

Infrastructural Development Problems At Thoseghar : A Tourist Destination In Satara District, Maharashtra

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ABSTRACT

The present paper probes into the problems and prospects of infrastructural development at Thoseghar, an exotic waterfall in Satara district. Tourists visit Thoseghar in hoards during the rainy season. The destination has much potential to develop as a major tourist destination that can attract a large number of tourists. It is observed that tourists from not only Satara, but from adjacent districts and metros like Mumbai and Pune visit the place during weekends and holidays. A structured schedule was used to identify problems with infrastructural facilities that contains 35 variables stating different aspects viz. Road connectivity, Civic administration, Transport and Traffic management, Tourist facilities, Maintenance and management of tourist attraction and other services. Likert scale has been used to infer the opinion of the sample respondents on the importance level of facilities, and its satisfaction level with respect to destination Thoseghar.

Researchers observed that Thoseghar is a memorable one-day trip covering the Thoseghar Waterfalls, Chalkewadi Windmill Farms, offers panoramic views of forts, valleys, and clouds, and the Urmodi Dam further enriches the one-day trip. There are more gaps in importance and its satisfaction level towards facilities like Traffic management, Public utility, Guide availability, Parking facility, Mobile services and Hygiene of wayside amenities, restaurants and Dhabas. These gaps are prominent requirements of tourist destinations to attract a large number of tourists. The research concludes that the authorities need to focus on Communication services (like telephone and mobile connectivity), Parking facility, Traffic management and General upkeep of hotels at Thoseghar.

Keywords : Tourist Infrastructure, Thoseghar, Satara, Waterfalls

INTRODUCTION

The economic connotation of tourism is accepted throughout the world. The Indian Government took several noteworthy steps towards tourism development, and as a result, domestic tourism has risen in India. The growth in the domestic tourist visits in 2010 was about 11%. Maharashtra was the top state with 48.5 million tourists. The Campaign slogan of Maharashtra is 'MAHARASHTRA UNLIMITED'. The State government declared its tourism policy in 1999. This scheme came into operation from April 1, 1999. It covered tourism incentive schemes -tourism projects in the private sector, state public sector or joint sector and the co-operative sector. The domestic tourists visiting Maharashtra doubled during the last decade, from 41.79 lakhs in 1991 to 84.8 lakhs in 2001, whereas the number of foreign tourists visiting Mumbai increased from 7 million in 1991 to 8 million in 2001. The Government of Maharashtra, Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs introduced a separate tourism policy for Maharashtra in 2006. The State came out with a 20 years Tourism Development Plan to achieve the tourism development objectives. In 2010-11, the government allocated ₹ 52.59 crores for tourism development in the State. The State government declared zone wise schemes for the promotion of state level important tourist places under 'B' grade as Konkan Package, Nasik Package, Vidharbh Package. Ajanta Ellora Conservation and Development project in the 2nd stage was granted a budget of ₹ 360 crores under the 12th Finance Planning commission Scheme- "Under specific needs of the State". The total contribution of the top 10 states was about 90.3% to the total number of Foreign Tourist Visits in the country during 2010. The percentage shares of the top 5 states were 28.5% - Maharashtra, 15.7% - Tamil Nadu, 10.6% - Delhi, 9.4% - Uttar Pradesh and 7.2% - Rajasthan.

Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) was established under the Companies Act, 1956, (fully owned by the Govt. of Maharashtra) for the development of tourism. The State Government is carrying out all commercial and promotional tourism activities for this Corporation. MTDC has been, since its beginning, involved in the development and maintenance of various tourist locations of Maharashtra. MTDC owns and maintains resorts at all key tourist centers, and is also working towards the implementation of the Bread and Breakfast Scheme (B & B) in

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Maharashtra for budget tourists. In other states of India, for the sake of tourism development, independent bodies under the control of the respective State governments have been framed - like APTD, Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation has been focusing on not only increasing the revenue for the government, but is also taking steps to satisfy the growing needs of different groups of clientele (Rani, 2007).

