

Destination branding: Impact of demographics on sources of information regarding tourists first awareness about Kerala as a tourism destination

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Abstract

Tourism destination can be promoted through advertisement in the right media, using sales support techniques like brochure, folder, sales letters, display material and special offers like price reductions, free gifts and maintaining good public relations. This study focuses on the sources of awareness which give information to health tourists about Kerala. Hypotheses are tested to find out whether different sources of awareness and tourists age, gender and nationalities are associated.

Keywords: demographics, Kerala tourism destination

Introduction

Tourism is recognized as a productive one, generating a number of social and economic benefits. It promotes national integration and international understanding, creates employment opportunities and makes possible commercialization of a particular place.

A destination

- Is a place which offers complex of activities that comprise the tourism experience,
- Has more attractions on offer than what a tourist requires, so there is plenty of choice
- Is a product by itself as well as a container of products,
- Is bought by different people for different reasons like convention, shopping, culture ^[1].

Success of tourism industry is influenced customer orientation which necessitates integrated development of all the related components like transportation facilities, hotels and motels, communication facilities, availability of travel agents, tour guides etc. The tourism product can only be experienced. It is a service product which is perishable. The providers are a heterogeneous group of people. The success of this industry depends up on the integrated efforts of providers. The product mix is to be designed in the background of changing needs of the tourists, the pricing strategies are to be framed in tune with the paying capacity of the tourists, and the promotional strategies are to be formulated on the basis of emerging trends in competition. The profitable utilisation of available potentialities depends up on the application of innovative marketing strategies ^[2].

The business of tourism relates to all activities that cater to the comfort and satisfaction of tourists. For the development of a tourism destination, tourism product should be identified so as to know their needs and wants. Here the need for tourism marketing arises.

Identifying the Tourism Product

Tourism product means different things to the various members of the tourism industry. To the hotel, it is guest-nights. To the airline it is the seats flown and the passenger

miles. To the museum, art gallery or archaeological site, the product is measured in terms of the number of visitors. For the tourist the product is the complete experience resulting from the package tour or travel facility purchased, from the time they leave home until their return ^[3].

The tourism product includes attractions at the destination which may be

- Nature and geography, for leisure, for sport, for health, for pleasure.
- History, places of importance
- Tradition and heritage
- Events, festivals, excursions
- Sports, entertainment, shopping
- People- guides and others in the group.

In the case of a tourism product, the basic raw materials would be the country's natural beauty, climate, history, culture and the people. Other accepts would be the existing facilities necessary for comfortable living such as water supply, electricity, roads, transport, communication and other essentials. The tourist product can be analysed in terms of its attractions, its facilities and its accessibility. Attractions are those elements in the tourist product which determine the choice of a 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 or scenic like flora and fauna, beach resorts, mountains, national parks or events like trade fairs, exhibitions, arts and music festivals, games etc. Facilities are those elements in the tourist product which are a necessary aid to the tourist centre. These facilities complement the attractions. These include accommodation, various types of entertainments, picnic sites, recreation etc. Accessibility is a means by which a tourist can reach the area where attractions are located. The tourist attractions which are located near to the tourist generating markets and are linked by a network of efficient transport, receive the maximum number of tourists ^[4]. The growing number of tourist destinations gives tourists wide range of choices. For developing a tourism destination, the tourist needs and wants should be identified.

Identifying Potential Tourists

A tourist market may be identified corresponding to each tourist product. It includes actual or potential customers of tourism service or destination. The tourists’ market may be segmented on the basis of:

- Place of origin of tourists (Where the demand is)
- Destinations (Where the Supply is)
- Purposes of tour, holiday, pilgrimage, health treatment, sight-seeing, shopping, adventure.
- Economic status, spending tendencies
- Demographic characteristics, age, sex, occupation, attitudes
- Preferences for staying, camping, beaches, luxury hotels
- Preferences of travel- air, sea, road, train.

A market study would include who are the potential tourists, where do they come from, what are their likes and dislikes, what are their travel preferences, interests etc. Right identification of the potential tourists paves ways for reaching to the target audience or the actual tourists. Following factors are included in the market study:

- Spatial patterns of supply and demand, flows, impacts (who travels, from where to where, why, when, how)
- Seasonality’s (periods of high and low movement)
- Life cycles of products- affected largely by developmental activities as well as by political and regulatory changes)
- Attractions, land forms (hiking, beaches, hill stations), flora, fauna (nature, wild life, sanctuaries), man-made objects (temples, monuments), culture and history, cuisine, music, theatre
- Accommodation – commercial, private (friends), camping
- Infrastructure - roads, air fields, buses, car rentals, train,

electricity, water supply, communication, medical care.

