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- Kumar S. (2011): "Customer Value: A Comparative Study of Rural and Urban Customers," Thesis, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra.

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ANALYZING CUSTOMERS' PREFERENCES IN SELECTING HOTEL SEGMENT: AN EMPIRICAL CASE STUDY**DR. BIKRANT KESARI****ASST. PROFESSOR****FACULTY IN DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES****MANIT****BHOPAL****PRYAS JAIN****STUDENT****DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES****MANIT****BHOPAL****ABSTRACT**

The constant transformation has made the Indian hotel industry more functional and practical and has gained a level of acceptance world over. The standards of facilities and services offered have evolved over the last decade towards the extensive use of technology, environment friendly services, pricing, market segmentation, regional preferences, etc. The Indian hotel industry has seen a significant growth in room inventory across categories from upscale luxury to limited services and, boutique and budget hotels. The occupancy and the room rates have seen continued gains both from the domestic and the international traveler in both the business and leisure segment. This article discuss about the segmentation of hotel industry for providing better service to the customer in different class. This study empirically investigates the most important factor that is considered by the customer in selection of hotel for comfort accommodation. Sample of 39 tourists coming to Bhopal city for different purpose were selected randomly for the study, and it also focus on important dimension that attract the customer in choosing the best and appropriate hotel segment. The study concludes that customer make selection on the hotels by online website, suggestion of taxi driver and recommendation of some past customer also influencing in selecting the hotel segment.

KEYWORDS

Hotel segment, customer preference.

INTRODUCTION

With the continued growth in India's GDP, improvement in the per capita income, and increased aspirational spending, the Indian hospitality sector is expected to grow faster than most countries around the world. According to the Consolidated FDI Policy, released by DIPP, ministry of Commerce and Industry, government of India, the government has allowed 100 per cent foreign investment under the automatic route in the hotel and tourism related industry. The inherent strength of the Indian economy has led to increased international visits to India. For foreigners, the travel time has increased to three-five days for business travel and from five days to seven days and ten days for leisure travel. The government of India has announced a scheme of granting tourist visa on arrival (T-VoA) for the citizens of Finland, Japan, Luxembourg, New Zealand and Singapore.

The government has stepped up various reforms to accelerate the industry growth with liberalization in the regulatory framework, investment friendly schemes, extensive support for creating a world class infrastructure, initiating better air and land connectivity, incentivizing regional set-up in tier III and IV cities, exploring the untapped geographical resources. Currently 29 mega tourism projects are being initiated across 22 states. The government is focusing on the PPP and is looking beyond the traditional tourism. But, still more concrete measures such as uniformity of state and municipal taxes, single window clearances, improvising lower bureaucracy in effective planning and execution, and safe and secure environment will be critical to the industry's growth.

Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India states that India currently has over 200,000 hotel rooms spread across hotel categories and guest-houses and is still facing a shortfall of over 100,000 rooms. Leading hotel brands have pepped up their investments and are in various stages of commencement of new proprieties in India, both in metro and non- metro cities. Cities such as Hyderabad, Pune, Jaipur and Chandigarh have emerged as growth markets. The emergence of these secondary and tertiary cities has led to an aggressive increase in hotel development activity, which was previously dependent in just five main cities. Another trend that has now emerged in the various major markets is the growth of micro-markets, especially in the larger cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, etc., where travel time has increased.

The Indian hotel industry is seeing huge spurt of foreign investment and international brands entering the fray. Most major international hotel brands such as Starwood, Hilton, Marriott, Hyatt and Accor already have a growing presence in India and they have an even stronger pipeline. Marriott International operates 11 properties across the country and plans to expand its network to 100 hotels over the next five-years. ITC Hotels also have projected its plan to open 25 new hotels under the Fortune brand over the course of next 12-18 months. The emergence of branded budget and economy segment hotels present tremendous opportunities. Keys Hotels, a brand of Berggruen Hotels, is setting up a leading chain of mid-market hotels, resorts and service apartments across India and plans to open and manage 40 hotels over the next five years. So does, Ginger Hotel also plans to open 60 to 70 budget hotels in 23 locations across the country.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Eun Min PARK & Young Ook KIM (2012) in his analysis of urban hotel location focusing on market segment and local & foreign guest preference determined that local and foreign guests are influenced by different factors when choosing accommodations this paper demonstrate how a hotel's marketing strategy must distinguish between local and foreign guests, as well as considering the factors that affect a customer's choice, in particular hotel location.

