Chapter 4
INFORMATION NEEDS AND BEHAVIOUR OF TOURISTS

4.1 Introduction

With the development in economy and social progress, people’s material and cultural standard of living improved. Also their leisure time increased as well and tourism became increasingly popular as a kind of leisure way.1 Tourism is the largest industry in the world by virtue of the economic benefits it has created in capital investment, employment, gross output and revenue. It is also demonstrated as valuable for the socio-economic development of the people and conservation of heritage and environment. In India, 11% of the global GDP comes from tourism and 6% of the total populations are employed in this industry. Tourism is a multi-faceted phenomenon which involves temporary movement of people to destination outside their normal place of residence and activities undertaken during the stay in the destination. It composed of three basic elements:2

1. Dynamic element: Travel to a selected destination or destinations;
2. Static element: Staying in the destination;
3. Consequential element: Effects on the economic, physical and social systems with which the tourist directly or indirectly contact as the result of the above two elements.

Tourists travel for a number of reasons.3 These consist of push factors, such as the desire to escape from the daily living and working environment, pollution and traffic congestion of cities, etc., and pull factors, such as attraction of the destination, visiting friends and relatives, to play or watch sports, etc. The motivations for travel are far more complex and operate at a general level. Motivations of travellers visiting places for business purposes, health reasons, or to see relatives may be largely predetermined. In such circumstances, choice of destination may be beyond the control of the traveller and obligation to the destination may be weak.

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<th>Motivational category</th>
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<td>Physical motivations</td>
<td>- Refreshment of body and mind</td>
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<td>- Health purposes</td>
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<td>- Participation in sports</td>
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- Pleasure, fun, excitement, romance and entertainment
- Shopping

Cultural motivations
- Curiosity about foreign countries, people and places
- Interest in arts, music, architecture, folklore, etc.
- Interest in historical places, monuments, etc.
- Experiencing specific international and national events like Olympic Games, football matches, etc.

Personal motivations
- Visiting relatives and friends
- Meeting new people and seeking new friendships
- Seeking new and different experiences in a different environment
- Searching a change from one’s own permanent social environment
- Personal excitement of travelling
- Pilgrimage
- Travelling for travel’s sake

Prestige and status motivations
- Pursuit of hobbies
- Education or learning
- Seeking new business contacts and professional goals
- Attend conferences and meetings
- Ego enhancement and sensual pleasures
- Fashion

4.2 Awareness of Tourists

Potential tourists may be motivated to travel but, unless they are informed of what resources, facilities and means are available, they may be unaware of the means of meeting their requirements. Awareness of the destinations, facilities and services depends upon the availability of information and the credibility of its source. A tourist receives information through formal and informal sources.\(^4\) Formal sources include magazines, travel brochures, advertisement on radio and television, and discussions with travel intermediaries. Informal sources refer to comments obtained from relatives, friends or other travellers. Travel information received from relatives and friends is considered
as the most trustworthy and informative, but is ranked lowest in accuracy. Information obtained from guide books, government tourist departments and travel intermediaries ranked highly both in terms of quality and credibility.

4.3 Importance of Information in Tourism

Tourism is an information intensive business. The characteristics of the tourism product make it high risk, requiring timely and accurate information relevant to customers’ needs.\(^5\) Tourism is a confidence good and therefore the choice of destination depends on the information available and not the actual destination itself.\(^6\) A trip has three stages: selection of destination(s), planning of the trip and the actual trip. Tourists need information in all the three stages. Before going for a trip, tourist has to choose a destination between different options. He has to plan and prepare for the trip by arranging his transportation, accommodation and other prerequisites at the destination. He increasingly needs information during the trip also. As the trend towards independent travel increases, the demand for information also increases. Time has become a scarce commodity in the modern societies and the people want to utilise their precious touring time effectively. They don’t like to spoil their trip by acquiring wrong or insufficient information.

The distinctiveness of tourism also gives importance to information. A tourism product is intangible and cannot be pre-tested, because it is normally purchased well in advance, away from the place of its consumption and it cannot be exhibited or verified at the point of sale. Also, there is no money back guarantee, if the trip does not meet up to their expectations, and the products cannot be returned or refunded after purchase. So, well timed, accurate and reliable information is essential for a tourist to make appropriate choices and decisions. In the context of greater degree of apparent risk in pre-purchase through e-commerce, greater is the tourist’s need to seek information about the product. Tourists usually take extensive searching for intangible tourism information than tangible products. For consuming tourism products and services, people use sources different from those used for purchasing tangible physical merchandises.

The other apparent characteristic of tourism which emphasises the importance of information is that, tourism product cannot be bought separately. Because of the never ending permutations and combinations of alternative transportation modes, travel routes,
time schedules and lodging options, tourists need pertinent information for taking prudent decision. In addition to the intangibility and composite nature of the tourism, characteristics like, unstable demand, perishable nature, influence of psychology of consumers, fixed supply in short term, absence of ownership to customers, heterogeneousness, risk factors, etc. also give importance to information in tourism. Tourists reduce their concern about the ambiguity of tourism products by obtaining more information, and for understanding the quality of tourism products and services, information searching is the most important step.

Tourists generally need two types of information7 - static and dynamic. “Static information is the fundamental information about a destination or attraction, which do not change rapidly over time. It includes details about location, attraction features, climate, history, facilities available, etc. Dynamic information includes information about availability of transportation, accommodation and eating facilities its tariff rates, etc., which is considered as dynamic as they can change very frequently”.

The fundamental requirements of information by tourists can be categorised as:

- Geographical information (location, landscape, climate, etc.);
- Information on transport facilities (air, water, rail and road transportation to the travel destination and public transportation services like bus, taxi, etc. in the destination and their accessibilities);
- Information on eating facilities (restaurants, bars, cafes, etc.) including specific restrictions like vegetarian food, accommodation facilities (hotels, guest houses, etc.) and shopping facilities at the destination and their accessibilities;
- Information on tourist attractions (museums, galleries, theme parks, gardens, zoos, historical sites, beaches, etc.) at the destination and their accessibilities and timing;
- Information on weather condition of the destination and seasons of visit and other unique features like rain, snow fall, etc.;
- Social customs, culture and other special features of the destination;
Activities and entertainment facilities available in the destination and their quality and standard rate;

Information on formalities of entry and exit in the destination.

In tourists’ destination selection, pre-purchase information sources have an important role. Lot of studies and researches were conducted to examine various sources used by travellers for getting pre-purchase information for planning a trip. Travellers vary in their response to different types of sources of information, such as advertisement, brochures, websites, etc. Tourists use multiple sources of information for getting pre-purchase information, and when they are unavailable, unreachable or seemingly unreliable, they depend on sources like friends and relatives, destination specific literature, etc.