The Satara district in Maharashtra is blessed with rich flora and fauna, forts, waterfalls - most of which are unexplored, and there is a need to study the problems of infrastructural development in the district. The researchers selected Thoseghar in Maharashtra for the present study, as the place is known for its Waterfalls. With the objective to identify the gap between infrastructure importance level and its satisfaction level, the present study gives some suggestions to promote such unexplored destinations. Monsoon season is always an attraction for the tourists. Now a days, people look forward to visit different places for leisure. Thoseghar, a calm and quiet village, is 25 kms away from Satara city. The exact location of the Thoseghar falls is 17°35'47.84"N, 73°50'44.98"E. Thoseghar is gaining importance for its Waterfalls, which are around 1000 feet high and are a breathtaking sight to behold. The best time to visit Thoseghar is between July to November.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researchers selected the tourist destination "Thoseghar" as it is known for its Waterfalls. To gain information about the tourists who visit Thoseghar, an instrument structured schedule was prepared. A study tool with "Importance-Satisfaction" questions relevant to the tourism facility was obtained from the Ministry of Tourism. The data was collected on a 5 point scale. Local services, tourist facilities and other amenities at Thoseghar destination were checked on the scale of 1 to 5 based on the satisfaction levels; 1 for Poor to 5 for Excellent as well as importance levels; 1 for least important to 5 for most important. On Sunday, August 14, 2011 in between 2 to 6 pm, tourists were interviewed by three trained field investigators. The collected data has been analyzed by using Mean score, Ranking, Standard

Sr.	AGE	%	Sr.	GENDER	%
1.	Below 18 years	2.94	2.	Male	88.24
	18-25 years	38.24		Female	11.76
	26-35 years	26.47	3.	STATE	
	36-45 years	11.76		Maharashtra	97.06
	46-55 years	17.65		Other	2.94
	Above 45 years	2.94	6.	CITY	
4.	FIRST VISIT	52.94		Satara	55.88
5.	MAIN PURPOSE - TOURISM	94.12		Other	41.18
8.	MODE OF TRAVEL		7.	RECOMMENDED BY	
	Personal car	61.76		Friends/relatives	73.53
	Others	38.24		Others	26.47
9.	TRAVELING ALONE, OR WITH FRIENDS/ FAMILY		10.	STAYS(OUT OF 41.18%) IN SATARA	8.82
	Friends	73.53	12.	AMOUNT SPENT	
	Family and relatives	26.47		Below- ₹ 1000	55.88
11.	DINING OPTIONS			₹ 1000 - ₹ 2000	38.24
	Hotel	58.82	14.	LIKE MOST	
	Homemade Food	26.47		Waterfall	70.58
13.	MOTIVATION FOR VISIT			Nature	55.88
	To view the Waterfall	82.35			
	Natural beauty	79.41			

Source: Primary Data

Deviation and tabulation to draw the inferences. The sample size comprised of 34 tourists. On the spot convenient sampling technique was employed for the study. The tourist respondents were interviewed at Thoseghar Dhabas, and wayside restaurants.

