

Motivational Strategies Utilized by Workers in the Tourism Sector of Kottayam District, Kerala

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the motivational approaches employed in the tourism sector of Kottayam District, Kerala, emphasizing their effectiveness and influence on employee satisfaction and productivity. The ever-changing landscape of the tourism industry, marked by irregular work hours and seasonal variations, highlights the importance of successful motivational techniques in boosting employee performance and achieving high customer satisfaction. Primary data gathered from 110 employees using a structured questionnaire, complemented by secondary sources, offers an extensive insight into the demographic traits of the workforce and their motivational inclinations. The results indicate that financial rewards and work-life balance serve as the most significant motivators, as reflected by the highest mean scores among the assessed factors. Other motivational strategies, including recognition, opportunities for career advancement, employee empowerment, and fostering a positive workplace, also play a substantial role, although to a lesser degree. This indicates that a comprehensive approach to employee motivation is essential. By tailoring motivational initiatives to meet the varied needs and expectations of the workforce, employers in the tourism sector can cultivate a more engaged, efficient, and dedicated workforce, which in turn will enhance the growth and success of the industry in the region.

Keywords: Employee Motivation, Tourism Industry, Kottayam District, Kerala, Financial incentives and Work Life Balance.

1. INTRODUCTION

The tourism sector, a crucial and constantly changing field, has a significant impact on the global economy through its extensive range of services that include hospitality, transport, entertainment, and cultural activities. The effectiveness of this industry relies heavily on the human aspect—specifically, the performance and satisfaction of its workforce. Within this context, employee motivation is not just a part of operational management; it's a core element that drives service quality and competitive advantage. In the tourism field, employees are directly involved with customers, placing them at the center of consumer experiences and satisfaction. Whether it's personnel at hotels, guides on tourism excursions, or staff within various travel services, their passion and dedication directly shape the service quality they deliver. Employees who are motivated are more inclined to exceed expectations to guarantee customer satisfaction, epitomizing the service standards that characterize top-tier tourist experiences. Therefore, keeping employee motivation at high levels is essential for creating an environment where service quality flourishes and customer satisfaction is consistently attained. Consequently, fostering employee motivation surpasses basic human resource management; it evolves into a strategic priority that influences every level of the tourism industry, from local businesses to global standing. Effectively engaging with employees, comprehending their needs and goals, and equipping them with the necessary resources and incentives to excel are vital practices that support the ongoing success of tourism enterprises around the world.

2. IMPORTANCE OF MOTIVATION IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

The relevance of this study is highlighted by its analysis of specific motivational elements within the tourism industry in Kottayam District, Kerala. This sector is especially attuned to employee performance due to its direct effects on customer satisfaction and retention. The research identifies and evaluates various motivational factors, including financial rewards, recognition and appreciation, opportunities for career advancement, work-life balance, empowerment and autonomy, and a supportive work atmosphere. By assessing how these factors shape employee

motivation and productivity, the study provides essential insights into how these incentives can be strategically utilized to improve service quality and operational effectiveness in the tourism sector. This research holds particular significance as it presents empirical data on the effectiveness of various motivational approaches in a real-world setting. The findings can assist tourism managers and policymakers in developing customized motivation systems that not only elevate employee morale but also increase their engagement and loyalty. This is vital in a region like Kottayam, where tourism is a key economic driver, and where enhancing employee motivation could lead to better tourist experiences and economic gains. By identifying which factors are most effective in motivating employees, businesses can more effectively direct their resources toward those incentives that deliver the best results in terms of employee productivity and satisfaction, ultimately supporting the sustainable development of the tourism industry in the area.

3. KEY MOTIVATION PRACTICES

3.1 Financial Incentives: Financial rewards are among the most immediate methods to motivate employees in the tourism sector. This may involve bonuses, commissions, and performance-based salaries. For instance, numerous hotels and travel agencies provide commissions to sales staff who achieve or surpass their targets. Additionally, seasonal bonuses or profit-sharing options can be introduced as rewards for employees during busy seasons, thereby motivating them to perform optimally during peak periods.

3.2 Recognition and Rewards: Acknowledging and rewarding employees for their diligent efforts and accomplishments serves as a strong motivating factor. In the tourism sector, this can manifest through programs like employee of the month awards, public acknowledgment during staff meetings, or personalized appreciation notes from management. Such initiatives not only elevate morale but also cultivate a sense of belonging and loyalty among employees.

3.3 Career Advancement Opportunities: Offering career advancement options serves as another effective motivational strategy. Employees within the tourism sector frequently seek personal growth and development, whether through promotions, training programs, or educational initiatives. Employers who commit to their workforce's professional growth are likely to experience heightened job satisfaction and loyalty, along with a more skilled and efficient team.

