

Tourists Dissatisfaction To Songkhla Zoo

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Abstract

This study focuses on issues of dissatisfaction of the tourists who visited the Songkhla Zoo with the aim of revealing what particular issues under the marketing mix of products or services that caused the dissatisfaction. This quantitative study involved surveying 400 tourists visiting the Songkhla zoo, Muaeng District, Songkhla. The survey used questionnaires which were designed in relation to the marketing mix. The findings reveal that the tourists were not satisfied with 4 aspects which were product, price, promotion, and physical evidence. The study offers implications to the Songkhla zoo that the variability of products and services are very important to enhance the tourists' satisfaction. When the tourists have low satisfaction in those issues, consequently they also become dissatisfied regarding the value of money they spend.

Keywords: Zoo, Dissatisfaction, Marketing mix

Introduction

According to the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, Zoos and aquariums worldwide receive more than 700-million visitors annually. This equals to 11% of the global human population. This means that about one in 10 people experience human-animal interactions at zoos and aquariums each year. Songkhla Zoo was established in 1998 in order to create a new tourist attraction in Songkhla Province, a business and transportation hub in the lower southern Thailand, with the area of 10 rai and splendid view of the Gulf of Thailand, only 10-minute driving from Songkhla zoo is Samilak beach and another corner closed to the harbor is Songkhla Aquarium. Songkhla Zoo is a state enterprise under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment within over 1.4 millions square meters of jungle over the elephant-shaped mountain in

Muang District, Songkhla Province and became publicly serviceable on October 3rd 1998 (<http://www.songkhla-zoo.com>).

According to Fuchs and Weiermair (2004), many tourism destinations consider customer satisfaction as one of the most important sources of their competitive advantage, the researchers are interested in studying the service marketing mixed strategies influencing the customers in using the Songkhla Zoo because it was revealed that income of the Zoo Organization, Thailand, has decreased in the last three years from 612M to 581M in 2015-2016 (the Zoo annual report, 2016). This may cause that customers are not happy and did not want to come back and become repeating customers. Thappanawat (2005) surveyed the tourists' satisfaction and revealed their dissatisfaction in the number and type of animals, animal keeping places, fee, the animal show, and staff competency in the show. Many studies did survey and interpreted the data in a positive meaning. There is a gap between such satisfaction studies; therefore, dissatisfaction should be paid sufficient attention to ensure that tourists will come back. This study aims to find out what causes low tourists satisfactions or dissatisfaction and what marketing mix causes the dissatisfaction?

Literature Review

Service Marketing Mix

According to Page (2011), marketing in the tourism context differs from other products because tourism is a service industry, the intangible elements, quality of delivery and evaluation of experience being difficult to visualize. When the organization pinpoints the target market, study on the consumers' behavior, the marketing mixes will be strongly relevant to the marketing process. Swarbrooke and Horner (2007) cited the idea of the marketing mix that *"it is the set of variables which the organization can alter in the short term and the long term in order to satisfy their customer requirements"*. However, Siriphanich and Palakurthi (nd.) claimed the difference of service marketing with other product marketing that *a service, production and consumption take place at the same time*. Accordingly it means at a products are mixes of actual products and services. Products include souvenirs, food, or drinks while services are animal shows or hospitality.

Kotler et al. (1999 cited in Siriphanich and Palakurthi (nd.) described a model of consumers' behavior as the marketing and other stimuli enter the consumer's black box and produce certain response with the four basic elements are known as the "4Ps" : Product, Place, Price, and Promotion or namely "Marketing Mix". On the other hand, Kandampully (2002) stated that the tradition "4Ps" that those are not sufficient to apply in service organization as there are two important reasons; 1) *the unique characteristics*

of service, and 2) the interrelationship of marketing, operations and human resources in service”. Therefore, another 3 new “Ps”: People, Process, and Physical evidence are implied into 7Ps of service marketing mix. The edited service Marketing Mix will be appropriate to adopt to explain the organization such as zoos because they offer customers both products and services.

