

MEASUREMENT OF TOURIST SATISFACTION WITH HOTELS IN PUSHKAR

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ABSTRACT

In today's globalised world there is immense competition everywhere and service marketers are struggling hard to survive. Therefore it becomes an obligation for service providers to satisfy their customers and differentiate their service from its competitors. The influx of tourist is increasing in India and hotels are doing fairly good job in making their stay pleasant. The present study measures tourists' satisfaction with hotels in Pushkar and their intention to revisit or recommend to others. The researcher intended to deeply explore the literature and to identify the key factors of tourist's satisfaction with hotels and know their relative importance. This study examined whether tourists could be bifurcated into distinct clusters and the key factors determining tourists' satisfaction differed among the identified clusters. A self administered questionnaire was used to seek responses from the tourists who stayed in hotels of Pushkar. Best possible and accessible hotels were selected for the study and the data was analysed using SPSS. The results indicate that the tourists were satisfied with hotels of Pushkar and they have an intention to revisit or recommend to others. Further details of the results are presented in the paper.

Keywords: Hotels, Satisfaction, Tourist, Pushkar

Introduction

In the environment of growing global competition hospitality industry is continuously looking for new ideas on which they can increase their competitiveness. Tourism and hotel industry go side by side. The tourism industry occupies a significant place in the Indian economy and tourist's satisfaction is of utmost importance for the companies that want to survive in a field of fierce competition. The hospitality industry stipulates the hotels to be more innovative so that a delighted tourist will be glad to visit the hotel more frequently and will also share his wonderful experience with his/her friends or relatives. A country like India which attracts large number of

tourists is flooded with numerous hotels who tailor their services according to the preferences of customers/tourists. Pushkar, the holy city in Ajmer attracts foreign tourists almost round the year; therefore a research on tourists' satisfaction is significant for the hotels situated in this region.

According to many researchers (MacKay & Crompton, 1990; Yi, 1991; Blanchard & Galloway, 1994; Anton, 1996; Baker and Crompton, 2000) customer satisfaction is the mental perception of customers about a product or a service. MacKay and Crompton (1990) defined satisfaction as the psychological outcome which results from experiencing the service. According to Yi (1991) customer satisfaction is a customer's mental perception in which his/her needs, wants, and expectations throughout the product or service life cycle have been met or exceeded which result in subsequent repurchase and prolong loyalty. Customer satisfaction is the result of customer's perception of the service received in a transaction, where the price of a service equals perceived service quality (Blanchard & Galloway, 1994). According to Anton (1996) consumer satisfaction is a state of mind in which the customer's needs, wants and expectation throughout their experience are met. Spreng, MacKenzie and Olshavsky (1996) propose that satisfaction is the extent to which a product or service fulfils a person's desires. This is supported by Baker and Crompton (2000) who states that the tourism satisfaction is the psychological state of tourists after their visit to a destination.

The growing importance of customer satisfaction cannot be underestimated in the world where customers have multiple-choices. According to Gronoos (1990) & Parasuraman et al. (1988) the critical factors responsible for the success of any business is quality of service and customer satisfaction. Providing good quality service is the means for achieving sustainable advantage which results in satisfied customers (Shemwellet al, 1998). According to Kotler (1991) high customer satisfaction ranking is broadly believed to be the best indicator of a company's success and future profits. The prerequisites for obtaining competitive advantage and customer retention is giving quality service and satisfying customers (Blanchard & Galloway, 1994). Greater profits are made by those enterprises which understand and satisfy customer's needs than those which fail to understand and satisfy (Barsky & Nash, 2003). Major factors for hotel success are service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty (O'Neill, Mattila, & Xiao, 2006). The basis for any enterprise existence is their customers (Valdani, 2009). It is widely accepted that the cost of attracting new customers is always higher than the cost of retaining the existing ones and the successful managers implement effective policies of customer satisfaction and loyalty which help in retaining existing customers.

Hospitality industry offers homogeneous services but in order to be competitive, individual hoteliers must be able to satisfy their customers better than their counterparts (Choi & Chu, 2001). Also, the advancement of technology and new amenities has changed the hotel guest's preferences. So, it is imperative to measure hotel guests' level of satisfaction on each of the hotel attributes because if tourists remain unsatisfied they are not likely to return or recommend.

