



Tourists' satisfaction and hospitality in Sri Lanka: With special reference to Galle district

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Abstract

Tourism is one of the major foreign exchange earners and main growth sector for many countries especially for the small islands which are rich with required natural and cultural resources. Currently, there is a growing trend in tourist arrivals in Sri Lanka. This study was conducted to find out most significance factors affect to the tourist satisfaction in Sri Lanka. The study was based on primary data; 300 respondents who are visited in Hikkaduwa, Unawatuna and Koggala in Galle District in Sri Lanka. The sample was collected by multistage random sampling method and data was gathered by employing structured questionnaire. The satisfaction index was created under principle component analysis. The data were further analyzed by descriptive and ANOVA methods. Findings showed that mediocre satisfaction of respondent towards environment, hospitality, and infrastructure and highly satisfied on attraction transportation and cost. Furthermore the results revealed that tourist satisfaction is significantly different from tourist zone and country of origin. Similarly, the research emphasizes there is no significant different of tourist satisfaction from gender, age group, education qualification and sector.

Keywords: tourist satisfaction, principle component analysis, tourist satisfaction index

1. Introduction

Sri Lanka is one of the leading romantic destinations in the world which is set in the Indian Ocean in South Asia. It is well known as 'Pearl of the Indian Ocean' and it was known as Serendib, Taprobane, Ceylon and for some it is a paradise on the planet earth. Sri Lanka has only 65,610 square kilometers in extent, but it has a long stretched and proud history of over 2500 years. It is a place where the original soul of Buddhism still flourishes and where nature's beauty remains abundant and unspoiled. Its enchanting ancient ruins, endless soft-sanded beaches, imposing mountains, colorful festivals, tempting water spots, dense wild-life, and diverse ethnical groups and off the top hospitality from the local residents in Sri Lanka are the key reasons for tourist attraction. Above all its unique location is prominent factor which highly facilitates tourism industry. Due to the location of Sri Lanka in the Silk Route many merchants and explorers were attracted to the island in the past as well. Commercial cities of the country offer many investment opportunities to the business travelers.

Tourism industry in Sri Lanka dates back to 1960's and has grown steadily over the years. At present it is one of the major foreign exchange generating industries in Sri Lanka and lots of people directly or indirectly depend on the industry as their livelihood. Sri Lanka's tourism initially focused on beach tourism. However, later on tourism sector managed to diversify its products to capitalize on Sri Lanka's rich nature and culture. During the last two decades Sri Lankan tourism has had many setbacks mainly due to the uncertain security situation that prevailed in the country. There after Sri Lankan tourism industry dropped gradually. This situation was worsened further by the December 2004, Tsunami which destroyed nearly 2/3rd of the coastal area and many of the tourist hotels located along the coastal belt. Furthermore, the global economic recession also had a major impact on the industry. Mostly western province and southern both provinces are famous for this particular

industry and Kalutara a Hikkauwa are the most popular areas for tourism. Most of tourists are migrated because of sunny weather conditions and attractive beaches.

The tourism industry creates employment opportunities directly in tourism related businesses such as hotels and other accommodation units, restaurants, travel agents and tour operators, recreation and entertainment businesses, souvenir, handicraft and other shops. Indirect employment is generated in businesses, which sell goods and services to the tourism sector. In general, it has been found that indirect employment generated as a result of tourism is much higher than direct employment.

Currently, there is a growing trend in tourist arrivals in Sri Lanka. This has increased with the end of the civil war which prevailed in Sri Lanka for almost thirty years. It is obvious that the tourist satisfaction affects for the more arrivals of the tourists. So it is very much essential to identify the factors which affect the tourist arrivals as it directly and indirectly influence on the economy of Sri Lanka. The purpose of this paper is to determine the most significance factors affect to the tourist satisfaction in Sri Lanka.

1.1 Objectives

For a smoothly functioning tourism system in a country it is important to maintain higher level of satisfaction among tourists. Factors influence on satisfaction among tourists towards a particular destination changes overtime. Therefore continued research to identify the modern satisfaction factors in this regard would ensure sustainable tourist industry in a country. Hence, the main objective of this study is to identify the satisfaction of tourists visiting to Sri Lanka.

