

Evaluation of Service Quality of Tourism Industry Based on Customer Satisfaction and Expectation –A Case Study in Mysore

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the concept of service quality and has demonstrated the model of service quality gaps; it aims to measure tourists' gap between satisfaction levels of interpretation of services and their preferences of the interpretive service in Mysore. The research questions are utilized to measure the gap between expectation and satisfaction levels of tourists about Mysore. For this purpose a questionnaire with five-point Likert scale is applied to measure customer satisfaction. Data was obtained from 100 respondents and analyzed using SPSS software by employing factor analysis and multiple regressions. Results indicate that there are significant differences between overall expectations and satisfaction levels of tourists. For practitioners, it is worth noting that International tourists are exclusively concerned with the value for money services, while Indian tourists regard security and safety, as important factors for them to stay or revisit Mysore. The paper contains material relevant to the tourism industry, and implementable solutions are sufficiently suggested.

Key Words : Satisfaction, Expectation, Service Quality, Gap model Mysore

INTRODUCTION

Because of people's inclination to seek out something new, including that of traditional cultures, heritage tourism has become a major "new" area of tourism demand, which almost all policy-makers are now aware of and are anxious to develop. Heritage tourism, as a part of the broader category of "cultural tourism", is now a major pillar of the nascent tourism strategy of many countries. Cultural/heritage tourism strategies in various countries have common major growth area; which can be used to boost local culture, and can aid the seasonal and geographic spread of tourism (Richards, 1996).

Cultural/heritage tourism is the fastest growing segment of the tourism industry because there is a trend towards an increased specialization among

tourists. This trend is evident in the rise in the volume of tourists who seek adventure, culture, history, archaeology and interaction with local people (Hollinshead, 1993).

Cultural and heritage tourism comprises important sectors of global tourism (Richards, 2000; Silberberg, 1995). According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), 37 percent of international tourism is culturally motivated, and the demand is estimated to be growing at 15 percent annually (Richards, 2000). One of the major attractions for international tourists to India is to visit rich heritage sites; which are considered to be a major activity of cultural tourism. Recent studies about cultural/heritage tourism have focused on identifying the characteristics, development, and management of cultural/heritage tourism, as well as on investigating demographic and

travel behavior characteristics of tourists who visit cultural/heritage destinations.

Silberberg (1995) found a common pattern of cultural/heritage tourists by analyzing age, gender, income, and educational level. The study also showed cultural/heritage tourists' demographic and travel behavior characteristics in order to help tourism marketers to better their understanding of customers. Further, because there have been few studies that identify the relationship between cultural/heritage destination attributes and tourists' perception, this study focused on attributes which satisfy tourists who visit cultural/heritage destinations in order to help tourism planners develop strategies to attract customers.

About Mysore

After the reign of Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan in the late 18th century the Wodeyar dynasty came back into power and ruled the Kingdom of Mysore, which was the capital till India's independence in 1947 and the removal of princely state in about 1950. The Wodeyars were patrons of art and culture and have contributed significantly to the cultural growth of the city, which has led to Mysore earning the sobriquet Cultural capital of Karnataka.

Mysore is located at 12.30° N 76.65° E and has an average altitude of 770 meters above m.s.l (2,526 ft) .It is situated in the southern region of the state of Karnataka, at the base of the Chamundi Hills and spreads across an area of 128.42 km² (50 sq mi).

Mysore has never failed to mesmerize the tourists with its quaint charm, rich heritage, magnificent palaces, beautifully laid-out gardens, imposing buildings, broad shady avenues and sacred temples. Some of the prominent places of tourist interest in Mysore are the following:

1. The palace
2. Chamundi Hill and temple
3. Zoo
4. St.Philomena's Church
5. Krishnarajasagar Dam and the adjoining Brindavan Gardens
6. Tipu's palace in Srirangapatna and tomb Gombaz
7. Ranganatha Bird Sanctuary in srirangapatna
8. Srirangapatna temple

Classification of tourists :

- a) International tourist : The international tourist industry of a country may be defined as the sum of domestic activities that directly support the consumption of goods and services of foreign tourists in the country.
- b) Domestic tourism : Domestic tourism is the tourism of resident visitors within the economic territory of the country of reference. Table 1 shows the relevant data.

