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A Study on Perception of Tourists towards Himachal Pradesh as a Tourism Product

Suneel Kumar

ABSTRACT

The World Tourism Organization defines tourists as "people traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes". The tourism industry plays a key role in the economic growth of a nation. Tourism is an important driver of world trade and prosperity. Tourism industry play a role of bridge between countries and nations for the exchange of cultures and civilizations and a tool to develop trust between people of different religions, cultures and ideologies. This paper incorporates an analysis of perception of tourists regarding the various tourism services like tourist guide, transportation, medical, banking, police, parking, accommodation etc. in the state. It includes the analysis of the views of tourists about the general image of tourist destination and to put some light on the feelings and comprehension of the value of tourist stay in the state of Himachal Pradesh. The present study is based on Primary data, with the help of convenience and purposive sampling four districts i.e. Shimla, Kullu, Kangra and Kinnaur have been selected. At the second stage, twenty tourist places from these four districts with the help of simple random sampling have been selected. At the third stage, 300 tourists (200 domestic and 100 foreign) @ 15 tourists from each tourist destination are selected conveniently.

Keywords: *Value of Tourist Stay, Image of Tourist Product, World Tourism Organization*

Introduction and Literature Review

Tourism is the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business or other purposes. Tourism is travel and stay of non-resident. Tourism industry consists of three components attraction, accommodation and transport. Tourism is currently one of the fastest growing industries across the world. It is mostly a service industry because it renders services to various classes of people. India has emerged as a single largest net earner of foreign exchange. Tourism industry is one of the largest sectors of service industry in India. Travel and tourism industry has created more than 198 million jobs all around the world and has made 10% of gross national products (GNP) of many countries in 2002. With reference to World Travel and Tourism Council statistics (WTTC, 2005), travel and tourism which is a fast growing industry and is considered as the biggest industry in the world, would create 249 million jobs and share 10.6% of GNP in different countries all over the World . Tourism promotes

Suneel Kumar, Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Shaheed Bhagat Singh College University Of Delhi, New Delhi.
drsuneel.sbsc@gmail.com

national integration and international understanding.Prabir De (2008) in his paper showed that government is actively pursuing PPP model to bridge the infrastructure deficit. Several initiatives have been taken to promote power, ports, highways, airports, tourism and urban infrastructure. Sangeetha (2012) in her study 'Scope of Tourism: Indian Perspectives' concluded that government should promote tourism in less popular area by focusing environment, demography, socio-culture, economic and political background of any place for making it an attractive tourist spot. She further concluded that future of tourism in India is bright and there is a need to develop quality of infrastructure that will harness full tourism potential.Tiwari (2012) highlighted in his paper that tourism growth is faster in India than any other region and India and China will witness fast growth in tourism industry for next 10 to 15 years (WTTC). He had given various recommendations for development of tourism such as NGOs are mostly working together with the government departments, assisting in the implementation of identified policies and government should encourage better infrastructure to boost the tourism sector.Poddar (2015) in his paper explained that "tourism has encouraged development of infrastructure destinations and therefore at the nearby places". "Various modes of transport, health care facilities, sports centers, hotels and high end restaurants are developed due to growth of tourism in that region." He concluded that factors like cleanliness, poor infrastructure, hygiene and issues of internal security is a serious problem and need to be addressed.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

• To analyze the perception of tourists regarding various tourism facilities in the state of Himachal Pradesh.

• To investigate the opinion of tourists about Himachal Pradesh as a tourism product.

Research Hypotheses

• H_0: The opinion of the tourists over the various tourism facilities in the study area does not vary significantly.

• H_a: The opinion of the tourists over the various tourism facilities in the study area does vary significantly

• H_{01}: The perception of the tourists about the Himachal Pradesh as a tourism product does not vary significantly.

• H_{a1}: The perception of the tourists about the Himachal Pradesh as a tourism product does vary significantly.

Data Base and Research Methods

The present paper is mainly based on primary data and focused on the perception of tourists towards the various facilities available in the state and the general image of the destination in the mind of visitors A total of 19 field visits have been made to 20 tourists destinations of four districts of Himachal Pradesh, i.e., Shimla, Kullu, Kangra, and Kinnaur. Of which, four visits were the pilot study visits made to each district. Each tourist destination has been visited once to do the questionnaire survey. The sample respondents have been selected with the help of convenience and purposive sampling from four districts. A total of 300 tourists (200 domestic and 100 foreign) have been selected from 20 tourists destinations of selected districts, thereby taking 15 samples from each destination. While selecting the samples, special care

has been taken to ensure the representation of different regions, age groups, educational levels, sex and income levels. Tourist's response has tabulated and further interpreted by calculating the simple percentage, mean value, standard deviation and skewness etc. has been used for inference data. In view of the large size of sample (300), hypotheses have been tested by using chi square test at 1% level of significance.

