



A STUDY ON GAP IN SERVICE AMBIENCES WITH RESPECT TO TOURISM SERVICES AT KANCHIPURAM DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

The promotion and growth of tourism is the indicator for economic development and market expansion in any country. Tourism is the well-known market attraction activity through which the flow of foreign exchange takes place. It is a service package which helps to transform the identity of location, value, culture, ritual practices, traditions and customs between people in different countries. In this aspect, India is a country with rich destinations for various forms of tourism includes heritage, religious, pilgrimage, adventure, medical and relaxation backgrounds. It is the notable tourism economy in the world which attracts reasonable amount of tourist every year and also contribute phenomenal share to the GDP and foreign direct investment (FDI). The major enlargement of tourism evolves through best marketing practices and service approaches. In this background, Kanchipuram a place of temple paradise stand for its pilgrimage tourism identity since from its traditional. The centric of tourism background provides economic and social development support for the District, State and Country. The location of Kanchipuram still shows the scope for tourism development in forth coming periods based on its ample service ambiences on its delivery packages. The present paper focuses to address the service ambiences gap of tourism services and its impact on tourism development at Kanchipuram District.

KEY WORDS:Service Ambience, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), Foreign Exchange, Service Delivery, Pilgrimage Tourism.

1.1.INTRODUCTION

Tourism is the world's largest industry and one of its fastest growing segments in the economy. For many countries tourism is seen as a main instrument for regional development, as it stimulates new economic activities. Tourism may have a positive economic impact on the balance of payment, employment, growth of gross income and production. It may also have negative effects, particularly on the environment. Sustainable tourism has

three interconnected aspects: environmental, socio-cultural, and economic. Sustainable tourism includes optimum use of resources, including biological diversity; minimization of ecological, cultural and social impacts; and maximization of benefits for conservation and local communities. Tourism is an important foreign exchange earner and an export for many low income countries as well as for developed ones. Nowadays many developing

countries pay attention to economic policies for promoting international tourism as a potential strategic factor for the development of national economic growth. The tourism-led economic growth hypothesis (TLGH) postulates that tourism expansion show the way to economic growth. It receives directly from the export-led growth hypothesis (ELGH) which states that the economic growth of countries can be generated not only by increasing the amount of labour and capital within the economy, but also getting higher exports. The Tourism sector of Indian economy is at present experiencing a huge growth. The tourism sector of Indian economy has become one of the major industrial sector under the Indian economy. The tourism industry earns foreign exchanges worth ' 21,828 crore. Previous year the growth rate of the tourism sector of Indian economy was recorded as 17.3 percent. The growth in the tourism industry is due to the rise in the arrival of more and more foreign tourists and the augment in the number of domestic tourists. Tourists from Africa, Australia, Latin America, Europe, Southeast Asia, and so on are visiting India and there are growing by the thousands every year. Indian Tourism offers an assortment of different cultures, traditions, festivals, and places of interest. India is a country with rich cultural and traditional diversity. This aspect is even reflected in its tourism.

Today's voyager can virtually tour destinations at the touch of a finger, be in touch with distant islands on their way to the office and plan customized adventures through simple online platforms. By failing to connect with and fascinate this virtual audience, many tourism enterprises are fighting an ascending battle. Service quality can be well thought-out to be the customers' judgment about an entity's overall excellence and superiority of service (Clow, Kurtz, Ozment, & Ong, 1997; Zeithaml, 1988). The most important aspects of service quality are tangible and intangible. Tangible aspects that may include building design and décor, ambient conditions, and equipment are considered to have a direct authority on the customer's perception of service quality. Empirical studies (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996; Wener, 1985) have been carried out to confirm the effect of ambient conditions, facility aesthetics, and cleanliness on customer perceptions of service quality. The tourism services and its promotions are elevated its customer attraction and retention through its service attributes and its allied ambiances. The intangibility of service attributes should be mixed with exploring service ambiances for suitable tangible elements. The growth of tourism marketing and promotions in India in recent period, the realization of tourism importance and economy

both at regional and state level help the tourism promotion to streamline with service ambiances. In addition to that, it is imperative to frequently view the user response about the service ambience and it's actual. The outcome of comparison helps to identify the gap exists in the service ambiances and fills the gap. The closeness to expectation to perception leads to enhanced service ambiances and which helps to effectively promote tourism service for augmented customer attraction and retention.

