# MANAGING TOURIST SATISFACTION: THE CASE OF A RESORT IN GAUTENG, SOUTH AFRICA

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─Abstract ─

*Customer satisfaction is very important within any industry, due to the variety of benefits that it provides to the establishments. Thus, the satisfaction of the tourists is associated with the experience of a product and service. However, little is known as to what contributes to tourists' satisfaction in the context of a resort within South Africa. Therefore, the objectives of this study is to identify the factors that contribute to tourist satisfaction at a resort within South Africa, through conducting a literature review and an empirical analysis. This article followed a case study approach using quantitative, descriptive and exploratory research to evaluate the satisfaction of the tourists. Furthermore, a non-probability method, namely convenience sampling was used, and the sample size of the study was 132 tourists at a resort in Gauteng. The measuring instrument used was a questionnaire and a total of 11 factors were identified that contribute to the satisfaction of the tourists at a resort. Amongst others the factors that has the largest contribution to the satisfaction of the tourists include accessibility of the overall establishment, service delivery of the restaurant employees and responsiveness of the hotel employees. The results also indicate that the factors are interrelated with each other, thus indicating that if a certain factor contributes to tourist satisfaction, a variety of other factors will also contribute to the satisfaction of the tourists. To conclude, the unique contribution of this research is that it indicates that responsiveness is an essential factor to tourists. Furthermore, there is a meaningful relationship between employees' ability to*

*deliver reliable services and their responsiveness to the needs of the resort guests. Therefore, these factors need close attention from resort managers to maintain and improve tourist satisfaction.*

**Key Words:** *tourist satisfaction, tourism, factors, tourists, resort.*

**JEL Classification:** M31, Z33

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The objectives of this study is to identify the factors that contribute to tourist satisfaction at a resort within South Africa, through conducting a literature review and an empirical analysis. Tourist satisfaction can be defined as the individual's cognitive-affective state that is obtained from a tourist experience (Iniesta-Bonillo, Sanchez-Fernandez & Jimenez-Castillo, 2016:5003). The satisfaction of tourists is an essential factor in the tourism industry. Previous studies have focused on customer satisfaction in other working environments (Ihtiyar, Ahmad & Osman, 2014:492; Ozatac, Saner & Sen., 2016:873; Yeo, Mohamed & Muda, 2016:179) and geographical areas outside South Africa (Arasli & Baradarani, 2014:1416; Lovrentjev, 2015:555; Poolklai, 2015:2120). However, there is limited research done on tourist satisfaction in the context of resorts in South Africa focusing on the factors that contribute to the satisfaction of the tourists.

### 1.1. Factors affecting tourist satisfaction

An understanding is needed of the factors (see Table 1) that influence the tourists' satisfaction at resorts to obtain advantages such as loyalty, positive word of mouth and increase in profit (Ozatac *et al.,* 2016:87). Some of the factors influencing tourists' satisfaction include tangibility, reliability, safety and security, empathy, receptivity, responsiveness, and assurance. According to Sekajja (2006:66), Marinescu and Ispas (2012:350) and Ara (2016:90), tangibility, involve items such as attractiveness of the establishments' structure. Reliability involves items such as room service, and safety and security entail items such as the welcoming of the guests (Marinescu & Ispas, 2012:350). Empathy includes the skills and experience of the staff (Sekajja, 2006:66; Marinescu & Ispas, 2012:350; Ara, 2016:90), and Marinescu and Ispas (2012:350) grouped the attention of the staff to establish an effective relationship with the tourists under receptivity. Assurance include friendliness of the staff and responsiveness include the user-friendliness of the reservation at the establishment (Sekajja, 2006:66; Ara, 2016:90). The factors

that have been identified in other studies are overlapping. Therefore, there is inconsistency with regards to which factors affect tourist satisfaction in a resort context.