Table 1 Statistics on tourists visit to Mysore for the last six years (international and domestic tourists)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Maharja's Palace	1,68630	16,45,820	18,31,361	20,62,99 4	25,25,687	21,53,246
Art Gallery	1,97,085	2,14,797	2,29,892	2,42,211	2,75,125	2,29,334
Zoo Garden	11,82,513	15,96,818	15,30,711	16,45,315	19,84,331	19.55,925
Chamudi Hill	11,78,908	18,25,645	33,03,704	70,74,421	1,21,14,705	1,18,34,606

Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation (KSTDC)

KSTDC is an entity was set up by government of Karnataka state in India to promote tourism within the state. The aim of KSTDC was to provide infrastructure, conveyance and other facilities to tourists visiting Karnataka. Part of mission is also to promote unknown tourist spots in Karnataka. The corporation runs conducted tours — tours of predetermined places at predetermined times. The KSTDC owns some hotels and guest houses.

Future plans Tourism Development Corporation (KSTDC) for Mysore:

The future plan has two dimensions:

- I. Publicity: Workshop for stakeholders such as travel agents, hoteliers, guides, businessmen to enhance their awareness about maintenance and improvement of tourism areas.
- II. Development: Central Government under Jnurun (Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission) scheme authorizes government of Karnataka for urban development in terms of transportation and hygienic development and public maintenance (Heritage Passport Programme).

"The Heritage Passport Programme proposes to reassess these local cultural and natural resources with a view to developing new tourism itineraries stretching all across the target States through synergetic partnerships among all stakeholders," UNESCO said in a statement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural/Heritage Destination Attributes

The study attempts to identify cultural/heritage destination attributes which satisfy tourists when they visit these destinations. Therefore, after investigating previous research related to this topic,

the researcher decided to select several of cultural/heritage attributes tourism.

Andersen, Prentice and Guerin (1997) investigated the cultural tourism of Denmark. They chose several attributes, such as historical buildings, museums, galleries, theaters, festivals and events, shopping, food, palaces, famous people (writers...), castles, sports, and old towns. They identified the important attributes as being castles, gardens, museums, and historical buildings, when tourists made a decision to visit Denmark.

Richards (1996) showed the marketing and development of European cultural tourism. He chose several attributes related to cultural/heritage destinations in order to analyze European cultural tourism. Through analyzing these attributes, this article indicated a rapid increase in both the production and consumption of heritage attractions.

Glasson (1994) argued the impacts of cultural/heritage tourism and management responses through an overview of the characteristics of tourists to Oxford in England. This article highlighted the varying perspectives and dimensions of impacts on and tourist capacity of the city. Peleggi (1996) assert the relevance of Thailand's heritage attractions to both international and domestic tourism, including an analysis of the state tourism agency's promotion of heritage and the ideological implications of heritage sightseeing in relation to the official historical narrative. This research introduced several attributes, such as traditional villages, monuments, museums, and temples. Philipp (1993) distinguished black-white racial differences in the perceived attractiveness of cultural/heritage tourism. The article surveyed a Southern metropolitan area and chose various attributes. The research concluded that white tourists were more interested in cultural/heritage destinations than black tourists.

In addition to the research argued above, many other researchers have studied cultural/heritage destination attributes. For example, Sofield & Li

(1998) studied the cultural tourism of China by selecting history, culture, traditional festivals, historical events, beautiful scenic heritage, historical sites, architecture, folk arts (music, dancing, craft work) and folk culture villages as the attributes of significance. Janiskee (1996) focused on the importance of events through several attributes such as festivals, historic houses, traditional ceremonies, music, dancing, craftwork, food, and the direct experience of traditional life.

Tourists' Satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction is important to successful destination marketing because it influences the choice of destination, the consumption of products and services, and the decision to return (Kozrak & Rimmington, 2000). Several researchers have studied customer satisfaction and provided theories about tourism (Bramwell, 1998; Bowen, 2001). For example, Parasiraman, Zeithaml, and Berry's (1985)

Table 2 - The Previous Study About Cultural / Heritage Attributes

The Previous Study About Cultural/Heritage Attributes

	So field 1998	Anderson 1997	Richards 1996	Jacishee 1996	Glasson 1994	Peleggi 1996	Philipp 1993	Author 2001
History/Tradition	X				X			
Monuments			X			X		X
Monumental ruins								
Historical buildings		X	X		X	X	X	X
Culture villages	X					X		X
University College					X		X	
Museums		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Galleries		X	X				X	X
Traditional scenery	X						X	X
Arts (music/dance)	X		X	X			X	X
Architecture	X		X					X
Handicrafts	X		X	X		X	X	X
Theaters		X	X		X			X
Festivals/Events	X	X	X	X				X
Old town (city)			X			X		
Historic people		X	X					X
Religious pplaces			X			X	X	X
Food		X		X			X	X
Shopping places		X			X		X	X
Sports								
Informinion centers						X		X
Atmosphere.					X			X
people								
Indoor facilities					X			X
Accessibility					X			X
Expensiveness					X			X
Accommodations								X
Tour packege								X
Guide								X
Souveniris								X

