
IMPACT OF EXPERIENTIAL TOUR DYNAMICS ON TOURISTS' SATISFACTION

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Abstract

Tourists' trip experience and tourist satisfaction are frequently explored in tourism studies. The trip experience is an amalgamation of all the experiences that tourists encounter that underpins tourists' satisfaction. Our research examines the connection between trip experiences and overall tourist satisfaction among tourists in India. For this purpose, an on-site survey was conducted at three World heritage sites and seven hotels in New Delhi, soliciting 309 responses from tourists. The data from the sample was analyzed in two steps. First, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed; afterward, multiple regression analysis was done to determine the relative effect of trip experience dimensions on overall satisfaction. The results indicated that five dimensions (trip excitement, hotel choice, tour guide, tour leader, and welcoming) significantly impacted overall tourist satisfaction.

Keywords: *Tour Operators, Tourist Satisfaction, Trip Experience, Exploratory Factor Analysis, Multiple Regression*

Introduction

Tourism is a prime source of revenue that generates employment for many countries worldwide. A substantial market share of the international economy is directly through tourism (Santa-Cruz & López-Guzmán, 2017).

Investment in the tourism sector is crucial for the country's economic growth, which benefits from both inbound and domestic tourist activities. Therefore, Tourism is served by employing good management practices, eliciting positive publicity, and revisiting intention (Fang et al., 2020).

Promoting tourism services is an important job for tour operators as they are called the “brains behind the vacation” as they leverage their expertise and resources. Additionally, tour operators function as a vital link between tourists and tourism service providers. According to Zhang et al. (2022), tour operators know tourists' expectations. Their expertise can offer quality products and services that shape a superior tourist experience, ultimately leading to tourist satisfaction (Taheri et al., 2019). The multidimensionality of what constitutes a ‘trip experience’ eludes definition (Chen & Rahman, 2018) and can include experiences with tour guides, tour operators, trip itinerary, hotel stay, and entertainment activities (Marin-Pantelescu et al., 2019).

Similarly, there is little agreement on factors influencing tourist satisfaction (Marinao, 2018), although tourist behavioural aspects and motivations have been explored by several studies (Bayih & Singh, 2020; Osman et al., 2020; Srivastava, 2023; Srivastava & Shandilya, 2023), and various attributes of tourist satisfaction are discussed in tourism literature. Tourist satisfaction is a byproduct of the experiences the tourists have during a trip (Kachwala & Pai, 2022). There is, however, a clear focus on tour operators, tour guides, and travel agencies as important stakeholders in ensuring tourist satisfaction (Marin-Pantelescu et al., 2019).

Numerous studies investigated the role of tourist engagement, experiences, and trip encounters in tourist satisfaction. Alrawadieh et al. (2019), examined the connection between tourist engagement and satisfaction. Similar to this pattern, Cajiao et al. (2022), discovered a favorable link between travel experience and motivation. Researchers Wu and Li (2017), looked into how the socio-demographic profile of tourists affected their satisfaction. At the same time, the authenticity of heritage sites was also identified as a factor influencing visitor satisfaction by Domínguez-Quintero et al. (2020). Trip experiences as a mediating variable of tourist satisfaction were explored in various studies (Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Medina-Viruel et al., 2019; Cajiao et al., 2022). In contrast, Domínguez-Quintero et al. (2021), found no relationship between trip experience and satisfaction.

Thus, while tourist satisfaction has been positively linked to tourist engagement, tourist demographic profile, site authenticity, and destination loyalty, there appears to be less in its relationship with the trip experience

itself. As seen above, while some studies find no relationship between trip experience and trip satisfaction, Medina-Viruel et al. (2019) research has related trip experience to motivation. Yet, others have explored its mediating role against the backdrop of such lack of research agreement and considering the multidimensionality of the 'trip experience,' especially in the Indian context. As a result, this study investigates the trip experience as a multidimensional construct and then examines the connection between the diverse constituents of Delhi tourists' trip experience and overall satisfaction. The study explores the dimensions of trip experience and overall satisfaction separately. Then, it aims to explore the relationship between the two for all those tourists who have booked their Delhi trip through a travel agent. The study will help us to understand the trip experience's impact on the tourists' overall satisfaction. The study's implications would be useful for the tourism intermediaries to focus on the tourist trip experience. This would affect the services tour operators provide tourists to satisfy them.

