

Pilgrims' Expectations and Satisfaction in the Hospitality Industry – A Case of Katra

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Abstract:-

Hospitality is one of the most important components of tourism industry. In many regions the hospitality industry thrives only due to the presence of tourism. The service providers add facilities and features so as to attract and retain customer base. The hospitality industry of Katra township of J&K is based on the pilgrims' flow to Shri Mata Vaishno Devi. This paper tries to determine whether the hospitality industry of Katra really looks in to the customer satisfaction which is in this study the pilgrims' satisfaction when the customer flow is constant. . In order to determine this, the paper tries to find the religious expectations of pilgrims from the hospitality units like hotels of Katra; and their satisfaction level by finding the extent to which the pilgrims' expectations are met. The paper also examines the difference between male and female level of expectation and satisfaction.

Keywords: hospitality industry, satisfaction, pilgrims, expectations .

Introduction:-

Religious tourism is a fixture of both ancient and modern cultures- a constant through the ages. Religious tourism also commonly referred to faith tourism is a form of tourism by which people of faith travel individually or in group for pilgrimage, missionary or leisure (fellowship) purpose. The international conference on religious tourism estimates the worldwide faith tourism industry at \$ 18 billion. Religious tourism comprises many facets of the travel industry including pilgrimage, missionary travel, leisure and vacations, faith based cruising, crusades, conventions and rallies retreats, monastery visits and guest stays, faith based camps and religious tourist attractions. From among these facets the pilgrimage is now a major pillar of the nascent tourism strategy of many countries. Pilgrimage tourism strategies in various countries have in common that they are major growth area,

that they can be used to boost tourism even in adverse situation like terrorism.

Although no definitive study had been completed on world wide religious tourism, some segments of the industry have been measured. According to the world tourism organization, an estimated 300 to 330 million pilgrims visit the world's key religious sites every year. According to the U.S office of Travel and tourism industries, American traveling overseas for religious of pilgrimage purposes has increased from 191,000 travellers in 2002 to 633,000 travellers in 2005 (30% increase). According to the religious conference Management Association, in 2006 more than 14.7 million people attend religious meetings an increase of more than 10 million from 1994 with 4.4 million attendees. One quarter (25%) of traveler said they were currently interested in taking a spiritual vacation (e.g. religious retreat, pilgrimage) . more than one in 10 travellers (12%) said they were more interested now compared to 5 years ago in taking a spiritual vacation. The appeal of a spiritual vacation spans the ages, with approx. one-third of each age group (18-34 years old, 35-54 years old and 55 plus) expressing current interest in taking such a vacation.

At the level of countries initiatives for religious tourist, India boasts largest portion of visitors as religious pilgrims. In India, the domestic tourism is at a wider scale than the international tourism. Among the various tourism forms more than 50% of the tourism is of pilgrimage tourism type. Infact, it is religious/spiritual motivation which dominates in case of the Indian travelers. This has actually led the agrarian society of India to participate in tourism. The religious sites of India are thronged by pilgrims in lakhs. This can be estimated by the annual pilgrims' arrival to the shrine of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi, which is around 7 million. The other countries who are actively promoting religious tourism include Jordan, Cypress, Italy, Bahamas, Scotland, Switzerland and Israel. Jordan: promoting niche markets such as religious tourism is a large part of Jordan's overall tourism strategy. Cypress: launching new marketing efforts to increase religious tourism of its current 100,000

faith –based visitors annually. Italy: religious tourism in Italy alone generates \$ 4.5 billion each year. Bahamas: one of the few countries with a director of Religious Tourism and Staff dedicated to attracting faith based visitors. Scotland: projected to triple from religious tourism dollars of GBP 80-100 to GBP 300 million by 2014. Switzerland: seeking to highlight its religious sites and attract more visitors. Israel: tourism Ministry looks to boost tourism from North America. (Wikipedia encyclopedia, 2006)