Page (2011) explained that for the marketers who sell and promote the tourism products and services, the factors of consumer behaviors are crucial as they divide tourists into groups so that they can provide specific products that appeal to each group because they have different behaviors, key factors to determine the demand are such as age and income as purchasers of products and services behave in term of spending, their attitudes and values towards what they buy. Many studies have been conducted to understand behaviors and satisfactions of tourists in association with marketing mix services. Marketing Mix includes in the marketing strategy factors that are used to satisfy the needs of specific customer groups (Morrison, 2010).

Seerarat et al (2009) explained that the personal factors influence to consumer behavior when making decision for purchasers; age, family life cycle (FLC), occupation, economic circumstances (or income), education, and value and lifestyle. Teenagers like to try out the new and fashionable products, but elder group prefers healthy and security products. Blue collar workers choose the products for daily life while the white collar workers prefer the better quality of products and services. While Family Life Cycle (FLC) refers to the life process for living influence to needs, attitudes, and values affecting to the needs in products and different purchasing behaviors. It relates to money status and personal interests.

What are the tourists satisfied with?

At this point the importance of tourism satisfaction and dissatisfaction will be emphasized as described that the tourists can generate the word-of-mouth recommendation leading to new customers, becoming repeating customers themselves (Swarbrooke and Horner, 2007; Kotler et al, 2003). On the other hand, when the tourists become unsatisfied or dissatisfied it may cause more problems and difficult to compensate, thus leading to bad reputation (Bowie and Buttle (2011); Wongmontha (1999, cited in Ngarnsriwiset, 2012). So the ultimate aim of the tourists’ satisfactions is how to retain them.

Beard (2014) explained tourist satisfaction in relation to scales of ten. When a customer gives a product or service a rating of 7 and above, can be considered satisfied, and scores of 6 and below are warning signs that a customer is unhappy and at risk leaving. This kind of ranking may be misinterpreted by researchers as a low satisfaction,

but it is actually a signal of dissatisfaction. Milbourn (1998) stated that understanding satisfaction is important because dissatisfied customers rarely complain or rarely try to complain, but they rather simply go to another service provider. The general thought is that satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived service quality and firm performance (Babikas et al., 2004). Once the satisfaction becomes low; consequently, this performance is low which definitely cause the low revenues or incomes.

There are a number of studies on tourist satisfaction. Jankingtong (2009) studied in the tourist satisfaction with the service Marketing Mix and the requirements arising from tourist experiences in the Ton Nga-chang Wildlife Sanctuary, Thailand. He found the beauty and nature of the place was rated highest of the level of satisfaction with the Service Marketing Mix while others were moderate in most aspects. Publicity aspect was satisfied in a low level. Grace (2009) conducted secondary research to gain a better understanding of what customers found satisfying at water parks and other similar theme parks, such as Disney World and Six Flags. He proposed that “overall environment, value, staff, and hours of operation were the most important aspects to customers when they considered their overall satisfaction with Splash Lagoon. As seen by these studies, overall satisfaction was considered and did not interpret a low satisfaction as dissatisfaction.

Wongnichakul and Kongthanasinthon (2008) studied the Service Marketing Mix Strategies in selecting day spa service by the Japanese in Soi Thonglor, Bangkok, Thailand. They found that the Japanese customers preferred services of day spa for the top three reasons- people-personal with good, polite personality, good manner, price-service with reasonable price and service process- clean utilities of high safety. However, this survey research indicates that age and income of the customers did not show significant differences on the use of service marketing mix. Ngarmsriwiset (2012) studied service Marketing Mix factors affecting touring behavior of tourists at Dusit zoo and Safari world, the most important service Marketing Mix factor affecting touring behavior of tourists at Dusit Zoo and Safari World is cool and pleasant natural surroundings in the zoo which means the tourists were satisfied with place and product of the zoo. Interestingly Thappanawat (2005) revealed the result of the study on the satisfaction of visitors toward the services of Songkhla Zoo, Songkhla. The overall satisfaction was higher than the hypothesis while the satisfaction on zoo shows, and publication were 3.52 and 3.54 which were lower than the hypothesis. This means that the visitors were not satisfied with the number and type of animals, animal keeping places, fee, the animal show, and staff competency in the show. Accordingly there were many aspects under the Marketing Mix not able to satisfy the tourists, but they were not paid much attention in this study.

