

Tourist's SPOT Buying Behavior: An Analytical Study

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Abstract

Consumer behavior is an extremely important and complex aspect to be studied as it is unpredictable and relative in nature. Various models are identified to predict it to its nearest possibilities. Considering tourist as a consumer of the tourism industry it is important to understand their individual needs and spot buying process in whole complexity. There are certain studies and research conducted on identifying the influential factors towards their certain behavior and how it changed over time. This paper aims in identifying how much those factors are important with respect to the preference for different tourism spot.

Keywords: Consumer behavior; Factors of influence; Preference of tourism spot; Spot; Tourist

Introduction

Consumer behavior is an extremely complex aspect which needs to be studied thoroughly so as to meet the ultimate insight of consumer mind. The aspect of consumer decision making regarding a tourism product is indeed based on certain cues which he or she gets from his or her surroundings. Therefore one, who controls those cues and their sources, can rule the consumer mind with the purpose to promote and sell tourism products. The tourism consumer behaviour is the sum total of its acts, attitudes and decisions regarding choosing, buying and consuming tourism products and services, and also its post-consuming reactions. The knowledge about the degree of the influential factors that acts as a basis of consumer's needs and decision processes is very important for the marketing managers as it provides more refined detail, that allows improving his own decision-making process, to forecast future behaviour and to judge a real and objective image of the consumer demand.

The tourist's behavioural pattern with reference to the tourism consumer behaviour literature and its model is important for developing new tourism products and services more accurately with an aim to serve the consumers (tourist) more effectively to meet their changing needs and wants. This will eventually lead to identify the target at a particular time with a particular tourism package to offer. An understanding of consumer behaviour is therefore crucial to make marketing activity more successful.

The factors that lead a tourist to select a particular spot over other are a question to be answered. The paper aims at identifying the extent to which these influential factors stimulates a tourist to prefer a particular tourist spot. An understanding of tourist's preference can be achieved by answering the following questions and obtaining a correlation between them:

- What is their purpose of visit?
 - What attracts them for deciding a holiday destination?
 - What is their plan for a holiday?
 - What are the important criteria their choice is based on?
- } **Psychological Factors**
- What is their income pattern?
 - What is their budget and spending pattern?
- } **Personal Factors**

- Who are their companions during visit?
 - What is their source of information?
- } **Social Factors**
- What do they buy?
 - When do the buy?
- } **Cultural Factors**

Tourist's behavioral pattern

Tourism can be defined in behavioral terms as persons who travel away from their normal residential region for a temporary period of at least one night. The behavioral pattern displayed by the consumer is the subject matter for many concluded research further extensive research are going on.

Much of the Consumer Behaviour research on tourism appears to rest on the assumption that travel decisions are thoroughly planned. Yet, evidence has started to crop up, that challenges such notions. For example, Hyde and Lawson [1] find tourist decisions involve planned, unplanned and impulse purchases. Similarly, Bargeman and der Poel [2] conclude that 'it appears that the decision-making processes behind selecting a vacation are much less extensive and far more planned than described in the rational choice models'.

Changing lifestyles the changes in social demographics, has resulted in an increasing trend in travelling, for which the need to identify and satisfy the internal desire expectations of a consumer has become an important factor. Increase in options for accommodation, accessibility, and attraction variables supported by the affordability factor, the need for further examination of the routine aspects of travel decisions are required, to provide a consumer the right package at the right time. As most existing tourism CB research assumes thoroughly planned

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decisions [3], the routine aspects of tourist decision making and its implications for tourism marketing are in urgent need of research.

Let us go through the literature that reveals different tourist’s characteristics that is categorized in accordance to their displayed behavioural pattern (Table 1). Tourist’s typologies by some selected authors are discussed [4,5] and modified.

The influential factors and the ‘Spot’ preference

The consumer behavior is influenced by many factors like psychological factors, personal factors, social factors and cultural factors. Tourist behavior can be further grouped under these four major categories as

- a) Personal factors: includes age, family lifestyle, profession, annual income and lifestyle.
- b) Psychological factors: includes tourists’ personality, self-image, motivations, and perception.
- c) Social Factors: this consists of culture, family, social class, reference group.

d) Cultural Factors: comprises of factors like physical ambience, social ambience, time of visit, state of mind

By understanding these factors one can identify an individual tourist’s need, and by further examining, the related factors behind preference for a particular tourist spot can be determined.