Review of Literature

If a customer is satisfied with a service he is likely to return in future or recommend to others. Many studies and researchers (Cho, 1998; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Choi & Chu, 2001; Yuksel, 2001; Bigne et al., 2005; Fuchs & Reichel, 2006; Joaquin & Cladera, 2009; Joaquin & Jaume, 2010) have found association between satisfaction and intention to revisit or recommend to others. A satisfied customer will come back again to purchase product and services (Kotler, 1991). A study was conducted by Cho (1998) to assess the satisfaction of Korean tourists' with the visit to Australia in terms of overall satisfaction of experience, intention to recommend and intention to return to Australia. Kozak & Rimmington, (2000) opined that if tourists are satisfied with their holiday experience, it is expected that they will be more likely to continue to return to a destination and/or recommend it to others. According to Choi & Chu (2001) there is a high positive correlation between guests' overall satisfaction and their intention to return to the same hotel in future. Yuksel (2001) carried out a research to provide destination managers and marketers with an analytic insight into how repeat and first-time visitors develop their satisfaction and return intention judgments. According to Bigne et al. (2005) satisfied tourists tend to purchase the product repeatedly (intention to return). Fuchs & Reichel (2006) stated that if a tourist is attracted by a destination then his perception of a destination will be high and in future he will be interested in visiting. Satisfaction has a positive effect on intention to return (Joaquin & Cladera, 2009). Similar study was conducted by Joaquin & Jaume (2010) to examine the impact of the satisfaction and dissatisfaction on both the tourists' overall satisfaction and their intention to return to the destination.

Satisfied customer is loyal towards the company, spreads positive words and establishes long term relations with them. Fornell (1992) is of the opinion that customer satisfaction leads to positive word-of mouth publicity and successive repeating purchases. Strategic asset of an organization is their relationship with their customers and starting objective of any business is customer satisfaction (Gruen et al., 2000). Positive relationship & quality service creates word of mouth publicity and increase in repeated guest rates (Kim et al., 2001). According to Bigne et al. (2005) satisfied tourists

communicate their good experience to others (word of mouth). According to Villanueva et al. (2008) a satisfied customer promotes positive word of mouth at no cost for the company and with effect & credibility which is better than the conventional advertising.

There are numerous researches that examine the preference of hotel attributes among tourists. Satisfaction derived from each of the attribute should be determined to ascertain the overall satisfaction with hotels. Researchers and Practitioners believe Cleanliness, security and price (Cadotte & Turgeon, 1988; Knutson, 1988; Wilensky and Buttle, 1988; Hsieh et al., 2008; Sohrabia et al, 2012) are the attributes of Hotel which are considered important by the tourists. According to Cadotte & Turgeon (1988), important hotel attributes are price followed by speed & quality of service, parking availability, staff service and cleanliness. In an extensive study by Knutson (1988) clean and comfortable room, location, services, safety and friendliness of employees were determined as the five important hotel attributes. Wilensky and Buttle (1988) demonstrated through their study that quality of services, physical attractiveness, prospect for relaxation, prestige and value for money were significantly evaluated by the tourists. Barsky and Labagh (1992) posited three attributes which are considered important by travellers in choosing a hotel and building loyalty which are employee attitude, location and room condition. LeBlanc and Nguyen (1996), in his research suggested physical environment, corporate identity, service personnel, service quality and accessibility are the factors which influence hotel's image to travelers. Dolnicar and Otter (2003) reviewed previous studies and found price, image, service, food, security as hotel attributes which are considered by travelers when selecting hotel. Hsieh et al. (2008) announced that responsiveness and competence of staff, price, hygienic environment, transport, special promotions, reservation procedure, food & beverages are important factors which are considered by the tourists in Taiwan. Sohrabia et al. (2012) in their study opined that Promenade and comfort, security, network services, enjoyment, staff services, news & recreational information, cleanliness and room comfort, price, room amenities and Parking space are the important factors of hotel selection in Tehran hotels.

On the basis of literature review, we can hypothesize that:

H₁: There is an impact of hotel satisfaction factors on overall satisfaction of hotel.

H₂: There is a relationship between overall tourist satisfaction with hotels and tourist's willingness to revisit or recommend to others.

H₃: There is a significant difference between clusters on all factors of hotel satisfaction.

Research Methodology

A questionnaire was developed for the study and it comprised of 34 items which were grouped into three main sections. The first part of the questionnaire was designed to obtain the demographic information of the respondents. The respondents were then required to assess their level of satisfaction on 28 attributes of hotel. A five-point labeled Likert-type scale was used and the respondents were required to give rating between 5= very Satisfied and 1= very dissatisfied for each of the hotel attributes. The last section which consisted of 2 items inquired the respondents about their intention to revisit or recommend the hotel to others. Literature suggests that Likert type scale can be employed to measure customer satisfaction and customer preference. The respondents were presented with adequate explanation on what the questionnaire was trying to measure and how they should answer it. At the end of the questionnaire ample space was left for the comments or the compliments by the respondents about the hotel.

