

Tourist Preference of Food and Beverage in South India with Special Reference to Madurai

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Abstract

The paper explores about the food preference and likings of the tourists in Madurai. As food being the integral part of the major revenue contributor. The objective of the study is to evaluate the preference of food by sample tourists and to analyze the impact of food and beverage experience during a tour. The study requires both secondary and primary data. The secondary data required could be gleaned from prestigious journals and reports the primary data could be collected from the respondents by the personal interview method. The findings reveal that the foreigners have really enjoyed the food and provided by our food and beverage outlets and the place could be suggested as culinary tourist destination of south India.

Keywords: Culinary Tourism, Food and Beverage, Luxury Hotels, Madurai Tourism, Tourism

1. Introduction

The origin of the global tourism industry can be traced to early lodging facilities in Europe. But the modern hotel industry took shape in the American continent, some landmarks being the city hotel in New York, the Tremont House in Boston and the Statler Hotel in Buffalo. Indian hotel industry has also risen by leaps and bounds from ancient times to the present. Today, India is an important international tourist destination with 1.25 per cent share in the global business. In absolute terms, 5.08 million international tourists arrived in India in 2007 and spent US \$ 10.7 million, marking a 24.3 per cent rise over the previous year. This growth is attributed to the country's incredible India international marketing campaign and its open sky policy, which have led to a massive growth in travel for business and pleasure. All this has opened exciting opportunities for the hotel industry. The hospitality industry is poised to cross Rs.826.76 billion by 2010.

As the food plays an integral part of the tourism and it would provide all the cultural and regional aspects to the tourists to both domestic and international so cuisine would be manifest of culture. Indian cuisine differs as a result of variation in local, cultural, geographical location and its culture is evident from the food which is prepared in every region.

1.1 Indian Cuisine

The Indian cuisine would be composed of Mughlai cuisine, Awadhi cuisine, Bengali, Punjabi, Rajasthani, Guajarati, Maharastrian, Kashmiri, Andhra, Hyderabad, Karnataka, kerala, Tamilnadu, Chettinad and more as it would be evident from the above India would be an tantalizing place to explore the food, people, and culture from different parts of the world. As foreigner from would adore the Indian food despites the fact it would be spicy when compared to other regions.

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1.2 Ethnic Cuisine

It literally means the food and beverage prepared and consumed by ethnic group as a manifestation of their ethnicity. Ethnic cuisine is about representing their culture, race, country of origin, language through the food and beverage they consume and serve to their guest.

2. Review of Literature

During the last decade, a number of studies have been undertaken on various aspects of tourism in India. The investigator makes an attempt to review the most outstanding among them.

2.1 Domestic Tourism

The factors determining domestic tourism have been dealt with at length by Kunal Chellopadhyay. According to him domestic tourism develops and assures a significant proportion of total tourist trade as long as two conditions prevail. They are, a large number of tourism minded people and availability of well-connected tourist sites. Kunal holds that these two factors are present in an abundant measure in India. However, what is unique about the Indian tourists is that Indians travel thousands of miles on pilgrimages in spite of their very low-earning potentials.

2.2 International Tourism

Francesco Frangialli puts forward five challenges for international tourism unto the turn of the century. They are, to benefit from socio-demographic factors favorable to international tourism and to incorporate technological changes that foster development in order to take advantage of the current trends in consumer behavior; to opt for a strategy of sustainable development and to develop and improve human resources.

3. Methodology

The study requires both secondary and primary data. The secondary data required could be gleaned from prestigious journals and reports. Further, to an extent reliance on the records and official bulletins of the headquarters of the Tourism Department, Madurai and Office of the Assistant Director of Statistics, Madurai was also necessary. The primary data could be collected from the respondents by the personal interview method.

3.1 Sample Design

In order to assess the development of tourism in Madurai region, 500 tourists were randomly selected with the help of tourist information centre in the Madurai region. For analytical purposes, 100 selected tourists were post-stratified into two categories namely domestic and foreign tourists. Out of 100 sample tourists, 67 (67.00 per cent) belong to foreign tourist group and the remaining 33 (33.00 per cent) belong to the domestic tourist group.

3.2 Collection of Data

On the basis of the information gathered from the experts and officials of tourism development, a well designed pre-tested interview schedule was drafted and used in the field survey to collect primary data. Before undertaking the main survey, a tentative interview schedule was prepared and administered to 25 tourists in order to test the validity of the interview schedule. It facilitated the removal of the 'non-response' and unwarranted questions and the modified final schedule were prepared on this basis.

