HILL STATION TOURIST SATISFACTION IN UDHAGAMANDALAM

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Abstract:
The present study is undertaken to explore the satisfaction of tourist to visiting Udhagamandalam. The objective of this study was to offer an integrated approach to understanding tourist satisfaction by examining the causal relationships among the components of tourism product and overall tourist satisfaction of tourist. The research was conducted with 200 tourists visiting Udhagamandalam. The collected data have been analyzed with the help of percentage analysis and descriptive statistics. This analysis provides a useful background to the tourism planner and government in the planning of future tourist marketing strategies.
Key Words: Destination Facilities, Destination Attraction, Tourist Satisfaction & Tourism in Udhagamandalam

Introduction:

Geographical area of the tourism destination playing a pivotal role in the development of tourism, it gives an overall image of tourist destination by its attractions, accessibility, climate, environment and other aspects. To assess the level of satisfaction of tourists it is essential to know the views and experience of tourists about various facilities offered to them at the tourism destination. Here, the tourist and native people of the destination play a major role in this regards because mostly these two parties frequently come into contact. Good conduct of both these parities increases the popularity of the tourism destination. Study region Udhagamandalam is a famous hill station in Tamilnadu. It the Nilgiri district is spread over a total area of 2549.00. sq.km. The geographical location of the district lies between 100 38' and 110 490'N latitude and 750 44' and 770 87' E longitude. As the climate is one of the major pulling factors of the Niligiri, April, May and June are the hottest months with a variance of 18º C minimum and 43º C maximum temperature. December and February are the cool months varying temperature as high as 35º C and as low as 17º C. Every hill station is a magnificent place to visit. The Nilgiris District is one of the hilly districts and it celebrated as summer asylum for the tourist, which in turn accelerate the economic development of the district. Udhagamandalam generally called as Ooty, capital of the district, is the queen of hill stations in India. The Nilgiris has 30 tourist places, which attract tourists from other parts of the state and country, of which the famous places are Botanical Garden, boat house, the Rose Garden and the Doddabetta peak in Udhagamandalam. Sim's park, Kateri falls, Pasture Institute, Dolphin's nose and Lamb's rock are the Important Tourist sports in Coonoor. In Kotagiri block Kodanadu view point and St. Catherine's falls are the two main tourist attractions. In Gudalur block the main tourist attraction in Mudumalai wild Life Sanctuary and Natural forest wealth are the key factors for the beauty of the district. In Udhagamandalam, tourism industry is growing exponentially. In this town a tremendous growth in the tourist arrival and overall tourist activity have taken place. In recent, there has been huge development in infrastructure and recreational facilities in the town.

Literature Review:

Brahmankar (1998) has found that the major factors which attract tourists to India include beautiful natural scenery, attractive customs and way of life, wildlife sanctuaries, backwaters and rivers, mountains, beautiful creations of man, traditional art and dance forms and typical festivals. The negative features include red tape in ticketing, checking, language difficulties, poor communication facilities, lack of personal safety, unsanitary conditions, difficulties in transport and traffic, unsatisfactory accommodation, beggars and tipping, problems in meeting people, over charging by taxi drivers and private transport operators.

Braun O. L., etl, (1999) stated that the choice for or against a destination is influenced by the factors such as attractiveness (e.g. nature, landscape, places of cultural interest), available facilities (of importance to tourists, such as accommodations) and accessibility (e.g. good means of transportation); and also climate and weather are important factors in choice of destination.

Kozak (2001) highlighted that there are many scientific studies have focused on impact of tourists satisfaction and intention to revisit to the destination.

Nicolau, Mas (2005) analyzes a multistage tourist choice process: taking a vacation, visiting foreign vs. domestic destinations, taking multi- vs. single-destination vacations. „The empirical application carried out on the sample reaches the following conclusions: the dimensions which appear to have an effect on the decision to

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take a vacation are income, household size, age, active occupational situation, being a student, size of the city of origin, and opinion of taking a vacation."

