AN EFFECT OF EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

When world leaders gathered in Paris in 2015, they established a new agenda called "2030 - the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)" to help countries work together to change the world. The World Tourism Organization has been pushing for destinations to not only expand, but also to act ethically by creating sustainable urban centers and committing to the eradication of poverty. The United Nations has declared 2017 to be the "International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development." The "the Union Tourism Ministry" and the "Ecotourism Society of India (ESOI)" have signed a memorandum of understanding to advance ecotourism in India. The Himalayan region, the idyllic state of Kerala, and the remote region of northeast India have all found great success in attracting ecotourists. In response to the ecological strategies and biological conservation policies of "The United Nations, World Tourism Organization, and Ecotourism Society of India," the Goan government has released a draft tourism policy that goes beyond the traditional focus on beach tourism and gives significant attention to the growth of ecotourism, monsoon tourism, heritage tourism, and backwater tourism.

KEYWORDS: Experiential Marketing, Customer Satisfaction, Ecotourism Society, India, Tourism Ministry, Sustainable Development Goals

INTRODUCTION

Many nations' economies rely heavily on tourism. According to the Manila Declaration on World Tourism from 1980, "an activity crucial to the life of nations because of its direct effects on the social, cultural, educational, and economic sectors of national societies and on their international relations."

The tourism business accounts for more than a third of international services trade and employ more people than any other sector of the economy, as reported by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

Tourism Towards 2030, a report by the UN World Tourism Organization, predicts that "international tourist arrivals worldwide are expected to increase by 3.3% a year between 2010 and 2030 and is expected to reach 1.8 billion by 2030," with 4.4% annual growth predicted for emerging destinations and 2.2% growth predicted for advanced economies.

The Mediterranean region was the most popular among international visitors in 2017, bringing in a record 1,322 million people.

When compared to 2016, Europe's performance in 2017 was outstanding.

The region gained 8%. In 2017, Africa saw an increase of 8%, while Asia and the Pacific saw an increase of 6%.

Even the Middle East and the Americas saw improvement in 2017, with a rise of 5% and 3% respectively.

"The Travel & Tourism (T&T) sector will continue to show strong momentum in 2018 by growing at a 4%-5% rate" (UNWTO- World Tourism Barometer, 2018).

This includes growth of 3.5%-4.5% in Europe and the Americas, 5%-7% in Africa, and 4%-6% in the Middle East.

In 2016, international arrivals were highest in Asia and the Pacific 9%, then in Africa 8 % the Americas 3% and a disappointingly low 2% in Europe. Despite geopolitical challenges, the world's most popular tourist destinations, including those in the Middle East, have all seen an increase in visitors this year. It is abundantly obvious from the foregoing that developing economies are gradually replacing developed ones. From 1980 to 2016, the emerging economies went from growing at a rate of 30% to growing at a rate of 45%. There is widespread optimism that emerging economies would account for 57% of international arrivals by 2030. This would translate to more than a billion tourists.

A staggering 13% growth in Southern and Mediterranean Europe, along with 7% growth in Western Europe and 5% growth in both Northern Europe and Central and Eastern Europe, helped Europe reach 671 million in 2017. In contrast, there were 324 million international visitors to Asia and the Pacific in 2017, with South Asia seeing an increase of 10%, South-East Asia of 8%, Oceania of 7%, and North-East Asia of 3%. South America saw a 7% increase in international visitors in 2017, Central America and the Caribbean saw a 4% increase despite the devastation wrought by hurricanes Irma and Maria, and North America

saw a 2% increase. UNWTO claims that a lack of data makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions on Africa and the Middle East. With a rebounding North Africa seeing an increase of 13% and Sub-Saharan Africa seeing an increase of 5%, Africa saw a total of 62 million international arrivals. In 2017, 58 million international tourists visited the Middle East, marking a significant increase over the previous year.

A number of factors contributed to the rise of tourism as a global industry in the 20th century, including the growth of the middle class in both developed and developing nations, the proliferation of new forms of communication and technology, the improvement and expansion of transportation infrastructure (particularly in the form of airplanes, trains, and automobiles), the general improvement of people's quality of life, the greater value placed on leisure time, and the emergence of new patterns in international tourist flows as a result of psychological, sociological, and economic shifts. The changing demography of tourists means that those over the age of 60 will expect more from their vacation experiences. These visitors are not affected by the seasons and are predicted to increase from 0.9 billion in 2010 to roughly 1.4 billion by 2030 as the younger generation continues to travel in search of education, adventure, and cultural immersion. According to a report published in 2016 by the United Nations, "the youth traveler ventures independently to remote, pristine, and far off places, stays longer, and immerses in other cultures to build their life experiences".

