

# DESTINATIONS HERITAGE AND FRANCO-TAMIL CULTURE AS A SIGNIFICANT DRIVER FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT OF PUDUCHERRY

*Mr. M. Siva*

*Adjunct Faculty*

*Department of Tourism Studies,*

*School of Management,*

*Pondicherry University - 605 014*

*Puducherry, India*

## Abstract

The study outlines the importance of local heritage sites and unique mix of French and Tamil cultural heritage as a source of tourism development at Puducherry. The city with many beautiful heritage buildings, temples, church's, iconic statues, combined with the well designed French style avenues is a seamless mixture of French Colonial Heritage and Tamil Culture. Against this background, an in-depth study was conducted among the local residents and the tourists to ascertain their reactions in remaking of local heritage and culture for the development of tourism. While locals adhered to the personal and valued memories of the Tamil and French culture that prevails over centuries at the destination and the tourists revealed their positive experience visiting this destination. The dichotomous reaction underscores that a major importance must be given to the local heritage sites and culture in attracting large number of tourists to this destination. The inferences of the study may confer suggestions for the restoration and promotion of heritage and cultural tourism at this destination.

**Key Words:** Heritage Tourism, Cultural Tourism, Spiritual Aura

## I. INTRODUCTION

Heritage tourism is the fastest emerging segments of the impending tourism sector. John M. McGrath et al., (2016) states that, "heritage tourism is a rising field, both from a visitation viewpoint and research efforts." Intangible cultural heritage represents the refined height of cultural inheritance, and has steadily become a significant component of tourism resources (Zhang et al., 2018). Palmer (1999) concedes that "heritage" was the "buzz" idiom of the 1990s" and heritage tourism "is an influential force in the building of national identity." Puducherry itself as a "heritage" town is a mixture of sacred characteristic, French grandeur legacy and unique blend of Franco-Tamil ethnicity. Puducherry, being a destination of heritage and spiritual attractions that includes Eglise de Notre Dame des Anges Church, Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient, Chamber of Commerce, Raj Niwas, Sri Manakkula Vinayagar Temple, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Ananda Ranga Pillai Mansion with Franco-Tamil Architecture attracts large flow of tourists towards this destination. Puducherry has happened to be an acknowledged tourism destination for the urban middle-class visitors (Helle Jørgensen, 2019). With relevant to the heritage sites and cross-cultural history, this study will examine in detail of tourist's perception in visiting Puducherry, the importance of historical sites and franco-tamil culture as driver of tourism attractions. Furthermore, the study will also illustrate the significance of conservation and restoration of heritage sites and culture at this destination.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Heritage Tourism

**Definition Attempts:** “Heritage” is considered as one of the fastest growing constituent of tourism in many urbanized economies (Alzue et al., 1998; Herbert, 2001). The word “heritage” in its widespread meaning is linked with the word legacy; that is, something which is transferred from one generation to the other. A very brief explanation of ‘heritage’ is ‘inheritance from the past.’ Heritage has been largely understood as a figurative plane on which ideas of identity are projected (Sabine Marschall, 2019). The ‘Oxford’ dictionary specifies ‘heritage’ as a, “valued objects and qualities such as historic buildings and cultural traditions that have been passed down from earlier generations.” Park’s (2010) views heritage tourism, “as an emotional journey into nationhood.” Heritage tourism is a leading force in promotion and maintenance of nationwide branding as it contributes to destination attractiveness (Deepak Chhabra, 2017). Heritage tourism is viewed as a growth segment, progressively sought by tourists for their more uniqueness and authentic experiences (Lacher et al., 2013).

‘Heritage tourism’ likely to be a fiscal development driver (Dong et al., 2013; Timothy et al., 2006). Fyall et al., (1998) describe “heritage tourism” as a fiscal activity that uses socio-cultural assets to attract visitors. Tourism’s fundamental nature is vibrant, and its interface with heritage frequently results in a reinterpretation, of the latter. In its fundamental nature, the association with promotion of heritage tourism and the conservation of heritage sites within the destination are challenging.

