

EFFECTS OF ICT IN ECOTOURISM MARKETING WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TOUR OPERATORS IN KOLLAM DISTRICT

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Abstract:

Ecotourism industry is one of the rapid flourishing and early service to use information and communication technology for marketing its services to customers. The competitive edge in this industry has been increasing day by day. In order to be aggressive and fortunate the ecotourism industry has to use ICT tools for marketing their services which is more indigenous and cost effective. The main objective of this study is to identify the ICT tools used by tour operators in eco tourism marketing and also to study the issues faced by the tour operators due to ICT and find out the aid of ICT in eco tourism marketing. A survey was conducted among the tour operators. The sample size of the study is 150 respondents. As Kollam is one of the famous eco tourism destination in Kerala.

Keywords: *Ecotourism, Information and Communication Technology*

INTRODUCTION

Ecotourism is environmentally accountable travel and visit to noticeably undistributed natural regions so that it will level in and respect nature that promotes conservation and has low negative traveller impact and gives for beneficially socio-financial involvement of neighbourhood populations. Eco tourism has acquired an awful lot attention in recent years specifically in the developing world. Eco tourism in simple terms means management of tourism and conservation of nature in a way so that it will hold an excellent balance among the requirement of tourism and ecology on the one hand and desires of the local communities for job, new abilities, and employment generation on the other. The aim of eco tourism is to conserve sources, particularly biological diversity and maintain sustainable use of resources, that can carry ecological enjoyment to guest, conserve the ecological environment and boost financial gain. But, accomplishing the objectives in ecotourism relies upon whether or not they are environmentally and ecologically sustainable and economically applicable. Ecotourism helps in concerning neighbourhood network for the conservation of the ecology and bio diversity of the region. Ecotourism contributes the conservation of biodiversity, sustains the properly well being of humans.

In this technological era the role of information and communication is very important. Eco tourism industry use communication and information technicalities to market their products. In this technological era tour providers have been using various ICT tools for popularising their products and services. Internet, websites, mobile application, e-mail, social media, online advertising etc. The pivotal aspect in ecotourism is information. The biggest obstacle faced by the tour operators in Kollam district is to provide adequate and relevant information to tourists. It can be possible only through proper use of information and communication in industry. Through effective use of ICT in ecotourism industry help the tour

operator to promote tour package, promote various eco products and create good relationship with tourists. Thus this study is very much relevant in this competitive era.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the major ICT tools used by the tour operators in marketing ecotourism.
2. To study the benefit of ICT in ecotourism marketing
3. To examine the key issue faced by tour operators while using ICT tools.

DATABASE AND METHODOLOGY

The validity of any research is based on a systematic method of data collection and proper analysis of the data collected. The methodology adopted for the proposed study is given below:

➤ Sources of data

Both primary and secondary data sources were used for carrying out the Study. Primary data were collected with the help of a structured questionnaire. While, Secondary data obtained from periodicals, journals, magazines, newspapers, websites, books and other reference material.

➤ Sampling design

The sampling technique followed in this study is Convenient Sampling, which is a classification of non Probability Sampling which is used to select the tour operators in kollam district. Total number of respondents participated in the study was 150.

➤ Tools for analysis

The data collected were classified and analysed based on the objectives of the study. For analysis statistical techniques like percentages, tables, One-way Anova and friedmantest test were used.

HYPOTHESIS

H01: There is no significant relationship between Qualification and use of information technology tools for business promotion

H01a: There is significant relationship between Qualification and use of information technology tools for business promotion

H02: There is no significant relationship between issues faced by tour operators and level satisfaction towards ICT tools.

