

**Destination Branding - An Innovative Technique In Tourism Sector (With Special Reference To Kerala Tourism)**

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**Abstract**

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Brand is unique name and image that given for a product or service to attract consumers. The core concept of branding is identification and differentiation. Branding helps to identify goods or services of one seller and to differentiate it from those of competitors. Service branding is important due to the unique characteristics of service sector. Tourism is a major source of income in our economy. So it is desirable to take every effort to nourish tourism sector. Destination Branding thus, considered as a new strategy in service sector. It facilitates tourists to identify and distinguish their destination and can plan their journey. The study focused on the influence of place branding in promotion of tourism with special attention towards Kerala Tourism. There are different forms of tourism such as, heritage tourism, medical tourism, ecotourism, monsoon tourism, pilgrimage tourism, water tourism, adventure travel, industrial tourism and so on. Kerala is a blessed land which has high potential for tourism. Kerala brand can claim all the before said kinds of tourism. 30 visitors, randomly selected, were asked questions meant for data collection. Results revealed that majority of respondents have some knowledge about Kerala before they start their journey and they got such information from different Medias. Once they heard *Kerala – God's own country*, it gets stuck in their mind and they remember the same when they plan their holiday destination. This is the basic purpose for which branding meant to.

**Keywords:**

Service branding; Tourism;  
Destination Branding.

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## 1. Introduction

Branding is the management process by which a product or service is branded. It is the process of giving a name, term, symbol, design, distinctive colouring or a combination of these that will help to identify producer [1]. Once, marketers believed that the methods of branding a product and methods of branding services were same. But, branding services is entirely different and difficult than branding products. This is mainly due to the unique characteristics of services [2]. The typical characteristics of services are:

1. Intangibility
2. Inseparability
3. Heterogeneity
4. Perishability

As services are intangible, there is no physical medium to examine. So to create a mass awareness, branding is the best method. Branded services possess competitive ability and can easily penetrate in to human mind. The tourism sector is a large and fast growing tertiary sector able to generate several benefits for the whole economy. In recent years new techniques for promoting tourism have developed. Destination branding is a new phenomenon in tourism sector. 'Incredible India Campaign' launched by Ministry of Tourism, India in the year 2002 with the objective to revamp Brand India as Tourist attraction with an integrated Marketing communication effort, which won Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) gold award for best destination marketing campaign in 2009[3]. Identifying the importance of tourism in Kerala, the government is on the right path in promoting 'Brand Kerala'.

### Statement of Problem

The main objective of branding is identification and differentiating goods or services. Destination branding is the process of giving a name, symbol, logo, word mark or such other graphics that both identifies and differentiates the destination. It conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination. It also serves to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience [4]. The destination branding must be capable of depicting geography, Heritage, Culture and cuisine particular to the region branded.

The unique culture and traditions along with varied demography have made Kerala one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world. Growing at a rate of 13.31%, the tourism industry contribute lions share to the state's economy. Aggressive marketing campaigns launched by the Kerala Tourism Development Corporation—the government agency that oversees tourism prospects of the state—laid the foundation for the growth of the tourism industry. The tag line of *Kerala – God's Own Country* adopted in its tourism promotions and became a global super brand. Kerala is regarded as one of the destinations with the highest brand recall. Kerala is an established destination for both domestic as well as foreign tourists, mainly because of serene backwaters, Ayurvedic treatment and also well known for its beaches, mountain ranges and wildlife sanctuaries. Other popular attractions in the state include hill stations and resorts at Munnar, Wayanad, Nelliampathi, Vagamon and Ponmudi; and national parks at Periyar, Silent valley and Eravikulam. Back water tourism and eco tourism are the backbone of Kerala tourism. To further promote tourism in Kerala, the Grand Kerala Shopping Festival was started by the Government of Kerala in 2007. Since then it has been held every year during the December–January period. The tourism agenda promotes ecologically sustained tourism, which focuses on the local culture, wilderness adventures, volunteering and personal growth of the local population. Efforts are taken to minimise the adverse effects of traditional tourism on the natural environment, and enhance the cultural integrity of local people. Destination logos can create strong brand image, which helps tour planning. Consumers can choose among various destinations, one which satisfies their desire as logos can effectively communicate about target place [5].

### Objective

To know more about destination branding and its influence on promotion of tourism, with special attention on Kerala tourism.

## 2. Research Method

The study was purely based on primary data collected from 30 tourists, who visited Thrissur; Kerala during a period between 14/02/2018 and 30/06/2018 from various countries such as: United Kingdom, Germany, Singapore, Australia and Sri Lanka. And also from other states of India including Utter Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Pre structured questions were used for collecting data, the questions asked as follows:

1. Why you choose Kerala as your holiday destination?
2. Do you have any previous knowledge about Kerala?
3. Do your expectations about Kerala get satisfied?

Selected respondents were asked to give their opinion. Their responses noted and it became the foundation on which the entire study was developed.

