

Accommodation preferences, Memorable Tourism Experience and its Outcomes – A Comparative Study on Homestays vs Other Accommodation among Tourists

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Abstract

This study was administered on 507 foreign tourists who visited Kerala, India prior to October 2019 using social media promotion and online survey across UNWTO's six tourism regions. In this study the researcher tries to find out the holiday dimensions such as relaxing, fun, overall enjoyment, thrill, customer delights, uniqueness in the holiday felt among people who preferred different accommodation choices against homestays which are key elements in measuring Memorable Tourism Experiences(MTE). Further the outcomes of MTE namely vivid recall ability, word of mouth and social media share and revisit intentions were checked using correlation and regression. It was found that foreign tourists who prefer homestays have higher revisit intentions and vivid recall ability but poor word of mouth and social media share habits. At the same time the uniqueness of homestays are in very high customer delight and uniqueness they experience.

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Introduction

The world of business has come a long way since marketing became an integral part of ensuring that products and services meet customer needs. In the past a trader try to market his commodities to others. When large volumes started getting produced in the early 20th century, it was manufacturers who used marketing of their goods. Growth in wealth of people, have paved way for Services as an important offering to customers and thus the business started finding new ways of marketing their services. This again changed to managing services when service offerings where considered to be a staged service like a drama(Grove & Fisk, 1992) and customers were perceived to be having service encounter(Walker, 1995). In the 1980's for most of the developed

countries, a significant chunk of their GDP was from services sector and tourism services dominated the contribution to GDP. They identified that managing services require rather a new approach called managing experiences) of customers.

Therefore a number of researches have tried to identify ways to fulfill tourism (Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011; Verhoef et al., 2009, 2009)business in a way to derive better customer satisfaction. Pine & Gilmore's work named experience economy was the most important research that changed the way we manage or market a business namely managing experiences.(Pine et al., 1999)

Measuring experiences have become an important component in assessing the experiences in

consumption by a number of researchers (Campos et al., 2018; Fiore et al., 2007; Hwang & Seo, 2016; Jefferies & Lepp, 2012; McCLINCHEY, 2009; Meimand et al., 2013; Oh et al., 2016; D. Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2012; Robinson & Clifford, 2012; Won Jeong et al., 2009). From 2010 the researchers increasingly started identifying importance of memory of tourists after their holidays in measuring experiences (Agapito et al., 2017; Barnes et al., 2016; Kastenholz et al., 2018; Kim & Jang, 2016a, 2016b; Marschall, 2012, 2015a, 2015b; Tung et al., 2017). Because it was found that if an experience does not stay in the memory of tourists, it does not have a commercial value or customer satisfaction. Therefore many researches started identifying ability to recall (Kim & Jang, 2016b; Park & Santos, 2017; Servidio & Ruffolo, 2016), vividness of their experiences (Manthiou et al., 2014) and loyalty (Ali et al., 2014; Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Cardinale et al., 2016; Cetin & Dincer, 2014; Manthiou et al., 2014; D. L. Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2013; Tanford & Jung, 2017; *The Impact of Memorable Tourism Experiences on Loyalty Behaviors: The Mediating Effects of Destination Image and Satisfaction—Jong-Hyeong Kim, 2018*, n.d.; Yi et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2014). Most of these researches have tried to measure the positive experiences and its effect on loyalty (Barnes et al., 2016; Tsaor et al., 2013, 2013). Simultaneously researches have converged into resultant objectives i.e. to measure word of mouth publicity (Cetin & Dincer, 2014; Tham et al., 2013; Triantafillidou & Siomkos, 2014) and revisit intentions (Assaker & Hallak, 2013; L. Chang, 2013; L. L. Chang et al., n.d.; Meng & Han, 2018; Zhang et al., 2018). Many researches have also succeeded in identifying components or factors that affect experiences. The most prominent study among them was by Pine and Gilmore. They have identified four important elements that lead to experience viz education, entertainment, escapism and aesthetics (Pine et al., 1999).

