

**A CONCEPTUAL PAPER ON THE DIMENSIONS OF THE
ROAD TRANSPORT SYSTEM THAT INFLUENCE TOURIST
SATISFACTION**

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Abstract

This is a conceptual paper to study the dimensions of road transport system that affect tourist satisfaction. The paper reviews the literature on transport and tourism, and analyses various dimensions of transport system such as accessibility, perceived quality, tourist expectations and perceived value. The study aims to determine which dimensions of the transport system affect tourist satisfaction. The dimensions outlined in the paper are analyzed using the theoretical framework of Oliver's Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory (1980). The model is appropriate for this inquiry because it allows an understanding of how tourist satisfaction is influenced. The literature search was conducted using online international journal databases in order to capture the wide range of published academic research in the field. Transport accessibility, perceived performance or quality, tourist expectations and perceived value are the dimensions of the road transport system identified and found in the transport tourism literature. The literature suggests that transport is an important element in tourism development, but fails to identify any specific causal relationship between transport system performance at the destination and tourist satisfaction. The paper ends with the recommendation that further research is needed to produce a better understanding and explanation as to which dimension affects tourist satisfaction, which will assist transport and tourism departments to improve and enhance tourist satisfaction.

Keywords:

Transport;
Tourism;
Tourist satisfaction;
Dimensions of the road transport system.

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Introduction

Transport is an integral part of the tourism industry. The significance of the transport system for tourism is acknowledged in tourism literature. For any tourist destination, the ability to travel within the destination to preferred attractions enhances the likelihood that tourists will visit the destination. Literature reveals that transportation services provided for tourist use also influences their satisfaction.

The tourism industry consists of various services, which are required to serve the specific wants and needs of tourists (Leiper, 1979). Every tourist will be dependent on one or several of these services while visiting a destination. Among them, transportation service is the main component of tourism, because without travel there is no tourism. It is transport which facilitates the movement of tourists to visit the places of their interest. An analysis of existing tourism transport literature reveals that research in this area is either based on a disciplinary approach such as economics, geography, management, psychology and sociology or modal approach i.e. focused on modes of transport such as air, water and land transport. Among the various modes of transport, road transport is a very important mode for intra-destination tourism.

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Problem Statement

Goa is one of the most important tourist destinations in India. It is the smallest State of India by area, but is famous for its beaches, churches and architecture. Large numbers of international and domestic tourists visit Goa every year. Literature in the area indicates that transport system and its availability at the destination, is one of the important determinants of tourist preference. A transport system which satisfies tourists will always enhance the likelihood of the tourist to return to the destination. Tourism in Goa is a well established economic activity and Goa has public as well as private transport system within the region. Most tourists use the local transport system during their stay in Goa. Therefore it will be relevant to study which dimensions of transport system affect tourist satisfaction, which will assist in future development of transportation services.

Purpose of Inquiry and research question

This conceptual paper is intended to identify and understand the dimensions of the road transport system that affect tourist satisfaction, through an analysis of tourism and transport studies. Therefore the question of this paper is “Which dimensions of road transport system affect tourist satisfaction?”

The answer to this question will be based on an extended review and analysis of literature.

Significance of the inquiry

It has been observed that Goa is already a well established and self-sustaining tourist destination. Travelling around Goa is fairly easy. There is an extensive road network which connects most places in Goa with motorable roads. The road transport system in Goa comprises of public and private bus transport, taxi and cab, motorcycle taxi, auto rickshaw and cars or bikes on rent as means of transport. The study will focus on the dimensions of road transport that affect tourist satisfaction in general and also on different modes of transport. The mere availability of a transport system is not sufficient for tourism, it should provide accessibility and also services which will satisfy the tourist. This research will examine those aspects and make recommendations for future research.

Summary of theoretical framework

This conceptual paper integrates dimensions of transport system and tourist satisfaction, which makes it necessary to provide a theoretical framework on satisfaction. The theoretical model that best explains customer satisfaction is Oliver's Expectation Disconfirmation theory (1980). The expectation-disconfirmation paradigm has often been used to analyse consumer satisfaction, with the results suggesting that customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction is a result of a comparison between consumers' pre-purchase expectation and their post-purchase evaluation. This research proposes to apply the Tourist Satisfaction Model i.e. American Customer Satisfaction Model, based on the same theoretical framework.

