

Scope for Promoting Agriculture Cum Rural Tourism in Thanjavur District- A Case Study

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Abstract

Background/Objectives: Thanjavur district- “the Rice bowl or Granary of Tamil Nadu” is one of the 32 districts of Tamil Nadu in South India and is well known for its domination in agriculture, architecture, music, arts and handicrafts. The author, a native of Thanjavur district, is of opinion that the district have not realized or understood its real potential to promote agro and rural tourism though it has many of the features required. **Methods/Statistical Analysis:** An exploratory cum descriptive study has been carried out by the author to identify the existing potentials for promoting agro cum rural tourism in the district. Details required for this study were collected from different sections of the society including Government Departments and experts through direct interviews, field visits, focussed group discussions and the findings were summarised and presented in the form of a case study. **Findings:** It is very clear that there is immense scope available as such to launch immediately the Agri cum Rural tourism in Thanjavur district. The district administration with the help of Govt. of Tamil Nadu and Govt. of India should take immediate steps to launch the project. **Applications/Improvements:** It is important for the government, society and the affected people to find out alternative methods of income to sustain their livelihood. Launching of “Agri and Rural Tourism” project in the district will benefit all sections of the society and the nation and hence this study assumes greater importance.

Keywords: Agriculture Cum Rural Tourism, Agro Tourism, Case Study, Promotion of Rural Tourism, Thanjavur

1. Introduction

Indian economy is an agrarian economy and it is a backbone to Indian economy. In terms of farm output, India holds second position in the world. Agriculture and its allied sector like forestry and fishery contributes 13.7 percent towards the Indian GDP¹. The agriculture sector employs 54.6 percent of the total work force. During the 12th plan period (2012-2017) 4 percent growth has been targeted. The contribution of agriculture towards the economic growth of the country is declining from 1952 to 2011 due to various reasons including the environmental reasons². The slow growth rate of agricultural sector throws several challenges to Indian economy and Government administration viz poverty, rural exodus, unemployment, farm suicides, poor per capita income and other social problems in the country. Mahatma Gandhi once said “India lives in Villages”. India has around 5,25,000 villages

and the study area of this research Thanjavur district has 906 revenue villages and sizeable number of population is even now living in rural areas with less comforts and revenue. Under this background it is important for the country to protect people depending on agriculture living in rural areas by providing them secured livelihood to solve some of the above said problems. Tourism is an important sector which is economically important and is growing rapidly in India and it contributes 6.6 percent to India's GDP and provides 13.95 million jobs which amounts to 7.7 percent of total job creation in India. The tourism in India is expected to grow at an annual rate of 7.9 percent till 2023 making India the third fastest growing tourism destination over the next decade³. Thanjavur district known as “Rice Bowl of Tamil Nadu” accommodates more than 50 percent of its total workforce in the agriculture and other allied activities. Of late, the

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farmers of this district, both the farm owners as well as the labourers, are facing number of problems in continuing their present occupation due to lack of water supply in river Cauvery, which is the main source for agriculture and depletion of ground water, erratic climate, monsoon failure and continuous loss due to increasing debts in agricultural operations etc. Due to these problems, a large scale exodus is happening in the agriculture sector and both landlord and the labourers are moving towards other sectors like real estates, constructions to get regular income. India which is facing already low growth rate in agricultural production is likely to face food scarcity and increased price of food items. The growing unemployment and poverty is expected to create social unrest in the long run. Under these circumstances it is important for the government, society and the affected people to find out alternative methods of income to sustain their livelihood. Launching of "Agri and Rural Tourism" project in the district will benefit all sections of the society and the nation and hence this study assumes greater importance.

2. Methodology

This is purely a qualitative and exploratory study. Primary data and information for the study have been collected using interview schedules, during in depth qualitative personal interviews with officials belong to different government departments like agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, tourism in addition to farm experts, agri consultants, leading farm owners, labourers and social thinkers in the district. Secondary data were collected with the help of internet sources, published government reports, press reports, research reports etc. The study was conducted during November and December 2015. A focussed group discussion was also conducted at SASTRA campus on November 18, 2015, wherein 17 experts drawn from different govt departments, artisans, farm experts and folk artists attended and gave their views which were very positive and assured full support and participation in implementation of the project successfully.

