

A Study on Foreign Tourist Satisfaction on Tourism Attributes in Kunming, China

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Abstract

This research attempted to identify the factors such as tourism attraction, accessibility and infrastructure, safety and security, destination image, affecting tourist's destination satisfaction in Kunming City, China. This research also explored the relationship between tourist satisfaction and selected tourists' demographic characteristics (age, gender and educational level) and travel behavior characteristics (length of stay, past-experience and source of information). The study areas for this research were the main attractions of Kunming City, China. The quantitative approach was the major method used, with statistical techniques such as descriptive analysis and inferential analysis. The sample population for this research was composed of foreign tourists who visited Kunming City, China between February to March, 2015. The survey was conducted at ten different attractions in Kunming, the unit of analysis was at the individual level with the sample size of 384 foreign tourists. The findings of this research indicated that higher levels of tourism attraction, accessibility and infrastructure, safety and security, destination image were positively associated with higher level of tourists' destination satisfaction. Moreover, ANOVA revealed that there is a significant difference in the overall satisfaction of tourists by gender, age, educational level and length of stay. Based on the results of this study, several recommendations can be made to increase tourists' satisfaction with the Kunming City, China. First, identifying the variables that satisfy the tourists who visit Kunming will help tourism planners develop appropriate strategies to attract tourists/target markets and serve them effectively. Second, it will help tourism marketers to better understand what their customers want.

Key words: tourist satisfaction, Kunming City, tourism attraction, destination image, demographic characteristics, travel behavior characteristics

Introduction

The focus of the research was to identify the factors such as tourism attraction, accessibility and infrastructure, safety and security, destination image, affecting tourist's destination satisfaction in Kunming City, China. This research also explored the relationship

between tourist satisfaction and selected tourists' demographic characteristics (age, gender and educational level) and travel behavior characteristics (length of stay, past-experience and source of information).

The research was conducted in Kunming, China between February 2015 and March 2015. The quantitative approach was the major method used, with statistical techniques applied, including descriptive analysis and inferential analysis. The sample population for this research was composed of foreign tourists who visited Kunming City, China. The survey was conducted at ten different attractions in Kunming, the unit of analysis was at individual level with the sample size of 384 foreign tourists.

Kunming Tourism Development

Kunming is the capital city of Yunnan Province and is best known for its pleasant climate, and ethical, endemic, and regional culture. The city enjoys a pleasant climate and flowers blooming all year long and does its best to live up to its title of "the City of Eternal Spring". With a history of more than 2,400 years, Kunming was the gateway to the celebrated Silk Road that facilitated trade with Tibet, Sichuan, Myanmar and India. With its convenient transport links in and out of the city, Kunming now welcomes and sees off tens of thousands of visitors every day. The tourist arrivals and tourism revenue have been among the forefront of other tourism city in western region of China.

As a famous tourism city in China, Kunming's tourism development is now running into a dilemma. Although, the number of tourism arrivals has been consistently growing over the decades, but due to the new tourism law promulgated last year, the tour groups have significantly decreased last year in Kunming. In particular, the domestic tourists group decreased to 11.40%, and overseas tourists group surprisingly decreased to 18.65%. It is the first time the number of tour groups present negative growth since Kunming became a tourism destination.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

First of all, Kunming has unique selling points which are agreeable weather, rich natural beauty and ethnic minorities' and culture. Secondly, Kunming serving as a transportation interchange point in southwest China, also an important gateway to Southeast Asia and South Asia.

After the EXPO'99 was held successfully in Kunming, the image of “the City of Eternal Spring” became well known all over the world. Locals then begin to have a higher acceptance of tourism.

Last but not the least, Kunming Changshui International Airport is a world-class airport which has the second largest terminal building in China, and already handled 30 million passengers in 2013 and expected to handle 38 million passengers in 2020.

