

# **A Study on the Scope for Special Interest Tourism Based Services in India**

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Received: July 18, 2014., Revised: December 01, 2014., Accepted: December 15, 2014.

## **Abstract**

Today, travelers are provided large amount information which includes Web sites and tourist magazines about introduction of tourist spot. Many approaches have been proposed to analyze the large amount of available information with the aim of discovering the most popular Points of Tourist Interest and routes. However, it is not easy for users to process the information in a short time. Therefore travelers prefer to receive pertinent information easier and have that information presented in a clear and concise manner. Whether you are looking for banks by company, foreign exchange services, free wireless hotspots, touristic attractions, campsites, supermarkets, restaurants, cinemas, The aim of POI Tourism Services is to enable tourists to find spots that only the locals know, giving the tourists opportunity to the tourists to explore new areas of the place like never before. This paper proposes find the scope for a personalized service for tourist “Special Interest Tourism” recommendation for tourists who travel within India & for the benefit of Foreign Nationals who visit the country. The major focus of the study is to understand the demand for such a service being integrated into the conventional tour package. The major findings made during the course of the show that the market for “Special Interest Tourism” based services stands at approximately 63%. Travel today is mainly for the people from the middle income group having a fixed budget while traveling and would like economic travel solutions that fit their budget. This accounts for a major part of the market for the service. Most tourist prefer to go on week end getaways or trips that last more than a week, this means that a specialized trip plan based on the travelers interests is feasible with these type of travelers. Maximum demand for “Special Interest Tourism” based services would be during the festive seasons.

**Keywords:** Service, Tourism, India.

## **1. Introduction**

Designing a custom travel itinerary planning is a complex task. The entire process requires to identify specific places of tourist interest, to select a few of them according to the customer’s tastes and potential constrains (e.g. time), and to manually to set them in a meaningful visiting order. Skilled and curious travelers typically consult several sources of information such as travel books, travel blogs, photo sharing sites and many others. The number of possible choices easily blows up, and makes it difficult to find the right blend of places to visit that best meet the interests of a particular traveler. The main intention of such a service initiative should be to provide travelers complete, up-to-date, and reliable travel guide. While providing such services, it is crucial to know what the traveler aims to achieve during his/her visit to a particular destination. This helps facilitate a better understanding about the traveler’s expectations, meeting the expectations of the traveler being the key to the success of such a venture.

India is a country that has intrigued travelers and tourists for a very long time. It’s rich cultural heritage and traditions have always left a lasting impression in the hearts of travelers from the beginning. With a vast diversity that ranges from bustling modern metropolises to ancient temples, from the peaks of the Himalayas to the Arabian sea, India is a country that has always been popular with the tourists. From being a major tourist destination for

trade in exotic spices, silk and precious stones, today the modern image that India projects as an International tourist destination is something very different. Today India is a popular travel destination that offers unique experiences to the traveler. The key is to identify the need of the customer and to iterate a travel plan that best suits the traveler's needs and demands.

The tourism industry in India is a big source of income to the nation. As per the estimates of the world travel and tourism council, tourism generated close to \$121 billion. This accounted for 6.24% of the nation's GDP for the year 2012. The annual growth rate of the tourism sector in India is predicted to grow at a rate of 7.7% in the coming decade. This means that the scope for developing a service that creates a unique travel experience that is totally different from the pre-packaged tours are the need of the hour. Travelers to India are looking for the real local experience. This cannot be achieved with pre-packaged tours. There is immense potential in a customized tour planning service that makes tailor made tour plans for the customers. Providing the travelers with up to date travel information helps them to make their journey memorable and creates a potential demand for similar services in the future.

Having a clear understanding about what are the needs and wants of the traveler would help travel agencies to develop better tour plans for the travelers that suit their means and demands. It comes without saying that such a service would also increase job opportunities in the country.

#### **Objectives of the Study:**

- To have a basic understanding about the changing demands of domestic and international travelers in India
- To analyze the scope for Special Interest Tourism Services in India
- To measure the demand for customized tourism services in India

## **2. Literature**

In a research paper submitted by Christian Røine (2001) to the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Department of Computer and Information Science titled "Design and Evaluation of a Personalized Mobile Tourist System" talks about the rapid growth of services associated with smart phones and handheld devices, making them powerful devices with many features. Location awareness is one of the hot topics, aiding applications to provide better services to users. A challenge is to combine the large amount of tourist information with the limited display sizes of smart phones. Also, tourists spend a lot of time ending information with little knowledge of their probable enjoyment of these tourist relevant locations. Recommender systems attempt to solve this by using information about users and points of interest. We will investigate several studies that discuss tourist applications.

