

Tourists' Satisfaction and Its' Challenges on Natural Attractions in a Rural Area

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ABSTRACT

The tourism industry's impact on the Philippines' economy, the Department of Tourism, the Philippines' tourism's primary agency, has aggressively promoted the Philippines as a tourist destination with several promotional and marketing strategies. This study assessed the satisfaction of the tourists on different attributes in natural attractions. Two hundred thirty tourists took part in this study. The instruments are made up of three parts. Part 1 pertains to the respondents' profile, part 2 contains items on determining the tourists' satisfaction, and part 3 pertains to the guests' challenges. The gathered data were treated statistically using frequency, simple percentage, weighted mean, and rank. Tourists had expressed their satisfaction with the different factors they experienced. However, tourists also encountered some problems while visiting the tourist sites. The information on service quality gaps could help tourist destination managers diagnose where performance improvement can best be targeted. The management needs a relatively stable labor force to allow the internalization of service standards.

Keywords — Business management, tourists' satisfaction, descriptive method, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

The decision to travel to a certain tourist destination depends on a collection of determining factors ranging from the economic or environmental to those of a sociological nature. The identification and relative weight of each of them is one of the core issues in tourism research since they are critical to its success or failure in a specific location. In particular, the tourist demand theory seeks to obtain a numerical measure of the influence of some selected determinants on the destination appeal to establish which are the most relevant ones (Li et al., 2005; Song & Witt, 2000).

Tourism is one of the factors used in developing the country's economic level, especially the developing countries. The more tourists were visiting, the higher the country's income. The economic level of the locals in tourism area management will also increase. The tourism products that need attention in developing tourism areas are tourist attractions, facilities, and accessibility. The tourist attraction is the main factor that motivates the tourist to visit an area. The attraction of a destination reflects the visitor's sense and opinion related a destination's ability to satisfy their needs (Ginting, 2018).

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (2009), the tourism industry has managed to generate a gross income of U.S. \$ 3.5 trillion, which is expected to increase to the U.S. \$ 7.0 trillion by 2025. With the estimation of one billion tourists traveling worldwide by 2023, the tourism industry is becoming a key driver of socio-economic progress, contributing to developing countries' economic growth, including the Philippines. In the Philippines, tourism is the second largest industry after the manufacturing sector contributes to economic growth. In 2008, records showed that a total of 22.5 million tourists came to travel in the country, generating a national income of Php49.6 billion.

With the impact contributed by the tourism industry to the Philippines' economy, the Department of Tourism, the primary agency of the Philippines' tourism, has aggressively promoted the Philippines as a tourist destination with several promotional and marketing strategies. For example, the theme "It's More Fun in the Philippines" continues to be the slogan for all advertising types at the international level. In the province of Bohol, the Department of Tourism develop the untapped potential and promote tourism in the province. "Behold Bohol" was promoted aggressively across the country from early 2008. Simultaneously, the Department of Tourism announces the product niche, especially with elements that include eco-tourism and adventure sports to the long-haul travelers. For meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE). The sector continues to be given special attention by the Department of Tourism (Henderson, 2011).

Promoting through such events would certainly be meaningless if they do not cater to tourists' tastes or contribute to their journey's fulfillment. Various studies have shown that tourists who are satisfied with their visit will come back or recommend it to others (Fabinyi, 2010).

According to the study of Akama et al. (2003), Kenya's national parks form the pillar of the country's tourism industry. Over one million international tourists visit Kenya annually to partake in wildlife safari and other forms of nature-based tourism. However, in recent years, the country's tourism industry has shown increasing signs of poor performance, especially in international tourists' volume visiting the national parks. Several reasons have been postulated as possible causes of this poor performance. They include the presumed degradation and reduction of the quality of the wildlife parks' tourist products, a deteriorating security situation in the country, and poor infrastructure. However, most of these suggestions are not based on empirical research. This study investigates one of these arguments (i.e., reducing the parks' tourist product quality as it relates to visitor satisfaction) using the case study of Tsavo West National Park.

The SERVQUAL service quality attributes were used to measure the quality of services and overall visitor satisfaction with the park's tourist products and services. A total of 200 international tourists were interviewed, and interestingly, an overwhelming majority of the tourists (over 70%) indicated that they had a satisfactory experience. Thus, based on the tourists' responses, one may argue that the park offers a quality tourist product at least for Tsavo West's case. In this regard, the study contends that there are probably exogenous factors responsible for the current decline and poor performance of the Kenya tourism industry. A reduction of the quality of the parks' tourist products is not a determinant of such decline.

