

Research Paper

The Influence of Destination Attributes on Backpacker Loyalty: Unveiling the Mediating Role of Satisfaction in Heritage City Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka

D.M.C. Dassanayake

Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Faculty of Management Studies, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka. chamindad@mgt.rjt.ac.lk

ABSTRACT

In the diverse landscape of the tourism industry, backpacker tourism emerges as a distinct niche, characterized by its unique culture, preferences, and economic impact. This research aims to study the factors influencing backpacker satisfaction and loyalty at the Anuradhapura heritage site in Sri Lanka, aiming to distinguish how various destination attributes influence satisfaction and loyalty. Using a quantitative research approach, this study deployed a structured questionnaire to a sample of 174 international backpackers, selected through purposive sampling. According to the results of Pearson correlation, multiple linear regression, and mediation analysis, the study revealed that value for money, destination attractiveness, and quality of accommodation significantly predict satisfaction, which in turn mediates the influences of those destination attributes on loyalty. The findings emphasize the need for destination marketers to consider economic and visual appeal in their business and marketing strategies. Theoretically, the study provides important insights into backpacker tourism behaviour by demonstrating how satisfaction mediates the influence of destination attributes on destination loyalty. Practically, this understanding aids destination management companies in formulating and implementing strategies that enhance backpacker satisfaction and loyalty.

Keywords: Anuradhapura, backpackers, heritage, loyalty, satisfaction, Sri Lanka

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 01 July 2023

Accepted 20 December 2023

Available online 30 December 2023

1. Introduction

Tourism encompasses various travel forms, among which backpacker tourism stands out due to its unique characteristics. A backpacker is typically seen as a traveler seeking adventure and cultural immersion on a budget, often prioritizing experiences over luxury (Iles and Prideaux, 2011). These travelers are known for their flexibility, resourcefulness, and desire to explore off-the-beaten-path destinations. Backpacker tourism, therefore, is not just about travel; it's about an immersive, cost-effective journey that often leads to profound personal and cultural discoveries (Sroyetch, 2016).

Backpacker tourism is studied from multiple viewpoints, encompassing economic, social, cultural, and behavioural contexts (Hampton, 1998, Iles and Prideaux, 2011, Rana and Brett, 2011, Dayour et al., 2017). Importantly, scholars have recognized that backpacker tourism is a crucial driver for economic and infrastructure development for many underdeveloped countries and territories (Scheyvens, 2002, Sroyetch, 2016). Therefore, attracting backpacker tourists to a particular destination can be beneficial, mainly from an economic perspective. However, how a particular destination meets the expectations of backpackers is of

utmost importance in making the tourist destinations attractive to backpackers.

Many factors from different perspectives determine the attractiveness of any travel destination. Among these factors are destination image (Pike, 2016), place attachment (Silva et al., 2013, Ryan and Prayag, 2012), perceived values (Dassanayake, 2021, Dassanayake et al., 2015), social and cultural aspects, attractions (Lu et al., 2016), activities (Wang et al., 2016), amenities (Robustin et al., 2018), and services (Neuhofer, 2012). Amongst the various factors, the prevailing services, facilities, and circumstances play a significant role in assessing a destination's suitability. Whether a destination meets the expectations of the visitor can be perceived differently by distinct travel segments, such as group travellers, family travellers, and backpackers. Consequently, it may be necessary to conduct separate studies to uncover the segment-specific perspectives, like backpackers, as the group is distinct in their travel behaviours (Kahandugoda and Dassanayake, 2021). Thus, conducting a study to discover how well a particular destination's facilities, services, and conditions meet the needs of backpackers is vital for the progression of backpacker tourism in that area (Gnanapala, 2015).

1.1. The Study Context: Anuradhapura Heritage Destination

Anuradhapura, situated in the North Central Province of Sri Lanka, is a significant heritage tourism site that encompasses a rich blend of history, culture, and environment (Sammani et al., 2018, Samarajiva et al., 2011). The city's roots can be traced back to the times of King Vijaya, with its founding credited to Minister Anuradha (Nissan, 1989). Subsequently, King Pandukabhaya developed it into a prosperous capital city, and it continued for more than 1400 years. Anuradhapura remains a pivotal Buddhist site, showcasing the advanced irrigation and agricultural practices of its era (Wimalaratana, 2016).

As a tourist destination, Anuradhapura offers an array of fascinating experiences for visitors seeking a holistic journey through time. At its peak, Anuradhapura boomed as an active city comprised of royal palaces and monasteries, temples splendid with jewels, and sophisticated residences ranging from two to three stories, complemented by captivating pleasure gardens and serene pools (Udurawana, 2015). Today, the city's spiritual value echoed in the eight venerated sites, including the sacred Sri Maha Bodhi Tree, sheltered by its satellite trees, and the majestic stupas like Jetavanarama, Ruvanvelisaya, and Thuparamaya that stand as proofs of its majesty. Architectural miracles like the Queen's Palace and the Ratnaprasada, along with the thoughtful atmosphere of the Samadhi Buddha and Toluwila statues, continue to show the city's historical importance (Rajapakse, 2018). The surrounding tanks and streams – such as Malwathu Oya, Abhaya, Jaya, and Tissa –

reflect the city's past magnificence, enriching the destination's value (Abeywardana et al., 2019). These structures collectively highlight Anuradhapura's potential to enhance the cultural experiences and sightseeing suggestively and for tourists, complemented by improved transport services and infrastructure, highlighting its pivotal role in attraction and visitor satisfaction. A rich collection of sites unfolds, surrounding the sacred landmarks of Mihintale and Aukana, a range of museums, and cultural festivals like the Poson festival beyond the attractions that exist at central Anuradhapura. These sites and events provide deep insights into the region's religious and cultural practices and customs, offering a unique lens through which to view the life and times of ancient Sri Lanka (Wimalaratana, 2016).

