

A Study of Tourist Satisfaction in Shimla City

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Abstract

India's glorious tradition and rich cultural heritage is linked with the development of tourism. Himachal is situated in the heart of western Himalayas. The capital of Himachal Pradesh i.e. Shimla is celebrated summer resort for the tourist all over the world. There have been numerous buildings, temples and attractions having heritage value. It is important to understand why Tourists are attracted to hill stations. The reasons are linked to Tourism as an activity and how it can be sustained in the long run. Here, the tourists, local residents, hoteliers and local entrepreneurs of the destination can play a major role in this regards because mostly these parties frequently come into contact. Good conduct of these parties determine satisfaction level of the tourists. The present study conducted through survey method on questionnaires filled by tourists and interview schedules for hotel owners. Chi-square was used as a statistical technique for analysis. The results indicate that the chi-square value is significant it shows that overall tourists are satisfied with their visit to Shimla. Further the study reveals current reasons for tourist attraction and there is a positive trend in tourist inflow in Shimla city in last seven years.

Introduction

Travel is one of the oldest activities. It existed even before the recorded industry, when men were roaming in search of food and shelter. Travel in the past was not a thing if pleasure as in case now. Travel got a big boost with opening of trade routes. Today we are living in economic era. The only country having a sound economic status can enjoy freedom by all ways. Tourism is one of very significant ways, by which nations can make extraordinary progress in several fields, more so in the economic sphere. Tourism is one of very significant ways, by which nations can make extraordinary progress in several fields, more so in the economic sphere. To assess the level of satisfaction of tourists it is necessary to know the views of tourists about various facilities provided to them at the destination.

Tourism in India

India's glorious tradition and rich cultural heritage is linked with the development of tourism. The magnificent monuments attract number of tourist from all over the world. Besides, its cultural heritage, India has got a unique geographical position. Tourism in India is now in the process of being turned into

an industry with emphasis mainly on earning foreign exchange. Tourism and hotel industry is third largest earner of foreign exchange in India. India has a great tourism potential to attract tourist at various destination. Architectural beauty of India is also attraction for tourists. Ajanta and Allora caves, Elephanta caves and Mughal architecture, livery deserts, historical monuments and exciting wild life such as temple in Orissa, Meenakshi temple in Madurai, Gir forest in Gujrat, Periyar in Kerala, Taj Mahal in Agra etc. which are the main attraction for tourists from all over the world. India has fairly large infrastructure available for tourism. There is adequate transport facility and communication network system catering the need of tourists.

Tourism in Himachal Pradesh

“Dev Bhoomi” name given by the ancients to Himachal Pradesh means “Abode of God”. Himachal is situated in the heart of western Himalayas. The capital of Himachal Pradesh i.e. Shimla is celebrated summer resort for the tourist all over the world. Usually, tourists visit Shimla throughout the year so it is important to understand that why tourists are attracted to hill stations. Tourists basically through the hill station for many reasons. Tourism as an industry began to develop in Himachal only in the 19th century, when the British started founding hill station for rest and peace. Himachal gained international name when British declare it summer capital in 1864. With the reorganization of the states in 1966, tremendously rich tourist potential areas like those of Kullu, Manali, Kangra, Dharamshala, Shimla, Chail and Dalhousie of H.P. began with the starting of second five year plan. Most of tourists visit H.P. for its natural and scenic beauty. (Singh, Daleep 2002)

Himachal is delightful state for visitors particularly valouring the hot season when people flock to its hill stations to escape the scorching heat of plains. In terms of tourism, the state has an immense resource of natural, cultural wealth to offer. The snow peaked mountains, glistening rivers, serene environment, ideal climate and peaceful life style, all combined to make Himachal a magnetic attraction. The state is rich in tribal culture, languages, folklore, dress forms, special Himachali cuisine other than off course the rich bounty of natural beauty. The state has all elements to attract various segments of tourist’s population. But, what we need is better accessibility and stepping of the right potential markets. (Bansal, 2006)

Shimla is situated in North West Himalayas and was the summer capital of India during the pre - independence era. Shimla is now the capital of H.P. This town is spread over a ridge measuring about 12 k.m. It is perhaps the biggest hill station of the world located at an altitude of 7,262 (2,421 m) feet above sea level. A place of peace and pleasure, Shimla is a tourist resort in real sense of the world.

