

An Empirical Study on Tourist Behaviour towards Tourism Products

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Abstract: The product for the tourist covers the complete experience from the time he leaves home to the time he returns. The tourist product today is developed to meet the needs of the consumer and techniques like direct sales, publicity and advertising are employed to bring this product to the consumer. The tourist product is the basic raw material, be it the country's natural beauty, climate, history, culture and the people, or other facilities necessary for comfortable living such as water supply, electricity, roads, transport, communication and other essentials. Consumer behavior is a highly important factor for all activities which have the purpose to promote and sell tourism products. This paper gives an empirical study on tourist behaviour towards tourism products.

Keywords: Tourists behaviour, Tourism Products

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I. Introduction

The word tourism encompasses all activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment. The tourism industry also includes establishments whose products are mainly sold to visitors, though they do not form a major share of tourist consumption. Several infrastructure sectors like power, telecommunication, water supply, roads and some production sectors like travel items, sports equipment; photographic materials, medicines and cosmetics are included in this category. The infrastructure for tourism thus includes basic infrastructure components like airports, railways, roads, waterways; amenities like electricity, water supply, drainage, sewerage, solid waste disposal systems and services and facilities like accommodation, restaurants, recreational facilities and shopping facilities. Planning for sustainable development of tourism, therefore, involves the integrated development of basic infrastructure and amenities along with all the tourism facilities in a balanced manner.

Tourism Products

A tourism product can be defined as the sum of the physical and psychological satisfaction it provides to tourists during their travelling en route to the destination. The tourist product focuses on facilities and services designed to meet the needs of the tourist. It can be seen as a composite product, as the sum total of a country's tourist attractions, transport, and accommodation and of entertainment which result in customer satisfaction. Each of the components of a tourist product is supplied by individual providers of services like hotel companies, airlines, travel agencies, etc. The tourist product can be analyzed in terms of the following:

- Attraction
- Accessibility
- Accommodation
- Amenities

Attractions

Of the four basic components of a tourist product, attractions are very important. Unless there is an attraction, the tourist will not be motivated to go to a particular place. Attractions are those elements in a product which determine the choice made by particular tourist to visit one particular destination rather than another. The attractions could be cultural, like sites and areas of archaeological interest, historical buildings and monuments, flora and fauna, beach resorts, mountains, national parks or events like trade fairs, exhibitions, arts and music festivals, games, etc.

Tourist demands are also very much susceptible to changes in fashion. Fashion is an important factor in the demand for various tourist attractions and amenities. The tourist who visits a particular place for its natural beauty may decide to visit some other attractions due to a change in fashion.

However, the attractions of tourism are, to a very large extent, geographical in character. Location and accessibility (whether a place has a coastal or inland position and the ease with which a given place can be reached) are important. Physical space may be thought of as a component for those who seek the wilderness and solitude. Scenery or landscape is a compound of landforms; water and the vegetation and has an aesthetic and recreative value.

Climate conditions, especially in relation to the amount of sunshine, temperature and precipitation (snow as well as rain), are of special significance. Animal life may be an important attraction, firstly in relation to, bird watching or viewing game in their natural habitat and secondly, for sports purposes, eg. fishing and hunting. Man's impact on the natural landscape in the form of his settlements, historical monuments and archaeological remains is also a major attraction. Finally, a variety of cultural features-ways of life, folklore, artistic expressions, etc. provide valuable attractions to many.

Accessibility

It is a means by which a tourist can reach the area where attractions are located. Tourist attractions of whatever type would be of little importance if their locations are inaccessible by the normal means of transport. A Tourist in order to get to his destination needs some mode of transport. This mode may be a motor car, a coach, an aeroplane, a ship or a train which enables him to reach his predetermined destination. If tourist destinations are located at places where no transport can reach or where there are inadequate transport facilities, they become of little value. The tourist attractions, which are located near the tourist-generating markets and are linked by a network of efficient means of transport, receive the maximum number of tourists. The distance factor also plays an important role in determining a tourist's choice of a destination. Longer distances cost much more in the way of expenses on travel as compared to short distances.

Accommodation

The accommodation and other facilities complement the attractions. Accommodation plays a central role and is very basic to tourist destinations. World Tourism Organization in its definition of a tourist has stated that he must spend at least one night in the destination visited, to qualify as a tourist. for accommodation away from one's home is met by a variety of facilities. The range and type of accommodation is quite varied and has undergone considerable change since the last half century. There has been a decline in the use of boarding houses and small private hotels. Larger hotels are increasing their share of holiday trade, especially in big metropolitan areas and popular spots. In more traditional holiday and sea-side resorts in Europe and elsewhere, big hotels are keeping their share of holiday resorts. In recent years, some changes have been reflected in the type of accommodation. There has been an increasing demand for more non- traditional and informal types of accommodation. The latest trends in accommodation are holiday villages. In recent years there has been an increase in the popularity of such accommodation.

Accommodation may in itself be an important tourist attraction. In fact, a large number of tourists visit a particular destination or town simply because there is a first class luxury hotel or resort which provides excellent services and facilities. Some countries like Switzerland, Holland, France, Austria, and Belgium have gained a reputation for providing excellent accommodation with good cuisine. Many hotel establishments elsewhere in various countries, especially the resort hotels, have gained a reputation for their excellent cuisine, services and facilities.

Amenities

Facilities are a necessary aid to the tourist centre. For a sea-side resort, facilities like swimming, boating, yachting, surf-riding, and other facilities like dancing, recreation and other amusements are important for every tourist centre. Amenities can be of two types; natural, eg. beaches, sea-bathing, possibilities of fishing, opportunities for climbing, trekking, viewing, etc. And man-made, eg. various types of entertainment and facilities which cater to the special needs of the tourists. Excellent sandy beaches, sheltered from sunshine with palm and coconut trees and offering good bathing conditions form very good tourist attractions. Certain other natural amenities such as spacious waters for the purpose of sailing or the opportunities for fishing and hunting are also very important.