1.2. Conceptual Background

This research is based on the concepts derived from past studies to evaluate the services and conditions at a travel destination. Backpackers, as a unique segment in the tourism industry, are characterized by their preference for budget accommodation, interactions with other travellers, and flexible, independently organized travel plans. Age-wise, backpackers mainly fall between 15 to 29 years, though they can range up to 60 years. According to Nash et al. (2006) and Richards and Wilson (2004), backpacking is a segment of low-cost travel encompassing rural tourism activities like camping and hiking, as well as affordable international travel. The concept of backpacking, highlighted by Cohen (2003) and further scrutinized by Pearce et al. (2009), arose in the 1960s and 70s, contrasting these travelers from standard tourists due to their lengthy travel duration and desire for immersive experiences.

The literature provides a range of factors vital for assessing the facilities, services, and conditions at a tourist destination. This study mainly focuses on attractiveness, value for money, information availability, safety, transportation facilities, and accommodation quality. These factors have been identified as they jointly include the diverse array of services, facilities, and conditions essential for satisfying backpackers traveling to the Anuradhapura area.

Value for money, a prominent factor in consumer satisfaction, characterizes the perceived balance between what is received and what is given regarding a product or service. Sinha and DeSarbo (1998) describe it as the exchange between price and the quality or benefits received. Zeithaml (1988) further articulates it as customers' judgment of the perceived value they receive compared to what they have paid or given. Demirgüneş (2015) sees value for money as an overall assessment of a product's usefulness based on what is received versus what is given, encompassing both tangible and intangible features like emotional and social values. It also includes emotional, functional, and social dimensions, where functional value is

cognitive, and the other two are affective (Demirgüneş, 2015). In this context, the value for money of a product is understood in three dimensions: product-related, personal-related, and social-related values, each addressing different consumer needs, expectations, and perspectives (Aulia et al., 2016).

Attractiveness in tourism, as outlined by Pallavicini (2017), is a central aspect in determining the demand for a destination. It includes tourists' feelings and perceptions towards a destination's unique qualities and characteristics. Formica and Uysal (2006) underscore that elements such as climate, resources, and cultural aspects significantly improve a destination's attractiveness. This attractiveness is critical to destination marketing and plays an essential role in the development and popularity of tourism in a given area (Massidda and Etzo, 2010). Additionally, effective management of these attributes and features contributes to setting up a destination's appeal and satisfying travellers, eventually inspiring revisits and positive word of mouth (Som et al., 2011). Therefore, attractiveness is a multidimensional concept that influences tourist satisfaction and destination appeal.

Safety, as a construct in tourism, has gained prominent attention in research, mainly regarding its relationship with tourism crime and visitor well-being in destinations. It emphasizes that safety and tourism do not stand alone, highlighting major risk factors like political instability, health concerns, war, terrorism, crime, and natural disasters. These issues, particularly political unrest and terrorism, significantly influence travel intentions and satisfaction, as noted by Floyd et al. (2004). According to George (2003), safety problems directly affect tourist satisfaction, with tourists often being vulnerable to crimes in unfamiliar environments. Factors like unfamiliar behaviours and language barriers intensify this susceptibility, as well as the visible outsider status of tourists in urban areas (Sirakaya et al., 1997). The perception of safety strongly influences a backpacker tourist's decision-making process, influencing their satisfaction and the possibility of revisiting or partaking in destination activities (Pearce et al., 2009). Safety concerns are particularly relevant for backpackers, who often undertake off-beaten paths and engage in potentially risky activities (Jabłonkowska, 2015). Factors like travelling alone, staying in lower-standard accommodations, and adventurous activities contribute to safety risks for backpackers, underscoring the importance of safety in ensuring visitor satisfaction.

Information is a crucial variable in tourism, mainly inclined by improvements in information technology and the availability of numerous sources. As per Yasin et al. (2017), tourists today rely heavily on various information sources for travel purposes. The cost of obtaining information generally involves time, financial, and effort factors (Gursoy and McCleary, 2004). The amounts and types of information

a traveller needs rely on various aspects, including risk perceptions, vacation type, and cultural background, as outlined by Osti et al. (2009). Tourists use a wide range of sources, from brochures and the internet to social media and personal experiences. Jacobsen and Munar (2012) classify these sources into internal and external, with external sources including media and online content and internal sources encompassing personal experiences. This diverse information context plays a prominent role in shaping tourists' perceptions and satisfaction.

Transportation, an essential element of tourism, involves moving people or goods from one place to another. It suggestively affects tourists' satisfaction and experiences, shaping their post-visit behaviours. The capacity, efficiency, and quality of transportation services, as well as the advances in transport infrastructure and policies, play a prominent role in developing the attractiveness of a tourist destination (Ouariti and Jebrane, 2020). Backpackers, a discrete group of tourists, habitually prioritize convenient and low-cost transport modes that facilitate interactions with local communities and engagement in local cultures. Their transportation choices, influenced by factors like security, cleanliness, cost, and reliability, are also shaped by personal preferences, socioeconomic factors, and fitness levels (Domènech et al., 2023).

