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Benchmarking Holiday Experience: the Case of Senior Tourists

Abstract

Purpose - The main objective of the paper is to determine and benchmark the senior tourists' preferences by considering the importance attached by them and their perception with respect to internal tourism attributes (i.e. package tour attributes) and external tourism attributes (i.e. destination attributes).

Design / methodology / approach – The present study makes use of importance-performance analysis and employs paired sample t-test for this purpose.

Findings / Contributions – The senior tourists evaluated the package tour attributes to be more important and better than destination characteristics. They also perceived that the service providers have to pay immediate attention to improve the quality of restaurants and meals and hotels.

Research Limitations – Data is collected only from inbound senior tourists in Poland. In future, research may be conducted with a more representative sample.

Practical implications – The senior tourists want to explore the local cuisine and then have food choices from their culture as well. 'Tour escort' is one of the most essential characteristic of a package tour and it could serve as a factor of differentiation. Hence, the tourist service providers have to pay attention to these factors.

Originality/ value – The article takes into account the internal tour attributes and destination attributes to evaluate senior tourists' holiday experience.

Key words: Senior tourist, service quality, importance-performance analysis, tourism product.

1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the major services contributing to economies worldwide and is expected to grow at an annual rate of 6 percent globally till 2020 (World Tourism Organization, 2010). Consequently, many countries are looking at tourism as a driver of regional economic growth (Wilde and Cox, 2008), and as the main constituent of the service-driven economy (Yasin *et al.*, 2011). The direct contribution of tourism sector in Poland to GDP is PLN29.4bn (1.7% of total GDP) in 2014, and is forecast to rise by 4.9% in 2015, and to rise by 4.5% per annum, from 2015-2025, to PLN47.6bn (2.0% of total GDP) in 2025 (World Travel & Tourism Council,

2015). Tourism, being a competitive sector, cannot sustain based on the cost factor alone (Eraqi, 2005). So, targeting the appropriate market is essential for its growth. The most influential demographic pattern which has impacted the tourism industry is the ageing of population (Reece, 2004). The senior market, along with its size, potential for growth, and purchasing power has become the centre of attention in the travel industry (Horneman *et al.*, 2002). The senior travel market is growing, especially because of the increase in elderly population around the world and by 2025 these mature people will represent a huge chunk of population in many countries (Batra, 2009). Furthermore, the package tourists are also a prominent segment in the travel market considering the duration of their stay and the amount of money spent in traveling (Bonn *et al.*, 2009). The current research, hence attempts to examine the tourist satisfaction in the senior travel segment, which availed package tours.

However, in spite of the significance of the senior travel market, tour agencies continue to operate with a lack of understanding of the senior travelers' concerns (Batra, 2009). The existing tourism products do not reflect the changing needs of senior tourists, who seek out tourism products appealing to them at a deeper level (Green, 2006). Furthermore, marketing campaigns have become outdated due to their lack of strategies to attract senior tourists (Viant, 1993). Thus, there is a need to understand and benchmark seniors' preferences so that tourist service providers could offer products which meet their needs.

Benchmarking is an important tool to achieve competitive advantage by comparing with the best in class (Stevenson, 1996). In services, benchmarking is difficult given the intangibility and variability characteristics of services (Narayan *et al.*, 2008). Benchmarking in tourism has been overlooked especially from the perspectives of senior tourists. Hence, this study hopes to benchmark senior tourists' holiday experience by comparing their expectations and the tourism

products' performance. The first step in benchmarking is to analyze the customer perceptions and their feedback on services they consumed (Padma *et al.*, 2009). In this light, the present study attempts to examine the senior tourists' holiday experience through their perceptions of package tours and makes use of the importance-performance analysis with regard to package tour features and destination characteristics.

Despite the numerous studies on senior tourism, differences exist on the definition of term "senior market" or "mature market" (Pol *et al.*, 1992). The cut-off starting age for seniors ranges from 50 to 55, 60 or even 65; this discrepancy makes it difficult to profile older consumers as well as to compare the findings (Norman *et al.*, 2001). This study has examined senior tourists who are aged more than 60; this demarcation of tourists into seniors is in line with the age categorization used by the World Tourism Organization (2001).

