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The tourist observation of hoteliers and travel agents in Indian tourism industry

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Abstract

Now a day's in a whole world, infinite people build their travel plans for an enjoyment or business related trip. The trip may be for short or long duration, for the weekend, or for a longer holiday sometime during the coming year. Visas are applied for, flights are reserved, accommodation is booked, cars are rented, train tickets are purchased, programmes are planned and the World Wide Web is surfed for travel-related information and availability of seats. Thousands of people are working round-the-clock to offer these services and interrelate with the traveller, while another couple of thousands work behind the scenes to assist the traveller have a safe and memorable holiday. All these people form a part of one of the largest industry in the world in the tourism industry. A tourist is a temporary visitor to a place, who leaves their usual place of residence and work to have a change from their usual routine for a short time; they may stay at a place at least let's say for 24 hours. In the current study, we would be considered two such intermediaries having direct contact with the tourists, i.e., Travel agency and the Hotels. The tourist's observation of the travel agents and the hoteliers would be recognized bringing to light assorted factors that are decisive for accomplishing victorious tourism partnerships.

Keywords: Relationship marketing, channel intermediaries, Hoteliers, travel agency, Tourist perception, service experience, tourism partnerships.

Introduction

Tourism is travel for pleasure; also the theory and practice of touring, the business of attracting, accommodating, and entertaining tourists, and the business of operating tours. Tourism may be international, or within the traveller's country. The World Tourism Organization defines tourism more generally, in terms which go "beyond the common perception of tourism as being limited to holiday activity only", as people "travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes".

Tourism can be domestic or international, and international tourism has both incoming and outgoing implications on a country's balance of payments. Today, tourism is a major source of income for many countries, and affects the economy of both the source and host countries, in some cases being of vital importance.

Tourism is a dynamic and competitive industry that requires the ability to adapt constantly to customers' changing needs and desires, as the customer's satisfaction, safety and enjoyment are particularly the focus of tourism businesses.

Tourism encompasses

a) Outbound Tourism

Outbound tourism is what you may be most familiar with. It involves the people going from British Columbia to other provinces, territories or countries. For example, going to Hawaii for a holiday is considered outbound tourism.

b) Inbound Tourism

The tourists coming to BC from other places are called inbound tourists. BC competes in a global market to attract tourists from the United States, Japan, Germany and many other countries. The industry also implements marketing campaigns aimed at attracting travellers

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from other parts of Canada, as well as from within British Columbia.

c) Domestic Tourism

Approximately half of the tourists in BC each year are actually from within the province. BC Stats and Destination BC consider those travelling beyond their usual environment (typically more than 80 km from home) for business or for pleasure to be tourists.

d) Tourism Sectors

There are different ways to measure the size of the tourism industry, as tourism does not conform to the usual ways that industries are defined, such as manufacturing, forestry and other industries. Tourism constitutes a wide variety of sectors that provide diverse products and services to visitors. However, these businesses also provide products and services to local residents.

Specialist travel service providers assist tourists with travel arrangements. These providers include travel agencies who are involved in retailing of travel products directly to the tourists (individuals or groups). They provide information on different travel destinations and advise customers on travel plans. They also sell associated products such as insurance, car hire, and currency exchange.

Business travel agencies specialise in making travel and accommodation arrangements for business travelers and promoting conference trades. The tour operators provide packages for individuals while the principals provide basic travel and tourism related services.

Tour operators offer holiday packages which comprise travel (road, rail, sea, air as well as to and from the destination airport, car hire, excursions, etc) and accommodation (hotels, guesthouses, apartments, etc) services.

Transport service providers could be airlines, cruise lines, car rentals, and rail companies. A tourist's choice of transport would depend on the travel budget, destination, time, purpose of the tour, and convenience to the point of destination. Accommodation could be hotels and motels, apartments, camps, guest houses, lodge, bed and breakfast establishments, house boats, resorts, cabins, and hostels. In addition, tourists also require catering facilities, which a variety of outlets for food and refreshments offer. These include hotels, local restaurants, roadside joints, cafeterias, and retail outlets serving food and beverages.

