

Exploring Tourist Satisfaction: A Study of Domestic Visitors at Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park

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Abstract

This study presents a comprehensive analysis of the tourist satisfaction and market competition environment of Shivapuri National Park as a tourist destination. The study defines the relevant concepts related to tourist destinations and satisfaction and conducts a SWOT analysis to evaluate the internal and external factors affecting the park. To gather empirical data, an email questionnaire survey was conducted, and responses from 210 domestic tourists were collected to investigate the actual conditions of the park and satisfaction levels based on 18 indicators. The research identifies practical issues that hinder the improvement of tourist satisfaction and proposes measures to enhance the overall experience of tourists. The findings of the study provide valuable insights into park management, which can be used to develop effective strategies for attracting more tourists and improving their overall satisfaction levels. The research highlights the importance of understanding the tourist satisfaction and market competition environment of national parks and the need for regular monitoring and evaluation to ensure sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: Tourist destination, Tourist satisfaction, Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park

1. Introduction

As the demand for diversified material and spiritual life continues to increase, the tourism industry has experienced rapid development in recent years. Forest tourism has become an extended and expanded branch of traditional tourism, and forest parks have become the main body of this type of tourism. Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park, with its abundant natural resources and diverse flora and fauna, is an important forest park in Nepal.

In order to meet the growing demand for tourism and enhance the quality of the park as a tourist destination, it is important to improve tourist satisfaction. The satisfaction of tourists is directly related to the reputation of the scenic spot, the number of tourists, and the economic benefits of tourism. Thus, it is necessary to investigate the level of tourist satisfaction and take targeted improvement measures to address areas where tourist satisfaction needs improvement.

By analyzing the current status of tourist satisfaction in Shivapuri National Park based on empirical investigation, applicable improvement measures can be proposed to improve tourist satisfaction and promote the green, healthy, and sustainable development of the park. Improving tourist satisfaction can generate positive marketing effects, increase the intangible wealth of tourism, expand the scale of tourists, enhance the profitability of the park, and ultimately promote the economic benefits of tourism.

To achieve this, it is important to optimize the service and management quality of the park, timely understand tourist satisfaction and dissatisfaction enhance the perception of natural tourists, and improve the market competitiveness of

the park. By doing so, the tourist loyalty of Shivapuri National Park can be enhanced, leading to positive word-of-mouth advertising and practical significance for the promotion of the economic benefits of tourism.

2. Tourist Destination and Tourist Satisfaction

A tourist destination is not just a single travel attraction, but a whole area that includes various elements such as food, accommodation, transportation, and activities. Scholars have proposed different models to define tourist destinations, but they all agree that it is a complex system that includes tourism resources, location, management, image, price, service facilities, sustainable development, and the experience of tourists. However, some models may overlook factors such as price differences and the perspectives of locals. The destination composition system proposed by (Shen et al., 2018) includes tourism facilities, tourist attractions, and tourism services, with attractions being artificially developed based on tourism resources and including landscape systems and events. Overall, a tourist destination is a comprehensive system that covers all elements related to tourism.

In the late 1990s, scholars began applying tourist satisfaction to the tourism industry, which helped the industry grow. Domestic research on tourist satisfaction focused on defining what it is and creating evaluation criteria. Tourist satisfaction is a way to measure how satisfied tourists are with the products they experience during their trip. It includes both overall satisfaction and individual satisfaction and is measured using various specific indicators. Tourist satisfaction is complex, multi-dimensional, dynamic, and difficult to measure because many factors affect it. Tourists' expectations of the destination and other elements impact future satisfaction, and since expectations differ, satisfaction levels can vary. Tourist satisfaction can also change with time and location.

Various tools can be used to measure tourist satisfaction, including surveys, comment cards, online reviews, social media monitoring, mystery shopping, and focus groups. Among these, surveys are a common and effective tool used to gather information about tourists' satisfaction levels with different aspects of their trip. Surveys can be conducted in various formats, such as paper or online, and can cover different areas like accommodation, attractions, transportation, and customer service. Survey data can help businesses and destinations to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses in their services and facilities, improve customer experiences, and ultimately enhance tourist satisfaction levels. Therefore, conducting surveys can be an essential part of any comprehensive tourist satisfaction measurement program.