The following table illustrates not only the attributes of previous studies about cultural/heritage tourism, but also the attributes identified for the purpose of this study. The 25 selected attributes are based on previous studies, which were similar to this study. These attributes include cultural/heritage attributes as well as infrastructure attributes, such as food, shopping places, accommodations, etc.

expectation-perception gap model, Oliver's expectancy-disconfirmation theory (Pizam and Milman, 1993), Pizam and some studies on customer satisfaction are also notable in tourism behavior research. For example, Pizam, Neumann and Reichel (1978) studied the factor structure of tourists' satisfaction with their destination areas.

Chon and Olsen (1991) found out a goodness of fit

correlation between tourists' expectations about their destination, and tourists' satisfaction. Then, after tourists have bought the travel service and products, if the evaluation of their experience of the travel product is better than their expectations, they will be satisfied with their travel experience. Furthermore, Chon and Olsen (1991) provided an intensive literature review of tourist satisfaction. One thing to be noted, however, is that although the posited social cognition theory offers an alternative way of explaining satisfaction processes, its methodological mechanism is analogous to that of expectancy-disconfirmation theory. In other words, the concepts of congruity and incongruity can be interpreted similarly to the concepts of confirmation and disconfirmation, both of which can result in either positive or negative directions.

Kozak and Rimington (2000) examined the findings of a study to determine destination attributes critical to the overall satisfaction levels of tourists. Pizam, Neumann, and Reichel (1978) found that it is important to measure consumer satisfaction with each attribute of the destination, because consumer dis/satisfaction with one of the attributes leads to dis/satisfaction with the overall destination. Rust, Zahorik, and Keininghan (1993) assert that the relative importance of each attribute to the overall impression should be investigated because dis/satisfaction can be the result of evaluating various positive and negative experiences.

Gap Model of Service Quality (SERVQUAL)

The widespread adoption of service quality concept and the close attention of the service firm managers to this concept motivate the researchers to explore more solid methods for service quality measurements and the evaluation of it (e.g. Parasuraman et al., 1988; Dabholkar et al. 1996; Brady and Cronin, 2001). For this aim, gap theory is the most accepted model in the service literature (Brown and Bond, 1995), although some criticisms about its validity is also discussed by researchers (e.g. Teas 1993).

The gaps model positions the key concepts, strategies and decisions in services marketing in a manner that begins with the customer and builds the organization. Tasks around what is needed to close the gap between customer expectations and perceptions (Zeithaml and Bitner, 1996). Not knowing what customers expect (Gap1), not selecting the right service designs and standards (Gap 2), not delivering to service standards (Gap 3), and not matching performance to promises (Gap4), are the underlying causes behind the customer gap (Gap 5). Among these five service quality gaps, the customer gap is the most vital point to consider. The major aim of the gaps model is to analyze the difference between customer expectations and perceptions (see Figure 1). To increase customer satisfaction, firms first need appropriate measurement techniques for measuring and evaluating the gap between expectations and perceptions. After receiving the service, customers compare the performance of the service provider with their expectations which are mainly influenced by word of mouth, personal needs and past experience. In most of the service settings, however, customers may not get the service level they expected before the service experience. The performance of the service provider falls either below customer's expectations or above them. When expectations are high, service is perceived to be of exceptional quality and also to be a pleasant surprise. When expectations are not met, service quality is deemed unacceptable. When expectations are confirmed by perceived service, quality is satisfactory. However, quality, which falls short of expectations, has a greater effect on customer satisfaction than quality which exceeds satisfaction (Zeithaml and Bitner, 1996). In the services sector, being different has a special advantage among rivals who offer similar goods and services (Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons, 1994).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate tourists' gap between satisfaction levels of interpretation services

