

# Destination Satisfaction and Destination Loyalty-An Attempt to Re-conceptualize the Popular Narrative

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## ABSTRACT

Considering the complex nature of consumer response and behavior, it is crucial to have a deep understanding of why tourists revisit certain destinations and how their experiences affect their satisfaction and loyalty. To boost and uphold the competitiveness of a destination, it is vital for destination managers to give priority to enhancing the levels of tourist satisfaction. While there is an extensive body of literature discussing customer satisfaction, loyalty and their interplay, there has been limited effort to investigate these aspects within the specific context of the tourism industry. Elements like satisfaction with destination attributes; the overall destination environment and pricing have a substantial impact on tourists' satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Environment; Elements; Tourism

## INTRODUCTION

Recognizing and comprehending customer satisfaction stands as a cornerstone for achieving business success and making it a central area of focus in the realm of tourism study. Within the field of tourism studies have put forth diverse methodologies to explore and analyze visitor satisfaction. Consequently, it has been reported that satisfaction influences short-term revisit plans and it was not found to impact mid-term or long-term revisit intentions. A positive correlation exists between the destination source credibility and the level of tourist satisfaction experienced with respect to the destination. Tourists typically evaluate their level of satisfaction by comparing their initial expectations with their actual perceptions during their trip, which, in turn, influences their overall assessment of the destination. Tourism managers strive to ensure the delivery of high-quality products and services to elicit positive evaluations and satisfaction from tourists who serve as reviewers and share their experiences to recommend destinations to others. Customer satisfaction and positive word-of-mouth are significantly influenced by people related factors and emotions. With more competition in the leisure industry and a better understanding of the value of repeat visitors, loyalty has become a crucial focus in leisure study. Consumer loyalty is contingent upon a deep understanding of customers' desires and requirements, serving to secure recurring purchases of brands and products. In tourism study, it is crucial

to employ distinct measurement variables when evaluating loyalty in relation to various types of tourism products. Destination loyalty fundamentally takes a long-term view, focusing on the continuous visitation patterns of travelers over their lifetime, rather than adopting a short-term, cross-sectional approach that treats each visit as separate from previous ones, regardless of the broader context of prior experiences [1-5].

## DESCRIPTION

When crafting tourism policies, it's important to keep in mind that a tourist's perception of a destination can be influenced by both positive and negative assessments of its resources and these dual perspectives can shape their overall evaluation. Iqbal, et al. delved into the realm of international tourism to unravel the complex intricacies of satisfaction and loyalty among visitors to the Maldives. Despite the abundance of previous study on destination satisfaction and loyalty, one crucial aspect has been overlooked the role of various underlying factors in determining destination loyalty. By elucidating the direct impact of destination attributes such as characteristics, environment and price on overall satisfaction, this study provides compelling evidence and insights within this domain. Surprisingly, the study did not find hospitality to be a significant factor in this context. This study highlights the importance of pricing as the main driving force for attracting tourists to the Maldives and suggests

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**Received:** 06-Nov-2023, Manuscript No. JTH-23-27924; **Editor assigned:** 09-Nov-2023, PreQC No. JTH-23-27924 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 23-Nov-2023, QC No. JTH-23-27924; **Revised:** 28-Jan-2023, Manuscript No. JTH-23-27924 (R); **Published:** 04-Feb-2025, DOI: 10.35248/2167-0269.25.14.566

**Citation:** Iqbal UP, Nooney LK (2025) Destination Satisfaction and Destination Loyalty-An Attempt to Re-conceptualize the Popular Narrative. J Tourism Hospit. 14:566.

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that promoting guesthouse options could provide a wider range of price options for visitors. Another interesting finding is that neither age nor gender appeared to affect the link between satisfaction with the destination and loyalty to its brand. Additionally, the frequency of visits was found to partially mediate the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty, further emphasizing the significance of overall satisfaction with the destination [6-10].

## Synthesis

Exploring the determinants of destination satisfaction is inevitable for destination management. Moreover, it has the potential to contribute to the destination loyalty. Interestingly, a recent study conducted by Iqbal, et al., has delineated the aspects of destination satisfaction and also examined the satisfaction loyalty nexus. The study has illustrated, satisfaction with destination characteristics, destination environment and price as significant in determining the destination satisfaction. Moreover, the study has empirically tested the role destination satisfaction in building destination satisfaction. Adding on, the price aspect of destination satisfaction has been widely discussed in the literature and depicted as a focal point for the visitors to take a decision on whether to remain or switch their destination. However, there are different outlooks on this aspect, for example; a lower price may create a low impression about the quality of the product or service. According to the price-quality inference theory, consumers think that the price and quality are closely intertwined and when the price raises so as the quality. Therefore, the results of the study conducted by Iqbal et al., is contradicting the arguments of price quality inference theory. However it is corroborating with the findings of the study conducted by Ndofirepi et al. Destination characteristics are another aspect widely discussed along with the destination satisfaction. The study conducted by Thal and Hudson, has reported the role of destination characteristics in the psychological well-being of the wellness tourists. Another study conducted by Guzel, et al., has identified four dimensions of destination characteristics that attracts the tourists; facilities and atmosphere, locality, historical religious natural places and, image. However, there is a dearth of study exploring the myriad dimensions of destination characteristics on destination satisfaction and loyalty. Importantly, there is lack consensus among the scholars about the meaning of destination characteristics. For example, some authors have used environmental characteristics as a dimension of destination characteristics whereas some scholars have used it as a separate construct for measuring the destination satisfaction. By destination characteristics, generally we mean the availability of facilities in the locality which is detached from the environmental beauty or characteristics. The landscape, climate and the greenery or the scenery contributes to the environmental satisfaction which does not necessarily contributing to the satisfaction with destination characteristics. Availability of good infrastructure, hotels, restaurants, restrooms, supermarkets, shopping malls and so on contributes to the satisfaction with destination characteristics. Hence, more rational outcomes are possible through identifying destination characteristics and environmental characteristics as two separate constructs [11-15].

The term destination loyalty can be understood as the revisit intention by a satisfied traveler. Adding on, destination satisfaction is nothing but the ability of the actual service to meet the expected service by a traveler. The contributing factors to the destination loyalty has been extensively discussed in the literature. The study conducted by Som, et al., has reported destination satisfaction as one of the strongest predictors of destination loyalty. Another study by Asmelash and Kumar, has discussed the nexus between destination satisfaction and loyalty and reported a significant positive relationship between the two. The study conducted by Iqbal, et al., has also asserted the significance of destination satisfaction on destination loyalty. However, the nexus between destination satisfaction and loyalty needs to be explored further by examining the moderating roles of visitor's demographics and their country of origin. Adding on, the case of backpackers needs a special attention in this case considering the peculiar features of a backpacker. Furthermore, the destination loyalty and revisit behavior need to be examined to assess the real impact of destination loyalty on tourism revenue [16,17].

## CONCLUSION

The existing literature empirically tested the significant role of destination satisfaction in constructing destination loyalty. However, the nexus between these two needs further exploration to fill the following gap in the literature. Firstly, the precursors of destination satisfaction need to be revisited in the context of backpackers and domestic tourists to unearth more themes. Secondly, majority of the studies have adopted a descriptive approach in examining the determinants of destination satisfaction and loyalty, therefore a triangulation approach could bring a different outlook on the topic. Finally, the nexus between destination satisfaction and loyalty can be examined in the context of sustainable tourism to traverse concepts.

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