

## Some Issues on The Effect of Tourism Service Quality and Satisfaction of Foreign Tourist in Tamilnadu



### Commerce

**KEYWORDS :** Service Quality; Tourist Satisfaction; Tourism; Tamilnadu.

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aims to assess tourists perceptions towards quality tourism services provided at Tamilnadu historical site, and to measure tourist satisfaction by examining the impact of quality tourism product on overall tourist satisfaction. Tamil Nadu, a place of peace and serenity in the far south of the Indian sub-continent with its feet washed by the Indian Ocean, is a paradise for tourists. People who come here go back with an everlasting memory of the land and people. Tamil Nadu is a land of magnificent temples that remain intact exposing the marvel and glory of the Dravidian culture, art, architecture and spiritual values. Not only temples but Churches and mosques too, declare the inbuilt secularism of the land: Maximum population is Hindu (88.67%), followed by Muslims (5.47), Christians (5.69%), Sikhs (0.01%), Jain (0.12%), and Others (0.04%). Numerous festivals and fairs, throughout the year add colour to the scenic beauties at numerous destinations. The ancient glory and modern hub of life mingle amazingly well, giving joy and soothing comforts. Long, sandy and sunny beaches abound to brace one's health and enhance happiness. It is also a land of sanctuaries for birds and animals, forests, mountains, hill stations, natural sceneries and waterfalls – enough to forget everything else and be immersed in enchanting beauty. Modern amusement theme parks have come up in various places to provide heartthrobbing and thrilling experience to young and old.*

### Introduction

The people of Tamil Nadu are traditionally hospitable and friendly – making one feel at home while being there. 2.1 Evolution of Tamil Nadu Tamil Nadu is said to be older than Northern India. North India and the Himalayan ranges appeared on the globe recently in terms of geological time scale. Tamil Nadu existed before that as part of the continent that linked Africa and Australia together. It was called Lemuria or Kumarik Kadam. So the origin of the first man should have taken place somewhere in this continent, and later, the race should have migrated to various parts of the world. The Tamil or the Dravidians are therefore one of the earliest races of the world. Prehistoric tools and weapons and burial sites have been discovered in various parts of Tamil Nadu. The earliest known period of organised life and history of the Tamils belongs to the Sangam Age.

Tourism is one of the top and fastest growing sectors in the world; it plays a very important role in the economy and stimulated the growth of other economy (Osman and Sentosa, 2013). The Travel and Tourism industry has outperformed the global economy in 2012, it growing faster than manufacturing, retail, financial services and communications. The industry has grown its total contribution to GDP by 3% and increased the number of jobs by five million to 260 million, and therefore one in 11 of all jobs in the world are now supported by Travel and Tourism. More than 10% of all new jobs created in 2012 were from the industry. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council's economic research, in 2012, Travel and Tourism's total economic contribution was US\$6.6 trillion in GDP. This contribution represents 9% of total GDP (WTTC, 2013). In India, tourism plays an important role in the national economy and contributes highly to the country's GDP compared with the other sectors. Tourism's contribution to the Indian economy was estimated to be US\$3.4 billion and accounts for approximately 12.4 per cent of the country's GDP in 2010. It provides the Indian economy with hard currency and creates new jobs. The tourism sector is a promising sector in India due to India being considered as an attractive country for tourists in the world for reasons such as the diversity of nature, the deep-rooted cultural heritage, and the country's political stability. In addition, Tamilnadu became one of the "Seven Wonders of the World" in 2007, and that attracts more tourists from around the world. India had been visited by more than 8.25 million tourists in 2010 which an increase of 16.5% from 2009 which was about 7.08 million tourists. The tourism statistics between 2006 and 2010 indicate that the tourism

sector in India is growing rapidly. Hence, the tourism income in 2010 has increased by 65% from 2006 which was about US\$2.06 billion (Indiaian Ministry of Tourism, 2013). India is a destination with many iconic tourist attractions, such as Tamilnadu. Tourism is of vital importance to the national economy of India. It is the Kingdom's largest export sector, its second largest private sector employer, and it's second highest producer of foreign exchange (Othman, 2010). Service quality is considered as a standard used to assess the effectiveness of a particular leisure service agency, including the tourism service sector (Godbey, 1997), and therefore the quality of service involved with tourism plays an important role in the process of delivery (Wyllie, 2000). Further, the quality of service influenced customers' image that had an effect on the process from expected quality to perceived quality (Prabaharan et al., 2008). Customer satisfaction can also be defined as satisfaction based on an outcome or a process (Vavra, 1997). Tourism is arguably one of the largest self-initiated commercial interventions to create happiness on the entire planet (Pearce, 2007). Happiness is directly related to satisfaction, and therefore overall happiness is highly linked to satisfaction in leisure travel sector (Glatzer, 2000). The majority of tourists have experiences with destinations, and their perceptions are influenced by comparisons among facilities, attractions, and service standards (Laws, 1995). The study will present and test three main dimensions of factors affecting tourist satisfaction, and they are: destination facilities, destination accessibility and destination attraction. The purpose of this paper is to measure the quality of tourism services and its impact on tourist satisfaction in Tamilnadu.

