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Museum Service Quality, Satisfaction, and Revisit Intention: Evidence from the Foreign Tourists at Bangkok National Museums in Thailand

Tattawan Duantrakoonsil, Earl L. Reid and Hae Young Lee[†]

School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Kyungsoo University, South Korea

KEYWORDS

Museum tourism,
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ABSTRACT

Despite its importance to Thailand, museum tourism has not received sufficient attention from researchers and practitioners. Consequently, knowledge of museum tourist responses toward museum service quality is quite limited. Thus, the purpose of this study was to (1) examine the service quality of museums in Thailand and (2) revealed how tourists react positively namely through satisfaction and revisit intentions. This study further explored how the proposed relationships vary between Asian and European tourists. Based on Harrison and Shaw's (2004) museum experience model, facilities, staff services, and exhibition experience were proposed as three important service elements encountered during a service experience. Data were collected from foreign tourists who visited any of the 6 national museums in Bangkok. A total of 260 questionnaires were obtained over a 3-month period, all of which were retained and utilized for the analysis. Results found that exhibition experience and staff services were positively associated with tourist museum visit satisfaction, which in turn acted on revisit intention. In addition, exhibition experience was found to be the most important service element for Asian tourists, while staff services was most important for European tourists. Staff services and exhibition experience both played important roles in the tourist museum experience, while facilities did not have an effect on the evaluation of museum services. In response, museum managers need to implement a segmentation strategy that considers tourists' backgrounds such as region, culture, or nationality.

1. INTRODUCTION

Museums, as important historical and cultural resources, increase the attractiveness of tourism destinations by attracting potential tourists to a specific destination. Museums play a critical role in preserving cultural heritage by linking the past to the present (Falk & Dierking, 1992; Huo & Millar, 2007). Museums are an important perspective of a destination's heritage not only the tourists but also the citizenry which more

than 40,000 museums global (Zils, 2000). Many tourism destinations expend a great deal of effort in promoting their museum resources in order to increase their competitive advantage. Museums, specifically, endeavor to continue meeting visitor expectations by providing better services and amenities. Many tourists have also shown continued support by including museum visits in their tour itineraries (Cheng & Wan, 2012). The fact that most tourists have specific interests among the variety of cultures, heritages, histories, and tradi-

[†] Corresponding author: Hae Young Lee, School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Kyungsoo University, 309, Suyeong-ro, Nam-gu, Busan 608-736, South Korea, Tel. +82-51-663-4465, Fax. +82-51-627-6830, E-mail: hylee1228@ks.ac.kr

tional resources in travel destinations is evidence of an appreciation of the value of cultural or historical aspects of tourism.

Given the richness of cultural and historical aspects in Thailand, museum tourism is of great important to the Thai tourism industry. The number of foreign tourists who have visited museums throughout Thailand has steadily increased, although the size of that market is relatively small compared to the domestic market. According to the Fine Art Department of Thailand (FADT) (2016), the total number of foreign tourists who visited national museums nationwide in 2016 was 108,188. However, museums in Thailand face various administrative difficulties such as lack of funds, poor facilities, or a lack of new exhibits (Daily News, 2015). Furthermore, most museums are outdated and often fail to provide a unique experience. As a result, museum service in Thailand tends to be somewhat disappointing and insufficiently satisfying for visitors.

Thus, an understanding of how tourists evaluate their museum experience is essential in enabling museums to provide better service and upgrade tourist museum experiences. However, there remains an insufficient number of articles concerning an understanding of the service quality of museums and tourist responses towards the service. Therefore, this study sought to examine foreign tourists' perceptions of service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty towards museums in Thailand. Based on Harrison and Shaw's (2004) museum experience model, facilities, staff services, and exhibition experience were proposed as important service attributes related to the museum experience. In addition, to check for cultural differences, this study explored how the proposed relationships may differ between Asian and European tourists. According to the Fine Art Department of Thailand (FADT) (2016), the top 10 arrivals by nationality were the Asian tourist group and the European tourist group who visited any of the 6 national museums of Thailand in Bangkok. Therefore, this study of propose relationships were compared between the Asian tourist group and the European tourist group who visited any of the 6 national museums of Thailand in Bangkok. The results of this research could provide guidelines for museum managers and destination marketers in implementing more successful management schemes that can meet tourist expectations of service quality.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Museum Tourism in Thailand