Accommodation is a fundamental aspect of any tourist destination, essential for providing tourists with a place to rest and rejuvenate (Poudel, 2013). It fulfills both physiological and psychological needs, thereby playing a crucial role in tourist satisfaction (Chin et al., 2018). The variety and availability of accommodations, from budget guesthouses to star-grade hotels, sufficiently influence the image and the attractiveness of a destination. Satisfaction regarding the accommodation involves both tangible (like food, facilities, and location) and intangible aspects (such as service quality and atmosphere). Budget accommodations are commonly preferred by backpackers, with factors like security, price and cleanliness being key considerations (Ren et al., 2018).

Satisfaction and Loyalty are critical aspects in examining tourist behavior, mainly among backpackers. Research has shown that tourist satisfaction significantly affects behavioral Loyalty (Xu and Wang, 2016). Furthermore, the mediating role of satisfaction between elements of the services provided and customer loyalty has been emphasized in the context of backpackers' behaviour (Ali et al., 2018). Additionally, the influences of travel experience variables have been recognized as crucial factors associated with tourist satisfaction and Loyalty, shedding light on the multilayered nature of satisfaction and Loyalty in determining tourist behavior, mainly among backpackers (Sangpikul, 2018).

The development and maintenance of tourism destinations face numerous challenges and issues, including evolving travel expectations and behaviors, global economic and political instabilities, the diverse range of travel product offerings, and severe competition among destinations (Chen et al., 2023). Managing heritage tourism in Anuradhapura is also not without challenges and problems. Attracting tourists to a specific destination involves considering numerous factors. Key among these are the facilities, services, and infrastructure offered, which are fundamental for any traveler (Neuhofer, 2012, Khairi and Darmawan, 2021). Equally important is recognizing target markets for the destination and modifying them to meet their explicit needs. The backpacker segment, in particular, holds potential in Anuradhapura's tourism sector, as backpackers are now frequent visitors to the Anuradhapura area (Jayasri and Jayasinghe, 2021).

Consequently, it becomes necessary to examine how facility services and infrastructure are offered to backpackers in Anuradhapura. Although some studies have evaluated foreign guests' views about the services in Anuradhapura, they have not considered backpackers as a separate segment (Udurawana, 2015). Studies done on backpackers have focused on factors like culture, novelty seeking, relaxation, adventure, and destination attractiveness (Jayasri and Jayasinghe, 2021). Therefore, a study is required to assess the views of backpackers on the services and facilities offered at Anuradhapura. Therefore, the primary objective of this research is to examine the impact of services, facilities, infrastructure, and overall conditions on the satisfaction and loyalty of backpackers visiting Anuradhapura.

1.3. Development of Hypotheses

The empirical evaluations suggest that several vital influences contribute to backpacker satisfaction, encompassing numerous aspects of tourism expectations and experience. Value for money, as highlighted by Demirgüneş (2015) and Sinha and DeSarbo (1998), has a significant effect on satisfaction, encompassing functional, social, and emotional attributes. Similarly, the attractiveness of a destination, as described by Cugno et al. (2012) and Sirdeshmukh et al. (2002), is crucial, with natural and artificial features, resource utilization, and governance all contributing to satisfaction. Safety, as explained by Jabłonkowska (2015), is also a key factor where actual safety conditions and perceived risks influence backpackers' satisfaction and travel behaviour. Information availability and accuracy, according to Yasin et al. (2017), play a vital role in shaping backpackers' experiences and satisfaction. The source and type of information, particularly for first-time and repeat visitors, are crucial. Transportation features, including traffic management and public transport services, are significant determinants of satisfaction, as detailed by Hassan and Shahnewaz (2014). Finally,

accommodation qualities, such as service quality, price, and location, are closely linked to backpacker satisfaction, with studies by Ren et al. (2018) underscoring their importance. These insights lead to the formulation of the following hypotheses:

H₁: Value for money positively influences backpacker satisfaction.

H₂: Destination attractiveness positively influences backpacker satisfaction.

H₃: Safety positively influences backpacker satisfaction.

H₄: The quality and availability of information positively influence backpacker satisfaction.

H₅: Transportation attributes positively influence backpacker satisfaction.

H₆: Accommodation attributes positively influence backpacker satisfaction.

Satisfaction and loyalty are fundamental variables in examining and understanding tourist behavior, predominantly among backpackers. Research has shown that tourist satisfaction significantly influences loyalty (Xu and Wang, 2016). Furthermore, the relationship between satisfaction with the services provided and customer loyalty has been emphasized in the context of backpackers (Ali et al., 2018). Additionally, the dimensions of travel experience have been recognized as crucial factors influencing tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. Further, this notion highlights the mediating role of satisfaction in the relationship between various influencing factors and loyalty among backpackers (Sangpikul, 2018). These insights lead to the formulation of the following two additional hypotheses:

H₇: Satisfaction positively influences backpacker loyalty.

H₈: Satisfaction mediates the influences of various factors (such as value for money, safety, accommodation, attractiveness, and information quality) on backpacker loyalty.