Literature Review

Dimensions of Tourist Satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction is referred to as an experience that induces positive feelings (Oliver, 1993), a collective assessment of a tourist's individual experience (Lee et al., 2012; Chen-Yi, 2016), and a pleasurable sense of well-being (Zhou et al., 2023). Tourist satisfaction indicates effective destination management and is evident in increased destination popularity and tourist revisit intention (Fang et al., 2020). The satisfied tourists will most likely suggest it to others and share it on social media (Hollebeek & Rather, 2019; Sthapit et al., 2019). As an aspect of tourism management, pricing tourist products and services impacts tourist satisfaction (Su et al., 2022).

Studies also suggest that tourists who have experienced overall satisfaction promote the destination by attracting other potential tourists. In contrast, poor tourism service quality leads to dissatisfaction and losses to the service providers (Hassan & Shahnewaz, 2014). Long-lasting and memorable tourist experiences significantly impact revisiting destinations (Loncaric et al., 2019; Barnes et al., 2020). Besides being loyal customers, satisfied tourists act as destination brand ambassadors by attracting potential tourists (Filosofova & Apostolov, 2017; Alexander et al., 2020).

Customer loyalty as a marketing strategy to increase customer base is widely discussed in the tourism literature. Furthermore, satisfied travellers through positive word of mouth increase the customer base by bringing in

their contacts, friends, and relatives. Customer loyalty is discussed in tourist literature as “destination loyalty” (Valverde-Roda et al., 2022). Customers’ recommendations (Destination Loyalty) and the resale quality of tourism as a product (visit) are what drive revenue for the travel and tourism sector (Kachwala & Pai, 2022).

Digital Technology and Tourist Satisfaction

Tourism has benefited from digital technology when the accessibility of a destination is concerned (Gračan et al., 2021). Technological advancements have shaped tourist experiences to a new level (Dieck & Jung, 2018). The tourism service providers have benefited by conducting their businesses with ease. They can reach a broader potential tourist market (Ray, 2022) and as stated by Garau (2017), UNESCO and WTO have directed service providers to respond to the tourist demands of digital technology. The role of technology in travel planning is as high as ever. Tourists harness such technology’s potential in planning journeys, entertainment, and sharing tourist experiences on social media. Technological advancements affect tourist satisfaction and promote the destination (Mrsic et al., 2020) by creating long-term memory to be shared in real-time (Pai et al., 2020). The research conducted by Gračan, Zadel and Pavlović (2021) examines how modern technology related to intelligent maps, transport booking, and sharing of experiences can contribute to tourist satisfaction.

The internet pushed the global online travel agent (OTA) market to \$744.7 billion in 2019, driven by significant OTAs, including TripAdvisor, Expedia, Yelp, etc. India has the second-largest Internet users globally, and its impact can be seen in the growing use of the internet in the travel segment (Basuroy, 2022). Travel was once private and based on trust; tourists would share their experiences with friends and acquaintances. However, the internet has converted such experiences into a global database as travelers from anywhere in the world can access the database. Further, the process enables users to record and share experiences online (Selim et al., 2022). Oliveira, Araujo, and Tam’s (2020), research concluded that posting online content about one’s travel is done for fun and excitement. This aims to assist others in making decisions about travel and the perception other people make about them.

Tourist Satisfaction: Role of Tour Operators

Tour operators take a prominent part in establishing the brand image of the destination by sharing positive site-related information with travellers. The tour operators offer services they purchase in bulk and sell them as a

well-organized tour (Marin-Pantelescu et al., 2019). Tour operators act as intermediaries, bridging buyers and sellers. A high level of interaction occurs between the tour operators and the tourist, broadening the destination's knowledge. Tourists get a hassle-free, well-planned tour, saving travellers time and money (Page & Connell, 2020). The alliance between tour operators with hotels, bus operators, food outlets, retail outlets, sites, and guides provides the best possible services to tourists (Devaraja & Deepak, 2018). Tour operators are essential tourism stakeholders who play a major role in tourist satisfaction. They collect tourist feedback for better trip planning and successful destination management. Continuous improvements in travel operations can enhance tourist experience and satisfaction (Cetin, 2020).

