

Tourist Satisfaction and Revisit Intention in Responsible Tourism Destinations: Insights for Sustaining Engagement and Growth

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Abstract:

Responsible tourism boosts destination sustainability by promoting quality tourism, enriching experiences, improving residents' well-being, and conserving natural resources. Tourist satisfaction plays a key role in determining the long-term viability of responsible tourism destinations, as it is a significant predictor of intention to revisit. The present study investigates the relationship between tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention in Responsible Tourism destinations in Kerala, India. Data was collected from both foreign and domestic tourists who visited selected responsible tourism destinations in Kerala. The findings of the study indicate that satisfaction significantly predicts their revisit intention, explaining more than 70% of the variance. The study also examined the relationship of tourist satisfaction based on gender and tourist type. The results revealed a similar level of satisfaction among male and female tourists, except for the variable value for money, which reported high satisfaction for female tourists. Foreign tourists reported a higher satisfaction than domestic tourists for the variable related to service quality. The results highlight the importance of offering high-quality experiences to visitors, as this encourages repeat visits and contributes to the sustainability of destinations and benefits the local economy.

Keywords: Responsible Tourism, Satisfaction, Re-visit Intention, Local community

INTRODUCTION

Tourism, one of the fastest-growing sectors, has become a vital part of the economy through the creation of related jobs, enhancements in local residents' living standards, and support for other industries. In recent decades, increasing concerns about environmental degradation, severe climate change, cultural loss, and social injustice have prompted a shift in tourism towards more responsible and sustainable practices. Responsible tourism significantly contributes to the destination's sustainability by promoting quality tourism business opportunities, enriching holiday experiences, improving local residents' quality of life, providing socio-economic benefits, and safeguarding natural resources (Mathew & Sreejesh, 2017). Destination environments and host communities are essential components of the responsible tourism industry and form integral parts of tourism products (Hu et al., 2019). It ensures the meaningful engagement of the local community by prioritising triple bottom line – economic, socio-cultural and environmental benefits. Hence, when exploring responsible tourism destinations, the two most important factors tourists consider are the local community and the environment of the destination.

Tourist satisfaction plays a key role in determining the long-term viability of responsible tourism destinations. It can be assessed by the emotional response triggered by cognitive reactions to a service experience, or by the difference between pre-travel expectations and actual post-travel experiences. Tourists feel satisfied when their post-travel experiences align positively with their initial expectations, leading to pleasant feelings. This satisfaction is a significant predictor of their intention to revisit. Understanding the factors that affect the desire to return is essential for encouraging repeat visits to a place. Doing so will allow these factors to be adjusted, thereby increasing the chances of tourists returning and providing a stable income for the community dependent on tourism.

Kerala, southernmost state in India, is a pioneer in responsible tourism and has earned numerous national and international awards for its leadership in sustainable, inclusive and community-driven tourism practices. However, little empirical research has examined the satisfaction of tourists towards these destinations and their influence on revisit intention. Hence, the study aims to explore the link between tourist satisfaction with responsible tourism experience and their revisit intention.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Tourists have diverse needs, expectations, and experiences when visiting a destination. (Andereck et al., 2007) mentioned that the two crucial factors that tourists consider while practising responsible tourism are the local community and the destination environment. (Mathew et al., 2024) identified that responsible tourism practices can enhance the sustainable development of tourism destinations and tourists' satisfaction. In the context of tourism, understanding the role of satisfaction in predicting tourists' behavioural intentions has led to numerous studies and (Yuda Bakti et al., 2020) pointed out that satisfaction varies from the actual quality of service, as it results from a comprehensive and accumulated assessment of both internal and external aspects of services. (Mathew & Sreejesh, 2017) found that the overall quality of life can be achieved through destination sustainability and responsible tourism initiatives. The study also indicated that satisfaction serves as a key indicator of visitors' overall contentment with a location. (Nguyen Huu et al., 2024) conducted a study to examine the influence of tourist satisfaction on revisit intention in the Vietnamese context and revealed that factors such as cultural contact, perceived value, and green practices followed in a destination significantly impact satisfaction, leading to intention to visit the destination in future. (Wang, 2004) observed that the cost of acquiring returning customers is lower than that of attracting new ones, since repeat visitors tend to spend more and stay longer than first-time visitors. (Seow et al., 2024) pointed out that tourists who have an unpleasant experience on a tour tend to develop long-lasting negative memories, which can discourage them from returning to the same destination. (Lee et al., 2007) examined the relationship between perceived service quality, perceived service value, satisfaction, and behavioural intention among tourists at festivals, and found that the link between satisfaction and revisit intention was insignificant. It also noted that the strength of these relationships can vary depending on the specific service being analysed. However, research specifically focusing on this relationship in responsible destinations is limited and emphasises the need for an empirical study.