Soultana (Tania) Kapiki (2012) describes that quality in the tourism and hospitality industry involves consistent delivery of products and guest services according to expected standards. The outcomes of the survey suggest focus on quality service; retention of existing guests by exceeding their expectations; continuous quality improvement; employment, regular training and empowerment of service-oriented staff; search for best practices through benchmarking; and, finally, pursuit of quality accreditation through the various schemes, such as the eco-labels, ISO and the EU Foundation for Quality Management.

Austin c. Otegbulu & Odu Tenigbade (2011) identified significant attributes like regular power and water supply, closeness to the city center and good room service are most important in a hotel accommodation.

N.A. Ahmad, S.Y. Kamarudin, A.A.Aziz, M. Bakhtiar and N. Ahmat (2011) described the method that can help an organization to sell the right inventory, to the right customer, at the right time for the right price. This paper conceptualizes the relationship of application of market segmentation and occupancy performance and suggested that Hotel that practice effective market segmentation will have higher occupancy performance compared to other hotel.

Gursharan Jeet Kaur and Gopal Kumar Johari (2010) made an effort to highlight the present scenario of Tourism in India and hurdles that comes in the way for the development of Sustainable Tourism and its related infrastructure. It further highlights the initiatives taken by the Government itself, for attracting foreign incentives and to encourage private sector as well to act as a facilitator by providing supportive infrastructure facilities.

Ruchan Kayaman and Huseyin Arasli (2007) the principal contribution of the study is that it provides important insights into the development and measurement of customer based hotel brand equity. This study also suggest that hotel managers and executives should try to influence; perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand image and brand awareness in their organizations and design their service delivery process by considering relations between customer based brand equity components.

Hanlan, J, Fuller, D & Wilde, SJ (2006), 'segmenting tourism markets: a critical review' the practice of segmenting tourism markets as a vital step in the destination marketing process. This paper argues that the market segmentation process must be driven by the strategic imperatives of the destination. Further, through adopting a creative combination of post-hoc and apriority approaches to segmenting markets, destinations may identify emerging niche markets not yet targeted by competitor destinations.

Kyoo Yup Chunga, Seok Youn Ohb, Seong Seop Kimc, Seung Youb Hand (2004) this paper introduced perspective of market segmentation methodologies for hotel guest room customers these are segmentation by the industry data & benefit segmentation for respective customer.

DIMENSION OF HOTEL SEGMENT IN THE MARKET

In the ultimate mass market, all customers would want the same products and the same services. The opposite would be a completely tailored product or service for each individual. The real world is somewhere in between. How similar are hotel customers? Do they all want a traditional room in a full-service hotel or do some want suites? Do others want a low cost room with limited services or do they prefer a luxury hotel with a full range of services and benefits? Obviously, there are a variety of types of hotel customers. This poses a challenge for the hotel managers. Which customers do you want to serve? Which customers can we best serve? How can we organize those customers into groups or segments, so they can be targeted through our services and marketing strategies? How can we achieve competitive advantage with our targeted customers?

A market segment is simply a group of customers who have common requirements for a product or a service. Different segments have different needs and requirements. Segments require evaluation and adjustment according to their responsiveness to your decisions. Segments also show different patterns of usage in terms of days of the week and seasons. Segments present opportunities for developing strategies which cater to the specific needs and requirements of that segment. Your team will be able to set operating budgets and make capital investments that can improve your levels of service selected attributes. This can help you target segments and result in improved occupancy and, if investments are made wisely, improved profitability for your hotel.

