



TOURISTS' PERCEPTION IN OFF SEASON TRAVEL WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO OOTY

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ABSTRACT

The tourism destinations of India present a wide range of natural and cultural products. These include beaches, hill stations, wildlife sanctuaries, mountain regions, archaeological monuments, religious monuments, fairs and festivals, amusement parks etc. The Government has taken several policy initiatives including providing incentives for promoting tourism in these areas, and also for developing new destinations and products. The incentives are given by way of interest subsidies, allocations of funds to state governments for unique schemes, classification of hotels, and awards for the best hotels, tour companies, and destination managers' etc. The study aims to analyse the customer's perception during their off season visit. The time of the year when tourism traffic, and often rates, are at their lowest because of decreased demand, also referred to as season, off-peak or value season.

KEYWORDS : customer perception, off season visit, OOTY etc.....

Introduction:

Tourism is the second largest growing business area in the service sector after information technology in the global economy. Many of the economies are successful in marketing their country as best destinations and there by generating a substantial amount of foreign exchange from tourism sector. Tourism represents one of the world's largest industries with nearly 700 million estimated international visitor arrivals in the year 2000. The phenomenon today has become a very complex activity encompassing a wide range of relationships. As the global economy surges, resulting in the improvements in standards of living and disposable income coupled with more leisure time, the overall number of tourists are expected to grow further. Factors like availability of cheaper and convenient transport; fewer or no restrictions on travel, availability of mass information on various destinations and newer marketing techniques. The contributions from tourism to world economy and overall number of tourists are expected to grow further.

In India tourism has created direct or indirect employment for some seventeen million people. It generates earnings for hoteliers, travel agents, taxi drivers, craftsmen, souvenir-sellers, transporters, airlines, tourist guides and manufacturers of consumer goods. Some Rs.1000 crore worth of handicrafts are sold every year to tourists, taking the benefits of tourism to the villages where our craftsmen live and work.

Tourism in Tamilnadu has received a major thrust in the last few years. Several steps have been taken to make Tamilnadu an inviting and attractive destination for foreign and domestic tourists. It is believed that vast forest areas and an extensive coastal stretch have high potential for development of tourism in Tamilnadu.

History of OOTY:

OOTY or Udthagamandalam known as 'the queen of hill stations' is a capital town of district Nilgiris in Tamil Nadu, India. It was originally occupied by Todas, and ruled by East India Company before Independence of India. OOTY is the most popular hill station in South India, located in Western Ghats at the height of 2240 meters. OOTY is said to be one of the most beautiful places in South India. This place is well known for coffee and tea plantations, tree species like Conifers, Eucalyptus, Pine and Wattle dot. The temperature rarely reaches to 25in summer and in winter it will decrease to around 5 . Previous to British, the Udthagamandalam was the place of Todas, later on it was modernised by the British people. Not only modernising, British constructed the first railway line in this hill station and made OOTY as Summer Capital of Madras Presidency.

This hill stations has been declared as one of the hotspots among the 35 in world, since it is the home for unique variety of animals and plants. In this regard it is said to be rich in biodiversity. The economy of this region is dependent majorly on tourism and agriculture. Many types of fruits from the English countries being grown locally and they have its huge importance among the localities. Number of people from many countries visits Ooty in order to enjoy nature's beauty. There are several Dairy farming are there in Ooty and known well in the production of many dairy products such as cheese, skimmed milk powder and milk chocolates. And hence, we can find many local agriculture industries and several and certain research institutes like Live Stock farm and Potato research farm. Local crops with floriculture and sericulture being cultivated; in addition, the cultivation of mushrooms is also being practiced.

Review of literature

Rajakumari (2007) in her study on 'Tourism-An Epitome of Incentives' explains that to decrease financial leakages in tourism, it would be important to increase local ownership of tourism-related business, building up tourism infrastructure using local investors and avoiding purely foreign investment. **Sasikumar and Binu (2006)** have remarked the principles under which the concept of ecotourism was based such as natural conservation, sustainability, benefits to local community and possibilities of education and interpretation, the nature and category of eco-tourists; and the potentiality of the spot are the primary variables which are to be considered while planning for an ecotourism project. **Yuksel and Yuksel (2001)** argue that 'various positive and negative experiences may occur as a result of interactions with these components [attributes], and it is the cumulative effect that will ultimately determine the tourists' overall evaluation of the experience'. Hence, it is important to measure tourist satisfaction with individual destination attributes as well as tourists' overall satisfaction with the holiday destination. Assessing individual attributes will help detect areas of strengths or shortfalls within the destination.

Scope of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine the problems of tourist and their level of satisfaction from services available during off season visit. In all industries especially in those predominantly dealing with people, the level of customer satisfaction has effect on their future of the industry. Tourism is one such industry; it deals with human beings at every stage. So, what is most important is continuous

cordial human relationship. The travel agents, tourist guides, hoteliers, transporters, the information assistants at different centers are jointly responsible to create their situation.

