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Analysis of Differences between Expected and Perceived Satisfaction Score of Pilgrims: *A Case of Chhinnamasta Temple of Nepal*

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ABSTRACT

Nepal has many religious places to visit. The country collected about 6.7 percent of GDP in 2019. For sustainability of revenue collection and conservation of religious sites, the pilgrims should meet their expectations and hence, difference in Expectation (EV) and Perceived Score (PV) is one to asses that the study randomly selected 528 pilgrims visiting the study period was approached and noted their perception on 8 attributes that tap various dimension of pilgrims' sites using structured 24 Likert Scale Questions. Reliability questions related to each attribute were measured by calculating Cronbach Alpha and McDonald's Omega. There was no serious problem found regarding reliability of attributes. The Wilcoxon-Signed Rank test was used to infer a significant difference between EV and PV. All attributes except 'condition on Safety and security' showed significant difference between PV and EV, of which 3 attributes PV score outweigh EV. Gaps on EV and PV necessitate reviewing facilities available at Chhinnamasta Temple to attract more tourists.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study: Travel and tourism accounted for 6.1 percent of the global gross domestic product (GDP) in 2021, denoting an increase over 2020 but it was below the figures reported prior to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Overall, the total contribution of travel and tourism to the global GDP amounted to roughly 5.81 trillion U.S. dollars in 2021(*Statista*, 2021)

Tourism, in general, can be categorised into various forms like adventure tourism, birth tourism, business tourism, culinary tourism, dark tourism, religious tourism, sex tourism, to name a few (Tureac & Turtureanu, 2010). According to UNESCO, sixty percent of the

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world population practises religious tourism. It is estimated that there are approximately 600 million national and international religious and spiritual voyages in the world (*UNWTO*, 2011)

Nepal has many religious and spiritual places in its boundary. To that end, Pilgrimage tourism is one of the major parts of the tourism industry in Nepal. Tourism industry keeps the population mobile, bringing motley people in race, culture, religion in contact. Nepal accommodated 171937 (14.36 percent) of pilgrimage tourist in year 2016 which accounts about 6.7% contribution to GDP of Nepal (World Bank, 2011)

Despite collecting revenue, the sustainability of revenue and conservation of any pilgrimage sites rest on how much expectation and satisfaction of the pilgrims are met. To evaluate these two pertinent constructs, there should be scientific research.

These two constructs will determine the sustainability and conservation of the tourism sites in the years to come. What's more, when pilgrims are satisfied and feel they have met their expectation, more revenue will accumulate, the spill-over effect of this will benefit multilayers of the society.

Bleie (2003) mentioned that scholars and practitioners need to continue to address the challenges inherent in building pilgrim tourism on principles of sustainable tourism that reconcile cultural, developmental, conservational, and commercial interests.

As a study area, this study has taken Chhinnamasta Temple for examining differences in expected and perceived satisfaction score of Pilgrimage. Chhinnamasta Bhagawati also called Shakhada Bhagawati and Shakhadeswori is a temple and Shakti Peethas in Eastern Nepal lying in Chhinnamasta Rural Municipality of Saptari District. It stands as one of the renowned vicinities for Hindu pilgrimage, is famous for its religious and tourist attractions.

No written document but there is hearsay that King Shakra Singh came to Sakhada from Simaron Garh (Fort) in the first decade of the 14th century and died there. He had also brought the idol of his favourite goddess Bhagwati with him. He had spent the rest of his life in the service of this Bhagavati. The ruins were later turned into a small temple by a widowed Brahmin, Chyakhuri Nani. Bunnilal Thakur also helped build the temple, according to locals. The temple was built by Chyakhuri Nani and Bunnilal Thakur until 1990, but after a 90-year earthquake damaged it, the villagers, led by temple priest Aniruddha Thakur, collected donations, and built a new temple on the same site with a tin roof over the brick wall.

In the year 1971 AD, the temple was turned into a concrete one and 3-room dharamshala built with the help of the then Indian Railway Minister Lalit Narayan Mishra. In the year 1987 BS, the then King Birendra donated Rs. 500,000 on his visit to Bhagwati. From that amount, the then Sagarmatha Zonal Governor Surya Bahadur Sen Oli built a magnificent and beautiful pagoda style temple of Bhagwati. As Chhinnamasta Bhagwati is considered

to be one of the Shakti Peeths that fulfil desires, devotees from Nepal and India flock here daily with sacrificial items such as goats, sheep, pigeons, ducks and fish, says Chairperson Mahakanta Thakur. Hundreds of goats, sheep, pigeons, ducks, and fish are sacrificed in the temple every day. Those who fulfil their desires even offer five sacrifices. It is believed that more than 30,000 sacrifices are made here every year

Statement of the Problem: Chhinnamasta temple being one of the major Hindu religious sites at the eastern part of Nepal, pilgrims that come to visit the temple must meet their expectation and they must be satisfied on various factors. The level of satisfaction and status of whether the expectation meets or not has to be examined by research works. To fulfil the demand of this gap, the scientific research aiming to examine the level of expectation met and level of satisfaction is essential.