1.2.STATEMENT OF THE STUDY PROBLEM

The influx of tourism and development relies on the tourism promotion and its service backgrounds. The attraction and retention are the major components of any tourism promotion practices. In this aspect, the core tourism product requires the support of allied and facilitation services as a comprehensive package which caters the expectations of tourist or travelers. The augmented facilitating services are playing a significant role in tourism promotion. The service ambience of tourism encompasses product, price, facilities, infrastructure, tourist care, hygienic and environmental friendly packages. The collections of all these aspects are termed as service ambiances. The contribution of every ambience oriented factor or element towards the promotion of tourism services in terms of attraction and retention of visitors, market expansion are needed to be rated or reviewed regularly about its perception and expectation gap in order to add augmented services in tourism promotion. Kanchipuram is the pilgrimage tourist destination attracts domestic and foreign tourist regularly in all months in a year, but at the same time, the utilization of facilitated services with core pilgrimage tourism is not meeting the commercial requirements. The outcome of attraction to retention equivalence, the failures or gap on service ambiances should be studied from the opinion of visitors or tourist in the study location.

1.3.SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Kanchipuram District is an illustrious place in the land mark of Indian heritage and tourism practices. Dating from the day of Indian traditional and spiritual historical background, the surroundings of Kanchipuram District are visited by domestic and foreign visitors/ educationist/tourist/travelers and so on for the purpose of devotion, spiritual, rituals, culture, heritage and excavations. The buildings, temples, architecture, institutions, religious centers ever stand for its culture exchange, human values, learning centers and knowledge sharing. It is the district which attracts domestic and

foreign visitors/tourist in growing numbers in year after year, in addition to that, the nexus of state capital of Tamilnadu, Chennai also an added advantage for its location index.

1.4. REASON TO CHOOSE THE STUDY TOPIC AND STUDY UNIT

Tourism is the socio-economic related service activity in which revenue and human satisfactions are derived through different packages. It is the psycho-solution providers for every individual while they do different form of tourist activity ranging from health to entertainment and adventure. In addition to that, the ideal value of every trip or visit in tourism journey can be fulfilled only by providing add on and facilitating services like travelling, stay, food, hygienic, information and so on along with core purpose of visit. The collection of add on or facilitating service packages are known service ambience. The reason for coining the term ambience for every facilitating service is due to the balancing the perception and expectation of every element in above said aspects. So it necessary to study regularly the ambience background of service products in tourism promotion, since the expectation of visitors/tourist, period of visit, purpose and situation changes. By keeping this view, the present research topic has been taken for study purpose.

Kanchipuram is the notable tourism landmark for the promotion of pilgrimage and religious tourism since the origin of veda tradition. The requirement on service packages in pilgrimage tourism by tourist is completely different from other tourism forms. In this aspect, the present study location has been chosen for the study. Recently during the year 2014-15, Kanchipuram was identified as promotable tourism destination in India and also earmarked around Rs.150 crores for its tourism promotion and development. In this aspect, the present research paper on viewing the service ambiances available in Kanchipuram District towards tourism promotion and development, the existing gap in terms of expected and perceived will be helpful for promoting the existing tourism packages in an effective way.