After reviewing the literatures, there are several issues and gap. First, we can see the relationships among service Marketing Mix and tourists' satisfaction. Consequently, it was adopted to framework this study. Secondly the Marketing Mixes of product, place and process are generally satisfactorily by the tourists. Thirdly most of studies did not pay attention to issues of low satisfaction and to find out the causes of the low satisfaction.

Campdesuñer et al (2017) stated that there were many satisfaction survey inventories which can generate a variety of attributes. Many inventories are based on the assumption that services or products are evaluated taking into account all their attributes. On the other hand, the threshold model is based on the assumptions that in some characteristics of service there is a certain threshold beyond which its deficit is inhibitory and cannot be compensated by a high score in other attributes. This current study supports the latter assumption and strongly believes that the low satisfaction of one attribute cannot be compensated or compromised, but it needs to find out factors and reasons for such low satisfaction.

When a customer buys a physical goods, they acquire a title to the goods and there is a transfer of ownership or simply speaking they become an owner. In contrast, a service consumer receives only the right to that service and for only a specified amount of time (Kandampully, 2002). What makes a service different to a product is an issue. Kotler et al (2003) explains four unique characteristics of services, describe the difference between a service and a product. These four characteristics (IHIP) include: a) intangibility; b) heterogeneity; c) inseparability; and d) perishability. The IHIP can be a well-informed framework in this study.

Research method

This study adopted a quantitative survey to find out the answer for its research questions. The 400 respondents visiting the zoo were conveniently sampled to answer the questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed to examine the tourists' behaviors and their satisfactions. The questionnaire was reviewed by the experts and conducted Item-Objective Congruence (IOC). The questionnaire was tried out with 30 respondents and revealed the reliability of .967. The data collected were analyzed both descriptive and inferential statistics by frequencies, percentages. After analyzing the Marketing Mix on the questionnaire, the researchers further examined the four lowest ranked satisfactions into more detail, subsequently, in order to find out and discuss what lead to the tourists' low satisfaction.

The questionnaire was designed based on the Marketing Mix framework consisting of four parts as follows: the first part comprises of demographic characteristics of the

respondents. In the second part, questions were about tourist behaviors. The third part is close-ended question with multiple choices questions about day of visit, preference time of visit, influencers, reasons for visit, and expenses. The questionnaire employed 5-Likert scale ranging from “very satisfied” (5) to very dissatisfied” (1) to examine the satisfaction level of tourists towards service Marketing Mixes (7 Ps) of the Songkhla zoo: Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People/Staff, Physical Evidence, and Process. And, in the fourth part, the respondents will be asked to suggest in open-ended question about their expectations on any aspects they choose. Limitation: The general thought is that satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived service quality and firm performance (Babikas, Bienstock, and Van Scotter, 2004;). This study did not confirm such idea, to study about the relationship between low satisfaction and firm performance could be further investigated.

Findings

Who are the tourists?

The demographic characteristics of the respondents who visited at Songkhla Zoo in Songkhla Province are illustrated. The majority of the respondents were females (62%, n=248), and males were only 38% (n=152). The majority of the respondents were aged between 20-29 years old (40.3%, n=161). This was followed by the group of 30-39 years aged and less than 20 years old tourists which were almost the same of 21% (n=84) and 20.8% (n=83) respectively. The group between 40 to 49 years old and 50 to 59 years old accounted for 11.8% (n=47) and 5.5% (n=22) respectively whereas the 60 or above made up the smallest group, representing 0.8% (n=3) of the respondents. As seen, the majority group of the tourists were female and single, they are young.

