Paradise Beach while students are pleased with Aurobindo Ashram and moderately pleased with Paradise Beach. Businessmen are moderately pleased with Auroville.

5.10Income-wise Preference of Different Tourist Spots

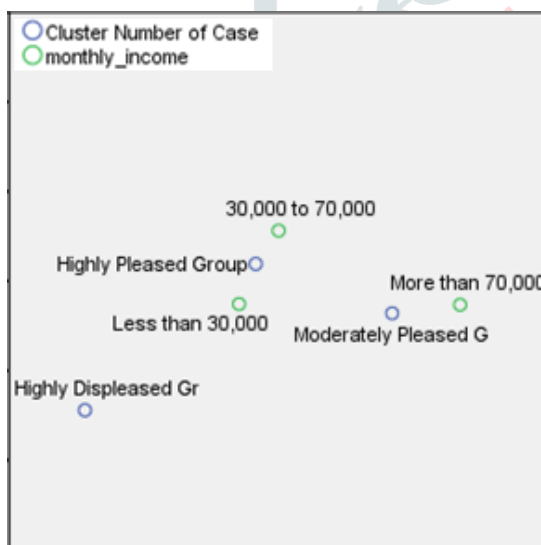


Fig. 13:Auroville

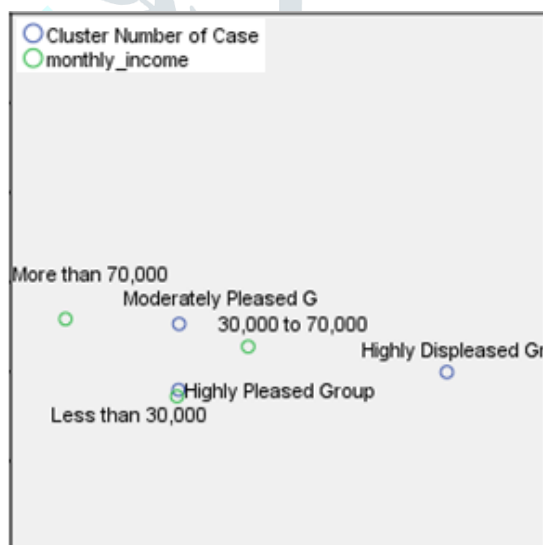


Fig. 14: Aurobindo Ashram

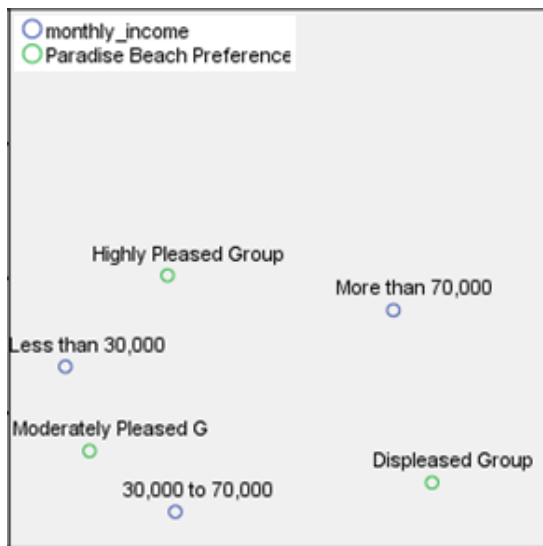


Fig. 15: Paradise Beach

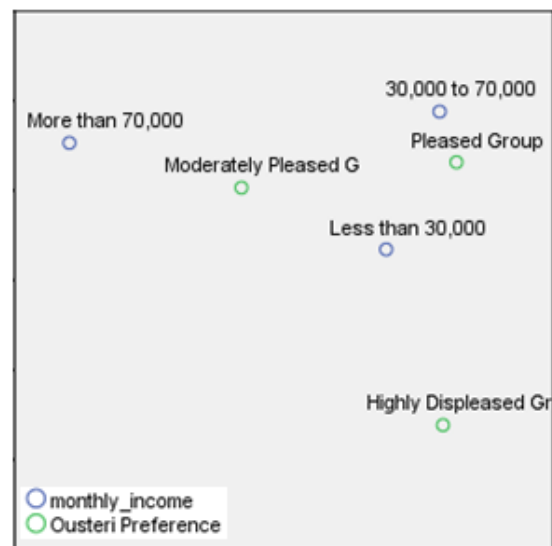


Fig. 16:Ousteri Lake

It can be inferred from figures 13-16 that tourists with monthly income of less than Rs. 30,000 are pleased with Aurobindo Ashram and Auroville while those with monthly income of Rs. 30,000-70,000 are moderately pleased with Aurobindo Ashram and pleased with Ousteri Lake. Finally, tourists with monthly income of more than Rs. 70,000 are moderately pleased with Paradise Beach and Auroville.