1.5. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Tourist products are the means to satisfy tourist needs (Paul, 1977:18). According to Jovicic (1988:2-3), tourist needs are those that are satisfied when movement is performed (travel and sojourn) outside the place of residence. Therefore, a need is a tourist need only if it requires a departure from ones place of residence. According to Medlik and Middleton (1973:132), all tourists buy, either separately, or as an inclusive tour, the various

components of the tourist product. Either way, the end result of all these purchases is a package. This view of the tourist product holds good whether a business trip, a holiday or, indeed, any other form of tourism, international or domestic, is under consideration. Airline seats or hotel beds may be individual products in the eyes of their producers, but they are merely elements or components of a total tourist product, which is a composite product. Tourist satisfaction is defined as post -consumption evaluation concerning a specific product or service (Westbrook and Oliver, 1991), and proposed to be one of the key judgments that tourists make regarding a tourism service. Hence, it is a well-established, long-standing focus marketer attention (Yuksel and Yuksel, 2002). Chi and Qu (2008) chose 33 destination items to measure tourist satisfaction, and distinguished seven key factors: lodging, dining, shopping, attractions, activities and events, environment, and accessibility. Master and Prideaux (2000) selected eight attributes to assess Taiwanese tourist satisfaction in South East Queensland. Heung and Qu (2000) examined the satisfaction levels of Japanese tourists to Hong Kong in terms of 31 travel attributes. Mazanec (2006) studied tourist satisfaction with ski resorts using six satisfaction indicators: ease of access, situation at ticket selling points, level and variety of prices, cableways and ski lifts, skiing area, skiing runs, services, and restaurants. In the hospitality research, Yuksel and Yuksel (2002) investigated restaurant selection and foodservice evaluation by measuring the level of tourist satisfaction with dining based on 10 factors: service quality, product quality, menu diversity, hygiene, convenience and location, noise, service speed, price and value, facilities, and atmosphere. A study by Mukhles (2013) concerning tourist satisfaction examined the impact of the quality of the tourism product on overall tourist satisfaction, and measured tourists' perceptions concerning the quality of tourism services provided at the Petra historical site. The findings noted that service quality, including destination facilities, destination accessibility and destination attraction, directly impacted tourist satisfaction. Another study conducted by Hossain and Leo (2008) revealed that service quality is a strong antecedent and is significantly related to customer satisfaction in the banking industry in Qatar. Similarly, Jihad and Majeda (2012) confirmed that service quality has a significant impact on tourist satisfaction. Perunjodi (2011) examined visitor satisfaction with respect to nature-based tourism attractions and found that nature-based tourism attractions have significant impact on and positive relationship with the overall visitor satisfaction.

1.6.OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the personal and location profile of tourist in the study location of Kanchipuram District.
2. To understand the purpose and process of tourism by the tourist.
3. To understand the opinion of tourist about core tourism value of Kanchipuram District
4. To know the view of tourist about the different attributes in service ambiances
5. To measure the gap in service ambiances of tourism services
6. To understand the impact of existing service ambiances on tourism promotion and development at Kanchipuram District.

1.7.SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study has been done at Kanchipuram District, Tamilnadu. The prominent tourism locations in the District have been taken for the study. The study covered both domestic and foreign tourist/visitors and travelers. The study covered the tourist profile, visiting purpose, sources of references and period of visit. The study addressed the view of tourist about the service support provided during their visit. The response about the gap of perceived and expected service ambience related attributes relevance to core tourism services in the District. The study also provides view on impact of existing service ambiances rating and its impact on current tourism promotion and development in terms of economic, service and environmental backgrounds.

1.8.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study has been conducted at Kanchipuram District. The selected tourism landmark like pilgrimage, architectural symbols, relaxation and entertainment based tourism backgrounds were selected for the study. An in depth pilot survey has been undertaken with tourist, commercial promoters, educationist, government officials, NGOs and general public about the tourism practices and promotional methods of tourism in the District. The reference period were taken for the duration of 40 to 50 years. The literature survey was used for measuring the tourism background and its historical trends at Kanchipuram Town. The various works published helped the researcher to pursue the research in the topic of service ambience and its influence on tourism promotion and development. The study population were taken from the tourist/travelers/visitors from domestic and foreign backgrounds. The experience survey done with associates of core and facilitating tourism packages include travel agencies, hotels, restaurants,

