

Image Agent Of India As A Tourist Destination For Japanese Tourists: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

With the spurting growth of new tourist destinations all around the world and the competition for reaching out to travellers, a creation of a unique identity is essential for any destination. Similar to the goods and services industry branding provides a way of creating a unique identity through relationship building and emotional appeal along differentiation on the basis of functional qualities. Through this exploratory research an attempt is made to gauge the brand perception of India as a tourist destination brand. For the present study data was collected with the help of a comprehensive structured questionnaire. Respondents are Japanese tourists who travelled India based on certain brand image that was created with the help of the image agents. While going to the literature review the first image agent of any destination is none other than experience of the same place. Sometimes experiences are soothing and sometimes they are not considered worth remembering. The second image according to the literature review is none other than word of mouth or the past image of the brand world over. The third image agent is taken as information centre from which you get the information about the country. Fourth image agent is none other than celebrities of that country. Last but not the least every country has some special place for which people from around the world travel to that country.

Introduction

Indian tourism has been facing the problem of not getting the expected number of foreign tourists despite extensive marketing efforts. The term 'India' has not been sending the correct signals to travel enthusiasts across the globe. In the view of this author India is regarded less highly than it deserves to be by the outside world. The image it portrays is that of mysticism, political instability, grinding poverty, illiteracy, terrorism, unemployment, communal discord, lack of social services, and corruption (Sarkar, 1997). To top it all, the year 1998 commenced ominously for Indian tourism with the United States official Trade Guide declaring India to be a dangerous destination (Express Travel and Tourism, 1998) and progressed with explosion of nuclear bombs delighting its citizens and incurring the wrath of world community. This type of image plays a crucial role for tourists to avoid visiting India in spite of visiting neighbouring countries. Ahmed and Krohn (1992) have discussed this problem from the perspective of marketing prerequisite for India. Menon (1997), Seth (1996,1997), Travels Trends (1996), Narayanan (1995) and many others have considered India's image to be an obstacle hampering its progress in tourism. This study was undertaken to measure the attitudes of foreign tourists and assess whether the visitors actually perceived these negative images. Although a lot of literature exists on tourists' satisfaction and dissatisfaction hardly any study has been conducted in India. The studies conducted in other countries cannot be applied directly to India because of its entirely different social structure and environment. The purpose of the study was to assess foreign tourists' expectations and satisfaction levels in relation to India as tourist destination and to identify the gaps between the two. Tourists' groups have been compared with each other to identify the gaps between expectation and satisfaction levels.

Gaps Identified

While many studies have been conducted related to India from a complex mix of the tourists travelled in India, but so far, no study has been conducted by taking account of Japanese tourists and their repeated visits to India. To capture that image that they have about India a questionnaire has been created to get their clear view about India that resides in their heart.

Objectives of the study

1. To find out whether they have Visited India in past
2. To find Unique Brand Recall about India as tourist destination
3. To find Indian tourism information source
4. To find Recalling any two Indian celebrities
5. To find Influential Information Provider
6. To find Most Important Tourism Destination in India

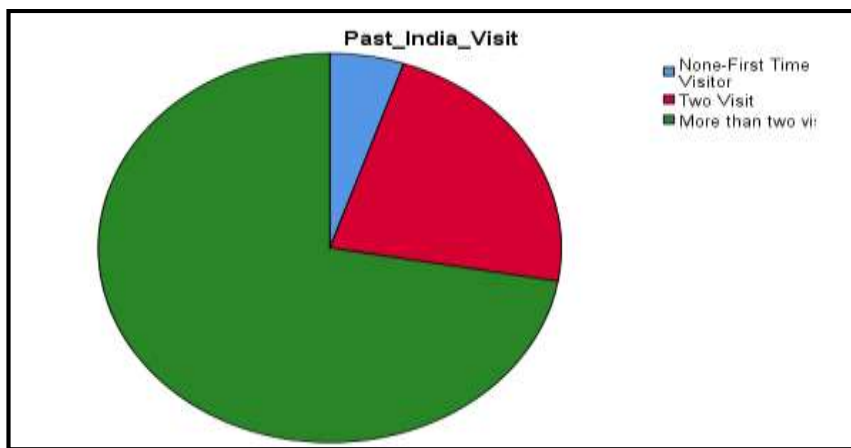
Analysis and Interpretation

Analysis about how Japanese got information about Indian tourism destinations in order to provide a description on image agents for Japanese tourists.

