



# Employment Generation through Tourism: A Comparative study of Mamallapuram and Vedanthangal

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**Abstract** – This paper intends to carry out a comparative analysis of employment generation in tourism in two unique destinations in Tamil Nadu: Mamallapuram, a UNESCO World Heritage Site famous for its cultural and heritage tourism, and Vedanthangal, a famous bird sanctuary specializing in ecotourism. Through a scientific analysis of tourism infrastructure investments in terms of employment generation, this research intends to examine how these unique tourism models are contributing to economic development in Tamil Nadu. This paper also intends to develop a Tourism Employment Impact Framework (TEIF), in which employment generation in tourism will be categorized as direct employment, indirect employment, and induced employment. From this research analysis, it is evident that Mamallapuram has received a huge investment of ₹100 crore in terms of infrastructure development in tourism, with a total state tourism summit generating 127 MoUs worth ₹22,794 crore expected to generate around 66,000 jobs in Tamil Nadu. On the other hand, Vedanthangal, although on a smaller scale, plays an important role in providing livelihood support to local communities during the season through guiding, bird protection, and ecotourism-related ventures. The evaluation of the two destinations on five different parameters, namely scale of investment, employment, seasonality, community participation, and sustainability, reveals that heritage tourism destinations offer higher absolute employment opportunities, and ecotourism destinations offer localized benefits with lower infrastructure requirements. The study concludes that regional tourism development strategies should include both models in the state tourism policy, as in the case of Tamil Nadu, where 31 destinations have been identified in phases, covering categories like urban tourism, special experience tourism, and nature-based tourism.

**Keyword:** Tourism employment, Mamallapuram, Vedanthangal, heritage tourism, ecotourism, livelihood generation, sustainable tourism, Tamil Nadu tourism policy

## I. INTRODUCTION

One of the most important sectors to have developed in Tamil Nadu has been tourism, which has contributed greatly to the state's treasury, foreign exchange earnings, and employment opportunities. Tamil Nadu has diverse tourism resources that range from ancient temple architecture to UNESCO World Heritage Sites, wildlife sanctuaries, hill stations, beaches, etc. These diverse tourism resources have contributed greatly to the state's treasury, with 128.9 Crore domestic tourist visits and 45 Lakh foreign tourist visits in the past five years, which clearly reflects the importance of the sector to the state's economy [1].

The employment generation potential of tourism is particularly significant for rural and peri-urban areas where other employment opportunities may be scarce. In addition, tourism offers employment opportunities across a variety of skill levels, ranging from heritage interpreters and wildlife guides to hospitality, transportation, and local craftspersons. Furthermore, tourism employment offers opportunities to women, youth, and local artisan groups, which might not be available in other sectors [2].

This paper attempts to carry out a comparative analysis on employment generation through tourism in two distinctly different tourism destinations, namely, Mamallapuram and Vedanthangal. Mamallapuram, a heritage site declared by UNESCO located on the Coromandel coast, 60 kilometers south of Chennai, boasts a rich heritage of Pallava rock-

cut temples built during the seventh and eighth centuries. The site attracts hundreds of thousands of tourists annually. The site has received considerable government investments, with a recent allocation of ₹100 crores for infrastructure development [3].

Vedanthangal bird sanctuary in Chengalpattu district is said to be one of the oldest bird sanctuaries in India, established in 1858. The area of this sanctuary is around 30 hectares. This sanctuary is a breeding ground for thousands of migratory birds such as painted storks, grey herons, cormorants, etc. Unlike in Mamallapuram, where tourism activities are conducted throughout the year, in Vedanthangal, there are clear seasons. The peak season is in winters when migratory birds are present in this area.

The above two destinations throw light on some of the important issues in tourism planning: how different models of tourism generate employment in a country—whether it is heritage tourism or ecotourism—and how this employment can be increased in a positive way. Three major contributions of this paper can be identified. Firstly, the paper carries out a comprehensive analysis of the employment patterns of tourism. Secondly, the paper develops a framework called the Tourism Employment Impact Framework that is used to assess the impact of tourism on employment. Lastly, the paper offers insights that can be used to inform tourism policy at the state level, particularly the phased approach to developing 31 tourism locations that vary from urban tourism, special experience



tourism, and large tourism hubs, among others, as discussed in Tamil Nadu [4].

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: the next section carries out a literature survey on the topic. In the next section, the methodology that the paper uses to propose the Tourism Employment Impact Framework is discussed. In the following section, the analysis and discussion of the paper are presented. In the final section, the conclusion of the paper is presented.

