

TOURISTS' SATISFACTION AT TRIJUGINARAYAN, INDIA: AN IMPORTANCE-PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Satisfaction is an excellent predictor of tourist behaviour as it influences the choice of destination, consumption of products and services, the decision to return and maintain lasting relationships. This paper analyzes the level of tourist satisfaction with destination attributes using the Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA), based on the information obtained from 200 domestic tourists visiting Trijuginarayan, an emerging spiritual and adventure tourist destination located in Garhwal Himalaya in Uttarakhand state of India. The results obtained show that attributes related to tourism product of spiritual and cultural nature, atmosphere and climate, a variety of tourist activities, hospitality and safety are significant factors in determining tourist satisfaction, whereas basic facilities such as accommodation, transportation, tourism infrastructure and hygiene and sanitation at destination are of significant importance in satisfaction evaluation. Findings also reveal that tourists were satisfied with the core products, but were dissatisfied with basic tourist facilities offered at the destination. Based on the results, the paper concludes that tourism stakeholders must outline effective strategies for holistic development and improving performance of attributes in the given destination.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourist satisfaction is recognized as one of the most important sources of the destination competitive advantage since the fundamental goal of tourism stakeholders is to assess both the adequacy and effectiveness of tourism products in terms of the facilities and services that all together provide memorable destination experiences for tourists (Fuchs & Weiermair, 2003). It is believed as one of the important elements for a superior advantage, distinctive image, and market destinations successfully, as it influences the choice of destination, consumption of products and services, decision to return, maintain long-term relationships and improve destination reputation (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Zabkar, Brenčič, & Dmitrović, 2010). Tourist satisfaction essentially indicates the result of relationship between tourists' expectations about the destination based on their previous information and image of the destination (pre-travel expectations) and their assessment of the outcome of their experience (post-travel experiences) at the visited destination (Pizam, Neumann, & Reichel, 1978; Neal & Gursoy, 2008). It is a feeling generated both by cognitive and emotional aspects of tourism activities, as well as an accumulated evaluation of various components and features of the destination visited (Wang, Zhang, Gu, & Zhen, 2009). Tourist evaluations of the destination inform stakeholders how well the destination matches the tourists' needs, thereby enabling the destination's strengths, weaknesses, and critical success factors to be identified from the tourist perspective. This may help them to improve quality of products/services that interest tourists, and to increase the competitiveness of the given destination by formulating sound operational strategies (Huang & Xiao, 2000; Hui, Wan, & Ho, 2007; Meng, Tepanon, & Uysal, 2008; Dmitrovic et al., 2009).

As tourist satisfaction influences tourists' behavioural intentions and plays a vital role in destination competitive advantage, it has attracted scholars' interest and a large number of articles and studies have focused on this aspect with regard to various tourist destinations throughout the world (Pizam et al., 1978; Baker & Crompton, 2000; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Kozak, 2001; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Wang & Qu, 2006; Chi & Qu, 2008; Cracoli & Nijkamp, 2008; Alegre & Garau, 2010; Chen & Chen, 2010; Marcussen, 2011; Osti, Disegna, & Brida, 2012). The Uttarakhand State of India has received poor coverage in literature, despite having the excellent tourism attractions. Studies can be found on ecotourism, tourism resources planning and management, pilgrimage tourism, sustainable tourism, trekking tourism, human resource practices, tourism education,

community attitude, performance measurement, but little work has been undertaken to measure tourist satisfaction in Uttarakhand (Uttarakhand Tourism Development Master Plan, 2007-2022, 2008; Singh & Singh, 2009; Mahar & Bagri, 2010). The dearth of research in this area has prompted researchers to undertake the study on tourists' satisfaction.

The present study aims to measure tourist satisfaction with destination attributes in an emerging spiritual and adventure tourist destination located in a mountainous Uttarakhand state of India. This study has two specific objectives; it intends to investigate tourists' satisfaction with destination attributes in an emerging spiritual and adventure tourism destination, and examines the importance and performance of destination attributes in overall tourists' satisfaction using the Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA). Information on the importance and performance of destination attributes in overall tourists' satisfaction enable recommendations on improving the quality of tourism offerings and services, and help the destination to compete with other emerging spiritual and adventure destinations of the Himalaya. The present study contributes in the area of tourist satisfaction by providing an empirical relationship between the performance of destination attributes and overall tourist satisfaction. The findings of this paper are also beneficial for tourism policymakers and stakeholders in designing and developing sustainability of this spiritual destination.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Enhancing tourist satisfaction is one of the primary functions of tourism destination and a prerequisite for the development of strategies leading to destination's improved attractiveness and competitive positioning (Dmitrovic et al., 2009). Although tourist satisfaction is a personal judgment, the understanding of tourists' satisfaction is necessary for evaluating the performance of destination, improving products and services offered, promoting tourism offerings effectively to target markets, gaining better destination image, and determine repeat visits and predisposition for recommending the destination to others (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Yuksel, 2001; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Chi & Qu, 2008; Meng et al., 2008). Satisfied tourists normally recommend better tourist destinations to others or express their appreciation about the destination and are keen to visit again and vice-versa (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Bigne, Sanchez, & Sanchez, 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Meng et al., 2008; Bigne, Sanchez, & Andreu, 2009; Lee, 2009;

Zabkar et al., 2010; Marcussen, 2011). Dissatisfied tourists may express negative comments about a destination causing set back to its market reputation (Chen & Chen, 2010). It has been also observed when tourists visit a destination; they seek more than one experience at the given destination. They stay in a hotel, go outside the hotel to eat and drink, communicate with local people and visit cultural and historical sites. A trip becomes not a single product, but rather consists of different service components often provided by multiple organizations with different objectives (Kozak, 2003; Ozturk & Qu 2008). It is important to identify and measure tourist satisfaction with each attribute that a destination offer as the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with one of the attributes leads to satisfaction or dissatisfaction with overall destinations.