Wium, (2010) in his research indicated that the Mobile tourist service system has potential and is encouraged by the positive feedback from many users. Users especially found the system to be beneficial to them as tourists, and that they could use the system during vacations. Unfortunately, the achieved responses were not completely satisfactory to our goals, but further iterations with the suggested improvements.

M.P.Saji, Senior Research Fellow at Gandhigram Rural Institute in his research paper "Tourism Product Development In Ecologically And Culturally Fragile Areas – Observations From Kerala In India" states that countries that are economically backward but rich in terms of resources, tourism has become a vital sector to be considered for regional development. In the post-modern world, there seems to be an ever increasing urge for experiencing authentic life styles and environment – a search which is obvious to end up in locations and communities that were ecologically and culturally enclosed so far, so that it had not altered yet. This taste of more diversified and specialized experience makes many of the culturally and ecologically rich regions attractive in contemporary tourism market. The new tourism styles like Eco-tourism, Cultural tourism, Rural tourism, (indeed too many) have become synonym with the growth of tourism in several countries. The paper tries to explore through various alternative tourism concepts like eco-tourism and cultural tourism and observe its actual practices in Kerala, the southern most states of India, which has initiated several innovative tourism models. After analyzing the pros and cons tourism initiatives in the state, the paper seeks to appreciate and present the approaches that could be used as a base for tourism product development and management in ecologically and culturally fragile area.

Anne Bader (2010), in his research paper titled "Tourism Business Environment Analysis Conducted For Kerala/India" analyzed the tourism business environment of the Indian state Kerala. Furthermore, four scientific models are shortly explained in order to identify the most suitable ones for the business environment analysis. By

comparison the global forces model and the SWOT analysis were chosen. An adapted combination of both focusing on changing modes in global forces and the categorization of the identified changes into internal and external aspects, not considering any competitors, identifies the business environment Kerala's tourism sector is operating in. In the second part the chosen models are used to conduct an adapted tourism business environment analysis for Kerala.

A case study titled "Community-Based Tourism: A Case Study From Buhoma, Uganda" describes how community-based tourism activities were developed in Buhoma, Uganda in the context of the FAO/United Nations Foundation project Community-Based Commercial Enterprise Development for the Conservation of Biodiversity at World Heritage Sites. The overall goal of this Enterprise Development Project, which was implemented from 2001 to 2004, was to create viable small scale enterprises to generate additional income for local communities while providing incentives for sustainable natural resource management at Bwindi World Heritage Site. The project was implemented by a local non-governmental organization, the Mgahinga and Bwindi Impenetrable Forest Conservation Trust, which has been supporting community development in villages surrounding Bwindi Impenetrable and Mgahinga National Parks since 1995. In a paper written by Sudipta Kiran Sarkar and Babu P George (2010), titled "Peace Through Alternative Tourism" examines the connection among alternative forms of tourism and the establishment of long term peace. In the Research Paper done by Drita Kruja and Albana Gjyrezi (2011), titled "The Special Interest Tourism Development and the Small Regions", the authors of the paper are of the opinion that It is easy to attract visitors when you have plenty of resources, nice accommodations, powerful selling techniques, many supporting sectors and of course reliable government support. The challenge starts when you lack most of the above and what you have is only a handful of beautiful natural resources, breathtaking sceneries, goodwill and a great desire and pride to show those visitors your country. You target that group of customers whom are specifically interested in what you have, beautiful views, heartfelt welcome, home like accommodations and very warm people. These customers do not look for fancy, expensive, overcrowded hotels; they are in search of real beauty and nature. They have special interests and would like to fulfill them toward a reasonable price. Hence starts the development of what is widely known as the special interest tourism. A Research paper was done by Wouter Sou\_riau and Pieter Vansteenwegen (2011), titled "Tourist Trip Planning Functionalities: State of the Art and Future", the paper states that When tourists visit a city or region, they cannot visit every point of interest available, as they are constrained in time and budget. Tourist recommender applications help tourists by presenting a personal selection. Providing adequate tour scheduling support for these kinds of applications is a daunting task for the application developer. The research paper written by Weiler, B.; Hall, C. M. (1992), titled "Special interest tourism: in search of an alternative." looks at some of the common things that can be identified customized tourism services provided to the tourists who are looking for a unique experience while travelling to a new destination. A special interest tourism experience is always motivated primarily by that particular interest. With respect to travel behaviour, the one aspect that seems to be consistent is the 'seeking' behavior. The potential of special interest holidays in providing a quality experience for host populations and in avoiding detrimental impacts on the environment are discussed. The research paper written by authors Kalinowski, K. M. & Weiler, B.; Hall, C. M.(1992), titled "Educational travel: The dawn of a new era in Travel" talks about the forms of travel which are distinctly educational with respect to their origins and reasons for development. The experience that they provide, travelers' motivations, and the characteristics of the travel experience are discussed in this paper. The paper also throws light on the Current opportunities for educational travel. This study is done with respect to the students wishing to gain education abroad and their destinations, and future prospects for this type of special interest tourism are explored.

