

Tourists' Satisfaction towards Ayurveda Tourism in Kerala

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Abstract

The Success of the Service - Oriented Tourism Industry corresponds to the level of Tourist Satisfaction at the destination. The Tourist preference, most often, to visit and experience a tourist spot, is determined by the kind of quality services, provided to and experienced by the visitor. The practice of Ayurveda Tourism in Kerala is no exception to this. The State of Kerala, of late, has become the hot spot for Ayurvedic treatment, and rejuvenation therapies. As a Brand Ambassador of Ayurveda Tourism, Kerala attracts a large of chunk of Foreign Tourist arrivals, which supplement to the State revenue too. An analytical approach to Various components connected with Ayurveda Tourism practiced in Kerala, and the level of tourist satisfaction, stands as a testimony to the quality of service provided, on par with international standards.

Keywords: Tourists' Satisfaction, Traditional Medicinal Systems, Ayurveda, Holistic Treatment, Rejuvenation Therapy, Heterogeneous Service Provider. Eco-Friendly Environment

Introduction

Ayurveda is a native medicine of Indian subcontinent developed through the ages. India is known for its traditional medicinal systems - Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani. Traditional Medical systems are mentioned even in the ancient Vedas and other scriptures. The Ayurvedic concept seems to have appeared and developed between 2500 and 500BC in India. Also called the "science of longevity," Ayurveda offers a complete system to live a long healthy life. As a holistic healing science, Ayurveda comprises of two words, - Ayu and Veda. Ayu means life and Veda means knowledge or science. Hence literally Ayurveda means the science of life, dealing not only with treatment of different diseases but serves as a base for a complete holistic way of life .

The Significance of Ayurveda in Kerala Tourism

The major delight of Kerala is basically Ayurveda and backwaters. Ayurveda as a holistic system of healing has a hoary tradition of more than 3000 years old. Kerala and Ayurveda are synonymous to each other, as it is the only place where Ayurveda has been practiced with absolute authenticity and dedication. This ancient Indian system of medicine has proved to be not only the cure for illness but also a hundred percent natural way to complete health. Kerala is a role model for other states in India in tourism promotion . Thus it encourages them to revive the ancient medical knowledge systems of India.

Kerala is not only a beautiful destination in Southern India known for its excellent beaches and scenic backwaters but also, of late, Kerala has gained international attention for health tourism and is becoming a popular international health tourism destination. Tourists have also identified that Kerala has a vast pool of qualified and trained doctors and experienced nurses, having an excellent network of hospitals / health resorts that offer healthcare on par with international standards at very affordable prices. Of late, international travelers from several countries have also realized the advantages of travelling to Kerala, and thus Health Tourism Industry has begun to take off in big way in the state.

Kerala, of late, has become an acclaimed hotspot for its indigenous medical therapies such as Ayurveda which helps to rejuvenate and revitalize the body and mind. Ayurveda has become one of the remarkable components of Kerala tourism and also it is the main contributor to Kerala's health tourism. Undeniably Ayurveda has become the trademark of Kerala tourism. Since Ayurveda provides a holistic treatment with no side effects, it has become popular among Health care travelers, both domestic and International travelers. Since Ayurveda helps to rejuvenate the body and mind, not only health tourists but those for other specific purposes are also interested in Ayurveda.

Tourist Satisfaction Explained

In any business venture, its ultimate success is depended on and decided by the level of Satisfaction of customers/consumers. The quantum of satisfaction is determined by the quality of service rendered to the customers. The Tourism Sector is no exception to this. Tourist satisfaction is estimated by comparing the expectation of customers/consumers before and after a service. If the service or product doesn't meet the expectation, it will result in the dissatisfaction of tourists. Satisfaction, on the other hand, will be created as a result of a positive feeling between pre-travel expectations and the post travel experience. Thus, when the experience of visitors creates a sense of gratification, then contentment will be created. Tourist's satisfaction as a concept has two main aspects. The first, one is about the expectation of the tourists before and ahead of the

travel and the second dimension is a validation of the rendered services after the travels of the tourist. In simple terms, Tourist satisfaction is a direct result of tourist expectations and the perceived value after the visit. The World Bank argues that, the sum tourists spend and their satisfaction on a site are directly related to the quality of facilities and services at touristic spots. On site information center, background history, handicraft centers, public toilets, mini and supermarkets, banks, restaurants, and accommodation are among the certain facilities which will impact the level of satisfaction. Even though, one has to be mindful of not over commercializing some sites, availing a minimum of facilities can help to intensify a fair level of tourism spending in an area. Thus Tourist satisfaction is considerably linked to customer loyalty, repetitive visits and a positive social communication on the visited site.

Dorfman endeavored to solidify the definition of satisfaction from recreational camping perspectives. He states that "satisfaction level are maximized when aspiration (desirability) equals perception but only when the desirability is high for that condition. Desirability for conditions could directly relate to the social identity theory and the need for the personal distinctiveness". The service providers will be recognized for their efficient service delivery only when the tourists are satisfied. The satisfaction of tourists is usually dependent on the extent and level of individual efforts and expectations. Cardoza remarks as "customer effort is any physical, mental or monetary resource expended by the customer in the acquisition of a service or product". Visitors will have their own perception and image before they ever travel to the site.

