

Tourists Perception and Satisfaction: Implications for Destination Management

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Abstract

Tourism has become an important global economic and leisure activity due to its growing acceptance and benefits. Therefore, countries engage in numerous marketing and promotional activities to attract more tourists and improve their satisfaction. If a destination can identify and satisfy the needs and wants of tourists, these tourists will probably make repeat visits and spread positive word of mouth publicity. Researchers have discussed the close relationships among the psychological variables, such as motivation, attitude, perception, and satisfaction. Therefore, it is worthwhile to use these variables to study about the tourists' behavior. The main objective of this paper is to identify the relationship between the tourists' perception and satisfaction and discuss its influence on destination management. The study adopts questionnaire survey by personal interviews with 204 tourists through convenience sampling. Correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis are employed to find the association between the variables. The result of the proposed model confirms that there is a positive correlation and linear relationship between the dependent (tourists' satisfaction) and independent variables (destination related factors that affect for the perception of the tourists). The results show that there is a positive correlation and linear relationship between the tourists' perception and the satisfaction the proposed model exists and is named as DESPER (Destination Perception). The study concluded that the tourists who visit Sri Lanka are satisfied and willing to behave positively, i.e. revisit and recommend. However, the tourists are dissatisfied with several destination related factors, therefore, the relevant and responsible authorities should take necessary actions to improve those factors.

Keywords

Destination Selection, Tourists Perception, Tourists Satisfaction, Revisit, Destination Management

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1. Introduction

Consumer satisfaction defined by the researchers is based on the relationship between the consumer's pre-purchase expectations and post purchase evaluations (Engel et al., 1990; Handy, 1977). Motivation first arouses the need of the tourists then directs the individuals to search the necessary products and services for the need gratification. As a result, the individuals make travels in destinations in order to consume diverse goods and service. If the tourists can meet their exact needs during the holiday consumption in the

destination, the tourist will be satisfied; otherwise, they will be dissatisfied. When the holiday experiences exceed the tourists' expectations, they will be delighted (Gnanapala, 2012).

Satisfaction helps to create, develop, and maintain a favorable publicity and goodwill about a tourist destination or a resort. Satisfaction is a measure of how products and services supplied by a destination meet or surpass the customer expectations. Also, the customer satisfaction is considered as an important performance indicator of a successful business operation. In a competitive tourism business, customer satisfaction is seen as the main

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differentiator and increasingly becomes the key element of business strategy (Kotler et al., 2010). Tourists travel to fulfil their dreams also considered as to have a psychological relief from the motivators that aroused the travel needs. Motivation and satisfaction are closely interrelated like two sides of a coin and tourists determine the travel decisions based on their expectations. Moutinho (1987) describes satisfaction as a function of the relationship between pre travel expectations and post travel experiences. If the tourists can meet the travel expectations during the stay in the destination, they will be satisfied. On the other hand, if they cannot meet the travel expectations, the tourists will be dissatisfied. Weber (1996) and Truong & King (2009) mentioned that satisfaction is an important concept in marketing and acts as a key influence over future purchase, market share, and the word of mouth publicity. Also, Oliver and Desarbo (1998) highlighted that if the tourists' expectations are matched with the actual performance of the product or services, he/she will be satisfied.

According to Wang et al. (2009) tourists' satisfaction is a feeling that generate through the cognitive and emotional aspects of tourism activities. It is mainly based on the tourists' expectations, destination image, perceived quality, and perceived value. Vavra (1997) stated that the customer satisfaction is the key and important criterion for determining the quality delivered to the customer through the goods and services. Since the tourism is highly service oriented industry the service providers should take the necessary actions to maintain the service standards and the quality. Barsky and Labagh (1992) emphasized that the offerings of the high quality services to satisfy the customers as the most important challenge of businesses in the decade of 1990s. In the services sector, especially in hospitality and tourism, customer satisfaction has become a major issue and a challenge since the customers' attitudes, perceptions, personality and the tolerance of ambiguity may differ from person to person. The consumers perceive the same service in different ways, therefore, the standardization of the services are more difficult than the tangible offerings.

Consumer satisfaction is important for the future well being of the tourism and hospitality organizations as well as the sustainable destination managements. National tourism organizations and other destination management organizations have undergone many issues and problems while promoting the available products and services for different target markets. Therefore, tourism and hospitality organizations needs to pay more attention in this regard. Based on the problem background the main objective of this study is to identify the relationship between the tourists' perception about the destination related factors and its effect on their satisfaction. Also, the study discusses the influence

of tourist perception and satisfaction on destination management.

2. Literature Review

The destination selection process is greatly influenced by the tourists' motives, attitudes, and perceptions. According to Lamb et al. (2014), perception is the processes by which people select, organize, and interpret stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture. Similarly, Solomon (2001) defines perception as the process by in which the sensations are selected, organized, and interpreted. Furthermore, the sensation refers to the immediate response of the human sensory receptors, i.e. eyes, ears, nose, mouth, skin to basic stimuli such as sights, sounds, smells, taste, and feelings. When consuming products and services, tourists compare the actual situation with their buying expectation. The evaluation process is highly dependent on their perception about the service quality and the product performance. Robbins (2005) defines perception as a process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their environment. According to him, three main factors are influencing the perception of the individuals. They are factors in the situation, factors in the perceiver, and factors in the target. The tourists perceive the taste, quality, and nature through the five senses and perception may be different from tourist to tourist. For example, the same service of a star class hotel may be perceived by different tourists in different ways. Therefore, the perceived service quality may directly affect the tourists' satisfaction.