Weaknesses

The lack of new attractions development can bring about the loss of tourists' interest. The high priced tickets in the main attraction also leads to the disagreement between tour operators/ travel agencies and site management.

The news of conflicts between tourists and guides spread all over China has brought a bad impact on Kunming's tourism industry's development.

Opportunities

The Mekong tourism development could have benefits to Kunming, Also, Kunming has close economic relationships with ASEAN.

Moreover, Kunming has developed the meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (MICE) market.

Threats

On the one hand, the new tourism law has serious impacts on tour operator/travel agency's business which may decrease the number of tour group arrival.

On the other hand, the influx of more tourists may damage the ecosystem in some specific sites, and increasing the cost of living for locals.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are: (1) to identify the relationship between tourism attractions and tourist's satisfaction towards foreign tourists who visit Kunming, China; (2) to identify the relationship between accessibility and infrastructure and tourist's satisfaction towards foreign tourists who visit Kunming, China; (3) to identify the relationship between safety and security and tourist's satisfaction towards foreign tourists who visit Kunming, China; (4) to identify the relationship between destination image and tourist's satisfaction

towards foreign tourists who visit Kunming, China; (5) to analyze the level of tourist's satisfaction based on their demographic characteristics; (6) to analyze the level of tourist's satisfaction based on their travel behavior characteristics.

Review of Literature

Tourist Satisfaction

Due to the impacts on the travel decision making, consumption of products and services, tourist's satisfaction is considered as a major variable that sustains the competitiveness of the tourism business (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000). Kotler (2000) defined satisfaction as feelings of like or dislike resulting from comparing a product or a service a person received in relation to his or her expectations. However, if this results in feelings of displeasure, the tourist is dissatisfied (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). Baker and Crompton (2000) defined tourist's satisfaction as their emotional state after experiencing their vacation. Moutinho (2001) suggests that a tourist's first time experience is antecedent to satisfaction and it decides whether the individual becomes a repeat visitor or not. Several studies acknowledged that tourist satisfaction can produce positive behavioral intentions from tourists, for instance, positive word-of-mouth and repeat purchases (Neal & Gursoy, 2008; Andaleeb & Conway, 2006; Karatepe, 2006). On the other hand, tourists who have lower levels of satisfaction may have negative comments on destinations and damage to their reputation as well (Reisinger & Turner, 2003).

Therefore, evaluating tourist satisfaction can be seen as a post-consumption process (Kozak, 2001). Valuing and evaluating tourist's satisfaction can assist managers to promote their services (Fornell, 1992). Another reason why tourist's satisfaction is so important is that, the visitor satisfaction surveys can provide essential insights for destination managers and tourism authority policy planners. Additionally, the ability to manage tourist's feedback and complains is important to the competitive advantage in tourism industry.

Satisfaction can be defined as post-consumption evaluation where the customer determines whether a chosen service meets or exceeds their expectations (Engel, Blackwell & Miniard, 1993). Satisfaction can also be seen as a past experience emotional response (Spreng, Mackenzie & Olshavsky, 1996). Furthermore, satisfaction has been defined recently as individual's cognitive-affective state caused by a consumption experience (Bosque & Martin, 2008).

Tourist Demographic Characteristics

Tourist demographic characteristics which include gender, age, nationality, occupation, educational level, income level are usually used in research. Characteristics of tourists are not only applied as a reference for analyzing market segmentation but also for marketing efforts to implement the strategy (Gaffar, Wetprasit, Swtiyorini, 2011).

