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Issues and Trends of Event Tourism Promotion in Destinations. Puducherry, an empirical Study

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Abstract

Puducherry dots a significant place in the world tourism map. The spiritual radiance of the place coupled with unique heritage symbols makes it a fast progressing tourist destination frequented by tourists from all parts of the globe. Puducherry has undoubtedly subscribed to the emerging forms of the tourism and the latest practices in the industry. In this context, realising the importance of the Event Tourism which is gaining grounds at a quick place; contributing immensely to boosting both the destination image and the economy, Destination Puducherry also chipped in recently with certain promotional strategies. The present study deals with the potential of Puducherry in successfully hosting Event Tourism. This paper also elucidates the major issues and current trends and practices in the realm of event tourism promotion in Puducherry. This study aims to identify destination suitability, opportunity, tourist inflow, government involvement in promotional activities, human resource requirement and SWOT for event tourism management. The research work is exploratory in nature. Concrete hypothesis is framed based on extensive reviews and understanding of the Puducherry perspective of the event tourism, which is tested and interpreted. The findings of this work are expected to highlight the opportunities and niche areas of event tourism promotion in Puducherry.

Key Words: Destination, Event Management, Event Tourism, Promotion, and SWOT

Introduction

Event Tourism is a multi-million dollar industry, growing rapidly, with mega shows and events hosted regularly. Surprisingly, there is no formalized research conducted to assess the growth of this industry. The industry includes fields such as the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Events), exhibitions, conferences and seminars as well as live music and sporting events. Puducherry is an amazing tourist destination well connected with premier cities and towns of South India. Destination Puducherry is home to fabulous tourism products and unique features that entice tourists both foreign and domestic. The prospects of event tourism is not much tapped given the tremendous potential of Puducherry in the arena of indigenous events and cultural and leisure events. Event management existing for several thousand years it is only came last two decades that the concept of an event industry and profession has gained currency

(Harris, 2004). The growth and demand is induced by new millennium (Abbott & Geddie, 2001). Event is “anything that happens, as distinguished from anything that exists” or “an occurrence, especially one of great importance” (oxforddictionaries.com). A special event is “a one-off happening designed to meet specific needs at any given time” (David C.Watt, 1998). Local community events may be defined as “an activity established to involve the local population in a shared experience to their mutual benefits (Wilkinson, 1988). A special event recognizes “an unique moment in time with ceremony and ritual to satisfy specific needs (Goldblatt, 1997). A well know writer in the field of event management, defines special events from two perspectives, that of customer and that of the event manager as follows: “a special event is a one-time or infrequently occurring event outside normal programs or activities of the sponsoring or organizing body” and “to the customer or guest, a special event is an opportunity for leisure, social and cultural experience outside the normal range of choices or beyond everyday experience” (Getz, 1997).

Review of Literature

Special events, as defined in our introduction and more common events such as sporting events, corporate meetings, conventions, expositions , festivals, carnivals and prize giving ceremonies”, which may not the definition “ outside the normal range of choices”(Watt,1998). Event can be categorized such as by location, appeal, theme, scale or economic impact (Walsh-Heron & Stevens, 1990; Getz, 1991, 2007; Hall, 1992; Richards, 1994; Jago & Shaw, 1998; Gratton, Dobson, & Shibli, 2001). Events can be classified “in terms of size of the events” such as “mega events, regional events, and major events, minor events” (Van Der Wagen & Brenda, 2005). Event can be categorized by “geographic location, size of population, age of population, organizations, affluence of the community and organizer” (Watt, 1998). Events can be classified into four broad categories based on their “purpose and objective”: They are as follows “Leisure events, Cultural events, Personal events and Organizational or Corporate events” (Goldblatt & Nelson, 2001). Event Tourism is the application of then management practice of project management to the creation and development of festivals, events and conferences. Event Tourism involves studying the intricacies of the brand, identifying the target audience, devising the event concept, planning the logistics and coordinating the technical aspects before actually executing the modalities of the proposed event. Post-event analysis and ensuring a return on investment

have become significant drivers for the event industry. Event tourism destination should have a good venue, transportation facilities, hotels (accommodation), event designers, staging, trained personnel's in event management ,operations and logistics, safety and security, crowd management modules, monitoring, control and evaluation system, health and medical support, emergency services, insurance, information technology, marketing ,legal personnel, financial personnel, technical expertise, event organizers and basic facilities and amenities.(Watt,1998; Van Der Wagen & Brenda, 2005; Goldblatt & Nelson, 2001)