H02a: There is significant relationship between issues faced by tour operators and level satisfaction towards ICT tools.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- This study is purely an academic one and is not free from the constraints of time and money.
- The study has been only confined to the marketing of ecotourism products and service by tour operators in kollam district
- The study is based on the primary data collected from 150 tour operators in kollam district and therefore the results of the study cannot be generalized.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table: 1 Demographic profile of the respondents

Particulars		No of respondents	Percentage (%)
Age	Up to 20 years	12	8
	20 – 30	75	50
	30 – 40	29	19.33
	40 - 50	23	15.33
	Above 50	11	7.34
	Total	150	100
Experience	Less than 1year	26	17.33
	1 - 5	62	41.33
	6 - 10	32	21.33
	11 - 15	20	13.33
	Above 15	10	6.68
	Total	150	100
Educational Qualification	Matriculation	64	42.68
	HSS	56	37.33
	Under Graduate	14	9.33
	Post Graduate	2	1.33
	others	14	9.33
	Total	150	100

**Source: primary data
Interpretation**

The above table shows the least 8 % of the respondents are below 20year of age that majority 50% belong to the age group between 20-30 years. About 19.33% of tour operators are in age group of 30-40. Respondents in the age group of 40 to 50 years are 15.33%. 7.34% respondents are in the age group above 50 years. As regards to experience 41.33% of the respondents have experience between 1-5 years, 21.33% of the respondents have experience between 6- 10years, 13.33% of the respondents have experience between 11-15 years, and 6.68% of the respondents have experience above 15 years. Among the respondents majority 42.68% are with a Matriculation level, 37.33% with Higher Secondary, whereas the 9.33% of the respondents are graduates, post graduates constitute the least 1.33% of the respondents and 9.33% belongs to other category like diploma, polytechnic etc.

Table: 2 Benefits of using information and communication technology to tour operators

Motivating factors	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Promotion of business	44	29.33
Perpetuate Customer affinity	25	16.67
Ease of online transaction	33	21.33
Curtail delay in work	15	10
Effective communication	13	8.67
Enhance work performance	12	8
Customer feedback	8	5.33
Total	150	100

Source: Primary data

Interpretation

The above table reveals that majority 29.33% of the respondents opines that promotion of business is the major benefit in using information and communication technology. 21.33% of the respondents opine that through ICT online transaction can be made simple and easier. 16.67% is on opinion that good relationship can be maintained with customer. prefer green entrepreneurship as a start up because it encourage social entrepreneurship. 10% of tour operators recommend the ICT tools because, it will reduce the work load. 8.67% of respondents opines that use of ICT will helps to have an effective communication and 8% of respondents is on a view that ICT helps to enhance work performance. The least of 5.33% is on opinion that feedback of customer can get easily through the use of ICT.

Table: 3 Key issues faced by tour operators while using ICT.

Key issues	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Lack of software problem	18	12
Lack of knowledge	28	18.67
Unstable internet	32	21.33
Unskilled employees	39	26
Technological up gradation	17	11.33
Lack of technical support	16	10.67
Total	150	100

Source: Primary data

Interpretation

Above table reveals that majority 26% of tour operators opines that lack of skilled employees is one of the major challenges faced by them while using ICT. 21.33% of tour operators face the problem of unstable internet connection. 18.67% of tour operators have not enough knowledge about the system and its advancement. 12% of respondents face problem related with software. 11.33% people is on a view that any up gradation will occur it become difficult to them. The least 10.67% of tour operators opines that lack of technical support is one of the major issues faced by them.

ONEWAY ANOVA

H01: There is no significant relationship between Qualification and use of information technology tools for business promotion

Table: 2 Relationship between Qualification and use of information technology tools for business promotion

Ict tools	Experience	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F Value	P value
Electronic mail	Matriculation	64	4.59	.495	94.191	0.000
	HSS	56	3.64	.483		
	Under Graduate	14	2.14	.000		
	Post Graduate	2	5.00	.000		
	others	14	2.14	.770		
	Total	150	4.05	.933		
Social media	Matriculation	64	4.38	.488	129.860	0.000
	HSS	56	3.41	.626		
	Under Graduate	14	5.00	.000		
	Post Graduate	2	5.00	.000		
	others	14	1.29	.469		
	Total	150	3.79	1.101		
Website of service provider	Matriculation	64	4.00	.836	143.166	0.000
	HSS	56	2.05	.227		
	Under Graduate	14	5.00	.000		
	Post Graduate	2	5.00	.000		
	others	14	1.79	.426		
	Total	150	3.17	1.278		
Telephone	Matriculation	64	4.50	.504	117.005	0.000
	HSS	56	3.50	.603		
	Under Graduate	14	5.00	.000		
	Post Graduate	2	5.00	.000		
	others	14	1.57	.514		
	Total	150	3.91	1.058		
Internet	Matriculation	64	4.06	.432	224.175	0.00
	HSS	56	2.75	.437		
	Under Graduate	14	5.00	.000		
	Post Graduate	2	5.00	.000		
	others	14	1.29	.469		
	Total	150	3.41	1.100		

