

**IMPROVING THE TOURISM INDUSTRY BASED ON TOURIST SATISFACTION IN SRI LANKA: SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CHINESE TOURISTS**

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**ABSTRACT**

Tourist satisfaction with destinations is one of the essential driving elements in the tourism industry's development, since satisfied tourists are more likely to revisit scenic spots and satisfy tourists' travel advice attracts new visits to the spots. However, there is a lack of research related to the investigation of tourist satisfaction of Chinese tourists, the second largest source of visitors in Sri Lanka, and corresponding specified measures to attract more tourists, proposed by sorting out statistics obtained in the investigation. Therefore, this study attempted to measure the importance and performance of Sri Lankan destination attributes by employing Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) method, in order to explore Chinese arrivals' tourist satisfaction and identify the main influencing factors, then, identifying the primary areas for improvement within the country's tourism sector. The study was carried out as mixed-method research. The researcher used stratified random sampling followed by the simple random sampling method. The researcher used the simple random sampling method and selected 100 from the population as the sample size. Relevant primary and secondary data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, annual statistical reports and other literature on the subject with the concentration to answer the research questions. The survey of 100 Chinese tourists showed that transportation, accommodation and 9 factors including 24 projects, influenced the tourist satisfaction strongly. According to the IPA index, transportation smoothness, professional staff quality and 10 projects were identified as the weakness of influencing factors. The IPA grid indicated that

transportation smoothness, the Chinese language level and 5 projects fell into the 'Concentrate Here' quadrant, requiring immediate managerial intervention. Overall, the findings show that the Chinese tourists were very satisfied with hospitality and Sri Lanka's natural beautiful environment vital to attracting more visitors. This research will provide a model and reference for further research or study on tourists from other countries to Sri Lanka.

**Keywords:** tourist satisfaction, importance-performance analysis, tourist destination in Sri Lanka, Chinese tourists and tourism industry

## **INTRODUCTION**

The significance of tourism in Sri Lanka (SL) is increasing in value as a strategic economic sector, and the government is devoted to making its tourism industry a vital growth mode in improving the national economy. SL is a beautiful tropical island in the Indian Ocean Region, as an ideal tourism destination, which can successfully compete with other countries because of the critical geographical position in part. Apart from its location, SL offers a large number of choices for tourists. Among them are favourable weather, beaches, cultural heritages, natural parks and wildlife (Fernando, Bandara & Smith, 2016). As noted by Kiriella (2016) as well, SL is a well-known tourist destination due to its endowment of three "S" s that are "Sun, Sea and Sand". By possessing abundant tourism resources, improving the tourism industry in Sri Lanka has great space and potential.

However, tourism in SL has been a story of untapped potential. According to Fernando, Bandara and Smith (2016), although the Sri Lankan (SL) tourism industry is predicted to keep growing, simplex markets and products and mismanagement of this growth contribute to a lack of value-adding opportunities. Moreover, due to the Easter Sunday

attacks on 21st April 2019 and the global novel coronavirus pandemic, the number of tourist arrivals to SL has decreased significantly. According to SL Tourism Development Authority (2019), 1,913,702 tourists visited SL in 2019, but it was a decline of 18% over 2018 when 2,333,796 tourists visited the country during the same period. It is reported that there are some complaints of visitors about safety, guide service, transportation and food. In comparing the national tourism development strategy and aims, the country faces a number of challenges in developing the tourism industry. The most crucial thing in recent times is to find the breakthrough of tourism development, then recover and improve the tourism industry in SL.

According to the SL Tourism Development Authority (2018) visitors from the United Kingdom, Western Europe, China, and India made up more than 62% of SL leisure visitors, mainly, China was recorded as the second major country of origin for tourists with a share of 11.54% during 2018. However, the number of Chinese tourists to SL is less than 0.0012% of the total number of Chinese outbound tourists. It is meaningful to study how to expand the Chinese tourism market and attract more visitors to Sri Lanka. A , more in-depth analysis of the motivation and satisfaction of China's visits originally can make the market strategies and policy-making more niche-targeting, it will be more helpful to improve the SL tourism industry directly. Exploring the motivation, experience and current situation of Chinese tourists choosing SL as the destination is one breakthrough. It is equally useful to strengthen the cooperation between tourism authorities of SL and China. Wang Danhe (2018) stated that tourist satisfaction (TS), plays a vital role

in marketing tourism products and services, which is also the foundation and orientation of tourism planning and management. Generally, the TS could be improved, beginning with destination planning to consider the visitor experience from entry to exit, which has extra effects of being a positive promotion method for tourism industry development. As a critical factor which impacts the competitiveness of tourist attractions, TS has significant research value. Therefore, exploring Chinese arrivals' TS with Sri Lankan destinations (SLD) and identifying the main areas for amending within the country's tourism sector is practical and timely for improving its tourism brands.

Even though the SL tourism sector continues to grow, poor tourist satisfaction of this growth and limited diversity of markets contribute to the lack of value-adding opportunities. There are many positive actions to revive the tourism industry. However, those methods and policies are macro for overall tourism. There is still a lack of research on investigation of TS, and corresponding specified measures to attract more tourists, which is proposed by sorting out statistics obtained in the investigation. People have to get travel suggestions from others' experience or information on websites, which are not complete and objective enough.