commercial centers, shops, temples were helped the researcher along with literature supports to identify the factors under service ambiances towards tourism promotion. The sampling unit covered both domestic and foreign tourist with the different demographical backgrounds. The samples required for survey response purpose were selected through convenience method. The sample size was restricted to 240. The required data for present study were collected through primary and secondary sources. The secondary data were collected through historical background of study unit, journals, books and web references. The primary data were collected from respondents through structured pre tested questionnaire through personal interview. The structured questionnaire was tested for its reliability aspects through test-retest process and the reliability value obtained was around 76 percent (cronbach alpha value). The questionnaire covered the aspects of personal and location background of respondents, reasons for visiting the location, frequency of visit, preferred locations and period of visit, mode of arrival. The above said aspects were collected through closed ended questions with nominal (categorical scales). The aspects related to opinion about service ambiances in terms of travelling, mode of travelling, hotels and restaurants provisions, health care treatments, information centers and availability, local administrative support, availability of travel guides and their relations, safety and environmental backgrounds, local population attitude and so on were rated through interval scale ranging from very poor to very good. The collected data were edited, code and tabulated for further analysis. The statistical and analytical tools like percentage analysis and descriptive statistics.

1.9.LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The study was carried out only in the selected locations of Kanchipuram District. The selection of tourism locations through its historical, religious, pilgrimage, entertainment backgrounds were done through judgmental basis.
2. The samples for the study were selected through convenience basis due to the availability of tourist during the time of study and their schedule of availability.
3. The attributes reviewed through pilot study related to service ambiances towards tourism promotion and its impact on attraction and retention of tourist were taken from literature backgrounds, interactions through experience survey.
4. The service ambience attributes were standardized for all selected study locations.

1.10.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 describes the socio-economic background of pilgrimage/tourist who visits Kanchipuram and its surroundings. Regarding the age of group of tourist, 44.2 percent are in the age group of 31 to 40 and 33.3 percent are less than 30 age background. Among the tourist visiting Kanchipuram, 51.7 percent are female. Among the visiting group 35 percent are qualified with graduation. Among the tourist, 32 percent are employed in private sectors and around 23 percent belong to government and business categories. Regarding their monthly income 45.4 percent of income group between 25001 to 30000 visits Kanchipuram. 32.1 percent of tourist visits with their family and 25 percent as personal/individual basis. About their frequency of visit 51.3 percent visit first time and 48.7 visits another time (more than one time). 23.8 percent of tourist visit for pilgrimage purpose and 22.5 percent for academic or research purpose. The mode of awareness about the tourism background of Kanchipuram is known to tourist through media and web source as the major sources. The stay period of 43.8 percent of tourist covers minimum one week and 29.6 percent more than a week. The preferred places of stay during their visit are like hotels, Yatrika Nivas, paying guest and dormitories. Table 2 shows the place of arrival of tourist, 71.7 percent from domestic background like the states of Andhrpradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Orissa, Madhyapradesh and Pondicherry and 28.3 percent arrive from foreign background. Among the domestic tourist, 32.6 percent arrive from northern background and regarding the foreign tourist background, 35.3 percent from European continent. Table 3 explores the service gap on tourism services at Kanchipuram District. It is observed about the service gap exist in the ambiances made on offering various tourism service related attributes. It can be obtained by comparing the difference between perceive ambience attributes on tourism services with expected standards. Among the aspect, the huge gap is observed with respect to ambience of tourism guidance and guide services, provision of information and its evidences, safety and security measures for the tourist during their visits, provision of stay facility and its related ambiances, barrier on language and tourism ethics followed since the base of tourism is pilgrimage in nature and ambience on health care support to tourist. At the same time, the minimum gap is also found with respect to transport facility, tourism care and treatment and availability of relaxation and other amenities and its ambiances.

