

Product Standardization and Marketing Approach for Tourism Products



Management

KEYWORDS : Service products, Standardisation, Tourism attributes, backwaters, generalisation

VIDHUSEKHAR P

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, CENTRE FOR MANAGEMENT STUDIES KANNUR UNIVERSITY
MAIN CAMPUS, MANGATTUPARAMBA, KANNUR-KERALA 670567

ABSTRACT

The Research paper reviews various tourism products, its availability and marketing approaches for promoting tourism in Kerala. Case study of Kasaragod district is taken as a bench mark for generalising the product through out the state. It discusses recent trend in Tourism Industry, Advantage Kerala in Tourism Marketing with almost similar products available in each district. The infrastructure connectivity by Air, Road and Rail are highlighted. And finally a Culture-Pilgrim-Festival circuit is drawn to highlight the potential products.

Introduction

This Research paper reviews various tourism products, its availability and marketing approaches for promoting tourism in Kerala to give standardized services throughout the state for each district. Case study in Kasaragod district is taken as a bench mark to generalize the study for the state due to the characteristics enjoyed by the districts.

Tourism is one of the world's largest and fastest growing Industries in the world. It involves movement of millions of people all over the world. Tourism does not exist in isolation. It is characterized by transport, locale and accommodation. The fundamental elements of tourism include pleasing weather, scenic attraction, historical and cultural factors, Accessibility and amenities.

There are 3 levels of attributes for tourism products. Basic level attribute consists of landscape and land resource of a region. The core levels of tourism product include Beaches, Backwater and Hills. The compliment level is the reformed area of resources characterized by custom, culture and clothing. So the product development is made based on these attributes.

Fifty years of British rule made many transformations in the field of tourism in India. Despite the transformations, many traditions maintained a profound cultural distinctiveness. Kerala was also no exception. The tourism activities which started in Kerala during early seventies helped to keep the tradition intact.

Tourism has been a major social phenomenon from time immemorial. Motivated by the natural urge of every human being for new experiences, adventures, education and entertainment, also include social, cultural and business interests.

There exists centuries old connection between Kerala and Foreign nations. Initially tourism was centered on beaches. Later on Auyrveda, Backwaters, festivals, Hill stations found place in Tourism. Today Kerala is actively marketing products like Beaches, Backwaters, Adventure, Heritage, Pilgrim, Medical and Eco tourism in the world market. Promotion of Responsible tourism is also getting much attention in Kerala.

Kasaragod is the northern district of Kerala bordering Karnataka. The landscape is dominated by Coconut palms, hills and streams flowing into sea. It became a separate district of Kerala state in the year 1985. Before that it was a part of erstwhile Cannanore District. To its south lies Kannur (Old Cannanore) district and Land to the north the Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka state. All along its east it is walled by the Western Ghats while along the west the Arabian Sea borders it. The district, covering an area of around 1992 km² have two taluks, namely, Kasaragod and Hosdurg (Kanhgad) both being municipalities as well. There are seventy-five villages and thirty-nine panchayats.

Railway connected the district as Kozhikode-Mangalore-Mumbai (Konkan route) and Kozhikode-Mangalore-Bangalore. Rail, Road lines are parallel to coastal area and touches major towns

in Kasaragod District. Mangalore International airport is situated 70 Kms away (north) from District Headquarters. Calicut and Cochin airports are 200 and 350 Kms (south) away respectively.

Travel for pilgrimage and learning has been an integral part of Kerala culture. This travel gave a boost to the movement of people from one place to another. Another stream of traveller was developed with the development of trade. This resulted in finding new trade routes. For the benefit of traders our ancient rulers created many facilities like Dharmashalas and inns. Domestic tourism is one of the most vibrant expressions of our heritage. Domestic tourism has strong back up of Indian culture. Tourism was more of a civilized issue, so a total change in mindset is needed to usher in a tourism friendly atmosphere. Vast and varied country, pluralistic in food, language, customs and religion contribute to the ethos of our unity in diversity.

Recent trends in Tourism Industry

Tourism is a smokeless industry, which can bring economic development through generating employment, increasing foreign exchange and creating infrastructure facilities in the host country. It is smokeless in the sense that it makes minimum damage to the environment and ecology.

Tourism is best defined as a market, marketed in terms of demand and supply. There is an adjusting mechanism between supply and demand. Focus is given on exchanged transactions in which consumer exercise preferences and choices and exchange money in return for the supply of particular travel experiences and products.