I. Objectives of the Study

- To assess the satisfaction of tourists in participating in responsible tourism activities.
- To analyse the influence of satisfaction of tourists on their intention to revisit the destination.

II. Hypothesis of the Study

- H_{01} : There is no significant difference in tourists' satisfaction levels in participating in responsible tourism activities between male and female tourists.
- H_{02} : There is no significant difference in tourists' satisfaction levels in participating in responsible tourism activities between foreign and domestic tourists.
- H_{03} : There is no significant influence of tourist satisfaction on their revisit intention.

METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive and empirical in nature. Data for the study were gathered from both primary and secondary sources. The sampling frame for the study consists of tourists visiting Kumarakom, one of the most popular responsible tourism destinations in Kerala. Primary data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire among tourists from August 2024 to January 2025. The measurement for each research variable is sourced from previous studies, which were modified to suit the present study. The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the demographic profile of respondents, and the second part addresses the measurement variables, including tourist satisfaction (5 items), and revisit intention (3 items), anchored on a five-point Likert-type scale, varying from "1= Strongly Disagree" to "5= Strongly Agree". Data collected from repeat visitors by excluding first-time visitors through an initial question: "Have you already visited this destination?" A convenience sampling method was used to collect data from the respondents, and data were collected from 383 tourists who visited the destination. The data collected from respondents were classified and analysed in accordance with the study's objectives. Internal consistency is tested using Cronbach's alpha, and alpha values for the items measuring tourist satisfaction ($\alpha=0.88$) and revisit intention ($\alpha=0.95$) exceeded the threshold limit. For analysis, statistical tools, percentages and averages were used. Spearman's correlation, Mann-Whitney U test, and regression analysis were used to test the hypothesis with SPSS 25.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Table 1. displays the demographic profile of the respondents, and shows that the majority of respondents are female (52%). 39% are graduates, and 25% have reported post-graduation. 46% of respondents are

private employees, and 30% are government employees. 62% of respondents are domestic tourists, and 38% are foreign tourists.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
- Male	183	48
- Female	200	52
Age Group		
- 18-27	55	14
- 28-37	122	32
- 38-47	95	25
- 48-57	56	15
- 58-67	35	9
- 68 above	20	5
Education Level		
- Secondary	58	15
- Higher secondary	81	21
- Graduate	149	39
- Postgraduate	95	25
Employment		
- Private	178	46
- Government	113	30
- Self-employed	56	14
- Unemployed	22	6
- Retired	14	4
Type of Tourist		
- Foreign tourist	147	38
- Domestic tourist	236	62

Source: Primary data.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics and correlation among study variables

Variable	TS	RVI	Mean	SD
Mean value of Satisfaction	1	0.719	20.75	3.33
Mean value of Revisit Intention	0.719	1	12.33	2.37

Source: Computed from primary data

Table2. shows the result of Spearman's correlation and shows a strong, positive correlation between tourist satisfaction and revisit intention ($r=0.719$, $p<0.001$), indicating that higher levels of tourist satisfaction are associated with higher revisit intention.

Hypothesis Testing:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in tourists' satisfaction levels in participating in responsible tourism activities between male and female tourists.

Table 3: Test Statistics Gender and Satisfaction

Hypotheses	Variable	Gender	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	p-value
H _{01a}	Feel satisfied with the services provided by the host community	Male	187	17456	0.374
		Female	196		
H _{01b}	Services received exceeded expectations	Male	188	17488	0.403
		Female	196		
H _{01c}				15810	0.011

	Feel the worthiness of time and money	Male	178		
		Female	204		
H _{01d}	Made the right decision in choosing a destination	Male	185	17194	0.251
		Female	196		
H _{01e}	Provided a restful and relaxing atmosphere	Male	201	16570	0.076
		Female	183		

Source: Computed from primary data

Table 3 presents the results of the Mann-Whitney U test used to assess gender-based differences in satisfaction levels with responsible tourism activities. The test compared the satisfaction scores of male and female tourists across five dimensions, and the results indicate that for the variable feel worthiness of time and money, a statistically significant difference was observed between male and female tourists ($p=.011$), with females reporting higher satisfaction (Mean rank=204) than males (mean rank=178). Hence, hypothesis H_{01c} is rejected, revealing a significant difference between male and female tourists in satisfaction levels regarding the value for time and money. However, no significant gender differences were observed for any other variables ($p\text{-value} > 0.05$), indicating similar levels of satisfaction among male and female tourists across all indicators.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in tourists' satisfaction levels in participating in responsible tourism activities between foreign and domestic tourists.