According to Robbins & Coulter (2005), perception is a process by which individuals give meaning to their environment by organizing and interpreting their sensory impressions. Similarly, Solomon (2002) defines perception as the process by which physical sensations such as sights, sounds, and smells are selected, organized, and interpreted. The eventual interpretation of a stimulus allows it to be assigned a meaning. The tourists who come to a destination and consume the same products and services perceive them differently. For example, some tourists may perceive the foods and beverages served by the hotel as tasty, of quality, and cheap while some other tourists may perceive them as tasteless (more spicy, oily, salty, etc.), of low quality, and expensive. Based on tourists' attitudes and perception on what they have seen, consumed, and experienced, they develop their satisfaction or dissatisfaction about the holiday spending.

2.1. Quality, Perception and Satisfaction

Eraqi (2006) identified that the quality of the consumed products and services greatly affect tourists' satisfaction and

vice versa. There are two types of qualities such as product features which enhance the customer satisfaction and the freedom from deficiencies which increase customer satisfaction (Kotler et al., 2010). Tourists like to pay for the added costs of the additional product features that make the tourists more loyal to the business. Measurement of the service quality depends on the personal judgments about the quality and product features related to the tourists' expectations.

Quality can be viewed in another way and a distinction can be made between technical and functional quality.

"Technical quality refers to what the customer is left with after the customer employee interactions have been completed. For example technical quality relates to the guest room in the hotel, the meals in the restaurant. Functional quality is the process of delivering the service or product. While the service is being delivered, customers go through many interactions with the firm's employees. A guest makes a reservation, is greeted by the door attendant, is escorted to the room. The experience of checking into a hotel is an example of functional quality. Excellent functional quality may make up for a room that is not quite up to expectations. If functional quality is unpleasant, a high quality room might not overcome the guests' previous dissatisfaction" (Kotler et al., 2010, p. 407).

In addition to the technical and functional quality, Kotler et al. (2010) introduced a third quality element as societal quality. Societal quality is a credence quality which cannot be evaluated by the tourists before buying the products and is often impossible to evaluate after purchase. Business organizations should consider their ethical responsibilities when developing and delivering products and services, avoiding product features that can cause harm and potential safety hazards for the consumers. These features may not affect customer dissatisfaction immediately, but in the long run, it can bring more undesirable situations. Hotel and restaurant managers need to be more concerned about these issues since negative publicity destroys their goodwill hastily.

There are many studies which have been carried out by different researchers in different contexts to identify the factors that affect the tourists' satisfaction and associated consequences. According to Alegre & Garau (2010), the negative attributes of the destination considerably cause the dissatisfaction among the tourists. Such attributes include too much construction, street prostitution, polluted resorts, queues and delay services, unavailability of favorite foods and drinks, overcrowding, lack of sanitary facilities, foreign currency exchange problems, slow customer clearance, etc. Truong and King (2009) identify the factors that affect the satisfaction of the Chinese tourists who visit in Vietnam. The

factors include variety and beautiful scenery, variety of activities, quality and variety of restaurants, quality and standard of accommodation, safety, friendliness and hospitality of local people, availability of shopping facilities, availability of nightlife and entertainment facilities, prices of souvenirs and gifts, service level of immigration and customs clearance, political stability of the destination, social and educational value of the tour, variety of cultural events and festivals, etc.

Poon and Low (2005) investigate tourists' perception and satisfaction about the Malaysian Hotel facilities using two groups such as the Western and Asian travelers. The findings highlighted that the Asian tourists were satisfied with the factors i.e. price levels, food and beverages, hospitality of the host, recreational and entertainment facilities, accommodation facilities, location, transportation, security & safety, and payments. Similarly, Western travelers were satisfied with the hotel factors i.e. security and safety, hospitality of the host, food & beverages, accommodation facilities, recreational and entertainment facilities, supplementary services, appearance, location, transportation, and payment.

Eraqi (2006) investigates the tourism services quality in Egypt and identified the factors that affect customer satisfaction. According to him, the tourists' satisfaction of quality depends upon a number of criteria, such as the general evaluation of tourism services, the extent to which tourists are satisfied with the hotel's services, customer value related to tourism services' prices, level of services at accommodations, internal transport quality, the extent to which tourism services prices at suitable levels, and tourists' desire to repeat his/her visit. The results indicated that the majority of tourists are satisfied with tourism services in Egypt and rated them as good (71%), weak (18%), and fair (11%).

