Research Paper

TOURIST SATISFACTION LEVEL ON DESTINATION FACILITIES IN THE NILGIRIS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research paper is to study the perception of tourist on the tourism facilities at the Nilgiris. The perception on the facilities have directly influenced on the overall satisfaction of the tourists. The perception was assessed by using factor analysis. A total of 15 variables were selected in order to analyze the influencing factors and 12 variables were used to evaluate the level of tourist satisfaction towards the Nilgiris as tourist destination. The results show that the majority of the tourists are influenced by the natural attractions such as gardens and climate of the destination. From the perception of tourists, they are highly satisfied with the tourism attractions of the destination.

KEYWORDS: *Tourism in the Nilgiris, Factors influencing, Tourist satisfaction, perception of tourists.*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism plays a vital role in the development of economy of both developing and developed countries. Growth of tourism industry is faster than any other industry as well as foreign exchange earnings. Understanding tourist's satisfaction is one of the most important factors for the development of tourism industry, because of its effect on their future economy (Petrick 2003). Satisfied tourists tend to share their positive experience to their friends and relatives (positive word of mouth) and they intend to revisit the destination (Barsky 1992; Beeho and Prentice 1997and Hallowell 1996). Satisfaction originally is a physiological outcome derived from exercise (Lee et al., 2007). Customer satisfaction is the result or the final step of a psychological process from need recognition to evaluation of experienced products (Peter and Olson 1996). Satisfaction can therefore be defined in three different ways. First, it can be viewed as a post-consumption evaluation of a chosen alternative cause of action to determine if it meets or exceeds expectations (Blackwell, Engel & Miniard, 1993). It can also be defined as an emotional response derived from a consumption experience (Spreng, Mackenzie, & Olshavsky, 1996). Most recently, satisfaction was defined as individual's cognitive–affective state derived from a consumer experience (Bosque & Martin, 2008).

The cognitive parameters are those that influence satisfaction during and after consumptive experiences and help form future behavioral intentions. They include factors that influence tourist destination image and expectations (electronic and print media, internet, film documentaries, and word-of-mouth publicity by people) of the destination and factors directly influencing disconfirmation (attractions, services, and other facilities) (Okello et al., 2005; Chen & Tsai, 2007). A key outcome of tourism satisfaction that will influence future tourism intentions for revisits both in the short and long term is loyalty to the destination (Chen & Tsai, 2007). Chen and Tsai (2007) have demonstrated that tourism satisfaction is directly influenced by destination Attractions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to WTO 1985, customer satisfaction is "a psychological concept that involves the feeling of well-being and pleasure that results from obtaining what one hopes for and expects from an appealing product and/or service" (Pizam, 1994). Measurement of customer satisfaction with leisure and recreation fields has been an important topic within the related literature (Dorfman, 1979). A definition of satisfaction has been discussed for more than three decades, with a variety of approaches within the tourism literature. These include: destination features, their qualities and relationships with customer evaluations and satisfaction and all of the above well documented. Satisfaction is the evaluation of the performance of the overall services provided by the firm received by the customer (Skogland and Siguaw, 2001).

Satisfaction is an important factor to be taken into account by the customer in deciding whether to continue a purchase or otherwise. Satisfaction results when performance exceeds the requirements (Bitner, 1990). On the other hand, when the requirements exceed the performance, dissatisfaction will result (Parasumaran, et al.1990). From a tourism perspective, the same concept applies to tourists because tourists are also subscribers to the services provided. Thus, their decision to visit again also depends on the satisfaction factor. In the discussion of the concept of tourist satisfaction, another term often used is travel satisfaction, which is a result of a tourist's satisfaction after their own experience or the experience of a product or service provided (Gunderson et al., 1996; Heide et al., 1999; Heung, 2000). Various reasons that cause tourists to be satisfied with their trip or journey, which includes the quality of the services provided, such as infrastructure, security, cleanliness, natural situation, consumer protection and easily accessibility (Jayaprkash 2016). Mythili and Jayaprkash (2017) highlighted that Natural beauty of the Nilgiris draws tourists away from the crowded and polluted towns and cities. The study exhibits that majority of the young tourists who love to visit the Nilgiris Hills for its beautiful climate. In relation to tourist satisfaction the overall experience tourists have with the given destination. Tourists take a trip to visit the destination to consume the products or experiences that it offers, to have good memories to share with their friends and they form their judgment of the destination by comparing their actual experiences with their expectations