Furthermore, there is a less reliable basis to establish targeted management mechanism for policymakers and managers. In summary, it is necessary to establish a tourist satisfaction evaluation scheme and explore tourist satisfaction with SLD for Chinese tourists. Therefore, this

study's problem statement is, *'What are the main factors influencing the improvement of tourist satisfaction with Sri Lankan Destinations?'*

Improving the SL's tourism industry is urgent and has great potential since the country has perfect tourism resources. TS is crucial for the future well-being of tourism and sustainable destination management, mostly it is meaningful to research Chinese TS of Chinese tourists which is the second-largest source in SL. Thus, the research's general objective is to identify the main factors influencing Chinese tourists' satisfaction towards tourist attractions in SL. The specific objective is to explore the major factors influencing Chinese tourists' satisfaction towards tourist destinations and the factors that are a drawback that should be improved in SL.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In the recent past, various researchers have engaged in many research about international tourism concentrating on trends in tourist arrivals. Fundamentally, there is a great deal of literature on forecasting and identifying tourist arrivals trends, with various types of empirical analysis. When considering SL, many factors affect tourist arrivals. As Ranasinghe (2015) points out, SL has various rich cultural heritages and landscapes that present a wide range of tourist opportunities for foreigners. Many researchers are attracted by overall tourism development and specific tourism projects. Those researches have equal contribution to absorb tourist arrivals, and it may not offer customized guidelines to suit the needs of different tourists. However, after the Easter Sunday attacks and the novel coronavirus epidemic, which brought severe negative effects to SL's tourism perception, few studies

focus on identifying the factors that will influence improving TS for tourists' visiting SL. This study will address that it is important to identify the attributes that derive satisfaction or dissatisfaction with SLD for Chinese arrivals who were the second largest tourist source.

Chathurangani (2018) discusses the main challenges to improve the SL tourism industry. She explains that SL is a tourist destination with various attractions and beautiful culture and hospitality, where there are lots of challenges. Due to the long-term civil war, the national impression of SL was impacted negatively. Arrivals cannot get an excellent perception and experience because of the lack of transportation infrastructure. The shortage of manpower resources in the hotel industry is a salient problem as well. Finally, the disproportion of tourism development exists as well. It was challenging to develop the tourism industry well as the conditions were not safe in the past years, especially the development of the North and Eastern tourism is relatively delayed.

The former Chinese ambassador Cheng Xueyuan (2019) said that beautiful scenic spots in the island have attracted a lot of many Chinese tourists including himself. The population of Chinese tourists reaches approximately 300, 000, which is not worth mentioning compared to Chinese tourists who travel to Thailand, as Chinese visitors to Thailand exceeded 10 million in 2018. Cheng Xueyuan (2019) offered three main reasons. Firstly, the language barrier. Usually, most Chinese tourists are not used to speak English, and they cannot understand the local language Sinhala. Therefore the guides who can speak Chinese are popular. However, the number of those guides in SL is minimal. Secondly, Chinese tourists have a passion for Chinese food; they still have a "Chinese stomach" when travelling to SL. However, it is not easy to run

Chinese restaurants since it is difficult to apply for Chinese working visas. Thirdly, Chinese tourists are used to Chinese tobacco and alcohol. They cannot buy Chinese tobacco and alcohol during their travel, and are not even allowed to carry a small number of Chinese cigarettes with them, which makes them feel very unsatisfied. There are no such restrictions in many other countries. The feeling of convenience, experience and happiness are the most important to Chinese tourists, and it is one of the key factors influencing tourists' decision-making of travel destinations.

### **Tourist Satisfaction Theory**

TS theory is a vital theory involving tourist consumption behavior and tourist destination service management. Most of the empirical studies on tourist satisfaction conducted by international scholars require tourists to rate the service through a questionnaire survey and then conduct statistical analysis on the obtained data to measure the overall and different satisfaction indicators. The influencing factors of TS have always been the focus in the research field of TS. Many scholars select and verify the influencing factors of TS according to the research objects' nature and characteristics.

Further, as Sheng Xiaolan (2011) stated, evaluation factors of TS include infrastructure, management, tour guide service, price, traffic conditions, accommodation conditions, sanitary conditions, food characteristics, and leisure activities. Luo Huimin et al. (2016) believe that TS's influencing factors in cultural and creative tourist destinations include theme characteristics, cultural connotation, shopping environment and sanitary conditions, and other factors. Wang Danhe (2018) pointed out that the

influencing factors of satisfaction consisted of design layout, supporting facilities, personnel service, commodities, and catering. According to Deng Jinyang and Pierskalla (2018), a tourist destination's economic development mainly depends on the high quality of tourism experiences and resulting satisfaction provided by the destination. It is believed that tourists who are pleased with a destination are more likely to spend more, revisit, and recommend others. Thus, TS plays a critical role in contributing to the success of a destination. A scenic spot is usually composed of various attributes, involving accommodation, food, activities, shopping, and services. It is the tourist's perceptions of these attributes in a destination that mutually form a comprehensive image of it, which affects his or her overall satisfaction.