Sr.	Facility and Tourist services	Satisfaction			Importance		
		Mean	Rank	S.D.	Mean	Rank	S.D.
1.	Quality of Roads	2.88	4.00	1.25	4.73	12.00	1.10
2.	Quality of Wayside Amenities	2.09	11.00	1.27	4.78	6.00	0.93
3.	Public Convenience	2.00	12.00	1.30	4.55	19.00	1.13
4.	Sewage and Drainage System	2.16	10.00	1.40	4.03	29.00	1.72
5.	Garbage Disposal	1.22	30.00	0.53	4.45	23.00	1.35
6.	Condition of City Roads	2.81	5.00	1.05	4.53	20.00	1.02
7.	Drinking Water Supply	1.45	24.00	0.96	4.13	28.00	1.58
8.	Condition of Street Lights	1.26	28.00	0.79	3.73	32.00	1.93
9.	Condition of Transport Signage	1.52	22.00	0.88	4.87	3.00	0.94
10.	Traffic Management	1.26	28.00	0.55	4.77	7.00	1.15
11.	Availability of Mass Transit System	3.00	2.00	1.08	3.62	33.00	1.50
12.	Availability of Rental Car	2.77	6.00	1.41	4.24	27.00	1.20
13.	Behaviour of the Driver of the Vehicle	3.19	1.00	1.29	3.35	34.00	1.69
14.	Availability of Commercial Transportation	2.68	8.00	1.19	3.94	31.00	1.85
15.	Behaviour Driver of the Commercial Transportation	2.75	7.00	1.02	2.79	35.00	1.53
16.	Availability of Authorized Tour Operators	2.27	9.00	1.20	4.00	30.00	1.34
17.	Availability of Hotels	1.63	16.00	1.09	4.76	8.00	1.16
18.	Bahaviour of the Officials At Tourist Reception Office	1.42	25.00	0.91	4.67	13.00	1.08
19.	Level of Knowledge of the Staff At the Reception Office	1.48	23.00	0.93	4.61	16.00	1.06
20.	Quality of Help Provided By the Reception Office	1.52	20.00	0.91	4.55	18.00	1.35
21.	Behaviour of Service Staff at Hotel	1.86	14.00	1.11	4.48	21.00	1.32
22.	Tariff Structure of Hotel Rooms	1.38	26.00	0.77	4.75	9.00	1.23
23.	General Upkeep of Hotel Rooms	1.59	17.00	1.10	4.94	2.00	1.19
24.	Hygiene of Wayside Amenities In Restaurants and Dhabas	1.52	21.00	1.06	4.65	14.00	1.28
25.	Availability of Petrol Pump	1.00	35.00	0.20	4.83	4.00	1.15
26.	Behaviour of Personnel at Wayside Restaurants and Dhabas	1.67	15.00	1.01	4.48	21.00	1.32
27.	General Cleanliness (Tourist Attraction and Area Around It)	1.92	13.00	1.12	4.29	26.00	1.56
28.	Public Utilities	1.57	18.00	1.06	4.64	15.00	1.50
29.	Condition of Signages Within Tourist Attractions	1.56	19.00	1.14	4.83	4.00	1.25
30.	Parking Facility	1.08	32.00	0.35	4.74	11.00	1.28
31.	Availability of Trained Guide	1.14	31.00	0.43	4.33	25.00	1.67
32.	Behaviour of Guide	1.05	33.00	0.32	4.75	9.00	1.36
33.	Conservation of Heritage	2.89	3.00	1.34	4.59	17.00	1.20
34.	Power Supply	1.29	27.00	0.75	4.43	24.00	1.31
35.	Telephone/Mobile Connectivity	1.04	34.00	0.27	4.96	1.00	0.94

