

STUDY ON TOURIST SATISFACTION IN NATMATAUNG NATIONAL PARK, CHIN STATE IN MYANMAR

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Abstract

Myanmar is a land rich in nature and diversity of species. Tourism industry is being developed by numerous kinds of tourism. Among them, ecotourism is getting popular. The richness of biodiversity makes Natmataung National Park ideal for ecotourism. Geographically, the study area has a great opportunity to promote potential ecotourism sites and mountain resorts. This research emphasizes on tourist satisfaction. The objectives of the research work are to present the basic factors (accommodation, transportation, local people's behaviour and safety and security) of Natmataung Area and to examine the tourist satisfaction on the study area. The data are collected from 160 tourists according to interviews and questionnaires. They are analyzed statistical analysis. Quantitative and qualitative methods are used and the questionnaire includes demographic factors of tourists and their satisfaction on the national park. The analyzed results highlight tourist satisfaction. Extensive survey research methods are used to collect primary and secondary data. In this research, descriptive analysis, frequency, percentage and graphical analysis are used to identify and analyze the data. The findings of this research will be useful for tourism promoting in destination. Primary data are mainly applied to the research. SWOT analysis is a frame- work used to evaluate tourist satisfaction.

Keywords: satisfaction, perception, demographic factors

Introduction

Tourism in Myanmar has been based on natural, traditional culture, historical sites, religious attraction and ecotourism. Tourism is not only the world's leading service sector but also considered to be an important foreign exchange earner around the world and all the countries in the world strive for economic benefits by developing tourist resorts for attracting the "global tourists" (Ranade, P.S., 1998). Tourism industry of developing countries also supports their economic potential and these countries majorly rely on tourism for their foreign exchange reserves. World's forty poorest countries, tourism is the second most important source of foreign exchange (Mastny, 2001). Tourism has also been a driving force in protecting natural and cultural heritage, preserving them for future generations to enjoy" (Pololikashvili, Z., 2019). Natmataung area is mainly dependent on the supporting factors especially, physical factors (natural tourist attraction sites) and cultural factors (life styles of local people).

Myanmar has emerged as a popular tourist destination and experienced rapid growth in tourism sector (Tun Win Than, 2019). Nowadays, tourism is trend to ecotourism. Myanmar has numerous untapped natural resources below our land. In Chin state, Natmataung is also known as Mt. Victoria and Khaw Nu Sone or khonuamthung is the highest mountain of western Myanmar. Natmataung is the most attraction site in Kanpatlet Township. The most common types of tourism are ecotourism, adventure tourism, cultural tourism and bird watching tourism. It is located close to the border of India and which at 3035 metre above sea level. It occupies an area of 720 km and is one of ASEAN Heritage Park. The study area is surrounded at lower elevations by tropical and subtropical moist forest. Natmataung park has been protected as an ecotourism site since 1994 (Wikramanayake, Eric Diner Stein; Colby J. Loucks; et al. (2002).

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Aim

The main aim is to explore the basic needs for tourism development.

Objectives

The objectives are

- to present the basic factors (accommodation, transportation, local people behaviors and safety and security) for tourism development, and
- to examine tourist satisfaction on the study area

Study Area

The study area is located in the southern part of the northwestern Myanmar, Chin State (Figure 1). Chin State is a mountainous region and, has the primary attraction of the ecosystem such as forest, flora, fauna, cultural heritage and natural environment. Study area is located in Southern Chin Hill at 21° 19' North Latitude and 93° 55' East Longitude in Chin State, north-western part of Myanmar. It is located within 3 townships - Kanpatlet, Mindat and Matupi. Natmataung is the highest mountain in Chin State and the third highest mountain in Myanmar. Natmataung National Park was established in 1994. This Park was also appointed as an ASEAN Heritage Park. This Park is administered by the Department of Forest and Environment.