### **Tourist Satisfaction Influencing Factors**

At present, scholars have proposed that tourist satisfaction is not only affected by the hardware conditions of tourist destinations, for instance, resources, environment and tourist facilities, but also inseparable from the service quality of scenic spots. Due to the diversity and complexity of tourist destinations, the research on influencing factors of tourist satisfaction is still in the exploratory stage, and there are still some difficulties in the quantification and standardization of influencing factors.

In conclusion, the main areas covered in the literature review are the main factors that influence the individuals' perception for tourists in SL, tourists' attitudes and perception on what they have seen, expensed, and experienced, on which they extend their satisfaction or dissatisfaction



with the travelling. Once the brief literature review was conducted, the researcher identified 9 concerns which impact on overall TS of SL as transportation, accommodation, guide service, infrastructure, sanitary conditions, food Specialty, recreational activities, hospitality and security which are shown in the table below:

**Table 1: Selected Influencing Factors of Tourist Satisfaction**

| Ser | Influencing Factors Selected | Source   |
|-----|------------------------------|--|
| 1.  | Transportation               | Chathurangani (2018), Wang Danhe (2018)        |
| 2.  | Accommodation                | Deng Jinyang & Pierskalla (2018)               |
| 3.  | Guide Service                | Cheng Xueyuan (2019), Luo Huimin (2016)        |
| 4.  | Infrastructure               | Sheng Xiaolan (2011), Chathurangani (2018)     |
| 5.  | Sanitary Condition           | Wang Danhe (2018), Luo Huimin (2016)           |
| 6.  | Food Specialty               | Sheng Xiaolan, (2011), Wang Danhe (2018)       |
| 7.  | Recreational Activities      | Sheng Xiaolan (2011), Wang Danhe (2018)        |
| 8.  | Hospitality                  | Deng Jinyang & Pierskalla (2018), Pizam (1978) |
| 9.  | Security                     | Chathurangani (2018), Wang Danhe (2018)        |

Source: Developed for This Study

### **Tourist Satisfaction Research Approaches**

TS is crucial since it impacts consumption during the visit and for further loyalty. More specifically, tourists who are satisfied with their previous travel experience tend to be more willing to revisit the destination and recommend the destination to friends (Kim & Brown, 2012). The study of TS was initially based on the larger customer satisfaction concept found in general marketing contexts. According to Rust and Oliver (1994), satisfaction was defined as “the degree to which one believes that an experience evokes positive feelings”.

TS is a fundamental concept in the tourism sphere. As stated by Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1996), the fact approved by a large number of studies is that customer satisfaction galvanizes a company’s competitive performance. This is effective for tourism studies with various theories, ideas and measurement instruments targeted to observe TS. To identify the strong and weak points of a specific tourist destination, it is critical to hear tourists. Therefore, TS comes across as an efficient indicator for the integrity of the tourism industry. As reflected by the literature, scholars discovered a satisfaction term as “a collective evaluation of individual experience” (Lee, Kyle & Scoot, 2011), “an important prerequisite in assessing the performance of a particular site or activity” (Schofield, 2000). After gathering all considered conceptual aspects, it seems that satisfaction contents both cognitive and emotional components. In this study, the researcher, guided by definition, confirmed that satisfaction is the degree of a particular tourist destination to satisfy visitors' expectations and needs and is a vital prerequisite for evaluating a specific performance spot.

Therefore, overall satisfaction is determined by performance of a variety of specific components or attributes of the destination. Tourism researchers have observed the satisfaction concept from different angles. In summary, most of these studies aimed to explore the level of satisfaction with a tourism product, defining visitors' perceived importance to overall TS and making recommendations regarding tourism products developments. Most of the studies take TS as a dependent variable and measure it, employing a Likert-type scale by asking visitors, how satisfied they were during a single visit. According to Kozak (2001), based on tourism science approaches, which emphasise onemphasized customer satisfaction, approaches can be divided into expectation-performance approach, importance-performance approach, and disconfirmation approach and performance only approach. Among these approaches, the IPA approach helps to understand which aspect needs improvements, where it is urgent to concentrate resources, especially regarding the shortage of latter.

### **Importance - Performance Analysis Method**

Wang Danhe (2018) analyzes the TS of tourist attraction based on the IPA method. He explains that TS, as a key factor affecting tourist attractions' competitiveness, has essential research significance. This study analyzes the collected data by using the IPA method and obtains the four aspects of TS index data of design layout, environment and supporting facilities, personnel services and tourism products, catering of tourist attraction, and evaluation and suggestions for improvement from these four aspects.

As stated by Boley, McGehee & Hammet (2017), IPA is one of the most ubiquitous methodological tools within the tourism literature. It is commonly used to distinguish discrepancies between what stakeholders' think is an important component of a specific issue and their actual perceptions of how well the issue is being managed (Lai & Hitchcock, 2015). The universal acceptance of IPA stems from its ability to provide "valuable and popular techniques for the management of tourism destinations" and its simplicity that allows for easy interpretation (Taplin, 2012). In the tourism literature, those types of analyses have been mainly demand-oriented, with the vast majority focusing on how much tourists value an experience, service or product, and how well a business or destination has met tourists' expectations.