Regarding their education, about half (54.3%) of the respondents graduated a bachelor degree and the rest was lower than that of a bachelor degree. Very interesting, nearly half were students so their income was relatively low compared to the monthly household income of Thais which is about 26,000Bht per month, therefore, they were lower middle-incomed tourists. Most of them (76.3%) lived in Songkhla while the rest (23%) came from other provinces for instance Patthalung, Pattani, and Satun. Consequently, many of them visited Songkhla Zoo before. The respondents visited the Zoo with children, friends, relatives, only few came with tour groups (0.8%). They spent less than 500Bht or less than 1000Bht (52.3% and 37.3% respectively). The respondents were young travelers with low incomes, they travelled to the Songkhla Zoo on weekends, reveals their satisfaction on the seven Marketing Mixes as follows:

What do they feel?

As mentioned earlier, the assumption of threshold provided a framework of this current study. Having resulted as such, the four low-ranked service marketing mix were price, product and promotion and Physical Evidence (\bar{X} lower than -3.30) were selected to be further analysed, these four marketing mixes were chosen in association with what Beard (2014) suggested.

Table 1: Analyses of Marketing Mix Satisfaction of the Songkhla Zoo

7 Ps Marketing Mix		Satisfaction Level
Product	3.20	Dissatisfied
Price	3.17	Dissatisfied
Place	3.48	Satisfied
Promotion	3.20	Dissatisfied
People	3.30	Satisfied
Physical Evidence	3.23	Dissatisfied
Process	3.30	Satisfied
Total	3.26	Dissatisfied

After screening the Marketing Mix with low satisfaction (dissatisfaction hereafter), the researchers investigated what caused such dissatisfaction. As shown in Table 2, data of the different aspects of each Marketing Mix which were not satisfactorily.

Table 2: Analyses of Issues under Dissatisfaction of Marketing Mix

Product Issues		(SD)	Satisfaction
1. A Variety in Numbers/Types of Animals	3.13	0.90	Dissatisfied
2. A Variety in Types of activities/Show	3.10	0.90	Dissatisfied
3. Waterpark	3.31	0.86	Satisfied
4. Environment in natural scene	3.49	0.90	Satisfied
5. A Variety in Numbers/Types of restaurants	3.09	0.91	Dissatisfied
6. Souvenirs	3.08	0.90	Dissatisfied
7. Reasonable entrance fee	3.14	0.92	Dissatisfied
8. Reasonable Swimming suit and	3.14	0.89	Dissatisfied

Product Issues		(SD)	Satisfaction
equipment rental fee in waterpark			
9. Value of money	3.22	0.94	Dissatisfied
10. Reasonable food prices	3.17	0.91	Dissatisfied
11. Reasonable souvenirs prices	3.17	0.93	Dissatisfied
12. A Variety on Advertisement to PR	3.12	0.98	Dissatisfied
13. Discount price for promotion	3.13	0.89	Dissatisfied
14. Entrance fee including water park	3.28	0.89	Dissatisfied
15. Clean and sufficient toilets	3.09	0.98	Dissatisfied
16. Convenient and sufficient parking area	3.19	0.94	Dissatisfied
17. Clean and sufficient sitting areas	3.24	0.94	Dissatisfied
18. Interesting products in souvenir shops	3.23	0.99	Dissatisfied
19. Appropriate conditions of animals (in secured and nature scene)	3.24	0.95	Dissatisfied
20. Clear and sufficient direction signs and information board in the zoo	3.23	1.02	Dissatisfied
21. Clean and safe animal show areas	3.30	0.88	Satisfied
22. Overall area in the zoo	3.31	0.88	Satisfied

Regarding the **Product**, there are six issues investigated (1-6), five issues of the **Price** (7-11), three aspects of the **Promotion** (12-14) and seven aspects of the **Physical Evidence** (15-22). All of these had the satisfaction level of 3.08 up to 3.49. Considering most aspects were not able to satisfy the tourists.

Are the tourists not satisfied?

For Product, there were four issues under the level of 3.30 which comprised a variety of animals and activities or shows, restaurants, and souvenirs. Price showed all issues with lower level than 3.30. Not a surprise, clean and sufficient toilets was the lowest of the physical evidence while a variety on publicizing channels and discount prices for promotion were lowest rated in the Promotion issues.