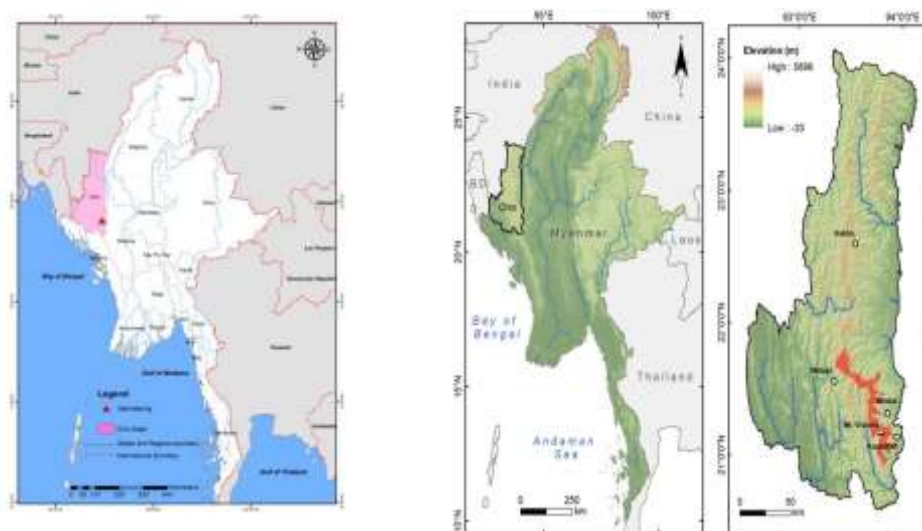


Figure 1. Location of Natmataung

Source: Myanmar Information Management Unit

Methodology

To present tourist satisfaction of Natmataung, primary data were collected 160 respondents from tourists. To collect primary data, interviews, structure interviews and questionnaires were applied. Four main factors: accommodation, transportation, local behaviors and local security and safety were stressed to present tourist satisfaction. In this paper, physical and human factors especially climate data are used. This research is based on open interviews, structures interviews and questionnaires. The questionnaire's sampling size is 160. Furthermore, eleven interviews were conducted with representatives from administrative institutions who were

engage in tourism. Additionally, information from field observation conducted in March 2019 and 2020 is used as well as some specific literature on internet and text. The questionnaire is structured with satisfaction factors based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) very satisfied, (2) satisfied, (3) neutral, (4) dissatisfied, (5) very dissatisfied. The methods of descriptive analysis, frequency, percentage are used to identify and analyze the data. In this research, SWOT analysis is used for tourist satisfaction.

Geographical Background of Natmataung Area

Natmataung is one of the highest peaks of Southeast Asia. The mountain is now protected within Natmataung National Park established in 1994. The area is 279 square miles and also an Association of ASEAN Heritage Park and an important bird watching area. Natmataung (Mt. Victoria) is the highest mountain in the Chin state, western part of Myanmar; it is located in Kanpatlet Township of southern Chin State. It is a part of the Chin Mountain range with a height of 3053 metres above sea level. It is established in 2010 and is listed as one of the ASEAN Heritage Park. In elevation, it ranges from 740 to 3,070 metres. It was designated an important birth watching area in 2004. It is easy to access by land from Pakokku and Seikpyu. It is 193 km away from Pakokku and 150 km from Seikpyu and is an 8hour drive to Pakokku via Ayeyarwaddy Bridge. There is a forest area, including hill evergreen forests, moist upper mixed deciduous forests, pine forest (above 9,000 feet) and hill savanna. Natmataung area conserves rare species of Myanmar's orchids. In the top area, pine trees and many oaks are grown. The mountain is covered by large rhododendron trees that bloom three colours such as red, yellow and white flower. There are many varieties of wild orchids flower and roses. There are 1024 plant species, 91 orchids species and 71 medical plants species. This area falls within the Eastern Himalayas Endemic Bird Area. According to forest department, 345 birds, 35 mammals ,105 amphibians and reptiles, 99 butterflies and 35 beetle's species has been recorded here. The mountain top has a borderline and the climate is alpine climate (ET) along with subtropical Highland climate (Cwc and Cwb) in the nearby surrounding terrain. November to February is Myanmar's cool season. Night temperature falls to 0°up the mountain and in Kanpatlet and Mindat the temperature is around 5°C. The hottest months are April and May. Chin ethnic group are Tibet-Burma group and comprise about only one percent of Myanmar's population. Chin is comprised of multi sub- groups with distinct identities. Chin people that lived around Natmataung National Park consist of nearly 6000 people and about 100 people inside the park. (Figure 2). They depend on the shifting cultivation and hunting. People in Chin state can be to six main groups: the Asho, Laimi, Mizo, Cho, Khumi, and Zomi. The Chin groups share similar history but speak different languages and dialects and have different cultural identities. Facial tattoo culture of Chin women became more popular cultural attraction in the study area. About 80% of Chin people are Christians but many tribes still follow animistic beliefs and traditions.