Significance and Development of Tourism in India

Dr. Mahesh Sharma, India's Union Minister of State for Tourism, Culture, and Civil Aviation, predicted that the country would attract 1% of international travelers by 2018. Incredible India!, M visa, Athiti Devo Bhava, Tourist Visa on Arrival, Adopt A Heritage Project, new Incredible India Website, 5 year tax holiday for Heritage sites, and 100% FDI for certain projects are just some of the branding and marketing schemes launched by the Government of India in recognition of the importance of tourism. Tourism infrastructure development is being prioritized to offer a healthy boost to the industry and improve visitors' overall experience. In 2017–18, the government of India approved funding for 11 theme-based projects costing a combined Rs.824.80 billion under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme, and three projects costing a combined Rs.98.84 billion under the PRASHAD Scheme. Investments in the tourism industry are forecast to reach US$12.4 billion under the 12th Five Year Plan, with private sector investments accounting for US$9.2 billion. Cultural performances, food festivals, tourism exhibitions, displays of handicrafts and handlooms, yoga sessions, tourism

and heritage walks, tourism related competitions for students and the general public, excursions to tourist sites, seminars, and workshops were all part of the October 2017 Paryatan Parv, which took place in 31 states and union territories to promote the importance of tourism to the nation's economy and highlight cultural diversity. The Government of India's Ministry of Tourism has also collaborated with individual states to establish "Special Tourism Zones" as part of the 2017-18 federal budget.

India's deep spiritual aspects, beautiful landscapes, delicious cuisine, and plethora of spa and yoga facilities all contribute to the country's reputation as a top destination for those seeking relaxation and rejuvenation. India has traditionally seen itself as the center of many different old religions and cultures, making it a fascinating and alluring travel destination. Ecotourism in India has flourished thanks to the country's rich biodiversity (both plant and animal), its wide range of landscapes, and the presence of 30 World Heritage Sites spread throughout its several states. The 25 distinct biomes also make India more appealing to eco- and nature-oriented vacationers. Some of the best areas in India to experience nature's bounty are the Himalayan Mountains, the paradisal state of Kerala, the wilds of Northeast India, the unspoiled Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and the exotic Lakshdweep Islands. Nature worship, a belief in the unity of all life, and the upholding of moral principles have all played vital roles in Indian culture throughout antiquity. India is advertising itself as an ecotourism destination, with the first of its intended destinations being the awe-inspiring "Thenmala" in Kerala. Biking, fishing/angling, bird watching, camel & elephant safari, camping, canoeing, trekking, hiking, horse & jeep safari, backwater boathouses, mountain expeditions, white water rafting, yoga, meditation, and ayurveda are just a few of the adventurous and enlightening activities that are planned and staged to ensure an extraordinary experience of oneness with nature.

Tourism and Hospitality Industry Trends in Goa

Goa was voted the best Indian vacation spot by Conde Nast Traveler readers in 2013, 2014, and 2016. The beaches, hills, forests, forts, cathedrals, temples, lakes, and waterfalls of this little Indian state, home to only about 1.5 million people, are a gift from nature, and the state's rich legacy and Portuguese customs and culture are ingrained throughout its very fabric. What makes this destination truly special is the seamless fusion of Portuguese and Goan traditions, which can be seen in the local food, way of life, and architectural design of homes and landmarks. Goa's 105 kilometers of coastline are a boon to the state's tourism industry.

Even before the advent of the hippy-trail in the late 1960s, Goa was one of the most sought-after vacation spots. The state government's "Go Goa- A Perfect Holiday Destination" advertising campaign draws visitors year-round, whether they're interested in monsoons, adventures, nature, ecotourism, medicine, the sacred, or pilgrimages (De Abreu, 2008). Each of these subsets of tourism opens up a new market segment by offering something unique to visitors. Goa and Sikkim benefit from a disproportionate share of domestic visitors thanks to the rapid growth of on shore and off shore casinos. Tourists of all ages go to the city to experience its many vibrant festivals and events, such as The Carnival, Shigmo, Sao Joao, IFFI, Sunburn, Supersonic, and The Grape Escapade.

According to the results of the Eleventh Finance Commission, Goa has some of the greatest infrastructure in the country. Goa also topped the list for greatest quality of life in the country's Economic Survey 2013–14, conducted by the National Commission on Population. Goa has the highest per capita NSDP in India, at US$ 4,449. Due to the robust performance of the tourist, pharmaceutical, and mining industries between 2004–05 and 2014–15, Goa's GSDP growth rate showed high growth of roughly 11.23%. After a partial mining prohibition was lifted, Goa's economy became increasingly reliant on tourism. About 5.3 million tourists visited Goa in 2015, representing 141 different nations, while 4.06 million visited in 2014, with 0.51 million being international tourists (mostly chartered travelers) and about 4.06 million being domestic tourists.

Experiential Marketing in the Tourism Industry

"a service industry, the recreation industry, the industry of experience" (Barlow & Maul, 2000) are all terms used to describe the tourism sector. The rapid shift "from product to service to experience" has "forced the marketing researchers to employ the experiential marketing approach in scheming the marketing strategies," as Williams (2006) puts it. Customers should be involved in this process (Maklan & Klaus, 2011). Desmet and Heekkert (2007) note that in the age of experiential marketing, the emphasis of customer design has shifted toward customers' experiences. The benefit of experiential marketing may be broken down into three categories: sensory, emotional, and cognitive. As an alternative to the common practice of focusing just on the qualities and advantages of a product, this approach encourages customers to "sense, feel, think, act, and relate" to the brand.

