

Factors Affecting the Satisfaction of Visitors to Đà Lạt Flower Festival 2012

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ABSTRACT

The research aims to investigate factors affecting the satisfaction of visitors to a national festival, i.e. the Đà Lạt Flower Festival 2012, on the basis of 500 respondents visiting the festival. The SERVQUAL by Parasuraman et al. (1988) with some adjustments is used. The SPSS software is also employed to perform the Cronbach's alpha, EFA, and multiple regression analysis.

The results indicate that the visitors' satisfaction is sharply affected by five following factors, in order of importance, (1) tangibles, (2) empathy, (3) responsiveness, (4) reliability, and (5) assurance. The research also extends several recommendations to the festival organizers in order to enhance the service quality and the visitor's satisfaction.

Keywords: Festival, satisfaction, service quality, SERVQUAL, SERVPERF

1. AN OVERVIEW OF FESTIVALS IN VIETNAM

According to the 2009 stats, there are 7,966 festivals in Vietnam within a year. Of them there are 7,039 folk festivals (88.36%), 332 historical ones (4.16%), 544 religious ones (6.28%), 10 adapted ones (0.12%) and others (0.5%). Additionally, Vietnam, in past years, has invented various festivals for kite flying, boating, fireworks, coffee, tea, flowers, rice, etc. making the spiritual life of local people more diverse and original.

The organization of a festival always entails various activities and services related to accommodation, fairs, exhibitions, workshops, recreation, sightseeing, etc. in every corner of the host locality. Since a festival is organized on the basis of the local and national demand, it is a marketing problem, the answer to which lies in the visitor's satisfaction. The fact that a festival is successfully organized and visitors are satisfied will definitely help polish the local image as well as its brand names, promote the infrastructural development, enhance the human resource competence and economic growth, and diversify the local spiritual life.

The Đà Lạt Flower Festival was first organized in 2005; and there thus far have been four flower festivals respectively held in 2005; 2007; 2010; and 2012. Its success reflects positive impacts of the festival on the cultural and spiritual life of the local people as well as further development of Lâm Đồng Province in general and of Đà Lạt in particular.

This is the first research on the satisfaction of visitors to Đà Lạt Flower Festival. The author humbly hopes it will partly contribute to the successful organization of next flower festivals.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH MODEL

A festival often entails various services whose results are generated by interactions between service providers and visitors, as well as activities of providers to serve customers (ISO 9004-2:1991E). In order to measure the satisfaction of visitors, it is necessary to measure the service quality which is shown throughout the interactions between service providers and visitors (Svensson, 2002).

Many researchers have been endorsing the opinion of Parasuraman et al. (1985) saying that the service quality is determined by the difference between customer's expectations and their evaluations of the service they received. Hà Nam Khánh Giao and Nguyễn Tân Vũ (2011) regard the customer satisfaction as the convergence of the

enterprise's competence and customer needs or the individual perception arising from comparison of received service quality with their own expectations.

By employment of SERVPERF (Cronin & Taylor, 1992), Jasmina Gržinić (2007) measured the service quality satisfaction of residents in Riviera Resort. The five-point Likert scale shows that the service quality of Riviera Resort is affected by four factors: (1) empathy, (2) responsiveness, (3) reliability, and (4) tangibles. Mahdavinia Seyed Hessamaldin (2008), in his study on Customer Satisfaction in Four Star Isfahan Hotels using SERVPERF, arrives at a conclusion that the service quality of studied hotels is affected by four factors namely (1) tangibles, (2) responsiveness, (3) reliability, and (4) empathy.

The recommended research model is based on aforementioned theoretical and practical premises for Festival and is exhibited in Figure 1.

