

TOURIST SATISFACTION WITH VISIT OF LUSHAN MOUNTAIN

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ABSTRACT

Tourist satisfaction is an important benchmark for measuring the development of "quality tourism" in tourist attractions. The purpose of this paper is to study tourist satisfaction of Lushan Mountain. The research method employed is based on the tourist satisfaction model of ESR by focusing on satisfaction of the tourists' expected experience, scene experience and recall experience. The overall result of the field and questionnaire surveys shows that tourist satisfaction of Lushan Mountain is positive. The important factors withholding tourist praise are the attitudes of service personnel, toilet hygiene, entertainment activities, accommodation prices, and quality of the food served. Findings also show tourists were positive on their expected experience and recall experience, but negative on their scene experience. The study suggests the need to make improvements in accommodation, traffic, and entertainment activities to enhance tourist experience.

Keywords: *Lushan Mountain, tourist satisfaction, ESR Model.*

INTRODUCTION

Ever since 2009 when the China National Tourism Administration looked into "quality tourism", the Jiang Xi Province has been surveying key tourist attractions in the province. Their results showed tourist satisfaction with Lushan Mountain has ranked third consistently except for 2015 (see Figure 1). This emphasis on quality tourism has entered a new stage of focus when the China Tourism Conference of 2018, for the first time, proposed "a new era of high-quality tourism development in China". Tourist satisfaction has become an important way to "quality tourism" as attention to tourist satisfaction surveys has become important.

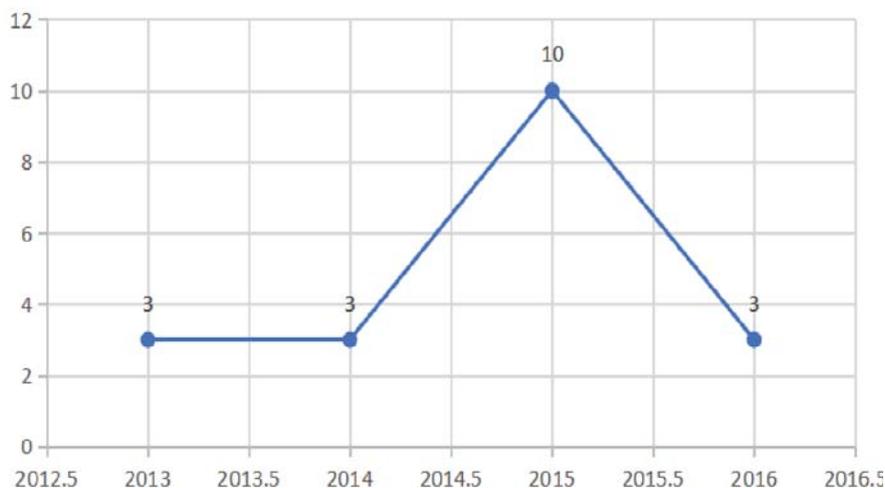


Figure 1: The Ranking of Tourist Satisfaction in Lushan Mountain

(Source: The Jiangxi Province Tourist Satisfaction Survey report, 2017)

LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, academic research that focused on content, formation mechanism, scenic evaluation and model construction of tourist satisfaction has yielded fruitful results. Tourist satisfaction plays an important role in management and marketing of tourist attraction. It is the difference between tourism expectation and practical experience (Liuguoqiang, 2015). The formation mechanism of tourist satisfaction is based on the relationship among tourist motivation, expectation and satisfaction (Huangzi Xuan, et al., 2018). It constructs an evaluation index system in the hope of alleviating tourist satisfaction by using the factor analysis method (Wangxia, 2017). Empirical research scholars are inclined to compare studies of tourist perception. As such, the problems of tourism service are raised in the comparison of tourist satisfaction with world heritage sites of Huangshan, Lushan and Wuyi Mountain (Guxiao Yan, 2009). However, most scholars rarely performed research on tourist activities and experience solely on Lushan Mountain.