From the literatures available in the field of agri and rural tourism it is observed that the agri and rural tourism can benefit various section of the society apart from the farming community⁴. Researchers has observed that "arts and crafts have a special place in the cultural heritage of regions and nations and many commentators have noted that tourism can assist arts and crafts, both

by recognizing their importance, and by purchasing craft products. Income flows from these activities are well documented. Not only have the crafts but many factors contributed for the success of agri tourism". IICPA has defined the term agri tourism through an equation i.e. Rural /Natural Environments + Agricultural Products/Services + Tourism Products/Services + Farm Commodities, Processing, Packaging = Agritourism. So it is clear that agri tourism is not visiting farms alone but it combines various other activities also to attract the tourists⁵. Various Researchers have concluded that the agri tourism must: 1. Have something for tourists to see (animals, birds, farms, culture of the village, dress and festivals) 2. Have something for tourists to do (participating in agricultural operations, riding horse, buffalo, cooking and participating in the rural games). 3. Have something for tourists to buy (rural crafts, fresh vegetables, food are few items)⁶. The factors which play important role in the success of any agri tourism venture. These factors were based on their research case study⁷. They are "connectivity among Agro Tourism Centres (ATCs), attractions at ATCs, accommodation facilities, outdoor recreational activities, entertainment programs, food for tourists, safety and security aspects of tourists, medical facilities, risk and liability in case of accidents at ATCs". A scholar stated that, "unique product is essential to the success of an Agritourism business⁸. So goal of business should be to create a unique experience for visitors". A researcher has observed that "each audience you hope to attract will have different needs and expectations and you will need to employ audience specific strategies to attract them"⁹. The coordination between various stake holders of the agri & rural tourism is important for the success. Researcher has also observed that "working together, farm owners and tourism promoters and planners can create a successful agri tourism program out of existing resources and attractions". The agri tourism project planners may have to face few barriers or challenges while launching the project. Researchers in their research study conducted in five districts of Sri Lanka noted that "infrastructure development, relevant training and education for the farmers, access to farm credit, proper measures to waste management, and environment protection methods". Similarly other researchers found out the challenges facing agri tourism. They are "large distance from high population densities to most Kansas farms and ranches. Second problem is lack of agri tourism clusters. Tourists are more likely to travel to a destination if there are several tourist stops to visit.

Because of the relatively infant stage of the industry, only few of these clusters are developed. The third limitation is the lack of rural amenities and recreational opportunities in many regions of the state²¹⁰. Review of various other literatures by the authors also gave a clear insight about the prospects and problems of this agriculture cum rural tourism trade at global levels.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Tourist Attractions and arrivals in Thanjavur district

Thanjavur is said to be a cultural capital of the country in 1790 and was a centre of Chola cultural heritage. The district attracts domestic and foreign tourist throughout the year Table 1 gives an idea about the visit of domestic and foreign tourists visited Thanjavur from the year 2008-2015.

Thanjavur district is blessed with several heritage sites apart from wonderful centuries old saivite and vaishnavite temples and churches mosques etc. apart from educational, agricultural historical important sites. Agriculture in Thanjavur is the major occupation

Table 1. Tourist Arrival to Thanjavur district

Year	Domestic	Foreigner	Total
2008	2581906	75461	2657367
2009	2915617	92456	3008073
2010	4915587	98591	5014178
2011	5224361	99373	5323734
2012	4875215	73207	4948422
2013	4975378	101862	5077240
2014	6043359	355417	6398776
2015 Upto November	6529077	384299	6913376

Source- District Tourism office report, Thanjavur

Table 2. Crop seasons

Crop Seasons
Kuruvai season (June to September)
Thaladi season (September to march)
Samba season (August to January)

Source- Primary data

which provides livelihood for considerable population. Agriculture in Thanjavur directly and indirectly affects the people of Thanjavur in business, education, employment, tourism etc. Thanjavur is located in Cauvery delta region and it is the most fertile region in the state. Cauvery River is the major water source for irrigation. Cauvery, grand Ana cut canal (pudharu), vadavaru, vennaru, are flowing through Thanjavur city. There are three agriculture seasons practiced in the district for paddy cultivation.