Surveys are an essential component in measuring tourist satisfaction at national parks, since they can reveal important information about how tourists view the area and how satisfied they are overall. Numerous subjects, including the standard of the park's facilities, the friendliness and helpfulness of the employees, the range of activities offered, the park's natural beauty, and the overall tourist experience, can be covered in surveys.

Tourist satisfaction with park-based tourism services and recreation quality is a critical concern for national park administrations and regional tourism (Eagles & McCool, 2002), as it has a significant impact on local economic development and sustainable area management (Rivera & Croes, 2010). Achieving high visitor satisfaction is a primary goal for nature-based tourist destinations (Moore, Rodger, & Taplin, 2015). To develop or assess tourism destinations, Dickman (1997) proposed the five As of tourism: attraction, activity, accommodation, access, and amenity. Several studies have investigated visitors' satisfaction with specific national park tourism services, including studies by Sivalio lu and Berköz (2012), Taylor and Grandjean (2009), Burns, Graefe, and Absher (2003), and Burns and Graefe (2006). These studies suggest that visitors typically have a satisfactory experience with the national park's ecosystem services, particularly with the natural environment and scenery, including forests.

According to the expectancy disconfirmation paradigm (Oliver, 1999), positive disconfirmation can encourage destination loyalty, leading to repeat visitation and positive word-of-mouth recommendations. On the other hand, dissatisfaction may result in visitors expressing negative word-of-mouth and seeking recreation elsewhere (Lovell, Patterson, & Walker, 2001). Measuring visitor loyalty, which refers to a commitment to a particular destination, place, or brand (Rivera & Croes, 2010), is crucial as it indicates support for protected areas. Several studies have analyzed the relationship between park loyalty and satisfaction, including studies by Moore, Rodger, and Taplin (2017). However, while both concepts appear to be positively related, little research has examined the relationship between visitor loyalty and park affinity. Notably, Arnberger et al. (2019) found no significant relationship between the likelihood of revisiting a park and park affinity, indicating that this area warrants further investigation.

3. Progress in the Development of Shivapuri National Park

Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park, located in the northern region of Kathmandu Valley, is a visually stunning protected area. Its establishment in 2002 conferred upon it the status of the ninth national park in Nepal, with a coverage area of 159 sq km. As documented by SNNP (2017), the park provides habitat for 177 avian species, 102 butterfly taxa, 129 mushroom varieties, and 30 mammalian taxa. The park boasts several forest types, including pine, oak, and rhododendron, which endows nature enthusiasts with an exceptional experience. The park's diverse wildlife, including Himalayan black bears, leopards, and rhesus monkeys, further augments its allure. Additionally, Shivapuri National Park's pivotal role in supplying potable water to the Kathmandu Valley accentuates its importance.

Moreover, the park offers breathtaking panoramic vistas of the Himalayas and Kathmandu Valley, making it an idyllic destination to relax amidst nature, away from the city's chaos. The park's strategic location and easy accessibility make it a popular tourist spot. Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park is a stunning and protected area with diverse natural features, wildlife, and cultural sites, making it a must-visit destination for anyone who desires to witness the best of Nepal's natural beauty.

The major attractions of the park are, Bagdwar, Bishnudwar, Nagigumba, Shivapuri Peak, and Sundarijal. The mean yearly visitor count for the five years leading up to 2016 was 167,500. In the year 2016-17, the park received a total of 16,539 foreign visitors and 193,178 domestic tourists (SNNP, 2017). However, the number of foreign visitors experienced a significant decline in the following years, with 16813 and 12496 visitors in 2017 and 2018 respectively, according to the Nepal Tourism Statistics (2018). It should be noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on tourist arrivals in national parks and other travel destinations, and the numbers may have decreased since the time of reporting. The park generates revenue through entrance fees, which are used for conservation and maintenance efforts.