Kozak and Rimmington's (2000) study in Mallorca, Spain revealed that various variables of destination attractiveness, tourist attractions, availability of English language, and facilities and services at the destination airport were significant in determining overall tourist satisfaction. Destination attractiveness, tourist attractions and facilities, and services at the destination airport were found to have an impact on the level of overall satisfaction of the tourists. Respondents' intention to repeat their visits to Mallorca in the future was influenced by destination attractiveness, facilities and services at the destination airport, and their level of overall satisfaction. Kozak (2003) measures tourist satisfaction with multiple destination attributes and the subsequent intention to repeat visit and recommend to others among four different groups of tourists visiting two different destinations: Mallorca, Spain and Mugla, Turkey. The results of this study show that overall tourist satisfaction, intention to recommend and intention to repeat visit were affected by multiple attributes and differ from one customer group and from one destination to another. Pritchard (2003) researched about attitudinal and behavioural consequences of destination performance. This study surveyed visitors to Western Australia and used factor analysis to develop two performance-expectation measures of the destination's environment and service infrastructure. The results revealed that destination performance is not only an important factor, but also their behaviour such word of mouth affecting tourists' satisfaction as well as intending to return. Yoon and Uysal (2005) examined causal relationships among push and pull motivations, satisfaction and destination loyalty using structural equation modelling in Northern Cyprus. The study revealed that tourist relaxation, family togetherness, knowledge and education of historical places and new people, cleanness and shopping, and safety and fun are the key

factors of enhancing tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. It was recommended to managers in the study to establish a higher tourist satisfaction level to create positive post-purchase tourist behaviour, in order to improve and sustain destination competitiveness.

Wang and Qu (2006) studied tourist satisfaction in the context of the Pearl River Delta sub-regional destinations of China and obtained a comprehensive list of attributes of traveler satisfaction. These underlying dimensions include quality of accommodations, shopping opportunities, restaurant facilities, personal safety, tourist information, road conditions, potable water, traffic flow and parking facilities. While evaluating tourist destination of Eureka Springs in Arkansas, USA, Chi and Qu (2008) identified seven attributes which generate tourist satisfaction. These attributes were listed in the study as accommodation, dining, shopping, attractions, events and activities, environment, and accessibility. The results of these studies revealed that tourism is a multi-faceted concept and tourists' overall satisfaction with a destination is affected by their satisfaction with each individual component involved in their experiences at the destination. In one of the studies conducted in Southern Italy, Cracoli and Nijkamp (2008) categorized various factors of destination competitiveness and tourist satisfaction into two categories as basic and complementary factors. Reception and sympathy of residents, artistic and cultural cities, landscape, environment and nature are "basic factors" as they characterize the comparative advantage of a tourist destination. The variables such as information and tourist services, cultural events (concerts, festivals, and art exhibitions), quality and variety of products in shops, hotels and other accommodation, the level of prices and living costs, and tourist safety are "complementary factors", as the given factors stimulate tourists to visit a destination. In the perspective of Alanya, Turkey, Aktas, Cevirgen and Toker (2009) grouped all the variables influencing tourists' overall satisfaction under three titles; destination facilities, accommodation services, and incoming travel agency services. Furthermore they advocated that these factors have a direct influence on tourists' satisfaction, which in turn influences destination loyalty. Lee (2009) proposed that destination image, attitude, motivation, natural landscapes, services and recreational opportunities are some of the notable attributes that affect tourist satisfaction.

Alegre and Garau (2010) examined reasons of tourists' dissatisfaction at a sun and sand tourist destination in Balearic Islands, Spain. According to them the major attributes of tourist satisfaction were climate, cleanliness and hygiene, scenery, peaceful ambience,

accommodation, safety, historic sites or places, the presence of friends and family, interacting with other tourists, sports activities, tourist attractions, prior visits to destination, ease of access to destination and information, local cuisine, local lifestyle, and affordable prices. Marcussen (2011) opined that satisfaction with the accommodation is the most important determinant of overall tourist satisfaction with holidays, and satisfaction with price, facilities and offered services plays a significant role in tourist satisfaction. Other determinants like the accessibility of destination, prior experience, socio-demographics and additional trip characteristics also play a vital role in tourist satisfaction. Prayag and Ryan (2012) conducted a study on perceptions and satisfaction of tourists' traveling to Mauritius. Attributes such as attractions, accommodation, accessibility, amenities, activities, local community and shopping were used to evaluate tourists' satisfaction levels. The findings showed that tourists were satisfied with tourist attractions, accommodation, transportation, residents' attitudes, the services provided in hotels, shopping facilities and the environment.

Torres-Sovero, González, Martín-López and Kirkby (2012) conducted a study on factors influencing tourist satisfaction in ecotourism lodges in the South-eastern Peruvian Amazon and noticed that the quality of the lodges, ecological and cultural features of the destination, and availability of quality guides employed therein played a decisive role in tourist satisfaction. In another study conducted in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam by Khuong and Ngoc (2014), the higher levels of service quality, infrastructure and accessibility, natural environment, safety and security, and destination image are positively associated with the higher level of tourists' destination satisfaction. The results of these studies reveal that both functional or tangible components and psychological or abstract attributes of the destination contribute significantly to tourist satisfaction.

IMPORTANCE-PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS (IPA)

It has been observed that looking at satisfaction and importance values separately is ineffective in assessing the success of a particular tourism destination in meeting tourists' needs. This approach is not able to justify differences in importance and satisfaction for particular destination attribute. For instance, examining satisfaction values alone would suggest that features with lower satisfaction values require management intervention. However, when satisfaction scores are compared to the corresponding importance scores, satisfaction may be rated higher than importance, suggesting that tourists are in fact satisfied with the features

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Study Area: Trijuginarayan

Uttarakhand state is located in the northern part of India sharing the international boundary with Nepal, Tibet (China), and the national boundary with Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh State of India. Uttarakhand state has a rich cultural heritage and is famous for nature, wildlife, pilgrimages, yoga and meditation, mountains, peaks and forests, valleys, glaciers, rivers, flora and fauna, Hindu religion pilgrimage sites like Badrinath and Kedarnath, the world heritage site Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve, and the first national park of India - Jim Corbett National Park. Situated at a distance of 249 km from Uttarakhand state capital Dehradun and 460 km from national capital New Delhi, Trijuginarayan enjoys the privilege of having rich background tourism elements. The destination is unique in its natural surroundings and has all the qualities to attract high-value tourists, potential to successfully compete with other Himalayan destinations, and generate a substantial income to local people. The study area is easily reachable by road from Delhi, the national capital of India and other major cities of Northern India. Triguninarayan is located at an altitude of 1,980 meters, which gives the region an enjoyable weather round the year. Summers are pleasant and temperature ranges between comfortable 15°-30°C. Winters are extremely cool with the temperature diving down to a chilling 0°-15°C. The most appropriate time to visit Trijuginarayan is either between March to June or September to November.