The actual survey was carried out with 200 tourists who had stayed in best hotels of Pushkar. They were interviewed on the last day of their trip when they were about to leave for their original destinations. As the respondents were mainly the international tourists a pilot testing was done with 20 tourists staying in 4 hotels to check there were no any ambiguous words & all items are appropriate and none of them should be added or removed. Due to missing values and the like, the sample was further reduced to 169 respondents.

Data Analysis

The survey included the items enquiring about the origin, gender, age and marital status. 4.7% tourists were Indian and 95.3% were foreigners; 43.2% of the tourists were male and 56.8% of the tourists were female. Among them 61.5% tourists were single and 38.5% tourists were married. It is revealed that only 12% of the tourists were under the age of 20, 55.2% of the tourists belong to the age group of 20-40 followed by 24.2% and 8.6% who belong to the age group of 40-60 and more than 60, respectively.

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett’s Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.726
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2216.537
	Df	378
	Sig.	.000

The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted with the satisfaction derived from 28 hotel attributes. All of the hotel attributes were subjected to

Table 2: Factor Analysis

Hotel Attributes	Factor Loadings	Communalities	Mean	Eigenvalues	Variance (%)	Cronbach's Alpha
Factor 1: Staff and Cleanliness				8.147	29.098	.848
Staff communication	.542	.692	3.96			
Staff appearance	.582	.602	4.09			
Clean room	.846	.844	3.97			
Room Facilities	.708	.774	3.60			
Clean bathroom	.920	.892	3.66			
room service	.533	.622	3.84			
Factor 2: Internet & speed				2.676	9.556	.716
Wireless Internet access	.802	.759	3.98			
Speed of internet	.861	.791	3.79			
Check in and checkout speed	.631	.675	4.02			
Factor 3: hotel interior				2.268	8.101	.774
Tidy Lobby	.831	.851	4.07			
Lobby interior	.774	.821	3.95			
well lit areas in hotel	.619	.700	4.03			
Factor 4 : Value for money				1.722	6.151	.718
price-quality ratio	.675	.537	4.09			
Room size	.675	.599	4.26			

Hotel Attributes	Factor Loadings	Communalities	Mean	Eigenvalues	Variance (%)	Cronbach's Alpha
Room rent	.701	.790	3.95			
Bed size	.574	.726	4.08			
Factor 5 : Awareness				1.616	5.770	.839
Signage in hotel	.787	.822	3.86			
Signage is visual	.796	.840	3.88			
Factor 6: Extra Facilities				1.431	5.109	.611
Medical facilities	.881	.812	3.27			
Laundry services	.615	.701	3.67			
Factor 7: Food				1.244	4.442	.769
Variety of food	.870	.839	3.84			
Quality food	.814	.724	3.72			
Factor 8: Security				1.172	4.184	.607
safety in room	.543	.711	4.41			
Location of Hotel	.803	.703	4.30			

principal factor analyses with varimax rotations to identify the underlying dimensions.

The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was .726. Since the KMO value was above 0.7, the variables were interrelated and they shared common factors. The result of Bartlett's test of sphericity is 2216.537 and is statistically significant (Sig. = 0.000). This test shows that the data matrix had significant correlation and use of factor analysis was considered appropriate (See table 1).

The 28 items of hotel attributes could be reduced to 8 factors which explained 72.410% of the overall variance. A principal component analysis with varimax rotation was employed and the results of the factor analysis produced a clean factor structure with relatively high loadings for the factors. It was decided to drop three items which had factor loadings of less than 0.50. The communality of each variable was relatively high, ranging from 0.602 to 0.892 which indicates that the variance of the original values was captured fairly by eight factors. After dropping three items, Reliability analysis (Cronbach's Alpha) was performed to test the reliability and internal consistency of each factor. The Alpha coefficient of the eight factors ranged from 0.60 to 0.84, well above the minimum value of 0.50 and was considered an acceptable level for basic research (Nunnally, 1967). As a next step, content validity of the items belonging to each factor was carefully studied. It was found that the content of one of the items in Factor 5 did not gel with that of the remaining items. Therefore, it was decided to drop one item from Factor 5. As a result of this decision, the reliability coefficient for the remaining items was increased from 0.742 to 0.839. We were left with eight factors composed of 24 items and the eight factors were named 'Staff & Cleanliness –Factor 1'; 'Internet & Speed –Factor 2'; 'Hotel interior –Factor 3'; 'Value for money –Factor 4'; 'Awareness –Factor 5'; 'Extra facilities –Factor 6'; 'Food– Factor 7' and 'Security–Factor 8'. Table 2 illustrates the final rotated factors and the variables as well as the statistical data related to it.

