

‘Homestays’ Seamless Sensory Marketing

OPEN ACCESS

Manuscript ID:
MGT-2020-08013216

Volume: 8

Issue: 1

Month: July

Year: 2020

P-ISSN: 2321-4643

E-ISSN: 2581-9402

Received: 13.05.2020

Accepted: 15.06.2020

Published: 01.07.2020

Citation:
Gowri Kusuma, P.
“‘Homestays’ Seamless
Sensory Marketing.” *Shanlax
International Journal of
Management*, vol. 8, no. 1,
2020, pp. 28–34.

DOI:
[https://doi.org/10.34293/
management.v8i1.3216](https://doi.org/10.34293/management.v8i1.3216)



This work is licensed
under a Creative Commons
Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0
International License.

P. Gowri Kusuma

Associate Professor, Department of Management

Dr. BR Ambedkar Institute of Management and Technology, Hyderabad, Telangana, India

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8298-2260>

Abstract

Travel is an important mode of rejuvenating oneself. In this era of stress and busy life style, vacation acts as one of the therapy to burnout our stress. While planning for a vacation, one has to take care of a lot of factors. One such factor is where to stay? In this paper, the author has attempted to study the option and availability of ‘Homestays’ as a primary deciding factor in zeroing the destination for a vacation. Further, the study is extended to explore the elements of sensory marketing that drive towards opting for homestays. Data is collected from the Indian tourists who stayed in homestays during their vacation in the last three years. The results reveal how sensory marketing appeals to attract tourists in opting for homestays. The study also advocates that homestays can play a major role in capturing and delivering the values of the great Indian culture to the next generation.

Keywords: Homestays, Sensory marketing, Destination, Vacation, Hospitality management and Tourism industry.

Introduction

Economic activities are needed for the growth and development of any economy. These economic activities vary from time to time, depending on various internal and external factors in the environment. The stakeholders need to sense these changes in the environment and proactively design strategies to pave a platform for economic activities. One such industry that has a high potential for economic activity is the ‘Tourism Industry.’ An area that was considered as a luxury has now become a need for every common man who is either sandwiched in his routine or who is truly a travel lover.

In the current tourism sector, customer experience is fast emerging as a differentiator superseding every other dimension. Creating a seamless experience in this highly competitive tourism sector is very vital, especially for small players like the homestay providers. This seamless experience can be given to customers by adopting sensory marketing. By appealing to multiple senses through sensory marketing, strong associations can be built with customers’ memories and emotions. Sensory experiences at every touchpoint can create a niche in the tourism industry, especially for the small players.

This paper aims at studying the growth of stay options available to the tourists and the factors contributing to opt for ‘Homestays,’ especially in South India. Data is collected from 79 tourists who stayed in ‘Homestays’ in the last three years. It is revealed that sensory marketing has played a prominent role in the growth of ‘Homestays.’ These homestays truly reflect the ideology of ‘Athidi Devo Bhava.’”

Review of Earlier Works

Ifeanyichukwu & Peter (2018), the study was conducted to know the relationship between human senses and customer patronage. It is discovered that the effect on the concept of sensory marketing is inevitable in the success of the firm, and it builds a strong customer patronage. Randiwela (2018), Sensory marketing can be used to enhance customer value to create a competitive edge. Aaradhana Krishna (2016), touch increases consumer evaluations, smell enhances the memory for product descriptions, and affects product evaluations. Shabgou & Daryani (2014), the five senses usually affect up to 21 percent of consumer behavior. Out of sight, smell, hearing, touch and taste, touch, and taste have the maximum impact on consumer behavior—the study conducted by Rossini (2013) focused on the sensory variables that attract the consumers. Apache, a French toy chain for kids, uses sensory variables to improve its sales. Hearing is stimulated by music, which is used exclusively in the circus. A special kind of perfume used in candies attracts the kids to enter the shop. A miniature candy factory is created inside the store to create an impression among the customers. Bright colors and circus music are used to grab the attention and keep the customers engaged.