Owing to its religious significance and natural surroundings, it has been declared a tourist village by the Uttarakhand State Government. According to legendary accounts, it is believed that the marriage of Lord Shiva (one of the trinities of Hindu Gods) and Goddess Parvati (one of the forms of mother Goddess Durga) is solemnized here in Treta Yug (it is believed that this period belongs to millions of years back when Lord Rama ruled India) in the presence of Lord Vishnu (one of the trinities of Hindu Gods). Because of this Lord Vishnu is being worshipped here continuously throughout three yugs (eons), thus it is named Trijuginarayan. Encircled by abundant foliage, the temple represents Pahri-Partihar architecture style, gives a picture of the rich built heritage of Garhwal region (Alter, 2001). On being accessible to Kedarnath, Vasukital and Panwalikantha mountain meadow, Trijuginarayan has become a familiar tourist destination for all nature of the tourists.

Trijuginarayan receives around 9 to 10 thousands pilgrims and tourists from May to October every year (Tourism Statistics, 2012).

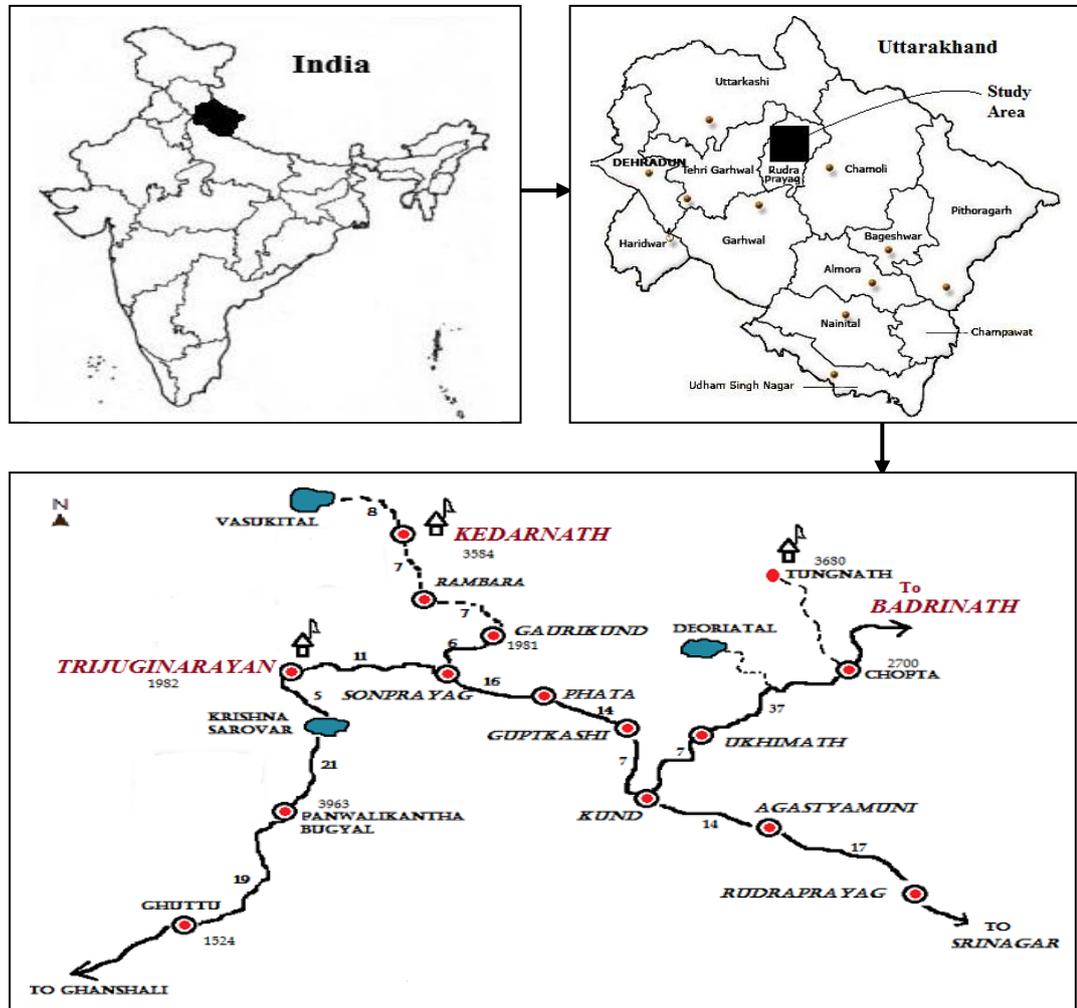


Figure 2. Roadmap of Trijuginarayan

Trijuginarayan is an ideal destination for promoting spiritual tourism owing to its natural and cultural surroundings. Vishnu temple of Trijuginarayan is the main attraction. Vishnu Kund, Rudra Kund, Brahma Kund (Kund is local name and is almost similar to purified water tank like of spa), Aachhri Udiyar (Udiyar is the local name of rock shelter), Gauri Gufa (Cave) and Krishna Sarovar (Lake) and Chandika temple are other notable attractions. Numerous trek routes, originating from Trijuginarayan, are ideally designed to suit the needs of tourists. In view of its natural bounty, rich spiritual values and emerging adventure tourism opportunities, the region is growing rapidly and people from

surrounding locations and nearby states has started to visit these attractions to see religious heritage and to enjoy adventurous activities on this unexplored site. The study area offers many opportunities to explore temple architecture, lakes and caves, 360° view of Himalayan peaks and Mandakini river valley, trekking trail, rock climbing, rappelling, paragliding, nature photography and cycle safari.