Table 4: Test Statistics Type of Tourist and Satisfaction

Hypotheses	Variable	Tourist	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	p-value
H _{02a}	Feel satisfied with the services provided by the host community	Foreign	217	12994	0.000
		Domestic	180		
H _{02b}	Services received exceeded expectations	Foreign	214	13274	0.002
		Domestic	181		
H _{02c}	Feel the worthiness of time and money	Foreign	198	15274	0.349
		Domestic	188		
H _{02d}	Made the right decision in choosing a destination	Foreign	202	14934	0.187
		Domestic	187		
H _{02e}	Provided a restful and relaxing atmosphere	Foreign	202	14824	0.154
		Domestic	187		

Source: Computed from primary data

Test statistic shown in Table 4 reveals that foreign tourists reported significantly higher satisfaction than domestic tourists for the variable 'feel satisfied with the services of the local community' ($U=12994$, $p\text{-value}=0.000$), and 'Services received exceeded expectation' ($U=13274$, $p\text{-value}=0.002$), resulting in rejection of H_{02a} and H_{02b}. There were no significant differences found for any other variables ($p\text{-value} > 0.05$), and the hypothesis was accepted for H_{02c}, H_{02d}, and H_{02e}, suggesting that foreign and domestic tourists had similar levels of satisfaction across the remaining variables.

H₀₃: There is no significant influence of tourist satisfaction on their revisit intention.

Table 5: Influence of tourist satisfaction on their revisit intention

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-square	S.E
1	0.856	0.733	0.732	1.228
Predictors: (Constant) Tourist satisfaction				

Dependent Variable: Revisit Intention

Source: Computed from primary data

The result of the regression analysis is shown in Table 5. indicate a strong positive relationship between satisfaction and revisit intention ($\beta=0.856$, $p\text{-value}<0.005$), explaining over 73% of the variance. The findings emphasise that when tourists experience a high level of satisfaction during their visit, it will lead to a stronger revisit intention among them in responsible tourism destinations.

DISCUSSION

Responsible tourism serves as a fundamental vehicle for sustainable and overall development of the local community. When evaluating a tourism destination, it's essential to consider tourist satisfaction as it highlights strengths and weaknesses. This evaluation can also aid in developing strategic and operational plans for the destination. Satisfaction received from the destination plays a key role in attracting visitors again and encouraging them to share positive words about the place. The present study was conducted to examine the influence of tourists' satisfaction on their revisit intention, focusing on responsible tourism destinations in Kerala. The study also examined the differences in satisfaction levels based on gender and tourist type when engaging in responsible activities at the destination.

The study revealed a difference in satisfaction levels between male and female tourists regarding value for money, with higher satisfaction among female tourists, and found similarities with earlier literature (Meng & Uysal, 2008). There is no difference in the satisfaction levels between male and female tourists for the remaining four dimensions: perceived service quality, level of enjoyment, atmosphere, and the decision to visit, challenging the previous studies (Meng & Uysal, 2008). A notable difference can be observed in the satisfaction levels with service quality and the level of enjoyment among foreign and domestic tourists, consistent with the findings of past studies (Kansal et al., 2015)

The findings also confirm that tourist satisfaction is a key predictor of tourists' revisit intention in responsible tourism destinations. The regression analysis of satisfaction of tourists significantly predicts revisit intention, explaining more than 70% of the variance. These findings highlight the importance of positive visitor experiences in shaping tourists' behavioural intentions and are consistent with previous research (Nguyen Huu et al., 2024). The result also challenges the insignificant relationship between satisfaction and intention in past studies (Lee et al., 2007)

CONCLUSION

The present paper examines tourists' satisfaction and intention to revisit a responsible tourism destination. Although the importance of delivering satisfactory services to tourists at the destination has been extensively discussed in previous studies, there is a lack of evidence to support these claims in destinations that prioritise sustainability. Furthermore, the impact of satisfaction on revisit intention is not well understood, particularly in sustainable tourism destinations. Our findings show that when tourists are more satisfied with the services they receive at a destination, they're more likely to return, developing a loyalty towards the destinations that focus on sustainability and community-centred practices. As repeat visitors are more beneficial to tourism destinations, especially those focused on responsible tourism, they provide a steady income for the local community. Both first-time visitors and repeat visitors are vital to the local community's well-being. However, repeat visitors tend to be more selective and focused than first-time visitors (Kemperman & Joh, 2003).

From a practical perspective, these results suggest that destination managers and policymakers should give priority to service quality, promote more environmentally friendly practices, and facilitate a deeper tourist-local community interaction. They can conduct social media campaigns and promotional advertisements to highlight the facilities available in the destinations. The destination management organisations can provide clear indications of their environmentally friendly activities to be followed in the destinations to encourage tourists to act sustainably.

Although the study results are satisfactory and align with earlier research, there are limitations to consider. First, our research was confined to a single responsible tourism destination, focusing mainly on backwater tourism, which limits the ability to generalise these findings to other responsible tourism sites. Second, the study only addressed repeated visitors; future research could be conducted in a broader context, including first-time tourists. Future research could also expand by examining destination image, perceived

value, travel motivation, and environmental concern. A longitudinal study exploring the influence of satisfaction on revisit intention over time is also possible.

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