Figure 2 Le Pon village in Natmataung Area

Source: Field Observations (March, 2020)

Results and Findings

According to secondary data, international tourist arrival was 4,364,101 persons in Myanmar. The tourist arrival of the study area was 18,809 persons in 2019. The arrival of international tourist was 2,878 persons (0.07% of international tourists' arrival in Myanmar) and domestic tourists with 15,931 persons. Table 1.

Table 1. Tourist Arrivals in Kanpetlet Township (2016-2019)

Sr. No.	Year	International Tourist	Domestic Tourist	Total
1	2016	1761	5151	6912
2	2017	2459	11047	13506
3	2018	2364	16904	19268
4	2019	2878	15931	18809

Source: Ministry of Hotel and Tourism, Kanpetlet

Tourists Satisfaction on Natmataung National Park

Satisfactions of visitors on study area are distributed to 160 visitors. Their responses are differentiated into 5 levels as very satisfied, satisfied, neutral, dissatisfied and very dissatisfied. Satisfaction is based on four factors such as accommodation, transportation, local people behaviour and safety and security. According to table 2 and figure 3, most tourists are satisfied on accommodation with 59 percent which is the highest percentage. For the ease and comfortable lodging of tourists, almost all the hotels are well built in a modern style and facilitated with attractive, traditional and valuable furniture. The lowest percentage is in safety and securities in tourist satisfaction. Without strict security arrangements, tourists who do not know the local situation of the place they visit may be exposed to some harm. This would create negative perception in the minds of potential visitors. There is no police station at the Natmataung National Park, but several police are assigned to keep watch at the foot of the hill. Some tourists suggest that police should be everywhere.

Table 2 Tourist satisfaction on Natmataung National Park

Sr.No	Factors	Percentage
1	Accommodation	59%
2	Local Behaviours	28%
3	Transportation	11%
4	Safety and securities	2%

Source: Based on questionnaires

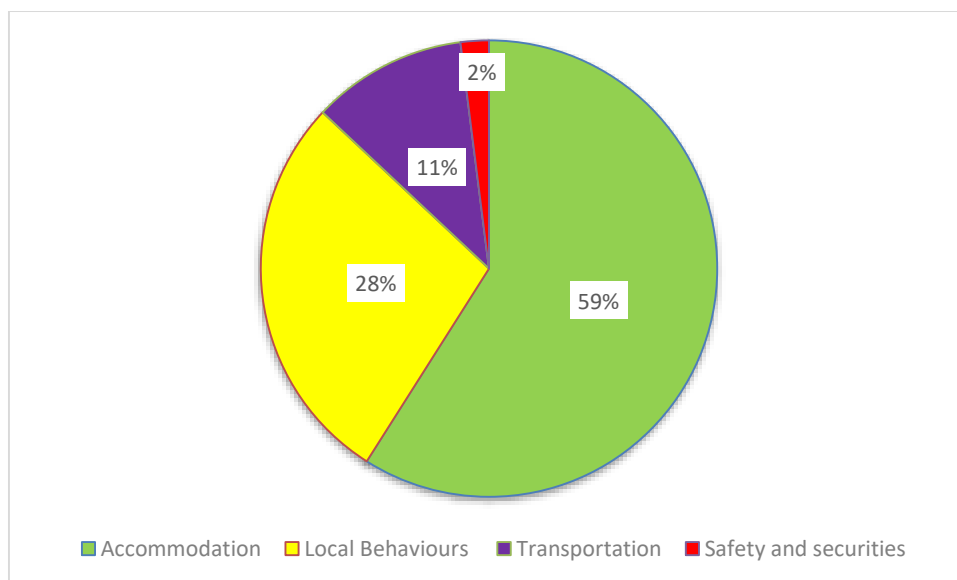


Figure 3 Tourist satisfaction on Natmataung National Park

Source: Field Observations (March,2020)

Tourist Satisfaction on Accommodation

Accommodation means all accommodation facilities such as hotels, guest houses facilities and services, water and electricity systems, atmosphere cleanliness and food. Table 3.

Table 3 Percentage of Tourist Satisfaction on Accommodation

Accommodation	Hotel services	Water/ electricity system	Atmosphere cleanliness	Food
Very satisfied	35	24	65	12
Satisfied	42	28	24	15
Neutral	12	20	3	25
Dissatisfied	8	18	4	28
Very dissatisfied	3	10	4	20
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Field Observations (March,2020)

Concerning with accommodation, 65% of the visitors responded as very satisfied is which highest percentage among other factors. This indicates that the most visitor like the atmosphere cleanliness. Some tourists said that they like the clean air and clean atmosphere. Some were very dissatisfied about food which consists of 20 percentages. Most of the visitors, especially foreign tourists dislike chin traditional food. The majority of tourists are satisfied on hotel services.