Data Collection

Satisfaction variables for spiritual, adventurous and rural destination were identified through a series of focus groups conducted with local tourism entrepreneurs, staff of the tourism development board, and in addition to consultations with a number of experienced tourism personnel and some visitors. In addition, surveys of Kozak and Rimmington (2000) in Mallorca, Spain, Chi and Qu (2008) in Arkansas, USA, Meng et al. (2008) in Southeast Virginia, USA, and Aksu et al. (2010) in Antalya, Turkey were reviewed and incorporated in the survey instrument. In order to ensure the validity of survey instrument, the initial questionnaire was given to a panel of experts, faculty members of tourism and hospitality discipline and tourism stakeholders such as hotel managers and managers of the tourism development board, to judge its content's validity, the clarity of its items meaning and to assure its linkages with the study objectives. In order to validate the reliability, the questionnaire was pilot tested using 30 domestic tourists, representing 15% of the total sample size, who were considered the representatives of the study population. The value of Cronbach's alpha was found 0.812, which suggested an acceptable level of reliability of the questionnaire. The data thus received was systematically arranged, tabulated and analyzed using IBM SPSS Version 20.

The sample population for this study was domestic tourists who have stayed at least one night in Trijuginarayan during October 2011 to February 2012, as this is the prime season of tourist arrival. Transient tourists and day-trippers were excluded from the study. The survey was conducted face-to-face using self-administrated questionnaires. Researchers waited outside the selected tourist spots throughout the destination and chose one tourist out of every three who visited the destination. Each prospective participant was initially approached and informed the purpose of the survey. A total of 218 domestic tourists participated in the study, with a final valid 200 questionnaire being used in this study, excluding 18 responses that were unreliable or insincerely answered. The survey questionnaire consisted of three sections: travel

behaviour, tourists' satisfaction with destination attributes and demographic profile. The first part of the questionnaire examined the purpose of the visit, travel frequency, mode of transportation used, length of stay, sources of information, and companion on the trip. The second part of the questionnaire was concerned with attributes related to tourists' satisfaction with various attributes of destination. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each of the 28 tourist satisfaction attributes of a five-point Likert- scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Out of 28 attributes, six were related to weather conditions and accessibility and seven were associated with the environment. Eight variables were concerned with the quality of tourist facilities and seven were associated tourist motivation factor. The last part of the questionnaire contained questions to examine surveyed tourists' demographic profile.

RESULTS

Demographic Profile

The demographic characteristics of respondents shown in Table 1 reveals that 6% of respondents were from the age group of less than 21 years, 29% were from 21-35 years, 39% were from 36-50 years and 26% were above 50 years. The analysis indicates that males dominate the sample with 71% of them included in the survey. The male percentage is proportionately more as the region is located in isolated locations and does not appeal much to female tourist traffic. As regards to educational background, 8% tourists interviewed were secondary, 14% obtained graduate, 36% were post-graduate and 42% were having a professional degree. The sample was split between married and unmarried with the majority of individuals interviewed were married (58%). The married couples prefer to come here as this is the place wherein one of the trinities of Hindu Gods named Lord Shiva got married to Goddess Parvati.

Table 1. *Demographic Profile of the Respondents (N= 200)*

Age	f	%	Education Level	f	%
< 21 Years	12	6	Secondary	16	8
21-35 Years	58	29	Graduate	28	14
36-50 Years	78	39	Post-Graduate	72	36
Above 50 Years	52	26	Professional Degree	84	42
Gender	f	%	Marital Status	f	%
Male	142	71	Married	116	58
Female	58	29	Unmarried	84	42

f: Frequency

Travel Choice

It was found that 63% of the respondents were first-time visitors, followed by 13% experiencing attractions for the second time, 6% were enjoying its third time and 18% respondents have experienced it more than three times. For the purpose of visiting Trijuginarayan, 38% answered as the religious and cultural purpose, 26% opted for rural experience, 21% for holiday purpose and 15% had other reasons. In response to the length of stay, 37% of the respondents preferred to stay a single day, 38% were for two or three days, whereas 25% liked to spend more than three days. On inquiring about the sources of information, 50% of the respondents were convinced by friends, 19% were informed by travel agents and newspaper/magazine, respectively and 12% of sampled tourists came to know through tourist brochures. While obtaining details about the nature of visits it was noticed that 11% were alone, 39% came with spouse, 27% preferred to visit with family, 16% visited with friends/classmates and 7% travelled with relatives. As destination is being one of the offbeat locations in India, 36% of the respondents preferred to come with their own vehicles whereas 64% of surveyed visitors used public transport (Table 2).

Table 2: *Travel Information of the Respondents (N= 200)*

Visit Frequency	f	%	Source of Information	f	%
First time	126	63	Friends	100	50
Second time	26	13	Travel Agent	38	19
Third time	12	6	Brochure	24	12
Fourth time or more	36	18	Newspaper/Magazine	38	19
Purpose of Visit	f	%	Companion	f	%
Religion and Culture	76	38	Alone	22	11
Rural Experience	52	26	Couples (Spouse)	78	39
Holidays	42	21	Family	54	27
Other Reasons	30	15	Friends/Classmates	32	16
			Others (Relatives, parents)	14	7
Length of Stay	f	%	Mode of Travel	f	%
One day	74	37	Own Vehicle	72	36
Two or Three days	76	38	Public Transport	128	64
More than three days	50	25			

f: Frequency

Importance-Performance Means of Destination Attributes

Table 3 shows the importance and performance means of 28 destination attributes which are categorized into four major categories, namely weather and accessibility, the uniqueness of the destination, quality of tourist facilities and tourist motivation factor. Results presented in Table 3 also indicate that some attributes had better performance than their perceived importance while for some of them were vice versa. Data summarized in Table 3 reveals that 'weather and accessibility' factor had importance mean 3.98 and performance mean 3.28, resulting -0.70 mean difference. 'Uniqueness of destination' factor has importance mean 3.58 and performance mean 4.09, resulting mean difference of 0.51. The importance mean is 3.64, performance mean is 2.80 and the corresponding mean difference is -0.84 for 'quality of tourist facilities' factor. The mean difference of -0.18 is calculated from importance mean (3.83) and performance mean (3.65) for 'tourist motivation factor'.