BUSINESS SEGMENT CUSTOMER

Business segment includes people who travel for business reasons. Their travel expenses are usually covered by the companies they work for. Since they travel to conduct business, most of the time, they will travel during the week. However, a small portion (around 10 percent) may travel during the weekends too. The duration of their stay is one to two nights. Many are frequent travelers and represent opportunities for repeat buying. They tend to be the very demanding in terms of overall levels of services, but are generally willing to pay for added value. Travelers in this segment tend to generate around 15 percent of the demand for the hotels in the area.

CORPORATE CONTRACT SEGMENT CUSTOMER

Like business segment, people in this segment also travel for business reasons. However, they are required to stay at hotels that have a contract with the company they work for. Many large corporations have contracts with hotels that guarantees a certain number of room nights in return for discounts. Most of the time, the level of discount they receive depends on the number of room nights they can guarantee to generate; higher the room night, higher the discount. Companies may have contractual rate agreements with more than one hotel in your area. Most of the time, travelers in this segment will travel during the week; only a small portion (around 5 percent) may travel during the weekends. The duration of their stay is one to two nights. Since they have limited options in terms of the number of hotels they can stay, they are not as demanding as business travelers. Travelers in this segment tend to generate around 5 percent of the demand for the hotels in the area.

FAMILY SEGMENT CUSTOMER

Family segment includes families with and without kids who travel for pleasure and leisure activities. Family segment includes families with and without kids who travel for pleasure and leisure activities and are the best segment for selling rooms on weekends (Friday, Saturday, & Sunday). Research suggests that around 80% of them travel during the weekend. Around 10% of the market demand is generated by family segment.

IPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

In this project the researcher tries to find different segments of customers in hotels. The research is conducted in BHOPAL and focused major location of the city. As a capital this city is most important for commercial purpose and government purpose, so presence of hotels can be easily seen here. Bhopal is a growing city, and well in its way of becoming a metro city. Construction of one of the most prestigious hospital, AIMS is an example to growth in Bhopal. Due to this fast growth major players like MERRIOTS have taken interest in the city.

Scope of hotel industry in Bhopal is quite huge. To provide better and quality service to customer we should first understand them. In this research we will try to divide customer in to different segments and will identify unique need and wants of each segment. We will try to determine what lead to the choice of the particular hotel, what they like in the hotel, what extra they want, and what they don't want. This is the main objective of the research, another aspect of the research is the price, we will try to find the price sensitivity of each segment & how it affects them and how much they are willing to pay for the services they get determining an average room tariff that will help in present as well as, future tariff setting, is the secondary objective of the research.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

It has been seen that every hotel charges each segment equally, irrespective of their needs and wants. Each segment may want different thing in a hotel. If we understand the reason, why a customer selects a hotel, we can use it to provide better services to them.

OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

- To divide the customer in segment group.
- Why they selected the particular hotel.
- To know the satisfaction level of customer.

SECONDARY OBJECTIVE

- To know the Price sensitivity
- What more each segment group wants in a hotel.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

"Marketing research means the systematic gathering, recording, analyzing of data about problems relating to the marketing of goods and services "Marketing research has proved an essential tool to make all the need of marketing management. Marketing research therefore is the scientific process of gathering and analyzing of marketing information to meet the needs of marketing management. The study aims on basic research which intended to expand the body of knowledge for the use of others with a primary objective in dividing the customer in segment group, reason for selecting particular type of hotel and satisfaction level in the bottom side of the research also tried to find out the price sensitivity case and other dimension which attract in each segment of customer.

BENEFITS OF STUDY

There are many benefits related to this study. Some of the benefits of taking this study are as follows:

- We can understand the customers need and wants properly.
- Can provide better services.
- Can plan our tariff rate properly.

PROCESS OF MARKETING RESEARCH

The marketing research is done in systematic process. The researcher have pursued the below process of marketing for the study.

Stage 1: Problem Definition The first and the most important step in marketing research is to define the problem, here problem is to divide customer into different segments and identify the reason for choosing a particular hotel. We will also try to identify price sensitivity of each segment.

Stage 2: Research design Research design indicates the method and procedure of conducting research study. Descriptive research is undertaken where the researcher wants to know the characteristics of group.