Perhaps, the best season of the year is autumn but early spring runs a close second. There are several important tourist places in town like, Advanced Study, Ridge, Mall road, Jakhu temple, Kali Bari Temple etc. (Balokhra, 1997)

Need of the Study

The tourism sector is a huge employer, creator of economic security and contributor to society. The main purpose of hotel system is to satisfy customers' needs and to delight customers. The importance of customer's satisfaction cannot be underestimated; in the world of global industry customers have multiple-choices. A delighted customer will be willing to visit the hotel more often and will also share pleasant experience with his/her friends and relatives. Shimla is a popular hill station in northern India and tourists make regular visits to Shimla city throughout the year. In Himachal Pradesh tourism being the main source of revenue, Shimla is one of the main contributors in generating revenue to the state government. The research in question was designed to study the inflow of tourists in Shimla in last seven years and to understand current reasons for tourist attraction through examining the satisfaction level of tourists, regarding the services provided by the hotels in Shimla town and to analyze main factors affecting the level of satisfaction.

Review of Literature

Casarin (2005) stated that the product is the result of the interaction between the process of the offer of an area and the process of purchasing/consumption of the tourist. Accordingly tourist satisfaction is a function of the quality and effectiveness of the influential factors or bundle of activities offered to the consumer which are associated with a touristic destination.

Gountas & Gountas (2007) stress on the analysis of causes that generate such a level of satisfaction is much scarcer. In this sense, if satisfaction level is a process linked to need, motivation, and characteristics of the service offering, we need to study in greater depth the antecedents behind such evaluation and not restrict ourselves simply to its assessment, otherwise we would be limiting our capacity to understand the clients emotional experiences during their interaction with service provider.

Gee et. al (2008) states that the need for businesses to retain customers is an important issue in today's global marketplace. To retain customers, a business must forge loyal and long-term relationships with profitable customers. But it is a very difficult task because today's market is buyer's market and customers have become more demanding as they want value for their money. When a marketer fails to deliver value to the hard earned money of the customers then it loses its hard earned customers as well. Now the question arises how to retain a customer? The answer to this question can be found in customer satisfaction. In tourism industry

Tourists are part of the tourism production process. They engage with supply networks and interact with destinations (Gnoth et al, 2009) and Tourist's satisfaction can be defined as his/her emotional state after experiencing the trip (Baker and Crompton, 2000).

Lee T.H. (2009) stated that destination image, attitude, motivation, natural landscapes, service and recreational equipments were attributes which affects the tourist satisfaction. Attributes like travel environment, price or value, accessibility and natural attractions influence tourist satisfaction (Alqurneh Majid et al., 2010).

Objectives

Following are the objectives of the study:

1. To study the inflow of tourists in Shimla in last seven years.
2. To understand and appreciate the historical and current reasons for Tourist attraction.
3. To study level of satisfaction of tourists on various dimensions.
4. Suggestions for improving tourism in Shimla.

Hypotheses

1. There is a positive trend in inflow of tourists in last seven years.

Research Methodology and Data Collection

To conduct a sample survey a questionnaire and interview schedule was prepared and filled up by tourists' and hotel owners' were interviewed. About 100 tourists at the period of summer season were asked to mention their views about the facilities by stating excellent, good, satisfactory and unsatisfactory residing in 20 hotels in Shimla town. Locality wise hotels were selected 5 respondents i.e., tourists from 20 hotels making it 100 overall. For analysis and interpretation : Non parametric tools were used to arrive at results namely chi- square test and scaling method i.e. Five point likert scale for eighteen statements.

Table 1 : Trends in Tourist Inflow in Shimla

Year	Number of Tourists		
	Indian	Foreigner	Total
2007	2095946	98839	2194785
2008	2061539	112917	2174456
2009	2175314	108981	2284295
2010	2485564	127737	2613301
2011	2818270	134167	2952437
2012	3195332	158671	3354003
2013	3460014	171102	3631116

Source: himachaltourism.gov.