4.4 Genesis of Tourist Information

As noted elsewhere, tourism is an information intensive activity. Tourism related information is being largely generated by both government and private agencies. Tourists can acquire information from a wide array of sources. They can directly access either tourism product and service suppliers or tourism intermediaries like travel agents and tour operators for the required information. Travel agents enable a user to search and reserve a product or service and at the same time act as an advisor for relieving the customers much of the burden of searching suitable products. The expertise and knowledge of the travel agents can be effectively utilised by the customers for formulating appropriate packages for a trip. Tour operators act as consolidators by amalgamating different travel components like transportation, accommodation, food, entertainment, etc. for marketing them in suitable format for different categories of customers. Some government level tourism organisations also act as intermediaries for distributing tourism information in a region. The foremost function of each of these intermediaries is to facilitate the purchasing process through information exchange.

Private agencies have greater role in the tourism development and promotion of tourism in the country, by effectively participating and cooperating with different government agencies and projects. Private agencies in the tourism sector can be categorised into two based on their nature of duties, 1) travel agencies and tour operators and 2) hotel Industry. Both these groups are distributing lot of information in the form of
advertisement for helping tourists. Advertisements are important sources for getting information about a tourist destination, its attractions, tour packages, tariff rates, off season discounts, accommodation facilities, transportation, etc. Most of these write ups are prepared by reputed travel and tourism experts and content writers, so it is treated as a reliable and up to date source of information.

The tourism suppliers and intermediaries provide principal information about a destination or tourism product in the form of printed brochures or flyers, and through listings published in local or regional tourist guides, which are static information in nature. But for booking a ticket or lodging facility in destination, dynamic information like availability of accommodation, conveyance facilities, etc. and their rates, which change frequently, is needed.

4.4.1 Government Organisations

Government organisations like department of tourism, tourism development corporations, different councils for promotion of tourism, etc., both of central and state governments are collecting, organising and disseminating information scientifically and technically, on tourism destinations, attractions, available services and facilities, statistics, proposals for tourism development, etc. This information is made available free of cost in attractively printed booklets or in digital form through respective websites, which broadly focus upon providing:

- Reliable and up to date information about destinations and attractions;
- Availability of hotels, restaurants and other services;
- Maps and tourist guides for showing the sites and their accessibility;
- Link to geographical information systems;
- Procedural formalities for international tourists, permits for entry in restricted areas, etc.;
- Special products like heritage tourism, eco tourism etc.;
- Profiles of tourists and statistical data; and
- Newsletters, bulletin board facilities, etc.

4.4.2 Travel Agencies and Tour Operators

Travel agencies are principal intermediaries in the travel distribution chain for the retailing of reservation and ticketing services. Tour operators manage a tour by suitably
re-packing it according to the necessity of the customers. In the early days, services of tour operators were ancillary in nature, but due to the changed government policies, they can now effectively participate in the tourism development of the country by promoting and managing tourism. For the benefit of customers, both travel agencies and tour operators are generating lot of information in the form of advertisements, flyers, etc. in the categories of

- Tour packages based on a particular location, season, festival or theme, on which the firm doing business;
- Boarding and lodging;
- Transportation;
- Special interest tour packages like wild life tourism, trekking, safari, etc.;
- Shopping; and
- Combination of two or more of the above items.

4.4.3 Hotel Industry

In India, hotel industry has undergone a period of rapid growth and plays a prominent role in the economic development of the country. Many hotels and resorts offer different types of tour packages to the prospective customers. For this, they are generating lot of information in the following fields:

- Historical importance and attractions of the region;
- Tariff rates of food, accommodation and other available services;
- Information on transport facilities, distance from air port, sea port, railway station and bus station;
- Accessibility map of the destination;
- Climate/weather, air quality, etc. of the destination;
- Festivals/events and nightlife at the destination and their accessibility;
- Exceptional attractions of the area;
- Shopping and entertainment facilities of the region; and
- Photographs.

4.5 Information Needs

According to Rowely and Turner “need is generally conceived as describing what an individual ought to have, for his work, edification, recreation, etc”. An information
need is “a recognition that one’s knowledge is inadequate to satisfy a goal”. The need for information is a realistic situation where, an inseparable interconnection exists between information and need. Because there exist a need, information is originated and transmitted. Information is a commodity and at the same time a process. For making the information useful, it is to be put into action, by way of acquiring, transmitting, processing, utilising and transferring.

For promoting the use of information, needs of the users are to be measured. In the era of information explosion, information needs of users are varied and multidimensional, because the users may belong to different interest groups and from different environment. Also their viewpoints towards information, intention for using the information, priorities, etc. are varied. Everybody needs information of one kind or another at various situations. The information is increasing day by day in its volume, variety and means of access and also the complexities in human life. Any piece of information, recorded or unrecorded, that one may need in connection with his study, teaching and research activities may be called as information need. Information need is a condition in which certain information contributes to the achievement of a genuine information purpose. Information need connects information with an information purpose.

Information needs are of three types: 1) need for updating the current progress of one’s field; 2) need for a specific piece of information; and 3) an exhaustive need for almost all the literature on a given subject. The need for information is normally expressed by the user, but some time the user cannot express his need. Similarly some information needs are immediate or urgent in nature, while some others are future or forthcoming needs.

4.5.1 Tourists’ Information Needs

For the last fifty years tourism industry has been growing exceptionally. As day by day, more areas in different parts of the world are developing into tourist destinations, disposable income and leisure time of people have raised, transportation systems and communication networks have advanced, and tourists have the means to choose their products and services from a large variety. Each tourism product and service has different images, and the destination images relate to information perceived by the traveller.
Tourism is information intensive and tourists need information before, during and sometimes after their trip.\textsuperscript{12} The building up of destination image creates different information needs for tourists. Information is needed for selecting a destination and for taking decisions during the trip, like selecting accommodation, restaurant, local transportation, etc. Tourists have more concerns about the risk factor of the trip than its efficiency in the earlier travel planning stage, and the concern will be transposed at later stages of planning.\textsuperscript{13}

Information needs of tourists are more complex in nature, when compared to other categories. They need information for different purposes relating to travel, ranging from selection of destination and itinerary planning to needs arising spontaneously during the travel in unexpected situations, thousands of miles away from the home town, involving unknown language, culture and environment. The needed information is highly dynamic in nature, like weather condition, transportation schedule, accommodation facilities, cost, etc., which can change very frequently.

Information needs of the tourists vary with the purpose of visit, and to be satisfied at the earliest possible time. At the same time most of the users cannot express their demands properly and clearly. Understanding of consumer information needs is the key to understanding consumer behaviour.\textsuperscript{14} Vogt and Fesenmaier enunciate consumer information needs by four elements: product knowledge, uncertainty reduction, efficiency, and utility.\textsuperscript{15} Product knowledge is the expansion of the existing knowledge of the tourists with respect to a travel product. Uncertainty reduction element of information is useful to a tourist for reducing prior to product decision making uncertainties. Efficiency element drives the tourist to seek information that helps to cutting down the expenses. The utility information needs ensures the relative benefits to the cost.