**Table 1: Factors that influence the satisfaction of tourists**

| Factor | Industries | Author(s) |
|---|---|---|
| Tangibility | Tourism, hotel, banking, education, retail, telecommunication, and nature reserve | Sekajja (2006:66), Agbor (2011:59), Marinescu and Ispas (2012:350), Anjum, Aftab, Sultan and Ahmed (2016:513), Ara (2016:90), Ozatac *et al.* (2016:874) |
| Reliability | Tourism, hotel, banking, education, retail, telecommunication, and nature reserve | Sekajja (2006:66), Agbor (2011:59), Marinescu and Ispas (2012:350), Anjum *et al.* (2016:513), Ara (2016:90), Ozatac *et al.* (2016:874) |
| Safety and security | Tourism | Marinescu and Ispas (2012:350) |
| Empathy | Tourism, hotel, banking, education, retail, telecommunication, and nature reserve | Sekajja (2006:66), Agbor (2011:59), Marinescu and Ispas (2012:350), Anjum *et al.* (2016:513), Ara (2016:90) |
| Receptivity | Tourism | Marinescu and Ispas (2012:350) |
| Responsiveness | Hotel, banking, education, retail, telecommunication, and nature reserve | Sekajja (2006:66), Agbor (2011:59), Anjum *et al.* (2016:513), Ara (2016:90), Ozatac *et al.* (2016:874) |
| Assurance | Hotel, banking, education, retail, telecommunication, and nature reserve | Sekajja (2006:66), Agbor (2011:59), Anjum *et al.* (2016:513), Ara (2016:90) |

It can be seen from Table 1, that there are a variety of factors that influence tourists' satisfaction. A large variety of these factors were identified in other industries that are not within the scope of tourism. Some of the factors were however identified within the tourism industry, but there are limited factors identified in the context of a resort within South Africa. Therefore, the current study identified other factors that contribute to the satisfaction of the tourists within a resort context in South Africa.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This study followed a case study approach using quantitative, exploratory and descriptive research to evaluate tourist satisfaction, and to uncover the factors

contributing to tourist satisfaction at a resort. A formal letter was sent to the resort by means of an e-mail, stating the purpose of the study and requested permission to conduct the survey on their premises. A non-probability sampling method, convenience sampling was used, and the study population included the tourists who visited the resort during weekends. The sample size for this research study was 132 tourists, with a total of 100 completed questionnaires. The survey consisted of two sections and 60 questions. A pilot study was conducted with ten tourists at the selected resort in April 2017 and shortcomings were corrected. The researcher distributed the questionnaire during weekends, from the 22 October 2017 until the 3 December 2017. The only respondents, who participated in this study, were the tourists that used hotel and restaurant services. The data from the respondents were first captured and analysed in Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, and descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data. Secondly, the data was captured and analysed in SPSS, the data included the demographic profile and tourist satisfaction. The following statistical techniques were applied to the data: exploratory factor analysis, Kaiser-Meyer Olkin and Bartlett's test, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient and Spearman Rank Order Correlations.

## 3. RESULTS

The primary goal of this study was to identify the factors that contribute to the satisfaction of tourists at the selected resort. The demographic results are as follows: 45% were male, and 55% were female, the majority of the respondents were between 30 years and 39 years of age (32%), married (64%) and matric was their highest qualification (33%). The factors that contribute to tourists' satisfaction are identified in three areas, namely overall establishment, restaurant facilities and hotel facilities. These factors are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Factor analysis of the factors that contribute to tourist satisfaction at a resort**

