"A Lifestyle Segmentation Approach towards Eco Tourism with the Use of AIO Approach"

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is rightly understood as act / activity of leisure. It is one of the important industries of service sector. Tourism in India is very essential to the economic growth of the nation. There are various niche segments of tourism and one such segment is identified as Ecotourism. Typically, ecotourism aimed at protecting as well as preserving the diversity of natural and cultural eco systems while entertaining and accommodating tourists. To understand traveler's choices, likes, dislikes and needs for ecotourism, it is important to use lifestyle segmentation approach. Activities, Interests and opinion also helps researchers to understand psychographic profile of the consumer. Therefore, AIO approach along with lifestyle segmentation is used to understand traveler's behavior towards ecotourism.

There are many research studies available in this area that focuses on traveler's behavior towards tourism. This study additionally focuses on ecotourism segment of tourism industry. Activities, Interests and Opinion scale was adopted to understand lifestyle of the traveler. A structured questionnaire was used to collect the data for the study. Exploratory Factor Analysis – EFA, Independent Sample T-Test and One Way ANOVA were used to analyzed the data. The first method has helped in extracting the factors and second & third method used to study its influence on demographic variables. Three major factors of traveler's towards the ecotourism have recognized in this study.

Key Words: *Tourism, Ecotourism, Activities, Interest, Opinion, Lifestyle Segmentation*

1. INTRODUCTION

TOURISM

Tourism can be defined as a travel act and this travel can be for leisure or for the purpose of recreation. Tourism can also be said to be practice of touring for fun, entertaining the visitors and/or running the business of tours to various places / destinations of tourist interests.

Tourism is one of the most important industries amongst service sector. The significant elements of the tourism industry comprise of transportation, lodging, hospitality etc. The intangible elements of the tourism include the purpose or motivation of being a tourist, like rest, relaxation, the capability to meet and deal with new people. Further the intangible elements of tourism can be discovering varied cultures.

It is rightly said that Tourism is vital for most of the countries since it generates considerable employment, income etc. The income is generated because of the consumption of goods and utilization of services by the tourists. Thus, the economies are advanced and upswing in the economy is being experienced in the sector / industry.

So far as the Indian tourism industry is concerned, it is crystal clear that it is very important and vital to the economy of the country. It can be transpired from the data that considerable income and employment are generated from the tourism sector.

The Ministry of Tourism formulates national policies for the development and promotion of tourism by consulting various agencies, ministries, state governments, union territories and industry stakeholders including representatives of the sector in the process.

The ongoing pandemic of COVID 19 has impacted our lives like never before. To curb the spread and outbreak of COVID 19, many countries have imposed lockdown for a number of weeks resulting in total discontinuation of all the economic activities and economic fallout. On account of this situation, all industries of the service sector including tourism have suffered substantially, causing tremendous amount of loss of revenue and unemployment. The implications of the pandemic will be long lasting and far reaching.

ECO TOURISM

Eco Tourism is a type of tourism which is aimed at protecting as well as preserving the diversity of natural and cultural eco systems. Tourists are entertained and accommodated in such a manner as it is minimally harmful to environment but the onus of maintaining the local cultures as well as preserving the environment lies upon both the visitors and service providers as well.

The tourism related revenues assume significant importance for encouraging and preserving the diversity of local economies in respect of eco-tourism. Eco-tourism focuses on local cultures, personal growth and learning new ways to live in. The responsible and real eco-tourism includes programs which reduce the adverse effects of traditional tourism on natural environment and increase the cultural integrity of local people.

India's most popular tourist destinations like Kerala, Himachal Pradesh and Andaman are of richest bio diversity in the world. In the nutshell, it can be concluded that the eco-tourism programs comprise those which minimize the negative environmental aspects / effects of conventional tourism and to enhance the cultural integrity of the local people. The eco-tourism appeals to proponent of social and environmental responsibility.

LIFESTYLE SEGMENTATION APPROACH

Customer lifestyle segmentation is a part of marketing management technique in which small sub-groups are created from the data according to their choices, needs, likes and dislikes. This data can actually help the company in pitching across different similar products to the customers in an effort to increase the market share. When a company or a brand team approaches a customer who is already using a similar product, she / he is more likely to buy a product if it is pitched properly. This can only happen if the company knows what the customer was using previously.

Lifestyle Segmentation is a type of segmentation in which the consumers are grouped as per their lifestyle. Marketers use lifestyle segmentation and studies to plan their product or service better, so that it is in line with the consumer lifestyles. This kind of segmentation is also important to decide on the message to be communicated in advertising the product or service to the target customers.