Specifically, the current research addresses the following questions:

- What tourism product attributes, including services provided by the tour operator and destination attributes, are of the highest importance to senior tourists?
- Are the senior tourists satisfied with the services provided by the tour operator (internal tourism product attributes) and the destination attributes (external tourism product attributes)?
- What are the most attractive tour characteristics and destination features to the senior tourists?

2. Literature Review

This section provides an overview of senior travel market, especially their motivation to travel, motivation to avail package tours, destination choice and their satisfaction. In this research, the theory of expectancy-disconfirmation is employed to understand the senior tourists' satisfaction with package tours and it is also discussed in this section.

2.1 Senior Travel

Of late, the senior tourism has received a wide attention in the literature as people aged 60 years and above are expected to constitute 22 percent of world's population by 2050 (United Nations, 2002). The senior travelers also represent the lion's share of holiday spending (Javalgi *et al.*, 1992). In general, travel motivations of seniors are explained by 'theory of push and pull motivations' (Dann, 1977). The push factors (or intrinsic motivators), correspond to the needs and preferences of travelers (Klenosky, 2002) such as desire to escape from routine, experience adventure, interact socially, etc. Meanwhile, the pull factors (or extrinsic motivators) are characteristics pertaining to the destination such as image, natural beauty, safety, etc. (Uysal and Jurowski, 1994). While the push factors give tourists a reason to travel, the pull factors explain their choice of destination (Crompton, 1979).

The older tourists prefer package tours, especially because of health constraints, like-minded companions, value for money and discomfort in encountering unfamiliar situations while traveling to strange places, etc. (Patterson, 1996; Lee and Tideswell, 2005; and Lee *et al.*, 2012). So, the mature tourists hope to achieve their travel goals by availing all-inclusive package trips which provide convenience and value for money while reducing the possible hassles and unpleasant surprises (Lo and Lam, 2004). A detailed review of the existing studies on senior travel is provided in Table 1.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

There are several authors who focused on other considerations in group package tours. Bonn *et al.* (2009) found that service friendliness, ease of getting around, climate and perceived value were the significant predictors of package tourist satisfaction, in a study on the U.S. tourists who

visited China. Xu and Chan (2010) conceptualized service experience of package tourists into four dimensions such as recognition and escapism, peace of mind and relaxation, hedonics and involvement. Takeda and Card (2002) explored the barriers for disabled tourists in the group package tours offered by the U.S. tour operators. They found that the tourism products could not cater to the needs of the disabled tourists who found great difficulty in accessing restaurants and bars during their travel.

Based on the above literature review, it is observed that despite the great potential for growth offered by the mature tourist market in terms of its preferences towards package tour, there are only a limited number of package tours offered for this group (Lee *et al.*, 2012). It is also evident that the existing studies have not examined the package tours and senior travel market together. Further, there is a dearth of research in understanding the quality of tourism products in comparison with senior package tourists' expectations so as to benchmark the possible areas of improvement. Thus, the current study aims to fill this gap.

2.2 *Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory*

Oliver (1980) proposed that quality is a function of both customers' expectations and service performance, i.e. the disconfirmation of performance from expectations. Based on this expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm, Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) conceptualized service quality as a result of the difference between perceived and expected service. In services, customer satisfaction depends on the quality of services provided (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1996) and all the aspects of service may not equally influence the satisfaction; it is essential to pay attention to service attributes which are important to customers (Padma *et al.*, 2009).

Tribe and Snaith (1998) made use of the expectation-performance gap to determine tourist satisfaction. Law and Ngai (2005) applied the expectancy-disconfirmation theory to compare the expectation and performance with respect to usability of Hong Kong travel websites. They revealed that the travel websites did not meet tourists' usability expectations and the largest gap was observed for the information dimension. Martin *et al.* (2009) applied this theory to investigate the effect of provider image on tourist satisfaction. The study concluded that provider image and service performance were the main drivers of satisfaction.

Based on the above literature review, it is observed that the senior tourists seem to be more satisfied with package tour attributes than the destination characteristics.

3. Research Methodology

This section deals with instrument design, data collection, data analysis and sample profile. The data analysis section provides a detailed overview of the importance-performance analysis.