II. Objectives of The Study

To identify the most influential factor among the selected tourism products.

Study Area

Present study is an attempt to find out the Impact of Socio- Demographic and Psychographic Factors affecting the customers visiting the Five Ecotourism Projects area of South Kerala:

1. Ecotourism Project Thenmala
2. Ecotourism Project Ponnudi
3. Konni Ecotourism Project
4. Ecotourism Project of Pamba Biological Garden – Gavi
5. The best of Kerala’s backwater (Vembanad Lake) and Bird Sanctuary – Kumarakom.

III. Observation and Findings:

Tourist opinion on the level of importance of Tourism Products

Tourism Products	Importance	
	Mean	Agree %
Location /proximity	6.23	92.15
Transport accessibility /good roads	6.12	91.10
Parking sites near the accommodation	6.41	93.99
Parking sites near the sites for visit	6.36	93.50
Tourist information /maps, guidebooks	6.17	91.60
Place for shopping	6.64	96.28
Cleanliness	6.39	93.80
Hospitality	6.18	91.70
Safety	6.33	93.16
Opportunities /facilities for adventure / sport	6.09	90.80
Organized cultural events	6.14	91.30
Prices corresponding to the services	6.14	91.29
Good equipped rooms	6.85	98.40
Good hygiene	6.63	96.15
Diverse food and drink	6.11	91.00
Prompt service	6.14	91.30
Well prepared food	6.02	90.09
Many nature landmarks	6.05	90.40
Favourable climate	6.12	91.10
Tourist paths	6.05	90.40
The tourist destination as a whole	6.26	92.47

*Agree % represents values of 4&5

The factor “Good equipped rooms” is considered most important with mean 6.85 and agree % 98.4 is placed first. Most hotels provide the standard set of facilities, which include bedrooms, restaurants, bars, function rooms, meeting rooms, as well as recreation facilities, such as swimming pool, sauna, golf fields or tennis courts.

Second place is for the factor “Place for shopping” with mean 6.64 and agree % 96.28. “Good hygiene” is in third place with mean 6.63 and agree % 96.15. Hygiene refers to a set principles perceived by a community to be associated with the preservation of health and healthy living. While in medical sciences there is a set of standards of hygiene recommended for different situations, what is considered hygienic or not can vary between different cultures and gender.

Fourth place is for the factor “Parking sites near the accommodation” with mean and agree % is 6.41 and 93.99. The factor “Cleanliness” is in fifth place with mean 6.39 and agree % 93.8. Cleanliness is both the abstract state of being clean and free from dirt, and the process of achieving and maintaining that state. Cleanliness may be endowed with a moral quality, as indicated by the aphorism “Cleanliness is next to godliness”, may be regarded as contributing to other ideals such as health and beauty.

“Parking sites near the sites for visit” is in sixth place with mean and agree % 6.36 and 93.5. “Safety” is placed seven with mean 6.33 and agree % 93.16. Safety is the state of being “safe”, the condition of being protected against physical, social, spiritual, financial, political, or other types or consequences of failure, damage or any other event which could be considered non – desirable. Safety can also be defined to be the control of recognized hazards to achieve an acceptable level of risk. The factor “Location /proximity” is placed eighth with mean 6.23 and agree% 92.15. “Hospitality” is placed ninth place with mean 6.18 and agree % 91.7. Hospitality is the relationship between guest and host, or the act or practice of being hospitable. Specifically, this includes the reception and entertainment of guests, visitors or strangers, resorts.

The factor “Tourist information /maps, guidebooks” is in tenth place with mean 6.17 agree % 91.6. “Organized cultural events” is in eleventh place with mean and agree % 6.14 and 91.3. The factor “Prices corresponding to the services” is twelfth place with mean 6.14 and agree % 91.29. Price is one of important marketing tools to attract customers to purchase their products (Armstrong & Kotler, 2003). Marketers normally adopt different pricing strategies to achieve their desired sales objectives (Hsu & Powers, 2002). In the fierce competitive market, price reduction strategy is also commonly employed by marketers as a result of keen competition. However, Reid, Bojanic and David (2006) argued that reducing price strategy to attract customers

may not be effective. On the other hand, hoteliers may need to focus on other areas they can improve in order to attract and retain their customers in the long run.

“Prompt service” is in thirteenth place with mean and agree % 6.14 and 91.3. Prompt service is a function of how well an organization meets the needs of its customers constantly and consistently.

Fourteenth place is for the factor “Transport accessibility /good roads” with mean 6.12 and agree %91.1. The factor “Favourable climate” is placed fifteenth with mean 6.12 and agree % 91.1. “Diverse food and drink” is in sixteenth place with mean 6.11 and agree % 91. The factor “Opportunities /facilities for adventure / sport” is in seventeenth place with mean and agree % 6.09 and 90.8. “Many nature landmarks” is in eighteenth place with mean 6.05 and agree % 90.4. “Tourist paths” is in nineteenth place with mean 6.05 and agree % 90.4. The least important factor is “Well prepared food” is placed twentieth with mean and agree % 6.02 and 90.09.

IV. Conclusion

It is a difficult task to discern all the reasons and motivations behind the behavior of tourists due to the many different personal, social, cultural, economic and educational values that exist in every society worldwide. Researchers from various disciplines have tried to explain tourist behavior, but a gap always remains between theory and the multitude of lived experience. Nevertheless, it is widely accepted to a minor or major extent, every tourist’s choice is influenced by the offers of the supply side and the marketing skills and attraction expertise of the destination.

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