Nine concerns which impact on TS of Chinese tourists were identified. On this basis, using the IPA method to analyse the TS is practical. However, these scholars have also highlighted a lack of research conducted on analysing satisfaction comprehensively. Hence, this study will analyse the TS from different perspectives for different objects based on the IPA method. As Gao Zhixiang (2012) stated, IPA is the importance-performance analysis method, through questionnaire surveys, to obtain relevant data, of the characteristics easy to understand, visual, convenient diagnosis and decision-making. It is a quantitative approach for measuring how people feel about specific characteristics of an issue or a thing. According to Yang Weiwei (2015), the IPA process itself contains four steps: distributing the questionnaire, appraising satisfaction and importance, drawing a four-quadrant chart, and locating each indicator in the four-quadrant chart.

The above steps provide a framework for analysing and finding gaps in the present TS evaluation for Chinese visitors to SL. On this basis, using the IPA method to analyse the TS is practical. However, these scholars have also highlighted a shortage of studies conducted on analysing the satisfaction comprehensively. To better develop the tourism market in terms of Chinese tourists, and expand tourism in SL, it is necessary to measure Chinese TS with SLD. Hence, this study explored the TS and mainly based on the IPA method, through the theoretical analysis, attempted to put forward some suggestions on improving the tourism industry.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research was based on the objectives stated in the chapter introduction. The research design has its initial point with the positivism of the major philosophy, selecting a deduction approach and a quantitative method with a survey. Then, it chose a cross-sectional study as the time frame. Since exploring the major factors influencing Chinese tourists' satisfaction towards tourist destinations is the main objective, some managerial Implications were proposed, key points were placed on the analysis of importance and satisfaction, and improvements to the current development situation were suggested.

The research's general population is the total amount of Chinese tourist arrivals whose national places are in eastern, western, southern, northern or central China. They have experience in visiting at least all the selected 6 scenic spots in SL and spend at least a whole night in each scenic spot area, presently living in SL (resident visa holders). For this study, the

researcher used stratified random sampling followed by a simple random sampling method. The sample size was 100 and by using simple random sampling, the researcher selected 100 from the population. This sample approximately enclosed 6.0 per cent of the population. The questionnaires were distributed to 100 people who come from different areas in China. What is more, 5 tourism-related professionals were interviewed thoroughly for clarification of key research matter. The study is carried out as a mixed-method (quantitative and qualitative) research and research approach used here is a deductive approach.

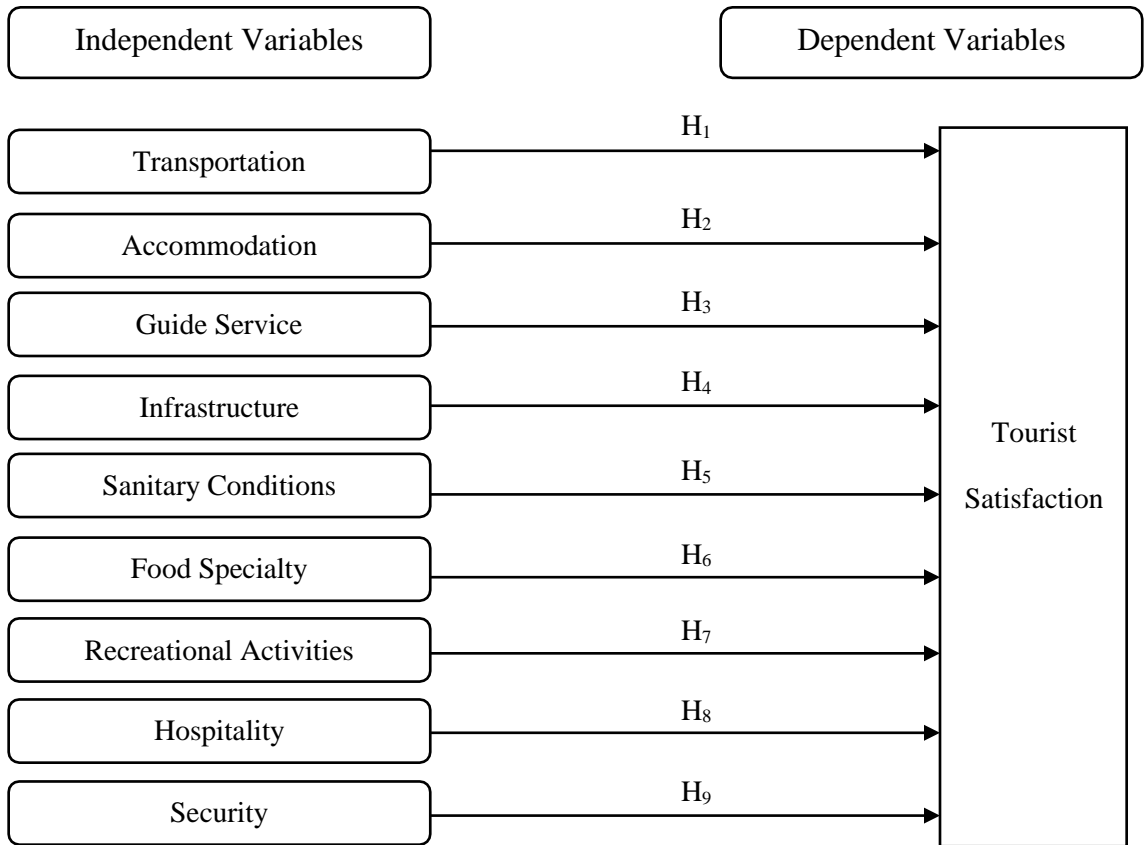
An appropriate data collection technique is required to gather data related to the research questions. Hence, data was collected as primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through the questionnaire method and semi-structured Interview (SSI). Secondary data was collected from the Internet, annual statistical reports and other resources.