3.4 Balancing Work and Personal Life: Given the high demands of the tourism sector, promoting a balance between work and personal life is vital. Flexible work schedules, paid leave, and wellness programs can assist employees in managing stress and achieving a healthy work-life balance. Employers that prioritize their staff's well-being are more likely to sustain motivated and productive team members.

3.5 Employee Empowerment and Autonomy: Providing employees with greater autonomy can enhance job satisfaction and motivation. In the tourism sector, this could mean allowing staff to make decisions related to customer service, giving them the tools and authority to resolve issues immediately, or encouraging them to share ideas for operational improvements. When employees feel trusted and appreciated, they are more inclined to take ownership of their responsibilities and pursue excellence.

3.6 Constructive Work Environment: Establishing a supportive work environment is crucial for maintaining employee motivation in the tourism industry. This includes cultivating a culture of teamwork, ensuring transparent communication between management and employees, and fostering an inclusive workplace. A constructive work environment not only boosts employee morale but also leads to superior customer service, as satisfied employees are more likely to create enjoyable experiences for guests.

4. METHODOLOGY

The research utilizes a descriptive design, which is ideal for describing the existing conditions concerning employee motivation. This approach enables the investigation to concentrate on detailing the various factors and practices that influence employee motivation within the tourism industry, specifically in Kottayam District.

To gather the required information, the study employs both primary and secondary sources. Primary data is directly sourced from employees in the tourism sector in Kottayam. This firsthand data is essential as it provides

specific insights into the current motivational practices and their effectiveness as experienced by those affected. In addition to primary data, secondary information is compiled from numerous published sources, such as government reports, industry publications, and prior research studies. This secondary data offers a broader context and aids in aligning the primary data findings with established knowledge and trends within the industry.

A structured questionnaire serves as the main tool for data collection. This questionnaire is thoughtfully crafted to collect a wide range of relevant information about motivation, encompassing both quantitative data from closed-ended questions and qualitative insights from open-ended questions. The structured approach guarantees that the data gathered is consistent and can be effectively analyzed to highlight key trends and patterns in employee motivation.

The study's sample comprises 110 respondents, deemed sufficient to provide a representative snapshot of motivational practices in the tourism sector of Kottayam District. The sample includes a varied group of employees from different roles within the industry, ensuring that the data conveys a diverse array of experiences and viewpoints. Convenience sampling is used as the method for sampling due to its practicality for accessing respondents. Although this non-probability sampling technique may face limitations regarding generalizability, it is suitable for the exploratory nature of this study, allowing for the initial collection of insights into the research issue.

5. FINDINGS

To gain a deeper understanding of the demographic attributes of tourism employees and evaluate their motivation levels in Kottayam District, a comprehensive survey was carried out. The table below offers a thorough profile of tourism employees in Kottayam District, Kerala, showcasing significant demographic features such as age, gender, departmental affiliation, marital status, educational qualifications, and work experience. This information furnishes important insights into the workforce's composition, illustrating the diversity in terms of age, educational background, and job roles within the tourism sector. Grasping these profiles is vital for assessing the effectiveness of motivation strategies and for customizing approaches that meet the distinct needs and characteristics of employees in this field.

Table 1

Profile of Tourism Employees in Kottayam District, Kerala

Category	Sub-category	Frequency	Percent
Age	Below 25 Years	36	32.72
	25–35 Years	42	38.17
	36–45 Years	10	9.09
	46–55 Years	13	11.82
	Above 55 Years	9	8.18
Gender	Male	57	51.82
	Female	53	48.18
Department	Human resource	33	30.00
	Marketing & Sales	42	38.18
	Finance	4	3.64
	Food & drink	22	20.00
	Others	9	8.18
Marital Status	Married	42	38.18
	Unmarried	66	60.00
	Others	2	1.82
Educational Qualification	Schooling	17	15.45

	Higher Secondary Course	35	31.82
	UG Degree	39	35.45
	PG Degree	11	10.00
	Others	8	7.27
Work Experience	Less than 5 years	47	42.73
	5 to 10 years	37	33.64
	11 to 15 years	14	12.73
	16 to 20 years	9	8.18
	Above 20 years	3	2.73
	Less than 5 years	47	42.73

The demographic profile of tourism employees in Kottayam District, Kerala, indicates a varied workforce, with a significant number of individuals in the younger age categories. The majority of workers are in the age brackets of 25–35 years (38.17%) and below 25 years (32.72%), suggesting a predominantly young workforce. A smaller proportion of employees belong to the 36–45 years (9.09%), 46–55 years (11.82%), and above 55 years (8.18%) categories, implying that while the industry appeals to younger individuals, it also accommodates more seasoned workers who enhance the overall diversity of the workforce. The gender ratio is relatively equitable, with males slightly surpassing females, making up 51.82% and 48.18% of the workforce, respectively.