For accommodation, lodging facilities are viewed as very satisfied by 35%, satisfied by 42 %, neutral by 12% and dissatisfied by 8% and very dissatisfied by 3%. According to their answers, most visitors prefer the hotels to be furnished with local products like bamboo, rattan

and teak. International tourists liked facilities and services. Most hotels are well decorated, furnished and facilitated with high quality teak furniture and doors, which is why all the respondents gave satisfied. Figure 4.



Figure 4. Mountain View Hill Resort Hotel Conditions in Myoma (1) Kanpetlet

Source: Field Observations (March,2020)

Tourist Satisfaction on Behaviour of Local People

Local behaviors include Tattoo culture and lifestyle of ethnic groups. According to the responses to questionnaires, tattoo culture is very satisfied as perceived by 77 percent, satisfied by 13%, neutral by 2 %, dissatisfied by 8% and very dissatisfied no responded. Lifestyle of ethnic group is very satisfied as perceived by 54 percent, satisfied by 22%, neutral by 14 %, dissatisfied by 7% and very dissatisfied by 3%. Most of the tourists are interested in Chin women. According to interview, *“Chin women wear tattoo because they were afraid of being picked up by king and become his lesser wife. Chin people said that they started wearing tattoo on their face in order to prevent this.”* Chin people can tell which type of Chin they are by seeing this tattoo. The pattern of tattoo culture was distinct tattoo pattern according to those living tribes of Kanpatlet Township. Thus, this part of chin culture will soon be gone and can find that culture at over 50 years old Chin women. Actually, face tattoo culture of chin women will disappear in over 30 years. But the young women of the study area have made fake tattoo on their face when the Chin National Day and other traditional festival was held. It is attractive to the tourists. Moreover, a trip to Chin State is not complete without tourists listening to the sound of flute played by nose. The old women age is nearly 80 years who can entertain that kind of unique tradition (see figure 5).

Table 4 Percentage of Tourist Satisfaction on Behaviour of Local People

Local People	Tattoo Culture	Lifestyle of ethnic groups
Very satisfied	77	54
Satisfied	13	22
Neutral	2	14
Dissatisfied	8	7
Very dissatisfied	0	3
Total	100	100

Source: Field Observations (March, 2020)



Figure 5. Chin women's face with tattoo

Source: Field Observations (March, 2020)

Tourist Satisfaction on Transportation

Transportation also plays an important role for study area development. Transportation is easy to access from Yangon to Kenpatlet but Mindat Township is not easy to access as the road is incomplete. However, the road condition between Kenpetlet and Natmataung is not good and is the main reason why some respondents gave negative answers concerning with transportation. Visitors can trek from Kanpetlet to Natmataung National Park as it is located only 15 miles away. According to table 5, the accessibility from Yangon is very satisfied as perceived by 65 %, satisfied by 13 %, neutral by 5 %, dissatisfied by 7% and very satisfied by 10%. Table 4. Most visitors visited study area by car. Only 22 percent visitors arrive by flight. The nearest airport to Natmataung is Bagan Nyaung U, which is an eight-hour drive away. See figure 5. Most of the tourists are not satisfied on the road condition.

Table 5 Percentage of Tourist Satisfaction on Transportation

Transportation	Road Condition	Yangon to Kanpetlet	Kanpetlet to Natmataung	NyaungU to Kanpetlet
Very satisfied	19	65	32	45
Satisfied	20	13	18	21
Neutral	21	5	25	13
Dissatisfied	25	7	20	12
Very dissatisfied	5	10	5	9
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Field Observations (March, 2020)



Figure 6 Transportation route from Yangon and Bagan- Nyaung U to Kanpetlet

Source: Myanmar Information Management Unit

Tourist Satisfaction on Safety and Securities

In the tourism industry, securities and safety of tourists is a very important necessity. Without strict security arrangements, tourists who do not know the local situation of the place they visit may be exposed to some harm. Local securities include political stability, tourist police enforcement, and strictness of local immigration and the activation of local Voluntary Originations. This would create negative perception in the minds of the potential visitors. Till now, serious crimes have not been reported in Natmataung area. There is no police station at study area, but several police are assigned to keep watch at different sections of the park. An army camp located near Chin Village for the security of Kenpetlet Township is also helpful, in some ways, for the security of the park.