The survey method collects data by asking questions from participants, both through questionnaire and interview methods. To collect useful information using the survey method, this study applied close structured and open-ended questions. The data collected from the questionnaires distributed among selected respondents was typed into EXCEL very carefully and all the questions were available with the given answers. The data gained after processing in EXCEL was coded and analysed by IBM SPSS 22 software by the researcher. The main reason for choosing SPSS to analyse data was to process numerous amounts of data in an efficient and user-friendly mode.

Furthermore, SPSS is a manner that can be utilized to retrieve output graphically in some instances as well. SPSS comes with a way for effective data management, while it provides more techniques for filtering the information to prepare for further analysis. Although there are many tools that many tools available to analyse quantitative data, the SPSS software was selected for the analysis as the above strong points.

Apart from the closed-ended questions survey, SSI was conducted to gain more flexible and in-depth information. 5 professionals in the Tourism field were interviewed -depth, via talk, phone, or instant messenger to clarify key research matter. SSI can gain a higher response rate since people find it difficult to reject an individual request for an interview rather than neglect a questionnaire. SSI is genuinely suitable for lots of valuable tasks, especially when specific open-ended questions require further queries. Since face-to-face interaction, some aspects that cannot be assessed through a questionnaire, such as emotion and body language, can be identified and recorded. Subsequently, the data gathered from SSI were conducted discourse analysis (DA) to get the collated summary.

### Conceptual Framework



Source: Author developed.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Based on the selected 9 concerns which impact, the TS of Chinese tourists were set and modified according to specific features of SL scenic spots. They are transportation, accommodation, guide service, infrastructure, sanitary conditions, food Specialty, recreational activities, hospitality and security. TS is represented using multi-item scale.



Regardless of its quality, the performance of an attribute may not affect tourist satisfaction if the tourist did not experience or did not care too much about the attribute. In contrast, the opposite would be right for attributes with high levels of importance and performance. This assumption leads to the following hypotheses:

- H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant relationship between transportation and TS for Chinese tourists in SL.
- H<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant relationship between accommodation and TS for Chinese tourists in SL.
- H<sub>3</sub>: There is a significant relationship between guide service and TS for Chinese tourists in SL.
- H<sub>4</sub>: There is a significant relationship between infrastructure and TS for Chinese tourists in SL.
- H<sub>5</sub>: There is a significant relationship between sanitary conditions and TS for Chinese tourists in SL.
- H<sub>6</sub>: There is a significant relationship between food speciality and TS for Chinese tourists in SL.
- H<sub>7</sub>: There is a significant relationship between recreational activities and TS for Chinese tourists in SL.
- H<sub>8</sub>: There is a significant relationship between hospitality and TS for Chinese tourists in SL.
- H<sub>9</sub>: There is a significant relationship between security and TS for Chinese tourists in SL.

## **Measurement**

The instrument that was applied to collect data for the research is a questionnaire survey consisting of 33 questions, which were to identify

the major influencing factors of TS for Chinese tourists in SL. The perceived satisfaction and importance were checked in the questionnaire based on the IPA method for each factor. The statements of instruments were worded with a probable response continuum which is based on the Likert - style five - type scale. It is with possible response options ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied) for TS. For importance, it is with possible response options ranging from 1 (very unimportant) to 5 (very important). The mean index marks (100 importance marks and 100 satisfaction marks) were calculated by averaging the individual statements within each index. According to Cai Caiyun, Tang Chengcai and Zhang Xianyu (2011), in order to objectively and scientifically reflect the difference between importance and satisfaction, an IPA index was constructed to scientifically quantify the difference in importance and performance of tourists' satisfaction, construct the IPA index measure formula as follows:

$$IPAI = (I - P) / I * 100$$

In the formula, IPAI represents the importance-performance analysis index, "I" indicates importance and "P" indicates satisfaction. The IPA index is negatively correlated with satisfaction. To reflect the influence of different factors on satisfaction, the IPA index is divided into five:  $\leq 5.00$ , 5.01-10.00, 10.01-20.00, 20.01-30.00,  $\geq 30.01$ , which respectively means: very satisfied, relatively satisfied, general, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

To make the questionnaire reliable, the study analysed the reliability of importance and satisfaction scale of Chinese tourists' satisfaction towards tourist attractions in SL. SPSS 22 and Excel 2013 for windows was employed to test 24 questions. Before assessing the entire model, the reliability of the measurement items was tested using Cronbach's alpha test to evaluate the nine factors' internal consistency. Alpha varied from 0.855 to 0.994. This shows that the reliability of the questionnaire is strong.