In this background it can be said that the pilgrimage tourism has a wider existence. The direct benefits accrued to hospitality industry are immense. When the flow of customer base in the form of pilgrim is constant there is a natural tendency to overlook the expectations of such customers resulting into dissatisfied guests although satisfied with his/her religious motive. This study tries to determine this aspect that whether the hospitality industry really looks in to the customer satisfaction, which is in this case the pilgrims' satisfaction when the flow of the customer base is constant. While determining this, the paper determines the expectations and satisfaction of pilgrims from hospitality industry of Katra.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the hospitality and leisure (H&L) industries, employees contact with guests is perhaps the most critical part of the guests' experience. Guest service, guest satisfaction, spend rates and return rates are all affected by these interactions. The best in the industry are known for their service, having made these touch points a competitive advantage (Erdly.M et al.) Hotel managers are primarily responsible for enhancing guests' experience with their stay. Guests are obviously influenced by different touch points during their stay at the hotel: the room, reservation process, front desk services, the room and different types of value- added guest services. In order to be actionable and relevant, the guest satisfaction program must evaluate each of these contacts and provide diagnostics for improvements as well as identify areas with a high impact of guests' overall assessment of the brand.

Most of the studies into customer satisfaction in the hospitality literature have focused on identifying service attributes, which are treated as customers' needs and wants. From a marketing perspective, customer satisfaction is achieved when their needs and wants are fulfilled. There is a general widespread agreement in the literature that the provision of service quality is concerned with generating customer satisfaction (Hadjiphanis. 2000)

Consumers constantly revise their satisfaction judgments as they gain new service experience

while some researchers found that consumers weigh their prior cumulative experience more heavily than their most current individual service encounters when updating their cumulative overall satisfaction, others found the opposite result. The study of "Hotel Guests' Cumulative Satisfaction updating process in the context of service failure and service recovery" has investigated customer satisfaction updating process in the context of service failure and service recovery in the hotel industry. The results of the data analysis show that when updating overall satisfaction, participants weighed their current service encounter satisfaction more heavily than prior cumulative overall satisfaction, regardless of different levels service failure and service recovery. When one customer experience service problems, it is difficult to bring customers' satisfaction level back to where it was. (Fu yao-yi, Mount Daniel). To build lasting relationships and keep highly desirable customers coming back, one need to ensure that their experience constantly meet their high expectations (SurveyoTM). Estimates suggest that it is upto ten times more expensive to acquire a new customer than to retain an existing one. Building customer loyalty is not only the basis for repeat business, but al a means of broadening offerings and cross selling services. For a mature business customer retention is the key to increased profit (www.hospitalitynet.org).

Several researchers have studied customer satisfaction and provide theories about tourism (Bramwell, 1998; Bowen, 2001). For example, parasiraman, Zeithaml, and Berry's (1985) expectation- perception gap model, Oliver's expectancy- disconfirmation theory (Pizam and Milman,1993), Sirgy's congruity model (Sirgy,1984; Chon and Olsen ,1991), and the performance –only model (Pizam, Neumann and Reichel ,1978) have been used to measure tourist satisfaction with specific tourism destinations. In particular, expectancy- disconfirmation has received the widest acceptance among these theories because it is broadly applicable.

Pizam and Milman (1993) utilized Oliver's (1980) expectancy- disconfirmation model to improve the predictive power of travelers' satisfaction. They introduced the basic dynamic nature of the disconfirmation model into hospitality research, while testing part of the original model in a modified form. In order to assess the causal relationship between two different disconfirmation methods, they employed a regression model with a single "expectation-met" measure as the dependant variable and 21 differences –score measures as the independent variables. Some studies on customer satisfaction are also notable in tourism behavior research. For example, Pizam, Neuman and Reichel (1978) investigated the factor structure of tourists' satisfaction with their destination areas. The

authors showed eight distinguishable dimensions of tourist satisfaction.