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Overview

This study employs a quantitative research approach grounded in post-positivist epistemology, which recognizes the possibility of gaining knowledge of an objective reality through empirical research. The ontological view of realism

Table 1: Sample Demographics

Description	Count	%
Region		
Asia	20	11
Australasia	18	10
Europe	133	77
America	3	2
Gender		
Male	113	65
Female	61	35
Marital Status		
Single	97	56
Married	66	40
Other	11	4
Age		
18-26	40	23
27-36	68	39
37-46	20	12
47-56	25	14
57 and above	21	12
Education		
High School	23	13
Diploma	39	23
Bachelor	75	43
Postgraduate	37	21
Monthly Average Income (\$)		
Below 1000	14	8
1000-2000	67	39
2000-3000	31	18
3000-4000	25	14
Above 4000	37	21
Travel Companion		
Alone	26	15
With Spouse	59	34
With Girl/Boy Friend	31	19
With Friends	52	30
With Parents	1	6
Other	5	3

reinforces this approach, proclaiming the presence of an observable and measurable reality (Al-Ababneh, 2020). In this research, the unit of analysis is identified as individual backpackers. This epistemological focus enables the study to draw precise conclusions about the preferences, behaviors, satisfaction, and experiences of backpackers. Such an approach guarantees that the results and findings are exclusively applicable to this distinct group, facilitating targeted insights and conclusions.

The study adopts a deductive approach. Hypotheses were derived through a comprehensive literature review, laying a solid foundation for empirical inquiry. This methodological selection allows for a focused exploration of specific hypotheses related to backpacker expectations and satisfaction, contributing adequately to both practical and theoretical advancements in the arena. A survey method serves as the foundation of the research strategy (Creswell, 2014). This approach was chosen for its usefulness in collecting quantifiable data from a relatively large sample of backpackers.

2.2. Questionnaire Development

The development of the survey instrument, the structured questionnaire, was a meticulous process. The questionnaire consists of two main sections: demographic information and the measurements of key variables of the study. In the demographic section, respondents were asked to provide details about their background, including gender, age, geographic region, income, marital status, travel companions, education level, and employment status. The core of the questionnaire aimed at the primary research constructs, with items organized on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree.' Several statistical measures were employed to ensure the reliability and validity of the instrument. The internal consistency among the questionnaire items of each variable was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha. These statistical analyses will be comprehensively presented in the data analysis section of this paper.

Additionally, the criterion-related validity and face validity of the questionnaire were thoroughly assured. The development of the measurements for each variable in the questionnaire, particularly those regarding the main research variables, was grounded in a comprehensive review of relevant literature. Notably, the works of Aulia et al. (2016), Formica and Uysal (2006), (Floyd et al., 2004), and (Friman et al., 2020) contributed to guiding the formulation of questionnaire items, ensuring that they are both theoretically thorough and empirically rigorous.

2.3. Population, Sample, and Data Collection

The study's target population was defined as foreign backpackers visiting the Anuradhapura heritage city. The study employs a non-probability sampling method, specifically purposive sampling, due to the nature of its target population. The questionnaires were distributed among the selected sample through the purposive sampling technique. As the exact number of backpackers visiting Anuradhapura is unknown and not all travelers to Anuradhapura are backpackers, it is crucial to select respondents who meet specific characteristics representative of backpackers. This necessitates purposive

sampling, where respondents are chosen based on certain required features. Therefore, this research appropriately utilizes the purposive sampling technique to ensure the relevance and accuracy of its findings.

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Value for money	0.701
Attractiveness	0.853
Safety	0.685
Information	0.681
Transportation	0.687
Accommodation	0.755
Satisfaction	0.883
Loyalty	0.701

A team of about 10 undergraduate students was mobilized to collect data. These students, with printed questionnaires and adhering to a purposive sampling technique, purposefully approached possible participants at several places within the heritage city, including public transport stations and railway stations, particularly during guests' waiting times. Their approach was timed to ensure it was suitable to engage the backpackers, and verbal consent was gained before the presentation of the questionnaire. A total of 174 usable and completed questionnaires were gathered. The data analysis was performed with the SPSS software.

3. Data Analysis and Results

3.1. The sample Profile

As Table 1 depicts the study targeted 174 backpackers at the Anuradhapura heritage site in Sri Lanka, mainly from Europe (133; 77%) and predominantly male (113; 65%). Main demographic factors showed a majority of single backpackers (97; 56%), with most in the 27-36 age range (68; 39%), and a standard education level of a bachelor's degree (75; 43%). The most frequent income category was \$1000-2000 (67; 39%), and travelers often visited with a spouse (59; 34%) or friends (52; 30%). Overall, this sample reflects a young, educated, and economically diverse cohort, indicating a broad appeal of the Anuradhapura heritage site among different segments of the international backpacking community. The majority of European visitors suggest regional preferences or travel patterns, highlighting possible areas for targeted tourism strategies.

3.2. Computing of Variables and Reliability Testing

The variables were calculated using the mean values of the questionnaire items used in the survey. The internal consistency reliability was tested by calculating Cronbach's alpha for each construct separately. Table 02 depicts the

reliability score scores of each of the variables. According to the alpha values, 5 variables meet the threshold of 0.7, and the other three are also considered reliable as the values are closer to 0.7.

3.3. Interrelationship between constructs

The interrelationships between constructs were assessed using the scores of Pearson correlation among the variables. Table 3 shows the correlation scores with their significance levels.