Questionnaires were distributed among 100 participants, 100 recovered with a recovery percentage of 100%, among which 4 were ineffective ones since 4 respondents answered that they have not travelled to all 6 scenic spots or spent at least one night in each spot. Thus the valid rate was 96.0%. Among all respondents in this survey, male accounts for 47.9% of the total and female 52.1%. There are tourists of all ages in terms of age, but they are mainly 19 - 24 years old and 25 - 44 years old, accounting for 26.0% and 33.3% respectively. From the perspective of educational background, tourists with an educational background of or higher than junior college account for 63.6% of the total; the fact proves that tourists with a higher educational background hold a top post among all Chinese tourists. From the occupation perspective, the highest percentage of the respondents are the business manager/business owner which account for 21.9% of all respondents. After that, both civil servants and professionals account for 15.6% respectively, and students for 12.5% are college students studying in SL. In terms of monthly income, tourists with a monthly income between 7,001- and 9,000-Yuan

account for the highest ratio which is 29.2%, 9,001 and 11000 Yuan for 22.9%.

### Importance - Performance Analysis Results and Quadrant Analysis of Tourist Satisfaction

After computing the indirect importance and satisfaction scores (mean value, mode and sort), the 9 satisfaction influencing factors, including 24 projects, were depicted in Table 2.

**Table 2: Evaluation of the Influencing Projects**

| Factors (Projects)  |   | Importance |       |      | Satisfaction |      |      |
|---------------------|---|------------|-------|------|--------------|------|------|
|                     |   | Mean       | Mode  | Sort | Mean         | Mode | Sort |
| Transportation      | Transportation comfort                      | 4.02       | 5     | 17   | 3.48         | 4    | 10   |
|                     | Transportation convenience                  | 4.04       | 5     | 14   | 3.74         | 5    | 6    |
|                     | Transportation smoothness                   | 4.14       | 5     | 9    | 2.91         | 4    | 21   |
| Accommodation       | Accommodation price                         | 3.69       | 5     | 23   | 3.94         | 5    | 3    |
|                     | Accommodation facilities                    | 4.03       | 5     | 15   | 3.52         | 4    | 7    |
|                     | Living environment                          | 4.17       | 5     | 8    | 3.97         | 5    | 2    |
| Guide Service       | Staff professional quality                  | 4.01       | 5     | 18   | 3.03         | 3    | 18   |
|                     | Chinese language level                      | 4.30       | 5     | 3    | 2.82         | 3    | 22   |
|                     | Guide quality                               | 4.13       | 5     | 10   | 3.05         | 3    | 17   |
| Infrastructure      | Work enthusiasm                             | 4.05       | 5     | 12   | 3.82         | 5    | 5    |
|                     | Guide signs                                 | 3.72       | 4     | 22   | 3.27         | 3    | 14   |
|                     | Rest facilities                             | 4.03       | 4     | 16   | 3.14         | 3    | 16   |
| Sanitary Conditions | Supporting building facilities              | 3.74       | 5 (4) | 21   | 3.02         | 3    | 19   |
|                     | Sanitary conditions inside the scenic spots | 4.27       | 5     | 4    | 3.92         | 5    | 4    |
|                     | Sanitary facilities                         | 4.00       | 4     | 19   | 3.20         | 3    | 15   |
| Food Specialty      | Convenience and                             | 4.20       | 5     | 6    | 3.42         | 3    | 12   |

|                         |  |      |   |    |      |   |      |
|-------------------------|--|------|---|----|------|---|------|
|                         | quickness of meals                                     |      |   |    |      |   |      |
|                         | Dining environment                                     | 4.24 | 5 | 5  | 3.42 | 3 | 11   |
|                         | With Chinese characteristics                           | 4.19 | 5 | 7  | 2.78 | 2 | 23   |
| Recreational Activities | Diversity of activities                                | 3.58 | 4 | 24 | 3.35 | 4 | 13   |
|                         | Cultural features                                      | 3.75 | 4 | 20 | 3.50 | 5 | 8    |
| Hospitality             | Hospitality of local people                            | 4.06 | 4 | 13 | 4.52 | 5 | 1    |
|                         | Security feeling                                       | 4.71 | 5 | 1  | 2.70 | 3 | 24   |
|                         | Careful security checking                              | 4.06 | 5 | 11 | 2.99 | 3 | 20   |
| Security                | Security supporting facilities inside the scenic spots | 4.52 | 5 | 2  | 3.49 | 4 | 9    |
|                         |  |      |   |    | 4.07 |   | 3.37 |

Source: Constructed by the Researcher

The data shown in the above table indicates that the mean values of importance and satisfaction are 4.07 and 3.37, respectively. The four-quadrant diagram of Chinese TS with SLD is constructed with the importance as the abscissa axis, the satisfaction as the ordinate axis and the point (3.50, 2.00) as the origin. And then, draw quadrant demarcation line with point (4.07, 3.37) as the centre point. The quadrant diagram of importance and satisfaction of the 24 projects are shown in Figure 2.