The tour guide and leader influence the tourist's trip experience as they come in close contact with the tourists. Tourist satisfaction is based on the assessment of their entire tour, starting from the itinerary provided to the hotel stay and meal, tour operators' evaluation based on the explanation and interest generated, followed by an overall personal experience of the group tours (Weng et al., 2020). A study by Cetin and Yarkan (2017), has identified specific characteristics that should be possessed by a tour guide in order to influence the tour packages' success. They play a big part in differentiating their competitors and heavily contribute to selling the next trip (Syakier & Hanafiah, 2022). Their professional behaviour is critical for exceeding tourist expectations and adding to the tour's success.

A strong collaboration between tour guides and operators helps create fantastic tourist experiences and enhances the destination's image. Therefore, the tour operators have been called "cultural mediators" (Weiler & Yu, 2007; Huang et al., 2010; Weiler & Black, 2021). Tourists want to experience authentic local lifestyles, customs, and culture with the help of tour leaders and guides (Syakier & Hanafiah, 2022), which can only be translated at the tourist surroundings.

Tourist Satisfaction: Local Culture, Food, and Hospitality

Tourists visiting heritage sites and experiencing history are drawn to cultural heritage, festivals, and events (Io, 2019). The tourist heritage experience must include performance arts like live shows of dance, music, and plays that portray the heritage (Zhang et al., 2020). Similarly, shopping is a popular tourist activity, and accessibility to these stores is an important component of the tourism experience (Mawufemor et al., 2019) hence, tour operators often include shopping on their itineraries (Fairhurst et al., 2007;

Kong & Chang, 2016). Further, it contributes to local communities' economic uplift and promotes local products (Kaur et al., 2016).

Buying souvenirs, keepsakes, and mementos is a practice associated with tourist travel, making the trip a tangible experience that can be gifted to others or extended to one's memory (Wilkins, 2011; Chang et al., 2022). Tourist experience is not limited to the products but includes the services delivered by the vendors (Mawufemor et al., 2019). Hotel stay is important in framing the tourist experience (Elghani, 2012; Lee & Chhabra, 2015; Pourabedin et al., 2022). A hotel stay creates a lasting image in the guest's mind as many services are provided during the guest's stay (Ugwuanyi et al., 2021). Fuentes-Moraleda et al. (2020), recommended that the importance of food in the travel experience should be noticed.

Hotels provide unique heritage experiences regarding accommodation, service, and dining facilities. They have a prominent role in establishing a brand image by sharing positive destination-related information with tourists, leading to understanding the tourist experience (Elghani, 2012). A research study by Yameen (2013), concluded that the "three P's" affected tourist satisfaction. These are i) People - human efforts providing the services; ii) Physical evidence- i.e., the environment in which interaction and delivery of service occur; iii) Process: the service delivery procedure. Hotels are crucial in helping frame the tourist experience (Lee & Chhabra, 2015; Pourabedin et al., 2022; Srivastava et al., 2023).

Gastronomic motivations and culinary experiences influence the value perceived mainly in historical and cultural destinations, thus important for tourist satisfaction. Mora et al. (2021), refers to gastronomy as a 'foundational pillar' of tourism, influencing satisfaction and loyalty to the destination. Tangible and intangible cultural experiences are significant for the tourist. The intangible cultural heritage by research studies is divided into "extrinsic attributes" and "intrinsic attributes". Live performances have extrinsic attributes (Lee et al., 2016; Park & Petrick, 2016), while performing arts and artistic craftsmanship have intrinsic attributes (Bergadaa & Lorey, 2015). They enhance the tourist experience and enjoyment, thus making it more popular (Park & Petrick, 2016; Zhang et al., 2020).