The tourism industry is the most various business and is one of the world's largest for primary industry sector growth as a producing revenue, organization development and employment (Lee and Chang, 2008). Museum tourism is one form of the cultural tourism. It has part of role to develop tourism society as a publishing and preserve the cultural heritage (International Council of Museums (ICOM), 2010).

The hallmark of a museum is the preservation of valuable historical relics or cultural heritages whether they be related to politics, economics, society, religion, or art. As a channel to the past and a cultural resource itself, museums have become part of the lives of modern people (International Council of Museums (ICOM), 2010). Thailand is a country so rich in historical and cultural resources that it attracts the intellectual curiosity of tourists. Indeed, many tourists interested in Thailand's diverse history and traditions, as well as the lives of Thai people, visit museums to gain a genuine understanding of Thailand (Narksuwana & Roswarnb, 2016).

There are some well-known national museums in Bangkok, such as the Bangkok National Museum, the Royal Barges National Museum, the National Gallery Bangkok, the Royal Elephant National Museum, Wat Benchamabophit National Museum and Silpa Bhirasri National Museum (Narksuwana & Roswarnb, 2016). Founded in 1859, the Bangkok National Museum, or Phra Nakorn National Museum, was the first museum for the Thai people. Its original name was Bowornstharn Mongkol Vice-King Palace, or Viceroy Palace, and included the palaces and royal halls as examples of great Thai architecture. The royal private museum at Phrapas Phipittapun Royal Hall in the Grand Palace was established in the reign of His Majesty King Mongkut, King Rama V, to preserve and collect treasured objects (FADT, 2016).

There are currently six national museums in Bangkok are under the management of the Office of National Museum within the Fine Arts Department of the Ministry of Culture in Thailand. Since the origin of the first museum in 1859, the national museums have been collecting Thai cultural items related to Thailand's prehistory, architecture, arts, traditions, religion, and including analyses by specialized experts. Both outdoor and indoor national museums incorporate modern media in all their exhibitions (Narksuwana & Roswarnb, 2016). All museums effectively introduce Thailand by exhibiting and introducing various artifacts from the past.

However, in general, museum service in Thailand does not do enough to attract tourists because, as public sector operations, museums do not pay much attention to visitor expectations of the experience. Rather than providing proper services, museums operate in ordinary and traditional ways under the guise of pursuing the public interest. Thailand museums need to play a future-oriented role by creating unique museum experiences based on the needs of tourists and their service expectations.

2.2. Service Quality

Service quality refers to the overall evaluation by a consumer of the service they experience (Oliver, 1980; Rust & Oliver, 1994). Service quality is generally considered as a key to the success of any organization or company because it affects judgment, such as customer satisfaction, and loyalty behaviors such as revisiting, repurchasing, or recommending (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). Both researchers and practitioners have verified its positive role in increasing customer satisfaction, which in turn is linked to future behavioral intentions (Clemes, Gan, & Ren, 2011). Caruana (2002) also said that the service quality model has accepted considerable attention in the literature by both specialized experts and academic researchers.

Among various studies on service quality, the three-component model of Rust and Oliver (1994) has been widely supported by many researchers since it was the first to consider the two aspects of process and outcome in the measurement of service quality. Brady and Cronin (2001) extended Rust and Oliver's ideas by adapting the original quality components into new elements: interaction quality, physical environment quality, and outcome quality. In this context, interaction quality refers to characteristics of the attitude, behaviors, and skills of service personnel, such as being helpful and courteous staff. Physical environment quality is defined as the surrounding facilities and environmental functions. Outcome quality refers to how customers evaluate what is left after service delivery.