### 2.2 Destination attributes and tourist’s Perceptions

Puducherry the former French colony, no wonder has become the most preferred destination in recent years. The fact that the part of tourists prefers to visit a heritage destination on holiday and for leisure substantiate that culture, tourism and leisure are increasingly bound together (A. Ramires et al., 2018). Sharma et al., (2018b) states that, “the experiences of tourist are influenced by the emotions elicited from tourists in a destination. In tourism studies, feeling affects tourists’ perceived destination image.” The confluence of French and Tamil heritage attracts large number of tourists in recent decades. In the past two decades, travel for cultural motives has grown-up rapidly, so as heritage and cultural tourism has turned into the most affluent fragment of the tourism industry (Altunel et al., 2015). The brand image of ‘Heritage City’ and long traditional link of franco-tamil culture play an imperative role in attracting large numbers of tourists to the destination. Cultural heritage is understood as a significant attractor to a territory, and also as an feature for local development (Cristofle, 2012). Tourists’ perceptions of a destination are noteworthy for understanding their destination choice and succeeding travel behavior (Wang et al., 2010).

### 2.3 The importance of historical sites and intangible cultural heritage as a driver of tourism attractions

M. Murzyn-Kupisz, (2013) states that, “built heritage frequently forms an essential part of regeneration strategies as inspiration, the backdrop to regeneration processes or even their central aspect and catalyst.” Heritage buildings represent ancient history and the culture of nations (H.A. Abd ElWahab et al., 2018). Helle Jørgensen, (2019) argues that, “Colonial heritage is becoming an increasingly familiar tourist attraction internationally.” World heritage site are found to be a magnet for visitors, implies that issues of accessibility, transport, accommodation and other service terms have to be delicately dealt with to elude inundate the site itself (Myra Shackley, 1998). Cultural and historical legacies act as an imperative attraction for tourists in several destinations and hence represent a primary resource for generating inflows of tourists (J.L. Groizard et al., 2018).

As the importance of promoting the destination, heritage tourism plays a significant role in attracting greater numbers of tourists to a destination. With relevant to the above concept, (Light & Prentice 1994) states that, “heritage tourism is a fast growing segment of the tourism industry” and is anticipated to grow furthermore (Boyd, 2002). Heritage destinations do face firm competition from other heritage sites and destination types (Confer et al., 2000), in addition to increasing demands for services from visitors (Fyall et al., 1998). Heritage tourism is viewed as individual and experiential phenomenon and in addition linked to precise attributes of a destination (Matthew Alexander et al., 2016). Nevertheless, it is vital to make out the scale of heritage concerning of potential markets. The extent of appeal (whether global, nationwide, regional or

local) does have significant implications on the length of stay and influencing the choice of tourism products.

#### ***2.4 The significance of conservation & restoration of heritage sites and culture at the destination***

Heritage sites in the tourism market attract greater number of visitors. Conservation is, probably a major issue more in conflict with tourism promotion, while tourism focuses on marketing sites and generates economic benefits by attracting more number of visitors. If this practice of commercializing and commoditisation of the culture endure for a long time, it is probable that the authenticity of culture could be eroded and most likelihood extinct (Nur Izzati Mohd Rodzi et al., 2013). Cultural and natural patrimony is subject to several challenges that create threat to preservation. Urbanization, deforestation, industrialization, armed conflict and natural disasters are the examples (J.L. Groizard et al., 2018). M. Ginzarly, et al., (2019) argues that, 'heritage attributes should be preserved or developed.' The dilemma along with conservation and tourism development is apparent in heritage sites (WHC, 2005). However, preserving the cultural traditions and restoring the heritage buildings, should be a part of heritage tourism for promoting the continued heritage tourism, in a destination.

