Tourist Expectation and Perception towards Service Quality of Tourism Services in Kodaikanal

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Abstract: Tourism refers to movement of one place to another place. its generates more revenue to Government. Tourism develops other associated industries like Hotel industry, transport, handicraft and travel agent. Tourism in India is the largest service and one of the most profitable industries in the country.

Kodaikanal is one of the very popular and most sought holiday destination hill resorts in South India. The economy of Kodaikanal is predominantly run by tourism. The number of tourists increased year by year. Service providers who are related to tourism services are also increases. They provide lot of services to their customers and try to satisfy them. Hence, it has created an initiative to the researcher to study service quality of the tourism services.

Keywords: tourism, kodaikanal, service quality, sustainable development, perception

I. INTRODUCTION

Today, tourism is a major service industry which contributes more to one countries national income and also its growth. Tourism refers to movement of one place to another place, it may be travel to historical importance places, hilly stations etc for the purpose of relaxation, education, sports, medical etc., every year a travel to another country or within the country is increased and its generates more revenue to Government. Tourism develops other associated industries like Hotel industry, transport, handicraft and travel agent.

Tourism brings in large amounts of earnings into a local economy in the form of payment for goods and services needed for tourists, accounting for 30% of the world's trade of services, and 6% of overall exports of goods and services. It also creates a platform for employment in the service sector of the economy associated with Tourism. The World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC) estimates that the total contribution of travel and tourism would be Rs.14722.3 billion (7.9 per cent of GDP) in 2023.[1] By its importance tourism is recognized as an "Industry".

II. TOURISM IN INDIA

Tourism in India is the largest service and one of the most profitable industries in the country. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council report2, International tourist arrivals to India are expected to touch 13.43 million by 2024.

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[1]Opportunities in Tourism, Hospitality and Event Management, Journal of the Federation of Andhra Pradesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Vol.XIII, No.15, April 10, 2013, p.1. (1-10).

[2] **World Travel & Tourism Council report**, retrieved from https://www.wttc.org/-/.../reports

Expenditure by foreign tourists in India is expected to grow 4.3% every year to Rs 1.74 lakh crore in 2024. It provides substantial foreign exchange and jobs. According to Government of India estimate, every one Crore Rupee invested in Tourism creates 475 jobs as against 126 jobs from Manufacturing Sector.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Kodaikanal is one of the very popular and most sought holiday destination hill resorts in South India. The economy of Kodaikanal is predominantly run by tourism. The number of tourists increased from two million in 1999 to 3.2 million in 2009, 4.2 million in 2013 and 5.3 million in 2015. With the development of modern amenities and transport Kodaikanal has become one of the favourite summer destinations to the tourists, however, many local tourist groups commute on short trips to Kodaikanal. With the increasing trend of tourist towards Kodaikanal leads to the growth of large number of service providers. They provide lot of services to their customers and try to satisfy them. Hence, it has created an initiative to the researcher to study service quality of the tourism services.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of the study are:

1. To study about the socio-economic profile of Tourist
2. To find out service facilities available in Kodaikanal
3. To analyze the tourists perception towards service facilities
4. To evaluate the tourists expectation towards service facilities
5. To measure the level of satisfaction towards service facilities
6. To find out the gap between perception and expectation with regards to tourism services
7. To identify the Impediments faced by the respondents in Kodaikanal and offer suggestions based on the findings for sustaining of tourism services

V. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study is confined to tourist (both domestic and International tourists) who are visiting Kodaikanal and their opinion towards tourism services offered and so the research scope is limited, and more specifically, it is associated with tourism.

VI.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the present study is outlined here under

Population - Population for selecting sample units of the study includes tourist both Domestic and International Tourists who visit Kodaikanal.

Sampling Technique - Purposive random sampling technique is used.

Sample Size - In this study, the researcher took 536 samples from the population.

Source and Tool for Data Collection - In this study both primary and secondary data were used. The primary data is collected through a well structured questionnaire. The Questionnaire is constructed on the basis of REQUAL Model. The Secondary Data were collected from Magazines, Books, Journals, Tourism Office, Government Reports and Statistics, Websites etc.,.

Tools for Analysis

The various statistical tools used in this study are simple percentage analysis, Standard Deviation, Weighted average, Chi-square test, Analysis of variance, Garrett ranking analysis, Inter Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis, T-Test, Descriptive analysis and Gap Analysis.

