

Abstract

Project Title: Consumer Behavior and Expectation on Ecotourism Services
in Chiang Mai Metropolitan Area
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The objectives of this study are to investigate the consumer behavior and expectation towards ecotourism services in Chiang Mai Metropolitan area. The study utilizes quantitative data that has been collected by questionnaire. By using convenience sampling techniques of non-probability in the selection process, 200 ecotourists at three destinations in Chiang Mai Metropolitan area are selected. In addition, the questionnaire for the section of customer expectation on service quality and service marketing mix had been tested for reliability validation by using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient formula. The Statistic Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used for data analysis.

Overall, the result of this study shows that most of respondents are females. Ages of the respondents are below 20 years (20%) and between 20 to 45 years (53%). Over eighty percent (85%) are Thai with the occupation of business owners (22.5%), private employees (22.0%) and students (22.0%), respectively. Over half of the respondents earn yearly income less than THB150,000 (50.5%). The most ecotourism activities participated by respondents is nature exploring; specifically on nature photography and botanical trip. The objective for visiting ecotourism destination are relax and leisure. In addition, most of respondents are influenced in selecting ecotourism destination by perception on beauty and reputation of a destination.

This study found that most of respondents organized a trip by themselves and preferred to buy ecotourism services at a destination by traveling mostly on weekend. Furthermore, it was the consumers who made the decision in selecting ecotourism holiday themselves. Internet website was an initial source of information when ecotourism buyers search for ecotourism information. Respondents indicated that they have increased

knowledge of wildlife and nature while traveling ecotourism destination and if they have a chance to participating ecotourism activity in the future, nature exploring would be the first choice for them.

In terms of customer expectation on service quality, the respondents considered assurance ($\bar{x} = 4.14$) as the most expected dimension from excellent ecotourism providers, followed by reliability, responsiveness and empathy, respectively. In addition, respondents seemed to consider tangible attribute as only somewhat expected.

Regarding to service marketing mix factors, the respondents indicated that the physical evidence ($\bar{x} = 4.05$), people ($\bar{x} = 3.92$), place ($\bar{x} = 3.75$) and products/services ($\bar{x} = 3.67$) were considered as the most expected factors. Among physical evidence elements or concrete evidence to customers, respondents indicated environmental responsibility as extremely expected element.

The result of this study recommended that the ecotourism destination should give more attention to improve their reputation by being promoted via reliable tourist agencies, create or increase brand awareness by using online social network, provide appropriate nature exploring activities for a group of family, and ensure the security of service transactions. Additionally, giving ecotourism and environmental knowledge, training and meeting to all employees, interested parties, local people and tourist guides should contribute environmentally conscious to them and also it will establish public relationship to all stakeholders. Furthermore, the government agencies should be giving more information about ecotourism to business entrepreneurs and concerned groups of people.