A STUDY ON KERALA TOURISM BRAND ATTRIBUTES THAT NEED SPECIAL ATTENTION IN POST COVID-19 SCENARIO WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MALABAR REGION

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ABSTRACT

The state of Kerala is considered as a one of the domestic and foreign tourist paradise. It is relevant and imperative a detailed study is necessary for boosting the opportunities in Post Pandemic scenario. This study is conducted just before the Covid-19 situation arise and its findings are significant in Post Covid-19 situation too. Brand is the sum total of a customer perceive a product or service. So developing and maintaining of brand attributes in tourism service sector is far more relevant. Attributes are developed through actions, images and presumptions. This study analysing some core attributes related hospitality and tourism industry are performing in the state of Kerala. The core attributes we analysed here are satisfaction level towards accommodation facilities, transportation, hospitality, quality of information received and food and beverages. This study was conducted in month of January 2020 in Northern district of Kerala such as Kozhikode, Malappuram and Wayanadu.

KEYWORDS : *Brand Attributes, Tourism industry, hospitality, Post Covid-19.*

INTRODUCTION

Kerala located on the south western tip of India , enjoys unique geographical features that have made it one of the most sought- after destination in Asia. Fondly referred to as 'Gods Own Country' , Kerala was selected by National Geographic Traveller as one of the 50 destinations of lifetime and one of thirteen paradise in the world.Kerala has made admirable progress in tourism developments in recent years. God's Own Country has become a well recognised tourism brand and state has achieved impressive growth in foreign tourist arrival in particular. The state's Tourism vision 2025 envisages sustainable development of tourism with focus on backwaters, Ayurveda and eco-tourism.

Brand Attributes portray a company's brand characteristics. They signify the basic nature of brand. Brand attributes are a bundle of features that highlight the physical and personality aspects of the brand. Attributes are developed through images, actions, or presumptions. Brand attributes help in creating brand identity. In this study we are trying to portray the perception of both domestic and

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foreign tourists regarding how they felt about attributes of tourism infrastructure and other parameters related to hospitality industry. The analysis mainly focuses on tourists' perception or their satisfaction level towards accommodation facilities, transportation facilities, hospitality they enjoyed, quality of information received, and the satisfaction level towards food and beverage they served. The findings are relevant and much significance in the wake of post Covid-19 scenario and this study try to incorporate the findings in this current situation. The tourism department is try to develop various strategies to get out of the this worst situation in tourism sector of the Kerala state. In the post Covid-19 scenario the Kerala tourism hopes to launch short haul tourism, the focus will be mainly on domestic tourism to promote prominent destinations in the state aggressively.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE
EwaGlinska(2013) : This study enquire, how to search the place, brand identity and distinguished features on local stakeholders perspective. Shaping are organisable image / brand of a particular town or city has become one of the possibilities to achieve the competitive advantage on the contemporary territory market.

Jacob J &SeemaChelat (2013): This is the survey of practitioners, manufactures , researchers, representatives of various associations in Ayurveda sector was carried out, the findings of the survey which have used to explore the possibilities of promoting Ayurveda sector in medical tourism with support of governmental institution and society in order to adhere targeted growth.

Ezreth(2014) : This study gives an introduction to PPP and CPPP model for sustainable tourism development in Kerala. The government alone cannot contribute to comprehensive and sustainable development of tourism in Kerala. It is because of budgetary restriction, the government can't afford new investment especially in tourism projects.

Haseena V A &Ajims P Mohammed (2014): This study projects the sustainable tourism strategy development in Kerala as a tool of growth and portrayed as a possible model for development. There is an unlimited scope of tourism development in Kerala. It definitely bring up economic development of country.

Parikshat S Manhas&ParvinderKaur(2014) : The study focused on E learning and its emerging trends to strengthening hospitality and tourism industry. The study aims to the impact of e-learning on students over the traditional learning system in participating the hospitality and tourism education in India.

Jeemon Jacob (2020) : The article focuses on the hard hit Kerala tourism sector due to pandemic. The study portrays crores of revenue loss in tourism sector , the story of tour operators caught debt trap. The author share his positive thoughts, the situation will improve after the state is fully vaccinated.

Toby Antony (2020) : The outbreak of Covid-19 turned the tourism sector upside down, takes away the entire income due to drop in visitors arrival. The after effects can witness all areas of the industry.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
1. To study about satisfaction level oftourist towards brand attributes such as accommodation, transportation, hospitality, Information quality received, and food & beverages during their stay in Kerala
2. To test whether there is a significance difference in satisfaction level towards brand attributes across different demographic categories of tourists vising in Kerala.
3. To make suggestion for make necessary improvement in parameters that are influencing tourism brand in post Covid-19 scenario.

Hypothesis of the study
H_0:There is no significance difference in the satisfaction level towards brand attributes across the categories of purpose of visit of tourists visiting in Kerala.

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METHODOLOGY

The study is in descriptive in nature (Ex post facto) , which include surveys and fact finding enquires of the happening at present. The study had applied questionnaire as instrument for collecting data. The variable are measured on standard measurement scale (Five point Lickert Scale) ranging from '5' Highly satisfied to '1' Highly dissatisfied. Since the sample frame is scattered the non probability sampling of convenience sampling is used to selecting the respondents. A total of 112 tourists were given questionnaire and collected their responses for critical analysis and interpretations. The secondary data were collected from different sources like libraries, newspapers. Magazines, journals, websites etc.