Conservation of monuments and heritage properties facilitate the continued existence of art forms and culture (R.Uma Devi, 2013). Tuter Lussetyowati (2015) states that, 'cultural heritage tourism protects cultural heritage and develop the quality of life of inhabitants and visitors. A learned society or community makes prudent decisions in protecting and preserving resources that delineate the very quintessence of the culture and society (Norzaini Azman et al., 2009). Choosing an apt organizational source for heritage tourism is essential for developing and promoting heritage tourism. The confident attitudes towards heritage property and heritage conservation determine the success (S. Xu et al., 2017). The tourist industry has the possibility to cause degradation of the physical as well as cultural environment and also contributes to heritage preservation that profits residents and future visitors (Hovinen, 1995: 387). Several initiatives have been made for attaining equilibrium between preservation and consumption of World Heritage Sites, or heritage in a wider sense, from varied perspectives for instance visitor management (Airey et al., 1998; Herbert, 2001; Waite, 2000).

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

Puducherry as a destination of age old franco-tamil culture has an important built and cultural heritage. The historic destination even though has the major heritage and cultural attractions, the studies about tourist's perceptions visiting Puducherry, the importance of historical sites, franco-tamil culture as a driver of tourism attractions and the importance of conservation and preservation of heritage sites and culture at this destination are very limited, no concise report of promoting heritage and cultural tourism of the destination are revealed. Therefore the study explores the mentioned areas adopting qualitative research method. Primary and secondary source of information were used for the research. The secondary source of information includes books, journals, government reports, scholarly works and promotional material targeting tourists. Primary data were collected through in-depth interview from residents of white town and Tamil quarter. The opinions were gathered from 20 local residents (representatives of heritage properties of Puducherry Boulevard- French and Tamil Quarters) and 24 tourists visiting Puducherry Boulevard. The content analysis method was chosen to infer from the responses.

### **IV. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF LOCAL RESIDENTS-(CONTENT ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS)**

**4.1 Value of Heritage properties to community:** Major local residents do accept that heritage properties are of much value to the community. The major inference from the respondent reveals the fact that the heritage properties contributes to tourism promotion, economic benefits at regional and national level, increased employment opportunities, improved standards of life and cultural revitalization.

“Puducherry is a spiritual place, the heritage properties values a lot to the local community and the future generations. The heritage buildings, with its rich cultural diversity, grand heritage of French and Tamil architecture has to be protected and preserved so that the future generations would come know about the richness of the blend of culture and unity.”

- Mr. Neelakandan, Chetty Street, Puducherry.

#### ***4.2 Importance of preservation of heritage buildings***

Mixed responses were been countered. Even though majority responded in favour of preservation of heritage buildings so that the future generations would be enlightened with the life style of their ancestors; the respondents’ current family situations (division of properties among heirs), changing lifestyle, economic and physical conditions of the heritage properties forces them to reconstruct the heritage buildings according to the modern architectural design. “Puducherry has lost more than 700 listed heritage buildings in the past 10 years, most of them in the Tamil Town (INTACH, 2016).” The major respondents of French quarters gave priority to the preservation of heritage properties.

“There are only few heritage buildings left out in Boulevard of Puducherry. For example, the buildings in tamil quarters which has the special features of ‘thinnai’ (a flat-ceiling platform built into the façade and supported by large wooden columns), ‘mutram’ (a central open courtyard surrounded by a colonnaded roofed space) and ‘thalvaram’ (a tiled roof extending from the sloping roof to posts or pillars at the curb, sheltered people from intense rain or shine has to be preserved so that future generations should know about the uniqueness in construction of buildings on those days.”

- Mr. Murugan, Muthumariamman Koil Street, Puducherry

#### ***4.3 Promotion of heritage tourism in Puducherry***

In common it was been revealed that more initiatives can be taken by the tourism authority to promote heritage tourism at Puducherry. The majority responded that Government in support of tourism department [Puducherry Tourism Development Corporation (PDTC)] must take necessary initiative to restore the heritage buildings and maximize the promotion of heritage sites of Puducherry.

“Heritage Tourism?” It has to be adequately promoted. Puducherry is rich in mixed culture (French and Tamil); it can be more explored by the tourists who are visiting Puducherry. So, the concerned authorities whoever is in charge has to take much initiative to promote heritage tourism in Puducherry.

- Mr. Gaspar, Laporte Street, Puducherry.