3.1 Data Collection

The researchers analyzed secondary data such as reports on tourist satisfaction and the results of the surveys conducted by selected tour operators regarding the quality of package holiday services. This analysis was followed by a pilot study which was conducted with the tourist companies' managers and individual tourists to identify attributes that have an influence on the holiday experience of tourists. While the secondary analysis and literature review helped in the content validity, the pilot study ensured face validity of the questionnaire. After selecting tourism product attributes crucial for visitors, a questionnaire was developed including open-ended questions aimed at obtaining information concerning travelers' holiday experience. Tourists were asked questions regarding their assessments of the tourism product attributes in terms of their

importance and performance. The numerical evaluation of all attributes was made using 1-5 Likert scales. Moreover, tourists were asked questions regarding their opinions on the attractiveness of Poland as a tourist destination. The questionnaires were distributed among tourists who were spending their summer holidays on coach tours in Poland in 2013. Tours were organized and sold in the form of package holidays by tour operators and travel agents in the United States, Canada, and Australia. Mazurkas Travel, the Polish incoming tour operator, was a local partner responsible for arranging tourist services.

3.2 *Tourism Product Attributes*

Based on the results of a secondary data analysis and in-depth interviews with the tourist companies' managers and individual tourists, factors affecting tourists' holiday experience have been distinguished and grouped into two categories: tourism company products and other destination attributes crucial for travelers. This study considers 20 tourism product attributes: 7 internal tourism product attributes (ITA) and 13 external tourism product attributes (ETA). Table 2 provides the list of tourism product attributes. The internal tourism product attributes controlled by the tour operator comprised intangible components such as attractiveness of the program, organization, tour escort, and price/quality relationship as well as tangible elements including hotels, restaurants and meals, and standard of the bus. The external tourism product attributes beyond the tour operator's control referred to other destination factors influencing tourists' experience. The latter group included the following cultural and natural environment attributes: tourist attractions (culture, monuments), nature (countryside and parks), and weather. It also included social environment attributes (opportunity to meet new people, kindness toward foreigners, and possibility to communicate in English); functional and economic environment attributes (shopping opportunities, reasonable prices, tourist information, and handicapped

facilities); and atmosphere attributes (climate and atmosphere of the visit, safety, and cleanliness).

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

3.3 Data Analysis

In the present study, the researchers have analyzed senior tourists' perceptions of their holiday experience with regard to tourism company products and destination products. The research tasks include the identification of tourism product attributes crucial for senior travelers and factors influencing their holiday experience. The senior tourists' perceptions of the importance of the tourism product attributes as well as of the performance of each of these attributes have been considered in this study. The current study makes use of the importance-performance analysis (IPA) to compare package traveler's expectations and the performance of tours. The expectations of senior tourists are measured through importance attached by them to the tour attributes as well as destination characteristics and the performance is measured by their corresponding perceptions. The significant differences in senior tourists' perceptions between the internal and external tourism product attributes are also determined using a paired sample *t*-test.

The IPA, first proposed by Martilla and James (1977), is a technique used to identify the strengths and weaknesses in a service (Padma *et al.*, 2014). The IPA helps to identify areas of good work, scope for improvement, places of low priority and areas of strategic overkill. According to O'Neill *et al.* (2001), it is a technique used in strategic marketing for designing and developing product, marketing communication, service delivery, etc. The IPA has found wide applications in a variety of services such as tourism (e.g. Narayan *et al.*, 2008), education (e.g. Joseph and Joseph, 1997), banking (e.g. Joseph *et al.*, 1999), healthcare (e.g. Padma *et al.*, 2014), etc. Further, the IPA takes into account both importance and performance scores to arrive at the

strategic priorities needed to gain a competitive advantage (Khan and Rahman, 2014). This study also employs a paired sample *t*-test for a statistical comparison of attributes' expectation and performance as suggested by Johann (2014).

3.4 Sample Profile

The tourists spending their summer holidays on coach tours in Poland were the respondents of the survey. A paper-and-pencil questionnaire was distributed to the tourists at the end of each tour. Out of 463 travelers who availed the package tour, 69.1% were senior tourists aged 60 years and above, and 317 questionnaires were obtained from them. A description of sample characteristics is provided in Table 3.