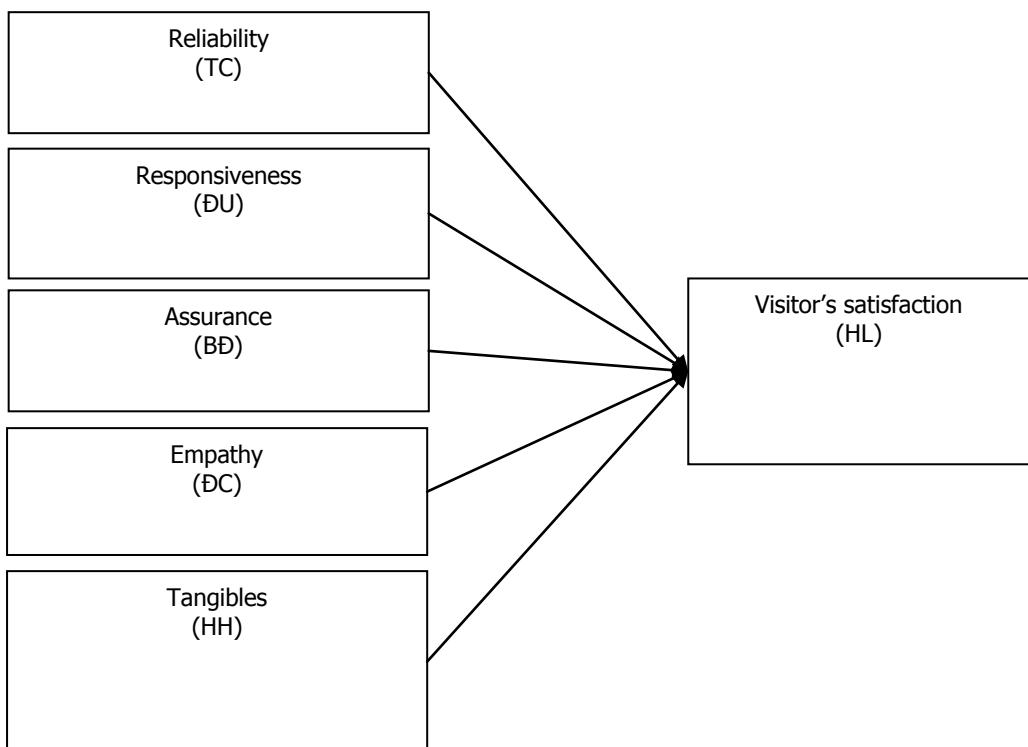


Figure 1: Recommended Research Model

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

a. Qualitative Research:

In the preliminary research (i.e. group discussions), the SERVQUAL is adapted to establish an appropriate scale and a questionnaire which is to be utilized to conduct mock interviews with 10 visitors. Then expert opinions will be consulted to adjust the wording of the questionnaire.

The adjusted measurement scale will then be utilized for the quantitative research. Observed variables (36 statements) are measured by the five-point Likert scale with 1 as ‘absolutely disagree’ and 5 as ‘absolutely agree’.

b. Survey:

The survey was carried out during the Đà Lạt Flower Festival 2012 (i.e. from Dec. 30, 2011 to Jan. 3, 2012); and 500 questionnaires were randomly disseminated among visitors at main venues of the festival as “Beautiful Flower Spaces”, “International Gallery and Exhibition of Flowers”, “Street Festival – Flowers and Light”, “Flower Exhibition and Street Parade”, and “Wine Festival Night”. However, of 500 returned questionnaires, there are 136 inappropriate ones for lack of necessary information; and thereby there are 364 ones left for further analysis.

c. Sampling:

Attributes of the research sample are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample Characteristics

| Characteristics | Frequency | As % |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|------|
| Age | | |
| From 18-25 | 135 | 37.1 |
| From 26 – 35 | 114 | 31.3 |
| From 36 – 45 | 68 | 18.7 |
| Over 45 | 47 | 12.9 |
| Purpose of festival participation | | |
| Excursion | 94 | 25.8 |
| Relaxation | 40 | 11.0 |

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|------|
| Convention | 12 | 3.3 |
| Festival participation | 165 | 45.3 |
| Others | 53 | 14.6 |
| Monthly income level | | |
| None | 6 | 1.6 |
| Under VND3mn | 84 | 23.1 |
| From VND3mn to VND5mn | 116 | 31.9 |
| From VND5mn to VND10mn | 116 | 31.9 |
| Over VND10mn | 42 | 11.5 |
| Marital status | | |
| Single | 186 | 51.1 |
| Married | 178 | 48.9 |

d. Testing Measurement Scale and Model:

The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of the service quality scales for Đà Lạt Flower Festival 2012 in Table 2 are equal to or larger than 0.699; and the item-total correlation coefficients are larger than 0.3 after leaving out a variable. In other words, all of the measurement scales are reliable and will be utilized for EFA (Nunnally & Burnstein, 1994).