Objective of the Study: The main objective of research study is to analyse the difference in expected and perceived Satisfaction Score of Pilgrims visiting Chhinnamasta temple of Nepal.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Eliade (1969) defines pilgrimage as “a religiously motivated journey to a symbolic centre of the world – axis mundi, or its representation, i.e., a very sacred place, a place of the sacred, separated from profane zone”. According (Nieminen, 2012), religious tourism, pilgrimage tourism, cultural tourism, cultural heritage tourism and spiritual tourism are often used interchangeably.

Pilgrimage tourism has spiritual importance and falls under religious tourism (Dhar, 2015). Pilgrimage tourism means travel to a site or worship or a sacred place, it is one of the most geographically significant forms of religious behaviour (Vijayanand,2012). Pilgrimage as a form of journey provides an opportunity for the people to visit sacred places and is a feature common to more or less all societies (Ashfaq & Parveen, 2014). Pilgrimage can have very positive effects on communities and is one of the well-known phenomena in religion and culture and it exists in all the main religions of the world (Collins-Kreiner, 2020). Religious tourism is taken as one of the oldest forms of tourism (Rinschede,1992).

Religious tourism established three essential motivations, first the quest of knowledge, second the development of interpersonal relations and third spiritual renovation. These three key motivations interact dynamically with three dimensions God, oneself and other (Li et al., 2006).

The major impact on the environment due to pilgrimage tourism includes stress on basic services such as water supply, degradation of natural resources and increase in pollution specifically in peak seasons (Hole & Snehal,2019).

Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry (1990) stated that excellence in customer service is the feature of success in service industries and among manufacturers of products that require reliable service. Service is the ability to deliver what is promised. (Pai et al., 2016) studied taking Murudeshwara Shiva temple as a case and concluded *the* local authorities need to work towards improving support service which is a necessary factor in determining the overall satisfaction of the tourism.

Kumar (2015) carried out a study to evaluate expectation and satisfaction of Hindu pilgrims at Naina Devi Shrine situated in the north-western Indian state Himachal Pradesh following the Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory. The result of the study emphasised the necessity of improving appropriate entertainment activities, upgrading the cleanliness, hygiene and sanitation situation, and reconstructing the prices charged for accommodation and souvenirs items leading to the destinations in order to enhance the satisfaction of pilgrims.

Expectations define the customer's anticipations about performance of products and services (Ashfaq et al., 2019). Perceived performance investigates the customer's experience after using products or services that can be better or worse than customer's expectation (Spreng et al., 1996).

Disconfirmation is defined as the difference between the customer's initial expectation and observed actual performance (Bhattacherjee & Premkumar, 2004). EDT consists of two sub processes having independent effects on customer satisfaction: the formation of expectations and the disconfirmation of those expiations through performance comparisons (Oliver, 1980). When actual performance of a specific product or service cannot meet the customer's expectation, negative disconfirmation will occur and leads to customer's dissatisfaction. Positive disconfirmation leads to the customer's satisfaction if perceived performance of a specific product or service is able to exceed customer's satisfaction. Finally, when there isn't any difference between customer's expectation and actual performance of specific product or service, means perceived performance equals to expectation, thus simple confirmation is occurred (Oliver, 1980; Santos & Boote, 2003)

RESEARCH METHODS

This section presents the sampling plan and data collection methods as well as data analysis tools.

Sampling and Data collection method

Pilgrims visiting Chhinnamasta temple in the data collection period (August-December 2021) were the respondents of the study. For maintaining randomness of the sample, the pilgrims in que and temple premises were chosen using a method known as EPI or SSM.

Getting representative samples in household surveys is often difficult in low-income countries. Prevalent random sampling techniques demand the availability of a population frame. Substitute for such situation may be most popular spatial sampling methods adopted by WHO for use in low-income countries is the EPI method, named after the Expanded Programme of Immunization which makes use of a modification of PPS (Probability Proportional to Size) sampling developed originally in the USA and modified for use in the smallpox eradication programmes in West Africa or Segment Sampling method(SSM) similar to EPI. This method first identifies segments or clusters (e.g., communities, villages). In each chosen cluster the EPI method selects a random direction which is often defined in the field by spinning a bottle or pen (Bostoen & Chalabi, 2006; Chao et al., 2012).