Destination Branding

Identification of tourists needs guide the development of suitable products. A destination should be enabling to attract all the potential tourists and motivate them to use the tourism services of that destination rather than another. The range of motivational factors that influence consumer choice include leisure and recreation, sporting interest, social interests such as family reunions or visits to friends, religious factors and business needs. Understanding consumer motivation and consumer needs is a major part of tourism marketing.

Successful destination brands are those that are able to clearly differentiate themselves and simplify choices for customers. A destination brand is the totality of perceptions that a customer holds about the experience associated with a place. Effective management of these perceptions and experiences can secure enduring value for the destination, its partners and customers. This means that the brand is built at every point of contact between customers and the destination [5].

Methodology

Descriptive and analytical research design is used for the study. Data are collected from 370 international tourists visited Kerala through a questionnaire.

Results and Discussions

Tourism destination can be promoted through advertisement in the right media, using sales support techniques like brochure, folder, sales letters, display material and special offers like price reductions, free gifts and maintaining good public relations. Following table shows the sources of awareness which give information to tourists about Kerala.

Table 1: Sources of First Awareness about Kerala

Sources of Awareness	No. of Tourists	Percentage
Friends	90	24.32
Internet	86	23.24
Books/Magazines	58	15.68
Television	46	12.43
Travel Agent	62	16.76
Road Show	28	7.57
Total	370	100

Source: Primary Data

Friends and internet are the major sources of first awareness of tourists about Kerala followed by internet and travel agent.

Testing of Hypotheses Regarding Sources of Awareness about Kerala

Following hypotheses are tested to find out whether different sources of awareness and tourists age, sex and nationalities are

associated.

1. Hypothesis regarding sources of awareness and age groups

H₀ : Sources of first awareness of tourists about Kerala regarding their age groups are not associated.

H₁ : Sources of first awareness of tourists about Kerala regarding their age groups are associated.

Table 2: Sources of Awareness and Age Groups

S. No	Sources of Awareness	Age Groups				Total
		Below 10	30 - 45	46 - 60	Above 60	
		Number of Tourists				
1	Friends	21	27	22	20	90
2	Internet	25	29	24	8	86
3	Books/Magazines	9	25	17	7	58
4	Television	12	9	19	6	46
5	Travel Agent	8	14	20	20	62
6	Road Show	11	4	7	6	28
	Total	86	108	109	67	370

Source: Primary Data

Chi – Square test is used for testing hypothesis. Pearson Chi – Square value is 34.602 at 15 degrees of freedom and P value is .003. Null hypothesis is rejected as P value is less than .05. Hence it can be concluded that Sources of first awareness of tourists about Kerala regarding their age groups are associated. 2. Hypothesis regarding sources of awareness and Gender

groups
H₀ : Sources of first awareness of tourists about Kerala regarding their gender groups are not associated.
H₁ : Sources of first awareness of tourists about Kerala regarding their gender groups are associated.\

Table 3: Sources of Awareness and Gender Groups

S. No	Sources of Awareness	Sex Groups		Total
		Male	Female	
		Number of Tourists		
1	Friends	58	32	90
2	Internet	49	37	86
3	Books/Magazines	36	22	58
4	Television	28	18	46
5	Travel Agent	35	27	62
6	Road Show	14	14	28
	Total	220	150	370

Source: Primary Data

Chi – Square test is used for testing hypothesis. Pearson Chi – Square value is 2.622 at 5 degrees of freedom and P value is .758. Null hypothesis is accepted as P value is higher than .05. Hence it can be concluded that Sources of first awareness of tourists about Kerala regarding their gender groups are independent.

3. Hypothesis regarding sources of awareness and Nationalities of Tourists
H₀ : Sources of first awareness of tourists about Kerala regarding their nationalities are not associated.
H₁ : Sources of first awareness of tourists about Kerala regarding their nationalities are associated.

Table 4: Sources of Awareness and Nationalities

S. No	Sources of Awareness	Nation				Total
		Europe	USA	Arab	Neighbours	
		Number of Tourists				
1	Friends	53	15	14	8	90
2	Internet	37	30	17	2	86
3	Books/Magazines	32	12	13	1	58
4	Television	23	14	7	2	46
5	Travel Agent	30	15	12	5	62
6	Road Show	10	10	7	1	28
	Total	185	96	70	19	370

Source: Primary Data

Chi – Square test is used for testing hypothesis. Pearson Chi – Square value is 19.620 at 15 degrees of freedom and P value is .187. Null hypothesis is accepted as P value is higher than .05. Hence it can be concluded that Sources of first awareness of tourists about Kerala regarding their nationalities are independent.

Conclusion
 Friends and internet are the major sources of first awareness of tourists about Kerala followed by internet and travel agent. Sources of first awareness of tourists about Kerala regarding their age groups are associated. Sources of first awareness of tourists about Kerala regarding their gender groups are

independent. Sources of first awareness of tourists about Kerala regarding their nationalities are independent.

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