

EVALUATING SERVICE QUALITY AND TOURISTS' SATISFACTION OF
SPA FACILITIES: A CASE OF GADEK HOT SPRING

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*To my dear family especially my mother, thank you for always being there for me,
supporting me and encouraging me to be the best that I can be.*

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ABSTRACT

Health and wellness tourism is seen as one of the prominent developing sectors of tourism in near future. The health tourism is different and consists of a number of sub-sectors. The chemical and mineral properties in hot spring were discovered and their effects on human being were listed, hot springs were known to be healing feature then it was motivating for those who want to participate in. Spa industry complicated with other sectors such as architecture, property development, landscape design, fashion, food, beverage as well as traditional medicine. The first purpose of this thesis is to evaluate the impact of tourists' overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction in hot spring, how satisfied they are with Gadek hot spring, loyalty intention to revisit and willingness and recommend Gadek hot spring to others. The second is to investigate the key criteria which influence on tourist satisfaction in Gadek hot spring. The third one is, to prioritize the key criteria which influence on the tourist satisfaction in hot spring. Based on the five dimensions of service quality, a questionnaire is used to establish a complete service quality evaluation framework for hot spring. In this research, Expert Choice is used to find the relative weights among the criteria. Finally, the service quality evaluation framework and evaluation results can be used as a guide for hot spring proprietors to review, improve and enhance service planning and service qualities in the future.

ABSTRAK

Pelancongan kesihatan dan kesejahteraan dilihat sebagai salah satu sektor terkemuka pelancongan yang akan membangun dalam masa terdekat. Pelancongan kesihatan adalah berbeza dan terdiri daripada beberapa sub-sektor. Sifat-sifat kimia dan mineral dalam air panas telah ditemui dan kesannya terhadap manusia telah disenaraikan, air panas telah dikenali kerana mempunyai ciri penyembuhan dan ia telah memberi motivasi kepada mereka yang ingin menyertai masuk industri ini. Industri spa merupakan industri yang rumit dengan sektor-sektor lain seperti hartanah seni bina, pembangunan, reka bentuk landskap, fesyen, makanan, minuman serta ubat tradisional. Tujuan pertama tesis ini adalah untuk menilai impak kepuasan keseluruhan pelancong atau rasa tidak puas hati mereka terhadap kolam air panas, tahap kepuasan mereka dengan air panas Gadek, tahap kesetiaan untuk datang semula dan kesanggupan serta mengesyorkan kolam air panas Gadek kepada orang lain. Kedua ialah untuk menyiasat kriteria utama yang mempengaruhi kepuasan pelancong di kolam air panas Gadek. Yang ketiga, untuk mengutamakan kriteria penting yang mempengaruhi kepuasan pelancong pada di kolam air panas. Berdasarkan lima dimensi kualiti perkhidmatan, soal selidik digunakan untuk mewujudkan perkhidmatan yang berkualiti lengkap dan penilaian rangka kerja untuk kolam air panas. Dalam kajian ini, Expert Choice digunakan untuk mencari berat relatif antara kriteria. Akhirnya, kualiti perkhidmatan penilaian rangka kerja dan keputusan penilaian boleh digunakan sebagai panduan untuk pemilik air panas untuk mengkaji semula, memperbaiki dan meningkatkan perancangan perkhidmatan dan kualiti perkhidmatan pada masa depan.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Tourism is identified to be a top priority for the following reasons. Firstly, it is the industry which requires more labor, therefore it prepares more careers for community. Secondly, the industry brings more benefits, enhancing social-economic situation for people. Thirdly, it can promote country in order to improve peace, gathering together, unified and sustainability.

Hot spring consumption has gradually flourished in recent years. I will first elaborate the history of health tourism to have a better understanding of the industry and furthermore it is necessary to know some of the essential concepts of spa tourism in general field in my master thesis. Health and wellness tourism is seen as one of the prominent developing sectors of tourism in near future. The health tourism is different and consists of a number of sub-sectors. Spa therapies were used in ancient

times in diverse forms which reflect cultural, social and political milieu then people besides cleaning function they used it as places for social encounters.

The global spa industry is not grown well however it is the fastest leisure industry. Spa industry complicated with other sectors such as architecture, property development, landscape design, fashion, food and beverage, fitness and leisure, personal development and conventional as well as traditional medicine. (Cohen & Bodeker, 2008). The most important factors for those who are interested to visit hot springs have always been different kinds of treatments but they also enjoy going there for refreshment. Health tourism wasn't prominent until the 16th and 17th century. The chemical and mineral properties in hot spring were discovered and the effects on human being were listed, hot springs were known to be healing feature then it was motivating for those who want to participate.

Between 18th and 20th century identified modern massages besides hot springs accommodation services were improved especially in Sweden. In the US spas were built around hot springs then hydrotherapy and knee therapy was developed. The spas weren't used as general until the end of 1980's however in the early 19th century some spas have been found. In border of Mexico spas emphasized on body (Cohen & Bodeker, 2008). Hotel spas and travel agencies both promoted and became practical in spa vacations in the 80's and spa industry became global. Hotel and resorts included spa services such as beauty treatment and dinning. With the help of spa magazines and consumer spa publications the industry was encouraged for spa-going. In order to growth of spa industry and promote spa knowledge, International Spa Association (ISPA) was established in 1991. ISPA so far has offered information in different purposes such as guest relation, services and standards of practice. In every region the spa has its own property and it's called calm place away from regular every day.