The mean scores of 28 attributes range from 3.10 to 4.24, indicating that respondents ranked all these attributes importantly, more specifically, between 'very important' and 'extremely important'. The top three important attributes were availability and adequacy of transportation

facilities (4.24), completeness of roads and road signage to the destinations (4.11) and value for money the destination offers (4.00), indicating that tourists perceived these attributes as the most important factors. However, variations of tourist attractions (3.10), uncrowded and unspoiled destination (3.10) and availability of competent tourist guide (3.29) have been given the less weightage. The mean scores of performance statements about tourists' perceptions of the performance of 28 attributes are also shown in Table 3. The mean scores of 28 statements range from 2.44 to 4.24. Compared to the importance, the perceptions of the performance were relatively low, indicating that the actual performance of the destination slightly lower than visiting tourist expectations. Tourists gave the highest ratings to the wilderness and undisturbed nature (4.24), variation in tourist attractions (4.24) and pleasant weather and climate (4.13). Subsequently, the below average rankings were given by tourists to easy accessibility to hotels and lodges (2.44) and cleanliness and maintenance of public convenience (2.44).

Table 3. *Importance-Performance Means of Destination Attributes*

Variables	I	P	M.D.
(a) Weather and Accessibility	3.98	3.28	-0.70
Pleasant weather and climate	3.96	4.13	0.17
The destination is free from air and noise pollution	4.00	4.11	0.11
Availability and adequateness of transportation facilities	4.24	2.88	-1.36
Completeness of roads and road signage to destination	4.11	3.00	-1.11
Easy accessibility of hotels and lodges	3.98	2.44	-1.54
Telecommunication facilities near tourist destination	3.60	3.12	-0.48
(b) Uniqueness of Destination	3.58	4.09	0.51
Tranquility and panoramic view of natural environment	4.00	4.11	0.11
The wilderness and undisturbed nature	3.68	4.24	0.56
A rich spiritual and cultural heritage	3.54	4.12	0.58
Spiritual attractions are well kept and restored	3.48	3.98	0.50
Variety of tourist attractions	3.10	4.24	1.14
Protected cultural and natural resources	3.29	3.98	0.69
The destination is unique and authentic	4.00	3.98	-0.02
(c) Quality of Tourist Facilities	3.64	2.80	-0.84
Quality & hygiene at tourist place, accommodation & eateries	3.92	2.68	-1.24
Proper interpretation facilities	3.84	3.00	-0.84
Availability of competent tourist guide	3.29	2.44	-0.85
Maintenance of tourist attractions	3.47	2.58	-0.89
Cleanliness & maintenance of public convenience facilities	3.80	2.44	-1.36
Availability of leisure and recreational activities	4.00	3.24	-0.76
Availability of quality souvenirs	3.73	2.58	-1.15
Uncrowded and unspoiled destination	3.10	3.46	0.36
(d) Tourist Motivation Factor	3.83	3.65	-0.18
Low traffic and adequate parking facilities	3.86	3.68	-0.18
Well-maintained pedestrian pathways, parks and green areas	3.58	3.10	-0.48
Hospitality and friendliness of local people	3.92	4.00	0.08
Safety and security	4.00	4.12	0.12
Availability of information center	3.88	3.24	-0.64
Value for money	4.00	3.58	-0.42
Activity oriented tourism place for a whole year	3.58	3.86	0.28

I: Importance; P: Performance; M.D.: Mean Difference

Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA)

In order to examine tourist satisfaction with destination attributes, mean scores of all attributes were plotted on the IPA matrix as shown in figures

of 3 to 6. For each IPA matrix, placements of axes on the grid were calculated through the grand mean of the given factors. Tourists' perception and importance values were plotted on the four quadrant grid that were formed based on the mean scores of importance performance ratings. Each attribute was then assessed by locating in the appropriate quadrant. Each quadrant suggests a different response from the destination marketing strategy point of view.

Weather and Accessibility

Quadrant I is the *Concentrate here* and it includes three attributes: 'availability and adequacy of transportation', 'completeness of roads and road signage to destinations' and 'easy accessibility of hotels and lodges'. Tourists perceive the importance of these three attributes. However, the performance of these features was comparatively less appealing to tourists. Efforts are to be made to improve transportation and accommodation facilities for tourists since tourists are visiting the study area with all expectations.