Recently, Hasegawa (2010) identifies the satisfaction of the tourists who visited Hokkaido, Japan and concluded the factors of scenic beauty and meals to have the largest influence on the overall satisfaction of the tourists. In addition to that, souvenir items, accommodation, services, transportation facilities, and tourist facilities also influenced their satisfaction. Nash et al. (2006) identifies the factors that affect the satisfaction of the backpacker tourists as price, location, cleanliness of rooms, value for money and the presence of self-catering facilities etc. Huang & Sarigöllü (2008) argue that the core and secondary factors of the destination affect the tourists' satisfaction. The core factors are the fun & sun, ecotourism, outdoor adventure, sea sport and entertainment. The secondary factors represent the infrastructure & services, safety, convenience and cost. Similarly, Kozak (2002) investigates the factors that affect the satisfaction of German and British backpacker tourists. He concludes that accommodation services, local transport

services, hygiene and sanitation, hospitality and customer care, facilities and activities, price levels, language and communication and airport services affect the overall satisfaction of the tourists.

Choi & Chub (2001) investigate the determinants of hotel guests' satisfaction and their repeat patronage in Hong Kong hotel industry with using a multiple regression analysis. They identified seven hotel factors as the determinants of the tourists' satisfaction, i.e. staff service quality, room qualities, general amenities, business services, value, security and IDD facilities. Among them, staff service quality, room qualities, and value are considered the most influential factors for the tourists' overall satisfaction.

Master & Prideaux (2000) examine the role of culture and its influence on visitor satisfaction using 150 Taiwanese who travelled in South East Queensland. The findings concluded that the culture did not play a major role in determining the satisfaction. The majority of the tourists are satisfied with the holidays. The tourists believed that the facilities and services were important determinants of the holiday satisfaction. Furthermore, the tourists tolerate the cross-cultural differences and they did not evaluate the overall satisfaction based on the cultural differences.

Kim & Lee (2010) examine the relative importance of perceived service quality, customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions of the tourists in South Korea. It indicates that the destination related tangibles and responsiveness were highly influential factors for customer satisfaction. Furthermore, the study revealed the consequences of customer satisfaction as Word Of Mouth (WOM) communication, purchase intentions, and complaining behavior. Similarly, Ladhari et al. (2008) explores the determinants and consequences of dining satisfaction of tourists regarding the restaurant services in Korea as positive emotions, perceived service quality, and negative emotions. Positive emotions are more important and it mediated the impact of perceived service quality on dining satisfaction. The satisfied customers gave positive recommendations, developed loyalty, and even liked to pay more. Further, Wu & Liang (2009) investigate customer satisfaction with service encounters in luxury hotels in Taiwan and identified the restaurant environment and interactions with the service employees and other customers influence positively and directly the customer satisfaction.

Akama & Kieti (2003) argue the existing exogenous factors are responsible for the decline and poor performance of Kenya's tourism industry. The exogenous factors are the increasing negative perception of the tourists about Kenya as an insecure tourist destination and the poor infrastructure conditions and facilities, especially, the poor transport

network.

Chang et al. (2006) identifies the interaction between the salespeople and shoppers is a vital component of product delivery and thus influence the shoppers' consumption motives and satisfaction. The destination attributes affect the perceived quality of tourist offerings and those factors are positively related to the tourists satisfaction and their behavioral intentions also confirmed that there is a positive relationship between the tourists' satisfaction and the behavioral intentions (Zabkar et al., 2010).

Nield et al. (2000) identifies the value for money, quality of foods, number of dishes, standard of food services, variety of dishes, presentation of food and speed of service, attractiveness of the surroundings influence the overall food service experience and satisfaction of the tourists in Romania. Thompson & Schofield (2007) identify factors related to the public transport system of the destination i.e. ease of use, efficiency and safety, and good parking affect for the tourists satisfaction.

2.2. Measurements of Satisfaction

Different research models and frameworks (instruments) have been developed to identify and measure the tourists' satisfaction related to a place/resort or a destination. There are four major instruments widely applied and discussed by researchers i.e. Importance – Performance Analysis - IPA (Fishbein, 1963); Martilla & Jemes, 1977; Evans & Chon, 1989; Almanza, Jaffe, & Lin, 1994; Duke, & Persia, 1996), SERVQUAL - Service Quality (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Johns and Howard, 1998; Abdullah, 2005; Carman, 1990; Smith, 1995; Babakus & Boller, 1992; Brown et al., 1993), SERVPERF - Service Perception (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Boulding et al., 1993, Lee et al., 2000; Parker & Mathew, 2001) and HOLSAT - Holiday Satisfaction (Alegre & Garau, 2010; Aguilo, Alegre, & Sard, 2005; Baker & Crompton, 2000; Danaher & Arweiler, 1996; Kozak, 2003; Pizam & Ellies, 1999; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Tribe & Snaith, 1998; Truong, 2005; Truong & Foster, 2006).

3. Methodology

The research is designed using the positivism research paradigm. As highlighted by Jennings (2001) the positivism believe that the world is guiding by the scientific rules that explain the behaviour of phenomena through causal relationships; therefore the facts needs to be deductively derived. The positivism or qualitative research deals with numbers; the data are numerical and analyzed by using statistical tools to answer research question or to examine the research hypothesis. The study predict that the tourist satisfaction is depended on their perception related to the

destination and associated factors.

