Role of Customer Delight on Revisit Intention in Tourism sector in Western Province, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

This research paper investigated the little-known connections between customer delight and propensity to return. And further provides insights into the critical role that customer delight plays in the tourist industry, facilitating successful interactions for the development of destination strategies. This is among one of the initial attempts to reimagine the tourist industry's approach to customer delight in order to motivate traveler revisit intentions.

Key Words – Customer delight, revisit intention

Introduction

Tourists are more inclined to plan further visits when they are thrilled by interesting activities, meaningful encounters, and cooperative value creation that are consistent with the identity of the place (Bhatti & Nawaz, 2020). This research study emphasizes the importance of customer delight in encouraging repeat visits, encouraging ethical tourism, and supporting the long-term sustainability of the location.

While there is known empirical study on customer delight in tourism literature (Mikulic et al., 2021), conceptualization within a single framework is crucial and there is a lack of understanding of the relationship with other potential constructs. Conceptual works are unquestionably more

essential and have garnered more citations (Yadav, 2010). In the context of revisit intention, this research article expands on a novel definition

of consumer delight and behavioral intentions.

It is essential for tourism businesses to concentrate on customer delight and propensity to return as the industry expands. The tourist business may increase its position in the market by focusing on providing exceptional customer service and developing a distinctive brand identity that appeals to consumers. Additionally, client delight affects tourism marketing initiatives. delighted consumers essentially turn into brand advocates by writing favorable reviews and recommending the products and services of a company. This increases the companies' visibility to potential customers as well as their brand recognition. Customers that are happy with the services received from a tourism business will return, increasing demand and profitability. When a venue delights visitors, they are more likely to recommend it to others or come back (Liang et al., 2020). As well as if a tourist's initial visit is unpleasant, they are less inclined to return. (Rather et al., 2021). Given that the location hasn't had any thorough, cohesive, or consistent brand design and positioning, it is Sri Lanka's top goal to do so. Given the current opportunity in the post-pandemic global travel and tourism sector, this is a serious failure that has to be urgently remedied.

Prior tourism research on revisit intention places a heavy emphasis on customer service as a predictor of tourists' propensity to stay in hotels. (Torres et al., 2020). Ulker-Demirel and Ciftci (2020) found hotel customer delight is the most important indicator of a tourist's inclination to return. You have to get into people's minds in order to surprise them; you can't just go into rooms and lobby areas.

Given that the majority of businesses just provide the basic minimal degree of pleasure, it is necessary to go above and beyond the call of duty for the clients. The level of extra effort put forward by the businesses is determined by delight.

This research paper unfolds as follows. Summarization of Customer delight and customer revisit intention, then came the model development and research hypothesis. Then the overview on research methodology, discussion with the results followed on. And this paper concludes with management implications, limitations and future recommendations.

Theoretical Background

Below is the review of important Customer delight and revisit intention literature.

Customer Delight

Researchers and practitioners alike have been paying more and more attention to the idea of delight nowadays. While the idea of being satisfied is comparatively well-established, there is little study on delight, and the literature that is currently available still is having difficulty defining customer delight (Schummer, 2007). There are two ways that one can define delight. Plutchik (1980) claims that the first viewpoint on delight is based on psychological literature and differs from satisfaction in that delight is an emotion while satisfaction is the outcome of a confluence of emotion and cognition. Pleasure (joy, elation) and high arousal are the components of delight as an emotion (Berman, 2005, Finn, 2005). Generally, Pleasure and arousal are the two main components of emotions (Mano & Oliver, 1993; Mattila & Wirtz, 2000). According to Bigné et al. (2003), pleasure is the extent to which a person feels good, joyful, or delighted in a situation, while arousal is the degree to which a person feels sparked and active. Another definition of customer delight is an emotion made up of happiness, excitement, thrills, or exuberance (Kumar et al., 2001).

The second perspective on delight, which leans more toward an attitudinal perspective, comes from its description as an exceptional degree of satisfaction. (or total contentment; Keiningham, Goddard, Vavra, & Iaci, 1999). Simply said, delight is thought to be a state of greater contentment (Alexander, 2010; Vanhamme, 2008). Customer delight is when the visitor has a pleasing experience in addition to being satisfied (Patterson, 1997).