This research has been undertaken to fill that void. It adopts the tourist satisfaction model based on spatial displacement and time conversion, combination of expected experience, scene experience and recall experience. Through an investigation and analysis of tourist satisfaction with Lushan Mountain, this research aims to identify the main factors that affect tourist satisfaction and suggest measures to bring improvements to activities that have contributed to low tourist satisfaction.

Tourist Satisfaction Model

Comprising intangible experiences and the attractiveness of tourist attractions, tourist satisfaction can be divided into three levels: material, spiritual and social (Zhaoqing Xia, 2018). By considering the mechanism and activities of travel experience from the perspective of the tourist (Matian & Xieyan Jun, 2015), this paper constructs the ESR model of tourist satisfaction with the expected experience before travel, the scene experience in the travel process, and the recall experience after travel (Figure 2).

The ESR model realizes the continuous conversion of time and the complete displacement of space, which is representative of the evaluation of tourist satisfaction. The expected experience of tourists affects the scene experience in the travel process. The scene experience will affect the recall experience of tourists. The recall experience will positively or negatively strengthen the expected experience of tourists, which form a reinforcement factor for tourists to decide whether to travel again.

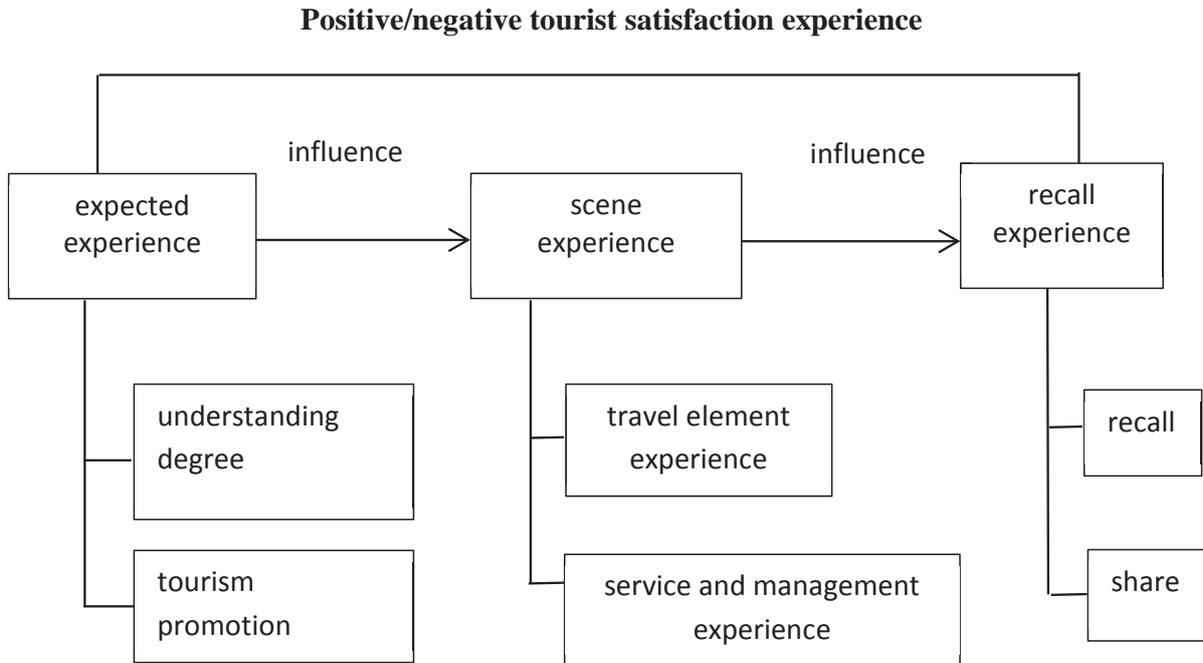


Figure 2: Tourist Satisfaction Model (ESR)

Expected Experience

The expected experience includes tourist understanding of the destination and the promotion of the tourist destination. Those indicators generated by the media will form the expected perception before the tourists set off, which becomes the first factor that affects the satisfaction of tourists.