1. Visit to India in past

Statistics		
Past_India_Visit		
N	Valid	851
	Missing	3

Past_India_Visit					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	None-First Time Visitor	44	5.2	5.2	5.2
	Two Visit	192	22.5	22.6	27.7
	More than two visit	615	72.0	72.3	100.0
	Total	851	99.6	100.0	
Missing	System	3	.4		
Total		854	100.0		

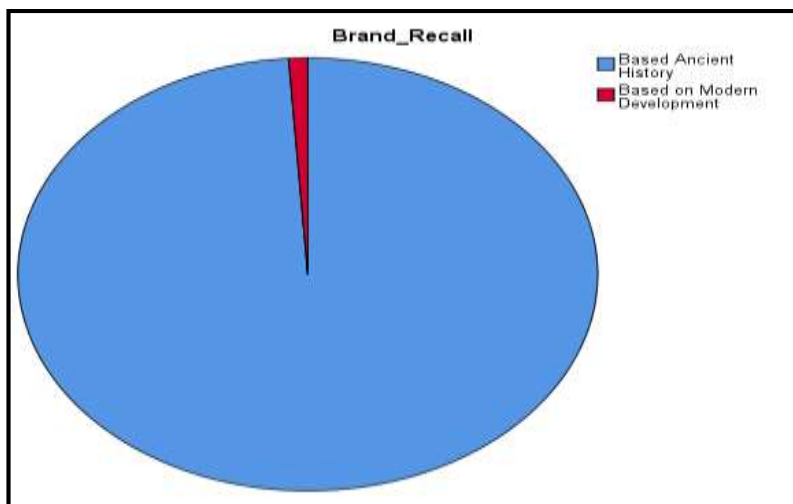


2. Unique Brand Recall about India as tourist destination

Statistics		
Brand_Recall		
N	Valid	849
	Missing	5



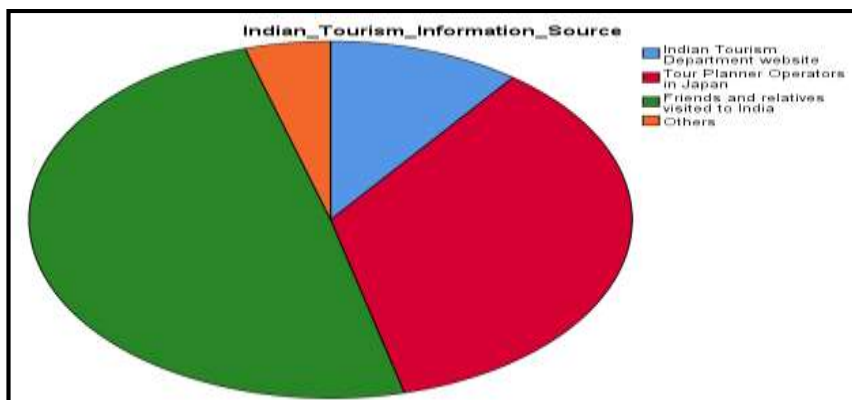
Brand_Recall					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Based Ancient History	840	98.4	98.9	98.9
	Based on Modern Development	9	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	849	99.4	100.0	
Missing	System	5	.6		
Total		854	100.0		