Font (2000) Oxenfeldt (1974) believed that gender, age, nationality, occupation and educational level influenced tourist travel decision-making. Andreu, Kozac, Avci, and Cifter (2005) stated that generally speaking, females had stronger travel motivations than males. Specifically, female tourists have a stronger relaxation and escape-based motives and male tourists enjoyed recreation and activity in the destination. The image of various tourism destination was influenced by their own age (Walmsley & Jenkins, 1993). Jonsson and Devonish (2008) claimed that the older tourists preferred cultural exploration and relaxation whereas younger tourists preferred to engage in sports rather than other activity. Mellina and Aballe (2013) found that there were marked satisfaction gaps across different age groups in type of attraction, person-based accessibility, safety and security and attention to public toilet facilities, emergency exit, food and water service and travel tips. However, some of research found that gender and age are not significant for the level of tourist satisfaction (Perovic, Stanovic, Moric & Pekovic, 2012)

Tourists' income and education level influenced their destination choice especially the distance between the place they live and the place they actually visited, tourists who have higher education levels and income levels tend to travel farther from home (Zimmer, Brayley & Searle, 1995). It is obvious that the higher educated tourists achieved the greater amount of travel (Middleton & Clarke, 2001). Mellina and Aballe (2013) revealed that higher educated tourists are harder to satisfy.

Tourist Travel Behavior Characteristics

Tourist travel behavior characteristics includes five variables which are group membership, travel motive, mode of travel, number of nights spent, source of information and past experience.

Past experience has significant impact on tourist's satisfaction (Jodice, Norman, Kyle & Marsianko, 2006), In Light's (1996) study, tourists' experiences play significant role in tourist satisfaction and motivation of revisit. Huh (2002) identified that the tourists who had experience were more satisfied than those tourists without previous experience.

According to (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985) word of mouth has a significant impact on tourist's expectations, the source of information are mass media such as newspaper, TV, travel guide book, etc. or new media such as Twitter, Facebook, etc., or even a comment or recommendation from friends and relatives. These can give a different expectations to a potential tourist and indirectly influence their future tourist satisfaction.

The length of stay is a significant determinant for local tourism development due to tourist's overall expenditure and consumption of local resources that are dependent on it (Davies & Mangan, 1992; Gokovali, Bahar & Kozak, 2007). Fleischer and Pizam (2002) and Menezes, Moniz and Vieira (2008) argued that the tourists between 45 and 54 years old and have time, money, resource and health and so they tend to sustain longer stays at destination. However, Huh (2002) indicated that there is no significant relationship between overall tourist satisfaction and the length of stay, and Esu and Arrey (2009) found that the five travel behavior characteristics did not relate to tourists overall satisfaction.

Tourism Attraction

Tourism attraction refers to a place, location, a natural or man-made facility, event, or activity which offers items of specific interest to tourists; in other words, for tourists who want to visit. According to Jenkins (2010) a tourist destination is a city, town resort or area the economy of which is dependent to a significant extent on the revenues accruing from it.

According to Nowacki (2013) tourism attractions play a significant role in determining the tourist attractiveness of the whole region, the satisfaction with attractions will have a huge impact on the assessment of entire trip's satisfaction. At the same time, Lee (2009) stated that natural landscapes, natural attractions, service and recreational equipments were attributes which influence the tourist satisfaction.

Accessibility and Infrastructure

According to Beerli and Martin (2004), infrastructure includes transport facilities, health services, telecommunications, accommodations, restaurants, hotels, tourist center and so on. Litman (2003) presented that accessibility refers to the ability to reach desired goods, services, activities and destinations, for example, availability, affordability and convenient of transport facilities, information or geographic distribution of activities and destination. Transportation has been repeatedly seen as one of the main features of a destination (Middleton, 1998; Page, 2004). Laws (1995) stated that transportation is one of the

secondary destination elements which contribute to the attractiveness of a destination. However, tourism planners are rarely concerned with public transportation, because public transport is first and foremost to meet the needs of the local population (Thompson and Schofield, 2007). Local transportation needs should indeed take precedence over tourism demand, but they also acknowledge that the urban transport also needs to focus on the needs of tourists (Orbasli and Shaw, 2004). According to Lee (2009), attributes such as travel environment, price or value, accessibility affect tourist satisfaction as well.