According to ISPA the spas are places which give relaxation and revitalization. Spa tourism usually focuses on the healing of the body and using mainly water such as, mineral or thermal pools, steam rooms and saunas.

1.1.1 Typologies of Health Tourism

There are numerous types of health tourism which focus on physical or medical healing in order to gain psychological and spiritual dimensions. Medical tourism is travelling to destinations in order to cure by surgical or therapeutic healing treatments. There is also a product which is called medical wellness that is a combination of medical and wellness for people who want to improve their health. (Smith & Puczkó, 2009).

Different types of stay spas:

1) Day spas are about three-quarters of the industry. They are the smallest spas in terms of size with lower revenue. In day spas beauty, fitness and wellness program are included but there is no accommodation during the visit and the business hour can be from an hour up to a full day.

2) Medical spas are the fastest growing spa sector in some parts of the world, they have provided comprehensive medical and wellness care to undertake health protection treatment in environment with spa facilities.

3) Resort and hotel spas are placed which equipped with spa services, fitness and wellness features. They both should have facilities such as movement, fitness, water, warmth, beauty, nutrition and relaxation. The resorts are in remote location with beautiful landscape and offering all service programs which is related to spa industry. It is prominent to understand better the meaning of tourist satisfaction in this study. It means that a consumer gives his or her ideas after experiencing about services and products which present visitors were satisfied or dissatisfied (Woodside et al., 1989).

According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry in 1985, customer's overall satisfaction may be related to their assessment of not only service quality but also product features (e.g. size of hotel room, etc) and price.

In context of tourism, satisfaction plays important role in comparison between expectations and experiences. When experiences compared to expectations result in feelings of gratification, the tourist is satisfied (Reisinger & Turner, 2003) and leave that destination with their good memory. They consent to pay more for these services however when the result in feelings of unhappiness, the tourist is dissatisfied (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). This is a reason to elaborate why tourism industry are determined to highlight a destination in order to improve the satisfaction of visitors. The purpose of this study is to find tourist satisfaction in hot springs and how satisfied they are with service quality, loyalty intention to revisit and willingness to recommend Gadek hot spring to other friends or relatives.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

Tourism described as the activities of people who travel and stay in places outside their usual environment for not more than consecutive year for leisure (WTO, 2000). A classification of purpose of visit designed to measure the key segments of tourism demand for planning, marketing and promotion purposes.

Classification of purpose of visit by types of tourism is mentioned (WTO, 2000):

1. Leisure, Recreation and Holiday
2. Visiting Friends and Relatives
3. Business and Professional
4. Health Treatment
5. Religion/Pilgrimage
6. Sport
7. Others

It seems that health tourism is growing well among the other sectors of tourism. Patients are increasingly traveling to developing countries for health care. Developing country is ready to offer their facilities to foreign customers. The first and important factor in developing countries in context of health tourism is reasonable prices of treatment and therapies also the other criteria's play important role like waiting times for procedures, facilities in international travels, access to various airlines, establishing powerful culture between nations. Asian countries are powerful in terms of hot spring, traditional methods and natural resources which they have caused many patients by different religions in the world come for healing. Moreover cause to growth of this market for these countries. The special geographical location of Malaysia, the history of medical science, the availability of hot springs, low cost and high quality health care services has led to high importance

of medicine fields in Malaysia. Special climate, vast natural resources and remote areas are other factors for promoting health tourism in Malaysia.

The suitable function of responsible organization in this sector is very important. The policies and proper planning and cooperation of governmental organization are influential factors for developing this sector in Malaysia. Planning and programming by governmental and private organization, contribution of stockholders and partnerships are considered as the most important factors for increasing the number of visitors and make opportunity for those who are eager to visit hot springs in different purposes. There are some criteria which have good effect in tourist satisfaction in hot springs such as hygiene condition, water quality, host hospitality, information accessibility, costs and accessibility of the area, certification and food quality. The present study has been scaled up factors which are related in tourist satisfactions in hot spring in Malaysia.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objectives of this research are surveying the tourist satisfaction in hot springs in Malaysia. This research has expressed three main important criteria that included:

- To evaluate the impact of tourists' overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction in hot springs which may result in their intention to return to the destination.

- To recognize the key criteria which influence on tourist satisfaction in hot spring.
- To prioritize the key criteria which influence on tourist satisfaction in hot spring.

1.4 Research Question

- How effectively satisfactions of variables give intention to visitors which have multiple visitations to the destination?
- What are the key criteria which influence on tourist satisfaction in hot spring?
- Which priority should be given to key criteria in order to have influence on tourist satisfaction in hot spring?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research was designed to determine what factors can be influence on visitors in order to satisfy them in hot springs in Malaysia. It seems that knowing each of this factors are necessary for entering Malaysia to health tourism market. The significance of this survey has been expressed:

- It is necessary for organizations or private sectors to identify the significance of raising the standard and improving the facilities.
- Understanding the suitable factors of marketing for attracting health tourism in terms of hot springs for healing. Studying diverse factors such as products, price, place and promotion play special roles in this sector of tourism.
- Therefore the present study is special importance to evaluate tourist satisfactions in hot springs and fulfill tourist's basic needs.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The scope of this research is to evaluate tourist satisfaction in hot springs and its related affecting elements and potentials of hot spring. The research will be done within hot springs in order to evaluate the perception of visitors with elements such

as: appealing physical facilities, hygiene and cleanness of hot spring facilities, reasonable prices, reliability in handling customer service problem, level of tourist satisfaction in tourism activity, personal attention given by staff, availability of first aid facilities and instruction.

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