Trip Experiences and Tourist Satisfaction

Swarbrooke (2001), asserts that the various dimensions of tourist trip experience are formed based on travel. As Murphy, Pritchard, and Smith (2000) recommended, these dimensions as physical and emotional, similar

to an earlier study by Carbone and Haeckel (1994), only worded differently as “Mechanic” and “Humanic”. The tangible aspects of the trip are the physical dimensions, which include welcoming the tourist, transportation, and accommodation (Cetin & Bilgihan, 2015; Liao & Chuang, 2020), places of interest (Ghose & Johann, 2019), tour leader role (Yen et al., 2018, Teng & Tsai, 2020), tour guide (Huang et al., 2010; Cetin & Yarcana, 2017; Weiler & Black, 2021), trip excitement (Park & Petrick, 2016; Io, 2019; Zhang et al., 2020). Tourists tend to build upon each of such experiences that result in the actual experiences. The intangible or emotional dimensions of the tourist experience include feeling relaxed, engaging in adventure activities, and visiting other attractions (Arnould & Price, 1993; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Kim et al., 2012).

There is still a debate about what makes up the tourism experiences typology, even though several research studies have been on the characteristics of tourist experiences (Kim et al., 2012; Cetin & Bilgihan, 2015; Konstantakis et al., 2020). The trip experience comprises a destination’s infrastructure, accessibility, accommodation, and places of interest. However, according to the review of the literature, the overall satisfaction of the trip has been studied only by the duration of the trip and mode of travel (Morris & Guerra, 2015; De Vos, 2017; Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Ghose & Johann, 2019). The literature review demonstrates extensive work on the trip experience and overall tourist satisfaction; however, a gap remains in recognizing the connection between the trip experience and overall tourist satisfaction. This research study has provided a framework to understand the connection between trip experience and tourists’ overall satisfaction for tourists visiting Delhi booked through tour operators (Fig. 1). Based on the research studies discussed above, the following hypothesis was established:

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between the trip experience and overall tourist satisfaction.

H_a : There is a significant relationship between the trip experience and overall tourist satisfaction.

The capital city of India, Delhi, was chosen as the study area. There are three World Heritage Sites, which all fall under the cultural heritage category. The history of Delhi goes back to the Mahabharata times, according to Indian mythology. At the same time, the documented history dates back to the 12th century when the Delhi Sultanate was prominent. Thus, proving to be a capital city for many rulers in the past (Delhi Tourism, 2022). In 2019, Delhi International Airport received the maximum number of tourists compared to

all the other international airports in India (Government of India, 2020). In March 2020, Delhi Airport topped tourist arrivals even under an e-Tourist Visa. Delhi is in fourth place for foreign tourist arrivals and thirteenth for domestic tourist arrivals. There was a growth of 8.86% in foreign tourists and 25.26% in domestic tourists from 2018 to 2019 (Government of India, 2020).

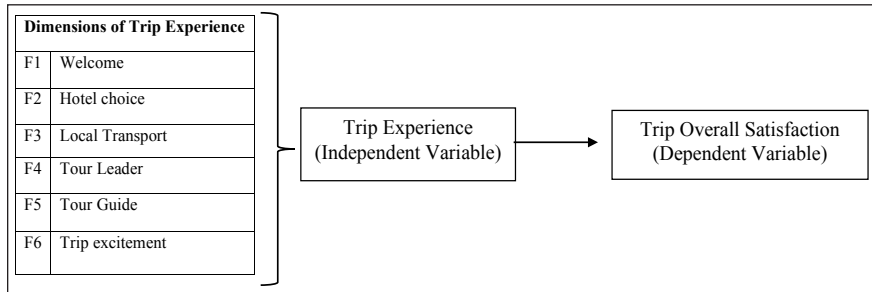


Fig. 1: Proposed Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

The data was gathered using a questionnaire that the participants administered. To accomplish the study's objective, quantitative methodology was used. The acquired data was carefully analyzed using statistical tests to investigate the link between the two variables. The questionnaire comprised two dimensions, one for trip experience and the other for overall tourist satisfaction, that was compiled from an extensive literature review. A questionnaire capturing the trip experience constructs, overall satisfaction constructs, and demographic profiles of respondents was circulated among the tourists. The data analysis was conducted in two steps. A similar process is followed by a study by Chi and Qu (2009). The initial step was to validate the variables for exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to identify the underlying dimensions of a trip experience (Huete-Alcocer et al., 2019). Followed by a multiple regression analysis using SPSS software to predict traveler's overall satisfaction based on six factors derived from the literature study and EFA (Chi & Qu, 2009).