VII.   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of this study are,
1. The study is confined to Kodaikanal only.
2. Since it is an empirical study, there may be personal bias in getting the data where the respondents may be reluctant to provide some of the information.
3. The findings cannot be generalized to the universe.

VIII.   LITERATURE REVIEW

Jacob Konwar & Deb Kr.Chakraborty (2015)[3], pointed that there is a significant mean difference in the opinions of the domestic and foreign visitors regarding the tourism related products and services in the river island Majuli before and after visiting it.

Mahamad S, Latha G, Manikandan N & Chandrasekar V (2014)[4] rightly pointed out that tourism has played a very decisive role to transform the world into a globalized economy where all nations can exchange free trade and culture and share their interest of mutual benefits based on tourism industry.

Thilakam.C & Jothimani. U (2014)[5], suggested that the government authorities should take necessary step to boost the quality of the hospitality services provided in the study area. A list of approved hotels and their rates, facilities and types of meals offered,¬ telephone number with emails their location and taxi charges from station should also be included in the travel brochures.

IX.   SOCIO – ECONOMIC PROFILE

The data collected through questionnaire are indicated in the upcoming table.

Table – 1- Socio Economic Profile

Socio-Economic Factors		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	254	47.4
	Female	282	52.6
Age	18 - 20	80	14.9
	21 - 25	131	24.4
	26 - 30	126	23.5
	31 - 35	60	11.2
	36 - 40	108	20.2
Marital Status	Unmarried	192	35.8
	Married	296	55.2
	Separated	32	6.0
	Widow	16	3.0
Educational Qualification	Up to SSLC	30	5.6
	HSC	94	17.5
	Graduation	283	52.8
	Diploma	65	12.2
	Others	64	11.9
Employment Status	Homemaker	43	8.0
	Service	87	16.3
	Own Business	177	33.0
	Professional	149	27.8
Monthly Income	Below Rs. 10,000	30	5.6
	Rs. 10,001 to Rs. 25,000	114	21.2
	Rs. 25,001 to Rs. 50,000	181	33.8
	Above Rs. 50,000	211	39.4
Family Size	Up to 2	109	20.3
	3to 4	269	50.2
	5 to 6	110	20.5
	Above 6	48	9.0

Source: Collected through Questionnaire

[3] **Jacob Konwar & Deb Kr.Chakraborty,** "Tourism and its associated aspects in the River Island Majuli, Assam: A Study from the Perspective of Visitors", Prabandhan: Indian Journal of Management, July 2015, pp. 41- 50.

[4] **Mahamad S, Latha G, Manikandan N & Chandrasekar V,** "A study of tourist inflow in Tamilnadu 2001-2012 – A GIS based study", International Journal of Geomatics and Geosciences, Vol. 5, Issue 2, 2014, pp - 312 -319.

[5]**Thilakam .C & Jothimani. U,**" A Study on Consumer Attitude towards Tourism Products in Tuticorin District", Ph.D thesis submitted to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Oct 09, 2014, retrieved from http://www.slideshare.net/UJothiMani/tourism - 40051899#related-tab-content.

From this study its revealed that, female are interested to visit kodaikanal as compared to male, youngsters who pertaining to the age group 21-25 and married people are eager to visit kodaikanal, further it should be noted that graduates are having interest as compared to other categories and families whose monthly income more than Rs.50,000 are plan to come kodaikanal.

Table – 2 – Pre- Tour Related Profile

Tour related facts		Frequency	Percent
Nationality	Indian	388	72.4
	Foreign Nationals	148	27.6
Place of origin	Within Tamil Nadu	232	43.3
	Other States of India	121	22.6

