

# A Study on Tourists Satisfaction at Hill Station in Munnar (Kerala)

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## ABSTRACT

Tourism has emerged as the global industry and has been playing a lead role in the economic growth. Understanding tourist satisfaction is most important for the tourism industry, especially because of its effect on their future economy. The major attraction of tourism in Kerala is the variety of tourism products. Hill stations are the major attraction in Kerala. The present study is an attempt to analyse the tourist satisfaction at Munnar hill station in Kerala. The study concluded that the satisfaction level of the tourist at the destination is not up to the mark.

*Key words: Attraction, Customer Delight, Customer Satisfaction, Hill station, Tourism.*

## 1. Introduction

Tourism is now the largest industry in the world and is considered one of the major emerging industries across the globe because of high profit generation, job opportunities, investments, foreign exchange earnings, societal and cultural advancements and tax

payments, which, in turn, help in the overall growth of the economy. Kerala, promoted as "God's Own Country" is blessed by nature with varied geographical features like beaches, hill stations, backwaters, national parks & wild life sanctuaries. Kerala Hill stations offer a multitude of experience to

the tourist. Kerala is today the most acclaimed tourist destination in India and is continuing as one of the prime tourist destinations of South Asia.

Customer satisfaction plays a key role in a successful business strategy. Understanding tourist satisfaction is of utmost importance for the tourism industry, especially because of its effect on their future economy. Satisfied tourists tend to communicate their positive experience through word of mouth and they tend to buy the product frequently. This is the cheapest and most effective form of marketing and promotion. The major question then is “What makes tourists satisfied?” or “What important constructs should be considered when analysing tourist satisfaction?” Subsequently, the following question of interest is “how does tourist satisfaction materialize?” The antecedents and consequences of tourist satisfaction is thus the focal point.

Tourism and leisure activities are becoming more and more important in the people's life. In tourism destination management, maximising travel satisfaction is crucial for a successful business. The evaluation of the physical products of destination as well as the psychological interpretation of a destination product is necessary for human actions which could be represented as travel satisfaction results destination loyalty. Tourist satisfaction usually contributes to increased rates of the retention of the tourists' patronage, loyalty and acquisition, which in turn helps in realizing economic goals like increased number of tourists and revenues.

Tourists' satisfaction with a trip or a destination is a result of many aspects, such as their perception of product elements experienced as well as their expectations before- and during the trip. People go on holiday to satisfy one or several of their needs, whatever these needs are. To achieve satisfaction people try to behave in a rational way. They choose, for instance, activities that they expect will fulfil their needs satisfactorily. This tendency of rational behaviour, illustrates that there are relationships between motives for travelling, choices made and satisfaction.

Munnar, the famed hill station of south India, situated in Idukki district of Kerala, is a romantic locale where natural beauty is everywhere to visit, explore and to enjoy. Munnar is situated at the confluence of three mountain streams – Muthirapuzha, Nallathanni and Kundala – and the word ‘Munnar’ means three rivers in Malayalam. Situated about 1600m above sea level, the hill station had been the summer resort of the British Government during the colonial era. Virgin forests, savannah, rolling hills, scenic valleys, numerous streams, huge splashy waterfalls, sprawling tea plantations and winding walkways are all part of the great holiday experience on offer for a traveler to Munnar. The present study has been made to assess the tourist satisfaction at hill station in Munnar. The assessment has been made on the basis of some variables like tourists overall attraction about the destination, hotel facilities, transportation facilities, cleanliness and hygiene conditions, activities of the destination and experience, expectation relationship of the tourists at the destination.

## 2. Review of Literature

According to Thuy-Huong Truonga, David Foster (2005) measuring tourists' satisfaction with a particular destination is not simply the cumulative evaluation of service quality of a number of individual service providers. There are various activities and experiences that are key attributes of a specific destination that are not linked to specific organisations or are provided by several working in concert. Any measure of satisfaction must therefore include these aspects of the total holiday experience.

Moharrer Masoomed has highlighted that (2006) many researchers have shown that satisfaction can affect customer retention and also it can make them recommend the goods or services to the others. About the case of tourism, satisfaction in the first step of tourism can affect potential tourist's intention for purchasing that special product or products. As a result it is necessary to investigate which factors are more important for the tourist.