## II. LITERATURE SURVEY

The literature on tourism employment has grown and changed over time, shifting from an early concern with counting tourism-related jobs to more sophisticated studies of job quality, distributional effects, and sustainability. This review draws on recent studies between 2021 and 2026.

### Tourism Employment: Direct, Indirect, and Induced Effects

Traditionally, tourism employment is divided into three levels. The first level is direct employment, comprising enterprises that directly serve tourists, such as hotels, restaurants, transportation services, tour operators, and guide services. The second level is indirect employment, consisting of enterprises that indirectly serve tourism, such as food providers, construction and maintenance services, handicraft producers, and agriculture providers catering to the tourism industry. The third level, induced employment, arises from the spending of tourism employees on local goods and services, thus creating multiplier effects that cascade through the local economy [2].

The strength of these multiplier effects differs across local economies. Economies that have well-developed local supply chains and high levels of local retention of tourism revenue tend to have larger employment multipliers. Conversely, economies that have high levels of imported goods and services, as well as high levels of external ownership, tend to have leakages in tourism revenue, hence reducing the multiplier effects.

### Heritage Tourism and Employment

Heritage tourism, based on cultural and historical resources, is one area that has been extensively researched in the context of its potential for generating employment. Studies have shown that heritage resources offer diverse opportunities for employment, ranging from guiding and interpretation, site management, hospitality, and retail, to traditional crafts and crafts-based industries. The UNESCO recognition can also act as a catalyst for the generation of employment, as it can enhance international visibility and attract high-spending tourists.

Heritage tourism, as an area, has been identified in the Indian context as an important one in the generation of employment. The “Adopt a Heritage” scheme and other state-level initiatives aim to utilize the cultural resources

available in the country for the generation of employment. The recent announcement by the state of Tamil Nadu regarding the hosting of the first-ever Tamil Biennale in January 2027 is an indication of the strategic importance being given to the state as an international hub for art and cultural tourism.

### Ecotourism and Community Livelihoods

On the other hand, ecotourism, which refers to responsible travel to natural destinations that minimizes negative environmental and cultural impacts, offers a new employment model. Ecotourism differs from heritage tourism, which involves large-scale employment.

Studies on bird sanctuaries and ecotourism sites reveal that ecotourism creates considerable employment opportunities for the local community. These include employment as guides, bird protectors, homestay operators, and sellers of handicrafts. However, one major problem with ecotourism sites is seasonality. Since ecotourism sites are visited by large numbers of tourists during the season when birds migrate, this creates a problem. Therefore, livelihood diversification is a major issue for ecotourism sites [1].

### Tamil Nadu Tourism Policy Framework

The tourism policies of the Government of Tamil Nadu have clearly outlined an extensive framework for tourism development in the state, with an emphasis on tourism-driven economic growth. Some of the policies are as follows:

- **Infrastructure Investment:** Over the last five years, the state government invested ₹612 crore in tourism infrastructure, facilitating tourism development in various regions of the state [4].
- **Private Sector Participation:** During the Tamil Nadu Global Tourism Summit 2026, 127 memoranda of understanding worth ₹22,794 crore were signed, expected to generate 66,000 jobs in various tourism sectors [3].
- **Phased Development of Destinations:** In the first phase, four special tourism destinations were identified in the Kanyakumari, Kallakurichi, Erode, and Thoothukudi districts. In the second phase, 31 locations have been included, categorized as urban tourism, special experience tourism, and large tourism hubs [2].
- **Institutional Innovation:** Establishing a Special Area Development Authority for Mamallapuram is an example of a targeted approach by the government for tourism governance in the state [3].
- **Diversified Offerings:** In addition to traditional tourism in heritage sites, the state government is also developing facilities for caravan parks, theme parks, camping sites, and nature-based tourism to ensure that tourism benefits are shared by various regions of the state [1].



### Synthesis and Research Gaps

The literature shows that there is considerable understanding of the mechanisms of tourism employment, though there are gaps in the research. The findings include:

- Tourism employment is generated through the direct, indirect, and induced effects of tourism;
- Heritage tourism generates higher absolute employment compared to other forms of tourism;
- Ecotourism generates benefits for the community in the local vicinity of the ecotourism sites;
- Seasonality is a problem in the sustainability of employment.
- The gaps in the research include:
- The need for comparative research on the application of various tourism models under the same policy framework;
- The need for more information on the quality of employment and the level of wages in the tourism industry;
- The need for longitudinal research on the employment generated by tourism;
- The need for research on the translation of infrastructure investments into specific categories of employment.