Another major component of the travel and tourism industry is 'attractions' such as theme parks and natural attractions including scenic locations, cultural and educational attractions, monuments, events, and medical, social or professional causes.

The tourist information and guidance providers include a number of service providers such as those offering insurance, recreational, communication, and banking services; government agencies; tour guides; industry associations; packaging agents; ticketing agents; and holiday sellers.

Types of tourists

Tourists can also be classified based on their purpose of visit:

Business tourists

This segment typically comprises those travelling for meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (MICE); however, this definition is not conclusive and includes any tourist on a visit to India for business purposes. Business tourism is viewed as an important market in the country and

one of the high-yielding sectors of the tourism industry.

Leisure tourists

Leisure tourism comprises trips for pleasure. It includes holidays within the country or abroad. Visiting friends and relatives and travel for a variety of reasons such as health and fitness, sports, education, and culture also come under the purview of leisure trips. In the past few years, opportunities in India for leisure tourism have emerged strongly owing to the following factors: changing consumption pattern of Indian customers, burgeoning Indian middle class population, and geographical diversity.

Tourists can also be classified into domestic and foreign tourists based on their nationality. Furthermore, depending on the duration, tourism can be classified into picnic, excursion, holidays, weekend getaways, etc.

Medical tourism

Medical tourism also known as health tourism has emerged as one of the important segments of the tourism industry. The term has been coined by travel agencies and the mass media to describe the rapidly-growing practice of travelling across international borders to for healthcare. Travelers typically seek services such as elective procedures as well as complex specialised surgeries such as joint replacement (knee/hip), cardiac, dental, and cosmetic surgeries. Psychiatry, alternative treatments, and convalescent care are also available.

Several factors have contributed to growth in medical tourism worldwide. These include:

Low travel costs

Significant reduction in travel costs worldwide has made travel to other countries for medical treatments more affordable. This has also boosted industry growth.

Adventure tourism

Travel for the aim of exploration or travel to remote, exotic and possibly hostile areas is known as adventure tourism. With tourists looking for different options, adventure tourism is recording healthy growth. Adventure tourism refers to performance of acts, which require significant efforts and some degree of risk or physical danger. The activities include mountaineering, trekking, bungee jumping, mountain biking, river rafting, and rock climbing.

India with its diverse topography and climate offers tremendous scope for adventure tourism. The mountain regions offer lot of scope for mountaineering, rock climbing, trekking, skiing, skating, mount biking and safaris; rushing rivers provide opportunities for river rafting, canoeing and kayaking; and oceans provide tremendous opportunity for diving and snorkeling.

Ecotourism

Ecotourism, also known as ecological tourism, is travel to natural areas to appreciate the cultural and natural history of the environment, while not disturbing the integrity of the ecosystem and creating economic opportunities that make conservation and protection of natural resources advantageous to local people. It involves travel to destinations where flora, fauna and cultural heritage are primary attractions. Ecotourism also minimises wastage and the environmental impact through sensitised tourists. It can be one of the medium to preserve local culture, flora and fauna and other natural resources.

India, with its great geographical diversity, offers several eco-

tourism destinations. It is home to a wealth of ecosystems which are well protected and preserved. These include:

- Biosphere reserves
- Mangroves
- Coral reefs
- Deserts
- Mountains and forests
- Flora and fauna
- Seas, lakes and rivers
- Caves

A few places for ecotourism include the Himalayan region, Kerala, North East India, Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands. Thenmala in Kerala is the first planned ecotourism destination in India. Some most popular ecotourism locations in the country are Rishikesh, Kerala and Puducherry.

Wildlife tourism

Wildlife tourism, one of the fastest segments of tourism, involves travel to different locations to experience wild life in natural settings. Due to its varied topography and distinctive climatic conditions, India is endowed with various forms of flora and fauna and it has numerous species of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and plants and animals.

