

TOURISTS INCONVENIENCES AS THE DETERMINANT OF AFFECTIVE IMAGE: A STUDY BASED ON TOURISTS' INSIGHTS

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Abstract

With increasing tourists' distinct motives, the tourism industry is at the pinnacle to enhance their offerings and to position its destinations in the competitive outset. Destination branding has been considered as the most appropriate approach by the destination marketers to achieve the frontiers and destination image plays a vital role in it. Affective image being the integral aspect of image studies has high relevance in understanding tourists' behavior. In such context, this empirical study intended to understand the impact of tourists' inconveniences in the destination on its affective image. Intensive literature found the lack of evidence on this perspective and thereby constitute as the primary objective of the research. A Structured questionnaire was designed after iterations and pilot study and floated to 570 tourists. Based on the eligible responses, 448 sample size was fixed to perform the analysis. The questionnaire contained necessary statements measuring the inconveniences of tourists and the affective image. Exploratory Factor Analysis of SPSS was used as the data reduction technique, Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modeling of AMOS were used for confirming the existence of individual factor models and for final model that depicted the objective of the study, respectively. Model fit was found and the outcomes indicated that there was influence of inconveniences faced by tourists on the affective image of the destination. Implications were drawn based on the research findings.

Keywords: *Destination, Affective Image, Tourists, Inconveniences, SEM*

Introduction

The tourism industry, otherwise known as the travel industry, has been considered as one of the most vibrant and lucrative industries that contribute to the growth and development of economies (Shankar, 2019). This industry, perhaps the sector with faster growth, syncs with other businesses such as hotel, hospitality, and transport etc. across the globe. Many countries are bestowed with intensive tourism resources that facilitate the economy to attract people from other countries on distinct perspectives such as to invest on the businesses, consuming the tourism resources through travel, conceiving new avenues of businesses, and even generating employment opportunities. In Indian context, the country has rich heritage, cultural, natural, and other tourism attractions, that attract diverse tourists and prospects. According to Indian Tourism and Hospitality Industry Report 2020, India has witnessed 10.89 million of Foreign Tourists Arrivals in 2019 and found as the 3rd largest country on investments on Travel and Tourism (US\$ 45.7 billion in 2018). India has also been considered as the digitally upscaled or elevated nation with high end digital tools that supports all sorts of tourists' requirements. With growing business competition in global outset, the tourism destinations in India not only satisfy the diverse tourists' motives but also conceive a stringent image and position itself as an Incredible India in the World Tourism Market. Though there are many initiatives by Government, Marketing strategies and executions by destination marketers and contribution of research outcomes by academics, the need for further studies in tourism arena, marketing and branding frameworks, and policies or investments at Government and Corporate level exist. However, any significant move towards the betterment of the industry requires the ultimate understanding of tourists and their behavior. There are many research works on branding destinations, tourists behavior, sustainability of resources etc, but this research work is quite narrowed to understand the tourists inconveniences in the tourism destinations on a notion that the experience acquired in a location or place would conceive a thought or perception about it.

Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives of the study.

- To understand whether tourists' inconveniences have impact on their perceived affective image of the destination.
- To provide suggestions to the marketers and policy making authorities on branding the destination based on the research outcomes.