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Tourist satisfaction is one of the most important concerns in tourism industry. In order to develop tourism industry, tourist satisfaction has been a considerable goal for many countries. In fact, developing the tourism industry is the target of any government all over the world because it's contribution in growth of GDP and wide range of employment opportunities. Particularly, developing tourism industry is desirable for all countries because it will benefit not only the industry itself, but also generate a strong flow-through effect in other sectors such as retail, transportation, and construction (Hui, et al., 2007). With the increasing role of tourism in the global economy and growing competition in the global tourism market, the importance of enhancing the satisfaction level of tourists is being recognized as a way to expand and maintain a large and loyal customer base for long-term success. Satisfied tourists bring success to the tourism business. They are likely to revisit and recommend the destination to their families and friends. On the other hand, dissatisfied tourists may not return to the same destination and may not recommend it to other tourists. Even worse, dissatisfied tourists may express negative comments about a destination and damage its reputation. So, the researcher interested to find out what are the factors satisfying the tourists visiting the Nilgiris.

STUDY OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this research paper is to analyze the factors influencing tourists and their level of satisfaction towards various facilities of the Nilgiris.

SAMPLING PLAN AND TOOL

The study is based on primary data. The researcher collected the primary data from tourists visiting various places of the Nilgiris. For the collection of primary data, 300 tourists were selected through convenient sampling method. The data were collected by using well structured interview schedule. To analyze the satisfaction of tourists the following statistical tools were used percentage, mean, standard deviation and factor analysis.

AREA AND PERIOD OF STUDY:

The study is undertaken in important tourism attractions of the Nilgiris during the period of from April 2014 to October 2014.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study is undertaken to analyze the satisfaction level of tourists visiting the Nilgiris. The primary scope of present study is mainly based on the opinion of domestic tourists. It enables us to understand the satisfaction of tourists. In short, the study covers only socio economic status, influencing factors and satisfaction of tourists visiting the Nilgiris.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION
Table: 1
Demographic consideration of the respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	156	52.0
Female	144	48.0
Total	300	100
Age	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
below 20	26	8.7
21-30	151	50.3
31-40	99	33.0
41-50	12	4.0
Above 50	12	4.0
Total	300	100.0
Marital status	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Married	81	27.0
Unmarried	219	73.0
Total	300	100.0

No of members in family	Frequency	Percentage
Up to 3	73	24.3
4 to 5	191	63.7
Above 5	36	12.0
Total	300	100.0
Educational qualification	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
No formal education	24	8.0
Up to high school	25	8.3
Diploma education	13	4.3
Under Graduate	166	55.3
Post Graduate	72	24.0
Total	300	100.0
Occupation	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Business	11	3.7
Government employee	110	36.7
Private employee	51	17.0
Students	73	24.3
Agriculturist	24	8.0
Professionals	31	10.3
Total	300	100.0
Annual income	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Less than Rs.1,00,000	49	16.3
Rs.1,00,001-5,00,000	96	32.0
Rs.5,00,001-10,00,000	134	44.7
Above Rs.10, 00,000	21	7.0
Total	300	100.0

Source: Primary data

The gender distribution of the respondents was, with 52% male respondents and 48% female respondents. The major age group of the tourists was 21to 30 years 50.3%, followed by 31to 40 years 33%, below 20 years 8.7%, 41 – 50 years and above 50 years were 4%. The marital status of the respondents was, with 73% Unmarried respondents and 27% married respondents. Most of the tourists (63.7%) reported that their family consists of 4 to 5 members, followed by up to 3 members 24.3% and above 5 members are 12%. In terms of education qualification, almost 55.3% of the tourists were Under Graduates, 24% of the tourists were Post Graduates, 8.3% of tourists had higher secondary school education, 8 % of the respondents falling under the group of having no formal education, almost 4% of the respondents were above the diploma graduates. In terms of occupation, almost 36.7% of the tourists were Government employees, 24.3% of the tourists were students, 17% of tourists were employed in private sectors, 10.3% of the respondents were belongs to the group of professionals, 8% of the respondents were agriculturists, 3.7% of the respondents were engaged them in business. With regard to annual income of tourists, the major group tourist had annual income of Rs 5 lakhs – Rs 10 lakhs 44.7%, followed by Rs 1 lakh – Rs 5 lakhs 32%, 16.3% of the respondents annual income was less than Rs 1 lakh and 7% of the respondents visiting the Nilgiris earning more than Rs 10 lakhs per annum.

FACTOR ANALYSIS

In order to determine the factors influencing, Factor Analysis was performed (Table - 2) Principal Component Analysis with a Varimax Rotation and Eigen value equal to or more than 1 (Kinnear and Taylor, 1987) were used for the present study. In order to get clear factorial design, factor loadings equal to or above 0.50 were retained. Hence, the factor analysis on the 16 influencing items showed 4 factors with 15 variables and explained 69.48% Variance. In line with the objectives, the present study seeks to find out the factor influencing tourists in the selection of holiday destination. The suitability of factor analysis was validated with the help of KMO sampling adequacy was 0.704, above the recommended value of 0.6, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant (χ^2 - 874.068, p <0 .000).

