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TOURISM CLUSTERS: A KEY TO TOURIST SATISFACTION AND SUSTAINABILITY IN AMRITSAR REGION

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable Tourism relates to meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. The present paper focuses on the satisfaction of the tourists with the existing attractions to be the key indicator for the sustainable development and assesses the impact of clustering of attractions on the stay of the tourists in Amritsar, located on the western flank of Punjab. A sample size of 100 tourists was taken to determine the overall satisfaction of tourists with the existing attractions and attitude towards clustering of attractions in Amritsar. The research methodology adopted is factor analysis, Pearson's co-relation and simple descriptive statistics. The results indicate that generally current tourists are satisfied with the existing main attractions but they don't know much about potential attractions in and around Amritsar. The results further show that tourists are positive about staying here for longer time but they require better services and more attractions to visit. This will certainly increase the carrying capacity of Amritsar and that will further lead to longer sustainability of the region. It is recommended that this research can be applied to other regions also and further research can be undertaken with other indicators of destination sustainability as devised by the WTO.

KEY WORDS: Demographic profile, Sustainability, Tourist attractions, Tourist satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world, as both domestic and international visitors visit to the most attractive places. It is an increasingly important source of income, employment and wealth in many countries. This growth is a cause for both interest and concern. However, its rapid expansion has also had detrimental environmental (and socio-cultural) impact in many regions, depending on how tourism is developed and managed. At the same time, the concept of sustainable development has become widely accepted as the way to a better, more humane and socially responsible future. There is a growing belief that tourism can play a significant role in sustainable development (UNWTO, Montenegro, 2007). Sustainable tourism strategies have gone a long way towards minimizing this negative impact. Today, tourists are becoming more demand oriented and their length of stay is also shrinking with time. So they cover only the main attractions and go back home. Therefore, to retain tourists at a destination requires exploration of more potential sites and formation of new clusters of attractions in order to better serve tourists and to give them more satisfaction. This will lead to decentralization of attractions and tourists will be spread in the whole area instead of concentrating on a single point leading to increase in carrying capacity of the destination to make it more sustainable.

LITERATURE REVIEW

“Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of the present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing the opportunity for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems” (Earth Summit, 1992). Sustainability guidelines try to maintain a balance among the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development and guarantee its long-term sustainability. Expressed simply, sustainable tourism can be defined as: ‘Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities’. (Making Tourism More Sustainable: A Guide for Policy Makers, 2005).

A tourist destination is a complex of attractions, equipment, infrastructure, facilities, businesses, resources, and local communities, which combine to offer tourists products and experiences they seek. Sustainable tourism ensures a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them (SCBD, 2009). At each tourism destination there exist certain data and information that can serve as sustainability indicators such as volumetric, including tourist arrivals, overnights spent, and accommodation capacities, or economic, such as tourism revenues and expenditures. (UNWTO, Montenegro, 2007). Tourism can provide the justification and help for conservation of local nature areas, archaeological sites, arts, crafts, and cultural traditions and overall improvement of environmental quality because these are attractions for tourists (Birgit Steck, 1999).

“Tourist satisfaction” measures the subjective impressions of tourists. Asking tourists whether they are satisfied with their trip and why, can be very helpful when identifying lacks of quality and possibilities of improvement. By constantly checking the visitor satisfaction, the success of measures taken to improve the products offered can be evaluated (www.oete.de/tourism4nature.org). Satisfaction was the result of the visitor’s feelings as to whether or not their needs and expectations had been met (Shu-Yun Cheng 2005). Tourist satisfaction is important to successful destination marketing and planning because it influences the choice of destination, the consumption of products and services, and the decision to return (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000). A visitor’s overall satisfaction will influence the likelihood of repeat visitation, extended length of stay, increased expenditure, enhanced yield and word-of-mouth referrals (Sustainable Tourism Online). Milman and Pizam (1995) also confirm that once the tourists are satisfied with their experience they might like to visit a destination. At first sight, tourist satisfaction may be hard to measure due to very subjective impressions, but a detailed and well-structured analysis can be a valuable source of advice for the improvement of the quality of tourism products (OETE.DE, 2007).

The literature review confirms that tourists’ satisfaction is one of the major indicators for the sustainability of the tourism over a place. Therefore, the present study was designed to determine the satisfaction of tourists with the existing attractions in Amritsar, known for the Golden Temple. To maintain sustainability it is very important to disperse the tourists in the surrounding areas so that carrying capacity of the main attractions in Amritsar could be enhanced. Hence, in the present research, views of the tourists have been analysed in case more attraction clusters are developed in the region.