Destination and Satisfaction

Tribe and Snaith defined tourists' satisfaction with a destination as the degree to which a tourist's assessment of the attributes of that destination exceeds his or her expectations for those attributes. Woodside, Frey and Daly have reviewed a definition of satisfaction. It is generally recognized as a post-purchase construct that is related to how much a consumer likes or dislikes a service or product after experiencing it. Mountiho included some

notes in terms of travel that this post-purchase construct is primarily a function of pre-travel expectations and travel experiences. In the same way, Pizam, Neumann and Reichel have defined tourist satisfaction as the results of the comparison between “a tourist’s experience at the destination visited and the expectations about the destination.” Although the definition is slightly different, but the attractiveness of a destination reflects the feelings, beliefs, and opinions that an individual has about the destination’s perceived ability to satisfy the special vacation needs of that person.

Post-Purchase Attitude

Moreover, Swan and Combs also claimed, ‘satisfaction as a post-purchase attitude.’ Westbrook introduced the notion that customer satisfaction involves cognitive and affective aspects in pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase phases of buying goods and/or receiving services. While many other conceptualizations exist, there is an agreement that, ‘satisfaction is a judgment a customer makes following a service encounter in which goods and/or services are exchanged.’

This evaluation of satisfaction is highly heterogeneous. It differs from customer to customer, encounter to encounter, and firm to firm, supporting the need for new insights in customer satisfaction between and across industries. Tse, Nicosia, and Wilton emphasized that, ‘satisfaction is a process spanning the consumption period and that research of the post-purchase phase is critical to new knowledge development’. To analyse the tourists satisfaction towards Ayurveda Tourism in Kerala, this study has been undertaken with following objectives.

Objectives

- To analyze the relationship between Natural and Eco – Friendly environment, Clean and Hygienic environment and Ambience of Guest Room and Treatment Centre in Ayurveda Tourism.

- To evaluate the association between the various variables of quality of treatment and the level of satisfaction has been analysed.
- To find the overall satisfaction of Ayurveda tourists visiting Kerala.

Research Methodology

Survey is a ‘fact-finding’ study, a method of research involving data collection directly from the population or a sample thereof at a particular time. Not a mere clerical routine work of gathering and tabulating figures, it requires an expertise, experience, imaginative planning, careful execution, critical analysis and rational interpretation of the findings. International Patients are chosen as samples for this study on “**Tourist Satisfaction Towards Ayurveda Tourism in Kerala**”.

Sources of Data: The data for this study has been collected both from primary and secondary sources.

Study Design: Descriptive, exploratory and analytical study has been adopted. Sampling Design: 300 Respondents are selected using Multi Stage Random Sampling method.

Universe: The universe of this study includes various Ayurveda Centres in Kerala.

Method of Data Collection: A standard questionnaire with five point Likert’s scale was used as a primary tool for data collection. Despite initial reluctance by the respondents, person-to-person approach provided sufficient scope and space to nullify their doubts, thus required data are gathered.

Analysis and Interpretation

Relationship between Natural and Eco – Friendly environment, Clean and Hygienic environment and Ambience of Guest Room and Treatment Centre in Ayurveda Tourism:

Ayurveda tourism has also been decided by a Ayurveda tourist based on three vital factors like Natural and Eco – Friendly environment, Clean and Hygienic environment and Ambience of Guest Room and Treatment Centre. All the three are interrelated and their relationship has been analyzed.

Levels of Satisfaction / Variables	Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	Not Considered	Dissatisfied	Strongly Dissatisfied	Total
Natural and Eco – Friendly environment	146	73	15	41	25	300
Clean and Hygienic environment	167	64	12	29	28	300
Ambiance of Guest Room and Treatment Centre	163	68	20	25	24	300
Total	476	205	47	95	77	900

Assumption

Null Hypothesis: H0

There is no significant difference between the level of satisfaction and variables. There is no significant association between Natural and Eco – Friendly environment, Clean and Hygienic environment and Ambiance of Guest Room and Treatment Centre in the Ayurveda Tourism.

Alternative Hypothesis: H1

There is significant difference between levels of satisfaction and variables. There is significant association between Natural and Eco – Friendly environment, Clean and Hygienic environment and Ambiance of Guest Room and Treatment Centre in the Ayurveda Tourism.

Single Factor ANOVA for Relationship between Natural and Eco – Friendly environment, Clean and Hygienic environment and Ambiance of Guest Room and Treatment Centre in the Ayurveda Tourism

Summary	ANOVA: Single Factor			
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Highly Satisfied	3	476	158.6667	124.3333
Satisfied	3	205	68.33333	20.33333
Not Considered	3	47	15.66667	16.33333
Dissatisfied	3	95	31.66667	69.33333
Highly Satisfied	3	77	25.66667	4.333333

CRD ANOVA table for Relationship between Natural and Eco – Friendly environment, Clean and Hygienic environment and Ambiance of Guest Room and Treatment Centre in the Ayurveda Tourism.

