

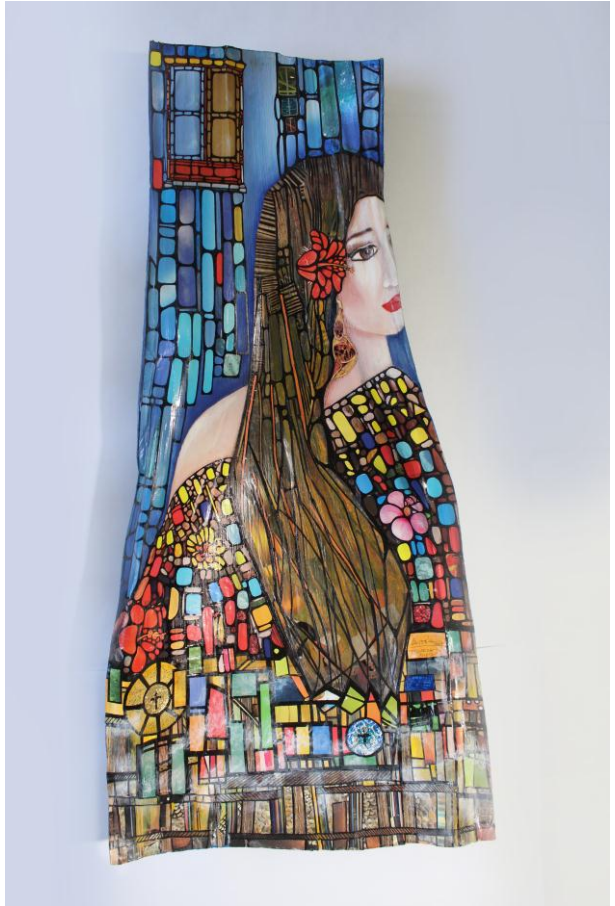
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The role of customer interactions towards customer satisfaction in theme parks experience

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to investigate the role of customer interactions towards customer satisfaction in theme parks experience. Survey was done using self-administrated questionnaire on systematic sampling method. Result shows that interaction contributes towards customer satisfaction but at the same time service providers may also strengthen their service at different factors. In conclusion, interaction also plays an important role to make sure that the tourist feels satisfied besides convenience and willingness to visit theme parks again.

Keywords: customer, interactions, satisfaction, parks experience.

El papel de las interacciones del cliente hacia la satisfacción del cliente en la experiencia de los parques temáticos

Resumen

El objetivo del estudio es investigar el papel de las interacciones del cliente hacia la satisfacción del cliente en la experiencia de los parques temáticos. La encuesta se realizó mediante un cuestionario autoadministrado sobre el método de muestreo sistemático. El resultado muestra que la interacción contribuye a la satisfacción del cliente, pero al mismo tiempo, los proveedores de servicios también pueden fortalecer su servicio ante diferentes factores. En conclusión, la interacción también juega un papel importante para garantizar que el turista se sienta satisfecho además de la conveniencia y la voluntad de visitar los parques temáticos nuevamente.

Palabras clave: cliente, interacciones, satisfacción, experiencia en parques.

1. INTRODUCTION

Based on Theme Index in the Global Attraction Attendance report, a theme park in Malaysia have been listed in the top 20 water parks worldwide and they also show the statistics of the attendance to the theme park increase from year to year. In 2017 the numbers recorded are 1.27 million as compared to 1.07 million in 2016. The increasing number of visitor's shows that theme park business is important to the tourism industry and that could be the answer on the increase of operators in Malaysia. Malaysia has a lot of tourists' attraction place such as nature, culture, history, adventure, leisure,

theme park etc. There a variety of theme park in Malaysia, in this study the researcher will highlight on Lost World of Tambun, Sunway Lagoon, I-City, and LEGOLAND. A theme park is a place where people spend their leisure time and entertaining their self or family. The family will spend their weekend at a theme park in entertaining their children (Ady, 2010). Some of the cases theme park been used as the place of holding event Such as in Sunway Lagoon, it been recognized by the world as proof from the international event held in the place.

Handling millions of visitors a year was not an easy task especially when the competition is tough. Theme park operators need to ensure that customer come to their park and satisfied. The level of satisfaction will soon conclude whether they will come back or not. Customer satisfaction is important in marketing research because it will help to generate the awareness of the park itself. A satisfied customer will help to communicate to others about their experience and the same may happen should they are not happy. Based on that, interactions between staff and customers are important. Staff is the first contact point that customer may look after should they faced difficulty or perhaps to get more information (Ady, 2010). In tourism and hospitality services, the performance of frontline employees is critical to the customers' perceptions of the service offering. These employees play a significant role in creating and maintaining customer satisfaction although they receive generally low wages and little or no benefits in comparison to their strategic contribution to the firm's

performance (Wang, 2016; Dagustani, et al., 2016; Bittar, 2017; Hossain et al., 2017).

1.1. Interactions and satisfaction

The direct contact with clients and the knowledge they have about the service production process make service employees an important information source for the organization (Carmen, 2016). Moreover, they also serve as a marketing representative of the organization and influence its customer relations (Don, 2012). Many service workers are considered part-time marketers because they conduct marketing activities but do not belong to the marketing or sales department (Paul et al., 2013). According to Edwin (2016) the lack of intention on expectation towards the tourist needs and wants besides low service quality provided create as a major influence on the level of tourist satisfaction. It is important for the theme park management to ensure their customers are satisfied with the products and services that they offered and enhance the purchase intention (Imran et al., 2018).

