

Japanese tourists perception about India as tourist destination

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Abstract

This study explores the determinants of brand image of India for Japanese tourists. The concepts of branding, image and India as a tourist destination have been reviewed. As well as a thorough study on Tourism Industry in India, its development scenarios and tourist arrival pattern were conducted. This paper also investigates the changes of tourist perception about India after the spend a considerable amount of time in our country. Analysis in the study was based on data collected from 851 Japanese tourists, based on a questionnaire floated to capture the perception of destination branding. Factor analysis was conducted on the data so collected, to arrive at the important factors affecting the Brand Image of India as a tourist destination.

Subject Classification: L83, Z32, M31, C38.

Keywords: Destination branding, Tourism, Branding, Factor analysis.

1. Introduction

Destination brand exists in the eyes while destination brand image is retained in the mind of the beholder. Destination branding results in destination brand having specific image based on destination related attributes. Destination branding is enormously significant and is much about destination image formation activities, plans, processes, and

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related strategic aspects of branding. The field of tourism marketing and destination branding lack extensive research studies (Cretu, 2011). The research base in this area is approximately one and half decades old (Caldwell, 2004).

Major research on destination branding is regarding brand building process, perception analysis, brand image attributes, recall test, role of integrated marketing communication in destination branding, destination's satisfaction scoring, and comparative study on tourist satisfaction & role of destination's image. Research work in 'destination branding' lack in orientation lead country specific research on brand image. 'Orientation lead' connotes the business functional domain specific view. For instance, marketing oriented, human resource oriented etc. More specifically research on brand image determinants with marketing orientation in Indian context and that too from country specific tourists is a significantly dry zone.

This aspect is important because such kind of study will help in identification of those brand image attributes that will help in attracting tourists from a particular country provided that such identified attribute is incorporated in destination marketing. This study focuses in exploring India's branding image determinants as a tourism destination from Japanese tourists' perception. The branding challenge a destination arises from tourists' decision-making process (Cretu, 2011). Within the tourists' decision-making process, the most important aspect is alternate generation and evaluation of each alternate before making a final decision. Since the need generation stage offers equal opportunity to every tourism destination but 'alternate generation and evaluation' stage makes a destination qualify or disqualify from the consideration set.

This study also attempts to explore the evoked attributes that Japanese tourist used as evaluative criteria while including a tourism destination in their consideration set. This research also aspires to supplement the existing literature while providing indispensable information to the tourism professionals, scholars, agencies, and other stakeholders of tourism industries. The distinctive feature of this research is the marketing orientation inclusion regarding destination image determinants from Japanese tourist viewpoint and exploration of brand image attributes as the generic set and evoked set. Another distinctive feature of this study is the examination of image agents for Japanese tourist. The results of this study will help them in identifying which brand image attributes attract more Japanese tourist and what are evoked attributes for India as a tourism destination.

Study Objectives

The primary objective of the study is to analyse the perception of Japanese tourists towards brand image of India as a tourism destination, with a specific reference to Delhi, Rajasthan, Agra, and Varanasi. The specific research objectives were:

- To empirically explore the factors that determine brand image of India as tourism destination by using 22 attribute based standard scale.
- To examine unique attributes that favor India as a tourism destination to be in evoked set of alternatives.
- To analyze the positive and negative aspects of India as a brand destination for Japanese tourists

Literature Review

Understanding 'Destination Brand and Destination Branding'

Brand has variety of contexts and meaning to different people but just to begin the concept of destination brand and for the standard reference the definition of brand as proposed by the American Marketing Association (AMA) is mentioned here, it says a brand is a purely a legally differentiated physical entity and can be defined as a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers. A brand may identify one item, a family of items, or all items of that seller (AmericanMarketingAssociation, 2009). Literatures on the brand suggest that brand is a mental impression and eventually it stay alive only in customers' minds. Branding is on the other hand a process followed to build brand and branding has been explained by the used of variety of models in the literature related to brand and branding. In a broader perspective branding involves a set of modus operandi intended to make sure people distinguish the product in an enviable way and helps to create competitive identity (Caldwell, 2004). In a more practical sense branding is the process that bequeaths a product with a 'personality' and the 'personality' expression appears in the form of brand. A brand makes a product:

- i. Distinctive
- ii. Memorable
- iii. Valuable
- iv. Resilient

Destination branding refers to the holistic branding efforts for a country, nation, or a decipherable geographical place (Alhroot, 2007). Destination term is used as a generic term, and it may represent a country, a state, or a city (Cretu, 2011). Destination branding narrates the way in which a place (country, state, or city) put across itself on the national and international platform in terms of business fitness, public intervention, sport, education, culture and tourism (KPMG, 2013).