The statistics of correlation analysis among the factors to evaluate the satisfaction and loyalty at Anuradhapura heritage site indicate that backpacker satisfaction ($r = .458$, $p < .01$ with attractiveness; $r = .162$, $p < .05$ with transport; $r = .465$, $p < .01$ with accommodation; $r = .224$, $p < .01$ with safety) is a multifaceted construct, heavily influenced by the attractiveness of the site, the suitability and efficiency of transport, the quality and standards of accommodation, and the sense of safety. These aspects are fundamental in determining a positive experience, with higher ratings in these features correlating with satisfaction. Loyalty ($r = .211$, $p < .05$ with accommodation; $r = .255$, $p < .01$ with attractiveness; $r = .359$, $p < .01$ with transport) is also statistically significant to these variables, postulating that the possibility of backpackers returning to the site or endorsing it to others is reliant upon their satisfaction levels. With the statistical significance demonstrated it is evident that improving these aspects can significantly increase both immediate satisfaction and long-term loyalty among backpackers at the Anuradhapura heritage site.

3.4. Evaluating influences of the destination-related factors on the satisfaction

Multiple linear regression analysis was run to establish how the independent variables influence the satisfaction to test the first six hypotheses. In the regression analysis, the model explains a moderate 34.2% variance in satisfaction, as indicated by an R^2 of 0.342, with the Adjusted R^2 at 0.318 suggesting a slightly lower explanatory power when adjusted for the number of predictors. The ANOVA results confirm the model's significance with an F statistic of 14.458 and a p-value of less than 0.001, indicating that the predictors collectively provide a reliable prediction of satisfaction levels among backpackers. This statistical foundation validates the relevance of the predictors in the model.

In the regression analysis focused on backpacker satisfaction at the Anuradhapura heritage site (Table 4), several prominent factors emerge as significant predictors. The attractiveness of the site shows a strong positive influence on satisfaction ($B = .562$, $p < .001$), indicating that more striking sites are likely to generate higher satisfaction among backpackers.

Table 3: Inter-item Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Attractiveness (1)	1	.451**	.363**	.300**	-.530**	-.081	.458**	.255**
Transport (2)	.451**	1	.152*	.061	-.377**	-.054	.162*	.359**
Accommodation (3)	.363**	.152*	1	.218**	-.422**	-.173*	.465**	.211**
Safety (4)	.300**	.061	.218**	1	-.190*	.018	.224**	.042
Information (5)	-.530**	-.377**	-.422**	-.190*	1	.318**	-.300**	-.019
Value for money (6)	-.081	-.054	-.173*	.018	.318**	1	.070	.114
Satisfaction (7)	.458**	.162*	.465**	.224**	-.300**	.070	1	.559**
Loyalty (8)	.255**	.359**	.211**	.042	-.019	.114	.559**	1

Accommodation quality is another vital element, suggestively increasing satisfaction ($B = .763, p < .001$). Also, Value for Money positively affects satisfaction ($B = .461, p = .014$), although its effect is less noticeable compared to attractiveness or accommodation. On the other hand, safety, transport, and information, despite being part of the model, do not demonstrate a statistically significant influence on satisfaction, suggesting their influence might be minimal or dominated by the leading variables in this context.

Moreover, a simple linear regression was run to examine the influence of satisfaction on loyalty, and the statistical analysis provided evidence that satisfaction significantly influences loyalty. The association between satisfaction and loyalty is further supported by the R^2 value of .313, indicating that approximately 31.3% of the variance in loyalty can be explained by satisfaction. The ANOVA results reinforce this conclusion, with a significant F-value (78.342) and a p-value less than .05, indicating that the model is statistically significant. Additionally, the coefficients show that for every unit increase in satisfaction, loyalty increases by .458 units, which is statistically significant ($p < .05$). These findings collectively suggest a strong and significant influence of satisfaction on loyalty.

Finally, the mediating role of satisfaction in the model was evaluated by running a multiple regression analysis. This analysis involved assessing the change in R^2 on two different occasions: once with the mediator (satisfaction) included and once without it. In the results of the mediation analysis, satisfaction appeared as a noteworthy mediator in the model predicting loyalty. The initial model without satisfaction as a mediator accounted for 22.5% of the variance in Loyalty ($R^2 = .225, F(6, 167) = 8.078, p < .001$). The inclusion of satisfaction increased the variance explained to 46.3% ($R^2 = .463, F(7, 166) = 20.434, p < .001$), with the change in R^2 being statistically significant ($\Delta R^2 = .238, p < .001$). This considerable increase in R^2 highlights the mediating power of satisfaction. Moreover, satisfaction itself had a strong positive effect on Loyalty ($B = .492, \beta = .601, t = 8.575, p < .001$), with its inclusion significantly

improving the model's predictive capability. These results confirm that satisfaction significantly mediates the influences of various predictors on loyalty, enhancing the understanding of the factors that drive customer loyalty.

4. Discussion

The results of this study have produced essential implications for the theoretical explanations of backpacker tourism dynamics. The results validate the hypothesis (H_1) that value for money is a crucial determinant of backpacker satisfaction, which is in line with the conceptualization of Demirgüneş (2015) consumer value assessment and provides empirical sustenance to theory on the trade-off between cost and benefit perceptions (Sinha and DeSarbo, 1998). Further, the findings of the study reinforce the stance that destination attractiveness (H_2) is a critical factor in shaping satisfaction, validating the theoretical assertions posited by Cugno et al. (2012) and Sirdeshmukh et al. (2002) concerning the influence of a destination's intrinsic appeal on the tourist satisfaction.