There are certain studies and research conducted on identifying the influential factors towards the certain tourist behavior and how it changed over time. This paper aims in identifying the relation between these influential factors and the preference for a particular tourist spot.

Influential factors V/s Preference

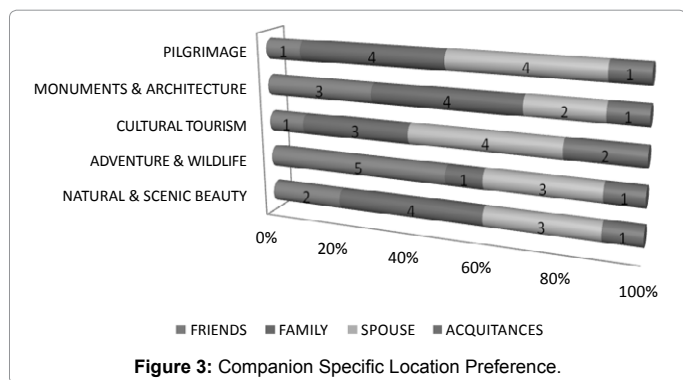
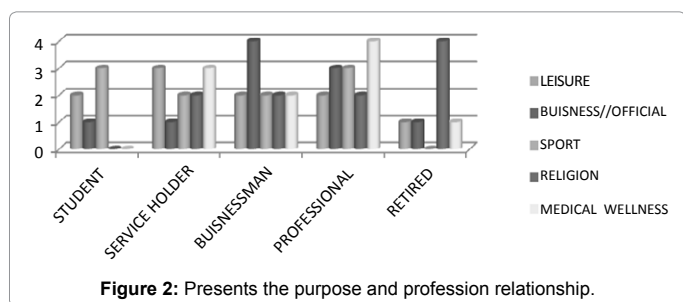
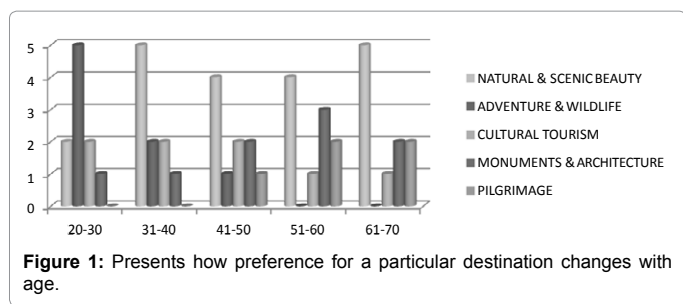
The tourist’s personality is based on certain demographic factors which distinguishes him from other individuals. These individual explicative variables are denoted as the personal factors. The target group will be shortlisted and the tourism promotional material will be intended based on these personality preference relationships of the client.

An individual’s preference changes with change in age and family life cycle stages (Figure 1). Recent study reveals that, in the early stage of