Perception of the Tourists towards various facilities in the State

It is evident from table 1.1 that majority respondents are of the opinion that transport facility is good in the state. The mean value (3.84) of opinion is quite high from mean standard score. The standard deviation is 1.05 and skewness is – 0.79. It shows that their opinion is distributed towards higher side of average score. Further, calculated value of chi-square test is significant, which shows that there is a significant difference in the opinions of the respondents regarding the quality of transport facilities in the state.Majority of respondents are of the view that quality of accommodation is good. The mean value (3.84) supports the above opinion. The standard deviation is 0.91, while skewness is – 0.79.

It shows that opinion is scattered towards higher side of mean score. The calculated value of chi-square when compared to table value at 1percent level of significance is significant. It shows that the opinion of the respondents is not equally distributed.It can be concluded that the majority of the respondents agree more strongly that quality of accommodation in the state is good.

Table 1

Perception of Tourists Regarding Various Facilities

S. No.	Tourists facilities	SA	A	NC	D	SD	Total	Mean	S.D.	SK	χ^2	Table value of χ^2 at 1%
1	Quality of transport	44 (14.7)	157 (52.3)	41 (13.7)	45 (15.0)	13 (4.3)	300 (100.0)	3.58	1.05	-0.79	207.67	Significant
2	Quality of accommodation	63 (21.0)	166 (55.3)	35 (11.7)	33 (11.0)	3 (1.0)	300 (100.0)	3.84	0.91	-0.88	264.13	Significant
3	Quality of food	77 (25.7)	144 (48.0)	55 (18.3)	17 (5.7)	7 (2.3)	300 (100.0)	3.89	0.93	-0.90	200.47	Significant
4	Physical setting of the state	72 (24.0)	121 (40.3)	58 (19.3)	40 (13.3)	9 (3.0)	300 (100.0)	3.69	1.07	-0.61	114.50	Significant
5	Sanitary conditions	31 (10.3)	104 (34.7)	66 (22.0)	72 (24.0)	27 (9.0)	300 (100.0)	3.13	1.16	-0.21	67.43	Significant

6	Tourist information, banking, medical and guide facilities	411 (13.7)	130 (43.3)	58 (19.3)	62 (20.7)	9 (3.0)	300 (100.0)	3.44	1.06	-0.41	131.17	Significant
7	Condition of roads	24 (8.0)	108 (36.0)	53 (17.7)	83 (27.7)	32 (10.7)	300 (100.0)	3.03	1.18	-0.16	82.70	Significant
8	Tariffs of the hotels	37 (12.3)	113 (37.7)	60 (20.0)	67 (22.3)	23 (7.7)	300 (100.0)	3.25	1.16	-0.31	79.27	Significant
9	Making booking at the tourist destination was easy	38 (12.7)	135 (45.0)	66 (22.0)	45 (15.0)	16 (5.3)	300 (100.0)	3.45	1.06	-0.60	138.43	Significant
10	Recreation facilities	36 (12.0)	111 (37.0)	88 (29.3)	53 (17.7)	12 (4.0)	300 (100.0)	3.35	1.03	-0.31	105.23	Significant
11	Publicity of the tourist product	31 (10.3)	114 (38.0)	77 (25.7)	63 (21.0)	15 (5.0)	300 (100.0)	3.28	1.06	-0.30	101.33	Significant
12	Shopping areas in the state	44 (14.7)	144 (48.0)	54 (18.0)	44 (14.7)	14 (4.7)	300 (100.0)	3.53	1.06	-0.39	162.00	Significant
13	Sightseeing facilities available in the sate	83 (27.7)	136 (45.3)	43 (14.3)	27 (9.0)	11 (3.7)	300 (100.0)	3.84	1.04	-0.94	168.07	Significant

Note: Figures in parentheses indicates as percentage of row total

Source: primary probe

SA:-Strongly Agree, **A:-**Agree, **NC:-**No Comments, **D:-**Disagree, **SD: -** Strongly Disagree, **S.D.:-** Standard Deviation, **SK:-**Skewness