The lack of significant findings about the influence of safety, transportation, and information on satisfaction compels to reject the $H_3, H_4,$ and $H_5,$ and it signals a potential nonconformity with the existing literature, challenging the conclusions of Floyd et al. (2004) and Pearce et al. (2009) about the impact of these factors on the traveler's decision-making and sense of well-being. This disparity prompts a re-evaluation of these constructs' roles in the context of backpacker tourism, suggesting that the backpacker segment may prioritize more diverse aspects of the travel experience than previously understood. The $H_6,$ which proposed that accommodation features and conditions positively influence backpacker satisfaction, was authenticated, indicating that the location, quality, and services of accommodation substantially shape the satisfaction levels of backpackers, confirming Poudel's (2013) postulations. In the context of loyalty, satisfaction shows a significant impact on loyalty (H_7), confirming the postulations of Xu and Wang (2016). The mediating power of satisfaction in the model (H_8) is vibrantly demonstrated,

Table 4: Regression Coefficients

Variable	Un.Std.Coeff.		Std. Coef.	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-2.269	1.182		-1.920	.057
Attractiveness	.562	.139	.334	4.060	.000
Transport	-.106	.156	-.049	-.684	.495
Accommodation	.763	.152	.356	5.006	.000
Safety	.056	.096	.039	.582	.561
Information	-.078	.178	-.036	-.441	.660
Value for money	.461	.185	.167	2.490	.014

substantiating the theoretical depictions of Ali et al. (2018) and (Sangpikul, 2008) on the satisfaction-loyalty relationship.

5. Conclusions

This study not only approves the hypothesized pathways but also enriches the theoretical insights by quantitatively indicating the mediating power of satisfaction between destination assessment factors and loyalty. This study enhances the theoretical background of backpacker tourism by affirming the significant mediating role of satisfaction between destination attributes and loyalty, improving the discourse within tourism behaviour knowledge. Theoretically, it advances the understanding of the determinants of backpacker satisfaction, demonstrating the power of destination attractiveness and value for money over other attributes. In terms of managerial aspects, the findings highlight that destination marketers should prioritize these aspects to enhance backpacker satisfaction, which in turn positively affects destination Loyalty. The study postulates that focused investments in enhancing the perceived value and marketing the unique attraction of inheritance sites can lead to a more profound satisfaction and encourage repeat visits and positive word of mouth among backpackers.

The consolidative interpretation of these findings provides a comprehensive understanding of the determinants of backpacker satisfaction and loyalty. By exploring the interrelations among various destination-related factors, the study explains the complex nature of backpacker preferences and perceptions. This inclusive approach emphasizes the importance of a multilayered view of the tourist experience, as it is determined by a collection of elements that extend beyond traditional satisfaction thoughts. The empirical evidence presented herein not only aligns with but also challenges and expands existing academic dialogues, thereby furnishing a comprehensive

picture that could significantly inform strategic destination marketing and management practices in heritage tourism.

6. Recommendations, Limitations, and Future Research

The study's findings lead to several practical implications for destination marketing in backpacker tourism. Emphasizing the enhancement of perceived value and promoting unique attractions of heritage sites is critical for increasing backpacker satisfaction and loyalty. Additionally, the importance of the quality, location, and services of accommodations cannot be overstated, as these factors significantly shape backpacker satisfaction. The results also suggest a need for destination planners to re-evaluate their strategies, considering the diverse priorities of backpackers.

However, this research encompasses certain limitations. The focus on specific determinants of satisfaction may not cover all variables influencing backpacker behavior. Geographically, the study's context is limited to heritage sites, which may not be applicable to other tourism types or destinations. Also, the lack of significant findings for some hypotheses suggests a potential deviation from established theories, indicating a need for a more inclusive approach to studying factors influencing backpacker tourism.

Future research should aim to explore additional factors affecting backpacker satisfaction and loyalty, particularly those not showing significant influence in this study. Comparative analyses across different cultural and geographical contexts could yield more nuanced insights into backpacker behaviors and preferences. Furthermore, understanding the role of digital technologies, such as social media and mobile apps, in shaping backpacker decisions and experiences, could provide valuable information for destination marketing strategies.