Stage 3: Data Collection and Sampling Primary data has been collected for the purpose of the study through survey method which consists of personal interview, telephone interview and mail interview. To conduct the survey, the researcher has selected a combination of structured and unstructured questionnaire as an instrument for gathering valuable information from the customers. Questionnaire, which is used for the survey, is consisting question and checklist questions to check the customer feedback. Sampling units are the tourist visit to Bhopal city. Through simple random sampling method

Stage 4: Data analysis and interpretation After all the above steps are completed now the important step is data analyzing and interpretation. For this researcher has used percentage and regression with the help of SPSS.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

TABLE NO. 1 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION LEVEL

MODEL SUMMARY

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.743 ^a	.553	.489	.525

a. Predictors: (Constant), facilities, room service, reception, cleanliness, comfort, food

The above table shows the adjusted R square, which is .489. This shows that 49% of variability of satisfaction is explained by this model.

TABLE NO. 2 SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	14.322	6	2.387	8.646	.000 ^a
Residual	11.596	42	.276		
Total	25.918	48			

a. Predictors: (Constant), facilities, room service, reception, cleanliness, comfort, food

b. Dependent Variable: satisfaction

Table No.2 predicts the Sig value is .000 which is less than .05. This show that model is useful. It tells us at least one independent variable is a significant predictor of the dependent variable.

TABLE NO. 3 INFLUENCING FACTORS

COEFFICIENTS

Influencing factors	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.747	.294		5.946	.000
reception	.172	.113	.273	1.515	.137
food	-.375	.140	-.516	-2.684	.010
room service	.037	.123	.049	.303	.764
cleanliness	-.022	.112	-.033	-.194	.847
comfort	.346	.120	.540	2.874	.006
facilities	.277	.215	.382	1.287	.205

a. Dependent Variable: satisfaction

The above table no. 3 shows that only food and comfort plays an important role in satisfaction as sig, values are .010 for food and .006 for comfort, which is less than .05.

Model also shows that with one unit increase in comfort the satisfaction is increased by .346 units.

TABLE NO. 4: REASON OF VISIT

Reason	Response
Corporate Business	7
Business	19
Families	5
Others	8
Total	39

Source: field survey

Above table interprets that 49% of the costumer visit Bhopal due to business reason. 20% due to personal reason, 13% because of families and 18% because of corporate business.