Author	Characteristics
Dalen (1989)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modern materialists want to get a tan to impress people when they get home. They like partying and are more concerned with drink than food. Hedonism is their main motivation. • Modern idealists also seek excitement and entertainment but want both to be more intellectual than the last group. They do not, however, want mass tourism or fixed itineraries. • Traditional idealists demand quality, culture, heritage, famous places, peace, and security. • Traditional materialists always look for special offers and low prices and have a strong concern with personal security.
American Express (1989)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adventurous, who are independent and confident and like to try new activities • Worries, who worry about the stressing travel and their safety and security while on holiday • Dreamers, who are fascinated by the idea of travel and they read and talk a lot about their travel experiences and different destinations • Economizers, who simply see travel as a routine opportunity for relaxation rather than as a special part of their life. As such they want to enjoy holidays at the lowest possible price • Indulges, who want to be pampered when they are on holiday.
Smith (1989)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explorers are a small group who travel almost as anthropologists • Elite tourists are experienced frequent travelers who like expensive tailor made tours • Off-beat tourists aim to get away from other tourists • Unusual tourists make side trips from organized tours to experience local culture • Incipient mass tourists travel to established destinations where tourism is not yet totally dominant • Mass tourists expect the same things they are used to at home
Perreault, Dorden and Dorden (1979)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget travelers who had medium incomes, but sought low-cost vacations • Adventurous tourist who were well educated and affluent and showed a preference for adventurous holidays • Homebody tourist were cautious people who took holidays but did not discuss their vacation with other people, and spent relatively little time planning it • Vacationers were a small group who spent lots of time thinking about their next holiday. They tended to be active people in lower paid jobs • Moderates had a high predisposition to travel but were not interested in weekend breaks or sports.
Cohen (1972)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recreational tourist for whom the emphasis is on physical recreation • The diversionary tourist who seeks ways of forgetting their everyday life at home • The experiential tourist who looks for authentic experiences • The experimental tourist where the main desire is to be in contact with local people • The existential tourist who wants to totally immerse themselves in the culture and lifestyles of their vacation destination.
Westvlaams Economisch Studiebureau (1986)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active sea lovers who want to take a holiday by the sea, with a beach close by • Contact-minded holiday makers value making new friends on holiday, and being hospitably received by local people • Nature viewers want to be well received by the host population while enjoying very beautiful landscapes • Rest-seekers want a chance to relax and rest while on holiday • Discovers like cultural holidays and some adventure, but they also like to meet new people • Family-orientated sun and sea lovers, who were the largest group, like to do things together as a family and seek ‘child-friendly’ activities • Traditionalists value safety and security and try to avoid surprises by sticking with familiar destinations and types of holiday.
Gray (1970)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wanderlust itineraries tend to be multi-destination. They want to see and feel and learn what is unique, distinctive about specific places reflecting cultural needs rather than recreational. • Sunlust depend on the individual's motivation and tastes such as sun, snow, peace, noisy socializing, warm, cool weather, beautiful scenery, heavy metal music with lot of people raging all night.
Plog (1977)	<p>Plog sought to link personality traits directly with tourist behavior, and divided people up into psychocentrics, and allocentrics. He argued that the former were less adventurous, inward-looking people. They tend to prefer the familiar and have a preference for resorts that are already popular. Allocentrics, on the other hand, are outward-looking people who like to take risks and seek more adventurous holidays.</p>

Source: Modified from Therdchai Choibamroong, (2005)

Table 1: Discussions of Tourist Typologies by Selected Authors.



family life cycle phase, unplanned, impulsive, adventurous, risk taking behavior is prominent. The mid stage is predominated by complexity and delicacy. Whereas the later stage of life is generally calm and peaceful when things are much smooth and untroubled. The research also supports the general notion as indicated above. We find here that the inclination towards Adventure and wildlife tourism is very much preferred by young people as they are energetic and knowledge seekers. With the passage of time their energetic and fun loving attitudes fades and they become calculative risk takers. The problem of finance, family, profession creeps in they seek space for relaxation. Herein the concept of nature tourism, cultural tourism comes in where the tour marketers need to customize their product that ease tension and reduce pressure. The later stages were marked by more relaxed and tension free life. The availability of ample time at their disposal makes them more inclined towards religion and spirituality.

The marketers should shortlist the target group and provide a perfect combination of the tourism promotional material and package intended towards them to bridge the gap between service offer and expectation. The tourism offer remains a challenge for a marketer as the offerings may also depend on the profession and the purpose of visiting a destination (Figure 2).

The extraction of the purpose vs profession relationship can act as a determining factor that could provide judgement or form a basis

of tourism promotions and package offerings. The sporty nature of the younger generation specially the students has been reflected in the study as their love for adventure and fun specifies their purpose of visit to a particular destination. With the dynamic nature of job pattern of service holders, accompanied by hectic lifestyle, the urge for finding some leisure for relaxation from the daily schedule of life has become very much prominent. The degree of increasing frequency of tours for business and leisure attracts the marketers intention to modify their tourism offerings as it plays a deciding factor in selecting a tourism spot.

