



PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICE ATTRIBUTES OF SHRI MATA VAISHNO DEVI SHRINE BOARD: AN IMPORTANCE-PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Delivering high quality service becomes essential with the increased demands placed by consumers not only in the service industry but also in the religious-not-for profit sector. Organisations like Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, Shree Siddhivinayak Ganapati Mandir Nyas Trust, Shri Saibaba Sansthan Trust, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board take care not only the religious site but also deliver qualitative service to the visitors. The Importance –performance analysis was a tool used to study the effectiveness of various issues and attributes especially in the service industry. The present study aims to evaluate the service attributes of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board with the help of importance-performance analysis framework. A survey was administered using questionnaire with a focus on importance of pilgrim's expectations and level of satisfaction perceived by pilgrims concerning the various services provided by Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board.

Keywords: Importance; Performance; Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board.

Introduction

Delivering high quality service becomes essential with the increased demands placed by consumers not only in the service industry but also in the religious-not-for profit sector. Religious tourism is exception of all types of tourism where the number of pilgrims always increased irrespective of any kind of situation. And it becomes challenge for the organisations that take care of these site's administration and management. They have to keep in mind not only the religious sentiments of the pilgrims but also their basic needs like accommodation, easy accessibility, hygienic conditions, communication and many more. In today's scenario, a pilgrim is also looking for every comfort at the site. To meet the expectations of the pilgrims and for the right administration and management of the religious sites many organising bodies were formed like Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, Shree Siddhivinayak Ganapati Mandir Nyas Trust, Shri Saibaba Sansthan Trust, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board.

The Shrine Board, managing the biggest pilgrimages of North India, is monitoring the pilgrim arrivals and facilities available to them on daily basis with focus on providing greater spiritual satisfaction and amenities to the visiting pilgrims (vaishnodevi-tours.blogspot.com). Prior to the takeover, the management and control of the shrine was with a private trust called the Dharmarth Trust and a group of traditional local residents called Baridars. The takeover was necessitated considering the poor state of thing and the absence of facilities for the pilgrims. Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board was set up in August 1986 to provide for better management and governance of the holy shrine (maavaishnodevi.org). Vasudev (2002) stated, Vaishno Devi is one of the most popular pilgrimage places in India perhaps because here religion validates the currency of consumerism. Pilgrimage to the shrine increased rapidly after 1976, when physical changes were made to accommodate 5,000 per day. By 1981, the annual number of pilgrims to the Vaishno Devi Shrine 9 lakh (Foster 1986; 52), but by a decade later, the total was over three million. In 2001 the number of visitors exceeded five million (Foster and Stoddard, 2010) and by 2010 eight million pilgrims came to the shrine (prlog.com). With the increased inflow of the pilgrims, the economic activities are growing manifold. The total impact of the shrine on the entire economy of J&K would be almost twice as that on the economy of Katra (the base camp) i.e. more than Rs.1000 crores and about 60,000 persons employment in 2006 and with growth rate of about 11% per annum (Jain, 2007).