Numerous professionals have proposed that consumers own a comfort zone. When satisfaction exceeds that zone's upper bounds, the result is different (Keinningham et al., 1999). Some, on the other hand, describe customer delight as going above and beyond a customer's expectations while also bringing them a pleasant surprise (Berman, 2005). In this case, delight emerges because it is linked to a powerful feeling that includes contentment and pleasure as the main components of the element of surprise (Magnini et al., 2010).

According to Magnini et al. (2011), the authors go on to suggest that having tremendously satisfied customers is not the same as having delighted customers. Additionally, their investigation revealed that factors contributing to customer delight may vary between domestic and foreign visitors.

Then, the question emerges: In order to delight a customer during the customer service, does a positive surprise is required? While researching human emotions, Plutchik (1980) discovered that consumer delight occurs when surprise and joy interact with each other, but he did not draw the conclusion that surprise and joy are necessary for delight. In order to determine whether surprise is necessary for delighting a consumer, a recent study examined blog posts on Tripadvisor. It was discovered that the surprise as a necessary element of delight. Furthermore, Crotts and Magnini (2010) discovered a high correlation between the surprise component and consumer loyalty.

Revisit intention

The desire to revisit or recommend a place is a reflection of a visitor's contentment and loyalty with that destination (Zhang, 2012). A pleased client may serve as an agent of word-of-mouth promotion by recommending a product or service to friends, family, or other prospective customers (Khuong & Nguyen, 2017). According to Zhang (2012), there are three types of revisit intentions: short term (in one year), medium term (in three years), and long-term (in five years). While, a revisit intention to discover new things and boost satisfaction can be carried out at any time. Since most travel destinations rely on return tourists, the propensity to return is acknowledged as a significant phenomenon for both individual appeal and the economy as a whole (ÇetıŇnkaya & Oter, 2016). A sizable fraction of companies depends on returning guests at the majority of tourism marketplaces (Marcussen, 2011). According to Khuong and Ha (2014), tourists' contentment and intention to return to a certain place are largely determined by how well they perceive the image of that destination, not by their demands and needs. In addition to giving the tourist destination a steady stream of cash and revenue, repeat visitors also help the destination gain market share, spread good word of mouth, and save operating and marketing expenses (Vuuren et al, 2012).

The concept of revisit intention originates from behavioral intention. Behavioral intention is defined as "a stated likelihood to engage in a behavior" (p. 28) by Oliver (1997). The motivations behind word-of-mouth and repurchase are two examples of conduct. When considering leisure and recreation, behavioral intention is used to describe travelers' desire to return frequently to the destination and their intention to do so within a year (Baker & Crompton, 2000). The assessment

of behavioral intention also takes into account positive word-of-mouth and the readiness to suggest to others (Bigne, Sanchez, & Sanchez, 2001).

The intention of the traveler to revisit may be impacted by marketing campaigns, knowledge about new attractions at the destination, and their own experiences there (Aziz et al., 2012). According to Um, Chon, and Ro (2006), revisit intention has been viewed as a continuation of satisfaction rather than the beginning of the revisit decision-making process.
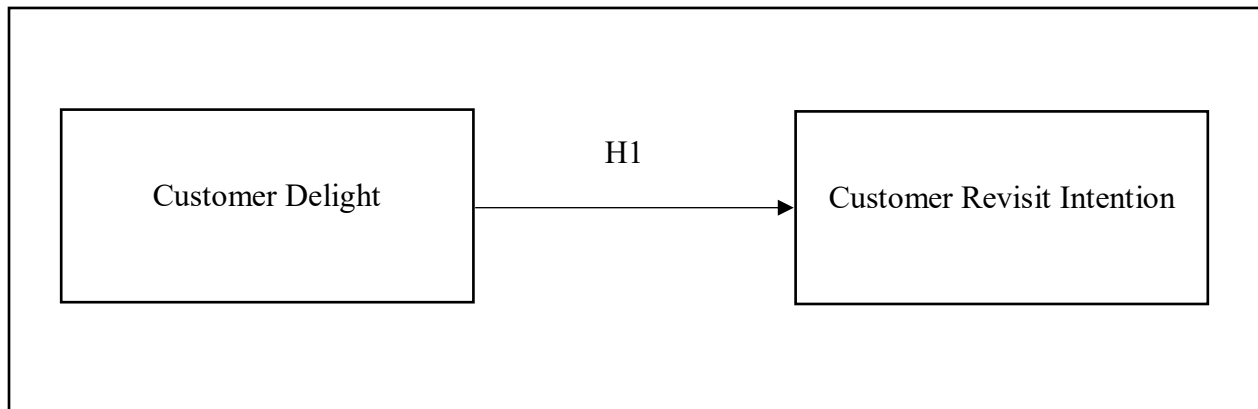
Theoretical Model and Hypothesis Development

