

THE POWER OF SENSORY ATTRIBUTES IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY OF KERALA

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Abstract

This study tries to comprehend how travellers' five senses influence their choice to return to popular tourist destinations in Kerala. The study looked at both domestic tourists, as well as a variety of factors that affect travellers' behaviour. A sample size of 100 respondents was used for the survey's primary data collection, which was conducted in March 2023. The findings suggest that five key sensory qualities are directly related to tourists' enjoyment. These qualities include sustenance, mental calmness, natural flora and fauna, among others. When asked about their experiences visiting different tourist attractions in Kerala, the respondents expressed a satisfactory degree of visitor satisfaction. This study demonstrates that visitors' decisions to return to a location are largely influenced by their sensory impressions.

Keywords: Sensory attributes – Kerala – tourist places – tourist experiences – five senses of marketing.

Introduction

“New art is sensory violence on the frontiers of experience” – Marshall McLuhan

The current economic situation is prompting companies, organizations, and even the government to embrace sensory marketing. For a long time, human senses have been overlooked. However, it is through these five senses that each person perceives their surroundings. Understanding these senses allows for strategic decision-making, leading to greater success and a more personalized sensory experience for customers. As a result, sensory marketing is employed to offer customers a unique and exceptional experience.

To unite all customers under a single sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell is a real task. However, multiple studies have demonstrated the beneficial effects of sensory cues on mood and purchasing behaviour. Schiffman et al. (1995) and Villemure et al. (2003) demonstrated this by conducting an experiment to show that a pleasant perfume elevates mood. Despite their enormous importance, the human senses of sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell have long been disregarded. These five senses are essential for a person to use when making various decisions. Every person can become aware of and make a distinction between businesses, goods, and services thanks to these sensory qualities. Experts, counsellors, and researchers are becoming more and more interested in sensory marketing, indicating that all five senses are important.

Destination appeal referred to the capacity of destinations to fulfil visitor expectations in terms of dimensions such as frivolous breaks, food, accommodation, cultural affluence, natural beauty, etc. (Pearce, 1979). Many other things make a place appealing to visit. Some of these factors are the exchange rate, political safety, how well-prepared the area is for disasters, and the quality of its infrastructure (Ferrario, 1979). Kerala is a popular luxury travel destination on the Indian subcontinent and was named by the National Geographic Channel as "one of the fifty destinations to be visited in one's lifetime" in 2004.

Kerala is situated on the southwest coast of the Indian Peninsula, stretching 580 km, and has been noted by many as an ecstasy of tourism. The characteristics like sensible climate, ironic art, intriguing

centenaries, assorted natural and cultural attractions, etc. are competent to developed nations which causes the tourism industry to embellish Kerala. Kerala is special because it has a variety of interesting landscapes that set it apart from other states in India. This diversity attracts tourists with its beautiful beaches, backwaters, wildlife sanctuaries, lush green forests, and a wide range of plants and animals found in Kerala.

This study is an earnest attempt to identify how the five senses of tourists are helping to re-visit the tourist places in Kerala. The focus of the study is related to the destination appeal towards the five senses of sensory marketing.

Review of Literature

The most recent studies (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Jensen, 1999) demonstrates that consumers' preferences for experiences while interacting with products and services diminish the relevance of the product itself. The tourist industry is one of the well-established examples of how to experience the economy as a consumer experience of a fused product that includes housing, food, transportation, souvenirs, and leisure activities (Quan and Wang, 2004; Woodside et al., 2000).

The physical features of a service production are influencing the behavior of individuals. The global tourists' consumption includes a destination as an experience environment. So, how to enhance tourists' global experience by knowing destinations and tourism organizations is crucial to develop effective marketing strategies (Ritchie and Hudson, 2009; Morgan et al., 2009; Tung and Ritchie, 2011; Mossberg, 2007).