Dimensions of Trip Experience and Overall Satisfaction

A detailed literature review and unstructured discussions with a few tour operators generated a complete list of trip experience and tourist satisfaction dimensions. While conducting the literature review, characteristics of trip

experience and tourist satisfaction were recorded and subsequently compiled into questionnaires that three senior tourism faculty members reviewed. The trip experience dimensions included sixteen items and the overall tourist satisfaction list included five.

After consulting the literature and talking to the experts, the six-trip experience dimensions selected within each attribute varied greatly to reflect all the appropriate qualities. The first dimension was welcoming, which included receiving at the airport or station and transferring services to the hotel. The hotel choice was the second dimension that covered four features: room comfort, cleanliness and hygiene, food variety, and exposure to new food. The third dimension of local transport covered the vehicle's overall state and seat comfort.

Tour leader was the fourth dimension that included professional knowledge and interaction with tourists. Knowledge about the sites and communication skills were evaluated under the fifth head of the tour guides. The last dimension, trip excitement, was assessed under engagement, live shows, entertainment, and shopping. The overall tourist satisfaction determinants were evaluated under satisfaction with the trip, recommendations to others, social media posts, money spent, and repeat visits. The questionnaire directed respondents to evaluate tourist trip experience and satisfaction variables on a Likert scale of one to five.

A pilot test of the research instrument was conducted to confirm its reliability and internal consistency, with data collected from thirty tourists. An internal reliability test revealed Cronbach's Alpha values of (0.823) for sixteen 'trip experience' items, and a score of (0.837) was observed for five items used for overall satisfaction. A score of 0.7 value, according to Nunnally and Bernstein (2010), is considered an acceptable value for instrument reliability.

A structured questionnaire was used to gather the data. The participants administered the questionnaire, which is often a practice in tourism research (Hassan & Shahnewaz, 2014). The respondents were those tourists who had booked through a tour operator and visited Delhi's three heritage sites. Over 450 questionnaires were distributed to tourists, 250 at the three World Heritage Sites of Delhi: Red Fort, Humayun's Tomb, and Qutb Minar and its monuments, and the remaining 200 questionnaires were distributed across the seven hotels. These hotels were randomly selected from those located in the central part of New Delhi.

The final questionnaire was distributed after conducting a pilot test on thirty hotel respondents (Hassan & Shahnewaz, 2014). The pilot test's result helped to modify the final questionnaire by eliminating and rephrasing the questions the respondents needed help answering due to a lack of knowledge during their travel. A total of five questions were removed from the final questionnaire. Data was collected between April-December 2019 and January 2020 using convenience sampling. Three hundred nine were usable questionnaires (180 from the hotels and 129 from the sites) out of 450 questionnaires distributed.

Results

The tourist's demographic profile is shown in Table 1. This shows a 68.67% response rate. As seen in Table 1 below, a major chunk of respondents (49%) fell in the 36-55 years category, while (42%) belonged to 16-35 years. A higher percentage were male respondents, with 67%.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

| Background | Categories | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------|--|-----------|------------|
| Type of Tour Package | | | |
| | Group Tour Package | 241 | 78 |
| | Customized Tour Package | 68 | 22 |
| Age | | | |
| | 16-35 years | 131 | 42 |
| | 36-55 years | 153 | 49 |
| | Above 55 years | 25 | 9 |
| Gender | | | |
| | Female | 102 | 33 |
| | Male | 207 | 67 |
| Nationality | | | |
| | Indian | 215 | 70 |
| | Foreigner | 94 | 30 |
| Occupation | | | |
| | Student | 108 | 35 |
| | Employed/Self-Employed/ Working at home | 179 | 58 |
| | Retired | 22 | 7 |

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Factor analysis summarizes the observed data for a straightforward interpretation of relationships (Yong & Pearce, 2013). By exploring the data set, EFA reduces variables into small factors (Child, 2006). To confirm the predetermined dimensions of a trip experience and validate the variables for further analysis, the Principal Axis method of factor analysis was used as recommended by Chi and Qu (2009) and Huete-Alcocer, López-Ruiz and Grigorescu (2019). For this purpose, the data set was closely examined, and outliers were removed before analysis.