The research paper written by authors BOB Brothertona & BÜLENT Himmetođlub (2001), titled "Beyond Destinations—Special Interest Tourism", explores the contention that the next frontier in the tourism development process lies beyond the highly packaged destination-based tourism product within the realms of Special Interest Tourism (SIT). It focuses on the underlying conceptual foundations for this contention and initiates the process of differentiating between 'general' and 'special' interest tourism and tourists by proposing both a general 'Tourism Continuum' and a new typology of special interest tourists. Finally, it also contains the results from an exploratory survey on UK Outbound special interest tourists which was designed to empirically explore many of the basic ideas and propositions developed from the earlier conceptual work.

Attix, S. A (2002). In his paper titled "New Age-oriented special interest travel: a exploratory study" examines the dynamics and issues related to New Age travel within the broader realm of spiritual/religious tourism in the USA. Data on the New Age population and its demographics have only been available since the 1990s, and it indicates that travel for pilgrimage, personal growth and non-traditional spiritual practices has been increasing steadily since the 1980s.

### 3. Methodology

The research design used in this study was descriptive in nature. Probabilistic sampling design has been used to conduct the research. Sampling unit is the basic unit containing the elements of a target population. The sampling unit of the study is only the persons who travel on holidays and business purposes at least once a year. The study contains a sample size of 100 respondents. The time period of the study was 3 Months. Simple random sampling is adopted as sampling technique. The data was collected from the both primary and secondary sources. In this study the primary data was obtained through the survey of the respondents. The questionnaire was prepared by me with the help of similar research papers and articles. Secondary data is the data that's obtained through various other sources like the internet, journals, other research papers, magazine articles. A pool of secondary data sources were used for this study and the references are given towards the end of this report. Major part of the data collection work was carried over through the internet, the questionnaire is uploaded in Instant.ly and the link was sent to the respondents as soon as they give their response it was recorded in the cloud space.

### 4. Analysis

From the data received, we can assume that there is a lot of scope for personalized “Special Interest Tourism” services within the country. Assuming that all the respondents are Indian there is a 63% market for the service. This means that the opportunity to initiate the rendering of such a service would be an additional advantage to the tour promoters.

**<Table 1> Destination of Travel**

Destination of Travel		
Destination of Travel	Overseas Travel	Percentage
Within the Country	63	63
Overseas Travel	37	37
Total	100	100

**<Table 2> Duration Of Stay**

Duration Of Stay		
Holiday Period	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Day Trip	3	3
Weekend Getaway	37	37
Lasted Over a Week	60	60
Total	100	100

The duration of the stay as per the responses collected, there is not much demand for day trips to tourist destinations. Maximum number of respondents prefer going on trips that last over a week followed by weekend getaways. Both these duration of stay during a holiday were preferred by 60% and 37% of the respondents respectively. These are the two durations that would be optimal to initiate “Special Interest Tourism” Services.

**<Table 3> Purpose Of Visit**

Purpose Of Visit		
Purpose Of Visit	Number Of Responses	Percentage
Business	16	16
Leisure	28	28
Night Life	18	18

Shopping	21	21
Cultural Heritage	17	17
Total	100	100

The data collected shows that the main reason for travelers to go on a holiday is to have a relaxing time. The other factor that plays an influence while selecting a destination is the Shopping facilities that are available. The Night Life that a place has to offer and the Cultural heritage of the place are also equally important factors. This is one if the reason Goa is considered one of the most sought tourist destination in India by foreigners. The number of travelers who come on business will also take the effort to relax a bit when in a new place. So this category also very important clientele to operators who provide special interest Tourism Services.