Figure 1 – Conceptual Model

Scholars hardly ever encountered the term "customer delight" prior to the 1990s (Oliver et al., 1997, p. 312). Oliver et al. (1997) proposed the concept of "delight," which is based on the cognitive and emotional pleasures of hedonic consumption, and emphasized that customer feedback in individuals and customers involves more than just happiness.

According to the majority of researchers, unexpectedly good performance that surpasses customer expectations results in customer delight (Kao et al., 2020; Mikulic et al., 2021). The tourism industry had been paying a lot of attention to this idea lately (Barnes, Kraemer et al., 2021).

Prior research on tourist delight in the travel industry has focused on the role that customer service plays in influencing travelers' intentions. 2020; Torres et al. For example, Ulker-Demirel and Ciftci (2020) discovered that the most significant element influencing a visitor's propensity to return is

customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction and the intention to return have been shown to be significantly positively correlated in the research (Mikulic et al., 2021; Williams & Soutar, 2009). Nonetheless, there is a dearth of research and little discussion of the direct relationship between behavioral intention and consumer delight.

According to Torres and Kline (2013) and Huang et al. (2007), there is a dearth of research that highlights the correlation between consumer delight and both Customer Engagement and intention to return. Tourist satisfaction and delight with the a meal, for example, are correlated with the quality and diversity of wine at wine festivals as well as the future return of those visitors (Hui et al., 2007). According to Eid et al. (2020), visitors who enjoy the cuisine are more likely to interact with the location.

It is demonstrated that CE and the will to return are related (Hui et al., 2007). However, the literature does not contain any empirical support for the hypothesis that customer delighted and revisit intention are mediated by CE. The literature did not explore this relationship (Hollebeek & Rather, 2019; Rather et al., 2021). It's been said that the best way to engage clients and guarantee behavioral intentions is to delight them rather than satisfy them.

Therefore, based on the above arguments, the hypothesis developed was,

H$_1$: Customer delight has a positive relationship with revisit intention.

Methodology

This study mainly focuses on the impact of customer delight on revisit intention in Sri Lanka. Also, the study considered to Western province as the research area due to the convenience of the researcher to collect the relevant research information from the local and foreign tourists who visits those provinces due to numerous reasons. Here, the researcher collects data from that tourist, which is the study setting of this research.

Then, total numbers of respondents approximately 400 respondents were selected to collect the data required for the study. These 400 respondents were scattered as 200 from hotels and 200 from Famous Public places in Western Province representing the local and foreign tourist.

Convenience sampling was used as it is one of the important sampling methods of non-probability sampling technique because; it is very difficult to identify specific population. The questionnaires

were distributed among the local and foreign tourist (under the convenience sampling) who visit western and central provinces for numerous reasons in Sri Lanka in order to select the related respondents of the research.

Variables and Measurements

Each construct's survey items were created using prior research as a guide. Five items were used to gauge customer delight. The following questions were answered on a 7-point Likert-type scale, with 1 denoting strongly disagree and 7 denoting strongly agree. "I am delighted by my experiences at this destination.", "This destination provides more than I have expected.", "I feel positively surprised by what I have experienced at this destination.", "I thoroughly enjoy my interaction with others at this destination.", "This destination offers experiences that exceed what I have imagined." To measure customer revisit intention, five items (Wu's, 2016) such as "I will visit this destination again in the near future.", "This destination is my first destination choice.", "I would recommend others to visit this destination.", "I have a strong intention to visit this destination.", "I would say positive things about this destination to other people." were employed. Furthermore, these elements aligned with the body of research concerning the conceptual definition of delight and the intention to revisit. The revisit intention items were scored using a 7-point Likert-type scale, where 1 represented strong disagreement and 7 represented strong agreement.

Results

The majority of participants were Female (69%) and Majority of participants (82%) was travelled for leisure. The results of 400 respondents' recent education indicated that 47 % of them were completed primary and secondary school, 15.8 % have held a diploma, and 29.4 % of respondents were bachelor degree and 7.8% were post graduate. By analyzing the number of visits as a tourist, it was determined that most respondents had travelled as tourists to Western Province once a year.