To tap the potential of wildlife tourism, the government has launched some wildlife packages for travelers. Wildlife Tourism in India includes wildlife photography, bird watching, jungle safari, elephant safari, jeep safari, jungle camping, ecotourism etc.

The country offers immense opportunities for wildlife tourism. The strong heritage of wildlife in India comprises more than 70 national parks and about 400 wildlife sanctuaries including bird sanctuaries. However, concrete steps by both the government and the private sector need to be taken to promote wildlife tourism. Taj Hotels & Resorts has a joint venture with Conservation Corporation Africa to provide wildlife enthusiasts, circuit tourists and high-end domestic travelers with fascinating wildlife experiences within India through an ecologically-sustainable model. In a bid to preserve the natural habitat, the Ministry of Tourism has launched an initiative, "Tigers: Our Natural Beauties".

Some other forms of tourism include cruise tourism, beach tourism, pilgrimage tourism, monsoon magic, luxury tourism.

Objectives

1. To analyze the relationship that exists between Tourists, Travel agents and Hoteliers in the Tourism industry.
2. To evaluate the factors influencing the process of tourism partnerships.

Methodology

The descriptive research method is followed in the current research to express and analyze the relationships that exists between tourists, hoteliers and travel agency in the tourism Industry in Delhi. Tourists visiting Delhi were interviewed and their responses were sought from 100 tourists. Factor analysis technique was used to classify the components factors that are crucial for ascertaining victorious relationships among tourists, hoteliers and travel agents.

Relationship Marketing

Relationship marketing is about forming long-term relationships with customers. Rather than trying to encourage a one-time sale, relationship marketing tries to foster customer loyalty by providing exemplary products and

services. This is different than most normal advertising practices that focus on a single transaction; watch ad A and buy product B. Relationship marketing, by contrast, is usually not linked to a single product or offer. It involves a company refining the way they do business in order to maximize the value of that relationship for the customer.

Relationship marketing mainly involves the improvement of internal operations. Many customers leave a company not because they didn't like the product, but because they were frustrated with the customer service. If a business streamlines its internal operations to satisfy all service needs of their customers, customers will be happier even in the face of product problems.

Technology also plays an important role in relationship marketing. The Internet has made it easier for companies to track, store, analyze and then utilize vast amounts of information about customers. Customers are offered personalized ads, special deals, and expedited service as a token of appreciation for their loyalty.

Social media sites allow business to engage their customers in an informal and ongoing way. In the past, it would have been impossible to keep useful records about every single client, but technology makes it easy for companies to automate their marketing efforts.

Branding is the final component of relationship marketing. A company can form a long-term relationship with a client if that client feels like the brand they purchase reflects who they are or who they want to be. Customers are less inclined to switch to a different brand if they think that switch makes a statement about their identity.

The Hoteliers

Leisure travelers are always looking for ways to improve their travel experience, which is the reason why they are more drawn to hotel packages than business travelers. Equipped with the mindset of having a great vacation experience, the majority of leisure travelers are looking for hotels that provide them with incentives to stay there than any other hotel. There are plenty of different packages that hoteliers can create for guests, such as providing a package that is associated with a large event in the city, walking tours around the most popular tourist destinations in the area, itineraries for family fun or romantic getaways and much more. This is the opportunity for hoteliers to get creative, do their research on the biggest demand generators in their area and utilize this valuable information to increase the number of guests to the hotel through packages. Leisure travelers have a greater appreciation for the extra "frills" that hotels offer to their guests. For example, a hotel that offers a pool, fitness area or a restaurant receives a lot more bonus points for leisure travelers. Therefore, it makes it no secret that hotels that offer extra facilities and amenities are much more appealing to leisure travelers than hotels that don't offer these extras. Business travelers on the other hand, do not put as much emphasis on these hotel extras as leisure travelers do. So, if your business mix is mostly comprised of leisure travelers, it is beneficial to highlight your hotel's extra facilities and amenities to attract these type of guests.