### III. METHODOLOGY

Based on the synthesis of the literature, this paper develops the Tourism Employment Impact Framework (TEIF) for analyzing employment generation effects in Mamallapuram and Vedanthangal.

#### Theoretical Foundations

The Tourism Employment Impact Framework draws on two theoretical foundations. First, the tourism multiplier theory offers a theoretical understanding of the process by which initial tourism spending creates a series of subsequent income and employment-generating effects. The magnitude of these effects varies depending on local linkages and leakages.

Second, the sustainable livelihoods approach recognizes that employment not only matters in quantity, but also in its qualitative attributes such as income levels, seasonality, conditions of work, skill enhancement, and gender equity.

#### Framework Components

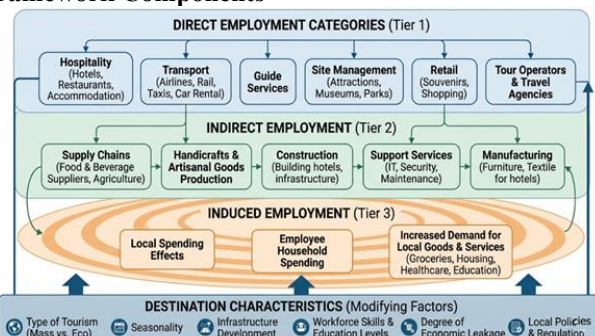


Figure 1: Tourism Employment Impact Framework (TEIF)

The Tourism Employment Impact Framework comprises three analytical layers.

#### Data Sources

The analysis will be based on various sources such as government tourism policy and investment schemes from the Government of Tamil Nadu, media reports on infrastructure development schemes in Mamallapuram, and observations from both destinations. Primary data collection through structured interviews with tourism stakeholders will be proposed for future extension of this research.

#### Comparative Approach

The comparative method will be based on an analysis of five parameters for both destinations:

- Scale of Investment
- Employment Patterns
- Seasonality
- Community Participation
- Sustainability

### IV. RESULT ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The current section provides analytical results related to the generation of employment opportunities in Mamallapuram and Vedanthangal, as discussed below through five illustrative figures and a comparative analysis table.

#### Mamallapuram: Investment Scale and Employment Projections

The Tamil Nadu government's commitment to the development of the tourism sector, particularly the flagship destination of Mamallapuram, reflects the significant investments planned for the area.

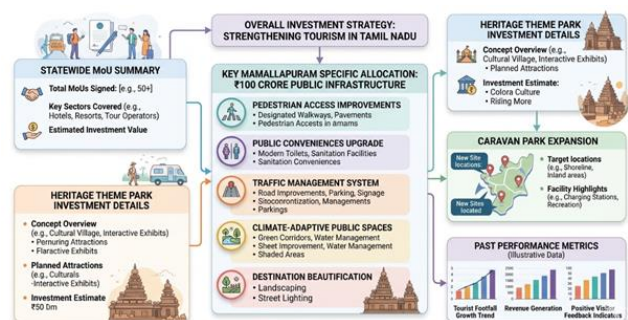


Figure 2: Mamallapuram Tourism Investment Snapshot

Figure 2 depicts a substantial investment being channeled towards Mamallapuram and the Tamil Nadu tourism sector in general. The investment of ₹100 crores in public infrastructure for Mamallapuram addresses existing gaps in infrastructure that have hindered its development potential.

The establishment of a Special Area Development Authority is an institutional innovation in planning that

addresses issues in heritage conservation, municipal development, and tourism development in an integrated manner. Urban planners argue that this helps to eliminate issues of fragmented planning common in heritage towns with shared jurisdictions.

The investment scenario in Tamil Nadu, with 127 MoUs totaling ₹22,794 crores, presents a holistic tourism development strategy in which Mamallapuram is a part. The employment potential in Mamallapuram is not specified in isolation from the 66,000 employment opportunities in Tamil Nadu in general. The investment in and around Mamallapuram suggests a substantial employment potential in the area.

The proposed heritage theme park at Poonjeri, developed by Mata Amritanandamayi Mandir Trust, investing ₹1,500 crore in each phase, will add significant tourism infrastructure in the vicinity of Mamallapuram. Such projects generate construction jobs in the short term and operation-based jobs in the long term.