For security and safety of the study area, the most respondents were not satisfied with the existing facilities. There was 14% of total responds condition was very satisfaction, which while 20% perceived as being satisfied and 20 % as neutral. 22% was dissatisfied. However, 22% respondents said the condition was dissatisfied and 24 % regarded it as very dissatisfied. Table 6. According to the data, the respondents are not satisfied with all the aspects of local securities.

Table 6 Percentage of Tourist Satisfaction on Safety and Securities

Level	Safety and Securities
Very satisfied	14
Satisfied	20
Neutral	20
Dissatisfied	22
Very dissatisfied	24
Total	100

Source: Field Observations (March, 2020)

SWOT analysis on the tourist satisfaction in Natmataung National Park

SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis is a framework used to assess internal and external factors, as well as current and future potential. The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats affecting tourism in Natmataung are as follows:

Table 7 SWOT analysis on the tourist satisfaction in Natmataung National Park

Item	Strength	Weakness	Opportunities	Threats
Attraction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -attractive climate - attractive plant species - natural landscapes and cultural tourism sites -natural tourism sites - local cuisine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -less efficient in superstructure and infrastructure -weak infrastructure -lack of cleanliness and -poor food sanitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -resort Tourism - ecotourism - CBT Area (community-based tourism) - special events and festivals (e.g., Chin New Year festival) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -change of ecosystem, -loss of animals and degradation of environment - threat to the natural environment
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -easy access to trip by road 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -no air trip to study area -no railway line and - poor condition of earth roads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -can fly airline, extension and upgraded road lines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -loss of forest, -change in Land Use - loss of biodiversity
Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> new hotels, motels, inn, guest house, home stay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -some services poor, -need high quality accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - can get more services, - good quality accommodation and -job opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -increase in hotel price competition within the hotel,
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -water supply, -accommodation amenities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - low internet access and telecommunication -less efficient in healthcare and toilet - Banking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -can improve more infrastructure e,g toilet and health care centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -cost for machine and maintain
Market demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -ecotourism and nature tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -cultural tourism - low number of international tourists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -resort tourism -ecotourism site - new CBT area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -change of ecosystems, -loss of natural habitat - influence upon culture and tradition

Source: field observations and interview, 2020

Discussion and Conclusion

Chin State has many potentials for ecotourism. Around the study area is rich in natural resources and specific culture and life styles. To develop Natmataung National Park's ecotourism, the involvement of host community is one of the fundamental facts and their positive views are very important. The weakness of this research is that field observations was conducted only in March, 2019 and 2020, therefore it was not possible to ask the tourists of the rest of the months. The advantage is that when sharing the questionnaires for the research, I was able to recollect all the questionnaires and interviews with authorize persons, hotel owners, hotel managers and tour guides.

According to survey data, in accommodation factors, the atmosphere cleanliness is the only one aspect in which most of the tourists are satisfied. According to research, respondents are satisfied only to culture such as local people behaviour, it is tattoo culture and life styles of ethnic groups. For transportation, respondents are very satisfied with the route from Yangon to Kanpetlet. Overall road condition doesn't meet the satisfaction level for the respondents. For the last factors, safety is an important aspect for tourism development. Travelers are not satisfied with the aspects in safety factors. Most of the tourists suggest that hygiene and sanitation should be improved, and community-based tourism are also important for tourism development. The findings suggest that tourists have different levels of satisfaction with five elements of study area tourism. Tourists are more satisfied with attributes concerning attractions, accommodation, amenities, and activities while less satisfied with safety and security. Generally, the findings have shown that tourists are more satisfied with atmosphere cleanliness, tattoo culture and traditional ways of living of the local residents.

This research used survey technique with structured interviews to collect the satisfaction from tourists. According to the results, most of the respondents travel to Natmataung for recreational purposes. Their main consideration of criteria to choose the area is cleanliness of atmosphere and freshness, accessibility of transport and variety of accommodation choices. Generally, visitors to the study area are satisfied because of the hospitality of local people, cool climatic conditions and the attractiveness of the existing natural sources of beauty scenes. Seen from positive points of view, local people can gain economic opportunities as a result of the development of tourism industry. To sum it up, the results state that it is to plan, organize, direct and control the infrastructure development, political stability, safety and local security, local attractiveness and sustainable activities with the collaboration of local people, private and partnership in promoting Natmataung ecotourism site to become a quality destination.

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