3. Indian tourism information source

Statistics		
Indian_Tourism_Information_Source		
N	Valid	851
	Missing	3

Indian_Tourism_Information_Source					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Indian Tourism Department website	88	10.3	10.3	10.3
	Tour Planner Operators in Japan	304	35.6	35.7	46.1
	Friends and relatives visited to India	420	49.2	49.4	95.4
	Others	39	4.6	4.6	100.0
	Total	851	99.6	100.0	
Missing	System	3	.4		
Total		854	100.0		

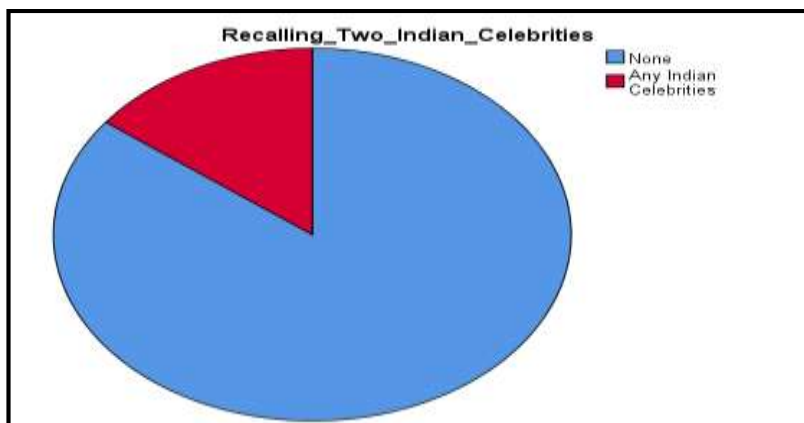


4. Recalling any two Indian celebrities

Statistics		
Recalling_Two_Indian_Celebrities		
N	Valid	851
	Missing	3

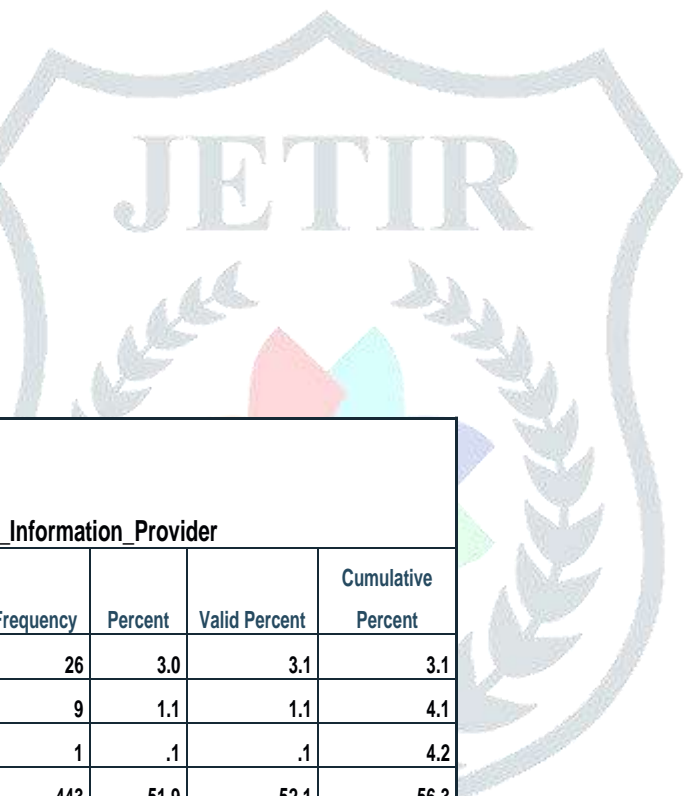


Recalling_Two_Indian_Celebrities					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	None	726	85.0	85.3	85.3
	Any Indian Celebrities	125	14.6	14.7	100.0
	Total	851	99.6	100.0	
Missing	System	3	.4		
Total		854	100.0		