Bibliography

- ABEYWARDANA, N., PITAWALA, H., SCHÜTT, B. & BEBERMEIER, W. 2019. Evolution of the dry zone water harvesting and management systems in Sri Lanka during the Anuradhapura Kingdom; a study based on ancient chronicles and lithic inscriptions. *Water History*, 11, 75-103.
- AL-ABABNEH, M. 2020. Linking ontology, epistemology and research methodology. *Science & Philosophy*, 8, 75-91.
- ALI, F., KIM, W. G., LI, J. & JEON, H.-M. 2018. Make It Delightful: Customers' Experience, Satisfaction and Loyalty in Malaysian Theme Parks. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 7, 1-11.
- AULIA, S. A., SUKATI, I. & SULAIMAN, Z. 2016. A review: Customer perceived value and its Dimension. *Asian Journal of Social Sciences and Management Studies*, 3, 150-162.
- CHEN, S., CHAN, I. C. C., XU, S., LAW, R. & ZHANG, M. 2023. Metaverse in tourism: drivers and hindrances from stakeholders' perspective. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 40, 169-184.
- CHIN, C.-H., LAW, F.-Y., LO, M.-C. & RAMAYAH, T. 2018. The impact of accessibility quality and accommodation quality on tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention to rural tourism destination in sarawak: the moderating role of local communities' attitude. *Global Business and Management Research*, 10, 115-127.
- COHEN, E. 2003. Backpacking: Diversity and change. *Journal of tourism and cultural change*, 1, 95-110.
- CRESWELL, J. W. 2014. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*, Thousand Oaks, CA, SAGE.
- CUGNO, M., GRIMMER, M. & VIASSONE, M. 2012. Measuring local tourism attractiveness: The case of Italy. ANZAM Conference Proceedings, 1-22.
- DASSANAYAKE, D. M. C. 2021. Why do Indians Select Sri Lanka for Vacations? Motives and Consumption Values. *Journal of Management and Tourism Research*, 4, 1-12.
- DASSANAYAKE, D. M. C., ZAHRA, A. & CAVE, J. 2015. The role of consumption values in the destination decision-making process. CAUTHE: Rising Tides and Sea Changes: Adaptation and Innovation in Tourism and Hospitality, 2015. 123-134.
- DAYOUR, F., KIMBU, A. N. & PARK, S. 2017. Backpackers: The need for reconceptualisation. *Annals of Tourism Research*.
- DEMIRGÜNEŞ, B. K. 2015. Relative importance of perceived value, satisfaction and perceived risk on willingness to pay more. *International Review of Management and Marketing*, 5, 211-220.
- DOMÈNECH, A., MIRAVET, D. & GUTIÉRREZ, A. 2023. Tourists' transport modal choices in Barcelona. *Research in Transportation Business & Management*, 48, 100902.
- FLOYD, M. F., GIBSON, H., PENNINGTON-GRAY, L. & THAPA, B. 2004. The effect of risk perceptions on intentions to travel in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 15, 19-38.
- FORMICA, S. & UYSAL, M. 2006. Destination attractiveness based on supply and demand evaluations: An analytical framework. *Journal of Travel Research*, 44, 418-430.
- FRIMAN, M., LÄTTMAN, K. & OLSSON, L. E. 2020. Public transport quality, safety, and perceived accessibility. *Sustainability*, 12, 3563.
- GEORGE, R. 2003. Tourist's perceptions of safety and security while visiting Cape Town. *Tourism management*, 24, 575-585.
- GNANAPALA, W. 2015. Tourists perception and satisfaction: Implications for destination management. *American Journal of Marketing Research*, 1, 7-19.
- GURSOY, D. & MCCLEARY, K. W. 2004. AN INTEGRATIVE MODEL OF TOURISTS' INFORMATION SEARCH BEHAVIOR. *Annals of tourism research*, 31, 353-373.
- HAMPTON, M. P. 1998. Backpacker tourism and economic development. *Annals of tourism research*, 25, 639-660.
- HASSAN, M. M. & SHAHNEWAZ, M. 2014. Measuring tourist service satisfaction at destination: A case study of Cox's Bazar sea beach, Bangladesh. *American Journal of Tourism Management*, 3, 32-43.
- ILES, A. & PRIDEAUX, B. 2011. The Effect on a Peripheral Destination from Changes to the Working Backpacking Market in Australia. CAUTHE National Conference, Adelaide. University of South Australia. School of Management, 323-336.
- JABŁONKOWSKA, J. B. 2015. Risk-taking factors in backpacker tourism. *Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Humanitas. Pedagogika*, 119-127.
- JACOBSEN, J. K. S. & MUNAR, A. M. 2012. Tourist information search and destination choice in a digital age. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 1, 39-47.