Memorable tourism experience

Post 2011, many researches have succeeded in identifying and creating valid scales to measure tourism experiences that are memorable. These researchers have derived the measurement tool from different angles. There are researches that start from motivation to travel, experience at site, experience post tour and benefits sought by individual tourists. Otto & Ritchie have measured the quality of the tourism service experience in four dimensions viz hedonics, involvement, peace of mind and recognition (Otto & Ritchie, 1996). Kim (2011) created a scale to measure memorable tourism experience (MTE) with the several components. They are Relaxation, Hedonism, Stimulation, Refreshment, Adverse feelings, Social interaction, Happiness, Meaningfulness, Knowledge, Challenge, Assessment of value, Assessment of service, Unexpected happenings, Personal relevance, Novelty and Participation (Kim et al., 2012a). Though a number of authors have used different terminology to measure the memorable experiential element like Memorable Tourism experience (Kim & Ritchie, 2014), tourists emotional experiences (Hosany et al., 2015), visitor experience (Lee & Smith, 2015), memorable hotel experience (Sthapit, 2018), memorable customer experiences (Bharwani & Jauhari, 2017), Kim's terminology of Memorable Tourism Experience is the most accepted and widely used scale to measure experiences of tourists.

Therefore this research has used the variables of Kim's Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) to measure the experiences of tourists. This research tried to measure the changes in MTE and resulting loyalty and revisit intentions of foreign tourists who visited Kerala based on their accommodation preferences. This is because hospitality or accommodation industry is the most remembered component as per the researches in the past (Liu et al., 2015).

The study measures the experience of foreign tourists since the novelty (uniqueness) element is

more with them compared to the tourist from the local culture(Assaker & Hallak, 2013).

Accommodation preferences and homestays

A study in UttarPradesh, India reveals that tourists' preferences especially accommodation changes with changes in their cultural background(Tripathi & Siddiqui, 2010). Moreover the activity preferences and their trip planning behavior largely involves their choice of desired accommodation and experiences(Rao et al., 1992). In a 2014 study of accommodation preferences of female travelers in Malaysia it was revealed that security and experiences are sought by the respondents(Hao & Har, 2014) and it was found that there is a higher level of preferences for homestays and lodges over hotels. A study in Taiwan of homestays and experiences reveals that Visitors demonstrated a very high level of overall satisfaction with their homestay experience, especially in terms of their ability to evoke feelings of being moved or touched, and of pleasure, excitement and satisfaction. In this study the correlation between experience and brand equity was 0.742, indicating a high degree of positive correlation(Shen & Liu, 2015).In the study by Moscardo recognizes commercial home or homestays as used in bed and breakfast and farmstays as a separate and distinctive form of tourist accommodation(Moscardo, 2009). In this study tourist experience, the host-guest relationship and the nature of tourism development are explored in rural context in Australia. It is found that one of the main reasons for choice of homestays for accommodation is for higher experiences of local culture(Shen & Liu, 2015).in a 2013 study of holiday satisfaction among Japanese travelers who visit Malaysian Homestays using HOLSAT model(Meimand et al., 2013), shows that there is no much gap in experience of tourists compared to their expectation.A research on wine experience of tourists in rural areas suggests ways to create experiential value and provides a tool to help small business operators assess and enhance their

experiential offerings that generate value for tourists(D. Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2012). It was found that customers increasingly look for novelty in experiences in rural tourism.Another study by McCLINCHEY states that it is not enough to look at the experiences of tourists but also important to look at the experiences of hosts in rural homestays to ensure delight(McCLINCHEY, 2009). One of the main reason people prefer rural homestay experiences is the search for authenticity. Many studies(Agyeiwaah et al., 2013; Batra, 2008; McCLINCHEY, 2009) states that novelty (discovery),culture cues, displays, social media or word of mouth publicity adds to bringing in this authenticity.Research on tourists' perceptions of authenticity in the Malaysian homestay experience reveals that the whole experience is in general described as 'authentic' by the guests(Mura, 2015).

A study on 151 international tourists in the Kumasi Metropolis, Ghana who lived in homestay facilities suggest that socio-demographics are influential factors on international tourists' motivations for choosing homestay(Agyeiwaah et al., 2013).This study tried to assess if the socio-demographics have any influence on foreign tourists to Kerala, India.

Another paper examines how homestay operators on Dachangshan Dao, China perceive the tourism impact on their community and how their social demographics influence their perception towards tourism. It was found that economic impacts, the interaction between tourism and other sectors, life quality improvement are the positive results of homestays(Gu & Wong, 2006).