Hypothesis

1. Puducherry is a suitable destination for event management.
2. There is an opportunity for promoting event tourism in Puducherry.
3. Inflow of tourists will have a positive impact on event tourism.
4. Government is significantly involved in event promotional activities.
5. Puducherry has the potential to conduct the events.
6. The requirement of Human Resources to conduct event is significantly sufficient.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the potential and prospects of event tourism promotion in Puducherry.
2. To examine the quality of event infrastructural in Puducherry.
3. To study the impact of events on tourism industry in Puducherry.
4. To identify the promotion strategies as regarding major events in Puducherry.
5. To carry out a SWOT study on event tourism in Puducherry.

Scope of the Study and methodological Discussion

The need of the study is to identify the suitability, opportunity, tourist inflow, government involvement in promotional activities, human resource requirement for event tourism management and future prospects of Event Management. Puducherry is an amazing tourist destination well connected with premier cities and towns of South India. Destination Puducherry is home to fabulous tourism products and unique feature that entices tourist- both foreign and domestic. The prospects of event tourism is not much tapped given the tremendous potential of Puducherry in the realms of indigenous events and cultural and leisure events. Hence there is

ample scope of assessing the present and future trends in the area of Event Tourism in Puducherry.

This research is an explorative research. In this research questionnaire tool is used to collect the primary data. Questions are framed using both close ended and open ended questions and close ended questions are framed to those relating to the objectives. In this research, non probability sampling method adopted especially convenient sampling technique is used for collecting primary data. The sample size being used for the study is 50 respondents. Primary data collected through questionnaires to gather information from tourism officials, and promoters and to draw the opinion and views of tourist's. Secondary data is collected from books, magazines, newspapers articles, tourist literature, Internal and Journals. Collected data have been analyzed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

Limitations of the Study

1. The information sought from the respondents was biased not to an extent since they had may work and it was really embarrassing to collect data from them.
2. The source of information was a constraint since the secondary data could not be found easily.
3. Time was a major constraint because the research period was for a short time and the number of respondents was also limited.

Puducherry Destination

Puducherry is one of the most popular tourist destinations in South India. The city has many beautiful colonial buildings, churches, temples, and statues, which, combined with the systematic town planning and the well planned French style avenues, still preserve much of the colonial ambience. Puducherry is also a popular weekend destination. It is a blend of spiritual aura, French colonial heritage, Tamil culture, Virgin beaches, Chunnambar Backwater, Arikamedu and the cosmopolitan flair of many nationalities in a small but varied town. The most popular tourist destinations are the four beaches in Puducherry, which are Promenade Beach, Paradise Beach, the Auroville Beach and Serenity Beach. Sri Aurobindo Ashram located on rue de la Marine, is one of the most well known and wealthiest ashrams in India. Auroville (City of Dawn) is an "experimental" township located 8km North-West of Puducherry .There are a

number of old and large churches in Puducherry some of which have been built in eighteenth and nineteenth century. A number of heritage buildings and monuments are present around the Promenade beach such as the Children's Park & Dupleix Statue, Gandhi statue, Nehru Statue, Le Café, French War Memorial, 19th Century Light House, Bharathi Park, Botanical Gardens, Governors Palace, French War Memorial, Romain Rolland Library, Legislative Assembly, Puducherry Museum, French Institute of Puducherry at Saint-Louis Street.