The experiences we have are personal and inside us, made up of constant mindful thoughts and feelings (Carlson, 1997). These experiences can be intentionally created and recreated by visitors (Stamboulis and Skayannis, 2003; Binkhorst and Dekker, 2009; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). When these experiences are more valuable to tourists, they also benefit the service provider (Scott, Laws, and Boksberger, 2009).

The SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1988) helps in creating experiences by considering technical skills, setting, and how people interact, providing a multisensory and unexpectedly valuable performance. The authors emphasize the importance of consumer experiences when buying products and services. These experiences should evoke sensations and be memorable.

In addition to other factors like staff performance, the presence of other tourists, the availability of products and memorabilia, and the existence of a theme, Mossberg (2007) focused on the physical environment in the consumption experience in the context of tourism by focusing on the five senses. A conceptual model of the tourist experience has recently been put forth by Cutler and Carmichael (2010), incorporating the physical element of the encounter, the influencing variables, and the human realm.

Sensory Marketing understands the importance of going beyond crowded advertisements. It connects with customers in a more personal way by focusing on the human brain and its five senses (Hulten, Broweus, and Van, 2008).

Among the senses, vision is the most powerful, followed by smell, hearing, taste, and touch (Lindstrom and Kotler, 2005). Vision is often seen as the most attractive sense. Sound can create emotions and feelings. Taste and smell are closely connected, with smell having a stronger influence on memory (Kennedy, 2008).

To stay aware of the requirements of the clients, the travel and tourism sector needs a change in outlook from 2-D to 5-D visibility and sound promotion. To make sensations of authenticity and experience among clients, an average mix of sound, sight, smell, contact, and taste ought to be rejuvenated with travel industry promotions. The tourism industry can encourage significant and designated sensorial

encounters to take advantage of sightseers' feelings, making good and enduring recollections to make good word-of-mouth to families and companions.

The multifaceted nature of tourism destinations as products, and the composition of images has attracted significant attention. It is generally accepted that destination icon includes cognitive, affective, and conative components of attitude (Pike & Ryan, 2004; Gartner, 1993; Tasci et al., 2007; Beerli & Martin, 2004). Cognitive images mean the rationality of attributes of a destination, while affection means the emotional experiences and tourists. The co-native component is corresponding to behavior evolving from cognitive and affective images (Sonmez & Sirakaya, 2002; Kim & Yoon, 2003; Pike & Ryan, 2004).

Statement of the Problem

A significant part of Kerala's income comes from its thriving tourist sector, which draws visitors from all over the world. Understanding the factors influencing tourists' destination preferences and their choices to return to particular tourism sites is crucial for the state to improve its competitiveness and sustainable growth. Vision, taste, smell, sound, and touch are the sensory factors that significantly influence how travellers perceive and experience a destination.

The following major issues are addressed in this study article: Considering Sensory Attributes When Making Travel Decisions, Evaluation of tourism destinations and the relationship between geographic tourist groups and sensory preferences.

Objectives

- ❖ To evaluate Sensory Attributes, such as vision, taste, smell, sound, and touch, on tourists' decisions to select and revisit specific tourist destinations in Kerala
- ❖ The study seeks to analyse the role of destination appraisal in customer perception, specifically focusing on how it affects the propensity of travellers to return.
- ❖ To test whether there is whether there is an association between tourists' geographical divisions (regions) and their preferences for sensory attributes when revisiting tourist destinations.

Scope of the Study

Scope of the research sets the boundary of a research. The focal areas of this research are sensory attractions and tourism industry of Kerala. The study is geographically limited to the state of Kerala. Only domestic tourists from India who revisited Kerala, are informants of the study. The study not considering tourists from abroad and tourists residing in Kerala. The study is mainly based on primary data, collected with the help of questionnaire survey.

Seven independent and eight dependent constructs are selected for this study. The findings of the study can be generalized only among the population of international food chain restaurants in Kerala. The major area excluded from this study is, this study does not consider all international food chain restaurants and local restaurants in Kerala

The hypotheses to be tested

H₀: There is no association between geographical divisions and sensory attributes of visitors who revisited the tourist destinations in Kerala.

