AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE MARKETING COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS IN PROMOTING INDIA AS AN ADVENTURE TOURISM DESTINATION

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ABSTRACT

The world over is growing with challenges in tourism preferences, adventure tourism sector is new and brimming with a huge potential. The tourism product is very different from a traditionally marketed manufactured product, the significance of branding and promotion are increasing day by day. Adventure tourism as a new sector in India deserves more attention in terms of branding and promotion. Branding and promotion starts with awareness building exercise. Awareness is essential in buying decision-making and helps in brand recall, awareness also increases the probability that the brand will be a member of the consideration set. Marketing communication is one of the best way to create awareness of the product within the target segment .The present study have analysed the effect of marketing communication with different media in promoting India as an adventure tourism destination. The outcome of this research paper should enable the adventure tourism marketers & promoters and adventure tourism consultants to take a deeper look into what can be done better with the adventure tourism brand to create a higher level of promotion to attract more tourist.

Introduction

Tourism industry is one of the most dynamic industries which interacts with the tourist in regular basis and tries to cope up with the changes. World-wide the tourist tastes and preferences are changing. Not only in the product market but also in the tourism sector tastes and preferences are also changing which leads to the transformation of travel and tourism marketing dominations and tourism product mix (Poon, 1993; Chon and Singh 1995; Loverseed 1997; Morrison et al. 1996; Ross1999). Nonconventional alternative tourisms are getting its market gradually because of changing international tourist behaviour, growth of technology, cultural exchange, and globalisation impact as well as life style change. Now a day with the changes in tastes and preferences of the international and domestic tourists, the new areas of tourism like eco-tourism as well as adventure tourism have emerged (WTTC/WEFA, 2000). Adventure tourism is one of the fastest growing segments in the travel industry with recent estimates based on consumer surveys indicating phenomenal growth of 17% from 2009 – 2010 (ATTA, 2011). Unlike other forms of recreation, adventure travel offers a unique opportunity in which participants become more experienced and pursue extended scales of "adventurous endeavours" (Ewert & Hollenhorst ,1989) referred to this notion as the "adventure pursuit." Traditional forms of recreation usually involve elements of skill in a specific outdoor setting. It is this "setting" that provides the primary attraction in special interest travel. However, in adventure travel, it is the "activity" that attracts travellers as participants. What distinguishes the adventure travel activities from those of traditional outdoor recreation is "the deliberate pursuit of risk and uncertainty of outcome often referred to as adventure" (Ewert, 1989) where an

individual often faces increasing levels of risk or personal threat (Hall, 1992). Although Ewert (1989) asserted that adventure pursuits can be subsumed under the broader category of outdoor recreation, it is arguable whether such a category is broad enough to cover the overall scope of adventure travel. Moreover, his term "adventure pursuit" should be considered as a sub domain, that is, not at an equivalent level with adventure travel but with adventure activities. Adventure tourism is one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism market. In the past, the tourism industry focused on young, wealthy, and able-bodied adventure tourists; however, this is slowly changing as marketers became increasingly more aware of the active and adventurous baby boomers (Lehto et al., 2008; Pennington-Gray et al., 2001). It has been acknowledged that people over 50 are more adventurous than their parents, and they are often driven to discover new destinations and to try out new and exciting leisure activities (Sellick, 2004). It has been argued that adventure tourism often serve different clientele with different needs, exploring new things, experimentation, cultural exchange, involvement with the nature, enjoying the destinations with activities (Schreyer & White, 1979; Schuett, 1993; Ewert, 1987; Yerkes, 1985; Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1989; Meier, 1978). The different forms of adventure tourism are Mountaineering, Trekking, Camping, Rafting, Mount Biking, Wild Life Safari, Hot Air Ballooning, Bungee Jumping, Parasailing, Paragliding, Diving and Snorkelling (John Swarbrooke et al,2003; Ralf Buckley,2006).