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients of Each Factors Affecting the Visitor's Satisfaction

| Measurement scales | N | Cronbach's Alpha | Minimum item-total correlation |
|---------------------|----|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Reliability (TC) | 6 | 0.757 | 0.463 |
| Responsiveness (ĐU) | 6 | 0.778 | 0.459 |
| Assurance (BD) | 4 | 0.699 | 0.389 |
| Empathy (DC) | 4 | 0.772 | 0.516 |
| Tangibles (HH) | 10 | 0.853 | 0.418 |

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|-------|-------|
| Visitor's satisfaction (HL) | 5 | 0.845 | 0.573 |
|-----------------------------|---|-------|-------|

The EFA results show that there are six factors with the Eigenvalue of 1.019 and the variance is 57.474%. Of observed variables, the factor loading of HH4 is 0.22 (<0.3) and BD2 cannot measure the visitor's satisfaction; and thus both are omitted. Accordingly, the Cronbach's alpha of BD falls to 0.688 from 0.699 whereas that of HH is unchanged.

The EFA is performed again. There are five factors with the Eigenvalue of 1.13 and the variance of 56.135%. The results show that the factor loading and difference of observed variables are acceptable. In addition, the KMO value of 0.938 and the very small Sig. value prove that the EFA results are reliable. Observed variables are arranged and named in accordance with a principle that one with its factor loading in favor of a dimension will be transferred to that dimension (Table 3).

Table 3: EFA Results and the Cronbach's Alpha of Factors Affecting Service Quality of Đà Lạt Flower Festival 2012

| Observed variables | Factor loadings | | | | |
|---|-----------------|-------|----|----|----|
| | HH | BD | DC | TC | DU |
| HH3 The festival is well decorated and catchy. | 0.553 | | | | |
| HH6 There are numerous utility services. | 0.532 | | | | |
| HH7 Convenient traffic among main venues of the festival. | 0.533 | | | | |
| HH8 Good ATM services | 0.665 | | | | |
| HH9 Equipment used in events is modern. | 0.688 | | | | |
| HH10 Festival attendants are well dressed. | 0.688 | | | | |
| DU4 Visitor's demands are timely met. | | 0.577 | | | |
| DU6 It is convenient to use merchandises. | | 0.513 | | | |
| BD3 Experiences are transferred. | | 0.699 | | | |
| BD4 Demands for amusements, excursion, researching, etc. are satisfied. | | 0.634 | | | |

| | |
|---|--|
| ĐC2 Getting preferential treatment | 0.582 |
| ĐU1 There are many shopping malls and outlets. | 0.480 |
| BD5 Communication is facilitated. | 0.568 |
| ĐC1 There is (a/your) favorite activity. | 0.679 |
| ĐC3 The activity timetable is appropriate. | 0.475 |
| ĐC4 There are numerous night amusement centers | 0.567 |
| HH1 Events are held in appropriate venues. | 0.558 |
| HH5 Diverse and original souvenirs are available. | 0.467 |
| TC1 Rented rooms are identical to descriptions in the signed contract. | 0.566 |
| TC2 Safety is secured during the traveling | 0.658 |
| TC3 Public means of transport are available. | 0.692 |
| TC4 Information related to the festival is publicized. | 0.445 |
| ĐU2 Entrance price is reasonable. | 0.505 |
| ĐU3 Attendants are hospitable and courteous. | 0.473 |
| HH2 Local coach stations and airport are convenient enough for departure and arrival. | 0.454 |
| TC5 Many activities are available for visitors to take part in. | 0.742 |
| TC6 Activities are well organized. | 0.580 |
| ĐU5 Activities are attractive and interesting. | 0.682 |
| Eigenvalue | 10.231 1.606 1.475 1.275 1.130 |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| Extracted variance | 12.584 | 11.423 | 11.248 | 11.239 | 9.140 |
| Cronbach's Alpha | 0.815 | 0.800 | 0.824 | 0.791 | 0.751 |

The Spearman's Rho (Table 4) shows that there is a correlation between explanatory variables and dependent one, which ranges between 0.481 and 0.662 (not exceeding 0.85). This implies that measurement scales can be employed to measure studied dimensions.

