

“Factors Affecting The Traveler’s Intention In Selecting Alternative Accommodation: A Case Study Of Mussoorie”

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Abstract

Inception of accommodations like Commercial homes, Service apartments, Homestays, Bed and Breakfast and Guest Houses help the travelers to opt for alternative accommodations instead of the conventional hotels. The study location, Mussoorie, queen of hills, is in Uttarakhand State and is a complete tourism destination of our country, which has recently experienced a spurt in the promotion and growth of alternative accommodation. It has a lot of potential for tourism development and various tourist activities, ranging from religious, sports, leisure, adventure, rural to wildlife and almost all types of tourism related activities and hence a lot of demand for different types of regular and alternative types of accommodation has arose. The purpose of the study is to find out the factors which affect tourists to select those types of alternative accommodations. The data was collected with the help of a well structured questionnaire which was distributed among 300 respondents and the factors affecting the decision are found with the help of exploratory factor analysis. Findings presented that safety and security and value for money services played the role as major motivator. Finally, some suggestions and recommendation have been provided which could be helpful for the alternative hoteliers to develop a better, sustainable, appealing and competitive framework for the stay of the tourists.

Keywords: Mussoorie, Alternative accommodation, Stay motivating Factors, Tourism marketing, Factor Analysis

1. Introduction:

Tourism is considered as a convenient way to boost national or regional economic growth, as it helps in bringing investments, creating jobs, and promoting sales of crafts and local artifacts (Pandey et al., 1995). Tourism is highly dependent on the destination image and its attributes. Some destinations seem to be much more flourishing as compared to others in offering tourism activities and in attracting tourists (Formica, 2000). To compete in the tourism market, tourism planners should have a clear understanding of the difference between attributes of tourism products and tourism attractions and their need and importance. Accommodation is one of the basic elements of tourism; or rather say an attribute of the tourism product to the tourists. The extent, type and nature of accommodation determine the volume and value of tourism of any destination (Henning & Willemse, 1999; Nuntsu, Tassiopoulos & Haydam, 2003). While tourist accommodation usually refers to traditional hotels of several categories, Inception of accommodations like Commercial homes, Service apartments, Home stays, Bed and Breakfast and Guest Houses help the travelers to opt for alternatives accommodation establishments instead of the conventional hotels which provide paid lodging to the tourists on short-term basis. The difference lies in terms of limited and personalized services given to the tourists with an authentic local and ethnic appeal.

Idea of home stays is not a new one but, it started back in times in Europe, and such homes operated by private homeowners have always been a fixture in popular American vacation areas (Nuntsu et al, 2003). However, in our country it started nearly two decades ago. The Ministry of Tourism introduced the concept of Commercial homes (specifically, the Bed & Breakfast and Homestay Establishments) as part of its world renowned Incredible India campaign.

One of the major tourist destinations of Uttarakhand state is the queen of hills, Mussoorie, which happens to nest almost all the types of tourism attractions and activities and has shown a recent development and growth of alternative accommodation. It has a tremendous potential for variety of tourism related activities, be it religious, sports, leisure, adventure, rural, or wildlife, which leads in the creation of demand for different types of regular and alternative types of accommodations.

The product of alternative accommodation is very different from the traditional hotel room in several ways like facilities, features and the benefits required by the guests. The study would be helpful for the alternative hoteliers to develop a better, sustainable, appealing and competitive framework for marketing and infrastructure for the stay of the tourists.

2. Literature Review:

In order to comprehend the present study to its logical conclusion, an extensive literatures on hotel selection factors that affect the choice of alternative accommodations and impact of customer reviews, their satisfaction levels and destination image had been thoroughly studied and chosen.

In the study of Reynolds & Emenheiser (1996) it has been presented that a future trend in which alternative accommodation providers such as Bed & Breakfast operators would be getting a much significant role in the hospitality industry. Also Novelli (2005) and Scarinci and Richins (2008) suggested the various reasons behind the increasing recognition and attractiveness of niche segments like alternative accommodation involves increased competition and market segmentation, more sensitive and unique need customers and communication technology.

In the study of Gunasekaran N. & Victor Anandkumar (2012) four factors that affect the decision of the customers in selecting an alternative accommodation were opined, those were value for money, homely atmosphere, guest-host relationship and local landscape. Also the research paper of Suvachart (2017), an exploratory factor analysis was done and five factors for the same were identified.

