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## A STUDY ON YOUNG ADULT CONSUMER BEHAVIOR TOWARDS ADVENTURE TRAVEL WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HYDERABAD

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### ABSTRACT

*Tourism sector is one of the largest employment generators in India. It plays a pivotal role in promoting inclusive growth of the less-advantaged sections of the society. Growing disposable incomes and changing preferences of young adults towards leisure and tourism have brought in significant growth in adventure travel. Present study aims at understanding adventure travellers' preferences in general and their expectations from adventure tours. A primary study has been conducted to understand young adults' consumer behavior towards adventure tours. Responses were gathered from select respondents, who have experienced adventure tour in last one year. Their preferences helped in suggesting appropriate strategies to different stake holders in adventure tourism business.*

### KEYWORDS

Adventure travel, consumer behavior, travelers' preferences, soft adventure travel Vs. hard adventure travel.

### INTRODUCTION

Adventure tourism in India is rapidly growing in popularity as Indian tourist seeks different kinds of vacations. Adventure tourism involves exploration or travel to remote, exotic areas. In Indian scenario there is lot of misinterpretation regarding adventure travel. People confuse independent adventure activities as adventure travel. As per Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) cruise, hot air ballooning, bungee jumping, para-gliding, jet skiing, visits to adventure theme parks do not constitute part of adventure travel. Hard adventure travel includes caving, climbing, trekking, surfing, paragliding, marathon and running tours. Soft adventure travel includes polar expeditions, camping, cycling, walking/hiking, horseback riding, kayaking, rafting, bird watching, safaris, scuba and snorkeling and surfing.

Based on the growing demand for adventure travel Indian government is extending Central Financial Assistance to various State Governments/Union Territory Administrations for development of Tourism Infrastructure in destinations including Adventure Tourism destinations.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) adventure tour operators expect business in 2015 to grow by 23%.<sup>1</sup> In New York Times Travel Show, Vice-President of ATTA, Casey Hanisko expressed his strong conviction about growing market that has yet to be fully tapped by agents. The worldwide adventure travel is estimated to be worth \$263 billion, as per ATTA research.

Adventure tourism market study 2013 by ATTA provides a picture of demographics, psychographics, and behaviors of adventure travelers of three key regions, Europe, North America and South America. Key findings of that study include:<sup>2</sup>

- Average age of adventure travelers is 36 years. They are much younger than non-adventure travelers.
- The sources of information they rely on include publications such as National Geographic, National Geographic Traveler and Men's Health, and general publications like Cosmopolitan and Vogue.
- Majority of adventure travelers planned their trips based on online research and consulting friends and family. They also preferred recommending trips on social media.
- Adventure travelers using Facebook has increased enormously from 2010 report. As per 2013 study 78% of travelers were using Facebook which was more than double since 2010.

In India, the average spend on adventure travel is INR8900 per day (excluding flights and visas)<sup>3</sup>. Indian adventure travelers preferred hiking and trekking, outdoor photography and safaris followed by cycling, camping and rafting. Those who went on International adventure preferred Europe and UK followed by Far East. Like global adventure travelers, Indians too preferred online search for researching information. 62.25% respondents had prior domestic adventure travel experience. Majority are between 30-39 years old and negligible percentage below 20 years.

The Indian Ministry of Tourism has taken various initiatives to promote Adventure Tourism. It issued guidelines for the approval of Adventure Tour Operators, which is a voluntary scheme, meant for all bona-fide Adventure Tour operators.<sup>4</sup> These guidelines cover various adventure activities of land, air and water, comprised of mountaineering, trekking, hang gliding, paragliding, bungee jumping and river rafting. The Indian Institute of Skiing and Mountaineering (IISM) in Gulmarg, Jammu and Kashmir is fully operational since 2009. And the institute is equipped with best of the modern equipment and training facilities. During year 2013-14, IISM was granted INR140.10 lakh to conduct adventure courses.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aimed at understanding what young adults of Hyderabad region expect from adventure travel. Major objectives of the study include,

1. To understand specific preferences of young adult adventure travelers in Hyderabad region.
2. To suggest recommendations to travel agencies/tour operators regarding the appropriate ways to segment, target and position their offers.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Jan-Feb 2015. Given that the meaning of adventure differs from person to person, for the purpose of this study, ATTA definition of adventure travel is considered. A structured questionnaire is designed and sent to a representative sample of travellers from Hyderabad. 214 respondents participated in the study. Responses are considered from only those people who had been to adventure travel atleast once in last one year.

### STUDY FINDINGS

1. 79% of the respondents belong to the age group of 20-25.
2. Given the same cost and duration 45% of the respondents preferred adventure travel over leisure travel.
3. 40% of respondents preferred rafting as most preferred adventure activity.

