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Management Education & Research Consortium Global (MERC Global)

Yadav Nagar, Kusmara, Tah.- Bhongon, Dist.- Mainpuri, Uttar Pradesh, Pin: 206303, India

Contact: +919604136798 / +919561346798,

Email: mercglobal@rediffmail.com and info@mercglobal.org

Web: www.mercglobal.org

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Gap Analysis of Stakeholders' Perception in Tourism Industry

Rajashri Ramesh Chavan¹ and Sarang Shankar Bhola²

¹Assistant Professor, Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil Institute of Management Studies and Research, Varye, Satara, Maharashtra, India.

²Associate Professor, Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil Institute of Management Studies and Research, Varye, Satara, Maharashtra, India.

ABSTRACT

The paper mainly focused to determine the stakeholder profile and establish the perception gap between tourist and service providers mainly hoteliers and tour operators. A research framework is constructed and tested using data produced by three independent surveys of tourists and tourism service providers viz. hoteliers and tour operators from the 10-tourist sites viz. Aundh, Sajjangarh, Kas, Thoseghar, Ajinkyatara, Mahabaleshwar, Panchgani, Pratapgarh, Wai and Koyna of Satara district. The study concluded that there is a difference of opinion amongst stakeholders in case of satisfaction and importance of those 33 available tourist services and amenities in the district.

KEYWORDS

Services, Perception, Gap Analysis, Tourism Industry, Maharashtra

INTRODUCTION

Satara district of Maharashtra State is an upcoming tourist destination surrounded by natural scenic beauty. The district comes into limelight due to the recognition of Kas Plateau in world heritage site. The Satara has a rich Maratha history. Two hill stations of Maharashtra are in Satara district. It observed that flow to tourist surrounding of Satara prefer for weekend touring. The flow of tourist arrival has risen. Equally, worth seeing tourism products are available in the district. To develop Satara as an all-round tourist destination foremost thing is to develop basic infrastructure. The government is putting their efforts for the development of basic infrastructure. The existing tourist services and amenities need to check to attract and satisfy the arriving tourist as well as to understand the perception of tourist and tourism service providers. The need arises to understand the perceptual gap between them. Therefore, the main objective of this study is the investigation of the perceptual gap between the tourist who visited destinations of Satara district and tourism service providers' estimation. Destination competitiveness can be improved with marketing tool a gap analysis. This paper consists of a brief review of researches; methodology adopted for this study, results &

discussion, which consists of the demographic profile of stakeholders, tabular presentation of the satisfaction level of stakeholders with its interpretation, tabulation of perception of stakeholders on importance towards the tourist services and amenities available in Satara, and hypothesis testing followed by conclusions.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are different parameters to understand the perception gap between stakeholders of the tourism industry. To identify these parameters, we reviewed some related journals and notices in the following manner. Narayana *et al.* (2009) persistent to identify dimensions of service quality and their corresponding measurement variables in the tourism industry by focusing on India, as South Asian destination and they used 10 dimensions viz. information, hospitality, core-tourism experience, value for money, hygiene, fairness of price, amenities, logistics, food and security are used to measure the perception of the tourist regarding their expectation about the destination and the performance of the destination to measure the gap between expectation and performance to determine the satisfaction that results to service quality. These dimensions can also used to quantify the perception of the service provider (i.e. tour operators, hoteliers, destination managers or officials in the tourist department of the country) about the expectation of tourist and how the tourist perceived performance of destination measured to compare the input on customer's own perception will highlight the gap in service providers' perception.

Lopez-Toroa *et al.* (2010) studied existing perceptions on the quality of Nerja as a tourist destination by using a measurement tool to define and quantify perceived quality levels and mainly focused to identify the factors and dimensions of the caliber of a tourist destination and their importance from the tourist's point of view. The results of their study indicate that the most valued aspects when describing the advantages of a tourist destination was the quality offered by hotel services, which coincides with the highest rating obtained.

Zouni, and Kouremenos (2008) describes the gap analysis an effective marketing tool for a better understanding of the customer's perspective and found that there were three areas of over perception, first attraction, prompt service delivery by personnel, food variety, competitive price, tourism trade, product assortment, and shop personnel friendliness lower than providers expected. Second, tourism service providers overestimate satisfied with the tourism trade of the destination. Third, suppliers overestimate most aspects of tourist's attitudes towards the destination and residents, as they rate them above expressed by tourists themselves by service suppliers.