Nicolau, Mas (2006) believe that distance or prices, as reasons to choose a tourist destination, interact with tourists personal motivations. In „Sequential choice behavior: Going on vacation and type of destination" paper, authors „proposes a multistage decision process to the choice of tourist destination types (going on vacation, coastal character, and urban character of the destination) as these choice sets are more idiosyncratic to tourists who prefer a specific type of tourist destination"

Anikumar K. (2009) in his reports on "Impact of Negative Factors of Tourism on Tourists" Pointed out that the negative factors which directly affected the tourists, three major factors such as 1. Over pricing 2. Hosts exploitation, on tourists and 3.Littering are found to be making a high impact on the foreign tourists and he concluded that tourists will avoid their further visits (or) discourage other tourists from visiting the tourists centeres of Kerala and may even tend to cutting down of their period of stay in the tourist centres of Kerala.

Hsu, Tsai, Wu (2009) identified factors that motivate tourist's elections and evaluated their preferences for tourism destinations.

Lyons, Mayor, Tol (2009) analyzed, based on questionnaires distributed during 2000-2006, motivational variables when Irish tourists in choosing holiday destinations. „Destination characteristics such as temperature, GDP and length of coastline at the destination country are all attractive factors that positively influence the likelihood of choosing a given destination".

Nagar (2010) examined the influence of destination personality and image on tourist loyalty. She conducted the study on tourists visiting hill stations in northern India and selected Places in Jammu and Kashmir as the sampling area. She concluded that destination personality has a positive impact on tourist loyalty.

Karim and Geng-Qing Chi (2010) confirmed that destinations' food image influenced travellers' visit intention positively.

Vasanthi, S (2012) highlighted that Natural beauty of the Nilgiris draws tourists away from the crowded and polluted towns and cities. The study exhibits that majority of the young tourists who love to visit the Nilgiris Hills for its beautiful climate.

Sellech et al, (2013) highlighted that tourists make decisions based on for example tourism attractions in the country, beautiful scenery, customs and culture, hospitality service providers including tour guides, hotel and restaurant staff, the quality of food and the friendliness of local people toward foreign tourists. These criteria are also the criteria of satisfaction with the visit of the country, which was confirmed by research in Malaysia

Statement of the Problem:

Attractions are important element of the tourism industry because they are the drivers of tourism. It can be categorized in to two kinds I) Natural attraction II) Manmade attractions. Udhagamandalam is a gorgeous hill station having both natural and manmade attractions which drafting attention of tourist from nook and corners of the world for its Scenic nature, Stunning Mountains and Greenery views. Tourists travel from one country to another or within the country, either for pleasure / family reasons / business purposes. The travel decision of the tourist is highly influenced by various factors like attractions, climate, culture and tradition of the tourism destination. It encourages people to visit and spare time at the destination. Without the magnetism, tourism does not exist and there could be little or no need for tourist facilities and services. It is only when people are attracted to a destination that amenities and services. Many reasons cause tourists to be satisfied with their trip or journey, including the quality of the services provided, such as infrastructure, security, cleanliness, natural situation, consumer protection and easily obtained (Handszuh (1995). So, the researcher interested to find out the influencing factors and level of satisfaction of tourists visiting Udhagamandalam. Based on the above discussion the researcher has raised the following research question;

✓ What is the level of satisfaction of tourists visiting Udhagamandalam?

Study Objective:

✓ To investigate the level of satisfaction of tourist visiting Udhagamandalam

Sampling Plan and Tool:

The study is based on primary data. The researcher collected the primary data from tourists visiting various places of Udhagamandalam. For the collection of primary data, 200 tourists were selected through convenient sampling method. The data were collected by using well structured interview schedule. To analyze the socio economic factors simple percentage method adopted, and Factor analysis used to find out factors influencing tourists to visit Udhagamandalam.

Analysis and Interpretation:

Table 1: Demographic Consideration of the Respondents

1. Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	130	65.0
Female	70	35.0

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Total	200	100.0
2. Age	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
below 20	24	12.0
21-30	78	39.0
31-40	76	38.0
Above 50	22	11.0
Total	200	100.0
3. Marital status	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Married	128	64.0
Unmarried	72	36.0
Total	200	100.0
4. No of members in family	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Up to 3	44	22.0
4 to 5	140	70.0
Above 5	16	8.0
Total	200	100.0
5. Educational qualification	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
No formal education	8	4.0
Up to high school	20	10.0
Diploma education	24	12.0
Under Graduate	52	26.0
Post Graduate	82	41.0
Above PG	14	7.0
Total	200	100.0
5. Occupation	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Business	16	8.0
Government employee	74	37.0
Private employee	32	16.0
Students	46	23.0
Agriculturist	20	10.0
Professionals	12	6.0
Total	200	100.0
6. Monthly income	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Less than Rs.15,000	32	16.0
Rs.15,001- Rs25,000	56	28.0
Rs.25,001-Rs 35,000	104	52.0
Above Rs.35, 000	8	4.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Primary Data