5.11 Marital Status-wise Preference of Different Tourist Spots

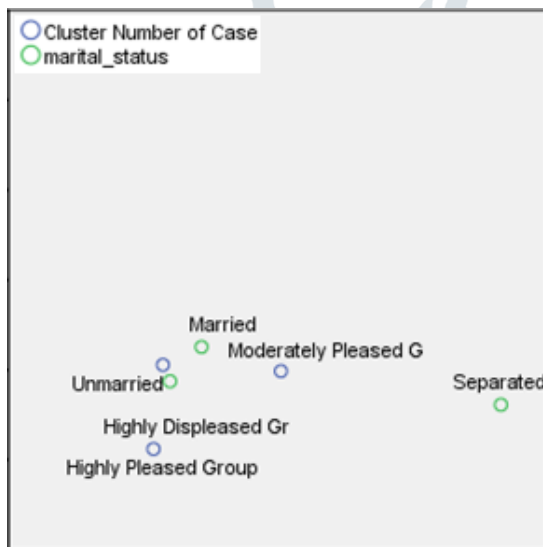


Fig. 17:Auroville

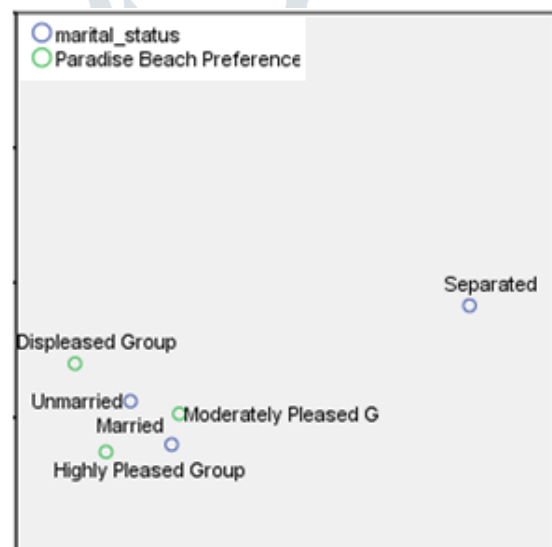


Fig. 18: Paradise Beach

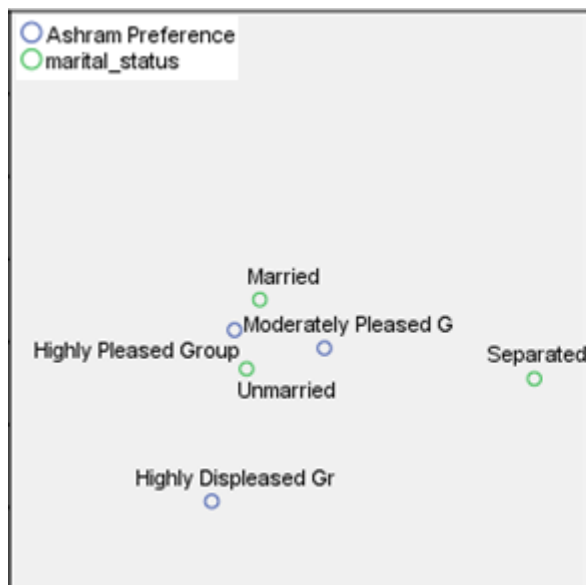


Fig. 19:Aurobindo Ashram

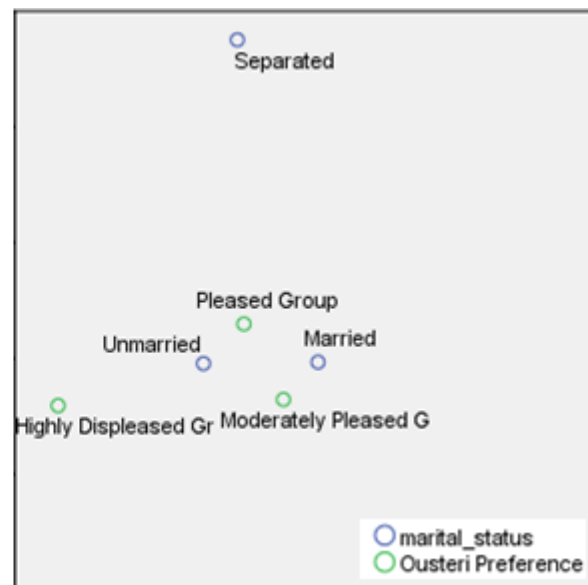


Fig. 20:Ousteri Lake

It can be observed from figures 17-20 that unmarried tourists are displeased with Auroville while they are highly pleased with Aurobindo Ashram and pleased with Paradise Beach and Ousteri Lake. Furthermore, married tourists are moderately pleased with Ousteri Lakewhile they are highly pleased with Aurobindo Ashram and pleased with Paradise Beach.

VI. INFERENCES FROM THE STUDY

97, 92, 85 and 71 tourists are aware about the tourist spots of Aurobindo Ashram, Auroville, Paradise Beach and Ousteri Lake respectively. 4 tourists unaware about Auroville are not aware about Paradise beach while 12 tourists not aware about Paradise beach are aware about Auroville. Five tourists are unaware about both the spots and 80 are aware about both the spots. Furthermore, all the 9 tourists who are unaware about Auroville are aware about Aurobindo ashram while four tourists who are unaware about Aurobindo ashram are aware about Auroville and 88 tourists are aware about both Auroville and Aurobindo Ashram. All the 9 tourists unaware about Auroville are also unaware about Ousteri Lakewhile 21 tourists aware about Auroville are not aware about Ousteri Lake and 71 tourists are aware about both the tourist spots. Though Aurobindo Ashram has been known for most tourists, Auroville is the most preferred tourist spot and it also has been rated as the most unique spot, followed by Aurobindo Ashram, Paradise Beach and Ousteri Lake. Most importantly, tourists prefer tourist spots depending upon uniqueness of these spots. Auroville and Aurobindo Ashram are the tourist spots which have least number of Highly Displeased tourists, followed closely by Ousteri Lake and Paradise Beach.