INSERT TABLE 3 HERE

4. Results and Findings

In this section, the results of the IPA along with paired sample *t*-tests are discussed to determine the senior tourists' satisfaction with the ITA and ETA. While the *t*-test has been applied to determine the significant difference between importance and performance, the IPA has been employed to categorize the attributes on strategic quadrants.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

In this study, both the ITA and ETA have been examined. Table 4 shows the perceived importance and performance for each attribute. The package tour attributes or ITA appear at the top of the table. Considering the importance of the ITA for senior tourists, it can be concluded that tour escort (4.88), organization (4.77), attractiveness of the tour program (4.70) and price/quality relationship (4.68) are perceived as the most important tour attributes. These

findings concur with the results of Holloway (1981), Patterson (1996) and Wong and Lau (2001). It is not surprising that tour guide is the most indispensable internal tour attribute for senior tourists, given the multiple roles played by such guides: information givers, instructors, motivators, destination ambassadors, entertainers, confidants and leaders. Further, tour escorts are the first point of contact for senior tourists in the case of a service failure. The standard of the bus, hotels, and restaurants and meals are of lower importance; however, their mean values are above 4.5, indicating the high level of importance for seniors.

Similarly, the highest-rated destination attributes include safety (4.70), cleanliness (4.70), tourist attractions (4.68), reasonable prices (4.55), tourist information (4.53), and kindness toward foreigners (4.52). Thus, senior tourists seek to have their hygiene, physiological and safety needs to be met by tour providers before fulfilling their other needs. Some destination characteristics or ETA such as climate/atmosphere of the visit, nature, possibility to communicate in English, and opportunity to meet new people are also very important for the senior travelers. These results reinforce the socialization and learning motivations of senior travelers as stated in the literature (e.g., Fleischer and Pizam, 2002; and Klenosky, 2002). The importance score for these attributes ranges from 4.0 to 4.5, while, shopping opportunities and handicapped facilities seem to be the least important attributes (3.65 and 3.45 out of 5, respectively).

INSERT TABLE 4 HERE

Thus, it is observed from Table 4 that though both groups of tourism product attributes are important to senior tourists, they seem to attach more importance to the ITA than the ETA.

According to the data presented in Table 4, the tour escort, organization, attractiveness of the program, and standard of the bus are the highest-evaluated attributes (4.86, 4.75, 4.73, 4.70,

respectively). ‘Restaurants and meals’ (4.45) and ‘hotels’ (4.39) received lower ratings than the others, but the mean scores indicate a relatively high level of performance. The ETA are also highly evaluated by tourists. The perception scores for a number of attributes are above 4.5, which includes, tourist attractions (4.68), cleanliness (4.65), safety (4.63), kindness toward foreigners (4.61), reasonable prices (4.58), climate and atmosphere of the visit (4.56) and nature (4.55). For other attributes (excluding handicapped activities (3.66), which is the lowest-rated attribute), mean scores range from 4.0 to 4.5.

4.2 Seniors’ Perceptions of Tourism Product Attributes: Importance vs Performance

A paired sample *t*-test (as explained in Section 3.3) has been applied to compare the mean tourists’ assessments regarding the importance and performance of the distinguished tourism product attributes. The results of the *t*-test are presented in Table 4. In the case of the ITA, *t*-statistic is significant for hotels, restaurants and meals and standard of the bus. The hotels and restaurants and meals have positive disconfirmation which indicates that they did not meet tourists’ expectations. So, these attributes have to be improved. The standard of the bus has negative disconfirmation which shows that it exceeded senior tourists’ expectations. The senior tourists are satisfied with respect to all other package tour attributes as there is no significant difference between their performance and importance scores.

With respect to the external tourism attributes, significant differences are observed for climate/atmosphere, nature, shopping and socialization opportunities, weather and kindness to foreigners. All of them have negative disconfirmation which indicates that the performance exceeded tourists’ expectations. The senior tourists are delighted with these destination attributes.