Therefore, the research adopts questionnaire survey by personal interviews with international tourists while they were spending their holidays in Sri Lanka. Questionnaire survey was conducted with 204 respondents by convenience sampling. The researcher believes that questionnaire survey is the most suitable, valuable, and convenient method for this study. Surveys can be used for descriptive, explanations, and exploratory purposes. Survey research is the best method available to the social scientists, who are interested in collecting original data to describe the population (Gupta,

2005).

The study employed both primary and secondary datum. The primary data was collected through the questionnaire survey with personal interviews. The questionnaire comprises of four main sections. The first section was developed to identify the tourists' demographics and travelling related characteristics. The second section was employed to identify the tourists' perception about the tourism products and services consumed during the holiday with the five-point Likert Scale. The final section was utilized to discover the tourists' overall satisfaction about the holiday stay.

Table 1. Correlation Analysis.

		Y	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7	X8	X9
Y	Pearson Correlation	1									
	Sig. (2-tailed)										
	N	204									
X1	Pearson Correlation	.288(**)									
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000									
	N	204	204								
X2	Pearson Correlation	.326(**)	.520(**)								
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000								
	N	204	204	204							
X3	Pearson Correlation	.349(**)	.383(**)	.399(**)							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000							
	N	204	204	204	204	204					
X4	Pearson Correlation	.321(**)	.146(*)	.372(**)	.401(**)	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	0.037	.000	.000						
	N	204	204	204	204	204					
X5	Pearson Correlation	.251(**)	.378(**)	.524(**)	.300(**)	.402(**)					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000					
	N	204	204	204	204	204	204				
X6	Pearson Correlation	.242(**)	.442(**)	.509(**)	.319(**)	.290(**)	.579(**)				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000				
	N	204	204	204	204	204	204	204			
X7	Pearson Correlation	.276(**)	.286(**)	.432(**)	.366(**)	.390(**)	.547(**)	.347(**)			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000			
	N	204	204	204	204	204	204	204	204		
X8	Pearson Correlation	.231(**)	.390(**)	.347(**)	.267(**)	.243(**)	.402(**)	.535(**)	.503(**)		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		
	N	204	204	204	204	204	204	204	204	204	204
X9	Pearson Correlation	0.122	.226(**)	.330(**)	0.081	.144(*)	.401(**)	.449(**)	.215(**)	.211(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.082	0.001	.000	0.247	0.04	.000	.000	0.002	0.002	
	N	204	204	204	204	204	204	204	204	204	204

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

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

3.1. Data Analysis and Presentation

Mainly the qualitative data analysis methods are employed. Advanced statistical analysis such as descriptive statistics, factor analysis, and principal component analysis are used for data reduction. Correlation analysis, simple and multiple regression analysis are employed to find the association between dependent and independent variable(s), while ANOVA was used to obtain the research findings and

Mallows' CP statistic to select the best subset.

3.2. The Model

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \beta_7 X_7 + \beta_8 X_8 + \beta_9 X_9 + \epsilon_i$$

Dependent Variable:

Y = Tourists Satisfaction on the Holiday stay in Sri Lanka

X = Independent Variables: Affecting factors for the Tourists'

Perception about the destination

X₁ = Tourists' Attractions

X₂ = Accommodation & Entertainment

X₃ = Food & Beverages

X₄ = Behavior of Staff

X₅ = Safety & Security

X₆ = Guide Services and Information

X₇ = Price Levels

X₈ = Nature of the selling Products and Behavior of the Vendors

X₉ = Infrastructure and super structure facilities

4. Results & Discussions

4.1. Correlation Among the Dependent and Independent Variables

Correlation measures the degree to which two variables are associated with or relate to each other and it does not provide a test of cause and effects (Seiler, 2004). Theoretically a correlation coefficient can take on any value between and including -1 and +1. A value of -1 or close to it, means that the two variables move in the opposite directions. A correlation coefficient of +1 or close to it, means that the two variables move in the same direction by the exact same amount. In the middle is the case where the correlation coefficient is equal to 0 and the variables move independently from one to another.

According to Table 1 the correlation between Y and X1 is (r) = 0.288 and (p = 0.000), and it is confirmed that at the 1% level of significance, there is a positive correlation between Y and X1. Similarly, it is conformed at the 1% level of significance, there exists a positive correlation between the variables (Y, X2), (Y, X3), (Y, X4) (Y, X5), (Y, X6), (Y, X7) and (Y, X8). In addition, there is a positive correlation between variables Y and X9 and confirmed at the 5% level of significant.

The results of the correlation analysis communicate valuable insights and practical ideas to the destination managers and marketers. The findings imply that, if the destination improves the quality of tourists' attractions and other supportive products and services, the tourists' satisfactions will be improved and vice versa. The situation is similar for the dependent variable and all other observed independent variables of the model. For example, there is a positive correlation between quality of staff and the quality of food and beverages supply.

Therefore, the hoteliers can take actions like undertaking

more training and development activities for the staff, introducing diverse methods for employee motivation, recruiting high skilled and educated employees, which will increase the quality of food and beverages supply, and vice versa. Finally, it will lead to the improvement of the positive perception and satisfaction of the tourists. The improvement of one destination related factors (e.g. quality of staff) simultaneously improves the tourists' satisfaction related to other destination related factors (e.g. quality of the food and beverages) and vice versa.

