

# The Role of French Language in Chettinad (Karaikudi) - Hospitality and Tourism

OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 13

Special Issue: 1

Month: February

Year: 2026

P-ISSN: 2321-4643

E-ISSN: 2581-9402

Citation:

Manikandan, S., and Thangamani, M. "The Role of French Language in Chettinad (Karaikudi) - Hospitality and Tourism." *Shanlax International Journal of Management*, vol. 13, no. S1, 2026, pp. 96–98.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.34293/management.v13iS1-i2-Feb.10394>

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## Abstract

*Chettinad, whose cultural and economic hub is Karaikudi, is among the most peculiar heritages of Tamil Nadu that has become notable due to their palaces of mansions, distinct cuisine and craftsmanship and merchandise background. However, growing interest in heritage conservation, the conversion of Chettinad houses into homestays, culinary tourism and increased popularity in experiential travel has in recent years attracted much attention to the hospitality and tourism in this area. This paper will analyze the present situation of hospitality and tourism development within Karaikudi and the wider Chettinad region with respect to infrastructure level, the perceptions of the locals, entrepreneurship in the area, as well as sustainability measures. With the help of secondary sources and field observations, it has been noted that the main attractions include heritage buildings, temple tourism, Athangudi tile, handloom, and Chettinad food, and some of the challenges to be found here will include lack of connectivity, seasonality, shortage of skilled labor, and the conservation expenses. The study goes further to discuss prospects of community based tourism, more environmentally friendly accommodations, digital marketing and collaboration between the communities and the government as an avenue of balanced development.*

## The Role of French Language

*Chettinad attracts foreign travelers interested in heritage architecture, South Indian culture, and cuisine. Among them are some French and European tourists who explore Tamil Nadu's cultural circuits. Basic French-language skills can therefore be useful for tour guides, hotel staff, and heritage homestay hosts when communicating with such visitors.*

*Chettinad cuisine is promoted internationally, including in France, where Indian food culture has growing interest. While French is not used locally in kitchens, French-language media and travel writing can influence inbound tourism.*

*Students in hospitality and tourism programs in Tamil Nadu—including around Karaikudi study French as a foreign language option because it is useful in hotels, airlines, and travel agencies serving international guests.*

**Keywords:** French and European Tourists, French as a Foreign Language Option, Chettinad Cuisine, Chettinad Houses, Athangudi Tiles, Handloom Weaving.

## Introduction

The culturally rich geographical region of Chettinad located in Tamil Nadu, and Karaikudi, which is the main urban centre has marked out a heritage tourism spot in South India. Known with their large mansions, elaborate woodwork, Athangudi tiles, temple architecture and world-renowned cuisine, Chettinad is the reflection of the NattukottaiChettiars, whose international trade connections determined the cosmopolitan outlook of the region. Over the last few years, there has been an uprising in the number of visitors visiting Europe, and especially France to have a cultural experience through a more authentic cultural experience, rather than the regular tourist route.

The French tourists are especially fascinated with the architectural conservation programs, cuisine, crafts villa, and connection with the main cultural paths of the Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. Their presence signifies the significance of cross-cultural communication, hospitality services that are offered with more than one language and interpretation of the heritage in augmenting visitor satisfaction. Knowledge about the reasons and demands of French tourists to the destinations hence becomes valuable in terms of destination planning, tourism education, and sustainable hospitality development in Chettinad.

It does not have an administrative or historical place within French as in Puducherry in the Chettinad region (including Karaikudi), but has a minor and nascent functional importance regarding tourism, education, and international cultural exchange.

## Here are the Key Ways French is Relevant in Chettinad

### 1. Tourism Communication

Chettinad attracts international heritage travelers, including visitors from France who are interested in architecture, cuisine, temples, and craft traditions. Because of this, knowledge of French can be useful for:

- Tour guides and interpreters
- Staff in heritage hotels and homestays
- Travel agencies marketing to European tourists

This helps improve visitor experience and cultural understanding.

### 2. Heritage and Academic Interest

Some French scholars, architects, and conservation groups study South Indian heritage architecture, including Chettinad mansions. In such cases, French-speaking intermediaries or translated materials support research visits and documentation.

### 3. Hospitality & Tourism Education

Students in hotel management and tourism programs in Tamil Nadu sometimes learn French as a foreign language because it is widely used in international hospitality. This indirectly benefits regions like Chettinad when trained graduates work in local tourism enterprises.

### 4. Destination Promotion

High-end heritage properties or tour operators may include French-language brochures, websites, or guidebooks to attract European travelers. This is part of global tourism marketing rather than everyday regional use.

## What is the Objective for Presenting this Paper

In the Chettinad region (Karaikudi and surrounding areas), the main objective for learning and practicing French is not for daily communication, but for professional, educational, and tourism-related purposes, especially as the region positions itself as a heritage destination for international visitors.

## **Main Objectives for Learning and Using French in Chettinad**

### **1. Enhancing Tourism and Hospitality Services**

The primary goal is to improve communication with French-speaking tourists—particularly visitors from France and other European countries—who travel to Chettinad for heritage architecture, cuisine, and cultural experiences. French skills help guides, hotel staff, and homestay hosts deliver better service, heritage interpretation, and personalized hospitality.

### **2. Supporting Heritage Research and Cultural Exchange**

French is useful in academic collaborations involving historians, architects, conservationists, and anthropologists from France who study Chettinad mansions, urban heritage, and craft traditions. Local researchers or students with French proficiency can act as facilitators or translators.

### **3. Improving Employability in Hospitality Educational**

Students in hotel management and tourism programs in and around Karaikudi may learn French to broaden career opportunities in luxury hotels, airlines, tour operations, and international travel services. Practicing French locally prepares them for work with foreign guests.

### **4. Destination Marketing and Promotion**

Tourism enterprises can use French-language content in brochures, websites, and social media to attract European travelers, positioning Chettinad as part of Tamil Nadu's cultural tourism circuit.

## **Future Plans and Intension**

One major future plan involves introducing or expanding French language modules within hotel management institutes, tourism departments, and local colleges. Short-term certificate courses designed for tour guides, homestay operators, and frontline hospitality staff could equip them with conversational proficiency tailored to tourism contexts. Community-based training programs, supported by tourism boards or NGOs, may further encourage youth participation and employment.

## **Conclusion**

Despite the lack of historical or administrative existence of the French in the Chettinad region, it assumes an increasingly supportive role in the framework of the heritage tourism and hospitality development. Since Karaikudi and other nearby villages are increasingly receiving more and more international tourists, especially French-speaking tourists, the interest of these tourists in architecture, cuisine, crafts and cultural landscapes, foreign language skills are invaluable in the quality of services and competitiveness of destinations. The main purposes of learning and practicing French in this area are professional, which are improving the interactive process with the visitors, academic and conservation partnerships, tourism educational training, and augmenting international marketing activities.

In order that Chettinad manages to position itself as an effective sustainable heritage tourism destination, the inclusion of basic French language training into hospitality coursework, guide certification courses, and as a part of community based tourism programmes may yield long term results. Not only would such activities enhance the satisfaction of the tourists, but they would also provide the young people in the area with job opportunities as well as bringing about serious cross-cultural interaction. Finally, the purposeful application of the French language as a means of communication, instead of being a cultural heritage, may foster the inclusive and globalized tourism in the region.

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