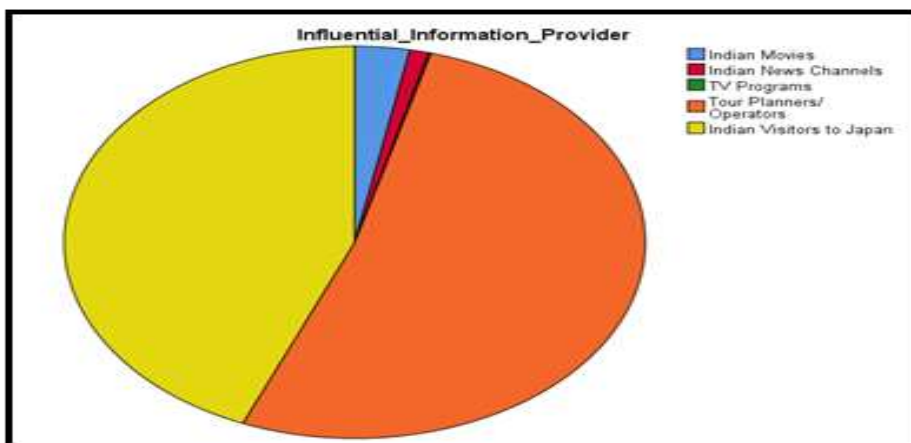


5. Influential Information Provider

Statistics		
Influential_Information_Provider		
N	Valid	851
	Missing	3



Influential_Information_Provider					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Indian Movies	26	3.0	3.1	3.1
	Indian News Channels	9	1.1	1.1	4.1
	TV Programs	1	.1	.1	4.2
	Tour Planners/ Operators	443	51.9	52.1	56.3
	Indian Visitors to Japan	372	43.6	43.7	100.0
	Total	851	99.6	100.0	
Missing	System	3	.4		
Total		854	100.0		

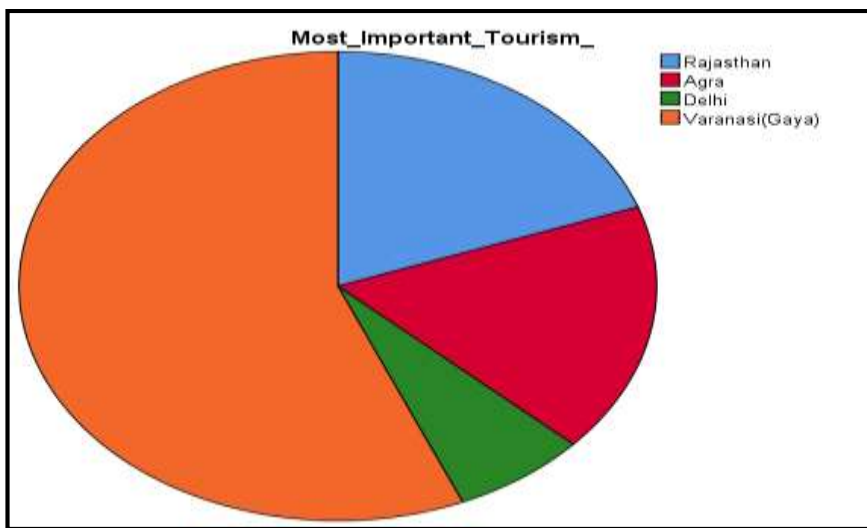


6. Most Important Tourism Destination in India

Statistics		
Most_Important_Tourism_		
N	Valid	851
	Missing	3



Most_Important_Tourism_					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Rajasthan	166	19.4	19.5	19.5
	Agra	147	17.2	17.3	36.8
	Delhi	58	6.8	6.8	43.6
	Varanasi(Gaya)	480	56.2	56.4	100.0
	Total	851	99.6	100.0	
Missing	System	3	.4		
Total		854	100.0		



Conclusion

We can conclude that Japanese tourists are well informed about India. They take India as an ancient country which is connected to lord buddha and that is why whether they do to any place or not but they whenever they travel to India they love to go to Varanasi and from there they love to travel to Bodh Gaya. Most of the information and the image building of India has been done by those Japanese who have travelled India before and because of their recommendation they travel to India. They Consider India as a mystic place.

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