

## Soft Infrastructure in Tourism Development

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**Abstract :** This study aims primarily at investigating the importance of soft infrastructure in tourism development for the case of an island economy namely Mauritius. The study in the first place assesses the level of perceived and actual satisfaction of the present state of the different types of soft tourism infrastructure and the allied services provided by tourism stakeholders in Mauritius and address the identified gaps. In order to address the study objectives, a rigorous survey analysis among 1741 international tourists at the departure lounge of the Sir Seewoosagur International Airport of Mauritius was carried out. The respondents placed significant emphasis on the different elements of the soft infrastructure dimension, where many of the elements falling under this dimension were rated with a high mean score. In particular the visitors rated communication, both internet and telephone services, and security to be most important. Significant gap has been found in the categories of 'Health' and 'Security'. This indicates that the tourists ascribe high importance to the soft infrastructure dimension. The link between the respondent profile and the key variables which influence the tourist choice of the island as a destination are found to be equally important for most of the international tourists. However, these were deemed to be more critical for tourists travelling with family members. Although the survey instrument attempted to measure any gap between on the one hand, the importance of the infrastructure dimension and on the other hand, the level of satisfaction with the infrastructure dimension, overall the results do not show any statistically significant gap among the different elements of the infrastructural dimension. The study dwells into further analysis by engaging into an econometric framework related to a Probit Model, using the data collected, to gauge the effect of soft infrastructure on tourist intention to repeat or recommend the destination. The results confirm that soft infrastructure is found to be sensible to tourists, although relatively less sensitive as compared to tourism and transport and hotel infrastructure.

**Keywords :** tourism development, soft infrastructure, Mauritius, hotel infrastructure

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