AIO APPROACH

What Are Activities, Interests, and Opinions?
Activities, Interests, and Opinions (AIO) are characteristics of a person that market analysts use to construct the psychographic profile of the consumer. Researchers usually reveal an AIO of a person by reacting to statements or questions in a survey. Advertising experts apply the concepts of AIO to better direct the marketing and promotional activities of an organization on its target audience.

AIO SEGMENTS

ACTIVITIES: Activities focus on the everyday life and interests of the members of the public at large. The buying habits vary with the profession / age / lifestyle of different persons. The advertisers can have insights into the consumers' activities through membership of various clubs, the options of entertainment during holidays and social events.

INTERESTS: An individual's interests reveal concepts and beliefs that guide his / her passions / interests. On a survey, family, cooking, crafts, and toys may be mentioned as interests by a mother of three. The interests may comprise of Hobbies, affiliations etc. A consumer may have different interests, including collecting coins, collection of postal stamps, gardening, and reading.

OPINIONS: Everybody has views and it's no different for customers. Marketers want to know the opinions of people about movies, public figures, politicians, actors and TV shows. Marketing companies do need to learn about the brands, products, and stores perceptions of customers. AIO aims at creating a consumer's psychographic profile, with the aim of targeting advertising to different types of people.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Eco-tourism is a growth process which benefits both its local people and the region. This is a trip to destinations, where flora , fauna and cultural heritage are the main attractions. (Swarna Rani 2020)

India is one of the few countries in the world with varied tourism opportunities, ranging from bio-cultural diversity to a wealth of heritage and antiques. Eco-tourism should effectively protect indigenous communities and cultures against external threats; recognize their traditional land and water rights; recognize their right to monitor and co-manage those resources; allow traditional institutions to engage in the management of natural resources; and recognize the right of communities to set their own development goals. (Nilakantha Panigrahi 2019)

Eco-tourist-based segmentation is a powerful tool for public agencies and private businesses to adapt their offering to different eco-tourist categories. They thus improve the tourism products and increase the benefit to destinations, so that eco-tourists are happier and willing to return to their destination. The key motivational aspect in ecotourism is "self-development," the same thing that is connected with gaining self-confidence and becoming autonomous. People think traveling is a chance to enrich their lives. Compared to more traditional modes of travel, ecotourism gives people more autonomous time to reflect on personal matters. (Mauricio CARVACHE-FRANCO et el 2019)

Lifestyle is an important factor in the customer decision-making process and findings from the study reveal the effect of lifestyle on demand for alternative tourism. People of the same subculture may exhibit various market behaviors. As the study showed, there are major relationships between experiencers, believers, accomplishers and the eco-tourism market. Such elements of lifestyle have specific primary motives and origins. Every segment of lifestyle will demand different tourism items. (Fatih PEKTA 2018)

Tourism is an important sector especially for developing countries. Destinations that have tourist attractions are struggling intensively to obtain more market share. Eco-tourism should be used as a means to increase a cultural, political, environmental and historical understanding of a tourist destination attractiveness. (Fatih PEKTA 2018)

The sustainability of tourism will be focused on the conservation of the natural environment, the development needs of the local economy and the resilience to environmental threats. Investment, technology, inclusion and participation make eco-tourism more economically viable and environmentally vibrant. (The Goodwin R D et el 2017)

Understanding tourist preferences for nature-based experiences is crucial to developing effective ecotourism marketing strategies. Charismatic species are the main attractors of eco-tourists to protected areas. Exploring alternative tourism preferences to iconic species can help identify ecotourism markets that are more likely to support those areas. (A Hausmann et el 2017)

The study seeks to expand the concept of ecotourism, which draws attention as an alternative tourist activity or tourist commodity, amid the growing interest in ecosystems and increases in family tours in the years resulting in the growth of educational tourism activities. Accordingly, the research suggested 'periurban ecotourism' to apply the idea of ecotourism to the fields of casual tourist practices experienced in daily life in local nature (e.g. camping and water sports),. (Kim Sang Jun 2016)

Leong et al. (2015) define experience as a good feeling of consciousness when a person's emotions, physical strength, intelligence, and spirit reach a certain level. It is argued that there will be no identical experience between the two individuals, because any experience is the result of interaction between the individual's mental state and the event. Battour et al. (2017) pointed out that experience usually refers to the individual's response to an induced stimulus. While experiential products contain tangible and intangible facets, marketing people should create an event that makes consumers happy, meaningful, and memorable. Kim and Chen (2016) pointed out that in order to provide consumers with a good leisure experience, operators should manage service products (including shaped and intangible products), service scenarios (i.e., environments with visitors' experience) and service delivery systems (personnel, Information, technology, etc.).