The research was conducted by Khanna & Mishra (2013), on coca-cola, to know the impact of sensory variables on building brand identity. It was found that taste and visual aspects have a strong impact on building brand identity. Cherulnik (1991), states that the consumer experiences the restaurant food before he/she consumes the food. Architecture and other exterior features act as visual clues to build an experience on the food, which the consumer is about to experience. These visual clues act as differentiators to differentiate the restaurant from others providing similar cuisines. Hoegg & Alba (2007), found the influence of color on taste cues. The research revealed that color affected both identification and flavor perception congruently and incongruently.

A study by Labrecque et al. (2013), examined that the interaction of color and light influenced the purchase intentions and price fairness. It is observed that blue and other cool colors create a relaxed shopping environment. Dixan, Randall & Zednickova (2013) have conducted a cross-sectional

experiment to know how the human brain captures intangible information and uses it as data to arrive at a purchase decision. The study revealed that stimuli could be created with the help of sensory variables and the likes and dislikes of customers. Sukalakamala (2004), explores that the ambiance of the restaurant will impact customer preferences. The study classified customers into three groups. They are: customers searching for authentic cuisine, customers who care about practical concern about authentic cuisines, and finally, the customers who seek novelty in authentic cuisines. It is concluded that the customers are likely to go for an authentic experience rather than visiting a restaurant based on convenience. Soriano (2002) explains that customer satisfaction is the key to encouraging customers to use the service again and again. The primary focus should be on knowing the expectations and the actual performance. If the difference is low, the customer is satisfied, and the chances of loyalty are high. Kotler et al. (1999) have identified that customer satisfaction is the outcome of what the customer thought will happen (expectations) and what the customer think happened (perceptions).

The Rationale for the Study

Domestic tourism has registered a rising trend in the last 13 years. The top five states contributing towards domestic tourism are Tamilnadu 20.9%, Uttar Pradesh 14.2%, Karnataka 10.9%, Andhra Pradesh 10.0%, and Maharashtra 7.2%. (Data has been collected from tourism.gov.in as on 1st June 2019)

From this data, it is evident that there is potential for the tourism sector in India. This sector has a multiplier effect. The increasing growth in hotels, restaurants, travel sites, private and public tour operators, above all the academic waves like separate disciplines for various courses like the Hospitality Management, including Travel and Tourism as a curriculum in professional degrees and diplomas are a real indicator to analyze the need and importance of tourism. Apart from recreation, this sector employs many people at various levels. On par with other service sectors, the tourism sector is also contributing to the GDP of the nation. This sector is still unexplored and has a lot of growth opportunities.

Background of the Study

Sensory marketing is about appealing to the customer's senses. Sensory Marketing deals with various techniques that can influence the customer's senses and their behavior. Various companies like Hershey's (Kisses), Dunkin Donuts (coffee shop in South Korea), and several automobile manufacturers use this sensory marketing to influence consumer's behavior. The five senses - smell, sight, touch, sound (hearing), and taste help in positioning the product.

Professor Aradhana Krishna is the pioneer in Sensory Marketing. Her contribution in the form of books and articles have opened new ways to boost sales. She explains how Sensory Marketing can be used to create subconscious triggers that characterize consumer perception of abstract notions of the product.

Homestay is an actual 'home away from home.' Homestay with a local family is one of the popular options leading to memorable experiences. The concept of homestays is not new to India. In the olden days, when there were no hotels and restaurants, homestays were considered the only option. Now again, it is the trend of these homestays. But the reason behind the prevalence of homestays is not lack of availability of hotels and restaurants. The hidden reason is something different. This paper will take you through the journey of this transformation. Homestays are now resulting in 'Hybrid Services' – a combination of products and services.

Objectives of the Study

The study is aimed at twin objectives. First, to explore the factors influencing the choice of 'homestays' in South India. And the second objective is to know the relationship between gender, age, family size, duration of the vacation, and average spending capability for one day and one night on the choices of opting for homestays. In this process, the significance of sensory marketing as a mechanism to stimulate the choice of opting for homestays is also explored.

Scope of the Study

The primary focus of the study is the choice of 'homestays' in Ooty, Kodaikanal, Allepy, Munnar, and Wayanad. These are the places of natural beauty.

Tourists come here to immerse themselves with nature, and the best way of experiencing nature is homestays that are away from the concrete jungle. Information is collected from the tourists who stayed in homestays in these places during the last three years (i.e., 2016 to 2018). The study (data collection) was conducted from January 2019 to April 2019.