Objective

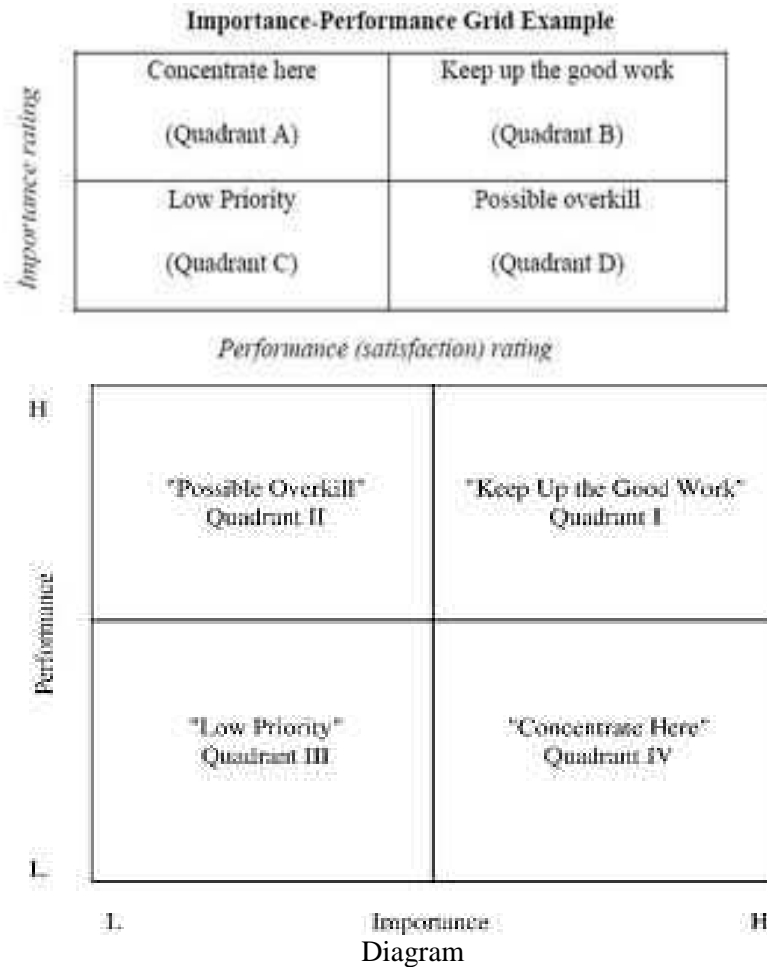
Shrine Board provides various services to pilgrims like accommodation, Bhojanalaya & refreshment units, shelter sheds, medical facilities, blanket stores, cloak rooms, bhaint shops, souvenir shops, places to rest at bhawan, obtaining a group no. for darshans, waiting in queue for darshans, information counters, room reservation service,



railway reservation counter, palkies, ponies and pithoos, post & telegraph, banks, security arrangements, online services and help desk. The present study aims to evaluate how important these service attributes for the pilgrims and how much they are satisfied with respect to their performance after pilgrimage.

Literature Review

The Importance-Performance Analysis developed by Martilla and James (1977) identifies the relative importance of the attributes associated with a service or product and indicates the degree of performances (i.e. satisfaction level) simultaneously. The results are plotted graphically on a two-dimensional grid.



The importance of the attribute is displayed on the vertical axis while the satisfaction level is displayed on the horizontal axis. The resulting four quadrants are: Concentrate Here, Keep Up the Good Work, Low Priority and Possible Overkill. In the Concentrate Here quadrant, the attributes are perceived to be very important to the customers, but the performance levels are seen as below average. This implies that improvements efforts should be concentrated here. Attributes situated in the Keep up the Good Work quadrant are perceived to be very important to the customers and the firm performs highly in these activities. In the Low Priority quadrant, the attributes have low importance and low performance to the customers.

Limited resources should be expended on the attributes belonging to this cell because the attributes are not perceived to be very important by the customers. The Possible Overkill quadrant contains low importance attributes with relatively high performance. The customers are satisfied with the firm's performance; present efforts on the attributes in this cell are over-utilized and managers should consider resources allocated elsewhere. Haemoun Oh (2001) critically review the past studies, reanalyses published data to raise questions and develops