A variety of scholars have documented the transformation of the service sector into the experience sector (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 1999; Schmitt, 1999), the attention sector

(Davenport & Beck, 2002), and the emotion sector (Gobe & Zyman, 2001). Various nations are vying for tourists' dollars by providing enticing packages of services, attractions, and experiences in which they excel (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). Creating a unique and unforgettable vacation is crucial to a location's long-term prosperity. For this to happen, product performance is less important than providing a positive overall experience for the customer. Experiential marketing "centers on the consumer's actual activities and preferences" (Holbrook, 2000).

Customers in the modern era are dissatisfied with the standard of service they have always received, thus they now expect more. The tourism business is not the only one adapting to the current consumer's demand for personalized service and unique experiences. The term "free time" has taken on greater significance for the modern tourist due to the increased demands of their busy lifestyle and higher expectations of their vacation. Destinations use experiential marketing and promotions to stay competitive and beat out the fierce competition. They do this by continuously creating and inventing, which results in satisfied customers (Pullman & Gross, 2004). Therefore, there is a high need for experiential marketing methods, as they benefit both the business and the consumer.

Ecotourism and Experiential Marketing

More and more people throughout the world are realizing how important it is to protect the environment and nurture the atmosphere we live in. However, today's consumers expect businesses to actively engage them and find ways to improve their lives as a result. As a result, there are already emerging forms of tourism that aim to combine environmental awareness education with cultural immersion. Hetzer (1965) states that "the base principles of ecotourism are lessening the environmental impact, admiring and reducing the impact on local culture, capitalizing on the financial benefits for locals, and enhancing tourist satisfaction."

Because of the stresses of modern life, more and more people are taking vacations away from the city to recharge in the tranquility of the countryside. Today's vacationers expect nothing less than pure entertainment from their service providers (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Schmitt, 1999; 2003). Therefore, in order to boost the appeal of ecotourism, it is necessary to understand your consumer; his goals, needs, and pleasures, as well as a proper grasp of the natural balance and surroundings. In reality, ecotourism entails the deliberate selection of

recreation places that foster awe and appreciation for the natural world, cultural traditions, and the way of life of local populations.

Through experiential marketing, the ecotourism business may increase the experience environment by showcasing and providing one-of-a-kind facilities, services, and leisure amenities. By bolstering and supporting the tourists' acknowledgement of ecotourism, Taiwan was able to build a knowledge-based experience economy (Lin, 2007). The government of Malaysia has also successfully promoted ecotourism in coastal areas, given the country's abundance of natural wonders like lakes, mangroves, limestone caves, mountains, wildlife, waterfalls, islands, and so on.

India has a long history of conserving its cultural and natural treasures while also devoting itself to nature worship and the preservation of ethics, rituals, traditions, and beliefs. Ecotourism has been bolstered by technological developments in transportation and information dissemination, making it possible for visitors to travel to previously inaccessible locations, where they can engage with the locals and the natural environment while minimizing their impact on the environment.

CONCLUSION

A group called "Ecotourism Society of India (ESOI)" is working to spread awareness about the importance of eco-friendly travel in India. The Himalayan region, the idyllic state of Kerala, and the remote region of northeast India have all found great success in attracting ecotourists. In response to the ecological strategies and biological conservation policies of "The United Nations, World Tourism Organization, and Ecotourism Society of India," the Goan government has released a draft tourism policy that goes beyond the traditional focus on beach tourism and gives significant attention to the growth of ecotourism, monsoon tourism, heritage tourism, and backwater tourism. Foreign exchange profits and revenues are directly impacted by the rising demand for and popularity of T&T both domestically and internationally. Goa's economy relies heavily on the tourism and travel industry, especially in light of the recent mining ban and limitations.

All the destinations have had to differentiate themselves and compete at a greater level because rising new markets (such as Thailand, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Cambodia, Hong Kong, China, and Vietnam) entered the global rivalry. In the age of experiential marketing, consumers are increasingly seeking fulfilment of "higher level needs" (Maslow, 1943), such

as those associated with a sense of curiosity, a desire for knowledge, peace, escapism, sustainability, respect for nature, and so on during their vacations. Goa needs to adapt itself to attract the high spending tourists amid a global surge in tourism. Goa is a great place to stage and promote ecotourism because of its cultural wealth, natural beauty, lush green woods, palm studded beaches, upbeat folk music, and plenty of waterways. Experiential marketing is not widely used in the ecotourism industry in Goa, despite the fact that research by Pine and Gilmore (1998) shows that doing so might help businesses generate higher long-term profits and justify the charging of higher rates. By providing empirical verification of the effect of "experiential marketing on experiential value and customer satisfaction" in the ecotourism industry in Goa, this study will provide a theoretical contribution to the current body of knowledge. On the other hand, it would be useful since it would serve as a guide for hotels and the tourism board as they work to improve the guest experience and win repeat business.

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