Regarding each dissatisfactory Marketing Mix, there were 22 issues from four Marketing Mixes. The four issues were received satisfactory level. Considering these four issues, it appears that the tourists were satisfied with the natural scenery of the zoo as described earlier. On the other hand, sixteen out of 22 issues earned the tourists dissatisfaction (lower than 3.30), four issues were from Product. This means that the tourists may be

dissatisfied with the Product of the Songkhla zoo. It is necessary to carefully consider the characteristics of the product or services provided by the Songkhla zoo, the variety of animals, shows, restaurants were considered relatively low. As earlier mentioned, Kotler et al (2003) pointed out four characteristics of product or service which includes intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability and perishability (IHIP). Products and services consist of process and operating at the same time are being provided while the consumers or tourists are present. The products at the Songkhla zoo are shown such as water park, food and drink kiosk. The tourists will experience the product and service at the same time while they are at the zoo. Intangibility of the products and services at the zoo can be different thing to different tourists. The concept or word “variety” may not be perceived differently to the tourists. However this study did not conduct a further interview to verify what the tourists actually think about the variety. The variety of products or services does not have actual physical appearance so that it makes a challenging task to organizations to provide satisfactory services or products. For the souvenirs, even they are tangible products, but it should be further investigated in what particular dimensions of souvenirs need improvement.

In terms of heterogeneity, it apparently relates to the abstract of variability and each tourist will have a perception of satisfaction at one point different to another point. The tourists come to the Zoo, they expect to see a variability of everything, this was interpreted by dissatisfaction on the issues of variety of animals or restaurants and shows. The Zoo must understand this issue as the customers normally expects the product or service variability. The variety of the products seems currently limited. The Zoo can provide different shows. Some specialized zoo such as Safari world in Bangkok and Crocodile farm in Samutprakarn runs crocodile wrestling shows all day long, even the far offers only one outstanding shows, but it organizes 6 rounds a day reflecting time variability so that the tourists can choose from. Whereas the Songkhla zoo offers less variability regarding the food and restaurants offered and the zoo has limited rounds of the wild animal show and the seal show. There is only one big restaurant in the zoo and others are kiosks. Regarding the issue of inseparability, the Songkhla zoo consists of both products and services whereas services such as wild animal shows, seal shows, scenery, cleanliness and conveniences, are received dissatisfaction from the tourists. The characteristics of inseparability of the Songkhla Zoo services are not very satisfactory. The tourists reflected that the services were not satisfactory in association with the money they paid; consequently, they had low satisfactions in all prices issues. Grigaliunaitė and Pileienė (2014) studied the relationships of the tourists’ satisfaction and loyalty, accommodation and catering, they found that the local tourists may be satisfaction in the important determinant to loyalty and satisfied local tourist tends to be

loyal, even they were not satisfied with accommodation and catering. Regarding the issue of perishability, the loss probably caused when the tourists were not satisfied and not want to purchase more services or products while they were at the zoo may not be recovered. The products and services at the zoo are perishable. At this point, it is crucial to at the point of contact that all services and products at the zoo should maintain the satisfaction of the tourists.

Conclusions and Implications

From the research, the suggestions from the tourist concerning on services and facilities of the Songkhla zoo were revealed as following aspects of service marketing mixes. Increase in the numbers and various types of animals and animal shows are recommended, for example, wild life animals like night animals, typical animals and animals from oversea should be further. The shows should be improved; they should be more interesting and fun. Also, the animal show should be adapted to the culture such as Songkhla culture or other nearby provinces like local shows being suitable for kids. More food outlets or kiosks and a variety of food were recommended. Importantly the tourists reflected unreasonable prices in many dimensions. The prices (entrance fee, admission fee) are not truly expensive, but the tourists compared it with the quality of services and products so that they perceived value-not-worth feeling. The zoo can possibly improve the quality of services and products which could consequently enhance the satisfaction.

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