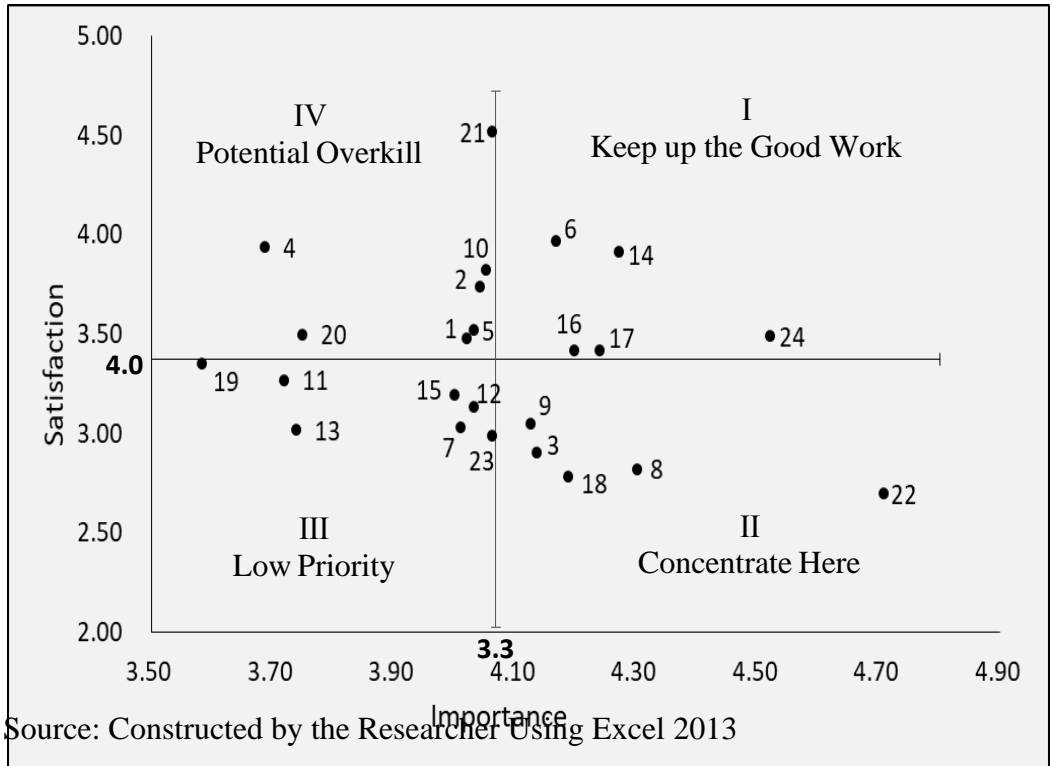


Figure 2: Quadrant Diagram of Importance and Satisfaction of the Influencing Factors

From the above graph, it can be seen that in this quadrant area, all the indicators are higher than the mean value of importance and lower than the mean value of satisfaction, belonging to high importance and low satisfaction indicators. This quadrant includes 5 factors: transportation smoothness, Chinese language level, guide quality, food with Chinese characteristics, security feeling. Two of the IPA indexes are between 20.01 and 30.00, which are dissatisfied, and three of them are more than 30.01, which are very dissatisfied. Most tourists think that security is paramount and tourists are willing to play in the safe environment. In the

survey, the existing traffic jam, too spicy food and language barrier affect the TS.

Further, some comments were made by the respondents for the open-ended questions and SSI. The two open-ended questions and SSI conducted by the researcher has produced some useful and practical first-hand opinions. Subsequently, the researcher employed discourse analysis (DA) to handle those opinions. The main collated summary supported the results as well.

### **Results of Correlation Coefficient between Influencing Factors and IPA Index**

Pearson Correlation Coefficient tested the influence of nine factors including 24 projects on the IPA index in SPSS 22. According to data shown in table 4.16, it can be observed that all absolute values of Pearson Correlation Coefficients are more than 0.75 which indicated that there are strong correlation relationships (importance is negative while satisfaction is positive) between all 9 influencing factors and IPA Index, leading to the support of hypothesis H1 to H9. The data presentation showed a negative correlation between factors and the IPA index, which means the factors are significantly associated with TS. Therefore, it can be concluded that, when the satisfaction degree of the respective factor is rising, the TS level also rises.

**Table 3: Correlation Coefficient between Influencing Factors and IPA Index**

| Influencing Factors     |              | Correlation coefficient (IPA Index) |
|-------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| Transportation          | Importance   | .913                                |
|                         | Satisfaction | -.999                               |
| Accommodation           | Importance   | .751                                |
|                         | Satisfaction | -.921                               |
| Guide Service           | Importance   | .877                                |
|                         | Satisfaction | -.997                               |
| Infrastructure          | Importance   | .766                                |
|                         | Satisfaction | -.753                               |
| Sanitary Conditions     | Importance   | 1.000                               |
|                         | Satisfaction | -1.000                              |
| Food Specialty          | Importance   | .793                                |
|                         | Satisfaction | -.999                               |
| Recreational Activities | Importance   | 1.000                               |
|                         | Satisfaction | -1.000                              |
| Hospitality             | Importance   | 1.000                               |
|                         | Satisfaction | -1.000                              |
| Security                | Importance   | .898                                |
|                         | Satisfaction | -.875                               |

Correlation coefficient ranges from -1.0 to +1.0. The closer value is to +1 or -1, the more closely the two variables are related. When the correlation coefficient range is above 0.75, it is called high degree of correlation.

