

Houseboat Services and Customer Satisfaction: “A study of Houseboat Industry of Kashmir”.

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Abstract

The main concern for organisations in today's competitive business environment is customer satisfaction and customer loyalty and organisations are trying hard to be successful about it. Customer satisfaction is the consumer's behaviour based on the experiences of purchasing a product or utilising a service which results in loyalty, profitability, repurchase and retention. Loyalty is concerned with the likelihood of a customer's returning, providing strong word of mouth publicity, making referrals as well as providing references and publicity. The main aim of the undertaken study was to assess the impact of satisfaction variables like Houseboat Facilities, Houseboat Attractions and Houseboat Accessibility on tourist loyalty staying at the Houseboats of Kashmir. The sample frame of the study comprised the Houseboats of Srinagar. A total number of 150 respondents staying at the houseboats formed the sample size of the study. The result of the study reflected that a satisfied tourist shows the intention of revisit and a strong willingness to recommend the destination to others.

Key Words: Satisfaction, Loyalty, Houseboats, Kashmir

INTRODUCTION

Across all the business sectors including Tourism industry, the need to magnetise, procure, influence and perpetuate the customers is one of the primary objectives for beating the global business competition. The Tourism industry in particular and all the businesses whose services depend heavily on building long term relationship with customers need to concentrate on satisfying the customers for gaining and maintaining their loyalty. Creative strategies are being adopted and applied worldwide to enhance the tourist inflow. Many destinations rely strongly on repeat visit of tourists as it is believed that satisfaction and retention of repeat visitors is less expensive than to attract and satisfy the new tourists. In a given destination, tourist satisfaction is influenced by factors like destination facilities, destination attractions and destination accessibility which in turn determine the customer loyalty. Loyalty is considered as a fundamental pillar in service marketing as it has significant impact on customer's repeat purchase and promotion, in fact, such customers are considered as the base of any business (Caruana;2002). Customer satisfaction determines the customers desire for further purchase and is considered as a key factor in the formation of customers desires (Mittal and Kumar;2001). Furthermore, the satisfied customer will act as an ambassador and helps in promotion by talking to others about their good experiences (Jamal & Naser; 2002). Several organisations have developed the customer loyalty programmes as a part of relation development activities. Um, et al; 2006 proposed a structural model which explained that the revisiting intention of the tourists to a particular destination is determined by the satisfaction of the tourists.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Providing the better and sophisticated services in the Hospitality, Travel and Recreation sectors lead to the satisfaction of tourists (Kozak, Rimmington: 2006, 260). The satisfied tourists turn into loyal customers and act as ambassador for receiving new tourists to a destination and create a better image through “word of mouth” publicity (Akin, Aksu et al; 2010), furthermore, tourist satisfaction plays a vital role in the survival and development of a destination (Phuong Giang Quach, 2013). Boltan (1998) and Binter (1994) argued that customer satisfaction is the outcome of understanding the needs, likes, dislikes of the customers before serving them. The tourism product includes tangible as well as intangible aspects and its satisfaction depends on the quality of the services provided and the main factor

responsible for the customer loyalty is customer satisfaction (Fornell and Anderson; 1996). The concept of loyalty has been considered as one of the most significant indicators of corporate success in the marketing literature (La Barbara & Mazursky; 1993, Turnbull & Wilson; 1989, Pine et al; 1995, Bauer et al; 2002). Baker and Crompton; 2000 added the definitions of tourist satisfaction by defining it as the tourist's emotional state after experiencing the trip. Thus the evaluation of satisfaction in terms of travelling experience is a post consumption process (Fornell, 1992; Kozak; 2001). Satisfaction can be used as a tool for managers to improve their services (Fornell; 1992) and to compare destinations and organisations in terms of the performance (Kotler; 1994). Peter; 1994 advocated that managing feedback received from customers can be an important source of competitive advantage. Furthermore, the services and the products offered at a particular destination can be evaluated by using satisfaction as a measure (Ross and Iso-Ahola; 1991, Noe and Uysal, 1997, Bramwell; 1998, Schofield; 2002). The undertaken study is an attempt to find out the cause-effect relationship between the tourist satisfaction variables i.e., Houseboat Facilities, Houseboat Attractions, Houseboat Accessibility and the Tourist Loyalty.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify different satisfaction variables of the tourist staying at the houseboats of Kashmir;
- To study the cause effect relationship between satisfaction variables and tourist loyalty;
- To explore various means of attaining tourist loyalty.