After packing, the revaluation of some relevant literature, we found that researchers had conducted research at popular tourist destination, which are already well developed. However, there is a gap that no one has gone to check out the gap analysis on upcoming tourist destination of Satara district for tourism services and opportunities with the intention to develop basic infrastructure at initial stage. Here, we want to bridge the gap with this theme. Satara is being a district and currently is emerging as a tourist destination for the vicinity of tourists these parameters (mentioned in the review) do not suitable to work out for the study of the district. The foremost thing to develop Satara as a tourist destination, basic infrastructure and tourist amenities must be usable. Therefore, we selected 33 tourist services and amenities, which were compiled under nine heads, viz. 'Air Connectivity', 'Rail Connectivity', 'Road Connectivity', 'Civic Administration', 'Traffic and Transport Management', 'Tourist Facilities', 'Taxes/Permits', 'Maintenance and Management of Tourist Attraction' and 'Other Services' from Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2010 Report of Marketing Research to measure the perception gap between stakeholders of the tourism industry with the intention that prevention is better than cure.

METHODOLOGY

This study focuses to determine the perception gap between tourist and service providers i.e. hoteliers and tour operators in case of satisfaction and importance of tourist services and amenities. The methodology adopted to suffice the objectives are 3 independent schedules were carried out and took purposive random samples of 326 tourists at 10 different tourist locations, 40 hoteliers and 10 tour operators. Schedule consist 1st part related to personal data and 2nd part highlights the perception on satisfaction level and importance level with regards to 33 items which summarized the tourist services and amenities. Responses regarding the perception have been taken on five-point Likert scale in order to measure the perception level. Data analysed with descriptive statistical tools and inferential tools i.e. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient and one sample 't' test.

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no perceptual difference between tourist and service provider (hoteliers and tour operators) towards the tourist services and amenities.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of Stakeholders

Tourists flow is from all over the Maharashtra. The gender ratio is equally beneficial. Budget hotels are more preferred to stay rather than star hotel. Tourist tends to visit destinations

within the vicinity of town to celebrate weekends. Entertainment and shopping is lesser preferred by tourists. Food and drinks, accommodation, transport, information material and packaged tours are perceived to be fair.

Hotels of all categories are found in Satara i.e. resorts, star graded and downtown. 60 % of the Resorts were established during 1980-2000. 50% of the star graded hotels were established prior to 1970 and 50% after 2000. 59.09% Downtown hotels were built after 2000 and other category hotels were (88.89%) established after 2000. The majority of hotels i.e. 75.86% serves both vegetarian and non-vegetarian food and 24.14% are pure vegetarian.

Most of the tour-operating organization i.e. 90% is proprietary. Out of them 66.67% organization established prior to 2005 and the rest after 2005. A few tour operators from Mahabaleshwar, Kolhapur, and Mumbai arrange package tours of Satara. 60% of sample tour operators have handled more than 1000 tourists each in a year.

Satisfaction Level of Stakeholders

Table 1 presents the responses regarding the satisfaction of tourists, hoteliers, and tour operators' about services and amenities in Satara.

Table 1 depicts stakeholder satisfaction level towards 33 tourist services and amenities. Tourists are strongly satisfied with the promptness of the ticketing window of the monuments/tourist attraction, telephone/mobile services, conservation of heritage sites and behaviour of service personnel at wayside restaurants and Dhabas. Whereas, hoteliers are strongly satisfied with the telephone and mobile services, hygiene in wayside restaurants and Dhabas, availability of commercial transportation and the behaviour of the drivers of commercial transportation. Tour operators are strongly satisfied with the availability of hotels, the availability of commercial transportation, behaviour of commercial transportation and mobile or telephone services since the mean score of these items is more than 3.

However, tourists are strongly dissatisfied with the air and rail connectivity, public utilities at the tourist attraction and levels of road taxes on vehicles. Whereas, hoteliers are dissatisfied with air and rail connectivity, public utilities and parking facility at the tourist attraction and tour operators are with the air connectivity, public utilities at the tourist attraction, sewage and drainage system, condition of city roads and traffic management since the mean score of these items is less than 3.