#### ***4.4 Demolition and Restoration of heritage buildings***

Mixed responses were gathered. Local residents living at Tamil quarters in common wanted to restore the heritage buildings if there is financial assistance provided by the Government or any International Agency. It’s also common in their response that the younger generations need them to demolish the heritage buildings and construct new buildings according the modern plan. The local residents of French quarters at a major scale preferred to restore the heritage buildings instead of demolition.

“I wouldn’t accept in demolition of heritage buildings. The building has to be restored in the same physical conditions. In Singapore, the Government assists in financing the local residents for restoration of heritage buildings but here nothing of that sort is there, INTACH for sometime tried to help to restore buildings in Vysial Street, later slowly kept aside, so if the Local Government or any Agency assists financially for restoration, sure, I am happy to restore the heritage buildings.

- Mr. Srikanth, Kamatchi amman Koil Street, Puducherry

#### 4.5 Conversion of heritage buildings to museum of art and culture

In common, because of lack of awareness of converting heritage buildings into museum, the local residents refused to support for the conversion of heritage buildings to museum of art and culture.

“Yes, I would render my support in conversion of heritage buildings to museum of art and culture provided the Government or concerned authority is assisting financially. The future generations would come to know about the uniqueness in the architecture of the buildings and the talents of ancestors.

Mr. Padbanaban, Nedarajappayer Street, Puducherry

### V. DISCUSSIONS

The study clearly exhibits that Puducherry is rich in spiritual and cultural heritage sites. The destination portrays a mixture of spiritual aura, French imperial Heritage and Tamil ethnicity. The elderly respondents wished to maintain the binding memories of the past that can be conceded from one generation to the other. But due to various attributes like modernisation, change in the mindset of younger generation, lack of awareness in protecting heritage buildings, lack of financial support by family or Government, high land value, developmental pressures, high maintenance cost of old buildings, division of property among legal heirs the local residents find difficult to maintain the physical character of their heritage properties. Considerations of financial assistance to the heritage property owners who seek to conserve and restore their heritage properties, strict legal framework by the Government authorities and implementation of other stringent guidelines may protect and restore the remaining heritage properties at this destination. In terms of converting heritage properties into museum of art and culture, awareness for the local communities has to be initiated so that the owners of heritage properties would be a part of tourism development of Puducherry.

The key to retain more heritage properties at this destination is possible by providing more incentives to property owners, then more regulation or restriction. The heritage education in schools and in the community as a whole must remain as priority in this destination to sustain heritage properties at this destination.

#### Inferences based on Survey conducted among the Tourists

Table 1: Tabular Depiction

Problems	Prospects
i) Lack of Information of updated heritage properties, relics and the cultural identity	Comfortable accessibility, connectivity by means of air, road and train.
ii) Dissatisfaction towards tourists Infrastructure Facilities	Rich in aesthetic, cultural, heritage and spiritual values. Mixture of spiritual aura, French imperial Heritage and Tamil ethnicity.
iii) Commoditization of heritage properties	Common platform for the rejuvenation of body, mind, soul and self-actualisation, thus making the destination very unique from others.eg, Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Temples.
iv) Poor Promotion of heritage, spiritual and cultural tourism at	The destination is an amalgamation of Eastern and western, ancient and modern.

<p>regional, national and international level.</p> <p>v) Less diversified tourism activities</p> <p>vi) Overcrowding and Congestion leads to dissatisfaction of tourists experiences.</p>	<p>Emotional factors comprising nostalgia, ethnic bond, romance, escapism and religious fulfilment promotes weekend tourism.</p> <p>Diversified tourism promotion(leisure Tourism-Beaches, Meditation &amp; yoga; Food Tourism - Multi cuisine, alcoholic beverages)</p>
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## 5.1 Inferences

The study reveals that the French Ethnicity on various aspects of lifestyle at Puducherry motivates large number of tourists to this destination. A French dominance marks every aspect at this destination that includes architecture, life style, language, street plan etc. The tourists perceived the impression of French culture in different fields beginning from hospitality sector to festivals and historical monuments. The tourists in general responded that if there is preservation and maintenance of heritage properties and promotion of cultural events they would be more attracted towards this destination.