A destination brand thus can catch the attention of investors, businesses, players, students, and visitors (Morgan, Annette, & Roger, 2011). However, a destination brand is perhaps best expressed as the essence of the destination from the point of view of potential visitors (Cooper, 1998). Another perspective of a destination brand which is equally important yet most of the time ignored is the inclusion of 'connect' a destination brand enjoy with its local residents. Thus, destination brand and branding are not limited to the efforts made toward national and international exposition, but it should also be given due consideration to make resonance with the local residents (Shiv, Shiv, & Veena, 2013).

Key features of Destination Brand

The review of literature about the destination brand divulges some key characteristics. These core feature of destination brand helps in understanding the conceptual and theoretical construction of the concept of destination brand. One aspect that is the very purpose of any brand is generation of competitive identity in a product or service and same is applicable to destination brand (Chiu & Lin, 2011). A destination brand communicates distinctiveness in such a way that instils a competitive identity in a place. The competitive identity creation does not happen among the various places in marketing environment (skift.com, 2012). Though role and importance of the marketing environment cannot be ignored but the competitive identity creation that formulate destination brand is much belong to the customers.

A destination brand exists in the eyes of the people living there, visiting there and working there (Alhroot, 2007, Hsieh, 2020). Some of the research writing explain destination brand as a dynamic relationship between the destination and how it is perceived by potential customers and visitors and local residents (www.shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in). Hence destination brand is incomplete if any of its primary stakeholders (customer, visitor or resident, government, businesspeople, and investor) are ignored. A workably good destination brand is a result of synchronization and

management of the perspective of all stakeholders relevant to a particular destination. Value proposition is important requirement for any brand and in this regard a destination brand is fundamentally an outcome of the values the destination tender and the reactions of the visitors toward such value projection (Carmen Blain, 2005). Also, effective marketing strategies can be designed on the basis of the appropriate attributes that are important to the tourists. (Chaudhary, Kiran, Kate, & Pandey, 2022).

Value projection of a destination brand is more often than not done through stories related to the destination. Stories provide some sort of human connect between people and place (Kumaran et al., 2022). Stories present the values related to the destination in a variety of ways and thus cover diverse level of imagination (Kelley, 1997). The destination attractiveness increases with service quality dimension such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance and care (Lin et al.(2011). Destination attractiveness is also impacted by positive word-of-mouth as well as positive eWOM. (Pathak & Chintalapati, 2022). Finally, it can be concluded that a destination brand is the sum of perceptions that someone has about a place which influence his/her attitudes towards that destination at an emotional level (KPMG, 2013).

Research Methodology

Research methodology is scheme or the way or the plan systematically answering the research questions as well as thus fulfil research objectives' information need. Researcher can think of research methodology as a mechanism of understanding how research is done systematically and logically. Research methodology expresses all possible steps that should be followed while conducting a research study. It also explains the reason for why a particular technique should be used in a given situation. Moreover, it explains the assumptions that a researcher should always consider while working on data analysis part of the project.

Research Design

The research study's initial part that includes variables exploration followed through the features of exploratory research. In fact, it is the exploration that helped in research questions' detailed development as well as later on in the formulation of research objective and finally the research hypothesis. This research study is a quantitative in nature and involved collection of data by using questionnaire. The data so obtained

was then analysed with suitable statistical methods. Hypothesis testing was also executed for establishing relation among dependent and independent variables. All these are the primary features of a descriptive research. The other important feature of the descriptive research is that it deals with describing and explaining the event or phenomena related to the current issues and also attempts to confirm the reliability of the results.

