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ASSESSING TOURIST INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE SATARA DISTRICT: THE VIEWS OF VISITORS

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Satara district is getting popular among the weekend tourist within the vicinity. The construction and development of tourist infrastructure is a necessary prerequisite for confronting competition from other, equally popular destinations. The objective of this paper is to assess problems of tourist infrastructure in district and find the perceptual gap in between existing status of tourist infrastructure and its importance. Data was collected from 326 tourist samples selected approached conveniently and executed structural schedule containing 33 variables. Five point Likert scale was used to seek opinion on existing infrastructural status and its importance. The variables taken from market research report published by Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. The schedule was implemented on 326 tourist samples of the 10 different locations of Satara, viz., Mahabaleshwar, Panchgani, Wai, Pratapgarh, Aundh, Thoseghar, Kas, Sajjangarh and Ajinkyatara where the tourist are coming to see those sites. The study concluded that tourist flow is mainly within the reach of 100 to 325 km. The age group 25-45 visited almost all the locations of Satara. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient between perception of satisfaction and importance level is 0.662, which is moderate. Tourist Infrastructure, viz., Condition of city roads', 'traffic management', 'public utilities at tourist attraction', 'parking facility at the tourist attraction', general cleanliness at tourist attraction and area around', 'quality of roads', 'condition of traffic and transport signage' and 'condition of signage within the tourist attraction' need to develop since tourist were strongly dissatisfied with those tourist amenities which are highly important to them.

Keywords: Tourist Infrastructure, Tourist Services, Tourist Amenties, Traffic and Transport Signages and Infrastructural Gap

INTRODUCTION

The district of Satara is located in the western Indian state of Maharashtra. Spread across an area of almost 10,484 sq. km, the district has very vibrant history it was then capital of Maratha Empire. Satara is also popular destination for

regional and Bollywood film shootings. Mahabaleshwar and Panchagani are well-known hill stations for tourists. On the contrary, there are other places worth seeing which are ignored by tourist. Tourist flow is increasing to see the gorgeous nature of Satara. It is increasing

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especially towards nature tourism like Kas, and Thoseghar (25% to 42%). Tourist arrival has risen from 8,972 in 2008-2009 to 350,000 at Kas. Since 1999 to 2011 Rs. 435.88 was actually spent under the head of tourism development. Out of that, 76.31% was spent on basic infrastructure and rest amount was spent on tourist infrastructure at different tourist sites of Satara district. Maharashtra government has allotted Rs. 385.40 lakh tourism development funds to Aundh. Funds were allotted Rs. 347.40 lakh in 2004-2005 and Rs. 38.00 lakh in 2007-2008. It is pragmatic that Satara district has varied tourism products but it lack in tourism development. This incited to cram in assessing tourist infrastructure with respect to Satara district. The need arises to draw the attention to utilize the available rich resources which is Nature gifted to the Satara district to develop and grow as a Tourist destination by improving existing infrastructure.

LITERATURE REVIEW

India's ability to develop as a tourist hotspot faces threat from wide range of geopolitical, security and infrastructural problems and also the risk of communal violence. The greatest disincentive for visitors to India is the lack of sufficient tourism infrastructure. Insufficient airline capacity, old airports, inadequate hotels, poor roads, an overstretched railway system, high levels of taxation, and a bureaucratic visa process will continue to discourage the tourists (Beckons, 2006).

More flaws were in international connectivity and condition of airports serving the destination/circuit, poor cleanliness in and around the tourist sites. Infrastructure on the approach road, garbage disposal, condition of city roads, sewage and drainage system, quality of wayside amenities

available on this road, hygienic conditions of the restaurants/dhabas, and power failure are the problems of the destination circuit with major Indian cities. The infrastructural gaps in the traffic signals, availability of budget hotels for stay, traffic management, and conveniences along streets. They were also concerned about general cleanliness of monuments and area around it, general upkeep of the hotels rooms, and public utilities at the monument/tourist attraction. (Government of Indian, Ministry of Tourism, Division, Marketing Research, 2010). Similar conclusions were experienced in following study (Ministry Tourism, 2010).

Orissa government has started developing Sea Tourism infrastructure at three selected beaches of Orissa such as Chandipur, Puri and Gopalpur by keeping the geographical diversity intact. SWOT analysis has been accomplished in terms of its potential for promotion of tourists, expecting projections regarding future tourist inflow, employment generation, and development indicators. There is need to analyze the effect of projection on significant stakeholders and vice versa, including government, non-government, commercial, local population, lobbyists, etc. The matrix provides the insight on development of the eco-tourism destinations, identification, and prioritization of development of the projects, identifications of infrastructural gaps, financial viability and sustainability, marketing scope and scale and integrated eco-tourism development (Vajir, 2008).