In order to have a successful business, it is important to understand the needs and wants of your customers. The same concept applies for hotels, as it is not only important to acknowledge your guests' preferences, but also to understand the differences of your business and leisure traveler segments. By better understanding your business mix, hoteliers are able to market to these different segments with greater

effectiveness. Taking the time to understand and research the differences of your business mix, such as business and leisure travelers, can only help to improve your hotel's influence on guests by providing them with what they truly want in their travel experience.

The Travel Agent

A travel agency's main function is to act as an agent, selling travel products and services on behalf of a supplier. Consequently, unlike other retail businesses, they do not keep a stock in hand, unless they have pre-booked hotel rooms and/or cabins on a cruise ship for a group travel event such as a wedding and honeymoon. A package holiday or a ticket is not purchased from a supplier unless a customer requests that purchase. The holiday or ticket is supplied to the agency at a discount. The profit is therefore the difference between the advertised price which the customer pays and the discounted price at which it is supplied to the agent. This is known as the

commission. In many countries, all individuals or companies that sell tickets are required to be licensed as a travel agent. While travel agents in the United States do not have to be licensed individually, the travel agency they are working for must be licensed, this differs state to state.

A travel agent is supposed to offer impartial travel advice to the customer. However, this function almost disappeared with the mass market package holiday, and some agency chains seemed to develop a "holiday supermarket" concept, in which customers choose their holiday from brochures on racks and then book it from a counter. Again, a variety of social and economic changes have now contrived to bring this aspect to the fore once more, particularly with the advent of multiple, no-frills, low-cost airlines.

Data Analysis

Perceived value of a tourism package and the quality of tourist relationship with travel agency and an hotelier.

Table 1: Factor Loading Of Various Factors Pertaining To Tourists Relationship with the Travel Agency

Component	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	Variance%	Cumulative%	Total	Variance%	Cumulative %
1	6.249	29.173	29.173	6.249	29.173	29.173
2	4.184	19.827	51.583	4.184	19.827	51.583
3	2.274	8.482	63.937	2.274	8.482	63.937
4	1.179	6.837	69.261	1.179	6.837	69.261
5	1.058	5.947	75.111	1.058	5.947	75.111
6	0.982	5.183	82.367	0.982	5.183	82.367
7	0.894	4.847	86.836			
8	0.795	3.683	89.337			
9	0.749	2.897	93.239			
10	0.711	2.361	95.336			
11	0.683	1.185	96.142			
12	0.525	0.747	97.362			
13	0.428	0.621	97.958			
14	0.295	0.539	98.982			
15	0.148	0.421	99.083			
16	0.087	0.362	99.284			
17	0.052	0.268	99.579			
18	0.012	0.116	99.626			
19	0.000	0.02	100.00			

Table 2: Factor Loading of Various Factors Pertaining to Tourists Relationship with the Hoteliers

Component	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	Variance%	Cumulative%	Total	Variance%	Cumulative %
1	7.735	31.472	32.578	7.735	31.472	32.578
2	4.435	19.363	53.859	4.435	19.363	53.859
3	2.926	11.774	62.884	2.926	11.774	62.884
4	1.953	7.736	71.474	1.953	7.736	71.474
5	1.694	6.362	75.254	1.694	6.362	75.254
6	1.374	4.947	82.577	1.374	4.947	82.577
7	0.865	4.263	85.803			
8	0.736	3.573	88.528			
9	0.727	2.947	93.366			
10	0.683	1.846	95.846			
11	0.538	1.273	96.827			
12	0.482	1.047	97.483			
13	0.364	0.841	97.843			
14	0.237	0.683	98.639			
15	0.119	0.572	98.953			
16	0.083	0.396	99.278			
17	0.042	0.168	99.572			
18	0.009	0.116	99.748			
19	0.001	0.030	100.00			

Factor Loading of Various Factors Pertaining to Tourist Relationship with the Travel Agency

The factor loading here indicates the scores which are obtained from various factors that constitute relationship marketing. The various factors includes, trust, commitment, conflict handling, relationship quality and satisfaction. Out of the 19 statements administered to the respondents (tourists) 6 most important factors that represent all these statements were found out. The scree plot represents in table - 1 depicts the Eigen values of all the factors ranging from 0.982 to 6.249 which is the total value of all the components. The Eigen values are seen diminishing gradually for every succeeding component gradually after certain point or let's say component. Based on the factor loadings sought from the factor analysis, we have six components which are of high importance, the remaining factors with less than Eigen values less than one is eliminated.