In homestay business, to ensure tourists have a higher level of experience, they should involve and indulge in activities offered. A study of homestays in Malaysia by Jamal et al, establishes highly positive relationships between perceived value, satisfaction, and behavioral intention, and their involvement in activities(Jamal et al., 2011b).A survey of 353 tourists to homestay

villages(Jamal et al., 2011a) results indicate that functional, emotional and experiential factors are important determinants of the perceived value of community-based homestay tourism.

Worldwide literature suggests that tourists in search of better experiences are shifting their accommodation preferences to homestays, lodges and resorts(Flognfeldt & Tjørve, 2013).

Assessing the experience dimensions of homestays

In order to check the Memorable tourism experience of foreign tourists visiting Kerala based on their homestay vs other accommodation preferences MTES (Memorable Tourism Experience Scale)(Kim et al., 2012b) proposed by Kim was used with suitable modifications based on a pilot study and validity and reliability study. Since the data was collected among respondents who uses social media, the social media behavior of respondents was also analyzed.

Methodology

This study was conducted among foreign tourists who have visited Kerala, India in the past. The survey was administered on 507 respondents using online survey. The researcher approached the tourists using social media advertisements and promotions who uses social media tools like Instagram, twitter and facebook. The survey was administered across all the five tourism regions (Africa, Americas, Europe, South Asia, Middle East and East Asia & the Pacific) proposed by UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization) in the months of September and October 2019. Respondents could be identified from 5 tourism regions except Africa region, probably due to the limited number of tourists (1.37%(Tourism, 2018)) from this region to Kerala. 45 Structured questionnaire with 7 point Likert scale was used and an additional 7 questions were used to elicit demographic profile of respondents. Incomplete responses were neglected for the purpose of the research. The data was validated using Cronbach's alpha and an

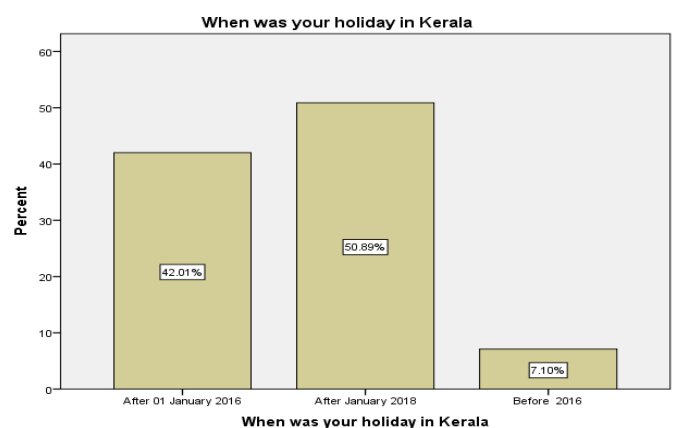
overall 0.785 consistency was achieved among variables.

The following objectives were formalized for the purpose of the study.

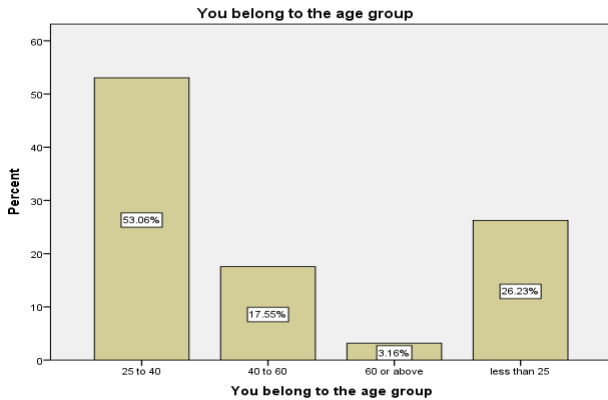
1. To assess the felt relaxation and resulting MTE among tourists who prefer different accommodation services.
2. To measure the level of overall enjoyment and its effect on MTE for tourists who prefer homestays in contrast with other accommodation preferences.
3. To make a comparative analysis of the local culture experience and its effect on MTE and loyalty based on accommodation pattern.
4. To understand the customer delight and uniqueness among respondents who stayed in homestays in comparison to other accommodation options and resulting MTE.
5. To estimate the level of MTE and its effect on loyalty, social media behavior,WOM and revisit intentions.

