

DOES AMBIENCE MATTERS ? CASE ON THEME PARK VISITOR SATISFACTIONS' AND LOYALTY IN MALAYSIA

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Received: 18 March 2020 Revised and Accepted: 20 June 2020

ABSTRACT: Ambience in tourism and hospitality are inter related in enhancing the visitor or the customer level of satisfaction and loyalty. The main objective of this study is to describe and explain the construct of ambience; the construct of satisfaction and the construct of visitor loyalty. The study will be focusing on the selected theme park which is cover from southern, central, and northern. This study focuses on the important of ambience that emotionally touch visitor at the theme park, especially on Malaysian and non-Malaysian visitor and they will be the target respondent of this study. The research data are based on the visitor visiting the perspective theme park. The outcome of this study will be a source of information for the theme park management to enhance the understanding of the main contributor of ambience towards the visitor loyalty and be competitive among the competitor as the result of the high quality of their services as to carry a good positive image of theme park and Malaysia as the country of harmonize and excellent in hospitality towards delivering first class customer service to the Malaysian and non-Malaysia visitor.

KEYWORDS: Visitor, Loyalty, Ambience, Satisfaction, Theme Park, CEO-Model, Malaysia

I. INTRODUCTION

Kotler (1973), explain atmospheric as the way to influence the customer by having attractive buying environment as to produce specific emotional effect from the atmospheric experience that indirectly influence the reason to buy. In conjunction of that Liang & Zhang (2012) stress again the importance of highlighting atmospheric as the marketing tool as to creative positive behavior and increase the satisfaction level during experiencing the service or preferred product. According to Slatten et al., (2011), customer experience is a crucial successful factor to be focus on by the management such as the theme park which highly related with producing excellent experience towards the visitor, that will result from the satisfactory emotional response and willingness to revisit and spreading the positive word of mouth such as spreading the goodness within the visitor circle.

The study population derived from the visitor consist of tourist that visit to Malaysia. The study sample involved the Malaysia and non-Malaysia visitor that visit to the theme park in Malaysia, especially focusing on Lost World of Tambun, Sunway Lagoon, I-City, And Legoland. The reason why visitor being chosen due to the increasing number of tourist attendance visiting thus giving the positive sign and impact to Malaysia economic contributor and growth. The increasing number of tourist means a good improvement of the destination such as the development of the routes, tour packages, and discount programs (UNWTO, 2008) and also being supported by Kum, Aslan, and Gungor (2015) claimed tourism activities are one of the crucial factors in economic growth. This study explores the important of ambience for the visitor satisfaction and loyalty during their experiences to the theme park in Malaysia. In addition, the present study investigates the mediating effecting of satisfaction on the relationship between ambience and loyalty. This study contributes to theme park Malaysia market research by considering the theme park visitor consumption behavior.

II. THEORITICAL BACKGROUND

The CEO-Model (Cause, Effect, Outcome) is a research application of visitor atmospheric experiences. The model its focused on the visitor's experience of the ambience in the theme park service setting in focus, and the relationship between these ambience experience towards visitors feeling of satisfaction and visitor loyalty. Slatten et al. (2009), agreed on the emotions are affected by the customer level of appreciation on the

environment. As the more the visitor of theme park such as in Legoland, happy and enjoy with the ambience surround, the visitor will experience more positive emotions toward the park.

Slatten et al. (2009), conclude that the customer feeling of joy is a result from the perception of the atmospheric experience attributes and the feeling of joy is a important indicator to the factor contribute to the loyaltiness. Therefore, this model supports the mediating effect of satisfaction as the factor contribute on the relationship between ambience experience and visitor loyalty. Below is the framework with the labelling of (cause, effect outcome).

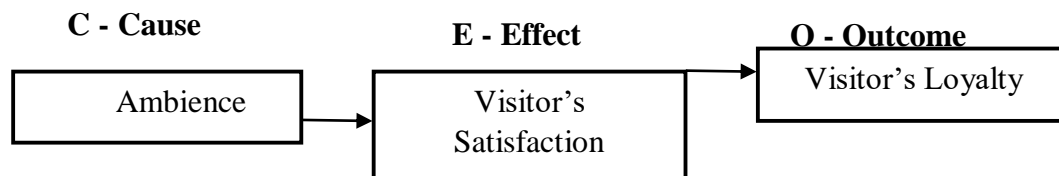


Figure 2.1: The above theoretical framework is derived mainly from previous study by Slatten et al. (2009) with labelling of CEO-Model (cause, effect, outcome).

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According Ryu & Han (2009), investing on the physical environment involving ambience (such as lighting, music, color and aroma) and layout (such as the seating environment) especially at restaurant which will enhance the dining experience as part of marketing tools which indirectly increase the level of satisfaction as to attract the current customer and enhance retaining or revisit customer. As to apply to theme park, the management, in order to be competitive among others, investing in the area of ambience may increase the satisfaction level of the visitor and contribute to positive behavior such as revisit the theme park.

F.Bigdeli (2014) found ambience contribute to the positiveness effect on the customer experience and emotions, this positive result in satisfied customer , such as a tremendous and happening music at the sunway lagoon during the activities does make the visitors happily enjoy the activities and enhance the satisfaction level towards the theme park (Baharudin Kadir, Shamsudin, Nurul, & Mohd, 2020).