The International Yoga Festival in Puducherry is celebrated during the first week of January. Generally it is celebrated from 4th January to 7th January. This annual festival is very colourful and also very famous among the Indians. The harvesting festival is celebrated from 13th to 16th of January every year at Puducherry. The houses are spring cleaned and adorned with colourful patterns of "Kolam". Old clothes and mats are ritually burnt on the bhogi day. Pongal made with new rice and jaggery sugar and raisins is cooked in new mud pots. On the third consecutive day; herds of cattle are washed and decorated. People dress up, visit, their friends and relative houses to wish each other. The Masimagam Festival in Puducherry is also termed as the 'Masi Magam'. Celebrated on a full moon day, the Masimagam Festival in Puducherry occurs in the Tamil month of 'Masi', which falls sometime in the months of February and March. Festival in Puducherry involves several rituals; one of the most important being the bathing of temple deities in the sea water. In fact, this pious cleansing of the idols is what takes up the better part of the day. The Mother's Birth Anniversary On 21st February. Lovers and scholars of Ramayana in Puducherry will witness a rare treat with performing arts company Adishakti organizing a Ramayana festival from March 16 to 31 at its campus near Auroville. Adishakti is conducted these event every year. In the month April Chitrai kalai Vizha (Summer Festival) organized by Department of Art & Culture, Government of Puducherry. It organizes Indian Classical music and dances in various places of Puducherry. The Villianur Temple Car festival in Puducherry is not the least of them. One of the most popular festivals in the entire southern region of India, the Villianur Temple Car festival in Puducherry is an occasion that is celebrated with immense fanfare and revelry. The Villianur Temple Car Festival in Puducherry takes place on a full moon day in the month of May. The Villianur Temple Car Festival in Puducherry is an annual event in the territory. The Villianur Temple Car Festival in Puducherry is a festival that is dedicated to the Thirukamemswara Kukilambal deity. In the month of July Mango festival is

celebrated at Karaikal for 4days. The mangoes are thrown mangoes from rooftops, much to the delight of the crowd gathered below. On 14th July is celebrated Bastille Day, Puducherry witnesses an Indo-French pageantry. Uniformed war veterans march through the street singing 'Marsellaise'. In the month of August the Veerampattinam Car festival is celebrated in Veerampattinam, a fishing village near Ariyankuppam. On 16th August Fete De Puducherry (Festival of Puducherry) is celebrated .Government of Puducherry organizing the fete features free evening cultural presentation in various places of Puducherry.

The French Food festival in Puducherry is one of the most important of them. One of the most popular festivals among the French colonies of India, the French Food festival in Puducherry is an occasion that is celebrated with hype. Serving also as tourism promotion, the French Food Festival in Puducherry is a reflection of the territory's historical and cultural heritage. The French Food Festival in Puducherry is also referred to as the 'Gourmet'. Held once a year, sometime in the month of August, the French Food Festival in Puducherry is a seafood lover's paradise; though, the French Food Festival in Puducherry specializes in vegetarian fare too. The French Food Festival in Puducherry also has people rustling up other cuisines aside of the French fare, like, Spanish, Italian, Mexican, Hungarian and of course Indian dishes too. Celebrating the French culinary heritage that the territory of Puducherry has inherited for its French colonizers, the French Food Festival in Puducherry is an event that is hosted and organized by the Department of Tourism of Puducherry. On 16th August Sri Aurobindo's Birth Anniversary is celebrated. On 16th of August Puducherry De Jure Transfer Day is celebrated. In Puducherry, for the past 9 years shopping festival has been celebrated. It has been celebrated from middle of December to end of February every year. The festival is conducted by Puducherry government.

Puducherry Adventure Event Tourism

Focus of Puducherry Tourism is to create Adventure Event Awareness and encourages visitors and residents to participate and gain exposure in Adventure Event Tourism. It's indeed a fresh initiative and Puducherry Tourism had been successful since past two years in organizing "Annual Adventure Tourism Carnivals" at different locations.