Review of Literature

Destination image studies has been considered as the most researched arenas of marketing in tourism outset (Fu, Ye & Xiang, 2016 – cited by Styliadis, Shani & Belhassen, 2017). Destination image plays a critical role in not only branding the destinations but also influences tourists satisfaction and loyalty (Ekinici, 2003 & Chiu, Zeng & Cheng, 2016). It also acts as the antecedent of tourists' pre/post purchase decisions and travel behavior (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). According to Lawson and Baud Bovy (1977), destination image is *"the expression of all objective knowledge, impressions, prejudice, imaginations, and emotional thoughts an individual or group might have of a particular place"*. The above definition is complete with all the aspects that, an individual perceives an image of the destination based on his knowledge or belief about the destination and its attributes, feelings and emotions associated towards the place, the picturization or the imagery of the tourism places and the thought of fluffiness to serve motives of wide tourists segments. However, researchers funneled down the destination image in two perspectives such as cognitive and affective. Bosque and Martin (2008) indicated the two elements of destination image viz: cognitive and affective. Cognitive image is all about the basic belief or the knowledge that exists in one's mind, tourists in this context) whereas affective image is the feelings or emotional aspects associated with the tourism destinations (Shani & Wang, 2011). Many studies exist on the destination image arena considering both cognitive and affective images, but some studies emphasized that affective image as the most influential component in destination evaluations (Sahin & Baloglu, 2011). Affective image is more associated to the tourists emotional responses to a place or destination (Kim & Richardson, 2003). Considering affective image of the destinations perceived by tourists is critical in understanding tourists attitude and behavior (Hosany, 2012). A study by Papadimitriou, Apostolopoulou, and Kaplanidou (2015) stated that affective image had significant influence on not only the destinations holistic image but also on the tourists behavior. Affective image carries due importance because it is a psychological response that represents tourists preferences towards an entity (Lee, 2009). Accordingly, a model based study revealed that cognitive and affective image had significant influence on tourists motivation (Shankar, 2020). However, Beerli and Martin (2004) inferred that overall image of the destinations were derived from the blend of cognitive and affective components. Also, a study by Bosque and Martin (2008) inferred that tourists satisfaction was derived from the cognitive-affective perceptions. Hence, destination image carries due importance for researching because it plays various roles in tourist behavior and for destination branding process. Since this study focuses on the affective image aspects, the literary evidence on this perspective have alone

been derived. Baloglu, Henthorne and Sahin (2014) developed an integrated model on tourists' behavior and in which, they found that affective image was stronger in predicting the overall image of the destination among the first-time visitors. Accordingly, the destination image tends to have positive impact on destination relationship and so as tourists behavior (Chen & Phou, 2013). The study further denoted that affective outcomes acted as the central link between cognitive knowledge and behavioral outcomes (Chen & Phou, 2013). On the view of literature, affective image of the destination has been considered as a compelling factor on tourists' behavior. Though there are diverse set of studies on distinct views of affective image, a void could be seen or in other words, the need for further distinct approaches or perspectives of affective image that benefit destination branding or on understating tourists behavior is visible. Eventually, the authors Tasci and Gartner (2007) pointed out that inadequate research evidence that were seen in literature based on the influence of destination image on tourists behavior mainly during their visits. This study focuses on such point and intended to understand whether the inconveniences tourists face in the destination impact the affect image. There were research studies related to tourists constrains. For example, a research study that pointed out the relationship between tourists constrains (in terms of their travel) and destination image (Chen, Chen & Okumus, 2012). However, there were no studies found constituting to the inconveniences or the discomforts confronted by tourists in the destination and how did it affect the perceived destination image and thereby named as the research gap.

Research Methodology

Type of Research: This study was based on tourists' insights and hence empirical approach had been employed.

Sample Framework, Type, and Size: Sample frame consisted of tourists who visited the tourism destinations in Coimbatore - a district of Tamil Nadu. Convenient sampling technique was chosen. Sample size was rounded to 448 from 570 (illegible responses were removed).

Data Collection Tools and Details: The data was acquired through a structured questionnaire that consisted of statements measuring the tourists' inconveniences and affective image through Likert 5-point Scale. Pilot study was conducted and resulted in listing out the top 10 most reported inconveniences in the destination. Affective image constructs were finalized based on the literature.

Data Analysis Tools: Factor Analysis of SPSS and Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modeling of AMOS were employed for

achieving the objectives.

Research Hypothesis: There is significant impact of tourists' inconveniences on perceived affective image.

Analysis and Results

Since the objective of this study was to understand the impact of tourists inconveniences on their perceived affective image of the destination, three stage analysis had been adopted. However, the demographic characteristics of the tourists engaged in this research have been excluded. First, factor analysis was performed on figuring out the high loading variables in the factors (Tourists inconveniences and Affective Image). Second, individual Confirmatory Factor Analysis was performed to confirm the existence of individual model in each factor and at last, structural equation modeling was worked on to achieve the objective.