### 3. Results and Analysis



**Official Logo of Kerala tourism**

Kerala has vast potentials for tourism development. It is a land of backwaters and beaches. It is famous for its wide cultural heritage, traditional Ayurvedic treatment, marshal arts (kalaripayattu) and rich biodiversity. These are the main attractions of Kerala. Ecotourism, pilgrimage tourism, medical tourism, monsoon tourism, backwater tourism are becoming integral part of tourism sector in Kerala. In Kerala context, Destination branding helps to attract tourist, both from inside and outside the country. Until the early 1980s, Kerala was not a well known destination. Destination branding takes a major role in promoting tourism sector in Kerala. The Kerala tourism logo consists of destination name in green colour, and letter "L" is shown as a coconut tree. Name Kerala underlined by two blue lines, below that Tagline - *God's Own Country* is included. All these directly carry overall specialities of Kerala. The study revealed that tourism can be promoted through careful branding procedure.

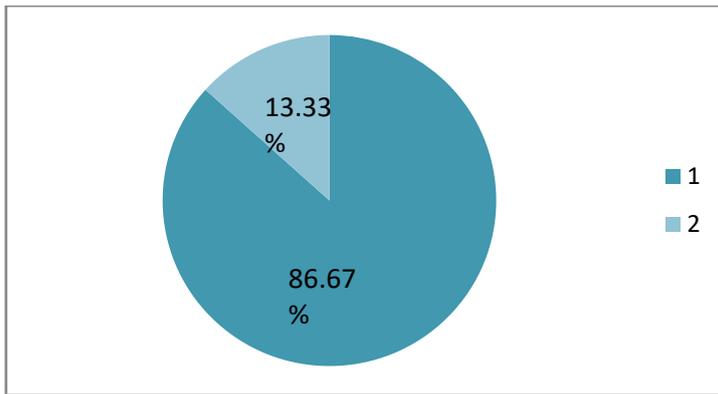
**Table 1: Tabular representation of tourist response**

Respondent	Purpose of visit	Have previous knowledge		Expectation Satisfied	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1	Ayurvedic treatment	✓		✓	
2	Site seeing	✓		✓	
3	Site seeing	✓		✓	
4	Pilgrimage	✓		✓	
5	Site seeing	✓			✓
6	Site seeing	✓		✓	
7	Pilgrimage	✓		✓	
8	Pilgrimage	✓		✓	
9	Suggested by others		✓		✓
10	Site seeing	✓		✓	
11	To see cultural programme	✓		✓	

12	Site seeing	✓			✓
13	Suggested by others		✓	✓	
14	Pilgrimage	✓		✓	
15	Pilgrimage	✓		✓	
16	Ayurvedic treatment	✓		✓	
17	Site seeing	✓			✓
18	Pilgrimage	✓		✓	
19	Pilgrimage	✓		✓	
20	Suggested by others		✓	✓	
21	To see thrissur pooram	✓		✓	
22	To see thrissur pooram	✓		✓	
23	Site seeing	✓			✓
24	Site seeing	✓			✓
25	To see thrissur pooram	✓		✓	
26	Pilgrimage	✓			✓
27	Ayurvedic treatment	✓		✓	
28	Suggested by others		✓		✓
29	To see thrissur pooram	✓		✓	
30	Pilgrimage	✓		✓	
<b>Total</b>		<b>26</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>8</b>

Source – Primary Data

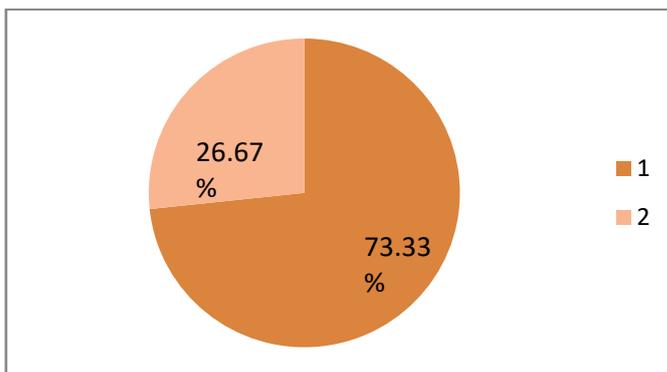
**Figure 1:** Respondents have previous knowledge about Kerala.



Source – Primary Data

The **Figure 1** shows that degree of respondents possesses previous knowledge about their holiday destination. Majority of respondents (86.67%) unanimously said that they had some previous knowledge about Kerala before they came for visit. They collect such information from various Medias such as Television, Internet, Newspapers, Magazines, Broachers and Books about Kerala. 4 respondents said that they didn't possess any previous knowledge and they choose Kerala because their friends suggested the same.

**Figure 2:** Expectation about Kerala get satisfied.



Source – Primary Data

**Figure 2** shows degree to which respondents feel that expectations about Kerala coincide with their real experience. 73.33% (22/30) agreed that they are satisfied. They further agreed that their previous knowledge about Kerala matches with their real experiences and also said that they very much enjoyed this trip. However, 26.67% (8/30) respondents said that they were not satisfied.

#### 4. Conclusion

Destination branding concept has become an increasingly important topic on the ground of vast development of tourism sector. It is an innovative technique which gains wide acceptance everywhere in the world. It helps to create mass awareness about the place desired to promote. Destination Branding must carry the peculiarities of places proposed to promote. Once a place branded properly, it will penetrate into human mind and create strong destination image among mass consumers. They can make outright choice at the time of planning their trip according to their preferences. Moreover, best image creation attracts more tourists which will ultimately contribute to our economy. Thus, it can be conclude that destination branding add extra perks to tourism promotion.

Further research scope – some more research should be needed in this area including more tourists from different countries.

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