David Bowie and Jui Chi Chang (2005) investigated that extremely satisfied tourists might have great expectations of their next purchase. So comparing experienced travellers to those without similar experience, which group expect more or is more easily satisfied? Empirical studies show that previous experiences affect a person's attitude and expectation towards the next purchase.

Dan Musinguzi and Rosanna Leung (2010) revealed that the ultimate goal of maintaining a high service- quality and customer satisfaction level is to survive in today's highly competitive market. From the

tourism perspective a destination remains competitive only if it provides products and services that offer complete satisfaction to the visitors.

## 3. Methodology

The present study is empirical in nature. Both primary and secondary data were used for the study. For conducting the study 50 tourists both foreign and domestic tourists were selected in the destination. The sampling method used for the study is convenience sampling. The primary data were collected from the foreign and domestic tourists visited at Munnar Hill Station based on structured Interview Schedule. The secondary data were collected from various journals of tourism, official Publications of ministry of tourism Kerala, books, periodicals, reports and the Internet. The data was analysed by using different statistical tool viz percentage analysis, Chi- Square and Analysis of Variance.

## 4. Results and Discussion

The interest of the tourist to the particular destination is a major factor for measuring customer satisfaction. About 8% of the foreigners have no opinion about the overall attraction of Munnar. 40% of Indian visitors and 28% of foreigners were highly satisfied with the overall attraction of Munnar. The percentage of Indians and foreigners who were satisfied with overall attraction of Munnar are respectively 60% and 64%. (Table 1) Though there is a slight variation exist opinions between the Indians and foreigners and the chi square test conducted indicate that this difference is not significant.

**Table 1: Tourists Opinion about Overall Attraction about the Destination**

<b>Overall attraction * Nationality Cross Tabulation</b>					
			<b>Nationality</b>		
			<b>Indian</b>	<b>Foreigner</b>	<b>Total</b>
Overall attraction	Neutral	Count	0	2	2
		% within Nationality	.0%	8.0%	4.0%
	Satisfied	Count	15	16	31
		% within Nationality	60.0%	64.0%	62.0%
	Highly Satisfied	Count	10	7	17
		% within Nationality	40.0%	28.0%	34.0%
Total		Count	25	25	50

Source: Primary Data

**Table 2: Overall Attraction about the Destination (Chi-Square Tests)**

	<b>Value</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</b>
Pearson Chi-Square	.357	1	.550
Not significant			

The operation and functioning of hotels is important indicator for measuring the tourist satisfaction at the destination. The table shows that about 8% of the foreigner and 12% of the Indians is having no opinion about the hotels facilities of Munnar. 8% of the Indian tourists are highly dissatisfied with the hotel facilities of Munnar. At the same time 16% of the Indians and 12% of the foreign tourists are dissatisfied with the hotel facilities of Munnar and 40% of the Indians

and 48% of the foreign tourists are satisfied with the hotel facilities of Munnar. The respondents highly satisfied with the Munnar hill stations are 24% of the Indians and 32% of the foreigners (Table 3). Though there is a little variation exist opinions between the Indians and foreigners regarding hotel facilities of Munnar and the chi square test conducted indicate that this difference is not significant.

**Table 3: Tourists Opinion about Hotel Facilities in Munnar (Chi-Square Tests)**

	<b>Value</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</b>
Pearson Chi-Square	1.610	2	.447
Not significant			

Table 4: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.721	1	.396
Not significant			

Transportation facility of the destination attracts more tourists to visit this place. The study reveals that 24% of the Indian and 20% of the foreign tourists is having no opinion about the current transportation facility in Munnar. About 16% of the Indian tourists are highly dissatisfied with the transportation available. The table shows that 20% of the Indians and 24% of the foreigners are not dissatisfied with the transportation facilities. but 28% of the Indian tourists and 36% of the foreign tourists are satisfied with the available transportation facilities. 12% of the Indian tourists and 20% of the foreign tourists are highly satisfied with the transportation facilities (Table 3). While there is a slight variation exist opinions between the Indians and foreigners about the transportation facilities and the chi square test conducted indicate that this difference is not significant. Cleanliness and hygiene conditions of the destinations are the main attraction of the tourist in a destination. 8% of the Indian tourist is having no opinion about the hygiene conditions at Munnar. 8% of the foreign tourists are dissatisfied with the available hygiene condition. 52% of the Indian tourist and 56% of the foreign tourists are satisfied with the prevailing hygiene conditions at Munnar. The table shows that 52% of the Indian tourists and 56% of the

foreign tourists are satisfied with the existing hygiene conditions. 40% of the Indians and 36% of the foreigners are highly satisfied with the existing hygiene conditions (Table 4). Even if there is a slight variation exist opinions between the Indians and foreigners regarding the hygiene conditions and the chi square test conducted indicate that this difference is not significant.