**Employment Pattern Comparison: Direct Jobs**

The pattern of direct tourism employment varies greatly between heritage and eco-tourism destinations.

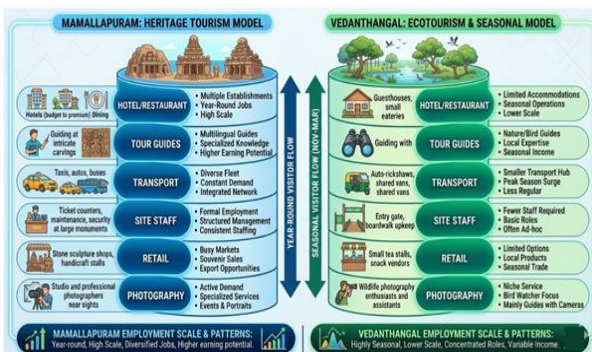


Figure 3: Direct Employment Patterns: Mamallapuram vs. Vedanthangal

From Figure 3, it is evident that there are basic differences in the nature of employment between the two destinations. The nature of heritage tourism in Mamallapuram facilitates year-round employment opportunities in different categories. The presence of multiple hotels and restaurants, varying in range from budget to luxury, facilitates stable employment opportunities in the hospitality industry. The international nature of tourists in Mamallapuram ensures that there are opportunities for multilingual tour guides, thus facilitating specialized employment opportunities that are lucrative.

The traditional art form of stone sculpting in Mamallapuram is an important category of employment. The artisans in the destination sculpt statues that are sold to tourists, and the traditional art form is an important aspect of tourism in Mamallapuram, where tourists observe artisans at work. This is an important aspect where tourism and traditional art form are complementary.

The nature of employment in Vedanthangal is marked by seasonality. During the winter season (November to February), when migratory birds are present, local guides are employed to conduct birdwatching tours. The forest department personnel regulate the crowd and protect the sanctuary. There are vendors selling food and local crafts. During the off-season, the nature of employment opportunities is limited.

**Indirect and Induced Employment Linkages**

Beyond direct employment, both destinations generate significant indirect and induced employment through local supply chains and worker spending.

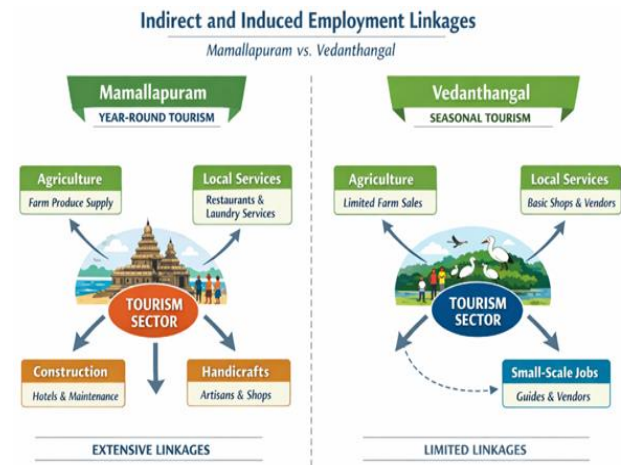


Figure 4: Employment Multiplier Effects

Figure 4 demonstrates how the scale and permanency of tourism activity impact the size of the multiplier effects. In Mamallapuram, the year-round demand for tourism activity allows suppliers to invest in supplying the tourism sector. Farmers can sign contracts with hotels to provide vegetables; laundry services can open up shop; construction workers can find employment in maintaining tourism facilities.

The employment multiplier effect, which ranges from 1.5 to 2.0, implies that every direct tourism employment opportunity in Mamallapuram can support 0.5 to 1.0 jobs indirectly. For instance, every hotel employment opportunity can support employment opportunities in the agricultural sector, laundry services, and maintenance services. These jobs may not be held by the same people, thereby increasing the spread of the tourism benefits to the larger community.

In Vedanthangal, the seasonal demand for tourism activity does not allow for the development of the multiplier effects. The demand for tourism activity does not allow suppliers to invest in supplying the tourism sector.

**Seasonality and Livelihood Sustainability**

Seasonal employment patterns present distinct challenges and opportunities in each destination.