### Some issues on the effect of Tourism Service

#### Service Quality

Service quality is defined as what the customer gets out and is willing to pay for" rather than "what the supplier puts in (Ducker, 1991). In some earlier studies, service quality has been defined to the extent where the service fulfils the needs or expectation of the customers (Lewis and Mitchell, 1990; Dotchin and Oakland, 1994). While Zeithaml et al. (1996) has conceptualized service quality as the overall impression of customers towards the service weakness or supremacy. Therefore service quality frequently has been conceptualized as the difference between the perceived services expected performance and perceived service actual performance (Bloemer et al., 1999; Kara et al., 2005).

Parasuraman et al. (1988) introduced the SERVQUAL model

to measure service quality including 22 items in five dimensions: reliability, tangible, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. These dimensions have specific service characteristic link to the expectation of customers. The SERVQUAL scale was developed in the marketing context and this was supported by the Marketing Science Institute (Parasuraman et al., 1986). Even though this model as an instrument has been used in various studies in across industries, the SERVQUAL has received many criticisms from other scholars (e.g., Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Brown et al., 1993). However, there are many researchers opposed the use of SERVQUAL to measure service quality due to the industry characteristics differences. Other previous researches confirmed that SERVQUAL instrument is applicable in tourism industry (Fick and Ritchie, 1991; Yuan et al., 2005; Shaikh and Khan, 2011).

**Medlik and Middleton (1973)** noted that „the tourist product is to be considered as an amalgam of three main components of attractions, facilities at the destination and accessibility of the destination’. In other words, the tourist product is ‘not as airline seat or a hotel bed, or relaxing on a sunny beach... but rather an amalgam of many components, or a package’. While, Middleton and Clarke (2001) indicated that there are five main components in the overall product, and they are: destination attractions and environment, destination facilities and services, accessibility of the destination, images of the destination, and Price to the consumer.

#### **Destination attractions and environment**

These are the component elements within the destination that largely determine tourists’ choice and influence their motivations to visit that destination. They include: Natural attractions: landscape, seascape, beaches, climate, flora and fauna and other geographical features of the destination and its natural resources. Built attractions: buildings and tourism infrastructure including historic and modern architecture; monuments; promenades, parks and gardens, convention centres, marinas, ski slopes, industrial archaeology, managed visitor attractions generally, golf courses, speciality shops and themed retail area. Cultural attractions: history and folklore, religion and art, theatre, music, dance and other entertainment, and museums. Social attractions: way of life and customs of resident or host population, language and opportunities for social encounters.

#### **Destination facilities and services**

These are the component elements located in the destination, which make it possible for visitors to stay and to enjoy in that destination. They include: Accommodation unit: hotels, holiday villages, apartments, villas, campsites, caravan parks, hostels, condominiums, farms, guesthouses. Restaurants, bars and caf  s: ranging from fast-food through to luxury restaurants. Transport at the destination: taxis, coaches, car rental, cycle hire. Sports/interest activity: ski schools, sailing schools, golf clubs and spectator stadiums; centres for pursuit of arts and crafts and nature studies. Other facilities: language schools, health clubs. Retail outlets: shops, travel agents, souvenirs, camping supplies. Other services: information services, equipment rental, tourism police.

#### **Accessibility of the destination**

These are the component elements including private and public transport aspects of the product that determine the cost, speed and convenience with which a traveller may leave his place of residence and reach a chosen destination. They include: Infrastructure: of roads, car parking, airports, railways, seaports, inland waterways and marinas. Equipment: size, speed and range of public transport vehicles. Operational factors: routes operated, frequency of services, prices charged and road tolls levied. Government regulations: the range of regulatory controls over transport operations (Middleton and Hawkins, 1998). A study conducted by Karim and Geng-Qing Chi (2010), they confirmed that destinations’ food image influenced travellers’ visit

intention positively. While Awaritefe (2004) found that the most prominent motivations for tourism destinations choice in a third world country are: self-actualization in an appreciative, educational or cultural context and leisure/recreational pursuits. Attractiveness of destination, quality services, facilities/amenities, favourable location and accessibility of centres also emerged as important considerations in tourist destination choice.