\textbf{4.6 Tourist Information Search}

Information search can be defined as “the motivated activation of knowledge stored in memory, or acquisition of information from the environment”.\textsuperscript{16} So information search may be either internal search or external search. Internal information search is the retrieval of knowledge from one’s own memory, and in external search, information is collected from market place.
Information is needed for each product and service and depending upon the nature of product or service, the types of information sources used will also be changed. Tourists also need information and they use different kinds of sources, which can be classified into many. According to Chen and Gursoy travellers depend on four categories of external information sources for planning their trip: family and friends, literature on the destination, media, and travel consultants. Personal experience of the tourists, influence of travel agents, advertising and publicity, word of mouth, travel literature, brochures, etc. influence tourists in selecting a tourist destination. Travel information search involves more information sources than in the case of other products.

4.7 Information Behaviour

Information behaviour is a major branch of study in library and information science. It is being described as how people need, seek, manage, get and use information in different contexts. It is the totality of the process of seeking, acquiring, storing and disseminating information. Human behaviour in relation to information sources and channels -including both active and passive-, information seeking, and information use is called information behaviour. It is the purposive seeking for information to satisfy some goal, which consists of all the interactions with a system. For getting information, the person may interact with manual information systems like library or reference book, or with computer based systems like databases, World Wide Web, etc. The interaction with a system, involves mental acts, for judging the relevance of data or information retrieved.

The information behaviour may refer to information use behaviour as well as information seeking behaviour. Information use behaviour is the assimilation of the perceived information into the person’s existing knowledge base by way of physical and mental activities, while the information seeking behaviour is the conscious effort to acquire information in response to a need or gap in the knowledge of a person, from existing resources in both human and technological contexts. Information behaviour encompasses both intentional information seeking and unintentional information encounters.

4.7.1 Tourist Information Behaviour

Many studies have conducted for understanding the travellers' information behaviour, in the context of the emergence of a large number and variety of travel
destinations and travel products. Understanding the tourists’ information behaviour is significant for policy makers for developing strategies for the progress of tourism industry and services. Snepenger & Snepenger argue that tourists may require little or no external information search for routine trips in their native place, because they utilise the already acquired information, whereas overseas vacations may require considerable external information search.19 Travellers may search for external information even before a routine trip to visit family or friends because of a change in route or some side trips.20 “When the internal information search proves inadequate, the travellers may decide to collect additional information from external sources. Travellers tend to use four broad types of external information sources for planning a trip. These are 1) family and friends, 2) destination specific literature, 3) media, and 4) travel consultants”.21 In a study Woodside and Ronkainen found that "the first time overseas travellers to a destination were prone to using travel agents and tour operators more frequently".22

The extent of information search for a tourism product is absolutely related to the type of product proposed for purchase by the traveller. When a highly priced product or service or a far away destination or a more complex product is selected, the tourists tend to engage in deeper information search.

4.8 Information Sources

Information sources are the means by which a person is informed about something or knowledge is communicated or shared with someone. These sources of information could be the various means by which information is recorded for future use like, documents, images, art works, people, organisation, speeches, observations, etc.

4.9 Tourist Information Sources

Tourist information generated from different agencies is available to the customers through standard information sources. Tourists can achieve information in two ways: actively and non-actively. In active information achievement, people search for information with the purpose of reducing uncertainty of a new product or destination. For getting information they look in Internet, search for brochures or go to a travel agency. In non-active or passive information realisation, the consumer do not request or search for the information, but it will come across to their attention through advertisements in mass media like newspaper, television or radio. The mass media information sources are
produced by commercial agencies and tourism organisations at national and international level.

Tourist information sources can be classified in different ways. According to Fodness and Murray the sources can be divided as commercial and non-commercial and based on type of information into impersonal and personal. Vogt and Fesenmaier categorised tourist information sources into several categories like: marketing, social, personal, and editorial. Gitelson and Crompton segregated information sources for travel into five groups: destination specific literature, consultants (travel agents and automobile clubs), friends and relatives, broadcast media (television and radio), and print media (newspapers, magazines and travel magazines). Van Raaij and Francken divided information sources for tourists into three segments: commercial, social and advisory. Travel and tourism information sources as described by Kotler and Armstrong can be four types - personal sources (advice from relatives and friends), commercial sources (such as brochures, advertisements, sales people, etc.), public sources (newspapers and magazines) and experiential sources (obtained by direct observation, past visits and product trial).

Tourist information is available and accessible in two main formats namely, print sources (published sources) and non-print (un-published sources). The published sources of information could be in print format and these include: books, periodicals, newspapers, travel literature, bibliographies, indexes and abstracts, etc. With the development of technology, lot of information sources are increasingly becoming available on digital formats as well, like multimedia, broadcast media, Internet sources, etc. Tourist information could also be obtained from human sources and institutional sources.

4.9.1 Print or Published Sources

The print culture has evolved gradually from the oral and script cultures and today printing is a universal phenomenon and documents are bulk printed. Printed and published documents are considered as the authoritative sources of information, because print sources go through extensive publication procedures and processes that include editing and reviewing for ensuring accuracy and authenticity. Qualification of the author, reputation of the publisher, validity of the origin, etc. can be expected in a print source, because only manuscript having standard quality is likely to have accepted for publication. Nowadays, most of the scholarly and long lived sources of information can
be found in both print and digital format. Although more and more information resources are published and disseminated through Internet, electronic and multimedia, information in printed form is the established way of communication.

4.9.1.1 Books

Books are the most common type of printed sources of information that deal comprehensively with a specific subject. It is “a set of printed pages that are fastened inside a cover so that you can turn them and read them”28. Books are generally categorised into two; fiction and non-fiction. A fiction book contains information that are not realistic, but rather, imaginary and theoretical. Non-fiction books deals with real things and give true information about people, events and places. Fiction and non-fiction books often give an overview of a destination. In the past decades, much of the tourist information was available only through books.

4.9.1.2 Journals and Magazines

Journals and magazines are publications that are released on a regular schedule under the same title, with an assortment of contents. Journals are by and large scholarly in nature and aimed the researchers and specialists. Journal articles are written by subject experts based on original research. Magazines are generally aimed the general public and mostly contain news, general information, personal narratives, etc. Both journals and magazines are important sources of information for tourists. A large number of periodical titles are available in the fields of tourism, leisure, travel and other related subjects and all these publications have substantial effects on people’s decisions to choose a particular tourism product. Periodicals provide necessary information to tourists with the support of colourful images and photographs. What they have seen and comprehended from the periodicals will be influential upon travellers for choosing a tourist destination or service.

Tourists use journals and magazines in conjunction with numerous other sources of information for getting detailed information that will help them to make their trip comfortable and relaxed. Many studies have revealed that regular travellers and those who like to travel are habitual subscribers of their favourite journals and magazines and they are using this source of information for updating their knowledge. Many people are
keeping the magazines for future references and taking it along with them in their visits for onsite references.

4.9.1.3 Newspapers

Newspapers are issued either daily, weekly or monthly and almost all the major cities around the world have at least a local daily as its own publication, and availability of many major national and international dailies. Newspapers are good sources of tourism related information in a big way. Almost all the national and regional dailies publish special supplements on tourism, which are good sources for information about history, geography, landscape, transportation and accessibility, arts and crafts, cuisine, shopping, education and employment opportunities, etc. of a destination. In addition, newspapers list the week’s or months happening, which will be useful for visitors for attaining detailed information of what is going on politically, economically and culturally in the area.