The table shows that quality of food in the state is good. The calculated mean value supports the above opinion. The standard deviation of 0.93 is very less and skewness is – 0.90. This shows that their opinion is scattered towards the higher side of mean score. The calculated value of chi square is much higher than the table value. It also reiterates the fact that respondents are satisfied with quality of food in the state.The mean value of the opinion regarding the physical setting of state is 3.69 and is slightly higher than the mean standard score. It shows that they are of the opinion that physical setting of the state is good. The standard deviation is 1.07 and skewness is -0.61. It supports the above opinion and shows

that distribution of their opinion is scattered towards higher side of the mean value. It reveals that their opinion is varying from agree to strongly agree over the issue. The calculated value of chi-square is significant at 1percent level which shows that their opinion is not equally distributed.

It is observed that almost every respondent believes that the sanitary conditions in the state are good. The mean value is quite high, which supports the above opinion strongly. It is clear that standard deviation is 1.16 and skewness is -0.21. It reveals that distribution of their opinion is scattered more towards higher side. Further, while applying chi-square test, it is observed that, value is significant and rejects the null hypothesis with the inference that the respondents agreed more strongly with the opinion that sanitary conditions in the state are good. It is evident from the table 1.1 that the mean value of the opinion with regard to tourist information, banking, medical and guide facilities is 3.44. It is higher than the mean standard scoring. The variation in mean score is 1.06 and skewness is – 0.41. This shows that the opinion of the respondents over this issue is ranging between agree to strongly agree. The chi-square result reveals that distribution of views regarding the tourist information, banking, medical and guide facilities are not equal. Hence null hypothesis is rejected at 1 percent level of significance. Thus, the above analysis leads to the conclusion that the respondents opined that the above said facilities are good at this tourist destination.

Further, while analyzing the views of the respondents regarding the condition of roads, it is evident that majority respondents are of the opinion that the condition of road is good. The mean value

supports the above opinion. The standard deviation is 1.18 and skewness is – 0.16. The chi-square value is significant at 1 percent level of significance, so alternative hypothesis is accepted. It reveals that the distribution of views over this issue is not equal and distributed more towards higher side of mean value. Thus, it can be concluded that the respondents accepted the fact that condition of roads is satisfactory.

The mean score of responses relating to tariffs of the hotels is slightly higher than the average standard score. The variation in opinion is recorded at 1.16 and skewness is – 0.31. This shows that their opinion has shown shift from agree to strongly agree. The chi-square is significant at 1 percent level of significance. It means that the distribution of responses is not equal, thereby indicates that the tariffs of the hotels are reasonable in the state. As evident from the analysis, respondents were satisfied with the booking facilities at this tourist destination. The mean value (3.45) supports the above opinion. The standard deviation and skewness is 1.06 and – 0.60 respectively. The calculated value of chi-square is quite higher than the table value at percent level of significance. It rejects the null hypothesis and reveals that the opinion of the respondents with respect to the booking facilities at this tourist destination is not equally distributed and majority of responses are shifting towards higher side, thereby supporting the conclusion that booking facility was easily available at this tourist destination.

The mean value of views relating to recreation facilities is higher than the average standard score. The variation in opinion is recorded at 1.03 and skewness is - 0.31. It depicts that variation in opinion is minimum and their opinion is shifting towards higher side over this issue. It is

evident that majority of respondents are of the opinion that recreation facilities are adequate. The chi-square value is much higher than the table value at 1 percent level of significance and null hypothesis is rejected. It reveals that there is a significant difference in the opinions of respondents regarding the recreation facilities in the state. The table further indicates that the mean value of responses relating to publicity of tourist products is more than the average standard score. The standard deviation is 1.06 and skewness is – 0.30. It shows that their opinion is distributed more towards higher side of average score. The calculated value of chi-square is very high from the table value. It shows that the opinion of the respondents is not equally distributed over this issue. Thus, the above analysis leads to the conclusion that majority of the respondents agree more strongly with the fact that publicity of tourist product is adequate.

The mean value of shopping facilities available in the state is more than the average standard score and standard deviation is 1.06, whereas skewness is – 0.69. It shows that opinion is distributed more towards higher side of average score. The calculated value of chi-square is very high than the table value. It shows that opinion is not equally distributed over this issue. Thus, the above analysis leads to the conclusion that the majority of the

respondents are of the opinion that there are adequate shopping facilities available in the state. The table further highlights that majority of responses regarding the sight-seeing facilities are distributed towards higher side of average standard score. The mean value of responses is 3.84 and standard deviation is 1.04. The skewness of responses is – 0.94. Further, chi-square is significant at 1 percent level, which indicates that the opinion of the majority of the respondents is changing from agree to strongly agree, thereby emphasizing that respondents found sightseeing facilities as adequate.