Based on the mean tourism product attributes' importance and performance evaluations and the results of a *t*-test, a strategic action grid was designed and presented in Figure 1. The ETA which are considered low priority include weather, shopping opportunities, possibility to communicate in English, opportunity to meet new people and handicapped facilities. The majority of ITA related to the services provided by tour operator and to other destination factors should be kept up. These include tour escort, organization, attractiveness of the program, price/quality relationship, tourist attractions, safety, cleanliness, reasonable prices, kindness towards foreigners, climate of the visit, nature, and tourist information. The only tourism product attributes that require concentration of the managers' efforts and thus thorough analysis include hotels and restaurants and meals.

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

The results of the IPA are in line with the results of *t*-tests. The attributes with significant positive disconfirmation indicate that tourists' expectations are not met. Thus, hotels and restaurants and meals are the two factors which need immediate attention and they feature in 'concentrate here' quadrant. These findings are in line with Li *et al.* (2011). The senior tourists want hotels with better value for money. While they want to explore the local cuisine, they also want to have choices with food from their own culture. The attributes where differences between the performance and importance mean values are insignificant show that senior tourists are in general satisfied with them. These attributes feature in 'keep it up' and 'low priority' quadrants.

Most of the ITA and ETA such as tour escort, price/quality relationship, nature, standard of the bus, etc. are observed in the 'keep it up' quadrant. The service providers have to continue to with the same level of service quality with respect to these attributes. The attributes with 'low

performance’ as well as ‘low importance’ mean values such as possibility to communicate in English, shopping opportunities, handicapped facilities, etc. are seen in ‘low priority’ quadrant. The senior tourists are indifferent to these attributes.

4.3 *Attractiveness of Tourism Product Attributes*

This section deals with the content analysis of open-ended question regarding the attractive features of the tour program. The most frequently repeated attribute-based items are presented in Table 6. According to the senior tourists, the historical sites and beautiful countryside are considered the most attractive destination features. Furthermore, the seniors highly appreciated the cultural experience, competitive prices, and friendliness of people. The tour escort, local guides, delivered lectures as well as local cuisine have also been appreciated by the travelers. These findings also concur with the results of the IPA and *t*-tests.

INSERT TABLE 5 HERE

5. *Conclusions*

This study has examined senior tourists’ holiday experience by analyzing their expectations and tourist products’ performance by considering tour attributes and destination features. The following sections discuss the practical implications of the results the study along with limitations and future scope.

5.1 *Theoretical Contributions*

The current research has applied the expectancy-disconfirmation theory from the perspectives of senior package tourists, apparently for the first time. The senior tourists seem to consider package tour characteristics more importantly than the destination characteristics. The main motivation for them is to experience a sense of comfort, security and belongingness and the curiosity to explore

a new place is only secondary. Hence, in the context of push and pull motivations, package tours are the prominent pull factors which influence their travel decision on the contrary to other travel segments whose motivations are destination characteristics or intrinsic reasons such as visiting family, country of origin, cultural proximity, etc. Thus, motivations to travel seem to vary across travel segments based on their age.

This study has also provided a set of ITA and ETA which impact tourist satisfaction. Theoretically, this is probably the first time such a classification has been attempted which gives clarity on those set of attributes which are under the control of package service providers.

5.2 *Managerial Implications*

The results of the current research contribute to a better understanding of seniors' expectations, needs and preferences regarding tourist destinations as well as their satisfaction with package holidays, which is crucial for destination positioning and designing appropriate product and communication strategies. Further, the performance ratings for the attributes are higher than '3', which is the mean value of the measurement scale. Hence, the tourism service provided by the tour operator has been evaluated positively by the senior tourists and the service level could serve as a benchmark for other tour operators in Poland as well as in countries with similar culture such as the Baltic countries. The current study has provided a set of ITA and ETA which could be used in benchmarking studies in future. The benchmarking could be conducted periodically to prioritize service improvement strategies. The IPA is an appropriate tool which could be used in this regard.