Tourism product is having a unique feature, it is an experience which begins in advance of the actual consumption of the product and continues after the consumption in some ways. These products offer only shared rights and not exclusive rights that also temporary in the sense that after which the purchaser will not have any say on the product.

The four main factors of any service products such as Intangibility, Heterogeneity, Perishability and Inseparability binds to tourism product also. Even though utilization of maximum capacity is a tough task for tourism products, a perfect match of Demand and Supply yield better output. So the management of Tourism marketing is about the management of demand, which a successful marketing manager can do efficiently.

Developed nations of Europe and America gained economic prosperity from this Industry. According to World Tourism Organization, they earned US \$82,200 Crores in 2012 in terms of revenue. Developing countries also started utilizing this Industry for economic development. Identification and development of innovative tourism products helped them to speed up growth. The reason for choosing tourism as an agent of development is mainly attributed to the geographical diversities and natural attractions prevalent in developing countries.

Tourism can bring more employment with minimum investment. There are millions of youth who are directly or indirectly

associated with this industry. Irrespective of size and resources countries all over the world are competing to exhibit the available products for marketing. Involvement of Agriculture, small scale industries, Handicrafts etc. speeded up the growth of tourism. Govt. agencies, Public-Private entrepreneurs are participant in this industry with Government playing the role of a facilitator.

Human resource is a fundamental issue in tourism. The labour intensive sector requires skilled people. Kerala Institute of Travel and Tourism Studies (KITTS), Food Craft Institute (FCI) are the institutes in the government sector providing training to youth. Many private institutions are also active in developing human skill.

Tourism also has negative side. This industry is highly vulnerable for derailment from the objectives. The government is just a facilitator here. There are Rules and Laws to regulate Tourism industry providers. For a sustained development of the industry, a healthy cooperation of Guest, Host and Service provider is important. The responsibility of the service providers is to stick on to the objectives.

Many call it as a smokeless industry. But if they started emitting smoke entire region will get corrupted. The development and marketing of Tourism product require the full cooperation of the host community. It is the responsibility of the entrepreneur to keep them happy. Careful and strict compliance to the Laws are needed in issues like garbage waste management and ground water usage. Law only cannot solve the problem of misuse. Awareness is imperative for smooth functioning of the industry.

Tourism is susceptible to many ups and downs. It cannot be seen in isolation. It is highly influenced by international events and issues. SARS, Epidemic, War, Economic recession etc. made a dent to tourism. Tourism paid heavy price for Political instability, terrorism, and Natural calamities of a region. A careful study about the risk involved in selecting a product is important for an entrepreneur. Thus Tourism can be best expressed as "THINK GLOBALLY AND ACT LOCALLY".

Responsible tourism is a new concept in tourism world. By this, participation of the local community is ensured and the benefits are shared among the local people. The initiative of Kerala government's "Responsible Tourism" which started in May 2007 in Kumarakom panchayath (backwaters tourism) in Kottayam district give a good lead in exploring this new experiment. Producers and enterprise groups were formed in panchayath on the basis of the projected demand, taking into account the extend of production required to ensure steady supply to the Hotel Industry.

Advantage Kasaragod in Tourism marketing

Kerala tourism has been registering consistent growth for several years. In the year 2013-14 more than 6.2 lac foreign tourists visited Kerala an increase of 32 % over the previous year. With regard to the domestic tourist arrival there was a growth of 8.47%. In economic terms this added Indian Rupee 2500.00 Crore to the foreign exchange reserve, an increase of 21% compared to last year.

Kerala showed a growth rate of 24% in Tourism during 2013-14. This is well above the national average. Last 08 years growth was a tremendous 19.3%. The highlight of this tourism growth rate is the concentration of high-ending tourist arrivals to enjoy the Kerala products.

Advantage Kerala in Tourism marketing

The development of tourism in Kerala is more or less evenly distributed. There are fewer anomalies. Not much difference can be felt for any tourist who travels from down south Trivandrum right upto northern Kasaragod district. North Malabar including Kasaragod is the area where much potential for tourism exists. A tourist visiting south and central Kerala can extend his visit to Kasaragod. Kasaragod is the one of th most beautiful districts in

Kerala state with 11 rivers (out of a total of 44 rivers in Kerala), forts, beaches, hills and backwaters. It is a replica of Kerala state.

Culture-Pilgrim-Festival Circuit

Kasaragod is an ideal destination for Cultural and Pilgrim Tourism. By bringing cultural heritage to the economic circuit, one can accelerate the beneficial aspects of tourism that justifies the investment.