Table 4: Correlation among Studied Dimensions

| | HH | BD | DC | TC | DU | TM |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Spearman's Rho | HH | 1.000 | 0.613 ** | 0.633 ** | 0.585 ** | 0.481 ** |
| | BD | 0.613 ** | 1.000 | 0.623 ** | 0.617 ** | 0.549 ** |
| | DC | 0.633 ** | 0.623 ** | 1.000 | 0.607 ** | 0.620 ** |
| | TC | 0.585 ** | 0.617 ** | 0.607 ** | 1.000 | 0.526 ** |
| | DU | 0.481 ** | 0.549 ** | 0.620 ** | 0.526 ** | 1.000 |
| | HL | 0.662 ** | 0.521 ** | 0.586 ** | 0.496 ** | 0.489 ** |
| | | | | | | 1.000 |

**: The Spearman's Rho has the statistical significant level at 0.01; n=364

e. Regression Analysis Results:

Tables 5, 6 and 7 set forth the multi-variable regression results concerning the service quality of Đà Lạt Flower Festival 2012. The regression model is comprised of five explanatory variables and a dependent one.

Table 5: Complete Multi-Variable Regression Model

| Model | R | R² | Adjusted R² | Estimated error | Durbin-Watson |
|--------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | 0.700 ^a | 0.489 | 0.482 | 0.44581 | 1.851 |

Table 6: ANOVA

| | Model | Sum of square | df | Mean square | F | Sig. |
|---|---------------------|---------------|-----|-------------|--------|--------|
| 1 | Regression analysis | 68.202 | 5 | 13.640 | 68.631 | 0.000a |
| | Residual | 71.152 | 358 | 0.199 | | |
| | Total | 139.354 | 363 | | | |

Table 7: Variable Coefficients in the Regression Model

| Model | Unstandardized coefficient β | Standard error | Standardized coefficient β | t | Sig. | Multicollinearity | |
|----------|---------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|---------|-------|-------------------|-------|
| | | | | | | Tolerance | VIF |
| constant | 0.828 | 0.175 | | 4.725 | 0.000 | | |
| HH | 0.381 | 0.057 | 0.384 | 6.689** | 0.000 | 0.434 | 2.307 |
| BD | 0.073 | 0.058 | 0.073 | 1.277 | 0.203 | 0.441 | 2.267 |
| DC | 0.157 | 0.064 | 0.146 | 2.443* | 0.015 | 0.397 | 2.518 |
| TC | 0.090 | 0.055 | 0.090 | 1.626* | 0.105 | 0.463 | 2.159 |
| DU | 0.113 | 0.044 | 0.128 | 2.559* | 0.011 | 0.566 | 1.767 |

Adjusted $R^2 = 0.482$; $F = 68.631^{**}$ denotes the statistical significance of $F=0.000$

Independent variables: HH; BD; DC; TC; DU

Dependent variable: HL

Note: ** and * respectively denotes the statistical significance $p<0.001$ and $p<0.05$

Table 5 shows that the adjusted R^2 reaches 0.482 and the Durbin-Watson coefficient lies within the range of 1 to 3. The F-test produces the extremely minute significance ($p=0.000$). Apparently, the regression model is appropriate to the collated data; and the compatibility of the model reaches 48.2%; in other words, the model can explain 48.2% in the variation of the dependent variable (Trọng & Ngọc, 2008).

The visitors' satisfaction with service quality in Đà Lạt Flower Festival 2012 can be expressed in the following linear regression equation:

$$HL = 0.828 + 0.381.HH + 0.073.BD + 0.157.DC + 0.09.TC + 0.113.DU$$

Positive regression coefficients imply that factors of the regression model increase the service quality in Đà Lạt Flower Festival 2012. As Table 7 shows, the variable "tangibles" has the strongest impact on the service quality ($\beta = 0.384$), and is respectively followed by "empathy" ($\beta = 0.146$), "responsiveness" ($\beta = 0.128$), "assurance" ($\beta = 0.09$) and "reliability" ($\beta = 0.073$). Despite their lack of statistical significance ($p > 0.05$), the correlation coefficients of the two latters indicate that they retain a positive relationship with the visitor's satisfaction; and thus it should be thoroughly weighed before adding them to the model.

f. Analyzing Visitor's Evaluation of Studied Dimensions:

Means produced from the descriptive statistics will be employed to evaluate the visitor's perception of studied dimensions. As Table 8 indicates, visitors have quite good comments on the service quality of Đà Lạt Flower Festival 2012 (Mean = 3.9566). Specifically, the statistical means of "empathy", "responsiveness", "tangibles", "assurance" and "reliability" respectively reach 3.9266; 3.8709; 3.8494; 3.755; and 3.6954. In short, it is possible to state that visitors wish to have more interesting activities and many amusement centers; and once organizers can meet these needs, the visitor's satisfaction will be enhanced.

