

Tourism Industry: Travelers' Perception

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Abstract

Indian tourism offers an array of tourist destinations that attract travelers from all over the world. As the travelers' satisfaction is directly related with the quality of services provided by these industries, they are the prime stakeholders. Travelers' positive satisfaction is the only backbone of the commercial as well as economic development of these industries. This study focuses on the perception of different age and income group travelers about the factors responsible for the growth and development of tourism industry.

INTRODUCTION

Indian land has always fascinated and captivated the world with its glorious past. It has dominated through most of human history, as a home of compelling and impressive realm, as an influential and commanding trading nation and as a spout of traditions and civilization. Humanity was always very keen to be acquainted with this sacred land and this curiosity gave rise to an intention of enquiring about everything that has happened in the past and is happening continuously. This exclusive way of enquiring this consecrated and blessed land gave rise to *Tourism*, which has proved a milestone for the world and its economy. At the start of the century, travel and tourism was confined only to a privileged few, namely the affluent, religious-zealots, conquerors and the elites who were stimulated by a strong spirit, urging them to explore new fields. But of late, since about five decades, tourism has suddenly erupted on a majestic scale and become a global phenomenon and a pertinent branch of knowledge (Singh, 1955).

According to the previous studies, the main aim of traveling and tourism was to proffer something, which was different from daily and routine life activities. According to Fairburn, 1951, a set of factors like safe and secure human mobility and intensive application of mechanization is responsible for the magnificent change of basic tourism into an enormous trade. Tourism is greatly affected by the efficient

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working of transportation and all other infrastructures. The geographical aspect and efficacy of tourism as a sub-discipline has drawn the attention of all those who can benefit from the activities of travel and tourism.

Gearing et al. (1974) observed that the most significant and important factor for the growth and development of tourism industry is the desire of travelers and tourists to witness the attractions, uniqueness of various places and to explore natural resources there. The work done by Clawson and Kentsch paved way towards a more meaningful methodology as their approach was based on the assumption that contribution statistics of the travelers are directly linked and are proportionate to the attractiveness of the tourism products. The efficiency of tourism products decides the success of any tourist place as well as the volume of revenue generation.

Tourism has been described as the insecure unified mixture of industries that arise from the movement of people and their stay in various destinations outside their home area (Pearce, 1982). It has become a big business and is considered as one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Traditionally tourism was associated with pilgrimages and our country has had a unique tradition of pilgrimage with a motive of divine and sacred journeys. These pilgrimages constitute an important form of cultural tourism having religious bearings and are more important than any other form of tourism for socio-economic reasons. Secular tourism which somewhat forms an anti thesis of religious tourism needs to be scientifically examined. The blending of these two phenomena i.e., cultural tourism and secular tourism is a challenging task that involves the identification and allocation of resources at the gross roots so as to cause the least damage to the environment and culture. The contribution of the resources in the area of travel and tourism deals with aesthetics, visual appeal, behavior that cannot be measured by any measuring scale.

Tourism and transportation has long been recognized as an engine of growth for long-term economic growth and development. This industry is considered as a great source of foreign exchange earner for many developing countries, which consider natural resources as their major assets (Thullen, 1996). Today, tourism has assumed huge proportions and diverse forms. With the advent of science and technology in the form of impressive growth of tourism and transportation, tourism has become the fad and fashion of the neo-rich. Travel in the distant past

was not undertaken for the purpose of pleasure since the motive was not to seek any holiday from the work situation. The primary motive of travel and tourism was related to trade, commerce and activities associated with it. Apart from this, it was also dominated by religious motivations and very little actual pleasure was intended. Today, because of the availability of quick and cheap travel facilities, tourism has become more convenient and has diversified to many more fields besides its religious and trade related implications.

Tourism industry is the only industry with minimum financial involvement by the government with the expectation of large returns by maintaining and developing proper infrastructure. This industry will continue to expand as the number of travelers traveling all over the world is substantial and their contribution in the process of growth and development of tourism industry is continuously increasing. It has been said rightly by Batra and Chawla (1995) in their study that traveling stimulates an increased interest in tourism. Murphy (1985) agreed and added that industrialization and urbanization, which is the outcome of desire and preferences of travelers, includes safety and other psychological aspects also. The travelers now have more mechanical and technical attitude that results in commercialization and hence gives rise to their living standards, which results in the formation of disposable income. This has created a desire of utilizing the leisure hours in traveling. Urbanization has created a new leisure society compelling people to adopt tourism and recreation as an inevitable lifestyle. The relevance of tourism can be seen in the development of the whole economy.