**<Table 4> Customer Preference Towards Destination Demographics**

Destination Demographics			
Destination Demographics	History	Culture	Climate
Rank 1	26	32	63
Rank 2	29	47	16
Rank 3	45	21	21

From the sample collected, it is clear that the respondents have ranked Climate to be the attribute of most importance while choosing a destination to spend a holiday. This means that the climatic conditions on a place need to be given a lot of importance while recommending a place to a tourist. The next variable that most respondents felt played an important role while choosing a destination is the Culture of the people of the place. The variable that had the least influence on the Impact of choosing a holiday destination was the History of the destination.

**<Table 5> Aspects Of Destination that Inspire Interest among Tourists**

Order	Answer	Responses	Percent
1	Museums and galleries	21	21%
2	Land Marks	26	26%
3	Place of Worship	16	16%
4	Park and Nature	31	31%
5	Others	6	6%

The responses as per the data collected show that 82% of the respondents would like to visit parks and natural resources such as springs, waterfalls, ponds, camping sites etc. 68% of the respondents felt that they would like to visit land marks that and heritage sites. 21% of the respondents feel that they would like to visit museums during their holiday. The least number of responses was for Places of Worship

**<Table 6> Tourist Request For Prior Information Regarding**

	Taxi /Bus	Bike/Car Rentals	Guided tour package	Total
Business	3	3	1	7
	8%	8%	5%	7%
Leisure	12	15	9	36
	32%	41%	45%	38%
Night Life	4	4	1	9
	11%	11%	5%	9%
Shopping	9	8	4	21
	24%	22%	20%	22%
Cultural heritage	10	7	5	22
	26%	19%	25%	23%
Total	38	37	20	95
	100%	100%	100%	100%

While travelling to a destination, the purpose of the journey plays a very important role in determining the means of transport that the traveler would like to take. Taking the purpose of the visit the following conclusions were made:

- Of the total number of respondents who preferred to take a taxi or a bus as a means of transport while traveling within the destination,
  - 8% of the travelers were on Business activities,
  - 12% of the travelers were there on a leisure trip
  - 11% of the travelers were there to enjoy the night life
  - 24% of the travelers were on a shopping expedition
  - 26% prefer the means of transport to explore the cultural heritage of the area.
  
- A total of 37 respondents felt that they felt more comfort. Table 4. exploring an area by taking bikes or cars on rent. This meant that they could enjoy the place at their own convenience.
  - 3% of the respondents who preferred bike/car rentals in a destination were on business
  - 41% of the respondents were on leisure trips
  - 11% of the respondents were visiting the place to enjoy the night life
  - 22% of the respondents were there to enjoy the shopping
  - While the remaining 19% preferred to explore the cultural heritage of the area.
  
- A total of 20 respondents felt that the best way to go around the city would be to be part of a guided tour.
  - 5% of the respondents were on Business
  - 45% of the respondents were on Leisure
  - 5% of the respondents wanted to enjoy the night life
  - 20% of the respondents were on shopping expeditions
  - 25% of the respondents felt it was the best way to enjoy the cultural heritage of the area.

**<Table 7> Preferred means of Transport while on a Holiday**

Order	Answer	Responses	Percent
1	Shopping Facilities	22	22%
2	Food and Cuisine	32	32%
3	Nightlife DJ parties & pubs	13	13%
4	Lodging facilities	30	30%
5	Others	3	3%
	Total	100	

**<Table 8> Preferred Type of Holiday package**

	Shopping Facilities	Food and Cuisine	Nightlife DJ parties & pubs	Lodging facilities	Total
Package	8	9	5	8	30
Tour	36%	28%	15%	27%	28%
Customized	14	23	11	22	70
Tour	64%	72%	85%	73%	72%
Total	22	32	16	30	100
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

On the basis of the data collected, it is very clear that there is a lot of demand for customized tour packages. When asked about the kind of holiday package that they would prefer while on a holiday for the given parameters, 72% of the respondents felt that a customized tour would be the best option to take. 64% of the respondents who really wanted to explore the shopping avenues chose to take a customized tour, and so did 72% of the respondents who wanted to experiment with the various food and cuisine offerings that the destination had to offer. 85% of the people who had visited the destination for the night life experience felt that customized tours would be the best option. 73% of the respondents who felt that the best way to find the best accommodation facilities is if they took a customized tour. As far as the demand for a packaged tour is concerned, the following trends were discovered.