HYPOTHESES

The extensive review of literature has revealed that there have been no serious efforts to critically examine the impact of Tourist Satisfaction variables on Tourist Loyalty in Kashmir. Therefore, the purpose of the current study is to fill the gap in literature and to study the impact of Satisfaction Variables on the Tourist Loyalty. In the undertaken study, three main dimensions have been selected as the factors that could determine the tourist satisfaction. In view of that, the study hypothesizes;

H01: The Houseboat Facilities have insignificant relationship with tourist satisfaction.

Ha1: The Houseboat Facilities have significant relationship with tourist satisfaction.

H02: The Houseboat attractions have insignificant relationship with tourist satisfaction.

Ha2: The Houseboat attractions have significant relationship with tourist satisfaction.

H03: The Houseboat accessibility has insignificant relationship with tourist satisfaction.

Ha3: The Houseboat accessibility has significant relationship with tourist satisfaction.

H04: The tourist satisfaction variables have insignificant relationship with tourist loyalty.

Ha4: The tourist satisfaction variables have significant relationship with tourist loyalty.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The proposed structural equation model of the tourist loyalty intention is presented in Figure 1. The model establishes a direct relationship of tourist satisfaction on Tourist loyalty.

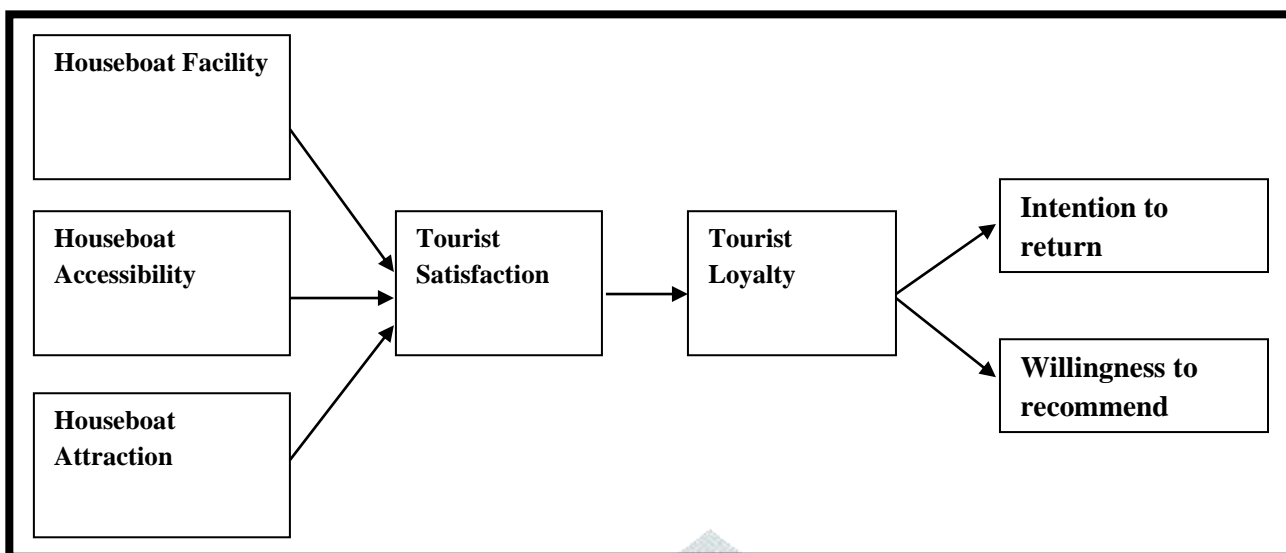


Fig 1. Conceptual Model of Tourist Satisfaction Variables and Tourist Loyalty.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The sample frame for the undertaken study comprised the Houseboats in Srinagar District. A total of 150 respondents were contacted to collect the required data. The data was collected through a well-designed questionnaire which consisted of two parts; Tourist Satisfaction Variables including – Houseboat Facilities, Houseboat Attractions and Accessibility to the Houseboats and the Tourist Loyalty. Using a 5-point Likert scale, the questionnaire for the study was developed based on previously employed validated scales from the existing literature, which consisted of 30 scale items including 9 scale items for Houseboat facilities, 7 scale items for houseboat attractions, 5 scale items for houseboat accessibility, 4 scale items for Tourist Satisfaction and 5- scale items for Tourist Loyalty. The collected data was analysed by using statistical software package, SPSS.

RESPONDENTS PROFILE

Table 1:

Socio-demographic characteristics		Absolute Frequencies	Percentage %
Gender	Male	98	65.33
	Female	52	34.67
	Total	150	100.00
Marital Status	Married	105	70.00
	Un - Married	45	30.00
	Total	150	100.00
No. of Visits	First time visit	113	75.33
	Revisit	37	24.77
	Total	150	100.00
Place of Residence	Foreign	35	23.33
	Domestic	115	76.67
	Total	150	100.00

RESULT FINDINGS

Table 2: Internal Consistency of Study's Questionnaire

Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Houseboat Facility	9	.881
Houseboat Accessibility	7	.706
Houseboat Attraction	5	.781
Tourist Satisfaction	4	.793
Tourist Loyalty	5	.832
The whole questionnaire	30	.798

Source: Field data, SPSS output

The results revealed in the table-2 show that Cronbach's alpha coefficient is ranging from 0.8 to 0.7 for different scale items in the instrument and are exceeding the recommended 0.6 level (De Vellis; 1991). Therefore, there is a high consistency and reliability among the statements in the questionnaire.