2. Literature Review

A definition for satisfaction has been discussed for more than 30 years, with the variety of approaches with in the

tourism literature. Some researchers defined satisfaction simply as the result of customers' assessment of perceived quality. However, in some papers, quality and satisfaction are modeled as separate constructs, because the underlying processing mechanisms for evaluating quality and satisfaction are distinct. In the tourism literature two major approaches are employed to measure tourists' satisfaction. Those are disconfirmation theory and performance-only approach. Disconfirmation theory is based on the post purchase concept which is a comparison between pre travel expectations with actual travel experience. Tourists' satisfaction is defined as "a collection of tourists' attitudes about specific domains in the vacationing experience". Therefore, tourist satisfaction is the overall experience tourists have with the given destination. However, this conceptualization has been problematic, particularly in tourism contexts. Due to the intangibility of tourism and leisure products, it has been argued that expectations are inevitably less concrete less useful.

The performance-only approach considered the tourist satisfaction construct as the tourists' evaluation of destination attributes. The tourists' satisfaction with individual component of the destination leads to their satisfaction with the overall destination. Kozak (2003) argued that tourist satisfaction can be measured through the summation of the tourists' evaluation of each destination attribute. Due to the fact that (dis)satisfaction with the overall destination is a function of (dis)satisfaction with one of the attributes of destination. Since as a practical point of view, the performance-only approach seemed to be less complex than the disconfirmation theory approach and , as identified by fallen and Schofield this approach was a better predictor of satisfaction, used the performance-only approach to measure satisfaction in this study.

According to the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Tourist Satisfaction Index and Tourism Service Quality Index (2013), it is implied that the tourist satisfaction index, which incorporates multiple dimensions of the satisfaction determinants, tends to be more effective in tourist satisfaction assessment (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Furthermore, recent customer satisfaction studies conclude that satisfaction is a latent construct that cannot be directly measured (Formally, 1992). This corresponds with other studies, showing that multi-item scales are significantly more reliable than single-item scales (Conner & Sparks, 1996). As such, tourist satisfaction is measured as a latent variable associated with three indicators, namely overall satisfaction, comparison with expectations and comparison with the ideal. The construct of tourist satisfaction, combined with the other five constructs (perceived performance, expectations, assessed value, overall satisfaction, complaints and loyalty), forms a theoretical framework for assessing tourist satisfaction.

Tourism researchers have been interested in measuring tourist satisfaction with a particular destination and identified hospitality (Alegri & Garau, 2009) [1]; (Salleh, Omar, Yaakop, & Moahmmod, 2013) [6], accessibility (Pizam, Neumann, & Reichel, 1978) [4]; (Khuong & Luan, 2015) [6], attraction (Salleh, Omar, Yaakop, & Moahmmod, 2013) [6] et al; (Kala & Bagri, 2015) [2], environment (Plessis, Merve, & Saayman, 2012) [5], (Salleh, Omar, Yaakop, & Moahmmod, 2013) [6], cost (Salleh, Omar, Yaakop, & Moahmmod, 2013) [6];

(Pizam, Neumann, & Reichel, 1978) [4] and infrastructure (Kala & Bagri, 2015) [2]; (Shahrin, Jusoh, Masron, & Hamid, 2013) [7].

Although, number of studies have been conducted in globally to determine different types of influential factors towards tourists' satisfaction, those studies did not attempt to develop an index in order to measure the level of tourists' satisfaction. Therefore, this study is as an attempts to fill this research gap in literature concerning tourists' satisfaction.

3. Methodology

Survey was selected the best method to achieve the objectives of the research, and the qualitative and quantitative data gathered through a structured questionnaire have been analyzed. The questionnaire is included two parts, as part A and part B. Part A includes eleven demographic variables and part B includes 6 dimensions consists with 42 Likert scale statements. Base on the purpose of the study multistage random sampling method was employed. Sample is consisted of total numbers of 300 respondents who are visited in Hikkaduwa, Unawatuna and Koggala in Galle District in Sri Lanka.

