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A STUDY ON E-TOURISM: AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH FOR HOME STAY TOURISM WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KUMARAKOM PANCHAYATH

DEVIKA R
LECTURER
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
SAINTGITS COLLEGE OF APPLIED SCIENCE
CHANGANASERY
KOTTAYAM

ABSTRACT

The tourism industry in India has been growing tremendously over the year and it is the major sources of economic growth. Home stay tourism is popular in tourism industry which adds socio cultural richness to tourist's experience. Apart from that E- tourism has become a recent trend in tourism industry. This paper focus on the impact of E tourism on home stay business of Kumarakom Panchayath and also various motivational factors influenced for adopting home stay and e tourism. In this study data are collected from home stay operators in Kumarakom Panchayath. The findings of the study will help the tourism sector and home stay operators to realise the importance of e tourism in the tourism sector.

KEYWORDS

e-tourism, home stay, e-booking, e- marketing, e-payment, e- promotion.

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

India is one of the few countries in the world blessed with the tremendous variety of tourist source. The tourism industry has taken the state of Kerala to the global map with its branding. The brand name of Kerala, 'God's Own Country' has become popular around the world. Kerala has an active tourism industry which has been accepted as one of the most suited industries for Kerala. The Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC), a public sector undertaking conducts and regulates the tourism activities. It is one of the most profitable ventures of the Kerala government. There is District Tourism Promotion Council also, which mainly concentrates on tourism promotion activities like marketing products through public/private participation, improvement of quality/standard or evolving procedure for certification of all tourism products, improvement of signage's, sanitation etc. by working through local government, heritage conservation and preservation, coordination of tourism clubs, creation of tourism awareness and preparation of host community, promotion of paying guest scheme information dissemination and local infrastructure projects.

The development processes within the information technology, communications and Internet, have revolutionized the entire tourism industry, creating new business models, changing the structure of distribution channels of the tourism and re-projecting all products of this industry and last but not least, influencing the touristic packages suppliers, destinations and stakeholders.

As long as the home stay operator's can be reached on the Internet, the trend will grow up in their direction, because the Internet is similar to a "playground" in which with a well done web site, the home stay businesses can advertise as professional as their larger competitors

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the impact of e- tourism on home stay business in Kumarakom Panchayath.
2. To examine motivational factors influencing adoption of electronic tourism among home stays in Kumarakom Panchayath.
3. To study the major problems associated with adoption of e tourism in home stays.

1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Primary data is collected from respondents in Kumarakom village using questionnaire through email and telephonic interview method. Population of the study consists of home stay operators. 50 samples are collected from home stay operators in Kumarakom Panchayath. Data are analysed through composite indices and Likert Scaling Technique.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Anupama.K, Koshy C.J (2014), the internet is revolutionizing the distribution of tourism information and sales. The home stay initiative that is booming in tourist location of Kumarakom is a venture of this kind.

S. Anil Radhakrishnan (2013), the tourism industry in Kerala, which is facing severe shortage of hotel rooms during the season. Even though the state has 50000 rooms for accommodation in different categories.

Bhuiyan et al (2012), home stay program enables operators to contribute in various programs for improving the life standards of rural communities because the program gives focus to economic development and social advancement of the operators.

Salaimia, Othaman and Maheeran (2011), home stays very different compared to other modes of accommodation such as hotel, motel or bed and breakfast which is normally situated in rural areas where the whole community is still practicing the traditional way of life and embracing strong culture and traditional practices.

Ismail & Islam (2011), studies that home stays provide job opportunities for local communities and improve qualities of life of local people.

Cotton & Whitney (2010), home stay program has potential to address many of the economic, environmental and socio cultural challenges that communities face. Increased training and capabilities in business development and tourism education etc.

Chaiytor, Kaoses & Thitphat (2010), found that home stays can ensure economic, social and cultural benefits for local communities as well as sustainable development. It provides a platform to reinforce these previous findings on contribution of home stay accommodation to the socio economic wellbeing of rural population.

Kayat (2009), home stay programs fail because of a lack of local people involvement, poor local leadership, lack of necessary knowledge and skills and poor planning.

3. DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

TABLE 3.1: MOTIVES FOR HOME STAY PROGRAMME

Particulars	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
To earn income from home stay	3.00	5.00	4.2885	.66676
To support responsible tourism mission	2.00	5.00	3.9615	.76598
Increasing demand of home stays	3.00	5.00	4.3846	.79592
To interact with culture around the world	2.00	5.00	3.7115	.77552
Personal interest and passion	3.00	5.00	4.0769	.70977
Use of unoccupied portion of home	2.00	5.00	4.0962	.82271
Earn foreign currency	2.00	5.00	3.5385	.77868

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: The above table shows the motives for home stay programme. Majority of the respondents are strongly agreeing with the statements that their motive for home stay business are 'increase in demand for home stays', 'to earn income from home stay', 'use unoccupied portion of house' & 'personal interest and passion' with mean value more than 4 of and they are agreeing with all other statements

TABLE 3.2: LEVEL OF SATISFACTION OF DIFFERENT E- TOURISM FACILITIES

Particulars	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
e booking	3.00	5.00	3.8367	.68760
e marketing	3.00	5.00	3.8627	.66392
e payment	2.00	5.00	3.8261	.87697
e promotion	2.00	5.00	3.9423	.63904

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: The above table shows that respondents satisfied with all e tourism facilities adopted in home stay programme such as E-promotion with mean value of 3.94, E-marketing with mean value of 3.86, E-booking with mean value of 3.83 & E- payment facilities with mean value of 3.82.