As the tourism has become an important industry, publishers of newspapers publish specialised monographs on various aspects of tourism for promotional purposes. Monographs are good source of information for specific themes of tourism studies like management, guidelines, special interest products (cultural, wildlife, beach, ecology, resort and adventure tourism), etc.

4.9.1.4 Travel Brochures

Brochures are privileged advertising channels in tourism industry and are used to provide customers with concrete information about different subjects like destination, attractions, recreation facilities, hotels, restaurants, etc. For selecting a destination and for planning a trip, tourists tend to depend on travel brochures as the key source of information. Tourism industry relies and gives much importance to commercial brochures published by reputed travel agencies, tour operators and hotels. Since the brochures are mostly produced by the tour operators and organisations centred at the tourist destination itself, it considered as a reliable and informative source. Many studies disclosed that, tourists consider brochures as the major information source for planning their trip and they use brochures published by tour operators and hotels for finalising their trip. Travel brochures are published by travel agents, tour operators, transportation companies, accommodation suppliers, national, international and local tourist
organisations and extensively inspire peoples’ interest for travel to visit a particular destination.

4.9.1.5 Travel Literature

Also referred as travelogues, travel literature is the narrative description by an individual or group about a place. It records all the experiences and perceptions about the place by the author(s) in detail. Travelogue is an important source of tourist information, because it gives more realistic information about a specific place to enlighten the readers about it. The travel depiction will inspire the readers to visit those destinations and provides useful advice for those who visit the places. ‘Description of Greece’, the famous travel writing from 2nd century A.D. by Pausanias and the more recent ‘The motorcycle diaries’ by Che Guevara are examples of immortal travel literature.

4.9.1.6 Posters

Posters are useful sources for both textual and graphic of information, with eye catching designs and visually striking colours. Posters are generally used as effective tools for advertisements and for communicating messages in public places. With the developments in printing technology, multi-colour posters can be printed easily and quickly in very low cost. Posters have widespread usage in tourism industry, for advertisement and for giving the visitors necessary information. Travel posters are major tools of marketing for putting forward a travel destination and for artistically conveying a message to the tourists. Characteristics like low production cost, high captive power and easiness of understanding make posters a popular media for communication in tourism industry.

4.9.1.7 Bibliographies, Abstracts and Indexes

A library catalogue generally contains bibliographical details of holdings of a library like books, periodicals and other documents, and does not provide information about the contents of the holdings. By browsing through the documents only one can find out what is available inside about a topic. Bibliographies, abstracts and indexes are providing brief information about books and journal articles and can be used as helpful starting points for locating necessary information on a subject.
Leisure, recreation and tourism abstract (LRTA) is the prominent abstracts database of internationally published research, in the area of tourism. It is a quarterly journal, in which the abstracts are arranged under four broad subject headings like ‘tourism’, ‘sports’, ‘leisure & recreation’ and ‘arts & entertainment’. Author and subject indexes are provided for location of information and an annual cumulative index is also published. Online version of the abstract is also available, with resources from archives of 38 years.

4.9.1.8 Statistics

Statistics is the numerical data which gives quantitative and qualitative information to develop knowledge about a particular topic. All government departments compile and publish statistics in relation to their area of activity. In India, ‘Ministry of Tourism’ and ‘Bureau of Immigration’ are collecting data about inbound and outbound tourists at national level for publishing the ‘India Tourism Statistics’. In Kerala, Research and statistics division of Department of Tourism gathers data on tourist arrivals to Kerala as an ongoing process for compiling the yearly ‘Kerala Tourism Statistics’. Private and commercial organisations are also carrying out research on the markets for tourism products and services and publish the statistics. The statistics provide valuable information to tourists, for choosing a right destination for their trip and for taking judicious decisions, by making comparisons and understanding the changes made over by time.

4.9.1.9 Geographical Sources in Printed Format

Geographical sources of information are providing useful information for tracing a place and for getting basic information about that place. Travellers can quickly perceive contextual information for planning and conducting a trip, from geographical sources. Originally these sources where tools printed in paper, and having the convenience of using anytime and anywhere regardless of availability of power, Internet access and mobile phone range. Geographical sources can be divided into three groups:

- Maps, atlases and globes for visual location and identification
- Gazetteers for identification with brief description,
- Guidebooks for longer descriptions from traveller’s point of view
4.9.1.9.1 Map

Maps provide tourists with general information of an area at a glance, useful for searching and locating places and attractions. Subject matter of maps may be geographical information, location of tourism spots and attractions, facilities at different parts of the area and other general information. There are different varieties of maps like tourist maps, recreational maps, distance maps, rail, road, and air transportation maps, etc., which provide relatable information to visitors. Maps provide detailed information about population, transportation network, land use types and other natural and human resources of an area. Maps have a very important role in tourism development of an area, because they provide coherent images of the facilities and condition of a destination, which will influence tourists in deciding a place to visit. Since information has a vital role in tourism development, the level to which a country’s image is projected through information about its’ environments and facilities, determines the prospects of its tourism. Publication of different varieties of updated maps can promote the development of tourism in an area, by supplementing other sources of information.

4.9.1.9.2 Atlas

An atlas is a bound collection of maps based on a particular subject or theme. An index of place names given at the end helps to locate places from the maps. Usually an atlas has a brief description about its subject or theme, which will be useful to travellers for getting basic information. World, national, thematic and historical are the different categories of atlases. While thematic atlases focus on a specific subject area, such as agriculture, ecology, tourism, etc., all the other categories provide general geographical and political information.

4.9.1.9.3 Globe

Globe is the three dimensional representation of planet earth. It is a scaled down replica for representing the earth accurately. While a map distorts the spherical surface of earth, a globe can more accurately represent the earth and can show the physical features such as mountains, oceans, rivers, etc. in a better way and as it actually exists in the planet. A globe can be used to find a location or place for visit, to mark out a travel route, to point out the longitude and latitude, etc.
4.9.1.9.4 Gazetteer

Gazetteer is a geographical dictionary or a directory of place names, which provides information about places and place names. Because the entries are listed in alphabetical order, it is very easy to find out information about places from a gazetteer. It is also a good source of information for knowing about the origin of place names, physical features, population, literacy rate, GDP, etc. which are significant for a tourist to choose a travel destination. Many local authorities and non-government organisations are bringing out theme based regional tourism gazetteers incorporating heritage monuments, forests, rivers, beaches, religious places, statistical information, etc. for promoting tourism in that region. Tourism gazetteer can be used as a travel guide and also as an effective tool for comprehending about a location easily. The World Gazetteer, Webster's New Geographical Dictionary, Columbia Lippincott Gazetteer, etc. are important sources of geographical information for tourists.