Source: Primary Data

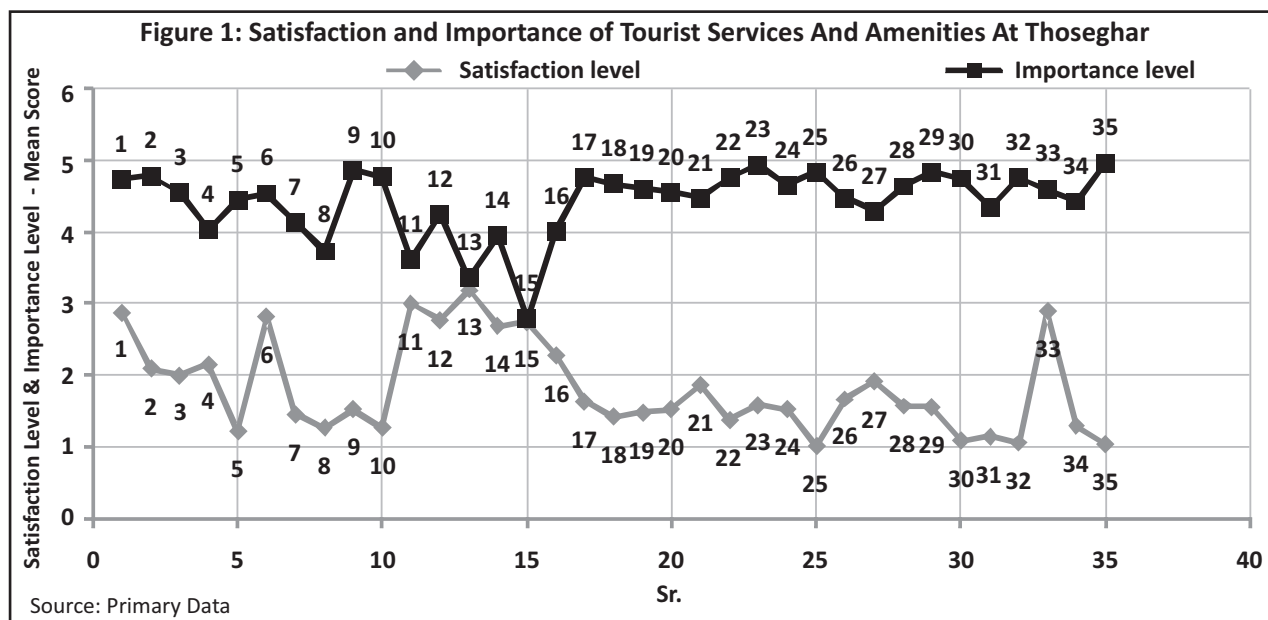
DATA ANALYSIS

The following inferences can be drawn from the Table 1 :

- 1) A majority of the tourists visiting Thoseghar were of the age group between 18 to 35 years. Among them, a majority of the respondents were men i.e. 88.24 percent of the respondents. Most of them were from Maharashtra, i.e. 97.06%. Out of these, 55.88% of the tourists were from Satara district itself, and 41.18% were from other places, of which, most of the tourists were from Pune.
- 2) Most of the tourists, i.e. 52.94% had visited the destination for the first time. To travel to Thoseghar, a majority of the respondents used their personal vehicle (car) - i.e. 61.76% of the tourists. 38.24% of the tourists used a two wheeler and the remaining respondents used public transport (bus) to reach the destination. 73.53% the tourists were visiting Thoseghar on the recommendation of their friends and relatives. 58.82% of the tourists had already recommended this destination to their friends, relatives, colleagues and neighbors.
- 3) The Maximum number of tourists , i.e. 73.53% visited the place with their friends, and the remaining traveled with their family and relatives. 8.82% of the tourists stayed in hotels at Satara.
- 4) 58.82% of the tourists dined at hotels/restaurants/dhabas at Thoseghar, and 26.47% tourists dined on homemade food. Total spending at Thoseghar by 55.88% of the tourists was below ₹ 1000, and 38.24% of the tourists had spent between ₹ 1000 - 2000.
- 5) Most of the tourists i.e. 82.35% visited the place to view the beautiful waterfalls, and 79.41% of the tourists were fascinated by the scenic natural beauty of the place.

The panoramic view of the waterfalls attracts a lot of waterfall enthusiasts to Thoseghar. Infrastructure is pivotal for attracting tourists. The Table 2 shows the percentage of importance level of facilities at “Thoseghar” , and the current satisfaction level as perceived by the tourists who visited the place on the day of data collection. The perceptual satisfaction of the sample towards infrastructure facilities at Thoseghar and the importance of infrastructural facilities are presented with the help of mean score, and the ranks were calculated on the basis of the mean score.