Research Methodology

Population: The population for the study is all the homestays in Karnataka and Kerala.

Sample Design: The Snowball technique was adopted to gather information from the respondents.

Sample Frame: Travelers who stayed in homestays in the last three years.

Sampling Technique: Convenient Sampling. Information about travelers is collected from online tourism portals and through snowball techniques using a reference mechanism. An online questionnaire was sent to tourists. Reminders were sent after fifteen days.

Sampling Unit: Homestays in Coorg, Ooty, Kodaikanal, Allepy, Munnar and Wayanad

Sample Size: Online questionnaires were sent to 150 tourists. Received 113 responses. But, it is found that 22 responses were incomplete, and 12 responses were having the same option for every question. Therefore these 34 responses were not considered for further processing. Finally, 79 questionnaires were considered for the study. Therefore, the response rate is 53%.

Data Collection

Primary Data Collection: Online questionnaires were used to collect primary data. Memorable Tourism Experience Scale has been used to collect the data on seven dimensions: Hedonism, novelty, local culture, refreshment, meaningfulness, involvement, and knowledge. A separate set of questions was designed to capture the data related to Sensory Marketing. Demographic profile on gender, age, family size, duration of the vacation, and average spending on a homestay for one day and one night is collected to meet the objectives.

Secondary data is collected through journals, web resources, and tourism blogs.

Data Analysis

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1: Gender

Gender	No. of Respondents
Male	25
Female	54
Total	79

Table 1 states that out of 79 respondents, 25 are male, and 54 are female.

Table 2: Age (years)

Age (years)	No. of Respondents
Less than 25	0
25-30	2
30-35	9
35-40	25
40-45	19
45-50	20
Above 50	4
Total	79

Table 2 summarizes that the people between the age group of 35-50 are more interested in traveling and exploring nature.

Table 3: Family Size

Family Size	No. of Respondents
2	11
3	35
4	32

Above 4	1
Total	79

Table 3 condenses that the majority of the tourists comprise the family size of 3 and 4 members.

Table 4: Duration of the Vacation

Duration of the Vacation	No. of Respondents
2-3 days	21
4-5 days	45
6-7 days	11
Above 8 days	2
Total	79

Table 4 discloses that the maximum tourists prefer a vacation of 4-5 days.

Table 5: Average Spending on a Homestay for One day and One night

Average Spending on a Homestay	No. of Respondents
Less than 2000 INR	4
2001-3000 INR	15
3001-4000 INR	23
4001- 5000 INR	28
5001-6000 INR	9
Above 6001 INR	0
Total	79

Table 5 gives us inputs that the majority of the tourists are ready to pay 3000-5000 INR per one day and one night stay.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 6: Influence of Demographic Profile on the Choice of 'Homestays.'

Demographics	Test	Chi square Value	df	p value	Remarks
Gender	Pearson Chi-Square	7.677	4	0.104	There is no significant association between gender and choice of 'homestays'
Age	Pearson Chi-Square	3.094	4	0.542	There is no significant association between age and choice of 'homestays'
Family size	Pearson Chi-Square	14.157	4	0.007	There is association between family size and choice of 'homestays'
Duration of the vacation	Pearson Chi-Square	24.537	4	0.000	There is association between duration of stay and choice of 'homestays'
Average spending on homestay for one day and one night	Pearson Chi-Square	1.186	4	0.880	There is no significant association between average spending and choice of 'homestays'

Table 6 elucidates that there is no significant association between gender, age, and average spending with the choice of homestays. There is an association between family size and the duration of the vacation in the choice of homestays. Further study may be done to assess the influence of psychological and cultural factors of the tourists in determining the choice of homestays.

Reliability Statistics

The reliability of the constructs was tested. Cronbach's Alpha score is 0.849, which is an acceptable value.

Table 7: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
.849	19

KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity indicated the data as suitable for the analysis.

Table 8: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.743
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	603.934
	df	171
	Sig.	.000

The dimensionality of the items was tested using principal component analysis. Communalities between measured items loaded on Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) varied from 0.445 to 0.767.