4.9.1.9.5 Guide Book

Guidebook is a small handbook which provides valuable and up to date information in a standard and classified way to travellers visiting a geographical area like a city, state, or country or for visitors of a museum, institution, historical site, etc. Guidebook is the well accepted travel specific information source carried by every tourist, for getting basic historical information about a particular place, detailed description about food and accommodation facilities, attractions of the region and other useful information for travellers. Tourists carry it because it provides relevant information in precise form to save their time and money and makes the trip a safer one. A tourist in a strange city can depend safely on a guidebook for deciding where to go, what to see, where to dine, and where to stay; otherwise he may simply wander in the streets for exploring places by chances. Guidebooks are indirectly supporting the tourism industry by providing appropriate information for fostering tourism in an area. It is commonly said that “guidebooks are not the record of someone’s tours but a description of what current tourists could anticipate.”

4.9.2 Non-Print or Unpublished Sources

In this day of technology, it is not possible to stimulate all the potential tourism customers solely with printed sources of information. Apart from the traditional print
resources they use technological resources like online travel magazines, digital maps, social networking websites using Web 2.0, CD-ROMs, software tools, multimedia simulation tools, etc. for getting relevant information. For gaining access to these resources, they use telecommunication and computer networks. All these non-print sources of information enable the users to come into contact with almost anything virtually, by sitting in their home. Many studies have proven that information assimilation will be in higher degrees with the use of non-print media for making a trip more enjoyable.

4.9.2.1 Human/ Personal Sources

Individuals create information and are also good sources of information. Some of the knowledge, facts and data are created by individuals and are distributed formally though books, journals, digital sources, social networking sites, etc. On the other hand, some information which is mostly obtained through experiences and familiarity is deliberated to others informally. It is neither systematically documented nor published, but provides vital information in a situation. It is orally communicated through personal discussions, and is a good source of tourist information, for a local level decision making.

4.9.2.1.1 Tourist Guides

Tourist guides are professionally qualified and experienced personnel who work as information givers and interpreters for visitors in an area. They act as representatives and ambassadors of the area for assisting the visitors. Tourist guide enhances the image of a destination and implements the objectives of responsible tourism. Majority of tourists spend only a short time at a destination and hardly possess any knowledge about the destination. Most of them may not be familiar with the local culture, language, traditions, beliefs, and everyday life of the local people. Tourist guides act as the important sources of information and provide assistance to the visitors for overcoming their unfamiliarity in a destination. They are the most important intermediaries for successful presentation of a tourist destinations or products before the tourists, which might influence the economic and social development of an area. What tourist guides present and decipher influences the images of their customers about a place or attraction, its culture, local activities and the behaviour of tourists in the destination.
**4.9.2.1.2 Word of Mouth**

Word of mouth is a communication process made by at least two participants, one communicator and one recipient of information, in order to make advantages of it. The recipient acquires important and valuable information about an object and the sender achieves confidence about the object he is talking about. In tourism, word of mouth is an important source of information for a purchase decision, because the exchange of information is on the basis of the knowledge and experience of both sender and recipient and it is a non-commercial communication. In word of mouth communication process, the recipient is requesting for information and obtains the benefits of the experience of the sender. As a general rule, if one is receiving unrequested information from a source, the retention level will be lower, and if the information is a solicited one, the retention and credibility level will be higher. “Word of mouth communication (WOM) can be seen as one of the communication agents which have greater credibility in the formation of the tourist destination image”. In many previous researches WOM is accepted as ‘the most often used travel information source by seniors’. This source of information is very useful and most influential for visitors those who are in a previously unknown place and situation, for knowing about amenities available in that area. Information obtained through WOM sources like friends and family members can be influential in the development of an image perception about a tourist destination.

WOM is considered as a significant media for the development of tourism in an area because, positive WOM is the result of satisfaction and it can influence a prospective visitor favourably. So the tourism authorities and managers should give special attention to assess the customer satisfaction and should identity the problem areas to make necessary modifications to enhance customer satisfaction. Travel agents and tourist guides are responsible for disseminating information about tourist destinations, attractions, boarding and lodging facilities, etc. and they can serve as important linking agents for word of mouth.

**4.9.2.1.3 Cognitive Wisdom**

It is the knowledge or perception spontaneously derived from a natural tendency, a sense of something not apparent or deducible. When an emergency occurs and there is no alternate source for getting information, cognitive wisdom can be considered as a good source of information for tourists, because they can take wise decisions based on their
previous experiences. The information obtained through intuition rather than from a reasoning will helpful for tourist those who are in a strange situation.

4.9.2.1.4 Instincts

Instinct is an innate talent to develop a means to tackle a situation. Human mind has the ability to develop an idea with the help of self conscious in a strange situation, which can be called as intuition, sixth sense, omen, etc. Eyes, ears, and instincts are the partners of a person while he is in travel, for getting appropriate information.

4.9.2.1.5 Talking to People

For getting immediate information about a tourist location or services available there, talking to local people or people who have been in that location for sufficient time is the best choice. Such people are great sources for getting first hand information about tourist attractions, entertainments, facilities like accommodation, food, shopping, etc. in a place. Availability of immediate response at the right time and vital information in interactive way are the advantages of this source of information. By contacting the right individual, up to date and relevant information can be obtained.

4.9.2.2 Institutional Sources of Information

Government organisations and departments publish lot of information in print and electronic formats for providing up to date information to the people. These agencies also provide personal and referral services to the public for meeting their information needs. Since government services are provided with public funds, most of them are distributed either free of cost or at low cost. Private sector institutions meant for different tourism related services are also doing such type of information dissemination activities pertaining to their area.

4.9.2.2.1 Libraries as Sources of Tourist Information

Libraries act as important sources of information by collecting quality information in a wide variety of formats and adapt new technologies for collecting, organising, and disseminating information in all forms. Apart from the fundamental role of making information and data available, libraries organise knowledge in a logical way. Also, unlike other sources of information, library materials go through a set of review processes. Library services can now be delivered outside the walls also, using information
and communication technologies and libraries are increasingly providing access to digital information along with the traditional information sources.

Access permission formalities may vary from library to library, and the tourists in most cases can telephone the library to know about the official procedures for using the library services. They can obtain information about the local culture, geography, climate, attractions, food and accommodation facilities, etc. from the published literature available in the library. This literature could be in a variety of forms such as newspapers, magazines, books, maps, atlases, gazetteers, World Wide Web and so on. The search for information can commence from the library catalogue, which is a comprehensive list of all the items held in the library, or from a subject bibliography or index. Modern libraries have the electronic version of the catalogue called Online Public Access Catalogue or OPAC, which is relatively simple to use and at the same time gives more details about each items like, location, number of copies, availability, etc. OPACs of many libraries can be accessed now through World Wide Web.

In case of tourists finding any difficulties in using the library services and resources, they can seek assistance from the library staff, and in some cases the staff will perform the search for tourists. Libraries are also often providing the visitors with access to subscribed information sources on the Web. These paid services will be very costly and the visitors may not have the ability or need to subscribe it directly by themselves.