Based on the strength of the validated model, many researchers have used the three-factor model by Brady and Cronin (2001). For instance, Dirsehan (2010) tested a model of service quality in the zoo context by considering tourist experiences in the three components of facilities, services and experience. Clemes et al. (2011) also examined that guests form their perceptions of motel service based on the three

primary elements of interaction quality, physical environment quality, and outcome quality. Ramseook Munhurrin (2012) also examined service quality dimensions in restaurant services with the restaurant context on customer intentions and satisfaction which good level of service quality on customer satisfaction leads to revisit the restaurant. Cho (2009) tested the effective restaurant marketing found that service quality elements had the positive outcome on satisfaction and leads to revisit and recommendation.

2.3. Museum Service Quality

Since visitors evaluate their overall experience based on service quality and develop positive loyalty intentions, several researchers have attempted to reveal the specific elements of museum service quality. Falk and Dierking (1992) first described the quality of service of museum experiences with the three components, or contexts, of physical, personal, and social. In this sense, personal context refers to personal experience and includes motivations, hopes and attentions. Social context covers the direct communications between visitors and staff, while physical context is the structural design or facilities of the museum. They highlighted that personal context is the primary component related to revisit intentions. In addition, Harrison and Shaw (2004) proposed the three major elements of museum service to be facilities, staff services, and exhibition experience. They contended that visitors assess the whole experience based on the quality of three service elements.

Within the Samoan museum context, Huo and Miller (2007) examined the relationship of satisfaction and the three quality elements of venue attributes (facilities), staff services, and exhibition experience of the museum. The relative importance of museum staff on satisfaction was supported by their findings. Cheng and Wan (2012) also examined the service quality of museums in Macao and found that foreign tourists evaluate the service quality of museums higher than residents do. In particular, tourists were found to be more satisfied when museum staff responded quickly to service requests. Therefore, the researchers studied the proposed relationships were compared between the Asian tourist group and the European tourist group of museum service quality who visited any of the 6 national museums of Thailand in Bangkok. According to the Fine Art Department of Thailand (FADT) (2016), the top 10 arrivals by nationality were the Asian tourist

group and the European tourist group who visited any of the 6 national museums of Thailand in Bangkok.

2.4. Facilities

Physical environment is important because it is directly related to tourist satisfaction and easily leads to revisit and return. According to Cheng and Wan (2012), visitors to museums are affected by facility attributes in terms of physical environment. Lockyer (2002) also argued that hotel guests pay particular consideration to physical facilities when they appraise their accommodation experience. Furthermore, Rojas and Camarero (2008) argued that the physical component of service quality is a direct determinant of satisfaction and positive emotion. Lee, Lee and Lee (2011) also examined the hotel restaurants in downtown Seoul found that the facility service has affected on customer satisfaction. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H1: Perceived quality of museum facilities is positively related with tourist satisfaction.

2.5. Staff Services

Numerous researchers have specified the importance of the people in the service delivery process as their actions make a big impression on the perception of the entire service quality. Huo and Millar (2007) determined that the customer service skills of museum staff play a critical role in increasing visitors' levels of satisfaction. Visitor satisfaction appeared to be also linked to revisit and recommend intention. Cheng and Wan (2012) also confirmed that staff services attributes, such as kindness and responsiveness, lead to museum visitor satisfaction. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H2: Perceived quality of staff services is positively related with tourist satisfaction.

2.6. Exhibition Experience

Exhibition experience usually influences tourists' evaluations in terms of outcomes of the service process. Harrison and Shaw (2004) suggested that exhibition experience can improve museum visitor satisfaction, which leads to revisit and recommendation. Rojas and Camarero (2008) also verified that a positive assessment of a visitor's experience to be an outcome assessment of service quality. They suggested that ex-

hibition experience serves to increase satisfaction and positive emotions. Clemes et al. (2011) found that the positive role of guest experience to be a result of what was gained from the service. They suggested that exhibition experience, from the outcome aspect, completes the tourist's satisfactory experience. Dirsehan (2010) also suggested that a tourist's experience is significant in increasing satisfaction, which then leads to recommendation behaviors as well as an intention to visit in future. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H3: Perceived quality of exhibition experience is positively related with tourist satisfaction.