1.6 Perception of the tourists towardsHimachal Pradesh as a tourism product

It is evident from table 1.2 that majority of tourists have positive opinion about this tourist destination. The mean value of the opinion is quite high from the mean standard scale. The standard deviation is 0.83, whereas skewness is – 1.40. It shows that their opinion is distributed more towards higher side from the average. The calculated value of chi-square is significant at 1 percent level of significance, which shows that the majority of tourists have strong positive opinion about this destination.According to majority of respondents, staff at this tourist destination is friendly with the guests.

Table 2
Perception of Tourists about the Destination

S. No.	Statements	SA	A	NC	D	SD	Total	Mean	S.D.	SK	χ^2	Table value of χ^2 at 1%
1	Tourists have positive opinion	103 (34.3)	158 (52.7)	26 (8.7)	7 (2.3)	6 (2.0)	300 (100.0)	4.15	0.83	-1.40	305.57	Significant

		SA	A	NC	D	SD	Total	Mean	S.D.	SK	Chi	Result
	about this destination											
2	Staff is friendly towards the guests	74 (24.7)	151 (50.3)	50 (16.7)	21 (7.0)	4 (1.3)	300 (100.0)	3.90	0.90	-0.84	220.57	Significant
3	Destination has a unique image	93 (31.0)	149 (49.7)	46 (15.3)	10 (3.3)	2 (0.7)	300 (100.0)	4.07	0.81	-0.82	251.17	Significant
4	Staff always gives priority to guests	75 (25.0)	128 (42.7)	60 (20.0)	33 (11.0)	4 (1.3)	300 (100.0)	3.79	0.98	-0.61	145.23	Significant
5	Destination respects the nature	73 (24.3)	136 (45.3)	47 (15.7)	26 (8.7)	18 (6.0)	300 (100.0)	3.73	1.10	-0.93	150.57	Significant

Note: Figures in parentheses indicates as percentage of row total

Source: primary probe

SA:-Strongly Agree, **A:-**Agree, **NC:-**No Comments, **D:-**Disagree, **SD: -** Strongly Disagree, **S.D.:-** Standard Deviation, **SK:-**Skewness

The mean value (3.90) supports the above opinion of the tourists. The standard deviation is very less, whereas skewness is 0.84. It shows that their opinion is scattered towards higher side of the mean score. The calculated value of chi-square, when compared with table value at 1 percent level of significance shows that the opinion of the respondents is not equally distributed. It can be concluded that majority of the tourists strongly support this fact, that staff at this destination is friendly towards the guests.

The table also reflects the positive image of the tourists about this destination. The calculated mean value supports the above opinion. The standard deviation is 0.81 and skewness is – 0.82. This shows that their opinion is scattered towards higher side of the mean score. The calculated

value of chi-square is much higher than the table value. It also supports the opinion of tourists about this tourist destination. The mean value of the opinion that the staff of the tourist destination always gives priority to the guests is 3.79 and is slightly higher than the mean standard score. The standard deviation and skewness are 0.98 and −0.61 respectively. It supports the above opinion and shows that distribution of their opinion is scattered more towards higher side of the mean value, which reveals that their opinion is varying between agree to strongly agree. The calculated value of chi-square is significant at 1 percent level showing that their opinion is not equally distributed.

It is observed that almost every respondent opines that the tourist destination respects

the natural environment. The mean value is quite high, which supports the above opinion strongly. It is clear that standard deviation is very low and the calculated value of skewness is –0.93. It reveals that the distribution of their opinion is scattered more towards higher side. Further the results of chi-square test support the fact that respondents are agreeing more strongly with the opinion that this tourist destination reflects the natural environment.

Conclusion of the Study

It can be concluded that respondents opined that transport, accommodation, food, sanitary, tariffs of hotels, shopping, sightseeing, recreation, tourists information, banking and medical facilities are adequate in the state of Himachal Pradesh.It can also be concluded that respondents have positive opinion about this tourist destination. They are of the view that the staff at this tourist destination is friendly towards the guests and has a unique image. Further the staff of this destination gives top priority to their guests and it is a perfect amalgam of nature and enjoyment.

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