Moreover, in 2015, the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) will be fully implemented. To pave the way for Thailand to be the tourism hub of Southeast Asia, it is important to study factors affecting tourist satisfaction. This study's emphasizes a northern province in Thailand, Chiang Mai, where there are many natural and cultural attractions. The significant factors are identified using statistical techniques. The data is obtained from a satisfaction survey developed and distributed randomly to foreign tourists who visit Chiang Mai. The quantitative data is then analyzed using factor analysis and multiple regression analysis to identify significant factors. The result indicates that the most significant factor affecting the overall satisfaction is the cost of staying, and other significant factors are hospitality, attractions and accessibility, and infrastructure. Also, policy recommendations are presented in the paper (Suanmali, 2014).

Thus, a detailed study on the satisfaction of their visit to Bohol, specifically in Candijay, should be conducted. Therefore, this study's main objective is to describe tourists' satisfaction in visiting tourist attractions in Candijay to help the parties develop the appropriate tourism promotion strategy.

This paper seeks to measure the tourists' satisfaction with their experiences on the tourist attractions in Candijay. As hospitality instructors of Bohol Island State University - Candijay Campus, the researchers desired to distinguish a practical solution or plan to the gaps in the tourists' experiences and their expectations during their visits to the tourist attractions in Candijay Bohol. Moreover, the researchers aspired to employ practical applications to solve any identified problems and get deeper insights about responding to tourist's satisfaction regarding different aspects of the tourist attractions. This is to look forward to more beneficial outcomes and ensure better information, which will eventually help tourist attractions managers plan for the future. Furthermore, the researchers strongly believe that providing exceptional services is an excellent factor to achieve tourist satisfaction at a peak level.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study assessed the tourists' satisfaction with their experiences during their visits to the tourist attractions in Candijay, Bohol, in the year 2020. Specifically, it answers the: (1) Profile of the respondents in terms of Age, Sex, Civil Status, Mode of Transportation, Employment Status, Traveler Type, & Primary Reason to Visit; (2) Level of satisfaction of the tourists about the different factors of tourism attractions in terms of accessibility, physical environment, social and cultural environment, visitor control and protection procedures, commercial considerations, and tourism staff; and (3) Challenges encountered by the tourists concerning different factors of the tourism attractions.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive method using the semi-researcher-made tool to determine the tourists' level of satisfaction with their experiences during their visit to the tourist attractions in Candijay, Bohol.

Research Site

The study was conducted on the tourist attractions in Candijay, such as Cadapdapan rice terraces, Can-umantad falls, and Canawa cold spring. The respondents of this study are both local and international tourists.

Cadapdapan Rice Terraces cover few hectares of the mountain slopes of Barangay Cadapdapan and being irrigated by the waters from Cadapdapan River. The same river system flows down to Can-Umantad Falls. Just below Cadapdapan Rice Terraces, at least 15 minutes trek down, is Can-Umantad Falls, the most iconic attraction of Candijay.

Can-Umantad Falls is regarded as the tallest waterfalls in the entire province of Bohol. The cascade lies along the Cadapdapan River that supplies irrigation to the rice terraces nested above it before flowing downstream. Can-Umantad Falls and the nearby spring pools are owned and managed by Eleuterio's Can-Umantad Falls and Rice Terraces Resort Inc. It is open to the public every day from 7 AM to 5 PM. The entrance fee is P20 per person; the parking fee is P10 for a motorbike and P20 for private cars.

Canawa Cold Spring is the natural gem that Candijay, Bohol had. The name is from the local term, "Cawa," which means a "Pan." The spring looks like a

perfect shape of a pan. And this where the “Canawa Cold Spring” being called. Many locals have said that they have tried to swim deep down, but no one has ever touched the bottom of the spring. Even the water source remains a big doubt for many since it has not yet been discovered where the cold spring comes from. The place has several cottages and built a concrete channel for the water to pass through. The mainspring pool is in its natural state and didn’t do any renovation. But the concrete canal where the water pass-through has been a beneficial thing for the kids, especially for those that can’t swim.