<sup>1</sup> www.travelmarketreport.com (<http://www.travelmarketreport.com/articles/Adventure-Travel-A-Growing-But-Untapped-Market-for-Agents>)

<sup>2</sup> www.fairtrade.travel ([http://www.fairtrade.travel/uploads/files/ATTA\\_-\\_Adventure\\_Tourism\\_Market\\_Study\\_2013.pdf](http://www.fairtrade.travel/uploads/files/ATTA_-_Adventure_Tourism_Market_Study_2013.pdf))

<sup>3</sup> Outbound Adventure Travel Survey from India Report – Dec, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Annual Report 2013-14 by Ministry of Tourism

4. One fourth of the respondents preferred March-April for such travel and an equal percentage of respondents preferred Jan-March.
5. 54% of the respondents are ready to book their tours through start-up operators too, as long as the packages are affordably designed and attractive.
6. God's own country, Kerala is the preferred destination by 21% of travelers and Uttarakand is preferred by 22%. Andaman and Nicobar too is a favorite destination for around 15% of respondents.
7. 52% of adventure travelers preferred short trips of 3-5 days.
8. When asked about the preferred accommodation 47% voted tents and camping over hotels, motels and cottages.
9. 84% of respondents said that they prefer e-bookings over brick and mortar travel agencies.
10. An interesting revelation in the survey was 45% of the respondents prefer these travels with their friends and almost equal percentage of respondents that is 42% of respondents preferred these travels with family.
11. When asked about the significance of personal safety 63% of the respondents said it is highly important and to be taken care by the tour operator.
12. 72% of the respondents considered hospitality of the tour operator are very important in making tour operator's choice.
13. For 74% of respondents' tour operator's ability to manage the group is a crucial factor in choosing a right operator.
14. 35% of travelers are ready to accept basic food during this kind of travel but 65% said that they expect tasty food from tour operators.
15. 65% of the adventure travelers sought an instructor or tour guide. 35% travelers are ready to travel without a guide.
16. 55% of respondents wanted their tours to be packed with exciting nature visits during these adventure travels.
17. 74% of the respondents felt that adventure travel should give them a feeling of relaxation too.
18. 66% of respondents were expecting exciting new activities to be part of their adventure travel.
19. 62% of the respondents felt that the group composition has to be from varied cultures.
20. Since relaxation is one of the expectations from vacations only 54% of the respondents were ready to push their limits to physical ability. And 46% of respondents preferred adventure activities of moderate difficulty.

### MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

1. Study revealed that there is lack of awareness of adventure travel. Many do not know what exactly adventure travel comprised of. Travel and tourism ministry must spend enough on promoting adventure travel. Incredible India campaign has revamped the image of India as travel destination across the globe as well as within the country. One such attempt encouraging adventure travel will fetch growth in this segment too.
2. Trusted online travel agencies like Make My Trip, Yatra.com etc., should come up with attractive packages to encourage adventure tourism.
3. Study findings clearly depict that majority of the travelers wish to have trained adventure sports instructors. So tour operators need to appoint good instructors and promote the same while marketing their packages. Ministry of tourism and Ministry of HRD too need to take necessary actions. Universities have to be provided better coaching and training facilities. Government has to promote those courses in adventure sports by showcasing the successful career paths associated with such courses. Ministry of Tourism has already started one such institute IISM in Jammu and Kashmir. But more and more such universities have to be established. Government need to invest in developing necessary infrastructure and maintain well the beautiful natural resources and landscapes our country is gifted with.
4. To create awareness and attract people to adventure travel indoor adventure campaigns have to be conducted. Such camps train personnel for adventure tours and prospective travelers will have a first-hand experience that induces trial and adoption.
5. Majority of the respondents showed interest in booking their adventure travel through start-ups too, if the package is attractive. This is a clear indication to government that more and more people should be attracted into this sector to do business. Ease of regulations will attract more travel operators to open their e-shops. As on date many restrain from this adventure travel business as there are lots of restrictions and difficulties to obtain licenses.
6. Since equal majority showed interest in leisure and adventure travel. It's an indication to travel agents that they can offer proper blend of both in their tour packages. Another interesting finding from the survey is majority of the travelers prefer short trips of 3-5 days. This implies that travel operators have to offer more and more of short trips to this segment, that immediately attract them.
7. Survey result reveals that online travel operators and online mode of payments are most preferred over brick and mortar operators and cash payments. Creating a well-designed website is the crucial factor in promoting adventure travel offers.
8. Through patronage rewards and planned customer retention strategies travel operators can expand their business. Specific marketing strategies have to be tailored for acquiring more and more customers from different age groups.

### SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study is limited to young adult population comprising mostly of student segment at graduate and post graduate level. And the research is confined to Hyderabad region and hence it may not represent actual population. The study can be extended to different age groups. And a detailed analysis can be made on impact of demographics on consumer behavior of adventure travelers.

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