According to Foxley (2001) and Canwell and Sutherland (2003), there exist three types of alternative accommodation, i.e. Service apartments, Guest houses and Commercial homes such as Homestay and Bed and Breakfast. Also in the words of Canwell and Sutherland (2003) guest house is pretty small as compared to an average hotel and with limited facilities and lesser number of rooms.

In the study of Gilbert and Terrata (2001) which is specific in marketing strategies, it was suggested that the tourist demographics itself as a motivational factor while selecting alternative hoteliers.

Earlier researchers have found out that the tourists, during the selection of alternative accommodation are influenced by factors which are enjoyment of country lifestyle and scenery, alternative to a hotel or a getaway to escape the larger hotel, meet the local people and find pleasure in the local heritage (Norman, 1988, Upchurch, 1996; Ingram, 2002).

The earlier studies focused on the rural lodging sites performed by Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, (2008); Ng, David, & Dagger, (2011) discovered that the accommodation services are extremely significant intangible feature.

In the words of Khan (2016) motivation, selection and satisfaction are psychological and emotional state of the travelers', also it was stated that it the social and behavioral judgment provided by the tourist against the facilities provided to him/her.

3. Research gap:

The purchase process of purchase is innately highly risky because customers cannot assess the services until they themselves check in and avail the services. So issue of safety and security along with the service quality always lies back in the mind of potential tourists which happens to be the most influential factors in earlier studies. By this it could be stated that there lie several factors which persuade the buying decision and optimal motivation regarding the selection of alternative accommodation, which still remain the topic of understanding and discussions.

4. Objectives:

The present study has certain objectives, which are as follows:

1. To determine the factors which affect tourists to select those types of alternative accommodations.
2. To give recommendations and suggestions for the optimal development of alternative accommodations in future.

5. Methodology:

5.1. Conceptual Model of the Study:

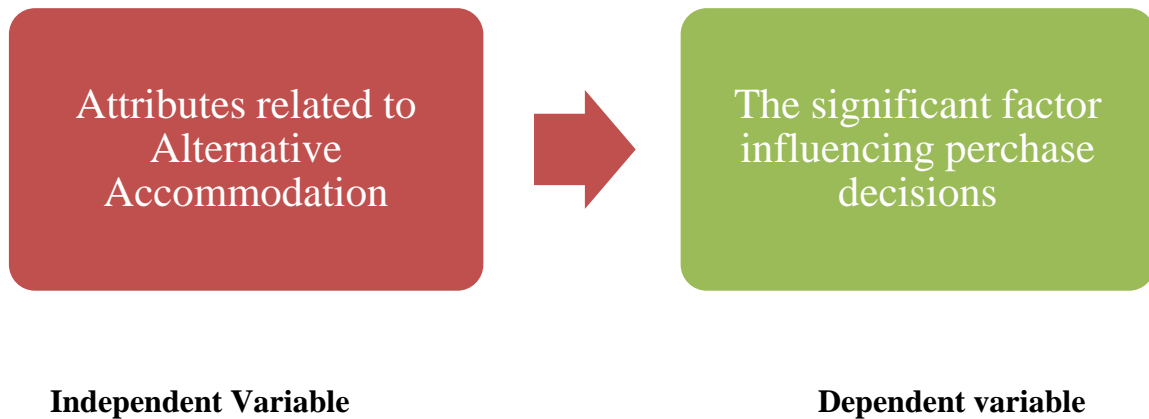


Fig 1: Proposed Model of the Study

5.2.Method:

The study is both empirical and descriptive in nature, which is based on primary as well as secondary sources. Both qualitative and quantitative data has been used. Convenient sampling was used for the study and data was collected with the help of a well structured questionnaire which was distributed among 300 respondents, both domestic and international guests were selected for the responses at the already decided alternative accommodation involving Service apartments, Guest houses and Commercial homes which including Bed & Breakfast and Homestay. Criteria for selecting the respondents were that he/she should be a bonafide guest at an alternative accommodation, decision maker in case of groups and independent traveler and should be of enough sensible age of maturity. Locations were selected in such a way so that the region having the most tourists' flow in the geographical spread of Mussoorie should be covered.

Questionnaire consisted of two parts, namely section I and II. Section I dealt with the demographic profile of the travelers while section II consisted of 24 variables on which respondents had to respond on a five-points Likert's scale.