Bartlett's test of sphericity was conducted to establish the correlations among the variables. The analysis revealed a significant Bartlett's score of .000 and a value of the KMO-MSA (0.9), considered suitable for factor analysis. Eigenvalues, variance percentage, communality, and factor loading significance determine the factors' extraction criteria. An eigenvalue of 1 or more was considered significant for extracting the elements. The total variance of 60% was deemed substantial to ensure the significance of derived factors, as recommended by Chi and Qu (2009). A total of six factors were generated with eigenvalues above 1.0, explaining an aggregate variance of 62.3% (see Table 2).

The value of commonalities was observed to be of a significant range (0.50 to 0.92), thereby confirming the variance in each of the six common factors computed together. In addition, the value of 16-factor loadings was observed to be in the significant range between (0.45 to 0.84) $>$ 0.35, considered an acceptable threshold for statistical significance. Thus, sixteen variables loaded significantly on six dimensions proposed in the study framework (welcoming, hotel choice, local transport, tour leader, tour guide, and trip excitement). The reliability test score, Cronbach's Alphas value for the six factors of the model, extended from (0.84 to 0.90) $>$ 0.70, a score considered to be of acceptable value (Nunnally, 1978).

Multiple Regression Analysis

The subsequent step was to ascertain whether the identified dimensions of the trip experience had any influence on overall tourist satisfaction. It was hypothesized that there is no significant relationship between the trip experience and overall tourist satisfaction. Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA) was carried out to verify this hypothesis and explore the relative significance of each dimension of the trip experience contributing to the tourists' overall satisfaction.

Table 2: Dimensions of the Trip Experience: Exploratory Factor Analysis

| | Eigenvalue | Variance Explained | Cronbach's Alpha | Factor Loadings | Communality |
|----|------------|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| F1 | 3.76 | 8.78 | 0.88 | | |
| | | | | 0.71 | 0.69 |
| | | | | 0.69 | 0.67 |
| F2 | 8.45 | 18.96 | 0.78 | | |
| | | | | 0.82 | 0.78 |
| | | | | 0.88 | 0.77 |
| | | | | 0.78 | 0.69 |
| | | | | 0.8 | 0.71 |
| F3 | 1.76 | 7.78 | 0.88 | | |
| | | | | 0.8 | 0.71 |
| | | | | 0.88 | 0.77 |
| F4 | 4.76 | 9.78 | 0.71 | | |
| | | | | 0.78 | 0.69 |
| | | | | 0.8 | 0.71 |
| | | | | 0.78 | 0.69 |
| F5 | 4.76 | 8.78 | 0.71 | | |
| | | | | 0.7 | 0.69 |
| | | | | 0.8 | 0.71 |
| F6 | 6.76 | 9.62 | 0.73 | | |
| | | | | 0.71 | 0.69 |
| | | | | 0.8 | 0.71 |
| | | | | 0.76 | 0.74 |
| | | | | 0.67 | 0.65 |

Source: Authors' elaboration.

The multiple regression analysis predicted tourists' overall satisfaction comprising of mean score of (trip satisfaction, trip recommendation, social media post, money spent on the trip, and repeat visit) as the dependent variable and the six dimensions of trip experience as independent variables: Welcoming (2 items), Hotel choice (4 items), Local transport (2 items), Tour leader (2 items), Tour guide (2 items), Trip excitement (4 items). Table 2 lists the six dimensions and 16 measurement scales of such dimension s. The value of the regression coefficients determined the corresponding importance of each factor (Table 3) - trip excitement was found to be the heaviest factor ($\beta=0.22$) followed by the hotel choice ($\beta=0.17$), tour guide ($\beta=0.15$), and tour leader ($\beta=0.14$). Thus, the final regression model was as follows:

$$Y = 1.69 + .18 X1 (\text{trip excitement}) + .14 X2 (\text{hotel choice}) + .12 X3 (\text{tour guide}) + .06 X4 (\text{tour leader}) + .04 X5 (\text{welcoming}) + e$$