Marketing communication is one of the ways to increase the awareness about the new product among the target group (Kiley 2005; Kotler and Keller 2009). Marketing communications represent the 'voice' of marketers which attempt to inform, persuade and remind consumers – directly or indirectly (Bennett 1995; Kotler and Keller 2009). Marketing communications can play a number of crucial roles, it must do so in an increasingly tough communication environment. The media environment is changing dramatically in recent years (Kaplan Thaler and Koval 2003; Kiley 2005). These dramatic changes have eroded the effectiveness of mass media (O'Leary 2003; Bianco 2004; Pendleton 2004). In this changing marketing environment communication for the new tourism product like Adventure tourist is becoming very complicated job.

One of the researches had been conducted by Ministry of Tourism, Government. of India (March 2007) it is basically research on 605 international tourist sample through Computer-Aided Telephonic Interviews (CATI) and 'Pen & Paper' - the interviews were done by the professional interviewers who went and visited the respondent in–person to gather his / her feedback, this research has also indicated about the types of holiday activities preferred by the Partners segment in India are Sight-seeing 93%,Shopping78%,Cultural events69%,Visiting friends and relatives 69%,Adventure sports 54%,Eco-tourism51%,rellgious purpose or pilgrimage 38%, Medical treatment 27%. The report also talks about awareness levels about India and its tourism resources are as follows- Know a lot about India 25%,have some knowledge about India 65%,don't know anything about India 8%, refused to talk on the issue 2%. So it shows us that India is already known for Sight-seeing (includes heritage and diversity, historical places and monuments, Cities) as well as its shopping opportunities and Cultural events, but adventure and nature based tourism can be another significant valued segment for Indian tourism marketing.(India Tourism Statistics,2007)

It can be seen that India based adventure tourism is liked by prospective tourist, adventure tourism as a new sector deserves more communication and promotion. Current study is concerned in exploring the various angle of marketing communication and promotion of adventure tourism products in India.

Review of Literature

Adventure tourism is one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism market. It has become so popular that approximately 100 million adults have chosen vacations that are classified as soft adventure (Miller, 1997). In the past, the tourism industry has focused on young, wealthy, and able-bodied adventure tourists; however, this is slowly changing as marketers become increasingly more aware of the active and adventurous baby boomers (Lehto et al., 2008; Muller & O'Cass, 2001; Patterson, 2002). Adventure travel is gaining more popularity among today's urbane travellers who want to "experience" a vacation rather than just spend their vacations on sitting in tour bus (Black & Rutledge, 1995; Madrigal, 1995; Tourism Canada, 1995; Vellas, 1995). Adventure tourism over the world has become the new budding sector of tourism. A "geotourism" study undertaken by National Geographic and TIA in 2002 suggests that adventure or "active" travel is 20% of the leisure travel market, between 16 million and 20 million adult travellers. A survey of ATTA (Adventure Tour and Travel Association) members in 2009, all of which are international adventure travel companies, provides an indication of the size of the market. Of the 276 responding companies, a total of 2 million customers each year were carried (ATTA, 2009). This equates to an average of 7,842 customers per company per year, with an average price point of US$2,748.

It has been observed that communication with tourists through various channels is common and effective means to market tourism products and build customer relationships (Poon, 1993).The tourism product is very different from a traditionally marketed manufactured product, the significance of branding and promotion are increasing day by day for this sector (WTO & ETC,2009). Tourism is an information intensive industry (Cox et al. 2009). Marketing communications have become vital for tourism product to promote its band identity and brand image to target audiences (Fakeye& Crompton, 1991). The marketing communication of the adventure tourism market can be challenging task because the industry or the sector is relatively new compared to traditional or mainstream tourism. In adventure tourism excitement, activity and the exploring new thing are appropriately blended with the attractiveness of the destination. The current study is attempts to focus on various aspect related to segmentation of the adventure tourism market in India.

Awareness is essential in buying decision-making as it is important that consumers recall the brand in the context of a given specific product category, awareness increasing the probability that the brand will be a member of the consideration set. In low involvement decision settings, a minimum level of brand awareness may be sufficient for the choice to be final. Awareness can also influence consumer decision making by affecting brand associations that form the brand image (Keller, 1998). As a consequence, brand awareness will affect purchase decision through brand association, and when a product owns a positive brand image, it will help in marketing activities (Keller,1993). Brand awareness refers to the strength of a brand's presence in the consumer's mind" (Aaker, 1996, p.10). It is a measure of the percentage of the target market that is aware of a brand name (Bovee, 1995). Marketers can create awareness among their target audience through repetitive advertising and publicity (Stryfom, 1995). Brand awareness can provide a host of competitive advantages for the marketer. These include the following (Aaker, 1996) Web sites, for example, receive an enormous interest. (Castro et al., 2004) and are concerned with improving their content looking for a suitable rating method. The matter of improving the quality of websites and searching for suitable methods for

assessment is dealt by (Vaughan, Farrow & Tims, 2006).