Scene Experience

The expected experience is not the whole of the tourist experience as it needs to be confirmed by the reality of the experience. The scene experience includes the present experience of tourism products, tourist catering, accommodation, travel transportation, travel toilets, and management of tourist destinations. The scene experience is a key factor affecting tourist satisfaction.

Recall Experience

Recall experience is the memory and sharing of tourism experiences by tourists. Tourists share their travel experiences through text, pictures, videos, etc., which will affect the expected experience of tourists positively or negatively, forming the key factors that determine whether tourists travel again.

METHODOLOGY

Questionnaire Design and Survey

Based on the tourist satisfaction model, the questionnaire contains four parts: (1) Characteristics of tourist travel including purpose and mode of travel, duration of stay, access to information, etc. (2) The satisfaction survey of tourists, including the satisfaction of specific items under each experience element, is the core part of the questionnaire. It is measured by Likert's five scales, i.e. "Very satisfied", "Satisfactory", "Neutral", "Unsatisfied" and "Very Unsatisfied" are denoted by 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 respectively. (3) Tourists' overall perception and evaluation of their experience. (4) The basic information of tourists.

The questionnaire was distributed to visitors to Sandie Spring, Meilu, and Huajing, which are some of the main tourist attractions at Lushan Mountain. From 21 August to 26 August 2017, 400 questionnaires were distributed on the scene, with 362 returned questionnaires that were usable.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Data collected from the questionnaire (see Table 1) show 56.35% were males and 43.65% females; majority of the tourists fell into two age groups of 18 – 30 years old (51.93%) and 30 – 40 years old (29.83%); three main monthly income groups as those earning 3501-5000 RMB (19%), 5001-8000 RMB (40%), and 8001-12000 RMB (20%); 43.65% had undergraduate education and 21.55% masters and above; and 22% were entrepreneurs, 20% worked in government agencies/institutions, 18% were students, 15% were professional and technical personnel, 2% were farmers; and 1% were labours. It shows that there were more male than female tourists in Lushan Mountain, with middle-aged and young tourists making up the largest contingent.

Table 1: Basic Statistics of Tourists

	Feature	N	Percentage (%)
gender	Male	204	56.35
	Female	158	43.65
age	< 18	16	4.42
	18-30	188	51.93
	30-40	108	29.83
	40-50	38	10.50
	> 50	12	3.31
monthly income	< 3500 yuan	36	10.00
	3501-5000 yuan	70	19.00
	5001-8000 yuan	144	40.00
	8001-12000 yuan	72	20.00
	> 12001 yuan	40	11.00
educational background	lower than a college associate degree	38	10.50
	junior college	88	24.31
	Undergraduate	198	43.65
	master degree and above	38	21.55
occupation	government agencies employees	72	20.00
	corporate management staff	80	22.00
	business staff	36	10.00
	Professional skill worker	54	15.00
	Student	64	18.00
	Worker	4	1.00
	Farmer	6	2.00
	Retirees	46	13.00

Analysis of Results

Data in the form of weighted average obtained from the questionnaires (Table 2) shows that the average overall satisfaction of Lushan Mountain is 3.46 (accurate to 0.01). Of the 5.14% of the tourists who would recommend Lushan Mountain to friends, 61.15% of them have a pleasant recollection of their experience. Also, 43.17% of the tourists are willing to share their experiences in the media through text, pictures, etc. Tourist satisfaction analysis based on tourist perception of elements of tourism, tourism resource, accommodation, catering, traffic, shopping, entertainment activity, scenic service management, etc. is shown in Figure 3.