H₁: There is an association between geographical divisions and sensory attributes of visitors who revisited the tourist destinations in Kerala.

Methodology

The study is descriptive in nature. The population comprises all Indian tourists who are visiting Kerala. The data is collected during April and May of 2023. Here the researcher used multistage cluster sampling technique for selecting tourist places from Kerala and purposive sampling technique for selecting samples from population. For collecting data the researcher divided the Kerala state into three

zones. North Zone, South Zone and Central Zone. From each zone the researcher selected one district by using lottery method. Wayand, Idukki, Thiruvananthapuram are selected places for collecting data. The researcher visited these districts and collected data based on purposive sampling technique. A structured questionnaire in the printed form is used to collect data. The researcher went to tourists who are like from outside Kerala and confirmed that they are from outside Kerala and they are resistors. 50 questionnaires distributed to tourists in these three places and collected data. After collecting and scrutinizing the questionnaire some questionnaires are rejected because of incompleteness. Finally 100 questionnaires are selected for analysis. The majority of the inquiries depended on 5 points Likert scale, the other kinds of inquiries were dichotomous, elective based, immediate and winding, and so forth the casing of the survey was ready after cautious assessment of a portion of the past examinations.

Data analysis & interpretation

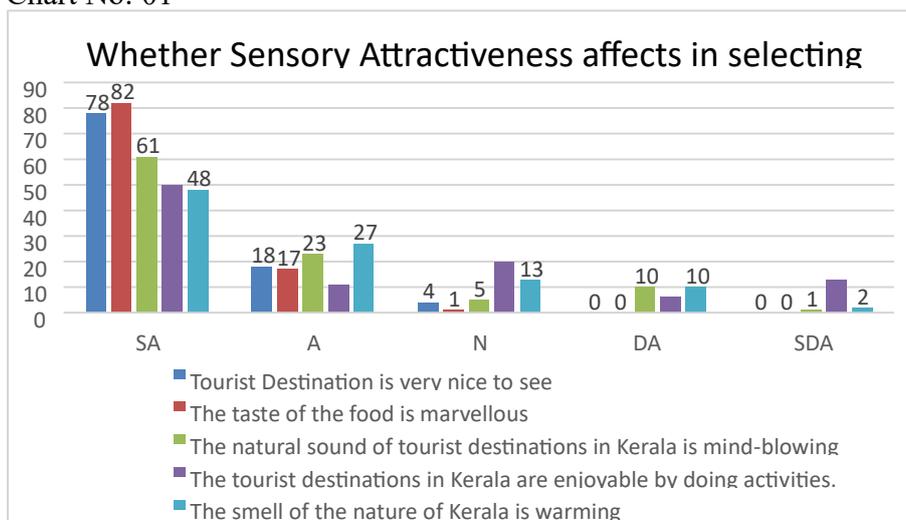
The consumption process of a good or service and the assessment of perception have a significant impact on repurchase behaviour, according to the consumer behaviour model of Assails' study from 1998. While for travellers, destination appraisal fits into customer perception, which greatly affects their propensity to return. There has been a lot of research in this area. The researcher focused on the observation of variables, such as Indian tourists from various parts of India and foreign tourists, to analyse various factors that have a prodigious influence on tourists' behaviour through this analysis of various tourist destinations in Kerala state, India, from which some of the main observation variables were found.

The level of satisfaction tourists feel about a destination has a direct impact on whether they will visit that place again. Whether a tourist decides to revisit a location mainly depends on how satisfied they were with their previous experience there. This satisfaction is a personal judgment made by the tourist after their trip, considering factors like whether their spending was worth it, if they achieved their goals, and if they enjoyed themselves.

A quantitative study on the satisfaction of tourists requires a consistent scale that makes a comprehensive evaluation of tourist satisfaction irrespective of destination.

This study shows that tourist satisfaction is directly related to the five major sensory attributes. The attributes such as vision, taste, smell, etc. have a major role in selecting and re-visiting the tourist destination. The graph shown below will explicitly the importance of sensory attributes in choosing Kerala as their favorite destination.