Table 1 shows the tourist inflow from 2007 to 2013 year by year. It indicates that there is a slight decrease in tourist inflow in 2008 as compared to 2007 and thereafter, there is increase in inflow of tourist year by year.

Reasons for attraction

Tourists through the Hill regions for many reasons. Apart from the desire for a feeling of renewal and spiritual well being, the other major reason for popularity of hill stations is the sprawling population and increasing pollution in the Lowlands or plains. Shimla is well connected by road to other parts of Himachal Pradesh and nearby Chandigarh from there to other parts of country. There is a Railway link also till Shimla town. The overcrowded urban areas and the stress associated with the pollution, noise, and crime make the people in these areas to seek peace, calm and beauty relatively. This phenomenon is particularly applicable for domestic tourism in most mountain regions around the world. One of the best examples of this phenomenon is Hill stations in the Indian Himalaya, developed by British in the past and now flocked by the Indian Middle class to escape the summer.

Table 2 : Personal information obtained from tourists

First visit to Shimla	Length of stay	Who planned your visit	Purpose of visit	Gender	Nationality
Yes 54%	1-3 Day 85%	Self-Organised 77%	Leisure 83%	Male 74%	Indian 92%
No 46%	4-6 Days 15%	Organised 23%	Business 17%	Female 26%	Foreigner 8%

Source: Data collected with the help of questionnaires.

Table 2 shows that 54% of respondents said that it is their first visit to Shimla and 46% responded that they have visited Shimla before. 85% respondents said that their stay is between 1-3 days, remaining 15% agreed on more than 3 days stay. 77% respondents had self-organized their visit while remaining 23% had organized their visit through tour operators. While the purpose of their visit for 83% respondents was for leisure and recreation and for remaining 17% for business. Further it depicts that out of a total 65 filled questionnaires obtained 48 were filled by male respondents & remaining 17 by female respondents and 60 questionnaires were filled by Indian respondents while remaining 5 by foreigners.

Table 3

Statements	D. F.	Table Value	Chi Square Value	Ranks (S.A.-1, A-2,N-3,D.A-4, S.D.A.-5)
Hotel employees are friendly, courteous and attentive.	2	5.991	29.569	1
Sufficient staff for number of customers.	3	7.815	17.769	1
The rooms are well maintained in hotel.	3	7.815	32.292	1
The room service is quick and frequent.	3	7.815	34.138	1
The menu has a good variety of items	4	9.488	41.231	2
Comfortable seating and attractive tableware	3	7.815	25.523	2
The quality of food is excellent in the city	4	9.488	30.615	2
Reasonable tariff is charged for hotels	3	7.815	50.754	1
There are different Himachali products in shops	4	9.488	31.231	1
The service allow me to enjoy my visit to Shimla	3	7.815	34.385	2
The prices are as I expect	4	9.488	33.385	2
Parking is easily available	4	9.488	5.958	4
View are attractive	2	5.991	14.615	1
Local people are kind	2	5.991	15.613	1
Easily available road links	3	7.815	6.938	1
Local traffic creates problem	3	7.815	14.569	2
Proper signboards are available	3	7.815	32.897	2
Tourist transportation service is excellent	4	9.488	5.077	3

Source: Data collected from questionnaire.

In table 3 five point Likert Scale has been used. The table 3 depicts that in all the above statements the chi-square value is significant shows that overall tourists are satisfied with their visit to Shimla. Further the study reveals, that tourists are satisfied with the services provided by hotel owners and staff while tariff are high in peak season as respondents felt also stated that local traffic and parking of vehicle is a problem in Shimla, the climatic conditions and scenery of the city are most enjoyed as majority of respondents have agreed on it.