If Kerala can be branded as "Gods Own Country", Kasaragod is the "Gods own land", where one can see, hear, talk and experience the God or Theyyam (Theyyam means Daiva ie. God). The real attraction of Kasaragod lies in the people with cultural diversities, distinct belief and tradition, whose daily life is influenced by the innumerable deities and Gods. Very few entrepreneurs are aware of the fact that Kasaragod is the land of diverse culture where Theyyams are performed for the goodness and welfare of common man. This is the land where intellectual discourse of highest order is being performed annually, an important centre of indigenous martial art.

A tourist entering the district can see a number of pilgrim centers apart from tourist spots. The entire area can be best expressed as a Pilgrim Circuit with innumerable temples, mosques, churches, cultural, spiritual and meditation centers.

An action plan has been drawn using the cultural-pilgrim-festival products to form a tourism circuit. It will be wise for a tourist to visit all the products in the circuit to make the travel fruitful.

Manjeshwar An entry for a traveller from Mangalore to this circuit is facilitated at Manjeshwar (10 Kms away from border). Here one can feel the warmness of Tulu-Malayalam (Karnataka-Kerala) culture. Jain temples (02Kms)

Kumbbla Continuing journey towards south, traveler can reach Kumbbla, the seat of Kumbbla Raja, who ruled over here centuries ago. Kumbbla is famous for Kambla (Buffalo race). Anandeshwara temple, Anandapuram lake temple (05Kms), Mujjukavu parthasarathi temple (06Kms) and Bela Church (05Kms).

Kasaragod The feel good factor of religious co-existence from Kumbbla can be felt persistently at a greater height in Kasaragod. Here a traveller can have a cultural feast with melodies of Map-pilapattu, Oppana of Illuminated girls and the grand drum beats of Yakshagana. Visitors can take Kasaragod Sarees and Thalangara thoppu as gifts. Malikarjuna temple, Malikdinar mosque (02 Kms), Lady of Dollar church (02Kms), Madhur temple (08Kms), Mallam Durga parameshwari temple (12kms), Nellikunnu Mosque, Kuthiyala gopalakrishna temple and Edaneer Mutt (10Kms).

Palakunnu The mind blowing cultural feast of Kasaragod prepares to see many unseen, when traveller crosses the Chandragiri River. This river flows beneath the historical Chandragiri fort. Further the journey towards the south, tourist can smell the proximity of an International tourism destination BEKAL. This is the symbol of bygone era in laterite. Palakunnu Bhagavathi temple, Trikanad Thriambakeshwar temple (02kms), Pandiyan Kallu (02kms) and Mukhiya prana temple (Inside bekal fort).

To do & Enjoy in Kanhangad A ten minutes drive from Bekal along the coast of Arabian Sea shows the way for a tourist into the "Land of Gods" i.e. Kanhangad. Here one can see, hear, talk and experience the "divine spirit" (Theyyam). Tourists can feel spiritualism (Ashrams) and enjoy folk.Madiyan koolom temple-Wooden carving-02 Kms. Anandashram-Practice meditation-yoga-05kms Nithyanadashram-Meditation- watch 100 caves Guruvanam- Sacred Groves and Meditation-06Kms Experience Theyyam performance - In temples, Tharavads and at important religious places.

Nileshwar The last leg in the circuit is Nileshwar, the cultural head quarters of the district. It is the seat of Nileshwar Raja, who ruled over here in the past. It is an important centre of

Yoga, Naturopathy and meditation. Nileshtar Mannampurathu kavu, Tali temple, Many sacred groves in and around Nileshtar. The traveller can proudly say farewell to the circuit with the immense satisfaction that he has been received and bid adieu by the erstwhile celebrated Rajas of this district.

Conclusion

There is uniqueness except in three districts namely (Wyanad, Pathanamthitta and Idukki) with regard to the landscape and structure of Kerala. The rest 17 districts show uniform pattern for tourism products, its availability and marketing. A standardized service product can be developed in the same manner as described by the paper.

REFERENCE

• Services Marketing by Christopher H Lovelock and Jochen Wirtz | • "Kasaragod Charithravum Samoohavum", – District Panchayath publication 2001, by Dr. C.Balan (HOD, History and Heritage studies, Kannur University). | • Conference on Tourism in India-Challenges ahead(15-17 May 2008 IIM-K) | • Tourism marketing potential(Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India) | • Various Press Sources (The Hindu, Business Line, Business Standard, Economic Times.) | • Various Periodicals (Tourism world, Kerala Tourism.) | Websites:- | www.keralatourism.org | www.tourismofindia.com | www.bekal.org | www.wttc.com |