Table 3: Regression Results of Dimensions of Trip Experience on Overall Tourist Satisfaction

| Model | | B | S.E. | β | t | P |
|-------|-----------------|------|------|---------|------|------|
| 1 | (Intercept) | 1.69 | 0.17 | | 9.90 | 0.00 |
| | Trip excitement | 0.18 | 0.05 | 0.22 | 3.37 | 0.00 |
| | Hotel choice | 0.14 | 0.06 | 0.17 | 2.36 | 0.02 |
| | Tour Guide | 0.12 | 0.06 | 0.15 | 2.04 | 0.04 |
| | Tour Leader | 0.06 | 0.07 | 0.14 | 0.83 | 0.02 |
| | Welcoming | 0.04 | 0.04 | 0.12 | 0.53 | 0.04 |
| | Local transport | 0.05 | 0.05 | 0.08 | 0.91 | 0.61 |

Dependent variable: overall tourist satisfaction.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

The results reveal that the five predictors together, $F(5,308) = 27.84$, $p < .05$, may account for 62.3% of the variance in tour experience. In (Table 3) the independent contributions of the predictors are presented. The result show that trip excitement ($\beta=0.22$, $t=3.37$, $p=0.00$), hotel choice ($\beta=0.17$, $t=2.36$, $p=0.02$), tour guide ($\beta=0.15$, $t=2.04$, $p=0.04$), tour leader ($\beta=0.14$, $t=0.83$, $p=0.02$) and welcoming ($\beta=0.12$, $t=0.53$, $p=0.04$) positively predict overall tourist satisfaction. The results suggest that trip excitement, hotel choice, tour guide, tour leader, and welcome contribute to overall tourist satisfaction. In contrast, local transport made a minor contribution to the regression model's predictive power.

Discussion of Results

The study explores the trip experience as a construct with multiple dimensions and then examines the connection between the diverse constituents of the trip experience and overall tourist satisfaction. A two-step analysis was used to accomplish the aim of the study. In the first step, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on the sixteen variables loaded on the six dimensions (welcoming, hotel choice, local transport, tour leader, tour guide, trip excitement) of a trip experience. The findings proved that the sixteen variables loaded significantly on six dimensions proposed in the study framework. Multiple regression was used in the second step to predict the tourists' overall satisfaction (trip satisfaction, trip recommendation, social media post, money spent on the trip, and repeat visits) on the six dimensions of the trip experience. The results indicated that five dimensions (trip excitement, hotel choice, tour guide, tour leader, and welcoming) significantly impacted overall tourist satisfaction. As a result of rejecting the null hypothesis, the study may acknowledge a strong relationship between the trip experience and overall tourist satisfaction.

The study supports the conclusions of earlier research by Chi and Qu (2009), that confirmed the positive impact of lodging, attractions, environment, and dining as significant factors in tourist satisfaction. A study by Prebensen, Woo, Chen, and Uysal (2012), support that the trip experience's dimensions help create the tourist's satisfaction with the destination visited. This study also confirms that trip experience positively impacts tourist satisfaction (Kim & Brown, 2012; Altunel & Erkurt, 2015). These results agree with (De Vos, 2017; Alrawadieh et al., 2019), pointing out that trip experience influences tourist satisfaction.

Other related studies (Chen & Rahman, 2018; Bayih & Singh, 2020; Osman et al., 2020), revealed that a memorable trip experience positively influences the revisit intention and recommending the trip to others. In addition, quality experiences lead to recommending the trip to others (Altunel & Erkurt, 2015), and unforgettable experiences strongly impact revisit intention (Barnes et al., 2016). Cetin (2020) correctly acknowledged that a positive tourist experience adds to the destination's popularity. The five dimensions highlighted by our study coincide with prior research (Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Su et al., 2020) that state these factors to be of prime concern and need improvement.

Conclusion

The role of the tour operators becomes vital to managing the tourist experience, from receiving the tourists until the time they depart. Our study

examines the connection between dimensions of trip experience and overall tourist satisfaction. The study has concluded that five dimensions of trip experience (welcome, hotel, tour leader, tour guide, and trip excitement) influence tourist satisfaction in visiting Delhi. The findings have revealed that tour operators can ensure tourist satisfaction by enhancing these five dimensions of trip experience.