Barsky and Labagh(1992) introduced the expectancy- disconfirmation paradigm into lodging research. Basically, the proposed model in these studies was that customer satisfaction was the function of disconfirmation, measured by nine “expectation met” factors that were weighted by attribute- specific importance. The model was tested with data collected from 100 random subjects vial guest comment cards. As a result, customer satisfaction was found to be correlated with a customer’s willingness to return

Chon and Olsen (1991) discovered a goodness of fit correlation between tourists’ expectations about their destination and tourists’ satisfaction. Then, after tourists have bought the travel service and products, if the evaluation of their experience of the travel product is better than their expectation, they will be satisfied with their travel experience. Furthermore, Chon and Olsen (1991) provided an intensive of tourist satisfaction. One thing to be noted, however, is that although the social cognition theory offers an alternative way of explaining satisfaction processes, its methodological mechanism is analogous to that of expectancy – disconfirmation theory. In other words, the concepts of congruity and incongruity can be interpreted similarly to the concepts of confirmation and disconfirmation, both of which can result in either positive or negative directions.

This study provides the demographic characters related to gender only. On the basis of this, the difference between the male and female’s level of expectation and satisfaction has been examined. The socio economic, demographic and behavioral indicators are commonly used in tourism research to profile tourists by age, gender, income, marital status, occupations, education or ethnic background. These indicators are easy to identify and use in marketing decisions (yavuaz, 1994).

Master and Prideaux (2000) analyzed the variance by age, gender, occupation and previous overseas travel of Taiwanese cultural / heritage tourists to determine if demographic and travel characteristics influenced responses on the importance of attributes and satisfaction levels. Lee (1996) examined the demographic variables of tourists in his tourism research. In particular, he investigated individuals’ trip characteristics (trip group types) and past experiences with a destination. Past experience was measured by asking tourists to indicate the number of trips they have taken to the chosen destination. His study analyzed the relationship between past experience and place attachment.

Study Area

This study has taken up a case of Katra town which is receiving nearly 7 million pilgrims

annually due to Shri Mata Vaishno Devi. Katra has been taken for the study purpose because of its huge inflow of pilgrims on the one side and due to the existence of well established hotel industry on the other hand. The Katra town has star category hotels ranging from 1 star to five star. Katra , the base camp for pilgrimage to Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Bhawan, lies at an altitude of 3000 above sea level and is located at the foothills of sub Himalayan ranges, known as Shivalik hills. The town of Katra lies at 33-59’ latitude and 74-55’ longitude and the Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine is situated at 33 01’45” N latitude and 74 01’ 50” E longitude. The town comprises of villages katra, Arli Hansali, Purana daroor and Kundorian. Katra town is basically located on a Kerewa, which is about to 2 to 2.7 Kms in widths. The kerewa is mostly composed of limestone fissure rocks. On north and northwest of this kerewa runs a sacred Banganga and on south and southwest runs Bhoomica Nallah. Katra town is located 635 kms towards the northwest of the national capital on national highway 1A and is about 50 kms from the Jammu & Kashmir’s winter capital Jammu which at present is connected by rail and air with the rest of the country. Katra town has a good linkage with its district head-quarter town of Ushampur by 18 Kms. Katra- Panthal Tikri road meets National Highway 1A at Tikri and is about 22 kms from Tikri to Udampur. It is also linked with Reasi and thereafter with Rajouri and Poonch districts via Bambla by a road maintained by Border Roads Organization.

Study Framework

The expectancy-disconfirmation theory provides a conceptual framework for this study. The expectancy-disconfirmation theory holds that consumers first form expectations of products or service performance prior to purchasing or use. Subsequently purchasing and use convey to the consumer beliefs about the actual or perceives performance of the products or services. The consumer then compares the perceived performance to prior expectations. Consumer satisfaction is seen as the outcome of the comparison (Cremons& Woodruff, 1992). As described by Oliver (1980), expectancy-disconfirmation theory consists of two sub-processes having independent effects on customer satisfaction: the formation of expectations and the disconfirmation of those expectations through performance comparisons. Moreover, a consumer’s expectation are: (a) confirmed when the product or service performance matches prior expectations, (b) negatively disconfirmed when product or service performance fails to match expectations, and (c) positively disconfirmed when perceived the product or service performance exceeds expectations. Dissatisfaction comes about when a

consumer's expectations are negatively disconfirmed; that is the product performance is less than expected (Churchill & Surprenant, 1982; Oliver & Beardon, 1985; Patterson, 1993)