- 36% of the respondents were in the destination for the shopping experience

- 28% of the respondents were in the destination for the food and cuisine
- 15% of the respondents wanted to experience the night life
- 8% of the respondents wanted proper lodging facilities.

**<Table 9> Scope for supporting Tourism based industries**

	Shopping Facilities	Food and Cuisine	Nightlife DJ Parties & pubs	Lodging Facilities	Total
Business	4	5	2	4	15
	9%	8%	8%	7%	8%
Leisure	15	24	11	21	71
	33%	36%	44%	34%	36%
Night Life	6	7	4	6	23
	13%	11%	16%	10%	12%
Shopping	11	15	4	13	43
	24%	23%	16%	21%	22%
Cultural heritage	10	15	4	17	46
	22%	23%	16%	28%	23%
Total	46	66	25	61	198
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100

The tourism industry of a destination can only survive if there are supporting industries that cater to the needs and requirements of the traveller. The purpose of the visit to the tourist destination plays a very important role in determining the demand that the traveller will have for supporting industries. On analysis of the data collected, the following were inferred.

- In regards to respondents who had travelled to a holiday destination, 9% of the respondents felt that they required proper shopping facilities. 8% of them wanted proper facility for clean and hygienic food. 8% of the respondents felt the need for proper night life, so that they could relax after a hard day of work.7% felt that the most important factor was to have proper shelter at an reasonable price.
- In regards to the respondents who travel to holiday destinations for having a good time, 33% of the respondents felt the need for proper shopping facilities so that they may buy gifts for people back home. 36% of the respondents felt that having good places to eat was important.44% of the respondents were of the opinion that they required to have proper facility to enjoy the night life. and 34% felt the need for proper lodging facilities.
- Considering the people who had gone to the destination for shopping, only 24% of the respondents felt the need for better shopping facilities. 23% of the respondents felt the need for proper food and dining places.16% of the respondents were of the opinion that there had to be better facilities to enjoy the nightlife better. 21% felt the need for better accommodation facilities.
- Among the tourists who travelled to a tourist destination to explore the cultural heritage the area,22% felt the need for proper shopping facilities. 23% of the respondents felt that the food and dining experience need to be improved. 16% of the respondents wanted scope for enjoying the night life.28% wanted proper accommodation facilities.

## 5. Findings

The following are the major findings from this study

- The market for “Special Interest Tourism” based services stands at approximately 63%
- 53% of the respondents have a fixed budget while traveling and would like economic travel solutions that fit their budget. This accounts for a major part of the market for the service.

- Most tourist prefer to go on week end getaways or trips that last more than a week, this means that a specialized trip plan based on the travelers interests is feasible with these type of travelers.
- Maximum demand for “Special Interest Tourism” based services would be during the festive seasons.
- The travelers would be happy to pay for special services that give them additional information about the tourist destination.
  - 84% of the respondents felt that they would like to have information regarding the best place to get a meal. The respondents were of the opinion that they would like to taste the original local cuisine.
  - 79% of the respondents felt the requirement for getting proper prior information regarding the best place to stay that offered good services at reasonable prices.
- The purpose of the visit to a holiday destination plays a huge impact on the way in which the traveler chooses to go about the destination
- Majority of the respondents do a lot of research before going to a tourist destination but would like additional services that help them to visit places that best suit their needs.
- A majority of the respondents prefer to have customized tours, this means that there is a huge potential for “Special Interest Tourism” based services
- There is a huge demand and potential for industries that support travel and tourism.

From the above data it is clear that In the event that tourists visit a place or region, there are various criteria that affect the experience that they earn while on the trip. The main intention of such a service initiative should be to provide travelers complete, up-to-date, and reliable travel guide. While providing such services, it is crucial to know what the traveler aims to achieve during his/her visit to a particular destination. This helps facilitate a better understanding about the traveler’s expectations, meeting the expectations of the traveler being the key to the success of such a venture.

## **6. Conclusion**

Designing a custom travel itinerary planning is a complex task. The entire process requires to identify specific places of tourist interest, to select a few of them according to the customer’s tastes and potential constrains (e.g. time), and to manually to set them in a meaningful visiting order. Travel is not longer the hobby of the rich and famous but it is also accessible to the common middle class. India is a county that caters to such a population of tourists, which is accessible to people from all income and cultural backgrounds. Being such country of diversity, India is perfect for the implementation of Special Interest Tourism Services.

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