Study Area

Delhi, Agra, Varanasi, and Rajasthan have been chosen for this study because these places are amongst the topmost Indian tourist destinations (www.trak.in, 2015). According to visits of foreign tourist to Indian union territories and states in 2014, Delhi Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan ranked 4th, 3rd, and 5th as per Indian tourism statistic at a glance 2014 report (www.tourism.nic.in, 2015). Therefore, these are the tourism destination in India that would be best for the objectives of this proposed research study. Hence, selection of Delhi, Agra, Varanasi, and Rajasthan as a geographic location for this planned research study would provide valid and reliable results.

Geographic Location: Delhi

As it is national capital and one of the favourite places of Japanese tourists in India. Delhi offers quite a few attractions which are always on the wish list of Japanese tourists. Connectivity through better transportation and accommodation facilities make it a hot spot for many international tourists. In terms of figures of arrival of Japanese tourists, it stands 4th best among all the states in India. Above all there are three tour and travel operators through which I get good amount of data.

Geographic Location: Agra

Agra is the most famous place for Japanese as they are fascinated by The Great Monument of Love Called Taj Mahal. My arrangement with tour and travel agents and companies will help me to fetch the data.

Geographic Location: Varanasi

Varanasi is second most preferred destination for Japanese as it is near to Sarnath. They are fascinated with Ghats and remind them one of

their ancient cities called Kyoto. There are many tour and travel agents who know Japanese language. It is believed that there are many Japanese who arrive in Varanasi every year and take a trip to Sarnath.

Geographic Location: Rajasthan

Rajasthan is third most preferred destination after Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra due to its rich ancient history, forts, castles, and panoramic views. There is strategic view for me to take this geographic location as there are many tour and travel operators who take the Japanese to Ranthambore Reserve for seen sighting. Through them there is great opportunity to gather the data.

Sampling Frame

In research terms the sampling frame is the sampling elements' list that will be used for the purpose of selecting survey respondents. Thus, the sampling frame is a depiction of target population's elements (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007). Sampling frame is not required in this research study because non-probability sampling method will be used where survey respondent is selected depending on some flexible criteria established by researcher and his or her judgment.

Sampling Procedure

In this research non-probability sampling method is used. The choice to take non-probability method is because of the scarcity of sampling frame. The sampling frame is used to draw sample by ensuring randomness. Due to unavailability of sampling frame, the non-probability sampling method was found to be the best possible option. Like probability sampling method, non-probability sampling method also offers specific sampling techniques. A combination of Snowball Sampling and Convenience Sampling were adopted for collection of data in this survey.

Sample size

According to the literature review, the number of Japanese tourists visiting India are approximately between 4700 to 9000. Since the method of sampling has been considered for this research is non-probability and within this judgmental sampling technique. As compared to probability sampling method the accuracy of estimates drawn based on non-

probability sample is always less. Therefore, the maximum allowed limit of margin of error has been selected while determining the size of sample. The maximum value of margin of error that under stressed conditions allowed is 10%. Sample size calculators in qualtrics.com was applied to calculate the sample size. For a population of greater than 9000, 95% confidence level and 3% error margin, the minimum sample size should be approximately 954.

Total 1000 Japanese tourists were contacted out of these 851 questionnaires were found to be completely filled in all dimensions, so the final sample size is 851 and the response rate calculated to be $(851/1000) * 100 = 85.1$.

Some of the Techniques applied for data analysis are mentioned below:

1. Measures of Central Tendencies
2. Measures of Dispersion
3. Factor Analysis
4. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Data Analysis, Findings and Discussions

The data was collected (Table 1) from 851 tourists of Japanese origin by using self-administered structured close ended questionnaire for

Table 1
Demographic Profile of the Sample

Sample Demographic variables		Count	Percentage
Geographic Location	<i>Varanasi (Gaya)</i>	423	49.7%
	<i>Agra</i>	170	20.0%
	<i>Rajasthan</i>	258	30.3%
Gender	<i>Male</i>	601	70.6%
	<i>Female</i>	250	29.4%
Age	<i>30-40</i>	53	6.2%
	<i>40-50</i>	147	17.3%
	<i>50-60</i>	439	51.6%
	<i>60-70</i>	212	24.9%
Qualification	<i>UG</i>	604	71.0%
	<i>PG</i>	247	29.0%
Occupation	<i>Private Job</i>	395	46.4%
	<i>Entrepreneurs/Businessman</i>	249	29.3%
	<i>Not Working</i>	207	24.3%

exploring the brand image determinant of India as a tourism destination. Respondents were the tourist who happened to be on their tour to Indian destinations (Table 1). The collected data went through data screening process where missing values and incomplete responses were evaluated. Since data analysis required assessment of scale for its reliability so first analysis was related to reliability coefficient calculation.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

