

Evaluating the Service Quality at Lung Ngoc Hoang Tourist Site, Hau Giang Province

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ABSTRACT

This study uses the IPA model to evaluate the service quality of the Lung Ngoc Hoang Tourist area. Research data were collected by convenient sampling with a sample size of 197 tourists who have ever visited and experienced the service at the Lung Ngoc Hoang tourist site. The research results show that only 8 over 30 criteria measuring the service quality rated by tourists have better performance levels than expected. In general, visitors claimed that the service quality of the Lung Ngoc Hoang tourist site does not meet their expectations. In particular, the criteria that are most rated not meeting the expectation are "Plenty delicious dishes, specialties, and rich souvenirs" and "Good communication system". Then follow the criteria "Convenient transportation system", "Guaranteed security", and "Quick resolve of customers' complaints and problems".

Keywords: Service quality, IPA model, Lung Ngoc Hoang tourist site

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1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Service quality has a significant impact on the satisfaction of visitors. According to Thanh et al. (2012), service quality is an extremely important component in the structure of a tourism product. If an organization offers high-quality services, tourists are willing to revisit the destination (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Parasuraman et al., 1985). Lung Ngoc Hoang eco-tourist site in Hau Giang Province is known as the largest bird park in the Southern West of Vietnam. It has been approved to become a nature reserve under the Prime Minister's Decision No. 13/2002/QĐ-TTg dated January 14, 2002, with an area of 2,805 hectares. The destination owns a unique ecosystem, including more than 50 species of birds coming to live and breed. By 2019, the number of species has surpassed 20,000. In which, there are rare birds such as Giang Sen, Co Nhan, and Dien Dien. In addition to this, the tourist site also has a variety of countryside cuisine, many traditional folk games of the river land, and a peaceful atmosphere. However, some questions are given. Have the advantages of natural and human resources in the resort been thoroughly promoted? Has the Lung Ngoc Hoang tourist site met tourists' needs and expectations? Are tourists satisfied with the service experiences? These are research questions suggested for the topic "Evaluating the service quality in Lung Ngoc Hoang tourist site, Hau Giang Province".

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Approach method

Service quality includes two separate parts: technical quality and functional quality. Technical quality is what the user gets; Functional quality expresses in the customer service process (Gronroos, 1984). Service quality is difficult to define and hard to implement. The perception and evaluation of service quality are more complicated than product quality because of its intangible nature (Nghiem, 2008). According to Parasuraman et al. (1985), service quality is the distance between the expectation for the service and the actual perception of the service they experienced. Parasuraman et al. (1985) introduced a "five gaps model" of service quality. Gap (1) is the difference between what customers expect and what the manager understands their expectations. Gap (2) determines the difference between the manager's perception of customers' expectations and the service quality specification. Gap (3) shows the difference between the service quality specification and the actual delivery process of the experience. Gap (4) defines the difference between the delivery of customer experience and the information they receive through communication activities. Gap (5) is the difference between the expected service and experienced service.

The topic of service quality measurement has been concerned by many domestic and foreign authors. Therefore, various models are used to measure service quality such as

SERVQUAL or IPA (Importance Performance Analysis). These models match different types of service while all have one thing in common, that is describing the level of customer satisfaction of the service. These are said to be the most commonly used models. In this study, the authors use the IPA model by Martilla and James (1977) to evaluate the service quality of Lung Ngoc Hoang Resort. The IPA model bases on the gap between customer perceptions on the importance level of measurement indicators and the service provider's performance level.

The paired samples (T-test) method was used to test the difference between the importance level rated by tourists (I)

and the performance of the resort (P) on the service quality. If $P - I > 0$, the service quality is good; if the result is smaller than 0, the service quality is poor. The higher value of the deviation, the worse the service quality.

2.2. Measurement criteria for the service quality at Lung Ngoc Hoang tourist site

Based on the literature review and the actual situation at the Lung Ngoc Hoang Tourist site, the study proposes the criteria to assess the service quality. There are 6 components explained in the table below.