Respondents

This study used lottery or fishbowl sampling in selecting respondents. Two hundred thirty (230) tourists in three (3) natural attractions in Candijay, Bohol, took part in this study.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire was adapted from the study of Salleh et al. (2013) entitled “Tourist Satisfaction in Malaysia.

The said instrument is made up of three parts. Part 1 pertains to the respondents’ profile. Part 2 contains items on determining the tourists’ level of satisfaction in different tourist attractions, and part 3 pertains to the tourists’ challenges about the various factors of the tourist attractions. The natural attractions’ holistic attributes were evaluated by the tourists using the scales indicated below.

Range	Categorical Responses	Interpretation
3.26 – 4.00	Very Satisfied (VS)	Manifests high contentment of the actual visit of the natural attractions
2.51 – 3.25	Moderately Satisfied (MS)	Manifests contentment of the actual visit of the natural attractions
1.76 – 2.50	Less Satisfied (LS)	Manifests very little contentment of the actual visit of the natural attractions
1.00 – 1.75	Not Satisfied (NS)	Manifests no contentment of the actual visit of the natural attractions

Data Gathering

A letter of approval was coursed through the Municipal mayor of Candijay for approval and forwarded to the Barangay Captain. Upon receiving the approval, research survey questionnaires were administered to foreign and local tourists.

After gathering data from foreign and local tourists, these were processed, analyzed, and interpreted.

Data were treated statistically using frequency count and percentage for the respondents' profile. The problems encountered weighted mean for the tourists' satisfaction and rank for the tourists' problems.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents (n=230)

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
I. Age		
18-24	125	54.30
21-30	79	34.30
31-40	21	9.10
41-50	3	1.30
51-60	2	.90
II. Sex		
Male	131	57.00
Female	99	43.00
III. Civil Status		
Single	181	78.70
Married	45	19.60
Widow/Widower	4	1.70
IV. Country of Origin		
Philippines	219	95.22
Spain	4	1.75
France	3	1.31
Switzerland	1	.43
Greece	1	.43
United States	1	.43
England	1	.43
V. Mode of Transportation		
Private Motorcycle	147	63.90
Public Motorcycle	21	9.10
Rented Motorcycle	20	8.70

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Rented Car	16	7.00
Private Car	24	10.40
Walking	2	.90
VI. Employment Status		
Employed	110	47.80
Self-employed	22	9.60
Unemployed	15	6.50
Retired	1	.40
Student	82	35.70
VII. Traveler Type		
Families	68	29.60
Couples	40	17.40
Solo	11	4.80
Business	4	1.70
Friends	107	46.50
VIII. Primary Reason to Visit		
Leisure/Fun	112	48.70
Sightseeing	17	7.40
Event	9	3.90
Business	4	1.70
Swimming	88	38.30
IX. Destination		
Can-umantad Water Falls	128	55.66
Canawa Cold Spring	102	44.34

The highest proportion (54.30%) of the respondents belonged to 18-24 years old. Natural attractions entice young adults to travel as they have a common desire to explore a new destination.

Concerning the sex, the data shows that more than half (57.0%) of the respondents were males, while females only comprise 43%. This data implies that males are more adventurous and have less fear of traveling in remote areas.

More than two-thirds (78.70%) of the respondents' civil status were singles, and less than one-third (19.60%) were married. The data shows that singles have more time to travel as they have less priority than a married person.

Almost all the respondents are local tourists (i.e., Filipino), with the highest proportion of 95.22%. On the other hand, only one respondent is coming from Switzerland, Greece, the United States, and England, which comprises only .43% in the aspect of Country of Origin. This is an obvious result since the destination are located in the Philippines. Only a few foreign tourists visited the tourist destination because it's still unknown, especially on social media, and the place is not yet fully developed.

In transportation mode, more than half of the respondents (63.90%) used private motorcycles in visiting a tourist attraction in Candijay as it is more convenient and hassle-free than using other means.

The highest proportion of the respondents (47.80 %) were employed. It implies that those who have an income source can spend money to visit tourist attractions and willing to pay any possible expenses while visiting the destination.

Most tourists are accompanied by their friends with the highest proportion of 46.50% with the purpose of leisure/fun as indicated in the table (48.70%). This data implies that a type of tourist who will visit natural attractions, especially in rural areas, wants to enjoy nature's beauty with a trail on it, together with their friends. They have more time, energy, and craving for this kind of experience.

