

Residents' Perception of Tourist Destination: An Empirical Study of Chandigarh

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Abstract—*The unparalleled expansion in the tourism industry during the last fifty years has created major challenge in tourism marketing. The growth of tourism industry is responsible for a tough competition among the destinations in attracting more visitors. One of the major marketing challenges which are arising from this situation is the need for an effective destination positioning keeping in mind the visitors to that particular region. Such a target market for a Regional Tourist Destination (RTD) must include people from the region and those who travel near their home destinations. For the success of any development in a destination the in- depth knowledge of the region by the people of the community and the stake holders is of prime importance. This article tries to understand, how its own residents perceive Chandigarh as Tourist Destination in comparison with the rest of Punjab. Then how exactly this present image is driving them towards tourism development in the region? Finally this article tries to know whether there is any difference in the resident's perception and reality.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The unprecedented growth in the tourism industry during the last fifty years has created major challenges in tourism marketing (Echtner and Ritchie, 2003). In India tourism development is recent trend. Most of the state tourism corporation came in to the existence after 1970s. This growth has created more competition among the similar destinations in attracting visitors. One of the most significant marketing challenges arising from this situation is the need for an effective destination positioning strategy (Echtner and Ritchie, 2003). If we want to position the particular destination first we need to understand what target market (consumers/visitors) have an image about the destination. The first step towards positioning of a tourist destination is to determine the most important variables tourists consider while evaluating a destination.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Residents of destinations may have images of their own place of residence that can be investigated in comparison with those of tourists (Sternquist Witter 1985)*. This stream has been called 'residents' active role' in destination image study (Gallarza et al (2002). This target market for a regional tourist destination includes first its own people (residents) who want

to visit near home destinations (seeing their own region completely). Here residents mean tour and travel operators of the region, hoteliers, tour guides, politicians, local tourism officials and general public. These people act as host as well as tourists. This kind of tourists is called as short haul tourists. Secondly people outside the region and within the state or country. And final target market is foreign tourists. The successful destination development, positioning and marketing depends up on the stake holders and the host communities perception and interest about tourist destination of their region. Lot of studies have shown the role of host community in creating the image of the destination. Residents are often seen as part of the image elements (Echtner and Ritchie 1991)* and their support for the industry may affect the tourists' perceptions of the destination.

3. CONCEPT OF DESTINATION IMAGE

Destination image means the sum of belief's, ideas and impressions that a person has about the destination. According to Reynolds an image is the mental construct developed by the consumer on the basis of a few selected impressions among the flood of total impressions and it comes into being through a creative process in which selected impressions are elaborated, embellished and ordered.

4. TOURISM PROFILE OF CHANDIGARH

Chandigarh, one of the Union Territories of India is indebted to a Chandi temple and an adjoining fort for its name. The history of Chandigarh is really captivating. Chandi is a goddess of Hindus and Garh means fort. On the vicinity of today's hustling and bustling city of Chandigarh, one could easily find this ancient temple. However, the city of Chandigarh has a primitive story to tell, a story that was born before the birth of the city. Chandigarh, as you will discover now, is located at the foothills of Shivalik range of Himalayas. The place was a large lake at the antediluvian ages. Serenity and a city are two diametrically opposite concepts, which however, get belied in the 'City Beautiful'. It is here that the trees and plants are as much a part of the construction plans as the buildings and the roads. India's first planned city, is a rich,

prosperous, spic and span, green city rightly called **“THE CITY BEAUTIFUL”**.

Tourist Attractions of the Chandigarh:

Chandigarh is a rare epitome of modernization co-existing with nature's preservation. It has many worth visiting places, the important are:

Capitol Complex

One of the most visited places in Chandigarh; the Capitol Complex is situated in Sector-1. It comprises of the Secretariat, the Assembly and the High Court. The geometrical concrete buildings of the complex, emerging elegantly out of the ground, comprise of the headquarters of the Government of Punjab as well as Haryana.

The Open Hand

'The Open Hand' is one of the most impressive monuments in Chandigarh. Situated in the Capitol Complex, it comprise of a giant hand, rising 85 feet high from a hollow trench. Made of metal sheets, the hand is capable of rotating and delivers the message that the city gladly receives all, without any distinction.

Sector 17

The most popular hangout of youngsters, Sector 17 houses the most upscale shopping market of Chandigarh. Apart from the market, the sector also prides itself on being dotted with fountains, sculptures and groves of trees. In short, it is completely a shopper's as well as a pedestrian's paradise!

Sukhna Lake

The nature lovers will find the Sukhna Lake of Chandigarh perfect for them. Situated in Sector 1, the lake was created by building an artificial dam on a seasonal stream. Go for boating, relax in the restaurant situated there or just sit on the 2-km-long promenade and take in the beauty of nature.

Rock Garden

Rock Garden is perhaps the most frequented tourist attraction in the city. Being the unique garden that it is, the popularity is perfectly understandable. Situated near the Capitol Complex, it is spread over an area of around 12 acres. Built by Nek Chand, the garden comprises of art objects that have been made from urban waste material.

Leisure Valley

Leisure Valley is for those who love soaking in the green surroundings. The valley basically comprises of a number of beautiful gardens, which adorn the city from its one end to the other. The popular **Rose Garden** of Chandigarh, the largest garden of Asia, is a part of the Leisure valley only. The **popular gardens** of the city are *Garden of Tranquillity*,

Garden of Rare Plants, Garden of Annuals, Bougainvillea Garden, Botanical Garden and Garden of Aromatic Plants.