suggestions for future hospitality and tourism research applying Importance-Performance Analysis. Rigorous reconsideration of Importance-Performance Analysis as a tool for developing marketing program is necessary. Results provided by Importance-Performance Analysis help managers to tailor-make marketing strategies based on the importance and perception of performance revealed in each quadrant, from the perspective of customers. This is a useful and effective way for management to identify what problems exist and why (Chu and Choi, 2000). Importance-Performance analysis a quantitative, theoretically informed empirical analysis the will be able to provide a basis for managerial and policy decisions in the tourism industry (Enright and Newton, 2004). The research provides additional support for the behaviour of the traveller by identifying and measuring attributes of importance and the associated satisfaction with those attributes (Rivera, Shani and Severt, 2009). There is a dynamic relationship between service attributes and overall customer satisfaction. Service attributes have a different impact on customer satisfaction regardless of their classification. The importance of service attributes can be derived from their performance i.e. proved in Mobile telecommunication industry (Pezeshki, Mousavi and Grant, 2009). Categorized the service quality attributes into an Importance-Performance Analysis grid. Once customers' requirements are clearly identified and understood, the service operators are more likely to do better job and to provide better service to their customers. Also, knowing how customers perceive the service quality attributes can be a means to achieve a competitive advantage and to differentiate themselves from competitors (Joung, Lee, Kim, Ahn and Huffman). Significant differences between management and employee perception of service quality in the hotel industry was found (Martin, 1995). IPA was used to construct service attribute evaluation maps to identify areas for improvement in airline service quality. The tangible dimensions were considered more important when evaluating ground service quality (Chen and Chang, 2005).

There is a need for client segmentation prior to IPA. IPA without segmentation is likely to result in user displacement of some segments giving a false impression of valid decisions. The attributes of a service or destination area, their importance to clients, and the clients' perceptions of performance can be used to incrementally guide decisions toward more optimal resource allocation (Vaskea, Beamanb, Stanley and Grenierd, 1996). IPA is a significant tool to assess consumers' preferences in technology-based heritage interpretations (Reino, Mitsche and Frew). Positioning of any recreation site in the community, using Importance-Performance Analysis as a guide, focused on the benefit that fell in the quadrant keep up the good work. It demonstrates the utility of Information-Performance ratings for determining a viable position (real, competitive and psychological) (Hunt, Scott, Richardson, 2003). On a performance-importance grid, the interaction of performance perceptions with the importance for an evaluation criteria permits managers to grasp the relative success of tour features. For escorted tour designs, tourist pre-trip expectations, post-trip satisfactions, and importance's of each on a performance-importance grid to consider potential decisions (Dukea, Perisiab, 1996). Huan and Beaman, 2005 clarify the practical importance of results of IPA. There are some exceptional conditions over which management has little or no control and in some cases managers can recognize conditions in which performance ratings will be down because most users will reflect the exogenous condition in their performance rating.

Methodology

To meet the study objective, a survey was administered among 100 respondents visited the shrine. A self-administered questionnaire was developed, guidance taken from the literature (Rivera; Chen, Chang) consist of demographic profile of the respondents to rate the level of importance, on the likert scale ranged from 1 to 5 (i.e very unimportant to very important), with respect to the services provided by Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board and rate the level of satisfaction, on the likert scale ranged from 1 to 5 (i.e. completely dissatisfied to completely satisfied) with respect to the services provided by the Board. At the end, it was asked whether they recommend Shrine Board services to others on 5-point scale (From very unlikely to extremely likely). The respondents were approached at the Vaishnavi Dham, Railway Station and Bahu Fort, Jammu. Only those respondents were considered for the survey that came after darshan at shrine.



Results

Importance and Satisfaction ratings of service attributes-

| Attributes | Importance | |
|------------------------------------|------------|--------------------|
| | Mean (X) | Standard Deviation |
| Accommodation | 4.09 | 0.92 |
| Bhojanalaya & Refreshment Units | 4.38 | 0.93 |
| Shelter Sheds | 4.51 | 0.76 |
| Medical Facilities | 4.5 | 0.83 |
| Blanket Stores | 4.25 | 0.80 |
| Cloak Rooms | 4.56 | 0.86 |
| Bhaint Shops | 3.94 | 1.14 |
| Souvenior Shops | 3.85 | 1.02 |
| Places to rest at Bhawan | 4.5 | 0.73 |
| Obtaining a Group No. for Darshans | 4.22 | 0.91 |
| Waiting in queue for Darshans | 4.12 | 1.0 |
| Information Counters | 4.43 | 0.79 |
| Room Reservation Service | 4.01 | 0.95 |
| Railway Reservation Counter | 4.03 | 0.98 |
| Palkies, Ponies & Pithoos | 3.82 | 1.21 |
| Post & Telegraph | 3.41 | 1.3 |
| Banks | 4.13 | 1.07 |
| Security Arrangements | 4.58 | 0.75 |
| Online Service | 4.21 | 0.91 |
| Help Desk | 4.5 | 0.77 |