Chart No: 01



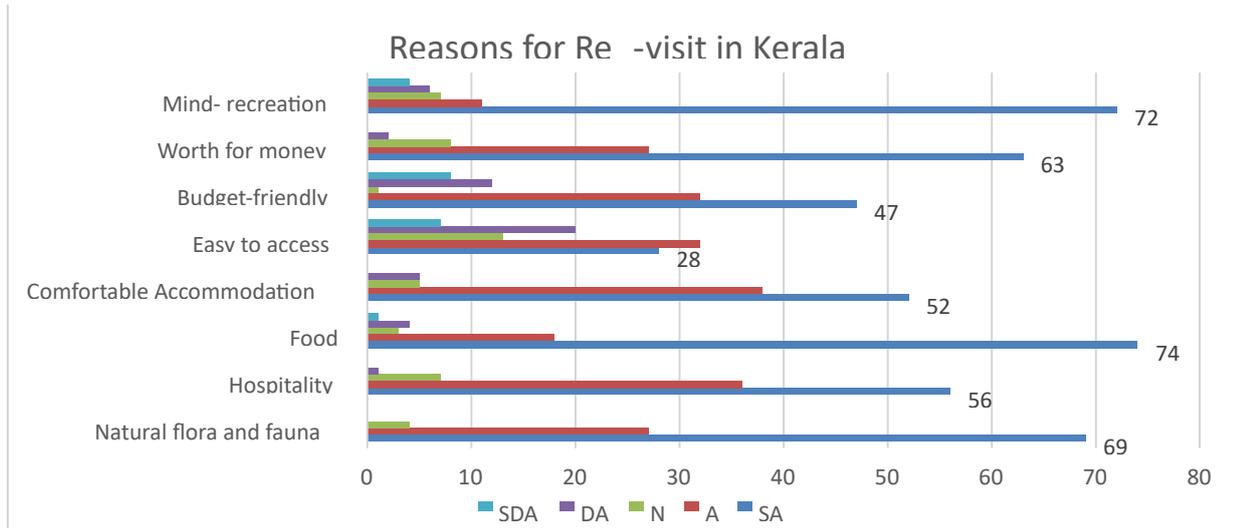
(Source: Based on primary data collection in the state of Kerala by the researcher)

The graph shows five major attributes vision, taste, sound, touch ability, and smell. In all the five attributes it is elucidated that all are interested in Kerala due to its strong sensory attractiveness. The taste of Kerala tourist destination is in the highest position among all other attributes.

The tourism destinations in Kerala are enriched with the natural landscape, cultural landscape, backwater tourism, eco-tourism, etc.

These destinations in Kerala are a mixture of tourism facilities and services. The revisit tendency of tourists is considered the result of tourist satisfaction in Kerala. The revisit intention has been created among tourists who are visiting Kerala. This revisit intention created is the extension of satisfaction they received from the destinations.

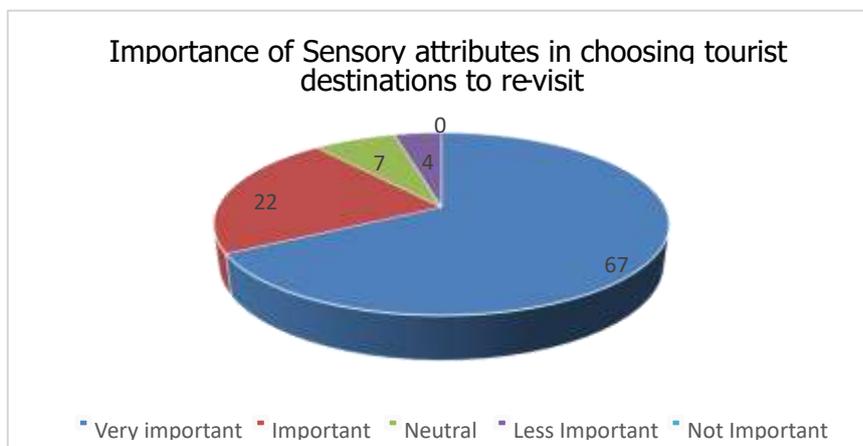
Chart No: 02



(Source: Based on primary data collection in the state of Kerala by the researcher)