4.9.2.2.2 Travel Agents and Tour Operators

Conventionally, travel agents and tour operators are distributors or re-sellers of tourism products and services. They add value to tourism industry in many ways. Much of the information search is done by them on behalf of the tourists for assisting them and they are also able to customise holiday packages according to the requirements of customers. Travel agents and tour operators are geographically very close to the tourists, and they are in a suitable position to build relation with them. Tourists can simplify the formalities and procedures of travel with the help of a travel agency. They can consult with a travel agency for getting information about routes, attractions, food, accommodation, etc. to be had at the destination. Through their services, travel agents and tour operators are functioning as good sources of information and providing better services than any other information sources, at individual and group level. Added advantages of this source of information are its’ human interactions, personal advices and
personal services. Consumers who are acquiring complex services like tourism, tend to have personal advices and services for eliminating the risks factors associated with it and the travel agent can act as one of the personal advisers. The marketing team of travel agents and tour operators create favourable images about their organisation in customers mind to make them purchase their packages. Travel agents and tour operators can perform better than any other sources for providing information to the tourists. “As long as the customers continue to have confidence in the ability of travel agents for providing them with reliable advices, they will continue to be a leading channel of distribution”.

4.9.2.2.3 Tourist Offices

Tourist offices run by government and non government agencies are found in almost all major cities, tourist destinations, airports, railway stations and bus stands. They will have a collection of pamphlets illustrating the tourist spots and historical places with colourful images and route maps, for free distribution. Tourist offices are good sources of information for knowing about the local places, cultural events happening around, food and accommodation facilities, etc.

4.9.2.3 Broadcast Media

Broadcasting is transmission of radio or television programme for the exchange of informative and entertaining contents of both general and special interests, over a wide area. Broadcast media are portable sources of information, disseminated by wired and wireless radio and television stations and networks. There are thousands of radio stations and television channels for broadcasting informative audio video contents, which are useful sources of travel information.

4.9.2.3.1 Radio

Radio communication is an inexpensive media for transmitting audio contents wirelessly. It is a good information source for local news, current news, information about local traffic, transportation, etc. Radio news is considered as an authentic source for getting up to date information and this medium has widespread use in local communication. Most radio stations broadcast special programmes on tourism, wild life, ecology and environment, which are very informative for tourists. Travellers and motorists are mostly depending radio bulletins for getting reliable information about climate and weather of an area. Broadcasting using Frequency Modulation (FM radios) is
commonly used for micro-broadcasting of high fidelity sound instructions and information to visitors of a particular area.

4.9.2.3.2 Television

Television provides information through both sound and visuals, and this characteristic makes it a wonderful medium for communication. It is considered as the most influential means of communication. Television programmes are presented in a personal tone and in a domestic nature, which gives ubiquitous acceptability to this medium. For instructional purposes this medium is very powerful, because it combines writing, speaking and showing. In tourism industry also television programmes have major roles in information dissemination, because of its wide geographic coverage and broad audience reach. There are lot of televisions channels dedicated for leisure, recreation, sports, ecology and animal life programmes, which in turn are good sources of tourist information.

Television can also be used for data transmission for providing vital information simultaneously to a group of people in an area. Train and air time schedules, up-to-date news, sports news, weather forecast, road conditions, etc. transmitted through teletext and videotext are useful for tourists to get pertinent information about a location.

4.9.2.3.2.1 Teletext

In teletext, information in the form of texts and graphics is broadcasted to the television set of the users. The data is stored in frames, and each frame contains coded character signals, which are transmitted to the users along with the television signals. The digital signals are decoded by a decoder attached with the television and the text and graphics will be displayed before the viewer along with the television programme. This is an one way communication, since the viewer cannot interact with the sender or information source. Teletext is used as an important media for transmitting updated information, such as time of departure and arrival of flights and trains, weather forecast, traffic conditions on roads, etc. to a group of tourists in a remote location.

4.9.2.3.2.2 Videotext

It is the source of graphical and textual information, normally transmitted to receive in a television set, where the users can also interact with the information source by sending and receiving messages using a telephone line. It is well developed in the
travel and tourism area for providing useful information and specific services like ticket reservation for transportation, entertainment, etc. to tourists.

4.9.2.3.2.3 Cable Television

Unlike the broadcast television services, cable television is a two way communication system, which can distribute special programme for special interest users like travellers. Cable television services provide direct video communication services to special interest users, on a pay for view basis.

4.9.2.4 Multimedia Sources

Multimedia source of information are digital objects stored on magnetic or optical storage devices and is a combination of audio, video, graphics and text files. With the development of multimedia technology, products can be demonstrated virtually before the tourists. They can feel the services available and can have a look at the quality of the product before choosing one. Documentaries, television serials, commercials, sponsored programmes, feature films and promotional films are important multimedia sources of tourism information.

4.9.2.4.1 Documentaries and Movies

Documentaries, movies, feature films, etc. are very useful sources of information for tourists to get an overview about a new destination. They have an important role in influencing people’s perceptions and images of a destination prior to the arrival. They provide a snapshot of a place with descriptive images and sound, which will give the viewers an inspiration for visiting the places they have seen on the screens. The three dimensional experiences provided with the support of moving images and sound will definitely provide required information about a tourist destination to a prospective customer. As the international film industry is growing by leap and bound and reaching a vast audience, it can turn into valid sources of tourist information.

4.9.2.4.2 CD-ROMs & DVDs

These are massive storage media which can hoard text, sound, still and moving pictures. The stored data can be searched and accessed according to the need of the user. The massive storage facility available in limited space can be used for publishing and
distributing tourism literature in the form of electronic brochures for informing the tourists effectively and economically.

4.9.2.5 Internet Sources

People around the world are more and more depending Internet and World Wide Web for their day to day information and communication requirements. Internet which was started as a research project has rapidly became an important information source for many people in both their personal and professional lives. The rapid developments in the 1990s made Internet as the most influential marketing and distribution channel in tourism and travel industry. There are thousands of websites for providing tourist information and people now turn to Internet for getting information about a location in the way they previously turned to libraries, encyclopaedias, newspapers, travel magazines, maps, guidebook, gazetteers, etc. Many travellers use Internet for purchasing tourism products and for finding tourism information. Tourists also use Internet for communication, interactive browsing, bulletin board services, exchange of electronic documents, images, sounds, etc. Invaluable statistics compiled by government and non-government agencies are available in the websites for free downloading and interpretations.

Internet is widely used as a source of information as it saves money and time otherwise spend for transportation, phone calls, postage charges, etc. for searching and accessing information. Another reason is that the “Internet can provide highly tailored content to users according to their preferences because it can be customised to a great extent”. WTO declared that the key to Internet success lies in the swift identification of customer needs and the establishment of direct contact with consumers, offering them comprehensive, personalised and up to date information”.

4.9.2.5.1 Online Travel Magazines

Online travel magazines are not online replications of paper editions, but are community forums for enhancing the readers’ involvement in the communication process. The readers can communicate their opinions and engage in interactive discussions with people of similar interests and experiences. Online travel magazines provide a lot of useful community information which can be used as good sources of tourist information.
4.9.2.5.2 Online Travel Forums

There are hundreds of online travel forums which share up-to-date and current tourist information. In an unfamiliar location, the travel forums are good companions for finding others who might be able to answer some questions.