Customer evaluation during interactions may derive from the way staff responses to them such as courteous, respectful and also the ability to solve a customer problem. Staff at the same time may portray a concerned and helpful towards attending the customer's needs. Besides that, it is also important that staff be friendly and knowledgeable. To capture tourists' satisfaction, companies must

strive to deliver services that meet or, even better, exceed customers' service expectations (Edwin et al., 2018). Bitner writes that both the ability of employees to respond appropriately to customers' needs, or possible service-delivery failures, and the presence of unprompted employee actions strongly relate to customers' perceptions of employees. Commitment to the organization can be beneficial to customer satisfaction, and on the other hand, employees generally being committed to their organizations deliver high-quality service to customers. Moreover, due to technological advances and increased interactivity between firms and customers, individual customers expect companies to increasingly customize products and services to meet their specific demands (Hyunju et al., 2017). Scholars thus argue that an interaction orientation can enable businesses to refine their knowledge about customer tastes and preferences. In addition, Urban proposed that an interaction orientation can improve customer satisfaction, strengthening repurchase behavior and leading customers to become a firm's trusted advocates. Meanwhile, customers could develop greater satisfaction and loyalty intention when they feel a positive interaction (Mohd, 2015). As such this research is to evaluate the relationship between interactions and satisfaction as per the following hypothesis.

H1: There is a significant relationship between interaction and tourists 'satisfaction

2. METHODOLOGY

Respondents for this study are a Malaysian and Non-Malaysian tourist who visited a theme park. Out of 700 questionnaires, 676 were usable. Systematic sampling was used in this survey in which every 5th element in the population is chosen starting from a random point in the sampling frame (Jabarullah & Hussain, 2018). The relationship between the interactions and satisfaction had been analyzed through the quantitative analysis.

3. RESULTS

Overall there were nine elements that describe the interaction between that theme park's staffs and respondents. Based on the result, some of the respondents were not satisfied with the staffs' attitude whereby out of nine elements mean score, six of them were below 3.00. The highest mean was 3.1494 and 0.69911 standard deviation. This was referring to I would describe the staff in theme parks as knowledgeable. The lowest mean score was 2.8654 and 0.86645 of standard deviation, referring to I would describe the staff in Theme parks as courteous. The second highest mean score was I would describe the staff in theme parks as available (3.1021 and 0.79625 of standard deviation), followed by I would describe the staff in theme parks as friendly (3.1006 and 0.81209 of standard deviation). The mean score for I would describe the staff in theme parks as helpful was 3.0917 and the standard deviation was 0.86265. Then, the mean score

for I would describe the staff in theme parks as concerned was 3.0799 and the standard deviation was 0.83771, followed by the staff in theme parks gives customers prompt service and solves any problems with 3.0089 mean score and 0.81645 of standard deviation. The staff in theme parks is never being too busy to respond to customers' requests' mean score was 3.0059 and 0.82010 was the standard deviation. Finally, the mean score for I would describe the staff in Theme parks as respectful was 2.9186 and the standard deviation was 0.94792.

Table 1: Respondents' Assessments on Interaction Factor in Theme Parks

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I would describe the staff in Theme parks as courteous	676	2.8654	0.86645
I would describe the staff in Theme parks as respectful	676	2.9186	0.94792
The staff in theme parks is never being too busy to respond to customers' requests	676	3.0059	0.82010
The staff in theme parks gives customers prompt service and solves any problems	676	3.0089	0.81645
I would describe the staff in theme parks as concerned	676	3.0799	0.83771
I would describe the staff in theme parks as helpful	676	3.0917	0.86265
I would describe the staff in theme parks as friendly	676	3.1006	0.81209
I would describe the staff in theme parks as available	676	3.1021	0.79625
I would describe the staff in theme parks as knowledgeable	676	3.1494	0.69911
Valid N (listwise)	676		

Tourists were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied towards Interaction between them and theme park's staffs. This variable has an

average rating of 3 and the value of Skewness and Kurtosis (0.066 and -0.018) also indicated that the distribution of Interaction was approximately normal (Salem et al., 2016).

Table 2: Correlation Analysis of Tourist’ Satisfaction and the Interaction Experiences

	Ambience	Interaction	Design	Satisfaction degree of the tourist
Interaction Pearson Correlation	0.410**	1	0.439**	0.452**
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000
N	676	676	676	676

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Predictors	Remarks
Dependent Variable: Satisfaction	
Interaction	0.000
R ²	0.489
t-value	0.204
F-value	13.144
Beta value	172.767
	0.452

Table 3: Summarized Regression Analysis Results of H1b

Regression Analysis for Table 4.21 is based on Hypothesis 1b (H1b). In this table, it stated that interaction (IV) and Satisfaction (DV) are significant. It is based on t-value which is 13.14% and the p-value is below than 0.01 (p<0.01). For the Beta value, it is 0.452. Thus, the H1b is accepted.

4. CONCLUSION

Interaction also plays an important role to make sure that the tourist feels satisfied besides convenience and willingness to visit theme parks again. According to Geissler and Rucks said that theme managers should consider in developing training to the employees which with this training and continues to follow up will enhance excellent service quality beside make the employees more knowledgeable, friendly, and responsive. Thus, as applied in theme parks management is suggested to have their own training programmed as to ensure extraordinary service and quality toward developing satisfactions toward the tourist. Based on the findings, it is important for the service providers to prepare their staff in terms of knowledge to solve problems, friendly and also availability. The finding is also consistent with (Kayaser, 2013). Besides that, there are many other items that are equally important to provide positive customer experience and customer satisfaction. Future research may take a deeper look into other attributes of the atmospheric experiences variable. This may be reflecting the attributes of ambiance, which may also touch on the other element in the ambiance attributes such as smell, scent or event temperature as further research.

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