

Measuring the impact of Service Quality on Tourist Satisfaction: A Study of Tourism Industry of Kashmir

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Abstract: *The complexity and globalization of today's competitive business environment have made quality one of the most important sources of competitive advantage in the business organisations including tourism industry. Many leading quality organisations have started to exploit opportunities to face this situation and recognized the importance to have a systematic process to manage quality to gain and maintain this competitive position. This study was conducted to investigate the causal relationship among the components of service quality (destination image, destination support services and security, destination cleanliness and destination facilities) and tourist satisfaction. A series of multiple regressions were applied to determine the relationship between service quality and tourist satisfaction. The results of the analysis confirmed that destination image, support services and security, cleanliness and facilities directly influenced tourist satisfaction. The results also indicated that service quality has a significant and positive impact on tourist satisfactions. Thus, to ensure tourists' satisfaction, aggressive and sustained efforts should be undertaken to improve service quality.*

Key Words: Quality, Satisfaction, Tourism.

Introduction

The complexity and globalisation of today's competitive business environment have made quality as one of the most important sources of competitive advantage of the tourism business enterprises/destination. Many leading quality organisation have started to exploit opportunities to face this situation and recognized the importance to have systematic processes to manage quality to gain and maintain this competitive position. Each business management is aware of the fierce competition in every sector and customer expectations have never been greater. It is no longer sufficient just to maintain a business; it is necessary to move forward if a business wants to achieve a sustainable future. Customer care, improvements in efficiency, effective marketing, benchmarking, staff training and deployment are all vital for survival and competitiveness in a changeable business environment. To improve, means to change, and change can be stressful, there is no magic formula that can be applied to every business, but there are proven system, such as quality management that can bring benefits if it is applied in the right way. For business to be successful, the motivation to develop and implement a quality management system must be based on a clear understanding of the business aims and objectives.

Review of Literature

Jihad and Majeda (2012) confirmed that service quality has a significant impact on tourist satisfaction. Ivyanno and Nila (2013) examined the influence of service quality and tourist satisfaction on the future behavioral intentions of domestic local tourists to the Borobudur temple using the SERVQUAL model and multiple regression analysis. The study found that service quality has a positive influence on tourist satisfaction. In other words, maintaining service quality is important to maximize tourist satisfaction. Norazah (2013) found that five elements of service quality, assurance, reliability, responsiveness, tangibles and empathy are significantly correlated with tourist satisfaction in the hotel industry in Malaysia. While in the tourism industry, Perunjodi (2011) examined visitor satisfaction with respect to nature-based tourism attractions in Mauritius, and found that nature-based tourism attractions have significant impact on and positive relationship with the overall visitor satisfaction. Customer satisfaction plays an important role as a marketing tool to attract the most variable segments of the market. According to Bitner and Hubbert (1994), customer satisfaction is the term used for the measure of the extent to which the product or service provided by the organization meets customer expectations, or, in other words, customer satisfaction is the fulfillment of the wants, needs and expectations of customers, thereby create customer loyalty to the product or service offered.

Objectives of the study

- To analyze the role of service quality in the development of tourism industry of Kashmir.
- To study the perspective of distinct tourist group in terms of their expectation and perception.
- To study the service quality dimensions that has most discriminatory power in separating various satisfaction levels.

Research Methodology

A sample size of 150 samples were selected for the study using quota sampling which can be suitably applied for determining the sample size where the total population is unknown (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). Therefore, quota sampling was used to determine the sample size for tourist respondents. The questionnaire was distributed to 150 tourists but only 130 respondents completely filled up the questionnaire and the same were used for the study. The study's questionnaire consisted of three parts, - tourist's demographic information, tourist satisfaction, and services quality including destination image, destination support services and security, destination cleanliness and destination facilities. The questionnaire for this study was adopted based on the studies of Norlida et al. (2011), Redzuan et al. (2010), and Ivyanno and Nila (2012), and modified for the topic of this study. The items were scored on a five-point Likert scale. Data analysis was undertaken using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Regression analysis is used when independent variables are correlated with one another and with the dependent variable (Sheridan J. Coakes, 2005). Therefore, regression analysis was applied to determine the relationship between tourist satisfaction and services quality.