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation

The above table shows the test result of ANOVA (one-way). The P value is less than 0.05 in all 5 variables. Hence it is interpreted from the above result is that there is a significant relation between educational qualification and use of information technology tools to

promote business. The various significant variable are Electronic mail, websites of service provider, Telephone, Internet, social media etc.

Table: 4 Satisfaction among entrepreneurs towards Starting Green Entrepreneurship

Satisfaction level	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Satisfied	104	69.33
Dissatisfied	46	30.67
Total	150	100

Source: Primary data

Interpretation

From the above table it is clearly understood that 69.33% of the tour operators were satisfied towards the usage of information and communication technologies and the remaining 30.67% of the respondents were not satisfied towards the usage and application of ICT tools.

CHI SQUARE TEST & TESTING OF HYPOTHESIS

H02: There is no significant relationship between issues faced by tour operators and level satisfaction towards ICT tools.

Table: 6 Observed Frequency -Key issues faced and level of Satisfaction

Key issues	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Total
Lack of software problem	12	6	18
Lack of knowledge	18	10	28
Unstable internet	20	12	32
Unskilled employees	34	5	39
Technological up gradation	8	9	17
Lack of technical support	12	4	16
Total	104	46	150

Source: Primary data

Interpretation

By applying Chi-Square test on the observed data the significance of the data found and tested hypothesis. The critical value of χ^2 is $\chi^2_{0.05,5} = 11.070$ where degrees of freedom = (no. of rows-1) X (no. of columns-1) = 5x1 =5. The calculated χ^2_{cal} value for the above table is $\chi^2_{cal} = 11.1488$. At 95% confidence level, the χ^2_{cal} is more than the $\chi^2_{critical}$, therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and concluded that there is significant relationship between Key issues faced by tourists and satisfaction towards using ICT tools.

FINDINGS

- Majority 50% belong to the age group between 20-30 years
- Majority 41.33% of the respondents have experience between 1-5 years
- Majority 46% of the respondents belong to the age group of upto 31-40 years.
- Among the respondents majority 42.68% completed Matriculation level of education.

- Majority 29.33% of the respondents opines that promotion of business is the major benefit in using information and communication technology.
- Majority 26 % of tour operators opines that lack of skilled employees is one of the major challenges faced by them while using ICT.
- Majority 69.33% of the tour operators were satisfied towards the usage of information and communication technologies
- It is found that there is a significant relation between educational qualification and use of information technology tools like Internet,E-mail,Social media,Telephone,Websites etc to promote business
- It is found that there is a significant relationship between Key issues faced by tour operators and satisfaction towards using ICT tools.

CONCLUSION

ICT have conceived a revolt in eco tourism marketing. The tour operators are very much cautious while using major information and technology tools like Email,Social media,Websites,Internet Etc as these ICT tools are considered as a far reaching for marketing ecotourism products and service. Unskilled labours and unstable internet is considered as a major hindrance in marketing eco tourism industry through ICT tools. From this study it is concluded that proper and adequate measures have been taken by the tour operators to implement ICT tool. As it is considered as one of the cost effective and innovative urge to expand eco tourism industry in kollam district of Kerala. The various ICT tools as discussed above help the tour operators to manage various eco tourism destinations and tourists' statistics. It also helps the tourist to identify the major eco tourism spots in the district.

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