Analysis & Interpretations

1. Satisfaction level towards Accommodation facilities

Parameter	Category	Count	Percentage
	Highly Dissatisfied	10	8.93%
	Dissatisfied	20	17.86%
	Neutral	10	8.93%
Accommodation	Satisfied	55	49.11%
	Highly Satisfied	17	15.17%
	Grand Total	112	100%

Interpretation: Most of the respondents 55 (49.11%) were satisfied with their accommodation, while 40 respondents (35.71%) were not that much satisfied about the accommodation facility. It is inferred that considerable number of the tourists were not satisfied with accommodation facility.

2. Satisfaction level towards Transportation Facilities

Parameter	Category	Count	Percentage
	Highly Dissatisfied	15	13.40%
	Dissatisfied	25	22.32%
	Neutral	15	13.40%
Transportation	Satisfied	40	35.70%
	Highly Satisfied	17	15.18%
	Grand Total	112	100%

Interpretation: The tourists' satisfaction towards transportation facility ; Satisfied category is 57 respondents (50.90%), While dissatisfied and neutral category is 55 respondents (49.11 %). The result shows major section of the respondents were not enjoyed the transportation facilities.

3. Satisfaction level towards food and beverages

Parameter	Category	Count	Percentage
	Highly Dissatisfied	10	8.93%
	Dissatisfied	25	22.32%
Food &	Neutral	7	6.25%
Beverages	Satisfied	45	40.18%
	Highly Satisfied	25	22.32%
	Grand Total	112	100%

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Interpretation: Satisfaction level towards Kerala's Food and beverage is that 70 respondents (62.50%) is satisfied and 42 respondents (37.5%) were not satisfied.

4. Satisfaction level towards Hospitality enjoyed

Parameter	Category	Count	Percentage
	Highly Dissatisfied	3	2.68%
	Dissatisfied	12	10.71%
Hospitality	Neutral	20	17.86%
	Satisfied	52	46.43%
	Highly Satisfied	25	22.32%
	Grand Total	112	100%

Interpretation: Table showing satisfaction towards hospitality enjoyed by the international tourist in Kerala during their visit. It is found that 77 respondents(68.75%) were satisfied with hospitality they received during their stay while 35 respondents (31.25%) were either not satisfied or neutral towards the parameter hospitality.

Satisfaction level towards different brand attributes across different purpose of visit categories (Testing of Hypothesis)

Analysis of Variance(ANOVA)

Purpose of Visit	Mean	Std. Deviation	ANOVA					
				Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Ayurveda & Rejuvenation Therapies	3.886	.9400	Between Groups	2.622	4	.874	1.778	.152^{NS}
Leisure	3.803	.5483	Within Groups	103.196	108	.491		
Business	4.136	.4218	Total	105.818	112			
Education	3.714	.3805						

Inference:

The **Table** shows the mean and standard deviation of each categories of Purpose of Visit along with the result of ANOVA for comparing the mean scores of Brand Attributes between the categories of Purpose of Visit. The F-value and p-value are 1.778 and 0.152 respectively. As the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis H_0 is accepted. That is there is no significant difference between the mean scores of Brand Attributes across the categories of Purpose of Visit.

MAJOR FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

- Most of the respondents 55 (49.11%) were satisfied with their accommodation, while 40 respondents (35.71%) were not that much satisfied about the accommodation facility. It is inferred that considerable number of the tourists were not satisfied with accommodation facility. Since the study shows the number of dissatisfied tourists regarding accommodation facilities not small the concerned authorities should make the accommodation facilities up to mark once the Covid-19 pandemic is over and tourism sector on track.
- The tourists' satisfaction towards transportation facility ; Satisfied category is 57 respondents (50.90%), While dissatisfied and neutral category is 55 respondents (49.11 %). The result shows major section of the respondents were not enjoyed the transportation facilities. The government

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and concerned agencies are to concentrate to invest more on transportation facilities and other allied infrastructure and it should get priorities in all policy decisions.

- Satisfaction level towards Kerala's Food and beverage is that 70 respondents (62.50%) is satisfied and 42 respondents (37.5%) were not satisfied. The tastes and preference of tourists regarding food and beverages should be analysed and make necessary steps to be taken to improve the same. It will be in the priority list in post Covid-19 scenario.
- Satisfaction towards hospitality enjoyed by the international tourist in Kerala during their visit. It is found that 77 respondents(68.75%) were satisfied with hospitality they received during their stay while 35 respondents (31.25%) were either not satisfied or neutral towards the parameter hospitality. Since the hospitality is one most important parameter in brand image of tourism industry , necessary training and development programmes to be conducted for all concerned parties work with this industry. In post Covid-19 Scenario this aspect also be get its stake in tourism related policies and decision makings.

CONCLUSIONS

The study reveals tourists' perception regarding major parameter of brand attributes of tourism and hospitality industry in the Malabar region of Kerala state and it can generalised to whole Kerala.This survey will enable the tourism industry to design and redesign plans, policies and implement them to achieve key changes in the activities, that are affecting brand image of Kerala tourism industry in Post covid-19 scenario

Kerala has made admirable progress in tourism developments in recent years. God's Own Country has become a well recognised tourism brand and state has achieved impressive growth in foreign tourist arrival in particular. The state's Tourism vision 2025 envisages sustainable development of tourism with focus on backwaters, Ayurveda and eco-tourism.

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