Safety and Security

Safety is the protection from unintended incidents, while security is the protection from intended incidents. Moreover, Albrechtsen (2003) stated that “safety is concerned especially with the protection of human lives and health while security adverts to the protection against criminal activities”.

According to Donaldson and Ferreira (2009), safety and security are regarded as primary ingredients for tourism growth and destination competitiveness. Moreover, tourists who feel unsafe at one destination can contribute to the formulation of negative destination images, which may lead to a decline in tourism activity in this area (George, 2003).

Destination Image

There is no doubt that the image tourists have of tourist destinations is major element of tourist marketing (Buhalis, 2000; Laws, Scott and Parfitt, 2002; Tasci and Gartner, 2007) and ultimately influencing the final choice or behavioral intention (Chen and Tsai, 2007). Tourists decide their vacation destination based on not only the destination images being portrayed by the destination marketers but also in accordance with their own images of one destination that come from difference sources (Banyai, M., 2009).

The definition of destination image, according to Lawson and Baud Bovy (1977) is the expression of all objective knowledge, prejudices, imagination and emotional thoughts of an individual or group about a particular location. Bigne, Sanchez and Sanchez (2001) added that destination image is the subjective interpretation of reality by the tourist.

Several studies propose that the development of the image of a tourist destination is based on the tourist's rationality and emotionality and based on outcome of the combination of two main elements (Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997; Walmsley and Young, 1998; Lin, Duarte, Kerstetter and Hou, 2007): The first element is perceptual and cognitive, which

means the destination image is evaluated by the attributes of its resources and attractions (Stabler, 1995) which can be seen as one motivation for tourists to come to visit that destination (Govers and Go, 2003), and the second element is effectiveness which refers to the feelings and emotions raised by tourist destinations (Keller, 1993).

According to Echtner and Richie (1991), the image of the destination will be based on historical, political, economic and social information which, in turn, would shape the image that the person already hold. Baloglu and McCleary (1999b) present a PATH model to explain the process of forming the image of a tourist destination which shows the cognitive and perceptual assessment are impacted by source of information, age and level of education. Furthermore, Tasci (2007) states that age, race, and past-experience that tourist have on this destination are very important for the destination image. Socio-demographic characteristics also powerfully influence the image of destination that tourists created in their mind. (Beerli & Martin, 2004)

Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature review, the conceptual framework for this research was designed as follows: (Figure 1)

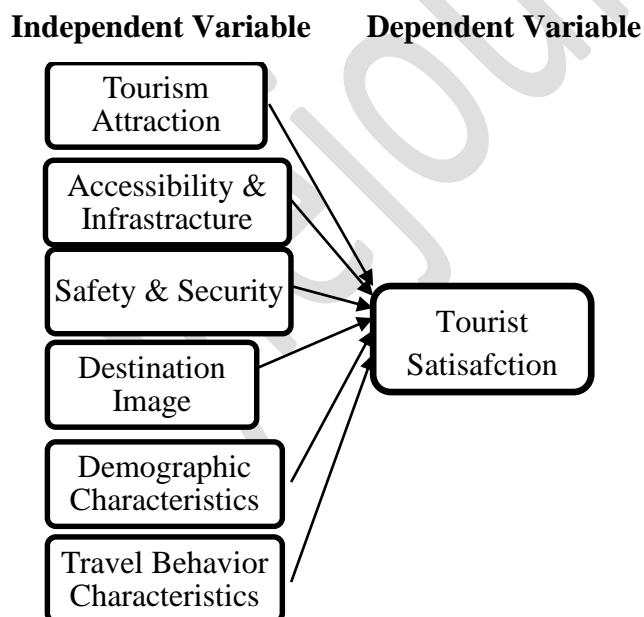


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Methodology

This study applied a descriptive research method that seeks to identify the relationship between tourism attraction, accessibility and infrastructure, safety and security, and destination image towards tourist satisfaction, in order to analyze those relationships, controlling for tourists' demographic characteristics and travel behavior characteristics.