Generally, in the current study, the senior tourists' expectations have been met and they have been even exceeded in some cases. The only noticeable quality gap refers to the hotels, and

restaurants and meals, which requires more focus from the service providers. Some of the senior tourists have special dietary requirements. While they want to explore the local food, they also want to have their native food choices. The hotels and accommodation options provided to the senior tourists were not up to the expected standards. Hence, the travel agencies could provide hotels with better facilities, which may lead to a corresponding raise in the price. The seniors place high importance on selected ITA and ETA. Therefore, tourist catalogues and other communications tools should contain information about the most important aspects of package holidays, emphasizing such tour attributes as attractiveness of the program, organization, tour escort, and price/quality relationship. They also should focus on destination attributes, stressing safety, cleanliness, nice and friendly atmosphere and the opportunities to socialize such as night life, etc. Attention also could be paid in marketing communications to influence the reference groups such as peers who previously visited the destination, family and friends.

The importance attached to the tour guide by the senior tourists shows that tour escorts are an essential and indispensable component of package tours for senior travelers. The tour escorts serve as the first point of contact to provide information and also to ensure that the tour runs smoothly. In the case of service failure, the tour escort has the primary responsibility to act empathetically and restore the service. As tour escort plays a crucial role in the service delivery and service recovery, leadership skills, general knowledge, communications skills, and cultural sensitivity as well as caring, thoughtfulness, attentiveness and patience should be regarded as essential for this position. It is even recommended to employ a tour leader and a tour assistant to perform all required duties. 'Tour escort' is one of the most essential characteristic of a package tour which could help in differentiation of tours and hence has to be benchmarked across the

industry and also across countries. In addition to functional benchmarking, cultural benchmarking also has to be performed, based on the cultural background of the inbound tourists.

Furthermore, conclusions can be drawn concerning the product development and service delivery process. As the seniors attach more importance to the ITA than the ETA, it is suggested that the tour itinerary is carefully designed and all activities thoroughly planned and organized. The program of the tour should be attractive and appealing to seniors, as they appear to value all that helps to save time and make the most of their holidays (for example, making use of elevators instead of staircases). In addition to historical sites, it is necessary to include such items as local customs and traditions, folk music and dances, lectures, cultural events, piano recitals, traditional dishes and beverages and a home-hosted dinner.

5.3 *Limitations and Future Scope*

This study has considered only inbound senior tourists, who availed package tours in Poland. Future studies may replicate the current study by including outbound tourists, independent travelers, and also compare the results with younger tourists. The role of online information for senior tourists which is not examined currently, also offers potential to research further. Furthermore, this study has considered all senior tourists as a single homogeneous cluster. In the future, research could be undertaken to overcome these limitations and perform comparisons across cultures. The current research has collected data only at a specific point in time (2013) and hence, in future, a longitudinal study may provide insights which are more stable.

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Table 1 A Summary of Literature Review on Senior Travel

Research Objective	Author(s)	Main Finding
Senior travelers' motivation to travel	Iso-Ahola (1982)	The desire to escape the daily routine and to seek psychological rewards through a different environment
	Cleaver <i>et al.</i> (1999)	Escape from their routine life and seek fun-filled activities
	Tucker (2005)	Sense of impending mortality was the reason behind the older tourist enjoying every minute of their package holidays
	Sangpikul (2008)	Three push factors: learning, ego-enhancement and relaxation and four pull factors: travel arrangements and facilities, cultural and historical attractions, shopping and leisure, and safety and cleanliness served as motivations to travel
	Esichaikul (2012)	Rest and relaxation, visiting new places and learning
	Carneiro <i>et al.</i> (2013)	Socialization and novelty seeking followed by culture and entertainment options
Seniors' motivation to avail package tours	Javalgi <i>et al.</i> (1992)	Convenience was the main motivation to avail package tours
	Heung and Chu (2000)	The combination of accommodation, meal options, guided tours in vehicles at affordable cost made package tours attractive
	Joseph and Thomas (1996)	Deteriorating health was the main reason for the older tourist to choose package tours
Senior travelers' destination choice	Dann (1977)	The decision to visit a place was influenced by tourists' needs
	Shoemaker (2000)	Pull factors such as visiting local sites, shopping, and natural scenery were very important
	Horneman <i>et al.</i>	The presence of beaches, countryside and historical