Table: 2
Factors influencing tourists (Factor Analysis results)

Item No	Factors Influencing	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
	Rotated Component Matrix[a]				
2	Botanical garden	0.851			
9	Safety and security	0.814			
1	Climate	0.781			
4	Varity of attractions	0.761			
10	Positive word of mouth	0.740			
13	Environment	0.665			
7	Low cost Tourism		0.825		
14	Boating		0.742		
6	Easy accessibility		0.706		
15	Shopping		0.542		
11	Motivation of family			0.808	
3	Waterfalls & Dams			0.691	
8	Adventure/ sports activities			0.633	
12	Cleanliness				0.692
5	Motivations of tour operators				.685
Eigen values		5.147	2.970	1.695	1.402
Percentage of total variance		31.743	18.373	10.581	8.785
Cumulative percentage of variance		31.743	50.116	60.697	69.482

KMO and Bartlett's Test	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	0.704
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square	874.068
Cronbach's Alpha	0.812

*At 1% significance level

Further from the examination of the factor loadings, it is understood that items Botanical garden (0.851), Safety and security (0.814), Climate (0.781), Varity of attractions (0.761), Positive word of mouth (0.740) and Environment (0.665) with first factor. Low cost Tourism (0.825), Boating (0.742), Easy accessibility (0.706) and Shopping (0.679) with second factor. Motivation of family (0.808), Waterfalls & Dams (0.691) and Adventure/ sports activities (0.633) with third factor, and Cleanliness (0.692) and Motivations of tour operators (0.685) with fourth factor are highly loaded (have high correlations) compared to factor loadings in respective of those items with other remaining factors.

Table: 3
Perception of tourist Satisfaction with destination attributes

Attributes	Mean	Std. Deviation
Tourist attractions	4.337	0.626
Public transport systems	3.883	0.592
Accommodation facilities	3.883	0.514
Services in hotels and rest houses	3.887	0.644
Tourism facilities	4.077	0.397
A safe and secure place to travel	3.793	0.641
Shopping facilities	3.803	0.565
Hygiene and health	3.390	0.922
The attitudes of people towards tourists	3.640	0.529
Unspoiled nature	3.960	0.529
Climate	4.113	0.897
Entertainment	3.947	0.482
Overall Satisfaction	3.487	0.761

The above table 3 describes the respondents' views on tourist satisfaction. Most respondents were satisfied with the tourist attractions in the Nilgiris (mean = 4.337, SD = 0.626). In addition, the study also showed that respondents are satisfied with the climate of the Nilgiris (mean = 4.113, SD = 0.897), Tourism facilities (mean = 4.077, SD = 0.397), Unspoiled nature (mean =3.960, SD = 0.529), entertainment (mean = 3.947, SD = 0.482), Services in hotels and rest houses (mean = 3.887, SD = 0.644), Public transport systems (mean = 3.883, SD = 0.592) and accommodation facilities (mean = 3.883, SD = 0.514). Shopping facilities (mean = 3.803, SD = 0.565). A safe and secure place to travel (mean = 3.793, SD = 0.641), the attitudes of people towards tourists (mean = 3.793, SD = 0.641), hygiene and health (mean = 3.390, SD = 0.922), and Overall, level of tourists satisfaction is at a good level (mean = 3.487, SD = 0.761).

SUGGESTION

Natural attractions are the treasure of every hill station. To promote tourism in Nilgiris, the Government and TTDC should concentrate more on preservation of the natural

beauty of the Nilgiris. Package tours should be marketed; it will give new platforms for business opportunities. Necessary steps should be taken for providing adequate parking facilities in all tourism places. Local authorities should ensure the supply of pure drinking water, cleanliness and sufficient number of public toilet facilities.

CONCLUSION

Natural beauty and people friendly approaches of the Nilgiris keep tourist passionate towards this Queen of Hills in South India. It attracts tourist throughout the year for its richness in flora and fauna. The unique climate of the destination in all seasons is an impulse, which makes people to visit again and again. People and authorities were very much impressed by the economic benefits get into from the tourism activities. There is no doubt it's a mesmerizing destination because of its diverse attractions, facilities, services, amenities and environment. The results of the study provide greater insight into factors influencing tourists to visit the Nilgiris. The travel decision of the tourist is highly influenced by the Botanical garden, safety and security, Climate, variety of attractions and positive word of mouth. Tourist are highly satisfied with the tourism attractions, Climate and tourism facilities of the Nilgiris.

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