The most used factor reduction technique is factor analysis, and it is very important for the exploration of key factors or determinants, so it is popularly known as Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). For the exploration of important factors “SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science)” has been utilized. In case of present research study EFA is required to identify key factors that largely determines the India’s brand image as a tourism destination. The EFA results details as well as resulted factors are as follows.

Factor-1 is consisting of nine variables, and this is the main factor. It explains 43.55% of variance. The items’ (variables) factor loadings range from .696 to .898. Most of the variables of this factor are about the tourism destination attraction such as V7 (Incredible natural attraction), V9(Architecture and buildings), V13(Fairs Festivals) etc. **The first factor (as shown in Table 2) is defined as Incredible Natural Attraction.**

Table 2
Structure of Factor-1

FACTOR-1		
CODE	Variable	Factor Loading
V7	Incredible Natural Attraction	.898
V16	Economic Development Prosperity	.893
V2	Easy access to India	.878
V11	Tourism Destinations partially Crowded	.869
V3	Qualified and Courteous Service Staff	.854
V1	Unique Indian Customs and Vibrant Culture	.817
V13	Fairs Festivals	.813
V9	Architecture and Buildings	.725
V12	Diverse Cuisine	.696

Table 3
Structure of Factor-2

FACTOR-2		
CODE	Variable	Factor Loading
V8	Restful and Relaxing	.919
V6	Sports Facilities/Adventure	.916
V14	Political Stability	.789
V5	Safe and Harmless	.760
V10	Cosy Atmosphere	.716
V15	Transportation Facilities Local Infrastructure	-.909

Table 4
Structure of Factor-3

FACTOR-3		
CODE	Variable	Factor Loading
V17	Astonishing Historic Sites	.690
V4	Cost effective	.846

Factor-2 alone can explain 36.09% of variance and it is the other significant factor. The factor loadings range from -.909 to .919 and this factor consisting of six variables. This factor is about the safety and safety related concerns of the tourist for example V9 (Restful and Relaxing), V5 (Safe and Harmless), V14 (Political Stability) etc. The corresponding items and factor loadings of factor 2 are shown in Table 3. **The second factor is defined as Restful and Relaxing.**

Factor-3 is the smallest factor in its composition terms. It is consisting of only 2 variables, and it can explain about 7% of the variance. The factor loadings are shown in Table 4. **Third Factor is termed as Cost effectiveness.**

Findings and Conclusion

In conclusion, Incredible Natural Attraction of the destination, Restful and Relaxing nature of the place as well as cost effectiveness are the most important factors for the tourists to identify a destination as favourable. The responses of the Japanese Tourists and analysis thereof, indicates that these characterises build the brand image of a destination and will eventually increase the chances of a destination in the appearing in the evoked set of consumers.

It was found that significant number of Japanese tourists were on their tour to India for vacation purpose in northern India. It is imperative

for the governments and policymakers to improve upon the facilities and develop modern infrastructure connected with fast and smooth modes of transportation. Also, the aesthetic appeal of a destination should be maintained to attract more tourists, as the study points out that the natural beauty of a destination is one of the prime attractions for a place and it eventually adds to the brand image of the destination.

Japanese tourists usually face communication problem during their tour to India. For this problem academic institution can create and offer basic communication course that specifically target tourism related communication aspects for tourist guides and for other interested institution who deals in tourism.

Future Scope of Research

In this study, exploratory factor analysis has been applied to explore the underlying factor structure of tourist behaviour in choosing a destination. This structural model can be used as a base or reference for further analysis of the subject matter. Similar studies can be conducted to further validate the factor structure and to explore newer interaction that impact the brand image of a travel destination.

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