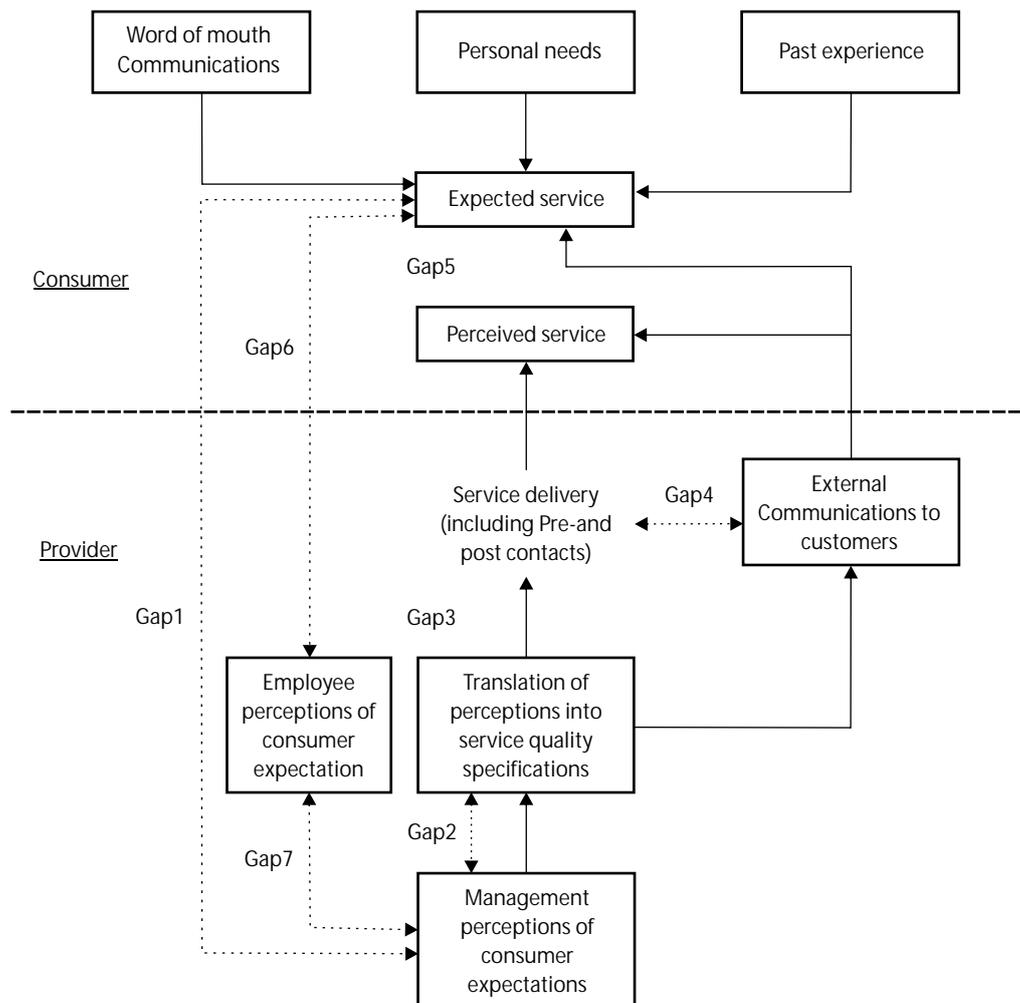


Figure 1. Model of service quality gaps (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Cury, 1999; Luk and Lak and Layton, 2002)

and their preferences for the interpretive service in a single tourist destination, Mysore city. Specifically, this study attempts to examine the effectiveness of interpretation services and to determine if the interpretive services provided by the Mysore city meet the needs of the general public.

Methodology used

Sample

The sample population for this research comprised of tourists who visited Mysore in March and April, of 2008. The survey was conducted over a 3-week period at five different places that are frequently visited in Mysore and the respondents of the study were selected using judgmental sampling method. Distribution of questionnaires was carried out only during the daytime between 11 A.M. and 4 P.M.

Respondents were approached and informed about the purpose of the survey in advance before they were given the questionnaire.

Respondents under the age of 18 were excluded. Personal observations revealed that tourists who were age 18 or older visit cultural/heritage destinations either individually or with their friends or families as groups. A total sample size of 100 was completed.

