THE EVALUATION OF FOREIGNERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THAI STANDARD OF TOURISM QUALITY

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Abstract - The purposes of this research were to study the level of satisfaction of Thai standard of tourism quality and to recommend guidelines to improve Thai standard of tourism quality. This is a mixed research of qualitative and quantitative method. There were 10 key informants from various people in the hospitality and tourism industry and there were 400 samples for quantitative research. The findings revealed that there were six categories of standard from high to low level of satisfaction as follows: 1) Tourist destinations must be environmental friendly, 2) Tourist destinations must be unique in cultural heritage, 3) Tourist destinations must offer food & beverages that are clean and hygienic, 4) Tourist destination must offer public restrooms that are sufficiency available, and 5) Tourist destinations must offer reasonable prices.

Keywords - Satisfaction; Standard; Tourist Destinations; Tourism Quality

I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, it is very important for ASEAN member nations to compete each other in terms of tourism. It becomes the priority of many hotel and tourism industry in Thailand to improve their standard quality. In general, the most important institutions to produce human capital for tourism in Thailand are very concerned that people of Thailand will fail to enhance the standard quality of service and take full advantages of this coming ASEAN integration of economic opportunities (Suvannathep, 2012) (Wongleedee, 2014) . Tourism is one of the most important industries to create jobs and bring foreign currency to Thailand (Santiwong, 1998). It is imperative to train a variety of employees in many service fields and who are working for hotel, airline, and tourism industry. The first group that needs to be train to enhance their quality of serviced to make international tourists happy is service people. Why? This is because there are vital human resources that must be trained to compete with other ASEAN nations. Thailand in their modern day has to compete with top countries of ASEAN such as Singapore and Malaysia. However, some of Thai employees' ability in English still lack behind many ASEAN nations (Prachchatturakit online, 2013). One important fact is that many policies from the Thai government need to improve their national education and training plan in order to catch up with Singapore and Malaysia. Tourism industry brings foreign currency and jobs which are why it is important for Thai tourism need to be trained to improve its standard quality in order to capitalize its entity as well as new opportunity.

This research is aimed to study the travel experience of international tourists in Thailand in order to find the best way to develop quality service standard to exceed international tourists' satisfaction in order to maintain and improve international tourists' loyalty.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As the hospitality and tourism industry sector of the Thai economy grows, the research topic of hospitality and tourism industry is becoming increasingly necessary. Service quality standard from Thailand distributed regionally, nationally, and globally have become a signature of its own way. Many ASEAN nations also aimed at enhancing quality service standard of their tourism industry. This means the measurement of reliable methods of service standard is vital. As a result, accurate and reliable instruments that assess service quality are the topic of study by many researchers around the world. In fact, instrument is called SERVQUAL was designed to be used as the best quality measurement. Theory of service quality or SERVQUAL was developed by the famousParasuraman, Zeithamal and Berry (1993).The theory's foundation was based on the difference between the tourists' expectation of service quality and the tourists' real experience of service during their trip. Put it differently, it is a measurement of the gap of tourists' expectation and tourists' perception. This type of measurement aims to measure five dimensions which included assurance, empathy, reliability, responsiveness, and tangibility. Each dimension is required to ask international tourist about their level of satisfaction, their comments, and opinions about the service received by the service providers when compare with their expectation that the particular service should be performed.

III. METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study was to study the level of satisfaction of international tourist members from

participating in the survey which designed to measure their level of satisfaction during the trip in Thailand. The population and sample size of this study was all international tourists at the Suvannabhumi airport which consisted of 400 respondents who visit Thailand during April of 2017. The Suvannabhumi Airport was chosen as a main area of study since it is the gateway to Thai tourist destinations. In fact, the sample size of 400 respondents was determined by Taro Yamane (1973) table with a 0.05 level of significance. However, only 200 respondents were available in the limited time and resources. The data collation was conducted by using an English questionnaire to elicit respondents' answer about their level of satisfaction from the service received. There are three parts to the questionnaire. Part one was aimed to ask them about their demographic information. Part two was aimed to ask them about their level of satisfaction and part three was aimed to provide a space to allowed respondents to provide comments and suggestions freely. Certainly, the reliability and validity of the questionnaire was important and, therefore, was tested by using Item-Objective Congruency or IOC index. In addition, 20 respondents were used as a pilot study in order to search for ways to improve the quality of each question and to obtain a Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of more than 0.75 to be accepted for this study.