Table: 1

S.No	Venue	Month	Activities
1	Puducherry	May & December	Parasailing, Windsurfing, Zorbing, Bungee Trampoline Para motor flying, Balloon-tethered, Water skiing, Kayaking and Banana Boat rides.
2	Yanam	First week of January	Para motor flying, Balloon-tethered, Waterskiing, Zorbing, Windsurfing, Kayaking and Banana Boat rides.
3	Karaikal	Third week of January	Parasailing, Waterskiing, Zorbing, Kayaking, Windsurfing and Bunjee Trampoline and Banana boat rides, Wind speeds are ideal for kite flying enthusiasts.
4	Mahe	First week of December	Para motor flying, Balloon-tethered, Waterskiing, Kayaking, Windsurfing, Zorbing, Bunjee Trampoline and Banana Boat rides.

(Source: <http://tourism.pondicherry.gov.in/adventuretourism.html>)

Swot Analysis of Event Tourism in Puducherry

Strengths

- Development of Industrial sector.
- Up-coming Tourism related projects.
- Major investment in Tourism sector.
- Increase in domestic and foreign tourist arrivals.
- With regard to the factors that draw tourists in large numbers to Puducherry, ideal and conducive climatic conditions, French aura, mysticism of Auroville, cool and serene beaches, cosmopolitan culture, attractive tour packages, discounts and offers from hotels, promotional efforts of the government, proximity to Chennai and other major tourist attractions of Tamil Nadu, among others are significant.
- Safe and secured Destination.
- Well established road connectivity with cities like Chennai, Trichy, Bangalore and other parts of South India.
- As regards the pull factors, the support of the government (subsidies incentives), success stories of earlier entrepreneurs, better infrastructural facilities, availability of skilled workforce, an accommodative host community, proximity to Chennai etc.

Weaknesses

- Lack of amenities in the destination.
- The lack of government involvement in MICE tourism development.
- Lack in Air connectivity.
- Lack in Train connectivity (as compared with other region of the country)
- Thoughts in the tourist mind that Puducherry is for week end celebration.
- There is no alternative tourist destination for visitors. (for e.g. youngster desires towards adventure tourism)
- Very congested roads creates traffic problem in the city.

- Since, Puducherry is a small state; there is no specific place to conduct events in grand manner.
- Lack of Infrastructure.
- Lack of professionalism in Human Resource.

Opportunities

- There are only a few event management organisers in the state. So opportunity for event tourism is naturally high.
- Continue increase of tourist inflow.
- Emerging of new travel agency and tour operation companies.
- New Industrial policy of government.
- Newly proposed Special Economic Zone, Information Technology Park.
- Upcoming projects in tourism related activities.
- Swiftly progressing to become a medical tourism hub.
- Rich in educational institution (7 medical colleges, 10 engineering colleges, one central University and NIT)
- Central and State Government involvement in development of Tourism sector by promoting and conducting Mega Events, conference and road shows.

Threats

- Changes in external environment (like changes in economy or market trends) or any unfavourable situation can pose threat to event business.
- Very powerful competitor or innovative ways of organizing events or a heavy tax on entertainment.

Data Interpretation and Analysis

The purpose of this study is to promote Puducherry as an event tourism destination. The respondents have been intervened with the help of standard questions. The demography details have also been collected from the respondents in order to study the following: Gender, profession, age group and educational qualification of the respondents have been collected from the respondents. The collected data has been properly analyzed with the help of SPSS software and the statistical tool used for the research is percentage analysis and chi square test.

Conducting Annual Events

Table: 2

Annual Events	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	43	86
No	07	14
Total	50	100

The above table illustrate 86% percent of the respondents had mentioned that their organizations are conducting events annually. And the 14% of the respondents said no. So it's

clearly shows that the 43 respondents were conducting events respectively. So there is scope for event promotion in Puducherry.

Event Outsourcing

Table: 3

Annual Events	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	39	78
No	11	22
Total	50	100

The above represents 78% percent of the respondents had mentioned that if their organizations conducting events they will outsource it. And the 22% of the respondents said no. So there is scope for event Management Company in Puducherry.