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics of Visitors' Evaluation of Studied Dimensions

| Factors | Mean | Standard deviation | N |
|-----------------------------|--------|--------------------|-----|
| Tangibles (HH) | 3.8494 | 0.62420 | 364 |
| Assurance (BD) | 3.7555 | 0.61254 | 364 |
| Empathy (DC) | 3.9266 | 0.57842 | 364 |
| Reliability (TC) | 3.6954 | 0.62210 | 364 |
| Responsiveness (DU) | 3.8709 | 0.70165 | 364 |
| Visitors' satisfaction (HL) | 3.9566 | 0.61959 | 364 |

4. DISCUSSION

The research can contribute to the enhancement of visitor's satisfaction as follows:

a. Tangibles:

Visitors are often attracted by events that are well-organized and well-decorated. In practice, if a festival is widely advertised and equipped with modern facilities, convenient public means of transport, available ATMs, etc. visitors will be attracted and satisfied.

b. Empathy:

This factor reflects a caring attitude toward each visitor and can be deduced that once a person visits a festival, they have a lot of opportunity to participate in various sightseeing tours, enjoy their favorite programs, and shop in souvenir stands.

c. Responsiveness:

This factor reflects and depends on the way festival organizers organize the program. If this factor is well handled, the visitor's satisfaction will be enhanced.

d. Reliability:

It indicates the ability to provide visitors with best services (i.e. accommodation, communication, means of transport, safety, etc.). If it is well managed, visitors feel safer to join the festival, and their trust in the local organization board will rise. Although its impacts on the visitor's satisfaction are low, this is the basic demand of each visitor; and thus visitors will be more satisfied if it is improved.

e. Assurance:

It is measured by the professionalism, courteousness, and hospitality. Visitors will be satisfied if they are nurtured at all destinations; the product and services at the festival instill unforgettable memories in them.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS TO ĐÀ LẠT FLOWER FESTIVAL ORGANIZERS

From the aforementioned analysis, the author offers several recommendations to organizers of Đà Lạt Flower Festival as follows:

Given Table 8, the variable "tangibles" has the strongest impact on the visitor's satisfaction. This implies that a festival can attract numerous visitors if it is uniquely organized and well decorated. However, due to the fact that Đà Lạt City is quite small

in area and the local infrastructures are restricted, it is really difficult to reduce traffic jam in the rush hour. Therefore, the festival organizers should develop a workable plan to coordinate the traffic right at entrances to the city as well as the heavy vehicle routes. If possible, there should be bus routes at the service of the festival.

The organizers should locate public utilities such as benches, public restrooms, ATMs, etc. around event venues. The attendant's uniform is advised to be well designed, decent and appropriate to the festival.

The festival programs should be broad so that both visitors and local people can interact in a festive atmosphere. Visitors will be more satisfied when they themselves can take part in all activities of the festival. Moreover, distinctive merchandise produced only at the festival can also enhance visitor's satisfaction.

Finally, accommodation, communication, safety, etc. of visitors during the festival must be properly addressed. Even though factors "reliability" and "assurance" do not have high impacts on the visitor's satisfaction, they are deemed as basic demands of each visitor. Hence, if these demands are well addressed, the visitor's satisfaction will be enhanced.

6. CONCLUSION

This research determines factors affecting the satisfaction of visitors to Đà Lạt Flower Festival 2012. The one with the strongest impact on the visitor's satisfaction is "tangibles", which is respectively followed by "empathy", "responsiveness", "reliability", and "assurance".

Given statistical means which reflect the visitor's perception of each influential factor, the author extends several recommendations to the Đà Lạt Flower Festival 2012 in order to enhance the visitor's satisfaction and attract more visitors to future flower festivals. Once visitors are satisfied with services provided during the festival, there are more opportunities that they will return to Đà Lạt for other flower festivals; and the Đà Lạt flowers will be widely advertised across the border; and the local tourism will develop accordingly. In brief, the research has contributed an empirical study on the festive service quality in the current context.

The paper has had positive contributions to the investigation of factors affecting the satisfaction of visitors to a festival. Yet, due to the fact that the author just surveys some primary venues of the festival; and each festival has its own distinctive features

and originality, the research's generalization is not high. Samples are randomly selected, and thus they are not highly representative. Further research can enhance the sample size and survey scope to improve the research results ■

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