Table 2: Tourist Satisfaction Score

Satisfaction	5 points (sample ratio)	4 points (sample ratio)	3 points (sample ratio)	2 points (sample ratio)	1 point (sample ratio)	Weighted average
Overall	10.50%	41.44%	35.36%	8.84%	3.87%	3.46
Tourism resource	6.63%	49.17%	41.44%	2.21%	0.55%	3.59
Accommodation	4.97%	31.49%	30.39%	23.20%	9.94%	2.98
Catering	5.52%	28.18%	38.67%	23.20%	4.42%	3.07
Traffic	14.92%	49.72%	22.65%	7.73%	4.97%	3.62
Shopping	4.42%	38.12%	38.67%	11.60%	7.18%	3.21
Entertainment activity	0	9.39%	22.65%	44.75%	23.20%	2.18
Scenic Service Management	5.52%	51.93%	29.83%	11.05%	1.66%	3.49



Figure 3: Satisfaction Scores of Each Element in Lushan Mountain

Tourism Resource Attraction

The tourism resource satisfaction score of 3.59 is higher than the overall satisfaction of Lushan Mountain, indicating higher attraction of the tourism resources in Lushan Mountain. The scores of air quality and ecological landscape of tourism resources are relatively high, while the scores of human landscape resources are relatively low mainly because of inadequate explanation provided by the tour guides. This resulted in the tourists not having cultural appreciation of Lushan Mountain.

Tourism Transportation

The traffic satisfaction of 3.62 is the highest among the many tourism factors, indicating convenient transportation for Lushan Mountain. The external traffic satisfaction score of 3.54 is slightly lower than the internal (3.83) traffic. This suggests improvements in terms of external traffic accessibility and road signs need to be made. The design of the sightseeing car received a higher evaluation score from the local tourists of the Lushan Mountain area. However, the evaluation of the price of the sightseeing vehicle was highly polarized. Visitors who stayed in Lushan Mountain for less than three days thought the admission price for the sightseeing car was too high, while tourists who stayed more than three days thought it was acceptable, and tourists who stayed more than seven days thought it was particularly cheap. Therefore, the price set for the sightseeing car can use differential pricing according to the tourist's length of visit.

Service and Management

Tourist satisfaction with tour service and management at 3.49 is close to the overall satisfaction with Lushan Mountain (Figure 4). The overall cleanliness and sanitation of Lushan Mountain is fine but the toilet hygiene was low (at 2.98) and this could have the impact of lowering the overall evaluation of Lushan Mountain by tourists. The evaluation of the material aspect of management is higher than the intangible aspect as reflected in expensive tickets, bad service attitude of the staff, unresolved tourist complaints, etc.

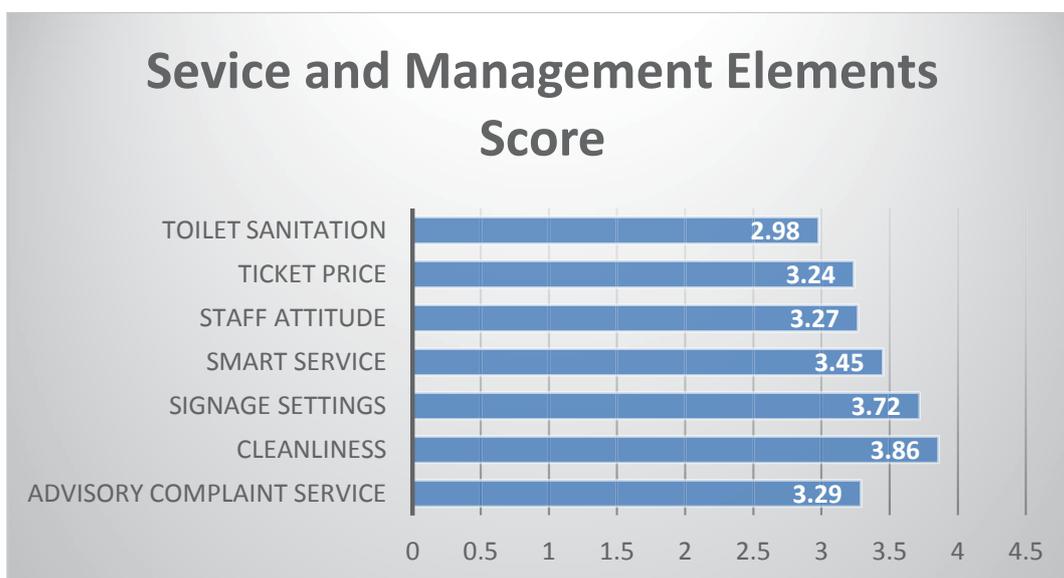


Figure 4: Satisfaction Scores of Service and Management in Lushan Mountain

Board and Lodging

The scores for food catering (3.07) and accommodation satisfaction (2.98) were low possibly due to the taste of the food catered for the tourists and the high price of accommodation. Overall evaluation for the dining environment, convenience and

accommodation facilities shows that there is still room for improvement of the accommodation infrastructure.