The activity of travel and tour is the exclusive function of urban centers and therefore, the task of establishing supply interaction between tourists and residents has always been a need (Lea, 1988). Benefits of a tourism-based strategy include foreign exchange earnings, improvement in government revenues and regional imbalances for the further development and growth of tourism industries (Dieke, 1993). The effective planning approach for the development of travel and tourism should include physical, social and economic elements as interrelated and interdependent components in the development process. It is certainly a strange paradox that the Indian tourism industry is functioning without necessary research support. The probable reason for this development and information gap has been the over emphasis given to overseas visitors as they bring in hard currency which the country needs so desperately to tide their payment imbalances. Ogilvie (1941) observed in his study that home tourists and their motive of traveling is ignored in

terms of economy as it best redistributes regional income without bringing in the concept of *New Money*. However, in recent years the significance of domestic tourism in India has been realized and few tourism organizations and states have made efforts to collect data on visitor statistics.

This study is an attempt to find out the perception of travelers of different age and income groups about the rankings of the factors responsible for the growth and development of tourism.

METHOD

The study is exploratory in nature and an attempt has been made to investigate how perception of travelers as *dependent variables* gets affected by two different levels of age and income groups as *independent variables*. The study was carried out to find out the travelers' perception about the rankings of factors responsible for the growth and development of tourism industry.

The Sample

A sample of 160 travelers was chosen for the study. These travelers were divided into two categories i.e., on the basis of their age, and on the basis of their income. Age as a demographic variable was sub-divided into two levels i.e., between 22-42 years and between 45-65 years. 40 travelers were chosen for each level of age. The travelers who were in the age bracket of more than 42 years but less than 45 years were not taken into consideration for the purpose of this study. In order to study the perceptual gap between the two levels of age, this gap was maintained.

In the same way income was also sub-divided into two levels i.e., those travelers whose annual income was *up-to Rs.2.50 lakhs* and those travelers whose annual income was *more than Rs.2.50 lakhs*. Here also 40 travelers were chosen in each individual level. Hence, it gave rise to four combinations:

- a) Those travelers who were in the age group of 22-42 years and earned an annual income of up to Rs.2.50 lakhs;
- b) Those travelers who were in the age group of 22-42 years and earned an annual income of more than Rs.2.50 lakhs;

- c) Those travelers who were in the age group of 45-65 years and earned an annual income of up to Rs.2.50 lakhs;
- d) Those travelers who were in the age group of 45-65 years and earned an annual income of more than Rs.2.50 lakhs.

Each cell consisted of 40 respondents.

Age group Income group	22-42 years	45-65 years
Up to Rs. 2.50 lakhs	40	40
More than Rs. 2.50 lakhs	40	40

Data Collection

The study was based on primary data collected by administering a self-designed questionnaire on 160 respondents. They were requested to rank various factors from 1-6, 1 for the most preferred factor and 6 for the least preferred factor responsible for the growth and development of tourism industry. The respondents were categorized on the basis of age and income.

Data Analysis

Weighted Average Method was applied on the responses of 160 respondents collectively and separately on the basis of two levels of age and two levels of income. The results were derived on the basis of the following hypotheses-

H₀₁- Travelers belonging to the age group of 22-42 years and having an annual income of *up to Rs.2.50 lakhs* perceive the same factors responsible for the growth and development of tourism industry as perceived by those who have an annual income of *more than Rs.2.50 lakhs*.

H₀₂- Travelers belonging to the age group of 45-65 years and annually earning *up to Rs.2.50 lakhs* perceive the same factors responsible for the growth

and development of tourism industry as perceived by those who annually earn *more than Rs.2.50 lakhs*.

- H₀₃ - Travelers belonging to the age group of 22-42 years with an annual income of *up to Rs.2.50 lakhs* perceive the same factors responsible for the growth and development of tourism industry as perceived by those who are in the age group of 45-65 years with the same annual income.
- H₀₄ - Travelers belonging to the age group of 22-42 years and with an annual income of *more than Rs.2.50 lakhs* perceive the same factors responsible for the growth and development of tourism industry as perceived by those who are in the age group of 45-65 years with the same annual income.
- H₀₅ - Travelers belonging to the age group of 22-42 years perceive the same factors responsible for the growth and development of tourism industry as perceived by those who are in the age group of 45-65 years irrespective of their annual income.
- H₀₆ - Travelers with an annual income of *up to Rs.2.50 lakhs* perceive the same factors responsible for the growth and development of tourism industry as perceived by those who earn an annual income of *more than Rs 2.50 lakhs* irrespective of their age group

RESULTS

The perception of travelers was evaluated by using weighted average method. For clarity in presentation following categories of travelers were made:

- A1** - Travelers who are in the age group of 22 – 42 years and have an annual income of up to Rs.2.50 lakhs.
- A2** - Travelers who are in the age group of 22 – 42 years and have an annual income of more than Rs.2.50 lakhs.
- B1** - Travelers who are in the age group of 45 – 65 years and have an annual income of up to Rs.2.50 lakhs.
- B2** - Travelers who are in the age group of 45 – 65 years and have an annual income of more than Rs.2.50 lakhs.
- C1** - All travelers who are in the age group of 22 – 42 years irrespective of their annual income.

C2 - All travelers who are in the age group of 45 – 65 years irrespective of their annual income.

D1 - All travelers whose annual income is up to Rs.2.50 Lakhs irrespective of their age group.