#### **Images of the destination**

The destination image is a relatively recent addition to the field of tourism research (Abu Ali and Howaidee, 2012). The image of tourist destinations is an element of major importance (Hunt, 1975; Chon, 1991; Echtner and Ritchie, 1991; Gartner, 1996; Buhalis, 2000; Laws et al., 2002; Tasci and Gartner, 2007), ultimately influencing the final choice or behavioural intention (Chen and Tsai, 2007). However, pioneering studies on the image of tourist destinations, dating from the 1970s and also the 1980s present some theoretical and conceptual limitations (Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Gartner, 1993; Gallarza et al., 2002). However, several studies have illustrated that destination images do, indeed, influence tourist behaviour (Hunt, 1975; Pearce, 1982). Lawson and Baud Bovy (1977) define the concept of destination image as the expression of all objective knowledge, prejudices, imagination and emotional thoughts of an individual or group about a particular location. Other authors define the image as the sum of all beliefs, ideas and impressions that people associate with a destination (Crompton, 1979). Bign   et al. (2001) define destination image as the subjective interpretation of reality by the tourist. Therefore, the image tourists have of a destination is largely subjective because it is based on the perceptions each tourist has of all of the destinations they have been to or have heard of (San Mart  n and Rodriguez, 2008). In other words, the destination image is evaluated by the attributes of its resources and attractions (Stabler, 1995) which motivate tourists to visit that destination (Alhemoud and Armstrong, 1996; Schneider and S  nmez, 1999; Gallarza et al., 2002; Beerli and Mart  n, 2004). Those destinations with strong, positive images are more likely to be considered and chosen in the travel decision process (Goodrich, 1978; Woodside and Lysonski, 1989). As a result, destination image has an important role for travel decisions (Schmoll, 1977; Moutinho, 1984; Woodside and Lysonski, 1989).

#### **Price to the consumer**

The tourism product is made up of all the tourism destination specific and non-specific goods and services that are demanded during one day of holiday, its quantity is measured through the number of overnight stays and its value is the daily price of the holiday. The demand function is known with certainty, choosing the daily price is equivalent to choosing tourism expenditure. The market value of the holiday is determined by its price. Thus, price coordination by means of a destination management and coordination provided by a tour operator supplying an all-inclusive holiday. The coordination of prices provided by the destination management allows setting a more efficient daily price for the tourism product, thus leading to an increase in overall tourism expenditure (Andergassen et al, 2013).

#### **Customer Satisfaction**

Customer satisfaction is defined as satisfaction based on an outcome that characterizes satisfaction as the end-state resulting from the experience of consumption, or a process that emphasizing the perceptual, evaluative and psychological processes contributing to customer satisfaction (Varvara, 1997). This definition, assessment of satisfaction is made during the service delivery process. Customer satisfaction can also be defined as feeling of the post utilization that the consumers experience from their purchase (Westbrook and Oliver, 1991; Um et al., 2006).

Relationship between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction

Several studies have investigated the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. For example, Gounaris et al. (2003) revealed that service quality has significant impact and positive relationship with customer satisfaction in Greek retailing industry. A study conducted by Jay and Hsin (2007), which aimed to understand the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in various hotels in Murtinos. The study found that the image of the hotel affected by the existence of service and customer satisfaction that support for the favourite image created by the hotel through the improvement of service quality and customer satisfaction. Jamal and Anatassiadou (2007) confirmed that service quality is positively related to bank's customer satisfaction in Greece. Another study was conducted by Hossain and Leo (2008), they revealed that service quality is a strong antecedent and significantly related to customer satisfaction in banking industry in Qatar. Similarly, Chen and Lee (2008) confirmed that service quality has a positive influence with customer satisfaction in non vessel owners and shippers in Taiwan. While Abu Alroub et al. (2012) investigated the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in the tourist restaurants in Amman, India. Their study clarified that there is a significant relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in tourist restaurants. The review of the literature indicated that the number of empirical studies in tourism is very limited. However, to date, there has been no serious effort to critically examine the impact of service quality on tourist satisfaction in Tamilnadu. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the quality of overall tourism product and its impacts on tourist satisfaction in Tamilnadu.

### Conclusion

The study findings concluded that service quality (destination facilities, destination accessibility, destination attractions) has great effect on overall tourist satisfaction. This study implies that service quality has a positive relationship with tourist satisfaction. These results suggest that tourist satisfaction can be enhanced by raising the level of service quality throughout destination facilities, destination accessibility and destination attractions. It was also found that Destination facilities (restaurant, transportation and parking) and attractions (Sites, Waterfalls, Museums, Temples, and Lakes) are positively related to foreign tourist satisfaction.

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