OBJECTIVES

The present study is designed to determine the

1. Satisfaction level of current tourists with the existing tourism attractions in the region.
2. Attitude of tourists towards clustering of tourist attractions

HYPOTHESIS

1. Tourists are satisfied with the current attractions in Amritsar.
2. Clustering of sites and circuits positively correlates to the stay of tourists.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To meet the objectives of the present study data was collected mainly at the primary level and results were reported. The sample consisted of tourists in Amritsar, who were administered a set of questionnaire and a five level Likert scale was included to study their attitude. The present paper has been divided into three sections. The first section focuses on the analyses of the satisfaction of tourists with the current sites. Total 10 attractions have been considered for analysis. The second section focuses on the general attitude of tourists if more tourist attractions are developed in Amritsar region and total 15 variables were considered adequate for the study and the third section explores overall satisfaction of tourist with Amritsar city as a whole.

DATA COLLECTION

Since the main objective of the research is to study sustainability of tourist sites in Amritsar Region, the data was collected from tourists, who visited Amritsar in the month of November, 2011. Questionnaires were given to 114 tourists. As data has been collected in personal interviews so only a few questionnaires had to be replaced. Overall 14 questionnaires were replaced as tourists left the questionnaire after filling the first page on pretext of shortage of time. These questionnaires were replaced with fresh ones and total 100 questionnaires were collected. The collected data was analysed to ensure that all the objectives of the research are met adequately.

DATA CODING

The collected data was transformed into codes and was entered into the SPSS 16.0 for analysis. The data was actually coded before entering into the SPSS. Only open – ended questions were left uncoded. To analyse the opinions and behaviour of visitors about various elements of tourism, the order of the measurement scale is coded as the 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = uncertain, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree. The demographic variables were either coded as ordinal class variables or the nominal class variables. Simple numerical scores were assigned to the data.

The Data was then cleaned, processed and missing values and outliers were identified.

SATISFACTION LEVEL OF CURRENT TOURISTS WITH THE EXISTING TOURISM ATTRACTIONS

Tourists were asked to give their views about the satisfaction level with the existing attractions. The findings have shown that tourists had visited only a few attractions in Amritsar region namely the Golden Temple, Durgiana Temple, Jallianwala Bagh and Wagah Border. It is interesting to find most of the tourists did not know about the existence of other sites in Amritsar Region.

TABLE1: ANALYSIS OF TOURISTS' SATISFACTION WITH THE EXISTING ATTRACTIONS

	Golden Temple	Durgiana Temple	Wagah Border	Ram Tirath	Jallianwala Bagh	Hari-Ke-Pattan	Sultanpur Lodhi	Dera Baba Nanak	Sarai Amanat Khan	Kapurthala Forts
Valid N	185	179	161	61	179	21	4	5	2	23
Missing	15	21	39	139	21	179	196	195	198	177
Mean	4.58	4.09	3.41	2.73	3.65	2.14	3.15	2.90	3.00	3.30
Std. Deviation	.87	1.0	1.10	1.19	1.04	.72	.50	.44	1.41	.87

Tourists were highly satisfied with the different aspects of the Golden Temple (mean=4.58, S.D=.872) and Durgiana Temple (mean= 4.09, S.D=1.00) and were satisfied with Jallianwala Bagh (mean=3.65, S.D=1.04). Tourists were dissatisfied with the planning and management of almost all other attractions which they visited viz. Hari-ke-Pattan (mean=2.14, S.D=.72), Shri Ramtirth (mean=2.73, S.D=1.19), Dera Baba Nanak (mean=2.90, S.D=.44) and Sultanpur Lodhi (mean=3.15, S.D=.50).

This analysis shows overall tourists are moderately satisfied with the performance of existing attractions in Amritsar Region. Hence, our first hypothesis is accepted partially that tourists are satisfied with the current attractions in Amritsar.

TOURIST ATTRACTIONS IN AMRITSAR AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF TOURISTS

The Golden Temple attracts tourists of all religions from around the globe. Of the total 100 questionnaires collected 42% females and 58% males took part in the survey. It was observed that mainly domestic tourists (59%) visited Amritsar Region. Among foreign tourists mostly were Europeans (23.0%) followed by Australians (11.0%), North American (5.0%) and (2.0%) from the rest of the world. Though the Golden Temple is a Sikh shrine, it is visited by tourists of all religions. 43.0% Hindus came to pay obeisance at the Golden Temple while 25.0% were Christians, 4.0% were Muslims, 14% were Sikhs and 14.0% belonged to other religions. Foreigners were mainly either Christian or belonged to other religions like Jews etc. These tourists were mostly young and middle aged as 65% tourists were below 45 years of age and the rest 35% above 45 years or older. Even 8% visitors were more than 55 years of age.