4.2. Multiple Regression Analysis

The main rationale of the multiple regression analysis is to learn more about the relationship between more independent variables (factors related to the destination) and the dependent variable (tourists satisfaction). Here the researcher has done a multiple regression analysis between dependent variable Y (tourists' perception) and independent variables. The tables 2 A, & 2 B will display the results of the analysis and it will be followed by the discussion of the results.

Table 2A. Model Summary.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.450(a)	.203	.166	.48659548

a Predictors: (Constant), X9, X3, X8, X4, X1, X7, X2, X5, X6

Table 2B. ANOVA(b).

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	11.692	9	1.299	5.487	.000(a)
	Residual	45.934	194	.237		
	Total	57.626	203			

a Predictors: (Constant), X1, X2, X3, X4, X5, X6, X7, X8, X9
b Dependent Variable: Y

In the table 2B (F value = 5.487, and p = 0.000) and it is confirmed that, there, exists a multiple regression model between Y (tourists satisfaction) and the independent variables (tourists perception on the destination related factors) at the 1% level of significance. The R² of this model is (R²=20.3%), and this value is reasonable for Likert Scale data.

The regression model is $Y = 2.930 + 0.092X_1 + 0.064X_2 + 0.081X_3 + 0.117X_4 - 0.009X_5 + 0.000X_6 + 0.042X_7 + 0.024X_8 + 0.006X_9$

From the above overall analysis it is conformed that there is a positive correlation between tourists perception about the destination and their satisfaction and it is conformed at 1% level of significance that is an association between dependent variables.

4.3. Determinants of Tourists' Perception and Satisfactions

After the identification of the nine factor loadings, we tested the multiple regression analysis to examine whether and to what extent the nine destination related factors have influenced tourists' satisfaction about the stay in Sri Lanka as a sustainable tourist destination.

Table 3. Regression Results of Tourists' overall Satisfaction about Sri Lanka based on factor scores.

Dependent Variable	Tourists' Satisfaction during their stay in Sri Lanka		
Independent Variables	Nine orthogonal factors representing the tourists perception about the services and facilities consumed at the holiday stay		
Goodness-of-fit			
Multiple R = 0.450			
R ² = 0.203			
Adjusted R ² = 0.166			
Standard Error = 0.4866			
F – ratio = 5.487			
Significance P = 0.0000			
Variables in the Equation			
Independent Variables	P	R ² Explained	Beta, b
Tourists Attractions (X1)	.000	0.083	0.222 ^a
Accommodation & Entertainment (X2)	.000	0.106	0.208 ^a
Food & Beverages (X3)	.000	0.122	0.171 ^a
Behavior of Staff (X4)	.000	0.103	0.216 ^a
Safety & Security (X5)	.000	0.063	0.129 ^a
Guide Services and Information Supply (X6)	.000	0.059	0.075 ^a
Price Levels (X7)	.000	0.076	0.199 ^a
Nature of the Selling Products and Behavior of the Vendors (X8)	.001	0.054	0.139 ^a
Infrastructure and Super-structure facilities (X9)	.082	0.015	0.070 ^b

^a P ≤ 0.01

^b P ≤ 0.05

Table 3 has demonstrated the results of the regression analysis. According to the coefficient of determination (R² = 0.203), the nine destination related factors gave an acceptable results in predicting the tourists are satisfied about Sri Lankan tourism products and offerings. Furthermore, the analysis has indicated that tourists have experienced and satisfied with the nine factors related to the destination, as shown in the multiple correlation coefficients (R) of 0.450. The result has indicated the F – ratio as 5.487 and it suggests that the multiple regression model that we have developed and adopted as reasonable and significant.

Beta coefficients (b₁ – b₉) of the model explained the relative important of the nine, destination related in influencing the tourists' overall satisfaction about the destination. The results have indicated that all the nine factors remained significant in the regression analysis with different values of the beta coefficients, and that indicates the contributing the different

weights to the variance of tourists' overall perception. When we consider about the beta values of the nine independent variables, Factor 1 (Quality of Attractions, b₁ = 0.222) supported positively in explaining the tourists' overall satisfaction, followed by Factor 2 (Quality of Accommodation & Entertainment, b₂ = 0.208), Factor 3 (Quality of Food & Beverages, b₃ = 0.171), Factor 4 (Quality of Staff, b₄ = 0.216), Factor 5 (Safety & Security situation of Sri Lanka, b₅ = 0.129), Factor 6 (Quality of Guide Services and Information Supply, b₆ = 0.075), Factor 7 (Tourist Prices, b₇ = 0.199), Factor 8 (Nature of the Selling Products and Behavior of the Vendors, b₈ = 0.139) and Factor 9 (Infrastructure and Super-structure facilities, b₉ = 0.070).