Tour Plan		Frequency	Percent
Purpose of visit	Site seeing	210	39.2
	Mountaineering	56	10.4
	Rest	203	37.9
	Business	42	7.8
	Education	25	4.7
Length of Stay	One day	110	20.5
	Two days	146	27.2
	Three days	100	18.7
	Four days	67	12.5
	More than four days	113	21.1
Mode of Transport	Own Vehicle	189	35.3
	Hired Vehicle	96	17.9
	Common sight seeing coach	86	16.0
	Friend's Car	60	11.2
	Travel Agent Vehicle	105	19.6
Cost of travel	Up to Rs. 10,000	94	17.5
	Rs.10,001 - Rs. 20,000	137	25.6
	Rs. 20,001 - Rs. 30,000	127	23.7
	Rs. 30,001 to Rs. 40,000	50	9.3
	Above Rs. 40,000	128	23.9
	Union territory	35	6.5
	European	34	6.3
	American	45	8.4
	Australian	33	6.2
	Asian countries	21	3.9
	African	15	-2.8
No of times visit	Once	192	35.8
	Twice	183	34.1
	Three times	61	11.4
	Four times	45	8.4
	Five Times	16	3.0
	Frequent Visitor	39	7.3
Awareness	Internet	135	25.2
	Tour Agents	58	10.8
	Books	22	4.2
	Friends & Relatives	280	52.2
	Advertisements	41	7.6
Factors Influenced	Self	157	29.3
	Spouse	99	18.5
	Advertisements	49	9.1
	Friends and Relatives	206	38.4

Source: Collected through Questionnaire

The above table pointed out that, domestic tourist particularly people from Tamil nadu having more interest to visit kodaikanal and they came to know kodaikanal by friends and relatives. Further it indicates that the American travelers also paying attention to visit the beauty of kodaikanal and most of the tourist are first time visit the kodaikanal.

Table – 3 – Opinion about kodaikanal

Opinion		Frequency	Percent
Outlook	Place of Scenic beauty	212	39.55
	Good place for resting and peace	114	21.27
	Good place for time pass	210	39.17
Times of visit	Season Time	219	40.9
	Off Season	209	39.0
	Festival Time	108	20.1

Source: collected though Questionnaire

This table shows that, most of the tourist felt that kodaikanal as a place of scenic beauty and they also willing to visit such places in seasonal time.

Table– 4– Tour Plan
Source: collected though Questionnaire

From the above table it should be clear that, most of the tourist visit kodaikanal for sightseeing purpose and they plan to stay for two days. Majority of the tourist use their own Vechicle to seeing the places and their budgeted cost is Rs.10,001 to Rs.20,000.

Table – 5–
Accommodation services & Service Quality Perceived

REQUAL Factors	Chi Square Value	P Value	Significant / Not Significant
Assurance	8.682[a]	0.013	Significant at 5% level
Reliability	94.746[a]	0.000	Significant at 1% level
Responsiveness	110.916[a]	0.000	Significant at 1% level
Tangibles	173.986[a]	0.000	Significant at 1% level
Service Responsibility	50.801[a]	0.000	Significant at 1% level
Service Product Dimension	100.031[a]	0.000	Significant at 1% level

Source: Computed from primary data

It is obviously identified that, there is a connection between overall satisfaction in Food and accommodation services with Reliability, Responsiveness, Tangibles, Service Responsibility and Service Product Dimension. Since P value is less than 0.01, null hypothesis is rejected at 1% level of significance.

Table – 6–
Transport services & Service Quality Perceived

REQUAL Factors	Chi Square Value	P Value	Significant/ Not Significant
Assurance	47.581a	0.000	Significant at 1% level
Reliability	43.892a	0.000	Significant at 1% level
Responsiveness	137.555a	0.000	Significant at 1% level
Tangibles	177.946a	0.000	Significant at 1% level
Service Responsibility	181.806a	0.000	Significant at 1% level
Service Product Dimension	208.438a	0.000	Significant at 1% level

Source: Computed from primary data

It is obviously identified that, there is a connection between overall satisfactions in Transport services with Assurance, Reliability, Responsiveness, Tangibles, Service Responsibility and Service Product Dimension.

Table – 7–
Travel Agent services & Service Quality Perceived

REQUAL Factors	Chi Square Value	P Value	Significant/ Not Significant
Assurance	178.542a	0.000	Significant at 1% level
Reliability	86.897a	0.000	Significant at 1% level
Responsiveness	48.610a	0.000	Significant at 1% level
Tangibles	44.150a	0.000	Significant at 1% level
Service Responsibility	148.818a	0.000	Significant at 1% level
Service Product Dimension	192.595a	0.000	Significant at 1% level

Source: Computed from primary data

It is obviously identified that, there is a connection between overall satisfactions in travel agent services with Assurance, Reliability, Responsiveness, Tangibles, Service Responsibility and Service Product Dimension.