Various Activities at the destination is a major factor forced the tourist to choose the tourist place. The study reveals that 8% of the tourist is having no opinion about the activities of the Munnar hill station. 4% of the Indian tourist and 8% of the foreign tourists are highly dissatisfied about the activities of the destination. The Table shows that 28% of the Indian tourist and 36% of the foreign tourists are dissatisfied with the performance and 36% and 40% of the Indian and foreign tourists are satisfied about the activities at the destination. The Indian and foreign tourists are highly satisfied with the activities of the destination were 24% and 16% respectively (Table 5). However there is a negligible variation exist opinions between the Indians and foreigners and the chi square test conducted indicate that this difference is not significant.

**Table 5: Tourists Opinion about Cleanliness and Hygiene Conditions of the Destination**

<b>Hygeine * Nationality Crosstabulation</b>					
			<b>Nationality</b>		
			<b>Indian</b>	<b>Foreigner</b>	<b>Total</b>
Hygeine	Neutral	Count	2	0	2
		% within Nationality	8.0%	.0%	4.0%
	Dissatisfied	Count	0	2	2
		% within Nationality	.0%	8.0%	4.0%
	Satisfied	Count	13	14	27
		% within Nationality	52.0%	56.0%	54.0%
	Highly Satisfied	Count	10	9	19
		% within Nationality	40.0%	36.0%	38.0%
Total		Count	25	25	50
		% within Nationality	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Primary Data.

**Table 6: Cleanliness and Hygiene Conditions of the Destination (Chi-Square Tests)**

	<b>Value</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</b>
Pearson Chi-Square	6.384E-016	1	1
Not significant			

**Table 7: Activities Available to the Tourists at the Destination (Chi-Square Tests)**

	<b>Value</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</b>
Pearson Chi-Square	3.997E-015	1	1
Not significant			

**Table 8: Experience in Munnar Adheres the Tourist Expectations (Opinion of Tourists)**

			Nationality		
			Indian	Foreigner	Total
Adherars expectation	No	Count	4	6	10
		% within Nationality	16.0%	24.0%	20.0%
	Yes	Count	21	19	40
		% within Nationality	84.0%	76.0%	80.0%
Total		Count	25	25	50
		% within Nationality	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Primary Data.

**Table 9: Experience in Munnar Adheres the Tourist Expectations (Chi-Square Tests)**

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.500	1	.480
Not significant			

The tourist satisfaction depends upon the relationship between tourist experience and expectation at the destination. The study reveals that 84% of the Indian and 76% of the foreign tourists can meet their expectation. 16% of Indian and 24% of the foreign tourists cannot meet their expectation. The difference of opinion between foreign and Indian tourist shows a negligible difference only. The chi square tests conducted indicate that this difference is not significant.

**5. Conclusion**

Customer delight emerges only when the indicators shows highly satisfied. The study reveals that the satisfaction level of the tourist at hill station in Munnar is not up to the earmark level From the forgoing analysis, the following conclusions were arrived. The difference of

opinion between the foreign and domestic tourists shows a negligible difference only.

1. Attraction of tourist towards Hill Station Munnar is at average level.
2. Hotel facilities in Munnar are at below average level with that of cost.
3. Transportation facilities are of below average level
4. Adheres with the expectation of the tourist is at above the average level only not at excellent level or high level. That shows the variance between expectation of the tourist and that of the end result of each tourist attaining; here the question arise, how we can meet the expectation of tourist practicably?
5. The factor hygiene plays the leading role in tourism. Only 40% of Indian tourists are highly satisfied and 36% of foreign tourists

are highly satisfied that shows hygiene level is average only.

6. Activities in munnar is not at par level. When compared with other hill station activities are of just average level only and survey also goes with that.

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