Kerala is well-accepted tourist place and government has paying more attention on Kerala tourism development. The Kerala tourism development initiatives and its impact checked through 'Six S' which are framework of India's National Tourism Policy i.e., Swagat, Soochana,

Suvidha, Suraksha, Sahyog, Sanrachna. (Ministry of Tourism Government of India)

METHODOLOGY

The objectives were set to conduct the study, to understand the tourist profile, to identify the problems regard to tourist infrastructure and to identify the infrastructural gap. The structured schedule was designed to check the opinion of tourist using convenient sampling method 326 samples from 10 different tourist destinations, viz., Koyna, Kas, Thoseghar, Panchgani, Mahabaleshwar, Pratapgarh, Wai, Ajiknkyatara, Aundh and Sajjangerh of Satara district were interviewed. 33 tourist services and amenities were selected from reviewed article. Five point likert scale was used to collect the opinion of samples. The spearman’s rank correlation was used to understand the relationship between perception of satisfaction and its importance level towards 33 tourist services and amenities. The gap in satisfaction and importance towards these services is presented with tabulation by calculating mean, rank, and standard deviation. The infrastructural gap is depicted in graph by considering the median value 3 to divide the mean data of importance and satisfaction to reflect the lower level to higher.

DATA ANALYSIS

Tourist Profile who Visited Satara District

Tourist profile of selected 326 samples from 10 different sites in Satara Distirct are as follows

Table 1 displays Maharashtra tourists more (90.49%) compared to ‘other than Maharashtra’ (9.51%). Male tourists found more(75.46%) compared to female (24.54%). Age group of tourist 25 to 45 found larger (63.81%) in Satara district.

Infrastructural Gap

The perceptual satisfaction and importance of respondents towards infrastructure facilities are presented with the help of mean score, ranks, and standard deviation (SD).

Table 2 shows satisfaction level of tourist who visited to Satara are satisfied with the 23 tourist services and amenities as the mean score is more than 3 (quadrant 1st in the graph) and they were dissatisfied with the ten variables while their mean score is less than 3. Out of 33 tourist services and amenities they are strongly satisfied with ‘promptness of ticketing window of the monument/tourist attraction’, ‘telephone/mobile services’, ‘conservation of heritage sites’, and ‘behavior of service personnel at wayside

Table 1: Tourist Profile at Satara District

| S. No. | Tourist Profile | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------------------|----------|-------|----|--|-------|--|
| 1. | Origin of Tourist | Maharashtra | | | F. | | % | | Out of Maharashtra | | | F. | | % | |
| | | | | | 265 | | 90.49 | | | | | 31 | | 9.51 | |
| 2. | Gender | Male | | | 246 | | 75.46 | | Female | | | 80 | | 24.54 | |
| 3. | Age-Group | 15-25 | | 25-35 | | 35-45 | | 45-55 | | 55&above | | | | | |
| | | 46 | 14.11% | 105 | 32.21% | 103 | 31.60% | 42 | 12.88% | 30 | 9.20% | | | | |
| <i>Source: Field Data</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Table 2: Perceptual Gap between Importance and Satisfaction of Tourist towards Tourist Services and Amenities at Satara District as a Whole

(n=326)