But statisticians had some concerns on the bias and precision of the estimates obtained using the EPI method until computer simulations provided indications of its validity (Bennett et al., 1994; Bostoen & Chalabi, 2006)

To choose respondents, a pen was spun and thrown on ground, the person near to the tip was approached, consent taken for survey and asked the structured questions. The structured questionnaire developed by (Oliver, 1980) has been used which contains 2 parts viz. 1) Information regarding respondents, 2) Questions related to respondents' expectation. The second part has two sub-parts, one was related to respondents' expectation towards various services, and another was to measure the level they perceived on their expectation. All together there were 24 questions of 5-point Likert type questions used by most studies based on Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) as a conceptual framework.

The total number of respondents approached was 550 but only 528 included in study due to denial of some of the pilgrims to respond. The study has used data collected between months August to December in 2021 by employing four enumerators.

Data Processing and Analysis

The collected questionnaires were meticulously scrutinised, discrepancies corrected and entered using data entry sheet in SPSS 23.0. Data has been presented mainly using tables and charts for the demographic section. Various questions measuring different factors related to expectation and Satisfaction were aggregated to get composite factor related scores.

Then, those composite scores were undertaken for inferential analysis using Wilcoxon-signed Rank Test tools to examine the existence of statistical significance.

Data Analysis and Discussions

The demographic information of the respondents has been presented in Table 1. The majority of the respondents were male (64.3%) whereas 35.3 percent were female

respondents. Age between 31 to 50 years was the dominant age group with 39.1 percent. The temple was mostly visited by pilgrims of education 'Up to 10' (59.2%). The main purpose of pilgrims was the 'prayer/pilgrimage' (30.6%). Regarding the budget of the visit, most of the respondents have budget less than 5000(63.9%) followed by '5000-10000'(31.9%) and 'More than 10000' (4.0%)

Table 1

Demographic of Respondents

Socio Demographic Variables		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	342	64.7
	Female	187	35.3
Age	18 to 30 years	134	25.3
	31 to 50 years	207	39.1
	51 to 60 years	144	27.2
	61 to 70 years	44	8.3
Education	Up to 10 class	313	59.2
	Up to 12 class	151	28.5
	Up to Bachelors	44	8.3
	Master's or above	21	4.0
Purpose	Prayer/pilgrimage	162	30.6
	Family outing	59	11.2
	Vow	133	25.1
	Popularity of place	38	7.2
	Religion	122	23.1
	Other	15	2.8
Budget of Trip (Rs)	Less than 5000	338	63.9
	5000-10000	169	31.9
	More than 10000	21	4.0
Modes of Travels	Bus	189	35.7
	Taxi	95	18.0
	Auto	114	21.6
	Rented Vehicle	128	24.2
	Private Vehicle	3	.6

Note: From author's calculation using data from Survey, 2021

Of the total respondents, 35.7 percent used bus, 24.2 percent rented vehicles, 21.6 percent hired Auto as Modes of Travels.

Thus, it is seen that the majority of the pilgrims that visit the study area are middle-aged male with education up to high school level and can spend Rs.5000 at most. It is prudent to focus on this category of pilgrims while planning sustainability of Chhinnamasta temple. The modal budget of the trip is lesser than or equal to 5000 demands more engaging services to add up for larger revenue.

Test of Reliability: The reliability of the attributes has been examined by calculating Cronbach Alpha, and also by McDonald's Omega suitable for items differ in quality or have skewed distributions (Italo & Alvarado, 2016).

Table 2
Reliability of Attributes

Attributes	No. Questions of in Attributes	Cronbach Alpha(α)	McDonald's Omega(ω)	Reliability
Condition of Tourism Services(A)	4	0.869	0.873	Good
Condition of Temple Management(B)	4	0.821	0.822	Good
Condition of Food(C)	3	0.819	0.855	Good
Condition of Accommodation (D)	2	0.727	0.727	Acceptable
Condition of Attitudes of Locals (E)	3	0.930	0.931	Excellent
Condition of Attraction(F)	3	0.780	0.796	Acceptable
Condition of Infrastructure Facilities(G)	2	0.801	0.804	Good
Condition of Safety and Security(H)	3	0.502	0.646	Poor

Note: Author's calculation based on data from Survey, 2021

Most of the attributes fulfil criteria of reliability coefficient as both Alpha and Omega greater than 0.7 except it's poor for attribute Safety and Security.

Analysis of Service Quality Gap

The Study used 8 attributes to examine the gap between Expectation Value (EV) and Perceived Value (PV) across these 8 attributes. First mean value for Expectation Value and Perceived Values across each attribute were calculated with respective standard deviation which has been presented in table 2.