Tourists with different educational qualifications and those aged less than 30 years are pleased with Auroville while tourists aged 30-50 years, Businessmen and those with monthly income of more than Rs. 70,000 are moderately pleased. Private employees and tourists with monthly income of less than Rs. 30,000 are pleased while unmarried tourists and those above the age of 50 years are displeased with Auroville. Tourists with monthly income of less than Rs. 30,000, students and those aged 30-50 years are pleased with Aurobindo Ashram while those with monthly income of Rs. 30,000-70,000, private employees and those aged less than 30 years are moderately pleased. Both unmarried and married tourists, graduates and Diploma-Holders are highly pleased with Aurobindo Ashram.

Tourists aged 30-50 years, graduates, unmarried and married tourists are pleased with Paradise Beach while those aged less than 30 years, Diploma-Holders, post-graduates, those with monthly income of more than Rs. 70,000, private employees and students are moderately pleased with Paradise Beach. Unmarried tourists, those with monthly income of Rs. 30,000-70,000, those aged less than 30 years and Under-graduates are pleased with Ousteri Lake while married tourists, private employees, post-graduates and graduates are moderately pleased.

Importantly, High income tourists are moderately pleased with Auroville, Paradise Beach and Aurobindo Ashram while they are pleased only with Ousteri Lake. Similarly, young tourists are pleased with Auroville and Ousteri Lake while they are only moderately pleased with Aurobindo Ashram and Paradise Beach. Hence, it can be observed that most important target market of tourism such as youngsters and high income category of people are not fully satisfied with the tourist spots in Puducherry. This implies that there is an urgent need to address the prevalent problems of tourism industry in Puducherry if the region wants to project itself as a good tourist destination.

VII. CONCLUSION

All is not well for Puducherry as far as tourism is concerned. It is vital for the government and other stake-holders involved to take immediate remedial measures, failing which the region will have to lose its glory and reputation of being one of the most preferred tourist destination in the country.

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