Various authors agree that marketing promotion mix and IMC includes the elements of advertising with different media, public relation, sales promotion, direct marketing, events and sponsorship, as well as internet / interactive communication (Belch, 2007; O'Guinn et al., 2009; Ouwersloot & Duncan, 2008). Brand awareness means the ability of a consumer can recognize and recall a brand in different situations (Aaker, 1996). Brand awareness consists of brand recall and brand recognition. Brand recall means when consumers see a product category, they can recall a brand name exactly, and brand recognition means consumer have ability to identify a brand when there is a brand cue. That is, consumers can tell a brand correctly if they ever saw or heard it. Moreover, Hoeffler & Keller (2002) indicate that brand awareness can be distinguished from depth and width. Depth means how to make consumers to recall or identify brand easily, and width expresses infers when consumers purchase a product, a brand name will come to their minds at once. If a product owns brand depth and width at the same time, consumers will think of a specific brand when they want to buy a product. That is, the product has higher brand awareness. Moreover, brand name is the most important element in brand awareness (Davis, Golicic & Marquardt, 2008). A brand name offers a symbol that can assist consumers to identify service providers and to predict service results (Herbig & Milewicz, 1993; Janiszewski & Van Osselaer, 2000; Turley & Moore, 1995). Brand awareness plays an important role on purchase intention because consumers tend to buy a familiar and well known product (Keller, 1993; Macdonald & Sharp, 2000). Brand awareness can help consumers to recognize a brand from a product category and make purchase decisions (Percy & Rossiter, 1992). Brand awareness has a great influence on selections and can be a prior consideration based in a product category

(Hoyer & Brown, 1990). Brand awareness also acts as a critical factor in the consumer purchase intention, and certain brands will accumulate in consumers' mind to influence consumer purchase decision. A product with a high level of brand awareness will receive higher consumer preferences because it has higher market share and quality evaluation (Dodds et al., 1991; Grewal et al., 1998).

Aim and the Objective of the Study

The present study would try to analyse the effect of marketing communication with different medias in promoting India as an adventure tourism destination. The study is divided into two parts. In first part, the popular medias have been identified which are being initiated and utilised for promoting Indian tourism. The current study is trying to identify how far those marketing communication with several medias are creating awareness about adventure tourism in India. The second step of the research is trying to explore the connection in between the intention to visit India for adventure tourism purpose and awareness about India as an adventure tourism destination.

Hypothesis and the Conceptual Model

To study the market communication and its effectiveness, several hypotheses have been formulated and those hypotheses are being statistically analysed. The hypotheses are as follows:

H$_1$: Television & digital media Ad. Campaigns (TDMC) will have the positive affects on awareness about India as an adventure tourism destination.

H$_2$: Private tour operator's one–to–one communication initiatives and their PR exercises (PCI) will have the positive effects on Awareness about India as an adventure tourism destination.

H$_3$: Promotion through government tourism offices and promotion centre of India tourism (PGTFPC) will have the positive effects on awareness about India as an adventure tourism destination.

H₄: Web communication /internet marketing and India tourism website (WCITW) will have the positive effects on awareness about India as an adventure tourism destination.

H₅: Promotion through tourism fairs, events & festivals (PTTFEF) will have the positive effects on awareness about India as an adventure tourism destination.

H₆: Communication through social networking (CTSN) will have the positive effects on awareness about India as an adventure tourism destination.

H₇: Awareness about India as an adventure tourism destination will have the positive effects on tourists intention to visit India for adventure tourism purpose.