3.2 Crop Seasons

The table 2 gives an idea about the major agriculture seasons followed in the district.

3.3 Major Crops Grown in different Regions of Thanjavur

The table 3 gives an idea about major crops cultivated in Thanjavur district. It is the clear from the table that paddy is the major and perennial crop grown in the district. Pulses like black gram, green gram, horse gram and other pulses, Cereals like jowar (cholan), bajra (kambu), raagi, maize, korra, varagu, saamai and other cereals are some of the other crops grown in the district. Apart from these are crops sugarcane, chillies, banana, mango, groundnut, coconut, gingili, cashew nut, and sunflower and various vegetables. The areas of agricultural operation in the deltas are classified as old delta region, new delta region, and padugai region paddy and other crops grams in old

Table 3. Major crops and percentage of cultivation

Crop	Cultivation
Paddy	75%
Pulses	06%
Oil seeds	14%
Millets	02%
Sugarcane	01%
Other crops	03%

Source: Primary data

Table 4. Monsoon Seasons

Season	Months
Winter	January to February
Summer	March to May
South West Monsoon	June to September
North West Monsoon	October to December

delta. Sugarcane and prawn are growing in the new delta regions and banana in padugai region.

3.4 Monsoon Seasons and Rainfall data

The district faces four seasons and receives rainfall is depicted in the table 4. From the rainfall data of past 70 years (1927-2009) observed that the district received a minimum of 936 mm and a maximum of 1175 mm. Again from the past 70 years (1927-2009) atmospheric temperature data it is observed that the district's hottest months are from April to June (35° to 36° C) and coolest months are from November to January (23° to 24° C).

3.5 Location of major Agricultural Farms in Thanjavur District

The following table 5 gives the location about major crops is cultivated in Thanjavur which are the potential spots for agri tourism.

3.6 Agro Research Institutes, Organic Farms and Industry.

Table 6 gives location of institutes, agro industries and major private farms around Thanjavur.

3.7 Fish and Animal Husbandary Farms

Table 7 covers location of horticulture farms such as Marakkavalasai, Andikadu, Eluppukarai, pudhukotayam,

Table 5. Location of major crops grown in Thanjavur District

Crop	Location
Black gram	Orathanadu, Ammapetai, Budhalur
Green gram	Ammapetai
Sunflower	Ammapetai
Soya	Thirupananthal
Gingili seeds	Thiruvaiyaru, Budalur, Ammapetai etc. in entire district.
Coconut	Pattukottai, Peravurani, Madukkur.
Oil palm	Thirukarurpathi, Nedar village (Thanjavur-kumbakonam road)
Red gram	Budalur, Thanjavur.
Sugarcane	Thanjavur, Papanasam, Ammapetai, Kumbakonam, thiruvaidaimaruthur.
Corn	Budalur, Thanjavur, Orathanadu
Groundnut, Vegetable, Mango	Budalur, Thanjavur, Orathanadu, Pattukottai, Madukkur

Source- Primary data

T.vadkuadu, T.masavakkudi Thambikottai in the Pattukottai area and also in Peravurani area places like Nadiyam, Somnathapatnam, Thiruvadhenam, Valavanpattinam, Villunivayal area are having plenty of fish farms in the district. Table 8 suggests animal husbandry farms that can be visited in the district.