Factor Analysis (FA)

Factor analysis was employed as a data reduction technique. Varimax Rotation with Kaiser Normalization was chosen as the steps in performing the analysis. Values less than 0.5 were suppressed. Factor analysis on tourists inconvenience resulted that the statements such as lacks frequent transport modes, nuisances, costly food and accommodation, unhygienic places and facilities, and lack of information centers had the high loading values 0.875, 0.814, 0.804, 0.789 and 0.774, respectively. The loading values corresponding to the inconveniences statements less than 0.0774 were removed. These constructs were grouped together and named as Tourists inconveniences for the further analysis. Similarly, factor analysis on affective image resulted with the measurements such as sparse, quiet, relaxing, and pretty and their high loading values 0.799, 0.797, 0.769 and 0.766, respectively. Hence then, these constructs were combined and represented as affective image.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

This technique was employed to confirm the model presence in each factor to proceed for the structural modelling. Based on the factor analysis results, the derived constructs of tourists inconvenience and affective image were employed on the CFA. 5 constructs of the tourists' inconveniences were diagrammed on AMOS to test the model fit adequacy values. Similarly, 4 constructs of affective image derived from the FA were diagrammed individually. The following Table 1 represents required CFA Model Fit values and Model Fit values of individual CFAs.

Table 1: Model Fit Values Required and Acquired for Factors

Components	GFI	AGFI	CFI	NFI	TLI	CMIN/df	RMSEA
Acceptable Values	Close to 1					Less than 5	Less than 0.08
F1	0.97	0.96	0.98	0.97	0.96	2	0.04
F2	0.99	0.98	0.99	0.96	0.99	1.32	0.01

(Note: F1 represents the tourists inconvenience, F2 represents affective image, RMSEA - Root Mean Square of Error Approximation, GFI - Goodness of Fit Index, AGFI - Adjusted Goodness of Fit, CFI - Comparative Fit Index, TLI - Tucker-Lewis Index, NFI - Normed Fir Index and CMIN/df - Chi Square value divided by Degrees of Freedom)

It is important to note that the acceptable values listed in Table 1 also applies to SEM Analysis. From the Table 1, it has been found that the factors that correspond to the tourists’ inconveniences and affective image have the required model fit values. During the iterations, covariances were drawn between the errors of nuisance and costly food and accommodations in tourists’ inconveniences. Similarly, a covariance line was drawn between the errors of constructs – pretty and relaxing of affective image. The covariance lines were drawn to achieve the model fit values based on their M.I values.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

SEM integrates the individual CFAs found, tests the model, and shows the existence of relationship between the factors derived after the stage 1 and 2 of analysis. The following Fig. 1 depicts the SEM diagram of the influence of tourists’ inconveniences on perceived affective image.

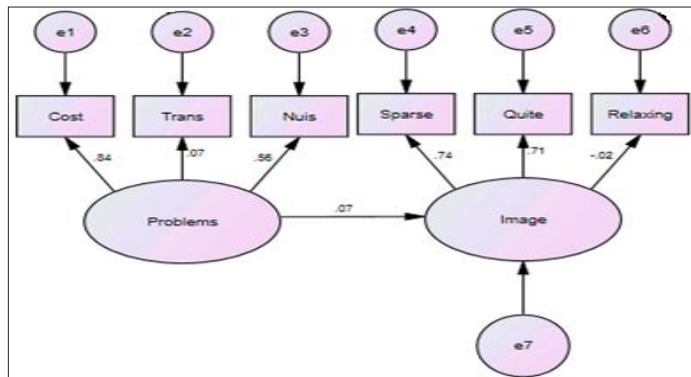


Fig. 1: SEM Model – Impact of Tourists Inconveniences on Affective Image

In the first iteration, the individual models confirmed from CFA were employed structurally (based on the objective) and found that the model did not have adequate fit values. Hence the constructs such as unhygienic places and facilities and lack of information of tourists inconveniences and the construct pretty of affective image were removed based on their loading and reliability values. In the second iteration, the constructs such as costly food and accommodation, lack transport frequency, and nuisance of tourists inconveniences and constructs such as sparse, quite and relaxing of the affective image were diagrammed with their error variables (Fig. 1). Being the dependent factor, an error variable for Image was included for the analysis. The results of the model fit components revealed that $GFI = 0.98 \approx 1$, $AGFI = 0.95 \approx 1$, $CFI = 0.95 \approx 1$, $NFI = 0.91 \approx 1$, $TLI = 0.89 \approx 1$, $CMIN/df = 3.42 < 5$, and $RMSEA = 0.07 < 0.08$. Thus, the values fall under the acceptable range and the model derived has the perfect Incremental fit (CFI, IFI, AGFI) Absolute fit (RMSEA, GFI) and Parsimonious fit (Chisq/df). The significance value between the tourists' inconveniences and affective image is $0.04 < 0.05$ and hence, the hypothesis - there is significant impact of tourists inconveniences on the affective image is accepted.