The aforesaid hypotheses were developed to taste the relationship between awareness about India as an adventure tourism destination and marketing communication initiatives by Indian tourism industry and how it can create the intention of the tourists to visit India for adventure tourism purpose.
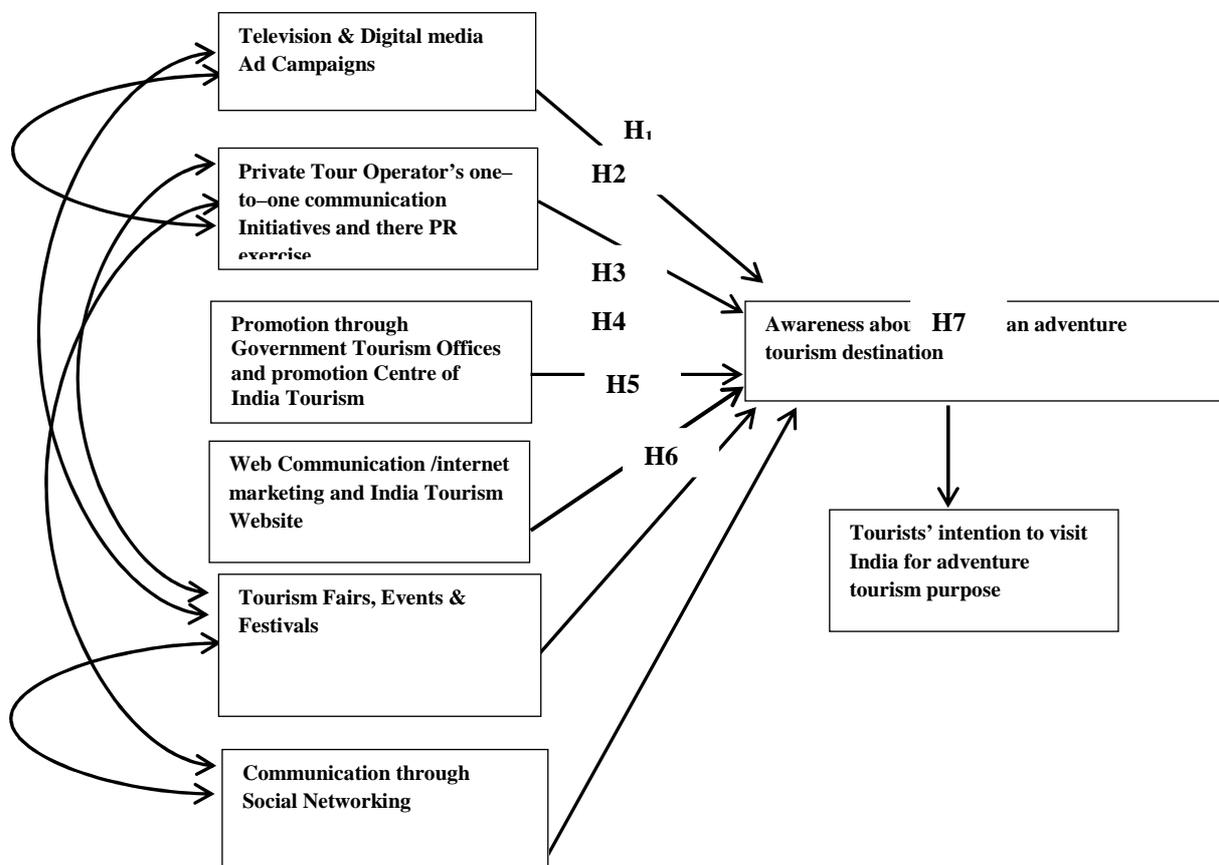

Figure 1: Hypothesis and the conceptual model

Research Methodology

The present study is exploratory cum causal in nature. Both the quantitative and qualitative tools are being used for finding the causes to consequences. The target responder of the study were the foreign as well as domestic tourists in India of age 18 years and above and face to face interviews with structured questionnaire were conducted to collect the data. The purposive sampling techniques have been used. About 314 samples were collected out of which only 258

were utilised and rest were rejected due to incomplete data. Within 258 sample foreign tourist responders were 132 and domestic tourist responders were 126 and that 57% were male responders and 43% were female responders. The mean age group of the sample is 31.8. The study has used structural equation modeling (SEM) to evaluate the hypothesised model (AMOS 20) and for other statistical calculations SPSS_20is being used . The results (Table 2), support the adequacy of the model. In qualitative research two Focus Group Discussions (each group consisting 8 people) and 14 In-Depth Interviews were conducted. Both the combinations of quantitative and qualitative tools have helped the research in justifying the proposition.