The instrument

The data collection instrument consisted of a two part self-administered questionnaire. The first section of the questionnaire was to measure the guests' expectation and satisfaction of service quality in Mysore city. Respondents were asked to indicate the level of perceptions based on a Likert scale from one

(very low) to five (very high). The second part of the questionnaire was designed to capture the demographic and traveling characteristics of respondents. SPSS 11.0 for windows was employed in order to access the particular results required for the scale measurement. Descriptive analysis such as means, standard deviation and

Table 3 : Respondents' Demographic Profile

	Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	73	73
	Female	27	27
Age	Less than 25	17	17
	25-35	39	39
	35-45	34	34
	45-55	6	6
	Above 55	4	4
Education	Below Graduation	5	5
	Graduation	39	39
	Post Graduation	56	56
Profession	Professional	18	18
	Salaried	19	19
	Business	30	30
	Student	29	29
	Others	4	4
Personal Monthly Income	Below 2000\$	75	75
	Above 2000	25	25

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics on tourists' Expectation, Perception and Gap Mean of Service Quantity In tourism industry of Mysore (N=100)

No	Dimension	Expectation		Perception		Gap	t	Sig. (2 tailed)	Results
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean (P-E)			
1	Catering	2.84	.940	3.32	.886	0.48	-3.352	.001	Reject
2	Safety	3.21	.701	3.53	.784	0.32	-2.774	.007	Reject
3	People attitude	3.44	.833	3.36	.785	-0.08	.669	.505	Accept
4	staff attitude	3.41	.726	3.07	.844	-0.34	3.135	.002	Reject
5	Price	3.60	.765	3.00	.816	-0.6	5.450	.000	Reject
6	Hygiene	2.54	.915	2.67	1.155	0.13	-.877	.382	Accept
7	Food	2.67	.667	3.29	.808	0.62	-5.894	.000	Reject
8	Quietness	3.67	.711	3.16	1.080	-0.51	3.731	.000	Reject
9	Cultural Level	3.45	.809	3.28	.986	-0.17	1.305	.195	Accept
10	Availability Information	3.43	.782	2.86	1.092	-0.57	4.395	.000	Reject
11	Religious places	3.52	.643	3.83	.652	0.31	-3.192	.002	Reject
12	Shopping places	3.41	.780	3.00	.804	-0.41	3.785	.000	Reject
13	Guidance	3.70	.628	2.86	.804	-0.84	8.555	.000	Reject
14	Historical building	4.00	.739	3.69	.720	-0.31	3.266	.002	Reject
15	Festival	4.11	.601	3.69	.775	-0.42	4.497	.000	Reject
16	Accommodation	3.47	.674	3.05	.609	-0.42	4.782	.000	Reject
	Total 9Service quality)	54.47		51.66		-2.81	-5.48	.000	Reject

Note:

1. Gap mean is defined as perception mean- expectation mean;
2. A negative gap indicates that guests perceived that service delivery did not meet their expectation' a positive gap indicates that guests perceived that service delivery exceeded their expectation
3. Denotes that there is a significant difference between (E) and (P) at 95 per cent confidence level

frequencies were calculated. Reliability of the scale was tested, dimensionality of the scale was confirmed through an exploratory factor analysis and regression analysis produced causal results.

The sample population

The target population of the study consisted of all the international and domestic tourists (n = 100) who stayed in Mysore city.

Hypothesis

1. There is no difference between tourists' expectation and satisfaction toward interpretation services.
2. There is no correlation between overall tourist's satisfaction and attributes.

dominant age group of the respondents was 25 to 35 years (39%), followed by 35 to 45 years (34%), less

Table 5 : Correlations Between Tourist Attributes and Overall Tourists Satisfaction About Mysore

		Overall Satisfaction about Mysore	Result
Safety	Pearson Correlation Significant Level	.446** .000	Reject
Price	Pearson Correlation Significant Level	.447** .000	Reject
Hygiene	Pearson Correlation Significant Level	.265** .008	Reject
Food	Pearson Correlation Significant Level	.371** .000	Reject
Quietness	Pearson Correlation Significant Level	.204* .042	Reject
Accommodation	Pearson Correlation Significant Level	.366** .000	Reject

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

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

3. Few factors best predict overall satisfaction of the tourist's satisfaction.

Discussion and Results

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are shown in (see Table 3). The gender distribution of the respondents was quite even, with 27% female respondents and 73% male respondents. The

expectations and perceptions in the form of the SERVQUAL gap score proved very useful for assessing levels of service quality (Shahin A, 2005). Table 4 shows that the average ratings for expectations are higher than the average perception ratings in almost of the attributes. The results of the quantitative application of the SERVQUAL model in tourism industry show that the overall expectations of hotel guests are higher than their perception. This proves

the existence of a negative SERVQUAL gap (-2.81).