The above chart shows the reasons for re-visit to Kerala. The answers say that they love destinations in Kerala because the tourist destinations in Kerala are competent enough to satisfy their sensory attributes. The variables like food, mind recreation, natural flora, fauna, etc. are directly correlated with the sensory attributes of tourists. The responses are absolutely gorgeous to elaborate on the importance of sensory attributes among the tourist who are visiting Kerala. The questionnaire contains a question related to the importance of sensory attributes to choose the tourist destinations to re-visit the respondents. The results show that the majority of them re-visited Kerala by considering the sensory attributes. Only 4% of tourists are not attracted to Kerala because of sensory attributes. 67% strongly believe in sensory attributes to choose the re-visit.

Chart No: 03



(Source: Based on primary data collection in the state of Kerala by the researcher)

Hypothesis test

H₁: There is an association between geographical divisions and sensory attributes of visitors who re-visited the tourist destinations in Kerala.

The chi-square (non- parametric test) test has been used to test the above-mentioned variables. The results are shown below: -

Table No: 01

		Observed Value				
Sensory Attributes	Geographical distribution					Total
	South India	North India	North East India	Outside India		
Very Influenced	38	21	11	9		79
Influenced	4	3	2	2	11	
Neutral	2	1	0	1		4
To Some Extent	0	3	3	0		6
Not At All	0	0	0	0		0
Total	44	28	16	12		100

Table No: 02

		Expected Value				
Sensory Attributes	Geographical distribution					Total
	South India	North India	North East India	Outside India		
Very Influenced	34.76	22.12	12.64	9.48		79
Neutral	1.76	1.12		0.64		0.48
To Some Extent	2.64	1.68		0.96		0.72
						6
Influenced	4.84	3.08	1.76	1.32	11	4
						0
Not At All	0	0	0	0	100	
Total	44	28	16	12		

Table No: 03

Chi- square Test

O	E	O-E	(O-E) ² / E
38	34.76	3.24	0.302002301
4	4.84	-0.84	0.145785124
2	1.76	0.24	0.032727273
0	2.64	-2.64	2.64
	0	0	0

<u>0</u>	22.12	-1.12	0.056708861
21			
3	3.08	-0.08	0.002077922
1	1.12	-0.12	0.012857143
3	1.68	1.32	1.037142857
<u>0</u>	0	0	0
11	12.64	-1.64	0.21278481
2	1.76	0.24	0.032727273
0	0.64	-0.64	0.64
3	0.96	2.04	4.335
0	0	0	0
9	9.48	-0.48	0.024303797
2	1.32	0.68	0.35030303
1	0.48	0.52	0.563333333
0	0.72	-0.72	0.72
0	0	0	0
		Calculated Value	<u>11.10775372</u>

The degree of freedom is 12 (3x4). The level of significance is 5%. Hence the table value is 21.026.

The calculated value (11.10775372) is less than the table value (21.026). So, the researcher accepts the null hypothesis. This means, there is no association between geographical divisions and sensory attributes of visitors who re-visited the tourist destinations in Kerala. In other words, the destination of tourists such as south India, north India, northeast, and outside India don't have any impact on sensory attributes to choose tourist destinations in Kerala for re-visit.

Conclusion

This study of sensory attributes as a measure to re-visit tourist destinations in Kerala shows that basically, the revisit behavior is in reference to the basis of sensory attributes. Moreover, customer satisfaction perceived from visiting various tourist destinations in Kerala is satisfactory among the respondents. The perceived value concept has also correlated with the sensory attributes of tourists. The most limiting factor of this study was the lack of proper research on tourists' revisit behavior. The decision-making behavior of tourists regarding tourism destinations, more efforts should be strengthened to investigate its multi-regional, different types and various channels so that research results are more scientific.

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