In this study, a survey was used to classify the characteristics of the target foreign tourists. Previous literature which has similar objectives with this study was used to develop an instrument for this study. A preliminary questionnaire was developed based on previous instrumentation developed by Huh (2002), Pivac et al (2011).

Non random sampling methods were used in this study in order to select suitable samples. The survey conducted in the Dongchuan Red Land, Yunnan Nationalities Village, Green Lake, Kunming Golden Temple, Yunnan University, Nanping Business Street, Dian Lake, Jinma Biji Historic Site, Wenhua Street, Kunming Changshui International Airport, etc. which are the main attractions in Kunming City, China. A total of 384 questionnaires were distributed. The distribution of questionnaires was carried out from February 1 to March 27, 2015. Respondents were approached and informed about the purpose of this survey in advance before this researcher gave them the questionnaire. Respondents younger than age 18 were excluded.

Data Analyses

In this study, the descriptive statistics was employed to analyze the selected demographic characteristics and selected travel behavior characteristics of respondents. In order to interpret the findings better, the mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the variables. Inferential analysis and ANOVA were also utilized.

Summary of the Findings

The goal of this study was to identify how tourism attraction, accessibility and infrastructure, safety and security, destination image influence overall satisfaction in Kunming City, China, and analyzed the differences in the level of overall satisfaction of tourists' with respect to demographic and travel behavior characteristics. 384 questionnaires were distributed by face-to-face to foreign tourists, who visited Kunming, China during February and March, 2015.

In general, 65% of respondents were 18 to 35 years old, most of the respondents had a high level of education (B.S. Degree 62.2%). Most respondents did not have previous experience in visiting Kunming, China. On the other hand, those respondents who had previous experience mostly came to Kunming 1 or 2 times. They usually spent 1 to 3 days at Kunming. Moreover, they obtained information about Kunming by the Internet or word of mouth.

The study analyzed variables by using Mean and Standard Deviation. The highest mean of Tourism Attraction is 4.03, "Easy to access to all of tourism attractions.", meanwhile, the lowest mean is 3.20, and "The attractions are not over crowded." Secondly, the highest mean of Accessibility and Infrastructure is 3.85, "Good quality and convenient public transport. (Bus, taxi, Metro)", meanwhile, the lowest mean "Reasonable prices of accommodation." is 3.45. Thirdly, the highest mean in terms of Safety and Security is 4.33, "Local people are friendly.", while the lowest mean in terms of this variable is "Well-organized medical services." equal to 3.52. Last but not the least, the highest mean in terms of Destination Image is 4.16, "I think this destination is popular." while the lowest mean "This destination respects the natural environment.", equal to 3.48.

Based on the objectives of the study, inferential analysis was applied for testing the relationship between the variables. Six main hypotheses were presented and tested, and five null hypotheses were rejected in this study.

Based on the result of the testing of Hypothesis One in this study, the Significant value of the hypothesis equals .000, which is less than .01 ($.000 < .01$) at .600 of the Pearson Correlation, therefore, there is a positive relationship between tourism attraction and foreign tourist satisfaction towards visiting Kunming, China.

According to the result of testing Hypothesis Two in this study, the Significant value of the hypothesis equals .000, which is less than .01 ($.000 < .01$) at .664 of Pearson Correlation, therefore, there is a positive relationship between foreign tourist satisfaction and accessibility and infrastructure towards visiting Kunming, China.

In accordance with the result of testing Hypothesis Three in this study, there is a positive relationship between foreign tourist satisfaction and safety and security towards visiting Kunming, China. The Significant value of the hypothesis equals .000, which is less than .01 ($.000 < .01$) at .671 of Pearson Correlation.

According to the result of testing Hypothesis Four in this study, there is a positive relationship between foreign tourist satisfaction and safety and security towards visiting

Kunming, China. The Significant value of the hypothesis equals .000, which is less than .01 ($.000 < .01$) at .737 of Pearson Correlation.