Analysis And Findings

Reliability Test

Reliability refers to the stability and consistency of a measure. To test the reliability of a scale is to test the internal consistency with the Cronbach Coefficient as the main index. When we test the reliability of the capability of marketing promotion & communication of Indian tourism sector to promote India as an adventure tourism destination, the Cronbach's Alpha is 0.717 which shows that this scale has an agreeable inside consistency and a good reliability.

Validity Inspection

After testing the reliability of the scale, the validity inspection is followed by using two methods: the convergence validity and the distinguish validity. This paper first makes the preliminary validity inspection by exploratory factor analysis. In this study the value of KMO is 0.738

The concomitant probability given out by the Bartlett inspection is 0.000. The measuring result shows that the data is suitable for factor analysis.

The descriptive data analysis is depicting that media is preferred for Adventure tourism related Communication in India in following ways.

Table 1: Media preference for Communication for Adventure tourism for India

Preferred media of Communication for Adventure tourism for India (at 5 point scale)	Mean score
Information from Family/Friends/ Relatives	4.44
Information from social gathering	4.34
Travel Shows on TV	4.2
Travel Journals	4.05
Newspaper Feature	4.17
News Channels	4.34
Travel Guides / Brochures from Agents or Tour Operators	4.31
Internet	4.27
Social Networking	4.38
Word of mouth communication	4.44

Figure 2: Media preference for Communication for Adventure tourism for India
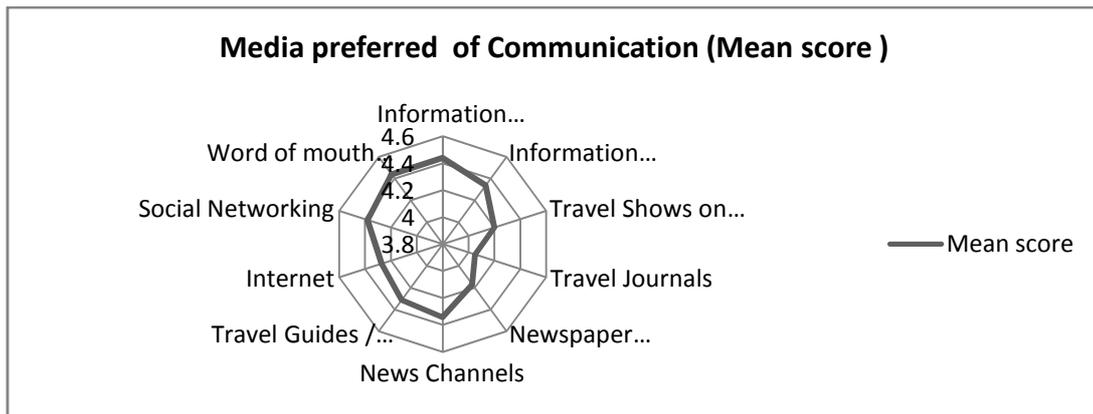
It has been observed that the most preferred media of Communication for adventure tourism for India are Word of mouth communication, Information from Family/Friends/ Relatives, News Channels, Travel Guides / Brochures from Agents or Tour Operators, Information from social gathering, Social Networking, Internet etc. Those media is having huge role in communicating with the target customer.

Hypothesis Testing and Findings

Table 2: Model Summary of Fit Indices

Chi-square/d.f	12.899/6	Less than 3.00	Hair et al.(1995)
CFI	0.995	Greater than 0.90	Hair et al.(1995)
GFI	0.989	Greater than 0.90	Hair et al.(1995)
CMIN/d.f	2.15	Less than 3.00	Arbuckle & Wothke, (1999)
AGFI	0.936	Greater than 0.80	Scott (1994)
RMSEA	0.063	Less than 0.08	Browne and Cudeck (1993)
NFI	0.99	Greater than 0.90	Byrne, B. (2009),Kline, R. B. (2010)