Managerial Implications

The primary objective of this research papers was to understand whether the inconveniences faced by tourists in the destinations significantly impact the affective image of the destination. This objective has been achieved from the analysis and found the impact. However, the secondary objective is to draw suggestions based on the research outcomes. With the given competitive scenario in the tourism industry, destination marketers execute fierce lucrative marketing strategies to position their destinations and so as to attract tourists' inflow. Destination branding has been considered as the most relevant paradigm in promoting and positioning their destinations. However, it is important to understand that designing and branding the destinations using the identifiable elements that are associated with the destinations or represents the image of the destinations stay in the tourists and prospects mind. There is enough evidence in the literature that, cognitive image interns impact the affective image and so as the tourists' behavior (Chen & Phou, 2013). This research has found that the issues or the discomforts tourists face in the destinations have impact on the affective image of the destinations. This is a key point for the marketers to look in as to what are the major visible issues or the mismatch between tourists' expectations and destinations facilities, to deliver memorable tourism experience. However, the policy making authorities or the local bodies who have adequacy to increase the standard of facilities in the destinations would also pave for tourists betterment. It is decisive to

consider the tourists discomforts because it tends to affect the destinations image. Accordingly, perceived image of the destination impact tourists recommending and revisiting intentions (Lertputtarak, 2012 & Mohamad, Abdullah & Mokhlis, 2012). Hence it is suggested for the marketers to increase the facilities standard to decrease the tourists inconvenience in the destinations. Frequent feedbacks from the tourists would help the destination marketers to track the tourists experience in the destinations and also to upscale the attraction attributes. Some of the reported inconveniences are lack of information centers that provide the necessary information to the tourists, frequent transport modes and facilities, nuisance caused by others in the destinations, costly food and accommodation facilities in the destinations and unhygienic places and facilities including public toilets. Colliding with the public authorities, the marketers could initiate various teams or the squads to track and maintain the public facilities effectively. Creating awareness among the local stakeholders, residents and other of the destinations about the cleanliness of public facilities would not only better the tourists experience but also to contribute to destinations sustainability.

Conclusion

Destination branding, perhaps the evolving concept, has huge potential to market the tourism destinations and its attractions in the global tourism industry and facilitate the thereof to sustain the incredible tourism resources. Though this proportion of study intends to understand the impact of tourists inconveniences on affective image technically, the suggestions drawn based on the results would facilitate the marketers in executing the branding process. Specifically, the affective image is an external aspect of touring – where tourists gain images about the destination during their consumption of tourism attributes. These attributes could add intangible benefit to the brand power of the destinations. However, when tourists face inconvenience in the destinations, they tend to perceive an inappropriate image despite of its existence. For example, a destination might have a sparse image but when a tourist experience an inconvenience of limited transport facility or find a crowded or nuisance commute, the probability of perceiving the positive image is quite lesser. Hence, this research work has indicated the need for the marketers and policy authorities to provide due predominance to the tourists inconvenience because the results shows that the inconveniences impact the image of the destinations.

Limitation and Scope of the Study

The inferences drawn in this research paper is based on the tourists' insights (data collected from the 448 tourists). Increasing the sample size

and conducting the research on other geographic unit would derive varied results. Also, it is important to note that the constructs measuring the factors of the final model used here are based on the iterations of Factor Analysis and Confirmatory Factor Analysis. Replicating the same mode elsewhere would have significant differences in the result values. Since the tourism industry is vibrant, any modifications in the executed research model or performing the same study on other approaches would produce more values to industry's betterment. Also, the literature in tourism requires more clear-cut evidence and multi-approach studies for evolution of branding theories with reference to tourism destinations. Thus, this conceives the scope for further research.

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