With regard to education level 71% were either graduates or post graduates while 19.0% had studied upto high school level only. These visitors were mainly serviceman (37.0%) and businessman (34.0%). It was also observed about 18.0% were students. Half of these (50.0%) were earning more than Rs. 20,000. About 18.0% visitors had not any income source and were totally dependent upon their parents. 32% visitors had income level below Rs. 20,000. The survey also revealed 23% tourists visited Amritsar on a day visit and 29% stayed here only for a night. 31% stayed for two nights and the rest for more than two nights.

TABLE 2: SATISFACTION LEVEL BY DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE VISITORS

	Place of Residence	Gender t=	Religion	Age Categories	Education Level	Monthly Income	Economic Activity
Golden Temple	.802	.652	.774	.570	.010	.046	.888
Durgiana Temple	.510	.892	.165	.179	.892	.099	.604
Attari Border	.211	.172	.653	.660	.526	.029	.743
Ramtirth	.229	.212	.145	.441	.097	.557	.675
Jallianwala Bagh	.523	.604	.618	.830	.085	.155	.263

Table 2 depicts the two-tailed Independent t - test and one-way ANOVA results of the mean difference of satisfaction level at different attractions by demographic characteristics of the visitors. The results showed that overall no significant differences in overall satisfaction of the respondents with various attractions in Amritsar exist with demographic characteristics of the visitors except education level of tourists and the Golden Temple and monthly income of the tourists and Attari Border (Indo-Pak Border) which are significantly related. Attari Border is 30 km away from Amritsar and the main ceremony takes place in the evening so tourists have to stay here for one more night if they visit Indo – Pak Border. Hence, Attari Border and monthly income of the tourists are significantly correlated.

CLUSTERING OF ATTRACTIONS AND STAY OF TOURISTS

To assess impact of clustering of attractions on the stay of the tourists 15 variables were taken. The KMO score of behaviour and satisfaction levels of tourists on visit to Amritsar Region is .644 which indicate that the patterns of co – relations are relatively compact and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity value is zero which means this test is highly significant ($p < 0.001$) so R- matrix is not an identity matrix and there is some relationships between variables included in the present study.

TABLE 3: PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS

Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.106	20.707	20.707	2.294	15.295	15.295
2	1.753	11.685	32.392	1.792	11.947	27.242
3	1.387	9.244	41.636	1.787	11.914	39.157
4	1.298	8.655	50.291	1.532	10.214	49.371

5	1.019	6.793	57.084	1.157	7.714	57.084
6	.971	6.473				
7	.930	6.199				
8	.838	5.588				
9	.752	5.012				
10	.687	4.578				
11	.608	4.055				
12	.546	3.642				
13	.522	3.477				
14	.410	2.737				
15	.173	1.156				

EXTRACTION METHOD: The Principal Component Analysis shows the Eigen Value of five factors is more than 1.0 explaining total variance of 57.084% thus reducing the 15 variables to underlying 5 factors. Before rotation factor 1 accounted for more variance (20.70%) than other three factors, however after extraction it accounts for only 15.29% of variance, though total variance of all five factors remain the same i.e. 57.084%.

TABLE 4: ROTATED COMPONENT MATRIX TABLE

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Stay longer if more sites are clustered	.917	.036	.115	.036	.090
I will prefer packaged tour to cover maximum sites	.839	.040	.012	.084	.125
I like to visit sites with large variety of attractions & activities	.645	.215	.179	.156	-.035
I try to be familiar with locals' traditional ways of life	-.010	.705	-.321	.044	.156
Try to travel around new sites	.177	.698	.287	.021	.078
Walk any distance to enjoy new attractive sites	.169	.671	.309	.087	-.051
Feel more satisfied	.104	.108	.700	.227	.152
Be encouraged to promote Amritsar among friends	.172	.072	.646	-.093	-.034
I feel satisfied to cover whole region in a single day	-.014	.022	.626	.067	-.022
My craze to visit main attraction determines my trip	.199	-.184	.094	.791	-.012
Visiting surrounding sites is an added benefit	-.139	.243	.068	.653	-.052
Be attracted to come again	.171	.069	.013	.578	.132
I will get a choice to visit authentic sites only	.135	.098	-.004	-.039	.641