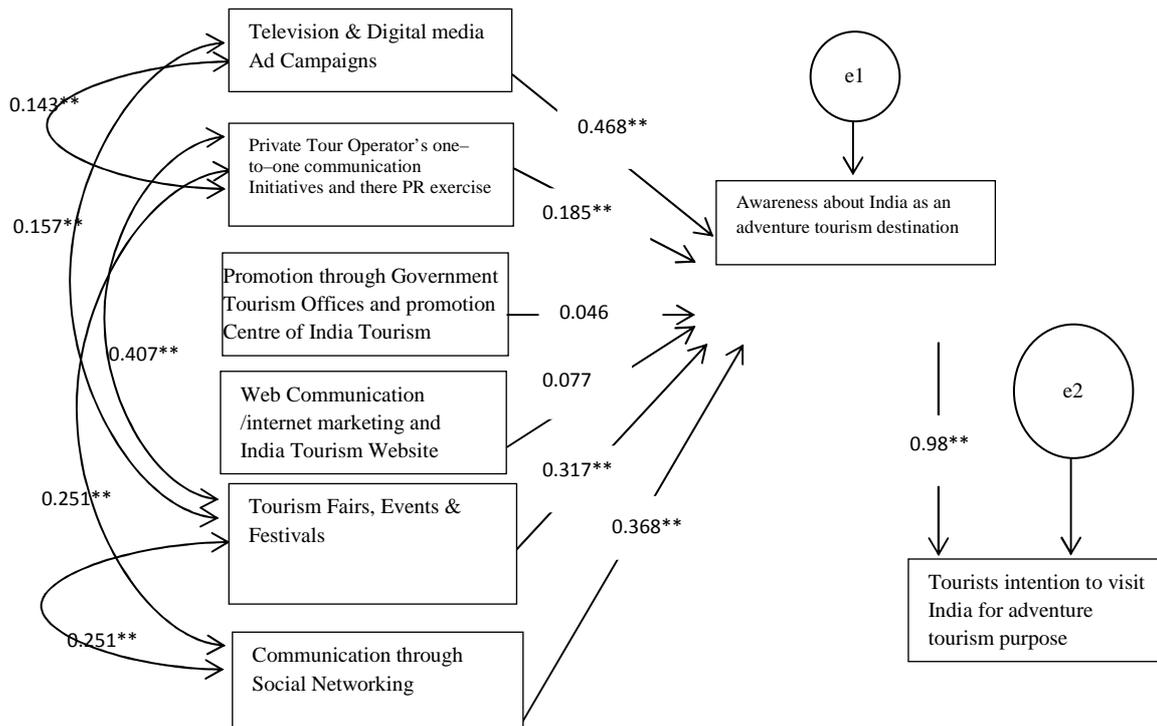Fig. 3: Result of Structural Modeling

Table 3: Summary of Model Parameters

Model Parameters			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Awareness about India as an adventure tourism destination	<---	Television & Digital media Ad Campaigns(TDMC)	0.468	0.057	8.234	***
Awareness about India as an adventure tourism destination	<---	Private Tour Operator's one–to-one communication Initiatives and there PR exercise (PCI)	0.046	0.035	1.306	0.192
Awareness about India as an adventure tourism destination	<---	Promotion through Government Tourism Offices and Promotion Centre of India Tourism(PGTFPC)	0.185	0.048	3.826	***
Awareness about India as an adventure tourism destination	<---	Web Communication /internet marketing and India Tourism Website (WCITW)	0.077	0.053	1.446	0.148
Awareness about India as an adventure tourism destination	<---	Promotion through Tourism Fairs , Events & Festivals (PTTFEF)	0.317	0.039	8.214	***
Awareness about India as an adventure tourism destination	<---	Communication Through Social Networking (CTSN)	0.368	0.04	9.217	***
Tourists intention to visit India for adventure tourism purpose	<---	Awareness about India as an adventure tourism destination	0.98	0.012	84.182	***

Table 4: Summary of Model Parameters

Model Parameters	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Television & Digital media Ad Campaigns	0.38	0.031	12.062	***
Private Tour Operator's one–to-one communication Initiatives and their PR exercise	1.114	0.092	12.062	***
Promotion through Government Tourism Offices and Promotion Centre of India Tourism	0.498	0.041	12.062	***
Web Communication /internet marketing and India Tourism Website	0.403	0.033	12.062	***
Promotion through Tourism Fairs , Events & Festivals	0.979	0.081	12.062	***
Communication through Social Networking	0.818	0.068	12.062	***
e1	0.323	0.027	12.062	***
e2	0.03	0.003	12.062	***