Table - 8
Amenities in Tourist Destination Factor

Tourist destination	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Rank
Drinking Water	3.07	1.156	-0.437	-0.815	VIII
Sporting and Recreation	3.16	1.067	-0.130	-1.042	VI
Commercial Tourist Attraction	2.75	1.112	0.039	-0.643	XI
Campsites	3.22	1.294	-0.053	-1.149	IV
Retail	3.08	1.262	-0.149	-0.838	VII

Banking	3.18	1.130	0.057	-1.044	V
Insurance	3.02	1.101	0.136	-0.575	IX
Medical	3.26	1.281	-0.262	-0.778	III
Emergency Services	2.87	1.182	-0.319	-1.016	X
Security Services	3.73	1.325	-0.983	-0.118	I
Behaviour of co-tourist	3.39	1.198	-0.272	-0.745	II

Source: Computed from Primary Data

"Security Services" is the top ranked Amenities in Tourist destination Factor with a mean value of 3.73, followed by "Behaviour of co-tourist" (3.39), "Medical" (3.26), "Campsites" (3.22), "Banking" (3.18), "Sporting and Recreation" (3.16), "Retail" (3.08),"Drinking Water" (3.07),"Insurance" (3.02), "Emergency Services" (2.87), "Behaviour of local people" (2.84) and "Commercial Tourist Attraction" (2.75).

X. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This study is conducted for the purpose of analyze the tourists' satisfaction and their expectations and perceptions towards tourism services in Kodaikanal.
- 52.6% of the tourist are Female.
- 24.4% of the tourist belongs to the age group of 21 to 25.
- Majority of the tourist are married (55.2%).
- 35.8% of the respondents have visited Kodaikanal for the first time.
- 35.3% of the tourists have used their own vehicle for make a trip in Kodaikanal.
- 25.6% of the tourist have spent Rs.10,001 to Rs. 20,000 for travel to Kodaikanal
- 40.9% of the tourist is willing to visit Kodaikanal in season time.
- 24.4% of the tourist preferred star hotels for their staying.
- 64.2% of the tourist has utilized the services of travel agent.
- 53.92% of the tourist has utilized the services of tourist guide.
- Housekeeping" is the top ranked services availed during the stay with a mean value of 4.38,
- "Ticket Booking" is the top ranked services offered by travel agent with a mean value of 2.65
- "Trustful and Friendly Services" is the top ranked services rendered by guide during visit factor with a mean value of (2.65)
- Majority of the tourist have high level satisfaction towards food and accommodation services.
- Lack of Parking Facility was ranked first by the respondents with the mean score of 66.032, followed by Traffic Jam (59.235), Lack of

Transport Facility (53.035), Higher Charges (50.209), Cheating/Theft (45.009), Poor Service (43.317), Land Scapes (40.791), Public Disturbances (36.491), Unclean environment (34.198) and Less availability of Tourist Guide (31.058).

XI. SUGGESTIONS

In order to minimize the service gap, the following suggestions have been offered.

To Service Providers
- Cleanliness, hygienic conditions and satisfactory catering should exist at every place of tourist interest.
- Service providers should introduce modern equipments such as Travel guidance notification Kiosks, Traffic notification, parking availability Mobile Apps etc., more in numbers to support customer service and also to improve the efficiency, productivity and the quality of services.
- Take necessary steps for providing Klaus car parking system or automatic multilevel puzzle parking system to their customers
- Guides should know different languages which will help them to provide good service to the foreign tourists.

To Government
- The proposals of Rope Cars can be placed in sufficient area which recreates the tourist more.
- The Riding Tracks of cycles, Horses and Pedestrian walk ways should be proposed and maintained.
- Create more employment opportunities to youngsters by giving training in the field of tourist guides.

To Tourist
- The knowledge for tourists about the destination (Kodaikanal) should be must. The tourist should be medically fit to withstand the micro climate of the destination because Kodaikanal is a hill station based tourism area.
- The entries, recreational activities within the reserved area should be avoided.
- The tourist activities whether personal or commercial should not affect the nature of Kodaikanal in any way at any cause.

XII. CONCLUSION

The tourism industry holds immense potential for the Indian economy and it can provide impetus to other industries through backward and forward linkages. Tourism is considered as a tool for economic development in India. Even though the service provider offers quality service to their customers, their Expectations are more than they perceived. The service provider must understand that Gap and take necessary implementation to offer quality service.

XIII.   SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

❖ The study may be extended to other similar tourist Destinations in Tamil Nadu as well as in India
❖ In future, the study may focus towards Foreign tourism
❖ The research work may be extended to compare the services of Private and Government service providers.

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