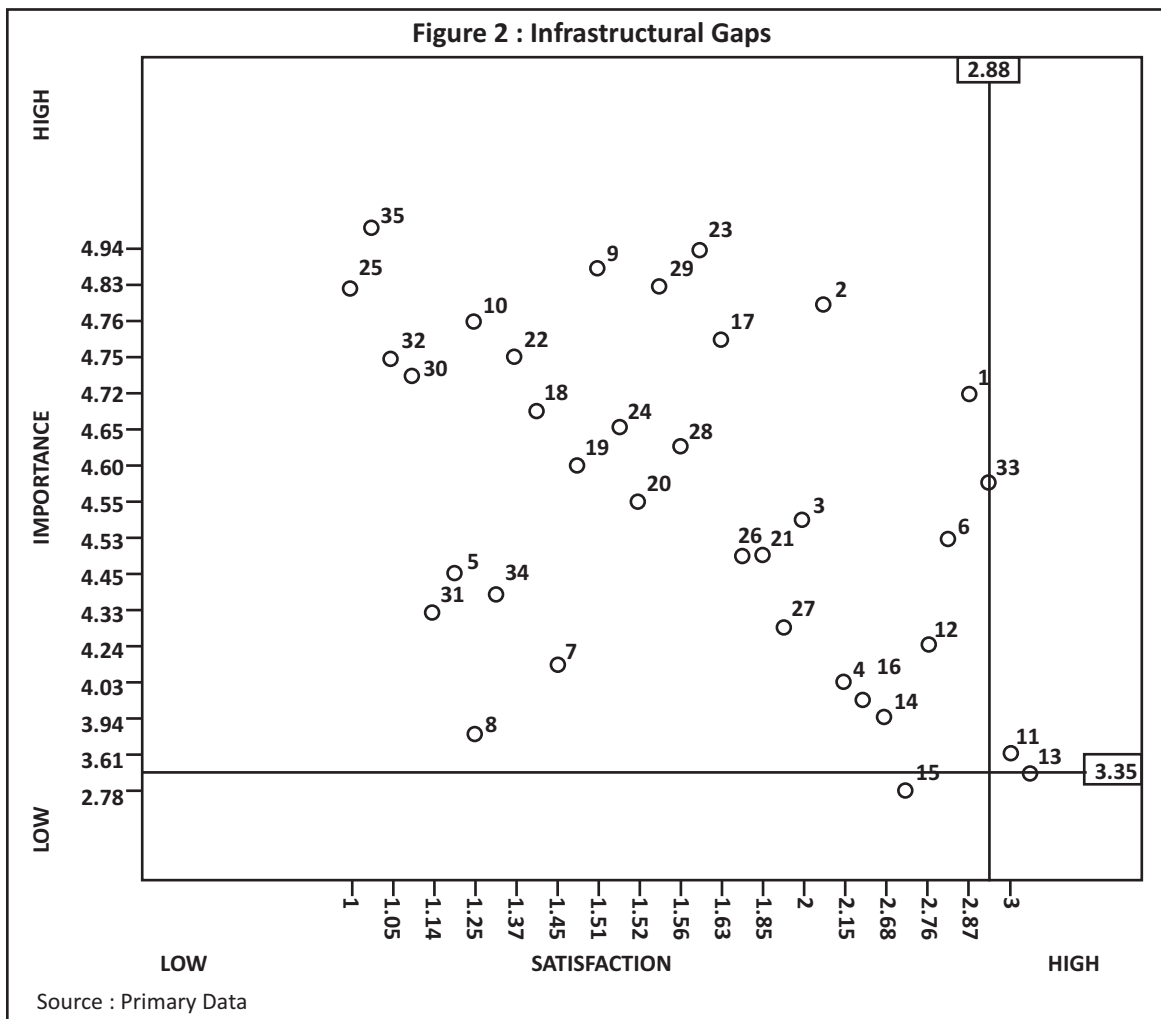
The Table 2 reveals that telephone/ cellphone connectivity is very important, since the mean score of this variable is 4.96 with Rank 1. On the contrary, mean score of satisfaction about the same is 1.04, which is very low with 34th Rank. General upkeep of hotel rooms is more important for the tourists; the mean variable is 4.94 with Rank 2. However, mean score of satisfaction about the same is 1.59 with 17th Rank. Condition of the signage carries a lot of weight, and is at the 3rd rank, with a mean score of 4.87, and the mean score of satisfaction of the same variable is 1.52 with 22nd