Source: Constructed by the researcher

## DISCUSSION

In the course of the study, the study's major objectives were to identify the factors impacting Chinese tourists' satisfaction towards tourist



destinations in SL and explore the detrimental factors that should be improved, especially by using the Importance - performance Analysis. According to the results, the absolute values of Pearson Correlation Coefficients between all 9 influencing factors and IPA Index are more than 0.75, therefore, it can be concluded that transportation, accommodation and 9 factors including 24 projects, influence tourist satisfaction significantly, supporting the literature of Chathurangani (2018), Cheng Xueyuan (2019), Wang Danhe (2018) and Deng Jinyang & Pierskalla (2018). Additionally, the results also found that there are 10 projects, including transportation smoothness, professional staff quality of accommodation, Chinese language level of guide service, and so on, which can be considered the detrimental factors of the SL tourism industry development. According to the quadrant diagram of importance and satisfaction of the influencing factors, the IPA grid indicated that there are 5 factors, including transportation smoothness, Chinese language level, guide quality, food with Chinese characteristics, security feeling, belonging high importance but low satisfaction indicators, should be paid more attention to improve the management, basic infrastructure or service.

As per the findings, Chinese tourists were very satisfied with the hospitality of local people and a naturally beautiful environment vital to attract more visitors in SL. The former Chinese ambassador Cheng Xueyuan (2019) also highlighted that this beautiful and hospitable country has attracted lots of Chinese including himself. Nevertheless, due to last year's Easter Sunday Blast and COVID-19 threats, tourists are still

reeling from security concerns and were not satisfied with the tourist security situation.

Moreover, according to question No 6, only 12.5% Chinese tourists gained tourism information about SL from websites, it is believed that the tourism of SL in China has great development potential in online marketing and the internet. Hence, more efforts should be made in propaganda for the SL tourism industry. According to the two open-ended questions and Semi-structured interview, the above findings are further proved. Further, the tourist professionals interviewed believe that Belt and Road Initiative of China has enhanced Chinese's understanding of SL and created more opportunities for tourism development.

## **CONCLUSION**

TS plays a vital role in assessing tourism development of certain scenic spots. In this regard, achieving customer satisfaction could lead to a thriving tourism industry. This is the first study that focuses on identifying the factors that influence improving TS for Chinese tourists' visiting to SL via quantitative mode. According to the study, most respondents expressed their positive attitudes towards the scenic spots in SL, showing that they agree that the performance of SLD met their expectations generally. From the above discussion, it can be concluded that all 9 factors have strong correlation relationships with TS. Except for hospitality of local people, for other 8 factors, the satisfaction is lower than importance. It means that those 8 factors have room for improvement. In terms of the main findings, tourists are dissatisfied with 10 projects that are the SL tourism industry's weaknesses, which need to

be improved and enhanced preferentially. According to the IPA grid, 5 out of 24 projects fell into ‘Concentrate here’ quadrant. Those projects have high importance but low satisfaction, which require immediate managerial intervention and improvement.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Due to this research's findings, which aspects need to keep up the good work, while which aspects need to be improved regarding the tourism industry, can be seen. The study results can be interesting and useful for all members, who are relevant to managing and servicing Chinese tourists in SL at the public and private level. Firstly, exploiting the advantages of ‘Internet plus Tourism’ fully. It is effective and efficient to apply information technology for tourism marketing, which has already been employed widely in China. If SL can establish a travel e-commerce platform based on the current publicity and marketing and strengthen cooperation with Chinese popular tourist websites such as *Ctrip*, *Qunar*, *Filggy Wechat* and *Alibaba*, more Chinese people will know this beautiful country and choose it as the preferred tourist destination. Secondly, making long-term plans for the construction of infrastructures. The natural landscape is indeed a feature of SL. However, it is not contradictory between improving basic infrastructures and protecting the natural characteristics. Proceeding from the above, Chinese tourists expect more *public transportation assets, rest facilities, sanitary facilities, security checking and security supporting facilities* within the scenic spots. Finally, giving more supporting policies to Chinese tourists. Chinese tourists have a passion for Chinese food; they still have a ‘Chinese stomach’ when travelling to SL. If the government can give

some supporting policies to run Chinese restaurants in SL, for example, working visa, it will be easy to get *food with Chinese characteristics*. At the same time, these policies will also promote employment in tourism. The tourism sector can organize a guide for common *Chinese language* and skill improvement training, improving the *guide quality*. Thirdly, Chinese tourists like *Chinese cigarettes and liquor*; however, they cannot buy those items during the trip, which makes them feel they do not enjoy the journey. If the policy is more tolerant and allows them to carry a few of those items when visiting SL, it is believed that more Chinese tourists may choose SL as the travel destination.

The study results approved that Chinese tourists are a potential tourist origin of the SL tourism industry. SL scenic spots have ample opportunities to gain more new tourists in its turn too, however, without understanding Chinese tourists' needs, the situation will not be improved, onward tourists will become bored and unmotivated to visit and businesses with residents, on the other hand, will stay apart from new tendencies, which can cause a decline.

### **Directions for future research**

For the future, more research in possible relations between Chinese tourists' satisfaction and SLD attributes, for exploring, which influencing factors contribute more to satisfaction, should be done to gain more common findings. Further, additional research on other foreign countries' tourists in SL will help policymakers and managers to gain comprehensive decision-making information, also, an in-depth face-to-

face interview survey instrument is suggested for future studies to investigate more about the real perceptions of respondents.

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