The selected tourists were contacted in person and the objectives of the study were clearly explained to them and their co-operation was ensured. The details regarding the time of arrival/departure, number of/duration of days, details of hotel accommodation, expenditure and the like marked the questionnaire.

The secondary data were collected from books, journals, newspapers and periodicals, official records of the Department of Tourism and internet.

Table 1. Purpose of visit of foreign and domestic tourists

| Purpose | Foreign | | Domestic | |
|-----------------------|-----------|---------------|------------|---------------|
| | Number | Percentage | Number | percentage |
| Leisure (sightseeing) | 40 | 59.70 | 20 | 60.60 |
| Health | 10 | 14.92 | 5 | 15.15 |
| Religion | 10 | 14.92 | -- | -- |
| Education | 2 | 2.98 | 6 | 18.18 |
| Visiting Friends | 2 | 2.98 | 2 | 6.06 |
| Business | 2 | 2.98 | -- | -- |
| Others | 1 | 1.49 | - | -- |
| Total | 67 | 100.00 | 162 | 100.00 |

Source: Survey data.

It has been revealed from Table 1 that out of 33 domestic tourists, 60.60 per cent visit Madurai merely for spending their holidays in sight-seeing. This is quite true for both the foreign and domestic tourists. Education and

health came next in importance. Thus it is evident that man is generally lured to places, where he can feast his eyes on things of scenic beauty and historical importance.

Table 2. Food preferences of foreign tourists

| S. No | Type of food preferred | International | | Domestic | |
|--------------|------------------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|------------|
| | | No. of tourists | Percentage | No. of tourists | Percentage |
| 1. | Continental | 6 | 8.95 | 2 | 18.18 |
| 2. | Chinese | 8 | 11.94 | 8 | 24.24 |
| 3. | North Indian | 15 | 22.38 | 5 | 15.15 |
| 4. | South Indian | 38 | 56.71 | 18 | 54.54 |
| Total | | 67 | 100.00 | 33 | 100 |

Source: Survey data.

Table 2 depicts that out of 67 foreign tourists, majority of 38 (56.71 per cent) of them prefer south Indian food, which is the home town food in Madurai followed by 15 (22.38 per cent) of them, who prefer north Indian food, 8(11.94 per cent) of them, who prefer Chinese food and 6 (8.95 per cent) of them, who prefer continental food.

Table 3. Ethnic food preferred by foreign tourists

| S. No | Preference of ethnic food | No. of tourists | Percentage |
|--------------|---------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 1. | Below 25 percentage | 15 | 22.38 |
| 2. | 25-50 percentage | 30 | 44.77 |
| 3. | 50-75 percentage | 12 | 17.91 |
| 4. | 75-100 percentage | 10 | 14.92 |
| Total | | 67 | 100.00 |

Source: Survey data.

It is depicted from the Table 3 that majority of 30 (44.79 per cent) of the foreign tourists prefer about 25-50 per cent of Ethnic food, followed by 15 (22.38 per cent) of the tourists prefer about below 25 per cent of the total food to ethnic food, 12 (17.91 per cent) of them prefer about 50-75 per cent of ethnic food and 10 (14.92 per cent) of them prefer about 75-100 per cent of ethnic food respectively.

4. Conclusion

It may be concluded that most of the tourist's especially foreign tourists have graded Indian food and beverages as delicious and very good. Further, Indian kitchen was manned with maximum number of staff due to higher

volume of work involved and better sale of Indian food and beverages, when compared to other sections. Hotel industry is the backbone of tourism industry, which creates national integration and international good will and understanding.

5. Suggestions

The following suggestions have been made to improve the food and beverage provided to tourists in Madurai.

The taste of continental food is not up to the expectations in south Indian hotels particularly in Madurai in the opinion of some tourists. Therefore, it is suggested that the government should be liberal in allowing the import of raw materials from abroad. For improving the quality of services and facilities of food and beverage in Madurai hotels, the department of tourism, government of Tamilnadu should insist at least a craft course to get the licensing for small scale restaurants and to attract more tourists to Madurai culinary tourism the government of tourism Tamilnadu can conduct food carnivals to encourage tourists to visit Madurai and also dedicate an area or a street only to provide food for the tourists.

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