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F Critical
Between Groups	41254.67	4	10313.67	219.7514	1.07E-09 (0.00000000107)	3.47805
With in Groups	469.3333	10	46.93333			
Total	41724	14				

Inference

ANOVA test has been conducted. The calculated value is greater than the table value (219.7514 > 3.478). Also p-value .000 is less than 0.05. We accept H1 that there is a significant association between Natural and Eco – Friendly environment, Clean and Hygienic environment and Ambiance of Guest Room and Treatment Centre in the Ayurveda tourism. We conclude that there is a significant association between the level of satisfaction and variables.

Association between Different Variables of the Quality of Ayurvedic Treatments and the Level of Satisfaction in Ayurveda Tourism

The quality of Ayurvedic treatments, Service rendered by Therapists, Service rendered by Doctor, Overall improvement in health during healing period, Organisation of the entire Ayurvedic programme and Overall rating of healing period plays a vital role in Ayurveda Tourism.

Association between Different Variables of the Quality of Ayurvedic Treatments in Ayurveda Tourism and the Level of Satisfaction

Levels of Satisfaction / Variables	Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	Not Considered	Dissatisfied	Strongly Dissatisfied
The quality of Ayurvedic treatments	5	2	1	1	1
Service rendered by Therapists	8	2	1	3	2
Service rendered by Doctor	12	11	2	2	2
Overall improvement in health during the healing period	34	10	2	8	9
Organisation of the entire Ayurvedic programme	54	13	2	10	9
Overall rating of the healing period	52	27	4	6	5

Assumption

Null hypothesis: H0

There is no significant difference between level of satisfaction and variables. There is no significant association between The quality of Ayurvedic treatments, Service rendered by Therapists, Service rendered by Doctor, Overall improvement in health during the healing period, Organisation of the entire Ayurvedic programme and Overall rating of the healing period in Ayurveda Tourism and level of satisfaction.

Alternative hypothesis: H1

There is a significant difference between the level of satisfaction and variables. There is a significant association between The quality of Ayurvedic treatments, Service rendered by Therapists, Service rendered by Doctor, Overall improvement in health during healing period, Organisation of entire Ayurvedic programme and Overall rating of a healing period in Ayurveda Tourism and level of satisfaction.

Single factor ANOVA for the association between The quality of Ayurvedic treatments, Service rendered by Therapists, Service rendered by Doctor, Overall improvement in health during healing period, Organisation of the entire Ayurvedic programme and Overall rating of a healing period in Ayurveda Tourism and the level of satisfaction.

Summary	ANOVA: Single Factor			
	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Highly Satisfied	3	25	8.333333	12.333333
Satisfied	3	15	5	27
Not Considered	3	4	1.333333	0.333333
Dissatisfied	3	6	2	1
Highly Dissatisfied	3	5	1.666667	0.333333

CRD ANOVA table for the association between The quality of Ayurvedic treatments, Service rendered by Therapists, Service rendered by Doctor, Overall improvement in health during healing period, Organisation of the entire Ayurvedic programme and Overall rating of healing period in Ayurveda Tourism and the level of satisfaction.

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F critical
Between Groups	107.3333	4	26.83333	3.272358	0.058431	3.47805
Within Groups	82	10	8.2			
Total	189.3333	14				

Inference

The F calculated value is less than F table value ($3.27 < 3.478$). Also p-value 0.058 is greater than 0.05. We conclude that there is no significant difference between level of agreements and the variables. We accept the hypothesis H₀ that there is no significant association between The quality of Ayurvedic treatments, Service rendered by Therapists, Service rendered by Doctor, Overall improvement in health during the healing period, Organisation of the entire Ayurvedic programme and Overall rating of a healing period in Ayurveda Tourism.

Correlation Tests were Conducted to Test the Linear Relationship between the Following

- Pearson correlation value for Highly Satisfied and Satisfied respondents is 0.668 – in medium status
- Pearson correlation value for Not Considered and Satisfied respondents is 0.594 – in low status
- Pearson correlation value for Dissatisfied and Highly Dissatisfied respondents 0.875 – in high status

It is concluded that there is a specific relationship between Highly Satisfied and Satisfied respondents, Not Considered and Satisfied respondents, Dissatisfied and Highly Dissatisfied respondents. Pearson correlation value for Dissatisfied and Highly Dissatisfied respondents is 0.875 which is in high status. It is understood that overall satisfaction of Ayurveds tourists visiting Kerala has to be raised.

It may be Concluded that the findings of the study provide valuable insights regarding the significance of Ayurveda sector in improving Kerala Tourism. Kerala has an advantageous position to avail the opportunities in Ayurveda and can attract a sizable tourist segment. It is vital for the local government institutions. Ayurveda tourism service providers should concentrate on tourists' satisfaction to ensure the better services to strengthen the opportunities of Ayurveda tourism. This Ayurveda tourism service provider sector has to be tuned as an organised sector. This can be done by the local government through providing an ideal platform and infrastructure facilities, policy and planning procedures. The

integration of Ayurveda centric tourism promotion activities with the local economy along with public-private–local government partnerships can push the growth of medical tourism sector in a big way.

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