Suitable Destination for Events

Table: 4

Suitable Destination	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	35	70
Neutral	09	18
Disagree	06	12
Total	50	100

The above table explains that 70% of the respondents agree that Puducherry is suitable destination for Event Management and 18 % neutral that it is the suitable place for event management and still more infrastructures can be developed. 12% of the respondents said Puducherry is not suitable destination for events.

Opportunity for Promoting Event Tourism

Table: 5

Suitable Destination	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	24	48
Agree	25	50
Neutral	01	02
Total	50	100

The table represents that 48% of the respondents strongly agree and 50% of the respondents agree that the opportunity for promoting Event tourism in Puducherry is high level. So it's clearly shows that the opportunity for promoting event tourism is very high in Puducherry.

Impact on Tourism Industry

Table: 6

Impact on Tourism Industry	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	36	72
Agree	13	26
Neutral	01	02
Total	50	100

The Table signifies that the positive inflow of tourists will have impact in Event tourism business in Puducherry. 72% respondents Strongly Agree and 26 % of them Agree that is an impact in the Event Tourism when there is a positive inflow of tourist. So it's clearly shows that positive Inflow of tourists will have impact on event tourism in Puducherry.

Government Involvement in Promotion

Table: 7

Promotion	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	03	06
Agree	33	66
Neutral	11	22
Disagree	03	06
Total	50	100

The above table explains that the Government Involvement in Promotion of Event Tourism in Puducherry. 6% of respondents strongly agree, 66% respondents agree, 22% respondents neutral and 6% respondents disagree. So it explains that the Government Involved in promotion of Event Tourism is Effective.

Destination Potentiality

Table: 8

Destination Potentiality	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	19	38
Agree	29	58
Neutral	02	04
Total	50	100

This table represents that the destinations potential ability to conduct event. 58% of respondents have said that they agree and 38% respondents said they Strongly Agree. It's clearly shows that the Puducherry destinations have the potential to conduct events.

Human Resource Requirement

Table: 9

Human Resource	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	11	22
Neutral	14	28
Disagree	17	34
Strongly Disagree	08	16
Total	50	100

This table shows that the requirement of Human Resource for Conducting Events. 34% of the respondents have disagreed and 28% respondents are uncertain and 16% of them strongly disagree and 22% respondents agree. So the Human resource to conduct event is not sufficient for conducting an event.

Testing Hypothesis - Chi Square Test

Table: 10

	Suitable for Event Management	Opportunity for Event Tourism	Impact on Tourism Industry	Government Involvement in Promotion	Destination Potentiality	Human Resource
Chi-Square	30.520 ^a	22.120 ^a	37.960 ^a	48.240 ^b	22.360 ^a	3.600 ^b
df	2	2	2	3	2	3
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.308
a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 16.7.						
b. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 12.5.						

H0: Puducherry is not a suitable destination for event management.

H1: Puducherry is a suitable destination for event management.

From the Test Statistics table, it can be seen that the chi-square value is significant, chi-square (df= 2) = 30.520 (expected value= 16.7), $p < 0.05$. Value is greater than expected value, so null hypothesis is not accepted.

H0: There is no opportunity for promoting event tourism in Puducherry.

H2: There is an opportunity for promoting event tourism in Puducherry.

From the Test Statistics table, it can be seen that the chi-square value is significant, chi-square (df= 2) = 22.120 (expected value= 16.7), $p < 0.05$. Value is greater than expected value, so null hypothesis is not accepted.

H0: Inflow of tourists will have no impact on event tourism.

H3: Inflow of tourists will have an impact on event tourism.

From the Test Statistics table, it can be seen that the chi-square value is significant, chi-square (df= 2) = 37.960 (expected value= 16.7), $p < 0.05$. Value is greater than expected value, so null hypothesis is not accepted.

H0: Government is not involved in event promotional activities.

H4: Government is significantly involved in event promotional activities.