1.11.CONCLUSION

Tourism is the emerging and viable contributing sector towards the GDP of our country. The various forms of tourism services in India attracts both domestic and foreign tourist. The visit of tourist through various forms ranging from entertainment to medical attracts location, service and commercial value to our country. In addition to that, the forms of tourism through pilgrimage and religious patronize the promotion of business, industry and trade values and practices. But at the same time, the level of completion from neighbouring countries to attract and retain tourist and their preference of their visit to our country need to promote tourism services as a package with service promotional approach. The need of marketing and enhancement of service quality have become inevitable aspects in present promotion of tourism in India. The aspects of service quality also need to explore the disposition of tourist view on ambiances associated with perceived quality and its comparison with standards prescribed for tourism services. In this aspect, the present study was undertaken about the illustrious pilgrimage tourism of Kanchipuram District and verifies the service quality gap about the expected and perceived quality on ambiances of tourism services. It was found from the study that the identified service related factors have gap between perceived and expected ambiances and in which the aspects with major gaps are needed to be given due importance in order to enhance the service values of tourism services at Kanchipuram District.

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Annexure

Table 1

Socio- Economic Profile of Tourist

Sl.No	Attributes	Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Age	Less than 30	80	33.3
		31 to 40	106	44.2
		More than 40	54	22.5
2	Gender	Male	116	48.3
		Female	124	51.7
3	Educational Background	Below Graduation	58	24.2
		Graduation	84	35.0
		Post Graduation	54	22.5
		Others	44	18.3
4	Occupational Background	Government sector	59	24.6
		Private sector	79	32.9
		Business/trade	52	21.7
		Others	50	20.8
5	Monthly Income	Less than 25000	51	21.3
		25001 to 30000	109	45.4
		Above 30000	80	33.3
6	Type of Visit	Individual/Personal	60	25.0
		Family	77	32.1
		Official	59	24.6
		Tour Package	44	18.3
7	Frequency of Visit	First Time/Maiden	123	51.3
		More than one time	117	48.7
8	Purpose of Visit	Pilgrimage	57	23.8
		Academic/Research	54	22.5
		Family trip/ Prathana	45	18.8
		Vacation Trip	38	15.8
		Tour Package	46	19.2
9	Mode of Awareness	Media	59	24.6
		Web sources	53	22.1
		Friends and Relatives/Neighbours	34	14.2
		Tour agencies and Other Promotional Sources	38	15.8
10	Period of Stay	Less than a week	64	26.7
		A week	105	43.8
		More than a week	71	29.6
11	Mode of Stay	Hotels	55	22.9
		Yathrika Nivas	69	28.8
		Paying Guest	60	25.0
		Dormitories	56	23.3
Total			240	100

Source : Primary Data



Table 2 Location of Background of Tourist

Sl.No	Attributes	Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Place of Arrival	Domestic	172	71.7
		Foreign	68	28.3
		Total	240	100
2	Location of Domestic	Southern Part	40	23.3
		Northern Part	56	32.6
		Eastern Part	45	26.2
		Western Part	31	18.0
		Total	172	100.0
3	Location in Foreign	Asian	19	27.9
		European	24	35.3
		American	15	22.1
		Others	10	14.7
		Total	68	100.0

Source: Primary Data

Table 3 Service Quality Gap on the Ambiences of Tourism Services at Kanchipuram

Sl.No	Attributes	Perceived Mean Value (P _m)	Expected Mean Value (E _m)	P _m -E _m (Gap Analysis)
1	Transport Facility	3.24	4.04	-0.8
2	Information Facility	2.45	4.15	-1.7
3	Stay Facility	2.78	4.41	-1.63
4	Hygienic Food	3.16	4.32	-1.16
5	Pollution Free Environment	2.54	3.65	-1.11
6	Health Care and Support	2.59	3.97	-1.38
7	Availability of Shopping Centers	2.31	3.67	-1.36
8	Safety and Security	2.43	4.25	-1.82
9	Local Transport and Guidelines	2.95	4.11	-1.16
10	Tour Guides and Guidance	2.43	4.29	-1.86
11	Relaxation and Entertainment with Core Tourism	2.73	3.61	-0.88
12	Tourist Care and Treatment	3.09	3.74	-0.65
13	Avoiding Language Barriers and Tourism Ethics	2.79	4.38	-1.59
14	Commutation Centers at Airport, Railway and Bus Terminals	2.47	3.74	-1.27
15	Support from Local Administration	3.10	4.32	-1.22
16	Tourist Care and concern by Local Population	2.48	3.65	-1.17

Source: Primary Data