Justification, scope and contribution of the study

The review of literature suggests that work has already been done in the field of satisfaction and expectations of guests in the hospitality industry but there is limited work found in the same area keeping in view pilgrims' need from the hospitality industry at the religious destination. This study thus helps to fill this gap. The study finds its scope in the religious destination with good infrastructural support in the form of accommodation units. The contribution of this research work is three fold. First, comprehending what pilgrims seek at religious destination may help tourism marketers better understand their customers. Second, identifying which attribute satisfy pilgrims could help the planners develop strategies to attract customers. Third, knowing who the satisfied tourists are may reduce marketing costs and maintain the religious destinations sustainability. Furthermore, this study contributes to the body of knowledge in satisfaction research. The findings should strengthen knowledge about the relationship between the factors that satisfy tourists after coming to a religious destination.

Objectives of the study

1. To determine the level of religious expectations of pilgrims from hospitality industry.
2. To determine the satisfaction level of pilgrims from hospitality industry.

Hypothesis

The hospitality industry of Katra looks into its guest satisfaction

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research has carried both primary and secondary data collection. The primary data collection has been done with the help of schedule. The schedule has been divided into two parts. The first part has the questions about the level of expectations of the pilgrims with the help of five point likert scale. In this scale 1 means highly unexpected and 5 means highly expected. The second part comprise of level of meeting of expectation which has also been designed on five point likert scale where 1 means highly not met and 5 means highly met. Both the parts have eight parameters namely availability of vegetarian food only, no alcoholic drinks, religiously sensitive staff,

religious ambience in the lobby of hotel, the interior décor of the rooms must have religious symbols, prepared itineraries on religious circuit for sale, information about religious destinations and information about the requirements at destinations. The sample size is 150 and the random sampling technique has been applied. The demographic profile of the respondents shows that among 150 respondents 91 are males and 59 are females. The various statistical tools applied are mean, standard deviation and t- test.

Reliability and Validity of data

To assess the reliability of the instrument, the Cronbach alpha coefficients for the questionnaire was calculated. The cronbach alpha is the most widely used index for determining internal consistency. It has been generally accepted that in the early stages of research on hypothesized measures of a construct, reliabilities of 0.70 or higher are needed, while for widely used scales, the reliabilities should not be below .80 (Nunnally, 1978). In the current survey, the value for the alpha coefficient is 0.87. This value confirms the homogeneity of the items comprising the questionnaire and indicate an acceptable level of reliability.

Validity indicates the degree to which an instrument measures the construct under investigation. Content validity refers to the subjective agreement among professionals that a scale logically appears to reflect what it purports to measure (Zikmund, 2000). In this study, content validity was strengthened through consultation and agreement of the professionals in the field.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents (N= 150)

variable	Frequency	percentage
Gender		
Male	91	60.66
Female	59	39.33

Out of the 150 questionnaires 91 of them were filled up by male and 59 by females. All the questionnaires were in usable form. Therefore the data from 150 respondents was analyzed in this study. The survey was conducted at Katra only because the study includes the responses in terms of the hospitality industry of Katra.

Table 2: Results on paired t-test between Tourists' expectations and satisfaction with attributes

S.No.	Parameters	Mean	Mean	Mean	t-value
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		satisfaction	expectation	difference	
1	Availability of vegetarian food only	4.4067	4.5333	-.1267	- 1.907
2	No alcoholic drinks	4.6733	4.7267	-.0533	- 1.016
3	Religiously sensitive staff	2.5933	4.0467	- 1.4533	- 19.267*
4	Religious ambience lobby of hotel	4.3133	4.0400	.2733	5.285*
5	The interior décor of rooms must have religious symbols	4.1400	4.0000	.1400	1.487
6	Prepared itineraries for religious circuits on sale	2.1800	4.0267	- 1.8467	- 18.721*
7	Information about the nearby religious destination	4.1733	4.3600	- .1867	- 3.771*
8	Information about the requirements at destinations	4.1733	4.3533	- .1800	- 3.591*

