

Tourism Development in Rural Areas of Vasai, Maharashtra

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Abstract

India is a country known for its lavish treatment to all visitors. They come from all over the world. Their cultural and social setup differs widely. Their economic power or the spending capacity of the tourists is also different. Areas with poor technological development and infrastructural facilities can be developed socially as well as economically through appropriate tourism management. The present paper envisages the role of tourism in Rural Development in peripheral area of Vasai, Maharashtra. It also will highlight the important hindrances which are the main obstacles in tourism management and its impact on rural development. Finally some of the suggestions will be drawn to meet the problem effectively. Thus, for the present research Vasai Fort located in Thane district of Maharashtra state was selected as a case study. Data was collected through primary survey (both interview and questionnaire method) from the tourist as well as the locals.

KEYWORDS: Tourism Management, Hindrances in development, Rural Development

1. INTRODUCTION:

Development of tourism can be considered one of unifying strategy for overall rural development. When a country's majority of population lives in rural area, development of such areas is believed to be of utmost importance. Among different nations it is said that development is only associated with urban areas. However, the scenario can be changed. People in urban areas are stressed to fast going life and thus they want to switch over to some unique features in rural areas for a small period. It is also seen that due to urbanization there is overall decrease in level of incomes of the people, less number of job opportunities remaining, which is an indication of low rate of urbanization or downfall of urbanization, leading ahead to low impact of rural development. However, one of the solutions remaining for this is the development of rural tourism. There is need for rural tourism, particularly in the developing countries of the world, where due to fragmentation of the land, farming is becoming very difficult. Due to rural tourism, poor households are having greater scope for development.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH:

With the main aim of understanding the role of tourism in development of rural areas, the main objective of the present paper is to study the location of Vasai fort and the tourism opportunities and challenges it provides, finally concluding the study with suggestions to overcome the problems.

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY:

For the present study the researcher have used both secondary and primary data sources. The secondary data for the study was obtained from newspaper, magazines,

journal and even from various websites. Primary data for study was collected with the help of questionnaire method. To fulfill the objective of the study and come to a specific conclusion closed ended questionnaire was prepared. The data collected was analyzed in tabular form and conclusion was drawn.

4. STUDY AREA:

It was felt that such an area should be selected for the research, which is not away much from urban agglomeration, which falls in category of rural or semi urban area and which has some potential for tourism development. Keeping all these criteria's in mind, Vasai Fort which is located in Vasai Taluka of Thane district of Maharashtra was selected as a case study for the present research. This area is located towards north of Mumbai having coordinates 19.3303°N and 72.8150° E. The total area of Vasai fort is 110 acres.

5. CONDITION OF THE FORT AT PRESENT:

Portuguese have built this fort where today the fort is in deteriorating condition. The present day condition is not appreciating at the fort. The remnants of the fort are all in shabby state. Portuguese had built few churches and citadel inside the fort which have now eroded walls. Here are few discussions on the poor state of the fort which can be the main obstacle in to tourism development.

- 1) **Poor infrastructural facilities:** The fort which is located some 7 km away from Vasai railway station is not having good road connectivity as well as the frequency of public transport is also poor. There are very few buses which commute people from Vasai Station to fort, but again it should be kept in mind that these facility is meant in general and not particularly for the tourists. Even the locals crowd the buses due to which the tourists who visit the fort for recreational purpose find it difficult to commute to fort. This is the prime reason why people don't favour visiting the fort.

It should also be kept in consideration that water transport is one more option which the tourist can use to reach this destination. However, it is noticed that tourist find it very difficult to avail the benefit of this facility too.

- 2) **Lack of entertainment and food facility in the fort:** Even after people strive to reach the fort, they find it difficult to stay for a longer time in the fort because of lack of entertainment and food facility. The fort doesn't have even a single hotel or restaurant wherein, the tourist tend to visit the fort, they have to either bring refreshment from out or go to Vasai jetty to have their lunch which is the nearest from the fort, adjacent to the sea coast.
- 3) **Garbage Littering:** This is yet another problem which can create problem for lack of tourism activity. However, it is important to note that this is created by the tourist themselves. Plastic pollution is one of the main concerns in this area. On the visit to the fort it was seen that majority of the areas were loitered by plastic waste (wrappers of food stuff, plastic bags), apart from plastics glass bottles were also scrabbled in many places. Papers which were brought by the tourists to sit and relax was left on their way. This way the entire fort area was loitered with polluting things.

- 4) Poor maintenance of the fort: The condition of the fort is worsening day by day. The poor maintenance of the fort is yet another striking reason for lack of tourism activity here. The ruins of the majestic Vasai fort can be seen here. Now what remains are the parts of the imposing 4 to 5 m long fort walls, two access doors ('Porta do Mar' and 'Porta da Terra') and remnants of Portuguese buildings and Churches, dating from 16th century and 17th Century. These are shaded by Mango trees and palms. There are also decorative gateways inscribed with coats of arms and Portuguese graves dating back to 1558. All these attractions are getting eroded very badly in recent days. When interviewed some tourists also quoted that they fear the stones from the huge walls falling down and may hurt them
- 5) Other Problems: During the visit when the tourists were constantly interrogated with questions regarding their inconvenience, some facts were highlighted. These are
- i. Lack of proper municipal water supply
 - ii. Un-erratic and untimely electrical load shedding
 - iii. Improper facilities that promotes urban living
 - iv. Occurrence of illegal activities that takes place at some sound places in the fort
 - v. In social activities which included drug deals and trafficking of women and children via port to distant places.
 - vi. Lack of recreational facilities.