| S. No. | Tourist Services and Amenities | Satisfaction | | | Importance | | |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|------|------|------------|------|------|
| | | Mean | Rank | S.D. | Mean | Rank | S.D. |
| 1. | Air Connectivity Status | 1.29 | 33 | 0.49 | 2.83 | 33 | 1.30 |
| 2. | Rail Connectivity Status | 1.96 | 32 | 0.76 | 3.10 | 32 | 1.23 |
| 3. | Quality of the Roads | 3.17 | 16 | 0.95 | 4.45 | 8 | 0.56 |
| 4. | Quality of Way Side Amenities Available on This Road | 3.30 | 14 | 0.80 | 4.29 | 15 | 0.68 |
| 5. | Public Conveniences Along Roads/Streets | 3.02 | 23 | 0.96 | 4.23 | 18 | 0.66 |
| 6. | Sewage and Drainage System | 3.11 | 20 | 0.94 | 4.20 | 24 | 0.65 |
| 7. | Garbage Disposal | 3.16 | 17 | 0.85 | 4.21 | 19 | 0.65 |
| 8. | Condition of City Roads | 2.79 | 29 | 1.09 | 4.39 | 13 | 0.57 |
| 9. | Drinking Water Supply | 3.43 | 11 | 0.81 | 4.44 | 9 | 0.56 |
| 10. | Condition of Street Lighting | 3.40 | 12 | 0.86 | 4.24 | 17 | 0.67 |
| 11. | Traffic Management | 2.92 | 28 | 1.12 | 4.42 | 11 | 0.61 |
| 12. | Condition of Traffic or Transport Signage | 3.10 | 21 | 1.02 | 4.47 | 7 | 0.58 |
| 13. | Availability of Commercial Transportations | 3.52 | 10 | 0.83 | 4.32 | 14 | 0.59 |
| 14. | Behaviour of the Drivers of Commercial Transportations | 3.75 | 6 | 0.71 | 4.16 | 26 | 0.69 |
| 15. | Availability of Authorized Tour Operators | 2.99 | 24 | 0.87 | 3.14 | 31 | 1.24 |
| 16. | Availability of Hotels | 3.55 | 8 | 0.90 | 4.14 | 27 | 0.96 |
| 17. | Behaviour of Service Staff at the Hotel | 3.67 | 7 | 0.74 | 4.20 | 23 | 0.54 |
| 18. | Tariff Structure of the Hotel Rooms | 3.12 | 19 | 0.82 | 4.16 | 25 | 0.52 |
| 19. | Hygiene at Wayside Restaurants and Dhabas | 3.16 | 18 | 0.97 | 4.26 | 16 | 0.52 |
| 20. | Availability of Petrol Pump | 3.09 | 22 | 1.11 | 4.20 | 22 | 0.54 |
| 21. | Behaviour of Service Personnel at Wayside Restaurants and Dhabas | 3.76 | 4 | 0.67 | 4.21 | 21 | 0.57 |
| 22. | Levels of Road Taxes on Vehicles(Tax Rates) | 2.78 | 30 | 0.94 | 3.97 | 30 | 0.64 |
| 23. | Administration of the Road Taxes | 2.99 | 25 | 0.95 | 4.04 | 29 | 0.57 |
| 24. | Public Utilities at the Tourist Attraction | 2.65 | 31 | 1.25 | 4.59 | 4 | 0.55 |
| 25. | General Cleanliness Tourist Attraction and Area Around it | 3.25 | 15 | 0.97 | 4.60 | 2 | 0.57 |
| 26. | Condition of Signage Within the Tourist Attraction | 3.36 | 13 | 1.25 | 4.57 | 6 | 0.55 |
| 27. | Parking Facility at the Tourist Attraction | 2.95 | 27 | 1.24 | 4.58 | 5 | 0.56 |
| 28. | Availability of Trained Tourist Guides | 2.98 | 26 | 1.10 | 4.21 | 20 | 0.91 |
| 29. | Behaviour of the Guides at the Tourist Attraction | 3.53 | 9 | 0.75 | 4.09 | 28 | 0.77 |
| 30. | Conservation of Heritage Sites | 3.76 | 3 | 0.85 | 4.60 | 2 | 0.58 |
| 31. | Promptness at the Ticketing Window of the Monument/Tourist Attraction | 4.19 | 1 | 0.65 | 4.39 | 12 | 0.59 |
| 32. | Power Supply Situation | 3.75 | 5 | 0.66 | 4.44 | 10 | 0.67 |
| 33. | Telephone/Mobile Services | 3.93 | 2 | 0.86 | 4.72 | 1 | 0.46 |
| | Rank Correlation Coefficient | .662** | | | | | |
| | Significant(2-tailed) | .000 | | | | | |

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

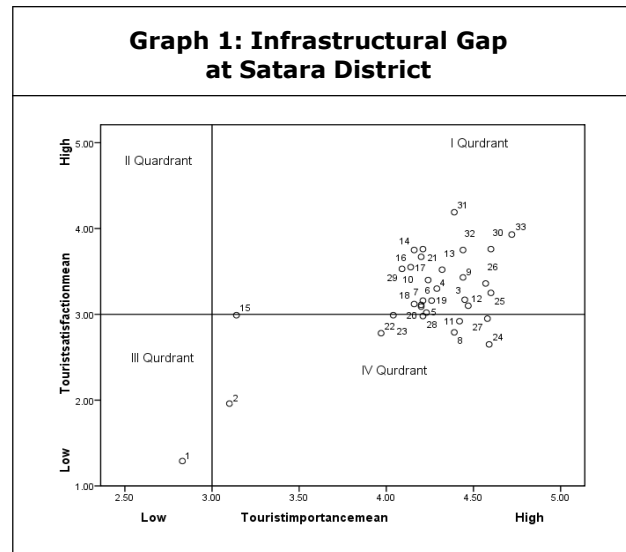
Source: Field Data

restaurants and dhabas' but are strongly dissatisfied with 'air', 'rail' connectivity, 'public utilities at tourist attraction' and 'levels of road taxes on vehicles' as they have 33 to 30 ranks, respectively.

