ABSTRACT

The immense potential of the tourism sector to act as a catharsis of economic and social development has been acknowledged in national and international forums. Almost all states in India have placed tourism on a priority platform, making efforts to exploit the tourism resources and potential offered by the state.

Understanding International tourist’s preferences and their perception of the destination are considered essential inputs in tourism planning and marketing efforts. The literature on tourists’ satisfaction with Kerala revealed that though there are few studies on motives and satisfaction, there are hardly any studies integrating the mentioned concepts with destination loyalty. With this in mind, the study employed path analysis to study the relationship between travel motives, overall travel satisfaction and destination loyalty. The study employs the Importance performance analysis on Kerala’s tourism attractions to identify the areas of satisfaction and areas that need concentration. Regression analysis reveals the relationship between tourism service experience and overall satisfaction and destination loyalty. The effect of demographic variables on satisfaction is also studied.

The theoretical framework chosen for this study was based on the model developed and tested by Yoon & Uysal (2005), who examined the effects of motivation and satisfaction on destination loyalty. They suggested that destination marketers consider the practical implications of these motivation variables as they could be the fundamental factors in increasing
satisfaction with the destination services and also enhance destination loyalty. Based on the framework suitable hypothesis were framed. The hypotheses were framed to test the proposed framework of the study and to achieve the following objectives:

1) To identify the push and pull motivation factors of foreign tourists to Kerala.

2) To analyze the relationship between travel motives, overall satisfaction and destination loyalty in terms of intention to revisit and recommend.

3) To analyze the effect of the service experience on overall satisfaction and destination loyalty.

4) To analyze the tourist destination attributes that are perceived as important and their satisfaction with their holiday experience in Kerala using Importance Performance Analysis.

5) The study aims to analyze the difference between expectations and experience with regard to service parameters based on Kerala’s 6 S frame work.

In order to achieve the objectives, 600 questionnaires were distributed among International tourists and only 513 responded. Deliberate sampling method was used in well known tourist destinations in Kerala. Path analysis, Regression analysis, Factor analysis, Importance Performance Analysis, ANOVA, t test, Paired t Test and Chi square tests were used for the present study.

The main findings of the study were as follows:

1) The hypothesis tested using Path analysis revealed:
a) Pull motives had a positive impact on overall satisfaction.

b) Push motives had a positive impact on overall satisfaction.

c) Overall satisfaction affects destination loyalty.


3) Importance Performance Analysis revealed the tourism destination attributes where Kerala’s destination marketers need to pay more attention which were city walks, museums/galleries, yachting/cruising and fishing.

4) The regression model was found to be valid with an R square value of .587 which was also found to be statistically significant. The constructs namely, accommodation, cleanliness and hygiene, information, safety, local people & food and conveniences had an influence on the dependent variable, Overall satisfaction.

5) The regression model was found to be valid with an R square value of .370 which was also found to be statistically significant. The constructs namely, accommodation, cleanliness and hygiene, information, safety, local people & food and conveniences had an influence on the dependent variable, destination loyalty.

6) Paired T Test revealed significant difference between expectation and actual experience of tourism services of accommodation, cleanliness and hygiene, information, safety, locals & food and conveniences.
Based on the findings suitable suggestions were discussed which could be implemented by the planners of Kerala tourism. It is hoped that the study would help the destination planners and service providers better understand and serve the International tourism market. Acknowledging the important constructs that affect tourist satisfaction and the subsequent tourist intention to re-buy and recommend the product would be of immense value to the tourism planners as it would enable them to focus their attempts to improve their offerings and position the destination right. Therefore, enhancing tourist satisfaction with reference to the attributes concerned should be one of the main aims of destination marketers as it is a prerequisite for developing strategies to enhance the destination’s attractiveness and its competitive positioning.