In general, activities in domestic destinations are not considered to be unacceptable.   Similarly, Chinese visitors are more interested in sightseeing than in promoting the protection of the environment when visiting the ecotourism. The unwanted behavior could pose a potential threat to stakeholders involved in ecotourism site management as the number of tourist arrivals continues to rise. Thus, understanding the motives of tourists with regard to their changing attitudes and further adaptation of desirable behaviors through their visit to ecotourism sites would help the resource Managers, operators of ecotourism, local residents and policy makers develop a comprehensive project. (Cheng & Wong, 2012)

Market segmentation works in reverse by trying to form supply to conform to demand (Hall, 2007). Segmentation means dividing heterogeneous markets into smaller, more homogeneous market segments which can be differentiated by the needs, characteristics, or behaviors of specific consumers (Kotler, Adam et al., 2006). To be purposive in segmentation, each segment must be observable, available and significant. Segmenting the tourist market allows the industry to define a specific market and understand the motivations, needs and demands of that group (Hall, 2007). It has been argued that this is more effective in matching supply and demand, since the organization or industry can then tailor their product accordingly and can target their promotional activities towards the relevant market.

In a systematic review Dolnicar (2004) categorizes segmentation methods using data-based and common sense segmentation building blocks. Researchers commonly use segment markets with socioeconomic and demographic variables. Some researchers divide the market into class, employment, country, motivations, the makeup of travel parties and the purpose of travel.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN FOR THE STUDY

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Every year many people travel from India to many parts of the world. There is various niche of the tourism sector such as Medical Tourism, Heritage Tourism, Agriculture Tourism, Cultural Tourism, Youth Tourism, Pilgrimage tourism and Eco Tourism. India is blessed with the eco-system and natural serenity. In recent scenario, many people have developed green attitude and exhibiting their responsibility towards Environment. Therefore, it is essential to understand social and psychological drivers acquired by such people in their life. This paper aims to study the concept of consumer lifestyle in context with Eco Tourism. Study also focuses on influence of demographic variables on consumer approach towards Eco Tourism. It was observed that there is lack of study in area of eco-tourism by focusing on psychological factors of consumers.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In this paper, following objectives are studied:

- To study the factors of life-style segmentation approach towards Eco Tourism.

- To study the influence of demographic variables on the factors identified for factors of life-style segmentation approach towards Eco Tourism.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Marketing research demands description of consumer by studying their characteristics. In this study, researchers have attempted to study life-style approach of the travelers with the use of AIO and therefore, the research design adopted was Descriptive research design. Total 400 respondents from Ahmedabad were approached with structured questionnaire to collect the data. Out of them, 350 respondents had agreed to participate in the research. Respondents were contacted personally by research to note their responses to the survey instrument.

RESEARCH ANALYSIS METHOD

With the use of AIO scale, researchers had tried to study the lifestyle of traveler with respect to the Eco Tourism. Researcher found Exploratory Factor Analysis as a suitable test to extract the factors for the study with the use of SPSS Software. Along with it, Independent Sample T-Test in case of Dichotomous Variable such as Gender and One Way ANOVA were used to study the mean difference among the groups in demographic variables in SPSS Software.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before applying exploratory factor analysis on the data, it is very important to check the data suitability. Therefore, KMO and Bartlett's Test was applied on the data.

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.908
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2550.519
	df	190
	Sig.	.000

KMO values depicted on the above table is very well above 0.7 level and values shown here is 0.908 which denoted that reliability of this data is 90.8%. Significance value in Bartlett's test is 0.00 lower than 0.05 also proves the data suitability for further analysis. These tests confirm that the study is free from random error and data exhibits internal consistency as items in the scale were measured on Five Point Likert Scale.