Regarding departmental representation, most employees are situated within the Marketing & Sales division (38.18%), followed by Human Resources (30.00%) and Food & Drink (20.00%). The Finance department accounts for only a small portion of the workforce, at 3.64%, while 8.18% are engaged in various unspecified roles. This distribution highlights the critical role of marketing and sales in Kottayam's tourism sector, likely reflecting the significance of these areas in driving business growth. The notable presence in human resources also indicates an emphasis on effectively managing the workforce, while the inclusion of employees in the food and drink sector underscores the importance of hospitality services in the industry.

In terms of marital status, the largest segment of the workforce is unmarried (60.00%), with married individuals making up 38.18%, and a minor portion (1.82%) categorized as others. This pattern may be linked to the earlier observed younger age demographic, where younger workers tend to be unmarried. As for educational qualifications, a significant part of the workforce possesses undergraduate degrees (35.45%), followed by those who have attained higher secondary education (31.82%). A lesser fraction has completed postgraduate degrees (10.00%), while others have either completed primary school (15.45%) or have different forms of education (7.27%). The data on work experience shows that a considerable number of employees have under 5 years of experience (42.73%), with lower percentages as years of experience increase, suggesting the industry is appealing to newcomers but also retaining a smaller group of experienced personnel. The table below presents an informative breakdown of how various motivational factors influence employees in the tourism sector of Kottayam District, Kerala. Each factor is assessed based on employee agreement and analyzed to comprehend its overall effect on motivation. This evaluation helps identify the motivational practices that are most effective and those that need further improvement to boost employee satisfaction and productivity.

TABLE 2

Factors Motivating Tourism Employees in Kottayam District

Motivating Factor	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Impact Level
Financial Incentives	67	19	18	4	2	4.32	0.99	High
Recognition and Rewards	37	28	29	12	4	3.75	1.14	Moderate

Career Development Opportunities	38	32	23	9	8	3.75	1.22	Moderate
Work-Life Balance	65	18	17	3	7	4.19	1.18	High
Empowerment and Autonomy	37	42	22	7	2	3.95	0.98	Moderate
Positive Work Environment	39	43	17	6	5	3.95	1.07	Moderate

The findings from the study on motivational practices among employees in the tourism sector of Kottayam District, Kerala, emphasize the diverse impact of various motivational factors on employee satisfaction and performance. Financial incentives and work-life balance stand out as the most significant motivators, with mean scores of 4.32 and 4.19, respectively, suggesting a strong level of impact. The high number of 'Strongly Agree' responses for these factors indicates that financial rewards and achieving a work-life balance are essential motivators for the workforce in this area.

Conversely, recognition and rewards, career advancement opportunities, empowerment and autonomy, and a positive work environment demonstrate moderate impact levels with mean scores between 3.75 and 3.95. While these elements are important, they do not exert as much influence as financial incentives or work-life balance. The standard deviations for these factors, varying from 0.98 to 1.22, point to differences in employee viewpoints, implying that although these aspects are appreciated, they may not be regarded as equally significant by all employees. This variation in motivational impact illustrates the need for management in Kottayam's tourism industry to embrace a multifaceted approach to motivating employees. Implementing strategies that enhance not only financial compensation but also recognize and reward achievements, provide career advancement opportunities, promote empowerment, and cultivate a positive work atmosphere can contribute to a more engaged and productive workforce. Employers should take these findings into account when shaping their motivational strategies to effectively meet the varied needs and expectations of their employees.

6. DISCUSSION

The survey carried out with employees of the tourism sector in Kottayam District, Kerala, has produced insightful findings regarding the demographic traits and motivational inclinations of the workforce. The demographic information highlights a young employee population, with a significant portion under the age of 35, which correlates with a high rate of unmarried individuals and a majority of employees holding undergraduate degrees. This youthful demographic is likely to be more energetic and could be more open to new motivational methods and workplace innovations. Evaluating the effect of different motivational factors indicates that financial incentives and work-life balance serve as the strongest motivators, recording the highest mean scores. These results imply that even with a younger workforce, traditional incentives such as monetary rewards and the capacity to sustain a healthy work-life balance are still greatly appreciated.

7. CONCLUSION

The research on motivational practices in the tourism sector of Kottayam District, Kerala, clearly illustrates that financial rewards and work-life balance are crucial for motivating employees, as shown by their high impact levels. However, the considerable variance in responses relating to recognition, career prospects, empowerment, and workplace atmosphere suggests that, while these factors have a moderate impact, they should also be addressed to meet the needs of a diverse workforce. As the industry develops, it is essential for management to embrace a comprehensive approach to employee motivation, blending both traditional and tailored strategies to enhance productivity and create a positive and inclusive work culture. This balanced method will not only improve employee satisfaction but also promote sustainable growth in the tourism sector of the region.

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