	(2002)	sites were essential when selecting a destination
	Kim <i>et al.</i> (2003)	Key tourist attractions such as beautiful landscapes, cultural and historical resources were significantly related to destination selection.
	Prayag and Ryan (2011)	Destination image was the most important pull factors in a destination respectively
	Chen and Lin (2012)	Familiarity with destination was the most important factor influencing destination choice
Senior tourists' satisfaction	Bowie and Chang (2005)	A guided package tour's elements related hedonism and enjoyment significantly influenced tourists' satisfaction
	Bonn <i>et al.</i> (2005)	The satisfaction of group package travelers was significantly influenced by service friendliness, comfortable transportation, acceptable climate and perceived value
	Poon and Low (2005)	Hospitality, accommodation, food and beverages, recreation and entertainment, supplementary services, security and safety, innovation and value-added services, transportation, location, appearance, pricing and payment were factors influencing tourist satisfaction
	Bilim and Yuksel (2008)	When tourists perceived the destination personality they desired, positive attitude towards destination occurred
	Chen <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Senior tourists when provided with hotel rooms with senior-friendly facilities, increased their satisfaction with respect to cleanliness, comfort, decoration, illumination, overall satisfaction and recommendation to others

Table 2 Tourism Product Attributes

Tourism Product Attributes	
Internal Tourism Attributes (ITA)	Hotels (Ht)
	Restaurants and Meals (RM)
	Standard of the Bus (SB)
	Attractiveness of the Program (AP)
	Organization (Or)
	Tour Escort (TE)
	Price/quality Relationship (PR)
External Tourism Attributes (ETA)	Tourist Attractions (TA)
	Nature and Countryside (NC)
	Weather (Wt)
	Opportunity to Meet New People (OP)
	Kindness towards Foreigners (KF)
	Possibility to Communicate in English (CE)
	Shopping Opportunities (SO)
	Reasonable Prices (RP)
	Tourist Information (TI)
	Handicapped Facilities (HF)
	Climate and Atmosphere of the Visit (CV)
	Safety (Sf)
	Cleanliness (Cl)

Table 3 Description of Survey Respondents

Demographic Variable	Percentage
Gender	
Female	56
Male	44
Country of Origin	
USA	85
Canada	6
Australia	4
Other	5

Table 4 Tourism Product Attributes: Importance vs Performance

Tourism Product Attribute	Importance (I)	Performance (P)	Service Gap (I-P)	<i>t</i> -value
Attractiveness of the program (AP)	4.70	4.73	-0.04	-1.15
Organization (Or)	4.77	4.75	0.01	0.42
Hotels (Ht)	4.54	4.39	0.15	3.80**
Restaurants and meals (RM)	4.54	4.45	0.10	2.45*
Standard of the bus (SB)	4.60	4.70	-0.10	-2.49*
Tour escort (TE)	4.88	4.86	0.02	0.91
Price/quality relationship (PR)	4.68	4.64	0.05	1.40
Climate and Atmosphere of the Visit (CV)	4.41	4.56	-0.15	-3.24**
Tourist attractions (TA)	4.68	4.68	0.00	0.09
Nature and Countryside (NC)	4.34	4.55	-0.20	-4.53**
Shopping opportunities (SO)	3.65	4.00	-0.29	-4.73**
Safety (Sf)	4.70	4.63	0.07	1.86
Opportunity to meet new people (OP)	4.13	4.34	-0.20	-4.53**
Weather (Wt)	4.09	4.14	-0.56	-11.20**
Cleanliness (Cl)	4.70	4.65	0.05	1.57
Reasonable prices (RP)	4.55	4.58	-0.04	-1.23
Tourist information (TI)	4.53	4.46	0.06	1.63
Kindness towards foreigners (KF)	4.52	4.61	-0.12	-3.12*
Possibility to communicate in English (PE)	4.29	4.34	-0.06	-1.25
Handicapped facilities (HF)	3.45	3.66	-0.02	-0.27