To further develop tourism in the park, the government of Nepal has taken several measures, including the construction of trekking trails, rest houses, and other tourism infrastructure. The park also collaborates with local communities to promote eco-tourism and sustainable development. As of now, Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park is still in its early stages of tourism development, with ample opportunities for growth and expansion in the future.

4. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the research is to investigate the level of tourist satisfaction in the Shivapuri National Park and the specific objectives are:

a. To investigate the impact of service quality on tourist satisfaction

This objective aims to explore how service quality affects tourists' satisfaction levels in a tourist destination. The research can involve surveying tourists to understand their expectations of service quality and how well the destination is meeting those expectations. This can help to identify areas where service quality can be improved to enhance tourist satisfaction levels.

b. To assess the effectiveness of traffic management and infrastructure construction on tourist satisfaction

This objective focuses on understanding how traffic management and infrastructure construction can impact tourist satisfaction levels. The research can involve examining the current traffic management and infrastructure in the tourist destination and surveying tourists to understand their satisfaction levels. The findings can help to identify areas where improvements can be made to enhance tourist satisfaction levels.

c. To explore the impact of tourist commodities on tourist satisfaction

This objective aims to investigate how tourist commodities can affect tourist satisfaction levels. The research can involve examining the current tourist commodities in the destination and surveying tourists to understand their satisfaction levels. The findings can help to identify areas where improvements can be made to enhance tourist satisfaction levels through enriching tourist commodities.

d. To evaluate the effectiveness of marketing and promotion on tourist satisfaction

This objective focuses on understanding how marketing and promotion can impact tourist satisfaction levels. The research can involve examining the current marketing and promotion strategies used at the destination and

surveying tourists to understand their awareness and perception of the destination. The findings can help to identify areas where improvements can be made to enhance tourist satisfaction levels through effective marketing and promotion strategies.

5. Research Methodology

The goal of the study was to measure tourist satisfaction with Shivapuri National Park, and the research methodology employed to achieve this goal involved several steps. The first step was data collection, which was carried out by obtaining prior written consent from respondents using their contact phone and email details from the recent visitor list of the park. The survey questionnaire in the word format was sent to the respondents via email. In the month of December 2018, a total of 550 tourists visited the park. The sample size was determined using the Yamane formula, where $\text{sample size}(n) = N / \{1 + N(e)^2\}$, where n is the required sample size, N is the population size, and e is the margin of error set at 5% (0.05). The sample size was calculated as $550 / \{1 + 550(0.05)^2\} = 550 / (1 + 1.375) = 550 / 2.375 = 231$.

The questionnaire was designed to measure various indicators of tourist satisfaction, and the respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with 18 indicators on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). The survey was conducted over a period of 30 days, from December 1, 2018, to December 31, 2018. The 231 respondents were selected using a lottery system based on their serial numbers in the visitors' list. A total of 231 filled-up questionnaires were collected via email, of which 21 copies were found invalid. Therefore, a total of 210 completed questionnaires were utilized, resulting in an effective response rate of 90.90 percent, which is considered a high rate of completion. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS Version 26 to obtain the average score, standard deviation, and ranking. Moreover, a SWOT analysis was also conducted to find the present status of the park and to cross-validate the result.

Based on the data analysis, the study provided recommendations for improving tourist satisfaction with Shivapuri National Park. These recommendations were based on the identified patterns and relationships in the data and were designed to address any areas where tourist satisfaction was found to be lacking.

6. Data Analysis and Results

6.1 SWOT Analysis of the Shivapuri National Park

Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park is conveniently located near Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal, making it easily accessible for tourists from both domestic and international locations. This national park boasts a diverse range of flora and fauna, with over 300 species of birds, which makes it a popular spot for birdwatching enthusiasts. The park also features numerous sacred sites of significance to both Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims and religious tourists, such as the Shivapuri Baba Ashram and the Nagarjun Palace. For adventure seekers, the park offers several trekking routes, including the one to the Shivapuri peak, where trekkers can enjoy breathtaking panoramic views of the surrounding mountains and Kathmandu city. Managed by the government of Nepal, the park has a dedicated team of park rangers who work tirelessly to protect its natural and cultural heritage.