Data analysis

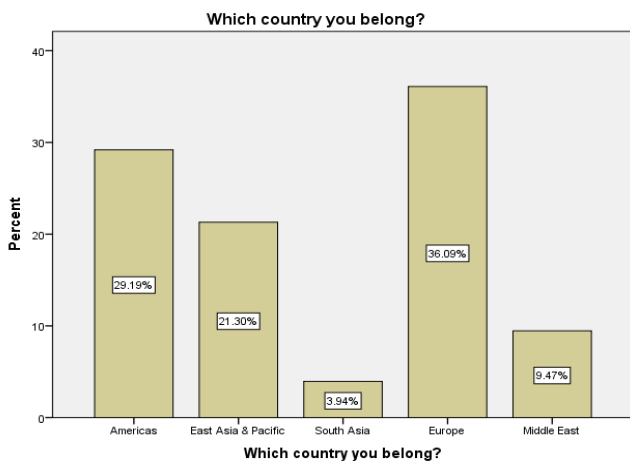
This research has surveyed foreign tourists who visited Kerala, India prior to 2019. All together 507 respondents participated in the study.7.10% of tourists from different tourism regions had their holiday prior to 2016, while 42% had their holiday after 2016 and at the same time most of the respondents (50.69%) had their holiday after 2018 January.



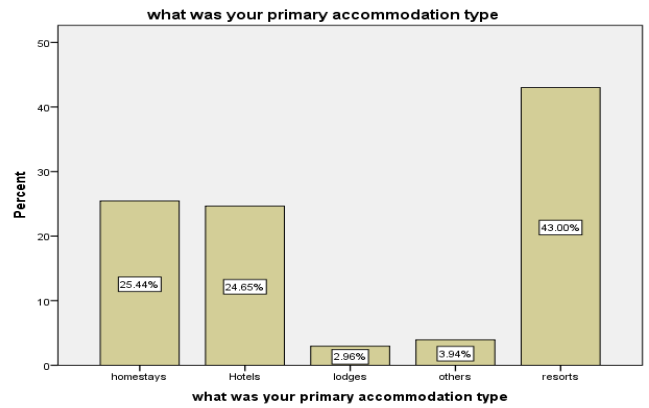
So this research can probably measure the experiences of tourists over different periods of time. The demographic variables was so selected to make possibility of further data possible.



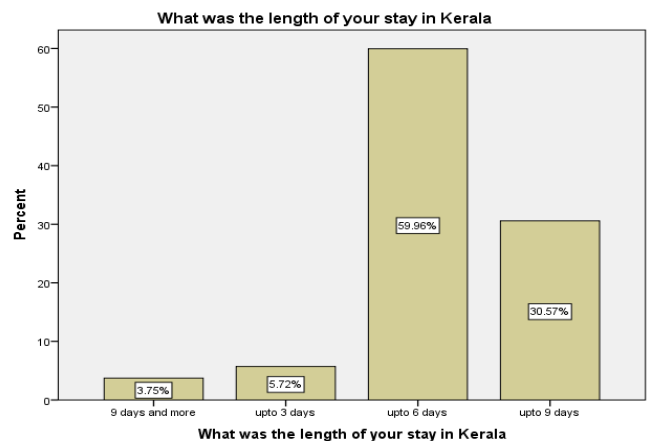
The age group of the respondents show that 80% of them are younger generation upto the agegroup of 40 (53.06 and 26.23%) probably because the respondents were targeted based on their use of social networking sites.



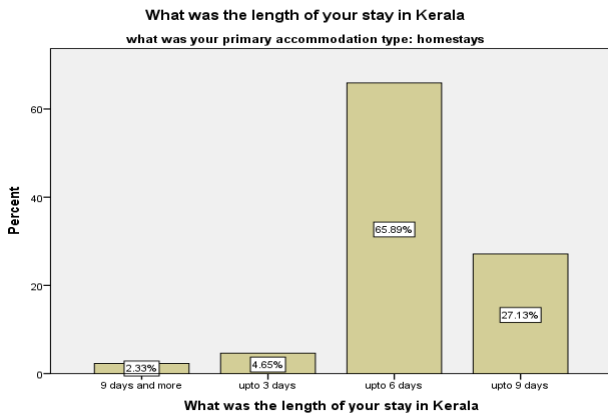
Though the responndents were originally asked to mention the country from where they belong, the data was later recoded based on the six major tourism regions of the world as per UNWTO. European tourism region with Europe, Russian Federation and Egypt has the maximum respondents with 36% of respondents. Americas comprising of Canada, Latin America and USA still continues to be the major source markets for Kerala, India (29.19%).