The dependent variable of this study was tourists' satisfaction and it was measured by tourists' satisfaction index and gender, marital status, level of education, age group, country of origin, occupation, purpose of visiting, length of stay, accompanying person were used as some independent variables. Descriptive analysis was performed with the aims of explaining satisfaction of despondence with their visits. Derived factor scores were generated by principal components extraction method to develop a composite index for tourists' satisfaction. Accordingly, T-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were conducted in order to see a significant difference in related to tourists' satisfaction based on the demographic profile of despondence. Following Figure 1 illustrate the procedure used to develop the tourists' satisfaction index.

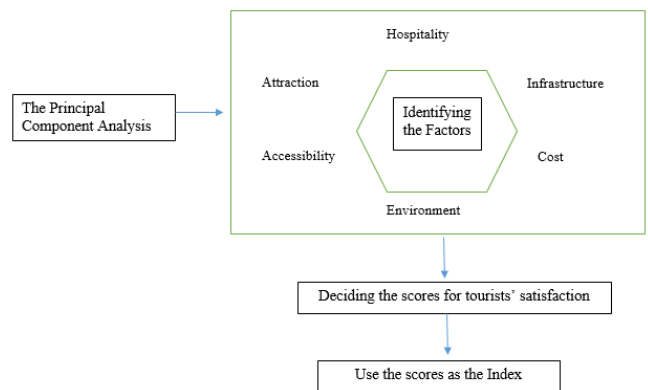


Fig 1: The procedure used to develop the tourists' satisfaction index.

4. Results and Discussion

Descriptive analysis

According to the collected sample 50% of the respondents were from Hikkaduwa region while 32% from Unawatuna and rest of 18% were from Koggala tourists' zone. Out of the total respondents 300, 55% were female. 50% respondents were belonged to 25-45 years age category.

35% of the respondents were belong to 26-35 age category. Respondents whose age is above 46 years were 13% while the rest of the 2% were above 36-45 years. According to the statistics it can be claimed that Galle district is visited by tourists irrespective to their age group. Similarly, educational qualification details reveals that 42% of the tourists belong to postgraduate education level. Majority of the respondents (38%) were from private sector. Most of the respondents were from Germany (26%), 22% from United Kingdom while 10% were from Russia. As well as 42% of respondents were from various countries such as Ukraine, Switzerland, Canada, Philippines, Australia, France, Spain, USA, India, China, South Korea and Czech Republic. When considering the purpose of visiting around 40% have visited for the reason of leisure, while 13% of the respondents were visited for the purpose of business. Nearly 9% have visited for education. Above results further confirmed by accompany person of the most respondents were either the spouse/children (35%) or friends/relatives (31%). Also travel duration of the majority of the respondents were 3weeks or more while minimum travel duration were 1-5 days.

4.1 Model Assessing Tests

According to the following Table No 1 it showed that Cronbach’s Alpha is higher than acceptable level of 0.7 and it implies an internal consistency was well defined.

Table 1: Reliability test

| Factor | Cronbach’s Alpha value |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| Overall tourists’ Satisfaction | 0.881 |
| Hospitality | 0.770 |
| Attraction | 0.726 |
| Transportation | 0.719 |
| Cost | 0.814 |
| Environment | 0.831 |
| Infrastructure | 0.745 |

Also table 2 illustrates the coefficient of Kaiser- Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy. According to KMO Bartlett test, value 0.847 was greater than the acceptance level of 0.6 ($p=0.000 < \infty = 0.05$). It claimed that the sampling is adequate. Hence, after confirming the validity of factors, they were used to build the tourists’ satisfaction index.

Table 2: Sampling Adequacy

| Kaiser-Myer- Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy 0.847 | | |
|--|-----|-------|
| Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity | Df | 465 |
| | Sig | 0.000 |

Source: Sample survey, 2018

Since the reliability and validity conditions of the data set are satisfied, the indices are constructed for the six factors. The data set is modeled into the indices and their distributions are analyzed as follows.