## VI. FINDINGS

- ❖ High level of mutual understanding between the Government and heritage property owners must be maintained, only then it would result in a successful restoration of heritage buildings.
- ❖ The outcome of the study clearly reveals that the heritage buildings are been demolished especially at Tamil quarters at a major scale for various reasons.
- ❖ The heritage properties at this destination are not preserved or restored due to the lack of proper procedural guidelines. The cooperation between the governmental bodies and the private sector is in vain. As of the gap, problem arises in promoting of heritage/cultural tourism at this destination.
- ❖ An audit of heritage sites is needed for the restoration of heritage sites.
- ❖ The outcome of the study also brings out the ethnic limits and other landscapes of Puducherry. This prospective is, as yet, untapped in Puducherry.
- ❖ Strategies widening a stronger sense of destination representation through heritage and cultural tourism are essential.
- ❖ The study in addition identifies a series of pitfalls in promoting tourism at this destination.
- ❖ In terms of tourists perception the Franco-Tamil culture has influenced at wider aspect to visit Puducherry.
- ❖ The major findings of this study reveal the fact that cultural/heritage tourism has a wide scope of attracting large numbers of national and global tourists.
- ❖ The study also elucidates that there is lack of proper promotion of tourism activities through modern information technologies.
- ❖ Overall study reveals the fact that there would be major challenges in the sustainable development of heritage and cultural tourism at the destination.

## VII. SUGGESTIONS

- Awareness creation among the heritage property owners about heritage and cultural values has to be enlightened.

- Provide financial and other support services to the heritage property owners for maintaining the heritage sites. Creating 'Heritage Fund' by the Government for maintaining and restoring the heritage properties is essential.
- Implementing immediate policies/laws from preventing of demolishing of heritage properties is essential.
- Commoditization of heritage properties must be reduced to restore the same physical character of the heritage buildings.
- Relaxation of entry procedures for vehicles & tourist vans entering the four regions from adjacent states.
- Protection of beaches from encroachment by strict laws.
- Participation in national and international travel marts to promote tourism at international scale is required.
- The Government should collaborate with International Agencies (Public private partnership-PPT) in restoration of heritage buildings at this destination.
- The Tourism Department needs to find out the probability of marketing the inherited properties for promoting tourism.
- The concern authorities needs to develop frameworks for effective planning and promotion of heritage and cultural tourism
- Recognise heritage sites as potential tourist attractions.
- Develop appropriate mechanisms for tourists infrastructural facilities
- Overcrowding, congestion, and safety problems need to be addressed.
- The frame work of heritage tourism management must be encouraged with societal acceptance and community participation.
- Promoting major Franco-Tamil cultural events would attract more number of domestic and international tourists.
- Puducherry being the Union Territory, effective co-ordination of both the Central and the State Governments in the development of infrastructure and tourism promotion needs to be adhered.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

Destinations heritage and franco-tamil culture would form special interest tourism in its long-standing economic value and tourist market segments, with high sustainable growth rates. Yan (2017) argues that, 'heritage tourism brings benefits and major changes to local areas.' Nurlisa Ginting (2016), states that, 'heritage tourism considerably attracted immense interests of tourists.' Heritage tourism importantly provides significant non-economic benefits: promotes, protects and sustains the inheritance base, addresses the local customs and ethics that define nations and communities and recognises multicultural legacies. Therefore heritage sites must be protected to promote heritage tourism. 'The Local community's involvement in the site conservation should be accredited and certain support should be rendered to sustain the site (J. Eugene, 2013).' Myra-Shackley (1998), argues that, "world heritage has to be protected to maintain its authenticity for future generations." "It is clear now, the heritage tourism to be successful, requires greater care in planning, focus on sustainable tourism development, preserve and restore cultural/heritage resources. The present study seeks to answer, the importance of heritage sites, culture and identity as the symbolic power of tourism development at Puducherry, simultaneously it explains the importance of conservation, continuity of traditional values and restoration of buildings when new projects are developed at this destination.

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