Numerous studies have confirmed the relationship between satisfaction and behavioral intentions such as revisit, repurchase, or recommendation. In general, highly satisfied tourists are more likely to develop more positive behavioral reactions (Harrison & Shaw, 2004; Hu & Millar, 2007). Museum tourists with high satisfaction will also have an exclusive response to the museum experience, as established by their higher mean scores for both intention to recommend the experience to others and intention to return that is an essential issue for museum operators. Westbrook and Oliver (1991) also said that overall satisfaction is a prerequisite for evoking positive customer intentions such as repurchase, recommendation, or revisit. The dependent variable of customers' apprehension and knowledge about health is satisfaction toward healthy foods as well as meaning prophet of customer behavioral revisit or repurchase in restaurants (Lee, 2016). Thus, the related hypothesis is formulated.

H4: Tourist satisfaction is positively related with revisit intention.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Sample and Data Collection

Data were collected from foreign tourist who visited any of the 6 national museums of Thailand in Bangkok. Trained interviewers gained permission from the museums and individually approached tourists to solicit responses. Six national museums in Bangkok are under the management of the Office of National Museum within the Fine Arts Department of the Ministry of Culture in Thailand and have been collecting Thai cultural items related to Thailand's prehistory, architecture,

arts, traditions, religion, and including analyses by specialized experts. A total only 260 questionnaires were obtained over a 3-month period in the limited time and limited cooperation from the respondents, all of which were retained. Interviews were held during business hours, 9 am. to 4 pm., from Wednesday to Sunday. After collecting all the questionnaires, the sample was divided into two groups. According to the Fine Art Department of Thailand (FADT) (2016), the top 10 arrivals by nationality were, in order, China, Malaysia, Japan, South Korea, Laos, India, United Kingdom, Singapore, Russia and United States. Based on this, this study divided the data into two groups - an Asian group and a European group. For this study, data collected from tourists from China, Japan, Malaysia, and South Korea were included in the Asian tourist group ($n=151$), while data from tourists from the United Kingdom, Austria and France comprised the European tourist group ($n=109$).

3.2. Measurement and Questionnaire Development

Based on previous research (Harrison & Shaw, 2004, Huo & Millar, 2007, Rojas & Camarero, 2008), all measurement items were modified to suit the museum tourism context. A five point Likert scale with 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree) was used to assess the proposed items. The questionnaire was composed of four sections. Section one included trip information and consisted of four topics: trip experience, nationality, travel companions, and frequency of travel. Section two related to the service quality of museum with the three elements of facilities, staff services, and exhibition experience. The outcome variables such as satisfaction and revisit intention were dealt with in the third section. Finally, demographic variables were included in the fourth section.

3.3. Analysis Methods

Structural equation modeling (SEM) technique with LISREL

8.5 was employed in this study (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993). As recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), the measurement model was first estimated using a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), followed by a structural model that was implemented to test the proposed hypothesis relationships. To check for differences in the relationships, the measurement model and the structural model were conducted for the Asian tourist group and the European tourist group separated.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

This study performed a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess the measurement model for each of the two groups. Model fit indices were good for the Asian tourist group ($\chi^2[23]=54.27$, GFI=.93, CFI=.95, SRMR=.07). Specifically, the standardized factor loadings of the Asian tourist group were acceptable with the lowest t -value of 2.53. Composite reliability (CR) also ranged from 0.71 to 0.83, which were acceptable. For the average variance extracted (AVE), facilities and exhibition experience were above the recommended value of 0.50, while staff services was somewhat lower. However, the squared root of AVEs (staff services) was higher than the correlation scores. Thus, the reliability and validity of the measurement model for the Asian tourist group was confirmed.