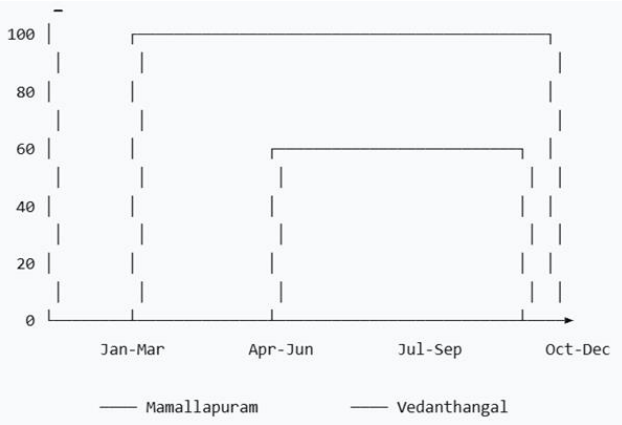


Figure 5: Seasonal Employment Patterns

Figure 5 highlights the significant difference in the employment stability of the two locations. While Mamallapuram has moderate seasonality in terms of employment, with the peak season being the winter months from October to March, due to favorable climatic conditions, and the off-season being the monsoon months from July to September, when fewer tourists arrive, the presence of heritage tourism results in permanent employment.

The employment pattern in Vedanthangal is characterized by extreme seasonality. While the winter migratory bird season results in peak employment, the summer season results in minimal employment. This calls for occupational diversification, where the people engage in other occupations such as agriculture, daily wage labor, and migration to nearby towns for employment in the off-season.

The sustainability consequences of the two models are as follows. While the Mamallapuram model results in permanent settlement, the Vedanthangal model results in occupational pluralism, which may lead to seasonal out-migration. Interventions in ecotourism sites have to consider the seasonality issue.

### State Tourism Policy and Regional Distribution

Tamil Nadu's phased tourism development strategy aims to distribute benefits beyond established destinations.



Figure 6: Tamil Nadu Tourism Destination Development Phases

Figure 6 shows the context within which Mamallapuram and Vedanthangal are considered within the tourism policy. The number of 31 sites under various categories indicates a planned attempt to spatially diversify the tourism benefits.

Interestingly, the categories include both "urban tourism" (which includes heritage precincts such as Mamallapuram) and "nature-based destinations" (which include ecotourism sites such as Vedanthangal). Such an understanding of varied tourism approaches under a single umbrella allows for interventions to be tailored to suit each site individually.

The planned development of caravan parks (75 across the state), camping sites, and nature-based experiential tourism sites indicates a planned attempt to develop nature tourism infrastructure, which could benefit sites such as Vedanthangal by providing a longer duration for tourism activities and generating employment.

### Comparative Analysis of Employment Generation

Table 1 presents a comprehensive comparative analysis of employment generation in Mamallapuram and Vedanthangal.

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of Tourism Employment Generation

Dimension	Mamallapuram	Vedanthangal
<b>Tourism Type</b>	Heritage/Cultural	Ecotourism/Bird Sanctuary
<b>Scale of Investment</b>	~100 crore public infrastructure; 23,000 crore heritage theme park (nearby)	Limited public investment; forest department maintenance
<b>Visitor Volume</b>	High (lakhs annually)	Moderate (seasonal peaks)
<b>Employment Scale</b>	Hundreds of direct jobs; potential for thousands with new investments	Tens of direct jobs; seasonal variation
<b>Direct Job Categories</b>	Hotels, restaurants, guides (multiple languages), sculptors, transport, retail, ASI staff	Forest guides, bird protection staff, local vendors, photography guides
<b>Employment Stability</b>	Year-round with moderate seasonality	Highly seasonal (winter peak)
<b>Skill Requirements</b>	Diverse: hospitality, language, craft, interpretation	Specialized: bird identification, local ecology
<b>Gender Participation</b>	Moderate in hospitality; limited in sculpting	Emerging opportunities for women guides
<b>Indirect Employment</b>	Strong linkages to agriculture, construction, laundry, transport	Limited linkages due to scale
<b>Community Participation</b>	Local residents in hospitality and crafts; some external ownership	High local participation in guiding and vending
<b>Sustainability Challenges</b>	Pressure on heritage assets; climate risks (erosion, flooding)	Seasonal livelihood gaps; habitat protection
<b>Growth Trajectory</b>	Strong positive (major investments underway)	Stable; potential for growth with ecotourism expansion



### **Analysis of Comparative Dimensions:**

Tourism Type significantly impacts employment. In the case of Mamallapuram, the presence of heritage sites facilitates varied and year-round employment. Vedanthangal, being an ecotourism destination, facilitates specialized seasonal employment.