However, the park also has certain weaknesses that need to be addressed. The Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park is facing several challenges that require immediate attention to ensure the preservation of its natural and cultural heritage. The park has been affected by illegal activities such as logging and poaching, which pose a significant threat to its diverse range of flora and fauna.

In addition, the park suffers from inadequate infrastructure, including poorly maintained trails, a lack of proper signage, and limited visitor facilities. This lack of resources and funding has resulted in a decline in the quality of services offered to visitors. Moreover, the park's proximity to the city of Kathmandu has led to encroachment and illegal settlements within its boundaries, which can negatively impact its ecological and cultural significance.

The Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park faces both challenges and opportunities for sustainable development and conservation. While the park's unique ranges of flora and fauna, as well as its religious and cultural significance, have the potential to attract more tourists, there are several threats to its preservation.

Illegal logging and poaching pose a significant threat to the park's biodiversity and wildlife. The park's proximity to the city of Kathmandu has resulted in encroachment and illegal settlements within its boundaries, which poses a threat to its ecological and cultural values. The park's vulnerability to natural disasters such as landslides and floods can cause severe damage to its infrastructure and pose a threat to visitors' safety. Moreover, the park suffers from inadequate infrastructure, such as poorly maintained trails, lack of proper signage, and limited facilities for visitors. The park lacks sufficient funds and resources to manage and maintain its infrastructure, leading to a decline in the quality of services offered to visitors. However, collaborations with local communities and stakeholders can enhance the park's conservation efforts and promote sustainable development. This partnership can create employment opportunities and promote the use of sustainable practices in the park's management.

Overall, addressing the park's challenges while leveraging its opportunities can promote its sustainable development, preserve its natural and cultural heritage, and contribute to the local economy. The park can seek support from international organizations and donors to secure funding for infrastructure development and conservation projects. It can also invest in technology and innovation to enhance its tourism offerings and develop community-based tourism initiatives to generate income and promote conservation efforts.

Furthermore, the erosion of traditional knowledge and practices threatens the park's cultural and religious significance. The park also faces competition from other popular trekking destinations in Nepal, such as the Everest and Annapurna regions, which can impact its tourist flow. Moreover, political instability and security concerns in Nepal can deter visitors, negatively affecting the park's tourism industry.

To overcome these threats, the park can adopt sustainable practices, such as eco-friendly infrastructure development and waste management to mitigate climate change and pollution. It can also engage with local communities to preserve and promote traditional knowledge and practices. Additionally, the park can differentiate itself from other destinations by promoting its unique cultural and religious significance and developing new tourism products and experiences. Furthermore, the park can work with the government to improve security measures and address security concerns to ensure visitors' safety. By addressing these challenges proactively, the park can safeguard its natural and cultural heritage and sustain its tourism industry.

6.2 Analysis of the Demographic Structure of the Respondents

Based on the age distribution of the respondents, it was observed that the majority fell within the 25-35 age range, accounting for 40 percent of the total, followed by tourists aged 19-25, accounting for 20 percent. These two groups were financially independent and relatively energetic. The proportion of female and male visitors surveyed was balanced, with 48 percent being female and 52 percent being male.

In terms of occupation, most of the respondents were working-class people, accounting for 28 percent, followed by students, accounting for 20 percent. With regard to educational background, the majority of the respondents had college or above education, accounting for 70 percent. In terms of income, the majority of respondents earned between 25000-40000 Rupees and 40000-55000 Rupees a month, accounting for 36 percent and 32 percent, respectively.

Regarding experience, 75.25 percent of tourists visited the park for the first time, 10.5 percent visited a second time, and 14.25 percent had visited at least three times. Therefore, it can be concluded that this sample group was representative, and their satisfaction was of great importance for the development of the park.

6.3 Analysis of the Satisfaction of Tourists on Various Indicators of Travel Experience

Based on the data collected from the respondents' comments on satisfaction with various elements of the construction of the park, this research gives statistics and sequencing on tourists' satisfaction with various elements of the travel experience. Respondents are asked to score various indicators of the tourist destination according to their level of satisfaction. Wherein, 1' represents "very dissatisfied", 2' represents "dissatisfied", 3' represents "common", 4' represents "satisfied", 5' represents "very satisfied"; the results are shown in "Table 1".