Model fit indices were also good for the European tourist group ($\chi^2[23]=35.54$, GFI=.93, CFI=.98, SRMR=.06). Standardized factor loadings of the European tourist group were also acceptable with the lowest t -value of 7.16. Composite reliability (CR) ranged from 0.78 to 0.81, which were acceptable. Furthermore, average variance extracted (AVE) (facilities=0.65, staff services=0.58; exhibition experience=0.51) exceeded the recommended value of 0.5. Thus, the overall quality of the European tourist group's measurement model was also confirmed.

Table 1. Construct properties and correlations (Φ) of Asian tourist group

Construct	Mean	Standard deviation	CR ^a	AVE ^b	Φ matrix		
					(1)	(2)	(3)
(1) Facilities	3.63	.43	.71	.58	-		
(2) Staff services	3.67	.52	.73	.48	.59	-	
(3) Exhibition experience	3.46	.67	.83	.56	.53	.61	-

^a Composite reliability; ^b Average variance extracted.

Table 2. Construct properties and correlations (ϕ) of European tourist group

Construct	Mean	Standard deviation	CR ^a	AVE ^b	Φ matrix		
					(1)	(2)	(3)
(1) Facilities	3.59	.53	.78	.65	-		
(2) Staff services	3.57	.55	.81	.58	.50	-	
(3) Exhibition experience	3.40	.60	.80	.51	.83	.65	-

^a Composite reliability; ^b Average variance extracted.

4.2. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Since the measurement model was validated, structural models for the Asian tourist group and the European tourist group were subsequently estimated to test the proposed relationships. Structural model fit indices were good for both groups: Asian tourist group ($\chi^2[57]=152.68$, CFI=.95, NFI=.91, SRMR=.07) and European tourist group ($\chi^2[57]=118.18$, CFI=.98, NFI=.92, SRMR=.07).

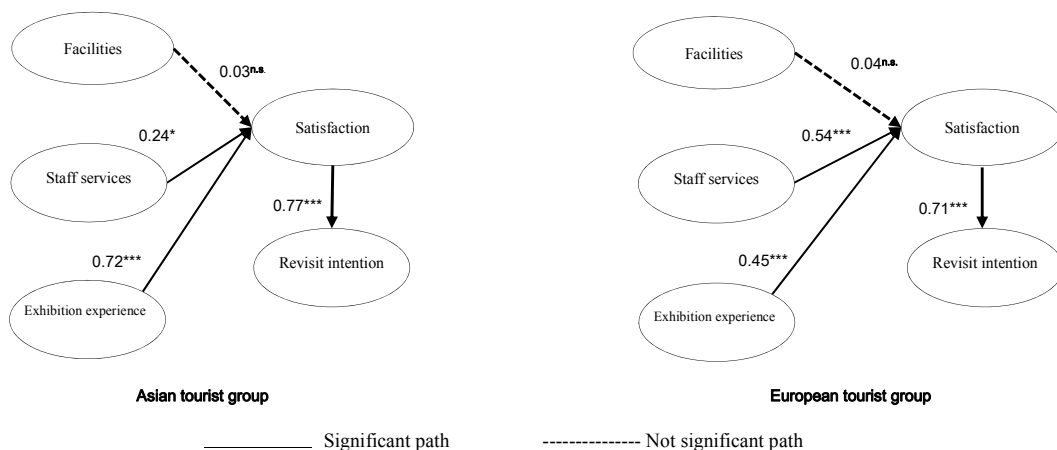
In the Asian tourist group (see Fig. 1), H1, which proposed a positive relationship between facilities and satisfaction, was not supported. Museum facilities did not significantly influence tourist satisfaction ($\beta=0.03$; $t=0.35$; n.s.). However, H2, which proposed that staff services influences satisfaction, was supported and significant ($\beta=0.24$; $t=2.09$; $p<.05$). In addition, H3, regarding a relationship between exhibition experience and satisfaction, was supported and significant ($\beta=0.72$; $t=5.27$; $p<.001$), and had the strongest effect on tourist satisfaction. The model indicated that exhibition experience is the major contributing variable to satisfaction for the Asian tourist group. Finally, H4, which proposed a positive relation-

ship between satisfaction and intention to revisit, was supported and significant ($\beta=0.77$; $t=5.55$; $p<.001$).