Statement of the Problem

Tourism is an industry which deals with people. In a highly competitive world of tourism a dissatisfied tourist could pose a threat to the entire industry itself. A slight rumour about a particular destination would ultimately dissuade the prospective tourists from visiting that place. Tourism can offer business opportunities in activities that cater to tourist trade like locally operated business which may be seasonal. Hence, an earnest effort has been taken to study the customer's perception in off season visit to OOTY.

Objectives of the Study

- To study the main reasons for the tourist to visit the spot during off-season.
- To analyse the problems during off season visit to the tourist spot Ooty.

Limitation of the Study

Utmost care and efforts have been taken by the researcher to avoid shortcomings in the process of collection and analysis of data in spite of the care taken, the study is prone to some limitations.

1. The study is confined to view point of tourists only.
2. The sample size was only 150 due to time constraints.
3. Convenient sampling method has been used to collect the data.

Research Methodology

The current study is analytical in nature. The current study is mainly concentrated on the hilly resort of Tamilnadu – OOTY. OOTY “The Queen of Hill Stations’ Udhagamandalam, known as Ooty, is one of the most scenic and visited hill stations of India, popularly known as “OOTY of the poor”. The study had applied convenient sampling technique and the sample size is 200 respondents of tourist from off season visit to OOTY.

Data Source

Data base of the study includes both primary and secondary data. Primary data has been collected through individuals using a structured questionnaire. First hand information has been collected from the tourist respondents in off season visit. The secondary data required for the study has been collected from journals, published documents, and websites maintained by ministry of tourism.

Statistical Tools

The data collected through the well structured questionnaire were classified and tabulated for analysis in accordance with the outline laid down for the purpose of justifying the objectives framed at the time of developing research design. Statistical tools like Simple percentage analysis, Multiple Response and Weighted average analysis are used.

Results & Discussion

Table – 1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

SNO	DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLE		FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Gender	Male	170	85.0
		Female	30	15.0
2	Age	Up to 20 years	60	30.0
		21 to 30 years	120	60.0
		31 to 40 years	15	7.5
		Above 40 years	05	2.5
3	Education	School level	10	5.0
		College level	120	60.0
		Professional level	70	35.0
		Others	0	0

4	Occupation	Farmer	40	20.0
		Business	50	25.0
		Employees	20	10.0
		Others	90	45.0
5	Monthly Income	Up to Rs 20000	130	65.0
		20001 to 30000	30	15.0
		30001 to 40000	20	10.0
		Above 40000	20	10.0
6	Mode Of Travel	By car	110	55.0
		By bus	30	15.0
		By train	10	5.0
		By bike	50	25.0
7	accommodation preference	Family	30	15.0
		Friends	160	80.0
		Neighbor	0	0
		college	10	5.0

Source: Primary Data

Table – 2 Reason for visit during off season

S. No.	Reasons	Weighted Average Score	Rank
1	Rest and relaxation	547	1
2	Visiting relatives and friends	388	7
3	Health	466	4
4	Fun	405	6
5	Religious reasons	432	5
6	Attending meeting, conference etc.	503	2
7	Business reasons	276	10
8	Sports and recreation	313	9
9	Culture	345	8
10	Shopping	486	3

Source: Primary Data

From the above table it is clear that among the reasons for visit during off season, the top priority is given to “Rest and Relaxation” with the mean score of 547, followed by “Attending Meetings, Conference etc.” has obtained second rank. The reasons like “Shopping”, “Health” and “Religious reasons” has obtained third, fourth and fifth rank respectively. The next consecutive ranks goes to the reasons like “Fun”, “Visiting relatives and friends”, and “Culture”. The last two ranks goes to the reasons “Sports recreation” and “Business reasons”.

Thus majority of the respondents visit ooty as a tourist spot during the off season due to the reason **Rest and Relaxation**.

Table – 3 Problems Faced during Off Season Visit

S NO	Problems	Frequency	Percentage
1	Poor climate conditions	60	30.0
2	Less scope for shopping	20	10.0
3	Non availability of guide	60	30.0
4	No fun in visiting the spots	40	20.0
5	Lack of aesthetics in tourist destination	50	25.0

Source: Primary Data

It is clear from the above table that “Poor Climate Condition” and “Non availability of Guide” are the top problems faced by the respondents. Followed by “Lack of aesthetics in tourist spot”, “No fun in visiting the spots” and “Less scope for shopping”.

Conclusion

The growth of tourism industry mainly depends on attractive tourist destinations, Facilities at tourist places, and infrastructure facilities. This demands huge investment and managerial capability. Tourists are cultural ambassadors. They come to Ooty to take back Home

fascinating experiences. Local population of a tourist place transportation authorities, hoteliers, and all concerned with tourism have to change their mindset. Tourism is an industry of imaginations. As in many other services sector human resource play an important role in boosting tourism sector. Human resource development programmes need to be undertaken particularly to train and develop the tourist guides, travel agents, drivers, and for people manning tourist places on a priority basis.

The study mainly focus on the offseason visitors and their preference and problems during their off season visit to Ooty. The main reason to select the off season for visit is to have rest and relaxation. They face the problem of poor climate but inspite many visit during offseason to have privacy and relief from their routine life.

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