As Baker and Crompton (2000) also mentioned satisfaction among the individual or customer is a psychological and involving emotional status which is influence by the experience wise. It is also related to the equality in attitudes from respective management (S. Hassan, Shamsudin, & Mustapha, 2019), and also by the external factors such as the physical environment (Hasim, Shamsudin, Ali, & Shabi, 2018), ambience and the delivering communication or interaction (B. Kadir & Shamsudin, 2019).

According to Cossío et al., (2018); Salem, Shawtari, Shamsudin, & Hussain, (2016); M. F. Shamsudin, Shabi, & Salem, (2018); Mohd Farid Shamsudin & Razali, (2015) in nurturing the tourist loyalty it is necessary for the agents involved to act on each of the components of the TLI (Tourist loyalty index) that is, on the expectations of the tourists, the level of perceived service quality, the destination’s global image, the visitor’s satisfaction, and also their intention to recommend the destination and repeat their visit.

Aziz et al., (2012), urge the important in understanding and occupied the visitor satisfaction by utilizing the information surrounding to fill the needs and wants that will enhance the satisfaction level thru the atmospheric experience. Such situation according to (B. Kadir & Shamsudin, 2019; M. F. Shamsudin et al., 2018; Mohd Farid Shamsudin & Razali, 2015) will increased the tendency to revisit.

IV. FINDINGS

Individual item reliability was evaluated by examining the outer loading of each construct measure. The rule of thumb of the indicator’s outer loadings should be higher than 0.70 according to (Hair et al., 2017). The score of the outer loadings for ambience measured item started from the highest is 0.816 and the lowest is 0.725. ‘The layout in the theme park has contributed to my experience’ (A5) was the highest outer loading score, while ‘The lighting in the theme park has contributed to my experience’(A2) known as the lowest outer loading score.

The first hypothesis includes direct relation of Independent variable to Mediating variables. Its explains the assessment of relationship between ambience and satisfaction. Value of path coefficient for direct relation of ambience to satisfaction (A-S) is 0.029. This show the path coefficient for ambience to satisfaction (A-S) as

small according to Cohen (1988) magnitude identification. Which according to Cohen (1988) suggested that path coefficient values of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 are indicates as low, medium and high impact.

The result shows that for ambience (A) is insignificant and negatively related to satisfaction (S), as result from (t-value: 0.669, p-value: 0.504). which is considered as per standard criteria of Hair et al., (2016).

Therefore, assuming a 5% significance level, the researcher finds that the ambience (A) insignificant and not supported.

The second hypothesis includes direct relation of Mediating variable (MV) and Dependent variable (DV). It explains the assessment of relationship between satisfaction and loyalty. Value of path coefficient for direct relation of satisfaction to loyalty (S-L) is 0.730. The path coefficient for satisfaction to loyalty (S-L) as large and high impact according to Cohen (1988) magnitude identification. The result shows that the third Hypothesis, satisfaction (S) is significant and positively related to loyalty (S), as a result from (t-value: 24.188, p-value: 0.000), which is considered significant as per standard criteria of Hair et al., (2016).

Therefore, assuming a 5% significance level, the researcher finds that the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty are significant and supported.

V. CONCLUSION

In this study, the relationship between ambience and loyalty has found to be insignificant. In ambience, it has the element of colour, lighting, sound, cleanliness and layout. It can't be consider which is not an important contributor, as without this element of beautiful colour added up in the theme park, lack of lighting which may harmful to the texture of the picture taken during the visitor visit, sound that attract the visitor to come at the certain check point, clean environment that make the visitor feels easy and spend more time at the time due to the comfortableness of the hygiene taken, and proper layout such as during the queuing counter during the ticket purchase it does contribute to the first perception during the theme park image

The relationship between ambience and satisfaction has found to be insignificant due to few explanations. First of all, the visitor being tested on the satisfaction of the theme park facilities, the enjoyment of the theme park attraction, the willingness to revisit the theme park soon, overall satisfaction with the theme park design and ambience. From this result, its shows the visitor is not happy with ambience that the theme park have provided. This is supported by Ryan et al., (2010); Salem et al., (2016) where's visitor satisfaction is determining whether the theme park meets the visitor need and wants, either from the attraction provided or the creativity in attracting the visitor to test the rides (Sallaudin Hassan & Shamsudin, 2019). Thus its shows, from the researcher results the theme park failed to maximize the level of visitor satisfaction in term or the facilities provided, the uniqueness and creativeness in attracting the visitor to ride.

Furthermore, this present study makes a contribution to the service literature that calls for research on the relationship between the atmosphere of the service setting and its linkage to visitor emotional response in experiencing tourism and theme park attraction, Ali et al., (2018), Jamal et al., (2017), Chen et al., (2016), Dong & Siu (2013), Slatten et al., (2009), and Bigne et al., (2005). This study contributes to the literature by investing the importance of ambience within the context of theme park attraction satisfaction and visitor loyalty in tourism industries in Malaysia . The findings of this study contribute to the empirical knowledge toward increasing the visitor loyalty towards the preferred theme park attraction

One important implications derived from this study is the mandatory of taking care the visitor atmospheric experience as its will determines the satisfaction of the visitor and contributor towards the loyalty. Thus the industry players, especially the managers must understand well the most contribute types of atmospheric experience that contribute towards the visitor satisfaction as the outcome of loyalty. Taking care, the visitor satisfaction is crucial as the more the visitor satisfied, the tendency of revisit, willingness to repeat, creating loyalty and willing to recommend to other people is positive related high.

VI. REFERENCES

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