Table 1: Satisfaction of Tourists on Various Indicators of Travel Experience

Index	Average	Standard deviation	Rank
Overall Satisfaction in general	3.79	0.85	3
External visitor	3.66	0.86	4
Internal visitor	3.22	1.15	14
Signage clarity	3.36	0.76	10
Preventive measures for safety	3.67	1.14	3
Overall cleanliness	3.42	1.18	8
Density of visitors	5.69	0.96	1
Geographic characteristics	4.12	1.08	2
Customer service approach	3.56	1.21	7
Tourism support services	3.64	0.85	5
Competency of staff	3.23	1.22	13
Staff performance	3.36	1.02	11
Restroom density	3.42	1.22	9
Route navigation	3.26	1.02	12
Visitor information services	3.12	0.75	16
Commodity pricing	3.62	0.99	6
Product components	3.21	1.21	15
Product classifications	3.12	1.05	17

Table 1 provides a summary of the results of a survey that was conducted to assess different aspects of the visitor experience in a particular location. The categories include various factors that can influence visitor satisfaction, such as overall satisfaction, external visitor experience, internal visitor experience, signage clarity, safety measures, cleanliness, the density of visitors, geographic characteristics, customer service approach, tourism support services, staff competency, staff performance, restroom density, route navigation, visitor information services, commodity pricing, product components, and product classification.

The results show that the density of visitors category has the highest average score and is ranked first, indicating that visitors feel comfortable with the number of people in the location. The geographic characteristics category has the second-highest score and is ranked second, suggesting that visitors appreciate the location's physical features, such as natural beauty or unique landmarks. The preventive measures for safety category are also highly rated and are ranked third, implying that visitors feel secure and protected while in the location.

On the other hand, the visitor information services, product components, and product classifications categories have the lowest scores and are ranked at the bottom, suggesting that visitors may have concerns about the quality and availability of information and products in the location.

Overall, the results of the survey suggest that the location is doing well in some areas but may need to focus on improving other aspects of the visitor experience to enhance visitor satisfaction and increase the likelihood of repeat visits. By analyzing the results of the survey, the location can identify areas that require attention and take appropriate measures to improve the visitor experience.

For instance, the low scores in the visitor information services category indicate that the location needs to provide more and better information to visitors about the attractions, events, and services available in the area. This can be

achieved by providing brochures, maps, and other printed materials, as well as online resources such as a website or mobile app.

Similarly, the low scores in the product components and product classification categories suggest that the location needs to review and enhance the range and quality of products and services available to visitors. This can be achieved by partnering with local businesses and vendors to provide high-quality and diverse products that cater to the needs and interests of different types of visitors.

The results also show that the internal visitor experience category has a relatively low score, indicating that there may be room for improvement in the facilities and services provided to internal visitors, such as staff members, volunteers, and contractors. By addressing this issue, the location can create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for all visitors, which can enhance their overall satisfaction and loyalty.

In conclusion, the results of the survey highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the visitor experience in the location and provide valuable insights into the areas that require attention and improvement. By taking proactive measures to enhance the visitor experience, the location can attract and retain more visitors, increase revenue and contribute to the local economy.

6.4 Counter Measures for Improving the Tourist Satisfaction in Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park

Enhancing the Service Quality in the Scenic Area

It includes the following aspects:

- **Providing special training for service personnel:** Regular training sessions should be conducted for workers in scenic areas to improve their appearance, service etiquette, and security response capabilities. Drills and practices should also be regularly carried out to enhance their ability to respond to emergencies.
- **Adding guide interpreters:** To enrich tourists' knowledge about Shivapuri's history and culture, guide interpreters should be added to provide explanations about the tourist destination's cultural resources.