And lastly, Can-umantad Water Falls was often visited both to the local and foreign tourists (55.66%) than the Canawa Cold Spring, which comprises 44.34%. This means that the Can-umantad Water Falls is more attractive, and the site and services rendered by the staff were exceptional in that it keeps the tourists to revisit and promote the places to others.

Table 2. Level of Satisfaction of the Tourists about the Different Factors of Tourism Attraction

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
I. Accessibility		
1. Easy to comply with entry requirements (e.g., entrance fees, etc.)	3.69	Very Satisfied
2. State of maintenance of traffic signs and symbols	3.23	Moderately Satisfied
3. Availability and easy access to parking services at destination	3.34	Very Satisfied
4. Traffic congestion of vehicles on entry and exit	3.32	Very Satisfied
5. Congestion of people	3.35	Very Satisfied
Aggregate Mean	3.39	Very Satisfied

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
II. Physical Environment		
1. Quality of landscape and natural areas	3.52	Very Satisfied
2. Equipment and infrastructure safety	3.20	Moderately Satisfied
3. Level of noise	3.37	Very Satisfied
4. Air quality	3.62	Very Satisfied
5. State of cleanliness	3.47	Very Satisfied
Aggregate Mean	3.43	Very Satisfied
III. Visitor Control and Protection Procedures		
1. Treatment by officials during an inspection procedures	3.31	Very Satisfied
2. Sense of security	3.31	Very Satisfied
3. Protection services	3.28	Very Satisfied
4. Policy implementation	3.39	Very Satisfied
5. Visitor management	3.22	Moderately Satisfied
Aggregate Mean	3.30	Very Satisfied
IV. Commercial Considerations		
1. Working days and opening hours of shops and facilities	3.39	Very Satisfied
2. Attractions and activities (diversity, quality)	3.34	Very Satisfied
3. Availability of public services	3.31	Very Satisfied
4. Local products and crafts	3.14	Moderately Satisfied
5. Affordability of the tourist product needs	3.30	Very Satisfied
Aggregate Mean	3.30	Very Satisfied
V. Tourism Staff		
1. General attitude	3.54	Very Satisfied
2. Language skills	3.35	Very Satisfied
3. Level of knowledge	3.56	Very Satisfied
4. Proper grooming	3.19	Moderately Satisfied
5. Public relation & management	3.38	Very Satisfied
Aggregate Mean	3.40	Very Satisfied
OVERALL AGGREGATE MEAN	3.36	VERY SATISFIED

The overall aggregate mean of 3.36 denotes that the tourists were *very satisfied*, especially on the accessibility, physical environment, visitor control & protection procedures, and the tourism staff. Except for commercial considerations, which are *moderately satisfied*, but the overall impression was still *very satisfied*. It indicates

that the management which handles the tourism sites in Candijay, Bohol, had good stewardship of different tourist destinations.

In the aspect of accessibility, the data in table 2 reveals that the respondents were *very satisfied*, as indicated by the aggregate mean of 3.39. The data implies that the respondents encountered easy access in complying with the entry requirements (e.g., entrance fees, etc.) with the legibility of traffic signs and symbols. The parking services at the destination were also accessible for the tourist. The congestion of people was adequately handled, minimizing traffic congestion, especially in the entry and exit areas.

As with the physical environment, the respondents were also *very satisfied*, as revealed by the aggregate mean of 3.43. Especially in air quality, with the highest weighted mean of 3.62, followed by the landscape and natural areas (3.52). This data shows that the maintenance workers and the natural attractions' management maintained and preserved the attractions' natural beauty, which is the tourists' core purpose in visiting the destination.

In visitor control and protection procedures, the aggregate mean was 3.30, *very satisfied*, uncommonly in policy implementation with the highest weighted mean of 3.39. It shows that the management could implement the policy and protocols to ensure the tourists who visited the natural attractions. And have no records of wounded or injured tourists while in the area of the tourism sites.

As to commercial considerations, tourists who visited the destinations were *very satisfied* with the aggregate mean of 3.30. Most especially in working days and opening hours of shops and facilities with the highest weighted mean of 3.39. It means that the small businesses like shops and stores near or within the tourist sites could provide the tourists' needs to their preferred time.