Tourist Service and Amenities	Tourists' Satisfaction			Hoteliers' Satisfaction			Tour Operators' Satisfaction		
	Mean	Rank	S.D.	Mean	Rank	S.D.	Mean	Rank	S.D.
Air Connectivity Status	1.29	33	0.49	1.17	33	0.38	1.71	33	1.11
Rail Connectivity Status	1.96	32	0.76	2.20	32	0.91	2.90	15	0.99
Quality of the Roads	3.17	16	0.95	2.90	25	1.08	3.00	11	0.94
Quality of Way Side Amenities Available on This Road	3.30	14	0.80	3.40	16	0.98	2.80	18	1.40
Public Conveniences Along Roads/Streets	3.02	23	0.96	3.13	22	1.18	2.60	22	1.35
Sewage and Drainage System	3.11	20	0.94	3.00	24	1.13	2.11	31	0.78
Garbage Disposal	3.16	17	0.85	3.10	23	1.12	2.30	28	1.06
Condition of City Roads	2.79	29	1.09	2.90	25	1.13	2.20	29	1.14
Drinking Water Supply	3.43	11	0.81	3.67	12	0.77	2.80	18	1.14
Condition of Street Lighting	3.40	12	0.86	3.40	16	1.01	2.90	15	1.20
Traffic Management	2.92	28	1.12	2.90	25	1.30	2.20	29	0.92
Condition of Traffic or Transport Signage	3.10	21	1.02	3.73	11	0.82	3.00	11	1.15
Availability of Commercial Transportations	3.52	10	0.83	4.13	2	0.52	3.90	2	0.74
Behaviour of the Drivers of Commercial Transportations	3.75	6	0.71	4.13	2	0.40	3.80	3	0.79
Availability of Authorized Tour Operators	2.99	24	0.87	3.58	13	0.75	3.40	10	0.97
Availability of Hotels	3.55	8	0.90	4.03	4	0.53	4.00	1	0.82
Behaviour of Service Staff at the Hotel	3.67	7	0.74	3.83	8	0.90	3.60	6	0.70
Tariff Structure of the Hotel Rooms	3.12	19	0.82	3.38	18	0.78	3.50	7	0.85
Hygiene at Wayside Restaurants and Dhabas	3.16	18	0.97	4.03	4	0.80	3.44	8	0.88
Availability of Petrol Pump	3.09	22	1.11	3.25	20	1.10	3.70	5	0.48
Behaviour of Service Personnel at Wayside Restaurants and Dhabas	3.76	4	0.67	3.75	10	0.49	3.44	8	0.88
Levels of Road Taxes on Vehicles (Tax Rates)	2.78	30	0.94	3.14	21	0.72	2.67	21	1.32
Administration of the Road Taxes	2.99	25	0.95	3.36	19	0.64	2.89	17	1.17
Public Utilities at the Tourist Attraction	2.65	31	1.25	2.24	31	1.15	2.10	32	0.88
General Cleanliness Tourist Attraction and Area Around it	3.25	15	0.97	2.85	28	1.00	2.50	24	0.97
Condition of Signage Within the Tourist Attraction	3.36	13	1.25	3.43	15	0.75	2.60	22	0.97
Parking Facility at the Tourist Attraction	2.95	27	1.24	2.63	30	1.19	2.50	24	0.97
Availability of Trained Tourist Guides	2.98	26	1.10	3.46	14	1.02	2.40	27	1.35
Behaviour of the Guides at the Tourist Attraction	3.53	9	0.75	3.94	7	0.61	3.00	11	1.22
Conservation of Heritage Sites	3.76	3	0.85	2.76	29	1.02	2.50	24	0.97
Promptness at the Ticketing Window of the Monument/Tourist Attraction	4.19	1	0.65	4.00	6	0.55	3.00	11	0.87
Power Supply Situation	3.75	5	0.66	3.78	9	0.77	2.80	18	1.03
Telephone/Mobile Services	3.93	2	0.86	4.43	1	0.55	3.80	3	1.23

(Source: Survey Data)

Perception of Stakeholders towards the tourist Services and Amenities available at Satara on importance scale

Table: 2
Distribution of importance level among Tourism Stakeholders towards tourist services & amenities