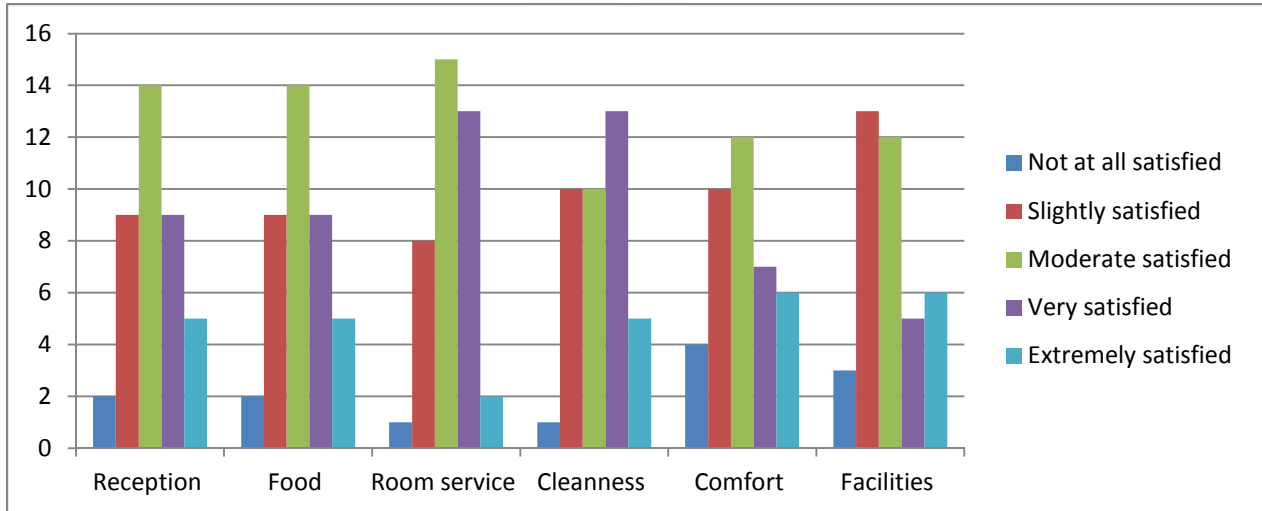
TABLE NO. 5: SATISFACTION LEVEL

satisfactions	Response
Not at all satisfied	2
Slightly satisfied	9
Moderate satisfied	14
Very satisfied	9
Extremely satisfied	5
Total	39

Source: Field Survey

The above table no.5 shows that near about 14% of customers are extremely satisfied from service 24% of the customers covveys that they are slightly and less satisfied whereas about one third of the customer are only moderately satisfied. Looking on to the above figure the researcher has focused in to six dimension of satisfaction level and the result are shown in the graph :

GRAPH 1



In the above graph it is clearly visible that customers are moderately satisfied among these entire six factors which considered as important for availing the hotel accommodation whereas if we see each of these factors individually then we can say that in room service there are lesser numbers of extremely satisfied customers and there is a scope of improving in this area. Factors like food, cleanness, comfort & facilities also put major impact in selecting the hotel segment so development in these areas is also required to attract more number of customers.

TABLE NO. 6: SOURCE OF SELECTION IN HOTEL

Source	Response
Recommendation of old customers	18
Auto & Taxi drivers	12
Internet & hotel website	9
Total	39

Source; field survey

In the above shows that majority of the costumers choose the hotel on the recommendation of some past customers who already visited this hotel. Influence of auto & taxi drivers also plays an important role in selection of hotels whereas we have also seen the customers book the room in advance through Internet and hotel website.

TABLE NO.7: IMPORTANCE OF TARIFF IN SELECTING THE HOTEL

Importance	Response
Not at all important	16
Slightly important	10
Moderately important	7
Somewhat important	5
Extremely important	1
Total	39

Source; field survey

The above table shows that only 4% of customers are highly sensitive towards price whereas 52% of customers are somehow give less importance to hotel tariff and for the remaining 44% of customer price is not a big factor in selecting the hotel segment.

CONCLUSIONS

The study provides understanding regarding the needs and wants and their preference in selecting the segment of hotel. The objective of this paper is to determine the most important attribute and variables and find out that the main reason why a costumer selects a hotel and the study conclude that mainly due to recommendation of some past costumer who tell us their pleasant experience in the hotel when they visited Bhopal and also from the internet & hotel website they find out some valuable information regarding the tariff and physical facilities, it is also revealed that taxi & auto driver at railway station, bus stand and airport plays an important role in decision making for selecting the hotel segment according the need of the tourist who are unknown to the city. After analyzed each factor it was perceived that customers were satisfied with the hotel, but there is scope of improvement. According to regression analysis, independent variable comfort plays an important role on dependent variable satisfaction. The findings also noted price doesn't matter for majority of customer. This shows that costumer require better service & facilities in compare to the price they are ready to pay for it. The findings determining the result pertaining to customer preference are vary according to their class and segment in business segment the customer need restaurant, bar & meeting room whereas in case of business corporate segment mostly the preference go for conference hall however in family class customer the basic requirements are food, room service and physical facilities.

RECOMMENDATION

- As we have seen restaurant is a major requirement in the hotel business. The entire segment group wants a restaurant. So focus should be on restaurant and giving the costumers a present experience.
- Hotel should provide better comfort. As seen in our regression analysis comfort plays an important role in satisfaction. Hotel can provide better comfort by giving costumer comfortable bed, pillow, clean n hygienic bed sheets etc.
- To increase the flow of new costumers. Hotel management should have good relation with auto drivers. The auto drivers should be paid good commission, so that they are motivated to bring costumer to our hotel.
- Cleanliness should be focused upon, as many guests were not satisfied with the level of cleanliness. Cleanliness plays a role in comfort, so in a way it's important.

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