Table 1 show that the initial Eigen values of all the components and the percentage of the variance and thus cumulative percentages. The extraction sum of squared loadings shows us that the components chosen i.e. the first six components can be explained up to 82.367%, which means to say that the relationship of the tourists with travel agency, is based on the following factors; viz., Trust, Commitment, Conflict handling, Relationship quality and satisfaction; and their relationships with each other can be explained well up to 82.367%.

In table 1, we can see that the factor 'commitment' and 'trust' has the maximum loadings which has been highlighted more than five times under different components, [here we have not taken the sixth component as it not got the permissible limit of loadings], proving it to be the most important factors in determining the relationship between the tourists and the travel agency. Secondly, we see 'satisfaction' appearing four times under different components, followed by relationship quality three times and conflict handling appearing two times, all these based on its repeated higher factor loadings. Now placing the factors in the order of their importance we can say that trust and commitment are the most important factors that determine the relationship between tourists and travel agents followed by satisfaction, relationship quality and conflict handling.

Factor Loading of Various Factors Pertaining to Tourist Relationship with the Hoteliers

The factor loading here indicates the scores which are obtained from various factors that constitute relationship marketing. The various factors includes, trust, commitment, communication, conflict handling, quality of service, and satisfaction. Out of the 19 statements administered to the respondents (tourists) 6 most important factors that represent all these statements were found out. The scree plot shown above in Fig1 depicts the Eigen values of all the factors ranging from 1.374 to 7.735 which is the total value of all the components. The Eigen values are seen diminishing gradually for every succeeding component gradually after certain point or let's say component. Based on the factor loadings sought from the factor analysis, we have six components which are of high importance, the remaining factors with less than Eigen values less than one is eliminated.

Table 2 shows that the initial Eigen values of all the components and the percentage of the variance and thus cumulative percentages. The extraction sum of squared loadings shows us that the components chosen i.e. the first six components can be explained Up to 82.577%, which means to

say that the relationship of the tourists with travel agency, is based on the following factors; viz., Trust, Commitment, Communication, Conflict handling, Quality of service and satisfaction; and their relationships with each other can be explained well Upto 82.577%.

In table 2, we can see that the factor 'quality of service' has the maximum loadings which has been highlighted more than five times under different components [here we have not taken the fifth and the sixth component as it not got the permissible limit of loadings], proving it to be the most important factors in determining the relationship between the tourists and the Hoteliers. Secondly, we see 'conflict handling and trust' appearing four times under different components, followed by communication three times and commitment appearing once; all these based on its repeated higher factor loadings. Now placing the factors in the order of their importance we can say that quality of service rendered by the hotels is the most important factors that determine the relationship between tourists and hoteliers followed by conflict handling capability of the hoteliers and the level of trust that the hoteliers gain from their service over a period of time, communication quality the hoteliers and the tourist have and the commitment that is shown by the hotelier towards the tourists.

Conclusion

This study focuses on the relationship marketing and analyses the relationship between hotelier, tourists and travel agents. The travel agency and hoteliers must provide value fundamentally through the quality of the tourism packages and the professionalism of its personnel, without losing sight of the price of the tourism package. But at transaction level, it is also important for the travel agency and hotels to try to monitor emotional aspects relating to the enjoyment of the tourism package and relating to the time spent in the travel agency during the process of the decision to buy. These factors if given importance and prioritised rightly will facilitate in strengthening the relationships between the travel agency, hotels and tourists. Hence communication, mutual trust and transparency can be better maintained if the players in tourism industry can collaborate and innovatively use information technology to facilitate the increase of competitiveness of both hotels and travel agents.

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