IV. FINDINGS

The findings revealed that the majority of respondents were international tourist from Europe, ASIA, ASEAN, and Australia. Male and female respondents were approximately the same proportion or 52:48 respectively. The majority or about 46 had the age between 21-35 years old with an undergraduate degree. Only 5 percent of the respondent had the age over 60 years old. The majority of respondents chose Bangkok as the major travelling area and least chose North-East region as their major travelling area. The average income from 58 percent of the respondent was about $20,001 to $35,000. Holiday was the major reason for the travelling in Thailand. The findings also revealed that the main objective for travelling to Thailand was to have a vacation in an exotic place. The majority of respondents visited Thailand for the first time and spent up to 7 days in Thailand.

Table 1.Profile of the respondents.

Items	(N=400) 100%
Gender	
1. Male	52
2. Female	48
Age	
1. (1-20) years old	15
2. (21-35) years old	46
3. (36-60) years old	32
4. (Over 60) years	5
Education	
1. Up to high-school	28
2. Up to undergraduate	52
3. More than undergraduate	20
Occupation	
1.Management/Administration	32
2. Professional/ Technical	27
3. Students	14
4. No jobs	15
5. Others	12
Income/ per month	
1. (10,000- 20,000) baht	15
2. (20,001-35,000) baht	58
3. (35,001- 50,000) baht	27
4. More than 50,000 baht	10
Purpose of travel	
1. Business	11
2. Holiday	67
3. Education	17
4. Others	5
Major Travelling area	
1. North	23
2. South	25
3. North-East	11
4. Central	15
5. Bangkok	26

Table 2.Level of satisfaction in service in a variety of places and activities.

Items	5- Likert scale
1. Hotel	4.85
2. Restaurant	4.84
3. Spa	4.50
4. Airport	4.44
5. Bus	3.11
6. Taxi	3.10
7. Museum	3.45
8. Natural park	3.54
9. Temple	4.11
10. Souvenir shop	4.01
11. Beach	4.02
12. Night market	3.56
13. Shopping mall	4.81
14. Traditional market	3.52
15. Tourist destination	3.66
16. Thai safari	3.52
17. Night entertainment	3.94
18. Thai boxing	3.60
19. Thai show	3.55
20. Train	3.01

The findings from table 2 revealed that hotel, restaurant, and shopping mall received the high level of satisfaction. This indicated that the service from these places had a high quality standard. Antithetically, train, bus, and taxi tended to be the low level of satisfaction. This indicated that the serviced from these activities had a low quality of standard.

Table 3. International Tourists' level of satisfaction of tourist destinations

	Mean	S.D.	Rank
Level of satisfaction			
1. Tourist destination must be environmental friendly.	4.78	0.991	1
2. Tourist destination must be unique in cultural heritage.	4.56	0.878	2
3. Tourist destination must offer food and beverage that are clean and hygienic.	4.23	1.012	3
4. Tourist destination must offer public restrooms that are sufficiency available.	4.15	0.892	4
5.Tourist destination must offer reasonable prices,	3.89	0.589	5

The findings from table 3 revealed five different tourist perception levels of tourists' perception of employees' service quality in Tourism as follows: 1) "Tourist destination must be environment friendly," was rated as number one with a mean of 4.78 and 0.991 SD 2) "Tourist destination must be unique in cultural heritage was rated as number two with a mean of 4.56 and 0.878 SD. 3) "Tourist destination must offer food and beverage that are clean and hygienic" was rated as number three with a mean of 4.23 and 1.012 SD.4) " Tourist destination must offer public restrooms that are sufficiency available" was rated as number four with a mean of 4.15 and 0.892 SD. 5) "Tourist destination must offer reasonable prices." was rated as number five with a mean of 3.89 and .589 SD.

V. FUTURE STUDIES

One of the limitations of this paper came from the use only the quantitative method and the use of Likert five-scale which may not have an ability to explain the reason behind the level of satisfaction. Hence, the findings may not be explained the tourists' experience effectively in the Thai tourism industry. Hence, future research should use a combination of quantitative and qualitative method or use both Likert five-scale measurement with an in-depth interview or a focus group to find out the reasons behind each level of satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

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