Table 1

The above table shows the importance mean scores and standard deviation of each service attribute. All the listed attributes were considered to be significant; all mean scores are above 3 i.e. neutral, which indicates that respondent's view all service attributes are important. The most important services, according to respondents, are security arrangements (4.58, 0.75), cloak rooms (4.56, 0.86) and shelter sheds (4.51, 0.76). Medical facilities (4.5,0.83), places to rest at bhawan (4.5, 0.73) and help desk (4.5, 0.77) were considered to be equal important for the respondents. Other important services include information counters (4.43, 0.79), bhojanalaya & refreshment units (4.38, 0.93), blanket stores (4.25, 0.80), obtaining a group no. for darshans (4.22, 0.91), banks (4.13, 1.07), waiting in queue for darshans (4.12, 1.0), accommodation (4.09, 0.92), railway reservation counter (4.03, 0.98) and room reservation service (4.01, 0.95). Conversely, respondents considered the bhaint shops (3.94, 1.14), souvenior shops (3.85, 1.02), palkies, ponies and pithoos (3.82, 1.21) and post & telegraph (3.41, 1.30) as the least important service attributes.

| Attributes | Performance | |
|---------------------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| | Mean (X) | Standard Deviation |
| Accommodation | 3.84 | 1.2 |
| Bhojanalaya & Refreshment Units | 3.85 | 1.23 |
| Shelter Sheds | 4.12 | 1.09 |
| Medical Facilities | 3.83 | 1.17 |
| Blanket Stores | 3.99 | 0.99 |
| Cloak Rooms | 4.14 | 1.14 |
| Bhaint Shops | 4.05 | 1.12 |
| Souvenior Shops | 4.06 | 0.96 |
| Places to rest at Bhawan | 4.03 | 1.13 |



| | | |
|------------------------------------|------|------|
| Obtaining a Group No. for Darshans | 4.11 | 1.06 |
| Waiting in queue for Darshans | 3.84 | 1.24 |
| Information Counters | 3.97 | 1.09 |
| Room Reservation Service | 3.53 | 1.17 |
| Railways Reservation Counter | 3.84 | 1.01 |
| Palkies, Ponies & Pithoos | 3.64 | 1.25 |
| Post & Telegraph | 3.46 | 1.07 |
| Banks | 3.38 | 1.33 |
| Security Arrangements | 4.05 | 1.19 |
| Online Services | 3.58 | 1.16 |
| Help Desk | 4.02 | 1.13 |

Table 2

The above table shows the satisfaction mean scores and standard deviation of each service attribute that are provided by Shrine Board to the pilgrims. The mean scores ranged from 3.38 to 4.14. eight of these attributes had satisfaction ratings greater than 4 like cloak rooms (4.14, 1.14), shelter sheds (4.12, 1.09), obtaining a group no. for darshans (4.11, 1.06), souvenir shops (4.06, 0.96), bhaint shops (4/05, 1.12), security arrangements (4.05, 1.19), places to rest at bhawan (4.03, 1.13) and help desk (4.02, 1.13). In contrast, the respondents were least satisfied with bank (3.38, 1.33), post & telegraph (3.46, 1.07), room reservation service (3.53, 1.17), online services (3.58, 1.16), palkies, ponies & pithoos (3.64, 1.25), medical facilities (3.83, 1.17), accommodation (3.84, 1.2), bhojanalaya & refreshment units (3.85, 1.23), waiting in queue (3.84, 1.24), railway reservation counter (3.84, 1.01), information counters (3.97, 1.09) and blanket stores (3.99, 0.99).

From the results it is derived that security arrangements are most important for the pilgrims but they are not satisfied up to that level.

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