Table 5: Summary of Model Parameters

	Model Parameters		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
TDMC	<-->	CTSN	0.157	0.037	4.258	***
PCI	<-->	CTSN	0.407	0.066	6.196	***
TDMC	<-->	PCI	0.143	0.039	3.662	***
CTSN	<-->	PTTFEF	0.293	0.055	5.306	***
PCI	<-->	PTTFEF	0.251	0.058	4.334	***

Above analysis is providing proper signal about the marketing communication aspect of Indian adventure tourism and how it is influencing the target customer or increasing intention to visit India for adventure tourism purpose. It has been observed that there is a significant impact of Awareness about India as an adventure tourism destination and the Intention to visit India for adventure tourism purpose.

But in between the awareness level of India and the marketing communication components it has been observed that only the component like Television & Digital media Ad Campaigns, tour operator's initiatives, tourism fairs & festivals and the Communication through Social Networking inanities are having significant correlation but other components like promotion through government tourism offices and promotion centre of India tourism, web communication /internet marketing and India tourism website are not having strong

impact in increasing the awareness level about India tourism.

Findings and Discussion on the qualitative research

(Focus Group Discussions and In-Depth Interviews):

The main points which have come up from Focus Group Discussions and In-Depth Interviews are summarised as follows

Adventure tourism is a new sector of tourism which is a rapidly growing sector in tourism industry. The segmentation approach has to be followed in communicating with the target group. The marketing communication is one of the ways which can attract the consumer.

The communication is having vital role in promoting and positioning of this type of tourism to the both international and domestic market. Adventure tourism is a new tourism product and for that reason marketing Communications and promotion have to be more strong and effective. Apart from the traditional form of marketing communication initiatives innovative and modernistic approaches of communication can be explored.

The communication format and Style could follow the recent trend and customer lifestyle change. The word of mouth communication which has evolved as a very important influencer over a period of time also contributes in communication. Tourism marketers can also bring about success stories of adventure tourism social gathering which can also influence the customer. Interactive website now a days also connects well with the prospective customer. Other adventure tourism communication initiative which can be used in modern times is social networking. Adventure tourism marketers must use Facebook and similar other social networking to generate more fan following. Apart from these, other tools like making the customer more involved through virtual

tour, having videos in the internet that can be downloaded and shared by the customer are some of the adventure tourism communication initiatives. Sharing of good experiences about the adventure tourism experience in proper forums involving online and physical forums has a huge impact on tourism product selection by the customer. Events, one-to-one personalized communication through physical interactions, web-based interactive applications where the consumer can download and run the applications and get involved with the adventure tourism. It could also be in the form of interactive campaigns where the adventure tourism marketer allows the existing customer to participate in the campaign execution which creates linkage with the prospect and the adventure tourism of India. Apart from these, other tools like making the customer more involved through virtual tour, having videos in the internet that can be downloaded and shared by the customer are some of the adventure tourism communication initiatives.

Consultation and Implication

From the present study it has been observed that existing marketing communication practices of India is not adequate to promote India as an adventure tourism destination in present market conditions. The tourists are interested in adventure tourism in India but they are not getting proper information. All the components of marketing communication are not functioning effectively to attract the potential adventure tourists. The promotion aspect should be more specific segment wise with the proper media for adventure tourism in India. Certain points have to be kept in mind while going for an effective promotion of India tourism those are more emphasis should be laid upon Social networking and tourism festivals & events for effective one-to-one promotional campaigns. Work hand in hand with private tour operators and their empowerment could be another big issue

because there is a significant impact of private tour operator's initiatives and their one-to-one communication with the prospective tourist and client in building the awareness about India as an adventure tourism destination. The outcome of this research paper should enable the adventure tourism marketers & promoters and adventure tourism consultants to take a look into what can be done better with the adventure tourism product marketing to create a higher level of promotion to attract more tourists. Though the overall model shall stand right but still with different sample size statistical outcomes might get changed.

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