From the Test Statistics table, it can be seen that the chi-square value is significant, chi-square (df= 3) = 48.240 (expected value= 12.5), $p < 0.05$. Value is greater than expected value, so null hypothesis is not accepted.

H0: Puducherry not have the potential to conduct the events.

H5: Puducherry have the potential to conduct the events.

From the Test Statistics table, it can be seen that the chi-square value is significant, chi-square (df= 3) = 22.360 (expected value= 12.5), $p < 0.05$. Value is greater than expected value, so null hypothesis is not accepted.

H0: The requirement of Human Resources to conduct Event is not sufficient.

H6: The requirement of Human Resources to conduct event is significantly sufficient.

From the Test Statistics table, it can be seen that the chi-square value is not significant, chi-square (df= 2) = 3.600 (expected value= 12.5), $p < 0.05$. Value is less than expected value, so alternative hypothesis is not accepted.

Findings

Listed below findings were identified through this study.

- In that fifty most of the respondents were male when compared with female. The male respondents are 36 and the female respondents are 14 out of 50 respondents.
- The respondents belong to the age group of 21-30 and the 31-40 age respondents has little bit low when compared with 21-30 age group.
- The respondents those who have given their inputs were mostly Graduates. And the post graduate peoples was little bit low when compare with graduate respondents.
- Those who have been responded to this survey were mostly professionals and they belong mostly to service industry.
- The respondents those who have given their annual incomes of these respondents are between 1 lakh-3 lakhs.
- 86% of the respondents have said that their organisation is conducting events and also they have said that they outsource their events to an event organiser.
- The respondents have said that they agree Puducherry to be a suitable destination for conducting events.

- The respondents have said that they agreed The Opportunity for promoting Event Tourism is very high level in Puducherry.
- 72% of the respondents have said that the positive flow of tourists to Puducherry will have an impact on event tourism.
- A larger proportion of the respondents have said that they agree that the involvement of the government in event tourism is high.
- 58% of the respondents have said that the destination has the potential to conduct event.
- 34% of the respondents have said that the human resource for events is required in large numbers in Puducherry destination.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Event management is considered one of the strategic marketing and communication tools by companies of all sizes. From product launches to press conferences, companies create promotional events to help them and to communicate to their clients and potential clients. They might target their audience by using the social media, hoping to generate media coverage which will reach thousands or millions of people. They can also invite their audience to their events and reach them at the actual event. Event Management involves studying the intricacies of the brand, identifying the target audience, devising the event concept, planning the logistics and coordinating the technical aspects before actually executing the modalities of the proposed event. Post-event analysis and ensuring a return on investment have become significant drivers for the event industry. The Puducherry government should come forward to involve in Mice tourism development. . The airport has to be constructed. Government has to develop air connectivity and rail connectivity and road transportation connectivity to important destination. Convention and conference hall have to be constructed with proper amenities and facilities. The higher educational institutions should develop skilled human resource to take responsibility of the event management companies. The government should give subsidies to attract event management companies towards Puducherry. The government should come forward to reduce entertainment tax.

Event management companies have to take steps to improve amenities and accommodation to be available to their customers respectively. Event management companies can promote themselves through social networking, internet, media, advertisement etc. This industry needs lot of professionals to improve this event management. Practically a management should have variety of professionals in various disciplines. If the management has professionals in all disciplines then the management will be an effective management this including event management also.

Conclusion

It is utmost essential for Event business that the event management companies and the Government have to create all the amenities for the event promotions. If these things are noted carefully, certainly they could emerge as a most profitable Event Business in Puducherry. Hypothetical test proved that destination is suitable for event management; there is opportunity event tourism in Puducherry; tourists' inflow will have positive impact on tourism industry; Government is significantly involved event promotional activities; destination has potential to carry out the events; qualified human resource is required. This industry needs lot of professionals to improve event management. Practically this management should have variety of professionals in various disciplines. If this management has professionals in all disciplines then this management will be an effective management.

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