Table 1: Interpretation of observations in the research model

Criteria	Observed variable	Scale	Reference resources
Tangible factors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The resting area in the resort is cool and clean. 2. Tour guide/ staff wear uniform, neat appearance, and polite greetings. 3. Plenty of delicious dishes, specialties, and souvenirs. 4. Good communication systems. 5. Convenient transportation systems. 	Likert 1-5	Thanh et al. (2012), Dam (2015), Kiet (2016)
Attractiveness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Romantic and natural landscape. 2. Attractive games and entertainment tools. 3. Plenty of unique cuisines. 4. Many souvenirs and specialties stalls. 5. Friendly and hospitable service staff. 	Likert 1-5	Lien and Hung (2014), Dam (2015)
Trust	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Detailed signboards of direction. 2. The provided services are as advertised. 3. The service quality is as advertised. 4. Service fees are public. 5. Easy to seek tourist information and book vehicle tickets. 	Likert 1-5	Thanh et al. (2012), Dam (2015), Yusofet al. (2014)
Responsiveness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enthusiastic staff. 2. The staff always understands customer needs. 3. The transportation always meets the expectation. 4. Flexible service time, warm welcome. 5. A variety of seasonal fruits. 6. Many additional services are available at the request of customers. 	Likert 1-5	Kiet (2016), Yusofet al. (2014)
Guarantee	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Guaranteed security. 2. Always protect the environment. 3. Always ensure food hygiene and safety. 4. The staff has good communication with international visitors. 5. The price is in line with the service received. 6. Tour guides/ staff have easy-to-understand presentations. 	Likert 1-5	Dam (2015), Kiet (2016), Yusofet al. (2014)
Sympathy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tour guides/ staff are attentive to visitors. 2. The staff always keep a courteous attitude to visitors. 3. Quick resolve of customers' complaints and problems. 	Likert 1-5	Basiony et al. (2014), Yusofet al. (2014), Kiet (2016)

Source: Author's synthesis and proposal, 2020

2.3. Data collection method

According to previous researches, the larger the sample size, the better (Tho, 2011). The study used a convenient sampling to investigate 197 tourists who have ever visited and experienced the service at the Lung Ngoc Hoang Tourist area. The characteristics of the study subjects are as follows: 46.7% male and 53.3% female; age from 20 to under 30 accounts for 61.4%, age from 30 to under 40 accounts for 18.3%, and the remaining ages make up a small proportion. There are 20% of tourists at the intermediate level; 68% have university/ college degrees; higher education and high school levels account for 5.9% and 5.1%, respectively. In terms of occupation, office workers account for 71.7%, civil servants/ officials are 19.3%, the rest 9.0% include students and self-employment.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1. Tourist evaluation for "tangible factors"

According to the test result in Table 2, the "Tangible factors" have not met visitors' expectations. Visitors are not satisfied as they rated the performance level of the 5 criteria lower than the expected level. In which, 3 criteria that tourists underestimate the most are "Plenty of delicious dishes, specialties, and souvenir; Good communication systems; and "Convenient transportation systems". Therefore, the resort manager should pay attention to improve all 5 above criteria to enhance the service quality.

Table 2: Test result of "tangible factors"

Sign	Tangible factor	Importance (I)	Performance (P)	(P-I)	Sig.
TF1	The resting area in the resort is cool and clean.	4.47	4.22	-0.24	0.000
TF2	Tour guide/ staff wear uniform, neat appearance, and polite greetings.	4.29	3.76	-0.53	0.000
TF3	Plenty of delicious dishes, specialties, and souvenirs.	4.25	3.47	-0.78	0.000
TF4	Good communication systems.	4.20	3.42	-0.78	0.000
TF5	Convenient transportation systems.	4.19	3.48	-0.71	0.000

Source: Survey data of 197 tourists, 2020

3.2. Tourist evaluation for "attractiveness"

Base on the result in Table 3, tourists underestimate the "attractiveness" of the resort. Most of the measurement criteria are not evaluated well by tourists. There are 3 criteria whose performance levels are lower than importance levels: "Romantic and natural landscape", "Attractive games and entertainment tools", and "Plenty of unique cuisines". Meanwhile, the other criteria's performance levels are higher than tourist expectations. Thus, to improve the quality of service, the resort needs to upgrade unsatisfied criteria and further promote elements with a high level of performance.

Table 3: Test result of "attractiveness"

Sign	Attractiveness	Importance(I)	Performance (P)	(P-I)	Sig.
ATT1	Romantic and natural landscape.	4.43	4.06	-0.37	0.000
ATT2	Attractive games and entertainment tools.	4.32	4.02	-0.29	0.000
ATT3	Plenty of unique cuisines.	4.30	3.87	-0.43	0.000
ATT4	Many souvenirs and specialties stalls.	4.24	4.40	0.15	0.002
ATT5	Friendly and hospitable service staff.	3.82	3.99	0.17	0.006

Source: Survey data of 197 tourists, 2020

3.3. Tourist evaluation for "trust"

Table 4 shows that the criteria related to trust meet the requirements of tourists, thereby indicating that tourists highly evaluate the trust factor. Almost the difference between the importance and the performance level is greater than 0. Accordingly, "Service fees are public" best performs, followed by "The service quality is as advertised". The remaining criteria are also highly evaluated. Although the resort has created trust for tourists, the manager needs to pay attention to maintaining good service quality.