P* < 0.05

In the table 2 are listed 8 attributes related to provisions by a hospitality industry in the pilgrimage destination of Katra town, base camp of the Shrine of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi. The results indicate that some attributes are satisfying, some are indifferent and others are unsatisfactory. Satisfying is defined as those attributes with satisfaction scores above expectation scores (positive mean difference) and with a t- value significant at the 0.05 level. Results indicated that tourists were satisfied with “religious ambience in the lobby of hotel” and “the interior décor of the rooms having religious symbols”. However the t- values indicate that between these two it is the religious ambience in the lobby of hotel which shows significant difference. The respondents’ satisfaction with these attributes was positively disconfirmed with their expectation, which led to satisfaction in relation to those attributes.

Indifferent attributes were defined as those attribute with a non- significant t-value ($P > 0.05$), regardless of a positive or negative mean difference. Attributes such as availability of vegetarian food only” and “No alcoholic drinks” were included in the group of indifferent attributes. This showed that respondents’ satisfaction was confirmed with their expectation and resulted in neutral feelings of indifference in relation to those attributes (see table 2)

Dissatisfying attributes were defined as those attributes with expectation scores outweighing satisfaction scores (i.e. negative mean score), regardless of a significant or non-significant t-value at the 0.05 level or below. Results indicate that tourists were dissatisfied with “Religiously sensitive staff”, “ prepared itineraries for religious circuit on sale” , “information about the religious destination” & “ information about the requirement at destination”.

Table 3 Tourists’ overall level of satisfaction with the hospitality industry of Katra (N=150)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Extremely dissatisfied	3	2
Very dissatisfied	9	6
Dissatisfied	81	54
Neutral	7	4.7
Satisfied	31	20.7
Very satisfied	14	9.3
Extremely satisfied	5	3.3

Note: Overall satisfaction means ranges from 1 (extremely dissatisfied) to 7 (extremely satisfied)

Respondents were also questioned about their overall level of satisfaction with the hospitality sector of Katra town. The results are summarized in table 3. From the research findings, 33.3 percent of the respondents indicated that they were satisfied, very satisfied or extremely satisfied with the

hospitality industry. 4.7 percent were neutral in their opinions and 62 percent of the respondents were dissatisfied, very dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied. The mean value of respondents’ overall perceived level of satisfaction was 3.7733 which is in the high end of the dissatisfaction scale.

This suggests that the hospitality industry provides tourists with a dissatisfactory experience. This does

not conform with the hypothesis leading to its rejection.

Table 4: Results on independent t- test between male and female expectation with the attributes.

S.No	Parameters	Mean (Male)	Mean (Female)	Mean difference	t-value
1	Availability of vegetarian food only	4.5275	4.5424	-.01490	-.086
2	No alcoholic drinks	4.7033	4.6949	.00838	.060
3	Religiously sensitive staff	4.1648	3.8644	.30043	2.262*
4	Religious ambience in the lobby of hotel	3.8681	4.3051	-.43695	-4.971*
5	The interior décor of rooms must have religious symbols	3.9780	4.0339	-.05588	-.544
6	Prepared itineraries for religious circuits on sale	4.1099	3.8983	.21159	3.601*
7	Information about the nearby religious destination	4.5495	4.0678	.48165	6.841*
8	Information about the requirements at destinations	4.5275	4.0847	.44273	6.172*

P* < 0.05

The t- values in the table 4 shows that there is significant difference between the expectation levels of male and female with respect to the attributes namely religiously sensitive staff, religious ambience in the lobby of hotel, prepared itineraries for religious circuit on sale, information about the religious destination and information

about the requirement at destination. These attributes have P value less than 0.05 level of significance. However there is no significant difference with respect to availability of vegetarian food only, no alcoholic drinks & the interior décor of the rooms having religious symbols. These attributes have values $P \geq 0.05$

Table 5 Results on independent t- test between male and female satisfaction with the attributes.