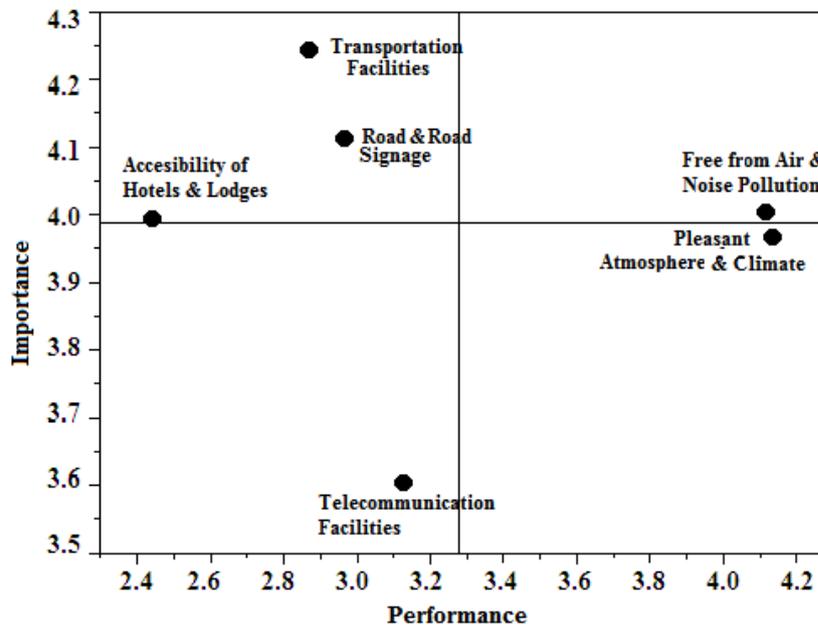


Figure 3. *Weather and Accessibility*

Quadrant II is the *Keep up the good work* quadrant and only one attribute, 'destination is free from air and noise pollution' was identified in this quadrant. This indicates that the performance of destination in this aspect is satisfactory and tourists were satisfied with the quality of the

environment. Quadrant III is the *Low priority* quadrant and only 'telecommunication facilities near tourist spots' attribute is located in this. In the fourth *Possible overkill* quadrant, 'pleasant weather and climate' attribute was identified only. This attribute was rated as lower than the average in importance and that the performance was higher than the average (Figure 3).

Uniqueness of Destination

Attributes of *Concentrate here* quadrant indicate that is important to tourists, whereas the performance does not really match the expectations. Only single attribute, 'destination is unique and authentic', was identified in this quadrant. Although tourists perceive quite a high importance to this attribute, the performance was not found satisfactory by them. In *Keep up the good work* quadrant two attributes 'tranquillity and panoramic view of the natural environment' and 'wilderness and undisturbed nature' were projected. It shows that tourists were satisfied with these attributes. In the third *Low priority* quadrant again, there were two attributes 'spiritual attractions are well kept' and 'protected cultural and natural resources'. In the last *Possible overkill* quadrant, 'rich spiritual and cultural heritage' and 'variety of tourist spots' were identified. It indicates the satisfactory performance of the destination was given less weightage (Figure 4).

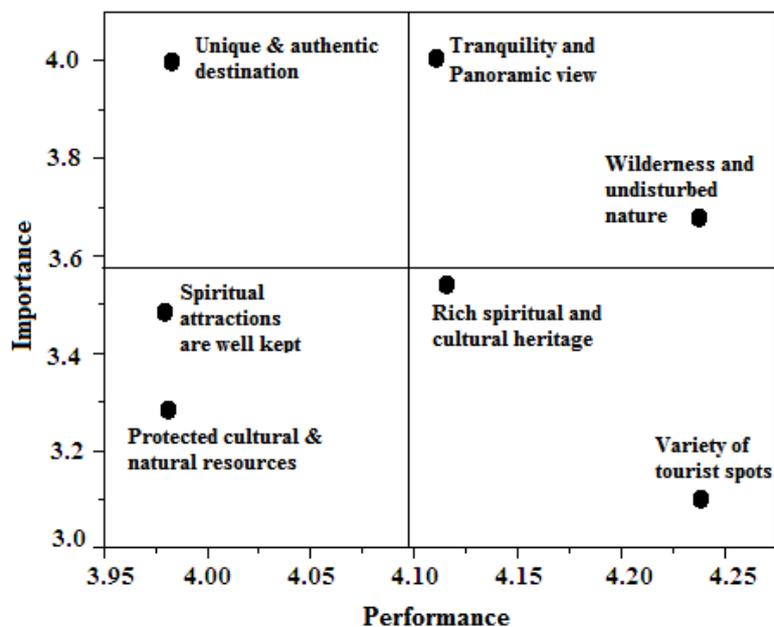


Figure 4. *Uniqueness of Destination*

Quality of Tourist Facilities

Three attributes 'quality and hygiene at a tourist place, accommodation and eateries', 'cleanliness and maintenance of public convenience' and 'availability quality souvenirs' fell into *Concentrate here* quadrants. It shows that tourists' places have a relatively high importance of these features, but their expectations were not addressed. The second *Keep up the good work* quadrant included 'availability of leisure and recreational activities' and 'proper interpretation facilities at tourist spots' attributes. It indicates that tourists gave high importance to these attributes. 'Maintenance of tourist attractions' and 'availability of competent tourist guides' figured in the third *Low priority* quadrant, indicating the low importance of giving attributes. Only feature 'uncrowded and unspoiled destination' is placed in the *Possible overkill* quadrant of low importance and high performance (Figure 5).

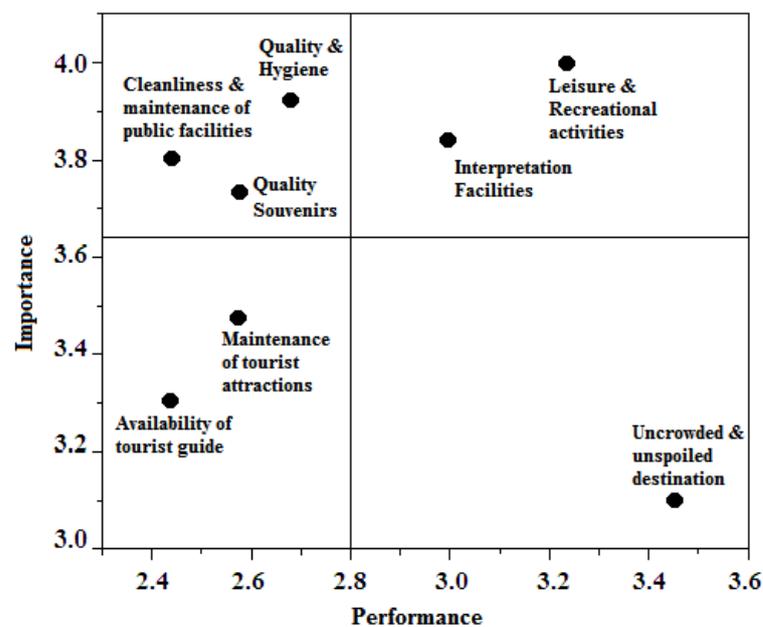


Figure 5. *Quality of Tourist Facilities*

Tourist Motivation

Concentrate here quadrant included two attributes 'availability of information center' and 'destination offers value for money' under which performance of the destination was not found satisfactory by tourists. Under *Keep up the good work* quadrant, three features named 'low traffic and adequate parking facilities', 'hospitality and friendliness of local people' and 'safety and security in destination' were identified. The

performance of the study area in these attributes was good and the tourists were satisfied with this. As the feature 'well-maintained pedestrian pathways, parks and green areas' was identified in *Low priority* quadrant, there are possibilities that concerned attribute was of poor advantage. 'Activity oriented tourism place for whole year' attribute placed in *Possible overkill* quadrant indicates the performance of destination in this low important feature is quite satisfactory and destination offers all year round tourism activities for tourists (Figure 6).