Table 4: Test result of "trust"

Sign	Trust	Importance(I)	Performance (P)	(P-I)	Sig.
TRU1	Detailed signboards of direction.	3.84	4.36	0.51	0.000
TRU2	The provided services are as advertised.	3.88	4.36	0.47	0.000
TRU3	The service quality is as advertised.	3.62	4.20	0.57	0.000
TRU4	Service fees are public.	3.65	4.30	0.65	0.000
TRU5	Easy to seek tourist information and book vehicle tickets.	3.99	4.40	0.40	0.000

Source: Survey data of 197 tourists, 2020

3.4. Tourist evaluation for "responsiveness"

Table 5 shows that visitors assess the "responsiveness" of the resort lower than their expectations. Five out of six criteria have the value of P-I smaller than 0. In particular, "The staff always understand customer needs" has the lowest point, followed by "A variety of seasonal fruits" and "Enthusiastic staff". On the contrary, "Flexible service time, warm welcome" is considered to perform better than expected with a difference of 0.17 points. The resort manager needs to be concerned about low-performance level criteria to improve them in the future.

Table 5: Test result of "responsiveness"

Sign	Responsiveness	Importance (I)	Performance (P)	(P-I)	Sig.
RES1	Enthusiastic staff.	4.32	3.83	-0.49	0.000
RES2	The staff always understands customer needs.	4.28	3.69	-0.58	0.000
RES3	Transportation always meets the expectation.	4.31	3.89	-0.42	0.000
RES4	Flexible service time, warm welcome.	3.98	4.16	0.17	0.010
RES5	A variety of seasonal fruits.	4.43	3.90	-0.52	0.000
RES6	Many additional services are available at the request of customers.	4.35	3.94	-0.41	0.000

Source: Survey data of 197 tourists, 2020

3.5. Tourist evaluation for "guarantee"

Based on Table 6, the criteria related to "guarantee" have not met the requirements of visitors. All 6 criteria get negative values for the difference between performance level and importance level. In which, "Guaranteed security" has the lowest point, followed by "Always ensure food hygiene and safety" and "The staff has good communication with international visitors". Therefore, to improve the service quality, the manager has to develop factors related to "guarantee".

Table 6: Test result of "guarantee"

Sign	Guarantee	Importance (I)	Performance (P)	(P-I)	Sig.
GUA1	Guaranteed security.	4.25	3.52	-0.73	0.000
GUA2	Always protect the environment.	4.34	3.91	-0.43	0.000
GUA3	Always ensure food hygiene and safety.	4.39	3.90	-0.48	0.000
GUA4	The staff has good communication with international visitors.	4.34	3.86	-0.47	0.000
GUA5	The price is in line with the service received.	4.52	4.31	-0.20	0.000
GUA6	Tour guides/ staff have easy-to-understand presentations.	4.24	3.82	-0.42	0.000

Source: Survey data of 197 tourists, 2020

3.6. Tourist evaluation for "sympathy"

Table 7 indicates that all the difference between performance level and importance level of "sympathy" gets negative values. The highest negative value (-0.68 points) belongs to "Quick resolve of customers complaints and problems", followed by "Tour guides/ staff are attentive to visitors" (-0.65 points). It concludes that the "sympathy" factor of the Lung Ngoc Hoang Tourist site has not performed well. There should be solutions to improve service quality and attract more visitors.

Table 7: Test result of "sympathy"

Sign	Sympathy	Importance(I)	Performance (P)	(P-I)	Sig.
SYM1	Tour guides/staff are attentive to visitors.	4.19	3.53	-0.65	0.000
SYM2	The staffs always keep a courteous attitude to visitors.	4.31	3.69	-0.62	0.000
SYM3	Quickly resolve customers' complaints and problems.	4.26	3.58	-0.68	0.000

Source: Survey data of 197 tourists, 2020

4. CONCLUSION

To sum up, visitors claimed that the Lung Ngoc Hoang Tourist site's service quality has not met their expectations. In which, the criteria not meeting the expectation at the highest level are "Plenty of delicious dishes, specialties, and souvenir" and "Good communication systems", followed by "Convenient transportation systems", "Guaranteed security", "Quick resolve of customers complaints and problems". Based on the above findings, some governance implications are suggested to improve the service quality of the destination: upgrade "tangible factors", enhance "attractiveness", increase "trust", promote "responsiveness", enhance "guarantee", and improve "sympathy".

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