6. Data Analysis:

After the collection of data by survey questionnaire, in close relation to the objectives and hypothesis of the study, the analysis of the data was done by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences- 17 (SPSS-17). The internal consistency was measured by using Cronbach's alpha coefficient value. Exploratory factor analysis

6.1. Reliability Test:

According to Nunnally (1978), Cronbach's alpha with larger alpha values (greater than 0.70) shows higher internal consistency in the measured dimension and has greater reliability. The Cronbach's alpha value is greater than 0.840, therefore it is evident that the questionnaire had good internal reliability and data could be utilized for further analysis.

6.2. Demographic And Travel Details Of The Tourist:

In the travelers' Indians contributed 74% while 26% were foreigners. Most of the tourists were males with 66% while females came out as 34%. Most of them were of the age group of 26-35 years with 26.5% followed by 46-55 years with 25.5% and 36-45 years with 21.0%. Respondents more than 55 years of age were counted as 9% while the remaining 18% found to be less than 26 years. 60% were married tourists while 40% were single. Almost 78% of the respondents took check in with friends and family while 16.5% with spouse. 3.5% came alone for the visit and 2% selected the response as 'other'. Most of the tourists who visited Mussoorie had good educational background in which 59.5% were graduates, 25.5% post graduates and 11% were technical. It was also found that only 2.5% have studied up to high school and 1.5% was having degree above post graduation. All types of travelers, i.e. students, employee, business personnel, home maker were in the respondents' list. 40% had monthly income more than 50,000 rupees, 30% had no income and remaining under 50,000 rupees.

The rationale for the visit of 50% of the respondents was leisure or recreation, 15% came for religious appeal and 12.5% for cultural and historical significance in which again greater part was of foreigners. Others came for education, honeymoon, and adventure or on official stay. Tourist who stayed only for one day were only 13(6.5%) while majority tourist stayed between 1-7 days, in which 30% stayed for 3-5 nights, 25% for 1-2 nights, 22.5% for 1 week. 40 respondents stayed for more than seven days.

6.3. Factor Analysis:

Factor analysis of the 24 variables was done by using Principal Component analysis after checking the appropriateness of Factor analysis (Malhotra, 2005) by using the Bartlett's test of sphericity (significance level at 0.01 level) and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistic (>0.6).

Table 1: Assessment of KMO and Barlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.898
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	5446.259
	Df	269
	Sig.	.000

Source: Compiled and calculated by researcher

Table 1 clearly shows that the KMO measurement was 0.898 and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity revealed a statistical significance at 0.01 level which could be understood as the correlation matrix was not an identity matrix. The values indicated in the table presented that the data collected from the tourists were suitable for factor analysis. Factors with eigenvalue greater than 1 and a loading of 0.5 and above were then rotated using varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization. Based on the eigenvalue criterion (that is, eigenvalue > 1), five factors emerged. To confirm the number of factors, a screen plot was drawn. Items belonging to factors for which no reasonable interpretation could be found or those that had very low additional explanatory power in explaining travelers stay motivation were dropped. Finally, four factors were retained explaining 85.199 per cent of the total variance. The factor analysis produced four dimensions which were labeled namely as safe and secure homely atmosphere, value for money services, local appeal and host and guest relationship.

Table 2: Final factors, items, loadings, communalities and Eigen values

Factors	Significant variables	Factor loadings	Eigen values	% of variance
Factor 1: Safe and Secure Homely Atmosphere (N=10)	1) Local Environment	0.722	9.215	42.677
	2) Homely atmosphere	-0.837		
	3) Safety and Security	0.819		
	4) Own space	0.716		
	5) Cleanliness	0.965		
	6) Quality of Food Services	-0.821		
	7) Flexibility stay	0.775		

	8) Unique appeal	0.644		
	9) Wanted a change	0.942		
	10) Availability of internet and phone	0.821		
Factor 2: Value for money services (N=6)	1) Personalized hospitality	-0.619	4.038	17.962
	2) Mussoorie experience	0.929		
	3) Ease of availability	0.756		
	4) Online reviews	0.762		
	5) Not exorbitantly price	0.634		
	6) Value for money	-0.747		
Factor 3: Local appeal (N=6)	1) Local Culture	0.762	3.216	14.204
	2) Local lifestyle experience	0.681		
	3) Interaction with locals	0.844		
	4) Crowd avoidance	0.612		
	5) Local support	0.654		
	6) Something different	0.645		
Factor 4: Host &Guest relationship (N=2)	1) Past experience with hotels	0.936	2.278	10.356
	2) Cordial relationship with the host	0.921		