TABLE 3.3: FACTORS INFLUENCE IN ADOPTING E-TOURISM

Factors	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Locating customers at reasonable cost	1.00	5.00	3.7308	.97247
Attracting customers	2.00	5.00	3.6346	.65765
Modernization	1.00	6.00	3.6538	1.04571
Positive effects of responsible tourism	1.00	5.00	3.2885	1.01627
Eliminate fraud	1.00	7.00	3.4423	1.14470
Provide customized services	2.00	7.00	3.8077	.88647
Mass communication	3.00	7.00	4.5000	.67155

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: The above table shows that majority of the respondents strongly agree with the statement that 'Mass communication' with a mean value of 4.5. It is the main factors that influence the tour operators to adopt e-tourism. They are agreeing with all other statements having mean values more than 3.

TABLE 3.4: PROBLEMS IN E-TOURISM

Problems	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
High cost	1.00	5.00	2.0385	1.02826
Lack of adequate knowledge& skills	1.00	5.00	2.0962	.84621
Indifferent attitude of customers	1.00	5.00	2.3846	1.03192
Lack of support from authorities	1.00	5.00	2.1538	1.05505
Prevailing tax mechanism	1.00	5.00	2.4423	.93753
Access & use	1.00	4.00	1.8800	.91785

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: The above table shows the problems associated with the adoption of E-tourism in home stays. The respondents are neutrally agreed with above all statements as mean values are less than 3. Most of the respondents agreed that prevailing tax mechanism and indifferent attitude of respondents are the main problems that they are facing.

TABLE 3.5: IMPACT OF E-TOURISM

Particulars	Maximum rank	Minimum rank	Mean	Sd	Rank
Increased annual occupancy rate	1.00	9.00	3.7885	2.07068	2
Improved off season tourism	1.00	9.00	3.4615	2.19144	1
Upward trend in profitability	1.00	9.00	4.5962	2.06046	3
Improved competency level	1.00	9.00	4.8654	2.26680	4
Reduced time & cost	1.00	9.00	4.9808	2.96046	5
Increased foreign exchange earning	1.00	9.00	5.9808	2.53980	8
Reduced level of fraud	1.00	9.00	5.0962	2.50693	6
Improved facilities & services	1.00	9.00	6.1346	2.52073	9
Enhanced knowledge & skills	1.00	9.00	5.8654	2.75844	7

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: The above table shows the impact of E-tourism on home stay business. Increase in off season tourism ranked 1 with lowest mean value of 3.46, increase in annual occupancy rate ranked 2 with mean value of 3.78, followed by increase in profitability, increase in competency level, reduce time and cost, reduce fraud, enhance knowledge and skills, foreign exchange earnings and improve facilities.

FINDINGS

- Majority of the respondents are strongly agreeing with the statements 'increase in demand for home stays', 'to earn income from home stay' are the motives to involved in home stay program me.
- Customers are satisfied with all e-tourism facilities provided by home stay operators.
- Mass communication is the main factor influences the home stay operators to adopt e -tourism.
- Prevailing tax mechanism and indifferent attitude of respondents are the main problems.
- Improve off season tourism & increase annual occupancy rate are the major benefits of electronic tourism to the home stay operators.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Provide training programs to home stay operators for the proper establishment of e-tourism in home stays.
2. More emphasis should be given on electronic promotion of home stays rather than other e-tourism facilities.
3. Proper developmental and infrastructural facilities are required for the promotion of home stay tourism,
4. Use internet and social media to promote home stays.
5. Home stay operations should be focused on foreign tourists.
6. There is need to design innovative, attractive and economical tour packages with the help of local self governments.
7. Authorities need to take more steps to attract tourists to Kumarakom Panchayath with the help of advertisements. There is also a need to conduct awareness programs so that more and more tourists came to know about home stays.
8. Implement customer benefit programs to attain customer loyalty.
9. Support from government through credit facilities, tax concession, simplify licensing of home stays.

CONCLUSION

The study on e-tourism among home stays in Kumarakom indicates that they are underutilizing the potential features of internet technology and not effectively promoting their tourism services. In India there has been revolutionary growth in smart phone sales resulting in a greater usage of internet. This growth would be benefiting home stay operators and marketers who could use internet with its multimedia features to reach out to potential tourists. The websites can be improved by additional features such as virtual tours, using audio and video features, animation, information on weather, electronic booking facilities, electronic payment facilities and links to tourism information centres and updated exchange rates etc. the findings are limited to e-tourism adoption among home stays in Kumarakom Panchayath in which home stay operators should apply constant innovation, in terms of marketing techniques and technological advancements, in order to be able to offer differentiated, personalized, tailored and value added services. The key point is for sustaining their competitive advantage is to focus on their competitive advantage on their core competencies that technology offers to exploit the opportunities that technology offers to improve their strategic position in the tourism value system.

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