Table 10: Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.334	28.075	28.075	5.334	28.075	28.075	3.317	17.459	17.459
2	2.480	13.055	41.130	2.480	13.055	41.130	2.557	13.458	30.917
3	1.646	8.663	49.793	1.646	8.663	49.793	2.224	11.706	42.623
4	1.479	7.782	57.575	1.479	7.782	57.575	1.876	9.874	52.497
5	1.238	6.518	64.093	1.238	6.518	64.093	1.813	9.543	62.040
6	1.110	5.843	69.937	1.110	5.843	69.937	1.500	7.896	69.937

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Discussion

The location of the homestays is an important criterion for zeroing on the decision to opt for the

Table 9: Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
Thrilled about new experience	1.000	.767
Indulged	1.000	.649
Enjoyed tour experience	1.000	.764
Exciting	1.000	.761
Once in a lifetime	1.000	.657
Unique	1.000	.661
Impressive local people	1.000	.809
Experienced local culture	1.000	.653
Liberating	1.000	.730
Freedom	1.000	.760
Refreshing	1.000	.666
Revitalized	1.000	.755
Did something meaningful	1.000	.725
Learned about myself	1.000	.602
Enjoyed what I wanted to do	1.000	.661
Visited what I wanted	1.000	.726
Exploratory	1.000	.698
Knowledge	1.000	.797
New culture	1.000	.445
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.		

Exploratory Factor analysis extracted six constructs, namely: novelty, local culture, refreshment, meaningfulness, involvement, and knowledge.

homestay. The scenic beauty and aesthetics have influenced the decision of the traveler in many cases. Travelers are of the age between 35-50 years who

were on a family vacation. Spouses and experiences by their peer group were instrumental in deciding for the stay. Travelers are ready to pay on an average of Rs.5, 000/- for one day and one night. The length of the vacation was 4-5days. Travelers enjoyed the location, color, food, music, and scent. The hosts have contributed to experiencing sensory marketing and leaving a long-lasting experience. Travelers also preferred bike and jeep service while opting for the homestay.

Homestays are leading towards niche marketing. There is an immediate need to tap this market to generate wealth and safeguard our perishing culture and heritage.

Findings

Travelers preferred homestays due to various reasons like distinctive accommodations, personalized services, safety, local knowledge, home-cooked food, open kitchen, bike/car hire, library, unique activities (like chocolate making, a trip to the estates), celebrating festivals and getting off the tourist trail. The services offered by the hosts acted as the differentiator among the available homestays. It is found that there is no significant statistical association between gender, age, and ability to pay for the homestay with the choice of opting for homestays. Research also revealed that family size and duration of the vacation are directly associated with the choice of homestays.

Scope of Future Study

- The elements of Sensory Marketing have the potential to promote homestays. Further studies in this segment can result in twin benefits to both the traveler and the host - resulting in a win-win situation. Therefore,
- Future studies can be based on the personality of the travelers and their preferences for homestays.
- A detailed study can be done on various offerings and benefits provided by the host.
- Further studies can be aimed at studying the relationship between the culture and traditions of both the host and the guest.
- Longitudinal studies need to be conducted to strengthen the findings of the study and explore new variables.

- Future studies should be directed towards understanding how homestays can be an integrated element of sustainable tourism.

Implications

This study will be useful for academicians to critically study the concept of 'Homestays'- issues and challenges in their curriculum. Travel and tourism agencies can include the theme of 'Homestays' in their offering. The hosts can have a clear understanding of what influences travelers and how to improve the experience of staying at homestays. They can create a niche for themselves by customizing the services and offerings.

Conclusion

Today's traveling is more of experience-based rather than features and benefits based approach. This study is exploratory and has attempted to understand how homestays can convert tourist experiences into memorable experiences.

Sensory Marketing can turn the target customers into potential and actual customers. The results of this study will help the homestay providers to focus on the elements which trigger the tourists to opt for the homestay.

Travel is more than sightseeing; it is a transformation an individual undergoes and understand the ideas of living. Travel can change of traveler's perspective towards way of life and impart new vigor in their mind. Travel connects with the inner world. India is the land of abundant destinations. Explore the inner world through travel.