In order to measure the gaps between the expected

correlation between overall satisfaction and Hygiene (Factor 3) was 0.265 (p=.008); the correlation between

Table 6 : Regression Analysis of the Factors Affecting the Existence of Service Quality in tourism industry of Mysore

Model	Variables Entered	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	Price	.447 ^a	.199	.191	.698
2	Safety	.579 ^b	.335	.312	.639
3	Accommodation	.647 ^c	.419	.401	.601
4	Food	.703 ^d	.494	.472	.563

a. Predictors: (Constant), Price Satisfaction
 b. Predictors: (Constant), Price Satisfaction, Safety Satisfaction
 c. Predictors: (Constant), Price Satisfaction, Safety Satisfaction, Accommodation Satisfaction
 d. Predictors: (Constant), Price Satisfaction, Safety Satisfaction, Accommodation Satisfaction, Food satisfaction

FOOD services, followed by the CATERING services.

These results revealed reject for hypothesis 1 that there is a difference between tourists' expectation and satisfaction of the selected cultural/heritage attributes.

Correlation Analysis

A correlation coefficient measured the strength of a linear between two variables. In the study, a correlation coefficient measured the strength of a linear between the overall satisfaction of the respondents and six factors (Safety, Price, Hygiene, Food, Quietness and Accommodation). The correlations between overall satisfaction and six factors were positive and were significant at the 0.01 and 0.05 levels. For example, the correlation between overall satisfaction and Safety (Factor 1) was 0.446 (p=.000); the correlation between overall satisfaction and Price (Factor 2) was 0.447 (p=.000); the

actual dependent values around the regression lines. The standard error was 69.8.

With the addition of another dependent variable into the model, Safety (X2) increased R, and R2 (0.579 and 0.335), respectively. The standard error also declined with the addition of X2. Model 3 further added another variable called Accommodation (X3) into the equation which further improved the capability of the model to explain the variation in Y, Accommodation (X3) increased R, and R2 (0.647 and 0.419), respectively. Model 4 further added another variable called Food (X4) into the equation which further improved the capability of the model to explain the variation in Y, Food (X4) increased R, and R2 (0.703 and 0.494), respectively.

The adjusted R-square (0.472) in Table 4 tells us that the model accounts for 47.2% of variance in the Food. In other words this model can predict service quality almost 47.2% correctly.

As a result Price factor ($R=0.447$) has 19.1% contribution, further Safety and Accommodation and

ensure that employees are well trained and understand the level of service needed to provide for their customers. KSTDC also should give customers the opportunity to talk about both their positive as well as negative experiences in Mysore. Employees should be able to show adequate personal attention to customers. Ensuring that employees are well trained, and giving attention to other factors that are required for the provision of a high level of service quality might incur increased costs, but will provide improved customer satisfaction. The allocation of financial resources for the human resource applications will equip employees with a better understanding of excellent.

CONCLUSION

The travel and tourism industry is undergoing profound change with the emergence of global brands, new distribution technologies, low-cost competitors, and structural changes as players merge and supply chains are redefined. Success in tourist business depends on understanding the key factors in determining customer satisfaction. As KSTDC continue to compete intensely for a larger market share, effective marketing strategies are essential to target both Indian and International travelers. This can be achieved by satisfying them during their first visit and prolonging their stay in order to develop customer loyalty and thereby building up the desire to revisit Mysore.

The paper reported that service quality is indeed an important driver of customer retention. Where price and safety perceptions are poor, there is potential for improving service quality to a significant increase in rate of retention. However, where negative price perceptions are associated with high service quality perceptions, service quality alone will be inadequate to retain customers.

The differences and similarities in tourists attribute evaluation and customer satisfaction has been highlighted. Hospitality factor is the most influential factor in determining the satisfaction level for both

Indian and International travelers that will lead to revisit. International tourists are more concerned with

destination by using the expectancy-disconfirmation theory. International Journals

Table 7 : Prioritization of Important Factor about Improving Tourism Industry

	No. Of International Respondents	Percentage	No. of Domestic Respondents	Percentage
Accommodation	5	10%	2	4%
Catering	2	4%	7	14%
Food	1	2%	8	16%
Guidance	2	4%	2	4%
Safety & Security	13	26%	14	28%
Hygiene	6	12%	4	8%
Price	21	42%	13	26%
Total	50	100%	50	100%

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