S.No.	Parameters	Mean (Male)	Mean (Female)	Mean difference	t-value
1	Availability of vegetarian food only	4.4176	4.3898	.02775	.171
2	No alcoholic drinks	4.5495	4.8644	-.31496	-2.397*
3	Religiously sensitive staff	2.9121	2.0678	.84429	4.313*
4	Religious ambience in the lobby of hotel	4.4945	4.0339	.46061	5.535*
5	The interior décor of rooms must have religious symbols	4.5055	3.6271	.87838	5.729*
6	Prepared itineraries for religious circuits on sale	2.3846	1.8644	.52021	2.834*
7	Information about the nearby religious destination	4.5824	3.5424	1.04004	8.998*

8	Information about the requirements at destinations	4.5824	3.5424	1.04004	8.998*
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P* < 0.05

In table 5 the t- values clearly shows that there is significant difference in the satisfaction experiences by male and female except in case of the attribute “ availability of vegetarian food” only as the P value is greater than the level of significance 0.05 and t- value being lower than 1.96.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results purport three different aspects under the satisfaction and expectation study. These three aspects include satisfying attributes, satisfying attributes and indifferent attributes. The satisfying attributes are always positively disconfirmed with their expectation. In opposite to this the dissatisfying attributes are always negatively disconfirmed with the expectations. The indifferent attributes corresponds confirmation of the satisfaction with the expectations. In the study the results show two attributes namely religious ambience in the lobby of hotel and the interior décor of the rooms having religious symbols are satisfying. The respondents were asked directly while filling the schedule about what they pertain to the religious ambience in hotels. The answer was mainly signifying the presence of idol of deity or photograph of the three pindies (sacred stones) or an altar with incense burning. This shows that the pilgrims expect such behavioral aspects from the local hospitality units and they experienced something above their expectations. This experience may be attributed to the cultural festivals going on in the time of navratras (nine days devoted to the deity, two times each year). The cultural fest in navratras includes various competitions like devotional songs and selection of the best decorated hotel. In the time of the festival all hotels are decorated at their level best and they carry this along even after the fest is over.

The study reveals four dissatisfying attributes namely religiously sensitive staff, prepared itineraries for religious circuit on sale, information about the nearby religious destinations and information about the requirements at destination. These results show that the hotel units of the Katra are not consciously geared for providing customized services to the needs of their guests. Religiously sensitive staff includes certain behavioral aspects giving feel good factor towards the sentiments of pilgrims/guests as well as generating those religious/spiritual sentiments in the guests. The absence of this feature suggest for a need to train human resource of the hospitality

units in order to orient them towards this religious sensitivity.

Dissatisfaction in terms of prepared itineraries for religious circuit on sale, information about the religious destination and information about the requirement at destination all suggest that the management of the hotel units is not concerned to fulfill the related needs of their guests. They are aware that pilgrims to the shrine are coming from far off places but they are not concerned to identify and cater their needs or desire to visit the nearby religious places. This might be due to the fact that the circuits for the nearby religious places are not will marketed and the hotel units lack the initiative to make any extra effort. This might be due to lack of the proper understanding among the hoteliers that it would eventually be profitable to their business; or it might be due to the reaching of satisfaction level of the hoteliers in their business with the constant flow of the guests coming to Katra. These are some questions which need to be explored for reaching at the actual reasons behind such behaviors.

Availability of vegetarian food only and no alcoholic drinks are the indifferent attributes. As such pilgrims expected this and they experienced the same. This shows that the hoteliers are aware of these two tenets related to the Vaishnav sect of Hinduism; and they have well integrated this into their business operation. The mean values above four and not five is due to the reason that some respondents were doubtful as they were of the opinion that they never asked for these things at this religious destination but who knows about their availability or non-availability. Such doubts opens a scope for further study in which hoteliers could be asked for these things in the guise of guests to confirm whether such tenet are hundred percent integrated or not into the hotel operations.