- JAYASRI, A. & JAYASINGHE, J. A. P. M. 2021. Backpackers' travel motivations and revisit intention to Sri Lanka. 4th National Research Symposium on Management, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka.
- KAHANDUGODA, K. M. G. S. B. & DASSANAYAKE, D. M. C. 2021. Behavioral characteristics of backpackers to Sri Lanka. 7th Ruhuna University International Conference on Humanities and Social sciences (RUICHSS 2021), University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka. 39.
- KHAIRI, M. & DARMAWAN, D. 2021. The Relationship Between Destination Attractiveness, Location, Tourism Facilities, And Revisit Intentions. *Journal of Marketing and Business Research (MARK)*, 1, 39-50.
- LU, E. H.-C., FANG, S.-H. & TSENG, V. S. 2016. Integrating tourist packages and tourist attractions for personalized trip planning based on travel constraints. *Geoinformatica*, 20, 741-763.
- MASSIDDA, C. & ETZO, I. 2010. Domestic tourism demand in Italy: a Fixed Effect Vector Decomposition estimation.
- NASH, R., THYNE, M. & DAVIES, S. 2006. An investigation into customer satisfaction levels in the budget accommodation sector in Scotland: A case study of backpacker tourists and the Scottish Youth Hostels Association. *Tourism Management*, 27, 525-532.
- NEUHOFER, B. An analysis of the perceived value of touristic location based services. In: FUCHS, M., RICCI, F. & CANTONI, L., eds. 2012. *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2012: Proceedings of the International Conference*, January 25-27, 2012, Helsingborg, Sweden. Springer, 84-95.
- NISSAN, E. 1989. History in the making: Anuradhapura and the Sinhala Buddhist Nation. *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice*, 64-77.
- OSTI, L., TURNER, L. W. & KING, B. 2009. Cultural differences in travel guidebooks information search. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 15, 63-78.
- OUARITI, O. Z. & JEBRANE, E. M. 2020. The impact of transport infrastructure on tourism destination attractiveness: A case study of Marrakesh City, Morocco. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 9, 18.
- PALLAVICINI, J. A. C. 2017. Factors influencing tourism destinations attractiveness the case of Malaga.
- PEARCE, P. L., MURPHY, L. & BRYMER, E. 2009. *Evolution of the backpacker market and the potential for Australian tourism*, CRC for Sustainable Tourism Gold Coast.
- PIKE, S. 2016. Destination image: Identifying baseline perceptions of Brazil, Argentina and Chile in the nascent Australian long haul travel market. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 5, 164-170.
- POUDEL, S. 2013. The influence of the accommodation sector on tourism development and its sustainability: Case Study: Strand Camping, Larsmo.
- RAJAPAKSE, A. 2018. Reconceptualizing sacred city meaning: The sacred city of Anuradhapura. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1, 15-28.
- RANA, S. & BRETT, A. S. M. 2011. Feedback information and consumer motivation. *European Journal of Marketing*, 45, 963-986.
- REN, L., QIU, H., MA, C. & LIN, P. M. 2018. Investigating accommodation experience in budget hotels. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 30, 2662-2679.
- RICHARDS, G. & WILSON, J. 2004. *The global nomad: Backpacker travel in theory and practice*, Channel View Publications.
- ROBUSTIN, T. P., ANDI, R., SUROSO, I. & YULISETIARINI, D. 2018. The contribution of tourist attraction, accessibility and amenities in creating tourist loyalty in Indonesia. *J. Bus. Econ. Review*, 3, 92-98.
- RYAN, C. & PRAYAG, G. 2012. Antecedents of tourists' loyalty to Mauritius: The role and influence of destination image, place attachment, personal involvement, and satisfaction. *Journal of Travel Research*, 51, 342-356.
- SAMARAJIVA, P., AMBANWALA, C. & PIYADASA, A. 2011. Visualisation of ancient anuradhapura: A demonstration of digital possibilities. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka*, 57, 125-134.
- SAMMANI, U., RANASINGHE, R. & TENNAKON, T. 2018. Religious Tourism Development Potentials at Anuradhapura UNESCO World Heritage City: Chinese Tourists' Perspective. *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management, United Kingdom*, 1, 244-258.
- SANGPIKUL, A. 2008. Travel motivations of Japanese senior travellers to Thailand. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 10, 81-94.
- SANGPIKUL, A. 2018. The Effects of Travel Experience Dimensions on Tourist Satisfaction and Destination Loyalty: The Case of an Island Destination. *International*

- Journal of Culture Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 12, 106-123.
- SCHEYVENS, R. 2002. Backpacker tourism and third world development. *Annals of tourism research*, 29, 144-164.
 - SILVA, C., KASTENHOLZ, E. & ABRANTES, J. L. 2013. Place-attachment, destination image and impacts of tourism in mountain destinations. *Anatolia*, 24, 17-29.
 - SINHA, I. & DESARBO, W. S. 1998. An integrated approach toward the spatial modeling of perceived customer value. *Journal of marketing research*, 35, 236-249.
 - SIRAKAYA, E., SHEPPARD, A. G. & MCLELLAN, R. W. 1997. Assessment of the relationship between perceived safety at a vacation site and destination choice decisions: extending the behavioral decision-making model. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 21, 1-10.
 - SIRDESHMUKH, D., SINGH, J. & SABOL, B. A. 2002. Consumer Trust, Value, and Loyalty in Relational Exchanges. *Journal of Marketing*, 66, 15-37.
 - SOM, A. P. M., SHIRAZI, S. F. M., MARZUKI, A. & JUSOH, J. 2011. A critical analysis of tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. *Journal of Global Management*, 2, 178-183.
 - SROYPETCH, S. 2016. The mutual gaze: Host and guest perceptions of socio-cultural impacts of backpacker tourism: A case study of the Yasawa Islands, Fiji. *Journal of Marine and Island Cultures*, 5, 133-144.
 - UDURAWANA, Y. 2015. Destination's Attributes on Tourists' Satisfaction at Sacred Areas of Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka. Proceedings of 04th International Conference on Management and Economics, Faculty of Management and Finance, University of Ruhuna, Matara, Sri Lanka,.
 - WANG, W., COLE, S. T. & CHANCELLOR, C. 2016. Profiling Rural Festival Visitors by Previous Visits, Purpose of Travel, and Activities: A Multi-Segmentation Approach.
 - WIMALARATANA, V. W. 2016. Cultural tourism potential in the north central province of Sri Lanka. *Social Affairs (Peradeniya)*, 1, 46-64.
 - XU, R. & WANG, J. 2016. A Study of Tourist Loyalty Driving Factors From Employee Satisfaction Perspective. *American Journal of Industrial and Business Management*, 6, 1122-1132.
 - YASIN, B., BAGHIROV, F. & ZHANG, Y. 2017. The role of travel experience and gender on travel information source selection. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 8, 296-310.
 - ZEITHAML, V. A. 1988. Consumer perceptions of price, quality, and value: A means-end model and synthesis of evidence. *The Journal of Marketing*, 52, 2-22.