5. Implications for Destination Management

The results communicate valuable insights and practical ideas to the destination managers and marketers. It implies that, if the destination improves the quality of tourists' attractions and other supportive products and services, the tourists' perceptions and satisfactions of the tourists will be improved and vice versa. Therefore, for example, the hoteliers can take actions like undertaking more training and development activities for the staff, introducing diverse methods for employee motivation, recruiting high skilled and educated employees, which will increase the quality of food and beverages supply, and vice versa. The improvement of one destination related factor (e.g. quality of staff) simultaneously improves the tourists' perception and satisfaction related to other destination related factor (e.g. quality of the food and beverages) and vice versa.

The potential behaviour of the tourist depends on how he/she perceives the quality and value of the product. Tourists value the destination products in different manner and expect diverse benefits through their holidays. The destinations should carefully study about their target markets and should understand what factors bring value to them. Consequently, it has becomes an immense challenge for the destination managers to increase the value bundle associated with their products and offerings.

The proceeding parts discuss the destination related nine orthogonal factors which influence the tourists' perception and satisfaction levels.

5.1. Tourists' Attractions

Attractions are the major determinants for tourists in selecting a destination, which are also known as the pull travel motives of the tourists. Tourists like to get maximum experience and satisfaction through exploring and enjoying

such attractions. Results highlight that the quality of the attractions has a positive influence on tourists' perception, which would lead them towards higher satisfaction levels. However, it is necessary to provide the adequate infrastructures and other facilities within and outside of the attractions. Furthermore, there should be viable programs to preserve and maintain the quality of attractions, customer education and interpretation programs for tourists' sites and community awareness programs to communicate the importance and benefits of tourism and to take preventive measures to overcome the negative impacts, etc.

Highly satisfied and loyal tourists create positive Word Of Mouth publicity (WOM) and it is the most powerful influence for the purchasing decision of the potential tourists. It costs four to six times to attract new customer than to retain the existing customers (Kotler et al., 2010). A satisfied tourist will talk favorably about their satisfaction related to a holiday destination or a hotel, which will spread the positive publicity. According to Kotler et al. (2010), a satisfied tourist will tell five others about their positive experiences, while a dissatisfied tourist will tell ten or more others about their negative experiences.

5.2. Accommodation & Entertainment

Accommodation in tourism is known as the second home of the tourists and researchers have identified that many facilities and services affect the hotel selection and tourists' satisfaction. For example, cleanliness and hygiene of the hotel & rooms (Atkinson, 1988; Knutson, 1988; Saleh & Ryan, 1992), conformability, spacious, ventilated and proper maintained rooms (Knutson, 1988; Saleh & Ryan, 1992), and proper room facilities and services i.e. well equipped and safety features of the bathrooms, proper and better lighting, proper door locks with safety, clean bed linen and mattresses (Ruys & Wei, 1998), entertainment, sports & recreational facilities (Knutson, 1988; Saleh & Ryan, 1992). Poon & Low (2005) identified the efficient front desk, friendly & communicative, pleasant staff, prompt & courteous service, congeniality of information counter, and language proficiency of staff affect the tourist satisfaction.

This research measures and identifies the tourists' perception and satisfaction regarding the accommodation facilities, room services & maintenance, quality & standards of bathrooms, night life & entertainments, shopping facilities, sport & recreation facilities. The results highlight the positive influence of quality of the accommodation and entertainment facilities on perception, which leads tourists towards higher satisfaction levels.

Hotel management should also ensure the consistency of the facilities and standards that are disseminated through the

promotional materials; otherwise, the tourists will be dissatisfied and results in negative word of mouth publicity. A considerable number of tourists are dissatisfied with the quality and standard of the bathrooms since they equally value the sleeping and bathroom facilities. Tourists expect well fitted, properly clean, maintained, spacious, and fresh bathrooms.

5.3. Food & Beverages

High quality food and beverages play a vital role in any travel experiences. There is an increased recognition for food and beverages as prime travel motivators of tourists. The tourists have to make their own choices about where to stay, what to eat, what to drink and what to do during their holidays. Sri Lanka is a gastronomic food heaven offering a wide range of cuisines. Its multi-ethnic society has created a melting pot of culinary delights encompassing Sri Lankan, Western, Chinese, Indian and other International cuisines. In this study, we identify a positive relationship between the tourists' perception and satisfaction regarding the quality & taste of foods, quality & taste of beverages, variety of foods, reasonability of food prices, food serving methods, and ability to eat your favorite foods.

Sri Lanka is very famous for its hospitality and food culture since ancient times and this has influenced tourists as a pull travel motive and also be considered as a unique selling point of Sri Lankan tourism. Therefore, the hoteliers should develop better promotional and marketing campaigns to attract more tourists through promoting Sri Lankan hospitality and food culture, i.e. gourmet tourists.

A considerable number of tourists have highlighted that they cannot eat their favorite native foods because most of the hotels go for the mass services through buffet meals. Kotler et al. (2010) suggested the customer concept in which every customer is considered as a separate market and it is also known as the one to one or individual marketing. One to one marketing refers to marketing strategies applied directly to a specific consumer. Having knowledge of the consumer preferences, it is suggested to personalize products and promotions to each consumer. The hoteliers can prepare meals according to the request and requirements of the tourists, which would be more profitable and also improves the tourists' satisfaction levels.