Since this study is a comparative analysis of accommodation preferences of foreign tourists to Kerala against homestays, unlike traditional belief we find homestays as the second best option for foreign tourists against hotels. Resorts continues to be the No.1 option for tourists, partially because of the credibility and leisure seeking behavior of tourists.



One of the main reasons for increasing number of tourists preferring resorts over homestays could be attributed to the lack of activities that help them to stay for durations or search for better security. 90% of tourists have stayed in Kerala for more than 6 days during their holidays.



Therefore a further verification to this fact was checked to see how many days, tourists to homestays have stayed and it was found that tourists in homestays tend to stay longer number of days (93%) compared to other accommodation types.

Based on the above demographic profile, an attempt was done to find out to measure to what variables are affecting the choice of accommodation preferences during their holiday in Kerala.

Relaxing Holiday

Accommodation type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
resorts	218	6.62	0.589
homestays	129	6.41	0.692
Hotels	125	6.18	0.959
lodges	15	6.07	0.884
others	20	5.95	1.146

And it was found that respondents have the highest mean value for the variable relaxing holiday for resorts with a lower standard deviation compared to other accommodation types while homestays are not far behind with 6.41 mean value but with a higher standard deviation of 0.692. It is to be noted that respondents have rated a lower score of 6.18 for hotels.

		Fun	Thrill	Overall enjoyment
Homestays	Mean	6.23	6.33	6.30
	Std. Deviation	.690	.802	.735
Hotels	Mean	6.07	6.10	6.03
	Std. Deviation	1.009	1.066	.983
Lodges	Mean	6.27	6.13	6.27
	Std. Deviation	.799	.743	.961
Resorts	Mean	6.28	6.48	6.38
	Std. Deviation	.637	.694	.689
Others	Mean	6.05	5.65	5.55
	Std. Deviation	1.234	1.424	1.395

The other variables assessed were fun filled holiday, thrill they felt and overall enjoyment. Homestays tend to have a higher consistency in these three variables though resorts have secured a higher level of perception from respondents. In the variable thrill, homestays have a higher standard deviation. Hotels have shown the highest level of inconsistency in rating across the three variables (1.009, 1.066 and 0.983 which means 68% of the respondents belong to this pattern).

One of the main factor that is expected to contribute to homestays and especially rural tourism is the possibility of a higher exposure and experience with culture and society. As evident in

Cultural and Social Interaction				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Lodges	15	6.4	0.73679	0.543
Homestays	129	6.2558	0.6991	0.489
Resorts	218	6.1101	0.71636	0.513
Hotels	125	6.032	0.84181	0.709
Others	20	5.95	0.99868	0.997

literature, it was found that homestays offer the highest of culture and social interaction after lodges. The highest value for lodges could be because of the type of tourists are backpackers

compared to homestays. The score of the respondents in homestays also shows that there is a higher level of consistency (lower standard deviation and variance) in opinions compared to other accommodation options.

Once the factors of experience were analyzed, the resultant Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) the respondents have in their memory was measured. This MTE scores were further analyzed to see the possible outcome of higher MTE namely vivid recall, Word of mouth reference, social media share and revisit intentions. Because if customers do not recommend and willing to come back, it does not have a commercial value from marketing angle.

Memorable Tourism Experience vs Outcomes									
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance			Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Homestays	MTE	6.5736	.64681	.418	lodges	MTE	6.5138	.70042	.491
	Recommended (WOM)	6.5349	.65008	.423		Recommended (WOM)	6.4541	.85879	.738
	Social Media Share	6.4031	.93974	.883		Social Media Share	6.4495	.69210	.479
	Vividly Recall	6.31	.682	.466		Vividly Recall	6.33	.630	.397
	Revisit intentions	6.29	.762	.581		Revisit intentions	6.30	.756	.572
Hotels	MTE	6.2400	.85572	.732	resorts	MTE	6.5138	.70042	.491
	Recommended (WOM)	6.2000	.80322	.645		Recommended (WOM)	6.4541	.85879	.738
	Social Media Share	6.09	1.085	1.178		Social Media Share	6.4495	.69210	.479
	Vividly Recall	6.0800	1.14723	1.316		Vividly Recall	6.33	.630	.397
	Revisit intentions	6.08	1.036	1.074		Revisit intentions	6.30	.756	.572