Demographic Analysis of Respondents

Table: 1

Gender		No. of Visit	
Male	89	First Visit	92
Female	41	Revisit	38
Age		Source of Information	
18-25	27	Friends/relatives	42
26-33	52	TV and Radio	18
33-40	29	Internet	31
Above 40	22	Tour guide/travel agent	39
Education		Occupation	
High school or less	18	Student	23
Sr. Secondary	23	Service person	37
Graduate	52	Business person	41
Post Graduate or above	37	Other	29
Marital Status		Co-tourist	
Single	46	Alone	32
Married	84	Accompanied	98
Time spend in Park		Transport Used	
1 hours or less	13	Public Transport	34
2-3 hours	47	Taxi or Cab	69
More than 3 hours	70	Self driven vehicle	27

Reliability Analysis

Table: 2

Variables	No.of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Destination image	5	0.821
Destination support services and security	4	0.867
Destination cleanliness	3	0.751
Destination facilities	7	0.763
Tourist satisfaction	6	0.831
The whole questionnaire	25	

Mean and Standard deviation of Variables

Table: 3

Service Quality	Mean	SD	Order
Destination image	3.89	0.63	3
Destination support services and security	3.87	0.61	4
Destination cleanliness	4.09	0.71	2
Destination facilities	4.15	0.77	1
Dependent Variable	Mean	SD	
Tourist satisfaction	4.09	0.67	

Regression Analysis for Impact of Service Quality on Tourist Satisfaction

Table: 5

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t.	Sig.
	B	Std.Error	Beta		
(constant)	3.199	0.044		8.025	0.000
Destination image	0.120	0.43	0.142	2.850	0.005*
Destination support services and security	0.463	0.63	0.378	6.692	0.000*
Destination cleanliness	0.165	0.62	0.145	2.496	0.013**
Destination facilities	0.557	0.058	0.564	9.601	0.000*

R²=0.504; F-Value=10.473;P<0.000

*Significant at 1%, ** Significant at 5%

Findings and Conclusion

To measure the reliability of the questionnaire used, the Cronbach's alpha was applied to analyze the data collected. It is shown in Table .1 that all of the measured values are above 0.60, it can be concluded that there is a high consistency and reliability among the statements in questionnaire (DeVellis, 1991). Table.2 showed that destination facilities was with the highest mean (4.15) presenting its importance from the point of view of the sample individuals while destination support services and security was the lowest mean (3.87) indicating that the sample individuals consider it to be the least important. Tourist satisfaction, as a dependent variable, was expressed by a mean of 4.09, which is considered as very good satisfaction. Table 3 shows that destination image is a significant predictor of tourist satisfaction. The results indicated a positive relationship between the destination image and tourist satisfaction ($t=2.850$, $p=0.005$). The regression results also showed that destination cleanliness is a significant predictor of tourist satisfaction. All the results seem to be consistent with Gounaris et al., (2003), Jay and Hsin (2007), Osman and Sentosa (2013), and Akbar and Parvez (2009) who concurred that service quality is positively associated with tourist satisfaction. The R Square of 0.504 showed that the model is a fit one and that 50% of the deviations observed were caused by the independent variable in the model. The p-value for the overall model was significant at $p\text{-value} < 0.05$. The results from the mean analysis showed that tourists are satisfied with the four service components studied. Meanwhile, the results of the regression analysis showed that the service quality component which is destination image, destination support services and security, destination cleanliness and destination facilities, is significantly and positively related to tourist satisfaction. Therefore, to ensure the continued visits tourists to the Kashmir, the initiative of offering sustained high service quality is important.

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