I need sufficient time to understand culture of new people	-.292	.352	-.169	.168	.577
Visiting far away attractions depends on its uniqueness	.200	-.244	.345	.090	.557

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotated Component Matrix table has divided the 15 factors of attitudes, satisfaction levels and behaviour of tourists on a visit to Amritsar Region in their next visit if new and more sites are clustered and developed into 5 factors. This table shows factor 1 has high loadings of the variables 'stay longer if more sites are clustered', 'I will prefer packaged tour to cover maximum sites' and 'I like to visit sites with large variety of attractions & activities'. This factor can be named as **Positive Factor**. Factor 2 has high loadings of 'I try to be familiar with locals' traditional ways of life', 'try to travel around new sites' and 'walk any distance to enjoy new attractive sites' and can be named as **Exploratory Factor**. Factor 3 shows high loadings of 'feel more satisfied', 'be encouraged to promote Amritsar among friends' and 'I feel satisfied to cover whole region in a single day' and can be named as the **Promotional factor**.

Factor 4 shows high loadings of 'my craze to visit main attraction determines my trip', 'visiting surrounding sites is an added benefit' and 'Be attracted to come again' and can be named as **Leisure Factor**.

Factor 5 shows high loadings of 'I will get a choice to visit authentic sites only', 'I need sufficient time to understand culture of new people' and 'visiting far away attractions depends on its uniqueness'. This factor can be named as **Interpersonal Factor**.

Table 5: Correlation Between Stay of Tourists and Five Factors

		Mean	Standard Deviation	Pearson Co-Relation	Sig. (1-tailed)
Positive Factor	Cluster Factor	12.26	2.05	1.0	
	Length of Stay	2.11	1.16	0.25	.000
Exploratory Factor	Cluster Factor	12.57	1.56	1.0	
	Length of Stay	2.11	1.17	0.45	0.265
Promotional Factor	Cluster Factor	11.06	1.83	1.0	
	Length of Stay	2.11	1.16	0.57	0.210
Leisure Factor	Cluster Factor	12.34	1.75	1.0	
	Length of Stay	2.10	1.16	0.52	0.233
Interpersonal Factor	Cluster Factor	12.63	1.49	1.0	
	Length of Stay	2.11	1.15	.129	0.036

CORRELATION ANALYSIS

In the study, correlation coefficient measured the strength of a linear between the length of stay of tourists and five factors (Positive, Exploratory, Promotional, Leisure and Interpersonal Factors). The results have shown that correlation between the length of stay of tourists and for Positive factor and Promotional factor was significantly positive. It means tourists will like to stay longer if more sites are clustered, like to visit sites with large variety of attractions & activities, they will prefer packaged tour to cover maximum sites and will be attracted to come again. Tourists will not only feel more satisfied but also they will be encouraged to

promote Amritsar among friends. This will reduce the burden on any one particular attraction, leading to the sustainability of the destination.

These results are positive to the hypothesis 2 that clustering of sites and circuits positively correlates to the stay of tourists.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the present paper is to give an account of the role of visitor satisfaction in maintaining sustainability at a destination. The study has found that tourists are satisfied with their visit to main attractions of Golden Temple, Jallianwala Bagh, Attari Border and Durgiana Temple but it was also interesting to find only a handful of tourists visit other attractions as they are not aware of their existence. Therefore, to maintain sustainability government should develop and promote various attractions and elements necessary for tourism development. This will reduce the load of tourists on the main attractions and they will be scattered in the whole area increasing the sustainability of the attractions. Stay of tourists is positively co-related significantly with stay longer if more sites are clustered, like to visit sites with large variety of attractions & activities, will prefer packaged tour to cover maximum sites and will like to visit sites with large variety of attractions & activities. The results of this investigation show that tourists are positive about staying here for longer time to understand the culture of people but they require authentic attractions to visit. The carrying capacity of the Golden Temple and Attari Border, during peak season, is below normal. Many tourists could not enjoy 'Retreat Ceremony by India and Pakistan forces at Attari Border due to large crowd. Certainly formation of new attraction clusters will increase the carrying capacity of the main attractions and that will further lead to satisfaction of the tourists and longer sustainability of the attractions.

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS OF STUDY

Future research should, therefore, concentrate on the investigation of a deeper insight into the issue of tourist satisfaction to maintain sustainability of tourist attractions in Amritsar. In order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the tourism sector, there is a need for effective policies and plans at all levels, especially at the local destination level where tourism activities take place, tourists interact with service providers and with communities and where tourism's positive and negative impacts are most felt.

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