D2 - All travelers whose annual income is more than Rs.2.50 Lakhs irrespective of their age group.

The statistical result (Annexure – A) shows the perception of travelers in the form of their preferences and rankings given to the individual factors responsible for the growth and development of tourism industry. The results revealed that all the initial hypotheses have been rejected. The first and the fourth category of travelers (A1 & A2 and D1 & D2) perceive the same on four factors i.e., *basic information and availability of mode of transportation, safe mobility from one place to another, adequate promotional activities, level of competition* as both the categories have ranked these factors as 1st, 2nd, 5th, and 6th. They have different perception on only two factors i.e., *accessibility* which has been ranked as the 3rd by A1 and D1 while A2 and D2 have ranked it 4th and *socio-economic development of place and people* which A1 and D1 have ranked 4th while A2 and D2 have ranked it as 3rd.

The second category of travelers (B1 and B2) perceive the same on three factors i.e., *basic information and availability of mode of transportation, adequate promotional activities, and level of competition* as both the categories have put these factors on 1st, 5th, and 6th rank. They have different perceptions for rest of the three factors i.e., B1 has put *socio-economic development of place and people* on 2nd rank while B2 has ranked it on 3rd rank, *accessibility* on the 3rd rank while B2 has put it on 4th rank. *Safe mobility from one place to another* has been ranked 4th by B1 and 2nd by B2. The third category of travelers (C1 and C2) perceive same on four factors i.e., *basic information and availability of mode of transportation, accessibility, adequate promotional activities, and level of competition* as both the categories have placed these factors on 1st, 4th, 5th, and 6th rank. They have different perceptions for rest of the factors i.e., C1 has ranked *safe mobility from one place to another* as 2nd while C2 ranked it 3rd. C1 has ranked *socio-economic development of place and people* as 3rd while C2 has ranked it 2nd.

DISCUSSION

The study has revealed that basic information and availability of mode of transportation are the most prominent and decisive factors responsible for the growth and development of tourism industry. In the activity of touring, destination can be selected on the basis of attractiveness of various places, which surround that destination. Travelers are more interested in making a proper discrimination among different places. Basic information and proper availability (Turgurt and Hoftus, 1977) of all necessary facilities and amenities are the minimum requirements for the growth and development of transportation and tourism (Ferrario, 1970). Safety and security along with mental satisfaction in travelling is a prerequisite for the success of tourism (Fairburn, 1951). The principle modes of passenger transport viz. air, rail and road have undergone significant developments in the last few years and competition has provided travelers with better choices.

It has been found that economically and culturally rich areas are more susceptible to tourism and hence, utmost care should be taken in the development of such recreational resources. Travel and tourism is the best way of developing social and economic aspect of place and people (Selvam, 1993). Better ways and modes of transportation and facilities are an important index of social, cultural and economic development of any society. It is the means by which citizens get together and develop social relations with each other (Jairaj, 2002). Doxe (1975) supported the findings and explained in his study that tourism is the only way to promote the scarce and vulnerable resource of culture. It has already been revealed by some previous researchers that the overall development of tourism gives rise to the social, cultural and economic development of people and place.

Nadaf (2002) and Singh (1991) in their studies found out that factors like convenience, complete information, ease of understanding the available information and safety during travel are a must, which motivate the travelers to travel. Appropriate and systematic evaluation of the available resources, with planned and accurate promotional policies will be helpful in the development process of basic infrastructure. But sometimes the nature, composition and degree of these activities may bring forth undesirable side effects in the form of high level of competition, which are more often irreversible and severe (Somayajulu, 2002). This leads to the assumption that tourism and transport industries are operating on increasing returns and their average cost is declining with the increase in the

level of production. According to Singh (2002) unhealthy competition should be immediately controlled; otherwise it will lead to unfair competition.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The present study has focused on the travelers' perception about the factors responsible for the growth and development of tourism industry. It has done so in light of the literature on increased volume and flexibility of travelling activities due to one or the other reason. The competitive environment in the current scenario is increasing the need to travel. It is clear from the work carried out here that focus is on the age and income differences of travelers in detecting their perception. As consumer satisfaction is directly related with the quality of services of service industries, they are the prime stakeholders. Indian tourism industry is functioning well, according to academicians. Tourism has become a global phenomenon and a pertinent branch of knowledge. If the factors, which are responsible for the growth and development of tourism industry are taken care of, then this industry can become the maximum revenue generating industry among all other service industries.

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Annexure - A

Table 1

Travelers' Perception for the Ranking of Factors Responsible for the Development and Growth of Tourism Industry

S. No.	Factors	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2	D1	D2	All
1	Basic information and availability of MOT	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	Adequate promotional Activities	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
3	Socio-economic development of place and people	4	3	2	3	3	2	4	3	3
4	Accessibility	3	4	3	4	4	4	3	4	4
5	Safe mobility from one place to another	2	2	4	2	2	3	2	2	2
6	Level of competition	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6