Tourist Shopping

The shopping satisfaction (3.21) is lower than the overall satisfaction of Lushan Mountain, suggesting that price of the products and the type of shopping are poor. Some of the same goods in different shopping malls were sold at different prices. Many goods also did not carry a price tag. Categorisation of shopping products is also not standardised. However, tourists evaluated highly the attitude of shopping shop staff, mainly due to the high level of local residents' participation in tourism, and the direct correlation between tourism benefits and personal interests.

Entertainment Activities

Entertainment activities are the lowest mark (2.18) among the tourism elements. Some tourists did not think there were any entertainment activities and focused only sightseeing tours. Tourists had no other experiential activities for their participation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In the survey using the 5-point Likert scale, the mean of 1 to 2.4 is negative on tourist satisfaction, 2.5 to 3.4 is neutral, and 3.5 to 5 is positive (Tosun, 2002). With an overall score of 3.5, tourists were positive on their satisfaction with their visit of Lushan Mountain. However, the main factors holding them back from a higher positive evaluation include poor sanitation of toilets, bad attitude of service staff, high prices of goods, complaints with some of the accommodation facilities, taste of some of food served could be better, and lack of experiential recreational activities like entertainment. Tourists had higher satisfaction with expected and recall experience but less satisfaction with scene experience. The following recommendations are proposed to improve on their scene experience.

Humanize Shopping Service

Tourism shopping has a significant effect on the economic pull effect of Lushan Mountain. However, the overall satisfaction of tourism shopping in Lushan Mountain is not high. The reason appears to be that the good, welcoming attitude of the shopping staff is usually observed when related only to sales that would translate into economic benefits for them. This study recommends that the sale staff should demonstrate a good, welcoming attitude at all times, whether directly or indirectly related to sales. They should adopt a human interest, instead of commercial interest, towards the shoppers or tourists.

Promote Traditional Products Prominently

This study also recommends that more should be done to play up and promote traditional products displayed and sold. More thoughts and efforts should be put into developing

tourism products to further promote the famous and/or cultural products traditional to the Lushan Mountain area. For example, promote the traditional products through games and contests.

Improve Material Needs - Food, Lodging and Transportation Facilities

Regarding improvements on the material needs and comfort of tourists visiting Lushan Mountain, this study recommends adopting price differentials on internal and external transportation, lowering some of the prices on accommodation, and improving the taste of some of the food served. For example, lowering transportation pricing for tourists who have a shorter visit of Lushan Mountain, opening up tourist lines for external traffic to shorten the entry time for external tourists, employing better chefs/cooks to prepare the food served to tourists, and upgrading accommodation facilities.

Develop Entertainment Activities

This study shows that tourists have the lowest score in their evaluation of entertainment activities in Lushan Mountain, and this includes their desire for a good emotional and spiritual experience from their visit. This can be illustrated by the low level of tourist participation of tourism products linked to the Lushan Mountain area. It is a likely reason why 46.83% of the tourists were unwilling to share their travel experiences with their friends. Therefore, it is necessary to rediscover tourism resources and develop entertainment activities, changing the tourism mode of “daytime viewing, sleeping at night”. Tour groups may consider offering entertainment or fun hands-on experiences that can tap into their emotional or spiritual side, experiences such as calligraphy and painting exhibitions, Buddhist music, stories on Lushan folklore, etc. These entertainment activities will enrich their experience of the Lushan Mountain landscape by connecting them to its culture, history, religion, customs and folklore.

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