Scale of Investment - a significant disparity exists between the two destinations. While the government allocation for the development of Mamallapuram is ₹100 crore, the private investment for a theme park adjacent to the heritage site totals ₹3,000 crore. This contrasts with the lack of significant tourism investments for Vedanthangal. This could be a reflection of government focus on heritage tourism, compromising investments for nature tourism.

Employment Stability - a significant difference between the two destinations. While the year-round employment at Mamallapuram facilitates permanent settlement and housing investments, the seasonal nature of employment at Vedanthangal could lead to the migration of the population.

Community Participation - a significant difference between the two destinations. While Vedanthangal, being a smaller destination, facilitates a high level of participation, as guides are recruited from the surrounding villages, the presence of a larger number of tourists at Mamallapuram attracts investments and employees from outside the region.

Sustainability Challenges are site-specific. Challenges for Mamallapuram include the heritage site's vulnerability to large tourist arrivals and climate-related concerns such as coastal erosion and flooding. Challenges for Vedanthangal include balancing tourism access with habitat concerns, especially during breeding seasons.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

In this paper, a comparative analysis on employment generation through tourism in two sites, namely Mamallapuram and Vedanthangal, both located in Tamil Nadu, India, with differing tourism products such as heritage tourism and ecotourism, respectively, has been presented. The Tourism Employment Impact Framework allows for a holistic evaluation process for direct, indirect, and induced employment categories, considering site-specific characteristics.

The analysis has revealed several important conclusions. First, there are greater absolute levels of employment generated in heritage tourism destinations because of the sheer numbers of visitors, variety of employment opportunities, and round-the-year operation. The high investment in Mamallapuram (₹100 crore) and other nearby private sector ventures (₹3,000 crore heritage theme park) will only add to its potential for generating employment, with a total investment in tourism in the state expected to generate 66,000 jobs.

Second, ecotourism destinations provide unique employment benefits in terms of guiding positions, high local employment, and conservation-based employment. Vedanthangal generates critical employment benefits in terms of income for local people in a season when other sources are scarce, besides providing for bird conservation and habitat preservation. However, there are sustainability issues in terms of seasonality that require diversification of livelihoods to be addressed.

Third, employment multipliers vary substantially between destinations. For Mamallapuram, with its round-the-year tourism operation, there are huge backward linkages to agriculture, construction, and other local sectoral activities. The employment multipliers are estimated to be in the range of 1.5 to 2.0.

Fourth, the framework for policies should consider various tourism models. Tamil Nadu's approach of developing destinations in phases, with 31 locations categorized under urban tourism, special experience tourism, and nature tourism, is an apt approach. Nevertheless, investment in infrastructure seems to have focused mainly on heritage sites, implying that investment in ecotourism facilities could be improved.

Fifth, sustainability is an important factor in the growth of tourism. In the case of Mamallapuram, addressing the issue of heritage tourism and the effects of global warming, such as erosion and flooding, is crucial. On the other hand, in the case of Vedanthangal, the need to ensure that the tourism industry operates at an ecological limit, addressing the livelihood needs of the people, is important.

Sixth, innovation in institutions is vital for better employment results. Establishing a Special Area Development Authority for Mamallapuram is an important step in planning for tourism development, considering various aspects such as heritage tourism.

Some policy implications that emerge are that Tamil Nadu should invest in ecotourism infrastructure, that mechanisms should be put in place for the provision of livelihood support in seasons where tourism is low, and that local procurement policies should be promoted in the state, particularly in destinations like Vedanthangal, so that the indirect employment base can be strengthened. Another implication is that capacity building for community-based tourism enterprises should be undertaken so that the benefits can be retained by the local communities.

Some limitations of the research are that, being based on secondary data, estimates of employment could be improved, and primary data could be collected on wages, working conditions, and the demographics of the employed population. Quantitative data on the employment base in Vedanthangal could also be collected. Some research directions that could be undertaken in the future are collecting primary data on the subject, collecting data on the long-run effects of investments in



infrastructure in destinations like Mamallapuram, and collecting data on destinations like hill stations, pilgrimage centers, and beach destinations.

While Tamil Nadu is moving ahead with its ambitious tourism development plans, with 127 investment MoUs, an investment of Rs. 22,794 crore, and 66,000 jobs, experiences from tourism destinations such as Mamallapuram and Vedanthangal provide valuable insights. Heritage tourism and nature tourism, when developed in a sustainable manner, can provide two pillars of tourism that generate jobs and are balanced in terms of regional distribution.

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