Multiple regression analysis was employed to investigate whether the independent variable (eight factors) exerted significant impact on the dependent variable (overall satisfaction). The mean item scores of each factor were summed to form a simple summated factor score. Table 3 shows the results of regression analysis. The R^2 of the model stood at 0.80 which indicates that about 80% of the variance in the satisfaction could be explained by the eight factors collectively. The results indicate a good fit. The objective of using multiple regression was to identify the comparative importance of each factor on tourists' satisfaction through beta coefficients. Among the eight factors, Staff & Cleanliness has higher beta values followed by Food, Internet & Speed, Hotel interior, Security, Value for money, Awareness, Extra

facilities. Hence first hypothesis factors of hotel satisfaction have an impact on overall satisfaction is approved.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Results

R-0.89, R²- 0.80, Adj R² – 0.79, SEE -0.38

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	B	Std. Error
(Constant)	.187	.097		1.918	.057
Factor1 (Staff & Cleanliness)	.209	.019	.315	11.234	.000
Factor2 (Internet & Speed)	.148	.016	.258	9.208	.000
Factor3 (Hotel interior)	.150	.018	.238	8.424	.000
Factor4 (Value for money)	.113	.023	.153	5.005	.000
Factor5 (Awareness)	.104	.016	.145	8.468	.000
Factor 6 (Extra facilities)	.118	.025	.128	9.254	.000
Factor7 (Food)	.176	.015	.298	11.493	.000
Factor8 (Security)	.143	.020	.204	7.308	.000

Dependent Variable: satisfaction

Table 4: Correlation

	Overall satisfaction	Intention
Pearson Correlation	1	.599(**)
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
N	169	169

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlation was performed on the overall tourists’ satisfaction with hotels and their intension to return or recommend the same hotel to others. A significant correlation was found between tourist satisfaction from hotels in Pushkar and tourist’s willingness to revisit or recommend to others. This finding is similar to the previous researches. The correlation coefficient is 0.599 at 99% level of significance (See table 4). Hence second hypothesis is

approved that there is a relationship between overall tourist satisfaction with hotels and tourist's willingness to revisit or recommend to others.

A non-hierarchical clustering approach (K- means) in which the individual are iteratively moved into clusters was adopted so as to minimize the variability within clusters and maximize the variability between clusters. A non-hierarchical clustering approach was performed on the three different cluster solutions ($n = 2, 3, 4$). Comparing the results obtained from these solutions, the four cluster solution was selected for further analysis because it provided the greatest difference between clusters and it yielded the most interpretable results. Table 5 demonstrates the mean score of hotel dimensions for all the clusters.

The results of ANOVA revealed that clusters were significantly different on all factors. The first cluster comprised of 66 respondents and the mean score suggest that tourists in this cluster were highly satisfied with all the hotel factors whereas the tourists in cluster four which comprised of 50 respondents were moderately satisfied with all the hotel factors. Tourists who are in the third cluster (32 out of 169) were highly satisfied with security, value for money and staff & cleanliness and they were moderately satisfied with the other hotel factors. Tourists who were in second cluster (21 out of 169) were very satisfied with security & very dissatisfied with Extra facilities furthermore they were moderately satisfied with other hotel factors. Hence third hypothesis there is a significant difference between clusters on all factors of hotel satisfaction is approved.

Conclusion

Our findings contribute to research on customer satisfaction with hotels by exploring the tourists staying in hotels of Pushkar, an international tourists spot in Rajasthan. The study has come out with certain consumer insights, which can be used by hoteliers in designing an effective marketing strategy.

The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was carried out with the satisfaction derived from hotel attributes. The eight factors comprised of 24 items were derived and named as 'Staff & Cleanliness –Factor 1'; 'Internet & Speed –Factor 2'; 'Hotel interior –Factor 3'; 'Value for money –Factor 4'; 'Awareness –Factor 5'; 'Extra facilities –Factor 6'; 'Food– Factor 7' and 'Security-Factor8' (Table 2). The overall satisfaction from hotel was regressed on the factors to identify whether the independent variable (eight factors) exerted significant impact on the dependent variable (satisfaction). Among the eight factors, Staff & Cleanliness has higher impact followed by Food, Internet & Speed, Hotel interior, Security, Value for money, Awareness, Extra facilities (Table 3).

The results of this study validate the previous studies that tourist satisfaction results in intension to revisit or recommend to others. This conclusion is mainly based on the findings of the correlation (Table 4). This study examined whether tourists could be grouped into different sub segments based on their satisfaction with hotels. The mean score revealed that the four groups of tourists had different level of satisfaction with eight factors (Table 5).

This study adds to the understanding of tourists' satisfaction analysis, however, there are certain limitations of the present study which is noteworthy. Due to small sample size the generalization of the findings is limited. The study was conducted during a specific period in the month of January. It could be argued that the results of the study might have been different had the survey been conducted in some different period.

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