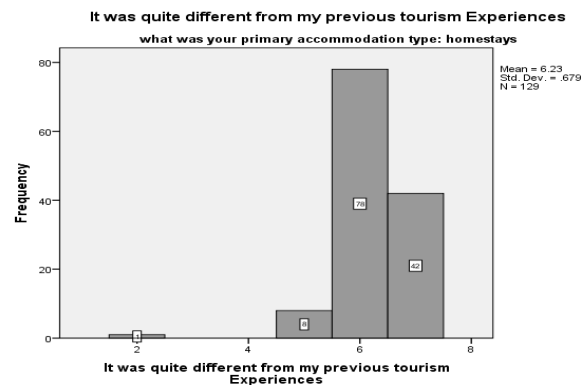
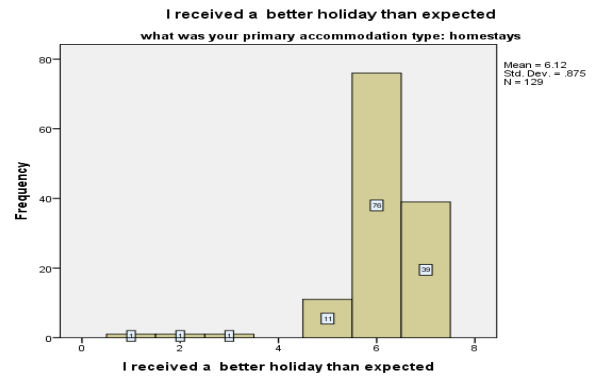
It is found that homestays create the highest Memorable Tourism experience with 6.57 mean value and with a lower standard deviation and variance compared to other accommodation preferences. In the outcome variables accommodation options except hotels have more or less same value. So it is inferred that a higher MTE value is helpful in creating better outcomes from business point of view. Hotels fail to create higher MTE and loyalty from the respondents with higher level of inconsistency in opinions perceived by respondents.

		Tourist Delight	Novelty (Uniqueness)
homestays	Mean	6.12	6.23
	Std. Deviation	0.88	0.68
Hotels	Mean	6.05	6.01
	Std. Deviation	0.88	0.95
Lodges	Mean	5.93	6.27
	Std. Deviation	0.70	0.80
Others	Mean	5.50	5.45
	Std. Deviation	1.40	1.28
Resorts	Mean	6.12	6.14
	Std. Deviation	0.92	0.69

The researcher also tried to find out to what extent foreign tourists found their stay different from the previous experience and also if they could really get more than what they expected (*novelty, Uniqueness*). It was found that homestays are capable of delivering better customer delight and unique experiences compared to other accommodation options.

MTE vs Recall, Loyalty, Social media , WOM						
Accommodation			Experience Recall	Revisit intentions	Social Media Sharing	Word of Mouth
Homestays	Memorable Tourism	Pearson Correlation	.770**	.529**	.408**	.535**

Throughout this analysis, we could find that lodges could give



experiences but these two factors viz delight and uniqueness was the major areas that differentiated homestay experiences from lodges or resorts.

In order to find to what extent these outcome variables do have an influence due to the memorable tourism experience, Pearson correlation was done. It was found that there is a significant positive relationship between MTE and the outcome variables in homestays, hotels and resorts significant at 0.01 level. Accommodation options like lodges and others could not show a similar pattern i.e. either with a lower significant value (lodges for 'word of mouth') or with no significant correlation.

	Experience (MTE)	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
Hotels	Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE)	Pearson Correlation	.751**	.720**	.496**	.689**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
Lodges	Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE)	Pearson Correlation	.828**	.831**	.732**	.546*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.002	.035
Others	Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE)	Pearson Correlation	.589**	.714**	.413	.745**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.000	.070	.000
Resorts	Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE)	Pearson Correlation	.662**	.698**	.334**	.601**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Independent variable: MTE ; Dependent variables: Recall, Loyalty, Social media , WOM

Further to measure the strength of the relationship among each variable linear regression among different types of accommodation choices were analyzed.