Table 4 : Information obtained from hotel owners

Gender of Hotel Owners	Number of Years of Business	Mode of Sales Distribution	Websites of hotel	Nature of Tourists	Occupancy during week	Trend in Tourist Inflow
Male 90%	1-30 75%	Only Cash 45%	Having 85%	Domestic 90%	Weekdays 20%	Increase 80%
Female 10%	31& Above 25%	Both Cash & Credit 55%	Not Having 15%	Foreigner 10%	Weekends 80%	Constant 20%

Source: Data collected from questionnaire.

Table 4 shows that 90 percent of hotel owners are male and only 10 percent are female. 75 percent of hotels in Shimla are running from about 30 years and rest 25 percent are above 31 years in business. 85 percent of hotels are connected with internet while 15 percent are not. The hotel owners responded that 90 percent of tourists are of Indian origin and remaining 10 percent are foreigners. Occupancy during weekend is maximum i.e. 80 percent while in weekdays it is upto 20 percent. According to 80 percent of hotel owners, there is increase in inflow of tourists year by year.

Table 5 : Information obtained from hotel owners

Activities Outsourced of Laundry	Parking Problem	Tourist satisfaction	Water Problem	Tourist behaviour	Need of more tourist Spots	Tourists responses about Kufri
Yes 99%	Yes 80%	Yes 40%	Yes 75%	Cordial 80%	Required 85%	Satisfied 25%
No 1%	No 20%	No 60%	No 25%	Not Cordial 20%	Not Required 15%	Not Satisfied 75%

Source: Data collected from interview schedule.

Table 5 shows that 99 percent of hotels outsource laundry services. 80 percent of hotel owners have parking problem while 20 percent do not have. 40 percent of hotel owners responded that tourists are satisfied and remaining 60 percent

responded that tourists are not satisfied with their visit to Shimla. 80 percent are satisfied with tourist behavior and remaining 20 percent are not. 85 percent responded that there is a need of more tourist spots. Hotel owners also responded that 75 percent tourists are not satisfied with their visit to Kufri.

Findings

- There is a positive trend in tourists inflow in last seven years.
- Lack of recreational activities.
- Shimla is rich in sceneric beauty but it has to be maintained for the long run.
- Factors like pleasing weather, scenic attractions, Historical and/or cultural factors, accessibility or reach, forms of accommodation available, are the main reasons determining the tourist traffic to a particular destination.
 - Tourism in the city can be organized as an industry, with due care to avoid exploitative use of scarce local resources.
 - During peak season, it is a common complaint that the hotel industry provides inadequate facilities as compared to the rates charged.
 - Parking facilities are not sufficient during summer. Some roads are narrow designed for a limited traffic and also creates parking difficulties.
 - The problem facing accommodation is acute during summer season. A flood of tourist enters the city causing demand for accommodation and thereby creating a shortage of accommodation.
 - The length of stay of tourists is 1-2 days. Most of the tourists visit Shimla for leisure/vacation.
 - Public toilets, drinking water outlets, sanitation facilities are not well maintained in the city.

Suggestions

- The scope of recreational facilities needs to be expanded as the present places of recreation become over crowded during peak season.
- Cleanliness of the city should be a priority of the government throughout the year.
- Proper facilities of drinking water , public toilets , safety of tourists gas to be followed.
 - Proper sign board and hoardings to be provided at strategic locations and should be in accordance with National Building Code.
 - Paid parking should be easily available at distinct places.
 - Government should make regular inspections and surprise visits to hotels to keep proper check.

Conclusion

Tourism is highly desirable to most hill stations because by attracting and serving visitors the destination earns mere or “basic” income from other parts of the country and globe .Shimla has many places of tourist interest. In order to mass attractive and friendly environment for tourism, it is essential to provide various facilities provided to them and also to understand and appreciate the historical and

current reasons for Tourist attraction. The study concludes tourism being the main source of income after agriculture and economy majorly depends on it along with all entrepreneurs of all types and size. Still it is worthwhile to identify the areas requiring special attention. It is send already that there is a general dissatisfaction about accommodation and parking facilities. The natural environment being the mainstay of Hill Tourism and a supporting and causal factor of many other forms of Tourism. The preservation of natural environment and ecosystem becomes of paramount importance.

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