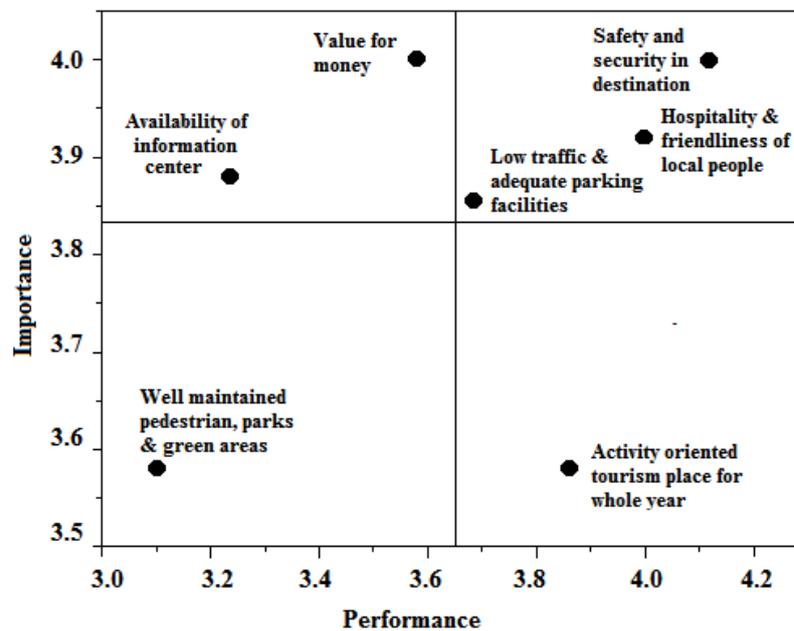


Figure 6. *Tourist Motivation Factors*

DISCUSSION

Measuring tourist satisfaction level is important while it can serve as a barometer to ascertain 'quality' of tourism offerings and services. The results provide insights on various attributes that have a strong influence on tourists' satisfaction. It was observed that many tourists came to the destination with high expectations and left the region with varying level of satisfaction. The results showed that weather and accessibility were the prime consideration of tourists, followed by tourist motivation factors, quality of tourist facilities and uniqueness of the destination. It showed that perceived expectation of tourists for destination was good for categorization it as a unique destination, almost satisfactory for tourist motivation factor and poor of weather and accessibility, and quality of tourist facilities. Out of 28 attributes, the top three most important

attributes were availability and adequacy of transportation facilities, roads and road signage, and value for money. In terms of performance, tourists conferred the top ratings to the wilderness and undisturbed nature, a variety of tourist spots, and pleasant weather and climate. The poor ratings were given to easy accessibility to hotels and lodges, cleanliness and maintenance of public convenience, and availability of means of travel services.

Nine attributes as identified under "*Concentrate here*" quadrant indicates that destination attributes are not properly developed and maintained. The attractions are supported by poor tourism infrastructure and available amenities and facilities are in the deprived state. Since middle aged, elderly people and married couples visit the destination along with family members, substantial effort must be put into action for improving roads, signage, transportation facilities and other primary tourism services like accommodation units and catering outlets. Normally for an upcoming tourist destination, local means of transportation and infrastructure to improve reachability, improving accommodation and catering facilities, conformity to cleanliness, and hygiene and updated information are of great significance. Efforts are to be made to inculcate all the above-referred issues in placing tourist destination as spiritual and adventurous tourist location. The performance of eight attributes, acknowledged in "*Keep up the good work*" quadrant, was encouraging and tourists were satisfied with them. However, it is suggested that the destination must pay attention to adequate interpretation of tourist attractions as well as improving parking facilities, planning and development of leisure and recreational activities which may provide higher levels of satisfaction and may offer exciting experiences to tourists. In order to compete with other emerging mountainous destination, Trijugarayan must preserve its unique natural environment suitable for peace, wellbeing and self-actualization. Since infrastructure development is a major concern for the destination, this seems a challenge for local tourism authorities, government and other stakeholders, to develop the area by not affecting destination features of competitive advantage.

Six attributes identified in the "*Low priority*" quadrant were rated as below average for both importance and performance. The performance of each attribute was regarded as unsatisfactory, and of low importance by tourists. Stakeholders responsible for the development of the destination must understand that although attributes of this quadrant are not of that significance in tourist satisfaction, these can't be put aside. Much scope is available for further improvement otherwise there are possibilities of