International Dolls Museum

International Dolls Museum, situated in Sector 23 of Chandigarh, has a vast collection of dolls and puppets from all over the world. It is open throughout the week, except Sunday.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The majority of the destination image studies used structured methodologies. In such studies respondents will choose the option which researcher used. It may fail to know what the respondents feel. Researchers to date have relied heavily on the use of structured methodologies. As a result they have been unable to capture the more holistic and unique components of the destination image. Furthermore, the psychological characteristics of destination image have not been adequately measured in the majority of the studies.' To overcome this problem in this study open ended as well as closed ended structured questions are used in single questionnaire to measure the image of Chandigarh. The questions of structured part are based on the literature review. Selected and relevant attributes were chosen from the Echtner and Ritchie (2003) study. The demographic profile of respondents is given in the table 2. Chandigarh is the universe of the study. Purposive Sampling technique was used. Respondents were chosen from all sectors of Chandigarh.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents (N=348)

		No.	%age
Gender	Male	257	73.9
	Female	91	26.1
Age:	15-21	27	7.8
	22- 30	127	36.5
	31-45	128	36.8
	46 and above	49	14.1

Table 2: Chandigarh as a Tourism Destination

Opinion	Frequency	Percent
Yes	336	98.5
No	5	1.5
Total	341	100.0

Table 3: Tourism Destinations and Scope for Tourism Activities

Opinion	Enough Tourism Destinations		Scope for Tourism Activities	
	F	%	f	%
Yes	207	60.0	194	57.1
No	21	6.1	48	14.1
Few	117	33.9	98	28.8
Total	345	100.0	340	100.0

From the table 3 it is very clear that 98.5 respondents feel Chandigarh is a tourism destination. Tourism destinations and there is huge scope for tourism activities in the region.

Table 4: Cost of Accommodation

Opinion	Frequency	Percent
Very Costly	3	1.0
Costly/Prices are High	61	20.3
Moderately Priced	192	63.8
Cheap	41	13.6
Very Cheap	4	1.3
Total	301	100

Transportation and quality of the roads are very basic and important aspects of tourism development. Table 7 clearly exhibits that Chandigarh is not up to the mark tourism infrastructure. 28.8% of the respondents said transportation facilities are underdeveloped and backward, 36.2% said moderately developed or average development and only 35% said developed. It shows many of the tourism destinations don't have the proper connectivity. It is again reflected in the quality of roads only 27.2% respondents said roads are in developed condition, 29.2% said moderately developed and 43.5% is underdeveloped

Analysis and Interpretation:

The responses gathered through the structure questionnaire from the respondents about Chandigarh tourism are analysed and presented in the following tables and graphs.

Table 5: Chandigarh in Terms of Historical Sites, Architecture/Building and Fairs and Festivals

Opinion	Historical Sites		Architect /Building		Fairs and Festivals	
	f	%	F	%	F	%
Very Rich	50	14.6	34	9.9	55	16.1
Rich	165	48.1	99	28.9	126	37.0
Average	109	31.8	190	55.4	148	43.4
Poor	17	5.0	20	5.8	12	3.5
Very Poor	2	.6	0	0	0	0
Total	343	100	343	100	341	100

Table 5 also show that there are lot of tourist interested for tourism activities in the region. It means potential tourism destinations of the regions must be identified and developed.

Table 6: Quality of Service of the Hotels

Opinion	Frequency	Percent
Very Good	31	9.1
Good	87	25.5
Average	190	55.7
Not Good	28	8.2
Very Bad	5	1.5
Total	341	100.0

Table 7: Chandigarh in terms of Transportation Facilities/Accessibility, Quality of Roads & Economic Development

Opinion	Transportation Facilities/ Accessibility		Quality of Roads		Economic Development and Affluence	
	F	%	F	%	Frequency	Percent
Highly Devel Oped	4	1.2	3	0.9	7	2.1
Devel Oped	115	33.8	90	26.3	80	23.6
Moderately Devel oped	123	36.2	100	29.2	106	31.3
Under Devel Oped	62	18.2	75	21.9	94	27.7
Back Ward	36	10.6	74	21.6	52	15.3
Total	340	100.0	342	100.0	339	100.0

6. FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

- 98.5 respondents feel Chandigarh is a tourism destination and there are lot of tourism destinations and there is huge scope for tourism activities in the region. It is also clear from the profile of the Chandigarh. It means potential tourism destinations of the regions must be identified and developed.
- Chandigarh has potential for developing tourism in terms of Historical Sites, Architecture/Building and Fairs and Festivals and customs and culture.

If the road and transport facilities are of this condition tourist visit to such destinations is unimaginable. The economic development of the region is still worst. 25.7% respondent said developed, 31.3% feel moderately developed and 43% feel underdeveloped and backward.

7. CONCLUSION

Residents of Chandigarh strongly feel, it is a Tourist Destination. Compared to rest of Punjab, Chandigarh also has lots of tourism attractions. It looks true that what Tim Schroeder (1996) felt, image that the host population has of its home area would be important because of its relationship to two aspects of tourism development: (1) it may influence political support for efforts to promote and develop tourism, and (2) it may influence the organic image developed in potential visitors via the information provided by host residents to friends, relatives, and business associates.

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