5.4. Staff & Service Quality

The term quality products and services have emerged as an important area in destination management and marketing. When the competition in the industry increases gradually, the managers are more concerned about quality improvements. Ritz Carlton became the first hospitality company to win the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in 1992 (Kotler et

al., 2010). Tourism and hospitality is a highly service oriented industry and involves high degree of contacts and coordination between employees and guests. Therefore, it has become a big challenge for the tourism and hospitality marketers to go for total quality management (Kotler et al., 2010). However, they must take the necessary actions and programs to ensure the total quality management of the services because the failures and mistakes affect the guests perception about the quality, which is closely associated to the customer satisfaction.

We measure and identify the tourists' perception and satisfaction related to talents and capability of staff, service quality, communication skills, friendly & responsiveness, and honesty and politeness. The tourists are satisfied about the behavior of the staff and quality services offered by the hoteliers. The employees need to understand the different behaviors of the tourists clearly, so human skills are more important as technical skills. The self-motivated, polite, honest and skillful employees are the assets of tourism; they can make things to be delightful to the customers. During the questionnaire survey, the tourists expressed that it is necessary to improve the employees' communication skills, i.e. both English and foreign languages. Excellent communication skill is important, because customers pay not only for the product, food, rooms or other facilities, but they also pay for the services and facilities. Therefore, the perceived service quality depends much on the communication ability and skills of the employees.

5.5. Safety & Security

Tourists prefer to travel in secure locations. Therefore, when selecting a destination, the tourists give more priority for the safety and security situation of the destination. We measure and identify the tourists' perception and satisfaction regarding the following factors: overall safety situation of Sri Lanka, medical care, security and safety measures, sanitary facilities, behavior of beach boys, and behavior of locals/Sri Lankans.

The results highlight that safety and security arrangement and situations have positive influences on the level of perception, which leads the tourists towards higher satisfaction levels. After ending the thirty-year old terrorism problem, specifically which occurred in the north and east regions of Sri Lanka, the country has developed a secure and safety destination for tourists to have enjoyable and memorable holidays. The majority of the tourists highlighted that the behaviors of the beach boys hindered their satisfaction. As far as sustainable tourism is concerned, the negative behaviors of the beach boys badly affect the future well being of the industry. Also, researchers have highlighted that the beach boys are a common problem in developing countries and are

difficult to eliminate the issue totally since it is highly related to the economic, political and socio cultural factors of those countries (Gunn, 1988; Hall, 2000; Inskip, 1991). Therefore, the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority and the relevant government authorities should take immediate actions to manage the beach boys' problems with the support of the hoteliers and local community.

5.6. Guide Services and Information

The tour guides are the closely associated persons with the tourists throughout the round tours and holidays and their behavior greatly affects the tourists' satisfaction or dissatisfaction. In this study, we measure and identify the tourists' perception and satisfaction regarding the quality, friendliness & responsiveness, communication skills (English & foreign languages), site explanations, and ability to provide relevant information.

The results communicate the tour guides are more responsible, dedicated and friendly people, and they added value to the holiday spending and satisfaction. However, some tourists highlighted that they are somewhat dissatisfied with the communication skills of the tour guide lecturers, especially, their foreign languages, and the ability to obtain relevant and accurate information. Since a holiday is usually a well planned activity, the tourists have done some preparation, such as collecting more information about the destination during the decision making stage. Therefore, the tourists come with a relatively good knowledge about the areas and aspects of the destination. During the stay at the destination, tourists like to gather more information to upgrade their knowledge. Perhaps, they get somewhat contradictory information from the tour guides when compared to the facts and details that they have collected during the preparation stage of their holidays. This may lead the tourists towards more confusion and frustration. The Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) as the National Tourism Organization (NTO) and the destination manager has to take actions to prevent such unfavorable situations. It is necessary to absorb educated and talented youth to be trained as the tour guides. Also, it is required to introduce/improve directions, signs, and information about the tourists' attractions especially in English and other popular foreign languages.

5.7. Price Levels

Price is one of the key factors in deciding about whether and where to have holidays. In tourism, there are two kinds of travelers: price sensitive economy travelers and less or no price sensitive upper market travelers. Since the majority of travelers are belonging to the price sensitive category, they pay much attention about the price levels and the value for

money of the destination.

The tourists highlighted that there are price variations of the good and services from place to place. It is acceptable to have a little variation of prices in different places. However, when the variation is vast, the tourists may refrain from buying and causes dissatisfaction. Such behaviors generate low income and cause negative word of mouth publicity, which is not healthy as far as the future of the Sri Lankan tourism industry is concerned. If the tourists buy enough goods in their holidays, it will help to create more opportunities through the supportive industries i.e. jobs, income and other benefits. Most of the vendors think of tourists as money generating machines; however, it is necessary to think fairly and reasonably to optimize the advantages. It is necessary to take actions to regulate and control the malpractices of the vendors.

5.8. Behavior of Vendors

Tourists like to buy high quality, valuable and useful objects to keep as souvenirs to remember their memorable holiday experiences and also to give their friends and relatives as gifts. Therefore, tourists prefer to shop in convenient places leisurely.