Source: Compiled and calculated by researcher

Based on the table values, the defined scales are as follows:

Factor 1: Safe and Secure Homely Atmosphere

The safe and secure homely atmosphere factor is the very first factor obtained through factor analysis which included ten items. This factor bagged 42.677% of explained variance and hence gains the maximum yield when a tourist opts for the alternative accommodation. It consisted of Local Environment, Homely atmosphere, Safety and Security, Own space,

Cleanliness, Quality of Food Services, Flexibility stay, Unique appeal, Wanted a change and Availability of internet and phone. It depicts the significance of having a friendly, safe and homely atmosphere and providing service with individual attention.

Factor 2: Value for money services

The second factor accounts for 17.962% variance explained and included Personalized hospitality, Mussoorie experience, Ease of availability, Online reviews, Not exorbitantly price and Value for money. This factor focuses on the importance of matching the perceived value by the different services provided to the tourists with the experienced value, so that the Value for money proposition stands fair. This factor plays very significant role for taking pricing decisions of alternative hoteliers and hence should be kept always ready in hands.

Factor 3: Local appeal

The third factor included Local Culture, Local lifestyle experience, Interaction with locals, Crowd avoidance, Local support, Something different and accounts for 14.204% explained variance. It presents the necessity of having a local appeal and giving a genuine experience with the help of displays, interactions, tangible evidence and cuisines.

Factor 4: Host & Guest relationship

The last factor incorporated only two elements Past experience with hotels and Cordial relationship with the host and showed 10.356% explained variance. It proposes that there should be a cordial and healthy relationship between the host and the Guest from the first pre-trip contact to the in-trip interactions and finally post-trip communication.

7. Discussion:

Results of the study are in accordance with the earlier studies and this study also supports these factors as motivators. Certain factors taken in this study have proven their significant roles in the decision making process of staying in alternative accommodation over conventional hotels. Factors resemble their relevant purpose and hence alternative accommodation providers should maintain such alternative accommodation and create a competitive appeal among

themselves with proper facilities for a sustainable development and keeping the need of the hour maintained.

8. Conclusion, Suggestion and Recommendations:

The results of the study opined the existence of four factors which are safe and secure homely atmosphere, value for money services, local appeal and host and guest relationship which influence the tourists' motivation and decision, which leads in the selection of alternative accommodation such as Service apartments, Guest houses and Commercial homes which including Bed & Breakfast and Homestay. Unique appeal, availability of web services and justified price of the services emerged as latest dimensions in which unique appeal emerged as a new element and hence should be kept in mind by the hoteliers.

To increase the stay of tourists in alternative accommodations, the marketers and business enterprises should focus greatly on the safe and secure homely environment in the products. Facilities should be provided with a very competitive pricing with the latest technology like wifi internet access and professional attitude towards the customers. More the tourist is satisfied and his/her perceived image matches with the expected image more likely is he/she will visit again and also recommend such alternative destinations to others. All the elements of the explained factors work in cumulating nature so optimal focus on each element should be given. This will make such alternative accommodation a pleasant place to study and improve its sustainability and business activities.

9. Limitations:

Since research is based on the travelers' social and psychological behavior hence there are possibilities of biased and little irresponsible information might be given while filling up the responses in the questionnaires which would be reflected in the analysis and hence in the interpretation, which cannot be neglected simply. Many a times respondents are hesitant to share their real self and so it is one of the major limitations of the survey based research. Sample size taken could have been larger to make the study more representative and authentic. Also the findings couldn't be generalized on the total population of travelers and tourists staying in Mussoorie. Data for the study were collected during the peak seasons only which could also

affect the results somehow so becomes a limitation too. Money and time constraints also acted as one of the limitations of the study.

10. Direction for future researches:

Since the present study has some limitations and specific objectives, other elements relating to the intention, motivation and decision making process can be either incorporated or a totally new dimension could be covered in future researches. Advanced statistical tools and techniques might be used to analyze further results and more interpretations could be made from the same or associated study.

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