Tourist Service and Amenities	Tourists' Importance			Hoteliers' Importance			Tour Operators' Importance		
	Mean	Rank	S.D.	Mean	Rank	S.D.	Mean	Rank	S.D.
Air Connectivity Status	2.83	33	1.30	3.18	33	1.39	2.6	33	1.43
Rail Connectivity Status	3.10	32	1.23	3.53	32	1.13	3.1	32	1.2
Quality of the Roads	4.45	8	0.56	4.40	6	0.55	4.6	3	0.52
Quality of Way Side Amenities Available on This Road	4.29	15	0.68	4.25	19	0.49	4.2	20	0.42
Public Conveniences Along Roads/Streets	4.23	18	0.66	4.33	11	0.47	4.2	20	0.63
Sewage and Drainage System	4.20	24	0.65	4.43	3	0.50	4.3	11	0.48
Garbage Disposal	4.21	19	0.65	4.43	3	0.50	4.3	11	0.67
Condition of City Roads	4.39	13	0.57	4.48	2	0.51	4.6	3	0.7
Drinking Water Supply	4.44	9	0.56	4.43	3	0.50	4.8	1	0.42
Condition of Street Lighting	4.24	7	0.67	4.15	26	0.43	4.2	20	0.63
Traffic Management	4.42	11	0.61	4.25	19	0.49	3.9	30	1.1
Condition of Traffic or Transport Signage	4.47	7	0.58	4.28	17	0.45	4.5	5	0.53
Availability of Commercial Transportations	4.32	14	0.59	4.30	16	0.56	4.2	20	0.42
Behaviour of the Drivers of Commercial Transportations	4.16	26	0.69	4.35	10	0.48	4.5	5	0.53
Availability of Authorized Tour Operators	3.14	31	1.24	4.05	29	0.45	4	29	0.82
Availability of Hotels	4.14	27	0.96	4.38	8	0.49	4.5	5	0.53
Behaviour of Service Staff at the Hotel	4.20	23	0.54	4.33	11	0.47	4.2	20	0.42
Tariff Structure of the Hotel Rooms	4.16	25	0.52	4.21	24	0.52	4.2	20	0.42
Hygiene at Wayside Restaurants and Dhabas	4.26	16	0.52	4.40	6	0.50	4.3	11	0.48
Availability of Petrol Pump	4.20	22	0.54	4.28	17	0.60	4.3	11	0.67
Behaviour of Service Personnel at Wayside Restaurants and Dhabas	4.21	21	0.57	4.15	26	0.43	4.2	20	1.03
Levels of Road Taxes on Vehicles (Tax Rates)	3.97	30	0.64	3.94	31	0.47	4.3	11	0.67
Administration of the Road Taxes	4.04	29	0.57	4.00	30	0.59	4.3	11	0.48
Public Utilities at the Tourist Attraction	4.59	4	0.55	4.33	11	0.47	4.5	5	0.71
General Cleanliness Tourist Attraction and Area Around it	4.60	2	0.57	4.33	11	0.47	4.3	11	0.67
Condition of Signage Within the Tourist Attraction	4.57	6	0.55	4.25	19	0.44	4.2	20	0.63
Parking Facility at the Tourist Attraction	4.58	5	0.56	4.38	8	0.49	4.3	11	0.67
Availability of Trained Tourist Guides	4.21	20	0.91	4.23	23	0.58	4.3	11	0.48
Behaviour of the Guides at the Tourist Attraction	4.09	28	0.77	4.24	22	0.61	4.2	20	0.44
Conservation of Heritage Sites	4.60	2	0.58	4.20	25	0.55	4.5	5	0.53
Promptness at the Ticketing Window of the Monument/Tourist Attraction	4.39	12	0.59	4.11	28	0.52	3.9	30	0.74
Power Supply Situation	4.44	10	0.67	4.33	11	0.47	4.4	10	0.7
Telephone/Mobile Services	4.72	1	0.46	4.58	1	0.50	4.8	1	0.42

(Source: Survey Data)

Table 2 shows the distribution of importance level towards tourist services and amenities in the view of three-sample unit viz. tourist, hoteliers and tour operators. Table 2 reveals that air and rail connectivity, availability of tour operators as if services are less important in the sight of all the stakeholders. However, some level of road taxes on the vehicles opinion of hoteliers and tourists are the same i.e. least significant. As per tour operators' opinion traffic management and promptness at the ticketing window of the monument/tourist attraction are least important. Administration of the road taxes is least important as hotelier's opinion. All stakeholders felt telephone and mobile is the most important service. However, preservation of heritage, public utility and general cleanliness at tourist attraction are most important as per tourist opinion. Hoteliers and tour operators felt most important civic amenities viz. sewage and drainage system, garbage disposal, condition of city roads and drinking water supply. Tour operators felt quality of roads is most important for tourism development in Satara.

Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis is tested with Spearman's rank correlation between perception of stakeholders towards the satisfaction level of tourist services and amenities. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient score is 0.358 between tourist and hoteliers, with .041 'P' values, which is significant at 0.05 levels. Whereas, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient score is 0.294 between hoteliers and tour operator, with 0.000 'P' values, which is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed). However, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient score is 0.767 between tourist and tour operators with 0.97 'P' value, which is more at 0.05 levels, which is insignificant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected with sufficient evidence to understand the perception gap between tourist & hoteliers and hoteliers & tour operators. However, the null hypothesis is bound to be accepted since the evidence to reject is not enough with the perception gap between tourist and tour operators. Thus, perception of tourists and hoteliers has a significant relation whereas the tour operator does not. There is a gap between the perception of tourist and tour operator a service provider and not between the tourist and hoteliers.

One sample 't' test has been used with a test value '3'. Table 3, 4, 5 and 6 narrates the 't' test.

Sr.	Satisfaction	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
1	Tourist	33	3.1933	.54809	.09541
2	Hoteliers	33	3.3221	.66781	.11625
3	Tour Operators	33	2.9109	.59167	.10300

Sr.	Satisfaction	Test Value = 3					
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
1	Tourist	2.026	32	.051	.19333	-.0010	.3877
2	Hoteliers	2.771	32	.009	.32212	.0853	.5589
3	Tour Operators	-.865	32	.393	-.08909	-.2989	.1207

The calculated 't' is significant in the case of hoteliers since the 'p' value is 0.009. The same is insignificant in case of tour operators and the 't' is on the border since the 'p' value is .051 regarding tourist and 0.393 regarding tour operator. Overall satisfaction count dwindles around mid point i.e. test value 3 which is not much significant.

Spearman's rank correlation was also used to assess the perception of stakeholders towards the importance level of tourist services and amenities. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient score is 0.479 and 0.565, 0.642 respectively, with .005, 0.001 and .000 'P' value respectively, which is significant at (tourists and hoteliers), (tourist and tour operators) and (hotelier and the tour operator) 0.01 levels (2-tailed). Thus, it showed that there are sufficient grounds to reject null hypothesis i.e. there is no difference in the perception of stakeholders towards the importance level of tourist service and amenities. It implies there is a disruption in the perception of stakeholders. Thus, the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Sr.	Importance	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
1	Tourist	33	4.2079	.42315	.07366
2	Hoteliers	33	4.2276	.26655	.04640
3	Tour Operators	33	4.2340	.41730	.07264

Sr.	Importance	Test Value = 3					
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
1	Tourist	16.398	32	.000	1.20788	1.0578	1.3579
2	Hoteliers	26.456	32	.000	1.22758	1.1331	1.3221
3	Tour Operators	16.988	32	.000	1.23401	1.0860	1.3820

The calculated 't' is significant in the case of hoteliers and tour operators since the 'p' value is 0.00. Overall importance count dwindles around point i.e. test value 4 which is significant. Thus with Spearman's rank correlation and one sample 't' test, hypothesis test is significant,

then it is proved that there are sufficient grounds to reject null hypothesis i.e. there is no difference in the perception of stakeholders (tourist and service providers). The alternative hypothesis is accepted i.e. there is a difference in the perception of stakeholders or there is a gap between the perception of tourist and service providers.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded from the study that the tourists flow is from Maharashtra with equal gender. Budget hotels are more preferred and tends visit to celebrate weekends. Entertainment and shopping are lesser preferred and are perceived to be fair. Hotels of all categories i.e. resorts, star graded and downtown found in Satara district. Most of them are established during 1980-2000. Majority serves both vegetarian and non-vegetarian food and few 24.14% are pure vegetarian. Most of the tour operating organizations are proprietary. Few of them arrange package tours of Satara and have handled more than 1000 tourists each in a year.

Difference found in the opinion between the perception of tourist and tourist service provider (tour operators and hoteliers) in case of satisfaction level and importance level of tourist service and amenities in Satara district. It is proved that in case of satisfaction level there is no sufficient evidence to reject null hypothesis i.e. there is no difference between the perception of tourist and tour operator. There is enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis i.e. there is no difference between the perception of tourist and hoteliers as well there is no difference between the perception of hoteliers and tour operators. One sample 't' test also supports these decisions. In case of the importance of tourist service and amenities, it is shown that there is sufficient grounds to reject null hypothesis i.e. there is no difference between the perception of tourist and service provider (hoteliers and tour operators). This also supported by one sample 't' test. Consequently, it found that there is an opening between the perception of tourist and service providers. The finish is a bundle of services and products, and providers of these services and products have conflicting and sometimes incorrect impressions of the views and evaluations of their visitors. The gap analysis used in this field is critical because it can be an extremely useful tool for management to use in identifying service problems or service fail points in the tourism industry in destinations.

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