3.8 Thanjavur –A Cradle of Unique Art

The agri tourism should have other attractions also to entertain the tourists. The guests may be taken to the important tourist spots in the district, which are listed in table 8. In addition to visiting tourist spots the guests may be taken to handicraft manufacturing units, which will be enjoyed by them. Thanjavur is a cradle of several arts and famous for several unique handicrafts. Bharata Natyam is one of the form of Indian classical dance that originated in the temple of Tamilnadu/Thanjavur. Chinnaiya, Ponnaiyah, Sivanandham and Vadivelu the four "Thanjavur brothers" of the Tanjore quartet contributed immensely for this Carnatic music who were employed in the courts of Maratha king Serfoji-II at Thanjavur. In Bharata Natyam Pandianallur style, Thanjavur vazhuvoor, Mysore and Kancheepuram, kalashetra styles are very popular. The trinity of Carnatic music Thiyagaraja, Muthuswami deekshidar, and Shyama Sastri of Thanjavur were the outstanding trios, created a new era in the history of Carnatic music.

Thanjavur is famous for making handicrafts items which are unique in characteristic at international level. The following table 9 presents an idea about the locations where the unique Tanjore handicrafts are currently produced. Tourists can be taken enroute to these production

Table 6. Location of Agri research institutes, industries and farms in Thanjavur district

Institutes and Industries	Location
Tamilnadu rice research institute	Aduthurai
Coconut research station (Agriculture university)	Veppankulam, Pattukottai area
Seed, pesticide and Fertilizer testing lab	Kumbakonam
Bio fertilizer production unit	Sakkotai near Kumbakonam
Sugar factories	Kurungulam, Thirumandangudi

Source- Primary data

Table 7. Location of major Horticulture farms in Thanjavur district

T.N. Govt State Horticulture Model Orchard farm in Marungulam (26.44 acres) and Aduthurai (20 acres) area	Guava, Jackfruit, Mango nursery
Karupoor padugai , Kabisthalam area (10-15 ha)	Mango
Boothalur, Marungulam areas	Hybrid Cucumber
Thirukaatupalli, Papanasam , Ganapathi agaraharam, Eechangudi, Kabisthalam, Thiruvaiyaru areas	Banana
Araiyyathamedu, pattukottai, peravurani , madhukkur areas	Coconut
Sundaraperumal koil areas (10-15 ha)	Jasmine, Rose, Tube rose, Javanthi, Kanagambaram flowers
Thirukkanurpatti, pudukkottai road	Tapioca
Aathanangottai	Tube Rose(Sambangi) flowers
Swamimalai, Pasupathi koil, Kandiyur, Nadukkadaai	Vegetables-ladies finger, Brinjal, Radish & Greens etc
Thruvaiyaru padugai area	Vegetables, Cucumber, Greens
Papanasam, Sarafojiraja puram, Raghunathapuram(approx 50 ha), Thiruvilai marudur, Kandiyur, Nadukkadaai	Betel leaves
SASTRA University	Theme based herbal garden

units to see directly the makings and to witness the talent of the artisans.

3.9 Proposed Agri Cum Rural Tourism Activities (Both Educational and Entertainment)

1. Visiting all types of agro farms to see different crop varieties and the processes involved in each crop.
2. Participating in farm activities (ploughing, plucking vegetables, flowers, millets, sowing, harvesting etc)
3. Visiting horticulture farms (vegetable & floriculture)
4. Visiting all kinds of veterinary farms (Dairy, poultry, emu, fishery, duck, rabbit, goat etc) and feeding them

Table 8. Major Animal Husbandry farms in Thanjavur district

Kurungulam	Kottil aadu valarppu
Marungulam, Naduvuor	Fodder Development, Eesha Farm
Putthur	Model Farming
Tamil nadu Veterinary College, Orthanadu	White Pigs, Poultry unit, Sheep unit, Goat unit, Piggery unit, Dairy unit, Food production unit, Kaadai unit. Ostrich, Turkey,
Annappanpettai	Goat
Eechangkottai	Exotic cattle breeding Farm
Vaalamarakottai	Fish Farm
Naduvuor	40 Farm of poultry
Orathanadu R.S Farm	Fish
Marungulam	Poultry Farm
Govindhapuram temple	Goshaala
Boundrygapuram	North indian breed Cattle form