MTE vs Vividly recall

<i>Independent variable: MTE</i> <i>Dependent variable: Recall</i>	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Homestays	.770 ^a	.592	.589	.41675
Hotels	.751 ^a	.564	.560	.53260
Lodges	.828 ^a	.686	.662	.42095
Others	.589 ^a	.347	.311	.53030
Resorts	.662 ^a	.438	.436	.51986

The ability to vividly recall is considered to be an important element to measure how well people are able to remember, tell others and also affects their intention to revisit. It is found from the above table R square value that there is a significant impact by MTE and its ability to hold recall value. Lodges have the highest strength with 68.6

followed by homestays (59.2), hotels (56.4), resorts (43.6) and others (34.7). For homestays 1-unit change in the MTE will make a 58.9% change in the ability to vividly recall.

MTE vs Social Media Share

Since this data was collected among tourists who primarily used social networking sites, an attempt was done to find out to what extent people with higher MTE behave on their social media. Linear regression shows that people who stayed in lodges make the most of the social media shares (.536) followed by hotels (.246). Homestays make only 16.7% chances of sharing their experiences on social media for every one unit change in MTE.

Independent variable: MTE Dependent variable: Social media share	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Homestays	.408 ^a	.167	.160	.625
Hotels	.496 ^a	.246	.240	.903
Lodges	.732 ^a	.536	.500	.365
Others	.413 ^a	.171	.125	.568
Resorts	.334 ^a	.112	.108	.595

MTE vs WOM

To what extent the respondents have told others about their tourism experiences in Kerala was assessed to find out the role of MTE in creating better word of mouth references. The regression table below shows that like social media case, respondents have shared more of the experiences in lodges. Homestays make the same impact as in social media for MTE. This may be due to the fact the social media share is often the digital method of WOM.

Independent variable: MTE Dependent variable: Word of mouth	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Homestays	.408 ^a	.167	.160	.625
Hotels	.496 ^a	.246	.240	.903
Lodges	.732 ^a	.536	.500	.365
Others	.413 ^a	.171	.125	.568

Resorts	.334 ^a	.112	.108	.595
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Revisit intentions

Loyalty of the customers are often assessed with the help of the intention of customers to purchase again. Respondents were asked to express their revisit intention and the linear regression values show that homestays make the lowest revisit intention of the guests with a 28% probability. However a unit change in MTE make 69% change in revisit intentions for lodges.

Independent variable: MTE Dependent variable: Revisit intention	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Homestays	.529 ^a	.280	.274	.80052
Hotels	.720 ^a	.518	.514	.79983
Lodges	.831 ^a	.691	.667	.36502
Others	.714 ^a	.510	.483	1.13350
Resorts	.698 ^a	.488	.485	.61622

Results

The findings of the study can be summarized as follows. The top two accommodation giving relaxing holiday to tourists are resorts(6.62) and homestays (6.41).Homestays tend to have a higher consistency with lower standard deviation and high scores (6.23,6.33,6.30) in fun filled holiday, thrill they felt and overall enjoyment though resorts have secured a higher level of perception from respondents. The MTE and experience with local culture and social interaction is 6.4 mean value on a 7 point scale for lodges, 6.25 for homestays and 6.11 for resorts. It was found that homestays are capable of delivering higher level of customer delight and unique experiences compared to other accommodation options.For homestays 1-unit change in the MTE will make a 58.9% change in the ability to vividly recall.Linear regression shows that people who stayed in lodges make the most of the social media shares (.536) followed by hotels (.246).

Homestays make only 16.7% chances of sharing their experiences on social media for every one unit change in MTE. Homestays make the lowest revisit intention of the guests with a 28% probability while on the other hand, a unit change in MTE make 69% change in revisit intentions for lodges.

Conclusions

The research shows that among different variables that make up Memorable Tourism Experiences, homestays have higher values. They are in a promising situation in customer delight and uniqueness (novelty) compared to other accommodation. Still it is found that though customers vividly recall their holidays their revisit intentions and word of mouth or social media share is far behind other form of accommodation preferences. So a further research to explore this phenomenon need to be done in upcoming researches. It is important to increase income in rural areas since the tourism leakage is least with homestays and will result in overall development of the country. Homestays and rural tourism should be able to get repeated visits and referral visits since they are able to create better experiences and delight than other accommodation options.

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