| Factors contributing to the satisfaction of the tourists | FL | MV | CA | IIC |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Overall establishment** | **TV** | | 53.64% | |
| **Factor 1: Accessibility of the establishment** | | **4.73** | **.782** | **.254** |
| Signage at this establishment | .860 | | | |
| Availability of parking space at this establishment | .850 | | | |
| Maintenance of this establishment | .693 | | | |
| Convenience of this establishment's booking system | .648 | | | |
| **Factor 2: User-friendliness of the establishment** | | **4.65** | **.650** | **.421** |
| Scenery at this establishment | .882 | | | |
| Child-friendliness of this establishment | .651 | | | |
| User-friendliness of this establishment's website | .634 | | | |
| Safety and security at this establishment | .549 | | | |
| Location of this establishment | .485 | | | |
| **Restaurant facilities** | **TV** | | 80.47% | |
| **Factor 3: Quality assurance of the restaurant offerings** | | **4.81** | **.936** | **.388** |
| Employees' communication skills at this restaurant | .961 | | | |
| Overall cleanliness of this restaurant | .928 | | | |
| Reliability of the employees at this restaurant | .869 | | | |
| Flexibility of the employees at this restaurant to meet your needs | .820 | | | |
| Overall services offered at this restaurant | .783 | | | |
| Atmosphere at this restaurant | .402 | | | |
| **Factor 4: Service delivery of the restaurant employees** | | **4.87** | **.899** | **.556** |
| Attitude of the employees towards customers at this restaurant | .912 | | | |
| Professionalism of the employees at this restaurant | .891 | | | |
| Helpfulness of the employees at this restaurant | .749 | | | |
| Quality of the food and beverages offered at this restaurant | .744 | | | |
| Promptness of the employees at this restaurant | .657 | | | |
| Friendliness of the employees at this restaurant | .650 | | | |
| Politeness of the employees at this restaurant | .519 | | | |
| **Factor 5: Sufficiency of the restaurant employees** | | **4.78** | **.777** | **.311** |
| Employees' appearance at this restaurant | .940 | | | |
| Number of employees working at this restaurant | .744 | | | |
| Individual attention provided by the employees at this restaurant | .505 | | | |
| **Factor 6: Variety of the restaurant offerings** | | **4.77** | **.610** | **.000** |
| Variety of food and beverages offered at this restaurant | .868 | | | |
| Attractiveness of this restaurant | .516 | | | |
| **Factor 7: Payment for the restaurant offerings** | | **4.72** | **.734** | **.000** |
| Payment facilities at this restaurant | .598 | | | |
| Price of the food and beverages offered at this restaurant | .507 | | | |
| **Hotel facilities** | **TV** | | 80.90% | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Factor 8: Employees' ability to deliver reliable services** | | **4.87** | **.966** | **.202** |
| Overall cleanliness of this hotel | 1.057 | | | |
| Reliability of the employees at this hotel | .813 | | | |
| Promptness of the employees at this hotel | .800 | | | |
| Quality of the rooms at this hotel | .766 | | | |
| Employees' appearance at this hotel | .693 | | | |
| Attractiveness of this hotel | .591 | | | |
| Employees' communication skills at this hotel | .573 | | | |
| Overall service offered at this hotel | .546 | | | |
| **Factor 9: Effectiveness of the hotel employees** | | **4.78** | **.794** | **.065** |
| Effectiveness of the check in and check out procedures at this hotel | .853 | | | |
| Number of employees working at this hotel | .807 | | | |
| Individual attention provided by the employees at this hotel | .711 | | | |
| **Factor 10: Convenience of the hotel services** | | **4.70** | **.684** | **.282** |
| Price of the accommodation | .950 | | | |
| Size of the rooms at this hotel | .670 | | | |
| Room service at this hotel | .665 | | | |
| **Factor 11: Responsiveness of the hotel employees** | | **4.89** | **.968** | **.365** |
| Flexibility of the employees at this hotel to meet your needs | -.924 | | | |
| Helpfulness of the employees at this hotel | -.920 | | | |
| Professionalism of the employees at this hotel | -.892 | | | |
| Payment facilities at this hotel | -.852 | | | |
| Attitude of the employees towards the customers at this hotel | -.825 | | | |
| Politeness of the employees at this hotel | -.591 | | | |
| Atmosphere at this hotel | -.584 | | | |
| Friendliness of the employees at this hotel | -.402 | | | |

Key: FL - Factor Loading, MV - Mean Value, CA - Cronbach's Alpha, IIC - Inter-items correlation, TV – Total Variance

Three factor analyses were conducted (see Table 2). The first factor analysis was done for the overall establishment and revealed an eigenvalue greater than 1.0 and explained 53.64% of the variance. The Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($p<0.000$), and the KMO was 0.711. The second factor analysis was conducted for restaurant facilities and had an eigenvalue greater than 1.0 and explained 80.47% of the variance. The Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($p<0.000$), and the KMO was 0.680. The last factor analysis was done for hotel facilities and showed an eigenvalue greater than 1.0 and explained 80.90% of the variance. The Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($p<0.000$), and the KMO was 0.863. The factor loadings for the 11 factors ranged between 0.402 and 1.057. Factor

loadings are correlations of items with the extracted factor - these correlations can be either positive or negative and to be of significance, it should either be smaller than -0.3 or larger than 0.3. All reliability coefficients were relatively high, ranging from 0.650 (the lowest) and 0.968 (the highest). All the above is considered acceptable (Pallant, 2010:192; Field, 2013:684).