negative impact and decreasing performance. Five attributes of “*Possible overkill*” quadrant were rated lower than the average in importance, even though their performance was higher than the average. Tourists have got the impression that Trijuginarayan has all features to make it as a tourist attraction for spiritual and pilgrimage destination with various activities oriented tourist spots, uncrowded and unspoiled destination with pleasant atmosphere, but efforts should be made towards retaining the present status and maintaining high standards without over-utilizing resources. These results are consistent with the findings of previous studies of Yoon and Uysal (2005) in Northern Cyprus; Wang and Qu (2006) in China; Chi and Qu (2008) in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, USA; Alegre and Garau (2010) in Balearic Islands, Spain, and Khuong and Ngoc (2014) in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board, one of the main stakeholders to promote tourism in the state, is making ceaseless efforts to promote spiritual tourism in such a way that pilgrims and other nature of tourists having spiritual motivation may be provided the best possible opportunities to avail spiritual tourism experiences. Efforts of local tourism development authorities are underway to develop a couple of tourist sites in the surroundings of the study area. These sites will be linked by hassle-free pedestrian pathways with the provisions of some viewpoints, open spaces and hygienic eateries. In order to improve accommodation facilities, a tourist rest house operated by Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam, an autonomous body of Uttarakhand State is in operation. The Board is promoting home-stay accommodation by identifying people willing to convert their houses partially into lodges with necessary provisions of food and beverages to tourists. For improving hygiene and sanitation, Department of Health and Sanitation of Uttarakhand has made the provision of some units of public convenience facilities. To improve language and hospitality skills, some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are extending short-term courses to local people so that they can deliver adequate services to tourists and join tourism and hospitality as a profession for self-reliance. Short and long-term courses on different aspects of tourism and hospitality ranging from seven to thirty days duration may be designed for local youths in collaboration with Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship, educational institutions and Universities.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

In order to attain tourists' positive evaluation, destination management organization (DMO) in Trijuginarayan should pay much attention to influential satisfaction attributes and make investment in development of basic tourism facilities, maintain service quality, preserve the scenic and spiritual quality of destination and create a harmonious atmosphere as these can be the source of competitive advantage for this emerging spiritual tourist destination. Further, due to the infancy stage of tourism development, the tourists arriving to Trijuginarayan may not be adequately informed about the existing spiritual and cultural elements of the study area. This means that the DMO must attempt to promote the spiritual and cultural related tourism products in order to educate the tourists. However, it is important that managers identify the spiritual and cultural components that will generate tourists' interest and provide a competitive advantage to the destination. Providing better information about the conditions of infrastructure, transportation and accommodation, spiritual and cultural background, geographical and historical information, local events and nature of available tourism products and attractions could help tourists be better prepared for what they may encounter. Tourist information centers ensure better quality of presentation of information about this emerging tourist destination in terms of the well-informed tourist map, signage, models and displays, up-to-date photos, pamphlets and audio-visual presentations. Satisfaction is measured to understand how well tourism stakeholders recognize and respond to the needs of visitors. Therefore, tourism stakeholders must make a provision to record the tourists' comments, complaints and suggestions as they are valuable sources for improvements and innovations.

It is necessary for the tourism stakeholders to properly identify areas of concentration that will result in a competitive tourist product. The IPA provides a simplistic means to identify potential areas (destination attributes) that require more or less attention from destination managers in order to satisfy tourists. When all tourism stakeholders understand the destination attributes that are important to tourists and understand how the overall destination is performing in those attributes, it allows the DMO to promote a complementary product that represents the tastes and preferences of the tourists. Moreover, the IPA revealed that Trijuginarayan's destination managers must concentrate on the adequate accommodation, transportation infrastructure and facilities, uniqueness of destination, quality of restaurants, cleanliness and hygiene in tourism

facilities, proper information centers and value for money in order to enhance the tourist experience. Necessary tourist facilities must be made available for tourists to enjoy the destination and to make a desired behavioural intention to revisit and recommend the destination to others. Additionally, unplanned tourism development can create a negative impact on the sustainability of tourism resources in Trijuginarayan. It is, therefore, critical for the industry to take the path of sustainable tourism development. Government agencies and local tourism entrepreneurs should enforce sustainable development by implementing regulations for environmental protection, cultural conservation, increasing investment and development of tourism infrastructures, and fostering human resource development for the tourism sector.

CONCLUSION

Managers acknowledge tourist satisfaction as one of the most important drivers of competitive advantage and recognize that accurate measurement of satisfaction is essential for the development of effective destination management strategies. This study contributes in identifying noteworthy factors that influence tourist satisfaction at Trijuginarayan, an emerging spiritual and adventure tourism destination of Garhwal Himalaya. The inclusion of both importance and performance in the IPA enables the identification of the destination's strengths, weaknesses, and critical success factors. Consequently, enhancing the performance of critical success factors of the destination, especially those that are important in the eyes of tourists can result in greater satisfaction and a more favorable image of the destination. Three considerations result of these findings. First, as an emerging tourism destination, Trijuginarayan has advantages such as pleasant weather and climatic conditions, a variety of tourism products, hospitality offered by local people and provision of safety and security. Second, it is fundamental to improve the overall quality of the tourist experiences, especially focusing on those attributes that account lower levels of satisfaction such as inadequate roads and proper signage, poor travel connectivity, sub-standard accommodation facilities, poor quality of hygiene, maintenance of public convenience and non-existent information centers. Third, Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board should develop liaising with other departments including forest and wildlife, public works, health and sanitation to supply better products and services to tourists and have a better plan to improve the environment-friendly tourism. It is worth to mention that

since spiritual and adventure tourism contributes significantly to the economy of this Himalayan state, the findings of the study are valuable for policy makers and tourism stakeholders in developing and maintaining this emerging destination. The goal of tourism stakeholders must be to ensure tourist satisfaction, establish stronger loyalty and positive future intentions that will manifest themselves through repeat visits and recommendations to others, hence making the tourism more sustainable in the area.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Finally, there exist limitations of the current research that warrant discussion to encourage more sound research in the future. First, sample size needs to be increased in order to have a better understanding of tourist behavior. Second, the surveyed data only reflected the current situation which may change in the future. A longitudinal study that makes it possible to analyze tourists' perceptions in a certain period should be introduced in further studies, which may be an effective way to evaluate tourists' perceived importance and performance. Studying domestic tourists to Trijugarayan is important, given the unique nature of tourism in the study area. Yet foreign tourists are equally important for the tourism development. Focusing only on domestic tourists was another limitation of our study. Future studies would be implemented to examine the travel experience and satisfaction of foreign tourists to this particular region. Comparisons could also be made between two similar destinations for the development of a more thorough tourism policy. Future investigations would also be conducted in this aspect.

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