And lastly, in the tourism staff aspect, the tourists were also *very satisfied* with the aggregate mean of 3.40. Particularly in the part of level knowledge (3.56), it denotes that the tourism staff in Candijay, Bohol, were trained and oriented on what and how to answer the tourists' query, especially regarding the common questions asked.

Table 3. Challenges Encountered By the Tourists Concerning Different Factors of the Tourism Attractions

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
1. Road condition.	181	78.70	1
2. Excessive entrance fee.	68	29.57	2
3. High prices of food & Beverage.	68	29.57	2
4. High cost of transport.	67	29.13	3
5. No transport facility.	66	28.70	4
6. Insufficient safety and security.	65	28.26	5
7. Poor service.	63	27.39	6
8. Poor accommodation.	57	24.78	7
9. Insufficient infrastructural and supra-structural facilities.	57	24.78	7
10. Improper disposal of solid waste.	55	23.91	8
11. Sanitary condition.	49	21.30	9
12. Lack of organizational setup and other recreational facilities.	49	21.30	9
13. Overcrowded.	45	19.57	10
14. Physical isolation and inaccessibility.	43	18.70	11
15. Unwanted expenses.	40	17.39	12
16. Information gap.	40	17.39	12
17. Pollution.	36	15.65	13
18. Environmental degradation.	36	15.65	13
19. Unplanned and haphazard growth op tourist spots.	35	15.22	14
20. Cheating habit of internal transport.	34	14.78	15

Table 3 shows that the respondents usually encounter the road conditions' challenges with the highest rank among the tourists' 20 challenges. It was a problem for the tourists as they travel from the highway to the tourist sites where the place is not yet fully developed, especially the sites located in remote areas. Moreover, excessive entrance fee and high prices of food & Beverage got the 2nd rank. Tourists often complained about this matter as they asked for payment for the entrance fee and another for environmental costs.

Additionally, the small businesses' prices within and near the tourist sites were high. They took advantage of the difficulty of finding a lower cost to the highway area because of the road condition and the distance from it. They also take advantage of the foreign tourist who had buying power for expensive products and can affect the local tourists in buying such products. And the 3rd rank lands on the aspect of the high cost of transport. Out of these challenges encountered by the tourist shows the lack of government attachment to the local tourist spots. This result was supported by the study of Ballantyne et al. (2009), which denotes that the important challenges that need to focus on it are the infrastructure in Oman (52%) which need to reformatting to be modern and attractive. The respondents believe that the government needs to support the tourism sector and focus on it. The private sector experiences and restrictions to deal with the tourists need to look at it as a challenge and find solutions by cooperating with the government. Also, the lack of commitment by Tourist operators in Oman discourages tourists from coming to Oman because it is one of the challenges that need to be studied and its solutions. That is why tourists preferred to use a private motorcycle rather than a public motorcycle (i.e., habal-habal) to save money as they take advantage of foreign and local tourists. Moreover, it is an adverse effect on the poor road condition of tourist sites.

Lack of strategic alignment between tourists' expectations and needs is a key area of concern. It needs mutually beneficial relationships between the tourism industry's challenges and services to meet these needs and reach a high level of customer satisfaction (Edwards et al., 2008).

CONCLUSIONS

Tourists had expressed their satisfaction with the different factors that they experienced, especially in accessibility, physical environment, visitor control & protection procedures, commercial considerations, and tourism staff. However, tourists also encountered some challenges while visiting tourist spots related to payments or fees. The information on service quality gaps could help tourism site managers diagnose where performance improvement can best be targeted. To achieve quality experience, establishments need a relatively stable labor force to allow the internalization of service standards. Thus, tourist site management's low performance will negatively impact the quality of service and an organization's desired competitiveness.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The study's findings may be best translated to the Local Government Unit in Candijay, Bohol, in response to the memorandum of agreement to conduct research activities to attain Comprehensive Land Use Planning of the municipality. The results must be explicitly forwarded to the Local Tourism Office and Municipal Planning and Development Office to gear towards assessing the tourists' experiences on the tourist attractions in Candijay, including their problems concerning their access to the tourist sites. Additionally, the output will help them develop their Comprehensive Land Use Plan, especially in the area of Tourism Development.

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