Differences in the level of satisfaction between genders was significant at $p < 0.001$. Moreover, a variation in the level of satisfaction with respect to age was found in the studies sample ($p < 0.05$). According to results, the most satisfied group is age above 55. Also, the level of education has a significant relationship to the level of satisfaction in Kunming, China ($p = 0.002$). The conducted study indicated that the level of tourist satisfaction increases with education. Thus, the results explained that female respondents, age above 55 years old respondents and the respondents who had doctor degree were more satisfied with the Kunming City, China than were other respondents. Thus, hypothesis 5a could be rejected.

The results indicated that no significant difference in overall satisfaction of the respondents was found in terms of past experience ($p > 0.05$). Thus, the hypothesis 6a was rejected for past experience. However, the results illustrated that significant difference was found in length of stay ($p = 0.002$). In this study, tourists who stay Kunming one to three days displayed a higher level of satisfaction compared to other respondents, although the difference was statistically significant. Furthermore, the study explained that the respondents who stay Kunming City, China one to three days were very satisfied the destination among four categories. Thus, hypothesis 6b was rejected for length of stay.

Conclusion

This study analyzed several attributes that affected the level of tourist satisfaction, in particular in the case of foreign tourists who visit Kunming, China.

With respect to the research objectives of this study, the relationship between tourism attraction and tourist satisfaction towards visiting Kunming, China was tested to yield a positive relationship. Tourism attractions were one of the primary components of the tourism and recreation system and the strongest one on the supply side: they are what attract the tourists to the tourist destinations.

Likewise, the researcher investigated the significant relationship between accessibility and infrastructure and tourist satisfaction towards visiting Kunming, China and the result shows that there is a positive relationship between accessibility and infrastructure and tourist satisfaction.

When testing the relationship between safety and security and tourist satisfaction towards visiting Kunming, China. This research established a positive relationship between safety and security and tourist satisfaction.

Furthermore, the significant relationship was achieved by analyzing the relationship between destination image and tourist satisfaction towards visiting Kunming, China. In short, the destination image is one of the most important elements of a tourist destination, and was a critical factor for the success or failure of tourism management.

Based on the survey, tourists who visited Kunming were dominated by males, aged 26 to 35 years old and have Bachelor's degree. According to the research objectives of this study, there were significant differences in the overall tourist satisfaction in terms of selected demographic characteristics such as gender, age and educational level. Females were more satisfied than male during their trip in Kunming, China. Furthermore, tourist satisfaction tended to increase with level of education. The most popular sources of information were the Internet and word of mouth. Additionally, there is no difference in overall tourist satisfaction in terms of selected travel behavior characteristics, such as past-experience. However, length of stay has significant relationship with tourist satisfaction. To conclude, in order to create effective marketing strategies for Kunming City, China, a better understanding of tourists is necessary.

Recommendations

1. Tourism planners and marketers should rely on resources that Kunming has, optimize the structure of tourism products to respond to market demands, in order to enhance the impact of the tourism industry and market competitiveness.
2. Government should accelerate the improvement of tourism integrated transportation system such as roads, railway, aviation and water transport, and other public infrastructure such as Tourist Service Center and toilets to provide better tourist convenience.
3. Create the policies, systems and structures to ensure tourists are kept safe, and the tourism industry is ready and responsive to when things can and do go wrong.
4. Tourism planners and marketers should investigate the destination image that tourists hold in their mind. Practically, the image identification process will figure out the most representative objects and descriptors of the destination, which has the most marketing potential. Furthermore, image promotion strategy should vary in different market

segmentation, when Kunming promotes its image, strategies should differentiate between domestic and international market.

5. Tourism planners and marketers should provide promotional resources which are targeted at specific tourists and which emphasize the opportunity to gain specific benefits from the visit.

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