4.9.2.5.3 Wikitravel

Wikitravel is an online collaborative travel guide, developed in wiki model through the teamwork of wikitravellers around the world. This service is available in 21 languages under free content license. Information is available in four major heads: destinations, itineraries, travel topics and phrasebooks. The contents are mostly images, video and other media files from original research and users can download necessary information free of cost and does not require giving citations. Wikitravel encourages original research in its contents.

4.9.2.5.4 Online Chatting

Online chatting is a form of real time communication over Internet. A sender can communicate a text message of short length to a receiver or a group of receivers and the receiver or participants can quickly respond to the message. Online chatting gives a feeling similar to the spoken conversation and is a good media for communicating each other. In tourism industry this service is widely used by people for point to point communications and multicast communications. Voice chat and video chat are alternative modes of online chatting, where multimedia contents can be transmitted over Internet, instead of text messages. Even though there are a lot of disadvantages like lack of personal contacts and risk involved in meeting unknown people, online chatting facilitate to meet people from all around the world.

4.9.2.5.5 E-WOM

Word of mouth (WOM) is an oral form of communication between a communicators and a recipient for exchanging non-commercial information. With the development of Internet technologies, WOM has advanced into a new form called electronic word of mouth (eWOM). eWOM can be defined as interactive communication of positive or negative statements through Internet, by a former genuine customer about a product or service he was experienced with. eWOM communications are directed to
customers through blogs, email, social networking sites and instant messaging programmes, and have revolutionised the characteristics and accessibility of travel information.

4.9.2.5.6 Web 2.0 Applications

Social networking websites using Web 2.0 applications are now been used as an important channel of communication for the purposes like sharing experiences, disseminating tourist information, collaborating with peers from other countries, reaching out to the people, etc. They are web enabled applications for providing a wide range of tools and capabilities to the users for online information transfer in previously unavailable ways. The most common Web 2.0 applications that have become sources of tourist information are Facebook, Twitter, RSS, travel blogs, Myspace and YouTube. While the Web 2.0 applications make connections between people using Internet, the yet to come Web 3.0 applications are expected to use Internet to make connection between people and information.

4.9.2.5.6.1 Facebook

Facebook is the well accepted free social networking website that permits its registered users to create profiles, send messages, upload images and videos and keep in touch with their family and friends. The members can join a network in facebook, based on their subject of interest, geographic regions, school affiliations, favourite tourist spot, etc. It facilitates its members to find friends based on common interest and allows them to communicate each other and to see which friends are in online and chat with them. The members can also create and promote their own public page based on a topic.

Each participating member will have a virtual bulletin board called ‘wall’, where others can leave text, photo or video. The virtual photo album component of facebook helps the users to upload photos directly from their computers and cell phones. Friends can comment on each other’s postings and can identify people from the posted photographs (tagging). Another feature is the status updates, a microblogging feature which allows members to make short public announcement to their friends, in a real-time basis.
4.9.2.5.6.2 Twitter

Twitter is a real time information network for sharing text based messages called tweets. Tweets are small bursts of information with a maximum length of 140 characters, for sharing news, ideas, opinions and latest stories about a particular subject. It discovers interesting people around the world and builds a following of people who are interested in a subject and shares information. It is a strong social media which maintain only a low social connection through instant messaging, texting and blogging, but with a very broad audience. Twitter can be used for connecting a business to its customers who are interested in their products and services in real time, for sharing information quickly and building relationships. Many tweeters depend the micro-blogging for advertising their services, because of its features like faster communication, less intrusive nature, tweets can be turned off and on, etc. In twitter one can search interesting people online and can follow their burst messages to get information about a tourist destination or service and to see the integrated photographs.

4.9.2.5.6.3 RSS

Rich Site Summary (RSS) is a XML based format for publishing frequently changing web contents for widespread content distribution. Websites that want to enlighten their visitors with some of their contents create a RSS document and register it with a RSS publisher. The users can subscribe updates from their preferred websites and can gather feeds from many sites to one location. They can easily read the news feeds from their favourite websites and stay informed by saving time by not visiting each site separately. Major Websites are using RSS feeds for syndication of their news feeds, cover stories, project updates, events listings, headlines, corporate information, etc. Many travel and tourism related web sites syndicate their contents as RSS feeds to whoever wants it.

4.9.2.5.6.4 Travel Blogs

Blog, which is a short form for web log, is an online discussion site in the World Wide Web for sharing information through discrete entries called posts. Travel blogs are online travel journals, also known as online travelogues, which are good sources of information for planning a trip. There are many websites who offer free space and templates for creating travel blogs, where the users can upload their postings, photographs
and video clippings. Without the need of any technical expertise in website designing, HTML codes and syntaxes, one can present one’s experiences for sharing with others, and can also maintain the archives of all earlier postings using a travel blog. The facility of the blogs for leaving comments by the readers about the postings in an interactive format often provides valuable criticism about the content. Blogs are considered as sources of impartial personal communication channels, and as a preferred media than corporate web sites. With the recent development of multi-author blogs, posts can be written and edited jointly by a group of authors, to create blogs with professional qualities. At390.com, NomadicMatt.com, WanderingEarl.com and BaconIsMagic.com are the most popular current travel blogs.

4.9.2.5.6.5 Podcasting

Podcasting is a way of delivering information in the form of MP3 audio files called podcasts, which can be downloaded from a website to an iPod or other MP3 players. Podcasting is effectively used to deliver audible instructions and details about a destination to tourists. For almost all the popular tourist destinations, guide book podcasts are available in tourism related websites, and users can subscribe to a podcast using RSS feed, for automatic updating.

4.9.2.5.6.6 Myspace

It is a social networking site very popular among teenage and young adult social groups. Myspace has a lot of inbuilt applications for sharing text messages, photographs and video clips. Users can embed their YouTube videos in their profiles for sharing. The "type to search" feature in Myspace is a powerful tool, where the users can simply start typing and a search display screen appears with the most relevant results for the search, as the typing proceeds. Myspace is considered as a useful platform for sharing one’s experiences and perceptions about a tourist destination, and many prospective tourists search Myspace for finding relevant information that would help them for planning and finalising a trip.

4.9.2.5.6.7 YouTube

www.youtube.com is the popular free video sharing website that permits users to upload, share and view video clips online. The site is a rich source of different varieties of video contents, like movie clips, television clips, short films, educational videos and
music videos. Most videos allow the viewers to leave comments about the content. The videos can be viewed freely and there is no need of any kind of registration. The registered users can upload videos of any duration using a simple interface. The site accepts videos uploaded in all the formats from computers and mobile phones. YouTube facilitates the users to view the videos outside the website also. The HTML code for the video can be easily embedded in any page on the web, which makes YouTube clippings popular in social networking pages. YouTube is one of the most visited website on the Internet, and it is reported that the site is receiving more than three billion views per day. “Anyone could upload content that everyone else could view” is the uniqueness of the site. Tourists and other people who would like to get tourism information can easily find useful and informative video clips from the YouTube.