Improving Internal Traffic Management and Infrastructure Construction

It includes the following aspects:

- **Introducing intelligent parking system:** The management can introduce an intelligent parking system to improve the operation efficiency of parking lots and reduce the time used for parking. An emergency warning plan should also be formulated to avoid chaos in parking lots during accidental and emergency events.
- **Strengthening taxi market management and increasing penalties:** To protect the rights and interests of tourists, management personnel should improve the reporting and complaints system and strengthen the training and management of drivers and conductors to improve operational efficiency.
- **Enhancing infrastructure construction:** The scenic area should expand the number of public toilets and signs, as well as select high-quality environment-friendly materials. While renovating the original infrastructure, it is also necessary to add new equipment, such as enhancing the construction of signal towers to increase the guarantee for tourists' safety and communication convenience.

Enriching Tourist Commodities and Enhancing the Soft Power of the Destination Culture

It includes the following aspects:

- **Developing cultural tourism commodities:** To explore the characteristics of Shivapuri's culture, the development of tourist commodities should be closely linked to the cultural resources of the tourist destination. By integrating tangible and intangible commodities, the cultural connotation of tourism commodities can be enriched.
- **Strengthening marketing and promotion:** To increase the destination's influence, innovative marketing methods should be adopted, and multiple channels and media should be used for marketing propagation. Taking

the opportunities of major events and tourism-related activities in Nepal and foreign countries can also help spread and promote the tourist destination.

7. Conclusion

Tourist satisfaction is a crucial factor that can affect a tourist destination's word of mouth and the likelihood of tourists returning to visit in the future. In this study, the tourist destination of Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park was taken as an example to investigate the level of tourist satisfaction, and measures were proposed to improve the indicators with relatively low scores in the survey of tourist satisfaction.

The first suggested measure to improve tourist satisfaction is to enhance the service quality in the scenic area. This can be accomplished by providing regular special training to improve the service personnel's service capabilities. The training should cover appearance, service etiquette, and other important areas that can cultivate the workers' normative practices and correct attitudes. Additionally, the training should focus on strengthening the emphasis on security and workers' ability to respond to emergencies. Drills and practices should be regularly carried out for emergency events.

Another measure to improve the service quality in the scenic area is to add guide interpreters in the scenic area. Shivapuri National Park is a natural tourist destination that has rich cultural connotations. During touring, it is necessary to strengthen the explanation of the tourism resources to enrich tourists' knowledge and make them available to learn about the history and culture while enjoying physical and mental pleasure.

The second set of measures focuses on improving internal traffic management and infrastructure construction. The increasing trend of self-driving tours demands that tourist destinations implement measures to enhance self-driving vehicle management and taxi market management. One suggestion is to introduce an intelligent parking system to improve the operation efficiency of the parking lot and reduce the time used for parking. Additionally, an emergency warning plan should be formulated to avoid chaos in the parking lot during accidental and emergency events.

Another measure is to enhance the management of the taxi market and increase penalties to protect the rights and interests of tourists to the greatest extent possible. Management personnel in the scenic spot should improve relevant reporting and complaints systems and strengthen the training and management of drivers and conductors to improve the operational efficiency of resources.

In addition to improving traffic management, it is also necessary to strengthen infrastructure construction. Tourists are less satisfied with the density of public toilets and the number of signage in the scenic area. Therefore, it is necessary to expand the number of toilets in the scenic area, add the number of signs, and select high-quality environment-friendly materials. While renovating the original infrastructure, it is also necessary to add some new equipment, such as enhancing the construction of signal towers to increase the guarantee of tourists' safety and communication convenience. The ticket-checking system can also be upgraded to an electronic ticket-checking system to improve the efficiency of checking tickets.

The third set of measures focuses on enriching tourist commodities and enhancing the soft power of the destination culture. The cultural connotation of tourism commodities can be enriched, and the grade of commodities can be improved by paying attention to the development of cultural resources and infusing the culture into the commodities to explore the characteristics of the commodities. Through the combination of tangible commodities and intangible commodities, the Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park can be introduced while introducing tourist commodities to the market.

Overall, the measures proposed in this study can provide a reference for the application and promotion of satisfaction research on other related tourist destinations. Tourist destinations can increase the number of visitors by enhancing tourist satisfaction.

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