The gender wise distribution of the respondents was, with 65% male respondents and 35% female respondents. The major age group of the tourists was 21to 30 years 39%, followed by 31to 40 years 38%, below 20 years and above 50 years were 12% and 11% respectively. The marital status of the respondents was, with 64% married respondents and 34% unmarried respondents. Most of the tourists (70%) reported that their family consists of 4 to 5 members, followed by up to 3 members 22% and above 5 members are 8%. In terms of education qualification, almost 41% of the tourists were Post Graduates, 26% of the tourists were Under Graduates, 12% of tourists had a Diploma Education, 10% of the respondents had a Higher secondary school education, almost 7% of the respondents were above the Post graduate level and 4% of the respondents falling under the group of having no formal education. In terms of occupation, almost 37% of the tourists were Government employees, 23% of the tourists were students, 16% of tourists were employed in private sectors, 10% of the respondents were agriculturists, 8% of the respondents were engaged them in business and 6% of the respondents were belongs to the group of professionals. With regard to monthly household income of tourists, the major group tourist 52% had annual household income of Rs 25,001 – Rs 35,000. It is followed by 28% Rs 15,001 – Rs 25,000, 16% of the respondents monthly household income was less than Rs 15,000 and 4% of the respondents visiting Udhagamandalam earning more than Rs 35,000 per Month as household income.

Satisfaction of Tourist Variables:

Table 2: Satisfaction of tourist

Variables	Score	Mean	Rank
Natural Attractions	929	4.64	1

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Climate	904	4.52	2
Scenic beauty	896	4.48	3
Sight seen places	820	4.10	4
Forest and Landscape	778	3.89	5
ATM and Other Bank Services	763	3.82	6
Communications facilities	636	3.18	7
Accommodation	624	3.12	8
Transportation facilities	604	3.02	9
Tourist guide services	578	2.89	10
variety and Quality of food	536	2.68	11
Basic amenities	524	2.62	12
Shopping facilities	508	2.54	13
Road connectivity	474	2.37	14
Parking facilities	411	2.06	15

The above table shows that various variables used for measuring the tourists satisfaction. There were 15 variables were used to measure level of satisfaction of tourist visiting Udhagamandalam. After the overall score computed and rank assigned each variable based on the score. The diversity natural attractions of Udhagamandalam had secured first palace with overall score of 929 points. The next rank goes to climate of place secured 904 points it's followed by scenic beauty 896 points, Sight seen places 820 points, and forest and landscape 778 points, ATM and bank services facilities 763 points, Communication facilities 636 points, accommodation facilities 624 points, transportation facilities 604 points, tourist guide services 578 points, variety and quality of food 536 points, Basic amenities 524 points shopping facilities 508 points, road connectivity 6474 points parking facilities 411 points.

Conclusion:

Udhagamandalam has many places of tourist interest. In order to mass attractive and pleasant environment for tourism, it is essential to offer various facilities to them and also to find out some important factors causes dissatisfaction and areas requiring special attention. The level of satisfaction of the tourist by observing their views about the facilities offered to them is assessed. The variable wise satisfaction is calculated and assigned ranks it reveals the fact that in general the tourists are satisfied with the existing facilities at Udhagamandalam. Still is worthwhile to identify the areas which requiring special attention. It is clear that there is a general dissatisfaction about parking facilities and road connectivity. In Udhagamandalam, the recreational activities most enjoyed by tourists are visits to natural attractions. During peak season, it is a general complaint that the hotel industry offers inadequate facilities as compared to the rates charged. The variety and quality of the food served by the restaurants in the town is also not up to the satisfaction of a large segment of tourists. Apart from these problems some problems of environmental concern also arise due to overcrowding waste disposal and noise pollution by vehicles. These problems should be addressed by tourism development authorities for the development of tourism in Udhagamandalam.

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