4.9.2.5.7 Online Geographical Information Sources

Uninterrupted development of information and communication technologies during the last decade has made overwhelming consequences in tourism information sources. Conventional geographical information sources were replaced with online tools that are capable to visualise, customise and interact with spatial data with the help of a web browser. World Wide Web was a resource for geographical information from its inception itself, and initially it was in the form of simple static image files of maps in GIF (Graphic Interchange Format), and with the emergence of JavaScript and many computerised mapping software, interactive services became available with the facility of dynamic querying, sorting, zooming, route finding, navigation assistance, etc. People can make descriptions of their favourite places and these places can be linked using standard codes called geo-tags for future references and identification. As the technology developed, many advanced geographical sources of information were evolved, with diversity of functionalities.

4.9.2.5.7.1 Digital Map and Atlas

Digital maps and atlases are electronic version of respective counterparts in paper format. The paper format has the limitations of updating and personalisation and these problems are reduced with digital mapping. In digital maps and atlases, features are stored in separate layers in a computer file, and can be updated easily to find that the changes are effected instantaneously. These interactive objects allow the users to get information about a place in different perspectives, by eliminating the limitations of static
representation of information in a printed page. Users can browse a particular type of attraction in a selected area by pointing and tapping on the symbol of that attraction. Information can be retrieved by applying variety of sorting criteria like relevance, proximity, alphabetical order, etc. Digital maps have the ability to provide information about directions based on the travel mode and help to find out missing locations, which are not shown in traditional route maps.

With the advancement of information and communication technology, different types of online maps are available now, which will give more options and facilities to the travellers for getting tourist information. Google maps (www.maps.google.com), National Geographic map (www.maps.nationalgeographic.com), Maps of India (www.mapsofindia.com), Microsoft live search maps (maps.live.com), Bing maps (www.bing.com/maps), etc. are some of the popular online maps.

4.9.2.5.7.2 Digital Gazetteer

Digital gazetteers provide online geographical information of places, geographical features, etc. by linking the feature’s name with its location and type. Digital gazetteers have been growing in importance recently on the basis of a range of services, including way finding, geo-referencing, and intelligence.

4.9.2.5.7.3 Digital Guide Book

Even though travellers are now getting significant information from Internet sources like blogs, online forums, etc., guidebook continues to be their favourite source of travel information. But due to the considerable size and weight of guidebooks, most of them prefer to shift from paper to digital format. Digital guidebooks can be easily downloaded to an iPod or Kindle and are very easy to navigate. The most popular feature of a digital guidebook is the live links, which by clicking take one to other areas in the book and also to the relevant websites. Pages can be bookmarked for later references. There are many smart phone applications for guidebooks based on Android and Windows operating systems, which will give online multimedia information instantaneously.

4.9.2.6 Mobile Phone Technology

Progress in electronics and communication technologies is continuously changing the way of communication and interaction in all spheres of human life. Mobile phone has
become the most popular way of communication and an inevitable gadget, due to its portability, wireless transmission, high transfer speed and versatile functions. Many industries are using the competence of mobile phone for motivating their customers by providing information through it. Relevant information in digital format broadcasted though mobile phones could elicit attention of many possible consumers by spreading information quickly.

Mobile phones can now be easily connected to Internet and thus the tourists can get access to news portals, web sites of service providers and blogs for getting valuable information. Mobile phones can serve as a pocket guide, for providing real time, location based information to tourists in all their information necessities.

4.9.2.6.1 Smart Phone Applications

The convergence of telecommunication technology, information technology and the Internet have changed mobile phones into smart phones and has developed many mobile phone applications for different purposes. Mobile phones have graduated from traditional communication devices to instruments facilitating personal navigation systems and mobile web platforms. Many smart phone applications have created innovative techniques for the tourism industry to connect visitors while they are on travel. Smart phones based on Android and Windows operating systems have generated radical changes to tourism industry. Tourists now get timely information at their fingertip. Using smart phone applications, tourists can find their way, discover unique attractions in a destination, search for important events and cultural festivities in a place and can even add items to their itineraries. Smart phone applications for electronic guidebooks and maps can be used by travellers in same way as paper guidebooks and maps used, and can augmented with Global Positioning Systems to get information with respect to the current location. Many of the travel applications use social media as a tool for facilitating communication. Travel related applications are the seventh most popular category of mobile applications being downloaded and it shows the importance of mobile applications among tourist in decision making.

4.9.2.7 Information Kiosk

Information kiosk is a kind of system for helping customers to locate useful information independently. It consists of a computer with necessary input, output,
display, communication and network devices, and set in lobbies of hotels, airports, shopping centres and other public places. Tourists can directly approach the system to get the specific information and can make reservations for prime necessities like lodging, boarding and travel facilities.

4.9.2.8 Marketing Events

Marketing events are important means for exhibiting a product or service to inform a specific audience to generate sales and to build a solid group of potential clients. In tourism, marketing events are more than a venue for exhibition and important means for selling products. It is also an important source of information for tourists. Tourism marketing events not only produce business that takes place on the event floor, but also secondary level of business to the supporting industries like hotels and restaurants and even a tertiary level of business to the event’s host community in general.

4.9.2.8.1 Road Shows

Road show is a presentation involving a series of marketing events organised at multiple places inside and outside the country, to initiate excitement and interest on a product or service. Each event may consists of audio-video presentations, poster exhibitions, interactive sessions, lucky draws, etc. which will fascinate lot of prospective buyers who are interested in understanding more about the offers. The programmes will be coordinated by responsible officers. Tourism industry can take advantages of the Internet also, by organising online road show presentations.

4.9.2.8.2 Tourism Fairs

Tourism fair is a business event organised to promote a destination as a popular tourist spot. Tourism products and services are showcased to consumers and business people. It is an important marketing strategy in travel industry, to educate and familiarise the customers and business people about tourism destinations. By acquainting with the destinations, the customers will get necessary information for becoming confident for visiting the destination and the business people will become primed to send travellers to the destination.
4.10 Conclusion

Quite a lot of researches have proved that the image formation about a destination is a mental perception developed on the basis of impressions form “the processing of information from various sources over a period of time”. Individuals acquire information about famous and important destinations deliberately and unknowingly throughout their life, even without visiting there or planning to do so. When a situation arises the acquired information will be processed internally based on their personal quality and experience along with the information obtained from different external sources to construct an image of a tourist destination for their visit.

Libraries are the well accepted sources of information. Setting up and running a library is very expensive and need a strong reason for its existence. Potentials of libraries are to be utilised for the social development and if they offers proper support to improve economic and social well being of the society, their existence will be justified. Most of the libraries have well balanced collections on different subjects, which can be presented through World Wide Web, and subjects like tourism, sports, geography, history and culture are influential for travellers to visit a place. They look up for the information on a destination prior to the trip, mainly through Internet. The libraries can offer a number of services to the tourists by developing excellent marketing strategies. A well planned, attractive and useful web site and informative web presentations will be useful for providing information that will inspire the tourists for visiting the places, since it can be accessed from every corner of the world. Libraries can also effectively participate in the local tourism development by printing and distributing promotional leaflets, brochures, giving referral services, etc.

References:


