

A STUDY ON FACTORS DETERMINING THE SELECTION OF HOTELS AMONG RELIGIOUS TOURISTS IN SOUTH TAMIL NADU

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Abstract - *The selection of hotels is one of the critical issues for the tourists and it is highly complex activity. Convenience, room features, service, serenity and peer advice are factors determining the selection of hotels among religious tourists. Significant difference is prevailing among factors determining the selection of hotels among religious tourists and their demographics except kind and gender. Service, room features, convenience, serenity and peer advice are positively and directly influencing satisfaction, meanwhile, satisfaction is positively and directly influencing loyalty of religious tourists towards hotels. Hence, hotels should provide facilities of online reservation, travel assistance and guidance to religious tourists. Hotels should be located in near to pilgrim places, to shopping centers and must maintain their reputation and websites properly. Hotels should improve features of rooms and safety measures and they must provide superior quality of services, security and adequate parking area to religious tourists. Further, hotels should give good quality of food and beverages, better lightings and they must keep all the premises of hotels clean and hygiene. Besides, religious tourist should select hotels in religious places based on recommendation of peer groups in order to stay peaceful and comfortable.*

Keywords: *Factors, Hotels, Loyalty, Religious Tourists, Satisfaction*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Indian hotel industry is flourishing due to growth and development of travel and tourism activities. Hotel industry is expanding further by means of visiting tourists from domestic and foreign places (Angamuthu, 2015). The hotel industry in India is significantly contributing to national economy and provides considerable amount of employment to people. The Indian hotel industry is witnessing a sizeable quantum of growth in room inventories among all kind of hotels across the nation (Sufi, 2015). The rate of hotel occupancy is rapidly growing due to stay of travelers and tourists and the wide range of hotels is available for tourists across India (Kumar and Singh, 2014).

In the exceedingly competitive atmosphere, it is essential for hotels to understand behaviour of guests and their choice of hotels (Noone and McGuire, 2013). The selection of hotels is one of the critical issues for the tourists and it is highly complex activity (Sohrabi et al 2012). Further, hotels require having complete knowledge on various features of their guests (Jones and Mei Chan, 2010) that permits them to discover factors that influence selection of hotels, mind sets and feelings of guests (Niininen et al 2016). Moreover, preference of hotels among guests is highly depending on their socio economic conditions, personal aspirations (Guillet et al 2014) and psychological features (Han and Kim, 2010). Generally, hotels are providing various good quality services to their guests in order to make them satisfied and it leads to loyalty of guests for hotels. Hence, it is necessary to study factors determining the selection of hotels among religious tourists in south Tamil Nadu.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Ali (2015) showed that reservation, availability of variety of food, unique services and behaviour and caring nature of employees were influencing choice of hotels among customers and these were related to their satisfaction and intent to revisit. Anawade and Bendale (2016) found that availability of amenities, variety of services and their qualities were affecting satisfaction of customers significantly.

Kumar and Bhatnagar (2017) concluded that amenities, variety of services and their qualities were significantly influencing choice of luxury hotels among customers.

Anand et al (2018) revealed that quality of food, attractiveness, security, locality and helping nature of employees were affecting selection of hotels of customers and these were associated with their satisfaction.

Patrick et al (2019) indicated that easy reach, parking facilities, room amenities and security arrangements were significantly influencing choice of hotels among customers and their satisfaction. Li et al (2020) showed that location, cleanliness, services, room amenities and value for money were influencing selection and satisfaction of customers towards luxury hotels.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- i) To find factors determining the selection of hotels among religious tourists.
- ii) To study satisfaction and loyalty of religious tourists towards hotels.
- iii) To examine structural relation among factors determining the selection of hotels, satisfaction and loyalty of religious tourists for hotels.

4. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

- i) Prevailing is no significant difference among factors determining the selection of hotels among religious tourists and their demographics.
- ii) Prevailing is no significant structural relation among factors determining the selection of hotels, satisfaction and loyalty of religious tourists for hotels.

5. METHODOLOGY

The pilgrim places in south Tamil Nadu are selected for the present study and religious tourists visited those pilgrim places are chosen by using convenience sampling method. The data are collected from 845 religious tourists by mean of interview schedule. Demographics of religious tourists are studied by using percentages. Exploratory factor analysis is carried out to find factors determining the selection of hotels among religious tourists. Difference among factors determining the selection of hotels among religious tourists and their demographics is inspected by employing t-test and ANOVA test. Satisfaction and loyalty of religious tourists towards hotels is ascertained through mean and standard deviation. Structural relation among factors determining the selection of hotels, satisfaction and loyalty of religious tourists towards hotels is examined by building Structural Equation Model (SEM).

6. RESULTS

6.1. DEMOGRAPHICS OF RELIGIOUS TOURISTS

The results reveal that 70.89 per cent of religious tourists are domestic tourists, 65.21 per cent of them are male, 44.85 per cent of them are in age of 31– 40 years, 30.89 per cent of them are under graduates, 26.39 per cent of them attain monthly income of Rs.35,001 – Rs.45,000 and 74.08 per cent of them are married.

6.2. FACTORS DETERMINING THE SELECTION OF HOTELS AMONG RELIGIOUS TOURISTS

Exploratory factor analysis is carried out to find factors determining the selection of hotels among religious tourists and outcome is depicted in Table-1. Value of KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) test to evaluate adequacy of sampling is 0.799 and chi-square value of 0.0066 of Bartlett test of Sphericity is significant at 1% level. Thus, method of factor analysis is highly suitable. Principal component analysis

method is applied to get factors by employing varimax kind of rotation and it is converged in 12th iterations. Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.85 displaying that the level of internal consistency is very much acceptable. Five factors are attained and they share 84.38 per cent of variation.

Table-1. Factors Determining the Selection of Hotels among Religious Tourists

Factor	Variables	Factor Loadings (Rotated)	Eigen Value	Variation (%)	Name of Factor
I	Brand image	0.62	4.01	26.75	Convenience
	Location	0.76			
	Online reservation	0.61			
	Travel assistance	0.75			
	Website	0.66			
	Guidance	0.67			
	Proximity to shopping centers	0.69			
	Close to pilgrim place	0.63			
II	Type of hotel	0.66	2.17	19.83	Room Features
	Room rent	0.65			
	Bed size	0.71			
	Fire alarm	0.76			
	Room size	0.69			
	Locking system	0.72			
III	Quality of service	0.66	1.84	15.68	Service
	Security	0.70			
	Parking area	0.65			
	Service	0.68			
IV	Cleanliness	0.71	1.23	12.82	Serenity
	Lighting	0.69			
	Food and beverage	0.64			
	Calmness	0.79			
V	Recommendation from friends	0.62	1.05	9.30	Peer Advice
	Recommendation from relatives	0.67			
	Ambience	0.61			
	Cumulative Variation (%)	-	-	84.38	

Factor - I consists of brand image, location, online reservation, travel assistance, website, guidance, proximity to shopping centers and close to pilgrim place. This factor is described as **Convenience**.

Factor - II includes type of hotel, room rent, bed size, fire alarm, room size and locking system. This factor is stated as **Room Features**.

Factor - III comprises of quality of service, security, parking area and service. This factor is denoted as **Service**.

Factor - IV encompasses cleanliness, lighting, food and beverage and calmness. This factor is portrayed as **Serenity**.

Factor - V contains recommendation from friends, recommendation from relatives and ambience. This factor is designated as **Peer Advice**.

Convenience, room features, service, serenity and peer advice are factors determining the selection of hotels among religious tourists.

6.3. FACTORS DETERMINING THE SELECTION OF HOTELS AND DEMOGRAPHICS OF RELIGIOUS TOURISTS

The factors determining the selection of hotels is split in to high, moderate and low levels on the basis of Mean \pm SD and it is depicted in Table-2 (Mean = 94.12; SD = 10.60).

Table-2. Level of Factors Determining the Selection of Hotels

Level of Factors	Number	Percentage
Low	161	19.05
Moderate	435	51.48
High	249	29.47
Total	845	100.00

Among 845 religious tourists, factors determining the selection of hotels are in high level for 29.47 per cent of them, but, they are in low level for 19.05 per cent of them. The relation among factors determining the selection of hotels and demographics of religious tourists is depicted as below.

6.3.1. KIND AND FACTORS DETERMINING THE SELECTION OF HOTELS

The relation among kind of religious tourists and factors determining the selection of hotels is depicted in Table-3.

Table-3. Kind and Factors Determining the Selection of Hotels

Kind	Level of Factors			Total	t-Value	Sig
	Low	Moderate	High			
Domestic	117 (19.53)	316 (52.76)	166 (27.71)	599 (70.89)	2.016 ^{NS}	.156
Foreign	44 (17.89)	119 (48.37)	83 (33.74)	246 (29.11)		
Total	161 (19.05)	435 (51.48)	249 (29.47)	845 (100.00)	-	-

(The figures in the parentheses are per cent to total)

^{NS} Non Significant

Among 599 domestic religious tourists, factors determining the selection of hotels are in high level for 27.71 per cent of them, but, they are in low level for 19.53 per cent of them. Among 246 foreign religious tourists, factors determining the selection of hotels are in high level for 33.74 per cent of them, but, they are in low level for 17.89 per cent of them.

The t-value is 2.016 and it is explicating that no significant difference is prevailing among kind of religious tourists and factors determining the selection of hotels.

6.3.2. GENDER AND FACTORS DETERMINING THE SELECTION OF HOTELS

The relation among gender of religious tourists and factors determining the selection of hotels is depicted in Table-4.

Table-4. Gender and Factors Determining the Selection of Hotels

Gender	Level of Factors			Total	t-Value	Sig
	Low	Moderate	High			
Male	104 (18.87)	262 (47.55)	185 (33.58)	551 (65.21)	.758 ^{NS}	.384

Female	57 (19.39)	173 (58.84)	64 (21.77)	294 (34.79)		
Total	161 (19.05)	435 (51.48)	249 (29.47)	845 (100.00)	-	-

(The figures in the parentheses are per cent to total)

^{NS} Non Significant

Among 551 male religious tourists, factors determining the selection of hotels are in high level for 33.58 per cent of them, but, they are in low level for 18.87 per cent of them. Among 294 female religious tourists, factors determining the selection of hotels are in high level for 21.77 per cent of them, but, they are in low level for 19.39 per cent of them.

The t-value is 0.758 and it is explicating that no significant difference is prevailing among gender of religious tourists and factors determining the selection of hotels.

6.3.3. AGE AND FACTORS DETERMINING THE SELECTION OF HOTELS

The relation among age of religious tourists and factors determining the selection of hotels is depicted in Table-5.

Table-5. Age and Factors Determining the Selection of Hotels

Age	Level of Factors			Total	F-Value	Sig
	Low	Moderate	High			
Below 20 Years	13 (20.64)	33 (52.38)	17 (26.98)	63 (7.46)	6.142**	.000
21 – 30 Years	28 (15.47)	112 (61.88)	41 (22.65)	181 (21.42)		
31 – 40 Years	80 (21.11)	169 (44.59)	130 (34.30)	379 (44.85)		
41 – 50 Years	28 (17.83)	85 (54.14)	44 (28.03)	157 (18.58)		
Above 50 Years	12 (18.46)	36 (55.39)	17 (26.15)	65 (7.69)		
Total	161 (19.05)	435 (51.48)	249 (29.47)	845 (100.00)		

(The figures in the parentheses are per cent to total)

** Significant in 1 % level

Among 63 religious tourists in age of below 20 years, factors determining the selection of hotels are in high level for 26.98 per cent of them, but, they are in low level for 20.64 per cent of them. Among 181 religious tourists in age of 21 – 30 years, factors determining the selection of hotels are in high level for 22.65 per cent of them, but, they are in low level for 15.47 per cent of them. Among 379 religious tourists in age of 31 – 40 years, factors determining the selection of hotels are in high level for 34.30 per cent of them, but, they are in low level for 21.11 per cent of them.

Among 157 religious tourists in age of 41 – 50 years, factors determining the selection of hotels are in high level for 28.03 per cent of them, but, they are in low level for 17.83 per cent of them. Among 65 religious tourists in age of above 50 years, factors determining the selection of hotels are in high level for 26.15 per cent of them, but, they are in low level for 18.46 per cent of them.

The F-value is 6.142 and it is explicating that significant difference is prevailing among gender of religious tourists and factors determining the selection of hotels.

6.3.4. EDUCATION AND FACTORS DETERMINING THE SELECTION OF HOTELS

The relation among education of religious tourists and factors determining the selection of hotels is depicted in Table-6.

Table-6. Education and Factors Determining the Selection of Hotels

Education	Level of Factors			Total	F-Value	Sig
	Low	Moderate	High			
Secondary	15 (17.65)	36 (42.35)	34 (40.00)	85 (10.06)	3.443**	.004
Higher Secondary	17 (14.78)	56 (48.70)	42 (36.52)	115 (13.61)		
Diploma	33 (24.44)	64 (47.41)	38 (28.15)	135 (15.97)		
Under Graduation	52 (19.92)	157 (60.16)	52 (19.92)	261 (30.89)		
Post Graduation	20 (11.76)	102 (60.00)	48 (28.24)	170 (20.12)		
Illiterate	24 (30.38)	20 (25.32)	35 (44.30)	79 (9.35)		
Total	161 (19.05)	435 (51.48)	249 (29.47)	845 (100.00)		

(The figures in the parentheses are per cent to total)

** Significant in 1 % level

Among 85 religious tourists with secondary, factors determining the selection of hotels are in high level for 40.00 per cent of them, but, they are in low level for 17.65 per cent of them. Among 115 religious tourists with higher secondary, factors determining the selection of hotels are in high level for 36.52 per cent of them, but, they are in low level for 14.78 per cent of them. Among 135 religious tourists with diploma, factors determining the selection of hotels are in high level for 28.15 per cent of them, but, they are in low level for 24.44 per cent of them.

Among 261 religious tourists with under graduation, factors determining the selection of hotels are in high level for 19.92 per cent of them, but, they are in low level for 19.92 per cent of them. Among 170 religious tourists with post graduation, factors determining the selection of hotels are in high level for 28.24 per cent of them, but, they are in low level for 11.76 per cent of them. Among 79 religious tourists who are illiterates, factors determining the selection of hotels are in high level for 44.30 per cent of them, but, they are in low level for 30.38 per cent of them.

The F-value is 3.443 and it is explicating that significant difference is prevailing among education of religious tourists and factors determining the selection of hotels.

6.3.5. MONTHLY INCOME AND FACTORS DETERMINING THE SELECTION OF HOTELS

The relation among monthly income of religious tourists and factors determining the selection of hotels is depicted in Table-7.

Table-7. Monthly Income and Factors Determining the Selection of Hotels

Monthly Income	Level of Factors			Total	F-Value	Sig
	Low	Moderate	High			
Less than Rs.25,000	18 (13.74)	79 (60.31)	34 (25.95)	131 (15.50)	5.239**	.000
Rs.25,001 – Rs.35,000	35	101	53	189		

	(18.52)	(53.44)	(28.04)	(22.37)		
Rs.35,001 – Rs.45,000	56 (25.11)	122 (54.71)	45 (20.18)	223 (26.39)		
Rs.45,001 – Rs.55,000	24 (13.18)	79 (43.41)	79 (43.41)	182 (21.54)		
More than Rs.55,000	28 (23.33)	54 (45.00)	38 (31.67)	120 (14.20)		
Total	161 (19.05)	435 (51.48)	249 (29.47)	845 (100.00)	-	-

(The figures in the parentheses are per cent to total)

** Significant in 1 % level

Among 131 religious tourists attaining monthly income of less than Rs.25,000, factors determining the selection of hotels are in high level for 25.95 per cent of them, but, they are in low level for 13.74 per cent of them. Among 189 religious tourists attaining monthly income of Rs.25,001 – Rs.35,000, factors determining the selection of hotels are in high level for 28.04 per cent of them, but, they are in low level for 18.52 per cent of them. Among 223 religious tourists attaining monthly income of Rs.35,001 – Rs.45,000, factors determining the selection of hotels are in high level for 20.18 per cent of them, but, they are in low level for 25.11 per cent of them.

Among 182 religious tourists attaining monthly income of Rs.45,001 – Rs.55,000, factors determining the selection of hotels are in high level for 43.41 per cent of them, but, they are in low level for 13.18 per cent of them. Among 120 religious tourists attaining monthly income of more than Rs.55,000, factors determining the selection of hotels are in high level for 31.67 per cent of them, but, they are in low level for 23.33 per cent of them.

The F-value is 5.239 and it is explicating that significant difference is prevailing among monthly income of religious tourists and factors determining the selection of hotels.

6.3.6. MARITAL STATUS AND FACTORS DETERMINING THE SELECTION OF HOTELS

The relation among marital status of religious tourists and factors determining the selection of hotels is depicted in Table-8.

Table-8. Marital Status and Factors Determining the Selection of Hotels

Marital Status	Level of Factors			Total	t-Value	Sig
	Low	Moderate	High			
Married	136 (21.73)	315 (50.32)	175 (27.95)	626 (74.08)	13.972**	.000
Unmarried	25 (11.42)	120 (54.79)	74 (33.79)	219 (25.92)		
Total	161 (19.05)	435 (51.48)	249 (29.47)	845 (100.00)	-	-

(The figures in the parentheses are per cent to total)

** Significant in 1 % level

Among 626 religious tourists in married, factors determining the selection of hotels are in high level for 27.95 per cent of them, but, they are in low level for 21.73 per cent of them. Among 219 religious tourists in unmarried, factors determining the selection of hotels are in high level for 33.79 per cent of them, but, they are in low level for 11.42 per cent of them.

The t-value is 13.972 and it is explicating that significant difference is prevailing among marital status of religious tourists and factors determining the selection of hotels.

6.4. SATISFACTION OF RELIGIOUS TOURISTS TOWARDS HOTELS

The satisfaction of religious tourists towards hotels is depicted in Table-9.

Table-9. Satisfaction of Religious Tourists towards Hotels

Satisfaction	Mean	Standard Deviation
Room tariff	3.36	1.13
Quality of food	3.23	1.15
Price of food	3.31	1.05
Cleanliness of room	3.84	0.70
Interior decoration	3.79	1.03
Room amenities	3.85	0.71
Parking area	3.27	1.25
Availability of variety of food	3.88	0.66
Quantity of food	3.38	1.28
Location	3.90	0.62
Services offered	3.80	0.96
External appearance	3.82	0.87
Quickness of service	3.17	1.19
Lighting	3.18	1.23
Behaviour of hotel employees	3.86	0.66

The religious tourists are agreed with they are satisfied with cleanliness of room, interior decoration, room amenities, availability of variety of food, location, services offered, external appearance and behaviour of hotel employees, while, they are neutral with they are satisfied with room tariff, quality of food, price of food, parking area, quantity of food, quickness of service and lighting.

6.5. LOYALTY OF RELIGIOUS TOURISTS TOWARDS HOTELS

The loyalty of religious tourists towards hotels is depicted in Table-10.

Table-10. Loyalty of Religious Tourists towards Hotels

Loyalty	Mean	Standard Deviation
I will certainly stay in this hotel in near future	3.83	1.05
This hotel is my primary choice in the next few years	3.37	1.21
I will stay in this hotel in my next visit	3.89	0.92
I will stay in this hotel even it is costlier	3.87	0.78
I am ready to pay extra tariff over other competing hotels to be able to stay again	3.29	1.23
I advice this hotel to my relatives and friends	3.77	1.00
I say advantages of this hotel to others	3.76	0.89
I do not switch to any other competing hotel if I have a problem in staying in this hotel	3.25	1.47
I suggest this hotel to somebody who seeks my advice	3.73	1.06
I will continue to be trustworthy guest to this hotel	3.34	1.10

The religious tourists are agreed with they will certainly stay in this hotel in near future, they will stay in this hotel in their next visit, they stay in this hotel even it is costlier, they advice this hotel to their relatives and friends, they say advantages of this hotel to others and they suggest this hotel to somebody who seeks their advice, while, they are neutral with this hotel is their primary choice in the next few years, they are ready to pay extra tariff over other competing hotels to be able to stay again, they do not switch to any other competing hotel if they have a problem in staying in this hotel and they will continue to be trustworthy guest to this hotel.

6.6. STRUCTURAL RELATION AMONG FACTORS DETERMINING THE SELECTION OF HOTELS, SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY OF RELIGIOUS TOURISTS TOWARDS HOTELS

The Structural Equation Model (SEM) is built to examine structural relation among factors determining the selection of hotels, satisfaction and loyalty of religious tourists towards hotels and outcome is depicted in Table-11. Goodness of Fit Index and Comparative Fit Index are 0.98 and 0.96 sequentially Standardized Root Mean Residual and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation are 0.09 and 0.07 consequently. These parameters are revealing that the model has an excellent fit.

Table-11. Structural Path Coefficients (Standardized)

Path	Coefficients (Standardized)	CR	P-Value
SAT ← SER	.382	6.758	***
SAT ← RF	.259	5.496	***
SAT ← CON	.321	6.320	***
SAT ← SE	.190	5.054	***
SAT ← PA	.293	5.952	***
LOY ← SAT	.548	9.435	***

*** Significant in 1 % level

The standardized coefficient for Satisfaction (SAT) against Service (SER) is 0.382, the standardized coefficient for Satisfaction (SAT) against Room Features (RF) is 0.259, the standardized coefficient for Satisfaction (SAT) against Convenience (CON) is 0.321, the standardized coefficient for Satisfaction (SAT) against Serenity (SE) is 0.190 and the standardized coefficient for Satisfaction (SAT) against Peer Advice (PA) is 0.321. Thus, service, room features, convenience, serenity and peer advice are directly and positively influencing satisfaction of religious tourists towards hotels. Further, the standardized coefficient for Loyalty (LOY) against Satisfaction (SAT) is 0.548. Hence, the satisfaction is directly and positively influencing loyalty of religious tourists towards hotels.

7. CONCLUSION

The foregoing analysis explicate that convenience, room features, service, serenity and peer advice are factors determining the selection of hotels among religious tourists. Significant difference is prevailing among factors determining the selection of hotels among religious tourists and their demographics except kind and gender. Service, room features, convenience, serenity and peer advice are positively and directly influencing satisfaction, meanwhile, satisfaction is positively and directly influencing loyalty of religious tourists towards hotels. Hence, hotels should provide facilities of online reservation, travel assistance and guidance to religious tourists. Hotels should be located in near to pilgrim places, to shopping centers and must maintain their reputation and websites properly. Hotels should improve features of rooms and safety measures and they must provide superior quality of services, security and adequate parking area to religious tourists. Further, hotels should give good quality of food and beverages, better lightings and they must keep all the premises of hotels clean and hygiene. Besides, religious tourist should select hotels in religious places based on recommendation of peer groups in order to stay peaceful and comfortable. In addition, hotels must charge rationally for room, food and other services and they should provide services promptly to religious tourists.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author and co-author greatly acknowledged that this article has been written with financial support of AURF - RUSA Phase 2.0 grant sanctioned vide Letter No. F. 24-51 / 2014-U, Policy (TN Multi-Gen), Department of Education, Government of India, Dated, 09.10.2018.

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