Analysis and Discussion of the Literature

This section provides a summary analysis of the literature available on tourism transport and dimensions affecting tourist satisfaction

Transport and tourism

Studies in this area have acknowledged the role of transport as a significant variable in tourism development. Travel is an essential component of tourism and the leisure experience (Dickinson & Robbins, 2008), and the role of transport in the development of tourism is acknowledged by tourism studies (Hall, 1999, 2004;

Prideaux, 2000; Sorupia, 2005; Musa, 2011; Rizal & Asokan, 2013; Georgescu, 2015). Provision of transport infrastructure as a factor in overall tourism development has been researched by Waryszak & King (2000); Khadaroo & Seetanah (2007); Thompson & Schofield (2007); Henderson (2009); Bimonte, Ferrini, & Grilli (2016) and the studies concluded that transport plays an important role in providing mobility for tourists at the destination and its experience may influence their satisfaction. Henderson (2009) concluded that safe and efficient transport affording accessibility from abroad and mobility on arrival is a critical consideration of tourism transport. Lew_A_McKercher (2006) identified trip origin, trip destination, transportation network, and transport mode as four elements influencing tourist's urban transportation choice. The review of transport and tourism research reveals that transport is researched as a provision for tourists at the destination. The literature reveals that transport is responsible for providing easy access and mobility at the destination and also has an influence on overall satisfaction. This research aims to identify the dimensions of road transport system essential at the tourist destination and their influence on tourist satisfaction. From the literature, transport accessibility, perceived performance or quality, tourist expectations and perceived value are some of the dimensions that have been identified as affecting tourist satisfaction.

Dimensions of the Transport System

1. Transport Accessibility

Accessibility, a concept used in fields such as transport planning and geography, is studied in tourism to mean provision of transportation services at the destination. Banica & Camara (2011) pointed out that "defining and evaluating tourist accessibility should take into account the characteristics of the transportation system, the ease to reach the tourist site from a certain location, the time taken, the costs and efforts made to go that distance." Abu Ali & Howaidee (2012) found that destination accessibility - which includes transport infrastructure, equipment, operational factors and government regulations at the destination - influences tourist satisfaction. The effect of transportation services and accessibility as variables of destination satisfaction were researched by (Tóth & Dávid, 2010; Araslı & Baradarani, 2014; Shahrivar, 2012). Accessibility of urban tourism products acquires high level of significance in the measurement of transport performance and visitors may experience higher level of dissatisfaction where the minimum requirements are not present (Thompson & Schofield, 2007). In a study to evaluate inbound tourists' satisfaction with Shenzhen using a comprehensive tourist satisfaction index system Gao & Wang (2010) found that accessibility is an important dimension of transport services.

2. Perceived Performance or Quality

According to Oliver (1977, 1980) "perceived performance refers to a person's perception of the actual performance of a product, service or technology artefact." Perceived quality is a measure of the customer evaluation via recent consumption experience of the quality of a company's product or service (American Consumer Satisfaction Index 1984). Perceived performance is usually referred to as perceived quality in customer satisfaction literature which stands for the overall excellence of the product or service (Mingfang, 2011). Wang, Zhang, Gu, & Zhen, (2009) analysed service quality using 'performance only' approach, adopting variables such as attraction, food and accommodation, transportation and local environment and found that perceived quality was a significant predictor in determining tourist satisfaction.

Visitors' experience at the destination and their overall satisfaction level are researched using different attribute-based models but a detailed investigation of public transport performance from visitors' perspective is beyond the scope of destination satisfaction studies (Thompson & Schofield, 2007). The Passenger road transport industry being a service industry, quality of service has a special significance in relation to customer satisfaction (Mekoth, 1997) and can be measured and judged on the basis of certain performance parameters. A study to analyse and compare the quality of services rendered by transport operators, it was established that customers' perception of quality of service is a function of safety, punctuality, regularity and frequency, comfort and convenience, quality of crew and social orientation found that there is positive relation between measure of perceived quality by customers and a performance-based measure of quality (Mekoth, 1997). From the literature, it is quite evident that the quality of the transport system is very important for tourism development. Research in the area of urban public transport performance has always been focused on local users, not on overseas visitors, but it is important to consider tourists as well, because as compared to local people, tourists, especially international tourists, are typically unfamiliar with the public transit systems of the destinations they visit (Chang & Lai, 2009).