Spearman Rank Order Correlations were calculated to determine the direction and strength of linear relationships between the different factors that contribute to the satisfaction of the tourists (see Table 3). According to Pallant (2010:134), a correlation of 0 indicates no relationship; a correlation of 1 shows a perfect positive relationship and a correlation of -1 shows a perfect negative relationship. Cohen's (1988) guidelines were used for interpretation: small rho = <0.10, medium rho = >0.10, and large rho = >0.50. Thompson (2001:82) states that we should avoid "merely being stupid in another metric" by interpreting effect sizes with the same rigidity that $\alpha$ = 0.05 has been applied to statistical tests. Furthermore, the results of the Spearman Rank Order Correlation showed significant positive relationships between the different tourist satisfaction factors (Pallant, 2010:134).

**Table 3: Correlations between the factors that contribute to tourist satisfaction at a resort**

| Tourist satisfaction factors (N=100) | | Accessibility of the establishment | User-friendliness of the establishment | Quality assurance of the restaurant offerings | Service delivery of the restaurant employees | Sufficiency of the restaurant employees | Variety of the restaurant offerings | Payment for the restaurant offerings | Employees' ability to deliver reliable service | Effectiveness of the hotel employees | Convenience of the hotel services | Responsiveness of the hotel employees |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Accessibility of the establishment | CC | | .566** | .620** | .525** | .664** | .617** | .621** | .528** | .526** | .565** | .574** |
| | Sig | | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| User-friendliness of the establishment | CC | .566** | | .585** | .440** | .519** | .683** | .605** | .381** | .369** | .355** | .426** |
| | Sig | 0.00 | | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Quality assurance of the restaurant offerings | CC | .620** | .585** | | .768** | .881** | .896** | .766** | .676** | .539** | .579** | .688** |
| | Sig | 0.00 | 0.00 | | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Service delivery of the restaurant employees | CC | .525** | .440** | .768** | | .731** | .652** | .717** | .659** | .544** | .475** | .680** |
| | Sig | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Sufficiency of the restaurant employees | CC | .664** | .519** | .881** | .731** | | .798** | .725** | .694** | .616** | .567** | .636** |
| | Sig | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Variety of the restaurant offerings | CC | .617** | .683** | .896** | .652** | .798** | | .782** | .527** | .389** | .473** | .563** |
| | Sig | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Payment for the restaurant offerings | CC | .621** | .605** | .766** | .717** | .725** | .782** | | .514** | .448** | .476** | .559** |
| | Sig | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Employees' ability to deliver reliable service | CC | .528** | .381** | .676** | .659** | .694** | .527** | .514** | | .793** | .608** | .946** |
| | Sig | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Effectiveness of the hotel employees | CC | .526** | .369** | .539** | .544** | .616** | .389** | .448** | .793** | | .541** | .722** |
| | Sig | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Convenience of the hotel services | CC | .565** | .355** | .579** | .475** | .567** | .473** | .476** | .608** | .541** | | .657** |
| | Sig | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | | 0.00 |
| Responsiveness of the hotel | CC | .574** | .426** | .688** | .680** | .636** | .563** | .559** | .946** | .722** | .657** | |

| employees | S i g | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | |

Key: CC - Correlation Coefficient, Sig – Sig 2 tailed, ** - Correlation is significant at 0.01 level, and * - Correlation is significant at 0.05 level.

## 4. DISCUSSION

From Table 2, it can be seen that 11 factors were identified that contributes to tourists' satisfaction at the selected resort. Within the overall establishment two factors where identified. Accessibility (factor 1) consisted of four items, such as signage and availability of parking space. User-friendliness (factor 2) comprised of five items, such as scenery and child-friendliness. Other studies have also found that accessibility and user-friendliness contribute to the satisfaction of the tourists (Arasli & Baradarani, 2014:1422; Ramseook-Munhurren, Seebaluck & Naidoo, 2015:257).

Furthermore, five factors where identified with regards to the restaurant facilities, these factors have also been identified in other studies as essential contributors to the satisfaction of tourists (Sekajja, 2006:72; Arasli & Baradarani, 2014:1422; Ramseook-Munhurren *et al.,* 2015:256; Ara, 2016:91). Quality assurance (factor 3) contained six items, such as employees' communication skills and overall cleanliness. Service delivery (factor 4) included seven items, such as attitude of the employees towards customers and professionalism of the employees. Sufficiency of the employees (factor 5) consisted of three items, such as employees' appearance and number of employees working at this restaurant. Variety of restaurant offerings (factor 6) comprised of two items, variety of food and beverages offered and attractiveness of this restaurant. Payment of the restaurant offerings (factor 7) contained two items, payment facilities, and price of the food and beverages offered.