Rank. Availability of petrol pump facility is the next most important variable, since its mean score is 4.83 with 4th rank, however, the variable satisfaction mean is 1.00 with 35th Rank. Condition of signage around the tourist attraction carries more importance with mean score of 4.83 with 4th Rank. But the satisfaction mean of same variable is 1.56 with 19th rank.

It can be inferred from the data that dissatisfaction of the tourists has been reflected in the ranking of the variables with reference to Transport signage, Parking facility, Traffic management and Availability of hotels and tariff structure. Irrespective of the above parameters, the mean score reflected a few positive aspects viz. Quality of roads, Condition of city roads, Availability of mass transit system, Availability of rental car, Availability of commercial transportation, Behavior of the driver of commercial transportation, Behaviour of the driver of the private vehicle, and the Availability of authorized tour operators.

The Figure 1 reveals the gap between importance and satisfaction levels with 35 tourist services and amenities as given in the Table 2. It could be inferred that the largest gap was in Variable 35 i.e. Telephone / mobile connectivity, and Variable 32 viz. Behavior of the guide. Similar gap was also found in Variables 34, 25, 29, 30, 31, 10, 7, 8, and 9. They were Power supply, Availability of petrol pump, Conservation of heritage, Availability of trained guide, Parking facility at tourist destination, Guide's behaviour, Heritage site and Power supply. However, with a practical point of view, guide facility was not available at Thoseghar, so the behaviour of guide has no meaning. The destination is seasonal (visited during the rainy season), and it is nearby Satara (at a distance of 25Kms - Satara has more than 15



petrol pumps), hence, even this is a variable does not need to be focused upon. Thoseghar is not a heritage site, so its conservation cannot be an issue. Power supply facility should not become a priority at Thoseghar destination because the Waterfall is worth seeing in the daytime only. However, the authorities can focus on this issue to avoid accidents and mishaps during the night.

Thus, the Variables that need foremost attention are services like Telephone/ mobile connectivity and Parking facility. And next precedence should be given to services like Traffic management and General upkeep of hotels as the gap between the importance and satisfaction score of these variables is considerably large.

The Figure 2 depicts four quadrants. The first quadrant represents high importance and high satisfaction, which is having two variables viz. Availability of mass transit system and Behavior of the driver of the vehicle. The second quadrant represents high importance and low satisfaction. There are 32 variables, among them, 23 variables are concentrated around the area of least satisfaction against their importance. They are General cleanliness at tourist attraction, Public convenience, Quality of wayside amenities, Behavior of service staff at hotels, Behavior of staff at wayside restaurants and dhabas, Public utilities, Quality of help provided by the reception office, Hygiene of wayside amenities in restaurants and dhabas, Availability of hotels, Condition of signage within the tourist attraction, General upkeep of hotel rooms, Tariff structure of hotel rooms, Condition of transport signage, Traffic management, Parking facility, Behavior of guide, Telephone/mobile connectivity, Availability of petrol pump, Power supply, Availability of trained guide, Garbage disposal, and Level of knowledge of the personnel at the reception office.

The 3rd Quadrant represents low importance and low satisfaction with one variable, i.e. Behavior of the driver of the commercial vehicle.

The 4th Quadrant represents low importance and high satisfaction level, and no variable is placed in this quadrant. In the matrix, the second quadrant of high importance and low satisfaction is crucial for the researchers - as it is pertinent to find out the infrastructural gaps as the maximum number of variables are clustered in this quadrant.

Hence, the researchers concluded that there were a number of tourist services and facilities that need to be provided at the scenic Thoseghar Waterfalls. Tourists were dissatisfied with imperative tourist facilities and amenities at the destination, Thoseghar. Besides the above-mentioned discussion and findings, the researchers observed a couple of other aspects, which are presented in the following sections.