Table 2: Rotated Component Matrix

Sr. No	Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
1	I am fond of Travelling.			.608
2	I like to travel to the place with undisturbed nature.		.617	
3	I like to visit museums & art gallery.	.812		
4	Whenever I get time, I travel to the places where there is wilderness.		.518	
5	I love the places with trees & wildflowers with a great species of birds & mountain.		.606	
6	I like to take the photography of landscape & wildlife.	.563		
7	I am interested to learn about nature.		.670	
8	I like to visit rural areas with natural serenity.		.637	
9	I am interested in visiting the place with diverse culture.	.619		
10	I am more interested in learning about local music & craft.	.689		
11	River Rafting, Mountain biking, Fishing are the activities in which I am interested while I am on vacation.		.555	
12	Green attitude of the local community attracts me to visit that place.		.643	
13	I am interested in taking part of the activity that conserve the environment.		.553	
14	Budgeted accommodations and inexpensive fares motivate me to visit various places.			.568
15	I feel free when I am travelling.			.707
16	I spend very less time at hotel.	.588		
17	Vacations create memories for me.	.736		
18	I prefer to travel with my family.			.667
19	I am a solo traveler.			.575

20	Selection of the destination is done taking into consideration the opinion of the friends and family.			.585

Interpretation starts with identification of the variables having higher loading under factor extracted in exploratory factor analysis. Principle component method with varimax rotation was applied to extract the factors. Total three factors have been extracted in this study. Factor loading higher than 0.5 is significant for the study. Here, variables categories under factors have loading higher than 0.5. As per the researcher's understanding factors are given names. So, Factor 1 is named as **Travelling activities** comprises of the variable such as visit to the museum, taking photography, understanding the local art and craft, and spending less time in the hotel.

Green Behavior is the name used for the Factor 2 as the variable extracted under this group as mainly sharing a very common theme that describe the green attitude of the respondents such as A love for nature, visiting the green places, participating in the activities like river rafting, mountain biking etc. This factor illustrates the environmentally friendly attitude of the respondents. Factor 3 is named as **Travel Intention** as this factor consists of the variables such as type of the traveler sole or family, opinion of the peer group, hotel preference etc.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Another objective of the research was to study whether demographic variables like age, gender, income, occupation, and education influence factors of lifestyle segmentation approach or not. So, hypothesizes were developed and Independent Sample T- Test and One-Way ANOVA were used to test hypothesizes.

H1: There is a significant difference between Gender and Factor of lifestyle segmentation approach towards ecotourism.

Here, researchers aimed to study that travelling activity, green behavior and travel intention of the male and female traveler are similar or different. As gender has only two groups: Male & Female and hence Independent Sample T-Test applied on the variables. Test result shows the 0.025, 0.029 and 0.01 for Travelling Activity, Green Behavior, and Travel Intention,

respectively. Therefore, researcher had accepted hypothesis and inferred that traveler's approach towards ecotourism gets differ between male and female.

H2: There is a significant difference between Age and Factor of lifestyle segmentation approach towards ecotourism.

It was an intent to check whether age influence traveler's approach towards ecotourism or not. To study this, One Way ANOVA test was applied on the variables and test result has given significance value of 0.046, 0.076 and 0.026 for Travelling Activity, Green Behavior and Travel Intention respectively. This leads to an interpretation that age has influence on travelling activity and travel intention, but it does not influence green behavior of tourist.

H3: There is a significant difference between Occupation and Factor of lifestyle segmentation approach towards ecotourism.

While developing this hypothesis, research attempted to study that profession of travel influence their approach towards ecotourism or not. One Way ANOVA test was applied to study this hypothesis and test result gives significance value of 0.052, 0.180 and 0.409 for travelling activity, green behavior, and travel intention, respectively. All the values are higher than 0.05 which lead to the conclusion that profession of traveler does not influence their travel approach towards ecotourism.

H4: There is a significant difference between Income and Factor of lifestyle segmentation approach towards ecotourism.

Income was assumed to be an important parameter to study traveler's approach towards ecotourism. Again, One Way ANOVA test was applied to study this hypothesis and test has given values 0.008, 0.010 and 0.001 for travelling activity, green behavior, and travel intention, respectively. Therefore, assumption stands true that income influences traveler's approach towards ecotourism.

5. CONCLUSION

Findings of this paper help in understanding the application of lifestyle segmentation approach in one of the tourism segments – Eco-Tourism. Researchers had studied Activities, Interest and Opinion of travelers to understand their lifestyle and factors have been extracted from this study. There are three major determinants of Eco Tourism according to this study – Activity of traveler, Green Behavior, and Intention of travelling. With reference to these determinants, travelers chose to opt for ecotourism.

It was also important to explore the demographic variables of the travelers and their influence on the traveler's approach towards ecotourism. Gender, Age, Income and Profession were major variables selected for study. A very important fact studied in this research is that male and female have different approach towards the ecotourism. Obviously, income also played important role in deciding the tourist place to visit. Thus, this study presents important insights to travelers, travel agents and tourism companies to understand ecotourism as one of the prominent and increasingly growing segment of tourism industry. As this study has explored only one segment of entire tourism industry so, likewise similar research can be conducted to understand other segments of the tourism industry.

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