Table 3
Gap Between Expectation Value and Perceived Value across 8 attributes

Items	Mean Perceived Score	Std. Deviation	Mean Expected Score	Std. Deviation	d_i
Condition of Tourism Services(A)	3.57	1.09	3.88	1.19	-0.31
Condition of Temple Management(B)	3.98	.93	3.70	.86	0.28
Condition of Food(C)	3.37	1.25	3.40	1.26	-0.02
Condition of Accommodation(D)	3.27	1.18	3.50	1.26	-0.23
Condition of Attitudes of Locals (E)	3.67	1.18	3.60	1.16	0.07
Condition of Attraction(F)	3.66	1.04	2.59	.74	1.06
Condition of Infrastructure Facilities(G)	3.21	1.23	3.50	1.34	-0.29
Condition of Safety and Security(H)	2.97	.94	3.03	1.07	-0.05

Note: From author's calculation based on data from Survey,2021

Table 2 shows that all 7 attributes for both Expected Value and Perceived Value, except attribute 'Condition and Safety and Security' are above neutral value 3 in Likert scale which indicates the pilgrims are satisfied on these various attributes. In case of 'Condition and Safety and Security', Perceived Value is lesser than 3 indicating that it is below the neutral value.

For Gap Analysis between EV and PV, difference(d_i) between them has been calculated by subtracting EV from PV. The negative value of di indicates the respondents found the attributes less than they expected.

Three attributes namely 'Condition of Temple Management', 'Condition of Attitudes of Locals' and 'Condition of Attraction' showed that their values are above the expectation of respondents whereas the rest 5 are negative indicating they are below expectation of respondents.

Having a difference between EV and PV does not assure that they are below the expectation of the pilgrims as the EV and PV are calculated using sample data. To ensure whether EV and PV really differ statistically, each of PV and EV should be compared using suitable statistical tools.

Examination of significance of Gap Between EV and PV:

- To compare two observations from the same respondents, two different times or at two different contexts are said to be a paired test.
- For a parametric test, the most common test for such a case is 'Paired T-test' if the data satisfy the assumption for it.
- To decide on the tools to test the significance difference between Mean Perceived and Expected, the difference between Perceived and Expected was computed.

There are three assumptions for paired t-test i) Independence of data ii) Normality of data iii) There are no outliers in data.

As the data was taken using random sampling, the first assumption is not violated. To test the normality of data, Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Sapiro-Wilk test have been used. The table 3 shows, result of the normality test.

Table 4

Test of Normality

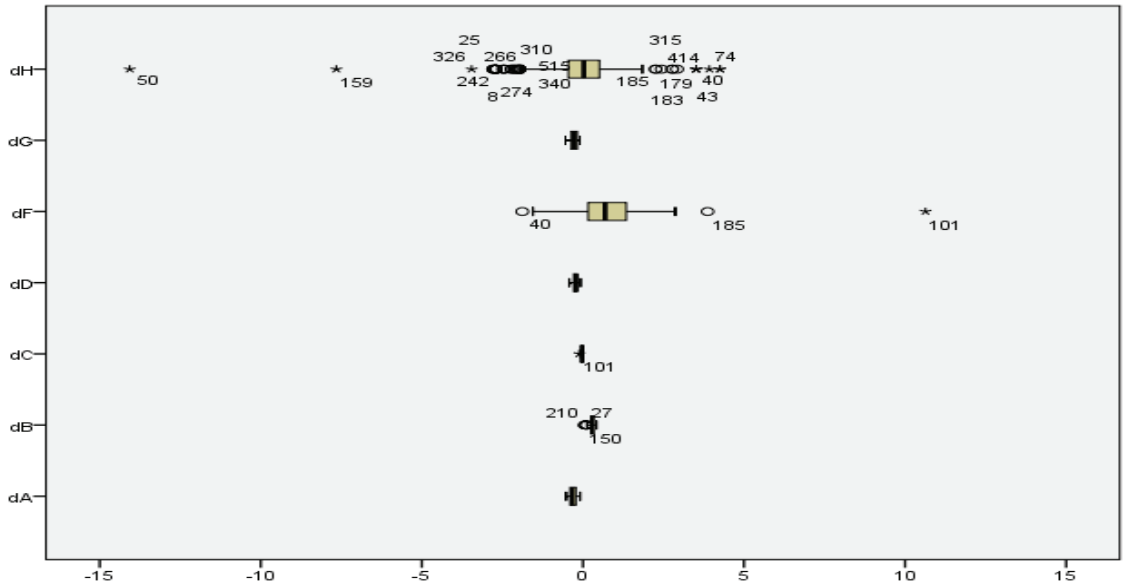
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov [a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
d_i	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
dA	.126	528	0.01	.967	528	0.01
dB	.161	528	0.01	.957	528	0.01
dC	.116	528	0.01	.926	528	0.01
dD	.163	528	0.01	.928	528	0.01
dF	.074	528	0.01	.863	528	0.01
dG	.153	528	0.01	.942	528	0.01
dH	.152	528	0.01	.778	528	0.01