Moreover, four factors were identified with regards to the hotel facilities. Employees' ability to deliver reliable services (factor 8) included eight items, such as overall cleanliness and reliability of the employees. Effectiveness of the employees (factor 9) consisted of three items, such as effectiveness of the check in and check out procedures and number of employees working at this hotel.

Convenience of the hotel services (factor 10) comprises of three items, such as price of the accommodation and size of the rooms. Finally, responsiveness of the employees (factor 11) contained eight items, such as flexibility of the employees to meet your needs and helpfulness of the employees. Sekajja (2006:72), Arasli and Baradarani (2014:1422), Ramseook-Munhurren *et al.* (2015:257) and Ara (2016:92) also found that these factors contribute to the satisfaction of the tourists.

All of the above factors are considered as important factors towards the satisfaction of the tourists at a resort. However, similar factors have been identified in other studies in different industries. Thus, the factors that has the most significant contribution to the satisfaction of the tourists within the three aspects (overall establishment, restaurant and hotel facilities) of the resort in South Africa include accessibility of the overall establishment (factor 1) with a 4.73 mean value, 0.782 Cronbach Alpha value and 0.254 Inter-Item Correlation value. Service delivery of the restaurant employees (factor 4) with a 4.87 mean value, 0.899 Cronbach Alpha value and 0.556 Inter-Item Correlation value. Responsiveness of the hotel employees (factor 11) with a 4.89 mean value, 0.968 Cronbach Alpha value and 0.365 Inter-Item Correlation value.

From Table 3 it is clear that the factors have a medium to large positive correlation with each other. This indicates that the factors are interrelated with each other, meaning that if a particular factor contributes to tourist satisfaction, a variety of other factors will also contribute to the satisfaction of the tourists. For example, there is an unique correlation between the factors, employees' ability to deliver reliable services and responsiveness of the hotel employees. Therefore, this means that if the tourists are satisfied with one of these factors, they will also be satisfied with the other factor. However, if the tourists are dissatisfied with one of these factors, they will also be dissatisfied with the other factor. Moreover, it can be seen that tourists are more satisfied with the responsiveness of the hotel employees than with the other factors. Therefore, it is important for resorts to ensure that they focus on items such as professionalism of the employees at this hotel and payment facilities at this hotel to ensure they obtain tourist satisfaction. Thus, resorts should improve items such quality of the rooms, attractiveness of this hotel and helpfulness of the employees to exceed the satisfaction of the tourists to obtain loyalty, positive word of mouth and increase in profit (Eid, 2013:252: Ozatac *et al.*, 2016:87; Yeo *et al.*, 2016:179).

## 5. CONCLUSION

To conclude, this study focused on the factors that contribute to tourists' satisfaction at the selected resort within Gauteng, South Africa. It can be seen that tourism is vital in any economy and provides a variety of benefits to a country. However, there are a variety of factors that influence the satisfaction of the tourists in a resort context that must be adhered to. Within this study, 11 factors where identified that contribute to the satisfaction of the tourists. Amongst others, the factors that have the largest contribution to the satisfaction of the tourists within three areas at a resort, including accessibility of the overall establishment, service delivery of the restaurant employees and responsiveness of the hotel employees. Furthermore, the 11 factors that have been identified are interrelated with each other, especially the two factors employees' ability to deliver reliable services and responsiveness of the hotel employees. The tourists are more satisfied with the factor responsiveness of the hotel employees than with the other factors that have been identified. Thus, indicating that resort managers need to focus on the identified factors to ensure that their tourists are satisfied and to obtain a variety of competitive advantages, for example, increase in profit and positive word of mouth. Future studies can be done in other sectors of the tourism industry and also in other tourism organisations using a measuring instrument similar to the one that was employed in this study. This will assist tourism organisations to gain an improved understanding of tourist satisfaction, to manage tourists' satisfaction more effectively and to compete more successfully in the marketplace.

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