Table 9. Unique handicrafts of Thanjavur and location of manufacturing units

Sl.No.	Item	Location
1	Thanjavur dolls	Thanjavur town
2	Thanjavur paintings	Thanjavur town
3	Pith work	Thanjavur & Kumbakonam
4	Bronze icons	Swamimalai & Kumbakonam
5	Thanjavur art plates	Thanjavur town
6	Bell Metal Plates	Nachiarkovil & Kumbakonam
7	Thanjavur musical instruments- Veena , Tambura, Violin, Mirudhangam, Thavil, Kanjira, Nadaswaram,	Thanjavur & Kumbakonam
8	Kalam Kari paintings	Karuppur near kambakonam
9	Silk Saree and cloth	Thanjavur & Kumbakonam

Table 10. Folk dances of Tamil Nadu

Bagavatha Nadanam	Ottan Koothu	Bommalattam or puppet show
Chakkai Attam	Oyilattam	Karagattam
Devaraattam	Oyil Kummi	Kavadi Aattam
Kamandi or Kaman Pandigai	Paampu Attam or Snake Dance	Kazhai Kothu
Kai Silambu Attam	Poikkal Kuthirai Aattam or Artificial Horse Dance	Mayil Attam or Peacock dance
Kali Attam or Kolattam	Puli Aattam or Puliattam (Tiger Dance)	Kolattam
Kummi	Sevai Attam	Thappaattam
Theru Koothu	Urummi Attam	Villu Pattu

Table 11. Tamil Martial Arts

Varma Kalai and Kuttu Varisai	Silambattam (Silambam)
Malyutham (Grappling/wrestling)	Adithada (Kick Boxing)

5. Visiting colleges & research centres connected to agri, horticulture, animal husbandry (like Tamil nadu Agriculture University extension centres, Krishi Vigyan Kendras and others)
6. Bullock cart, tractor and cycle rides inside the villages.
7. Bathing in village pond, pump set, canal, Cauvery river (in designated safe places only)
8. Fishing in village pond, canal, river
9. Cooking/eating traditional Tamil rural food items and learning the recipes vide Table 9
10. Eating traditional Tamil rural snacks & food items vide Table 10.
11. Playing rural or traditional games (silambam, pallanguzhi, chillu, dhayam, aadu puli aattam, gilli thandu, skipping, playing with marbles etc)
12. Evening cultural shows—Listening to tamil folk songs and folk dances vide Table 8
13. Bird watching
14. Visiting old bungalows-heritage sites in the village
15. Visiting village temple, mosque, church
16. Morning and evening walk in the village (in case of overnight stay in the rural resorts)

17. Wearing Tamil costumes like dhotis, saris, half sari, mundas (turban) and posing for photos.
18. Visiting famous tourist spots on the way vide Annexure:1
19. Visiting Handicrafts manufacturing units vide Table 7
20. Visiting silk sarees/handloom manufacturing units on the enroute.
21. Relaxing in coir cot in coconut or mango farm and playing in swings between the trees during the day time and can add any other activities which can promote business & can provide entertainment and education to the guests.

The following table 10 provides the list of famous traditional folk dances of Tamil Nadu which could be included to entertain the tourists in the tour. Good number of artists are available in this district to perform these items.

Similarly Tamil Nadu is known for certain **martial arts** which are given in table 11. The trained artist may be asked to give guest performance regularly to tourists in a given site or in the rural resorts during the overnight stay of the guests.

Food is another important element in tourism. There are number of food items unique to Tamil nadu rural areas. They can be served to the guests. Some of the items are given in Table 12.

More than 150 food items can be prepared using small millets such as thinai (foxtail millet), saamai (little millet), varagu (Kodo), pani varagu (proso millet), kudhiraivaali (barnyard millet), ragi (finger millet), kambu (pearl millet) and solam (jowar) and other grains. Undoubtedly the tourists can be given a very nice experience in the food items.

There are few challenges in launching the project. But proper and systematic planning and execution can help to meet the challenges easily.