Because data for both independent and dependent variables were collected from the same individual using a standardized self-report questionnaire, common method variance (CMV) was evaluated (Podsakoff et al. 2003). The scale items in the survey were thoughtfully created. There are no right or wrong answers, and "all information will be treated as strictly confidential," according to the questionnaire. Additionally, the researcher gave the responders the assurance that

their privacy would be respected. It has been proposed that these methods may be useful in reducing common technique bias (Podsakoff et al. 2003).

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to test Harman's single factor test in order to resolve any possible concerns regarding CMV. EFA was applied to find underlying constructs and to generate scale. A two-factor structure explaining 75.20 percent of the total variance was found by the EFA results; the first component explained 19.54% of the variance. Common method bias is not a big problem in this study because no single factor emerged from the data or accounted for the majority of the variance (Podsakoff et al. 2003).

For the purpose of structural equation modeling (SEM), skewness and kurtosis statistics were examined in relation to sample distribution, and the data were deemed to comply with the normalcy assumption (Bagozzi and Yi 2012; Hair et al. 2006; Kline 2015). The SEM estimate process was carried out using the maximum likelihood method of estimation. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was utilized to evaluate a two-factor assessment model in order to examine the psychometric qualities of scales (Anderson and Gerbing 1988).

χ^2 (220) = 555.91, p < 0.001; goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = 0.912; normed fit index (NFI) = 0.943; incremental fit index (IFI) = 0.957; Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = 0.945; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.952; and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.057 were the CFA results that showed how well the measurement model fit the data (Hair et al. 2006). Through the use of the Fornell and Larcker (1981) approach, the key constructs' reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were determined. The composite reliability for each construct is higher than 0.75, which is above the recommended cutoff of 0.70 (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). This suggests that all measures have appropriate internal consistency and reliability (Hair et al. 2006). Table 1 displays SFLs that are all significant (p < 0.001) and more than 0.55.

Every construct's average variance extracted (AVE) is more than the 0.50 cutoff (Hair et al. 2006).

Table 1 – Validity and reliability for constructs

Constructs and their respective items	Standardized Factor Loadings	AVE	CR
Customer Delight		0.640	0.898
I am delighted by my experiences at this destination.	0.824		
This destination provides more than I have expected.	0.876		
I feel positively surprised by what I have experienced at this destination.	0.865		
I thoroughly enjoy my interaction with others at this destination.	0.871		
This destination offers experiences that exceed what I have imagined.	0.819		
Revisit Intention		0.797	0.951
I will visit this destination again in the near future.	0.846		
This destination is my first destination choice.	0.749		
I would recommend others to visit this destination.	0.825		
I have a strong intention to visit this destination.	0.730		
I would say positive things about this destination to other people.	0.842		

Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigated the connections between destination revisit intent and customer delight. Although previous studies on tourism have primarily examined these constructs separately, there is a dearth of research that integrates these ideas into a unified nomological network, which is why this study was conducted.

The transdisciplinary research that has been suggested by many academics is clarified in this research report. It creates a theoretical foundation for motivating travelers to return. While prior research in the tourism context has primarily examined these variables separately, it is unknown what studies have been conducted that integrate these concepts into a single nomological network. The revisit intention and customer delight were shown to be positively correlated, as predicted. This research contributes to the academic inquiry into the impact of customer delight on the intention to return in the tourism industry in Sri Lanka. This is also in line with researches on tourism, which shows that customer-oriented actions encourage customer delight and indicate the

beneficial influence of specific emotions (such as delight) on customer behavioral intentions when it comes to the intention to return.

Limitations and further research

This study has a number of limitations in addition to its contributions. First, there are intrinsic limits to the survey technique, one of which is its incapacity to prove causation between our relationships. As a result, our findings can serve as a basis for additional (e.g., experimental) research that aims to determine causal linkages (Dolnicar and Ring 2014). Second, convenience led to the sample only being taken in Sri Lanka's western province. To finalize the findings in the context of Sri Lanka, another research should gather data from all around the country and compare it with the conclusions of this study. Furthermore, because Sri Lanka is a developing nation, it is unclear whether the approach will work in developed or underdeveloped nations.

Researchers advise conducting longitudinal research to look into how our modeled associations change over time in light of our cross-sectional data. Moreover, the data was restricted to particular locations.

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