General observation is that heritage structures in Maharashtra are often ignored when there is ample in scope to develop these sites to be self maintaining and self serving if handled correctly. Tourists from Maharashtra flock to Goa and other parts of India when such gems exist in their own backyard. The condition of the fort and its surroundings has degenerated with time and the present structure is overgrown with vines and vegetation that has blocked some vantage points and rendered interesting sections inaccessible.

6. SURVEY FINDINGS

TABLE NO.1 PROBLEMS PRESENT AT THE FORT		
PROBLEMS	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
No basic amenities	16	53.33
Lack of security	5	16.67
Lack of infrastructure	9	30
Total	30	100

TABLE NO.2 SPECIAL PROVISION FOR TOURIST BY GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA		
RESPONSES	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Yes	1	3.33
No	29	96.67
Total	30	100

RESPONSES	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Yes	3	10
No	27	90
Total	30	100

RESPONSES	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Yes	3	10
No	27	90
Total	30	100

REQUIREMENTS	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Restaurants and eatery	8	26.67
Basic amenities like ATM	7	23.33
Safety facilities	6	20
CCTV and Camera monitoring	10	33.33
Total	30	100

7. OBSERVATIONS

- i. The presented research shows the different ways to improve the study area i.e. Vasai Fort & shows different problems associated with it.
- ii. The Fort being a historical heritage site it is not be well maintained in different aspects. There is lack of safety, eatery and basic facilities which should be developed in the locality.
- iii. The research shows that on the fort there are many tourist visiting it, to give a boost to tourism industry in the study area there should be development toward the infrastructure as well as transportation facility.
- iv. There are numerous tourist visiting the place in order to help them there should be guide facility which is utmost important when there are foreign tourists visiting it
- v. There is lack in provision by MTDC towards the hotels, logging and boarding facility, etc there is no facility for tourist to stay or have a tour around the fort as they are completely unaware of the places within the fort.
- vi. There is no such basic facility of ATM for withdrawal of cash in the surroundings of the fort nor there is a bank nearby the fort.
- vii. The tourists are stranded as for sometime as the public transport has less frequency of buses as the count of the buses is still not upto the mark.
- viii. There is no safety for tourists as there is no police count on fort, there is no cctv monitoring of the fort to avoid crimes this lacking makes tourist feel insecure.
- ix. The fort being having a great history there is no development by the government for the development of it. The government has not spent a penny for the development of infrastructure until mid-2018 and the end.

- x. To boost the economical standards there should be development as there is no basic facility to park cars in the tourist place there is not much willingness of tourist to visit it.
- xi. Towards development of fort and its planning there should be a appropriate planning department the archeological department has not be doing its work and lacks in every terms.
- xii. The archeological department has completely neglected its responsibilities of maintaining the historical monument and has made it off charts for development schemes by government of India.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS:

These problems are guided by prominent solutions. If these solutions are inculcated lots of development will be seen in rural tourism. Vasai fort, itself has got great potentialities, only thing is to develop them effectively.

There is a small Koli Village inside the fort, so some of the culture is still present with modern outlooks. There are few stairways from the creek extending to the fort which gives a clear glimpse of the seaward side. The primary activity of the people belonging to this village is fishing. But again it is surveyed that not all the fisherman are satisfied with this activity. The primary reason for this is lack of fishing co-operative society which would have enabled these fisherman fetch better income. Again the fishes caught need to be transported to the distant places for which fisherman have to spend travelling to Vasai Station and forth. Once of the solution instead can be if tourism is developed in this area, the locals can serve the tourist by becoming host community. Small restaurants or food stalls if started around the fort campus, the local would earn at the same time the tourist would also find it convenient to have their refreshments. This would motivate more and more tourist to join up.

Secondly, there is no entry fee to fort. The entire fort could be walked over for 3 hours. But the new tourists are basically unaware of the spots and the way to churches and cathedrals of the Portuguese. In that case if some amount of entry fee is levied on the maintenance of the fort as well as it would restrict the general public who come here to pass time. Reduction in the number of people in the fort would reduce the pollution level. And the quality tourist could avail the benefit of the tourist spot.

If the locals are willing to provide some information about the fort area, the tourists could be benefited. In this way guides can earn good amount from tourists.

The extensive growth of vines and palms if altered, attractive gardens can be built up on such area. This would enable to draw attention of more and more tourists. The basic problem of accessibility could be solved if waterway to fort would start from Gorai creek to Vasai fort. Gorai is easily accessible from Borivalistn. If such facility is meant then pressure on local transport would reduce. At the same time, the tourist would find a better option to use comfortable jetties around. If these recommendations would be inculcated in reality lot of development can take place and lead to rural development.

9. CONCLUSION:

Tourism growth potential can be harnessed as a strategy for rural development. The trends of industrialization and development have had an urban centric approach. When this trend of urbanization has led to falling income levels, lesser job opportunities in the total areas leading to an urbanization syndrome in rural areas, rural tourism is considered, then, as one of the few activities which can provide a solution to these problems. Besides, there are other factors which are shifting the trend towards rural tourism like increasing levels of awareness, growing interest in heritage and culture and improved accessibility and environmental consciousness.

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