3. Tourist Expectations

Expectations refer to the attributes or characteristics that a person anticipates or predicts will be associated with an entity such as a product, service or technology (Oliver 1977, 1980). Expectation is a measure

representing the extent to which customers believe a particular attribute is essential for an excellent service company (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1994). Most tourism studies, (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Lather, Singh, & Singh, 2010; Abu Ali & Howaidee, 2012; Bigné, Sánchez, & Sánchez, 2001; del Bosque & San Martín, 2008; Mingfang, 2011; Gao & Wang, 2010; Wang et al., 2009; Yüksel & Yüksel, 2001; Mouwen, 2015) have utilised Expectation Disconfirmation model (Oliver 1980) to evaluate tourist satisfaction. The theory holds that consumers first form expectations of product or service performance prior to purchase or use, which they then compare with perceived performance. If performance is above expectation, positive disconfirmation occurs, in case of the contrary, negative disconfirmation occurs (del Bosque & San Martín, 2008). In tourism research, expectations are drivers of satisfaction in the context of travel agencies, and should be measured for each salient attribute of the product (del Bosque & San Martín, 2008).

Wang et al. (2009) measured expectation using indicators such as overall expectation, expectation for customisation and expectation for reliability and found that tourist expectations had a significant positive impact on both tourist satisfaction and perceived quality. The study concluded that expectations play a significant role in tourism due to intangibility of tourism services.

4. Perceived Value

Perceived Value is the consumers' overall assessment of the utility of a product based on their perception of what is received and what is given (Zeithaml, 1988). In tourism and hospitality research, perceived value has always received more attention while investigating the relationship between quality and /or satisfaction (Gallarza & Saura, 2006). Cronin, Brady, & Hult (2000) conducted a study based on advances in service marketing theory to assess the relationship between service quality, service value and satisfaction on behavioural intentions across multiple service industries. The study found that the effect of all the identified constructs on behavioural intentions is both comprehensive and complex. Gallarza & Saura (2006) investigated the dimensionality of consumer value in a travel-related context (students' travel behaviour) which confirmed the existence of a quality-value-satisfaction-loyalty chain. The study concluded that the value concept is multifaceted and complex, and in consumer research, the term perceived value should be understood as being synonymous with consumer value. According to Holbrook (1999) "consumer value is an interactive relativistic preference experience, means that the relationship of consumers to products (subjects to objects) operates relativistically (depending on relevant comparisons, varying between people, changing among situations) to determine preferences that lie at the heart of the consumption experience" (Holbrook 1999, pg. 9). Sweeney & Soutar (2001) developed PERVAL scale using emotional, social, quality or performance and price or value for money as four dimensions of value and found it to be significantly helpful in explaining attitude and behaviour. Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo (2007) proposed GLOVAL (Global purchase perceived Value) scale as an instrument of measurement of perceived value of a tourism package and by incorporating social value as an affective component, concluded that cognitive elements such as quality and price play a fundamental role in understanding tourist behaviour. The study proposes that both the cognitive and affective components play a fundamental role in explaining purchase and consumption behaviour. In a study to examine tourist value concerning war-related tourism, Lee, Yoon, & Lee (2007) developed a theoretical model for Korean Demilitarised Zone as a tourist destination. Using dimensions of PERVAL and GLOVAL scale to investigate the relationship between perceived value, tourist satisfaction and recommendation, the study found that all the variables under these three dimensions had a significant effect on tour satisfaction and recommendations. According to Mingfang (2011), in tourism literature, tourist satisfaction is generally value- or price-related, as the consumer will take both price and quality into consideration while assessing a selective destination value. Wang et al. (2009) found that perceived value has a direct and positive association with tourist satisfaction and also plays a crucial intervening role in the relationship between perceived quality and tourist satisfaction. The study thus suggests that perceived value should be measured by multidimensional items including price, time and efforts. In order to give tourists more value, destination managers should design products and itineraries to reduce tourist time and efforts.

5. Tourist satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction is critical to tourist destination because it influences the choice of destination, consumption of services during the visit and future intentions (Kozak & Rimmington, 1999). Measuring tourist satisfaction with transportation services is an important topic in tourism and transportation research, in order to understand the extent to which tourist expectations are satisfied. It will also provide valuable information to service providers about which aspects are important for tourists and will help them improve their services accordingly. The measurement of customer satisfaction in the service sector is usually made by using consumer perception about the quality of services (Berry, Parasuraman, & Zelthami, 1988; Kumar, 2012). Tyrinopoulos & Antoniou (2008) conducted an analysis of the variability of

users' behaviour and level of satisfaction with public transit services in five transit systems in two major cities in Greece and five transport companies using a variety of performance and quality indicators such as on-time performance, average waiting time at the terminals and stops, vehicle load, average route speed, conditions at the terminals and stops, safety, information provision, accessibility, and many others. In general, service frequency, vehicle cleanliness, waiting conditions, transfer distance and network coverage were the most important satisfaction attributes across transit operations. However, the results varied between transit systems.