Here, we measure and identify the tourists' perception and satisfaction regarding the quality of the selling products, price levels, behaviors, language ability, and the value for money. A significant number of tourists highlighted that they are dissatisfied with the behavior of local vendors and the language ability, especially in small shops. Since most of the souvenir and other domestic products are unfamiliar for the tourists, they like to know more about the products before buying them. Therefore, it is necessary to communicate freely and friendly, in which language has become a barrier. Also, the vendors make exaggerated efforts to sell their products. The sellers always overly persuade the tourists and they dislike and hate such behaviors. The unfriendly behaviors cause the negative perception and dissatisfaction among the tourists. It is necessary to introduce awareness and short term training programs for the vendors with the initiation of Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority to improve the quality of the selling behaviors as well as the language skills.

5.9. Infrastructure and Superstructure Facilities

Tourism is highly interrelated with other sectors of the country and is difficult to develop tourism as an isolated industry. Hence, the tourism and infrastructure and superstructure facilities should be developed simultaneously. In addition, the improved facilities are demanded by the tourists as well as local residents and the improved facilities

symbolize the economic development of the country. Future growth and development of tourism depend on these factors. Here, we measure and identify the tourists' perception and satisfaction regarding the quality of roads, safety of roads & traffics, banking services, internet & IDD facilities, and customs & airport services.

A considerable number of tourists emphasize that they are highly dissatisfied about the quality of roads and traffics conditions and urge the government to take necessary actions to improve them. Therefore, the Sri Lankan government should take short term and long term measures and strategies to improve the quality and safety of roads. The tourists do not want to spend more hours in roads and traffic jams which could be spent in enjoying the tourist sites. Tourists' satisfaction can be increased though improving the unsatisfactory factors.

Tourists' expectations are based on market and promotional information, past purchasing experiences, and opinions and advise of friends and relatives. However, marketers may over-exaggerate their services and facilities through their marketing and promotional materials, which may have negative impact on the tourists' satisfaction. The destinations should carefully study and identify the different expectations of the tourists. Satisfying or delighting the tourists help creates emotional ties with the destinations' products and services, which will finally lead to loyalty. Satisfied and loyal tourists are more profitable to the tourism businesses, because they make repeat visit in the same destination. They are less price sensitive, lifelong, and talk favorably to the friends and relatives about the destination. Finally, it is possible to have positive word of mouth publicity through the satisfied tourists in order to have competitive advantages.

According to Kotler et al. (2003), customer satisfaction and customer loyalty are two interrelated but different fields. Customer loyalty measures how likely customers return and their willingness to perform business partner activities with a particular organization. Tourists' satisfaction is very important in tourism and the satisfaction or delight drives the tourists towards loyalty

6. Conclusion

The study focuses on identifying the international tourists' perceptions and satisfaction on their holiday stay and its implication for destination management with reference to Sri Lanka. A regression model is utilized to identify the tourists' perception and satisfaction by using and measuring nine destination related independent variables.

According to the regression analysis, it is clear to see that when each factor is considered individually, each one is

significant, which implies that those factors are influencing the positive perception and satisfaction of the tourists. Nine orthogonal factors are used in the correlation and the linear regression analyses, which reveal that there exist strong positive correlation between the tourists' satisfactions and their behavioral intentions. Furthermore, it proves that the adopted model exists. We name it as DESPER (Destination Perception), which can be applied to any destination to identify the tourists' satisfaction by employing the same variables or modifying the variables according to the context.

Even though the tourists are satisfied and like to behave positively a considerable number of tourists are dissatisfied and developed negative perceptions about certain areas of the destination i.e. poor road conditions and traffic, behavior of the local vendors, less entertainment & recreational facilities, poor communication skills of the employees, behavior of the beach boys, price discrimination and behavior of the custom and airport staff.

This study conveys many important implications to develop sustainable destination marketing strategies. It is necessary to target the tourists' psychological makeup through effective marketing and promotional strategies. The perception and satisfaction of the tourists can be improved further through improving the quality and standards of the destination related factors. The success of the destination depends highly on the clear understanding of the tourists' satisfaction which directs them towards destination loyalty.

The destination managers should consider and pay more attention to the travel motivation of the tourists to improve and ensure the expected satisfaction through positive perception and travel experiences. The pull motives are related to the destination products, services and other attributes and most of them are common and the tourists can find similar products and attributes from other competing destinations. Therefore, the marketers should think about the competitive advantages, the ways and means of achieving them, and the unique selling points of the destination. The managers need to understand: What special benefits can the tourists receive from your destination/products? Why should the tourists buy/stay in your destination? Why should the tourists choose the destination over another?

The managers should consider more about whether the tourists are satisfied with the exact travel motives of the destination. If the tourists are satisfied with the exact needs, it will lead them towards the destination loyalty. The destination loyalty will be displayed through many ways, such as revisiting, recommendation, positive word of mouth publicity, etc. As concluding remarks, the tourists who have visited Sri Lanka have developed positive perception and satisfactions, which lead them to the destination loyalty.

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