Table 3: Distribution of the indices

| Variable | N | Mean | St deviation | Minimum | Maximum | Skewness | IQR | Median |
|--------------------------------|-----|-------|--------------|---------|---------|----------|-------|--------|
| Overall tourists’ Satisfaction | 300 | 79.41 | 11.48 | 48.00 | 100 | -0.4006 | 13.33 | 80.00 |
| Hospitality | 300 | 80.08 | 10.57 | 56.68 | 100 | 0.0724 | 15.93 | 80.00 |
| Attraction | 300 | 82.33 | 13.92 | 46.68 | 100 | -0.4168 | 12.67 | 80.00 |
| Transportation | 300 | 95.38 | 0.465 | 84.357 | 100 | -0.60 | 9.71 | 97.064 |
| Cost | 300 | 76.20 | 14.50 | 40.00 | 100 | -0.09 | 20.00 | 80.00 |
| Environment | 300 | 63.39 | 11.76 | 36.00 | 100 | 0.1492 | 18.00 | 62.00 |
| Infrastructure | 300 | 71.86 | 12.72 | 40.00 | 100 | 0.0985 | 16.00 | 72.00 |

According to the above table, the tourists’ satisfaction is distributed with a skewness of -0.4 which indicates that the distribution is slightly negatively skewed with a median of 80.00 and in the range of 48 to 100. The Inter quartile range of the distribution is 13.33. The hospitality Index is distributed with a skewness of 0.0724, which indicates that the distribution is positively skewed with a median of 80.00 and in the range of 56.68 to 100. The Inter quartile range of the distribution is 15.93. The Attraction index is distributed with a skewness of -0.41, which indicates that the distribution is negatively skewed with a median of 80.00 and in the range of 46.68 to 100. The Inter quartile range of the distribution is 12.67. The transportation Index is distributed with a skewness of -0.60, which indicates that the distribution is slightly negatively skewed with a median of 97.064 and in the range of 84.357 to 100. The Inter quartile range of the distribution is 9.712. The cost index is distributed with a skewness of -0.09, which indicates that the distribution is negatively skewed with a median of 80.00 and in the range of 40.00 5to 100. The Inter quartile range of the distribution is 20.00. The environment Index is distributed with a skewness of 0.1492, which indicates that the distribution is positively skewed with a median of 62.00 and in the range of 36 to 100. The Inter quartile range of the distribution is 16.00. The infrastructure Index is distributed

with a skewness of 0.0985, which indicates that the distribution is positively skewed with a median of 72.00 and in the range of 40 to 100. The Inter quartile range of the distribution is 16.00.

4.2 Differences by Demographic Profiles of Selected Variables

Following table explains the findings of T test and ANOVA on travel satisfaction variables according to the demographic profiles of the respondents.

Table 4: T test and Analysis of Variance on Tourists’ Satisfaction

| Variables | T –Test/ANOVA | Results |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Tourists’ Zone | F = 2.75 , p = 0.001 | Significant |
| Gender | t = -1.39 , p = 0.166 | Insignificant |
| Age Group | F = 1.92 , p = 0.128 | Insignificant |
| Education qualification | F = 1.241, p = 0.111 | Insignificant |
| Sector | F = 1.021, p = 0.213 | Insignificant |
| Country of Origin | F = 3.563, p = 0.000 | Significant |

The results showed in table 4 indicated that there was a significant difference between tourists’ zone with tourists’ satisfaction. The study also found there was a significant difference between countries of origin with tourists’

satisfaction.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Accordingly the results revealed that the overall tourist satisfaction (79.41) is high. Moreover all the dimensions are well above (50.0) on a scale ranging from 0 to 100. However the some dimensions are mostly satisfied; transportation, cost, attraction while some are mediocre satisfied; hospitality infrastructure and environment. One explanation for the high ratings could be that tourism of Sri Lanka is the fact that natural beauty, rich cultural heritage of Sri Lanka has contented the tourists. In addition the government has initiated guidelines and rules to adhere by the players in the tourism industry. Tourists are educated about the standard rates for the services within the country upon their arrival. Most of the local business have commit themselves to high-quality service delivery and adhere to best practice standards. Sri Lankan government foreseen the importance of developing tourism industry. The government has set year 2025 that the Sri Lanka tourism to be identified as a place for memorable, authentic and diverse tourism experiences. This research also revealed that dimensions has to be improved in order to mark higher tourist satisfaction. Government and other establishments involved in tourist industry should pay more attention towards providing friendly service for tourists, upgrading infrastructure facilities specifically in tourist destinations and support and encourage community to maintain clean environment in the country. Furthermore, since tourists' satisfaction significantly differs from country of origin, service providers should try to identify the preferences of different tourist nationality and provide tailor made services would be supportive to maintain higher tourist satisfaction.

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