Table 3: Means and Standard Deviations for the Study Variables

Variables	Mean	SD	Order
1.Houseboat facility	3.68	.89	1
2.Houseboat Attraction	3.57	1.01	2
3.Houseboat accessibility	3.46	.85	3
Dependent variable	Mean	SD	
Tourist satisfaction	3.66	.86	
Tourist Loyalty	3.53	.84	

Source: Field data, SPSS output

Table-3 presents the value of means and standard deviation for each variable in the questionnaire. It is clearly found from the table that the Houseboat Facilities (3.68) has given much importance by the respondents while the accessibility with least mean (3.46) indicating less importance upon the respondents. The Tourist Satisfaction and Tourist Loyalty are represented by mean scores 3.66 and 3.53 respectively and is considered a good level of satisfaction and loyalty.

Table 4: Linear Regression for Impact of Houseboat Facilities on Tourist Satisfaction

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable: Tourist Satisfaction						Hypothesis decision
	R	R ²	F	β	t	Sig.	
Houseboat facility	.739	.546	206.499	.739	14.37	.000	Accepted

P<0.01

Source: Field data, SPSS output

The results of regression analysis present in the above table indicate that Houseboat facilities had a positive relationship with Tourist Satisfaction ($\beta=.739$, $P=.000$). More specifically, Houseboat facilities explain (R^2)54.6% of variance in tourist satisfaction, which indicates that the houseboat facilities are moderate predictors in tourist satisfaction.

Table 5: Linear Regression for Impact of Houseboat Attractions on Tourist Satisfaction

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable: Tourist Satisfaction						Hypothesis decision
	R	R ²	F	β	t	Sig.	
Houseboat Attraction	.561	.314	73.844	.561	8.593	.000	Accepted

P<0.01

Source: Field data, SPSS output

The results in the above table indicate that Houseboat Attractions are moderately positively related to Tourist Satisfaction ($\beta =.561$, $P=.000$). The regression results make it clear that houseboat Attractions is a significant predictor of Tourist satisfaction. To be more specific Houseboat Attractions explain (R^2) 31.4% of variance in tourist satisfaction.

Table 6: Linear Regression for Impact of Houseboat Accessibility on Tourist Satisfaction

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable: Tourist Satisfaction						Hypothesis decision
	R	R ²	F	β	t	Sig.	
Houseboat	.755	.57	277.885	.755	15.09	.000	Accepted

accessibility							
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P<0.01

Source: Field data, SPSS output

The regression results depicted in the table-6 shows that Houseboat accessibility is a significant predictor of tourist satisfaction and is positively related ($\beta = .775$, $P = .000$). Houseboat Accessibility explains (R^2) 57% of variance in tourist satisfaction.

Table 7: Linear Regression for Impact of Tourist Satisfaction on Tourist Loyalty

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable: Tourist Loyalty						Hypothesis decision
	R	R ²	F	β	t	Sig.	
Tourist satisfaction	.780	.608	266.712	.780	16.331	.000	Accepted

P < 0.01

Source: Field data, SPSS output

The regression results in the table-7 indicate that Tourist Satisfaction is a good predictor of Tourist Loyalty. The Tourist Satisfaction is positively related to the Tourist Loyalty ($\beta = .78$, $P = .000$). More specifically, Tourist Satisfaction explains (R^2) 60.8% of variance in Tourist Loyalty. However, the overall results indicated that Tourist Satisfaction variables positively influenced the Tourist Loyalty. As a result, the Hypothesis 4 is accepted, which confirmed the positive relation between Tourist satisfaction and tourist loyalty.

CONCLUSION

The results of the undertaken study must be considered to be valuable as it supported the notion that Tourist Satisfaction and Tourist Loyalty are the determining components in improving tourist arrival. The satisfied tourist will definitely have a desire to revisit the destination and will recommend the same to friends and family members. The present study attempted to examine the relationship between the Satisfaction variables and Tourist Loyalty for tourists visiting, the Houseboats of Kashmir. From the findings of the undertaken study, it became clear that the satisfaction variables positively affect tourist loyalty. These findings can be used as the benchmark by various stakeholders of J&K tourism in designing future marketing strategies.

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