Neal & Gursoy(2008) examined how travellers' satisfaction with the pre-trip services, satisfaction at destination and satisfaction with return trip services affect their overall satisfaction with travel and tourism services. The study found that the travel and tourism experience is a multifaceted and hybrid experience as it depends on satisfaction with pre-trip services, satisfaction with services at the destination and satisfaction with transit route services indicating the need for coordination among these three primary areas of the travel and tourism service experiences. Lai &Chen (2011) defined satisfaction as, "the extent of overall pleasure or contentment felt by the public transit passenger, resulting from the ability of trip experience to fulfil the passenger's relevant desire, expectations and needs". The study investigated public transit passenger behaviour by constructing a comprehensive model considering involvement, service quality, perceived value, satisfaction and behavioural intentions and found that behavioural intentions significantly depend upon passenger satisfaction and to enhance passenger satisfaction, two antecedents' viz. service quality and perceived value must be addressed. Kumar (2012) states that the satisfaction of a passenger with a public transport undertaking is a measure of how well the service level delivered matches the expectations of the traveller. The study was conducted to identify the gap between passenger's expectations and perception about various service-related factors using six dimensions viz. assurance, empathy, reliability, responsiveness, tangibles and comfort. The highest gap was found in the comfort dimension and the lowest gap in responsiveness and empathy. The study concluded that most respondents were satisfied. Le-Klähn, Gerike, & Michael Hall (2014) investigated the use of public transport by visitors in the city of Munich, Germany to understand how visitors perceive public transport services and which factors influence their level of satisfaction. The study found that travelling, comfort; service quality, accessibility and additional features of service dimensions were positively evaluated by tourists.

Collection of Literature

Due to the multidisciplinary nature of transport and tourism research, it was necessary to have a very broad review of literature. This paper is based on a broad review of academic research on transport and tourism. The literature search was conducted using online, international journal databases in order to capture the wide range of published academic research in the field. Google scholar ([www. googlescholar.com](http://www.google.com)) was the main database used. The key words/phrases used were: role of the transport system in tourism, tourist satisfaction, service quality of transport system, transport and tourism development. N-list, a research consortium was also used to locate research papers and theses on transport.

Data collection and data sources for future research

This is a conceptual paper that is based solely on review of literature on the topic tourism, transport and tourist satisfaction. For future research, a quantitative study would be conducted to obtain data on tourist satisfaction with the road transport system in Goa. A quantitative method would be used because the research question would be a causal one, viz. "which dimensions of the road transport system have an impact on tourist satisfaction?" The procedure for conducting research would be to create a valid instrument that measures tourist satisfaction with selected dimensions of the road transport system. The sample population to be studied would be tourists using transportation services available in Goa. The tourists may be using any mode of transportation for their intra-destination movements throughout their stay in Goa.

Findings from Literature

Literature was useful for understanding the topic for this conceptual paper and helped answer the inquiry question, "Which dimensions of the road transport system affect tourist satisfaction?"

Based on the literature, it is clear that transport is an integral part of tourism. Most studies have acknowledged that transport is an essential element of tourism as it facilitates movement of tourists within the destination; availability of transport also determines selection of the destination by tourists and helps the economic development of the region. The literature reveals that transportation services provided for tourist use also has an influence on overall satisfaction. From the literature transport accessibility, perceived performance, expectations and perceived value are some of the dimensions of transport system identified as being important for a tourist destination. Studies on tourist satisfaction have researched the relationship that exists between perceived performance, expectation, perceived value and satisfaction at destination. These studies covered all the major services required at the destination but not related to any specific service. This

research primarily aims to determine the relationship of these dimensions with tourist satisfaction and the impact it has on tourist satisfaction.

Conclusion and Suggestions for Future Research

An analysis of studies on transport and tourism has revealed that transport being an essential element for tourism, its unavailability will always adversely affect tourist satisfaction, as tourists are dependent on the transport system for their movement at the destination. Tourist satisfaction is based on factors such as tourist expectation, perceived performance and perceived value and also closely related with tourist post-purchase behavior. Transport accessibility as a dimension of transport system and its relationship with tourist satisfaction has not been adequately researched. This research aims to fill the gap in tourism and transport literature by determining which dimensions of the transport system at the destination are significantly related to tourist satisfaction. Based on the literature, it is evident that there is scope for future research which will produce a better understanding and explanation of the relationship between transport and tourist satisfaction. Such research will assist the transport and tourism departments of Governments to plan effective marketing strategies and provide services that will enhance tourist satisfaction and ultimately result in increased tourist visits.

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