It is observed that except two, all facilities and amenities are important to the tourist at Satara since their mean score is more than 3. However, 'air' and 'rail' carries least importance. Among them 'telephone/mobile services', 'general cleanliness at the tourist attraction', 'conservation of heritage site and area around it', 'public utilities at the tourist attraction' as they received rank first, second, third and fourth, respectively. According to the tourist, services and amenities like 'air' and 'rail' connectivity, 'availability of authorized tour operators' and 'levels of road taxes on vehicles' carrying least importance since the ranks are 33, 32, 31 and 30, respectively.

Spearman rank correlation coefficient is 0.662, which is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). This reveals that there is uniformity into the opinion of tourist of satisfaction and importance.

Above graph reveals that 1st quadrant highlights twenty-four variables which show high importance as well as high satisfaction level. Most of the variables, viz., 'quality of roads', 'condition of traffic and transport signage', 'hygiene at wayside restaurant and dhabas', 'administration of road taxes', 'general cleanliness' and 'condition of signage within the tourist attraction' are close to the average satisfaction level but carries high importance level so need to attend in the tourism development. One variable, i.e., availability of authorized tour operator is positioned in the II quadrant but very close towards the average importance and average satisfaction. Two



variables as 'air' and 'rail' connectivity lie in the III quadrant carrying least importance and low satisfaction so it can be neglected. However, the most important is fourth quadrant which reflects high importance and low satisfaction having six variables all are near to the average of satisfaction but has highest importance level. These are 'public utilities at the tourist attraction', 'traffic management', and 'condition of traffic and transport signage,' 'condition of city roads', 'quality of roads', 'parking facility', 'general cleanliness at tourist attraction and area around' and 'condition of signage within tourist attraction'. Thus, these services and amenities demand more attention for the development of Satara as a tourist destination because it shows high dissatisfaction but high importance of services.

Quadrant IV is important to focus since these parameters are most important and carries dissatisfaction in the opinion of sample tourists. Variable number 8, 11 and 24, 27, 25, 3, 12, 26, viz., 'Condition of city roads', 'traffic management', 'public utilities at tourist attraction', 'parking facility at the tourist attraction', 'general cleanliness at tourist attraction and area around', 'quality of

roads', 'condition of traffic and transport signage and 'condition of signage within the tourist attraction' in Satara need to be address.

CONCLUSION

To conclude Tourists flow is from Maharashtra and mainly from Pune, Mumbai, Sangli, and Kolhapur that are within the reach of 100 to 325 km. Tourists from other states preferred only eminent destination like Mahabaleshwar and its surroundings Panchgani, Pratapgarh, Wai, and Kas. The gender ratio is almost equal at pilgrimage centre, Aundh and belongs to age group 25-45 is found more with mostly equal gender ratio. Most thirst area of tourist infrastructure gap is tourist infrastructural facility and civic amenities with transport and traffic management. The Air and rail connectivity found inconvenient to the tourist and also they did not feel to have. Thus it found that basic infrastructure is lacking in Satara district to come up as a tourist brand. There is a need to determine constructive tourism development policy. Except sea shore all kinds of sites like ancient caves in Agashivnagar, Nandgiri, and Pateshwar, Pratapgarh and Ajinkyatara. Wildlife of Koyananagar, Vasota, Valmiki, temples and pilgrimage centers such as Chaphal, Pali, Sajjangad, Shikharshingnapur, Yamai at Aundh, Naikba at Banpuri, Gondawale Maharaj math, Pusegao math, old Mahabaleshwar, Mandardevi. Museums such as Bhavani museum Aundh, Shivaji museum Satara, Dams as Koyana, Kanehar, Dhom and Veer, Bird sanctuaries at Mayani and waterfall at Ozarde, Thoseghar, Lingmala and lake such as Kas, Venna and health resort Prakruti and windmills at

Chalkewadi, Hydro electricity power plant at Koyna, deep valleys and green meadows, big plateaus at Panchgani and Kas, and many more are available in Satara district including two well-known hill stations's of Maharashtra. There is an opportunity to Satara district to grow for tourism by diverting existing tourist flow of hill stations towards other sites of district by improving their tourist infrastructure.

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