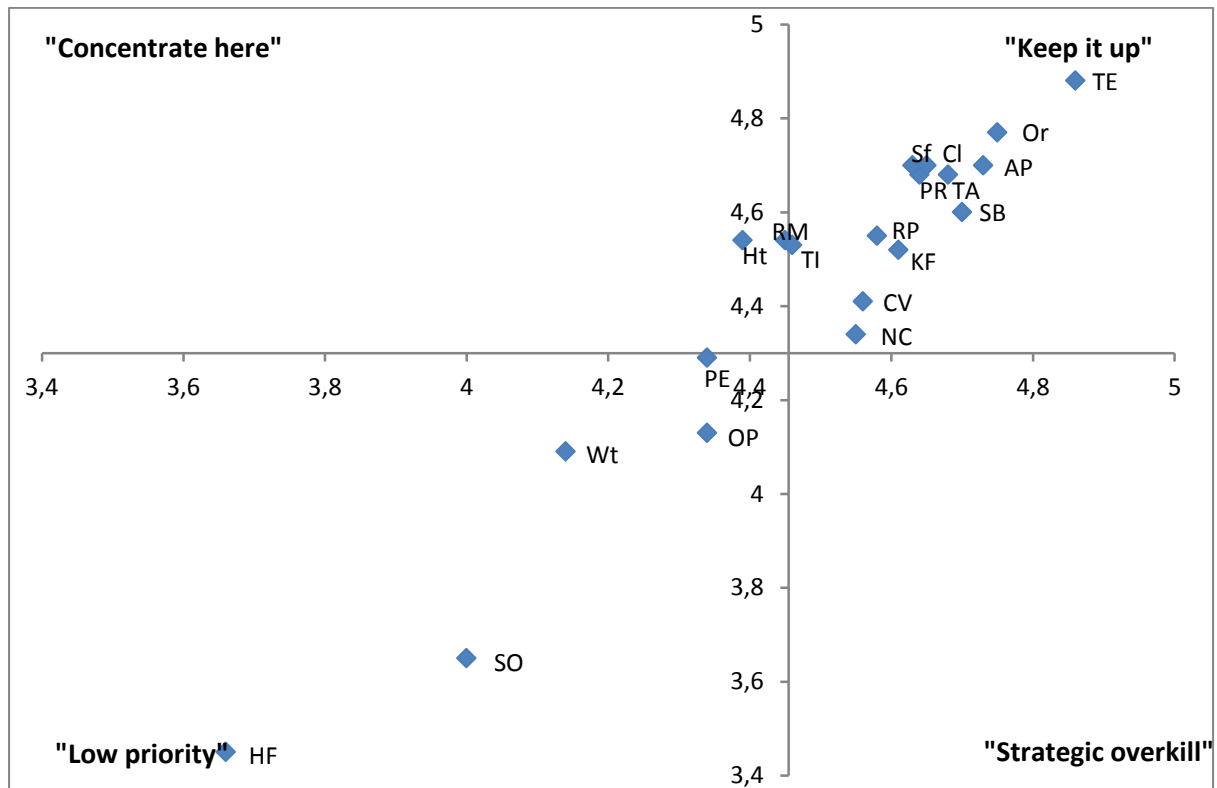
*- Significance at 0.05 level

** - Significance at 0.01 level

Table 5 Most Attractive Features of the Tourism Product Attributes

Package Tour Attributes		Destination Characteristics	
Attractiveness of the program	69%	Historical sites	43%
Tour leader/guides	15%	Countryside	18%
Local cuisine/meals	13%	Competitive prices	17%
Special lectures	11%	Friendliness of people	15%
Organization of the tour	4%	Cultural experience	13%

Figure 1 Strategic Action Grid



"Concentrate here"	"Keep it up"	"Low priority"
Ht: (4.39, 4.54)	TE: (4.86, 4.88)	HF: (3.66, 3.45)
RM: (4.45, 4.54)	Or: (4.75, 4.77)	SO: (4.00, 3.65)
	AP: (4.73, 4.70)	Wt: (4.14, 4.09)
	Cl: (4.65, 4.70)	OP: (4.34, 4.13)
	Sf: (4.63, 4.70)	PE: (4.34, 4.29)
	PR: (4.64, 4.68)	
	TA: (4.68, 4.68)	
	SB: (4.70, 4.60)	
	RP: (4.58, 4.55)	
	KF: (4.61, 4.52)	
	CV: (4.56, 4.41)	
	NC: (4.55, 4.34)	
	TI: (4.46, 4.53)	