For the European tourist group, H1, which proposed a relationship between facilities and satisfaction was not supported, like the Asian tourist group. Museum facilities was not significantly related with satisfaction ($\beta=0.04$; $t=0.35$; n.s.). However, H2, which proposed a relationship between staff services and satisfaction, was supported and significant ($\beta=0.54$; $t=3.96$; $p<.001$), and had the strongest effect on the European tourist group's satisfaction. Staff services was the major predictor to improve the satisfaction, which leads to revisit. In addition, H3, which proposed a relationship between exhibition experience and satisfaction, was supported and significant ($\beta=0.45$; $t=3.55$; $p<.001$). Lastly, H4, which proposed a positive relationship between satisfaction and intention to revisit, was supported and significant ($\beta=0.71$; $t=4.79$; $p<.001$).

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to clarify the relationships

**Fig. 1.** Result of hypotheses.

* $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$, *** $p<.001$; n.s.=non-significant.

among museum service quality components, satisfaction, and revisit intention of the 6 national museums of Thailand in Bangkok. Based on Harrison and Shaw (2004)'s museum experience model, three specific elements (facilities, staff services, and exhibition experience) were suggested for the evaluation of the museum service experience. In order to reveal cultural differences, the proposed relationships were further compared between an Asian tourist group and a European tourist group.

The relative importance of museum service quality attributes varied between the Asian tourist group and the European tourist group. Of the suggested elements, staff services and exhibition experience both played important roles in the tourist museum experience, while facilities did not have an effect on the evaluation of museum services. Specifically, Asian tourists considered exhibition experience as most important, while European tourists were more concerned with staff services. In response, museum managers need to implement a segmentation strategy that considers tourists' backgrounds such as region, culture, or nationality. Personal service can enhance the quality of the exhibition itself, but it also makes the visit experience more special by responding to tourists' intellectual curiosity in cultural aspects in a more friendly and appropriate manner.

Specifically, facilities is a physical context and refers to the structural design or facilities of the museum. Although, it is considered one of three elements of museum service quality enabling success for any national museum, the role of facilities was not of great concern to Asian and European tourists in this study. Of the three, the facilities element is a tangible aspect of museum service quality, whereas the elements to which tourists responded positively, staff service and exhibition experience are intangible aspects. Specifically, staff services is a social context and refers to the direct communications and interactions between tourists and staffs. Exhibition experience is a personal context that comprises a tourist's personal experience and includes motivations, hopes, intentions and includes how a tourist evaluates what is left after a service delivery. In short, it was the intangible aspects of museum service quality that were shown to have a significant relation on tourist satisfaction that would then lead to revisit and return intentions.

In addition, museum managers need to provide various services that can differentiate the tourist experience. For example, a location based native language description service or unattended guidance through mobile communication tech-

nology may be effective. Various experience or education programs that enhance tourists' cultural understanding can also be developed based on a segmentation strategy. Such overall efforts will create a better tourist museum experience, which consequently enhances the attractiveness of Thailand as a travel destination. Ideally, it may also lead to the development of a method to measure museum service quality, which may also contribute to the understanding of national museum marketing and management. Especially, development and coordination between the six national museums and Thai government which increase the number of foreign tourists including the sustainable development and it will certainly increase efficient revenue to the Thailand's tourism income.

Recognizing the implications, this study also has some limitations. First, this study focused only on the service quality of national museums in Bangkok, Thailand. Different museums may have different service procedures and content. In the future, thus, sample data needs to be obtained from more diverse museum tourists across different nationwide museums. Second, this study did not consider the personal characteristics of tourists or other travel-related variables. Comparisons based on various tourist characteristics such demographics or travel information will provide more detailed results and implications.

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