GENERAL FINDINGS

- 1)** Traffic management and parking facilities were inadequate and caused inconvenience to the tourists.
- 2)** Petrol pumps are an essentiality, but this destination is seasonal, so it is not viable to set up a petrol pump at the destination. Thoseghar is at a distance of around 25 kms from Satara city, and the tourists can get their tanks filled at Satara as the city has more than 15 petrol pumps.
- 3)** Guide facility is not available on the site. But there is an information centre of the Forest Department which is not noticed by a majority of the tourists.
- 4)** Police security was satisfactory at the tourist site.
- 5)** The destination is controlled and managed by the Forest Department. The Forest Department is governed by the Central Government. So without the approval of the Central government, the development initiatives cannot take place.
- 6)** Thoseghar has been declared as an 'Eco Sensitive Zone' by MoEF (Ministry of Environment and Forests). Now- a-days, tourists are attracted to similar destinations, which are calm, quiet and give individuals an opportunity to witness the beauty and bounty of mother Nature.
- 7)** The hotel occupancy was higher during the monsoon season as the Waterfalls gush down with full force during the moonsoons, and are an exotic sight to behold.
- 8)** People of all ages visited this destination, however, most of the tourists belonged to the 18-35 years age group.
- 9)** Mostly, such kinds of destinations are fun to visit with friends. Most of the tourists visited Thoseghar due to Word of Mouth (WOM) recommendation.

10) The Forest Department has proposed sanitation and drinking water facility on priority, fencing with gate and fixation of paving blocks on the road, and renovation of information centre building. The Department has spent ₹ 32 lakhs till date and ₹ 7 lakhs were spent only for footpath construction last year.

11) Road Connectivity is pivotal to reach such tourist locations. The mean satisfaction score towards the Condition of city roads, Quality of roads and Quality of wayside amenities is 2.81, 2.88 and 2.09 respectively. Whereas, the importance mean score for these respective variables is 4.53, 4.63 and 4.78 respectively. At present, the roads exist, but they are narrow and are not well maintained. One can raise the question of quality of road construction as well.

SUGGESTIONS

- 1) Traffic management is required during the rush season.
- 2) Engagement of local Guide would facilitate enriched directions/provide information to the tourists.
- 3) Parking zone should be declared and the area should be demarcated. For maintenance, the tourists can be charged for parking their vehicles.
- 4) Public Toilets are indispensable.
- 5) Fillip local entrepreneurship for establishing small dhabas and restaurants.
- 6) Arrange local mini buses with greater frequency during the rush season. Restrict the entry of big vehicles at the destination as they cause traffic congestion.
- 7) Photographs and videos of the Waterfall and the surrounding scenery should be displayed at hotels' waiting rooms and at the offices of tour operators and travel agents in Satara.
- 8) Roads should be repaired before the monsoon (rush) season.
- 9) Check Naka should be arranged to avoid and control illegal activities.
- 10) Movable garage and restaurant facility should be permitted.

CONCLUSION

Thoseghar is a good tourist destination in Satara, but it is seasonal in nature. As compared to earlier years, the tourist flow to the destination has increased. There are some infrastructural hassles like parking and traffic management, guide availability, telephone and mobile service availability, and hygiene related issues at wayside restaurants and Dhabas. It is a very good one-day trip covering Thoseghar Waterfalls, Chalkewadi Windmill Farms, valleys, cloud views, the Sajjangad Fort, a Pilgrimage centre and Urmodi Dam. Thus, for the economic significance of development of tourism in Satara District, the Forest Department has to think gravely to develop these kinds of destinations to attract tourists. High precedence should be given to services like telephone/ mobile connectivity and parking facility at Thoseghar. And the next right way would be to make available services like traffic management and general upkeep of hotels as these facilities are of prime importance. Publicity can be an effective source of communication for this type of tourist destination.

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