Previous arguments support the current findings of our study on how the trip experience influences overall tourist satisfaction. Tour operators should work on dimensions of tourist experience as it is pivotal for tourist satisfaction (Huang et al., 2010; Dahles, 2013; Cetin, 2020). Out of the five dimensions, the tour guide and tour leader are important for tourist satisfaction (Cetin & Yarcan, 2017; Teng & Tsai, 2020; Weiler & Black, 2021). The remaining three dimensions of trip excitement, hotel choice, and welcoming have been recognized by several other studies (Kim & Brown, 2012; Rääkkönen & Honkanen, 2013; Liao & Chuang, 2020; Sthapit et al., 2019) to be significant for tourist satisfaction. According to Alexander et al. (2020), a joyous trip experience can lead to tourists becoming destination ambassadors. As an outcome of our study, the theoretical and managerial implications focus on improving the tourist experience to enhance tourist satisfaction.

Theoretical Implications

Our research has successfully demonstrated that, of the six trip experience dimensions, five dimensions - trip excitement, hotel choice, tour guide, tour leader, and welcoming significantly impact the trip experience. These results are a major addition to tourism research literature. Previous research studies have looked into the dimensions of trip experience and satisfaction separately, but this study has explored the relationship between the two. This finding contributes to the literature by stating a relationship between the five dimensions of the trip experience.

The literature review indicates that monitoring tourist satisfaction is essential for tourism (Mutanga et al., 2017). Satisfaction creates memorable experiences and a favourable outlook toward the holiday destination (Pestana et al., 2020). Tourist satisfaction indicates how well the tourism product has performed concerning tourist expectations and the need for creating value-addition to the dimensions of the tourist experience (Kachwala & Pai, 2022). Our study has demonstrated that the five dimensions impact the overall satisfaction of the trip. Higher satisfaction would lead to repeat tourists and destination recommendations (Valverde-Roda et al., 2022).

Managerial Implications

This study shall help the tour operators enhance the trip experience by focusing on the highlighted five dimensions of a trip experience. The study has proved that emphasizing these five dimensions would achieve overall tourist satisfaction. The first dimension that tour operators should look at is a hassle-free welcoming of tourists at the airport and station. Second, at the hotel, the tour operators should ensure that the hotel room is comfortable and clean and that new gastronomical-related services are being met. Third, the tour operators must ensure the tour leader is knowledgeable and possesses good interactive skills. Fourth, the tour guide has good linguistic skills and is well-informed about the heritage site. This could stimulate the tourist's fascination with the site's historical and cultural significance. Fifth, the tour operators must ensure that the trip is an enjoyable and refreshing experience for tourists, along with ample time for shopping and good evening entertainment.

The financial success of tour operators is directly linked to tourist satisfaction. Overall tourist satisfaction determinants in this study include satisfaction with the trip, recommendations for the trip to others, social media posts, repeat visits, and money spent on the trip. Earlier studies have concluded that those tourists whose expectations have been met by the services offered during their trip would be satisfied and happy (Chen-Yi, 2016; Ghose & Johann, 2019). Tourists with memorable experiences will suggest the trip to others, share “EWOM” and “word of mouth”, and repeat their visits (Hollebeek & Rather, 2019; Sthapit et al., 2019). The money spent on the trip impacts tourist satisfaction (De Vos, 2017). To have an important effect on the determinants of overall satisfaction, the five dimensions of trip experience should be managed well.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite the study's several important contributions, some things could be improved. Firstly, the study has focused on tourists choosing a tour package or customized trip tour operators offer. Independent tourists can be incorporated into future research. Second, the study is limited to the area of Delhi, India. In contrast, studies of the same nature might be conducted for other tourist sites in India or abroad. Third, the questionnaire was distributed to the sample when they visited the heritage site or the hotel. The data could be collected at the end of the trip to overview their entire experience for further studies. Finally, other studies can assess which dimension of trip experience has a more significant influence on tourist satisfaction that can add to the next level of knowledge.

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