3.10 Major Steps Involved and Support Required in Launching Rural and Agro Tourism Project in Thanjavur District

3.10.1 Preliminary Support

- Identifying and mapping the overall strengths/resources available in the district
- Identifying the exact /area/village ideal for the visit & for constructing a rural resort through an extensive field study and collecting detailed information about the sites to prepare a master plan

Table 12. Traditional Tamil food items

Raagi(finger millet) –idli, adai, dosai, idiyappam, sevai(idiyappam)	Karakozhkkattai	Variety of food powders to add with plain rice(paruppu, coriander, milagu & seeragam)
Rice idiyappam & Aappam	Pulipongal	Kollu & Other thuvayals
Pongal- rice and other millets	Kambam(pearl millet) koozh	Sundals
Kuzhipaniyaram	Kambu choru	Aval uppuma,Urundai
Variety of payasams	Ilaneer and nongu	Red& Kaikuthal rice food
Boiled corn	Boiled groundnut	Ginger, amla and other candies
Nellikkai sarbath (Amla sarbath/)	Ellu & Groung nut urundai	Variety of chutnies as side dishes for tiffin items

- Visiting, observing and interacting with farm owners, local community, artisans to ascertain their basic interest and securing their preliminary support to the new project.
- Preparing an effective tour plan to give “best experience” to the guests with least cost and time.

3.10.2 Infrastructure Support

1. Installing direction boards, information boards in the respective sites both in tamil and english language.
2. Identifying an ‘ideal village’ to construct a ‘rural resort’ with all basic comforts viz.. protected drinking water, restaurants, washing facilities, a shopping center, with all the unique Tanjore handi crafts and rural products. Internet /Wi-Fi facility, safety and security, an auditorium for performing cultural shows in the evening, ATM, ,24 x 7 uninterrupted power supply, standby generator etc.
3. Laying proper approach roads, installing sign boards, installing street lamps, providing protected drinking water in all the visiting spots, constructing and maintaining hygienic public toilets in all spots and on en route, adequate dustbins at ever point, providing tasty & hygienic refreshment facility , provision for transporting handicapped and elders (wheel chairs, slopes in buildings).

3.10.3 Financial Support

Organizing an exclusive entrepreneur meet on “Agro & Rural Tourism” to promote entrepreneurs in the field and converting the idea in to a profitable business model. From investment angel investors and banks also may be invited to participate in meet. Loans and advances may be granted liberally on priority basis to support the project.

3.10.4 Marketing Support

1. Preparing an attractive brochure high lighting the importance of the tour and tourism spots.
2. Deciding the target groups and sending invitation to schools, colleges, domestic and foreign travel agents, corporate houses etc.
3. Developing and launching website with complete information, contact info’s about the route, timings, distance, features etc.
4. A full-fledged show room to sell all types of rural products, unique handicrafts “under one roof” providing high quality products at competitive prize to promote sale of those items. Rural self help groups’ products can also be kept for sale.
5. Installing advertisement boards in Tiruchirappalli, Thanjavur and Chennai junctions, airports, bus stands, arranging wide coverage through print & electronic medias, keeping pamphlets and displaying small posters/sign boards in all the leading lodges, cinema theatres, hotels and places of tourist attracting points in Tamil Nadu state.

3.10.5 Human Resource Development

1. Selecting tourists guides and training them on various aspects of hospitality and tourism and providing them a uniform, name plate/ID card. Through a structured programme they may also be trained to converse in english, popular Indian languages like Hindi, Malayalam, Telugu, Kannada and foreign languages like French & German to convey their points simply to please the guests.
2. Educating the local (all types of hosts) traders, field staff, community leaders, hotel employees, cab operators, farm owners about the importance and benefits of the project, to enlist their support and participation.
3. Before the start of the tour the tourist should be briefed about the local culture, tradition, expected behaviour and other do’s and don’ts during the trip to avoid any

misunderstanding and embarrassments between the hosts and visitors.

4. Conclusion

From the above, it is very clear that there is immense scope available as such to launch immediately the Agriculture cum Rural tourism in Thanjavur district. The district administration with the help of Govt. of Tamil Nadu and Govt. of India should take immediate steps to launch the project.

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