Note: From author's calculation based on data from Survey,2021

Applying Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, none of the different values(di) showed significant results. All p<=0.05 suggest absence of normality.

For checking outliers, Box-plot Fig 1 was prepared.

Figure 1: *Box-plot for checking outliers.*



The box plots indicate some attributes are ingrained with outliers.

So, though, first assumption of paired-t test is satisfied, data failed to satisfy remaining 2 assumptions thus demanding to look for alternative non-parametric tests. The suitable non-parametric test is the Wilcoxon-Signed rank test.

To test the difference between mean perceived and Expected across the different items, non-parametric tool Wilcoxon-signed Rank Test has been applied. The table 4 shows the result of the test.

The Wilcoxon-Signed Rank Sum test revealed that except for ‘condition of Safety and security’, there is gap in Expectation and Perceived Score of Pilgrims.

Perceived scores for condition of ‘tourism services’, ’food’, ’accommodation’ and ‘infrastructure facilities’ are starkest below than their expectation. Similarly, respondents found more than expected on condition of ‘temple management’, ’attitudes of locals’ and ‘attraction’.

Table 5

Hypothesis Test Result using Wilcoxon-Signed Rank Test

Median difference between Perceived and Expected score on	Sig.	Decision
Condition of Tourism Services	0.01	Null Hypothesis Not Accepted
Condition of Temple Management	0.01	Null Hypothesis Not Accepted
Condition of Food	0.01	Null Hypothesis Not Accepted
Condition of Accommodation	0.01	Null Hypothesis Not Accepted
Condition of Attitude of Locals	0.01	Null Hypothesis Not Accepted
Condition of Attraction	0.01	Null Hypothesis Not Accepted
Condition of Infrastructure Facilities	0.01	Null Hypothesis Not Accepted
Condition of Safety and Security	0.63	Retain Null Hypothesis

Note. The significance level is 0.05.

Note: From author's calculation based on data from Survey, 2021

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Based on primary 528 observations collected using a random sampling method, it can be conferred that there is a gap between Expectation of Pilgrims on various service attributes and status of these attributes they perceived. Difference between mean score of Perceived and Expectation shows that pilgrims' expectation was not met on attributes like 'Tourism Services', 'Food', 'Accommodation' and 'Infrastructure Facilities'. Attributes 'Temple Management', 'Attitudes of local' and 'Attraction' were in par as per expectation of Pilgrims. The non-parametric tool Wilcoxon-Signed Rank test validated the difference being statistically significant. Though direct satisfaction level was not examined, but gap in EVs and PVs indicate the area in which improvement is necessary.

Despite Perceived Score for 3 attributes measuring service quality available at Chhinnamasta Temple, being above Expected Score, the value of the mean score are not high as compared to 5 indicating the most satisfied. 4 attributes related to basic services the visitors basically expect like condition of Tourism Services, Food, Accommodation, Infrastructure Facilities are below par the expectation of Pilgrims. As these values are substantiated by hypothesis testing, the concerned authorities should revisit the situation of these attributes for betterment. If these issues are not addressed, it will cause fewer pilgrims in the years ahead.

Most respondents had Budget for Trip below 5000, so for accumulating more revenue from Chhinnamasta temple, those under rated attributes should be improved. On the top, the perceived mean score for attribute Safety and Security was least among all, which should be on priority to ponder.

Based on study of Naina Devi Temple of Northwest India Kumar (2015) argues that Efforts must be made to get acquainted with introducing entertainment and recreation activities as well as to combine the destination with adjoining tourist attractions to increase the number of tourist arrivals to the area. Collins-Kreiner (2010) exploring Continuity and Transformations Pilgrimage points out that pilgrimage in the modern days involves not only spatial movement but also involves fulfilling emotional desire, so tourist attraction services should be a priority.

In conclusion, despite many factors showing no differences between expected and perceived satisfaction scores, the factors which are below the expectation of the pilgrims indicate that necessary effort and initiation should be taken to improve the situation to meet the satisfaction level relating to those factors for sustainability of Chhinnamasta Temple as a tourism destination.

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