References

- Agapito, Dora, et al. *Sensory Marketing and Tourist Experiences*, Spatial and Organizational Dynamics Discussion Papers 2012-5, CIEO-Research Centre for Spatial and Organizational Dynamics, University of Algarve, 2012.
- Amornratkul, N. and Thanadon Pahome. *How Sensory Marketing Applies to the Hotel and Restaurant Industry in Order to Influence Customer's Behaviour in Thailand*, Malardalens Hogskola Eskilstuna Vasteras, 2011.

- Bitner, M.J. "Servicescapes: The Impact of Physical Surroundings on Customers and Employees." *The Journal of Marketing*, vol. 56, no. 2, 1992, pp. 57-71.
- Cherulnik, P.D. "Reading Restaurant Facades: Environmental Inference in Finding the Right Place to Eat." *Environment and Behaviour*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1991, pp. 150-170.
- Dixon, P. and Randall Stone, J.Z. *Engaging Customers through Sensory Branding*, New York, 2013.
- Hoegg, J. and Joseph W. Alba. "Taste Perception: More than Meets the Tongue." *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 33, 2007, pp. 490-498.
- Hornik, J. "Tactile Stimulation and Consumer Response." *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 19, no. 3, 1992, pp. 449-458.
- Hultén, B. "Sensory Marketing: The Multi-Sensory Brand-Experience Concept." *European Business Review*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2011.
- Ifeanyichukwu, C. and Abude Peter. "The Role of Sensory Marketing in Achieving Customer Patronage in Fast Food Restaurants in Awka." *International Research Journal of Management, IT & Social Sciences*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2018, pp. 155-163.
- Kotler, P. et al. *Marketing for Hospitality and Tourism*, Prentice Hall, 1999.
- Krishna, A. "An Integrative Review of Sensory Marketing: Engaging the Senses to Affect Perception, Judgment and Behavior." *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2012, pp. 332-351.
- Krishna, Aradhan, et al. "The Power of Sensory Marketing in Advertising." *Current Opinion in Psychology*, vol. 10, 2016, pp. 142-147.
- Labrecque, L.I. et al. "The Marketers' Prismatic Palette: A Review of Color Research and Future Directions." *Psychology & Marketing*, vol 2, no. 2, 2013, pp. 187-202.
- Milliman, R.E. "The Influence of Background Music on the Behaviour of Restaurant Patrons." *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 13, no. 2, 1986, pp. 286-289.
- Rajain, Pallavi. "Sensory Marketing Aspects: Priming, Expectations, Cross model Correspondences & More." *Vikalpa: The Journal of Decision Makers*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2016, pp. 264-266.
- Randiwela, Pradeep and Alahakoon, Sumedha. "Sensory Marketing to Boost Hospitality Industry in Sri Lanka." *2018 Cambridge Business & Economics Conference*, Cambridge University, 2018.
- Ribeiro Soriano, D. "Customers' Expectations Factors in Restaurants: The Situation in Spain." *International Journal of Quality Reliability and Management*, vol. 19, no. 8/9, 2002, pp. 1055-1067.
- Roballey, T. et al. "The Effect of Music on Eating Behaviour." *Bulletin of the Psychonomic Society*, vol. 23, 1985, pp. 221-222.
- Rossini, G. *Sensorial Experiences in the Store*. ISTAO-International Management Meet, 2013.
- Shabgou, M. and Shahram Mirzaei Daryani. "Towards the Sensory Marketing: Stimulating the Five Senses (Sight, Hearing, Smell, Touch and Taste) and its Impact on Consumer Behavior." *Indian Journal of Fundamental and Applied Life Sciences*, vol. 4, 2014, pp. 573-581.
- Sukalakarnala, P. *Customer Perceptions for Expectations and Acceptance of an Authentic Dining Experience in Thai Restaurants*, Texas Tech University, 2004.
- Sulek, J. and Rhonda L. Hensley. "The Relative Importance of Food, Atmosphere, and Fairness of Wait: The Case of a Full-service Restaurant." *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, vol. 45, no. 3, 2004, pp. 235-247.
- The Science of Sensory Marketing*, Harvard Business Review, 2015, <https://hbr.org/2015/03/the-science-of-sensory-marketing>.

Author Details

P. Gowri Kusuma, Associate Professor, Department of Management, Dr. BR Ambedkar Institute of Management and Technology, Hyderabad, Telangana, India, **Email ID:** kusumajana@yahoo.co.in.