The package offerings intended towards business holders are totally different from those of the general tourists. Those offerings should include a perfect combinations of package that offers leisure and refreshing ambience while providing a satisfactory requirements for a corporate and business deal.

The knowlodge and the nature of job profile that defines a professional specifies their preference. They are a little complex to deal with and can be treated as delicate consumer as they can be a good source for word of mouth promotion towards their community. The tourism marketer are required to satisfy their expectation by providing them with quality service.

The religious and spiritual nature is generally significant in the later stage of life that consists of retired personell from different field. In the life cycle stage they belongs to the group of old couple or old single. All the package offerings and tourism promotional material intended towards this target group should consists of religios and medical wellness factors in maximum.

The social life, refernce group and companion during visit is also considered as an influential factor behind selecting a tourism destination. It is on the part of the marketer to design the package offerings based on the companions that their clients choose during their visit. It is found that family members accounts to be the most prominent companion during most of the planned tour, the other companions may include friends (peer groups, colleagues, neighbors) and spouse in specific. Sometimes the acquaintances may even form a group to enjoy the tour for specified days. The nature of tourism offerings by the marketer should also be filtered as companion specific so as to reach much closer to their expectation fulfillment motive.

Figure 3 represents the rating that has been provided by the respondents to answer their companion specific destination choice and requirements. Friends are treated as most suitable and compatible partner when the choice for adventure and wildlife come into picture, whereas natural beauty can be enjoyed more with family and relatives.

It is said that a tour is enjoyed maximum when it is visited with suitable companions. The package offerings emphasized on this psychological factor would provide a better satisfactory service experience to its target group.

Tourism offerings in not only confined to a destination and its geographic nature but also highly dependent on the other corresponding attributes. That gamut of supporting physical attributes are also considered to be the important factors that influence dominates a spot buying decision making process. The degree of importance of each of those attributes is required to be noted and registered so as to provide the client with a pleasant and satisfactory offer (Table 2). Perfect blends of all the service offerings will in turn increase the chance of repeat purchase.

Attributes	Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation • Availability of Quality Food • Climate and Condition 	Extremely Important
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructural Facility • Quality of Local Service • Hospitality 	Very Important
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shopping and Entertainment facility • Culture and Lifestyle 	Moderately Important

Table 2: Physical Attributes of a place and their degree of Importance.

Conclusion

Consumer behavior is a very important and complex issue that requires in-depth analysis in every marketing activity especially in tourism. The refined detail about the influential factors that forms the basis of consumer’s needs and decision making processes is very important for the marketing managers to understand. The behavioral pattern of tourist, being the consumer of the tourism industry is judged on the basis of four different factors such as psychological factors, personal factors, social factors and cultural factors. The thorough knowledge about these influential factors that induces a tourist in preferring a particular destination over other is extremely essential for the marketer to narrow the gap between the offer and expectation.

Behavior is unpredictable in nature and it varies from person to person. Individuals with almost similar displayed behavior can be grouped and segmented. This segmentation is based on their demographic characteristics. The market offering needs to be drastically modified with the rapid changing pattern of the socio-cultural and socio-economic background of the consumer. The change in the demand and expectation pattern of today’s consumer is compelling the marketers to regularly update and innovate product and service offerings for which in-depth research is required.

Preferences change with changing age, profession, lifestyle, life cycle phases and social groups. This change is also reflected in the selection and buying pattern of the tourist when they choose their preferable spot for vacation. The preference is also dependent on the purpose of their visit and the compatibility factor that they have with their companion.

The internal influential factors are often backed by the external physical attributes and facilities with include accommodation facility, quality of food availability, climate other natural, social and political condition, infrastructural facility, accessibility, quality of available local service, hospitality, shopping entertainment facility, culture lifestyle etc.

The perfect combination of internal influential factors with the external supporting attributes can result in creating a better offer. The marketer who expertise in providing and promoting the ultimate blend in their service offer can capitalize in creating demand for their tourism product.

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