The separate question asked to the respondents regarding the overall satisfaction with the hospitality industry of Katra was measured at 7 point likert scale. The result indicates that the respondents' overall perceived level of satisfaction is towards the high end of the dissatisfaction scale. This is due to the fact that most of the pilgrims come for limited time of two days only. After seeking the blessings of the deity they all return back. Their stay in a hotel is very short and in this short span they do not feel catered from a religious point of view. This suggest that hotels need to be made aware of the special needs of the pilgrims so as to give customer delight, which should in turn

give their businesses loyal customers and the associated benefits.

The independent t-test in case of expectations for the male and female genders also gives some interesting results. The mean values clearly show that males are less concerned with the “religious ambience in the lobby of the hotel” and to the “interior décor of rooms must have religious symbols” than females. Males are more concerned with the attributes like “prepared itineraries for religious circuits on sale”; “information about the religious destination” and “information about the requirements at destinations”. This might be due to the fact that males are more outgoing than females and female are better in aesthetic aspects than males. The t-test in case of the satisfaction for the male and female respondent’s shows that males are comparatively more satisfied in relation to their expectation levels than females except in case of the attribute “No alcoholic drinks”. This might be due to the reason that males might have come across some situation where they found chances of availability of alcohol. The higher satisfaction of males in relation to the expectations than females may also indicate that it is easy to meet the needs of males than females. However, these generalizations are all open for detailed research.

CONCLUSION

In many regions the hospitality industry’s existence is based upon the presence of tourists’ influx into the region. One of the regions is Katra which is a small town at the base of trikuta hills of Shivalik range of Udhampur district of Jammu region of the state Jammu & Kashmir. The study has two objectives. The first is to determine the level of religious expectation of pilgrims from hospitality industry and the second is to determine the level of satisfaction of pilgrims from hospitality industry. The statistical tool paired t-test has been applied to test the hypothesis- The hospitality industry of Katra looks into its guest satisfaction. This study includes random selection of 150 respondents who belong to the pilgrim population coming to Shri Mata Vaishno Devi. The demographic profiling has been done on the bases of gender only. Accordingly, among 150 respondents 91 are males and 59 are females. The attributes against which the expectations and meeting of expectations (satisfaction) have been determined are total 8 in number. From the paired t-test between tourists’ expectations and satisfaction with attributes the results obtained has helped to categorize the attributes into three categories namely satisfying, indifferent and unsatisfactory. The overall satisfaction assessed as in the table 3 indicates that there exist a significant level of difference between what is expected and what is experienced. Thus, hypothesis does not conforming it. The study has also worked upon

finding the level of expectation and satisfaction difference between male and female respondents with the help of independent t-test. In case of expectations, differences have been found with respect to religiously sensitive staff, religious ambience in the lobby of hotel, prepared itineraries for religious circuit on sale, information about the religious destination and information about the requirements at destination. However, there is no significant difference with respect to availability of vegetarian food only, no alcoholic drinks and the interior décor of the rooms having religious symbols. In case of the satisfaction, there has been found significant difference in the satisfaction experienced by male and female except in case of the attribute “availability of vegetarian food” only.

This study opens up the scope for further study over how to bridge this gap between the expectations and satisfaction of the religious tourists; and to identify the particular needs of male and female religious tourists to find ways to meet their needs. From the study it can be concluded that the hospitality industry in the Katra town is not giving any attention to the special needs of their religious guests. They need to be made aware about the pilgrims’ special needs so that they can integrate this into their hotel operations giving not only better experience to their guests but also improve their business profitability and image.

Future Research

This study gives findings about expectation levels and satisfaction levels and on these basis give about the existing differences between them. The study does not suggest about how this gap between the expectations and satisfaction could be bridged. The study also includes findings on gender basis but does not find about particular needs of male and female and how these can be met. So these aspects open up the scope for further study

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